

# Furtwängler's Secret:

## The "Furtwängler Principle" In Science and Art

*Submitted by Matthew Ogden for LYM Dynamics Conference, 2009*

*How does the serious musician go about conducting a process of truthful self-conscious reflection on the cognitive action of musical composition within the mind, as a way of coming to a deeper understanding of the mind itself, without falling back on generally circulating reductionist music-theory analysis methods, or attempting to construct a merely different form of similar reductionist analysis, in the way that the so-called non-Euclidean constructed a new form of geometry which was, however, still Euclidean in its form? How do we escape from the pervasive formalism associated with musical analysis, without just going to the other extreme and saying "it's mystical, it's ideas", in the way that the Vitalists reacted to the Mechanists in biology, and rather develop a truly anti-formal approach to this question?*

*Perhaps, in the same way that Gottfried Leibniz developed his science of dynamics through his refutation of the mechanistic reductionism of Rene Descartes, and (rather than engaging in the all-too-common practice of philosophizing without actual experimentation) he proceeded to build a real physical science on that epistemological basis, we may take a Leibnizian view of the questions involved when we contemplate the effect of musical compositions on the mind.*

*I write this report with both this immediate question in mind, but, also, for the purpose of prompting a deeper level of discussion around a subject which is of critical significance in understanding questions of economics and statecraft among our audience within policy-making circles today, but, unfortunately, due to the persisting force of the "Two Cultures" mental ghost, is often the very last subject to be discussed, if it is even discussed at all.*

### **Introduction**

Sitting down to compose this report brings back a vivid memory I have of a conversation that I engaged in with a fellow music teacher, my close friend Jennifer, herself a very well-trained singer, some years back, in Boston, when we were trying to prepare a presentation on the concept of the musical comma. We kept attempting to explain this and that, trying to come up with some description or explanation. It was difficult, and momentarily discouraging, because we could not come up with the words to describe what we were thinking. But, we both suddenly realized that the only way we had any insight into what we knew about the idea we were discussing, came to us both in the form of, literally, a feeling. That seemed strange at first, but, as we discussed it more, and the fact that this was an internal sense that both of us shared, it actually revealed something about the nature of true knowledge itself, both in music and in science, as opposed to memorized opinion. Knowledge is always internal, extremely personal, and seems to be born from a sense of eeriness, that there is something which you "feel", but cannot yet grab with a description – as soon as you try to describe it, it seems to slip away. And the work of communicating this knowledge becomes attempting to set someone else up for that same eerie

sense of discovery. So, the experimental environment, either in a laboratory or a chorus, was actually the only way to communicate what we already sensed.

For that reason, I feel a common bond with one of the greatest musicians that I have known, at least from within the scope of recorded musical history: the great conductor and German patriot Wilhelm Furtwängler.<sup>1</sup> From the first moment that I heard a performance by Furtwängler, I knew that there was something *right* in the music he created. He, somehow, brought into actuality what in my mind had only been, before that, an ideal. In his musical performance, Furtwängler stood head and shoulders above any other musician or conductor I had ever encountered.

You can imagine the happiness I felt, when I encountered a published edition of Furtwängler's private notebooks. In reading through his fragments and outlines, I saw him struggling with exactly the same difficulty which I just mentioned: attempting to put into words what was, for him, a vivid and living understanding that he possessed about music, a degree of understanding, which he knew, was, among his other contemporaries, unique only to him. And, his attempts continued to prove elusive; the metaphors and images which he describes continued, in his mind, to merely brush the surface. There was something just beyond the reach of description which, one senses when reading these fragments, was, to him, absolutely clear and yet still possessed an element of the mysterious. And, of course, this is exactly the quality of idea we experience as we sit, spellbound, listening to the recording of one of his historic performances.

What I wish to discuss in this report, is not a polished description of what I would assert to be the mechanics of that experience, nor do I intend to give a sophisticated analysis of one or another piece of music, since, in those endeavors my efforts would prove false. (In my mind, the only proof of a truthful hypothesis about a musical composition comes in the form of an effective performance of that piece. Verbal analyses always fall short.) What I do intend to explore is a change in my own total world outlook, catalyzed in my mind through several different channels which I will try to piece together, which has brought me to a more mature understanding of at least the questions involved when one discusses the creative human mind itself, whether it be in terms of art or science, or even statescraft.

### **The Furtwängler Effect**

Take another account of the same type of moment-of-revelation, which has been recounted several times, probably raising some eyebrows among many a confused reader, in campaign pamphlets and economic policy papers of the American statesman Lyndon LaRouche. He recounts the story of first being seized by the 'magic' of one of Furtwängler's performances while stationed in an army camp after

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<sup>1</sup> For all the hundreds of years of great musical performance, it is a shame that we only possess access to a little over one hundred years of recorded "history". However, if we think like archeologists, we may imagine that Wilhelm Furtwängler is the product of the great tradition in musical performance which preceded him, and, as we listen to recordings of orchestras under his baton, we hear in our mind's ear the similarly great performers from generations which preceded him, in the same way that we can imagine, as we listen to the earliest recordings of the tenor Enrico Caruso, the voices of all the great singers from whom he learned, but the sounds of whose voices were never recorded. We hear their voices echo to us through him, as similarly we hear the great musical performers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century echoing to us through Furtwängler.

the close of World War II, listening to a recent recording of a performance of the Tchaikovsky Pathétique (incidentally, while our beloved conductor was still alive). He was literally pulled to the edge of his chair by the effect of hearing the performance of this composition under Furtwängler's baton.

According to LaRouche's description, "the performance was stunning in its *relentless suspension* and *remarkable coherence*, from opening to close." What mysterious power was it that Furtwängler possessed which allowed him to create this sort of effect?<sup>2</sup> What did he know? Ask yourself the question: What was Furtwängler's secret?

In a paper which Lyndon LaRouche wrote in 1997, called "Behind The Notes", a paper which was intended to be the preface of a second volume of a musical study manual (the original volume researched and composed by qualified members of the international Schiller Institute, but the second volume never yet published or completed), LaRouche prescribes the challenge: render this apparently mysterious "secret" a discernable principle, transparent and understood.

As any music teacher knows, it is the most difficult among pedagogical challenges to communicate a musical insight to the mind of a student. As observed during a recent series of master classes held in Boston with the Italian dramatic soprano Antonella Banaudi, the teacher must invariably resort to a sung demonstration, sometimes singing right along with the student, sweeping the student up, it could be said, into the teacher's idea. These glimmers of musical insight seem indescribable verbally, but appear as an image in the mind's ear.

Look closer at this concept of insight as an image, not visual, or of any other sensory organ, but of the "organ" of the mind. Look, therefore, for the elaboration of this musical insight in an investigation of the functions of the mind itself. The mind of the insightful student will "hear" the inaudible image lurking behind the vocalization of the teacher, and will respond by beginning to form an equivalent mental image and allowing that to guide his or her singing voice: this action taken by the receptive and insightful student, rather than merely robotically mimicking the mechanical inflections of the sounds uttered by the teacher, in the fashion of a pirate's parrot.

