14 Schoenberg, the Viennese-Jewish experience and its aftermath

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This chapter considers what made Arnold Schoenberg's participation in the culture of the Austro-German world possible, from the perspectives of a German-Jewish historical context and a theory of Viennese-Jewish identity. Taking a broad perspective requires a focus on matters larger than the individual. A simple reduction of Schoenberg's hyphenated Jewish identity to matters of personal belief, individual choice, or a facet of artistic expression would forgo too many questions that encompass the concerns of a people: a family history, a sacred text and law, a drive to be granted rights and recognized as fully human, an attempt to thrive in the majority culture, a desperation not to suffer annihilation, an opportunity to raise a family in a new country, a hope to help build a new nation. By virtue of their magnitude and urgency, these questions, vital to Schoenberg, help to place his work in a fitting context.

In a recent history of the German people, there is no mention of Schoenberg's name.[1] The names that do appear, Bach, Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Wagner, embody the narrative of a people who from a foundation resting on 200 years of German tradition (J. S. Bach), turned toward Enlightenment (Haydn and Mozart), a circumspect embrace of Utopianism (Beethoven), and an uneasy pairing of iconoclasm and German purity (Wagner). Though Schoenberg could have occupied a loosely defined space within the world of culture, as do Freud and Einstein, the fictional Adrian Leverkühn, the tragic protagonist of Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus*, displaces Schoenberg in this narrative. Leverkühn's pact with the devil not only brought him the secrets of Schoenberg's intellectual property – the method of composition with twelve tones related one to another – but the death of a beloved nephew and a fatal case of neurosyphilis. If one wishes to reflect the history of the German people through its composers, Leverkühn represents the catastrophic descent into Nazism. Schoenberg as a composer who did not belong to this people cannot assume an apt historical function.

By contrast, in a four-volume history of German Jewry in modern times, Schoenberg's name occurs in three of the four volumes.[2] He occupies an important cultural space among German-Jewish artists and intellectuals. In the context of that history, the basic preconditions for his

participation in German culture are set forth, and these begin with laws that permitted Jews to live in cities, and encouraged their subsequent migration to Central Europe's capitals.

Steps toward emancipation (1852–72): a tale of two fourteen-year-olds

In 1852, embarking early in a wave of Jewish migration in the aftermath of the Revolution of 1848 – an event that incited anti-Jewish rioting while it advanced the cause of Jewish emancipation – the fourteen-year-old Samuel Schönberg left home to become "an apprentice in a business."[3] He headed westward through the culturally Slovak region of the Hungarian Kingdom, from his native Szécsény to Bratislava, Hungary's former seat of government, and made his way by steamboat along the Danube to the imperial city – Vienna.[4] His journey is reminiscent of that of another fourteen-year-old who left home in 1743, decades before the 1812 edict that emancipated the Jews of Prussia, and made his way northward from Dessau to Berlin – over 100 kilometers – on foot.

Moses Mendelssohn left Dessau to continue rabbinical studies in Berlin, where he would become both a leading philosopher of the Enlightenment and a successful businessman. His example of self-formation through education (*Bildung*) made him an influential figure upon subsequent generations of German Jews; the intellectual aspirations in philosophy, science, literature, and music of the young Arnold's Jewish cohort evince the transmission of Mendelssohn's example. Berlin, a city of Slavs and Germans, was highly restrictive to Jews. In 1750, when Mendelssohn, a Jew of limited means, turned twenty-one, he became subject to the stringent terms of the new Revised General Code enacted that year.[5] Harsh regulations and punishing taxes diminished his opportunities in business and marriage while augmenting his financial woes with punishing taxes. This byzantine Code of Frederick II's bureaucrats placed those like Mendelssohn in the precarious Class Five, the category of *unprotected* Jews, a measure that intensified the degree of repression and exploitation inflicted upon those least secure.

One hundred years later, Samuel Schönberg's prospects in Vienna appeared more promising. After the Revolution of 1848, which pressed for equal rights, emancipation, and freedom of religion, residency restrictions for Jews in Vienna had been relaxed. Compared to Mendelssohn's risk of expulsion, Samuel Schönberg's chances were decidedly less and his choice of occupation somewhat greater. From an economic standstill, Vienna, by then a railway hub, lurched into commercial activity and seethed with newly arrived small businesses. But few prospered amid the

fierce competition; moreover, equality and rights for Vienna's Jews were still not settled issues. In governmental acts of 1851 and 1853, rights granted to Jews in 1848–49 were revoked, and restrictions concerning property ownership and professional opportunities were reinstated.[6] Further liberalization would await a new constitution in 1867.

