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**Autor:** Rothfarb, Lee A.  
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# Ernst Kurth in Historical Perspective: His Intellectual Inheritance and Music-Theoretical Legacy

LEE A. ROTHFARB

It is entirely appropriate that this commemorative volume dedicated to Dr. Ernst Kurth (1886–1946) include an essay which establishes an intellectual-historical frame of reference for his work. Such a perspective would, of course, be important for understanding and appreciating the achievements of any eminent scholar, but it is especially crucial, I believe, in Kurth's case. Kurth's underlying attitude as music theorist is that of a wide-ranging humanist and thus conceptually broad, considerably broader than the more traditional, primarily music-technical attitude of many of his fellow scholars. Kurth integrated and creatively applied to music several contemporary intellectual trends issuing from musical as well as from peripherally and even non-musical disciplines, including philosophy, aesthetics, physics and most notably from the then emerging science of psychology. Such a broad conceptual basis necessitates a correspondingly broad intellectual frame of reference in order to place Kurth's work in proper historical perspective.

The following essay offers such a perspective. It begins by positing two groups of early twentieth-century authors who, in different ways, introduced avenues of reform and renewal into the field of music theory. After briefly characterizing these two avenues of reform, the essay continues by sketching more fully the background for the one with which I associate Kurth's writings. The sketch then widens its scope to embrace a broader spectrum of intellectual currents which shaped Kurth's music-theoretical outlook. Finally, the essay attempts to identify the influence of Kurth's work on authors writing from the mid-1930's up to the present.

Ernst Kurth reached maturity in a time of far-reaching intellectual and cultural changes. One need only recall the work of Albert Einstein, Edmund Husserl, Sigmund Freud, Arnold Schoenberg, as well as that of many other European scientists, philosophers and artists working in the decades around 1900, to realize how profoundly the events of that period reshaped man's cultural-intellectual outlook. Kurth received his training as musicologist under Guido Adler at the University of Vienna from 1904–1908, at the very time when Freud, Schoenberg and the painter Gustav Klimt, all working in Vienna, were fundamentally altering ideas on the structure of the mind, music and art. Alongside changes in theories of physics, the mind and visual art, changes occurred in theories of music. Two branches of reform in music theory emerged in the first decade of our century, one exemplified in the writings of Heinrich Schenker, Arnold Schoenberg and the co-authors, Rudolf Louis and Ludwig Thuille, the other in the writings of Hermann Kretzschmar, Arnold Schering and Ernst Kurth.

In creating fresh approaches to music theory, Schoenberg, the Louis-Thuille team and Schenker were reacting, each differently and with differing results, to

the deductive, logico-scientific theories of Hugo Riemann, or to the oversimplified, classroom-style «theory» of Ernst Friedrich Richter.<sup>1</sup> Schoenberg, Louis-Thuille and Schenker, their ideological and methodological differences notwithstanding, belong to a branch of music-theoretical reform which took as a point of departure the traditional elements of investigation and issues of music theory: objective syntactic processes governing tonal relationships. In this admittedly very general sense, they share a disposition toward musical analysis similar to that of their nineteenth-century predecessors. We might characterize this common music-theoretical disposition as «material», not in the sense of emphasizing physico-acoustical matters but rather emphasizing technical-functional matters.

The other branch of reform took a different point of departure. Instead of objective syntactic processes, it focused on the psychological experience of the listener, the subjective interpretation of musical events and their affective impact. We might, therefore, aptly characterize this branch of reform as «experiential», in contrast to the «material» disposition mentioned above. Hermann Kretzschmar initiated this line of investigation with two essays proposing a «hermeneutic» style of analysis, based on the eighteenth-century doctrine of affections.<sup>2</sup> Kretzschmar, Schering and Kurth shifted the music-analytical emphasis from the object of listening to the subject doing the listening, and from a strictly technical to a psychological view of musical events.<sup>3</sup>

All three of these authors treated music as more than just abstractly structured sound. For Kretzschmar, «absolute» music was no more feasible than absolute poetry, whose content he presumed would exhaust itself in rhyme and meter schemes. Kretzschmar argued that all pieces of so-called absolute music embodied an interior mental content encased in the exterior of familiar musical forms. Musical analysis should reveal the mental content of music by interpreting descriptively its exterior forms (melodic figures, motives, themes, harmonies, etc.).<sup>4</sup> Schering sought to establish a relationship between musical processes and those of psychic life, in order to achieve what he called a «psychic resonance» with the forces of tension and release which, for him, characterized all musical works.<sup>5</sup>

Kurth, in his first published work, *Die Voraussetzungen der theoretischen Harmonik* (1913), aligned himself with the psychological branch of reform. He expressed doubt about the scientificity of music theory, claiming that its roots are ultimately psychological rather than acoustical. According to Kurth, explain-

1 Arnold Schönberg, *Harmonielehre*, Wien 1911, p. I; Rudolf Louis, Ludwig Thuille, *Harmonielehre*, Stuttgart 1907, p. IV; Heinrich Schenker, *Harmony*, trans. E. M. Borgese, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1954 (orig. Wien 1905), p. 175; id., *Kontrapunkt I*, Wien 1910, p. XVIII.

2 Hermann Kretzschmar, *Anregungen zur Förderung musikalischer Hermeneutik*, in: *JbMP* (1902), p. 45–66; id., *Neue Anregungen zur Förderung musikalischer Hermeneutik*, in: *JbMP* (1905), p. 73–86.

3 Arnold Schering, *Musikalische Bildung und Erziehung zum musikalischen Hören*, Leipzig 1911; id., *Zur Grundlegung der musikalischen Hermeneutik*, in: *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik u. allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft* 9 (1914), p. 168–175.

4 Kretzschmar, *Anregungen*, p. 51: «die Affekte aus den Tönen lösen und das Gerippe ihrer Entwicklung in Worten . . . geben.» «Whoever penetrates from the tones and [melodic] shapes to the affects raises the sensory pleasure . . . to a mental activity [geistige Tätigkeit].» Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are by the author of this essay.

5 Schering, *Zur Grundlegung*, p. 168.



ing psychological phenomena forms the very foundation of all music-theoretical systems, whose hypotheses, he believed, aim at forging links between tone-psychological and physico-acoustical facts. In *Voraussetzungen*, Kurth identified the chief shortcoming of «scientific» theories as their failure to effect a «consistent and complete transition from acoustics to musical logic.» He concluded that

as long as tone psychology provides no clearly decisive solution to that basic question [of the transition from acoustics to music] as a foundation for building all systems of music theory, it must be admitted at the outset that our entire music theory cannot do without a certain instinctive character alongside of an objective scientific one.<sup>6</sup>

Just as the main goal of Schering's hermeneutic analysis is to promote a «psychic resonance» with musical forces, so the goal of music theory for Kurth is to examine the connection between the exterior acoustical surface of music and its interior psychic origins. In Kurth's words,

The central task of all music theory is to observe the transformation of certain tension processes into sounds. Only in this way is it possible to awaken, even in theoretical reflection, an empathy and internal sympathetic resonance with the animated creative forces.<sup>7</sup>

The turn inward, from a «material» to «experiential» music theory, is illustrative of a pan-European cultural phenomenon rooted in socio-political currents which dominated nineteenth and early twentieth-century mentality. The anti-positivistic sentiments arising at that time helped to establish and legitimize the reflective, psychological leanings emerging in music theory around 1900. In addition to the cultural *Zeitgeist*, specific developments in the field of psychology may have motivated music theorists to explore a psychological viewpoint for their work.