This example, of musical insight in action, is perhaps an appropriate specimen we could use to point out the type of mental activity the insightful audience member experiences when listening to a great performance of music. That audience member is actively reconstructing in his or her mind the "sound" of the image in the mind's ear of the performer, he is hearing what's *behind* the physical sounds. We see that the mind, therefore, of the audience member, must be tuned correctly if it is to resonate with the *music* of the composition, and not just the notes. Compare the cognizant audience

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<sup>2</sup> We hear a similar description in a quote from the conductor Claudio Abbado, reflecting on his experience as a young musician in rehearsals under the baton of Furtwängler: "Even when Furtwängler walked into the pit, there was tension around him – like electricity. In the rehearsals, he would go over certain parts again and again, patiently explaining what he wanted...patiently, everything patiently. And slowly, this wonderful warm sound came out of the orchestra, and the tension, always this wonderful *tension* from beginning to end. He was one of the few musicians who could create tension even in the pauses when there was nothing but silence. That continuity, that *flow*... was something I will never forget. Those rehearsals and the performances were something very special for me." (DMM pp. 349-350)

member, actively engaged with the great musical performance, with the mind of the average Joe sitting in the seat beside him, struggling to keep open his eyes.

So, ask: what was it about the minds of two men, the young LaRouche and Wilhelm Furtwängler, which were “in tune”. What in Furtwängler’s performance of music would tell LaRouche – He speaks my language!

In the forementioned paper, “Behind The Notes” LaRouche gives the reader a hint: It is no mere accident that he would be so taken by, and dedicated to, Furtwängler’s approach to conducting; before the war, LaRouche had become, as he calls it, “a convert to the scientific world-outlook of Gottfried Leibniz”.

Although Gottfried Leibniz’s name may be familiar to the typical physics student, who might have caught a glimpse of that name somewhere among the pages of his science textbook, this assertive statement might make that physics student very perplexed. What about Leibniz’s scientific philosophy resonates with Wilhelm Furtwängler’s conducting?

### **The “Catenary Principle” In Art**

I take a slight detour, somewhat autobiographical again, to relate another encounter which I had with what was, to me, another very perplexing question, as was the one just mentioned, for quite the same reason. Typical of the ability of all truly creative persons to spark a thirst for creativity in the minds of others, the search for solutions to these questions posed by Lyndon LaRouche, the one just mentioned and the one I am about to introduce, has motivated a large part of my discovery process since they were first posed to me.

In what seemed like almost a passing the comment at the time, towards the end of a discussion several years ago which touched on many subjects, LaRouche mentioned, almost off-handedly, “If you really want to understand art, the challenge is to discover the catenary principle in music.”

At the moment he said it, this made no sense to me. How could a hanging chain, under the influence of gravity, tell us anything about music? The only logical analogy I could make at first, was a vague concept of the “frozen motion” state of the famous Greek statues resembling in some way this perfectly balanced hanging chain. And this was only an analogy in the domain of plastic art, not even music.

*The challenge embedded in these two questions, for the modern student of science, or the modern musician, is that these two questions seem to bridge the unbridgeable divide. They seem to ignore the universally accepted “iron curtain” between art and science.*

So, the solution to these “riddles” cannot come in the form of anything but a different and improved total world outlook for he who is motivated to find the resolution. It was only slowly that I began to reflect on the Greek sculpture not in terms of its material, or matter, which could be compared to the matter of the chain in some sort of simple analogous way, but in terms of this sculpture being embraced, in every visible detail, by the sculptor’s one, living *idea*. It was at that moment that I was able

to realize that this applied to music as well. The composition, in every detail, is embraced by a single *living* idea.

### **Furtwängler, A Leibnizian!**

Consider the following from Leibniz, taken from the very opening of an essay “On the Ultimate Origination of the Universe”:

“Besides the World, that is, besides the aggregate of finite things, there is some dominant unit...manifesting a much higher reason. For the one being which dominates the universe not only rules the world, it also makes or creates it. It is superior to the world and, so to speak, beyond the world, and is therefore the ultimate reason of things. Neither in any single thing, nor in the total aggregate and series of things, can the sufficient reason for their existence be discovered.”

As Leibniz is asserting a general universal characteristic, allow me to paraphrase Leibniz, in a slightly more specific context: *Neither in any single note, nor in the total aggregate and series of notes, can the sufficient reason for their existence be discovered.*

What we are faced with, when given the task of performing a piece of music, is to discover that “dominant unit” and allow it to speak to our audience members through the so-called finite things.

It is this challenge, and the question of the characteristic of the relationship between this “dominant unit” and these “finite things”, which Furtwängler wrestled with, and fought to communicate throughout the course of his life.

Consider these fragments, taken from Furtwängler’s private notebooks and writings:

“Let us consider the activity of artistic creation...When we look more closely at this process, we find we can distinguish two levels. On the first, each individual element combines with those adjacent to it to form larger elements, these larger elements then combining with others and so on, a logical outwards growth from the part to the whole. On the other level, the situation is the reverse: *the given unity of the whole controls the behavior of the individual elements within it, down to the smallest detail.* The essential thing to observe is that in any genuine work of art these two levels complement each other, so that the one only becomes effective when put together with the other.” W.F. Essay, *Contemporary Thoughts of a Musician*

"A truly sympathetic work, a piece of absolute music is like a sea. There are big waves, smaller ones on these, even smaller on these. The first thing one sees, and the only thing that most people see throughout their lives, are the smaller waves. But to reproduce them adequately one needs to understand the largest just as much, indeed above all." - W.F. 1940

“The sense of the orchestra as an artistic medium is that this body, constituting of 90 – 100 different people, different heads and hands, becomes one instrument through which a soul, a feeling, an intuition is communicated to the listener in its tiniest details. The more it achieves

this...the more it becomes the mediator, the communicator, the vessel and point of entry of the divine, speaking through the great masters.” – W.F. 1929

### **The Last Of The Mohicans**

We find ourselves happily surprised at uncovering the mind of a man who seems to be a relative philosophical genius dwelling among the ranks of our great-grandfathers’ generation, probably most shocked by his depth of philosophical insight, because most of what else we are familiar with from the first half of the twentieth century is superficial, to say the least. Furtwängler seems to be an almost “Last of the Mohicans” sort of figure in the world of music, much in the same way we perceive Albert Einstein as the last man standing amongst a sea of positivists and reductionists in science. They both seem to be members of some lost tribe which was somehow driven into extinction some time in the former century. It becomes very clear, as you read more of Furtwängler’s private notebooks, that he is self-consciously defending his idea of musical performance, and composition, in the face of the general decay with which he is surrounded, most of which he firmly and forcefully rejects.

