Closing the gap between music and history in Thomas Mann’s *Doktor Faustus*

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Abstract

The thesis aims to systematise in more detail than has been attempted to date the portrayal of music and German history in *Doktor Faustus*, and connections made between them.

It first traces Mann's interest in politics and music, and how these were brought together in writing *Doktor Faustus*. It then examines discourse about music in the novel, separating description of the timeless, ontological features of music from descriptions of compositions, as particular historical manifestations of that ontology. The composer is seen as the key intermediary between ontological and historical features. The thesis then examines Adrian Leverkühn's role; both the manifestation of music's ontology in his works, and the place of 'Erkenntnis' in them. Leverkühn himself is found to have only limited engagement with the historical circumstances in which he composes.

The next part of the thesis focuses on Serenus Zeitblom, showing that he, in his functions as narrator and admiring audience, gives Leverkühn the historical specificity he would otherwise largely lack, rooting him in early twentieth century German history. It considers his descriptions of Germany, which, like music, is portrayed as having both a timeless ontology and specific historical manifestations. Both sets of characteristics correspond closely to those of music.

Finally, the thesis considers how music and history are related to one another. Their treatment is found to lend weight to Mann's theory of 'one Germany'. Leverkühn's significance, and thus, much of the connection between music and history, is found to stem from Zeitblom's narrative, but even this does not offer a clear framework of connections, e.g. a detailed allegory. The thesis concludes that whilst music and history do reflect each other in the novel, the gap between them is closed through the shared responsibility of the artist and his audience, suggesting that Zeitblom's role and culpability may be worth further examination.
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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 The significance of Doktor Faustus

Doktor Faustus was begun during the last years of World War II, and published in 1947 in Switzerland. It was freely available in Germany only from 1949. It is a dense, intellectual novel, which assumes a good deal of knowledge about German music and culture. Whilst Doktor Faustus has moments of humour alongside its erudition, it does not have the accessibility of the Buddenbrooks ‘family saga’, and is probably a more difficult prospect even than Der Zauberberg for a relative newcomer to Mann’s work. As a result, it is the least well known of his major novels, certainly outside Mann’s German-speaking readership. At the same time, it is, quite possibly, the one that has been most dissected and explored by scholars. John Fetzer’s 1996 survey of the Doktor Faustus literature identifies ten broad topics of interest merely as a starting point. Fetzer notes that barely twenty years after the novel was published, “the lament had arisen that the critical literature dealing with Doktor Faustus...was assuming vast proportions”. Yet the secondary literature continues to accumulate. Why, then, is this work so eternally fascinating, and why is it worth adding further to the mass of studies?

First, because the novel was so important to Mann himself. It is significant that Mann began Die Entstehung des Doktor Faustus, his account of the composition of the novel, with an amusing story of an interview with a journalist from Time magazine. The journalist apparently asked Mann why his prediction that he would die at the age of seventy (in 1945), was showing no signs of coming true. Reflecting on this incident for a few pages, Mann ruminates on the relationship between illness and artistic endeavour, itself a key theme of Doktor Faustus. It is evident both that he struggled to overcome his quite serious illnesses in order to complete the novel, and also that the process of writing itself took a toll on his health. He describes Doktor Faustus as the work that “wie kein anderes an mir gezehrt und meine innersten Kräfte in Anspruch genommen hat”. For Mann, the novel represented a final reckoning with his own country, all the more emotive because it was written in exile. He wrote of it to friends as if of a beloved child - certainly more emotionally than was his habit when writing about his real children. In one letter to his American patron, Agnes Meyer - and the letter is typical of many written after the German edition of Doktor Faustus was first published - Mann spoke of his great emotion when it was well received by readers:

2 GW XI, p. 147.
A heavy cost to its author does not, however, automatically guarantee that a novel will have a heavy impact on the reading public. The second reason for continuing interest in *Doktor Faustus* is that its impact at the time of publication was enormous. Despite its complexity, the book was widely read in Helen Lowe Porter’s English translation even before it was easily available in Germany, as the USA Book of the Month Club selected it for its members for November 1948. The huge circulation this entailed was a source of delight (as well as some bemusement) for Mann: "Die Götter haben gesprochen, und der Book of the Month Club hat den November für >Dr. Faustus< bestimmt". Michael Beddow includes in his study of *Doktor Faustus* a striking graphic illustration of the huge amount of German media attention given to Mann between 1945 and 1949. Mann was mentioned almost twice as many times as Brecht, and far outstripped other prominent writers such as his brother Heinrich, and Franz Werfel. The coverage peaked in 1949, when Mann’s first trip back to German soil since well before the war coincided with the German publication of *Doktor Faustus*. It is fair to say that the attention given to the novel was largely due to the Germans’ inability to separate *Doktor Faustus* from Mann’s attitude to his defeated homeland. Beddow observes that substantive commentary on the novel is difficult to set apart from articles that simply used the opportunity of the publication to criticise Mann himself, especially given the relatively scant availability of the novel in Germany in 1949.

Everyone knew, whether they had read *Doktor Faustus* or not, that its theme was German culpability in World War Two. Feelings were running high on the subject of Mann’s right, or lack of it, to pronounce on such issues from what many Germans saw as the relative ease of exile in the USA. The most heated reactions occurred in the wake of Mann’s response to Walter von Molo’s open letter in the *Münchner Zeitung*. Von Molo had invited Mann to return to the defeated Germany. Mann’s response was extremely critical of the writers of the so-called ‘Innere Emigration’, who had chosen to remain in Germany whilst inwardly

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4 Letter to Agnes Meyer of 6 September 1948, ibid., p. 709.
6 The first German print run of *Doktor Faustus*, in 1949, was only 7,000. This compared with the initial print run of 14,000, distributed mainly in Switzerland. Because of its selection by the Book of the Month Club, the American print run was very high indeed, at 250,000. See ibid., p. 99.
disassociating themselves from the regime.\(^7\) The attention given to Mann's 'betrayal' reached its highest point when he visited both the Eastern and Western zones of Germany on his first return trip in 1949.

Germans' unease about *Doktor Faustus* did not, however, stem only from the controversy surrounding its author. There was something in the novel itself that seems to have spoken directly and alarmingly to the German people of an uncomfortable reality. Mann loved the German tradition, but had realised very early on - as many of his fellow Germans had not, or perhaps, had not dared - its dangerous use by Hitler and the National Socialist Party. This realisation is poured into *Doktor Faustus*. Mann had attained an almost superhuman status in the eyes of some Germans during his absence. His greatest adherents must have seen the novel as an act of revenge rather than the solidarity, even deliverance, for which they might have hoped:

Nach 1945 glaubten viele, er werde über den Ozean eilend Schafe wie Wölfe unter einen blauen Mantel schlagen. Sie waren bestürzt, die Schafe und die Wölfe, als sie nicht die Worte eines Heilsbringers, sondern eines tief Gereizten, Zornmütigen, Schwankenden vernahmen oder lasen.\(^8\)

The impact of *Doktor Faustus* was, therefore, evidently significant. But two key criticisms were levelled at the novel then, and have made themselves heard ever since. First, the claim that Mann's judgements of Germany rest entirely on the attitudes of the upper strata of society, particularly its intellectuals, making his views at best incomplete and at worst, damaging and irrelevant. Proponents of this view included the Gruppe 47 writers. Secondly, some critics have been appalled that Mann should suggest that art, particularly the sublime art of music, could possibly be complicit in Nazism. Notable in this group was Hans Egon Holthusen, whose 1949 study of the novel, *Die Welt ohne Transendenz*, was particularly influential in the early stages of *Doktor Faustus* study. These two criticisms are, in a sense, what this thesis sets out to answer. It will investigate whether high intellectualism and music have a real relationship with historical reality, whether the novel does bridge the gap between these two apparently disparate worlds.

The third reason for the significance of *Doktor Faustus* is the continuing relevance of its themes today. Mann's image, even in his lifetime, was one of a monument of German history. Brecht, having met Mann less than a month after arriving in America, apparently

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\(^7\) The letter from Walter von Molo (13 August 1945), and the even more critical follow up by Frank Thieß (18 August 1945), are reproduced in Klaus Schröter (ed.), *Thomas Mann im Urteil seiner Zeit. Dokumente 1891-1955*, (Hamburg, Wegner, 1969), p. 334-343.

\(^8\) Max von Brüch, from 'Münchner Sommer', *Die Gegenwart*, 15 August 1949, ibid., p. 386.
described the meeting by paraphrasing Napoleon's statement on seeing the Egyptian pyramids: "three thousand years gaze down upon me". It was always inevitable that death would enhance this impression. Yet the successive publication of Mann's diaries since 1977 has done much to balance it with glimpses of the private man. Even though his regular diary-keeping and methodical approach to his work make it difficult not to sense that Mann lived his life with half an eye to posterity, yet at the same time, the details of his family life, his ailments and various insecurities, have made Mann seem more human and approachable. And, as T. J. Reed notes, the revelation of his extensive use of montage technique, the impossibility of creation of original material, have dispelled the image of the traditional narrative writer in the high bourgeois tradition, and placed Mann securely amongst modernist writers. Yet many modern German writers have vehemently denied any influence from Mann on their own work. Marcel Reich-Ranicki conducted a survey of eighteen writers on the centenary of Mann's birth in 1975, and repeated the exercise with eight of them ten years later. Reich-Ranicki put their negative reaction down to the tendency of a new generation to turn against those who came before and are described as 'classic' writers. At the same time, however, he observed that it says much about the importance of Mann both that, for an 'irrelevance', he continues to awaken such strong reactions, and that these cannot diminish his lasting significance.

Hannelore Mundt's study, published in 1989, suggests that Mann's concern with the connection between aesthetics and fascism links him to later novelists who explore the Nazi period. She finds echoes of Leverkühn in figures such as Grass's Oskar Mazerath and Böll's Robert Fähmel, despite the broader social picture of Germany that these novelists typically offer. It is true that the large themes of Doktor Faustus do not sit easily with the themes of literature immediately after World War Two. For some time after the war - and not surprisingly - writers tended to reflect their experience through a focus on the humanity and suffering of an individual or small groups. This could entail the experience of living through the development of Nazism, as in Grass's Die Blechtrommel (1959), experience in the frontline, as in Heinrich Böll's Wanderer, kommst du nach Spa... (1950), or the isolation and disorientation of the soldier returning to society, in Wolfgang Borchert's play, Draußen vor

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12 Hannelore Mundt, 'Doktor Faustus' und die Folgen: Kunstkritik als Gesellschaftskritik im deutschen Roman seit 1947, (Bonn, Bouvier, 1989).
It is only relatively recently that the German novel has been edging away from individual experience and guilt towards the attempt at a broad historical and cultural panorama. One recent example is Grass’s novel following reunification, *Ein weites Feld* (1995). It may be that this much time and distance was needed to allow for Germany to face the disturbance and pain of examining its society as a whole in more detail. This entails stripping back to what Hamida Bosmajian calls in her survey of holocaust literature “historical scar tissue”. The hardening process does not mean, she says, that the pain is no longer there: “This is no genuine healing, but is an inevitability of human reality”. It may be, therefore, that Mann is more a writer of our own times than is immediately obvious, and that it is more timely than ever to examine the significance of the themes in *Doktor Faustus*.

1.2 The scope of this thesis

The impetus for this thesis lies in the apparent discrepancy between the subject matter of *Doktor Faustus* and its impact on Mann himself, its original audience and readers today. The subject matter is not a starkly realistic treatment of the evils of the Nazi regime and of the war itself. It is very different from obviously affecting accounts such as Böll’s *Wo warst du, Adam?* (1951), the experiences of Robert Fähmel in *Billard um halbzehn* (1959), or Zuckmayer’s drama about moral doubt in the high command of the German air force, *Des Teufels General* (1946). At first sight, the musical subject matter of *Doktor Faustus* seems too far removed from Nazism to have created the effect that it did, even discounting the media interest in its author. Yet Mann quite clearly unites music and the historical situation in Serenus Zeitblom’s final prayer: “Ein einsamer Mann faltet seine Hände und spricht: Gott sei eurer armen Seele gnädig, mein Freund, mein Vaterland”. But there is, *prima facie*, a huge gap between a serialist composer and Nazi Germany. Yet Mann believes, and invites the reader to believe, that this gap has been closed in the novel. He asserts in this phrase that in saying something significant about Adrian Leverkühn’s life and work he is also saying something significant about Nazi Germany, perhaps demonstrating a strong (or even causal?) connection between them. Indeed, Mann thought that this work of fiction made a far stronger statement about Germany that any public speech he could have made:

Daß ich nicht eben ein Deserteur vom deutschen Schicksal bin, - dies Buch wird es doch manchem zu fühlen geben, - stärker, glaube ich, als ein rhetorischer Beitrag zur Paulskirchen-Gedenkfeier es zu tun vermöchte.

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14 GW VI, p. 676.
15 Letter to Walter Kolb of 4 January 1948, *Briefe III*, p. 11. Kolb was the mayor of Frankfurt am Main, who had written urging Mann to visit the city in 1949 on his first return visit to Germany since before the war, when he would give an address in the Paulskirche on receiving the Goethe prize.
Even allowing for Mann's personal prominence, the reactions to the publication of the novel suggest that his fellow Germans thought the novel did indeed speak of modern German history as well as of Leverkühn. This thesis sets out to examine what is said about music and history in the novel, and how the apparent gap between them is closed. It is not another contribution to detailed source-hunting on the novel. There has been an enormous amount of illuminating research on the sources of Doktor Faustus. All of Mann's novels repay such study, perhaps none more so than this one. But the novel was experienced as a self-sufficient whole by its first audience and continues to be so for readers today. Not all of these readers will necessarily have a detailed knowledge of Mann's many sources. It is important for the impact of the novel that the text is able to sustain the connections between music and history in its own right, without the reader knowing much more about either than is on the page. The novel was certainly experienced as a whole, rather than a gradual accumulation of detail, by its author:

> Als ich in jener Sonntag-Morgenstunde zu schreiben begann, muß das Buch... nach seinem Hergang, seinen Ereignissen offen und übersichtlich vor mir gelegen haben; ich muß darin Bescheid gewußt haben so weit, daß es mir möglich war, sofort mit seinem Motiv-Komplex in toto zu arbeiten, den Anfängen gleich die Tiefenperspektive des Ganzen zu geben.\(^{16}\)

A number of attempts have, of course, been made to explore how music and history relate to one another overall in the novel. But these studies often seem to rest with the conclusion that whilst there is indeed some connection between the two aspects, this is so densely woven, even ineffable, that the most sensible conclusion must be to take refuge in Mann's own concept of 'Zweideutigkeit als System'. It is in the nature of this novel, it is said, to be ambiguous. This is undoubtedly true. But to content oneself with invoking this ambiguity surely cannot allow for a proper engagement with the real moral anguish that drove Mann on in writing Doktor Faustus. It must be possible, more than fifty years after the publication of Doktor Faustus, to make a serious attempt to move on from this ultimately unsatisfactory conclusion. This is certainly the view that John Fetzer reaches at the end of his survey of the Doktor Faustus literature:

> Any reduction in the degree of inherent ambivalence and ambiguity in the novel... may, in the final analysis, not be at all bad... perhaps the moment may be at hand to place an injunction on the threadbare concepts of equivocality and ambivalence which for so long have performed yeoman service in the cause of Mann criticism, and now need to be relieved of their duty in favour of something resembling a definitive commitment.\(^{17}\)

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\(^{16}\) GW XI, p. 168.

\(^{17}\) Fetzer, op. cit., p. 130-131.
Fetzer goes on to observe that the German word “Zweideutigkeit” does not, after all, mean that a concept is opaque and incapable of penetration. It merely signifies two meanings: “ambiguity can, under optimal conditions, ultimately lend itself to systematisation”. A single thesis cannot create those optimal conditions. But some degree of systematisation, at least, is precisely what this thesis strives for, and to draw from that process some concrete lessons for Mann’s time and our own. Even partial success in this endeavour must be a helpful step. A monograph by Matthias Schulze, published very recently, examines music as historical paradigm in *Doktor Faustus* and Hermann Hesse’s *Glasperlenspiel*. This is an interesting study, especially on the place of Wagner in the novel, and testimony again to the enduring importance of the issues of music and history at the heart of *Doktor Faustus*. But Schulze relates music to German historical reality only in a general way, whereas this thesis aims to go further in particularising the treatment of music and German history and relating them to one another.

This is a considerable task, bearing in mind that even Mann quailed before the depth and breadth of the themes in *Doktor Faustus*:

Entsetzlich! Es ist wieder >>une mer à boire<<. Ein Becken, in das allzuviel hineingeht, Deutschland, die Epoche, die Kunst, alles. Daß ich mich noch einmal auf so etwas einlassen mußte!20

And what hope for someone wanting to explain the joint impact of the historical and musical themes, on discovering that Mann himself appears to have been unable to fathom the reason why he found the novel so disturbing? He wrote to Hans Reisiger: “Ich kann doch manches ausdrücken, aber ich kann nicht ausdrücken, warum es so schrecklich ist”.21 In order to fulfil this task, it is, as noted earlier, important for the text to be considered largely on its own terms. This means not becoming extensively deflected into investigation of the underlying sources, except where knowledge of these genuinely helps to reinforce the process of systematisation and gathering meaning.

There are two justifications for this approach. First, the fact that this novel of high culture did have, and continues to have, an impact on readers without their necessarily having a highly detailed appreciation of Mann’s many-layered references. Although the many layers

18 Ibid., p. 131.
21 Letter to Hans Reisiger of 4 September 1947, ibid., p. 98.
are undoubtedly part of what creates the novel’s impact, feeling the impact is not dependent on understanding all that makes up those layers. It is a fact, as T. J. Reed observes, that “the Common Reader’s verdict is swayed by simpler things. To have created simpler things out of a compulsive and fearsome complexity is the triumph of the book”.^22

Second, Mann was wary of his own erudite reputation, and saw himself first and foremost as a creative writer, not a scholar.23 He rarely sought out and deployed erudition for its own sake. On the contrary, he was workmanlike, and even opportunistic, in his gathering of sources. The availability of Mann’s working papers and diaries since his death have revealed to scholars just how thoroughly he filleted his sources for what he wanted, often transferring them wholesale into his own text without explicit acknowledgement. We know from Mann’s thorough documentation of the process of writing Doktor Faustus of his collaboration with the philosopher and musicologist Theodor Adorno, and approaches to others, including Igor Stravinsky and the theologian, Paul Tillich, and of course, Mann’s disagreement with Arnold Schoenberg. But none of this should be seen as plagiarism. Mann was ready to seek help with specialist aspects of his novels when needed, because he knew that the detail was not the focus of the text, but merely a means to an end. The main end, in the case of Doktor Faustus, was the need to explore and understand Germany’s situation at the end of World War Two, and to make that understanding accessible to his readers. After all, Zeitblom’s prayer at the end of the novel speaks with the emotional involvement of the German, not the detachment of the scholar. This led Gunilla Bergsten, with good reason, to speculate about whether the “einsamer alter Mann” is also the author himself, referred to by name.24 The erudition and many sources of the novel are never sought for their own sake, but harnessed in the service of a clear moral purpose. Mann said when he finished writing: “Ich anerkenne die moralische Leistung”.25 The different elements are taken into the creative work and transformed as this happens. This thesis will examine closely the constituent parts of music and history in Doktor Faustus and the whole that is rendered out of them in this transforming process.

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22 T. J. Reed, op. cit., p. 402.
23 See, for example, T. J. Reed, ‘Thomas Mann and Tradition: Some Clarifications’, in P. F. Ganz (ed.), The Discontinuous Tradition. Studies in German in honour of Ernest Ludwig Stahl, (Oxford University Press, 1971), p.158-181. The essay notes that other authors, including both Lessing and T. S. Eliot, shared this wariness of their own reputations. Reed counts Nietzsche - obviously a central influence for Doktor Faustus - as virtually the only source of Mann’s most important ideas.
25 GW XI, p. 300.
1.3 The implications of closing the gap

Any discovery of specific connections between music and history in Doktor Faustus, and any explanation of how the gap between them is, conceivably, closed, should not only contribute to study of the novel, but provide some insight into the phenomenon of Nazism. Mann intended the novel to make a serious statement about Germany, and a connection between art and history should reveal something of the influence of art and artists in the rise of Nazism. More than fifty years after the end of World War Two, the fascinated horror with which people look at this period of German history is undiminished. Whilst this is not surprising, it is important that this fascinated horror is combined with a desire for greater understanding of the history. It is sometimes said that history repeats itself simply because no-one listens. It may be over-optimistic to suppose that investigation and understanding of the worst periods of history can always prevent similar events from recurring. Yet even if human history is not as teleological as we should like it to be, future history is surely doomed the moment we despair of a quest for greater understanding.

The quest for knowledge and understanding of the Nazi regime, especially the Holocaust, is still very much alive, perhaps partly because of an awareness that people with living memories of these events are becoming fewer. The controversy caused in 1999 by plans for holocaust memorials in Manchester and Berlin, and the alarm at the success of Jörg Haider’s Freedom party in this year’s Austrian elections, show how deeply the burden of this terrible episode of history is still felt, even by those born after it. The school curriculum in virtually every European country covers knowledge of the Holocaust, and Holocaust denial is classed as a serious offence. The quest for knowledge and understanding of what happened, and how, need not be confined to history syllabuses. It is quite reasonable to suppose that a work of literature, particularly one as anguished and committed as Doktor Faustus, can help. It would, of course, be misguided to attempt to explain the rise of fascism in Germany simply through an account of the relationship between culture and politics. It would be foolish, even crass, to ignore the many forces far beyond aesthetics that swept Hitler to power in 1933 in a complex interrelationship of all too tangible factors; the economic crisis, the crushing burden of the Treaty of Versailles, the organisational reach and political will of the National Socialist Party. As Joachim Fest observes, however, the failure of one group in Nazi Germany to prevent the rise of Hitler is simply a reflection of the failure of the population as a whole.  

Surely, then, the study of culture has something to tell us, not least because ideas and culture do seem to have played a greater part in the national life of Germany than perhaps they do in

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our own country. George Mosse notes in his study of mass movements in Germany that: “Hegel’s assertion that the universal spirit constitutes the culture of a nation stands within a specific tradition not shared widely in England or in the United States”.27

Literature is increasingly recognised as a real and powerful means of learning from history. Even if life is reflected only fleetingly or elusively in literature, it is life nonetheless. Indeed, some parts of life that are difficult or distressing to explain may be better grasped by approaching them in this indirect way. Mann’s collaborator on Doktor Faustus, Theodor Adorno, certainly thought this, writing in Philosophie der neuen Musik that: “Die Formen der Kunst verzeichnen die Geschichte der Menschheit gerechter als ihre Dokumente”.

Later, in his 1962 lecture, Engagement, Adorno asserted that even the most avant-garde art had its roots in social reality, using the writing of Samuel Beckett as an example of how such art could express the inexpressible:

Alle schaudern davor zurück, und doch kann keiner sich ausreden, daß alle exzentrischen Stücke und Romane von dem handeln, was alle wissen und keiner Wort haben will.29

J. P. Stern took the opportunity, appropriately enough, of a lecture on Doktor Faustus, to press the case for active historical enquiry to be an integral part of literary study, which should, he said, be “a humane enquiry and a recasting of living experience in the mode of language”.30 Every novel that is explicitly set in a particular historical period allows the reader to consider something of the forces underlying that period, to engage with the reality of the society as a whole in a way that it is more difficult to do if the focus is only on specific historical events or on ‘famous men’, with no feeling of what it was like to lead an ordinary life at the time. The study of recent Germany history, in particular, has tended to become dominated by the figure of Hitler, focusing more on the psychology of the man whom many would regard as the personification of evil, than on the society that allowed such a man to exercise a major influence on the course of world history.

Some would argue that history itself is now more closely aligned to the literary model. An article in the Times Higher Education Supplement in 1996 about future directions in historical research noted “a certain kind of rapprochement ... between history and literature in

28 TWA GS 12, p. 47.
29 TWA GS 11, p. 425.
the best work that is being produced”. A parallel analysis of directions in English literature research noted that “it is no longer possible to think of the literature of the past as a collection of masterpieces that somehow magically float free of their own history and culture”. The increasing popular success of historical narratives, such as Orlando Figes’s study of the Russian Revolution, written from the perspective of ordinary citizens, suggests that the two fields are indeed moving closer together. A recent collection of essays entitled Virtual History explores the significance of key historical events by suggesting, in narrative form, what the results might have been if they had turned out differently. What if, for example, Hitler had won the war and occupied this country? What if John F. Kennedy had not been assassinated? The book takes the literary dimension of historical studies to perhaps the ultimate point, and the result is clearly not to everyone’s taste. But surely Niall Ferguson is right to say, in his introduction to the book, that this kind of approach rescues us from thinking that history is heavily deterministic, that it could only have happened in a particular way, with no changeable causes and effects? Such a feeling of inevitability is certainly to be avoided when considering so catastrophic a period as the Nazi era.

Perhaps the most important way in which discovering how Mann closes the gap between music and history in Doktor Faustus could contribute to understanding of the Nazi era is that it could take us beyond the tendency to ‘demonise’ Hitler and that period of German history. There is a tendency to regard Hitler and Nazi Germany as the embodiment of absolute evil - beyond human understanding and control. In the introduction to his recent book Explaining Hitler, the journalist Ron Rosenbaum says that he was astonished to find, when he interviewed the most distinguished biographers of Hitler, such as Alan Bullock and Hugh Trevor-Roper, that even they despaired of ever explaining him. It is impossible to deny that there is something bizarre and disturbing about the figure of Hitler. Yet to dwell on this idea of Hitler as the embodiment of absolute evil is to place him beyond the realms of anything we can explain, control or prevent. The same tendency was evident in the widespread ‘demonisation’ of Serbian President Milosevic in the media - and not only the tabloid media - during the Kosovan crisis of 1999. This overwhelming focus on the individual, although not surprising, failed to recognise the real and deep-rooted cultural and historical forces

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contributing to the situation in the Balkans. It must surely be essential to take proper account of such wider forces if immense historical problems like these are to be tackled.

J. P. Stern notes that isolating Hitler the individual “is particularly misleading in the case of one whose every public word and every political act expressed for almost the whole of his career the fears and aspirations of his contemporaries”. It ignores the many, quite ‘ordinary’ public servants and members of the armed forces who helped to create and sustain the Nazi regime. It also ignores the fact that Hitler could not have gained power without his party’s conventional political success in democratic elections. Despite the Nazi myth of the ‘Machtergreifung’, Hitler’s path to power was largely quite prosaic. Although the NSDAP had no Parliamentary majority, it nonetheless claimed almost 44% of the vote in March 1933, and because Hitler lacked an overall majority in the Reichstag, it was necessary to do some political manoeuvring to pass the Enabling Law. To ‘demonise’ the Third Reich is to place beyond the realms of reality events and horrors - and responsibility for them - that were all too real; surely an injustice to the memory of their innocent victims. It may be that to attempt to specify and particularise the connections between art and real historical events in *Doktor Faustus*, rather than taking refuge in the mists of ‘Zweideutigkeit’, can help in informing us about this reality.

Finally, establishing some link between music and history in Mann’s novel may have wider implications. *Doktor Faustus* contains something that it must be possible to examine and understand. It is not an article of faith or a metaphysical mantra; rather, it is a text, in which we can quite properly seek to understand the rhetoric of association and implication by which connections are generated between the artist and society, between an intellectually demanding, austere and, by that token, ‘elitist’ music, and a highly populist kind of politics. It is this rhetoric that this thesis seeks to explore and illuminate. The novel may, therefore, be able not only to tell us something about Germany in the first half of the twentieth century, but about Germany now and the links between politics and culture in that country and beyond.