In 1875, Wilhelm Wundt established the first laboratory for experimental research in psychology, marking the birth of psychology as a formal scientific discipline. Wundt's primary goal was to break down conscious experience into discrete elements in order to discover the essential nature of consciousness. His main tool for achieving this goal was introspection, self-observation and attendant verbal description, carried out by subjects exposed to carefully planned and controlled stimuli. According to Wundt, the unity of consciousness is built up from several discrete elements by means of a «creative synthesis» which he called «apperception.»<sup>8</sup> Wundt's introspectional analysis and elementistic view of psychic contents and activity manifests itself in Kretschmar's style of hermeneutic analysis. Kretschmar's inner hearing (*ergänzende Phantasie*) and attempts to verbalize affective states of mind conveyed in the music is related to Wundt's introspectionist mode of analyzing conscious experience. Further, Kretschmar's understanding of a whole piece of music is, like Wundt's understanding of conscious experience, elementistic, a cumulative result of interpreting individual musical components, from motive to theme, to phrase, to period, etc.

6 Ernst Kurth, *Die Voraussetzungen der theoretischen Harmonik*, 2. Aufl. München 1973, p. 6. Further (p. 15): «Arguments concerning the scientific validity of musical theories are ... relegated to psychological assumptions; as long as these issues remain hypothetical, the scientific approach to music theory remains a relative one.»

7 Kurth, *Romantische Harmonik und ihre Krise in Wagners «Tristan»*, Berlin <sup>3</sup>1923, p. 2.

8 Duane P. Schultz, *A History of Modern Psychology*, New York: Academic Press, 1969, p. 44–55.



Around 1900, some psychologists turned away from Wundt's elemental or, as it is now called, «structural» approach to consciousness. Instead of building conscious experience out of separate elements, the Gestalt school of thought stressed spontaneous perception of integrated wholes. Kurth's ideas on aural perception of music, and indeed on the essence of music, agree with the Gestalt ideas on visual perception. Just as the Gestaltists stressed the dynamic relationship and primal connection among individual elements in, e.g., a dot configuration, so Kurth stresses the dynamic relationship among individual tones, which outline a «phase of motion» (*Bewegungsphase*), an indivisible primal-melodic whole, unanalyzable into discrete, harmonically generated tones.<sup>9</sup> Kurth interprets musical form similarly, not as series of harmonically, thematically or even macro-rhythmically defined parts but rather as an interlocking series of broad musical intensifications and de-intensifications, as an indivisible ebb and flow of dynamic «waves» reflecting the composer's creative-psychic stream.

The psychological slant in music theory even made its way into the writings of Hugo Riemann, whose «material» theories motivated the «experiential» theories in the first place. In a pair of articles published late in his career, Riemann outlined a «Theory of Tone Conceptions» («*Lehre von den Tonvorstellungen*»), which, he anticipated, would surprise his readers because of its uncharacteristic psychological bent.<sup>10</sup> Just one year after Kurth had questioned the adequacy, indeed the very possibility, of purely logico-scientific theories and had asserted the ultimately instinctive, psychological roots of all music theory, Riemann himself turned away from his otherwise «material» disposition with the following remarks.

The Alpha and Omega of musical art is not the actually sounding music but rather the mental conception of tone relationships which, before notation, lives in the imagination of the composer and arises once again in the imagination of the listener. Both the notation of musical creations and the acoustical performance of the works are only the means to transplant the musical experiences from the imagination of the composer into that of the listener. . . . In other words, the key to the innermost essence of music is not to be found in acoustics, nor in the physiology or psychology of tones [*Tonpsychologie*], but rather only in a *theory of tone conceptions*, a theory which of course up to now has not even been postulated, let alone worked out and cultivated.<sup>11</sup>

Judging from Riemann's final words here, he apparently did not know of *Voraussetzungen*. In a chapter on the «sensation of motion,» Kurth does in fact propose a theory of mentally conceived tones, the tones of «absolute» melody, understood as a pre-acoustic kinesthetic stream.<sup>12</sup> Acoustical melody is a sonorous embodiment of a psychic stream. After posing the notion of «kinetic energy» as the force behind melodic motion, Kurth reminds us that his newly introduced concepts do not refer to acoustical melody but rather to melody «reproduced

9 Kurth, *Grundlagen des linearen Kontrapunkts*, Bern 1948, p. 14f.

10 Hugo Riemann, *Ideen zu einer «Lehre von den Tonvorstellungen»*, in: *JbMP* 21 (1914), p. 1-26; id., *Neue Beiträge zu einer «Lehre von den Tonvorstellungen»*, in: *JbMP* 23 (1916), p. 1-22.

11 Riemann, *Ideen*, p. 2.

12 Kurth, *Voraussetzungen*, p. 58-71. In: *Musikpsychologie*, Berlin 1931, p. 46, Kurth explains that even at the time *Grundlagen* had gone to press he did not know of Riemann's articles on «Tonvorstellungen.»

in the imagination.»<sup>13</sup> Kurth's kinetic energy and its correlate, «potential energy,» as well as his «analytic» and «synthetic fusion,» based on Stumpf, further broaden the psychological premises of Kurth's melodic and harmonic theories. Riemann's apparent ignorance of Kurth's work notwithstanding, *Voraussetzungen* does represent a first working out and cultivation of music as a psychic experience.<sup>14</sup>

I began this study of Kurth's intellectual heritage by examining at length the influences of psychology on his output. I have done this for two reasons. First, because psychology, in its formative stages when Kurth published his early works, was surely a much discussed and debated subject in learned circles at the time. Second, and more importantly, because it is precisely the psychological slant of Kurth's writings which gives them their distinctive character. However, contemporary trends in other disciplines contributed to his music-theoretical outlook as well.

Kurth was an extremely well-informed scholar. His university training in music under Guido Adler was naturally quite thorough. As was customary for a doctoral student in musicology at the time, Kurth took a minor in philosophy, in which he also received a thorough grounding.<sup>15</sup> His extensive personal library, containing numerous volumes on a wide variety of subjects, betokens a broad spectrum of interests. As a thinker, Kurth brought an uncommonly rich background to the field of music theory. In synthesizing various areas of human inquiry, he created a refreshingly new style of music theory and so helped to revitalize a stagnating discipline.

The following pages provide a brief and selective overview of the intellectual legacy bequeathed to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century by musicians and non-musicians whose work either bears directly on, or demonstrates noteworthy bonds with, Kurth's writings. The selection is based primarily on relevance to Kurth's work and not necessarily on his bibliographic references. An innovative thinker such as Kurth often borrows ideas from other writers, consciously or unconsciously, leaving us to discover networks of influence among authors who collectively constitute a discernible intellectual tradition.

