6. Crisis of Expression

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In Stanley Cavell's "Philosophy of the Unheard," a short lecture on Schoenberg given at a Harvard conference in 1999, two remarks in particular stand out.[1] First, there is his suggestion that there is a relation between the Schoenbergian "row" and the Wittgensteinian "rule." Second, there is the comment he makes, on the strength of his reading of Schoenberg's *Letters*,[2] about the extent to which Schoenberg was preoccupied with being understood. They stand out because they constitute Cavell's most explicit and direct attempt to comment on Schoenberg's work. For the rest, there is much of interest, but the relation to Schoenberg in much of the lecture is indirect or oblique, a factor also significant for the present discussion. The two remarks provide a welcome initial orientation for what I want to say in the present paper.

Cavell lays the way for these two observations through recollections and acknowledgements of a more confessional kind, relating, first, to the "formative and intellectual or spiritual crisis"[3] that led to his discovery that music was no longer to be his life's work and, second, to his realization that what he demanded of philosophy was an understanding of what he had found in music, involving a reclamation of experience to be accounted for in philosophy as lucidly as in the music he loved. He attributes to these aspects of his life the "happy invitation" to him to speak on this occasion. This autobiographical statement is extended in the ensuing recollection of the importance of two friends with whom he shared musical analysis classes, Seymour Shifrin and David Lewin. Their conversations were "scenes of instruction — sublime instances of tracking the work that art does."[4] In fact, it was Lewin, the celebrated music critic, theorist, and composer, in whose honor the present conference had been convened.

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[1] Cavell, "Philosophy and the Unheard," in *Here and There: Sites of Philosophy*, ed. Nancy Bauer, Alice Crary, and Sandra Laugier (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2022), 260-68.

[2] Arnold Schoenberg, *Letters*, ed. Erwin Stern, trans. Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser (London: Faber and Faber, 1964).

[3] Cavell, "Philosophy and the Unheard," 260.

[4] Ibid., 261.

1. Of the Row and the Rule

Let me address directly the question of the relation between the Schoenbergian "row" and the Wittgensteinian "rule." Any comparison depends upon how each of these is to be conceived, and neither is straightforward. Suppose we take as an initial assumption the idea that what Wittgenstein intends in his various examples of a child coming into a language game is that the child's behavior be understood as becoming patterned by the rules established in the society: the child is guided and corrected by adults in a process that grooves the child into the expected standards of behavior in a process of *Abrichtung* — that is, something like the breaking-in and training of an animal. On this view, those rules are more or less stable or fixed, as is the behavior they instill, and they carry the authority of the society's approval. We might think of this as a conservative reading of Wittgenstein, and it is surely one that was widely held in the early, especially Anglophone reception of Wittgenstein's work.

Let us accept also, for the moment, that Schoenberg's dodecaphonic breakthrough and serialism impose a set of rules that the new music must follow. The aim is to achieve a complete break with the dominance of the tonic triad, which for four centuries (and now five) has imposed a conception of harmony (and consonance) according to which some combinations of notes — whether in chords or intervals in a melodic line — are dissonant. The inheritance of such a notion of harmony, in Western music especially, has generated expectations in music that have become naturalized, and this has led to claims by some that these expected combinations are indeed features of the natural world itself and hence of universal significance. They generate, most notably, a sense of musical resolution: a dissonance resolves into a consonance; a cadence at the end of a piece lands safely in the tonic triad; and these things produce a satisfaction that seems natural. Yet the development of Western music in the centuries in question reveals a gradual and partial move away from the dominance of the tonic triad, key markers of which would be the dissonances introduced in Beethoven's late quartets, the "chromatic" proliferation of half-tones in Liszt and Debussy, and the unsteadying of the sense of what the tonic key *is* — in, for example, Richard Strauss. Each of these — in its time, at least — encountered resistance from audiences, who found it hard to make sense of what they were hearing; but each also becomes a breakthrough in terms of what music can be.

Schoenberg's innovations constitute a further and more radical attempt to *emancipate* dissonance, and he does this by imposing a rule that prevents any tonic key from surreptitiously gaining dominance. The music thus created is often described as "*atonal*," though this is a misnomer to the extent that the music remains committed to the accepted twelve semitones that are seen (and repeated in different registers) on the piano keyboard. The release is from the dominance of the tonic triad, and this achieves, as it were, a new equality between the twelve tones; hence, there is no key signature, either literally in its inscription or figuratively in the music's *feel* or mood. The rule is that all twelve notes must be sounded before any one is repeated. A patterning is then achieved by repeating the initial sequence, reversing it, inverting it, or reversing the inversion. One can easily imagine a computer being programmed to produce music in this way.[5]

Now this stark system of rules does seem to have a rigidity about it and to constitute a radical break with the past. In the latter respect, it seems to contrast with the familiar conservative reading of Wittgenstein's later work: Wittgenstein does not institute a new set of rules but brings words back to the ordinary use that is their home. In the former respect, by contrast, as a system of more or less fixed rules, it does resonate in some degree with the conservative reading — that is, the grooving of the child into expected patterns of behavior: there is a convergence perhaps in that both seem to require — respectively, from the composer and from the child — submission to rules that are not to be compromised.

Yet something seems to be going badly wrong here — wrong especially because this conformist Wittgenstein is hardly what we find in Cavell, and wrong also because this is a caricature of Schoenberg's innovations. I shall elaborate on each of these points, but first I want to consider why the manner of this comparison should even be entertained. The phrasing of Cavell's suggestion, fairly late in the paper, that "the Schoenbergian idea of the row with its unforeseen yet pervasive consequences is a serviceable image of the Wittgensteinian idea of grammar and its elaboration of criteria of judgment"[6] seems to work towards a potentially persuasive conception of the contiguity of these two lines of thought. Here Cavell speaks of "grammar." But at the point where the parallel is introduced, the comparison seems to turn more specifically on "following a rule."[7] He writes:

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[5] A computer can be programmed to produce music firmly embedded in a tonic key, but then the basis for the music seems to be prevailing sensibilities, not the rational system.

> The strangeness of Wittgenstein's power, if that is what it is, is tied to the abruptness of his difference from the expected sound of philosophy, say of its pitch sequences (within which, of some fascination for the Schoenbergian ambience of this weekend, the idea of a series, as in the instance of following a rule, plays a notorious role), manifested in the apparent poverty of Wittgenstein's means.[8]

The phrasing here is characteristically subtle, if potentially ambiguous, and it deserves some exegesis. The novel and guiding thought is that the *Investigations* might be characterized in terms of "pitch sequences," sequences that (far from being governed by the familiar principles of the well-honed argument): establish nodes of connection that are striking in their originality; overlap in various ways; find continuities that sometimes seem natural, sometimes surprising, and sometimes go back to retrace ground; and reiterate a motif or echo an earlier passage, approaching a topic from a different angle. It successfully recalls thoughts in Wittgenstein's *Preface* to his book, in which the work is said to bring together, in the 693 uneven numbered paragraphs of its main text, the "precipitate of investigations into meaning, consciousness, understanding" and much more. It comprises, Wittgenstein writes, sketches of landscapes that are the products of the "natural inclination" of thought.[9] It is a collection of remarks, "really just an album,"[10] the casualness of which expression shows that this is not a systematic collection, arranged hierarchically by genus and species: rather, that thought is allowed to flow, from one topic to another, by way of overlaps and contiguities. This is closer to the way we normally think. Its examples are not instances of common types but samples that constitute different cases, where thought is guided by analogy.[11]

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[6] Cavell, "Philosophy and the Unheard," 267.