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Chapter 2 The genesis of *Doktor Faustus*

2.1 Thomas Mann and politics

2.1.1 A genuine political force?

It is worth asking, before seeking to unravel the interrelationship between music and history in *Doktor Faustus*, how Mann himself engaged with the history of his time. To gain a clear picture of Mann's political role, given the vigorous debate on this subject both during and after his lifetime, is no easy matter. Much of the discussion of Mann's literary standing, particularly after his exile to the USA and during the years after World War Two - the time when *Doktor Faustus* was written and published - focused on political considerations, rather than literary endeavour. One obvious example is the open letters to Mann from Walter von Molo and Frank Thieß. Mann was castigated for presuming to take a view about the moral standing of his troubled homeland from what Thieß memorably called the "Logen und Parterreplätze des Auslands". His critics also accused him of dabbling in a politics which he, as an artist, did not understand, nor treat sufficiently seriously and decisively. Whilst these exchanges are couched in dignified language, they were clearly deeply felt, and left a bitter aftertaste on both sides. Mann's reputation amongst fellow German writers suffered from the emotional resonances even after his death.  

Although Mann's political engagement has continued to provide fertile ground for discussion, the passage of time has inevitably begun to dull some of the more emotive German reactions. Meanwhile, the gradual publication of Mann's diaries since 1977 has given a new focus of critical attention, although Mann claimed they had no literary value in themselves. Many pages have, nonetheless, now been devoted to the private weaknesses, trivial obsessions and latent homosexuality behind Mann's carefully cultivated public persona, exciting at least as much interest in the man as in his literary output. Four major biographies of Mann were published in 1995 and early 1996 alone, drawing on the diaries, including one with a major focus on the sexual dimension. The interest in these matters is understandable, but it is

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1 See K. Schröter, *Thm im Urteil seiner Zeit*, p. 334-343. Although Mann asserted in his response to von Molo, *Warum ich nicht nach Deutschland zurückgehe*, "ich hebe keinen Stein", his remarks about those writers who had remained in Germany and published during the Nazi regime were clearly potentially inflammatory. See GW XIII, p. 957.

2 T. J. Reed notes that Mann inscribed "without literary value" on the packet containing his diaries, with instructions not to open them until twenty years after his death. See *The Uses of Tradition*, p. 419.

regrettable if they begin to obscure the equally problematic, but surely much more important, matter of Mann’s political and cultural significance. Mann himself was always inordinately sensitive to criticism and misunderstanding of his actions:

Wenn nur nicht all das Öffentliche, das Lob, der Tadel, das Geschwätz, so peinlich und sehnsuchtsverzerrend wäre - wonach? Dieser Trank des Mißverständnisses und der Unwissenheit von dem, was ich bin, nicht mehr trinken zu müssen.4

Mann did, however, have some hope that posterity would be a more accurate judge than the partial voices in his lifetime.5 It was difficult for such an authoritative German figure to escape controversy in the political climate of the times in which he lived. Distance may therefore allow a somewhat better understanding of Mann’s motivations.

From the publication of the Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen (1918) onwards, Mann both found himself and made himself the object of political debate and controversy. For obvious reasons, the period of his exile in the USA, with its many essays and broadcasts, brought matters to a head. It is certain that, by whatever means, he did become a political force to be reckoned with. A good example of his political significance is the care he took to try to ensure that his eventual return to receive the Goethe prize in 1949 did not court controversy. In fact, his efforts were in vain. The event was viewed by commentators in almost exclusively political terms.6 This situation illustrates an important factor in Mann’s political engagement. It shows that his effect as a political force was not just a matter of the way he himself perceived and executed his role. His impact also depended on the significance that others were prepared to attribute to him. This meant that Mann’s considerable political effect was sometimes at odds with his own view of his limitations as a political commentator, and his vision of the role of the artist. Although Mann was certainly increasingly politically motivated as his career went on, this motivation did not manifest itself in straightforward political activism. Rather, the complexity of his feelings about the relationship between cultural and political matters sometimes led to both private wrestlings with his conscience and to public misunderstandings.

Mann’s early works focused almost exclusively on the life of the artist, and did not promise much in the way of engagement with wider social issues. It is significant, however, that he never depicts the artist as cut off from the rest of the world. His early protagonists, such as


4 Tagebücher 1944-1946, p. 72 (30 June 1944).

5 See, for example, Mann’s letter to Carl Maria Weber of 3 August 1947: “Ich bin 72. An die Klärung und Herstellung meines Bildes aber (soviel davon da ist) durch das Verlassen der Zeit glaube ich.”, DuD p. 97.

Tonio Kröger, Hanno Buddenbrook and Gustav von Aschenbach, are painfully aware of the claims that society has on them, whether in the shape of family honour or wider public standing. If these artists are seen to fail in their duty to society, this is not a failure of responsibility to act, but a failure to conform. They experience the pain of isolation from society, rather than the pain of involvement in it. These early works do not contain the account of the artist’s responsibility to society that there is in Mann’s later works. The works do, however, establish an important principle; namely, that art is never the easy option, or a licence to let go. Aschenbach’s surrender to the forces of Eros on his trip to Venice, for example, is constantly juxtaposed with his elevated literary status at home: “der würdig gewordene Künstler”. His shame is increased by the awareness that he is the writer held up as an example to youth: “an dessen Stil die Knaben sich zu bilden angehalten wurden”.7 From the very beginning of his creative output, therefore, Mann shows the artist as someone who affects others, but the responsibility of the artist to those others tends to be played out in a confined framework. There may be an underlying sense that disappointed family expectations in Buddenbrooks, or a sullied literary reputation in Der Tod in Venedig, portend something more serious. But these have only an indirect impact on society as a whole. Mann noted, in the Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen, that elements of these early works might be read as reflecting wider political realities, but recognised that this was a subconscious rather than a deliberate act on his part. Yet he admitted that it did illustrate how the artist could unwittingly be a political instrument:

Ich wandte jene Begriffe ['Leben' und 'Geist'] und Wörter auf rein moralkischgeistige Dinge an, aber unbewußt war ganz ohne Zweifel daher politische Wille in mir lebendig, und noch einmal zeigt sich, daß man nicht den politischen Aktivisten und Manifestanten zu sein braucht, daß man ein >Ästhet< sein und dennoch mit dem Politischen tiefe Fühlung besitzen kann.8

This lacks some conviction, for there is certainly a long way to travel between this “tiefe Fühlung” and the shattering sense of complicity in a nation’s downfall that haunts the final pages of Doktor Faustus. It was to be a painful journey.

2.1.2 The journey to political awareness

Mann’s change of direction during the composition of Der Zauberberg was a key stage in this journey. In 1913, he had intended this novel to be a humorous counterpart to Der Tod in Venedig.9 Just two years later, however, the onset of World War One made it very difficult for Mann to ignore the extreme events in the world outside. His creative consciousness was

7 GW VIII, p. 52.
8 GW XII, p. 586-587.
disturbed, and for the first time, he felt a deep need to engage explicitly with the world outside the realm of his fiction:


Mann’s correspondence with Paul Amann a month after this suggests that whilst the war had caused him to be more aware of external realities, he still had some way to go to reach a practical, rather than an ideological, understanding of it. Klaus Harpprecht remarks that Mann’s philosophical celebration of the ‘Sympathie mit dem Tode’ was hardly designed to cheer up someone who was injured and shortly to return to the front. Well might Mann note, writing from the safety of his desk in September 1915: “Der Faszination des Krieges, der viele unterliegen, scheinen Sie nicht sonderlich zugänglich zu sein. Aber am Ende sind Sie überhaupt schon wieder im Felde”.  

Mann called a temporary halt to Der Zauberberg and wrote the Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen, his statement of the independence of the artist from a political position. This statement is also, set in context, a defence of the wider German ‘unpolitics’ of conservatism. Mann worked on the Betrachtungen for a long time, but despite this, the work cannot be regarded as a wholly balanced, definitive statement of his political position. The structure and thought progression do not compare well with his later essays and lectures, which are much more obviously constructed with a large audience in mind. Mann acknowledged even at the time of writing that the length and clarity of the Betrachtungen left much to be desired as a public document:


The long and sometimes convoluted text certainly reads as though it was written as a justification for an audience. But Mann himself and his brother Heinrich were undoubtedly the most important members of that audience. Although Mann had begun work on the Betrachtungen before he saw Heinrich Mann’s essay Zola, and the critical inspiration for his work was Romain Rolland, it was his brother’s polemic that acted as the catalyst for some of the greatest excesses of the text. Heinrich Mann had used the life of the French writer, Émile

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11 Letter to Paul Amann of 10 September 1915, ibid., p. 31. See also K. Harpprecht, op. cit., p. 397.
Zola, to illustrate the way in which intellectuals should stand up for the values of rationality and democracy at a time of national crisis such as World War One. He compared this with the indulgent aestheticism of many contemporary German intellectuals, with his brother obviously seen as the prime example. Heinrich Mann offered a view of the artist as the clear-thinking conscience of the nation, making it clear that Thomas fell some way short of this:

Sie, die geistigen Mitläufer, sind schuldiger als selbst die Machthaber, die falschen und das Recht brechen. Für die Machthaber bleibt das Unrecht, das sie tun, ein Unrecht, sie wenden nichts an als ihr Interesse, das sie für das des Landes setzen. Ihr falschen Geistigen dreht Unrecht in Recht um, und gar in Sendung, wenn es durch eben das Volk geschieht, dessen Gewissen ihr sein solltet.*

As already noted, Thomas Mann did not argue that artists should exist in an ivory tower, far removed from any contact with the outside world. His own exalted euphoria at the war, however misguided it later seemed, showed that he was himself in touch with external events. His view of the artist's political responsibility was distant from his brother's, however, in that he did not consider that what he said and did as an artist was open to judgement as if it affected political events. The artist simply had the responsibility to present the world as he perceived it, but should not necessarily be expected to take one side or the other, to pronounce on right or wrong. It followed, then, that Mann could not recognise the position in Zola, in which the artist could be held to be involved in political events as the "conscience of the people".

It was not until some time after he resumed work on Der Zauberberg that Mann began to address properly the practicalities of political action. It took a while after Germany's defeat and the establishment of the Weimar Republic for him to make his famous transition from the guardian of conservatism to the champion of democracy. Remarks such as "ich... fürchte eine schwere Kompromittierung der konservativen Idee, die im ganzen Lande wieder so sehr an Boden gewonnen hatte", show that even in 1920 Mann still hoped that the viewpoint of the Betrachtungen might yet emerge as a driving force in Germany, although he did qualify this hope: "wobei freilich die Gesinnung des eigentlichen Volkes schwer zu erkennen ist". It was the assassination of the industrialist, Walter Rathenau, by two young nationalists in 1922, which finally caused Mann to align himself unambiguously with...
democracy. In his letter to Ernst Bertram after the incident, Mann still explicitly identified himself with the *Betrachtungen*, but recognised that the decency of human existence was the most important issue at stake. If this was now best served by democracy, rather than the conservatism still close to his heart, then - reluctantly - so be it. Mann had already admitted in the *Betrachtungen* that political meaning might lurk behind apparently wholly aesthetic phrases. The letter to Bertram shows the beginnings of the idea that these words, particularly in the ideological ferment of contemporary history, might have some genuine political effect. The knowledge of this effect must carry with it some sense of responsibility:


It was the basic necessity of humanity, rather than strong conviction, that forced Mann the artist to begin a process in which he would ultimately almost take on the mantle of the politician. His conversion had been less to a specific mode of politics than to a politics of human decency. Mann had now stepped beyond the free play of intellectual ideas to reach the state that Heinrich Mann had hoped for when he drafted, but never sent, a letter in response to the *Betrachtungen*: “Die Stunde kommt, ich will es hoffen, in der Du Menschen erblickst, nicht Schatten”.^17

Although the Rathenau incident was something of a watershed, and Mann’s personal commitment to, and interest in, politics was strong, it was some time before he was to see political commentary as a major part of his role. The Thomas Mann of *Doktor Faustus* and the BBC broadcasts to Germany was a long time in the making. At the time of Hitler’s rise to power in 1933, Mann was preparing for a foreign tour with his lecture *Leiden und Größe Richard Wagners*, after its first delivery in Munich on 10 February. Outwardly, at least, he remained optimistic: “Ja es sieht schlimm aus in Deutschland, aber, noch einmal, es ist gewiss nicht ganz so schlimm, wie es aussieht”.^18 When Hitler actually became Chancellor on 30 January, Mann still hoped, whatever inkling he had of what lay ahead, that he might be able to keep from overt political action:

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^16 Letter to Ernst Bertram of 8 July 1922, ibid., p. 112.


When Mann left for his lecture tour on 11 February, he had no idea that he would not return to Germany again for sixteen years. When he realised that he was to be forced into exile, his main concern was - surely wholly understandably - what had been left behind. He could not bring himself to follow his brother’s example of speaking out in public against the Nazis, partly because he was concerned to resume his normal life and, most importantly, what he saw as his real work, as quickly as he could. His books escaped the initial ceremonial bookburnings in May 1933, and both he and his publisher, Bermann Fischer, wished to retain his German public for as long as possible. As some of his diary entries at the time show, even when external events suggested otherwise, Mann was sometimes even trying to believe that parts of the Nazi programme, including aspects of anti-Semitism, could be seen in a positive light.

Although Mann’s growing distress at the state of affairs in Germany made him resolve not to return, it was a long time before he could bring himself to be a political spokesman of any sort, much to the annoyance of his more vociferous fellow exiles. Mann certainly admitted to himself that a concern for his own comfort lay at the root of his reticence, but his diaries from this period, later published as *Leiden an Deutschland*, show that he was inwardly feeling a good deal of genuine concern and personal guilt: “Ich empfand die Schuld des Geistes, seine unpoltische und dem GenüB seiner Kühnheit asthetisch hingegebene Rücksichtslosigkeit aufs Wirkliche.” Mann was certainly well aware of the pull between self interest and duty that the situation brought about, though early on, self-interest seemed to have the upper hand:

Der zynische Egoismus, die gleichgültigste Beschränkung auf die Sorge auf das eigenspürlichste Wohlergehen und leidliche Durchkommen durch den willentlichen und genauvollen Irrsinn der “Geschichte” ist vollauf gerechtfertigt. Ein Dummkopf, wer die Politik ernst nimmt, sie sich zu Herzen nimmt, ihr das Opfer seiner moralischen Geisteskräfte bringt. Durchkommen und seine persönliche Freiheit und Würde wahren, ist alles.

Mann’s dilemma was not, however, simply related to self-preservation. At its heart lay the conviction, which he never wholly lost, that his greatest service to his country lay in being what he truly was - an artist. There is every reason to suppose that when he wrote to his son...
Klaus that he considered Bermann Fischer’s attempt to get *Joseph in Ägypten* published in Germany “ein eklatanterer Sieg ... als einen ganzen Stoß Emigranten-Polemik” that he sincerely believed it.23

The increasingly disturbing developments in Germany did persuade Mann, however, that he would need to go beyond his deepest instincts. This was to be accomplished, once again, in the name of humanity, rather than because of natural political zeal or support for a particular ideological perspective. Despite his bursts of mild optimism, Mann had watched with growing concern the Night of the Long Knives, the murder of the Austrian chancellor, Dollfuß, and the consolidation of Hitler’s power after Hindenburg’s death as ‘Führer und Reichskanzler’ requiring personal oaths of allegiance from civil servants. A crisis point finally came for Mann in July 1934, and he got quite a long way in gathering material for a public statement that he had begun to envisage on the grand scale of the *Betrachtungen*. Although he did not, in the end, follow this plan through, it is clear that he had begun it with the utmost seriousness of purpose:

> Was geht mich die >Weltgeschichte< an, sollte ich wohl denken, solange sie mich leben und arbeiten läßt? Aber ich kann nicht so denken... So werde ich von der Erzählung zu einem solchen bekennenden Unternehmen wie zur Zeit der >Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen<, übergehen....Die Zeit scheint mir reif für eine Äußerung wie ich sie vorhabe, und der Augenblick könnte bald kommen, wo ich bereuen würde, mein abwartendes Schweigen über die dafür gegebene Frist hinaus fortgesetzt zu haben.24

After all these false starts, when Mann’s public statement finally came about eighteen months later, in the shape of his open letter to Eduard Korrodi on 30 January 1936, it had all the more impact. Mann recognised that he would never again be able to draw back from the role of political spokesman: “Ich bin mir der Tragweite des heute getanen Schrittes bewußt”.25 Even at this stage, however, Mann’s political act had partly been encouraged by personal considerations. He had experienced increasing difficulties in his relationship with his children Klaus and Erika because of his lack of public support for their anti-Nazi cabaret *Die Pfeffermühle* and Klaus’s left wing literary magazine, *Die Sammlung*.26

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25 *Tagebücher 1935-1936*, p. 250, (31 January 1936). Korrodi had sought to defend Mann’s unclear position on the Third Reich, and to distinguish between Mann, who was still published in Germany, and the emigrés amongst whom he lived in Switzerland. This finally forced Mann into an open declaration of solidarity with his fellow exiles. See K. Schröter, op. cit., p. 259-267, and, for Mann’s reply, GW XI, p. 788-793.
26 See, for example, Mann’s letter to René Schickele of 19 February 1936, *Briefe I* p. 415-416, and Erika Mann’s letters to her father of 26 and 29 January 1936, followed by her grateful telegram on 6
Mann’s status as a political spokesman was sealed by his response to Bonn University at the end of the year after they stripped him of his honorary doctorate; he had already lost his German citizenship. The response was circulated as a pamphlet in several countries, including an illegal print run in Germany, and Mann’s strongly worded and widely publicised sentiments left no doubt of his opposition to Hitler’s regime. The document also showed that he had come a long way in his view of the artist. He explicitly designated the responsibility of using words as one of the highest of all:

Das Geheimnis der Sprache ist groß; die Verantwortlichkeit für sie und ihre Reinheit ist symbolischer und geister Art, sie hat keineswegs nur künstlerischen, sondern allgemein moralischen Sinn, sie ist die Verantwortlichkeit selbst ..... und in ihr wird die Einheit des Menschlichen erlebt, die Ganzheit des humanen Problems, die es niemandem erlaubt, heute am wenigsten, das Geistig-Künstlerische vom Politisch-Sozialen zu trennen und sich gegen dieses im Vornehm- >Kulturellen< zu isolieren.27

But Mann was certainly not transformed overnight into a political activist. In the months immediately after the publication of the Bonn pamphlet, his main concern was to resume work on Lotte in Weimar. Throughout his American exile, which began in 1938, Mann remained divided not just in his allegiance to his home and his adopted country, but also in his allegiance to his writing and to the necessity of political engagement. Mann’s inner division may have been partly due to his advancing years. He was by then over sixty, and it was late in life for him to take on a wholly different role from the one he had developed over past decades. But there was more to it than that. In a sense, despite his strong political commitment, notably his BBC broadcasts to Germany in the 1940s, Mann was always the ‘unpolitisch’ artist. He had made his position on the Betrachtungen clear in 1928 - they represented a part of his intellectual development that he could not deny, though he might have changed his views since then:

Man verleugnet sein Leben, seine Erlebnisse nicht, verleugnet nicht das, was man >durchgemacht< hat, weil man es >durchgemacht< hat und - wenn nicht wesentlich, so doch willentlich - ein Stück darüber hinausgekommen ist.28

2.1.3 What kind of politics?

Even when his political profile was greatest, Mann was never an unselfconscious political activist. This placed him far apart from a writer like Brecht, whose disagreements with Mann

February. The last three can be found in Erika Mann, Briefe und Antworten, edited by Anna Zanco Prestel, (Munich, Verlag Heinrich Ellermann, 1984), p. 86.
27 GW XII, p. 788.
28 GW XII, p. 639, (Kultur und Sozialismus).
Yet Mann’s effectiveness as some kind of political force for Germany can be in no doubt. Why else would his compatriots be so keen to involve him in this sort of political activity? In fact, Mann probably quite relished the role of travelling cultural icon, and the star treatment he received wherever he went. He had, after all, observed to his brother Heinrich when he was not yet thirty: “Ich habe im Grunde ein gewisses fiirstliches Talent zum Reprasentieren, wenn ich einigermaßen frisch bin”. At a deeper level, however, Mann felt that whilst a considerable responsibility had fallen to him, he was often uncomfortable with the means by which he was required to exercise it. Others, particularly in the émigré community, had a particular view of what he should do, but Mann continued to feel that his most profound political service was in his fiction. A passage from a letter to René Schickele in November 1937 is worth quoting here at some length. Mann wrote it when he was distressed at having to set aside work on Lotte in Weimar to write the lecture Vom kommenden Sieg der Demokratie. It illustrates perfectly how some of Mann’s most significant political moments occurred in his fiction, which treats the same issues as his discursive lectures and essays, but in a way that he felt more comfortable with:


This feeling was clearly still with Mann during the writing of Doktor Faustus. He refers in the Entstehung to the sensation that “das Öffentliche, der Besuch in der Menschenwelt für

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29 GW XI, p. 184.
30 Letter to Heinrich Mann of 27 February 1904, TM - HM, p. 27.
From his identification with the Republic in 1920, Mann’s service had never been to a particular set of ideas, but to humanity as such. Erich Kahler aptly described Thomas Mann, as “someone who feels a personal responsibility for the human condition”. Perhaps because he lacked a clear party political allegiance, Mann’s work as an essayist, though famous in its own right, never earned him the same wide acclaim as his fiction. It is somehow much easier to try on all kinds of ideological clothes in a fictional setting. Yet it can hardly be surprising that the master ironist should think that no one solution ever has all the good on its side. Mann never offers an unproblematic structure for attaining the good, knowing such flawless utopias to be impossible. Instead, he chooses to believe in the quest for good itself, whatever this may cost. Looking back on his career in his lecture Der Künstler und die Gesellschaft in 1952, only a few years before his death, Mann reflects on his nervousness of political statements:

Unleugbar hat ja das politische Moralisieren eines Künstlers etwas Komisches, und die Propagierung humanitärer Ideale bringt ihn fast unwiderruflich in die Nähe - und nicht nur in die Nähe - der Platitudes.

This lecture shows clearly that Mann’s main intention was always to understand rather than to peddle one particular political point of view, something that he felt no writer was well-qualified to do: “ich...glaube...nicht sehr an den Glauben, sondern weit mehr an die Güte, die ohne Glauben bestehen und geradezu das Produkt des Zweifels sein kann”.

This attitude relates Mann to the generation of writers immediately after him, such as Heinrich Böll and Wolfgang Borchert, who, whilst they were very preoccupied with the immediate political past, were principally concerned to count the human cost of war, rather than to cast ideological blame. The Gruppe 47 writers explicitly rejected any party political affinity.

Despite all this, it is not easy to pin down exactly why Mann’s fiction made such an important - perhaps in his eyes, the most important - contribution to his political responsibilities. He is not a historical realist, displaying many levels of historical detail, and the milieu of his novels is unremittingly that of the bourgeois intellectual class. They certainly do not cover a broad social panorama like the novels of, say, Günter Grass, and as such, their political intent is not always obvious. Perhaps if it had been, Mann might have

32 GW XI, p. 181.
34 GW X, p. 397.
felt less obliged to undertake political tasks. He thought that the German temperament was basically unsuited to the ‘Gesellschaftsroman’, which looks in great detail at external events, and felt that the progress of German society was better described through the progress of ideas, in the ‘Bildungsroman’. Mann sought to transmit not simply the ‘Geschichte’ of an age, but the ‘Mentalitätsgeschichte’, knowing that the mental had a profound effect on external historical events. He expanded on this idea in Der Künstler und die Gesellschaft:

Was der Deutsche seine >Innerlichkeit< nennt, macht ihn dem Gesellschaftlichen abhold, und neben den europäischen Gesellschaftsroman hat Deutschland, wie man weiß, das introspektive Genre des Bildungs- und Entwicklungsromans gestellt. 36

Helmut Koopmann identifies this approach as serving a novel like Doktor Faustus far better than a method like a traditional historical novel, because of the danger that preoccupation with historical authenticity will cause the novel to lose reference to modern reality. In this case, historical authenticity is pushed into the background, and the modern does not disappear behind it. 37

Whilst the German psyche does seem to be more suited to this more intellectualised genre than, say, the English psyche, there were many who disagreed with Mann’s assessment. Given the extraordinary and horrific historical events that Mann lived through, it is understandable if some people thought him rarefied. According to the Marxist critic, Ernst Fischer, Mann left so much of society out of the equation in Doktor Faustus that the novel entirely failed to provide any explanation for that part of Germany’s history. 38 Donna Reed compares two images of the provinces, first in Günter Grass’s Die Blechtrommel, of the provincial shopkeeper warming his hands at the synagogue fire, memorable in its combination of horror and matter-of-factness, and second Mann’s contemplation of the demonic irrationality of the provinces in Doktor Faustus. 39 This is an apt illustration of Mann’s dealing almost wholly in ideas rather than the nuts and bolts of social realism, which might be expected to have a more immediate impact. And yet, Mann’s approach is not wholly inappropriate, given the importance of ideas and culture, noted in the previous chapter, in Germany’s national motivation. Mann certainly took an intellectual pleasure in playing with the ideas. Some critics, such as Hans Egon Holthusen, commenting on Doktor Faustus shortly after publication, felt he took rather too much pleasure of this sort:

36 Ibid., p. 393.
Was die Begriffe Thomas Manns angeht, so versinkt man leicht ins Bodenlose, wenn man einen von ihnen fixieren, umreißen, lokalisieren will. Seine Begriffe haben keine festen Grenzen, keinen Ort, keinen eindeutigen Geltungsbereich. Sie sind als Begriffe gar nicht ernst zu nehmen, sind nur als schwebende Stimmungswerte und psychologische Reizstoffe zu verstehen, deren Vermischung, Verarbeitung und effektvolle Anwendung eine enorme stilistische Energie sich anlegen sein läßt.

Yet this approach surely had something valuable to offer in an age in which so many in Germany were seeking for a meaningful set of values. This was an age in which the intellectual pot pourri of a novel such as Der Zauberberg was itself a fair measure of reality. Keith Bullivant has even suggested that the ultimate result of this German predilection for the play with concepts was a tendency to mistake this play for politics itself, thus leaving a dangerous void where the real practical business of politics should be. This, Bullivant says, was ultimately Germany’s undoing.

Bearing in mind the way in which the relationship between art and contemporary history came to dominate Mann’s creative and personal life, we should surely expect to find his most important contributions to his age in a work such as Doktor Faustus, which explicitly addresses that relationship. We should certainly expect him always to be the artist, never the politician. It would be unwise, for example, to expect a strictly allegorical approach like that in George Orwell’s Animal Farm, published two years earlier, in 1945, in which everything has political significance. Above all, it is important not to try to fit the novel into a preconceived mould, but to receive and analyse Mann’s engagement with the history of his own time at the level at which it is offered. Mann’s sense of the political was, as we have seen, profound. But he knew that to give up the gift of artistic autonomy was itself to destroy a function of civilised and humane society: “das Absolutwerden der Politik, ihre totale Diktatur über alles Menschliche, das ist der Untergang der Freiheit”. We should be prepared for inconsistency and ambiguity, but at the same time, we should be prepared to find profound analysis of, and commitment to, contemporary history. In this sense, we can expect Doktor Faustus to mirror its author.