\* \* \*

The writings of Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911) provide a useful frame of reference for understanding Kurth's general music-theoretical disposition. Dilthey distinguished between the natural sciences and what he called the «cultural sciences» (*Geisteswissenschaften*). Attempting to establish the cultural sciences, or humanities, as autonomous fields of study, Dilthey declared the methods of natural science inappropriate for research in the humanities.<sup>16</sup> The natural scientist is

13 Kurth, *Voraussetzungen*, p. 65.

14 Ibid., p. 49 (analytic and synthetic fusion); p. 65, p. 71 (kinetic and potential energy).

15 Kurth's course registration sheets from the University of Vienna show that he accumulated a total of thirty-two credit hours (*wöchentliche Stunden*) in philosophy, compared with forty-seven in music.

16 Wilhelm Dilthey, *Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften* (1883). Herbert A. Hodges provides an excellent introduction to Dilthey's work in *The Philosophy of Wilhelm Dilthey*, London: Routledge and Paul, 1952.

limited to studying the physical properties of his object and thus can know it only *externally*. The cultural scientist may also study physical properties but because his object is a product of the human mind, he may penetrate yet deeper and gain a knowledge of its essence, i.e., he may know it *internally*, as one mind may know another. Dilthey calls this kind of deeper knowledge «understanding» (Verständnis), which he considers absolutely necessary for studying artworks. It requires an act of «self-projection» (Sichhineinversetzen) of one's own mind into the mind of another in order to achieve a «sympathetic experience» (Nacherleben) of its creative activity.<sup>17</sup>

Kurth, above all, brings to his music-theoretical work a clearly discernible humanistic turn of mind, in the sense of Dilthey's «cultural sciences,» which distinguishes Kurth's work from that of the theorists aligned with the «material» branch of reform described above. Just as for Dilthey the chief task of a historian is to gain an «understanding» of the personalities and events which constitute history, so Kurth believes that understanding music and its evolution requires looking beyond its technical properties, into the «cultural-psychological phenomena and currents of intellectual history overall.»

Wherever one seeks to understand the expressive will of a Weltanschauung itself, behind all the variations in the historical artworks, the last and most general, *fundamental problem of any style criticism* appears as a question of the *exchange between conscious and unconscious creative forces*.<sup>18</sup>

Furthermore, Kurth says that recognizing and comprehending this exchange is crucial in Romantic art since there, the connection between unconscious psychic forces and musical activity is unusually pronounced. Analyzing music-technical phenomena in light of this connection requires an «empathy» (Einfühlung), or «sympathetic experience» as Dilthey calls it, with the creative-psychic forces which produced the phenomena.<sup>19</sup>

In relying on the act of empathy for understanding music, Kurth reveals a connection with Theodor Lipps (1851–1914), the author most closely associated with empathy. Lipps's two-volume work, *Ästhetik* (1903, 1906), develops a theory of empathy as a basis for aesthetic contemplation and appreciation. According to Lipps, visual and/or aural perceptions lead to an «imitation» (Nachahmung) of events or emotions in the mind of the viewer/listener, who attains a «direct kinesthetic image» of them in the form of psychic impulses. When impulses match exactly those of the perceived events or emotions, the viewer/listener experiences an «aesthetic empathy» (ästhetisches Einfühlen), which Lipps characterizes as the «inside of imitation.»<sup>20</sup> Clearly, Kurth's objective to «awaken an internal sympathetic resonance with the animated creative forces» derives from Lipps's idea of empathy.

In addition to Kurth's agreement with Lipps on the role of empathy in understanding artworks, the two agree on the essential nature of melody. Lipps described its essence as

17 H. A. Hodges, *Wilhelm Dilthey: An Introduction*, New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1944, p. 14–15.

18 Kurth, *Romantische Harmonik*, p. 15.

19 Ibid., p. 2. See also above, Kurth's opinion of the «central task» of music theory.

20 Theodor Lipps, *Ästhetik*, Bd. 1, Leipzig 1903, p. 120, p. 125f.



internal motion which, in a uniform flow, passes through the tones and even fills the rests; [it is] a motion which is our motion, but for us [it lies] in the tones and also in the empty spaces between them.<sup>21</sup>

Compare Lipps's description of melody with Kurth's.

The actual and more significant content of melody by far, from the simple melodic line on, is the inaudible part of it or, to describe it more graphically, . . . the undrawn line which is only indicated by its notes; the force flows over the empty spaces between the notes and over the notes themselves.<sup>22</sup>

In these two statements, Lipps and Kurth are trying to verbalize a similar conception of melody. By empathizing with melody, by projecting ourselves into its flow, we experience the pre-sonic motivational forces which underlie melody and assure its continuity.

While Dilthey's idea of, and methodological approach to, the cultural sciences provide a general conceptual framework for understanding Kurth's humanistic disposition, the work of the German Idealist, Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860), provides a specific philosophical framework for understanding Kurth's view of music. Many ideas, and even turns of phrase, scattered throughout Kurth's writings derive from Schopenhauer's ideas on music. Without naming him, Kurth alludes to Schopenhauer at one point as «the great philosopher of the Romantic era.»<sup>23</sup>

Schopenhauer ascribes great importance to the fine arts. They offer a temporary escape from the unceasing strivings of the world Will, the blind force which drives Nature and humanity. By «losing» ourselves completely in an act of genuine aesthetic contemplation, we momentarily forget our individuality, our personal will, and

exist as pure subject, the clear mirror of the object, . . . [so that] the object . . . has passed out of all relation to the will.<sup>24</sup>

Schopenhauer ranks music highest among the fine arts. Being uniquely non-representational, music circumvents the «phenomenal» world, and even bypasses the eternal Ideas of the «noumenal» world, making it an exact copy of the Will.

Just as Schopenhauer, following Kant, distinguishes between the phenomenal and noumenal worlds, so Kurth distinguishes between the «outside» and «inside» of music. The «inside» constitutes «real» music, the presonic activity of the composer's psyche, his creative will. In sonic music, we hear only the last reverberations of psychic music.

What we generally designate as music is in reality only its fading away, better yet . . . its final quivering.

Music and its audible counterpart, the impressions of sound (the concrete outer layer), relate to one another as Will and its [phenomenal] expression, as force and its resultant effect, as abstract ideas and their concrete realization.

21 Ibid., p. 411.

22 Kurth, *Romantische Harmonik*, p. 7.

23 Ibid., p. 15; also p. 4, p. 546.

24 Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World As Will and Idea*, vol. 1, trans. R. B. Haldane and J. Kemp, London: Routledge and Paul, 1883 (orig. German, 1819), p. 231.

The [psychic] energies pass over into sensually perceptible wonders of sound as does the Life-Will into worldly images.<sup>25</sup>

Like Schopenhauer, Kurth also holds that music is detached from the Ideas. Originating in the deepest regions of the unconscious, where sensations and images are yet undifferentiated, music is the purest expression of psychic life.

[Music], as no other art, is free from conceptual expressions, so that it reveals most purely the contents of the unconscious.<sup>26</sup>

The lack of conceptual content should not, however, prevent us as listeners from investing music with «conceptual expressions» in the form of images or psychological meanings. On the contrary, such activity heightens our experience of music. Furthermore, by generalizing our conceptions, we can better sense the flow of the psychic energy which gives rise to music in the first place. According to Kurth, our chief task in listening to music is, indeed, to *experience* it by re-tracing the creative-psychic path set out by the composer and in this way to re-live, by empathy, the essential compositional act.

