

## **Twelve-tone composition: a dialogue between Schönberg and Leverkühn**

Dodecafonismo: el diálogo entre Schönberg y Adrian Leverkühn

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### **Abstract:**

Thomas Mann, a great Goethe's devotee, chose the figure of composer Arnold Schönberg to draw the personality of Adrian Leverkühn, the Faust of the Twentieth Century. The reception of the book by Schönberg was very controversial, owing to the fact that he felt that Mann was stealing from him the intellectual property of the "Twelve-tone-technique". In this article I am going to discuss how Mann, influenced by Theodor W. Adorno, understood Schönberg's music and which are the differences between what Schönberg composed and the fictional music of Adrian Leverkühn, Mann's hero, taking into account the dissertations of the main character and Serenus Zeitblom in the book about the method.

**Key words:** Arnold Schönberg, Thomas Mann, Adrian Leverkühn, Faust, Twelve-tone-technique

### **Resumen**

Thomas Mann, un gran devoto de Goethe, escogió la figura del compositor Arnold Schönberg para dibujar la personalidad de Adrian Leverkühn, el Fausto del siglo veinte. La recepción del libro por parte de Schönberg fue muy controvertida, puesto que él partía de la premisa que Mann le estaba robando la propiedad intelectual de la "Técnica de doce tonos" o dodecafonismo. En este artículo vamos a discutir cómo Mann, influenciado por Theodor W. Adorno, entendió la música de Schönberg y cuáles son las diferencias entre lo que Schönberg compuso y la música ficcional de Adrian Leverkühn, el héroe de

Mann, teniendo en cuenta las disertaciones del protagonista y de Serenus Zeitblom en el libro sobre el método.

**Palabras clave:** Arnold Schönberg, Thomas Mann, Adrian Leverkühn, Faust, dodecafonismo

In February 1948, Arnold Schönberg addressed himself to Thomas Mann in a writing where there appeared a fictional letter by the composer that, using the pseudonym of Hugo Tribsamen, would have been written, purportedly, in 2048. The musician wanted to advert the writer about what could happen in relation to the merits in favour of the evolution of music, feeling them usurped by Adrian Leverkühn, the main character of *Doktor Faustus: Das Leben des deutschen Tonsetzers Adrian Leverkühn, erzählt von einem Freunde* (1947). In fact, Tribsamen explains that, in an American encyclopaedia, there is an article written in 1988 that attributes the discovery of the twelve-tone-technique to writer Thomas Mann, as a step forward after the “emancipation of dissonance”. He also explains that Anton Webern would have defended Schönberg as discoverer of the method and that this fact would be refuted owing to the fact that Mann would have invented the theory around 1933 and would have authorised Schönberg to use it. As a result of this incident, Mann and Schönberg would have been in enmity until the end of their lives. According to Tribsamen:

“(…)

Ich habe sechs Dekaden der Amerikanischen Enzyklopädie durchblättert, ohne auch nur die Nennung seines Namens zu finden! Erst als ich zu der Ausgabe von 1988 kam, habe ich seinen Namen [Schönbergs] und eine kleine biographische Anmerkung gefunden.

(…)

Weiterhin muss er [Schönberg] eine Auseinandersetzung mit dem bekannten deutschen Dichter Thomas Mann gehabt haben, der offensichtlich der Erfinder der Methode des Komponierens mit zwölf Tönen war, die auf der Emanzipation der Dissonanz basiert, der Äquipollenz des *Begreifens* der Dissonanz mit dem *Begreifen* des Gleichklangs. Webern erwähnt einen Verdienst Schönberg bei der Erfindung dieser Theorie und der dazugehörigen Terminologie, aber es scheint falsch zu sein oder Schönberg war ein skrupulloser Ausbeuter der Idee eines anderen Mannes.

(...)

Wahrscheinlich hatte er zu dieser Zeit (um 1933 herum) die Zwölf-Ton-Theorie entwickelt und ließ sie, da er selbst das Komponieren schon aufgegeben hatte, Schönberg nutzen und unter seinen Namen veröffentlichen. Manns Großzügigkeit erwähnte niemals diese Verletzung seiner Rechte.

(...)

Nur der wahre Schöpfer ist zu einer solchen erhellenden Darstellung fähig. Aber Schönberg hätte niemals die Fähigkeit zu einem solchen Werk gehabt<sup>ii</sup>. (Schoenberg, Randold. 103-104)

Mann answers that everyone knows who the creator of the twelve-tone-technique is and that he just wanted to draw a picture of a time, based on a caricatural vision of an artist who represents “the martyr of our time” (“*Märtyrer der Zeit*”) (Schoenberg, Randold 106)<sup>iii</sup>. The German writer wrote the novel between May 23, 1943 and January 29, 1947, in the time between the Second World War and the first years of the great depression resulting from the conflict. Mann sees in Schönberg the Twentieth Century Faust, and sends him a copy of *Doktor Faustus* with the following brief note: “Arnold Schönberg, dem *Eigentlichen*, mit ergebenem Gruss” (Schoenberg, Randold 98)<sup>iv</sup>.

The chronological calculations indicate that Schönberg never finished Thomas Mann’s book and, consequently, his critiques can be put between parenthesis or, almost, accept that they are partial (Schoenberg, Randold 182) <sup>v</sup>. In 1948, Schönberg alludes Leverkühn and the relationship between Mann and Adorno, who is his musical advisor owing to the fact that he was Alban Berg’s pupil and, presumably, he knew first hand the twelve-tone-method. Schönberg mourned because, although he intended to explain the discoveries about the multiple counterpoints during his teaching days, this didn’t interest pupils enough and caused him discouragement. He comments that he has drawn a vital lesson from that experience:

Secret science is not what an alchemist would have refused to teach you; it is a science which cannot be taught at all. It is inborn or is not there.