At this point, as a sort of intermezzo, I wish to highlight a few significant aspects of Furtwängler’s biography, which are not commonly featured.

Born on January 25<sup>th</sup> (a birth date which I am proud to share!), in 1886, while both Johannes Brahms and Clara Schumann were still alive, Furtwängler’s native Germany was a relatively newly unified nation under Chancellor Otto von Bismarck. Although it is not apparent that Wilhelm ever met Brahms or Clara Schumann, Furtwängler’s mother was the daughter of the famous German philologist, Gustav Wendt, who himself was a very close friend of Johannes Brahms. Brahms came to know Professor Wendt (Wilhelm’s grandfather), through a mutual friend and musician, Julius Grimm, by his involvement in a network of intellectuals based in Karlsruhe, in northern Germany. Fascinated by Wendt’s depth of insight into philology and language, they became close collaborators. Gustav Wendt published a German translation of Sophocles’ tragedies, which he dedicated to his good friend Brahms.

Wilhelm’s father, Adolf Furtwängler, was the top Classical archaeologist of his generation, whose specialty was, literally, Grecian urns. He worked with the famous German archeologist Heinrich Schliemann during excavations of the site of Mount Olympus, in which they uncovered the temple of Zeus. In Munich, he served as head of the famous museum of Greek and Roman sculpture, the Glyptothek. When he died in 1907, Adolf Furtwängler was buried in Athens.

Wilhelm took several trips to Italy and Greece with his father, coming face to face with the real-life tragedies imprinted on the ruins of once-great ancient civilizations. Constantly reading the dramatic tragedies of Shakespeare, in the original English (*King Lear* being his favorite), and Goethe’s *Faust*, he became somewhat of an “ugly duckling” in the eyes of his teachers and fellow students in primary school. In addition to his Shakespeare, he always carried with him a pocket score of Ludwig van Beethoven’s string quartets.

Credit for focusing young Furtwängler’s interest on Beethoven’s quartets can be given to Josef Rheinberger, himself a very skilled composer (who has, very unfortunately, today been largely

forgotten), who became Furtwängler's counterpoint teacher when Furtwängler turned fourteen. *Rheinberger had also been the composition teacher of the physicist Max Planck!* himself a well-trained organist and pianist, when Planck was twenty years old. Rheinberger, an organist and choral director, but also very prolific composer and famous counterpoint teacher, was also a close friend of Brahms, to whom he dedicated several pieces, including one of his masses. Alongside Brahms, he was fiercely committed to maintaining the Classical tradition in composition, breaking explicitly from Wagner in public opposition to Wagner's "music of the future" of his "new German school" of anti-Classical musical composition. Rheinberger wrote twelve masses (the first when he was eight years old), and a well known collection of organ sonatas, among many others pieces, two hundred in total, including operas, cantatas, and symphonies.

Rheinberger's lessons in counterpoint for the young Furtwängler consisted of an intensive study of Beethoven's late quartets, which Furtwängler came to know so well, he could play them, all four voices perfectly, from memory at the piano. During one of their trips to Greece, his father writes that his young son Wilhelm "*has Beethoven's quartets along and reads in them. The style of the later quartets, especially the fugue, hovers before him as the ideal.*"

Furtwängler's father observes: "*He is developing himself out from Romanticism and surveys it as something behind himself...Beethoven steps into the lead for him. Now he really studies Beethoven, will soon know the symphonies and also the later sonatas almost entirely by heart.— Recognition of the value of the fixed form. Music is for him now in no way the expression of sentiments, which he totally rejects, but the working out of musical ideas in fixed forms... The modern trend, that he now has occasion enough to learn to know is the exact opposite of his own tendency, and he distains it - the theory, that music is supposed to express definite things, is for him stupid talk of such as do not know music at all. - All this with him absolutely independent development, influenced by no one. As he, above all, goes his own inner way, remarkably unfluencable, propelled by innermost necessity.*"

Even before receiving any formal lessons in composition and counterpoint, he began writing short musical compositions when he was seven, and more developed pieces in his early teens, writing fugues and fantasies for the piano, violin sonatas, piano trios, and string quartets.

Looking at these early compositions, which are, to me, the most indicative of the core of his mental character (however the external expressions of this may have changed in his later compositions), we make the happy discovery that, in fact, Furtwängler the young composer, not only saw Beethoven as his ideal, but, also, placed himself within the musical tradition of J.S. Bach's *Musical Offering*, whose theme first Mozart and then Schubert, Beethoven, and Brahms all respectively used as the musical seed of their own profound compositions in honor of the legacy of Bach. As a testimony to his dedication to this Classical tradition, the young Furtwängler at the age of fourteen, while a student of Rheinberger, consciously thought of himself as descended from this noble lineage of composers: compare Furtwängler's theme for his own *Fantasia for Piano in C-minor*, with Bach's *Musical Offering* and Mozart's K. 475.

For Furtwängler, Bach was “the greatest of all composers, the Homer of music, whose light still shines out across our musical firmament and whom, in a very special sense, we have never surpassed.”

### **From Leibniz to Köhler, through Music**

Furtwängler was a product, mentally and spiritually, of the Classical tradition in music and art, originating in Johann Sebastian Bach, and defended militantly by Johannes Brahms. It was the role of standard-bearer which Furtwängler inherited when Brahms died, and his collaborator, Furtwängler’s teacher Rheinberger, also died a few years later – a role which Furtwängler was fully conscious of.

Almost exactly contemporaneous with Furtwängler, we have found the personality of Wolfgang Köhler, the founder of the Gestalt psychology school, to be, similarly, an artifact of a Leibnizian tradition in science and philosophy, acting as another Last of the Mohicans-type in his time, engaged in a rigorous defense of his self-professed *dynamic* notion of both the human mind and the physical world, against the armies of mechanists among the science of the early 1900’s. We hear Leibniz speaking through Köhler, in the same way that we hear Furtwängler defending his “Leibnizian” sense of the composition and performance of music (even if he might not have known it in those exact terms) in fierce opposition to any dead and mechanistic approach to musical performance.

Consider, in light of what you have read from both Leibniz and Furtwängler so far, the following passage from Wolfgang Köhler’s introduction to his book “Physical Gestalts”:

“...We call ‘gestalts’ those psychical states and processes, whose characteristic properties and activities are not capable of being composed from similar properties and activities of their so-called parts. Thus we have spatial gestalts, associated with all more elementary visual forms; likewise tonal melody; and intellectual unities [Verbände] which, with respect to their characteristic properties, far exceed their material. Since, if it assumed that the localized sensations of color, the individual tonal sensations, and the meaning of individual words, are to be considered as ‘parts’ of spatial gestalts, melodies, and thoughts, then the specific impression of a seen figure, the intrinsic character of a given musical motif, and the sense of an intelligible sentence, surely contain more than the sum of the respective points of color, sensations of tone, and meanings of words. The same spatial gestalt can be produced with other colors and in other regions of the visual field, the same musical motif can be produced in other tunings; thus, such ‘ultimate elements’ do not constitute the intrinsic nature of the whole.”