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42 GW XI, p. 965, (Das Problem der Freiheit).
2.2 Thomas Mann and music

2.2.1 The musicality of writing

Music began to shape Mann's personal and artistic development long before he had any notion at all of politics. It was firmly embedded in his early family life. Like Tonio Kröger's mother, Mann's mother Julia was an exotic foil to the solid, burgher prosperity of his father, Thomas Johann Heinrich Mann. Mann's memories of her voice were later echoed in the attractive voice and latent musicality he attributed to Elsbeth Leverkühn in Doktor Faustus. Julia Mann would sometimes sing and play to her children in the evenings, and also hosted musical soirées at the family house. Music was a constant thread running through Mann's life, in his relationships with his friends and family: his intense early relationship with the violinist Paul Ehrenberg, his violinist son Michael Mann, later turned academic, and his many illustrious musical neighbours in California, including Schoenberg, Stravinsky and Bruno Walter. Mann himself began to learn the violin as a child, and continued playing into his twenties.

Mann never considered himself more than an amateur, however, and his later musical life was confined to listening to concerts and recordings, which he had in any case always approached with a singular passion. His letters and diaries are full of references to music he has heard. He notes in Die Entstehung, for example, that as he neared the end of Doktor Faustus, he listened to Schubert's B Minor trio. He valued the approval of musicians, recording with pride in Die Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen how Mahler loved his work:

Was ich machte, meine Kunstarbeiten, urteilt darüber wie ihr wollt und müßt, aber gute Partituren waren sie immer, eine wie die andere; auch haben Musiker sie geliebt, Gustav Mahler zum Beispiel hat sie geliebt, und oft habe ich mir Musiker zu öffentlichen Richtem über sie gewünscht.

Mann often repeated the observation by the composer, Ernst Toch, that he had "musikalische Initiiertheit". From the time of the Betrachtungen onwards, Mann always saw music as having a particular connection with the German soul:

1 "Das Schönste an ihr aber war ihr Stimme, der Lage nach ein warmer Mezzosopran... Dieser Stimmreiz kam aus einer inneren Musikalität, die im übrigen latent blieb, da Elsbeth sich nicht um Musik kummerte, sich sozusagen nicht zu ihr bekannte", GW VI, p. 33.
3 GW XI, p. 298.
4 GW XII, p. 319.
5 Ernst Toch made this remark in an essay, 'Thomas Mann und die Musik', published in Die neue Rundschau. Sonderausgabe zu Thomas Manns 70. Geburtstag, (Stockholm, 6 June 1945), p 188. Mann repeats the compliment in, for example, his letter to Theodor Adorno of 30 December 1945, Briefe II, p. 471, and in the Entstehung, GW XI, p. 170.
Seit Luthers religiösem-musikalischem Wirken aber ist die Musik, die deutsche, von Bach bis auf Reger, - ist das punctum contra punctum, die große fuga, nicht nur töndernd Ausdruck protestantischer Ethik, sondern, mit ihrem gewalzig-vieltönigen Ineinander von Eigenwille und Ordnung, Abbild und künstlerisch-spirituelle Spiegelung des deutschen Lebens selbst gewesen.  

Later on, Mann came to stress the dangerous elements of this musicality, and the need to take control of them, most emphatically in the essay Deutschland und die Deutschen (1945), which he wrote whilst working on Doktor Faustus, and in which he asserted that music was a “dämonisches Gebiet”. 

Music was not just a relaxing hobby. It shaped Mann’s intellectual development, and pervaded his writing, which, as noted above, he even liked to refer to as pieces of music - “gute Partituren”. This phrase helps to demonstrate the depth at which music affected Mann’s writing, but is probably not to be taken too literally, as is sometimes attempted with Mann’s assertion in Die Entstehung that Doktor Faustus does not simply describe, but actually is “constructivist music”. Mann certainly never wrote a literary ‘score’, more music than conventional language, in the same sense as, for example, his contemporary James Joyce did with Ulysses (1922) and Finnegans Wake (1939). Joyce and other modernist writers, such as Virginia Woolf and Marcel Proust, were more concerned with music as a means of representing inward experience, a task for which language had begun to seem wholly inadequate. Alex Aronson, in his study of music and the novel, notes that modernist writers who were using music as a means of conveying interior monologues were not usually likely to have at their disposal the technical language necessary to describe a musical work. 

Long before he came to write Doktor Faustus, however, Mann commonly went into long descriptions of specific works, often by Wagner. Attempting to interpret Mann’s novels as pieces of music is surely to focus too much on their structure at the expense of the intellectual, moral and emotional weight that structure bears. Thus, for example, the observation that Mann creates ‘contrapuntal characters’ is surely more important because of its reference to the ambiguity that Mann’s complementary characterisations portray, than for the musical analogy itself. Focusing purely on musical structure loses sight of the obvious fact that Mann wrote literature and not music, surely never meaning anyone to suppose
otherwise. Nor does this reflect the way Mann saw the relationship of music to his work - important, yet always subordinate to the writing itself:

Die Musik spielt in meine ganze Produktion als ein hoher Anreiz und selbst als ein Objekt der künstlerischen Nachahmung und Übertragung in meine künstlerische Sphäre ständig hinein - ohne daß gerade bestimmte Ideen bei Musik konzipiert worden waren.\(^\text{11}\)

2.2.2 The significance of Richard Wagner

It is true to say, as Viktor Zmegaz asserts in his study of Thomas Mann and music, that Wagner and music can be used almost interchangeably when discussing Mann.\(^\text{12}\) Mann remained a passionate admirer of Wagner’s music throughout his life. But this was not uncritical admiration. In the Betrachtungen, Mann said that he saw Wagner as “der moderne Künstler par excellence, wie Nietzsche’s Kritik mich gewöhnt hatte ihn zu sehen” - that is to say, as the artist of decadence.\(^\text{13}\) According to Nietzsche’s assessment in Der Fall Wagner (1888), Wagner’s decadence manifested itself in ecstatic abandon, which proved to be not an authentic, Dionysian experience, but a Romantic artifice:

“Überall Lähmung, Mühsal, Erstarrung oder Feindschaft und Chaos: beides immer mehr in die Augen springend, in je höhere Formen der Organisation man aufsteigt. Das Ganze lebt überhaupt nicht mehr: es ist zusammengesetzt, gerechnet, künstlich, ein Artefakt.”\(^\text{14}\)

Mann’s view of Wagner was qualified not only by Nietzsche’s perspective, but by his own sense, as a highly self-conscious writer in the early twentieth century, that much of the fragmentation and moral and spiritual decay that had - prophetically - pervaded Nietzsche’s writing had now begun to happen.

The insight that both Nietzsche and Mann had into Wagner’s work was the sort that is possible only for those who feel deeply about the object of that insight. Self-aware as Mann was, standing on the edge of modernism, he was able both to step outside Wagnerian decadence to point out its dangers, and to recognise its attraction and the fact that he could easily be sucked back into it. Both Nietzsche and Mann placed Wagner at the centre of much of their creative output, yet both saw clear imperfections in his work. They recognised the questionable effect of his music, but were nonetheless moved and fascinated by it. Mann was able to write with ironic detachment about musical effect, as about so much else, yet showed all too clearly how profound this effect of music was. One example of this is the mixture of

\(^{11}\) Letter to Viktor Polzer of 23 March 1940, Briefe II, p. 139.
\(^{13}\) GW XII, p. 79.
\(^{14}\) FN2, Der Fall Wagner, p. 917.
seriousness, genuine musical appreciation and affectionate humour in the detailed
descriptions of Hans Castorp’s favourite records in the chapter of Der Zauberberg entitled
‘Fülle des Wohllauts’. Mann is surely sincere in describing the insight and exhilaration that
music brings to Castorp:

Was er aber letzlich empfand ... das war die siegende Idealtät der Musik, der Kunst,
des menschlichen Gemüts, die hohe und unwiderlegliche Beschönigung, die sie der
gemeinen Gräßlichkeit der wirklichen Dinge angediehen ließ.\(^\text{15}\)

This sense of deep feeling and meaning is also important in laying the ground for the
significance that the Schubert song, Der Lindenbaum will take on in respect of Castorp’s
ultimate and symbolic fate in World War One:

Das Lied bedeutete ihm viel, eine ganze Welt, und zwar eine Welt, die er wohl lieben
mußte, da er sonst in ihr stellvertretendes Gleichnis nicht so vernarrt gewesen wäre.\(^\text{16}\)

Yet the analysis, even at its most genuine, is extremely self-conscious. And there is no
mistaking the irony and potential for amusement in the detail of Castorp’s sympathies with
the characters and plots of opera, his daydreaming at Debussy’s Prélude à L’après-midi d’un
faune. The final sentence of the chapter: “Das also waren Hans Castorps Vorzugsplatten”, in
its absolute understatement, brings the chapter to an ironic cadence.\(^\text{17}\)

Mann also took to heart an important belief of Schopenhauer; the third member, with
Nietzsche and Wagner, of what he referred to in the Betrachtungen as his “Dreigestirn”.\(^\text{18}\)
This was that music was not only related to all other arts, but supreme amongst them, in that
it was a direct expression of the Will, the force which, Schopenhauer asserted, drove the
whole of life:

Die Musik ist also keineswegs gleich den andern Künsten das Abbild der Ideen;
sondern Abbild des Willens selbst, ... diese reden nur vom Schatten, sie aber vom
Wesen.\(^\text{19}\)

The insight into Wagner’s music thus gave Mann an insight into the nature of art itself,
including his own art. He was not the only writer to have seen Wagner, in this context, as a
dubious moral influence on the whole of art. Tolstoy, for example, as a contemporary of
Wagner, had recognised that there was something dangerous about his music. His shock was
largely at the overt translation of desire and forbidden impulses into music, such as Tristan
und Isolde, in a way that had simply not been possible before in the nineteenth century.

\(^{15}\) GW III, p. 896.
\(^{16}\) Ibid., p. 905.
\(^{17}\) Ibid., p. 907.
\(^{18}\) See GW XII, p. 72.
\(^{19}\) Arthur Schopenhauer, Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung, Samtliche Werke, Vol. 1, edited by
Mann’s concern was not specifically about sexual morality, but about a kind of generalised moral structure for which artists, in some sense, bore responsibility. As noted in 2.1, Mann always had some sense of artistic responsibility, even though this did not become full engagement in the political issues of his times until relatively late in his career. He wrote to the editor of the American journal, *Common Sense*, that Wagner was: “eines der schwierigsten, das psychologische Gewissen am tiefsten herausfordende, darum aber auch eines der faszinierendsten Vorkommnisse der Kunst- und Geistesgeschichte”.

In his short early essay, *Über die Kunst Richard Wagners* (1911) Mann had outlined his ambiguous relationship to the composer and his greatness. He implied in that essay that some of the suspect nature of Wagner’s achievement was inherent in the very fact that this achievement was in music - the supreme art - rather than another form of art:

> Als Geist, als Charakter schien er mir suspekt, als Künstler unwiderstehlich, wenn auch tieffragwürdig in Bezug auf den Adel, die Reinheit und Gesundheit seiner Wirkungen, und nie hat meine Jugend sich ihm mit jener vertrauensvollen Hingabe überlassen, mit der sie den großen Dichtern und Schriftstellern anhing.

Despite the additional dangers of creativity in music, however, Mann applied his sense of morality as much to himself as to any other artist. He knew that the lure of Wagnerian decadence threatened the moral structure within which he, as a writer, needed to work. Nietzsche, too, had sensed that much of what he loathed in Wagner he feared for his own sake:

> Ich bin so gut wie Wagner das Kind dieser Zeit, will sagen ein décadent: nur daß ich das begriff, nur daß ich mich dagegen wehrte. Der Philosoph in mir wehrte sich dagegen.

And decades after Nietzsche had described his own concerns, Mann would call himself, in the *Betrachtungen*, the “Chronist und Erläuterer der Decadence”, and “ein Ästhet mit der Tendenz zum Abgrund”.

There was another sense in which Nietzsche’s criticism of Wagner can be seen as something that was, so to speak, prophetically relevant to Mann. Nietzsche accused Wagner of being - far from the creator of the all-embracing, organic, ‘Gesamtkunstwerk’ - the “größte Miniaturist der Musik”. Mann’s own experience of writing could easily be identified with this accusation of building up a work from many pieces rather than creating an organic whole. Mann and his fellow writers were, however, well aware that the great, organic, novel might no longer be possible in the twentieth century. Wagner never seriously doubted his

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20 GW XIII, p. 353.
21 GW X, p. 841.
22 FN2, *Der Fall Wagner*, p. 903.
23 GW XII, p. 153.
24 FN2, op. cit., p. 918.
capacity to create his monumental ‘Gesamtkunstwerk’, but Mann could not fail to encounter a sense of fragmentation. In the Entstehung, he fully admitted his reliance on literary ‘montage’, saying he was all too inclined “das Zitat der selbstandigen Erfindung vorzuziehen”.25

Mann’s use of Wagnerian music in his writing developed in the course of his career from specific descriptions of his works to a general ‘Wagnerian’ undertone. The perceived effects of Wagnerian music progressed from crude causality in the early works to something much less tangible, but no less significant, in his later works. In every case, the musical content is not a background factor, but the very stuff of the narrative. In a number of Mann’s early works, Wagnerian music is the direct cause of disturbing conclusions. Examples include the grotesque declaration of love and subsequent murder in Der kleine Herr Friedemann (1898), the death of Gabriele in Tristan (1903), the fateful embrace of the Aarenhold twins in Walsungenblut (1906) and, most famously, the death of Hanno Buddenbrook after a Wagnerian piano improvisation. In all these cases, although the grim conclusion of the narrative is hastened by physical or psychological weakness or both, the reader is left in no doubt that the music is the catalyst for these events. In some of these stories, it is easy to feel that Mann has a morbid fascination with rejection, death or incest. At this stage of his career perhaps, in part, he did. But it is important to look behind his savage irony to see his very real fear of the effects of Wagnerian decadence, combined with a sense of the glory that true artistic perfection can attain. Much later, in his lecture Leiden und Grofie Richard Wagners (1933), Mann quoted Wagner’s own fear of the best performances of Tristan und Isolde. It is evident that true artistry, rather than mediocrity, is what he saw as both most exhilarating and most threatening:

Dieser >Tristan< wird was Furchtbares! Dieser letzter Akt!!! Ich fürchte, die Oper wird verboten - falls durch schlechte Aufführung nicht das Ganze parodiert wird -; nur mittelmäßige Aufführungen können mich retten! Vollständig gute müssen die Leute verrückt machen - ich kann’s mir nicht anders denken.26

Mann responded to the true artistry, but was always able to see the price that might be paid for it. In Tristan, for example, whilst it is possible to feel a sense of the importance of Gabriele encounter with this artistic perfection, this is combined with a feeling of repulsion for Detlev Spinell, and some respect for the non-aesthetic world that Herr Klötzerjahn inhabits. Mann’s portrait of the husband is certainly sympathetic at the end, the ‘menschlich’ description at odds with the art at any price offered by Spinell:

26 GW IX, p. 393.
‘Gabriele!’ sagte er plötzlich, indem die Augen ihm übergingen, und man sah, wie ein warmes, gutes, menschliches und redliches Gefühl in ihm hervorbrach.\(^{27}\)

Aronson encapsulates Mann’s perspective when he says that “unable to resist the blandishments of the irrational, he yet speaks the language of reason and progress”.\(^{28}\)

Mann’s writing on music is not all fatalism: he does offer milder images of music, without these extreme results. But it is precisely the ability to touch the more dangerous extremes of music that he sees at the heart of genuine artistic experience. These extremes always seem to be latent, even when Mann’s images of music are apparently at their most benign. In *Buddenbrooks*, music appears at once as a positive social accomplishment, and a factor in Hanno Buddenbrook’s early death and the Buddenbrook family’s ultimate decline. Gerda Buddenbrook’s response when Herr Pfuhl initially denounces Wagner’s music as immoral, though it is humorously ironic, puts the serious point succinctly: “Glauben Sie mir, Pfuhl, diese Musik ist Ihrem innersten Wesen weniger fremd, als Sie annehmen!”.\(^{29}\) Hanno does not necessarily emerge as a truly great artist in comparison with Pfuhl; after all, his improvisation is hardly described in unequivocally glowing terms:

*Eine kurzatmige, armselige Erfindung, der aber durch die preziöse und feierliche Entschiedenheit, mit der sie hingestellt und vorgebracht wurde, ein seltsamer geheimnis- und bedeutungsvoller Wert verschafft ward.*\(^{30}\)

It is Hanno’s readiness to encounter the irrational in music, whatever the cost, which seems to raise him to a higher plane than Herr Pfuhl, even to a spiritual experience. The music master, on the other hand, pursues the social and professional position that his music gives him, and avoids its dangerous extremes: “ich lege mein Amt nieder, ich verzichte darauf, wenn Sie mich zu diesen Ruchlosigkeiten zwingen!”.\(^{31}\)

Was Mann too extreme in his interpretation of the impact of Wagnerian artistic excess? Wagner’s music was actually reported to have a considerable impact on contemporary audiences, although perhaps not as drastic as those depicted in Mann’s early works.\(^{32}\) Yet this, for Mann, was not really the central issue. As noted above, there is some evidence that Wagner was relentless in his pursuit of musical perfection, but did not actively seek out any violent impact. Nor was he unique in creating a work of art that incited people to violent or

\(^{27}\) *GW VIII*, p. 260.


\(^{29}\) *GW I*, p. 499.

\(^{30}\) Ibid., p. 748.

\(^{31}\) Ibid., p. 498.

\(^{32}\) For example, one of the concerts that Wagner conducted himself in Paris, where the audience included such eminent contemporaries as Berlioz and Baudelaire, attracted very wild enthusiasm and almost equal bewilderment from its audience, and harsh words from the critics. See Ronald Taylor, *Richard Wagner. His Life, Art and Thought*, (London, Paul Elek, 1979), p. 142.
otherwise undesirable actions. Even Goethe, whom Mann compared favourably with Wagner as a role model for the German people, had in his time - according to some commentators - left a trail of copycat suicides in the wake of *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*. What was most important to Mann was the phenomenon that Wagner’s music represented, that is, the extremes of decadence, which carried the individual away from rational control over his or her own actions and destiny. Mann saw this phenomenon as a theme whose time had come. If Wagner is seen to equate with individuals’ loss of control, it is not difficult to imagine the threads that might tie *Der kleine Herr Friedemann* to *Der Tod in Venedig*, and later, to *Doktor Faustus*.

### 2.2.3 Music as paradigm for art and life

For Mann, like Schopenhauer, music was both the highest manifestation of art, and the most dangerous. As such, its characteristics could magnify problems inherent in any form of art, and allow them to be examined more closely. He gradually moved away from portraying these extremes literally, in Wagnerian music itself, to showing how they could be found in art more generally, most obviously in *Der Tod in Venedig*. The ‘Wagnerian’ irrational is certainly present in the novelle, but is experienced only in Aschenbach’s dreams. Whilst his death is the consequence of decadence, the death is not violent, unlike that of protagonists in Mann’s earlier works, and affects only Aschenbach himself, as he does not even leave a bereaved family. The same message about art is delivered as in the earlier works; it is part of the artist’s work to be open to extremes, which can offer both the greatest fulfilment and the greatest debasement. Yet there is also a strong sense of a moral issue in the relentless pursuit of artistic perfection, in which Aschenbach becomes deflected into the pursuit of finite, human beauty. This combination is pure Schopenhauer, who saw art as at once non-rational, and potentially chaotic, and yet, in the aesthetic state, the closest man could come to perfection. He saw human beauty as one of the embodiments of the difficulty of ever breaking free of the Will when in pursuit of the purely aesthetic state:

> Menschliche Schönheit ist ein objektiver Ausdruck, welcher die vollkommenste Objektifikation des Willens auf der höchsten Stufe seiner Erkennbarkeit bezeichnet, die Idee des Menschen überhaupt, vollständig ausgedrückt in der angeschauten Form. Sosehr hier aber auch die objektive Seite des Schönen hervortritt; so bleibt die subjektive doch ihre stete Begleiterin.\(^\text{35}\)

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34 "It is of course impossible to prove that *Werther* caused any suicides, but cases of suicide associated with a reading of *Werther* are reported until well into the nineteenth century", Nicholas Boyle, *Goethe. The Poet and the Age*, Vol. 1, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 175.

35 *Welt als WV*, p. 311-312.
So it is that the inspiration of Tadzio both allows Aschenbach to rediscover his literary creativity, and simultaneously arouses feelings that cause him to question his social and moral status as a national literary figure:

Nie hatte er die Lust des Wortes süßer empfunden . . . wie während der gefährlich kostlichen Stunden, in denen er . . . jene anderthalb Seiten erlesener Prosa formte, deren Lauterkeit, Adel und schwingende Gefühlspannung binnen kurzem die Bewunderung vieler erregen sollte. Es ist sicher gut, daß die Welt nur das schöne Werk, nicht auch seine Ursprünge, nicht seine Entstehungsbedingungen kennt.  

This message is conveyed without any explicit reference to music, but music is never very far from the surface. Mann gave his protagonist Gustav Mahler’s physical features and played out his fate in the city of Wagner’s death, of which Nietzsche had said “Wenn ich ein anderes Wort für Musik suche, so finde ich immer das Wort Venedig.”

Mann subsequently moved from showing the ‘musical’ extremes of art to demonstrating that these were also present in life itself. In *Der Zauberberg*, Hans Castorp’s education or ‘Bildung’ is a series of extreme encounters. Although Castorp is fascinated by music, Wagner’s music is not mentioned by name. The Schubert song *Der Lindenbaum* acts as the key symbol of the fascination with death. But Wagnerian decadence is never far from the surface, and it is no surprise that Castorp’s education takes place in a realm of intense physicality and death. Aschenbach had observed “zwar liebt Eros den Müßiggang”, and the enforced idleness of the Berghof provides the ideal setting in which these ‘musical’ extremes can have free play and be examined in depth. The sanatorium is to all intents and purposes a vacuum, simply waiting for experience to fill it. The patients have no need to concern themselves with the everyday, practical matters that normally mediate between human beings and the extremes of experience:

[Frau Ziemßen] hatte ein wenig gemäßigten Ernst herbeiführen wollen, unwissend, daß gerade das Mittlere und Gemäßigte hier ortsfremd und nur die Wahl zwischen Extremen gegeben war.

For perhaps the first time, however, Mann felt that this brush with the extremes of death, intellectual persuasion and sexual adventure, could actually end positively rather than result in the central character’s destruction, or some other disaster. In 1918, he had described the novel’s theme as incorporating “Todesromantik plus Lebensja”. Castorp is not only exposed to these extremes, but also uses the available time and space to reflect on the encounters that he has. Although his “Bildung”, or development, is somewhat problematic,

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36 GW VIII, p. 492-493.
38 GW III, p. 696.
the experience nonetheless allows him to reach some kind of insight. Castorp is in no sense a
great artist or even a great man, yet he returns to the ‘Flachland’ from the unreality of the
Berghof better equipped than before to play a full part in the real world. Settembrini, as one
half of the duo furthering Castorp’s intellectual and moral education, is clearly suspicious of
music itself. He dismisses it as “politisch verdächtig”, because of its chaotic nature;
dynamic, yet vague. He does not deny the power of music, but feels that on its own, without
mediation, it is dangerous and not necessarily a force for good:

Die Musik ist unschätzbare als letztes Begeisterungsmittele, als aufwärts und vorwärts
reißende Macht, wenn sie den Geist für ihre Wirkungen vorgebildet findet. Aber die
Literatur muß ihr vorangegangen sein. Musik allein bringt die Welt nicht vorwärts.
Musik allein ist gefährlich.\textsuperscript{40}

Indeed, Settembrini foreshadows \textit{Doktor Faustus} when he asserts that “das Opiat ist vom
Teufel”.\textsuperscript{41}

The ending to \textit{Der Zauberberg} is equivocal, reflecting the problematic relationship Mann
himself had with the German intellectual tradition. Castorp is both drawn to the
quintessentially German nature of \textit{Der Lindenbaum}, but also becomes, like his creator,
‘educated’ enough to be aware of the implications of this Romantic fascination with death.
The internal division this creates in Castorp is summed up in one of Mann’s most moving
passages, in which Castorp sings \textit{Der Lindenbaum} to himself as he blunders across the
battlefield of World War One, probably to give himself up to death. Whilst music has
provided the decadent impulse to death, Mann shows that the impulse can take the form of a
positive choice of death, and thus, some degree of control and triumph over it:

\begin{quote}
Was denn, er singt! Wie man in stierer gedankenloser Erregung vor sich hin singt,
ohne es zu wissen, so nutzt er seinen abgerissenen Atem, um halblaut für sich zu
singen.\textsuperscript{42}
\end{quote}

We never find out whether Castorp ultimately survives the conflict or dies in it. Mann
asserts, however, that it is not this, but the enriching ‘education’ he has had that matters, for it
will allow Castorp “im Geist [zu] überleben, was [er] im Fleische wohl kaum überleben
[soll]”.\textsuperscript{43} This ends the novel with a sense that the dangerous extremes represented by music
are a necessary part of experience, and that they can have positive results, if only one will
learn from them. This view reflects Mann’s own political development and increasing sense
of personal responsibility whilst writing the novel, traced in 2.1. It admits the possibility of
winning a victory over the morally equivocal that the nature of music represents, which is

\textsuperscript{40} GW III, p. 160-161.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., p. 162.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., p. 993.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., p. 994.
present in both art and life. It also asserts personal engagement with the morally equivocal as an essential part of winning that victory, and thus opens the way for a novel with the moral weight of *Doktor Faustus*.

But even with this notion of active responsibility for the results of decadence, there was a long way to travel to *Doktor Faustus*. Mann’s first idea of a Faustian tale of a musician dated back to 1905. This was at the height of his preoccupation with placing Wagnerian music at the centre of his narratives, and nearly forty years before he actually began to write the novel. Mann’s original note of the idea is worth quoting in full to show just how closely it fitted with his notion of music at that time as the source of irrational, chaotic decadence:

*Novelle oder zu “Maja” Figur des syphilitischen Künstlers: als Dr. Faust und dem Teufel Verschriebener. Das Gift wirkt als Rausch, Stimulans, Inspiration; er darf in entzückter Begeisterung geniale, wunderbare Werke schaffen, der Teufel führt ihm die Hand. Schließlich aber holt ihn der Teufel: Paralyse.*

When first formulated, then, the theme of *Doktor Faustus* encapsulated many of Mann’s concerns about music’s decadence and its power to create havoc. Some of the novel does indeed relate back to this earlier, ‘Wagnerian’ Mann. Adrian Leverkühn’s disillusionment with the artifice of musical effect, for example, clearly owes almost everything to Nietzsche’s disillusionment with Wagner. But this is just a small part of the musical content of *Doktor Faustus*. Mann knew from the moment he began to collect material for the novel in the 1940s that he was, this time, entering a different league with his literary ‘musizieren’. His letter to Theodor Adorno at the end of 1945 says of his task: “dazu gehört mehr als >>Initiertheit<<, nämlich Studiertheit, die mir einfach abgeht”.