Besides agreeing conceptually on the essence of music, Kurth and Schopenhauer agree on the pre-eminence of melody. For Schopenhauer, melody directs the whole musical organism

in the unbroken significant connection of one thought from beginning to end, representing . . . the intellectual life and effort of man.<sup>27</sup>

Similarly, Kurth views melody as primal. A given musical style may or may not allow melodic forces to reign fully, which distinguishes Baroque (primarily melodic) from Classical music (primarily harmonic). Still, music remains for Kurth theoretically *melodic-genetic*. He views melody as the first and purest embodiment of psychic tensions, experienced as kinesthesia. In *Romantische Harmonik*, Kurth explains:

The boundary where the creative will and its reflection in sonorous expression make contact lies in the melodic line. . . . The melodic line is the first projection of the Will onto matter.<sup>28</sup>

At the very outset of *Grundlagen des linearen Kontrapunkts*, Kurth announces «Melody is motion,» a motto which informs his analytical work, as well as his aesthetic and historiographical opinions, throughout the study. The word «is» merits particular emphasis here, «is» in the sense of «is identical with.» The *identity* of melody and the projection of Will is crucial to Kurth and thus to our understanding of his ideas. When Kurth equates melody with motion, he does not mean melody in the ordinary sense of «tune», but rather in the primal sense of «tonal stream.» We might emend his motto to read «Melody is where Will moves sound.»

25 Kurth, *Romantische Harmonik*, p. 1; *Grundlagen*, p. 6; *Romantische Harmonik*, p. 1.

26 Ibid., p. 36.

27 Schopenhauer, *The World*, p. 334.

28 *Romantische Harmonik*, p. 5.

The primary elements of melody are tone and the sensation of motion.

Melody, as a most general and primal concept, represents a path of motion over which a tone, as an imaginary body, travels.<sup>29</sup>

The German word *Melodik* perhaps expresses Kurth's notion of melody better than *Melodie*, which commonly means «tune.» Often, but not consistently, Kurth uses the word *Melodik* or the phrase «absolute melody» when he specifically means tonal stream.<sup>30</sup> Melodic «line,» «linear» motion and, above all, «linear counterpoint» are all concepts which would have been less often misrepresented had they been understood in the sense of primitive tonal stream.<sup>31</sup>

Besides having roots in philosophical and aesthetic writings, Kurth's preoccupation with melody may have at least two additional motivations. First he may be reacting to the over-evaluation of harmony in the nineteenth century, to the neglect, or at least to the under-evaluation of melody and counterpoint. Second, Kurth's ideas follow up on a general revival of interest in melody from musical circles around 1900. The study of «exotic,» non-western music was in its first stages around that time and, in the work of Carl Stumpf, Otto Abraham and Erich Hornbostel, developed gradually into modern-day ethnomusicology. Other authors concerned with melody around 1900 are Robert Lach, who wrote a dissertation on the evolution of ornamental melo-poetics, and Georg Capellen, whose studies of «exotic» music were aimed at rejuvenating a languorous late nineteenth-century musical style by infusing it with non-European elements.<sup>32</sup>

The anti-positivist philosophy of Henri Bergson (1859–1941), widely read in the early twentieth century, brings together the intellectual threads reviewed so far, self-projection as a way of gaining access to the internal world, and the dynamic interpretation of reality. Bergson's *Introduction to Metaphysics* (French, 1903; German, 1909) asserts movement as the ultimate reality in the world. Nothing exists statically but rather is in a constant state of flux, of becoming.<sup>33</sup> We can grasp this dynamic reality only in an act of pure intuition, by projecting ourselves into its stream. Similarly, through intuition we can come to know what Bergson calls «pure» time, the continuous flow of mental states where past, present and future merge indivisibly. Bergson's dynamic reality and his notion of continuously flowing mental states laid the groundwork for Kurth's musical energetics and its psycho-dynamic origins.

29 *Voraussetzungen*, p. 60, p. 62.

30 Ibid., p. 60–62; *Grundlagen*, p. 2–22 passim; *Romantische Harmonik*, p. 4f.

31 «Linear» counterpoint means an integrated network of such primal melodic strands. Arnold Schoenberg, after admitting that he had not read *Grundlagen*, criticized and dismissed as self-contradictory the notion of linear counterpoint, based on his own ill-informed interpretation of it (*Style and Idea*, ed. L. Stein, trans. L. Black, New York: St. Martins Press, 1975, p. 289–297. In *Voraussetzungen*, p. 65, Kurth points out that «absolute melody» does not refer to «Melodies which are actually sung or played» but rather to melody (*Melodik*) «reproduced in the pure imagination.»

32 Georg Capellen, *Exotische Rhythmik, Melodik und Tonalität als Wegweiser zu einer neuen Kunstentwicklung*, in: *Die Musik* 6.3 (1906/07), p. 216f. Melody also plays an important role in an essay by the proto-Gestalt psychologist, Christian von Ehrenfels, *Über Gestaltqualitäten*, in: *Vierteljahresschrift für wissenschaftliche Philosophie* 14 (1890), p. 258f.

33 Henri Bergson, *The Perception of Change*, in: *The Creative Mind*, trans. M. L. Andison, New York: Philosophical Library, 1946, p. 177: «reality is mobility itself.» *Perception of Change* is an essay based on a series of two lectures given by Bergson at Oxford University in 1911.



Bergson realized that the idea of a world in constant motion seemed counter-intuitive; objects seem fixed and do not seem to move. However, Bergson was not thinking of motion as successive positions (stases) of objects in space. Attempting to show that motion was not necessarily equivalent to «space covered,» he referred to melody, which exemplifies a

clear perception of a movement which is not attached to [an object], of a change without anything changing . . . change is the thing itself.<sup>34</sup>

The common notion that melody is a juxtaposition of separate notes, similar to points in space, comes from musical notation. However, genuine, indivisible melody exists apart from the notated score. In listening to melody,

we have the purest impression of succession we could possibly have . . . it is the very continuity of melody and the impossibility of breaking it up which makes that impression on us.<sup>35</sup>

Bergson's conception of melody agrees fully with Kurth's idea of a «phase of motion,» also called a «span of motion.» Kurth's tonal stream is a path of motion delineated by, but not consisting in, the individual tones.

Melodic spans can arise in the imagination . . . even before the establishment of the individual tones themselves is clear.<sup>36</sup>

Essential melody exists in the continuity of motion between and through the tones. As for Kurth, so too for Bergson, breaking up the melody into distinct tones destroys its essential nature, just as breaking up Bergson's «pure» time into discrete moments («clock» time) would destroy the «uninterrupted humming of life's depths.»<sup>37</sup>

In emphasizing motion as the essence of melody, Kurth and his contemporaries follow a tradition which extends back to ancient times. The Greeks expressed this connection by conceiving mathematical relationships projected through time. Such relationships governed both melodic-intervallic and rhythmic order, designed to imitate the motion of celestial bodies and of the soul.<sup>38</sup> Thinkers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries formulated the «doctrine of affections» based on the link between musical motion and that of the soul. Certain melodic shapes, rhythms or modes could, they believed, «move» listeners to feel certain emotions. The analogy between the motion of tones and the soul continued into the Romantic period and, in the writings of Eduard Hanslick, developed into a major aesthetic issue. Hanslick denied that music expressed specific emotions, claiming instead that music embodies non-specific *movements* which, through mental associations, may secondarily engender specific feelings. Indeed, for Hanslick, non-specific movement constitutes the essence of music: «The content of music is sonorous form in motion.»<sup>39</sup>

The foregoing paragraphs show that Kurth's central thesis about the nature of music concurs with eighteenth and nineteenth-century trends in philosophy

34 Ibid., p. 174.

35 Ibid., p. 176.

36 *Grundlagen*, p. 15.