[7] Ibid., 261.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, P.M.S. Hacker and Joachim Schulte, rev. 4th ed. (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 3.

[10] Ibid., 4.

The parenthesis in Cavell's long sentence is in part his gently humorous gesture towards the "Schoenbergian ambience" of the weekend. But this is tempered by the association of the idea of a series with notoriety, a taint that is further extended, tilting at Wittgenstein's interpreters, to the idea of following a rule. While the former gesture might be read as a mild tease over the pieties of enthusiasm and anxieties over orthodoxy that had been aroused in some quarters by the new music, the slur of *notoriety* acknowledges something of Cavell's own struggles both with aspects of that music and with the interpretative damage that has been done by overreliance on the significance in the *Investigations* of the idea of following a rule.[12] In Cavell's "Music Discomposed" there are passages where his skepticism about the new music comes to the fore, not least because of its over-theorization. The music, he writes, was "philosophical if it was nothing else."[13] Adherence to systematic rules, and even the aesthetic appeal of the written score, seemed to have gained as much importance among some of its afficionados as the sound of the music that was actually produced. And throughout his discussions of Wittgenstein, he is critical of the interpretation of rules in the conformist or conservative way sketched above. Two salient factors may help to illustrate the ways that these points come together. The "Excursus on Wittgenstein's Vision of Language" provides vivid examples of ways in which the following of a pattern of word-use extends into the projection of that word into new circumstances, in ways that cannot be foreseen;[14] in "Music Discomposed," much of the discussion revolves around questions of improvisation, relevant to the performer and the composer, and this raises questions regarding the consequences of attempts by the composer both to close down the scope for such improvisation and to open it fully.[15]

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[11] Cavell's offers a fruitful discussion of these matters in "The World as Things," in *Here and There*, an essay that might itself be seen as an anthology of remarks, its 18 numbered sections proceeding not in a linear fashion so much as by association and connection. For a related discussion of Cavell and series, see my own "Small Acts," in *Television With Stanley Cavell in Mind*, ed. David LaRocca and Sandra Laugier (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2023). See also Sandra Laugier, *TV-Philosophy: How TV Series Change Our Thinking* (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2023).

[12] There is also a hint here of Cavell's sense of the notoriety he had exposed himself to by writing philosophically about series, especially in respect of television and film – a further muted gesture of sympathy.

[13] See Cavell, "Music Discomposed," in *Must We Mean What We Say?: A Book of Essays*, updated ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

[14] See Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, Tragedy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), ch. VII.

2. A Method of Composition

The idea that Schoenberg's major innovation comprises the imposing of a stark set of rules, and that a proper appreciation of his music requires sophisticated theoretical understanding, is roundly rejected by his friend and former pupil, the composer Roberto Gerhard:

> The "method of composition with twelve tones related only to one another" — as Schoenberg called it — is just what it says it is: a method of composition. It cannot, therefore, be too strongly emphasized that it is entirely and exclusively the concern of the composer. It does not concern the listener at all. Above all, the listener must not believe that, if only he knew more about it theoretically, he might find 12-tone music less difficult. This is a hopeless delusion. He will find it easier to listen to only if he hears more of it, often enough. He must, of course, learn how to listen to it, but this will come only from listening itself; and he must remember that it is the *music*, and nothing but the music which matters. It must particularly be stressed that the listener is not supposed to detect the "series" on which a given piece of 12-tone music is based, as if it were Ariadne's thread: or to follow the ways in which it is woven into the sound-fabric. [...] To insist, however, that the 12-tone technique is no concern of the listener is not to say that he is not affected by it. [...] The fact that the listener may remain unaware of the specific effect it has on him does not in the least detract from the reality of that effect: just as there can be no doubt that an intelligent listener who is yet entirely ignorant of the principle of tonality may still entirely enjoy, and even form a valid aesthetic judgement of, a piece

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[15] John Cage's "4'33," where the music is opened not to improvisation but to chance, would be a key variant of the latter.

> written, say, in C major. For this is the real issue: the 12-note technique must be understood as a new principle of tonality.[16]

It seems to me that it is easy to get stuck on the idea of the twelve-note series as a singly-voiced melodic line, with its ensuing repetitions, inversions and reversals. I do not wish to deny what might be achieved by the intervals in the melodic line, their rhythm, their instrumentation, and so on, but focusing on the singly-voiced melodic line hides the fact that the all twelve notes can be included in a single chord or, to be more pertinent, two hexachords. The density of hexachords and the contrast between any two thus contrived achieves a quality that goes beyond the melodic line, and this is an important and powerful feature of the music that Schoenberg produced. This technique also reflects something closer to a natural impulse that had arisen with the move in the 19th century towards greater chromaticism. This impulse is towards covering all the notes or filling the chromatic space. Shifting emphasis towards such qualities of texture can be a release from the inclination to detect the pattern — in listening to the music or in reading the score(!) — and it can, perhaps, reveal something closer to the "pitch sequences," the different textures of the textual shifts, that Cavell finds in the *Investigations*. Add to this Schoenberg's exploitation of recurrent motifs in different registers, different rhythms, different tempi, different orchestration, and different contexts, and the traversing of the musical terrain becomes more analogous to the movement of thought that Wittgenstein's *Preface* describes.

It is not surprising that, in the five papers that make up Part III of *Here and There*, Cavell refers several times to Wittgenstein's remark late in the *Investigations*:

> Understanding a sentence in language is more akin to understanding a theme in music than one may think. What I mean is that understanding a spoken sentence is closer than one thinks to what is ordinarily called understanding a musical theme.[17]

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[16] Roberto Gerhard, "Tonality in Twelve-note Music," *The Score*, May 1952, quoted in Malcolm MacDonald, *Schoenberg* (London: J.M. Dent, 1976), 88-89.

[17] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations,* §527.

The acceptance of this, without turning it into a theory, can also release sensitivity to those aspects of ordinary language philosophy that are attuned to what is other than the constative — or, as it might be put in broader terms, to the "force" of what is expressed, performative *and* constative being different kinds of force. Similarly, I take the earlier remark "All *explanation* must disappear, and description alone must take its place"[18] to align with the insistence, on the part of Gerhard and Schoenberg, on the priority of listening over theorization.