The musical content of *Doktor Faustus* is thus both related to, and yet different from, Mann’s earlier works. Luchino Visconti’s film adaptation of *Der Tod in Venedig* helps to illustrate this, as it portrays Aschenbach as a composer, and includes dialogue from *Doktor Faustus*. Visconti recognised that it was important to change Aschenbach’s artistic profession in this way if the novelle was to translate successfully to the screen. The change itself works well because of Mann’s own sense that music is all other arts writ large - for most of the time. But Visconti’s use of sections of dialogue from *Doktor Faustus* is not so successful. Visconti said that he used these dialogues to recreate the intellectualism of the novelle, which was

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44 Hans Wysling and Yvonne Schmidlin (eds.), *Thomas Mann Notizbücher 7-14*, (Frankfurt am Main, Samuel Fischer Verlag, 1992), p. 121-122 (notebook 7, p. 155).
otherwise difficult to translate into film.\textsuperscript{47} But for anyone who knows \textit{Doktor Faustus} well, the juxtaposition of these dialogues with the late Romantic decadence of Mahler's fifth symphony simply does not feel right. Although \textit{Doktor Faustus} retains a flavour of the 'music' of \textit{Der Tod in Venedig}, it has, for the most part, gone beyond it.

Although Mann's treatment of music always remained partly rooted in Wagnerian decadence, and his treatment of the artist always had musical undertones, he gradually broadened this 'musical' content to cover more and more of art and life. Music never became any less important to Mann, but it did become more and more influenced by his parallel political development, so that the territory of artistic responsibility extended correspondingly. This responsibility was superimposed onto Mann's narrower fascination with Wagner, and more youthful inclination towards the extreme and the shocking. The later manifestations of musical content in his work are, if anything, more dangerous. Unlike the fate of Herr Friedemann and others, they are more easily identifiable as the stuff of daily life, rather than exceptional incidents. Mann saw more and more clearly that it was possible for the individual to engage with the morally equivocal nature of music and of art and life itself, and to emerge from this engagement with some kind of victory.

\textsuperscript{47}"Der Stil von Thomas Mann ist z. B. sehr akademisch und verschnörkelt. Wie könnte ich durch Bilder diese literarische Besonderheit wiedergeben?". Ibid., p. 30.
2.3 Unification of musical and historical themes in *Doktor Faustus*

2.3.1 Rediscovery of the Faust themes

*Doktor Faustus* was begun at a time when Mann’s sense of political responsibility was perhaps at its most acute. Just before he began the novel, he was working with his publisher, Bermann Fischer, to make the detailed arrangements for publishing in book form his collected BBC broadcasts to the German people - *Deutsche Hörer* (1945). In his introduction to this book, Mann emphasised his strong desire to make contact with the German people and to offer a genuine political contribution: “Ich glaubte, diese Gelegenheit, hinter dem Rücken der Nazi-Regierung . . . Kontakt zu nehmen - und sei es ein noch so lockerer und bedrohter Kontakt - nicht versäumen zu lassen”. By the 1940s, Mann saw that his passion for music, which he had never lost, now had implications far beyond even the wider sphere of art.

The composition of *Doktor Faustus* did not, however, begin at a single moment of inspiration when these two aspects of his development - politics and music - came together. On the contrary, Mann’s own account, in *Die Entstehung des Doktor Faustus*, even allowing for the inevitably highly self-conscious style of such a memoir, shows him initially casting around for something to fill the vacuum left once he had completed *Joseph* - “das mich durch all diese Jahre des Exils, die Einheit meines Lebens gewährleistend, begleitet hatte”. Now that he had finished the tetralogy, Mann found that it was a burden he was only partly pleased to be rid of. He quickly abandoned the idea of continuing *Felix Krull*, whose opening chapters had been published in 1922, and turned instead to his notes of nearly forty years previously about a Faust story. This section of the thesis describes the way in which the musical and contemporary historical themes were brought together in Mann’s conception of *Doktor Faustus* in its early stages, in the light of the engagement with his own time and with music described in 2.1 and 2.2. This will set the context for the investigation of the way in which the novel closes the gap between music and history.

The most immediate sensation Mann had when rediscovering his old Faust notes was that he had now reached the time for his ‘monumental’ work. He had long modelled himself on Goethe, and intended his Faust to be, as Goethe’s had been, the pinnacle of his creative achievement. Goethe worked on the composition of *Faust* throughout his creative life.

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1 GW XI, p. 983-984.
2 GW XI, p. 153.
Although he did not actually write the novel throughout his career, Mann’s Faust was also, in a sense, the distillation of a lifetime’s work:

Ein Werk groß zu wollen, es gleich als groß zu planen, war wahrscheinlich nicht das Richtige, - für das Werk weder, noch für das Gemüt dessen, der seiner sich unterwand. 3

Mann also compared his undertaking to Wagner’s last work - “es wird mein Parsifal”. 4 Like Wagner, he had now reached the zenith of his urge to create myth. In his later years, the focus of Mann’s narratives consciously shifted from interesting individual protagonists to figures with universal significance, though without changing the main substance of his themes. Mann saw the character of Joseph as the turning point in this process, which was clearly an important step for him:

Überhaupt habe ich ja mit diesem Roman eine neue Stufe meines literarischen Lebens betreten, insofern als ich mit damit vom Bürgerlichen und Individuellen ...lösegelöst habe und zum Typischen und Mythischen übergegangen bin...denn der junge Joseph, eine in religiöser Sphäre lebende artistische Natur, sich zu seinen Vätern annähern so verhält, wie Hanno Buddenbrook zu den seinen, nur daß, wie gesagt, in diesem mythischen Buch das Familiär-Bürgerlichen ins Menschheitliche gesteigert wird und dem Werk gewissermaßen der Ehrgeiz zu Grunde liegt, eine abgekürzte Geschichte der Menschheit zu geben. 5

Mann approached the task of his Faust with a mixture of trepidation and pride. Whilst the story of the interview with Time magazine, which opens the Entstehung, is amusing, and typically self-aware, it does say something of the way in which he saw the novel as a monumental undertaking. It could later almost be said to have gnawed away at its author’s own mortality: “das Ganze ist wie eine offene Wunde”. 6 Mann is certainly in earnest when he writes of his fear of the novel: “weil ich es immer als mein letztes betrachtet habe”. 7 He was astonished that the basic theme of Doktor Faustus had come to him so young - although an objective onlooker might want to protest that even from an early age, Mann’s life had been a studied progress towards the great man of German letters that he was by the 1940s. Yet even at this late stage, Mann appears to have felt ill-prepared for the task that lay ahead. Letters written when he was just beginning the novel suggest that part of him shrank from the task that lay ahead, and questioned whether he would finish it. 8 One of his practical worries was whether the concepts in his mind could ever be given a coherent shape; he qualified the

3 GW XI, p. 169.
4 Letter to Klaus Mann of 27 April 1943, Briefe II, p. 309.
7 GW XI, p. 157.
8 See, for example, the letter to Jonas Lesser of 13 December 1943: “Es kann leicht sein, daß ich zum ersten Mal etwas als unausführbar werde aufgeben müssen”, DüD, p. 118.
novel in his diary as "wenn verwirklichungsfähig". Mann was also worried that even if he did manage to achieve coherence, the result would be neither palatable nor meaningful to the average reader: "Es ist sehr schwer, gewisse Dinge leicht, genießbar, dialogfähig zu machen, nicht ins Abhandlungsmäßige zu verfallen".

Mann found two early notes about the Faustian theme, both about an artist with syphilis. The character had apparently been intended either as the subject of a short story in his own right, or to feature in Mann's unfinished novel, Maja. The first note was about an artist who becomes engaged to an innocent 'Gretchen' figure, but commits suicide just before the wedding. The second note put the 'Gretchen' episode in the background and focused on the syphilis as an intoxication that will inspire the artist to his greatest works. Mann seems to have envisaged the pact from the outset as cognate with that in Goethe's Faust, in that it is for a higher creative purpose, not for pleasure alone. The way in which he subsequently expanded the idea made it take on a specifically moral weight, as it is seen as morally wrong to seek out the 'Wahnsinn' that results from syphilis, even for the sake of art. The musician's final collapse - "schließlich holt ihn der Teufel" - was to be the punishment for the moral wrong.

Mann's new notes in 1943 show that the Faust theme had now assumed a much deeper significance for him than it had had in 1905. The voluntary 'Wahnsinn' of the artist is immediately linked in his train of thought to fascism. Fascism then emerged in his working notes as a key theme, much more clearly, and at an earlier stage, than a specific reference to music. It was immediately regarded by Mann as a surrender of reason to the forces of irrationality, drawing a parallel between the surrender to irrational forces necessitated by 'musical' decadence, or 'Rausch', and Germany's situation in the 1930s and 1940s - both are the "Hingabe an den Instinkt". This mental link was only possible at this stage of Mann's career, when he had recognised the potential for art to relate to the whole of life:


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9 Tagebücher 1940-1943, p. 561 (10 April 1943).
11 TM Notizbücher 7-14, p.107 & p. 121-122.
Hingabe an den Instinkt und an das fessellose >Leben<, das eigentlich der Tod und als Leben nur Teufelswerk, gifterzeugt, ist.  

It is important that Mann thought of his Faust as an artist rather than the traditional alchemist figure. At the time he had originally conceived the theme it was connected with his long-standing preoccupation with the link between sickness and artistic creativity. Now, in later life, he was aware of a greater dimension. Despite his many achievements, Mann could see that he, the artist, could equally well exclaim in despair, with Goethe’s alchemist Faust:

Bilde mir nicht ein, was Rechts zu wissen
Bilde mir nicht ein, ich könnte was lehren,
Die Menschen zu bessern und zu bekehren.

When Mann had first sketched out the Faustian theme, he was seeking something that could follow up his astounding early success with *Buddenbrooks* (1901). Now, nearly forty years later, he was caught in the fragmentation and sterility of a century in which conventions were breaking down, and amongst them, the convention of the novel. A process that had begun with the growing ascendancy of technology, psychology, philosophy and science in the early years of the century, and the undermining of the authority of religion and morality was, in the wake of two world wars, gathering irreversible momentum. The speed of change was perhaps more rapid in Germany than it was in some other countries. So it was that Mann could now see his Faust’s intellectual and creative dissatisfaction and despair as a paradigm for all arts, including writing.

Mann also expanded his original Faustian theme to include Nietzsche, who is not mentioned by name in the early notes on *Doktor Faustus*, but is immediately obvious by the references to the Apolline and Dionysian, and the ‘Übermensch’. His reading as he continued to think about the novel focused not on Nietzsche’s ideas, however, but on the parallels of Nietzsche’s physical state with that of his Faust figure. Mann had recently read a book focusing entirely on Nietzsche’s final breakdown, and now turned his attention to a study of Nietzsche’s illness by P. J. Möbius, who, in 1902, had been the first to attribute the philosopher’s madness to syphilis. Although Nietzsche’s ideas about decadence, and, in

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15 P. J. Möbius, *Über das Pathologische bei Nietzsche* (1902). Mann owned a 1909 reprint of this book, which suggests that he found out about the very personal connection between Nietzsche and his own Faust character a few years after his orginal note about the syphilitic artist. He was therefore probably first making the connection with Nietzsche when returning to the note in 1943.
particular, the link between creativity and irrational ‘Rausch’, were central to Mann’s theme, information about the illness itself and the old Faust chapbook formed the bulk of Mann’s initial reading, presumably because he was not quite so well-informed about these themes. Mann probably felt that he knew enough about Nietzsche’s thought to return to this where necessary and incorporate it in the novel.

The first explicit indication in Mann’s working notes that the central character of the artist is to be a musician is a very short reference to Kleist’s *Gesta Romanorum* (which was also on his reading list at the time) as a potential opera subject for his protagonist. His first reference in correspondence to the musical theme is in a letter to his son Klaus, in which he refers to *Doktor Faustus* as “eine Künstler-(Musiker)- und moderne Teufelsverschreibungsgeschichte”, and, incidentally, also links this theme with “das Politische, Faschistische”. It is most likely that Mann felt from the outset that his ‘ultimate’ novel about an artist, his equivalent of Goethe’s *Faust*, could only be about music, the ‘ultimate’ art. The status he had always given to music, as amongst, yet above, the other arts, was most important: “Ein Musik-Roman? Ja. Aber er war als Kultur- und Epochen-Roman gedacht”. Mann had also long thought, as he later came to formulate in the essay *Deutschland und die Deutschen* (1945), that there was something essentially musical about the German soul. It had the same dangerous undertones and tendency towards the irrational ‘Rausch’ which he thought was recently revealed most clearly in the fascism of the Hitler regime:

Soll Faust der Repräsentant der deutschen Seele sein, so müßte er musikalisch sein; denn abstrakt und mystisch, das heißt musikalisch, ist das Verhältnis des Deutschen zur Welt.

### 2.3.2 Faust and the contemporary historical context

Mann moved forward quickly from the generalised concept of irrational ‘Rausch’ that had been the sum of his original thinking about the link between the artistic and political themes. He sought advice about the musical detail of the novel from musicians he knew. He was privileged to have a number of musically distinguished neighbours in California, and it is clear from his letters, diaries and the *Entstehung*, that he used his contacts with Bruno Walter,

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16 See L. Voss, op. cit., p. 21-23. Mann also studied a biography of Schumann and the letters of Wolf, making copious notes about their syphilitic symptoms. This may well have provided part of the impetus to make the Faust figure a composer. Voss notes, however, that there is no clear juncture in the notes at which this decision is made.
17 Ibid., p. 24.
18 Letter to Klaus Mann of 27 April 1943, *Briebe II*, p. 309.
19 GW XI, p. 171.
20 GW XI, p. 1131-1132.
Schoenberg, Stravinsky, Ernst Toch and others to the full, especially in the early stages
before his partnership with Theodor Adorno. Mann was determined from the beginning that
there should be extensive and accurate musical detail in the novel: "Hier galt es Realisierung,
galt Exaktheit, nichts war mir klarer". He wrote to Bruno Walter early on, making clear that
he saw his new novel as a very different undertaking from his previous fictional characters
with musical connections, and, in the light of his much later dispute with Schoenberg, with an
amusing aside:

Ich will's riskieren, - sehe aber kommen, daß ich Sie noch gelegentlich um Rat und
sachliche Information werde bitten müssen .... Sollte ich wohl eine
Kompositionslehre lesen? Haben Sie eine? Übrigens will ich Schönberg um Rat
fragen.  

It is worth noting that none of Mann's writings or notes at the time gives any sense that he
thought that this additional layer of musical accuracy would enhance the link between the
music and the initial thoughts he had had about fascism. For example, although as T. J. Reed
suggests, the 1905 Faust outline looked like "an allegory waiting for meaning", there was
certainly nothing specific in Mann's requests to his musical acquaintances that suggests he
was gathering together particular pieces of information to make up the detailed elements of
an allegory. At this stage, the musical detail appears to be as much a matter of accurate
'local colour' as anything else.

The vigour with which Mann pursued his musical researches might suggest that the accuracy
of the musical characterisation was more important to him for its own sake than dealing with
the contemporary historical aspect of the book. It is instructive, however, to compare this
enthusiastic information-gathering exercise with Mann's response to a request passed on by
his publisher, Bermann Fischer in April 1943, from a Swedish publisher asking whether he
would be prepared to write a book about 'the other Germany', that is, the better, more just
side of the country that was then the hated aggressor.  

Ich bezweifle aber sehr, daß ich es werde tun können, denn was für ein weites Feld
ist das: ein Buch über das liberale Deutschland! Es ist doch mehr die Sache eines
Historikers, und ich habe ganz andere Dinge im Kopf.

21 Ibid., p. 171.
23 T. J. Reed, op. cit., p. 366. Reed goes on to say that the many different layers in Doktor Faustus,
including the reality of the historical period, make it much more complex than a straightforward
allegory.
24 Letter from Bermann Fischer of 12 April 1943, Thomas Mann, Briefwechsel mit seinem Verleger
Bermann Fischer 1932 bis 1955, edited by Peter de Mendelssohn, (Frankfurt am Main, Samuel Fischer
25 Letter to Bermann Fischer of 21 April 1943, ibid., p. 325.
On one level, of course, Mann simply wanted to be left alone to get on with his enormous new project. On another level, his reaction is partly a manifestation of his conviction that his role was that of the artist, not the politician nor, in this case, the political historian. He was not equipped to pronounce at the level of historical detail that this project would have demanded. It is interesting to compare this response and the relative dearth of historical and political detail in *Doktor Faustus*, with the comprehensive musical detail, and the zeal with which Mann gathered it. The level of detail about the two areas seems to be inversely proportional to his view of the significance of each of them. Mann freely admitted that he was no musician - no more a musician, one might add, than a ‘Historiker’. Yet he was prepared to fabricate the musical detail because, however much it fascinated him, it was not the most important point: “die Musik, sofern der Roman von ihr handelt... [ist] nur Vordergrund und Repräsentation, nur Paradigma... für Allgemeineres.”

Even though Mann planned the contemporary historical dimension for *Doktor Faustus* from the outset - as noted above, fascism figured immediately in his expansion of his early idea for the novel - it seems that it mattered to him more that he should not fabricate the political and historical detail, than it did to do something similar with music. This detail is often the unspoken weight behind the musical ‘Vordergrund’.

There can be no doubting, however, that *Doktor Faustus* is a ‘German’ novel. Mann’s sense of artistic responsibility prompted him to convey the cultural forces at play in the political and historical situation of which he was writing. In place of the specific factual detail that he sought for the musical aspects of *Doktor Faustus*, the ‘German’ content is mainly manifested in a disparate collection of concepts - Faust, Nietzsche, Romanticism, fascism itself. Some or all would have had a range of associations for even a mildly educated German reader, but none, apart from fascism, had any specific and obvious connection with recent political events. The concepts appear to have been connected at a deep level for Mann, even though the novel does not make these connections immediately transparent, beyond simply their ‘Germanness’.

First and foremost was, of course, the Faust motif itself. This was long familiar to Germans from the centuries old tradition of the Faust chapbook and travelling puppet shows. The tradition was still strong in the German consciousness in the twentieth century. Michael Beddow notes, for example, the crude designation of ‘Faustian’ that was applied in Oswald Spengler’s analysis, in his widely read *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (1918-22) to the soulless technology and unscrupulous expansion of contemporary culture “in the confident

26 GW XI, p. 171.
expectation that his readers would find it all a Good Thing." Even though Mann disconnects his Faust from these generalised contemporary definitions, and creates a new literary character, his is still a peculiar and somewhat disturbing version of Faust. It was clear from the outset that this Faust was not to strive joyfully for a higher purpose, as Goethe's Faust largely does. Mann's Faust enters a pact that promises suffering and difficulty, even prohibiting love, hitherto an essential part of the Faustian pact, as borne out in the Gretchen story. Even Adrian Leverkühn himself exclaims "Will der Teufel die Lust prohibieren?". Mann had come to see decadence, decay and suffering as distinctive features of Germany in the early twentieth century. By infecting his Faust with syphilis, he was dragging his central character into the full extent of that decay to a degree that he had not done with any previous protagonist.

Nietzsche was linked physically to this syphilitic decay, as he shared the illness. He was also intellectually linked in his emphasis, so beloved of the Nazis, on strength and creativity at any price - "eine kraftsteigernde Unwahrheit hat mehr Wert als eine niederdrückende Wahrheit". This sentiment is uttered by the devil in *Doktor Faustus* in a way that shows precisely just how easily it could justify fascism, particularly in Germany's historical situation, in which political, economic and - to encompass both - ideological strength, were so sorely needed:

> Was dich erhöht, was dein Gefühl von Kraft und Macht und Herrschaft vermehrt, zum Teufel, das ist die Wahrheit, - und wäre es untern tugendlichen Winkel gesehen zehnmal eine Lüge....Vor dem Faktum der Lebenswirksamkeit, mein Guter, wird jeder Unterscheidt von Krankheit und Gesundheit zunichte.

2.3.3 Theodor Adorno and the unification of the musical and historical themes

Even this very brief survey of the themes of *Doktor Faustus* in Mann's working notes shows that he did not begin with a scheme setting out precisely what he wanted to say about Germany, then seek out the material that would best convey it. He more or less admits this in the *Entstehung*, when he states that he does not have any clear recollection of having a sense of the whole novel when he began. In preparing for the moment of beginning *Doktor Faustus*, Mann had enlarged upon the themes that had always been with him. Although they represented much of the cultural baggage of Germany, inevitably they did not specifically

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28 GW VI, p. 331.
30 Page 37 of Mann's notes for *Doktor Faustus*. Quoted in full in L. Voss, op. cit., p. 40.
31 GW VI, p. 323-324.
relate to modern Germany. When, in his pursuit of ‘Exaktheit’, Mann encountered Theodor Adorno, it seems that he began to recognise the gap between the way he had seen his central character’s situation, and contemporary history and society. It was Adorno who suddenly gave to Mann “Augenblicke der Erhellung über Adrians Position”. In fact, Mann was even concerned not to lose sight of his original main theme in the face of Adorno’s compelling ideas: “Hauptgedanke der erkauften Inspiration, die im Rausch darüber hinweggeht, nicht aus dem Gesicht zu verlieren”.  

Mann had never explicitly defined the ‘Exaktheit’ that he sought as being information about modern music, as opposed to ‘Exaktheit’ about the technicalities of music in general. In none of his initial approaches to friends did he say that he lacked an understanding of modern music. He simply referred to a need to acquire a technical knowledge of music itself, which he thought would be necessary in order to portray the education and career of a composer. His reading of Krenek, for example, seems to have been a happy coincidence, and his early letter to Bruno Walter asks about the generic technical training of a musician, be he Wolf or Stravinsky. Adorno’s fundamental contribution was to widen Mann’s musical frame of reference, which Mann freely acknowledged: “Tatsächlich haben Sie mir, dessen musikalische Bildung kaum über die Spätromantik hinausgelangt ist, den Begriff von modernster Musik gegeben”. 

Mann’s musical spectrum widened rapidly, and by the end, the novel contained nearly seventy musical characters, both real and imaginary. He was always only too well aware, however, that his musical tastes were firmly rooted in the very ‘Rausch’ of Wagner and others that he had earlier connected with the dangers of decadence, and now, the evil of fascism. Although he came to love the Leverkühn character more than any other of his fictional creations, Mann never acquired a taste for the music, retaining his emotional attachment to the ‘Rausch’ of late Romanticism to the end of his life. In 1948, he wrote in his diary about how listening to a recording of *Das Rheingold* had moved him to tears:

> war fast bis zu Tränen bewegt von dem Gesang der Rheintöchter mit dem “Traulich und treu ist’s nur in der Tiefe”, Gebe für diese Stelle allein die ganze Musik Schönbergs, Bergs, Křeneks und Leverkühns dahin.

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33 GW XI, p. 172.  
35 Letter to Theodor Adorno of 30 December 1945, ibid., p. 471.  
By the 1940s, however, Mann’s susceptibility to the ‘Rausch’ had become more informed since the helpless, almost blind succumbing to fate that had characterised Aschenbach. He was more aware of the dangers of musical ‘Rausch’, and knew through Adorno that there was more to music than this irrational sensuality. He was able to write about this, but, because he could never appreciate, and experience fully for himself, these other aspects of music, he needed Adorno’s help to do it. Hansjörg Dörr notes in his article on the collaboration with Adorno: “Für Mann kann die Musik sich nicht im Rationalen erschöpfen, die intellektuelle Art der Musikbetrachtung Adornos mußte ihm fremd bleiben.” Adorno’s focus was on the more modern question of the difficult situation of art, which needs to encompass more than “Rausch”. It is evident that Mann very quickly grasped that what he read in the manuscript of Adorno’s *Philosophie der neuen Musik* in July 1943, could substantially fill out his plans for *Doktor Faustus*: “In mir entschied es sich: >>Das ist mein Mann<<”. He acknowledged that Adorno’s writing provided “eine artistisch-soziologische Situationskritik von großer Fortgeschrittenheit, Feinheit und Tiefe”, which also possessed “die eigentümlichste Affinität zur Idee meines Werkes”.

Adorno knew about the ‘Rausch’ that had dominated Mann’s notes for the novel so far, and shared the writer’s concern about its dangers. But he went a step further in setting out, and providing a critique of, the way out of it, in the shape of Schoenberg’s twelve tone system. Adorno’s contribution thus not only fleshed out the framework Mann already had from his notes, but added a new dimension of modernity that changed the nature of the novel. Mann had not hitherto thought of making Leverkühn an atonal composer. He admitted that, as a result, he took over Adorno’s depiction of Schoenberg’s music virtually unamended. It seems to have been this that particularly rankled with the composer. Although Adorno greatly admired Schoenberg, the latter apparently found him irritating and had little social contact with him in the Californian émigré community. One reason for this, as Patrick Carnegy notes in his study of *Doktor Faustus*, was probably that Adorno was one of the few admirers who combined his reverence for Schoenberg with highly informed criticism, which tended to place the composer on the defensive.

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40 This and the quotation in the previous sentence, GW XI, p. 172.
In Adorno, however, Mann had taken on much more than a musical adviser. Adorno was a highly intellectual musicologist, sociologist and philosopher, who had been a key member of the Frankfurt School of German social theory since 1938. This meant that Adorno was able to relate his musical analyses to a broad and modern cultural and social framework. The very fact that Adorno had written a ‘Philosophie’, rather than the straight music textbook that Mann was originally looking for, meant that the correspondences between music and contemporary society came virtually ready-made. As a member of the Frankfurt School, now in exile, Adorno was actively engaged in research and writing that sought to develop a theory to oppose to the predominant philosophy of positivism. The Frankfurt School saw this philosophy as dangerous in that it focused on empirically discoverable facts, which were mere appearance (‘Schein’), as opposed to a more subtle and profound ‘essence’. The sociologists of the School considered that this exclusive focus on the base and obvious had created a new barbarism. Adorno saw art in general, and music in particular as being able to point beyond this ‘Schein’ towards the absolute. The read-across to the themes in *Doktor Faustus* of ‘Schein’, ‘Erkenntnis’, and ‘Rebarbarisierung’ is obvious.

The *Entstehung* describes how Mann and Adorno worked together extensively, telling the story of how Adorno persuaded Mann to tone down the ‘Hoffnung’ at the end of the novel, which he felt was too optimistic. Kretzschmar’s lectures and key parts of the dialogue with the devil could not have existed without Adorno’s input, which is acknowledged in the “Wiesengrund” of the Arietta theme in Beethoven’s piano sonata Opus 111 and in the appearance of the devil, when he discusses culture, in the unmistakable guise of Adorno: “ein Intelligenzler...ein Theoretiker und Kritiker, der selbst komponiert, soweit eben das Denken es ihm erlaubt”.

As Dorr and others have noted, however, Mann’s own account in the *Entstehung* probably does not credit Adorno with anything like the depth of influence he really had on the novel.

Working closely with the sociologist Max Horkheimer, Adorno’s work in the 1940s focused particularly on the relationship between society and its culture. He was therefore squarely in Mann’s long-standing literary territory, but could complement Mann’s grasp of the timeless forces at work in the German psyche with a highly contemporary sense of the way in which mass culture was currently influencing decisions and political movement in modern Germany. In the essay *Kulturindustrie. Aufklärung als Massenbetrug* (1944), Adorno and Max Horkheimer set out their view of the way in which mass culture was in danger of

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44 GW VI, p. 76.