This is also the reason why Thomas Mann's Adrian Leverkühn does not know the essentials of composing with twelve tones. All he knows he has been told by Mr. Adorno, who knows only the little I was able to tell my pupils. The real fact will probably remain secret science until there is one who inherits it by virtue of an unsolicited gift (Schönberg, *Style and idea* 386).

Schönberg uses this opportunity to say that Leverkühn (Mann) does not know the essentials of twelve-tone method.

It is undeniable that Thomas Mann has a huge interest in music: “No soy un hombre visual, sino un músico desplazado a la literatura”, he writes to his friend, the scenic artist Emil Preetorius, on December 12 1947 (Matamoro 13)<sup>vi</sup>. It is also proved in a letter to Adorno, collected by Bernhold Schmid: “« [...] der Eindruck, daß die Musik doch da sein muß, ist mir, wie das Überzeugende der biographischen Fiktion überhaupt, besonders wichtig”. Generell um fachmusikalische Aspekte dürfte er sich sehr bemüht haben» (Schoenberg, Randold 213-214).<sup>vii</sup> Mann has the need to feel music close to him, especially in fiction. He comments that the musical aspects have to be accurate, and this is the role played by W. Adorno in Mann’s work, being his musical councillor. Schönberg has serious doubts about Adorno’s competence in a slippery field like twelve-tone music. Whatever the case may be, Mann was determined to make his Twentieth Century Faust a musician: “If Faust is to be the representative of the German soul, he would have to be musical, for the relation of the Germans to the world is abstract and mystical, that is musical...” (Carnegy 6).

Schönberg, a susceptible personality, was probably most annoyed by the hero’s destiny:

“Wir sahen Tränen seine Wangen hinunterrinnen und auf die Tasten fallen, die er, naß wie sie waren, in stark dissonantem Akkorde anschlug. Dabei öffnete er den Mund, wie um zu singen, aber nur in Klangelaut, der mir für immer im Ohre hängen geblieben ist, brach zwischen seinen Lippen hervor; er breitete, über das Instrument gebeugt, die Arme aus, als wollte er es damit umfragen, und fiel plötzlich, wie gestoßen, seitlich vom Sessel hinab zu Boden”<sup>viii</sup> (Mann, Thomas, *Doktor Faustus* 729).

The pact signed by Adrian Leverkühn with the Demon in 1912 expires at that moment. It is detailed in a long dialogue –or internal monologue- in chapter XXV of Thomas Mann’s novel, *Doktor Faustus*. A conversation that the hero transcribed in a notebook and recuperates Serenus Zeitblom, the narrator, in order to rewrite it in the body of the novel, in 1944, according to Mann’s words. It is a metafictional chapter -fiction into fiction- which, actually, manages to

resemble reality as closely as possible. If there were any characteristic that we could highlight in the figure of Leverkühn, it would be that it is “demonic”.

To this end –we have to remember that after these words goes the epilogue -, we can find an affinity with a Schönbergian aphorism from 1909. Adrian’s painful outcry could be the humanity outcry:

“Kunst ist der Notschrei jener, die an sich das Schicksal der Menschheit erleben. Die nicht mit ihm sich abfinden, sondern sich mit ihm auseinandersetzen. Die nicht stumpf den Motor »dunkle Mächte« bedienen, sondern sich ins laufende Rad stürzen um die Konstruktion zu begreifen. Die nicht die Augen abwenden, um sich vor Emotionen zu behüten, sondern sie aufreißen, um anzugehn, was angegangen werden muß. Die aber oft die Augen schließen, um wahrzunehmen, was die Sinne nicht vermitteln, um innen zu schauen, was nur scheinbar außen vorgeht. Und innen, in ihnen, ist die Bewegung der Welt; nach außen dringt nur der Widerhall: das Kunstwerk”<sup>x</sup> (Schönberg, A. ASC\_Y3.62.159).

Art, or the *Painful outcry from Doctor Faustus (Doctor Fausti Wehklang)*, as the title eloquently announces, is a result of a metaphoric exclamation of the artist, the chosen one, who is able to assume humankind’s destiny. It is a traumatic externalisation of an artistic product gestated in the interior of a creator like Adrian Leverkühn, who is one of those heroes bound by eternity, the genius who leads the talented ones, despite the fact that to surpass the frontier that exists between intelligence –extraordinary ability or talent– and genius has had to pay the price of a pact with the Demon in chapter XXV.

In *Entstehung des Doktor Faustus. Roman eines Romans*, Mann confesses that he finds in Adorno texts about Schönberg what he wants to express in his novel: “denn was ich ihr entnehen mochte und mir zur Darstellung der kulturellen Gesamtkrise wie der Musik im besonderen von ihr aneignete, war das Grundmotiv meines Buches: die Nähe der Sterilität, die eingeborene und zum Teufelspakt prädisponierende Verzweiflung (Mann, Thomas, *Doktor Faustus Roman* 52-53)<sup>x</sup>. Throughout the whole chapter of the dialogue with the Devil, he wants to convince Adrian Leverkühn that taking his soul will give him benefits. For that reason, and because Mann is an intellectual who writes a novel situated in some undetermined place between essay and pure fiction, the devil’s speech has art as the nuclear theme and, especially, music.