There is no doubt that the new music did provoke excesses of theorization, an extreme example of which is the work of Josef Matthias Hauer. Malcolm MacDonald explains that, independently of Schoenberg and even in the crucial years between 1908 and 1919, Hauer developed a method of twelve-note composition involving forty-four *tropes*, which systematically divided the 479,001,000 possible combinations of the twelve chromatic pitches.[19] Perhaps Hauer can be dismissed as eccentric. Schoenberg himself was strongly critical of attempts to decipher the series in the music. In a letter dated 27 July 1932, he congratulates Rudolph Kolisch — his brother-in-law and leader of the Kolisch String Quartet — on working out the series in his Third String Quartet and, touching in the irony a little more, doubts whether he would himself have had the patience. "But," he asks,

> Do you think one's any better off for knowing it? I can't quite see it that way. My firm belief is that for a composer who doesn't yet quite know his way about with the use of series it may give some idea of how to set about it – a purely technical indication of the possibility of getting something out of the series. But this isn't where the aesthetic possibilities reveal themselves, or, if so, only incidentally. I can't utter too many warnings against overrating these analyses, since after all they only lead to what I have been dead against: seeing how it is *done*; whereas I have always helped pupils to see: what it *is*! I have repeatedly tried to make Wiesengrund see this, and also Berg and Webern. But they won't believe me! I can't say it often enough: my works are twelve-note *compositions*, not *twelve-note* compositions: in this respect people go on

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[18] Ibid., §109.

[19] Malcolm MacDonald, *Schoenberg* (London: J.M. Dent, 1976), 270.

> confusing me with Hauer, to whom composition is only of secondary importance.[20]

Adorno (Wiesengrund[21]) had been a pupil of Alban Berg, and he was, of course, apart from his other extraordinary achievements, to become a highly revered philosopher of music. Yet his *Philosophy of New Music*, which is principally devoted to Schoenberg and Stravinsky, met with Schoenberg's strong disapproval. No doubt this is surprising, given the enthusiasm for Schoenberg expressed in the book. Adorno writes:

> If of all the arts, music is privileged by the absence of semblance since it makes no image, in fact it has to the best of its ability participated in the semblance characteristic of bourgeois artwork through tireless conciliation of its own specific task and the domination of convention. In this, Schoenberg broke ranks precisely by taking expression itself seriously and by refusing its subsumption to the conciliating universal, which is the innermost principle of musical semblance. His music repudiates the claim that the universal and the particular are reconciled. However much this music owes its origin to an effectively vegetal urge, however much its irregularities in fact resemble organic forms, it is never and nowhere totality. […] Schoenberg's compositions are the first in which nothing can actually be different from what it is: They are at once deposition and construction. In them there is no remainder of convention, which guarantees the freedom of play. […] With the negation of semblance and play, music tends toward knowledge.[22]

Casualties of this subsumption to the conciliating universal, and exemplars of bourgeois art and false musical consciousness, extend, in Adorno's scathing attack, to Elgar and Sibelius ("Twenty years ago Edward Elgar's trumped-up fame seemed to be a local phenomenon, and Jean Sibelius's fame an exceptional instance of critical ignorance") and to the "pretentious meagerness of Benjamin Britten."[23] Certainly Adorno's praise of Schoenberg's work is not unqualified. He was less enthusiastic about the turn taken in the 1920s, when Schoenberg became committed more fully to twelve-tone technique: "The operations that broke the blind domination of the sonorous material become — through a system of rules — a blind second nature. To this the subject subordinates itself in search of protection and security, despairing of being able to fulfill the music on its own."[24] Those earlier operations achieved a form of expression that was not a semblance of the passions, as in more traditional forms, but rather, as Wassily Kandinsky had put it, "studies of the mind laid bare"; or, perhaps one might say, anticipating a little, a realization of the mind as expression.[25] The shudder of response such music invoked in its audience constituted an overcoming, however temporary, of the false consciousness of the historically constructed ego. Clearly, his preference was for the less systematically constrained, earlier period of Schoenberg's work.

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[20] Arnold Schoenberg, *Letters*, ed. Edwin Stein, trans. Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987), 164-65. Compare Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §66: "To repeat: don't think, but look!"

[21] Adorno's name was originally Wiesengrund, but he combined his surname with his wife's when their son was born (Wiesengrund-Adorno) and changed his name to Theodor W. Adorno in the course of his application for US citizenship.

[22] Theodor W. Adorno, *Philosophy of New Music*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 36.

In any case, given Adorno's immense influence, it is not surprising that he is referred to intermittently in Cavell's discussion, in this and other chapters in *Here and There*. Yet Adorno's castigation not only of swathes of apparently highbrow mainstream art but also of popular culture plainly sets him at some distance from Cavell, and, in what are after all comparatively short essays, his ideas are touched on and then set aside, rather than fully engaged.

3. Moses and Aron

A way forward with Cavell's own response to Schoenberg opens in his lecture in the form of his more specific recollection of work by David Lewin, and in this a connection or contrast with Adorno is briefly played out. Cavell recalls having been impressed by Lewin's essay on Schoenberg's unfinished opera *Moses and Aron*.[26] Let us approach this by way of Cavell's remarks about Adorno, specifically about Adorno's response to twelve-tone technique.

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[23] Ibid., 10.
[24] Ibid., 55. Schoenberg himself was enthusiastic about the development, writing — in a letter to Hauer in 1923 — that he felt enabled by the growing system to "compose as freely and fantastically as one otherwise does in one's youth," whilst being "nevertheless subject to a precisely definable aesthetic discipline" (*Letters*, 104).
[25] Quoted in Theodor W. Adorno, *Philosophy of New Music*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 35.

Adorno interprets what he calls Webern's "fetishism of the row" as having dialectical force, in connection with which he has recourse to the idea of expressing the inexpressible. Adorno expands on this in lines to which Cavell adds a parenthesis:

> One aspect of this is that twelve-tone music, by force of its mere correctness, resists subjective expression. The other important aspect is that the right of the subject itself to expression [i.e., the right to expression of the individual consciousness in late capitalism] declines. […] It has become so isolated that it can hardly seriously hope for anyone who may still understand it. […] Its melancholy disappearance is the purest expression of its terrified and distrustful withdrawal […]. However, it remains incapable of expressing the inexpressible as truth.[27]

Adorno's expression of this crisis of expression is expanded in his book by way of frequent references to loneliness, melancholy, withdrawal, despondency, anxiety, and shock. Yet his response to the twelve-note system remains equivocal, specifically with regard to how far it remains in thrall to the historical dialectic, as his subheading "Reversal into Unfreedom" suggests.[28] The mechanistic, external nature of the twelve-note system exacts a coldness from the composer, who has escaped,

> as he apotheosizes it, from the heights of the Second Quartet as the "air of another planet."[29] The indifferent material of twelve-tone music now becomes indifferent for the composer himself. Thus, he evades the spell of the material dialectic […]. Precisely because, for Schoenberg, the material that has become external no longer speaks, he compels it to mean what he wants it to mean,

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[26] David Lewin, "Moses und Aron: Some General Remarks, and Analytic Notes for Act I, Scene 1," *Perspectives of New Music* 6, no. 1 (1967): 1-17.

[27] Adorno, *Philosophy of New Music*, 112; in Cavell, *Here and There*, 264-65 (Cavell's parenthesis).

[28] Adorno, *Philosophy of New Music*, 92-93.

[29] Schoenberg, *String Quartet No. 2 in F sharp minor, Op. 10*, which includes the soprano vocal part with the line "Ich fühle luft von anderem planeten" (I feel air from another planet), from Stefan George's *Entrückung* (*Rapture*).