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debasing the critical potential of art.\textsuperscript{46} They were particularly interested in the way in which advertising was used in American broadcasts and, more importantly, the political exploitation of radio by the Nazis, who were able to use it as an apparently disinterested, and therefore all the more authoritative, mouthpiece for their ideas. Both moulded potentially independent views into one mass unified view with evident, but spurious, authority:

[das Radio] erhebt in Amerika keine Gebühren vom Publikum. Dadurch gewinnt es die trügerische Form desinteressierter, überparteiler Autorität, die für den Faschismus wie gegossen ist. Dort wird das Radio zum universalen Maul des Führers...Die Nationalsozialisten selber wußten, daß der Rundfunk ihrer Sache Gestalt verlieh wie die Druckerpresse der Reformation.\textsuperscript{47}

The theme of mass communication does not appear explicitly in Doktor Faustus. Yet the presence of Adorno’s voice raises the cultural account of fascism above what could have been, on early showing of Mann’s ideas, an account of Nazism as mass hysteria - ‘Rausch’ - alone. This might have been a more comforting analysis, because it would have suggested that these things happened when people were not fully in control of themselves. Adorno, however, adds the important dimension of rational calculation, systems and technocracy without which no regime could have gained the sustained political control that the Nazis did. The notion of Nazism as mass hysteria is still quite common, so that a book such as Daniel Goldhagen’s recent best-seller, Hitler’s Willing Executioners, which sets out the thesis that the excesses of Nazism sprang from long-held, well considered beliefs in Germany, attracts an enormous amount of attention from the general public and debate in the media.\textsuperscript{48} As will be shown in later chapters of this thesis, the combination of irrationality and calculating system is essential to both Leverkuhn’s music and German history.

Mann’s failure to acknowledge the depth of Adorno’s influence may have been partly, perhaps even largely, because he simply did not perceive the total extent of the influence. Mann had been looking for advice about musical technicalities, but not for the sociological and cultural depth that Adorno’s unusual combination of expertise brought to the task. Sauerland notes that Mann: “[war] genau so wie die meisten Leser nicht imstande, die musik- oder kunstgeschichtliche Schicht des Romans als solche einzuschätzen”.\textsuperscript{49} Mann was himself no cultural philosopher or sociologist. People often assumed, because of the apparent erudition of his works, that he was something of a polymath. Yet Mann, to his credit, was always conscious of his borrowed intellectual plumage:

\textsuperscript{46} TWA GS 3, p. 141-191.

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., p. 182.


In relation to *Doktor Faustus*, Katia Mann’s memoirs record that Adorno later thought that “er hätte im wesentlichen das Buch geschrieben”. She states that he expressed great concern that Horkheimer had not been credited in the *Entstehung*, which shows that he knew, if Mann did not, what his contribution owed to the thought of the Frankfurt School.

Adorno’s proposed solution was that Mann should review his and Horkheimer’s joint work, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*. Mann’s reaction, as recorded by his wife, illustrates perfectly that he had embroiled himself in ideas that went beyond what he had expected or understood fully for himself:


But however inadequately Mann might have understood the full depth of Adorno’s ideas, this does not diminish the greatness of the achievement of *Doktor Faustus*. It is fair to say that in being taken into Mann’s novel, Adorno’s ideas were given a much wider airing than they would otherwise have had. Perhaps Adorno was aware of this. The ideas in *Dialektik der Aufklärung* only reached the height of their popularity amongst US students in the 1960s.

Anthony Heilbut notes that the book “assumes neither impact nor audience, and that anyhow it is too late for change”. It is Mann who places Adorno’s (rather dry) theory in the context of narrative that brings it alive. He also connects Adorno’s modern cultural theory with the historical and cultural forces that reach far back into Germany’s past, but which he could see still shaped her being in the twentieth century. As the quarrel with Schoenberg showed only too vividly, Mann did not feel the need to be expert about every detail of the elements he took into his work. Instead, rather like the ‘ready-mades’ of Duchamp and other post-modern artists, these elements take on a new identity and significance when placed into a new context, not necessarily quite the same as their original use and meaning. Writing to Adorno of his montage technique, Mann said:

> Historisch gegeben und bekannt wie es ist, klebe ich es auf und lasse die Ränder sich verwischen, lasse es in Komposition senken als ein mythisch-vogelfreies Thema, das jedem gehört.

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51 Katia Mann, *Meine ungeschriebenen Memoiren*, edited by Elisabeth Plessen and Michael Mann, (Frankfurt am Main, S. Fischer Verlag, 1974), p. 147.
52 Ibid., p. 149.
Mann’s research was essentially guided by his eclectic reading, with some volumes seemingly picked at random. Voss notes in her account of the genesis of Doktor Faustus that Mann tended simply to extract from his reading the elements that were of interest to him, discarding the remainder, and not even noting the page reference. Yet it is clear from the reactions evoked by Doktor Faustus that this system worked in creating an effect. Even though the connections between themes might not be obvious on the surface, the themes were capable of being perceived by the reader to be connected at a very deep level. This very ambiguity - the mass of ‘Kulturprodukte’ with no clear way through it - is part of the phenomenon with which Doktor Faustus, in particular, seeks to engage. Mann certainly felt that the message of the novel was just as involving in the parts that most readers were likely to find most tedious: “ich glaube, daß die dem Buch eingeborene Erregung auch dort noch durchschlägt, wo es am langweiligsten ist”.

In exploring how the novel bridges the gap between music and history then, there is no clear, pre-existing template to guide an investigation of the text. We can be assured, however, that both music and history - specifically the politics of Germany in the first half of the twentieth century - are important in the novel. The history may be less obvious precisely because Mann felt more strongly about it, and the two are closely embroiled not least because Mann’s preoccupations by this time in his career were too far advanced to take them objectively apart. It is also fair to assume that despite the relative lack of historical and political detail in comparison to the musical detail, the cultural analysis jointly constructed by Mann and Adorno contains more of significance than even Mann might have supposed. The investigation, therefore, may well reveal Doktor Faustus to be a novel that is significantly greater than the sum of its parts.

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The genesis of Doktor Faustus, which has been traced in this chapter, is one that brings together artistic, cultural (and particularly musical) concerns on the one hand, and historical, social and political matters on the other. The link between the two spheres is one that occurs as a particular confluence of ontology and history. As we shall see, Doktor Faustus speaks constantly of the ontology of music and of the German psyche, and also of the processes by which, at a particular juncture, that ontology realises itself in historically specific aspirations, discourses and projects, be they musical or political. Precisely at this intersection-point of

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55 L. Voss, op. cit., p. 21-22.
ontology and German history - in this case, the first half of the twentieth century - certain important conceptual fields come into play, suggesting a parallelism between the domains of music and history. The conceptual correspondences all have a sense of dialectical energy and tension, and are as follows: first, the struggle for 'Durchbruch', for a form of outward expression that is yet inwardly truthful; second, the tension between cerebralism - detachment and reflectivity on the one hand - and sensuous immediacy on the other; third, a debate between order and stability, and disorder and chaos; fourth, a recognition of the claims of spirituality, of well-nigh religious aspiration on the one hand, and on the other, primal feeling.

I am well aware that these categories are somewhat elastic, but then, I shall want to claim that they are precisely that in the novel. I am also well aware that I have, in the introduction to this thesis, polemicized against a tradition of Doktor Faustus criticism that invokes 'Zweideutigkeit'. It may seem that my dialectical categories fall into just that tradition. But this is not so. My claim is not that Doktor Faustus is so full of 'Zweideutigkeit' that it ultimately refuses to yield any determinable meaning. Rather, it is that the novel diagnoses German culture at a particular point of its history where endlessly rehearsed dialectics are the order of the day - and seeks to provide a corrective to that omnipresent ambiguity. Doktor Faustus invites us to be critical of such a mentality - one in which profundity is seen to be synonymous with a kind of all-embracing relativism. My four areas of conceptual correspondence are thus not in themselves the final wisdom of the novel. Rather, they are the organising matrices that work in the cultural climate that is the subject of Doktor Faustus. They imply an overlap between music and historical events, and set up a beguiling rhetoric of relatedness. The question to be asked at the end of thesis - which is, I believe, the question asked by Doktor Faustus in its entirety - is how revealing, how causally operative, how analytically legitimate that relatedness actually is.
Chapter 3 Discourse in *Doktor Faustus* on music

3.1 The concept of music

3.1.1 Leverkühn’s musical education

An important first step in discovering how *Doktor Faustus* closes the gap between music and history is to establish what Mann means when he speaks of music. This chapter seeks to clarify Mann’s overall concept of music in the novel, underlining the difference between the continuing essence of music - its ontology - and the manifestation of this essence at specific historical points, in the form of individual compositions. Chapter 4 will then consider how the ontology of music is manifested in Leverkühn’s own compositions. All this will sometimes necessarily entail considering separately statements that actually occur in a single conversation. Clarity about the detail of the different ways in which *Doktor Faustus* speaks of music, however, particularly in a work of such complexity, is ultimately important for an adequate understanding of the correspondences Mann draws between music and history.

Mann had no illusions about the difficulty of the task he had taken on in his attempt to render Leverkühn’s compositions as realistically as possible. He wrote in a letter to Agnes Meyer shortly after beginning the novel:

Man muß eine besonders profilierte Künstlerpersönlichkeit nebst ihren Werken erfinden, - eine lächerlich schwierige Suggestionsleistung - und nur eine unter anderen.¹

Writers often write novels about writers, probably for the simple reason that it is entirely natural to write about what one knows best. But there might perhaps be more novels about composers if it were not for the difficulty of describing musical works unknown to readers convincingly in prose. It is interesting to note that several composers have attempted to write Leverkühn’s music retrospectively.² Although Leverkühn’s oeuvre includes chamber music and a violin concerto, the major works for the purposes of the novel comprise two oratorios, an opera and several Lieder cycles, which gives Mann an easier descriptive task than if

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² These include Albert Moeschinger’s *Vier Studien nach h-e-a-es (dem Andenken Adrian Leverkuhns)* (1948), Karl Wieland-Kurz’s *Apocalipsis sine Figuris* (1985-87), and the music composed by Rolf Wilhelm, using themes by Benjamin Britten, for Franz Seitz’s film of *Doktor Faustus* (1982). See Volker Scherliess, ‘Zur Musik in *Doktor Faustus*’, in Hans Wölkirchen & Thomas Sprecher (eds.), *Und was werden die Deutschen sagen??* Thomas Manns *Doktor Faustus*, (Lübeck, Verlag DrägerDrück, 1998), p. 146.
Leverkühn had been a purely symphonic composer. Despite the help he had from Adorno and others, it would undoubtedly have been easier for Mann to write a novel that concentrated largely on Leverkühn’s life. Instead, it is Leverkühn’s works, rather than his life, which take centre stage; indeed, his music seems to be the sum of his existence. Concentrating on biographical rather than musical details would certainly have been a surer way to avoid derision from the musical experts and keep the more general reader entertained. Mann himself seems to have been very aware of both these considerations. Writing to Agnes Meyer, he said: "Meine Sorgen gelten Adrian Leverkühn und dem Problem, wie man die musikalischen Exaktheiten, die sich aufdrängen, machbar macht".

Mann’s correspondence with Bruno Walter in 1945 shows his sensitivity to criticism about musical accuracy, and his desire to get the references absolutely right:

Ist es mir gelungen, in diesen primitiven Erwähnungen eine Dummheit, und sogar mehrere, unterzubringen, über die der Fachmann lachen muß, so werde ich nichts Eiligeres zu tun haben, als sie nach Ihrer Anweisung auszumerzen.

There have been many interesting attempts to explore the import of Mann’s assertion that his novel actually practised the ‘constructivist’ music of which it spoke. Whether or not Mann meant this remark to be taken literally - in any event he would certainly have relished the debate it continues to provoke - at the very least it directs the reader to the extraordinary depth, for a work of fiction, in which music is portrayed. Mann did not claim to have delivered a coherent philosophy of music, which would have been inappropriate for a novel:

Sie lassen zwar einfließen, ich hatte illuminiertes über die Natur der Musik gesagt; aber von Musik zu handeln ist doch noch ganz etwas anderes, als nur so philosophisch über Musik.

Nonetheless, the depth of his treatment of music is such that any connection between music and history cannot be fully appreciated without a concept of the nature of music as understood in the novel.

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3 Lieselotte Voss, too, notes that using predominantly vocal music for Leverkühn’s composition made life music easier for Mann than it would have been if he had to describe invented symphonic music. See L. Voss, Die Entstehung, p. 184. Writers have found various ways round this problem. One recent example is Kazuo Ishiguro’s The Unconsoled (London, Faber & Faber, 1995) which describes fictitious music from the point of view of the musician playing it, so that descriptions are overlain with his own feelings and memories. As noted in 2.2, on the other hand, Luchino Visconti decided to make Aschenbach a composer rather than a writer in his film of Death in Venice, giving the opportunity for using the powerful Mahler soundtrack, and avoiding the problem of presenting novels and essays effectively on film.

4 Gunilla Bergsten mentions some of the unfavourable reactions by contemporary musicians and musicologists to the musicological aspects of the novel. See Untersuchungen, p. 92.

5 Letter to Agnes Meyer of 7 January 1944, TM - AM, p. 532.


The exposition of this understanding begins long before Adrian Leverkühn’s own compositions are described. After all, he does not compose his first work until Chapter XVIII of *Doktor Faustus*. The preceding chapters cover his musical education. As such, they set out the characteristics of music as Leverkühn will understand them and shape them into his own compositions. Hansjörg Dörr has, for example, pointed to the direct link between Kretzschmar’s Beethoven lectures in Chapter VIII, Leverkühn’s conversation with Zeitblom about serialism in Chapter XII, and the dialogue with the devil in Chapter XXV.* The pattern in exploring a feature of music is usually for a concept to be introduced by Kretzschmar, then for the young Leverkühn and Zeitblom to discuss its implications. The concept is further refined as Leverkühn develops his own identity as a composer, and as he and Zeitblom participate in further discussions in the artistic and intellectual salons of their adult life. Crucially, the concepts are crystallised in the dialogue with the devil in Chapter XXV. This basic structure establishes the characteristics of music as seen in *Doktor Faustus* at an early stage; they are further developed, but never fundamentally changed. Chapter 3 of this thesis will identify the key elements of those characteristics, showing how Mann differentiates between the timeless essence of music - its ontology - and the manifestation of this essence in compositions at specific points in history. This division between continuing ontological characteristics and their historically specific manifestations is important for a proper insight into the relationship between music and German history in *Doktor Faustus*.

3.1.2 The Romantic concept of music

Most philosophical studies of music separate in some way the concept of music as a series of individual compositions, and as a continuing phenomenon apart from those compositions. Music seems unique amongst the arts in provoking the feeling that it possesses an ontological identity apart from its particular manifestations. That is to say, it is relatively easy to imagine that the material that makes up a great symphony can be separated from the symphony itself. There is less of a sense that a continuing essence can be found once the colours and textures of a painting or the language in a poem have been dissected. This timeless essence of music is something common to all music, remaining after the detailed components of a work - its particular notes, phrases, and harmonies - have been analysed.

The division between the timeless essence of music and its specific compositions dates from the earliest Greek philosophers. They saw the study of music almost exclusively as the study of a universal system, rather than of specific compositions, which tended to be regarded as

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inferior. Music was an important area of study for the most eminent philosophers, and Pythagoras’s teaching that the essence of music embodied the very principles holding the cosmos together, has left its mark on musical aesthetics ever since. It is well known that Plato saw music, and indeed other arts, as a potentially dubious moral and educational influence which should be closely guarded. He also made a distinction between music inaudible to man, which was thought to echo the harmony of the human soul and of the universe, and the specific pieces of music heard in contemporary Athens, which did not impress him. As Jamie James notes in his study of the concept of the music of the spheres: “it would never have occurred to Plato or any of his students to play a few bars of the World Soul on the lyre”.9 Plato suggested that this distinction pointed to a musical reality deeper than even the Pythagoreans had supposed:

Our pupils must not leave their studies incomplete, or stop short of the final objective. They can do this just as much in music as they could in astronomy, by wasting their time on measuring audible concords and notes . . . They talk about intervals of sound, and listen as carefully as if they were trying to hear a conversation next door . . . hey are all using their ears instead of their minds . . . I’m not thinking so much of those people as of the Pythagoreans, who we said would tell us about music. For they do just what the astronomers do; they look for numerical relationships in audible concords, and never get as far as formulating problems and asking which numerical relations are concordant and why.10

The intellectual persuasiveness of images of the music of the spheres has inevitably diminished, but the appeal of this notion of an underlying natural order in music has never been lost. Although the later aesthetics largely dismissed notions of affinity between music and the soul, the scientific studies undertaken by Descartes, Kepler and Mersenne amongst others still had at their heart the essentially Pythagorean assumption that the basis of music lay in nature,11 and modern studies of acoustics have the natural occurrence of sound as their starting point.

The understanding of music as a natural essence, not created by man, has an important implication for Doktor Faustus. This concept of music assigns it firmly beyond human reason and intellect. Although the basis of the earliest philosophy of music in mathematics meant that the Greeks saw music as largely rational and intellectual, this became overlaid with the thought of the Romantics. In the Romantic evaluation of nature, which placed the organic far above systems and rules, music was taken to be the most transcendent and


11 For example, Johannes Kepler’s Harmonices mundi (1619) and Marin Mersenne’s Harmonie universelle (1636), were both important texts that offered a picture of cosmological order with music at its heart.
important of all the arts, placing it outside any order into the realms of subjective feeling. Music could thus culminate in a dangerous irrationality, and - particularly when expanded by the insights of twentieth century psychoanalysis - the dark, demonic world of a Faust. There are fewer traces of the original Greek heritage of music in Doktor Faustus than of Nietzsche’s altogether more turbulent understanding of the Greek tradition.

Nietzsche’s major work on music, Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik (1872), was in turn deeply influenced by Schopenhauer, who attributed to music the highest status of all the Romantic arts. Music was at the pinnacle of the philosophical system outlined in Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung (1819). As already noted, this work was central to Mann’s own intellectual development: “so las ich denn, Tage und Nächte lang, wie man wohl nur einmal liest”. Schopenhauer clearly assigned the essence of music an existence separate from particular works. His starting point was the importance of realising that the musical language of specific compositions was merely the surface of music:

Auf unsern Standpunkte . . . müssen wir [die Musik] eine viel ernstere und tiefere, sich auf das innerste Wesen der Welt und unser Selbst beziehende Bedeutung zuerkennen, in Hinsicht auf welche die Zahlenverhältnisse in die sie sich auflösen läßt, sich nicht als das Bezeichnete, sondern selbst erst als das Zeichen verhalten. Schopenhauer asserted that the thing signified by music - “das Bezeichnete” - was no less than the Will itself. This was the principle on which, in Schopenhauer’s system, the whole world subsisted. Thus, Schopenhauer saw the ontology of music, its nature of being, as itself more bound up with the foundation of being than any other artistic phenomenon:

Die Musik ist also keineswegs gleich den andern Künsten das Abbild der Ideen; sondern Abbild des Willens selbst, dessen Objektivität auch die Ideen sind; deshalb eben ist die Wirkung der Musik so sehr viel mächtiger und eindringlicher als die der andern Künste: denn diese reden nur vom Schatten, sie aber vom Wesen. Schopenhauer goes on to make clear that music’s ontology - uniquely amongst the arts - was to be seen as entirely separate from the world, and thus from particular compositions:

So ist die Musik, da sie die Ideen übergeht, auch von der erscheinenden Welt ganz unabhängig, ignoriert sie schlechthin, könnte gewissermaßen, auch wenn die Welt gar nicht wäre, doch bestehn: was von den andern Künsten sich nicht sagen läßt.

At the same time, he recognised that music could participate in the physical world. This led to similarities between it and the specifics of the physical world, perceived by man as the Ideas:

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12 GW XI, p. 111 (Lebensabriß).
13 Welt als WV, p. 357-358.
14 Ibid., p. 359.
15 Ibid., p. 359.
So muß zwar durchaus keine unmittelbare Ähnlichkeit, aber doch ein Parallelismus, eine Analogie sein zwischen der Musik und zwischen den Ideen, deren Erscheinung in der Vielheit und Unvollkommenheit die sichtbare Welt ist.\textsuperscript{16}

Some of the analogies that Schopenhauer goes on to draw between music and the specifics of the world are quite strained. This actually serves to underline his point that the essence of music is entirely separate from the world, and cannot always easily be moulded in ways that the human world will understand. It is not surprising that Schopenhauer favoured purely instrumental music over any other, as it was much easier to listen to this in a way entirely disassociated from the Ideas:

Denn überall drückt die Musik nur die Quintessenz des Lebens und seiner Vorgänge aus, nie diese selbst, deren Unterschiede daher auf jene nicht allemal einfließen. Gerade diese ihrer ausschließlich eigene Allgemeinheit bei genauer Bestimmtheit gibt ihr den hohen Wert, welchen sie als Panakeion (Allheilmittel) aller unserer Leiden hat. Wenn also die Musik zu sehr sich den Worten anzuschließen und nach den Begebenheiten zu modelln sucht, so ist sie bemüht, eine Sprache zu reden, die nicht die ihrige ist.\textsuperscript{17}

The dissociation of music from reason inevitably gave it an important link with the emotions, but for Schopenhauer this meant more even than the ability to express deep emotions directly. Instead of a specific instance of love, for example, music would allow the listener to experience love itself. This objectification of emotion is a feature that many would be prepared to attribute to other great works of art. Goethe was surely claiming no more than the ability of poetry to transfigure the individual experience in his famous lines: “Und wenn der Mensch in seiner Qual verstummt/Gab mir ein Gott, zu sagen, wie ich leide.”\textsuperscript{18} But Schopenhauer is quite clear that literature, for example, can show only particular instances which, although they may tell us much about man, remain firmly rooted in the world of the Ideas.\textsuperscript{19}

Romantic writers were only too ready to agree that something lay behind music that did not lie behind their words, that it could be more deeply expressive than any other art form. The Romantics delighted in music’s ability to go beyond the rational, and its privileged connection with nature. They had an especially passionate relationship with the pure instrumental music so praised by Schopenhauer, particularly E. T. A. Hoffmann, who greatly contributed to building Beethoven’s almost mythic artistic stature. Nietzsche was later to perform a similar function in relation to Wagner. His remarks in \textit{Die Geburt der Tragödie}

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., p. 360.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., p. 365.
\textsuperscript{19} See, for example, Schopenhauer’s discussion of the lessons of great tragedy, in \textit{Welt als WV}, p. 355-356.
about the inadequacy of linguistic expression, when placed next to music, became the
resounding last lines of Stefan George's poem about him:

Und wenn die strenge und gequalte stimme
Dann wie ein loblied tönt in blau nacht
Und helle flut - so klagt: sie hätte singen
Nicht reden sollen diese neue seele! 20

It is not only German writers who have given an exalted place to music. The poet W. H.
Auden, a noted collaborator with Benjamin Britten, wrote passionately of the inadequacy of
verbal expression next to music:

All the others translate: . . .

From Life to Art by painstaking adaptation,
Relying on us to cover the rift;
Only your notes are pure contraption,
Only your song is an absolute gift. 21

Mann did not go to Nietzsche's lengths of composing music of his own - a habit which
certainly had musical aspirations, as already noted in 2.2. The attraction that music seems to
have held for early twentieth century writers is not surprising, bearing in mind that this was a
time when they were so frequently questioning the adequacy of language for conveying true
meaning. Patrick Carnegie notes that although Mann did not go as far as James Joyce, for
example, in pushing back the boundaries of language, his irony meant that his own language
has an ever-present pull towards the ambiguity and abstraction of music. 22 Marianne
Bonwit's 1950 essay, *Babel in Modern Fiction*, picked out *Doktor Faustus* as one of a
handful of significant works in the context of the collapse of values and language in the first
half of the twentieth century. She felt that Mann, with a handful of other authors, had
identified the essential arrogance and fevered activity of man's own achievements in the

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20 Stefan George, 'Nietzsche', from Der siebente Ring (1907), in *Sämtliche Werke*, Vol. VI/VII,
(Stuttgart, Klett-Cotta, 1986), p. 12-13. The reference in Nietzsche's text is "Sie hätte *singen* sollen,
diese 'neue Seele' - und nicht reden! Wie schade, daß ich, was ich damals zu sagen hatte, es nicht als
House, 1945), p. 5. Auden wrote the poem around the time that Britten was composing settings of his
work, including *Funeral Blues, Fish in the Unruffled Lakes* and *Tell me the truth about love*. Probably
the most famous Auden setting by Britten is the *Hymn to Saint Cecilia* (Op. 27, 1942).
22 In his book about the relationship between Nietzsche and Wagner, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau
mentions four of Nietzsche's compositions by name, including one, *Hymnus an die Freundschaft*, to
which Cosima Wagner apparently attributed the break between Nietzsche and her husband. Wagner
wrote to Nietzsche in December 1894: "Ich meinte, Sie müßten heiraten oder eine Oper komponieren;
eines würde Ihnen so gut wie das andere helfen. Das Heiraten halte ich aber für besser". See Dietrich
Fischer-Dieskau, *Wagner und Nietzsche. Der Mystagoge und sein Abtrünniger*, (Stuttgart, Deutsche
modern age which, like the Biblical tower, would crumble around him. Bonwit commended Mann’s command of linguistic devices as an essential ingredient in enhancing the effect of his protagonist’s downfall. The devil in the novel was, she believed, a wholly appropriate figure in this confusion: “who inspires Babylonian constructions and who demands human souls as a price”.

3.1.3 The composer as intermediary

Music’s separate existence as an essence - a thing apart from its manifestations in specific compositions - confers a particular status and responsibility on the composer. Its separation from a recognisable worldly order, in the realms of the non-rational, means that the composer has a crucial effect on the way in which music is understood within the human world. Given Mann’s long-standing preoccupation with the artist’s effect on his public, it is inevitable that he would be concerned about this process of understanding and the composer’s involvement in it. Carnegy sums up the potential moral implications of the separation of music from the rest of life thus:

Music is a perfect example of an artefact, itself of no intrinsic moral standing, which is coloured by what we make of it. It exhibits in extreme form the indifference and moral unaccountability of great art.

The composer’s task is, therefore, not easy. In Schopenhauer’s system, the notion of music as the direct expression of the Will means that it is an uncomfortable and problematic substance to handle. His concept of the Will is characterised by restless striving and desiring. The mark of the artist is his ability to escape this by attaining a state of pure contemplation. In the case of the composer, this will allow the Will itself to be contemplated free of incessant activity. It is not enough simply to reproduce the Will. Rather, it is necessary to engage the intellect in creative tension with it. Mann’s own essay on Schopenhauer, in 1938, noted how far ahead of his time the philosopher was in recognising the dark struggle between the intellect and instincts that Freud was later to see as dominating the whole of human mental life:

Schopenhauer, als Psycholog des Willens, ist der Vater aller modernen Seelenkunde: von ihm geht, über den psychologischen Radikalismus Nietzsche’s, eine gerade Linie zu Freud . . . Diese Einsicht . . . daß der Intellekt dazu da ist, dem Willen gefällig zu sein . . . die Triebe zu rationalisieren, birgt eine skeptisch-pessimistische Psychologie, eine Seelenkunde durchschauender Unerbittlichkeit, die dem, was wir Psychoanalyse nennen, nicht nur vorgearbeitet hat, sondern diese selbst schon ist.