Of course Köhler uses as an example of the Gestalt, the musical melody. What our study of the insights of Furtwängler into these concepts of the Gestalt will allow us, to do, I believe, is to expand the concept of just the formal unity of structure which Köhler elaborates quite thoroughly in psychology and perception, into a concept more inclusive of the living form of human creativity *in action*, beyond the basic psychological and perceptual analytical form developed by Köhler and his school.

Briefly, it is interesting to note that a common metaphor that we hear Furtwängler use often, we also hear similarly in Köhler, and in another contemporary of them both, Russian Academician Vladimir I. Vernadsky: the metaphor of a living biological organism. The musician, the psychologist, and

the biogeochemist all converge on the metaphor of the biological organism to express the mental image of a dynamically self-organized whole, embraced by one “living” unifying characteristic. Nothing, for Furtwängler nor for the others, in the common lexicon describing abiotic or non-living states was adequate to describe the “organic” nature of the type of creative behavior associated with musical performance and composition.

"It is time that biological thought, which, in economics and medicine, takes the harmony of organic occurrence as its point of origin, finally spread to art as well." – W.F. 1943

“The organic is the element that is unknown today, however much (or precisely because so much) is said about it. Color, nuance, detail are the characteristics of a sensitive century, but it takes *organism* to make art natural, and in doing so it brings it to itself.” – W.F. 1939

“What is ‘organic’? Two things are included in this word. Something living in itself, discreet, a living individual essence a world, a cosmos, an atmosphere...and at the same time something embedded in the flux of organic occurrence, which consequently contains access to the *infinite* within its *finitude*...The one is as important as the other, in fact the two belong profoundly together.” – W.F. 1945

“A symphony by Haydn will always be alive, for it is an organism, and we are organisms! It is the blood of our blood, flesh of our flesh. Machine-music is a theory, politics, in my opinion, and nothing more.” W.F.

### **A Side Note On Schenker**

It is important that Furtwängler polemicizes against “machine-music” at the end of the fragment just quoted, because it serves to help us separate Furtwängler’s truly creative art from the merely formal theorist to whom too much credit for Furtwängler’s genius is given, Heinrich Schenker. In order to avoid confronting some of the more difficult challenges posed to our world-view and our understanding of the human mind by the creative genius of Furtwängler, modern biographers are too quick to “explain” Furtwängler’s mysterious power by holding up the theory textbooks of Schenker.

As a music theorist, Schenker, in the very least, must be seen as of the type of the “non-Euclidean”: a bit of an eccentric who, although he was ready to question the formal analytical systems of the past, too quickly developed yet another theoretical system of analysis. Schenker’s analysis may be a clever elaboration of the grammatical structure of the tonal material in music, but must not be mistaken as a substitute for creative insight into the living human aspect of musical ideas.

As an example maybe of the sort of “false scent” which even well-intentioned biographers tend to follow, Sam Shirakawa, author of a fairly comprehensive biography intended mainly to defend Furtwängler’s character against slander, asserted that Schenker’s influence on Furtwängler “frequently has been overlooked and usually underestimated”. Shirakawa includes a metaphorical description of Furtwängler’s objectives in rehearsing a piece of music, which is insightful as far as it goes: “the sense of a work’s entire canvass in every played note, the grasp of the work’s totality, the mastery in achieving seamless chains of transitions culminating in an organic unity”; but then credits this concept to

Schenker, whose method of musical analysis he describes: “to see it [the musical piece] as a totality, a form – a Gestalt – rather than as the sum of many parts.”

I have not found, in my limited research thus far into Schenker himself, any explicit mention of Köhler and his concept of the Gestalt, as Shirikawa puts those words into his mouth (although this aspect merits more research into the influence of Köhler and the reach of the Gestalt psychology school<sup>3</sup>). Although Furtwängler did maintain a fairly regular correspondence with Schenker during the decade of the 1920's and into the 30's, we must think about what it was about Schenker that attracted Furtwängler to him? Or, maybe, what was absent in the rest of the musical world which drove Furtwängler into Schenker's arms? Do not assume that Furtwängler ever gave his whole-scale endorsement of all of Schenker's ideas. In an essay he wrote about the theorist after his death, he made the point that although his encounter with Schenker's study of Beethoven's 9<sup>th</sup> Symphony excited interest in him, “I did not subscribe to all the details”, and “the polemical positions of the author for me in many cases went too far”. Furtwängler makes the point that it was the questions which Schenker raised which were so unusual, compared to the average range of discussion in the rest of the musical literature, that originally attracted him. But, Furtwängler does acknowledge that Schenker “let his desire for absolutes carry him away.”

Among Schenker's private papers (in addition to a curious postcard which he received from reductionist physicist Ernst Mach), are found clues as to Schenker's attitude towards Furtwängler as being someone whom Schenker thought he could use to advance his own cause and help him jockey for teaching positions and financing, rather than as a unique genius to be respected and revered. From a diary entry in 1925, towards the beginning of Schenker's relationship with Furtwängler, he writes rudely, “Furtwängler turns out to be ignorant, and to an unimagined degree! ...in short, Furtwängler speaks as a dilettante, and ... I had trouble holding a conversation with him at all on artistic matters. How desolating to have to say that he is and will be the premier conductor of our time!”

Currently, I consider this relationship between Furtwängler, the truly creative artist, and Schenker, the somewhat self-aggrandizing music theorist, as somewhat paradoxical, but possibly typical of the times, in which Furtwängler, in the midst of what had become otherwise a relative intellectual and culture wasteland, is attracted to someone who is representing himself as standing against the incoming tide of irrationalism, supposedly situated somewhere between the “hermeneutic” school and the formalists, the two extremes in music theory of that time.

However, Furtwängler clearly polemicizes against the musical theorist's practice of dead formal analysis in his private diary:

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<sup>3</sup> The type of language which we see Furtwängler use, both in his descriptions of musical Gestalt, and in his use of biological metaphors, provoked me to attempt to trace out, preliminarily, any more details of possible direct connections between Furtwängler and the Gestalt psychology school. In the research which I have done so far, I've found one more thread: Victor Zuckerkandl, himself a protégé in some form of Schenker, but whose work also overlaps Kohler, writing a series of books on the concept of the Gestalt in music, in which he takes up questions of musical space-time. Pending more research, we will grant Zuckerkandl the benefit of the doubt that he was genuinely working to elaborate Köhler's idea of the musical Gestalt.