> and the fissures, especially the striking contradiction between twelve-tone mechanics and expression, become ciphers of such meaning.[30]

That the material no longer speaks seems to be welcomed, notwithstanding a certain ambivalence, because it has been divested of the associations, expectations, and channeled accretions of listening that have sedimented in the course of the development of music dominated by the tonic triad. To this extent then the composer is not caught in a reaction to the tradition, and, hence, still under the spell of a dialectic, but rather has created a mechanics that neutralizes the material, opening possibilities for expression significantly unburdened by, and better able to perceive, the false consciousness that has accumulated. Thus, Adorno continues,

> Schoenberg's inexorability and his style of conciliation stand in the deepest relation to each other. The inexorable music represents the truth of society in opposition to society. The conciliatory music recognizes the right to music that society, as a false society, still has in spite of it all, just as society reproduces itself as a false society and thus, by surviving, objectively provides elements of its own truth. As the representative of the most advanced aesthetic consciousness, Schoenberg touches at the limits of that consciousness in the sense that the legitimacy of its truth refutes the legitimacy that inheres even in a false need.[31]

In the face of these tensions, Adorno's tone remains one of unremitting urgency, and his stance is militant.[32]

What would it take to be persuaded by this? Cavell admits that it requires a fuller trust in Adorno's clarity of experience, as well as in the Hegelian dialectic to which it refers, than he can muster. How, then, is his own sense of a crisis of expression better realized? A possible answer has been supplied by the contrasting response to Schoenberg that he finds in Lewin's paper on *Moses and Aron*.

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[30] Adorno, *Philosophy of New Music*, 93. For Schoenberg's quotation, see Arnold Schoenberg, *String Quartet No. 2 in F sharp minor*, Op. 10, which includes the soprano vocal part with the line "Ich fühle luft von anderem planeten" ("I feel air from another planet"), from Stefan George's *Entrückung* (*Rapture*).

[31] Ibid., 94.

[32] In a thoughtful review article — "Philosophy of New Music and Roll Over Adorno: Critical Theory, Popular Culture, Audiovisual Media," *Cultural Critique* 70 (2008): 201-7 — Justin Schell draws attention to the excellent translation of *Philosophic der neuen Musik* provided by Robert Hullot Kentor, emphasizing its superiority to the earlier translation by Anne G. Mitchell and Wesley Blomster — *Philosophy of Modern Music* (New York: Seabury Press, 1973). Schell writes that Hullot Kentor "not only expertly corrects the inaccuracies of the old translation but also allows the antagonistic, even radical, character of *Philosophic der neuen Musik* to re-emerge" (202).

Lewin's discussion combines general remarks about the opera with analytical notes on the opening scene. Cavell is drawn particularly by the linking of the *dramatic* idea of God, as being unrepresentable but as commanding to be represented, with the *musical* idea of the "row" and its presence in the music. This dramatic idea is to be found in the idea of the row not as an abstraction that can be presented once and for all but rather as manifested everywhere, not abstractly but by means of material sounds and in diverse ways. The structure of this relationship is also played out dramatically in the relationships between God, Moses, Aron, and the *Volk* in a way that "suggestively," as Lewin puts it, prompts the analogy: "the idea" (row), composer (Schoenberg), performer, audience.[33] Moses hears the word of God: ideally he would spend his time in contemplation of this divine order, but God commands that he communicate it to the people. The people, however, do not like him, and he is not capable of speaking to them. Moses does communicate after a fashion with Aron, though he cannot adequately convey the truth that is the burden of his message. Aron is a brilliant speaker who is loved by the people, but he is easily seduced by their adulation. Lewin sets this out in expanded schematic form.

> God loves the Volk (more than He loves Moses, as we gather from Act I, Scene 1) but cannot communicate with them directly, and they do not know or love Him.
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> Moses knows and loves God; he does not love the Volk, nor they him, though they fear him; he cannot communicate with the Volk.
>
> Aron does not know God, but wants to love Him; he loves the Volk and is loved by them. Note that, in his love for the Volk, Aron is more like God than is Moses. He communicates easily with them.
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> Moses and Aron (the crucial link) love each other and think they know each other; as it turns out, they do not. The link breaks down, with tragic consequence.[34]

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[33] Lewin, "Moses und Aron," 2.

[34] Ibid.

Much of Lewin's ensuing discussion — the detailed analysis of Act 1, Scene 1 — draws attention to the contrasts between the sung and spoken elements in the work. This is most apparent in the contrast between Moses' *Sprechstimme* and Aron's coloratura tenor, but it extends through sung and spoken elements in the voice of the *Volk*. While I do not propose to explore these in detail, it is important to recognize the significance of this experimentation with voice, which itself accentuates the question of what is at stake in expression. In fact, in various works Schoenberg experiments with the voice, and this extends beyond any simple contrast between singing and speaking. Particular forms, intermediate between singing and speaking, are significant. In *Sprechstimme*, the rhythm of the music is maintained precisely but with only the merest gesture towards the rise and fall of the melody; in *Sprechgesang*, the performer again maintains the rhythm and, as it were, aims at the pitch prescribed but only to let their voice immediately fall away or sometimes rise from this. Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* is a celebrated example of *Sprechgesang*. The effect of these techniques, in their various combinations with singing and speaking, is characteristically to create an experience in which the difficulties of reconciliation between the substance and the means of expression become strangely apparent; the effect is also to heighten an uncanny sense of the wavering qualities of voice on which we depend, the voice that locates us, that realizes where we are. These matters, in turn, foreground questions of expression and voice not as technical difficulties of communication — say, of a reality out there and a thought in here: they realize expression and voice as fundamental to, and generative of, objectivity and subjectivity; and they take voice as the epitome of expression. Voice, we might say, is here *and* there.

4. Abandoning Ourselves, Calling Back the World

These modernist lines of thought are surely not far from the thinking that pervades Cavell's work. In particular, they bear consideration in relation to his own most explicit consideration of the relation between speaking and singing, in "Opera and the

Lease of Voice."[35] The "jigsaw shapes of intuitions" that guide Cavell through his discussion of "what singing betokens" and of the human capacity to "raise the voice" require, he claims, some "conceptual funding," and this cannot come other than from the experience of individual works, especially of opera (and individual instances, one can surmise, of scenes drawn from ordinary life).[36] "The instances will have variously to specify, summarizing my shapes of intuition," he writes,

> the singing in opera as calling back the world, or as expressing its inexpressible abandonment; and singing as (dis)embodied within the doubleness of the human expressed as ecstasy — being beside oneself, perhaps in joy, perhaps in grief — a doubleness taken in the sense of singing out of a world in which a world is intervening, one in which perhaps we belong in abandoning ourselves. This presents singing as thinking; perhaps as narcissistic reflection; narcissism as capturing both the primitiveness of singing's orality and the sophistication of singing's exposure and virtuosic display. The exposure is to a world of the separation of the self from itself, in which the splitting of the self into speech is expressed as the separation from someone who represents to that self the continuance of the world — a separation that may be figured as being forced into a false marriage. The excruciation or absoluteness of this separation seems to partake both of the terror of separation in infancy (the level of primitive narcissism, where the scream in which Wagner heard the origin of singing is still audible) and of a separation from possibility figured by the loss of the one who had descended from the realm of light, in whom one's expectation of intelligibility has been placed, and collapses.[37]