If the matter of cementing Vienna's liberal aspirations was still over a decade off, in the intervening century Jewish religious practice in some communities had undergone significant liberalization. While Moses Mendelssohn was learned in Jewish law and adhered to Jewish observance, Samuel Schönberg, by all accounts a "freethinker," sympathized with the attitudes of Jewish reform; he no longer felt obligated to many of the practices of traditional Jewish observance.[7] By 1871 a majority of German Jews shared this attitude.[8]

Ten years younger than Samuel Schönberg, Arnold's mother Pauline Nachod arrived in Vienna from Prague as a child with her parents and five siblings. In 1852 Prague, in both number and percentage, had a larger Jewish population than Vienna, though in the coming decades Vienna's Jewish population would exceed Prague's. Distantly descended from an illustrious ancestry, Rabbi Judah Löw (the Maharal of Prague, 1525–1609) and a line of synagogue cantors, Pauline Nachod's family tree was musical and traditional. Her family had long been associated with the *Altneushul*, a synagogue that has stood in Prague since the thirteenth century. Why Josef Gabriel and Karoline (née Jontof-Hutter) Nachod, after the birth in 1853 of their youngest child, Anna, uprooted their family to move to Vienna is a matter for speculation. One motivation may have been to escape anti-Jewish violence that broke out before Easter 1848 and led to attacks against Jewish shops, while another may have been the apparent upswing in Vienna's economy. As Jews migrated from the country to the city, Prague's Jewish population grew, but not as fast as Vienna's.

In 1852, serving a community scarcely 6,000 strong, less than one percent of the Viennese population, the Israelitische Kultusgemeinde (IKG) of Vienna was founded after imperial recognition of Vienna's Jewish community in 1849 and ratification of the Provisional Community Decree in 1852.[9] With oversight of Jewish schools and the power to tax community members directly, the IKG managed the community's life-cycle needs as a religious communal welfare organization, not a political one. Newly operational when Samuel Schönberg arrived and the Nachod family settled, the IKG served this mid-century ripple of immigration, which in the coming decades would flow in waves from the eastern backwaters of the empire into Vienna. By 1900 the Jewish population would surpass 146,000, representing 8.7 percent of the Viennese population.

Table 14.1 *Conversions in Schoenberg's family*

Name/birth date/relation to AS/godfather	Marries	Apostasy	Age	Conversion
Schönberg, Arnold, 09/13/1874, "Franz Walter" (added), Walter Pieau (?)	Mathilde 10/18/1901	03/02/1898	24	3/25/1898
Kramer, Emil Wilhelm, 01/06/1872, brother-in-law, A. F. W. Schönberg	Ottilie 1899	11/02/1900	29	1/06/1901
Schönberg, Ottilie, 06/09/1876, sister, A. F. W. Schönberg	Emil Kramer 1899	11/23/1900	25	1/06/1901
Zemlinsky, Mathilde, 09/07/1877 Schoenberg's wife, H. Kleinfeld, *Küster*	Arnold 10/18/1901	10/11/1901	24	10/18/1901
Zemlinsky, Alexander, 10/24/1871, brother-in-law, A. F. W. Schönberg	Ida Guttmann 1907	3/29/1899	36	6/11/1907
Guttmann, Ida, 06/26/1880, sister-in-law, A. F. W. Schönberg	Alexander 1907	5/10/1907	27	6/11/1907

In September 1874 the birth of "Arnold Schönberg" would be entered in the IKG's register with the infant's Hebrew name written אברהם (*Avraham*). Likewise, twenty-three years later Schoenberg's separation from the community and release from its financial obligations were recorded by the IKG on March 2, 1898. His apostasy was followed by his conversion to Protestantism, March 25, 1898, when he received a third name, "Arnold Walter Franz Schönberg." Years later in Paris on July 24, 1933, a new spelling, "Arnold Schoenberg," would be introduced in the improvised document for his reentry into the Jewish community. This document would serve as a proxy in effect restoring his name to the IKG roster and reestablishing his Jewish identity on a communal basis while distancing him from the German-speaking world and nullifying the "Walter Franz." Arnold Schoenberg amounted to a fourth name, the one he would soon take to America, his next yet unknown destination. The gravestone in Vienna's *Zentralfriedhof* reverts to the German "Arnold Schönberg."