37 Bergson, *Perception of Change*, p. 176.

38 Kathi Meyer-Baer, *Bedeutung und Wesen der Musik*, Leipzig 1932, p. 245-256.

39 Eduard Hanslick, *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen*, Leipzig 1854, <sup>8</sup>1891, p. 32, p. 74.

and aesthetics. Kurth did not discover motion in music. He simply re-formulated the conceptual link between music and motion by couching his theories in psychological terms. From the beginning of the nineteenth century onwards, music theorists had concentrated ever more narrowly on the vertical dimension of music, on harmony. Analyzing music chord by chord into harmonic «slices» inhibited their ability to recognize and understand broad harmonic-tonal and melodic continuities. After 1850, theory fell increasingly behind the innovations of composers like Liszt and Wagner. Outdated modes of analysis, applying stylistic norms of earlier periods, could no longer account for late nineteenth-century chromatic techniques.

Kurth approached those techniques from a different angle. He traced them to what he believed were their genesis, melody. According to Kurth, the harmonic novelty of late Romantic music arose from multiple melodic strands wending their way in and out of various harmonies, coalescing intermittently in related tonal chords, but only after passing coincidentally through numerous unrelated chords. This interpretation yielded a dynamic picture of Romantic harmony which reflected more accurately the spirit of the music than did the chord-by-chord style of analysis. By focusing on melody, Kurth strove to liberate music from the century-long buildup of chordal barriers erected by «harmonic» theorists.

In addition to intellectual currents in philosophy, developments in science around 1900 may have influenced Kurth. The chemist Wilhelm Ostwald (1853–1932), aggressively disputing the atomic theory of matter, speculated that all matter resolves ultimately into energy. His lecture to the Society of Scientists and Physicians, «The Overcoming of Scientific Materialism» (1895), proposed the metaphysical, quasi-Romantic theory of «energetics» as an alternative to the atomic theory.<sup>40</sup> According to Ostwald, all matter is infused with a *Grundkraft*, a primal motive force, and is thus in constant motion. He preferred his holistic, continuous structural basis for matter to the elementistic, «granular» one espoused by atomic theorists of the time.<sup>41</sup> Abandoning his earlier positivistic disposition, Ostwald claimed around 1892 that

Energy is indeed the sole reality in the world, and matter [is] not perchance the bearer [of energy] but rather only one phenomenal form of it.<sup>42</sup>

Although Ostwald did finally acknowledge the atomic structure of matter in 1909, he took Einstein's theory of relativity as proof for the primacy of energy over matter rather than as an equivalence relationship between the two.

40 *Dictionary of Scientific Biography*, vol. 15, New York: Scribner, 1977, s.v. «Ostwald» in the Supplement.

41 L. Strieburg, *Die philosophische Konzeption Wilhelm Ostwalds*, in: *Sitzungsbericht der Akademie der Wissenschaften der DDR* 13 N (1979), p. 117. Ostwald's shift away from an elementistic conception of matter goes hand in hand with the Gestalt-psychologists' shift away from Wundt's elementistic psychology. Ernst Mach (*Beiträge zur Analyse der Empfindungen*, Jena 1886) and Christian v. Ehrenfels (*Gestaltqualitäten*), both of whom anticipated the Gestalt movement, were working at about the same time as Ostwald.

42 D. Browarzik et al., *Einige Bemerkungen über Ostwalds Verhältnis zur Atomistik*, in: *Sitzungsbericht der Akademie der Wissenschaften der DDR* 13 N (1979), p. 110.

Ostwald's material energetics resemble Kurth's musical energetics. Just as Ostwald explained matter as a continuous, energetic phenomenon, irreducible to a discontinuous, atomic structure, so Kurth explained melody as an energetic phenomenon, irreducible to individual, harmonically motivated tones.

Along with concepts drawn from physics, the very language of physics, too, plays a role in Kurth's work. Most theorists have a distinctive language designed for a theoretical system, with various idiosyncratic «code words» and accompanying analytical symbols. Kurth's code words are certain scientific terms. These, and his refined literary prose style in general, characterize his work more than any system or analytical symbology. He borrowed scientific expressions such as kinetic and potential energy to describe, respectively, the flow of melody and its momentary restraint in harmonic formations. Kurth used these terms, as he himself clearly states, not according to their strict scientific meanings but rather «in analogy to» and «in free imitation» of their usages in physics.<sup>43</sup> Just as we today employ metaphorically the vocabularies of modern computer, space and nuclear technologies in everyday language, so Kurth in his day used certain terms from physics, then an important area of scientific exploration and conceptual reform. These and other borrowed terms help to clarify Kurth's ideas and, further, help readers to experience fully the dynamic «play of forces» (Kräftespiel) in music.

We have been examining extra-musical influences on Kurth from the fields of psychology, philosophy, aesthetics and physics. Let us now turn our attention to specifically musical literature. Kurth knew a broad range of music-historical and analytical writings. The following pages take up some of Kurth's leading thoughts which can be traced with reasonable certainty to their sources. The chief authors to be discussed are Kurth's mentor, Guido Adler, and August Halm, whose post as music instructor at the Wickersdorf Free School Community (Freie Schulgemeinde) Kurth assumed shortly after Halm resigned.

Adler viewed music as an organism, evolving organically according to certain general laws of growth and decay. At a sufficient historical distance, the historian can see that seemingly unique characteristics of individual compositions merge to produce a recognizable style which flourishes and, in its decay, yields seeds for the growth of a new style. Certain rhythmic, metric, motivic and formal regularities, the «raw materials» as Adler calls them, remain constant and are thus trans-stylistic. The degree to which a composition maximizes or minimizes these raw materials is a measure of its stylization.<sup>44</sup>

Adler published these ideas in 1911, several years after Kurth left the University of Vienna, but they no doubt guided his lectures for the famed Music-Historical Institute during Kurth's years there. Kurth takes up the idea of organic growth in the evolution of style in sketching the development from Bach through Wagner. He understands that development as a gradual suppression and subsequent liberation of linear forces, which for Kurth become a trans-stylistic element much like Adler's «raw materials.» Among these materials, Adler includes certain unchanging melodic motives, which «wander» from style to style until, consumed,

43 *Grundlagen*, p. 12. *Romantische Harmonik*, p. 10.