If, in the light of the operatic reference of this passage, my parenthetical surmise about scenes drawn from ordinary life seems presumptuous, it may be helpful to recall Cavell's preparation for this passage, in the closing paragraph of the previous section of his text. There he thinks of a version of primitive narcissism — a "self-judgmental forming of the self, as something to be possessed or to be overcome"[38] — as relevant to Emerson's remark that "Character teaches above our wills. Men imagine that they communicate their virtue or vice only by overt actions, and do not see that virtue or vice emits a breath at every moment."[39] Cavell understands this to imply that the signs of our virtue or vice are there in that we are "somehow judging at every moment, necessarily affirming or denying, since we are judged by our judgements (except when we judge not, that we be not judged), in which the heart is revealed."[40] Cavell draws attention to Emerson's transition in the above lines from "communicate" to "breath," which overwhelms any idea of mere communication — that is, of our speaking as fundamentally instrumental — with the recognition of our thoughts' being there in our words, as already in and out, already an ecstasy. The controlled extremity of the breath in singing and the wild loss of control in the scream can alike amplify and call attention to our dependence on voice as the element of our selves and our pains of separation.

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[35] Cavell, "Opera and the Lease of Voice," in *A Pitch of Philosophy: Autobiographical Exercises* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 129-69.
[36] Ibid., 151.
[37] Ibid.

But rather than explore this further through the examples of opera that Cavell provides, I propose to turn back to the dramatic tensions in "Moses and Aron" that preoccupy Lewin's reading. Let us recall in particular the "crucial" relationship: "Moses and Aron (the crucial link) love each other and think they know each other; as it turns out, they do not. The link breaks down, with tragic consequence."[41]

My hunch is that the demystifying human touch to Lewin's characterization of this and the other relationships is likely to gain Cavell's trust in a way that dialectical readings do not. Even in the plot-summary style of Lewin's short gloss here ("love each other and think they know each other; as it turns out, they do not"), there is an appeal to tensions and delusions that extend through ordinary lives. But it is crucial (again) that the pairing of Moses and Aron expresses a duality that can be found more widely in the human condition — between, on the one hand, an attraction and duty to others, community with them, and, on the other, an allegiance to something else, often perceived as higher or more truthful and as a calling of some kind. The latter may take the form of God or the truth, or be understood rather as being-true-to-oneself, or as being able to say what you mean and mean what you say (and in this sense to own your experience). Plainly, something like this pairing is echoed in relationships of kinds that draw Cavell's interest, in opera, literature, film. And equally plainly there is something like this relationship to be found in tensions within one's self. If this is thought to generalize or secularize too much, recall Cavell's remark about Emerson's "self-reliance": that Emerson is fully aware of the etymology that, via the Latin *ligare* (to bind), renews a connection with "religion."

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[38] Ibid., 150.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid. Cavell is alluding to words of Jesus: "Judge not, that ye be not judged." Matthew 7:1-6 (King James Version).
[41] Lewin, "Moses und Aron," 2.

But let me pause. In referring his audience to Lewin's paper, Cavell provides a complex quotation of some ten lines, which itself compresses Lewin's already complex explanation. Cavell holds back from mentioning the schematic elements that Lewin provides, which would have shown what is at stake more succinctly; and while I appreciate that my expansion of the first term in the schema (as the form of God or the truth, or as being-true-to-oneself or being able to say what you mean and mean what you say) may seem casual or opportunistic, I doubt that Cavell would have been wholly at ease with Lewin's expression. Lewin's schema is handy, to be sure, and it brings something important vividly into view. But it is vulnerable to the banality of psychological typology, where the focus would be particularly on a continuum of character extending between Moses and Aron.

Moreover, there is a powerful trajectory to the Biblical story involving the transmission of truth from God to the Volk. Lewin's interpretation of the opera begins to invite a complication of this through the to-and-fro, human dynamism of the relationship between Moses and Aron, as well as in their relationship with the Volk. In Cavell's Wittgensteinian terms, voice — and, hence, the possibility of truth — arises in the language games of this complex dynamism. The to-and-fro breaks up the one-way trajectory, and it displaces any idea of an *arche*: there must, at minimum, be a reticence about naming any first term. This helps to show how the idea and trajectory of a private realm of meaning prior to the public forms of language disappears, is dismissed, as a quasi-Platonist fantasy. Thoughts can be private, we may struggle to find words for them, but this arises out of a background competence, a background of life in the use of words. And this, I shall try to show, can be extended further in order to weaken the metaphysically inflected structure of the universal and the particular as it dissolves in singularities of speech, thought, and experience. In music, the tonic triad is analogous to the universal, and its fourths and fifths, as well as the multiple possibilities that extend beyond these, are particularities that have their place in cadences that fall finally into the harmony of the tonic. Dissonance gives way to consonance. Leonard Bernstein describes this sense of harmony as, precisely, universal.[42] But in Schoenberg the difference between consonance and dissonance ceases to apply (or at least to apply in the same way), while the contrast between the universal and the particular increasingly misses the point. Dissolving the imperatives of the tonic triad releases the singularities of the notes: it opens space for the germ-cells in Schoenberg's music from which emerge patterns of coherence and connection.

A later essay by Adorno, "Toward an Understanding of Schoenberg," may be helpful here. In this his translator writes of the "particular," the "general," and the "abstract," but a similar point is at issue. Thinking initially of traditional music, Adorno writes:

> It was as if every musical particular was subordinated to an established generality. By listening appropriately, starting from there, one would be able to deduce the development of its particulars in detail and to find one's way with relative ease. Traditional music listened for the listener. This, precisely, is over and done with in Schoenberg.[43]

Listeners must listen for themselves. The only thing that matters in this music is "the particular, the now and here of the musical events, their own inner logic."[44] It is important that this "logic" is of an almost palpable kind: "The decisive thing is the density of composition, which no one ever conceived of before — its concreteness, not its abstraction. Schoenberg leaves nothing unformed; every tone is developed from within the law of motion of the thing itself."[45] It is noteworthy

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42. See Leonard Bernstein, "Twentieth Century Crisis," in *The Unanswered Question: Six Talks at Harvard* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1976), 263-324.
43. Adorno, "Toward an Understanding of Schoenberg," in *Essays on Music*, ed. Richard Leppert, trans. Susan H. Gillespie (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2002), 629-30.
44. Ibid., 630.
45. Ibid.

also that Adorno counters the view of Schoenberg as the consummate musical intellectual by referring to him as a "musical vagrant," or perhaps as a "music-maker" rather than a "musician."[46] Adorno's word is "Musikant," a term that can have a slightly negative edge, but whose effect is modified by the inverted commas that Adorno adds: it is clearly invoked in praise of Schoenberg, suggesting the extent of his natural gift for music and his lack of pretension. In contrasting Schoenberg's Wagner-influenced early works with those of Wagner himself, Adorno writes instructively:

> In fact, only a rather dull and externally oriented musicality will fail to perceive the difference between this musical language and Wagner's. It is thoroughly lacking the element of the self-reflexive, the self-admiring, as it were. Everything is turned much more toward the thing than toward the ego, with an apparently altruistic warmth that is completely without the addictive tone of Wagner.[47]