The Devil establishes that “Zeit ist das Beste und Eigentliche, das wir geben, und unsre Gabe ist Sundglas. (...) Nur eben daß das Stundglas gestellt ist, der Sand immerhin zu rinnen begonnen hat, darüber wollt ich mich gern mit dir, mein Lieber, verständigen” (Mann, Thomas, *Doktor Faustus* 332)<sup>xi</sup>. Adrian can not melt down the heavy weight that implies to go forward to the end of the established time –twenty-four years–, but the character does not know yet of the tempting offer that will have the most dramatic consequences:

“Er: >Zeit? Bloß so Zeit? Nein, mein Guter, das ist keine Teufelsware. (...) Was für'ne Sorte Zeit, darauf kommt's an! (...) So ist doch Künstlerart und –Natur. Die, bekanntlich, neigt allezeit zur Ausgelassenheit nach beiden Seiten, ist ganz normalerweise ein bißchen ausschreitend. Da schlägt immer der Pendel weit hin und her zwischen Aufgeräumtheit und Melancholia (...). Aufschwünge liefern wir und Erleuchtungen, Erfahrungen von Enthobenheit und Entfesselung, von Freiheit, Sicherheit, Leichtigkeit, Macht- und Triumphgefühl, daß unser Mann seinen Sinnen nicht traut (...). Und entsprechend tief, ehrenvoll tief, geht's zwischendurch denn auch hinab, - nicht nur in Leere und Öde und unvermögende Traurigkeit, sondern auch in Schmerzen und Übelkeiten, - vertraute übrigens, die schon immer da waren, die zur Anlage gehören, nur höchst ehrenvoll verstärkt sind sie durch die Illumination und den bewußten Haarbeutel. Das sind Schmerzen, dia man für das enorm Genossene mit Vergnügen und Stolz in Kauf nimmt” (Mann, Thomas, *Doktor Faustus* 336-337)<sup>xii</sup>.

Abstract time is what interests the Devil the most, a time that, by the way, is conveniently adequate to each artist, a soul full of excesses whom has difficulties in finding the balance between joy and torment. The Demon can incorporate unique experiences like inspiration, the sensation that the artist is dominating the matter of his creation. Nevertheless, this sublime state of mind has a price: illness and the impossibility of love. In the Devil's words: “Liebe ist dir verboten, insofern sie wärmt. Dein Leben soll kalt sein – darum darfst du keinen Menschen lieben. (...) Kalt wollen wir dich, daß kaum die Flammen der Produktion heiß genug sein sollen, dich darin zu wärmen. In sie wirst du flüchten aus deiner Lebenskälte...< (...) Schägst du mir's dar? Eine werkgefüllte Ewigkeit von Menschenleben lang sollst du's genießen” (Mann, Thomas, *Doktor Faustus* 364)<sup>xiii</sup>. The renunciation of love is a high price to pay, but in this moment Leverkühn is not conscious of to what point he can be affected by this imperative. And illness, although that is not something new for him, ruffles him heavily. And the most terrible thing: the unknown. Adrian will not know anything about hell until he is there, because it is ineffable: “Das ist die geheime

Lust und Sicherheit der Höllen, daß sie nicht denunzierbar, daß sie vor der Sprache geborgen ist“ (Mann, Thomas, *Doktor Faustus* 357)<sup>xiv</sup>.

Regarding the pact, Adrian Leverkühn has no choice and the Devil takes for granted that it will be established because the pact is, in fact, with himself. He condemns himself to a spiritual death in return for being able to finish his greatest work, *Doctor Fausti Wehklang*, fragments of which were decided to be played at the moment Adrian is no longer Adrian, only to become a creature without vitality secluded in a mental health hospital. A new life radically opposed to what he was living, the one who had to be the topic of the book that Serenus Zeitblom would have to write during the war, when the destiny of Germany was already decided: the life of his greatest friend Adrian Leverkühn, the genius, the creator of a new musical system –presumably revolutionary- in which the basis relies on composition in twelve tones. This fact that, deeply read the novel remains as another point to consider in Adrian’s evolution, supposed the end of the friendship between Arnold Schönberg and Thomas Mann. As the author exposes, in the attempt to create a hero for his novel, twelve-tone composition was not the most important element in the construction of the main character: “So wüßte er, daß unter meinen Versuchen dem Helden des Buches “Eigenschaften zu verleihen, die eine Romanfigur braucht, um Interesse zu erregen”, die Übertragung von Schoenbergs “Methode des Komponierens mit zwölf aufeinander bezogenen Tönen” auf ihn nicht gerade der einzige und nicht der wichtigste war”<sup>xv</sup> (Schoenberg Randol 144).

Nevertheless, I find it extraordinary that Thomas Mann served his imagination with the art of Schönberg to create his Faust. In chapter XXII, Adrian Leverkühn largely talks about music and confesses to the narrator, Serenus Zeitblom, PhD in Philosophy, -like Johannes Faustus in the Sixteenth Century-, who has found the perfect and rational compositional method. “Das –says Adrian- ist ganz aus einer Grundgestalt, einer vielfach variablen Intervallreihe” (Mann, Thomas *Doktor Faustus* 279) <sup>xvi</sup>. “In this point, there is a coincidence with Schönberg’s formulation: “A basic set consists of various intervals” (Schönberg, Arnold, *Style and idea* 219). And follows: “Den fünf Tönen h-e-a-e-es abgeleitet, Horizontale und Vertikale sind davon bestimmt und beherrscht, soweit das eben bei einem

Grundmotiv von so beschränkter Notenzahl möglich ist” (Mann, Thomas, *Doktor Faustus* 279) <sup>xvii</sup> . For Schönberg, this would be the basic set that functions in the manner of a motiv” (Schönberg, Arnold, *Style and idea* 219). “Es ist wie ein Wort –Mann continues–, ein Schlüsselwort, dessen Zwischen überall in dem Lied zu finden sind und es gänzlich determinieren möchten. Es ist aber ein zu kurzes Wort und in sich zu wenig beweglich” (Mann, Thomas, *Doktor Faustus* 279). In these words, we can appreciate how Mann interrelates music and word necessarily, something that does not happen in Schönberg. It has to be said, however, that this does occur in the stadium of “emancipation of dissonance”, in which he discovers how to construct larger forms following a text or a poem (Schönberg, Arnold, *Style and idea* 217). However, in twelve-tone composition he could write a whole opera with a single set (224)<sup>xviii</sup>. Mann goes forward, through Adrian’s word of mouth:

“Man müßte (...) aus den zwölf Stufen des temperierten Halbton-Alphabets größere Wörter bilden, Wörter von zwölf Buchstaben, bestimmte Kombinationen und Interrelationen der zwölf Halbtöne, Reihenbildungen, aus denen das Stück, der einzelne Satz oder ein ganzes mehrsätziges Werk strikt abgeleitet werden müßte. Jeder Ton der gesamten Komposition, melodisch und harmonisch, müßte sich über seine Beziehung zu dieser vorbestimmten Grundreihe auszuweisen haben. Keiner dürfte wiederkehren, ehe alle anderen erschienen sind. Keiner dürfte auftreten, der nicht in der Gesamtkonstruktion seine motivische Funktion erfüllte. Es gäbe keine freie Note mehr. Das würde ich strengen Satz nennen” (Mann, Thomas, *Doktor Faustus* 280)<sup>xix</sup>.

Now, it is interesting to see how Schönberg formulates it:

“This method consists, primarily, of the constant and exclusive use of a set of twelve different notes. This means, of course, that no tone is repeated within the row that uses all twelve tones of the chromatic scale, though in a different order. It is in no way the chromatic scale. (...) Such a basic set (BS) consists of various intervals. It should never be called a scale, although it is invented to substitute for some of the unifying and formative advantages of scale and tonality. (...) Something different and more important is derived from it with a regularity comparable to the regularity and logic of the earlier harmony; the association of tones into harmonies and their successions is regulated (...) by the order of these tones. The basic set functions in the manner of a motive. This explains why such a basic set has to be invented anew for every piece” (Schönberg, Arnold, *Style and idea* 218-219).

Mann’s extract talks about “semitonal tempered alphabet” (*temperierten Halbton-Alphabets*), to refer to the basis of the “rigorous composition” (*strengen*



Satz) that it has to organize the piece, meanwhile Schönberg talks about chromatic scale. Both coincide in saying that the work derives strictly from the basic set (Schönberg) or “semitonal intervals” (*Halbton-Stufen*) or row (*Reichenbildungen*) in Mann, and in the fact that the row is based on a set of intervals between the pitches. Schönberg asserts that he would not name it scale because the scale does not substitute, in any case, the tonal scale. Meanwhile Mann adverts the need to justify melodically and harmonically every pitch in relationship with the row, namely, that would have a correspondence between each pitch and the horizontal and vertical axis, what can be considered something close to Schönberg’s fundamental idea of unity –written in capital letters-: “THE TWO-OR-MORE-DIMENSIONAL SPACE IN WHICH MUSICAL IDEAS ARE PRESENTED IS A UNIT” (Schönberg, Arnold, *Style and idea* 218-219), because he wants to point out that pitches have to have a meaning both on a harmonic and melodic level simultaneously, being audible on both levels. The asseverations of Serenus are similar to this idea, and Adrian, in several moments, shows a preoccupation for “das Problem der Einheit, Vertauschbarkeit, Identität von Horizontale und Vertikale” (Mann, Thomas, *Doktor Faustus* 111)<sup>xx</sup>. Regarding that for Schönberg this is fundamental, for Adrian they are simple “magischen Unterhaltungen” (Mann, Thomas, *Doktor Faustus* 112)<sup>xxi</sup> and Mann puts the word in his mouth, a theory of the vertical and horizontal space, taking as the basis intervals and dissonances. On the one hand, he talks about “der Umwandlung des Intervalls in den Akkord, die ihn beschäftige wie nichts anderes, des Horizontalen also ins Vertikale, des Nacheinanders ins Gleichzeitige. Gleichzeitigkeit, behauptete er, sei dabei eigentlich das Primäre, denn der Ton selbst, mit seinen näheren und entfernteren Obertönen, sei ein Akkord und die Skala nur die analytische Auseinanderlegung des Klanges in die horizontale Reihe” (Mann, Thomas, *Doktor Faustus* 112)<sup>xxii</sup>. According to Schoenberg’s *Harmonielehre*: “Ein Klang ist zusammengesetzt aus einer Reihe mitklingender Töne, den Obertönen; er bildet also einen Akkord” (Schönberg, Arnold, *Harmonielehre* 19)<sup>xxiii</sup>. According to this theory, overtones are further in dissonant intervals. Therefore, how Mann correctly understood, “desto entschiedener ist der polyphone Charakter des

Akkordes, je dissonanter er ist. Die Dissonanz ist der Gradmesser seiner polyphonen Würde” (Mann, Thomas, *Doktor Faustus* 112)<sup>xxiv</sup>. If a consonant chord expands a serie of overtones on a horizontal level, a dissonant one will expand even more.