For Schoenberg and his family, apostasy and Protestant conversion appear to have been tied to family, marriage, and assimilation.[10] Indeed, the date of Mathilde's conversion is the date of her wedding to Schoenberg. The only conversions in which Schoenberg played a role involved his sister's and his wife's families (see Table 14.1). Though the total number of Jews in Schoenberg's age group who converted was small, the percentage of Jews converting reached its peak around 1898.[11] Among the well-known apostates of this period are the composer and conductor Gustav Mahler, the journalist and critic Karl Kraus, and the artist Richard Gerstl; each had ties to Schoenberg, but none had a comparable situation: Mahler was older and conversion was required to direct the Vienna State Opera; Kraus, Schoenberg's contemporary, was wealthier and antithetical to the Zionist movement led by Theodor Herzl; Gerstl was from an intermarried

family. There is no generalizing about the individual motivations for renouncing Judaism and decision about conversion.[12] But in light of the heightened anti-Semitism of the time, the Schoenberg family and this limited group from his generation became what had been rare in the Vienna of their parent's day: they became *baptized Jews*. This is a term used advisedly to indicate that despite conversion they were still seen as Jews, and would be vulnerable to a new ideological and racist upsurge in anti-Semitism.[13]

When Samuel Schönberg and Pauline Nachod married on March 17, 1872, it was still "a hopeful moment."[14] Since 1867, when the Jews of Vienna achieved equality and fundamental goals of emancipation were realized, a period of stability seemed at hand, especially since Vienna had not yielded to its penchant for granting rights to Jews and then rescinding them. But the underpinnings of Jewish practice, identity, and communal life in Vienna had also been shifting in profound ways for over two decades. Various kinds of change would continue to affect all aspects of Jewish identity as Schoenberg and his cohort reached adulthood.

First, Jews in modern Europe had come to be defined narrowly in terms of personal religious belief rather than collectively (for example, as a nation without a land).[15] On this narrow criterion, derived from Christianity, adherence to a romantic theology attained preeminence as a dimension of personal identity. It was a criterion for *belonging* imposed upon Judaism and alien to it.

Second, by the close of the nineteenth century, after decades invested in assimilating German culture, Jews would come to identify as imperial subjects with respect to national allegiance, Germans with respect to culture, and Jews with respect to ethnic identity and religion.[16] This was different from their past status as members of Jewish communities residing in German-speaking lands. To manage the transition from communal identity vis-à-vis the state to personal identity, many of Samuel and Pauline's generation had embraced assimilation as the proper direction for their children. In 1934 Schoenberg would regard their certitude in assimilation as "a replacement for messianic belief."[17] Assimilation created a vacuum in Jewish education and affected the connection of Jewish youth to Jewish community. Between 1917 and 1934 Schoenberg would grow critical of its effects.

Third, as Michael Meyer observes, the ethical message of the Hebrew prophets had largely displaced Jewish ritual law for a majority of German Jews as their religious focal point: "ethical monotheism had become the foundation of their Jewishness."[18] Nuria Schoenberg-Nono recalls that the Schoenbergs taught their children that a good person holds to ethical conduct and belief in one God. This foundation in *ethical monotheism*

was a pillar of faith for his three families: the Jewish family in which he was raised, the Protestant family with Mathilde (née Zemlinsky) of Jewish ancestry, and the Catholic family with Gertrud (née Kolisch), a Catholic of Jewish ancestry (the three children of this marriage were raised Catholic as a precondition of the marriage).

Fourth, in 1879 a corrosive racial anti-Semitism gained a foothold in the German-speaking world marked by the publication of a malicious book by Wilhelm Marr, *The Victory of Judaism Over Germanicism*. Racial anti-Semitism derived from French works by Count de Gobineau and Joseph-Ernest Renan would be infused into the culture, undermining the recognition of long-awaited and hard-won rights.[19]

Fifth, in 1896 Theodor Herzl, whose life would make a strong impression on Schoenberg, published *Die Judenstaat*; Zionism, the Jewish national cause, would take hold in Vienna.

Ultimately, the "gravest challenge" to "the German-speaking Jews of Austria" would follow in the wake of World War I when the monarchy would collapse.[20] But this was in the offing. At a moment when the promise of the 1852–72 period seemed to assure a brighter future for a young Jewish family, Samuel and Pauline Schönberg set up their home in the Leopoldstadt, Vienna's Second District, the site of seventeenth-century Vienna's Jewish ghetto. Situated in the mainstream of Jewish life, in what was and is again today Jewish Vienna, Arnold Schoenberg was born, the second day of Rosh Hashanah, September 13, 1874.

On this Viennese-Jewish background, Schoenberg not only becomes an indispensable figure for modern German-Jewish history, but the contexts and concepts of modern German-Jewish history become indispensable for Schoenberg. The view taken here is that the research program of modern German-Jewish history – identity, emancipation, anti-Semitism, Judaism, Jewish apostasy, and Jewish philosophy – helps to delineate these factors in Schoenberg's Jewish identity and clarifies their impact upon Schoenberg's artistic enterprise. Moreover, as a theory of specifically Viennese-Jewish identity, the concept of tripartite identity treats the cultural, political, and ethnic-religious as autonomous spheres; their shifting entanglements define the case of Arnold Schoenberg.[21]