44 Guido Adler, *Der Stil in der Musik*, Leipzig 1911, p. 13, p. 15-20.



they spawn new motives. Kurth transforms these wandering motives into «developmental motives,» a small group of generic motivic shapes, which he describes as a «distillation of melody down to pure symbols of motion.»<sup>45</sup> For Adler and Kurth, such universal motives are the

seeds for organic shaping of the art work, ... and determine the formal content.<sup>46</sup>

Kurth and Adler agree on many issues, but student and teacher disagree on certain matters. For instance, Adler treats melodic ornaments as «superficial additions» lacking organic meaning. Kurth, by contrast, considers ornaments primal externalizations of psychic motion, indispensable to tracing the linear-dynamic ebb and flow. They are thus melodically organic. Adler views ornaments as decorations of structural tones, a «material» analysis. Kurth views ornaments as concentrated pockets of energy propelling one melodic tone to the next, an «experiential» analysis. Adler's approach is the traditional one. He understands musical phenomena as self-referential and evaluates them for their structural meaning. Kurth, on the other hand, views musical phenomena as symbolic of something beyond the tones and evaluates them for the affective meaning.

Unlike Kurth's lengthy and formal association with Adler, his association with Halm (1869–1929) was brief and informal. Nevertheless, Halm, Kurth's senior by seventeen years, left an enduring impression on the younger theorist. Indeed Halm's influence is evident throughout Kurth's works, beginning with *Voraussetzungen*, which Kurth was writing while in Wickersdorf. Just twenty-four years old when he met Halm, Kurth was in the formative stage of his development as an independent thinker. *Voraussetzungen* thus records the beginning of his original style as a theorist and simultaneously documents Halm's influence. We will begin by examining Halm's *Harmonielehre* (1905), which Kurth surely learned about from its author. By comparing a few thematic ideas in Halm's work with those in *Voraussetzungen*, we can assess the impact of Halm's thinking on Kurth.<sup>47</sup>

Musical dynamism is the link between Kurth's work and Halm's. Near the beginning of *Harmonielehre*, Halm identifies the essential quality of music as motion. He expresses this thought practically, by referring to the propulsive function of dissonance in music: «Music, in its essence, is dissonance, namely action and motion.» The major third, Halm says, contains «the driving force and germ of movement.» Conceptually, it disturbs the ideal consonance of the triad.

In reality, the repose of the triad is disturbed with the entrance of the third.<sup>48</sup>

Kurth takes Halm's idea a step further and applies it to both major and minor triads. Because the major third embodies an inherent upward-striving energy, the minor third, conversely, downward-striving energy,

45 Ibid., p. 20. *Grundlagen*, p. 436.

46 Adler, *Stil*, p. 50.

47 Kurth cites Halm's *Harmonielehre* several times in *Voraussetzungen*. Near the beginning of *Romantische Harmonik*, Kurth refers to Halm's «little *Harmonielehre*» as coming closest to his own conception of harmonic tension. See also *Grundlagen*, p. 77 and *Bruckner*, Bd. 2, Berlin 1925, p. 1009.

48 Halm, *Harmonielehre*, Leipzig 1905, p. 14, p. 26, p. 64.

Both forms of the triad are disturbances of absolute chordal repose.<sup>49</sup>

Kurth also agrees with Halm on the origin of all harmonic phenomena and diversity, the basic dominant/tonic cadence. In the Preface to *Harmonielehre*, Halm declares that

All music is . . . nothing other than a greatly expanded variation of the primordial musical form, i.e., the cadence.<sup>50</sup>

One again, Kurth modifies this view slightly to include the energetic opposite of the dominant/tonic progression, the tonic/dominant progression, which initiates harmonic motion.

These two cadences [V-I and I-V] are . . . the primal forms of all harmonic activity.<sup>51</sup>

For both men, the upward-striving tendency of the leading tone engenders the falling-fifth progression.<sup>52</sup>

The ideological relationship between Halm and Kurth emerges clearly in Kurth's publications after *Voraussetzungen*, as compared with Halm's publications after *Harmonielehre*. In *Grundlagen* and *Romantische Harmonik*, Kurth articulates his dynamic view of music more thoroughly and concretely than in his first work. Many ideas in those two volumes resemble Halm's ideas in *Von Zwei Kulturen der Musik* and *Die Symphonie Anton Bruckners*, both published in 1913. In the Bruckner study, for example, Halm speaks of the «inner striving» and of the «stream of force» in Beethoven's music. Furthermore, he interprets harmony and melody as two opposing types of musical «energy», a notion which Kurth develops at length in *Romantische Harmonik*. In *Von Zwei Kulturen der Musik*, Halm discusses melodic ornaments as bearers of force, as organic elements which assist in revealing the «will» of a theme. Kurth not only agrees with Halm's organic-energetic view of ornaments, he also uses the same musical example, the subject from Bach's G-major fugue (*Well-Tempered Clavier*, vol. 1), to illustrate the «turn» as a propulsive melodic force.<sup>53</sup>

The points of agreement between Kurth and Halm mask underlying, fundamental differences between the two men. Halm's basic theoretical assumptions are harmonic-genetic, while Kurth's are melodic-genetic. For instance, while the two theorists concur on the germinal energy of the major third, they attribute that energy to different sources. Kurth traces it to the leading tone, which he views as a harmonically independent, melodic phenomenon arising from a scale. When coupled with the fifth scale degree, this melodically conceived leading tone energizes the resultant major third and related major triad.<sup>54</sup> Halm explains leading-tone energy in precisely the opposite manner. For him, the leading tone first acquires its characteristic upward-striving tendency through association

49 *Voraussetzungen*, p. 122.

50 Halm, *Harmonielehre*, p. 5.

51 *Romantische Harmonik*, p. 111.

52 Halm, p. 27. *Voraussetzungen*, p. 120f.

53 Halm, *Von Zwei Kulturen der Musik*, München 1913, p. 170. *Grundlagen*, p. 27f. *Voraussetzungen*, p. 63.

54 *Voraussetzungen*, p. 70f.

with the major third, itself dependent on, and theoretically inseparable from, the «chord of Nature» (Naturklang).<sup>55</sup>

These contrasting interpretations of the leading tone yield differing genetic views of the primordial dominant/tonic cadence, discussed above. When Halm singles out the leading tone as

the undeniable expression of the natural connection of the [dominant/tonic] progression

he is assigning that progression a harmonic origin, since the leading tone has a harmonic origin. Kurth's leading tone has the same harmonic ramification but is melodic-genetic, making the cadence melodic-genetic as well. For Kurth, the «initial energy of tonality» manifest in the V-I progression «goes back, in its origins, to the initial energy of melody.»<sup>56</sup>

These theoretical disagreements are symptomatic of a deeper, ideological split between Halm and Kurth. As explained earlier in this essay, Kurth sought to explain musical phenomena psychologically, as acoustical manifestations of pre-sonic, psychic activity. In *Romantische Harmonik*, for example, which deals primarily with Wagner's music dramas, the psychological interpretation of musical events plays an especially crucial role in analysis. There, Kurth's work often shades off into hermeneutic interpretation of musical events as corollaries to dramatic events. Halm did not share Kurth's enthusiasm for a psychological approach to analysis. Expressing skepticism for such an approach, Halm cautions against taking the «psychological aspect for the logical one in music.» Elsewhere, he declares wryly

If a piece of music is evaluated according to how faithfully it reflects the inner life of the composer, then the psychologist is doubtlessly the appropriate one to diagnose it.<sup>57</sup>

Kurth, in a more serious tone, would in fact probably have agreed with Halm, except that Kurth would have called on a *music* psychologist to analyze the piece, not a clinical psychologist to «diagnose it.» Kurth's psychological stance is clear from his demand on music theory to «start with certain psychological processes instead of with harmonic forms and connections.»