Adorno stresses Schoenberg's aversion to "everything decorative, ornamental, not purely of the thing itself," relating this especially to the Functionalism (*Sachlichkeit*) in architecture of his friend, Adolf Loos: Schoenberg experienced the external musical structure as a false façade, believing that it had to fall to make way for what was "functionally necessary to become audible."[48]

For all the differences that appear in the respective responses of Adorno and Cavell to Schoenberg, the above remarks point to affinities too, and I shall shortly indicate where these are most pertinent. But have I underestimated the connections? Has Cavell? Is Cavell's position in fact much closer to Adorno's, closer perhaps than he is ready to admit? I want to reaffirm my initial sense that Cavell's restrained and somewhat oblique style is relevant to his purpose. Others, however, have found in this a kind of avoidance, even the harboring of a degree of self-deception. Such a line of interpretation is advanced with some confidence by Stephen Decatur Smith in a paper entitled "'We Look Away and Leap Around': Music, Ethics, and the Transcendental in Cavell and Adorno."[49]

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[46] Adorno writes in ibid., 631: "Schoenberg, whose intellectualism is legend, was, as a type, a naïve artist. If the term musical vagrant *[Musikant]* had not been so shamefully abused to glorify an unenlightened and uncritical performance, it could be applied to his origins."

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid., 634-35.

5. Gigantic Leaps

The essence of Smith's argument is that, for both Cavell and Adorno, "our relation to the conditions of possibility of our collective lives — our forms of life and experience, our common world or worlds — requires that we leap from them or depart from them."[50] On the strength of this judgement, Smith is concerned to show that the "reading of twelve-tone technique that Cavell rejects in Adorno grows from the movement of thought that he and Adorno share."[51] The manner in which Cavell relatively quickly sets aside Adorno's reading amounts to a "swerving" away: "in swerving from Adorno, Cavell swerves from himself as well."[52] Credentials for Smith's discussion are offered in the provision of important quotations from Cavell, including, from *The Claim of Reason*, both the celebrated passage questioning the "natural ground of our conventions" ("What I require is a convening of my culture's criteria…"), with its introduction of the idea of the "education of grownups,"[53] and the evocative account of the small child's coming into language (Cavell's daughter learning the word "kitty").[54] Regarding the latter, Smith is drawn particularly by the idea that in extending the word "kitty" to furry things other than baby cats, the child is making, as Cavell puts it, various "leaps," and by the idea that this leaping, far from being something that the child will simply outgrow, continues to be a dimension of what Cavell will call our "projection" of words, throughout our lives. Hence, the presence of the word in Smith's title. Leaping is further aligned with transcendence: the world we are in is characterized by its false consciousness, and so the leap is a movement of escape from this towards something more real. Indeed it is necessary to "rend the veil," to strip away the clothing of false appearances, to demolish the façade

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[49] Stephen Decatur Smith, "'We Look Away and Leap Around': Music, Ethics, and the Transcendental in Cavell and Adorno," *Journal of Music Theory* 54, special issue "Cavell's 'Music Discomposed' at 40," (2010): 121-40.
[50] Ibid., 122.
[51] Ibid., 123.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 125.
[54] Ibid., 169-80.

— a concatenation of images consolidating an idea of the "thing itself" that, in various permutations of phrasing, Adorno comes back to and that Smith appears to celebrate. The Biblical origins of "rending the veil" give the discussion a heroic scale, melodramatized even with the subheading "Gigantomachia," which is used to identify Cavell's project in "Philosophy and the Unheard" as the setting up of a contest between Adorno and Lewin — almost as if to emulate the grand scale of Adorno's pitting of Schoenberg against Stravinsky in *Philosophy of New Music*.

There are good reasons not to be moved by this. In the first place, what Cavell intends by "leaps" has a different, less startling, more playful, and in fact more pervasive significance than Smith seems to recognize. Cavell is talking about the ordinary circumstances of our coming into language and our everyday engagement with words, in what we say and in what we think. It is true that our language may lapse into cliché and received ideas, and perhaps that much of our lives is characterized by an average everyday inauthenticity in the way that Heidegger claims.[55] But it is of the very nature of words that they project into new situations and new possibilities, whether we like it or not: in fact, it is precisely this projection that makes possible the use of our words *as words* and not just as something overwhelmingly repetitive like the signs that animals use. This projection or pitching makes possible the engagement of our thought in ways that do not lapse in that fashion but open to new possibilities of our lives and world.[56] Herein lies our pervasive responsibility in what we say and think, a responsibility to ourselves, our community, and the world. Reflecting on his daughter's extended use of the word "kitty," Cavell writes:

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[55] See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), 222.

[56] Smith's essay begins with two epigraphs. First, there are lines from a poem by Paul Celan, "The world is gone, / I must carry you." These lines are central to Jacques Derrida's discussion of Celan in "Rams," in *Sovereignties in Question*, trans. Thomas Dutoit and Outi Pasanen (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 135-63. In a footnote, Smith states that Derrida's reading of the poem "has been highly influential for this essay, particularly in its formulation of ethics" (121). I draw attention to this here in light of the Derridean form of expression that I have adopted in my discussion at this point. The extremity of the situation to which Celan is responding is far removed from the discussion of "kitty," and hence, for present purposes, the first line of Celan's words here sends Smith off in the wrong direction: Celan, like Derrida and like Cavell, sees our responsibility in words as extending through our lives and world and as generative of culture and world itself. Similarly, the second quotation, from Wittgenstein, "The good is outside the space of facts," from *Culture and Value*, belongs to the thinking of the *Tractatus*, not to Wittgenstein's later philosophy, which is Cavell's concern.

> In each case her word was produced about a soft, warm, furry object of a certain size, shape, and weight. What did she learn in order to do that? *What did she learn from having done it?* If she had never made such leaps she would never have walked into speech. Having made it, meadows of communication can grow for us.[57]

This turning of thought is exemplified here through the fashioning of a series of vocal shifts. The rhythm of the lines lays the way for the rhyming of "leaps" and "speech," accentuated by the alliterative reversal of the P and S, and then, more subtly, as what is at stake expands from the singular child to the community, there is the imperfect rhyme (with "leaps") hiding in the first syllable of "meadows." The expansion is also achieved, subtly again, through the shifting of the pronouns (from the feminine singular child to the grown-up plural), and with a sense of the ramifications of achievement indicated in the movement from "having made such leaps" to "having made it," the colloquial timbre of the latter phrase opening to the "meadows of communication," once again accentuated, with the alliteration of the M. The expansive, even joyful tone of this last phrase does not point at all to an overcoming or rejection of the world that we know but to the continual renewal of its possibilities. This is the world we are in.

In the second place, Smith refers recurrently to the indigence of our condition, where, following Adorno, this is to be seen in a Messianic light. It is true that Wittgenstein and Cavell also will speak of the apparent poverty of our condition, but the stakes here are really very different: the poverty is not (at least, not primarily) anything to do with false consciousness but refers to the fragility of the means by which we make (sense of) our world. It is important that this is not a reverencing of the ordinary, as if what people ordinarily say and do were the answer to our problems; and, of course, the return to the ordinary and the kind of criticism it enables can be the occasion of exposing false consciousness, including the Messianic light in which this might be seen. But to mistake the indigence of false consciousness, dialectically construed, for the poverty of our means of making sense would be drastically to miss the center of gravity in their philosophy — that is, Wittgenstein's and Cavell's. Brian Kane's "Introduction" to the special issue of which Smith's paper is a part, gives prominence to a key passage in *Must We Mean What We Say?*, where Cavell writes:

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[57] Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 172.