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26 GW IX, p. 577.
For the composer, the struggle with the Will is a struggle with the very substance with which he composes, and the successful resolution of this struggle the mark of genius. It is clear from Schopenhauer’s praise of Rossini in particular, and the conspicuous absence of others, that he felt the composers had a key role to play, and that some were more successful than others in allowing music to achieve its true expression:

Von diesem Fehler hat keiner sich so rein gehalten wie Rossini: daher spricht seine Musik so deutlich und rein ihre eigene Sprache, daß sie der Worte gar nicht bedarf und daher auch, mit bloßen Instrumenten ausgeführt, ihre volle Wirkung tut.27

It is very clear in Doktor Faustus that the composer is seen as the intermediary between the ontology of music and the human world at a particular historical juncture. Kretzschmar’s lectures, particularly those about Beethoven, establish the principle of the composer as a channel between the timeless and the historically specific. His reply to Leverkühn’s ‘Bekenntnissbrief’ makes explicit the idea that music cannot proceed through time as an historical phenomenon without the help of individual composers, who are rooted in a particular historical period:

Die Kunst schreitet fort . . . und sie tut es vermittelst der Persönlichkeit, die das Produkt und Werkzeug der Zeit ist, und in der objektive und subjektive Motive sich bis zur Ununterscheidbarkeit verbinden, die einen die Gestalt der anderen annehmen.28

Inevitably our understanding of the history of music tends to focus on the characteristics of particular ‘great works’ and their reception, by audiences at different times for example, or by the composer’s contemporaries, without necessarily becoming too preoccupied with the nature of music that lies beneath. Some aestheticians, such as Benedetto Croce, who influenced later thinkers, have denied that any sort of artistic history exists at all, claiming that each artistic object, such as a musical composition, must be contemplated as self-subsisting. This does not, however, give much credence to the fact that although the initial inspiration for a work may be a timeless phenomenon, like music itself, the process of creation must occur within a definite historical context, which inevitably exerts its own pressure on the artist. The musicologist Carl Dahlhaus has suggested a middle view, which takes both artistic and historical possibilities for viewing the aesthetic object into account:

Aesthetic and documentary observations, whilst motivated by opposing interests, are not necessarily based on different and mutually exclusive groups of facts; just which sorts of facts are to be used in an historical or immanent interpretation is not determined a priori but must be decided upon in each individual case.29

27 Welt als W, p. 365.
28 GW VI, p. 181.
Mann took an elevated view of the artist’s role in history, referring in his essay on Schopenhauer to:

Die *vermittelnde* Aufgabe des Künstlers, seine hermetisch-zauberhafte Rolle als Mittler zwischen oberer und unterer Welt, zwischen Idee und Erscheinung, Geist und Sinnlichkeit.\(^{30}\)

Mann’s concern with the role of the artist as intermediary was also sharpened by the concern at the heart of Adorno’s writings on aesthetics about the interaction between art and ideology. Adorno’s deep involvement in the writing of *Doktor Faustus* therefore had a particular influence on Mann’s understanding of the process by which the composer translates music’s ontological characteristics into specific works, and the way in which these are received by the public.

The figure of Beethoven provides many of the most important examples when characters in *Doktor Faustus* discuss the ways in which composers make manifest the ontological characteristics of music. Although Mann had hitherto tended to see Wagner as the quintessentially German representative of the most dangerous and yet most uplifting aspects of music, Beethoven had a long established status as an embodiment of all things German, not least due to Wagner’s influence.\(^{31}\) David Dennis’s study of Beethoven and German politics has shown how parties right across the political spectrum used Beethoven’s works as inspirational vehicles, and how his music even now continues to play a part in social and political development in Germany.\(^{32}\) In a letter written in 1946, Mann admitted that “ich schreibe über Wagner mit mehr Sicherheit und Richtigkeit, als über Beethoven”.\(^{33}\)

Nonetheless, Beethoven, not Wagner, is, as Gunilla Bergsten has identified, the symbolic forerunner for Leverkühn.\(^{34}\) The prominence of Beethoven owes much to Adorno’s influence. He was much preoccupied with the composer, whom he found an important, but problematic figure. Adorno kept a diary about Beethoven until 1957 but, unable to come to terms with the *Missa solemnis*, left fragmentary notes on his death in 1969, which were finally published only relatively recently.\(^{35}\) Kretzschmar’s analysis of Beethoven, which had

\(^{30}\) GW IX, p. 534.
\(^{31}\) The seventeen year old Wagner was so deeply inspired by Beethoven’s ninth symphony that he transcribed it for piano solo. See Rudolph Sabor, *The Real Wagner* (London, Sphere, 1987) p. 37-9 for extracts from Wagner’s letters attempting to persuade Schott to publish his transcription. Alongside Shakespeare, Beethoven was the deepest influence on his young life, and was later invoked by Wagner as the inspiration for his ‘Gesamtkunstwerk’.
such an important influence on Leverkühn, closely follows Adorno’s 1937 essay, *Spätstil Beethovens*, and his notes on the piano sonata Op. 111, which he lent to Mann.\(^\text{36}\)

The distinction between music’s ontological characteristics and the ways in which these are translated by the composer into specific, timebound works, thus forms the starting point for the investigation of the correspondences between music and German history in *Doktor Faustus*. The next two sections of this thesis, 3.2 and 3.3, consider first how the novel portrays the ontological characteristics of music, and then the examples it gives of how these characteristics take on specific historical expression in musical works. As noted in the previous chapter, these characteristics divide into four key concepts: the struggle for ‘Durchbruch’, the tension between sensuality and cerebralism, lack of stability, and a spiritual capacity.

\(^{36}\) Mann records his gratitude for these notes in his letter to Theodor Adorno of 5 October 1943, *DuD*, p. 15.
3.2 The ontological characteristics of music

3.2.1 The struggle for ‘Durchbruch’

The fundamental characteristic of music that lies at the heart of the narrative in *Doktor Faustus* is its urge to reach beyond itself. Although the deep inwardness and otherness of music makes it mysterious and inherently difficult for man to understand, it is nonetheless seen to harbour a desire for expression to communicate effectively with the world beyond - the struggle for ‘Durchbruch’. This struggle is manifested in music’s relationship with words, and in its natural beauty.

An affinity with words, the normal human form of communication, is an obvious way for music to reach beyond its otherworldly self into the human world. The relationship between the two, especially the question of whether music or words should take precedence, has been a point of debate for as long as theories of musical aesthetics have existed. It was of particular concern to Renaissance theorists, and exacerbated by the emergence of opera as an important musical form. For the Romantics, the notion of music as the direct language of the Will was bound to make the relationship between music and words an uneasy one. As noted in the previous chapter, Schopenhauer certainly felt that pure instrumental music was music’s most ideal manifestation. He was nonetheless a great admirer of opera, albeit not the grand opera so popular in his day.¹

In his early years as a musician, Leverkühn, already a prolific composer of Lieder and working on his opera, identifies music’s close affinity with words as not simply a result of the forms into which composers have moulded it, but as a part of its ontology. He goes so far as to claim that music and words actually strive towards one another:

> Musik und Sprache. gehörten zusammen, sie seien im Grunde eins, die Sprache Musik, die Musik eine Sprache, und getrennt berufe immer das eine sich auf das andere, ahme das andere nach, bediene sich der Mittel des anderen, gebe immer das eine sich als Substitut des andern zu verstehen.²

Although Zeitblom checks Leverkühn’s zeal in asserting that the union of music and words is the sole objective of music by reminding him of ‘absolute’ music, the connection between

¹ Schopenhauer was apparently not impressed by Wagner’s operas, although Wagner was a fervent admirer of Schopenhauer. Wagner sent him an inscribed copy of the *Ring* libretto at Christmas 1854, but Schopenhauer did not acknowledge it. He apparently thought that Wagner had minor poetic gifts, but, having seen *Der fliegende Holländer* and *Tannhäuser*, did not think much of him as a composer. See Bryan Magee, *The philosophy of Schopenhauer*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 338.

² GW VI, p. 217.
music and text, and the sense in which music can itself become a form of language, are concepts that prove to be central to Leverkühn's own work.

The concept of beauty is probably even more important in Doktor Faustus to music's struggle for 'Durchbruch'. Sheer beauty is seen both as a natural characteristic of music, and something that gives particular evidence of its impulse towards outward expression. The implication is that an appeal through beauty to the human senses is an easy way for it to connect with the world beyond itself. It is the desire to be perceived as beautiful which leads music into the historical difficulties of 'Schein'. The essence of music seems to have an innocent, beautiful appeal, which is almost fragile as it enters into the historical, human world, in which these difficulties of "Schein" will be encountered. This fragility is evident in Zeitblom's description of the Arietta theme of Beethoven's piano sonata Op. 111, as heard in Kretzschmar's musical accompaniment to his lecture on the sonata: "Das Arietta-Thema, zu Abenteuern und Schicksalen bestimmt, für die es in seiner idyllischen Unschuld keineswegs geboren scheint".

Music's impulse to struggle for the 'Durchbruch' to expression is not, however, seen as indiscriminate communication with mankind in general. Rather, music is seen in Doktor Faustus to be uncertain of its most appropriate audience. Its inwardness and self-absorption give it a strong streak of exclusivity, which more readily equips it to communicate with the elite 'Publikum' than with the mass 'Volk'. This, again, reflects a long tradition in musical aesthetics to the effect that what is enjoyed by large masses of the public may not actually reflect the true essence of music. Plato was one of the earliest thinkers to support this view, which is a natural concomitant of the tensions between music's cerebralism and its sensuality, discussed later in this section. A sixth century treatise by the Roman philosopher Boethius, De institutione musica, continued the Greek tradition by distinguishing between 'musica mundana' - the cosmic music reflecting the order of the universe, 'musica humana' - human music reflecting the order of a virtuous and healthy soul and body, and 'musica instrumentalis' - audible music made and used by man. This division of music into categories, devaluing a purely sensual response in favour of the more intellectual insight needed to understand 'musica mundana', was enormously influential throughout the Middle Ages and Renaissance. Such arguments have invariably concluded that the more difficult, but more rewarding, 'true' music can only be understood by an elite.

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3 Ibid., p. 75.
A significant discussion on this point occurs in *Doktor Faustus* between Leverkühn, Schildknapp, Scherdtfeger and Zeitblom in Chapter XXXI. They reflect on the tension between the two audiences, but conclude that despite its natural exclusivity, music’s deepest wish is to enter wider society. Schildknapp puts this down to the desire for deep communion, which is at the heart of the Romantic world view:

> War es Sentimentalität, daß es die Musik . . . mit wachsender Bewußtheit verlangte, aus ihrer Respektsvereinsamung zu treten, Gemeinschaft zu finden, ohne gemein zu werden, und eine Sprache zu reden, die auch der musikalisch Unbelehrte verstand, wie er Wolfsschlucht, Jungfernkrantz, Wagner verstanden hatte?^  

This discussion is given particular urgency because of the complicated stage of development that art has reached at the time of *Doktor Faustus*. Music can appeal easily only to an increasingly specialised elite. The discussion is made poignant by Leverkühn’s obvious personal isolation, and he wistfully predicts a future with: “eine Kunst ohne Leiden, seelisch gesund, unfeierlich, untraurig-zutraulich, eine Kunst mit der Menschheit auf du und du...”^  

Zeitblom privately feels that music’s natural home is with the more elite ‘Publikum’, voicing to himself the fears of banality and at worst, barbarism, that await an art which surrenders itself entirely to the ‘Volk’:

> Eine Kunst, die >ins Volk geht<, die Bedürfnisse der Menge, des kleinen Mannes, des Banausentums zu den ihren macht, gerät ins Elend, und es ihr zur Pflicht zu machen, etwa von Staates wegen; nur eine Kunst zuzulassen, die der kleine Mann versteht, ist schlimmes Banausentum und der Mord des Geistes.  

It is one of many ironies in the novel that the worst artistic and human barbarism is ultimately advocated by the intellectual elite, - a ‘Publikum’ of the deadliest kind.

### 3.2.2 The tension between sensuality and cerebralism

The history of musical aesthetics from ancient Greece to the present day points to two views of the ontology of music, which coexist with some unease. One is of music as a series of sounds that gives pleasure to listeners, and the other is of music as a complex system that lends itself to detached intellectual analysis. Even the deep emotional charge of Schopenhauer’s Romantic descriptions of music is tempered by the realisation that music is not the highest expression of the turbulent Will, but its objectification. Yet whatever the tensions between them, these two views of the nature of music cannot ever seem to exist independently of each other. The characteristics attributed to the ontology of music in *Doktor Faustus* reflect this dualism.

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^Ibid., p. 427.  
^Ibid., p. 429.  
^Ibid., p. 429.
Zeitblom introduces early on the natural appeal of music's sensuality, with the “Stallwärme, Kühwärme” of his early memories of the singing lessons he and Leverkühn had at Buchel with Hanne the stablegirl. The natural sensuality of music is often connected in the novel with the human voice. Elsbeth Leverkühn’s voice, for example, although she never uses it to sing, is full of the promise of a latent musical sensuality, which foreshadows, at the same time, a sensuality in her son to counterbalance his natural coldness, though he rarely gives it free rein.

If sensual enjoyment is an unthinking response to a pleasurable sensation, pure sexuality is this and much more - the total abandonment to the senses and emotions, and the complete suspension of rationality. The overwhelmingly sensual quality of the human voice makes it the instrument most obviously enshrining the sexuality that naturally follows from music’s sensuality. This occurs even in the case of complex unaccompanied polyphony, apparently one of the most cerebral manifestations of music. The prominence of the human voice in this music leads Leverkühn to describe it in an overtly sexual way:


This sensuality can become a dark carnality, which Mann was acutely aware of in all forms of art. The extent to which the artist was required to surrender to darker impulses in order to engage in his art had been an important theme for Mann from Buddenbrooks onwards. This happens most obviously in Der Tod in Venedig, where Eros is the inevitable companion of beauty, and in which abandonment to the sensuality of beauty involves the artist’s transgression, disease and death:

Denn du mußt wissen, daß wir Dichter den Weg der Schönheit nicht gehen können, ohne daß Eros sich zugesellt und sich zum Führer aufwirft . . . unsere Sehnsucht muß Liebe bleiben - das ist unsere Lust und unsere Schande.

In Doktor Faustus, Mann’s concern with art as carnality culminates in the Faustian pact, entered for the sake of music, which he sees as the most dangerous art of all, combining transgression, disease and death in one. The devil’s promise to Leverkühn suggests that the composer who truly encounters music must submit to total abandonment in the embrace of a dangerous, diseased carnality:

Der Künstler ist der Bruder des Verbrechers und des Verrückten... Wir lassen die Lahm- und Schüchternheit, die keuschen Skrupel und Zweifel zum Teufel gehn . . . Wer weiß heute noch . . . was Inspiration, was echte, alte, urtümliche Begeisterung

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7 Ibid., p. 94.
8 Ibid., p. 33.
9 Ibid., p. 95.
10 GW VIII, p. 521-522.
The idea in *Doktor Faustus* of music as dangerous carnality, which places the emphasis firmly on the dark side of spontaneous sensuality, obviously owes much to Nietzsche’s conception of the orgiastic rites of Dionysus as the truest representation of the essence of music. Yet even this abandonment was not free of the duality of the sensual and cerebral, in that it involved a loss of all sense of individuation, and thus, a high level of objectification. Despite his championship of the Dionysian as authentic, Nietzsche was quite clear that the balance between the Dionysian and the sober, formal Apolline was essential:

Dionysus redet die Sprache des Apollo, Apollo aber schließlich die Sprache des Dionysus: womit das höchste Ziel der Tragödie und der Kunst überhaupt erreicht ist.\(^{12}\)

Silk and Stern observe, in their study of Nietzsche’s book, that this balance is not only something imposed by the composer, for example, by adding libretto. Rather, they argue that there is very little music - even the loosest jazz improvisation, which is hardly what Nietzsche had in mind - which is in a state of formless irrationality. Melody and rhythm are inherent in any acoustic pattern, so that “music, however Dionysiac in effect, always embodies an Apolline element” \(^{13}\) The implication is that music in any form is incomplete without both its sensual and cerebral elements, which must, therefore, be a part of music’s ontology or timeless essence.

Nietzsche particularly disliked the modern operatic culture at the time of *Die Geburt der Tragödie*. He felt that it had subordinated music to words, though he did perceive a resurgence of the Dionysian spirit in Wagner’s operas. He admitted, however, that *Tristan und Isolde* could not be humanly borne if it were purely symphonic, without the external trappings of opera, such as libretto. Thus, even if the essence of music is Dionysian abandonment, it would be impossible for man to stand a direct encounter with this absolute or to emerge unscathed, as demonstrated in Mann’s *Walsungenblut*:

Ein Mensch, der wie hier das Ohr gleichsam an die Herzkammer des Weltwillens gelegt hat, der das rasende Begehren zum Dasein als donnernden Strom oder als zartesten zerstäubten Bach von hier aus in alle Adern der Welt sich ergießen fühlt, er sollte nicht jählings zerbrechen?\(^{14}\)

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\(^{11}\) GW VI, p. 315.

\(^{12}\) FNI, *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, p. 120.


\(^{14}\) FNI, op. cit., p. 116.
If the sensual is to the fore, the cerebral is scarcely less important in *Doktor Faustus*. Music’s impulse towards order and rationality reflects Nietzsche’s rational, Apolline aspects of form, and the importance of music as objectification of the Will, the containment of the irrationality it embodies. The idea of music’s order is introduced early on, in Jonathan Leverkühn’s experiments and reading, where music is shown in natural patterns - “Gesichtsakustik” - physical frequencies and in the spheres. The idea is developed in Kretzschmar’s lecture, ‘Die Musik und das Auge’, in which he speaks of music’s self-contemplation and ‘Anti-Sinnlichkeit’, using concepts that clearly owe much to Schopenhauer’s vision of the Will, objectified and contemplating itself. Kretzschmar suggests a pathos in music’s natural sensuality, as it binds music to the world of the senses, almost cheapening it into an erotic thrill. This reduces music to something that is merely appealing, which cannot easily reveal its true ontological depths:

Vielleicht, sagte Kretzschmar, sei es der tiefste Wunsch der Musik, überhaupt nicht gehört, noch selbst gesehen, noch auch gefühlt, sondern, wenn das möglich wäre, in einem Jenseits der Sinne und sogar des Gemütes, im Geistig-Reinen vernommen und angeschaut zu werden. Allein an die Sinneswelt gebunden, müsste sie doch auch wieder nach stärkster, ja berückender Versinnlichung streben, eine Kundry, die nicht wolle, was sie tue, und weiche Arme der Lust um den Nacken des Toren schlinge.

Kretzschmar says that the abstract nature of the piano - a tempered keyboard already bound to rules, and thus unlikely to break out in sensual excess - makes it the best representative of music’s ‘Geistigkeit’. There is certainly something in this, but this connection with objectivity seems convincing if only works such as, for example, Bach’s Goldberg variations are taken into account; inversely, it works less well if Romantic piano music is taken into account, or indeed, the searingly sensual effect of Hanno Buddenbrook’s improvisation.

A major concern in the novel is how the process of using music’s predisposition to natural form can lead to the problematic ‘Schein’. This concept will be explored in more depth in the next section, but seems to arise because of a combination of the essentially artificial nature of form imposed by the composer, and music’s predisposition towards sensual appeal. The element of pure cerebralism in music’s ontology is the only weapon it has at its disposal to fight the shallowness of ‘Schein’. Leverkühn suggests that the urge to surpass ‘Schein’ through knowingness is something for which music itself yearns, as well as the composer:

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15 GW VI, p. 28.
16 Ibid., p. 85.
17 “dann begann ein Aufschwellen, eine langsame, unaufhaltsame Steigerung, ein chromatisches Aufwärtsdringen von wilder, undwiderstehlicher Sehnsucht, jäh unterbrochen durch plötzliche, erschreckende und aufstachelnde Pianissimi, die wie ein Weggleiten des Bodens unter den Füßen und wie ein Versinken in Begierde waren”, GW I, p. 749.
Zeitblom asks "wie will Kunst als Erkenntnis leben?" - all art, even music, needs the duality of the sensuous and the formal in order to survive as art at all. A surfeit of cerebralism will pervert the nature of music as surely as an excess of sensuality will cheapen it. Later even Leverkühn argues during a discussion about Saint-Saëns at Bullinger’s salon that evaluating music by ‘Geist’ alone is inadequate, though he is admittedly temporarily seduced by the intimacy of his relationship with Schwerdtfeger:


The ontology of music in Doktor Faustus thus draws on long-standing forces in musical aesthetics to show an uneasy balance between the two impulses towards subjectivity and objectivity, sensuality and cerebralism, with philosophical roots in the dualities of Schopenhauer’s ‘Wille’ and ‘Vorstellung’, and Nietzsche’s Dionysian and Apolline forces. The next section, 3.3, will show that this balance is at the heart of the way in which compositions can be distinguished from one another, in, for example, the balance between homophony and polyphony. Using the last of these dualities, Leverkühn’s first letter to Zeitblom from Leipzig testifies to the fact that the sensual and cerebral sides of music’s ontology are utterly inseparable:

Überhaupt nun aber und per aversionem ist’s eine Narrheit, die mechanische Trennung von Kontrapunkt und Harmonie, sintemal sie einander so unlöslich durchdringen, daß man nicht jedes für sich, sondern nur das ganze, nämlich Musik lehren kann.®

3.2.3 Lack of stability

Early on in Doktor Faustus, the young Leverkühn discovers that what had appeared to be music’s rigid tonal system is, in fact, wholly contingent. This discovery is crucial for the future course of the novel, as is the fact that he is exhilarated, rather than dismayed, by this discovery. At this stage, music’s lack of stability is simply presented as an ontological property of music. The realisation that it lies at the heart of a contemporary cultural crisis does not come to Leverkühn until later, when it is articulated by the devil. Leverkühn understands music to have no inherent system at all, so that the system of tonality within which composers have operated for centuries draws on music’s predisposition to order, but is

® GW VI, p. 242.
®® Ibid., p. 242.
®®® Ibid., p. 550.
®®®® Ibid., p. 188.

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not itself a binding force. Rather, the tonal system is open to manipulation, and replete with double meaning. Each chord has the meaning the composer chooses to give it, rather than an intrinsic significance:


Despite the theme of ambiguity, however, there is seen to be a strong sense of underlying order in music. Without this underlying order, the enharmonic changes demonstrated by Leverkühn would surely not be worth noting at all. In the eighteenth century, Rameau established the intellectual basis of the tonal system as it is still understood today. He was convinced that the basis of harmony lay in nature, and from this conviction, he established the tonic, dominant and subdominant chords as the foundations of harmony to which all other chords were related. Rameau was able to recognise the continuing identity of a chord through all its inversions, with the major triad at the heart of all else. 23 This is a principle later invoked by the devil. Despite composers’ struggles with the contingency of the tonal system the triad can always be recognised, and may even seem shocking amidst dissonance:

Tonale Klänge, Dreiklänge in einer Komposition mit dem technischen Horizont von heute - überbieten jede Dissonanz. Als solche allenfalls sind sie zu brauchen, - aber behutsam und nur in extremis, denn der Choc ist ärger als früher der bitterste Mißklang. 24

The principle of an underlying order is also made clear when Leverkühn refers to the tempered scale as a “Kompromiß für den Hausgebrauch”, which is inferior to the “richtige Tonleiter”. 25

It seems that it is the sheer complexity of the system, and the possibilities for ambiguity that it offers, which obliterate the stability of its core. The composer, depending on his temperament, can be left feeling either insecure or exhilarated by his encounter with music. It is the deeply cerebral nature of music, most obviously manifested in mathematics, which is seen to underly this ambiguity. Mathematics, like music, depends on the skilled manipulation of its system for its effect, and the subject is presented as Leverkühn’s first step towards his ultimate destiny. The relationship between music and mathematics is another concept as old as musical aesthetics itself. The Pythagoreans based their concept of music’s rootedness in

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22 Ibid., p. 65-66.
24 GW VI, p. 319.
25 Ibid., p. 212-213.
nature almost entirely on the mathematical relations between its sounds, and, as noted in 3.1, were criticised by Plato for what he saw as a too cerebral approach. In the Middle Ages, embodied by Kaisersaschem where Leverkühn first discovers music's ambiguity, the study of music was universally ranked amongst the sciences, as it was thought to be about the study of numbers within musical notes. The words Zeitblom uses to describe mathematics could equally be used of the ontology of music as portrayed in the novel:

Es nimmt ja die Mathese, als angewandte Logik, die sich dennoch im rein und hoch Abstrakten hält, eine eigentümliche Mittelstellung zwischen den humanistischen und den realistischen Wissenschaften ein, und aus den Erläuterungen, die Adrian mir gesprächsweise von dem Vergnügen gab, daß sie ihm bereitete, ging hervor, daß er diese Zwischenstellung zugleich als erhöht, dominierend, universell empfand.^^

Although Leverkühn's admiration for the order in mathematics is significant for his later development as a composer, the relationship of music to mathematics in Doktor Faustus does not merely amount to the affinity of one complex system with another. In concentrating on the highest abstractions of both mathematics and music - on what Kant referred to as "mathematical sublimity" - Doktor Faustus shows that music's inclination to order, as well as its sensuality, has its darker side. It can become an excursion into the irrational and otherworldly domain of a dangerous numerology: "Vernunft und Magie ... begegnen sich wohl und werden eins in dem, was man Weisheit, Einweihung nennt, im Glauben an die Sterne, die Zahlen".27

This ontological characteristic of music allows the initiated, as in mathematics, to create formulae that take ambiguity to almost sinister extremes. Zeitblom describes this as "Studium der Musik, ihres seltsam kabbalistischen, zugleich spielerischen und strengen, in geniösen und tiefssinnigen Handwerks".28 This notion is reflected in the recurring image of the composer as alchemist, an image suggested throughout the novel by Leverkühn's creative environment; his early education at the hands of his father, the 'Spekulierer', his later seclusion, especially in Pfeiffering, akin to a Faustian alchemist figure, and above all, by the magic square which hangs above his piano throughout his creative life.29 In Leverkühn's

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26 Ibid., p. 64.
27 Ibid., p. 259.
28 Ibid., p. 199.
29 The scope for interpreting the structure, events and themes of the novel in the light of the magic square is immense, and a number of scholars, for example Henry Hatfield in 'The Magic Square. Thomas Mann's Doktor Faustus' (1979), and Rosemarie Puschmann, in Magisches Quadrat und Melancholie in Thomas Manns 'Doktor Faustus'. Von der musikalischen Struktur zum semantischen Beziehungsnetz, (1983) have attempted it. It seems most helpful, however, to regard this device as a means of keeping in mind the mysterious or even diabolical potential of music, and the mathematical complexity at its heart. As with Mann's reference to the novel becoming constructivist music (see 3.1), the importance is not so much which of the - occasionally rather far-fetched - interpretations is correct, but the fact that the potential for such an interpretation is there at all, and that the novel offers such
‘Bekenntnissbrief’, he explicitly equates a life devoted to music to a career in alchemy and witchcraft:

Nun, allerdings, die Musik als solche...das hermetische Laboratorium, die Goldküche, die Komposition. Wundervoll! Ihr werdet mich, Freund Albertus Magnus, in die theoretische Geheimlehre einführen.\(^{30}\)

Leverkühn recognises mathematics as a ‘magical’ route to music - testimony to the otherworldly nature of his particular brand of mathematics. The route passes through the superstitious theology that he studies in Halle: “persönlich ist mir obendrein die Musik immer als eine magische Verbindung aus Theologie und der so unterhaltenden Mathematik erschienen”.\(^{31}\)

### 3.2.4 Spiritual capacity

The absolute, other-worldly, quality of music, and its fundamental unintelligibility to man inevitably give it a spiritual resonance. In *Doktor Faustus*, this is presented as a spiritual capacity, rather than an affinity to a specific belief or denomination. Mann himself was careful to differentiate between religion and religiosity, identifying his own creativity with the latter - a thematics of religious experience rather than a particular creed. His position was the same as Zeitblom’s in *Doktor Faustus*: “Religiosität, die ich als keineswegs meinem Herzen fremd betrachte, ist sicherlich etwas anderes als positive und konfessionell gebundene Religion”.\(^{32}\) Holthusen, commenting on the novel, thought this devalued religion: “Wo der Geist Thomas Manns sich den höheren und höchsten Rängen des Seins nähert, wird er seltsam vage und wirklichkeitsscheu”.\(^{33}\) But Leverkühn does have an unshakeable belief in transcendence, even if it is merely the negativity of the devil. The guiding principle behind the non-specific, but very real, spiritual capacity attributed to music in the novel is Schopenhauer’s belief that music, above all the arts, is the one most closely in touch with Being itself.