The artistic process of creation can . . . only be understood through a search back into the unconscious, through a capacity for resonance with the animated forces which vanish under the [sonorous] radiance of the artwork.<sup>58</sup>

In both *Grundlagen* and *Romantische Harmonik*, Kurth attempted to prove true what he had said years earlier in *Voraussetzungen*, that

Music psychology, too, can be made objective up to a certain point.<sup>59</sup>

The preceding selective survey reviewed the major trends which influenced Kurth and contributed to the distinctive character of his work. Like any learned author,

55 Halm, *Harmonielehre*, p. 6f.

56 Ibid., p. 26f. *Voraussetzungen*, p. 71, p. 125f.

57 Halm, *Humor und Musik*, in: *Von Grenzen und Ländern der Musik*, München 1916, p. 111; id., *Unsere Zeit und Beethoven*, in: *Die Rheinlande* 11 (1911), p. 61.

58 *Romantische Harmonik*, p. 2f., p. 9.

59 *Voraussetzungen*, p. 53.



Kurth absorbed much of his intellectual heritage, modified and blended it so thoroughly with contemporary thought, so that it is difficult to trace exhaustively or conclusively every benefactor. Nor is it necessary to do so. Kurth's theories are more than historical curiosities. They deserve study for their own intrinsic value as well-conceived and effective ways to interpret and understand musical structures.

\* \* \*

We have been examining various sources of Kurth's thematic ideas. In order to understand Kurth's place in the history of music theory, we must now turn from reviewing the sources of his ideas to identifying and assessing their influence on subsequent authors. This task is a difficult one for two reasons. First, in rejecting what he considered inflexible scientific theories, Kurth did not develop a systematic analytical technique or distinctive symbology which might help us to detect his ideas in other writers. Second, musical dynamism, the cornerstone of Kurth's work, is so widely acknowledged that pinning down specific influences is difficult. Unless a writer speaks of dynamism using Kurth's characteristic language, what may appear to be direct borrowings from Kurth may in fact only be a common respect for motion in music. Despite the obstacles, some connections between Kurth's work and that of several authors can be established. The following paragraphs discuss a few such connections.

The ideas of Ernst Toch, born in Vienna just one year after Kurth, bear a striking resemblance to Kurth's, especially regarding the primacy of melody. In his book, *The Shaping Forces in Music* (1948), Toch says,

The truth is that the melodic impulse is primary, and always preponderates over the harmonic [impulse]; that the melodic or linear, impulse is the force out of which germinates not only harmony but also counterpoint and form. For the linear impulse is activated by *motion*, and motion means life, creation, propagation and formation.<sup>60</sup>

From this quotation it is clear that Toch, like Kurth, takes a melodic-genetic view of harmony. On the relationship between melody and harmony, Toch explains

Although harmony may still be defined as the combination of three or more tones, it has to be interpreted beyond this concept as a momentary situation brought about by moving voices; as the cross-section arising at times of arrested motion; or briefly and plainly as *arrested motion*.<sup>61</sup>

Toch's «arrested motion» clearly derives from Kurth's «potential energy.» Another of Toch's ideas which derives from Kurth is the «wave line,» which combines Kurth's notions of developmental motives and curvilinear developments (*Kurvenentwicklungen*). Toch's wave lines appear in three varieties, ascending, descending and encircling, just like Kurth's developmental motives.<sup>62</sup>

60 Ernst Toch, *The Shaping Forces in Music*, New York: Criterion Music Corp., 1948, p. 5.

61 Ibid., p. 21.

62 Ibid., Chapter 5, *The Wave Line*. Kurth discusses developmental motives in *Grundlagen*, p. 418ff. and in his essay *Zur Motivbildung Bachs*, in: *Bach-Jahrbuch* (1917), p. 80-136. He speaks of curvilinear developments in *Motivbildung*, p. 98.

Toch also adopts Kurth's ideas on form. Following Kurth, Toch warns against confusing «form» with «forms.» «Forms» are static organizational schemes. They are the end result, not the genesis of form. Like Kurth, Toch stresses the dynamic quality of form, whose essence he describes as «the balance between tension and relaxation.» Compare Toch's characterization of form with Kurth's:

The struggle between becoming and being is the unending primal tension of the concept of musical form.<sup>63</sup>

Kurth's concept of form also shaped the ideas of Kurt Westphal. In *Der Begriff der musikalischen Form in der Wiener Klassik* (1934, 1971), Westphal contrasts the idea of (static) «form» with «forming» (Formung), much like Kurth's contrast of form and the *act* of forming (Formen) or formal *process* (Formvorgang), stressing the essentially dynamic nature of form. Both men understand form as a psycho-auditive, holistic phenomenon, best characterized as an «evolutionary curve» (Verlaufskurve) or dynamic «wave» (Kurth) which, once revealed, illuminates the creative process itself.<sup>64</sup>

The author who dealt most extensively with issues raised in Kurth's works is Victor Zuckerkandl (1897–1965). He focused on what he called the «properly musical» quality of tones, their dynamic properties.

The dynamic quality is the properly musical quality of tones. Musical tones are conveyors of forces. Hearing music means hearing an action of forces. Tones are elements of a musical context because and insofar as they are conveyors of a motion that goes through them and beyond them. When we hear music, what we hear is above all motions.<sup>65</sup>

Dissatisfied with Kurth's exclusively psychic explanation of musical dynamism, Zuckerkandl attempts to set dynamism on an objective foundation, apart from the composer's creative psyche as well as from the listener's recreative psyche. He points to the «dynamic field» inherent in a diatonic scale. Tones, he explains, embody directional forces which vary in intensity depending on the relationships between a given tone and the scalar anchors, degrees one and eight. Scale degree five is a point of equilibrium where motion away from one anchor becomes motion toward the other.

Zuckerkandl even goes one step further by trying to explain objectively the very idea of musical motion. How, he asks, can incorporeal tones «move»? Citing Max Wertheimer's findings on optical motion, Zuckerkandl explains musical motion as the *transition* between tones. Just as the brief transition between stroboscopically projected images engenders a sense of optical motion, so the transition between tones engenders a sense of aural motion.

We are not first *in* one tone, then in the next, and so forth. We are, rather, always *between* the tones, *on the way* from tone to tone.<sup>66</sup>

63 Toch, *Shaping Forces*, p. 157. Kurth, *Bruckner*, Bd. 1, p. 240.

64 Kurt Westphal, *Der Begriff der musikalischen Form in der Wiener Klassik*, Leipzig 1935 (reprint Giebing 1971), p. 11, p. 48–50, p. 52f. Kurth, *Bruckner*, Bd. 1, p. 234f., p. 249. *Musikpsychologie*, p. 250–264.

65 Victor Zuckerkandl, *Sound and Symbol*, trans. W. R. Trask, Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1956, p. 21, p. 37, p. 76.

66 Ibid., p. 137.

Zuckerlandl thus comes to the same conclusion as Kurth, who, appealing to intuition rather than to science, had observed: «Transition is motion» (*Grundlagen*, 2).