Bildung and "tripartite" identity

In Vienna, where emancipation arrived decades after its launch in Berlin, Jews aspired to reenact what had occurred following the Emancipation Edict of 1812. Amos Elon describes the second generation in Berlin as one that attained its status through success in commerce and its pursuit of

Kultur. Since their father's hard-won *exceptional* status, which superseded his *unprotected* status, did not extend to them, the young Mendelssohns were on their own making a place in society:

> In the eyes of the young, the key to integration was through the cult of *Bildung*, as defined in Goethe's novel *Wilhelm Meister*: the refinement of the individual self and character in keeping with the ideals of the Enlightenment. Even as they remained Jews, *Bildung* and *Kultur* would make them 100 percent German.[22]

Wilhelm von Humboldt, Prussian Minister of Education (1809), founder of the University of Berlin (1810), and frequent visitor to the Jewish salons of Berlin, understood *Bildung* as the path to emancipation and full citizenship leading from Judaism through Protestantism, ultimately to secular humanism.[23] Jews would not be emancipated as Jews per se, but as individuals who would shed their Judaism over time. This would occur not through the embrace of Christian dogma, but by "accepting Christianity as the historical and cultural agency that had molded their intellectual and moral life."[24] Thus *Bildung* required inhabiting and learning one's way around a secular world of culture premised in emphatically Christian terms. *Bildung* was a single yet vital mode of assimilation.

Schoenberg's pursuit of *Bildung* occurred through his youthful, amateur participation in the Polyhymnia Society and his friendships within a better-educated, almost exclusively Jewish cohort. *Bildung* led them through the avenues of music as well as art, literature, philosophy, science, politics, and religion. The spread and persistence of this "cult" (or secular religion) reached Schoenberg and his cohort through its narrow transmission via musical channels. Earlier Jewish-born Berlin musicians such as Giacomo Meyerbeer and Felix Mendelssohn were its representatives par excellence. Adolph Bernhard Marx made *Bildung* and its assumption of the unique potential of each individual fundamental to his theory of musical form.[25] *Bildung* achieved wide transmission from Berlin's precariously positioned parvenus to Vienna's aspiring bourgeoisie.

However, in the 1890s becoming "100 percent German" was not the categorical imperative in multinational, multiethnic Austria that it was in Germany. On Rozenblit's theory of Jewish identity in Habsburg Austria, Jews avowed a "tripartite identity," retaining their attachment to Jewish ethnicity while declaring loyalty to the Emperor and adopting the prevailing German culture.[26] This model is apt for the Schoenberg family. On account of his father's place of birth in a Slovak region of Hungary, Schoenberg was a Hungarian subject – he was called up for military service as such – and culturally Slovak.[27] In his relationship to the state, he was not recognized as a German, but would be culturally assimilated as Viennese. Schoenberg's

ethnic-religious Jewish identity, even free of the gravitational pull of the IKG, would have a life of its own without conflict imposed by national allegiance, official state religion, or culture. It would continue in Berlin, where *Der biblische Weg* would be completed, and in America, where the Fourth Quartet, Op. 37 (1936) would be composed swiftly during the long gestation of "A Four-Point Program for Jewry" (1933–38), a singularly prescient document foreseeing the Holocaust.

Given the independence of the three tracks of tripartite identity – national, cultural, ethnic – two questions vis-à-vis tripartite identity persist: first, did Schoenberg's push toward cultural assimilation necessarily entail a pull away from ethnic-religious identity? While there is fierce tension, Jewish sources inform Schoenberg's critique of Vienna. Second, were the creative interactions between Schoenberg's autonomous affiliations with German culture and Jewish ethnicity continuous or sporadic? The quality of these interactions could be harmonious, as in the visionary settings of Rilke in the Orchestral Songs, Op. 22 (1916), or in tension.[28]

Biblical sources as cultural and political critique

In Schoenberg's writings, cultural and ethnic affiliations were mutually refracted in ongoing critical dialogue that reached a point of crisis in 1933–34. As early as 1909, when Schoenberg condemned the Viennese cultural milieu, he did so using language not inherent to German high culture. The young Schoenberg's pursuit of *Bildung* occurred in an environment less than classically German. By attending *Realschule*, a junior high school designed for the majority of students, and not the *Gymnasium*, which admitted children who were elite academically, from wealthy families and occasionally from poor Jewish families, Schoenberg's education in German high culture missed a key component. As William Kangas notes, Schoenberg's *Realschule* curriculum lacked the foundations in Greek and Roman "mythos" indispensable to German high culture.[29] In lieu of studies in Greek and Roman civilizations, the Hebrew Bible became Schoenberg's touchstone. Jewish civilization, not Greek or Roman, is Schoenberg's historical frame of reference. Allusion to the Hebrew Bible occurs throughout Schoenberg's writings; discussion of two instances must suffice.[30]