> We learn and teach words in certain contexts, and then we are expected, and expect others to be able to project them into further contexts. Nothing insures that this projection will take place (in particular, not the grasping of universals nor the grasping of books of rules), just as nothing insures that we will make, and understand, the same projections. That on the whole we do is a matter of our sharing routes of interest and feeling, modes of response, senses of humor and of significance and of fulfillment, of what is outrageous, of what is similar to what else, what a rebuke, what forgiveness, of when an utterance is an assertion, when an appeal, when an explanation — all the whirl of organism Wittgenstein calls "forms of life." Human speech and activity, sanity and communication, rest upon nothing more, but nothing less, than this. It is a vision as simple as it is difficult, and as difficult as it is (and because it is) terrifying.[58]

This is not a disparagement of the world but a recognition of the need to turn back to it, to turn back to the rough ground, and to turn our words to new possibilities. The poverty to which Cavell and Wittgenstein refer lies in the fact that human activity and community rest upon nothing more than these projections. Nothing more, and nothing less, so that these materials *are* what we need. Kane omits the last line of the paragraph that he quotes, which runs: "To attempt the work of *showing* its simplicity would be a real step in making available Wittgenstein's later philosophy."[59] Poverty then is linked with an idea of simplicity and an aversion from grander forms of explanation, which might themselves generate false pictures, houses of cards, pictures that might hold us captive. Wittgenstein's inclination towards a kind of asceticism also casts poverty as a virtuous turn to simplicity and the ordinary circumstances of our lives and language. The obvious intimation of the ordinary here, which becomes thematized more fully as Cavell’s work progresses, seems to be missed in Smith’s reading; and this sends *him* off in the wrong direction.

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[58] Brian Kane, "Introduction," *Journal of Music Theory* 54, special issue "Cavell's 'Music Discomposed' at 40," (2010): 1-4, quoting Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?*, 48.

[59] Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?*, 48.

In fact, the muted slur in the “swerving” from Adorno attributed to Cavell rebounds to some extent in the unsteadiness of Smith’s interpretation. One swerves to avoid an obstacle or a crash, and certainly when one is travelling at speed. And Smith, I think, is moving forward too fast as the logic of his argument is expounded. But then, so it might be countered, is not Cavell travelling at speed when he, in “Philosophy and the Unheard,” moves through so much in just a few pages? This again would be to miss the tone of his remarks and the occasion of their utterance. Cavell has been invited to give a lecture at a Harvard conference in honor of David Lewin. What he says has the form of a tribute, and this is evident in the text in both content and style. Cavell has fashioned a text appropriate to the occasion, in which acknowledgement of achievement is realized both through personal recollection and gestures of some substance to aspects of Lewin’s work. In the process, he entertains a contrast between Lewin and Adorno, but this is nothing like a thoroughgoing critique of Adorno, any more than it is a comprehensive appraisal of Lewin’s achievement. In a passage that Smith quotes in part, and to which I alluded earlier, Cavell acknowledges Adorno’s views as well as indicating something of his own difficulties with them: “But the full credibility of this effort — whose importance I should not wish to be neglected — depends upon a fuller trust or interest in Adorno’s clarity of experience together with his articulation of it in a further Hegelian process of concepts, than I find I can lend to it.”[60] Smith’s response to this remark is that “The broader context of Cavell's essay [...] offers clues to a fuller reading. Cavell is staging a gigantomachy: Lewin versus Adorno.”[61] Who, one might wonder, is staging what?

6. Finding Community

Smith’s paper is valuable in bringing out aspects of Adorno’s thinking that diverge from Cavell’s. This is there in the forthright nature of his discussion, which in turn seems to shape his treatment of transcendence and of the thing itself. He guides the reader towards an unquestionably relevant passage in "The Availability of Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy" but seems to gloss over the carefully qualified terms by which Cavell's views are hedged.[62] It is true that the very nature of projection, the idea of aspect-shifting with its connections to a complete change of view, and the thought often expressed by Wittgenstein, to which Cavell is sympathetic, that one must change one's life can all be related to some kind of transcendence. But there is every reason to be cautious, if not to hold back completely, with such a heavily freighted term. In these pages, Cavell is not so much espousing the idea of the transcendental but feeling his way around the Wittgensteinian idea of grammar and its connections with ordinary language philosophy. He associates this with the kind of thing that Kant was after in speaking of the *a priori* possibility of knowledge. Cavell is providing a description of an aspect of Kant, not signing up to a thesis. With the idea of the "thing itself," so clearly entrammeled with the suspicion of false appearances, the gap between Wittgenstein and Adorno seems wider: in emphasizing the thing itself (the thing-in-itself or the real thing, even at times the condition of nakedness), philosophy is in danger of blinding itself to so much in the ways that human expression and life are realized. Without clothes, where could Stella Dallas be?

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[60] Cavell, “Philosophy and the Unheard,” 265.
[61] Smith, “‘We Look Away and Leap Around’,” 133.

Smith also sometimes writes as though Wittgenstein and Cavell have a theory of grammar, which again seems to fall short of an appreciation of the ways in which their references to grammar are made. In the work of neither author is the idea of grammar set out as a thesis: it would be more accurate to say that it is invoked to steer the reader away from certain clearly structured assumptions about the workings of language and thought. The idea of grammar is intrinsically connected to the idea of the language game, which again is a notion that sets out to obstruct the inclination to think in the overly theoretical or systematic ways to which human beings — including philosophers and musical theorists of a kind — are prone. The idea of grammar can fruitfully be illuminated by bringing out its connections to the idea of the background. A language game takes place against a background that can never be exhaustively articulated. So much must always remain unsaid. And this, I think, is somehow reflected in Cavell's style in "Philosophy and the Unheard." Smith is keen to read Cavell in a way that helps to crystallize an argument; but this misses the play of association and connection, and both the significance of withholding judgement and the inclination towards understatement that are very much germane to Cavell's purpose. And there is surely something in Cavell's text that remains unheard in Smith's interpretation.

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[62] See Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?*, 64-65.