In Mann’s consideration of “musical mortive” (*Motiv*) we can even appreciate another meaning, the Schönberguian musical idea, the creative root, the basic idea of the composition, its essence. Moving further, when Mann affirms that “there is no free note” (*Es gäbe keine freie Note mehr*), he points out that every note has a place in the “constellation” (*Konstellation*) –in Leverkühn’s therminology-, something that reminds Schönberg’s idea of “association of notes regulated by the order of these notes”, what is to say, that every single note has its place. Mann emphasizes that Leverkühn’s is a rational “system”, according to Serenus Zeitblom: “Rationale Durchorganisation dürfte man das schon nennen. Eine außerordentliche Geschlossenheit und Stimmingkeit (...). Aber wenn ich’s mir vorstelle (...) würde wohl unvermeidlich eine arge Verdüfftigung und Stagnation der Musik erzeugen” (Mann, Thomas, *Doktor Faustus* 280)<sup>xxv</sup>. Adrian follows with the explanation of his system:

“Außer as Grundreihe könnte es so Verwendung finden, daß jedes seiner Intervalle durch das in der Gegenrichtung ersetzt wird. Ferner könnte man die Gestalt mit dem letzen Ton beginnen und mit dem ersten schließen lassen, dann auch diese Form wieder in sich umkehren. Da hast du vier Modi, die sich ihrerseits auf alle zwölf verschiedenen Ausgangstöne der chromatischen Skala transportieren lassen, so daß die Reihe also in achtundvierzig verschiedenen Formen für eine Komposition zur Verfügung steht und was sonst noch für Variationsscherze sich anbieten mögen“ (Mann, Thomas, *Doktor Faustus* 281)<sup>xxvi</sup>.

Schönberg formulates it in a clearer way: “From the basic set, three additional sets are automatically derived: (1) the inversion; (2) the retrograde; and (3) the retrograde inversion. The employment of these mirror forms corresponds to the principle of *the absolute and unitary perception of musical space*” (Schönberg, A. *SI*, p. 225). And, furthermore, “the basic set is used in diverse mirror forms” (Schönberg, Arnold, *Style and idea* 220) and “the set is often divided into groups; for example, into two groups of six tones, or three groups of four, or four groups of three tones” (Schönberg, Arnold, *Style and idea* 226). Moreover, the formulation is not as clear as Schönberg’s, which is more systematic. Adrian

insistis: “Eine Komposition kann auch zwei oder mehrere Reihen als Ausgangsmaterial benutzen, nach Art der Doppel- und Tripelfuge” (Mann, Thomas, *Doktor Faustus* 281)<sup>xxvii</sup>. This is a collision point with Schönberg: meanwhile on a theoretical level it presents a clear disagreement, owing to the fact that the composer says that “the use of more than one set was excluded because in every following set one or more tones would have been repeated too soon” (and one tone cannot be repeated more times than others because we have the natural tendency to associate the repetition to the sensation of fundamental, in which the others establish a dependent relationship), Adorno reminds us that, for example, in his *Drittes Strichquartett* op. 30 (1927), Schönberg precisely uses the model of double and triple fugue that Mann transcribes literally from Adorno’s *Philosophie der neuen Musik*.

In the following pages we read: “Das Entscheidende ist, daß jeder Ton darin, ohne jede Ausnahme, seinen Stellenwert hat in der Reihe oder einer ihrer Ableitung. Das würde gewährleisten, was ich die Indifferenz von Harmonik und Melodik nenne (&hellip;) Aber diese Ordnung wird oder würde man hören, und ihre Wahrnehmung würde eine ungekannte ästhetische Genugtuung gewähren” (Mann, Thomas, *Doktor Faustus* 281) <sup>xxviii</sup>. In Mann we cannot find the fundamental thesis of the exclusive relationship between one tone and another, as the complete formulation of the Schönberg’s method guarantees “Methode der Komposition mit zwölf nur aufeinander bezogenen Tönen”. The Austrian composer emphasizes this aspect of his music, a fundamental point of his theory. As for the “unknown aesthetic satisfaction” (*eine ungekannte ästhetische Genugtuung*), it implies that the row is audible. On the contrary, with Schönberg we need the score to appreciate precisely the architecture of the composition.

Zeitblom, who appears to be inspired in the figure of Wilhelm Furtwängler, who had been Mann’s professor<sup>xxix</sup>, appreciates in Leverkün’s system “eine Art von Komponieren vor dem Komponieren hinaus” (Mann, Thomas, *Doktor Faustus* 281-82)<sup>xxx</sup> and, as Adorno would say, it starts veritably when the twelve-tones are established (Adorno 60). This statement is especially interesting because what the friend perceives from Leverkühn’s explanations is a double process

in the compositive act. On the one hand, the creation of the “semitonal tempered alphabet”, ordering twelve tones depending on the pitch intervals; on the other hand, the work in itself, created with this starting point. Serenus continues replicating his friend’s argumentation and concludes that the creative element of variation “wäre ins Material zurückverlegt – samt der Freiheit des Komponisten. Wenn er ans Werk ginge, wäre er nicht mehr frei»” (Mann, Thomas, *Doktor Faustus* 282)<sup>xxxix</sup>. Serenus understands the second creative moment, to write the work after obtaining the row, as something pre-established, without freedom of movements. But Schönberg would say: “One has to follow the basic set; but, nevertheless, one composes as freely as before” (Schönberg, Arnold, *Style and Idea* 224). This freedom is not destined to all human beings, only to geniuses, the superior men, or the ignorant ones, who do not know what they are doing: “A composer with twelve independent tones apparently possesses the kind of freedom which many would characterize by saying: 'everything is allowed'. 'Everything' has always been allowed to two kinds of artists: to masters on the one hand, and to ignoramuses on the other” (235). Adrian vindicates the same with resonances to the second Kantian critic: “»Gebunden durch selbstbereiteten ordnungswang, also frei«” (Mann, Thomas, *Doktor Faustus* 282)<sup>xxxix</sup>.