Writing in 1909, Schoenberg compares Vienna to Sodom and Gomorrah. Schoenberg, unlike his namesake Abraham, however, laments the few righteous individuals for whose sake Vienna is spared:

> So it would almost be better were there not the few "decent men." Were there not these few righteous men in Sodom and Gomorrah, perhaps God would

> repent of his ways, become angry and make it possible for a new culture to arise out of the desert salt. This is a feeble hope.[31]

This is not a homily, but an ironic commentary on Genesis 18: 17–33, a scene of bargaining, itself ironic. It not only demonstrates Schoenberg's conversance with the Hebrew Bible, but something more. The allusion reveals his affinity for Abraham's sense of morality epitomized by Abraham's questions to God: "Will you really sweep away the innocent along with the guilty? . . . The judge of all the earth – will he not do what is just?"[32] The self-centered individual would not pose such questions, but the ethical monotheist would. Contending with this biblical passage, Schoenberg engages the ethical monotheistic outlook of prophetic Judaism and maps the Viennese world around him into the biblical context of Sodom and Gomorrah. Schoenberg lays irony and ethics edge to edge, a juxtaposition that ignites *the torch* whose incendiary and illuminating effects could "make it possible for a new culture to arise." To lament the righteous ten on whose account a corrupt Vienna is not only sustained, but goes unpunished as it grows ever more depraved, is a way to rebuke a city that causes Schoenberg to lament God's compassion.

Schoenberg's rhetoric of rebuke, born of this volatile mixture of the ethical and the ironical, is akin to that of Karl Kraus, whose journal *Die Fackel* (The Torch) Schoenberg read devotedly and contributed to occasionally.[33] For Schoenberg, the ironic rhetoric of rebuke, an attitude adapted from the tone of prophetic Judaism, would be integral to several works that do not allude to or quote biblical text. A passage from the text of *Die Jakobsleiter* (1915) illustrates the point. The One Who Is Called proclaims:

> I sought beauty. To it I sacrificed everything: no aim was sacrosanct, no means clear-cut . . . I looked into brightness everywhere . . . I saw only my sun, was aware only of the rhythm of beauty.

The Angel Gabriel supplies the rebuke:

> Nevertheless you are self-satisfied: your idol grants you fulfillment before you, like those who seek, have tasted the torments of longing. Self-sufficiency keeps you warm. Heathen, you have beheld nothing.[34]

One work that does use biblical text to express both critique and faith, in much the spirit as the passage alluded to from Genesis, is *A Survivor from Warsaw*. It epitomizes the "entanglement" between Jew and German that finds expression in an "oratorical moment" of extreme concision.[35] In the text of the *Sh'ma Yisroel*,[36] instructions to hear, to affirm (the Oneness of God), to love, to teach, and to rise repudiate each dehumanizing action taken by the Nazi soldiers against the Jews recounted in the Narrator's

text: to roust them (mm. 25–42), beat them (mm. 43–61), count them (mm. 62–79), and deliver them to the gas chamber (mm. 69–79, 97–9).[37] Here the critique of fascism is presented in juxtaposition to a biblical text whose significance is not merely symbolic, but whose meaning is vital given its context in the work: the *Sh'ma* is recited for its own sake as a Jewish response to this reality, not because it promises a reward for suffering. The *Sh'ma*, a startling interruption in the narrative, is itself interrupted on the word *uvekumecho* (and when you rise). Schoenberg's pattern of row transformations leads inexorably from the choral *Sh'ma* to the return of the martial fanfare of the Nazi soldiers at its original transposition level. The ending's orchestral bombast, epitomized by the return of the trumpets, belongs not to the power of the *Sh'ma*, but to the military power on the verge of annihilating the defenseless contingent. Hardly a triumphant conclusion, it indicates, with irony on their attempt to rise, the imminent moment of the Jews' annihilation on which the survivor's memory shuts down and the extermination goes undepicted. *A Survivor from Warsaw* is a culminating work during a lifetime of Schoenberg's contending with anti-Semitism.

Bildung and anti-semitism

There is deep-seated anger in Schoenberg's 1909 rebuke of Vienna, the city in which his artistic personality was formed. Fueled by issues of cultural politics, sexual mores, and anti-Semitism, his anger is not counterbalanced with nostalgic writing about the Vienna of his youth. And if there is one city about which people wax nostalgic, it is Vienna. Schoenberg also refrains from writing with candor about his personal experience of Vienna's anti-Semitism. Moshe Lazar notes that during 1910–11 there is an absence of remarks from Schoenberg that address anti-Semitic attacks leveled against him and against Jews in general, including the 1911 Beilis blood-libel case.[38] Schoenberg does not write an essay about the humiliating experience of his family's 1921 vacation on the Mattsee[39] from which they were expelled as non-Aryans; he makes little more than ironic use of it in a note to Alban Berg:

> it got very ugly in Mattsee. The people there seemed to despise me as much as if they knew my music. Nothing happened to us beyond that.[40]

There may have been early negative impressions and humiliating experiences from his upbringing in Vienna that went unreported, but not unremembered.