“There is a difference between treating a masterpiece as a living plant resplendent in its natural colors, allowing it to grow and unfold in front of the audience or in its dried condition, in alcohol, etc. The thing to be avoided is not dissection, but dissection without a consistent awareness of the living and natural context. The experience of this context is the true artistic experience. It is and must be always unique and new, and has as little to do with the score as...”<sup>4</sup> WF 1927

I can say that Furtwängler, in his life-long quest for the words with which to express his unique understanding of the creative musical mind, found in Schenker’s questions, if not in his answers, the language which he, Furtwängler, could use for his own purposes.<sup>5</sup> Schenker’s words and his concepts of totality of structure and form were, from Schenker’s pen, merely dead *a posteriori* analytical descriptions, but, in the mouth of Furtwängler, the truly creative artist, they became living expressions of principle, which Furtwängler knew from *within* his own mind.

Studying the form of a work may be marginally useful, but it must never be considered a substitute for the internal re-experiencing of the internal *life* of the piece, something which is not found in any of the parts, not even in the most perfect description of the internal relationships of all the parts one with another. The missing factor in even the most clever music theorist, is the element of *musical insight*; the spirit of the piece is not found within the object of the piece at all – it is only found within the living soul of the musician himself, the “mental image”, formed in one’s own mind, of that inaudible “sound of the totality” which lurks *behind* the notes on the page.

From this we see, it falls to us something nobler, in our studies – to look beyond the concept of a mere formal Gestalt, if we wish to gain insight into the living human mind, the mind of a passionate, creative artist, or scientist, one not only interested in creating model representations of cold phenomena, but one seeking to uplift the souls of his fellow man to the highest ideal of the beautiful and the divine.

### **The ‘Living Emotion’ of the Gestalt**

“The reproductive artist must first of all understand and perform the individual phrase as a whole; then the melody to which the phrase belongs, then the piece of which the melody is a part. If the demands of the individual part are in tune with the whole, and the whole with the

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<sup>4</sup> The sentence trails off. After this fragment, he picks back up with his thought, saying “It is not the detail that places obstacles in the way of understanding, but only the point where the detail is supposed to be integrated within the whole”.

<sup>5</sup> And it’s important to consider that in the mouths of different people, the same words may mean very different things. Relevant to Furtwängler’s polemic against anti-human “machine-music”, consider one of Schenker’s stranger disciples, Milton Babbitt: Babbitt said of Schenker, “Schenker has contributed... a body of analytic procedures which reflect the perception of a work as a dynamic totality, not as a succession of moments or a juxtaposition of ‘formal’ areas related or contrasted merely by the fact of harmonic similarity or dissimilarity.” Sound exciting to the aspiring young Leibnizian? Milton Babbitt turns out to be the guru of twelve tone “composition” and “electronic music”, developing the machine music of the programmable electronic synthesizer. Babbitt wrote a piece scored for saxophone and magnetic tape, which contained the notation “Bathe in the blood of E-minor”! Beware of falling into a naïve acceptance of everything that sounds “profound” or “correct”; even Satan’s priests can sound theologically sophisticated at times!

individual part, then everything is in the balance. The prerequisite is that both, the individual part and the whole, should have passed through *living emotion*. There are some who can feel the individual phrase. Only a few who can feel the line of a longer melody; hardly anyone who can feel a true whole in its entirety, as the great masterpieces reveal. But today there is an overly practical and hence generally accepted way of coming to grips with nothing at all, but of simply reproducing everything in a 'reporting' style, without having passed through one's own emotions. This is not performance so much as reporting, not so much a work of art as mechanical photography." – WF 1939

Furtwängler constantly attacks false 'intellectualism' throughout his entire life, meaning the sort of emotionally detached and creatively impotent attempts to categorize and explain art and music while avoiding at all costs the internal and extremely personal *experience* of the poetic idea. The most technically skilled musician, or the most clever of scientists, who lacks the capacity for passion, will never experience the type of insight which we find in Furtwängler.

"Love – that love that is forever being seized and shaken by the work – can never ever be replaced, love alone creates the preconditions for the visionary and correct understanding of the whole in the work of art, for this whole – even if it is a great work whose effect is long-lasting – is nothing but love. *Each individual part can be more or less understood intellectually, but the whole can only ever be grasped by the living feeling of love.* It is the only thing which is appropriate and fitting to the whole work of art as an image of the active and living world. Everything else, however skillful it may be, is limited, and therefore profoundly boring to me." – WF 1936

We find stories of Furtwängler as a conductor who, upon completion of a great concert, would take a quick bow and be quick to slip out the back door, disappearing into the dark to walk, by himself, home, seeking quiet to think about the pieces just performed. This, rather than bathing in congratulations and talk. Furtwängler carried himself emotionally as an artist in the same way which he admired in Johannes Brahms, whom he described:

"He [Brahms] was loathe to talk about his works at any time. Like all true artists, he was fully aware of the distinction between the real creative act that manifests itself in the work of art itself and the sophisticated theorizing about it which was just beginning to become fashionable in his day, and which has since become such an intolerable feature of our oh-so-knowledgeable age. Particularly in the last years of his life, he lived with the future, with eternity, in mind." - WF

Brahms' last composition for the voice, the *Four Serious Songs*, written after his closest friend Clara Schumann died, and performed by Brahms himself shortly before his own death, ends with Saint Paul's First Corinthians, verse 13, "*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and though I understand all mysteries, and all knowledge – if I have not Love, I am nothing...*" The last words of the piece are:

*"Meanwhile, these three: Faith, Hope and Love abide with us, but the greatest of these is Love."*

These same words were chosen by Wilhelm Furtwängler to be etched on his grave stone when he died.

## Being and Becoming

As Furtwängler said of Brahms, “he lived with the future, with eternity, in mind.” This sense of a temporal life lived always with the mental image of the totality of all-time hovering before one’s eyes is the quality of soul one hears behind the notes of Furtwängler’s performance. And, under the baton of such a personality, the music itself takes on the same paradoxical quality of being: a constant reciprocal relationship between each moment in time with the totality of all-time.

Embedded in our discussion of the *parts* and the *whole* when it comes to musical composition and performance, is this very paradox of time: the dynamic interaction between the temporally situated part and the ultimately completed totality. It is this yet-to-be-completed totality which must exist within the mind’s ear of the conductor, as if listening to the future, as he negotiates the unfolding of each of the parts in the present. And, he must hear how the performance of the detail in the present, itself acts reciprocally to change the ultimate possibility of the form of the whole-upon-completion. Furtwängler expresses this dynamic quality of musical space-time as the constantly changing interrelationship of the “*Nah-hören*” (the near-sighted sound of the immediate present) and the “*Fernhören*” (the far-sighted sound of the completed whole).<sup>6</sup> The mutual effect of one on the other at all times, Furtwängler describes thus:

“...the fulfillment of the moment within a larger process. Each individual thing has its own function and this within the development of the whole. The two meet and intersect at each moment.”