Adrian enunciates two fundamental concepts: emancipation of dissonance and system: “Die Emanzipation der Dissonanz von ihrer Auflösung, das Absolutwerden der Dissonanz (...) würde jeden Zusammenklang rechtfertigen, der sich vor dem System legitimieren kann” (Mann, Thomas, *Doktor Faustus* 282)<sup>xxxix</sup>. On the one hand, “Emancipation of dissonance” is the terminology used by Schönberg to talk about the development of late-Romanticism –as in *Harmonielehre* talks about “polytonal” or “pantonal” music: “Tonality was already dethroned in practice, if not in theory. This alone would perhaps not have caused a radical change in compositional technique. However, such a change became necessary when there occurred simultaneously a development which ended in what I call the emancipation of the dissonance” (Schönberg, Arnold, *Style and Idea* 216). In *Harmonielehre*, Schönberg comments on that consonance and dissonance present not an essential

differentiation but a graded one, and defines the consonance as “als die näher liegenden, einfacheren, Dissonanzen als die entfernter liegenden, komplizierteren Verhältnisse zum Grundton” (Schönberg, Arnold, *Harmonielehre* 17) <sup>xxxiv</sup>. Or, following the same argumentation: “Die Dissonanzen nur graduell verschieden sind von den Konsonanzen; daß sie nichts anderes sind als entfernter liegende Konsonanzen, deren Analyse dem Ohr mehr Schwierigkeiten macht wegen ihrer Entfernung” (75)<sup>xxxv</sup>.

There is another discordant point in Schönberg-Leverkühn, thus Mann’s hero refers to compositional advances as system, but Schönberg formulates it very clearly: “I called this procedure *Method of Composing with Twelve Tones Which are Related Only with One Another*” (Schönberg, Arnold, *Style and idea* 218), or, even more explicit: “Already I did not call it a «system» but a «method»” (213).

Previous to the formulation of the “system” with twelve tones, Mann wrote about “Herren- und Dienertöne” (Mann, Thomas, *Doktor Faustus* 276)<sup>xxxvi</sup> in reference to tonality, what Schönberg describes as “eine sich aus dem Wesen des Tonmaterials ergebende formale Möglichkeit, durch eine gewisse Einheitlichkeit eine gewisse Geschlossenheit zu erzielen” (Schönberg, Arnold, *Harmonielehre*, p. 27) <sup>xxxvii</sup>. Tonality is a convention that requires order, dependence on the fundamental that could be perceived easily. Schönberg refutes tonality as an eternal law or natural in music, a thought that finds affinity with Mann’s words: “Die heute zerstörten musikalischen Konventionen waren nicht allerzeit gar so objektiv, so äußerlich auferlegt. Sie waren Verfestigungen lebendiger Erfahrungen und erfüllten als solche lange eine Aufgabe von vitaler Wichtigkeit: die Aufgabe der Organisation. Organisation ist alles.” (Mann, Thomas, *Doktor Faustus* 278)<sup>xxxviii</sup>. Schönberg, in “Composition with twelve-tones (1)”, pointed out the need of creating a new way of organisation through the twelve-tone method (Schönberg, Arnold, *Style and Idea* 215). As for Adrian, who at some point expresses that: “Wenigstens hatte er Ordnungssinn, und sogar eine alberne Ordnung ist immer noch besser als gar keine” (Mann, Thomas, *Doktor Faustus* 104)<sup>xxxix</sup>. Schönberg also defends that a work of art

has to maintain order, but just as a medium, owing to the fact that in the chaos we can also find beauty:

“Die Ordnung, die wir künstlerische Form nennen, ist nicht Selbstzweck, sondern Notbehelf (...). Damit soll nicht gesagt sein, daß jemals Ordnung, Klarheit und Verständlichkeit einem Kunstwerk werden fehlen dürfen, wohl aber, daß nicht bloß, was wir als solche begreifen, diesen Namen verdient. Denn die Natur ist auch schön, wo wir sie nicht verstehen, und wo sie uns ungeordnet scheint” (Schönberg, Arnold, *Harmonielehre* 30)<sup>xi</sup>.

The yearning for comprehension is what looks for Schönberg in twelve-tone music: “Form in the arts, and especially in music, aims primarily at comprehensibility” (Schönberg, Arnold, *Style and Idea* 215). To a certain point, this comprehensibility can be achieved thanks to the *entwickelnde Variation* (developing variation), that Adrian says we can find in Beethoven and Brahms and that it has two main goals for Schönberg, according to Bryan Simms: “It can help create a sophisticated and artful melody by the rapid growth of initial motivic elements, and it can link together seemingly different melodies on the basis of continually evolving motive forms” (Simms 34). The developing variation presents a formula that is repeated with certain modifications, but in each progressive modification we find the initial formula. Mann’s position toward this topic is the following: “Die Variation, also etwas Archaisches, ein Residuum, wird zum Mittel spontaner Neuschöpfung der Form” (Mann, Thomas, *Doktor Faustus* 278)<sup>xii</sup>. In order to variate something, it is necessary to have an originari root –here named “archaic”-, that, at the same time is susceptible to being modified in a determined way, in Mann, almost natural, unreachable by the composer, that although permits continued composing. In Mann, creation, is organic.

Thomas Mann’s hero is a melancholious figure, with his Romantic idea of inspiration, symbolized by the presence of angels –which also appear in Dürer’s engravings- who guide the creation. On the contrary, Schönberg is a genius full of aesthetic health, because he presents an *artistic ethos* from the Twentieth Century, which adapts to new times and gives answers that state a determined vital, social and artistic moment. He is a fellow contemporary of the great revolutions of our time, meanwhile Leverkühn offers a system that, when formulated, is already expired, because, this is pure *inventio*, in the sense that

it does not follow a coherent evolution that brings him to formulate the art that could be hegemonic in the next one hundred years –as Schönberg had hoped (Berg 341)<sup>xlii</sup>. With his rudimental knowledge and a limited perspective, he wants to melt in a cauldron different heterogenic elements that configure a magic potion under an astral conjunction. Because Leverkühn is a Faust that still conserves a lot from the middle-age mythos: “Thomas Mann croyait que la technique de douze sons lui permettrait de découvrir un recoupement entre l’archaïsme et modernité, dont le symbolisme musical pourrait s’exprimer dans un roman qui tire un parallèle entre l’hystérie d’un Moyen Âge en déclin et celle du fascisme” (Dahlhaus 201) <sup>xliii</sup>. Because, certainly, the terrible historical experience of fascism, with its rebellion against Enlightenment values has a flavour of returning to medieval obscurity, to fanaticism and to supersticion.