This dearth of early anecdote forces H. H. Stuckenschmidt in his biography of Schoenberg to improvise cautiously about the early years.

Schoenberg completed no autobiography comparable to Bruno Walter's or Artur Schnabel's. Both authors recount their adventures in *Bildung* and place themselves squarely in the German-Jewish milieu. Gershom Scholem would assign those like Schoenberg, Walter, and Schnabel to the "broad Jewish liberal middle class" who "adhered to the monotheistic belief and to a puritanical prophetic ethic that still observed High Holidays, Sabbath eve, Seder, and memorial anniversaries."[41]

Schoenberg's sketch for the third movement of his Jewish Program Symphony dated February 9, 1937 and entitled "The Sacred Feasts and Costumes," contains references to Bar Mitzvah and reading from the Torah, the Passover Seder, Purim, Yom Kippur, and Chanukah. These references and the musical content may hint at Jewishly familiar touchstones from Schoenberg's growing up. The confrontational titles of the other three movements – 1. "Predominance provokes envy"; 2. a) "What they think about us," b) "What we think about them," c) "conclusion"; 4. "The day will come" – suggest the experience of a harsher reality and a desire to make a clean break from assimilationism and political ties to the German world.

Karl Popper, the philosopher, came from the kind of Viennese-Jewish family that in Scholem's words attempted to make "a clean break" and convert to Protestantism. From his perspective in the well-to-do First District, Popper offers this assessment:

> I believe that Austria before the First World War, and even Germany, were treating the Jews well. They were given almost all rights, although there were some barriers established by tradition, especially in the army . . . although Jews, and people of Jewish origin, were equal before the law, they were not treated as equals in every respect. Yet I believe that the Jews were treated as well as one could reasonably expect.[42]

Artur Schnabel, the pianist and composer, was raised in Vienna under harder material circumstances – closer to Schoenberg's than to Popper's. Concerning Vienna's anti-Semitic mayor, Dr. Karl Lueger, about whom Schoenberg is virtually silent, Schnabel has an unfortunate episode to recount. Schoenberg's experience with the Lueger regime was mixed. In 1903 Lueger helped Schoenberg by authorizing an annual pension for him. But in 1911 the Christian Socialists, the political heirs of Lueger, interfered with Schoenberg's chances of gaining a professorship. Schnabel, without animus, recalls the effects of Lueger's anti-Semitism:

> Encouraged by Lueger, it was a favorite sport of patriotic male adolescents to bully and beat, with a jolly brutality, children whom they thought to be Jewish. I was molested only once, and I am not sure whether the motive for the attack was Austrianism or mere drunkenness on the part of a few lads. Though a very happy child in general those days, I learned the meaning of fear.[43]

This incident probably occurred after 1895 when Lueger first became mayor; Schnabel would have been about fourteen. Schnabel does not make too much of this episode which darkens an otherwise optimistic account of self-formation and growing mastery of German culture. In all likelihood, Schoenberg suffered similarly to Schnabel. When Schoenberg writes that anti-Semites made their argument "*durch die Faust*" (by beating it into us), it is hard not to take Schoenberg at his word.[44]

Bildung and anti-Semitism relate tortuously. *Bildung* anathematized anti-Semitism and fostered a German-Jewish symbiosis, thus serving as a valid basis for German-Jewish identity, yet *Bildung* also contained a latent anti-Judaism that sought to emancipate Jews not only from degradation and persecution, but from Judaism itself. The emergence of racial anti-Semitism adds an additional dimension to the formation of identity.

Contending with racism: relations with Richard Dehmel and Richard Gerstl

Insight into the question of anti-Semitic racism can be gained from a brief look at the artistic relationships Schoenberg maintained with the poet Richard Dehmel and the painter Richard Gerstl. Both influenced Schoenberg. Dehmel's influence is evident in Schoenberg's song settings as well as the string sextet setting of *Verklärte Nacht*. Gerstl's influence, evident from 1908, exerts itself when Schoenberg devoted himself to painting with the hope of a supplemental career as a portraitist. These relationships, which should be understandable within the aims of *Bildung*, take Schoenberg outside *Bildung's* proper domain. "Jewishness," as opposed to "Judaism," becomes the pressing issue of anti-Semitic racism that lurks in the question: can Jewishness be overcome?