This dynamic relationship between the future and the present, with each one shaping and bounding the possibility of the other in the context of the performance of musical composition, a Gestalt extended over time, seems to me to be a unique insight into the nature of the “musical gestalt” of which we can gain unique understanding through study (and attempted re-creation) of musical performances of the caliber of those conducted under the baton of Wilhelm Furtwängler. He continues the above cited quote, thus:

“... It is not always easy at first to grasp the fact that every detail has its function within the whole, and is not only 'arranged' within this whole, but often has an effect on the whole that goes far beyond its individual importance... This single-mindedness of purpose, this clear and unmistakable cohesion of the whole can only be created through real laws, based in nature.” – 1946 W.F.

Furtwängler borrows the language of Plato’s idea, as expressed in the *Timaeus*, of Being and Becoming, to communicate his idea about the dynamic interaction between the present and the future, between the temporally situated part and the ultimately completed totality. In a short note about Beethoven in his notebooks, Furtwängler says: one must see Beethoven’s musical form as a “Being”, and

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<sup>6</sup> These are terms borrowed from Schenker, but which were given a living meaning from the mouth of Furtwängler, rather than a mere nominal or hypothetical meaning in classroom analysis.

*“in the form of Being, a constant Becoming is at work... To experience Becoming in Being, and to let others experience it – to grasp the fleeting life of the moment in the solid form – that is real re-production.” – W.F. 1943*

Realize that this future-totality, the “Being”, is never static, but is in itself always changing as each step along the process of “Becoming” unfolds (a process of change which I experience even as I compose this paper!). That *Being* guides this process of *Becoming*, but at every point of that *Becoming*, the potential state of that *Being* is constantly reshaped.

### **The “Other Side” of the Score**

The performer lives in the moment of the music, the present measure of the piece, responding to what came before, setting up what is about to happen, but always hearing the moment in relation to the future echo of the whole – the whole-in-completion, echoing from the future into the ear of the present.<sup>7</sup>

This interaction between the “Fernhören”, the sound of the totality, the sound of the ideal in its completion, and the process of temporal performance, from moment to moment, is the nature of the mental experience of the performer. The totality is superior to the detail, but, the performer will also recognize that the mode of execution of any one detail will change the way the totality is heard altogether. So, the detail is intensely important, but always in proportion to the totality as a whole<sup>8</sup>. The being and becoming – they are mutually dynamic.

For the performer, the persisting challenge is, as could be said, to: *Give the whole, parts*. This whole must first be known; never can it be assembled as a sum of its parts. How does one achieve knowledge of this whole?

“One places himself in the situation of the Creator: His beginning point is the Nothing, the so-called Chaos; his end, the completed work (*gestaltete Werk*). The pathway thence, the act of bringing the “Becoming Gestalt”, or “Developing Whole” (*das “Gestaltwerden”*), from the Chaos, consummates itself in the act of *Improvisation*. Improvisation is in truth the principal form of all true musical performance; freely soaring into space, as a unique being, the work develops into existence, in the image of a spiritual event. This “spiritual event”, like a self-fulfilling organic process, cannot be designed, forced, constructed by logical procedures, calculated, computed, or in any way pieced together. It has its own inner logic, which, fused according to psychological laws, is no less natural, no less inexorable than any other “exact” logic. In conformity with the laws of organic life, every “spiritual” event, which a musical work represents, has within itself the drive to “complete” itself; this drive, not some arbitrary convention, is what gave rise to the so-called musical “forms” – which, insofar as they exist, are therefore natural – the Lied, the

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<sup>7</sup> In “Behind the Notes”, LaRouche terms this, “the principle of *memory of the future*”

<sup>8</sup> Furtwangler comments: “Not always, but very often, the tiniest detail can disturb, or even destroy, the whole process...”

sonata, the fugue, etc. A “self-completing (or self-perfecting) improvisation” – thus can we therefore describe a musical composition; completing, or fulfilling, itself in the vaulting out of its inherent musical form, and indeed in each of its moments, from the beginning to the end, *improvisation.*”

He continues: “Such is the work seen from the creator’s point of view. How does it appear to its interpreter, the performer?...He has to work backwards, as it were, not forwards, like the composer...His path is one characterized by the painstaking assembly and arrangement of component parts. And whereas, for the composer, these parts, as in any organic process, merge naturally into his vision of the work as a whole (*Vision eines Ganzen*), which gives them their individual life and meaning, the performer, for his part, has to laboriously reconstruct such a vision for himself out of the separate parts already existing... A different situation arises, however, if one directs his attention to the Becoming (*das Werden*), the evolution (*Sichentfalten*) of motives one from another, and if, before one’s inner eye, the vision of the totality, which directed its original creation, comes more and more into the light; then, and only then, will all the separate parts be seen in their true function within the whole.” – From Furtwängler “*Principles of Interpretation*” 1934

In order to re-create the vision of the composer, the performer must situate himself in the moment preceding the act of creation. Only from thence can the conductor recreate the work in its original form (“das Werk in seiner *ursprünglichen Gestalt* wiederherstellen, wirklich neu schaffen.” – W.F. 1934). Furtwängler always viewed himself as a composer first and a “conductor” second:

“From the point of view of music, the treatment which prevailed in former times, which saw no separation between *productive* and *reproductive* artists, is entirely right. If I have conducted, throughout my whole life, I have done so as a ‘composer’.” W.F. 1954

Put yourself in the shoes of the composer, approach the notes on the score from “the other side”, from the standpoint of the composer himself. What, or who, is behind the notes? Imagine yourself standing in the shoes of the composer at the very moment of composition.

In the words of Leibniz, we are searching for the “dominant unit” of the piece. Where do we look to find this “dominant unit”? If it cannot exist in any of the parts, where does it reside?

Referring back to Leibniz:

“A sufficient reason must exist for contingent truths – or truths of fact – that is, for the series of things, comprehended by creatures. The sufficient or ultimate reason must therefore exist outside the succession or series of contingent particulars, infinite though that series may be. Consequently, the ultimate reason of all things must subsist in a necessary substance in which all particular changes may exist only virtually, as in its source; this substance is what we call God.” - from “*Monadology*”

Contemplate Man’s unique power of willful creativity, a power granted to no other creature. A musical composition is an original creation, born out of the mind of Man, a living creation brought into being by a willful action of its composer – the superior substance in which the ultimate reason for all the

contingent particulars of this composition dwells, is, in this case, the human composer himself. In this case, man steps into the shoes of the Creator, becoming the superior substance of a world of his own creation. We, thus, no longer remain merely the passive audience to the Creator's composition!

The composer, and the performer who enters the composer's shoes, tastes the experience of creation.

### **The Well-Tempered (Solar) System**

It is this very experience, located in the realm of art, of which the astrophysicist Johannes Kepler learns the intended lesson for science:

I weave this one more element in here, a brief further development of the theme we've been examining, which, I hope, will serve to tie the ideas in this paper together as a unity, as a sort of *stretto*. As we experience in Books IV and V of Johannes Kepler's *Harmonice Mundi*, Kepler's method of discovery, through which he constructed a mental image of the organization of the entire Solar System, was to "re-compose" this vast harmonic composition, as if he were its original composer. At the conclusion of the *Harmonies of the World*, Kepler proceeds to close his eyes, step into the Creator's shoes, and re-compose the entire composition of the solar system, as they say, from scratch. Kepler was able to imagine, and recreate, the solar system as a unified well-tempered whole, because he understood the compositional principle of the Creator, rather than trying to construct the solar system, planet-by-planet, from the bottom up.