**Melencolia I, by Albrecht Dürer, 1514**

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<sup>ii</sup> ["I've been leafing through six decades of the American Encyclopedia without even finding its name! It was not until I came to the 1988 edition that I found his name [Schoenberg's] and a small biographical note.

(...)

Furthermore, he must have had a confrontation with the well-known German poet Thomas Mann, who was evidently the inventor of the twelve-tone composing method, which is based on the emancipation of dissonance, the equivalence of the concept of dissonance with the concept of unison. Webern mentions Schoenberg's merit in inventing this theory and its terminology, but it seems to be wrong or Schoenberg was a ruthless exploiter of another man's idea.

(...)

Probably at that time (around 1933) he had developed the twelve-tone theory and, since he himself had already given up composing, had it been used by Schoenberg and published under his name. Mann's generosity never mentioned this violation of his rights.

(...)

Only the true Creator is capable of such an enlightening representation. But Schoenberg would never have had the ability to do such a work." *trans. by the autor.*] All the quotations in this

article will be translated by the author.

It seems to be that Hugo Triebtsamen, name result of the combination of Hugo Riemann, a notorious musicologist, and Walter Rubsamen, author of the book about the American years of Schönberg, in 2048. Schönberg writes it in a 1948 letter to Thomas Mann.

<sup>iii</sup> Letter from Mann to Schönberg on February 17, 1948.

<sup>iv</sup> ["To Arnold Schönberg, the *original*, with sincere greeting"], Dedication from January 15, 1948.

<sup>v</sup> According to Schönberg, Leverkühn was born in 1866, although in the book is written that he was born in 1885 and died in 1940. Letter's Schönberg in *Music Survey*, Vol. II, No. 2, autumn 1949: "Wenn er wirklich 1941 gestorben ist, so muss er wenigstens 75 Jahre alt und etwa 1866 geboren sein (...)" ("If he really died in 1941, he must have been at least 75 years old about 1866 (...). (Arnold Schönberg Center\_1949.05.02\_ID: 5041. From now on, Arnold Schönberg Center will be abbreviated ASC) only indicates the error in the date, but in the French edition is unbearably explicit that Schönberg didn't read the hole novel. In note 22 in page 80 the author writes: "Les calculs chronologiques de Schoenberg montrent qu'il n'a pas lu le roman" ["Schoenberg's chronological calculations show that he didn't read the novel"], in: SCHOENBERG, Arnold, MANN, Thomas. *A propos du Docteur Faustus*. Préface de E. Randol Schoenberg, Postface de Bernhold Schmid, Traduit de l'allemand et de l'anglais par Hans Hildenbrand. Collection Pergamine. La Bibliothèque des Arts. Lausanne, 2002, p. 80.

<sup>vi</sup> ["I am not a visual man, but a musician displaced to literature"].

<sup>vii</sup> ["The impression that the music must be there is, like the convincing nature of biographical fiction, particularly important to me." In general he would have tried hard to find technical aspects"]. The letter is from November 8 1947 and we can find it in MANN, Erika (Hrsg.). *Thomas Mann, Briefe II, 1937-1947*. Fischer. Frankfurt am Main, 1963.

<sup>viii</sup> ["We saw tears trickle down his cheeks and fall on the keys that he, wet as they were, emitted very dissonant chords. He opened his mouth as if to sing, but only in outcry, who had stuck in my ear forever, burst out from between his lips; he spread his arms over the instrument, as if to question it, and suddenly, as if pushed, he fell sideways from the chair to the floor"].

<sup>ix</sup> ["Art is the cry of those who experience the fate of humanity. They do not resign themselves to it, but deal with it. Those who do not dull the engine of "dark powers", but rush into the wheel to understand the construction. They do not turn their eyes to protect themselves from emotions, but tear them open to tackle what needs to be done. But they often close their eyes to perceive what the senses do not convey, to look within, which seems to be out of the ordinary. And inside, in them, is the movement of the world; on the outside there is only echo: the work of art"].

<sup>x</sup> ["To expose the general cultural crisis, and music in particular, was the basic motive of my book: the closeness of sterility, the indigenous despair predestined to the pact of the devil"].

<sup>xi</sup> ["Time is the best and the real thing we give, and our gift is sundglas. (...) Only just that the glass is set, the sand has at least begun to trickle about it, I would like to communicate with you, my dear"].

<sup>xii</sup> ["He:> time? Just so much time? No, my dear, that is not devilish. (...) What a kind of time, that's what it's all about! (...) This is the manner and the nature of the artist. Who, as is well known, always tends to exuberance on both sides, is usually a bit stepped out. The pendulum always bounces back and forth between tidiness and melancholia (...). We bring surges and enlightenments, experiences of deprivation and unleashing, of freedom, security, ease, sense of power and triumph that our man does not trust his senses (...). And accordingly deep, honorable deep, it goes down in between - not only in emptiness and desolation and inferior sadness, but also in pain and nausea, - known by the way, who were always there, innate, only most honored strengthened they are through the illumination and the conscious blackbird. These are pains that one takes with pleasure and pride for the enormously enjoyed"].

<sup>xiii</sup> ["Love is forbidden to you insofar as it warms. Your life should be cold - so you must not love a human being. (...) We want you cold, that hardly the flames of the production should be hot enough to warm you. Into them you will flee from your coldness of life ... <(…) Are you in? A work-filled eternity of human life should you enjoy it "].