The fundamental basis of this mysterious connection with the root of all things is the ancient Pythagorean idea that music reflects the proportions of the cosmos. Professor Nonnemacher teaches this belief in the theology course in Halle.\(^{34}\) Leverkühn shows enthusiasm for this idea, probably because of his fondness for the mathematical aspects of music. He later refers

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\(^{30}\) GW VI, p. 177.
\(^{31}\) Ibid., p. 176.
\(^{32}\) Ibid., p. 120.
\(^{34}\) «»Kosmos<<, als Ordnung und Harmonie, als übersinnlich töndendes Intervall-System der Sphären.”, GW VI, p. 126.
to "die Verwandtschaft von Musik und Himmelskunde, wie sie schon durch die kosmische Harmonielehre des Pythagoras bewiesen worden sei". His father's "Experiment der sichtbaren Musik" introduces at an early stage in the novel the idea that music is a series of natural patterns, that is, something organic rather than manmade. Any idea of connection with the natural world is, however, inevitably affected by the view of the natural world to which the individual subscribes. The Leverkühns' world view is inextricably linked to the German Romantic view of nature as something vast and mysterious, and Jonathan Leverkühn's other experiments make clear that man's relationship with nature cannot be comfortable. Nature is seen as an alien world that does not display the same signs of rationality as the human world. Zeitblom sees the indecipherable script on mussel shells as evidence that nature is dangerous and irrational, and that its study takes man into forbidden territory:

Schon damals aber, als Knabe, begriff ich sehr deutlich, daß die außerhumane Natur von Grund aus illiterat ist, was in meinen Augen eben gerade ihre Unheimlichkeit ausmacht. Ja, Vater Leverkühn war ein Spekulierer und Sinnierer... Daß nun gar das Unterfangen, mit der Natur zu laborieren, sie zu Phänomenen zu reizen, sie zu 'versuchen', indem man ihr Wirken durch Experimenen bloßstellt, - daß das alles ganz nahe mit Hexerei zu tun habe, ja schon in ihr Bereich falle und selbst ein Werk des 'Versuchers' sei, war die Überzeugung früherer Epochen: eine respektable Überzeugung, wenn man mich fragt.

E. T. A. Hoffmann, the supreme musical Romantic, had made a similar point by referring to music as "die geheimnisvolle, in Tönen ausgesprochene Sanskritta der Natur". In Doktor Faustus, the parallels between this view of nature and Leverkühn's musical career are made obvious, and underlined by the fact that music itself has already been referred to by Zeitblom at the very beginning of the novel as a separate 'Geisterwelt' thoroughly at odds with his own world of rational humanism. The link is later made even more explicit by Leverkühn's imaginary forays into the hidden depths of the ocean. Zeitblom is unsettled by his fascination with the aspects of nature that are beyond the human mind; those which, like Kant's 'mathematical sublime', cannot be placed within human limits and thereby understood:

Er stürzte sich allerdings in das Unermessliche, das die astrophysische Wissenschaft zu messen sucht, nur um dabei zu Maßen, Zahlen, Größenordnungen zu gelangen, zu denen der Menschengeist gar kein Verhältnis mehr hat, und die sich im Theoretsichen und Abstrakten, im völlig Unsinnlichen, um nicht zu sagen: Unsinnigen verlieren.

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35 Ibid., p. 213.
36 Ibid., p. 28.
37 Ibid., p. 27-28.
39 GW VI, p. 16.
40 Ibid., p. 354.
Kretzschmar’s lecture, ‘Das Elementare in der Musik’, develops the theme of music’s connection with nature by referring to it as part of the primal elements of the world: “...jene Elemente seien gleichsam die ersten und einfachsten Bausteine der Welt”. This suggests a fundamental stability in the essence of music, bringing to the fore the basis of the tonal system in physics - physical properties - despite the inherent instability and ambivalence within which the composer, as Leverkuhn discovers early on, can present it to the world. In summoning up images of a Judaeo-Christian God’s calling of first things into being, this concept also imbues music with a sense of activity and dynamism, the essential characteristics of Schopenhauer’s Will. Leverkuhn later refers to this dynamism in terms that not only sound very like Schopenhauer, but also recall the glorification of activity in the interpretation of St John’s Gospel offered by Goethe’s Faust:

Eine Bekundung höchster Tatkraft - nichts weniger als abstrakt, aber gegenstandslos, einer Tatkraft im Reinen, im klaren Äther . . . Aber hier hast du’s, solche Musik ist die Tatkraft an sich, die Tatkraft selbst, aber nicht als Idee sondern in ihrer Wirklichkeit. Ich gebe dir zu bedenken, daß das beinahe die Definition Gottes ist. Imitatio Dei - mich wundert, daß das nicht verboten ist.

It is worth noting that Leverkuhn makes these remarks in the context of a discussion on Beethoven’s *Eroica* Symphony, with the implication that this symphony reflects the ontology of music more accurately than some other compositions. This in turn implies that the composer’s encounter with the essence of music is the crucial factor in deciding how completely this essence can be reflected to the world: the composer’s role as intermediary, as noted in 3.1, is an extremely important one.

An important element of music’s primal nature is its ability to revisit its earliest origins. Kretzschmar explains that even in the most complex of its developments, music has a strong pull back towards its beginnings. These beginnings are represented in monophony and the triad, and revisiting these simple, primal elements can give rise to astonishing beauty. This self-contemplation of music and its ability to regress in this way is reminiscent not just of Schopenhauer, but the German mystic tradition of Meister Eckhart:


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41 Ibid., p. 87.
42 Ibid., p. 108. Goethe’s Faust’s words are: “Mir hilft der Geist! Auf einmal seh’ ich Rat/Und schreibe getrost: Im Anfang war die Tat!”, Goethe, *Faust*, p. 44. Leverkuhn’s attraction to sublime aspects of nature that man cannot grasp is reminiscent of Faust’s shattering encounter with the Erdgeist. And in both cases, the ultimate encounter with the devil himself is anything but elevating.
43 GW VI, p. 87.
The sense of music as a mass, cultic experience is another important spiritual aspect in the ontology of music. It is central to *Doktor Faustus*, despite the fact that music’s particular manifestations in the modern human world invariably constitute individual cultural phenomena. This concept, too, owes much to Nietzsche. He asserted that it was precisely the unified, mass experience of Greek tragedy that made true artistic expression possible, because it moved beyond the individual, especially through the mass body of the chorus:

Der dithyrambische Chor ist ein Chor von Verwandelten, bei denen ihre bürgerliche Vergangenheit, ihre soziale Stellung völlig vergessen ist: sie sind die zeitlosen, außerhalb aller Gesellschaftssphären lebenden Diener ihres Gottes geworden... Nach dieser Erkenntnis haben wir die griechische Tragödie als den dionysischen Chor zu verstehen, der sich immer von neuem wieder in einer Apollinischen Bilderwelt verwandelt.44

Kretzschmar establishes the idea that music had become far removed from this cultic ideal by the nineteenth century. This is symbolised by the struggle of Beethoven, the great individualist, to write a fugue, seen to epitomise the era of music’s unity with the liturgical, non-individual, experience. Immediately after Kretzschmar’s lecture on this subject, Leverkühn speculates that music’s longing to return to its mass cultic origins has imbued it with a particular seriousness and pathos:

Der Obersekundaner zeigte sich ergriffen von dem Gedanken... daß die Trennung der Kunst vom liturgischen Ganzen... sie mit einer bezuglosen Feierlichkeit, einem absoluten Ernst, einem Leidenspathos belastet habe.45

Although most of the discourse in the novel about music’s spiritual capacity is quite generalised, Mann’s particular understanding of this spirituality does sometimes have definite Lutheran overtones. Zeitblom, the humanist Catholic, states at the outset that the real essence of music is something very far from his own comprehension. He is merely “ein Musensohn im akademischen Sinn des Wortes”.46 Later, Leverkühn writes in his ‘Bekenntnisbrief’ about the way in which theology led him to music:

Sie halten mich für berufen zu dieser Kunst und geben mir zu verstehen, daß der Schritt vom Wege zu ihr nicht gar groß wäre. Mein Luthertum stimmt dem zu, denn es sieht in Theologie und Musik benachbarte, nahe verwandte Sphären.47

In his speech at Pfeiffering, just before his final collapse, Leverkühn specifically dates his artistic pact with the devil from the time he studied theology at Halle:


44 FN1, *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, p. 52.
45 GW VI, p. 82.
46 Ibid., p. 10.
48 Ibid., p. 661.
On one level, Mann uses Lutheranism simply as another way of conveying the inwardness, irrationality and danger of music, as in Deutschland und die Deutschen, where the medieval atmosphere of Lübeck is described in terms that echo the evocation of Kaisersaschem in Doktor Faustus. It is thus not because of any positive virtue that Mann identifies music with Lutheranism, but rather, because “die Musik ist dämonisches Gebiet”. Within Lutheranism, Mann chooses to emphasise Luther’s inwardness, destruction of convention, and belief in the devil. Mann thus expresses his unease about Luther’s Germany, and suggests that that legacy, combined with the irrationality of Romantic decadence, is potentially catastrophic. As Mann’s friend, Ernst Bertram, said of Nietzsche:

Er . . . hat seine protestantisch-christlichen Grundantriebe ins Dionysische hinübergezwungen; die ihm angeborene Luthersprache, Lutherpathos und Lutherzorn dem ‘dionysischen Unhold’ Zarathustra in den Mund gelegt.

Holthusen’s study of Doktor Faustus took Mann to task for this biased portrayal of Luther and medieval belief more generally. It is worth remembering, however, that Mann gradually moderated his critique of Luther towards the end of his life.

The Lutheranism of music in Doktor Faustus, however, goes rather further than this generalised inwardness and irrationality. Two particular characteristics attributed to music in the novel serve to associate it with Lutheranism. The first is music’s sensitivity to sin. It is surely no accident that Leverkühn refers to the crisis of music’s sterility as needing “Erlosung”, or redemption, rather than simply “Losung”, or a solution. The sensitivity to sin is particularly bound up with music’s sensual appeal, and is thus especially highly developed in the area of sexual sin. The young Leverkühn points to music’s somewhat prurient concern about its own natural sensual appeal, and the necessity of its doing penance for it:

Das Gesetz, jedes Gesetz, wirkt erkaltend, und die Musik hat soviel Eigenwärme . . . daß sie allerlei gesetzliche Abkühlung brauchen kann - und auch selber immer danach verlangt hat . . . Die Musik tut immer im voraus geistige Bülse für ihre Versinnlichung.

Although the consciousness of great sin and the inability to redeem oneself can certainly be identified with Lutheranism, there is no evidence that Luther himself found the enjoyment of

49 GW XI, p. 1131.
51 H. E. Holthusen, op. cit., p. 15.
52 At the time of his death in 1955, Mann was planning a drama, provisionally titled Luthers Hochzeit, in which there was more understanding of the complexity of Luther’s character, so that he did not appear in so harsh a light. See Herbert Lehnert, Thomas Mann. Fiktion, Mythos, Religion, (Stuttgart, W. Kohlhammer, 1965), p. 219-223.
53 GW VI, p. 428.
54 Ibid., p. 95.
music to be particularly sinful. On the contrary, it was the Catholics, rather than the Protestant reformers of the sixteenth century, who tended to see music as subordinate to the text. The Catholic view tended to be of music as a sensual temptation to be endured because of the lessons contained in the text. The Protestants saw nothing wrong with enjoying music as an entity in itself, and considered that this could even lift the soul closer to God. Luther himself published a treatise on music in 1538, and his view of music was far more positive than that portrayed in Doktor Faustus, (although, like the novel, it relates it closely to theology) as shown in this extract from a letter commissioning a motet:

Mit dieser Musik hat mein Gott Dich, wie ich glaube, geschmückt und beschenkt... Es besteht kein Zweifel, daß viele Samen guter Tugenden in jenen Seelen sind, die sich der Musik verschreiben... Wir wissen nämlich, daß die Musik den Teufeln ebenfalls verhaftet und unledlich ist. Und ich glaube durchaus, und schäme mich nicht, es zu behaupten, daß nach der Theologie keine Kunst der Musik gleichkommen könnte.\(^5\)

The key is the importance of using music in the service of God rather than the Devil. Mann’s contention several centuries later, steeped in Romanticism and Schopenhauerean pessimism, would be that music did not naturally serve God, and that Luther’s inwardness made him more enslaved to the Devil than he knew. It seems that Calvin was more guarded in his opinions on music than Luther. He certainly seems to have had less faith in its inherent virtue. Though acknowledging the power of music to move the faithful in worship, as a gift from God, Calvin’s foreword to the Geneva Psalter, written in 1543, is full of exhortations to congregations to use it well and wisely, and not frivolously.\(^6\)

The second specifically Lutheran characteristic present in the essence of music is to be found in its difficult striving for expression, the problem central to Doktor Faustus, and discussed in the first section of this chapter. The possibility of salvation through constant striving was of course open to Goethe’s Faust, at the end of Part II, when it is declared: “Wer immer strebend sich bemüht/Den können wir erlöszen”.\(^7\) Salvation through striving, and the anguish of many sins is also an important concept for Mann’s Faust. Leverkühn places in his striving whatever faint hope he has of salvation - and in his case, ‘das Schwere’ is an almost total immersion in music’s ontological struggle for ‘Durchbruch’:

Vielleicht auch siehet Gott an, daß ich das Schwere gesucht und mir’s habe sauer werden lassen, vielleicht, vielleicht wird mir’s angerechnet und zugute gehalten sein,

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\(^{7}\) Goethe, Faust, p. 359. 

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J. P. Stern has criticised Mann's identification of Leverkühn's words with Christian salvation as a misreading of Luther. Nonetheless, it is crucial to the relationship that the novel draws between music and history, for as J. P. Stern himself has vividly shown, the idea of strenuousness and sacrifice, the pursuit of 'das Schwere' is a dark and pervasive strand in the history of modern Germany.

58 GW VI, p. 666.
3.3 The manifestation of music’s ontology in specific compositions

3.3.1 The struggle for ‘Durchbuch’

The composition is the form in which music enters the human world, and thus its means of attaining the outward expression, the ‘Durchbruch’, for which it strives. Compositions enable the timeless ontology of music to take on a specific, timebound form. Doktor Faustus not only presents the timeless ontology of music, but also gives examples of the means by which different composers give this ontology specific historical expression. Much of this is expressed in terms of Leverkühn’s musical education and development, allowing the reader to gain a general impression of the ways in which the ontology of music is translated into individual compositions before depicting Leverkühn’s own compositions, at the problematic historical period in which he finds himself.

The novel shows that the composer’s task is supremely problematic. Expression is not achieved with ease but, as noted in 3.2, is seen as something to strive for. The directness of the expression attained by Renaissance composers, such as Schütz, Carissimi, and particularly Monteverdi, makes a deep impression on Leverkühn when he visits a baroque festival in Basel with Kretzschmar:

Der Eindruck dieser ‘Musica riservata’ auf Leverkühn . . . die . . . das Bibelwort mit erstaunlicher menschlicher Freiheit, deklamatorischer Ausdruckskühnheit behandelte und es mit einer rücksichtslos schüdemden instrumentalen Gestik umkleidete, - . . . war sehr stark und nachhaltig.¹

The music of Monteverdi marks a key point in the history of musical expression. There was a dispute between Monteverdi and his contemporary, Artusi,² who accused him of disregarding the rules of polyphony, and subordinating every other consideration to the pursuit of expression. This “hervorbrechende Modernität”³ of Monteverdi’s music makes him an entirely opposite role model for Leverkühn, who later echoes his declamatory style in his own compositions.

Beethoven is, as noted in 3.1, probably the key composer in Doktor Faustus, more important for its musicological content than even Wagner. Leverkühn uses Beethoven’s music to begin

¹ GW VI, p. 237.
² Giovanni Maria Artusi’s treatise, L’Artusi, ovvero delle imperfettioni della moderna musica, published in Venice around 1600, was not simply an attack on Monteverdi himself, but a musicological study defending polyphonic practice in general. See E. Fubini, The History of Music Aesthetics, p. 125-142 for a discussion of this dispute in its historical context.
³ GW VI, p. 237.
to explore the relationship between music and words, which is part of music’s ontology of ‘Durchbruch’, indeed, they naturally strive towards one another. He relates an anecdote about Beethoven writing words in his notebook, but saying that he was nonetheless composing. Leverkühn asserts that this ontological characteristic of music allows composers to use words to mould the work of art:

Der künstlerische Gedanke, meinte er, bilde wohl überhaupt eine eigene und einzige geistige Kategorie, aber schwerlich werde je der erste Entwurf zu einem Bilde, einer Statue in Worten bestanden haben, - was für die besondere Zusammengehörigkeit von Musik und Sprache zeuge.¹

Beethoven’s ninth symphony has an all-important role to play in the novel. It is revoked in Leverkühn’s great work, Dr Fausti Weheklag, in which he supposedly achieves his final ‘Durchbruch’. The revocation turns on the relationship between music and words. In Beethoven’s symphony, the music bursts forth into words at the culmination of the work. In Leverkühn’s composition, however, the chorus gives way to an orchestral adagio. This revocation is made almost unbearably poignant not just by the death of Leverkühn’s nephew, Echo, but because the Ode an die Freude has so many connotations for the German nation, and was the obvious choice for the concerts at Christmas 1989 celebrating the demolition of the Berlin Wall. Leverkühn’s emphatic statement about taking back the symphony - “Es soll nicht sein”⁵ - could itself be a play on the relationship of words and music. In the last movement of Beethoven’s last quartet, No. 16 in F major, Op. 135, entitled “Der schwer gefasste Entschluss”, the opening phrase of the movement asks “Muß es sein?”, and the notes of the main body of the movement reply “Es muß sein”.⁶

The composer is shown in Doktor Faustus to be both an ally and an enemy of music in helping it to display the ontological quality of natural beauty that is central to its struggle for ‘Durchbruch’ to expression. Music’s eagerness to attain this beauty, which it expects to awaken a human response in its listeners, combined with its problematic dual nature of sensuality and cerebralism, leads to the problem of ‘Schein’. This is the problem that causes the crisis of composition faced by Leverkühn. Certain compositions may give the impression of communicating the true ontological quality of beauty in music, and affect audiences deeply. This apparently natural beauty is, however, actually man-made ‘Schein’, achieved

¹ Ibid., p. 218.
⁵ Ibid., p. 634.
⁶ The original intent of these words was almost certainly not as grave as it appears here. It seems that Beethoven first noted the phrases as a humorous response to a rich amateur musician who had failed to pay the composer for a performance. See Daniel G. Mason, The Quartets of Beethoven, (New York, Oxford University Press, 1947), p. 271. In a speech to the Reichstag shortly before his assassination in 1922, Walter Rathenau used the quartet to urge the Germans to pay reparations to the Allies. See D. B. Dennis, Beethoven in German Politics, p. 105-106.
through the expert craftsmanship of the composer. This means that most compositions are more properly regarded as finite, historical phenomena, rather than genuine expressions of the timeless ontology of music. Mann thus reveals the composer as the latest in his line of artistic confidence-tricksters - someone who allows the musical composition to pretend that it is something it is not: "Es hat den Ehrgeiz, glauben zu machen, daß es nicht gemacht, sondern entstanden und entsprung sei".\(^7\)

In his Adorno guise, the devil makes clear that the difficulty with 'Schein' is not due to specific historical circumstances. Leverkühn’s problem is nothing new, but the culmination of centuries of the same composing difficulty. ‘Schein’ arises because of tensions of form and content that are always bound to materialise in a composition:

> Wie sollte ich nicht einiges Vergnügen finden, an der Unpaßlichkeit, von der die Idee des musikalischen Werkes befallen ist! Schiebe sie nicht auf gesellschaftliche Zustände! . . . Die prohibitiven Schwierigkeiten des Werks liegen tief in ihm selbst.\(^8\)

Kretzschmar had already confirmed, in response to Leverkühn’s ‘Bekenntnisbrief’, that the crisis of ‘Schein’ he perceived was a universal problem, though it appeared to Leverkühn to be his own subjective opinion:

> Das vitale Bedürfnis der Kunst nach revolutionärem Fortschritt und nach dem Zustandekommen des Neuen ist angewiesen auf das Vehikel stärksten subjektiven Gefüls für die Abgestandenheit, das Nichts-mehr-zu-sagen-Haben . . . ich sage: der Lebens- und Fortschrittswille der Kunst nimmt die Maske dieser mattherzigen persönlichen Eigenschaften vor, um sich darin zu manifestieren, zu objektivieren, zu erfüllen.\(^9\)

Kretzschmar’s letter responds to Leverkühn’s description of the artifice of ‘Schein’, which he pejoratively terms the ‘Ahl-Wirkung’, summoning up visions of Mahler, Wagner, and Richard Strauss in his description of: “so geht es zu, wenn es schon ist”. The late Romantic composers, in an age of decadence, are seen to appeal particularly to the sensual aspects of music in their bid for effect. The composer uses a formula that he knows will not fail to evoke a response in the audience, even though some may see through the apparent spontaneity to the skill which creates the effect: “Kann man mit mehr Genie das Hergebrachte benutzen, die Kniffe weihen? Kann man mit gewiegeterem Gefühl das Schöne erzielen?”\(^10\). Mann himself was only too well aware of his weakness for this kind of practised effect, both believing that ‘Schein’ should be intellectually rejected, and yet being wholly seduced by it. In the 1940s, he both denounced Wagner’s music in a letter to the journal *Common Sense*, and noted in his diary that he was moved to tears by the prelude to

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\(^7\) GW VI, p. 241.
\(^8\) Ibid., p. 320.
\(^9\) Ibid., p. 181.
\(^10\) This and the previous quotation, ibid. p. 179.
Lohengrin. Mann recognised the skill of the composer, and claimed in the Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen that it was Wagner who taught him how to create apparently effortless artistic effect in general. 12 Though most members of an audience, unlike Leverkühn, will still be able to respond to the sound of ‘Schein’, the novel rejects any suggestion that this ‘Schein’ could be accepted as a genuine revelation of the ontology of music.

Leverkühn’s insight into the artifice of ‘Schein’ sets him on the path to the abandonment of tonality. In reality, however, the Second Viennese School would have been unthinkable without the legacy of the late Romantics, who themselves began the abandonment of the principles of tonality. There is a clear relationship between the two. One anecdote relates that when Schoenberg submitted Verklärte Nacht (Op. 4, 1899) to a committee of the Tonkünstlerverein in Vienna, one member, looking at the score, thought that it would sound “as if someone had smeared the score of Tristan while the ink was still wet”. 13 Patrick Carnegy asserts that Mann does not attempt in Doktor Faustus to construct the bridge between composers like Wagner and Mahler to atonality, but simply takes as his starting point an assertion that tonality is exhausted. 14 The break is, however, not quite as clear as all that. Mann is certainly likely to have had at the back of his mind the idea that late nineteenth century chromaticism prefigured the coming of atonality, and Matthias Schulze notes that the young Leverkühn’s improvisations in his uncle’s workshop are the early starting point for his invention of the twelve tone system. 15 Following a visit to the Schoenbergs, Mann noted the composer’s reverence for Wagner:

Es ist merkwürdig, wieviel Sinn und Pietät, ja Liebe diese Neutöner für das Alte, die ganze Welt der Harmonie und sogar der Romantik sich bewahren. Über Wagner ging das Gespräch mit großer Wärme. 16

There is one instance when Leverkühn acknowledges a link with the past, describing his technique as “das Absolutwerden der Dissonanz, wie es sich schon an manchen Stellen des späten Wagner-Satzes findet”. 17 In his letter to Zeitblom from Leipzig, he identifies Chopin’s ironic relationship to tonality as even anticipating Wagner. 18 And like Schoenberg,

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14 P. Carnegy, Faust as Musician, p. 44.
15 M. Schulze, Die Musik als zeitgeschichtliches Paradigma, p. 162.
17 GW VI, p. 258.
18 Ibid., p. 192.
who took many elements of Mahler's music into his own work, Leverkühn's early Lieder, in particular, are compared to Mahler: "Es war, der musikalischen Stunde nach und nach den Jahren des Adepten, fast unvermeidlich, daß hier und dort der Einfluß Gustav Mahlers spürbar war."  

The falsehood of 'Schein' is in part the unavoidable Apolline element of art that stands between the audience and the Dionysian reality of pure music, which would probably be too much to bear if it were not mediated in this way. Nietzsche certainly saw this illusion as part of art's greatness: "das Scheinende" of Apolline form was an honest deception, essential to the power of art, in that it allowed for the release of otherwise difficult feeling, perhaps most easily understood through the practice of wearing masks to perform Greek tragedy. Nietzsche believed that man should be grateful for the protection of this 'Schein'. Adorno suggested that the illusion of form was a longstanding one:

Since the beginning of the bourgeois era, all great music has found its pleasure in presenting this unity as unbroken and the conventional general uniformity, to which it is subjected, to justify itself out of its own individuality.

For Adorno, the easy appeal of music was always a stumbling block, when set in the historical context in which it had power over the responses of the people. 'Schein' certainly makes an even sharper distinction between the initiated, relatively small 'Publikum', who have insight into the true nature of music, and the mass audience of the 'Volk'. The latter are most likely to respond easily to 'Schein', the former to be troubled by it. Nietzsche observed that wide popular success was most likely to come from an excess (presumably more than the proper Apolline balance) of 'Schein': "der Massen-Erfolg ist nicht mehr auf Seite der Echten, man muß Schauspieler sein, ihn zu haben".