"The movements of the Heavens are nothing but a certain everlasting polyphony... which marks out and distinguishes the immensity of time with these notes. It is no longer a surprise that Man, the ape of his Creator, should finally have discovered the art to singing polyphonically, which was unknown to the ancients; namely, that he might play the everlastingness of all created time in some short part of an hour by means of an artistic concord of many voices, and that he might, to some extent, taste the satisfaction of God the Workman with *His* own works."  
– J. Kepler

Kepler credits his power to make his discovery to the advanced stage that polyphonic musical composition had recently achieved in his time, and the increased power that that sort of music had given man's mind to be able to taste or imagine the sort of compositions which the Creator must have composed:

"Now there is need, Urania, of a grander sound, while I ascend by the harmonic stair of the celestial motions to higher things, where the true archetype of the fabric of the world is laid up and preserved. *Follow me, modern musicians, and attribute it to your arts, unknown to antiquity:* in these last centuries, Nature, always prodigal of herself, has at last brought forth, after an incubation of twice a thousand years, *you, the first true offprints of the universal whole. By your harmonizing of various voices, and through your ears, she has whispered of herself as she is in her innermost bosom, to the human mind, most beloved daughter of God the Creator.*"

As we today seek to discover a deeper understanding of this human mind, I would that every scientist learn this universal truth, the noble and divine lesson of "Furtwängler's Secret".

## Appendix:

I include a short selection from a full essay by Wilhelm Furtwängler, so that you may now hear him speak, with a happy mind, hopefully more resonant with the questions at hand:

### [Excerpts from Wilhelm Furtwängler – “Contemporary Thoughts of a Musician”]

“The pages that follow reflect the point of view of a musician, a representative of the arts. It is not normally the business of an artist to make general observations in philosophical terms, and I am well aware that to try and compress my thoughts into so limited a space will only make for dissatisfaction in many quarters. Indeed, I would have given a great deal to be spared this effort. The reason I cannot avoid doing so lies with the contemporary situation, which unhappily demands from all artists a degree of awareness and certainty about the nature of art which was not necessary in earlier and happier times. Given the incredible ideological confusion that prevails today, an awareness of the situation can offer the artist a measure of reassurance and help him preserve his integrity in the face of an over-intellectualized environment.

“Let us consider the activity of artistic creation... As the composer regards the elements of his raw material in his hand, he sees an endless series of possibilities in his struggle to unite the various stresses and tensions in that material, with its underlying laws of rhythm, harmony and so on, and produce his final integrated product.

“When we look more closely at this process, we find we can distinguish two levels. On the first, each individual element combines with those adjacent to it to form larger elements, these larger elements then combining with others and so on, a logical outwards growth from the part to the whole. On the other level, the situation is the reverse: the given unity of the whole controls the behavior of the individual elements within it, down to the smallest detail. The essential thing to observe is that in any genuine work of art these two levels complement each other, so that the one only becomes effective when put together with the other. Not until today, when the essential unity of the two levels has dissolved, have we been in a position to perceive the distinction between them.

“These two levels, or aspects, of the creative process only make up what we might call the skeleton of the work of art. But philosophical investigation of the matter will take us no further. The next step would be to adduce the analogy of the personality of the creative artist. For, to correspond to the two kinds of creative process, there are two kinds of subjective personality. Corresponding to the power that works inwards, from the whole to the parts, a power which proceeds from a more or less complete vision of the whole, is an emotion that springs from the artist’s relationship to the world at its

most profound and most meaningful – an emotion one may call love, humility, reverence, worship, awe, and many other things.

“The other kind of creative process, however, although broadly directed by an overall view from above, is characterized by the gradual revelation of the whole in the course of its progress – a logical outwards growth from the part to the whole, as I put it above – corresponding to a passion to understand and control the world in its physical manifestations. It is this passion that inspires the artist at the inception of his work and drives him onward from one moment to the next, starting with the smallest element and working upwards, each element larger than the last. But such an artist is yet guided by a vision of the whole which resides in the recesses of his unconscious mind. For the two are inseparable – a passionate desire to understand the world in its every living detail, and a love of that same world, which comes to us as the eternal ‘gist’ of God. If only modern man would grasp that it is impossible to understand and shape the world as it confronts us without loving it! And that it is equally impossible to love it without seeking, in the context of this love, to understand it!

“The artistic process that has as its starting point the unity of the whole, rests on the concept of a more-or-less complete vision of that whole. For the artist at work – work being, in this context, not a state, a condition, but a dynamic activity of struggle and victory – this vision is the goal he seeks to attain; the star that, unbeknown to him, guides his steps through the maze of obstacles and temptations that beset his path and shows him how to unite the forces at his command. Only at the end of the journey, therefore, will the vision emerge in its totality, not only for the listener, the receiver of the work of art, but also – and this is a vital point – for the composer, the creative artist himself. The total vision only achieves its full radiance when it merges with all the individual sources of light from within the work, the *over-all* and the *particular* interacting and stimulating each other. It is not that the vision is present, ready-made, from the beginning and is only waiting to be filled with artistic substance. On the contrary: the joy that the artist feels comes not from possessing the vision but from the activity of turning it into reality. (The question of the nature of the vision before it receives aesthetic form, and, in particular, of the way in which the forces that issue from the vision combine with those which are present in the artistic material, is a subject in itself.)

“...The situation becomes different if we consider these individual elements not in terms of their kinship to each other, the ways in which they come together to form groups in the hands of this artist or that, but as independent products of the artist’s material. They are, of necessity, irreducible units, i.e. they cannot but remain isolated elements vis-à-vis the whole, because they embody a direct and absolute relationship to the material and can therefore not be separated from the personality of the individual artist....

“Since these units of expression are only parts of a whole, they can in practice only be employed in the context of a whole; and however much their selection and character depend on the content of the whole, on them in turn depends the character of that whole. Since this material is subject to its own internally-generated development, without reference to the whole, but at the same time there exists the closest of interrelationships between it and this whole, the forces that govern the whole must coincide with the state of development reached by the material, if both are to achieve their expressive purpose.

“...Later, especially with Beethoven, the situation changed, and the elements, now individually absorbed and mastered, and accepted into the aesthetic consciousness of the age, combine to form ever larger units. As the logical sequence of the parts grew, so did the cohesiveness of the whole. The parts increasingly lost their independence, to the point where they were incomprehensible without reference to the whole; no part made sense without reference to that which preceded it and that which followed. Examples of this can be found in Beethoven’s late works, with their increasing acceptance of the consequences resulting from this development process.