In 1908 Richard Dehmel, famous as the *poet of the young*, published the essay "Culture and Race," a fictitious dialogue between a German poet, "free of any *Rassedogma*," and a Jewish artist from Berlin. The poet, in his conclusion, argues that:

> talent is not the product of any one race. As for culture, its highest achievements would be impossible without the mixing of different races, since complicated temperaments which feel the need to express the contrasts and conflicts deriving from their personal identities can only evolve out of mixed blood origins . . . environment rather than race [is] the determinant of cultural forms.[45]

Liberal attitudes toward race like Dehmel's could excite Schoenberg's enthusiasm. Dehmel's liberality would only have encouraged Schoenberg

to propose collaboration in 1912 on a wide-ranging work in which modern man regains religion:

> for a long time I have been wanting to write an oratorio on the following subject: modern man, having passed through materialism, socialism and anarchy and, despite having been an atheist, still having in him some residue of ancient faith (in the form of superstition), wrestles with God and finally succeeds in finding God and becoming religious. Learning to pray! . . . But I could never shake off the thought of "Modern Man's Prayer," and I often thought: If only Dehmel . . .[46]

However, after World War I, Schoenberg's engagement with the poet seems to end for good just as Dehmel's attitude toward Jews changes. In 1919 Dehmel composed the manuscript "Einfluss des jüdischen Volkstums auf das Deutsche" (Influence of Jewish Customs on the German). According to this postwar manuscript, Dehmel perceives *mixed culture* as a "danger" and regards Jews as having "too much influence."[47] This was a line that in Schoenberg's view "nationalistic Germans," paragons of *Bildung*, such as Richard Strauss, Hans Pfitzner, and Wilhelm Fürtwangler, did not cross. Without subscribing to racist anti-Semitism, they could "consider everything German as superior" and have "a small anti-Semitic tarnish," but Schoenberg did not identify them with racial anti-Semitism and Nazism.[48]

Richard Gerstl, called the Austrian Van Gogh, came from a Jewish family in flux: his father was born Jewish, his mother converted to Judaism from Roman Catholicism. By 1898 Gerstl converted to Roman Catholicism. His mother would eventually be accepted back to the church and his father would convert to Roman Catholicism in 1904. According to Gemma Blackshaw, from 1905 to 1910, when the Christ image was iconic for young male artists, Gerstl and Schoenberg explored the use of this icon for the expression of conflicted Jewish identity.[49] For them the Christ image, without explicit consideration of any question of Jewish race, symbolized both "socio-cultural exclusion and belonging." Blackshaw understands Schoenberg's series of painted gazes as following Gerstl's emulation of the sudarium, the cloth used by St. Veronica to wipe the sweat from the face of Jesus that then became imprinted with the image of Jesus; Schoenberg invests these images with an intensely focused and colored gaze. Gerstl, on Blackshaw's view, was engaged in testing the possibility of identifying with Christ as the "ideal of overcoming Judaism," and in following this path suggested by Otto Weininger, of overcoming *Jewishness* as well. Blackshaw reads the final laughing self-portrait as Gerstl's last word on the folly of his Jewish-Christ enterprise. Schoenberg painted two very different "Visions of Christ." In general, he concerned himself more with grotesquerie and satire. According to

Schoenberg's Viennese-American pupil Richard Hoffmann, Schoenberg's many self-portraits were largely to hone his skill at portraiture. Blackshaw's point is that the interpretation of Gerstl's images requires consideration of Jewish identity, which applies to the interpretation of Schoenberg's art as well.

Theories of Schoenberg: accounting for the Jewish work of the American years

The majority of Schoenberg's Jewish-themed compositions and writings originate after 1933 in America (see Table 14.2).[50] Few are performed. And while they are not the works on which Schoenberg's reputation rests, they are provocative. Commentators have tried to integrate these final works into the sweep of religious interest that permeates Schoenberg's work. Peter Gradenwitz proposes a thesis characteristic of German historiography: "Schoenberg's inner religious development seems to have been dictated almost independently of his formal confession."[51] "Inner religious development" does not insist upon synchrony between formal religious confession and belief while it suggests aims and purposes (telos) that will ultimately converge with Schoenberg's formal confession. This is pleasing in a novelistic sense. In this narrative Schoenberg achieves unity with himself, if not with God. André Neher connects "inner religious development" with the penitential act of *teshuva* (return) and understands Schoenberg's biography to represent in Jewish terms a drama of *teshuva*.[52]

Alexander Ringer theorizes a continuous connection between Schoenberg's music and Jewish symbolism.[53] Thus for him the task of interpreting each work means thinking about underlying Jewish mystical concepts and Jewish musical practice. Steven Schwarzschild places the emphasis on the proximity of Schoenberg's compositional methods, especially twelve-tone serialism, to the Marpurg neo-Kantian philosophy of Hermann Cohen, which amounted to a highly idealistic German-Jewish synthesis and symbiosis.[54] Schwarzschild points to a passage from one of Schoenberg's letters to Kandinsky to show that the creative imagination is just that – creative:

> when the artist reaches the point at which he desires only the expression of inner events and inner scenes in his rhythms and tones, then "the object in painting" has ceased to belong to the reproducing eye.[55]

Consonant with Schwarzschild's view, William Kangas understands Schoenberg to be motivated by a "quest to think through the meaning of music in ethical terms . . . music, ethics and Jewish identity existed in a

Table 14.2 *Selected Jewish-themed writings and works by Schoenberg, 1923–50*

Year	Composition/text	Description	Subject	Source/author
1923–26	*Der biblische Weg* (The Biblical Way)	Theatrical play	Political. To possess the land, return to the biblical path.	A. Schoenberg
1930–32	*Moses und Aron*	Opera in 2 acts, complete and Act 3 text	A theological debate unfolds through a series of biblical scenes	Selections from Exodus, from Burning Bush through wanderings and death of Aaron (Act 3).
1933–38	A Four-Point Program for Jewry	Political essay	Fate of European Jewry. "Is there room in the world for almost 7,000,000 people? Are they condemned to doom?"	A. Schoenberg
1934	*Jeder junge Jude* (Every Young Jew)	Political essay	Assimilation as a false messianic hope	A. Schoenberg
1936	Violin Concerto, Op. 36	Finale: Allegro	"Triumphal March for Palestine"	A. Schoenberg
1938	*Kol Nidre*, Op. 39	Jewish liturgical, choral	Jewish mysticism (special light hidden at creation). Repentance. Annulment of vows	Yom Kippur traditional liturgy, modified and enhanced by Rabbi Jacob Sonderling and A. Schoenberg
1945	"Genesis" Prelude, Op. 44	Chorus and orchestra	The Creation evinced through wordless chorus and large orchestra	First verses of Genesis
1947	*A Survivor from Warsaw*, Op. 46	Oratorio. Narrator, men's chorus and orchestra	A Narrator recalls: Nazi soldiers round up Jewish men, who recite part of the *Sh'ma Yisrael* before their deaths	English text by A. Schoenberg, based on various reports, with a portion of the *Sh'ma Yisrael* up to the word *uvekumecho* [and when you rise]
1949	*Israel Exists Again* (fragment)	Chorus and orchestra	"Israel exists again, though invisibly"	A. Schoenberg
1949	*Dreimal tausend Jahre*, Op. 50a	Chorus a cappella	Rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem	Dagobert Runes
1950	*De Profundis* (Out of the depths) *Mima'amakim* Op. 50b	Psalm for mixed chorus, a cappella	Redemption of Israel from all its iniquities	Book of Psalms, Psalm 130 Composed for the Chemjo Vinaver *Anthology of Jewish Music* (1953)
1950	*Moderner Psalm*, Op. 50c	Speaker, chorus, orchestra	On the necessity of prayer, "and yet I pray . . ."	A. Schoenberg

self-reinforcing structure."[56] Ethics took Schoenberg to Jewish identity, not vice versa.

A theory based on the history presented in this chapter would suggest that the experience of the period from the relative security of the 1870s to the Holocaust had the trajectory spiritually, culturally, and politically of an

avalanche. The listener is never safe from this. Schoenberg places before his listeners a precarious scene, where a beleaguered, bewildered, or uncomprehending subject (as soloist or chorus) responds spontaneously to circumstances that resist resolution. The situation, one of life and death without theodicy as a presupposition, speaks to a modern condition, while the context, which may partake of irony and/or tragedy offset by some deep hope, may have an explicit or implicit religious dimension. The expressly religious works are noteworthy for their ability to present a subject's attempt to address the supernal world as a spontaneous response in a moment of crisis. *A Survivor from Warsaw* has already been addressed along these lines. The setting of Psalm 130 (*De Profundis* or *Mima'amakim*), Op. 50b offers a striking example, especially when compared to the setting by Franz Liszt that occurs in *St. Stanislaus* (1886). Liszt erects a cathedral; his setting is pictorial and theatrical, representing the "depths" and depicting the text; it is in every sense a Western setting. Schoenberg's setting is about the people who are using this psalm for prayer: their emotional and mental states, and their desire that Israel be redeemed without knowing when or how. Schoenberg does not try to imitate traditional Jewish prayer, but comes to a similar effect through his own musical language.

Musically, the Psalm and the other religious works shun traditional or ritualistic formulas, and it is from this, in part, that the sense of the spontaneous arises. But it is also this novelty and incongruity in the avoidance of conventional Western musical-religious codes that keep the composer's expression of religious belief and identity in flux.