To say this is to acknowledge the concept advertized in Cavell's title, whose name remains unheard in the main body of his text. What might be gathered under this name? First, Cavell says next to nothing about his opinion of Schoenberg's music. This is, in fact, consistent with the approach he had taken in "Music Discomposed," where his attention was drawn especially by the high profile of the music that developed in the wake of Schoenberg in the mid-20th century and by the extremes of response that music aroused amongst its advocates and its detractors. That essay concentrated more on identifying something about what it was essentially in a composition that constituted *meaning it* — and, yes, he was concerned with the posturing and fakery that could so easily emerge in the process.[63] But in terms of passing judgement on Schoenberg and his immediate associates, he was pointedly reserved, as he is in "Philosophy and the Unheard." It is reasonable to see this not as the willful hiding of a clear opinion but as a continuing ambivalence and humility in the absence of a clear response. There is nothing to suggest that his views are not consistent over this span of nearly four decades. Second, there is an element of the unheard in Cavell's avoidance of further elaboration of differences from Adorno: this is surely not the occasion; but even if the occasion were different, it is possible that Cavell would hold back from pressing an argument he believed would remain unheard. Cavell's remarking on the extent to which Schoenberg was preoccupied with being understood, which I mentioned at the start of this essay, is surely something over which he felt some sympathy, especially given the sense in which, in his own philosophical career, he was so often sidelined by the mainstream: he had good reason to feel that philosophers were not willing to hear what he had to say. There is a poignancy to this also in that Cavell's remark is prompted by his reading of Schoenberg's collected letters, at a time when he was reflecting on his own life, following *A Pitch of Philosophy* and in ways that would come to fruition in *Little Did I Know: Excerpts from Memory*. But third, I want to revert to the relation between the row and the rule, this time revising these terms in the light, respectively, of remarks by Schoenberg and Gerhard about the nature of the row as not the concern of the listener at all, and of the displacing in Wittgenstein of the idea of the rule by that of grammar and the background. With this revision, it becomes possible perhaps to appreciate row and rule as there in the music, there in the language game, but rightly remaining unheard. This, I suggest, indicates the work that Cavell's title does, in the background, as his text unfolds.

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[63] See my "Meaning It: Music, Cavell, and the Sense of Occasion," in *Collection on Here and There*, ed. Nancy Bauer, Alice Crary, and Sandra Laugier (forthcoming).

An interesting aspect of Adorno's account is to be found in the way that he sees in Schoenberg a realization of music in which the ego is overcome, which, if I have understood correctly, also involves a greater realization of subjectivity and of the subject as agent of the object. Can something like this thought, expressed no doubt in a markedly different tone, be found in Cavell's thinking of the voice in opera as "calling back the world, or as expressing its inexpressible abandonment"?[64] Recall his evocation of the idea of the doubleness of a world in which a world is intervening, where belonging requires a kind of self-abandonment. He speaks of a splitting of the self into speech as involving a separation, a separation figured in opera by "the loss of the one who had descended from the realm of light, in whom one's expectation of intelligibility has been placed, and collapses."[65] This is a dramatic intensification of the phenomenological insight that separation from the other is the condition for one's intelligibility, for having a voice at all. In Adorno's firmly historical, less phenomenological account the successful work of art captures the suffering of the present moment in such a way as to effect a shudder in the subject experiencing the work. There is a destruction, albeit temporary, of the historically and socially constructed ego that is the product of late capitalism. Far from being debilitating, however, this exacts the heightened tension that can amount to a conversion experience: nothing is changed externally, but there is a release to new possibilities. Adorno's subject is agent of the object; Cavell's "voice" is a condition of the world. Certainly it would be wrong to overstate the congruities here, and, as indicated above,

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[64] Cavell, *A Pitch of Philosophy*, 151.
[65] Ibid.

Cavell's emphasis on the variety of things contrasts with the theoretical unity of Adorno's account. But there may be enough here to suggest greater affinities than I have been inclined to suggest. Before returning to *Moses and Aron*, and perhaps allowing these thoughts a little more space to breathe, let me, in closing, take the interpretation in a direction that is more psychoanalytical.

One cannot go far in thinking this way without coming to a major theme of the "autobiographical exercises" that make up the pitch sequences of *A Pitch of Philosophy*. Cavell writes directly about his relationship with his mother and father, and about the sustaining of that pairing in himself. He recalls his mother's ability

> to bring to life whatever notes were put before her. It was precisely not to my mind a knack of interpretation, but something like the contrary, a capacity to put aside any interference, as of her own will, and to let the body be moved, unmechanically, by the mind of those racing notes. The lapse of distance — say that she was the music then and there; there was nothing beyond her to read into — is captured in my mind by an image of a certain mood that caused her to play the piano for herself.[66]

It is a reasonable assumption that this capacity was not separable from her other moods, when for example he found her sitting by herself in silence in a darkened room. But while his mother's musicality was attuned to perfect pitch, there was a different kind of attunement in his father, who, Cavell remarks, "had no natural language left" but who did have an unusual ability to tell stories and a capacity for conversation.[67] Cavell sees his own fascination with Austin as drawing, in some respects, on each of his parents' talents and as inheriting their all-too-human problems. Moreover, it is not difficult to think of these respective abilities of the mother and the father, and the barriers in the relationship between them, as reflecting the archetypes provided by the Biblical story and Schoenberg's opera. But the parallel does, admittedly, involve a curious kind of reversal. This is that the part of Moses in the opera is played in *Sprechstimme*, whereas the voice that speaks to the people is a coloratura tenor.[68] Yet this reversal amounts to a relatively superficial difference. The deeper point is that Cavell's mother was, in her playing, something like a pure conduit for the music,[69] and she needed no audience; Cavell's father could perform to the crowd.

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[66] Ibid., 18.

[67] Cavell's father had no natural language left in the sense that the Yiddish and Polish that he had grown up with as a child had faded from his use in the course of his life in the United States. See also my "Something Called Perfect Pitch: Cavell and the Calling of Ordinary Language to Mind," in *Music with Stanley Cavell in Mind*, ed. David LaRocca (New York and London: Bloomsbury, forthcoming 2024), and, for a related discussion, see Paul Standish, "The Philosophy of Pawnbroking," in *Stanley Cavell and Philosophy as Translation: The Truth is Translated*, ed. Standish and Naoko Saito (London: Rowman & Littlefield), 171-82.

Let me press a further parallel, in conclusion, involving the pairing of these tendencies in Cavell himself. Most obviously, and not forgetting Emerson's suggestion that character teaches above our wills, this was there in his character in its distinctive combination of warm sociability and a certain reserve. It can be felt at the heart of his philosophy, precisely in his elaboration of the concept of voice. Such thoughts include but take us beyond the biographical considerations that have been brought into the picture: they take us into the crisis of expression reverberating through the linguistic turn that is a keynote of modernism. To this Cavell's writing bears witness. As with Emerson, this is felt even in the tensions of his prose, which responds to the desire, and indeed *obligation*, both to find community with others and to do justice to oneself, in determining what one can mean and say. I venture to suggest also that there is an intimation here of the "formative and intellectual or spiritual crisis"[70] that led, first, to his discovery that music was no longer his life's work and, second, to his realization that what he demanded of philosophy was an understanding of what he had found in music. Whatever truth or good he had found in his experience of the musical sublime must be transmuted and further realized in the apparent poverty of conversation and community with others. This is perhaps a reclamation of experience as lucid as in the music he loved.[71]

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[68] A reversal in the sense that his mother is the (musical) performer, while his father now has no natural language and so is hardly a coloratura tenor!

[69] Not so pure as to imply that the music existed like a water-fall, simply, independently of her: music depends upon at least someone's subjectivity.

[70] Cavell, "Philosophy and the Unheard," 260.

[71] I am grateful to Gordon Bearn and Suzy Harris for thoughtful observations and comments on drafts of this paper. Martin Shuster is thanked especially for very helpful suggestions regarding Adorno.