“Up to the time of Beethoven, musical development had taken place with the tacit assumption that the work of art emerged like an organism. Those forces in the material which corresponded to this conception were called upon and exploited. But now these forces too became subjects of the process of conscious development. Whereas Beethoven, following both his basic attitude to his material and the nature of his genius, sought to bring out the whole with ever greater clarity and power, his contemporaries, such as Weber, but even more his successors in the Romantic movement, turned away from this approach. The concept of the work of art as an organic whole crumbled in their hands. The Romantics remained faithful to it only in small forms, and it was not long before the grand ideals of the past were forgotten altogether...

“A similar situation obtains where the elements of musical language itself are concerned. We have reached a point where composers no longer dare to use simple, direct harmony for fear of repeating what has already

been said. We are facing an impasse. One sign of this is the increasingly desperate search for absolute novelty, anything that is totally independent of the meanings derived from the old material. The theory of the quarter-tone system is a case in point.

“Since the concept of overall form as the expression of the artist’s vision has been affected by the irresistible onward march of developments in the musical material itself, today that concept has lost its central, dominant position. No longer does it appear to be able to assert itself over the material. *No longer is it the whole that controls the behavior of the parts.* No longer does the vision go hand in hand with the forces contained in the material; rather, it is the latter which has come to dominate the vision, determining the form of the whole and thus the vision itself. The whole has been consumed by the parts, with the result that, not only is there no longer a whole, but there are also no longer any parts, because these can only exist so long as there is a whole to which they can refer! Everything exhausts itself in the individual moment, no heed being paid either to what has gone before or to what follows. The consequence is a concentration on the effect of the moment, effect for its own sake, in harmony, in rhythm, in orchestration, and through numerous little titillating details.

“All this may appear to justify the notion of progress. But, it would be wrong to see the history of the arts only in terms of the development of their material and of the overall form linked to it. For this overall form itself is the expression of the artist’s vision, and although the vision can only become reality through its interaction with the material – indeed, may well owe its existence in part to the stimulus of the material – it cannot possibly be derived from the material. The vision is the more direct, most immediate expression of the artist’s relationship to the world. As such it lives its own life in the artist’s mind, without thought of realization in formal terms, although, as we have seen, it only achieves its realization through the act of formal creation. It is not that the material seeks the appropriate vision on its own account, but that the vision seeks the material for its complete expression. And since, as the expression of the artist’s view of the world, the vision is something final, something ultimate, it is not capable of development in the manner of the material. The visions of two different artists are entirely separate from one another. One artist may influence another, and certain resemblances may become evident, but such resemblances can only be superficial, for every vision is by nature new, peculiar to the artist whose view of the world it embodies...

“Although there is no need for historical learning or any other intermediate agent for us to understand these facts, the majority of artists today refuse to face them. To the extent that they are guided by the feeling that the present state of their material, quite independent of the creative urges of the individual artist, requires a

different kind of art from that of earlier ages, they are right to do so.

“But they go much further than this. They deny categorically that the material is dependent on, and conditioned by, the vision, or that the parts are dependent on the whole. In fact, they deny that there is a whole. This leaves them with only the parts, i.e. the material in its present state of development, which, as we have seen, is subject to the law of progress and will eventually become exhausted. It is a process of complete materialization, the debasement of all artistic elements present in the material, both cause and effect of the idea of progress. The significant features of a work of art, including the great works of the past, are now identified as lying only in the techniques employed – the harmony, the formal structure and so on – techniques, of course, corresponding to those which modern composers themselves admire and use. They cannot grasp what history would teach them – that *every complex of material forces is in the last analysis only a means towards the realization of a vision, the creation of a living world, which is the sole purpose of all artistic activity*. But when will we learn how to learn without imitating!

“From the foregoing we can see that philosophical speculation has played a far larger part in the evolution of music in recent times than ever before. It is the source of the concept of progress we hear so much about today. And it is to a large extent people who have never experienced what it is to create a work of art, and where one derives the strength to do so, who decide how art is to ‘develop’. They are prone to assess a work by its novelty – the novelty of its skills and techniques, that is to say. Even genuine composers cannot always escape from the influence of these people. The obsession with progress, with being original at all costs, hangs like the sword of Damocles over the heads of many modern composers, depriving them of the peace of mind they need in order to hear their own inner voice, and turning art from a free and joyful activity into soulless, pretentious drudgery.

“For music, until recent times the most vital and vibrant of all the arts. To become caught up in this maelstrom of mechanical progress, a special constellation of circumstance was required. These circumstances are primarily the result of one man – Wagner...

“When musicians began to regard Wagner’s music as absolute music, as music *tout court*, it was inevitable that a revolution in their attitudes would follow. What had formerly been rejected now began to be seen as a new form of freedom, a release from the laws of thematic and harmonic composition, from the strict observance of the rules of organically developed form and from other constraints that had been felt to be so burdensome. To be sure, this led to the creation of a mass

of new material elements in the post-Wagnerian period – opportunities for freer, more flexible forms, with more bold experiments in the last few years than in all the previous centuries of musical history put together. But very few of these ‘experiments’ proved to have any lasting or positive effect.

“The most important aspect of the situation was that people’s understanding of the meaning of music now took a new turn. *They no longer felt the necessity for an organic musical whole*, and the destruction of this concept opened the way to the developments that we see in modern times, when music has been handed over, bound and gagged, to the forces of so-called progress.

“Finally, a few observations on the subject of performance. Our only hope of salvation, a return to the inspiration that comes from the living masterpieces of music, is all too often stultified by bad performances... We are the same people as performers that we are as creators; we both produce and reproduce; the currents, trends, and dangers characteristic of the music of our own time reveal themselves in the way we regard the music of other ages. The inability to feel the fundamental emotional content of a work through its entire course, from beginning to end, is at its most glaringly obvious in those works of whose living example we stand in greatest need today. It is those works that receive the worst performances because they are the very ones that make the greatest spiritual demands on the performer.

“Proof of this can be found everywhere, most frequently in performances of the Classics – Bach, and especially Beethoven. There are two broad approaches. One is the ‘historical’ approach – that is to say, these works are seen as belonging to an historical period which is over and done with and has no direct relevance to the present age. After hearing a work performed in accordance with such a view, we find ourselves left with not the slightest doubt that it has indeed no relevance to the present age...

“The other is to thrust one’s own personality to the fore and seek, as a modern man, to turn the Classics into modern works. Here, by means of all kinds of *espressivo* techniques, and in a characteristically modern urge to pack as much emotion into each individual moment as possible, one can see even more starkly how ill-equipped we are for our task.

“In both cases the reason is the same – the inability to identify the emotional sources in this great music, that power of emotion and expression that flows through and permeates every part of the living organisms that are these works. One can imagine how great would be the new significance which both the work as a whole, and its constituent parts, the one aspect linked to the other, would gain, if our situation were properly understood.