<sup>xiv</sup> ["That is the secret pleasure and safety of the hells, that they are not denounceable, that they are away from language."].

<sup>xv</sup> ["So he knew that among my attempts to give the hero of the book "characteristics that a novelist needs to incite interest", the inclusion of Schoenberg's "method of composing with twelve tones one related to another" was not exactly the only one and certainly not the most

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important"]. Mann in *Saturday Review of Literature* in December 10, 1948.

<sup>xvi</sup> ["This comes entirely from a basic shape, a highly variable interval rows"].

<sup>xvii</sup> ["Derived from the five notes h-e-a-e-es, horizontal and vertical are determined and dominated, as far as this is possible with a basic motive of such a limited number of notes"].

<sup>xviii</sup> And he adds: "In the first works in which I employed this method, I was not yet be convinced that the exclusive use of one set would not result in monotony. (...) But soon I discovered that my fear was unfounded; I could even base a whole opera, *Moses und Aron*, solely on one set; and I found that, on the contrary, the more familiar I became with this set the more easily I could draw themes from it".

<sup>xix</sup> ["One would have to (...) form larger words out of the twelve levels of the tempered semitone alphabet, words of twelve letters, certain combinations and interrelations of the twelve semitones, rows forming the piece, the single sentence or a whole multi-movement work would have to be derived. Every sound of the entire composition, melodic and harmonic, would have to be identified by its relation to this predetermined basic row. No one should return until all the others have appeared. No one should appear until it doesn't fulfill his motivic function in the overall construction. There would be no free grade. That's what I would call a rigorous composition"].

<sup>xx</sup> [The problem of unity, interchangeability and identity of the horizontal and vertical lines"].

<sup>xxi</sup> ["Magic amusements"].

<sup>xxii</sup> ["The transformation of the interval into the chord, which worries him like nothing else, from the horizontal to the vertical, from the succession to the simultaneity. Simultaneity, he claimed, was actually the primary element, because the tone itself, with its nearer and farther overtones, was a chord in itself and the scale was only the development of sound into the horizontal rows"].

<sup>xxiii</sup> ["A sound is composed of a series of close tones, the overtones; it forms, therefore, a chord"].

<sup>xxiv</sup> ["The more decidedly is the polyphonic character of the chord the more dissonant it is. The dissonance is the gauge of his polyphonic dignity"].

<sup>xxv</sup> "That might be called rational organization. An extraordinary unity and quietness (...). But if I imagine (...) it would probably unmistakably produce a severe exacerbation and stagnation of the music"].

<sup>xxvi</sup> ["Besides the basic series, it could be used benefitally so that each of its intervals is replaced by that in the opposite direction. Furthermore, one could start the figure with the last note and let it close with the first, and then reverse that form again. There are four modes, which in turn can be transported to all twelve different output tones of the chromatic scale, so that the series is available for composition in forty-eight different forms and whatever else may be appropriate for variation fools"].

<sup>xxvii</sup> ["A composition can use as well two or more rows as a starting point, in a double or triple fugue"].

<sup>xxviii</sup> ["The determining factor is that every note in it, without exception, has its place in the rows or one of its derivatives. That would guarantee what I call the indifference of harmony and melody <(...) But this order will or would be heard, and their perception would provide an unprecedented aesthetic satisfaction"].

<sup>xxix</sup> "Furtwängler encarnaba la cortesanía grave y seria de un catedrático alemán, como su padre, y que Thomas Mann ironizó en el *Serenus Zeitblom* de su *Doktor Faustus*" ["Furtwängler embodied the grave and serious courtesanism of a German professor, as his father did, and that Thomas Mann was being ironic in the *Serenus Zeitblom* of his *Doktor Faustus*"], Matamoro, p. 45.

<sup>xxx</sup> ["A composition prior composition"].

<sup>xxxi</sup> ["Would be integrated to the material altogether, with composer's freedom. When he would return to work, he wouldn't be free"].

<sup>xxxii</sup> ["Tied to an imperative of order that he himself had imposed; free, then"].

<sup>xxxiii</sup> ["The emancipation of dissonance from its dissolution, the dissolution of dissonance (...) would justify any harmony that can legitimize itself before the system"].

<sup>xxxiv</sup> ["as the closer, simpler, dissonances than the more distant, more complicated relations to the fundamental tone"].

<sup>xxxv</sup> ["The dissonances are only gradually different from the consonances; that they are nothing but more distant consonances whose analysis makes the ear more difficult because of their distance"].

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xxxvi ["master and servant tones"].

xxxvii ["A formal possibility arising from the nature of the sound material to achieve a certain totality through a certain unity"].

xxxviii ["The musical conventions destroyed today were not always so objective, so outwardly imposed. They were solidifications of living experiences and as such for a long time fulfilled a task of vital importance: the task of the organization. Organization is everything"].

xxxix ["At least he had sense of order, and even an absurd order is still better than none"].

xl ["The order that we call artistic form is not an end in itself but a makeshift (...). This is not to say that order, clarity, and intelligibility may ever be lacking in a work of art, but that it is not merely what we conceive of as such that deserves this name. Because nature is also beautiful, where we do not understand it, and where it seems to us chaotic"].

xli ["Variation, as something archaic, a residuum, becomes the means of spontaneous re-creation of form"].

xlii We can find three witnesses of this statement: in RUFER, Josef. *Das Werk Arnold Schönbergs*. Basel, London, New York, 1959, p. 26; Letter from Arnold Schönberg to Alma Mahler, July 26, 1921 (ASC, Wien, Marina Mahler Collection).

xliiii ["Thomas Mann thought that twelve-tone technique would permit him to discover a conjunction between the archaism of Modern times, where ~~the~~ musical symbolism will be able to experiment in a novel that establishes a parallelism between the hysterism of the Middle-ages in declination and fascism"].