Kurth's main influence preceded World War II. During the Nazi period, his works were banned because of his Jewish lineage. In neutral Switzerland, though, his influence remained strong, if localized. One might think that the close of World War II would have brought a reemergence in Europe of his work and this is true to some extent. However, the resurgent interest in Kurth did not reach pre-War proportions. Reprints of *Grundlagen*, *Bruckner* and *Romantische Harmonik* did appear, but their impact was not the same as it had been in the 1920's. In the decade from 1920 to 1930, Kurth's work reached audiences of his own generation, who had grown up in and still had memories of pre-World-War I Europe. At the height of their popularity, Kurth's ideas and literary style were still understood, both literally and culturally. The years after 1945 drastically changed life in Europe. The jarring political and social changes following World War II, along with the extraordinary technological advances, greatly telescoped the passage of time, pushing into the distant past the world of only fifteen to twenty years before. Kurth's style of theory and its very language faded along with the turn-of-the-century mentality which produced them.

Although Kurth's work does seem to have lost interest for today's music theorists, a few American authors have adopted certain aspects of Kurth's approach to analysis. Leonard Meyer, for instance, proposed a theory of broadly unfolding melodic continuities based on Gestalt-psychological principles similar to those underlying Kurth's «overriding lines.» Like Kurth's «curvilinear developments,» Meyer's implication/realization analyses build on the intuitive, psycho-auditive experience of the listener rather than on a predetermined structural framework, as with Schenker's linear progressions. Meyer follows Kurth in tracing musical relationships to a «complex and subtle cognitive activity,» which engages many facets of the nervous system at the same time. We experience the implicative stimuli as «kinetic tension.» The realization of the stimuli resolves the tension. Accordingly, implicative relationships are a matter of «feeling and affect.»<sup>67</sup>

Over the last several years, Alexandra Pierce has evolved a type of analysis aimed at helping performers to feel and play phrase structure at various hierarchic levels. Her «fundamental research tool» for exploring such structures is the sensation of motion, Kurth's «Bewegungsempfindung.» Kurth's «play of forces» (*Kräftespiel*) becomes a «dynamic interplay» between what Pierce calls «structure» (skeletal melodic framework) and «ornament» (surface elaboration of the framework), engendering the «quality of movement» in music. Pierce's ideas of «performance phrase,» «spanning,» «balance-point juncture,» and

67 Leonard Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning in Music*, Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1956, p. 130–135 on «Structural Gaps»; p. 138–143 on «Melodic Completeness and Closure.» id., *Explaining Music*, Berkeley: Univ. of Calif. Press, 1973, p. 110–113 on «implicative relationships»; p. 114–130, showing graphs illustrating implication/realization analyses. Meyer speaks of «kinetic tension» on p. 65. Eugene Narmour, Meyer's student, expands on his teacher's work in *Beyond Schenkerism*, Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1977, Chapter 10, *An Alternative: Toward an Implication-Realization Model*.



climax also rely primarily on musical kinesthesia, which she translates into physical movements to aid performers in shaping the various phrase-structural levels of a piece. The «fountaining» and «arcing» movements described in her article on climax, for example, carry the arms and body through motions which span broad dynamic intensifications and de-intensifications resembling Kurth's formal «waves.» Here, perhaps without realizing it, Pierce has given physical expression to Kurth's notion of dynamic form.<sup>68</sup>

It is not given to many authors to revise fundamentally the conceptual premises of a discipline. Ernst Kurth was one such author. In his earliest writings, he recognized the need for music-theoretical reform and throughout his career tenaciously pursued a line of inquiry which both astutely challenged and effectively broadened the then accepted boundaries of his field. A lesser mind could not have blended so harmoniously such a wealth of intellectual trends and applied them so creatively and beneficially to a discipline which, at the time, needed fresh insights. Ernst Bücken realized Kurth's achievement and justifiably credits him for «renovating the edifice» of music theory from its foundation upwards, rather than simply adding to it.

The surmounting of rationalistic music theory which Riemann attempted [in his «Theory of Tone Conceptions»] has only now become a reality in the works of the Bern professor, Ernst Kurth.<sup>69</sup>

Bücken wrote these words in 1925, after Kurth had published three of his four major monographs, incontestably securing his international reputation. A decade earlier, before Kurth had achieved scholarly acclaim, Arnold Schering had called for a style of music theory which would effect the kind of fundamental «renovation» Bücken had in mind. Schering sought a theory of the «statics and dynamics of tonal motion.» Such a theory, he imagined, would

resolve these concealed forces of the tonal realm into their «components,» [showing that] what the composer and performer do instinctively, according to inner necessity, in fact matches the laws of our emotional and volitional life.<sup>70</sup>

Schering likened such a theory to a psychology of music. Kurth, I believe, successfully answered Schering's call. Indeed, it is precisely Kurth's steadfast probe to uncover the psychological roots of musical experience which characterizes his works and leads him gradually toward a summary of their contents in the pioneering *Musikpsychologie*.

Kurth is an influential, *pivotal* figure in the history of music theory. His writings provide an important connection between late nineteenth-century and twentieth-century trends in music analysis, aesthetics and psychology. His idea

68 Alexandra Pierce, *Structure and Phrase, Part I*, in: *In Theory Only* 4.5 (1978), p. 24f. ead., *Structure and Phrase, Part II*, in: *ITO* 5.3 (1979), p. 3–24; ead., *Climax in Music: Structure and Phrase, Part III*, in: *ITO* 7.1 (1983), p. 3–30, particularly p. 12–15 on «fountaining» and «arcing.» Margaret Allen, *Guides to Creative Motion Musicianship*, Ardmore Pennsylvania: Dorrance & Co., 1979, also focuses on kinesthesia as the chief means for understanding and performing music: «Music is composed of motion. . . . [T]hat which happens between the tones, . . . is the all-important thing. It is in this 'space between' that true musicianship is realized» (p. 3). «Music is the sound of energy release. . . . Musical motion is the sound of energy patterns» (p. 10), etc.

69 Ernst Bücken, *Ernst Kurth als Musiktheoretiker*, in: *Melos* 4 (1924/25), p. 358.

70 Arnold Schering, *Zur Grundlegung*, p. 173. id., *Musikalische Bildung*, p. 94.

of «overriding lines,» for example, links Riemann's pilot linear-harmonic analyses (*Katechismus der Fuge*, 1890–1891) with Schenker's macro-structural graphic analyses (*Das Meisterwerk in der Musik*, 1925–1930), and with Hindemith's ideas of step-progression and harmonic «fluctuation» (*Unterweisung im Tonsatz*, 1937–1939). In aesthetics, Kurth's work connects the writings of Lipps and Karl Grunsky (*Ästhetik*, 1907) with those of Zuckerkindl. Finally, Kurth's seminal work in music psychology couples early Gestalt research with certain psycho-auditive theories of Leonard Meyer, Diana Deutsch (*The Psychology of Music*, 1982) and of the co-authors Fred Lerdahl and Ray Jackendoff (*A Generative Theory of Tonal Music*, 1983). Clearly, it is important to familiarize ourselves with the innovative contributions of one of this century's most erudite and creative thinkers, so that we may better understand the history of music theory in our time.