When this division between 'Publikum' and 'Volk' is applied to specific compositions, it leads to the notion of good and bad taste. It is often considered 'bad taste' to appreciate what the masses enjoy, even if there is a virtue seen in bringing music to a wider audience. In Doktor Faustus, mass appeal is identified with the Romantics, who are said to have emancipated music:

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20 GW VI, p. 215.
22 TWA GS 12, p. 45.
23 FN2, Der Fall Wagner, p. 925.
Adorno acknowledged this, but did not preclude the possibility that music could be appreciated on two levels. His remarks in *Philosophie der neuen Musik* about public appreciation of Beethoven suggest that whilst ‘Schein’ is an element of all musical compositions, the truly great may, even with ‘Schein’, yet reach the heart of music. Most of their listeners, however, will not fully understand this:

> Dabei ist die Meinung, Beethoven sei verständlich, und Schönberg unverständlich, objektiv Trug . . . In Wahrheit verlangt das adäquate Hören derselben Stücke Beethovens, deren Themen der Mann in der Untergrundbahn vor sich hin pfeift, weit größere Anstrengung noch als der avanciertesten Musik: den Lack von falscher Darbietung und festgefahrenen Reaktionsweisen herunterzuschlagen.25

Mann himself wanted to appeal to audiences on both levels. He clearly cherished approbation by literary initiates, but also craved appreciation from the public at large. Writing to Hermann Hesse in 1910, referring to the recent publication of *Königliche Hoheit* the year before, he said:


*Doktor Faustus*, however, focuses strongly on the idea that since the ontology of music is inherently complex and inaccessible, a work that communicates easily with the wider public must be of a lower quality than something more esoteric. This stance is summed up early on in the young Leverkuhn’s terse remark when discussing Beethoven’s *Eroica* symphony: “das Wort Schönheit war mir immer halb widerwärtig, es hat so ein dummes Gesicht”.27 When Leverkuhn later develops his thinking about the status of the musical work, he is set to avoid anything that is immediately accessible to the ‘Volk’, also making clear that such a feat would be difficult to sustain throughout a whole work:

> Das Werk! Es ist Trug. *Es ist etwas, wovon der Bürger möchte, es gäbe das noch*. Es ist gegen die Wahrheit und gegen den Ernst. Echt und ernst ist allein das ganz Kurze, der höchst konsistente musikalische Augenblick.28

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24 GW VI, p. 191.
25 TWA OS 12, p. 18.
27 GW VI, p. 108.
28 Ibid., p. 241, with my italics. The “musical moment” has probably never been so short as in Anton Webern’s *6 Pieces for Orchestra*, Op. 6, and *4 Pieces for Violin and Piano*, Op. 7. Both were published in 1909-10, and most of the pieces are too short for any thematic development at all. The fourth of the pieces for orchestra has only six bars. Adorno wrote that: “Keine Werke könnten größere Dichte und Konsistenz der Formgestalt bewahren als Schönbergs und Weberns kürzeste Sätze. Ihre Kürze rührt gerade vom Anspruch höchster Konsistenz her”, TWA GS 12, p. 43.
In a more relaxed mood, during his relationship with Schwerdtfeger, Leverkühn tempers this harsh view with the remark that questions of taste are treated especially harshly in music. It is a difficult area, because of the fact that easy appeal in compositions is often an inevitable consequence of music's natural sensuality:

Im übrigen kann man wohl eine Gefahr für die Kultur darin sehen, wenn der Geist vor dem Gemein-Sinnlichen ein Auge zudrückt oder gar damit blinzelt... Alles wofür ich eine Lanze brechen möchte, ist eine gewisse Großzügigkeit in Dingen künstlerischer Moralität. Man gewährt sie, oder gönnt sie sich, wie mir scheint, in anderen Künsten bereitwilliger als in der Musik. ²⁹

These notions of taste in Doktor Faustus stem from far more than aesthetic snobbery. Whatever the dangers of Leverkühn's high intellectualism and isolation, an understanding of the opposite dangers of the lowest aesthetic common denominator is an essential part of the rationale for his actions. The need for the creative artist to preserve truth in his work was at the heart of Adorno's concern for contemporary culture. On the one hand, this meant protecting the artist's work from the commercialising effects of mass conformism, as explored in his extensive work on the 'Kultur-Industrie'. On the other hand, it meant having the insight to recognise the impossibility of an appealing work of genuine art in contemporary society, seeing beyond the Apolline exterior to the unrest, even the horror, which Nietzsche had known always lurked beneath. One measure of this insight will be the degree of comfort or otherwise that music creates in its listeners. It is difficult to imagine, for example, that a work creating a warm glow of comfort in its listeners in Germany in the 1930s was a great accomplishment of artistic integrity. Adorno made a similar point about the relationship of musical compositions with their context in his Einleitung in die Musiksoziologie, more than a decade after the publication of Doktor Faustus:

In jeglicher Musik, und zwar weniger in der Sprache, die sie redet, als in ihrer inwendigen strukturellen Zusammenhang, [erscheint] die antagonistische Gesellschaft als Ganze. Ein Kriterium der Wahrheit von Musik ist, ob sie den Antagonismus, der auch in ihr Verhältnis zu den Hörem hineintritt, zuschminkt und dadurch nur in um so hoffnungslosere ästhetische Widersprüche gerät, oder ob sie durchs eigene Gefüge der Erfahrung des Antagonismus sich stellt. ³⁰

A piece of dialogue from Anthony Burgess's novel, Mozart and the Wolf Gang, illustrates vividly the unease and guilt of the conscientious listener who nonetheless prefers and enjoys a form of musical composition which he knows deep down to be inconsistent with the age in which it is listened to.

So we feel guilt in returning to the music of Mozart, in which the integrity of society seems to be symbolised. We feel guilty about the diatonic scale, the plain confident

²⁹ GW VI, p. 550.
³⁰ TWA GS 14, p. 251.
do, re, mi' of an age of assurance. We feel guilty about accepting the
Schoenbergian postulate with our minds but rejecting it with our hearts and senses.\footnote{31}

3.3.2 The tension between sensuality and cerebralism

It is clear in \textit{Doktor Faustus} that a key challenge facing the musician who seeks to translate
the ontology of music into specific compositions is the need to reach an equilibrium in the
tension between sensuality and cerebralism that will facilitate satisfactory musical expression.
For the composer, the process of artistic creation is a constant battle of balancing these two
ontological properties within a given set of historical circumstances. Nietzsche had seen that
only when the Apolline forces perfectly balanced the Dionysian, could Greek tragedy be fully
expressed and understood:

Jetzt spricht, von der Szene aus, die Deutlichkeit und Festigkeit der epischen
Gestaltung zu ihm, jetzt redet Dionysus nicht mehr durch Kräfte, sondern als epischer
Held, fast mit der Sprache Homers.\footnote{32}

There are obvious echoes of this need for balance in the twin characters of the humanist
Zeitblom and the intellectual Leverkühn. Peter Pütz has emphasised the importance of a
combination of both aesthetics and ideas, or passion and distance, similar to the balance
between sensuality and cerebralism, to Mann's work and the successful work of art in
general.\footnote{33}

A number of the musical examples in \textit{Doktor Faustus} that form part of Leverkühn's
education turn on this balance. They show how the cerebral or formal aspects of music can
never quite cancel out the sensual, and vice versa. The sensual tends to be represented by
homophonic harmony and subjectivity, and the cerebral by polyphony and objectivity. It is
Kretzschmar, in his lecture on Beethoven's piano sonata Op. 111, who first introduces into
the novel the notion of "harmonische Subjektivität, polyphonische Sachlichkeit".\footnote{34} The
chord, as the basic musical building block, is found to contain the essential dichotomy within
itself. Leverkühn later states that it is at once both polyphonic and harmonic: "Der Akkord
ist kein harmonisches Genußmittel, sondern er ist Polyphonie in sich selbst, und die Töne, die
ihn bilden, sind Stimmen".\footnote{35}

\footnote{32} FN1, \textit{Die Geburt der Tragödie}, p. 55.
\footnote{33} Peter Pütz, \textit{Kunst und Künstlerexistenz bei Nietzsche und Thomas Mann. Zum Problem des
\footnote{34} GW VI, p. 73.
\footnote{35} Ibid., p. 102.
Doktor Faustus contains a number of examples of composers seeking to achieve this balance of subjectivity and objectivity in practical ways in their work. When explaining his serialism to Zeitblom, for example, Leverkuhn mentions the particular combination of subjectivity and objectivity employed by Beethoven and Brahms. These composers, he says, used the development section of sonata form, within the strict constraints that the form implied, to give free rein to their own invention:

Die Durchführung war ein kleiner Teil der Sonate gewesen, eine bescheidene Freistatt subjektiver Beleuchtung und Dynamik. Mit Beethoven wird sie universell, wird zum Zentrum der gesamten Form, die, auch wo sie als Konvention vorgegeben bleibt, vom Subjektiven absorbiert und in Freiheit neu erzeugt wird.\(^{36}\)

The point at which, with Beethoven, this section becomes the central statement of the composition is a crucial point in the transition from Classicism to Romanticism. In turn, this becomes the objectivity of a new form. Leverkuhn says of Brahms:

Nimm ihn als Beispiel dafür, wie Subjektivität in Objektivität sich wandelt! Bei ihm entäußert sich die Musik aller konventionellen Floskeln, Formeln und Rückstände und erzeugt sozusagen die Einheit des Werks jeden Augenblick neu, aus Freiheit.\(^{37}\)

Although the extreme individualism was not always immediately obvious to their audiences because of the familiar tonality used by Beethoven and Brahms, their freedom within a given form has an obvious relationship with the technique that Leverkuhn develops. It also points to the principle that music cannot survive in a subjective state alone, but needs objective form to sustain the all-important balance.

One simple example in Doktor Faustus of the balance of sensuality and cerebralism in compositions is the combination of the supremely sensual human voice with rigid or complex formal structures. In his lecture, 'Das Elementare in der Musik', Kretzschmar explains that although Johann Conrad Beißel’s hymns were composed according to his strict system of 'Herren- und Dienertöne', the objectivity this system imposed was counterbalanced by the unaccompanied falsetto voices which sang the hymns. In his subsequent conversation with Zeitblom, Leverkuhn comments on the similar counterbalance between the complexity of Dutch polyphony and the sensual appeal of the human voices singing it:

Darin war Vater Beißel sehr echt... Die alten Niederländer haben ihr zu Gottes Ehren die vertracktesten Kunststücke auferlegt, und es ging hart auf hart dabei her nach allem, was man hört, höchst unsinnlich und rein rechnerisch ausgeklügelt. Aber dann haben sie diese Bußübungen singen lassen.\(^{38}\)

The persistence of the dualism of sensuality and cerebralism in music is emphasised in the novel by the realisation that one can surface even where the other appears to be in the

\(^{36}\) Ibid., p. 254.  
\(^{37}\) Ibid., p. 254.  
\(^{38}\) Ibid., p. 95.
ascendant. Every composer is found to show this in his own way, even Bach, at first sight one of the strictest polyphonists. Following one of his musical history lessons with Kretzschmar, the young Leverkühn discusses with Zeitblom his view that even in compositions by Bach, the individual voices of the counterpoint - however masterly its execution - were not truly individual, but actually formed harmony. He states that this reflects the inverse of the proposition that a harmonic chord is really polyphonic (i.e. made up of separate notes). From whichever direction it is approached, the balance between the sensual and the cerebral elements of music is seen as a necessary preoccupation for any composer:


Although most of the discussion in Doktor Faustus is about the balance between sensuality and cerebralism in specific compositions, there is also some attention to be paid to the extremes of each of these, and how they are manifested in compositions. A particular preoccupation with compositions that demonstrate music’s dangerous carnality - the extreme of its sensual side - was only to be expected in the light of Mann’s previous works. In Doktor Faustus the Wagnerian intoxication and sickness unto death is demystified to some extent by Leverkühn’s dissection of the ‘Ah-Wirkung’. This means that although the decadence may give a taste of the dangerous carnality at the heart of music, such compositions are in essence a historical effect achieved by the composer, rather than an encounter with the ontology of music itself. At the same time, the awareness that this is a calculated assault on civilised feeling rather than an unstoppable outpouring of the essence of music does give the decadent carnality an even more sinister edge. Even so, unlike his fictional composer, Mann’s ability to see through the artifice of this particular ‘Schein’ did not mean that he was unaffected by it. He wrote to Bruno Walter in 1945: “Ich bin . . . von Kopf bis Fuß auf romantischen Kitsch eingestellt, und bei einem recht schönen verminderten Septimakkord gehen mir immer noch die Augen über”.

Taken as a whole, the novel is supremely evocative of the dark side of music, which Mann detected in Wagner especially. Leverkühn’s insight into the ‘Schein’ of late Romanticism, coupled with his voluntary surrender to the dark carnality at the heart of his pact with the

39 Ibid., p. 105.
devil - a veritable ‘Liebestod’ - make him the most dangerous of Hanno Buddenbrook’s spiritual heirs. Wagner’s deeper influence is as strong as ever in this novel, even though explicit references to Wagner as composer in *Doktor Faustus* are not nearly as prominent as those to Beethoven.\(^4\)

*Doktor Faustus* reminds the reader that compositions are visual as well as aural experiences; they can be read as musical scores, not only heard when performed. Their visual manifestation lends itself to showing an extreme of music’s cerebralism. In his lecture, ‘Die Musik und das Auge’, Kretzschmar states that music is not just the purely sensual phenomenon of its sound, but that its ‘Anti-Sinnlichkeit’ is manifested in compositions through the visual spectacle of notation. He asserts that musical cognoscenti can judge the quality of a composition simply by looking at the score:

Andererseits schilderte er uns den entzückenden Genuß, den schon das optische Bild einer Partitur von Mozart dem geübten Auge gewähre, die Klarheit der Disposition, die schöne Verteilung der Instrumentengruppen, die geistreich wandlungsvolle Führung der melodischen Linie. Ein Tauber, rief er aus, ganz unerfahren im Klange, müßte seine Freude an diesen holden Gesichten haben.\(^4\)

The point is further illustrated through the visual in-jokes inserted into compositions by Lassus and Burck, which Zeitblom, harking back to the most ancient mathematical interpretations of music, terms “pythagoräisch”. The implication of Kretzschmar’s lecture is not that these devices are simply imposed on music by the composer, but rather, that by exploiting the visual aspects of a composition, the composer is allowing music to express the cerebral aspects of its ontology, rather than simply succumbing to the temptation of wallowing in its sensual appeal. As an opposing force to the Romanticism of Wagner, the cerebral appeal that is possible in musical composition is a form of the ‘Musikalisch-Schönen’ praised by Eduard Hanslick. Hanslick was probably Wagner’s fiercest critic, deeming the intellect as important as the emotions in the contemplation of the musical work:

Freilich ist die Phantasie gegenüber dem Schönen nicht bloß ein *Schauen*, sondern ein Schauen mit *Verstand* . . . Die Phantasie ist dabei keineswegs ein abgeschlossenes Gebiet: so wie sie ihren Lebensfunken aus den Sinnesempfindungen zog, sendet sie wiederum ihre Radian schnell an die Tätigkeit des Verstandes und des Gefühls aus.\(^4\)


\(^4\) G. Bergsten counts only nine references to Wagner in the novel as compared with ten to Bach and nineteen to Beethoven. See G. Bergsten, ‘Musical Symbolism in Thomas Mann’s *Doktor Faustus*’, p. 208. Given Wagner’s aim of uniting all the arts in the ‘Gesamtkunstwerk’, it is perhaps also noteworthy that it is not he, but Beethoven, whom Mann uses to show the way in which music and words strive towards one another in the musical composition, except that Beethoven was Wagner's main influence, as is made clear in his key essay on the Gesamtkunstwerk, *Oper und Drama* (1851). See Richard Wagner, *Mein Denken. Eine Auswahl der Schriften*, edited by Martin Gregor-Dellin, (Munich, R. Piper & Co., 1982) especially p. 238-240.

\(^4\) GW VI, p. 84.

3.3.3 Lack of stability

In *Doktor Faustus*, the single most important factor determining the shape of musical history, i.e. the development of different forms of musical composition over time, appears to be the way in which composers are obliged to grapple with the inherent instability of music’s tonal system. The ontology of music does not make any of this easy for them. In the *Entstehung*, Mann attributed this analysis almost entirely to Adorno.\(^{45}\) Certainly, much of what the devil has to say, in his Adorno guise, about the implications for the composer of the instability of the tonal system is taken almost verbatim from *Philosophie der neuen Musik*.\(^{46}\) The nature of the tonal system means that composition is not a serenely creative activity, but the solution of one technical problem after another, in the cause of the battle against the exhaustion of tonality itself. The devil sums up the difficulty of composition with his assertion that “Das Komponieren selbst ist zu schwer geworden, verzweifelt schwer . . . Kunst wird Kritik.”\(^{47}\)

The view that at least some sort of absolute remains is borne out by scientific studies of acoustic perception which, many centuries after the Pythagoreans, have asserted that certain sounds in music occur in nature, so that the human ear is, for example, predisposed towards the major scale.\(^{48}\) The devil conjures up the image of the composer striving towards this apparent stability almost as if towards a mirage, attempting to cling to whatever objectivity he can find: “Wir haben da einen Anspruch von Richtigkeit, den das Gebild an den Künstler stellt - ein wenig streng, was meinst du?”\(^{49}\)

Through Leverkühn’s musical education, the reader is shown that the composer’s battle with the tonal system is not a uniquely modern problem. Kretzschmar exposes Leverkühn to the development of musical form from its earliest times and through all its significant stages. Kretzschmar is very keen to demonstrate the connections between composers, and to show that similar struggles are faced by different composers at the same time. Mann seems to take the view that each composition is an individual solution to a set of problems, and that contemporaneous works must be related because they spring to life in this common context. The similarities of these problems and their solutions create a coherent musical history:

Abspringend und nebeneinanderstellend, kam er von Hundertsten ins Tausendste ... besonders, weil es seine Passion war, zu vergleichen, Beziehungen aufzudecken, Einflüsse nachzuweisen, den verschränkten Zusammenhang der Kultur bloßzulegen . . . Zu zeigen, wie bloße Zeitgenossenschaft Wechselbeziehungen herstellt zwischen

\(^{45}\) GW XI, p. 174.
\(^{46}\) For a more detailed comparison of the two texts, see G. Bergsten, op. cit., p. 99-101.
\(^{47}\) GW VI, p. 318-319.
\(^{48}\) For example, both Heinrich von Helmholtz, in *Die Lehre von den Tonempfindungen also physiologische Grundlage für die Theorie der Musik* (1863), and a century later, Deryck Cooke, in *The Language of Music* (1959). See E. Fubini, op. cit., p. 359 & 393.
\(^{49}\) GW VI, p. 319.
so verschiedenen Naturen wie Tschaikowski und Brahms, gehörte auch zu diesen Lehrrunterhaltungen.\textsuperscript{50}

One important consequence of the fact that each composition is a free-standing (albeit historically relevant) solution, is that no one solution is an enduring expression of music’s ontological nature. It must eventually give way to another solution, and thus, musical conventions are precisely that - particular historical conventions stemming from the composer, which can never be fixed, as Leverkühn explains in his exposition of serialism:

Die heute zerstörten musikalischen Konventionen waren nicht allezeit gar so objektiv, so außerlich auferlegt. Sie waren Verfestigungen lebendiger Erfahrungen.\textsuperscript{51}

The transitions between different kinds of solutions are seen in the novel to be painful and difficult. A composer like Beethoven, who comes late in a particular era, and makes possible the transition to the next, has the hardest task of all. This notion, again, comes from Adorno, who stated in \textit{Spästit Beethovens}: “In der Geschichte von Kunst sind Spätwerke die Katastrophen”.\textsuperscript{52} As noted above, the crucial transition depicted in \textit{Doktor Faustus} is that between Classicism and Romanticism. The Beethoven compositions that Mann uses, as musical examples under Adorno’s influence - principally the late piano sonatas and string quartets, the ninth symphony and the \textit{Missa Solemnis} - are all from his final period.

Beethoven is seen as the tragic genius opening the way to the new world of Romantic individualism in music, just as Leverkühn is the tragic genius presiding over the demise of tonality. Kretzschmar’s lecture on Beethoven’s piano sonata Opus 111 describes the increasingly involved developments of the Arietta theme in the second movement as the heart-rending, dying farewell of sonata form:

Es ist wie ein schmerzlich liebevolles Streichen über das Haar, über die Wange, ein stiller, tiefer Blick ins Auge zum letzten Mal. Es segnet das Objekt, die furchtbar, umgetriebene Formung mit überwältigender Vermenschlichung, legt sie dem Hö rer zum Abschied, zum ewigen Abschied so sanft ans Herz, daß ihm die Augen übergehen.\textsuperscript{53}

Equally painful is Beethoven’s struggle to write a fugue for his \textit{Missa Solemnis}. The fugue is seen as representing a stage of music’s development that it has now outgrown. Kretzschmar says the composer’s appearance is “als komme er aus einem Kampf auf Leben und Tod mit allen feindlichen Geistern des Kontrapunkts.”\textsuperscript{54}

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., p. 104.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., p. 254.
\textsuperscript{52} TWA GS 17, p. 17.
\textsuperscript{53} GW VI, p. 76.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., p. 81.
As already noted, Adorno was particularly preoccupied with the sociological effect of culture. In *Doktor Faustus*, the reaction of an audience to particular compositions reinforces the sense of the composition as an historical phenomenon rather than a permanent representation of the ontology of music. For example, the lack of a fixed system in music means that there are no absolute standards of consonance or dissonance. Rather, the acceptability of a given chord depends on whether this particular manifestation of music is acceptable to the ear at that time. The devil observes that the composer never has the full harmonic series at his disposal. The diminished seventh interval, for example, will not necessarily always be a shock to the ear:

> Die Sache fängt damit an, daß euch beileibe nicht das Verfügungrecht zukommt über alle jemals verwendeten Tonkombinationen . . . Was falsch, was verbrauchtes Cliché geworden, der Kanon bestimmt es . . . Auf den technischen Horizont kommt alles an.\(^{55}\)

And yet, the devil asserts, the urge to believe in some underlying system beneath all this contingency is very strong, and the ear is still drawn to certain chords as an ideal. The devil’s exposition is taken almost verbatim from Adorno’s (rather clearer) version:

> Kein Akkord ist ‘an sich’ falsch, schon weil es keine Akkorde an sich gibt, und weil jeder das Ganze, auch die ganze Geschichte in sich trägt. Aber eben darum ist die Erkenntnis des Ohrs, was richtig oder falsch sei, unabdingbar wiederum an diesen einen Akkord gebunden und nicht an die abstrakte Reflexion auf das technische Gesamtniveau.\(^{56}\)

The mathematical nature of music’s system allows Leverkühn to develop his ‘magic square’ of serialism, first found in his Brentano-Lieder, which are based on a tone row using ‘h e a e es’ for ‘Hetaera esmeralda’. Zeitblom notes that Leverkühn is not unique in exploiting music’s abstract, mathematical nature by concealing cyphers in compositions. This has always been something that could be exploited by composers:

> Leverkühn war nicht der erste Komponist und wird nicht der letzte gewesen sein, der es liebte, Heimlichkeiten formel- und sigelhafter Art in seinem Werk zu verschließen, die den eingeborenen Hang der Musik zu abergläubischen Begehungen und Befolgungen, zahlenmystischen und buchstabensymbolischen, bekunden.\(^{57}\)

Leverkühn’s fellow syphilitic, Robert Schumann, showed as much literary as musical talent at an early age, and was especially inspired by the prose of Jean Paul. This enthusiasm later influenced his piano work, *Papillons*, in which the number of each movement relates to a chapter in Jean Paul’s *Flegeljahre*. Many other Schumann pieces include encryption, notably of his wife’s name, Clara. Numerous other composers have done everything from

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\(^{55}\) Ibid., p. 319.

\(^{56}\) TWA GS, Vol. 12, p. 42.

\(^{57}\) GW VI, p. 207.
incorporating names - Bach, Beethoven, Duruflé and Liszt, to more elaborate encryption - Elgar, and even a detailed musical language - Messiaen.58

3.3.4 Spiritual capacity

An important symbol in Doktor Faustus of composers' continual battle against the exhaustion of tonality is the increasingly complicated and outlandish variations marking the demise of sonata form in Beethoven's piano sonata Op. 111. As noted earlier, this subjectivity continues ad absurdum until there is nowhere further to go, composition turns in on itself and there is a 'dialectical reversal' to objectivity: "Die Freiheit neigt immer zum dialektischen Umschlag":59 At the same time, however, the novel emphasises music's ability genuinely to revisit its primal beginnings. It shows how this primal return is manifested in compositions; something quite different from the dialectical reversal imposed by the composer's struggle. It is probably the closest that a specific composition comes to expressing the true ontology of music. This sense of the past is particularly apposite in the context of the novel's largely Romantic conception of the ontology of music, as the notion of musical history began to take root most powerfully in the Romantic era, fostered by the spiritual pull of the Romantic consciousness towards rediscovery of the past, inevitably all the stronger in relation to music, the most Romantic of the arts. It was only in the nineteenth century that most historical studies of music, and even biographies of individual composers, began to appear.60 The sense of primal return goes hand in hand with the Romantics' conception of music as absolute, and their preoccupation with its timeless ontology.

Doktor Faustus is steeped in this Romantic sense of music's origins. In his lecture, 'Das Elementare in der Musik', Kretzschmar cites Bach and Beethoven as examples of the way in which composers can use for aesthetic effect music's ability to revisit these origins. His most powerful example, however, and one closest to Mann's heart, is Wagner's use of the E flat minor chord at the beginning of Das Rheingold:

Wagner [habe] . . . die Grundlemente der Musik in seinem kosmogonischen Mythos vom 'Ring des Nibelungen' sich mit denjenigen der Welt decken lassen. Bei ihm habe der Anfang aller Dinge seine Musik: die Musik des Anfangs sei das und auch der Anfang der Musik, der Es-Dur-Dreiklang der strömenden Rheinstiefe, die

58 It has also been suggested that Luther used numbers symbolically in his hymns, with meanings accorded to numbers of lines, though it is unlikely that Mann knew this. See Ernst Arfken, "Etliche geistliche Lieder zusammengebracht" Luther als Kirchenliederdichter', in Hans Ludwig Arnold (ed.), Martin Luther, Text und Kritik Sonderband (Munich, Verlag Text und Kritik, 1983), p. 113-117.
59 GW VI, p. 253.
60 Fubini states that it was not until the time of the Romantics that "there had ever been any desire to rediscover the forgotten musical inheritance which lay buried in manuscripts and archives, to listen to it anew and to evaluate it". E. Fubini, op. cit., p. 351.
In effect, this renewal of music’s primal elements is a more spiritual interpretation of the devil’s assertion that however exhausted tonality might appear, the ear is nonetheless drawn to certain chords: “Höre den abgestorbenen Akkord, - selbst in seiner Versprengtheit steht er für einen technischen Gesamtstand, der dem wirklichen widerspricht.” Kretzschmar’s reference to Bruckner’s habit of “refreshing himself” through playing triads at the organ suggests that, given the difficulty of grappling with the instability of the tonal system, composers see any opportunity to revisit a modicum of stability as a relief.

One important consequence of the way in which composers are seen to exploit music’s capacity to revisit its beginnings is to make musical history cyclical. Some of the same elements recur spontaneously in compositions at different times. Linear progress ad absurdum to dialectical reversal is not the full story. This is in addition to the obviously cyclical nature of the development of musical form through the elements of music’s ontology, notably the uneasy balances between sensuality and cerebralism, shown in the ever-changing balances between objectivity and subjectivity. Though this musical ‘eternal recurrence’ can be willed, and therefore hastened, by composers, the devil’s comments on neo-classicism imply that this is best achieved in a way that is in tune with the underlying nature of music. The novel appears to differentiate between revisitation that simply holds and arrests music at a particular point, and revisitation that vivifies it, as well as between composers’ exploitation of naturally recurring elements of music and an artificial process of modernisation:

Ich rede nicht von den folkloristischen und neo-klassischen Asylisten, deren Modernität darin besteht, daß sie sich den musikalischen Ausbruch verbieten und mit mehr oder weniger Würde das Stilkleid vorindividualistischer Zeiten tragen. Reden sich und anderen ein, das Langweilige sei interessant geworden, weil das Interessante angefangen hat, langweilig zu werden.

Since Adorno’s *Philosophie der neuen Musik* includes a somewhat polemical essay on Stravinsky, in addition to his longer study of Schoenberg, this can be taken as a reference to the former. Stravinsky was roundly criticised by Adorno as failing to confront properly the progress of music of his time, though later, from around the mid 1950s, he did begin to

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61 GW VI, p. 87.
62 Ibid., p. 319.
63 “Und er gedachte Anton Bruckners, der es geliebt habe, sich an der Orgel oder am Klavier durch das einfache Aneinanderreihen von Dreiklängen zu erquicken”, ibid., p. 87.
64 Ibid., p. 318.
65 “Stravinsky zielt ... nicht aufs Gelingen des Ausdrucks der Situation, die er eher überblicken als fixieren möchte”. TWA GS 12, p. 129.
explore the techniques of the Second Viennese School. As a friend and neighbour of Stravinsky, however, Mann was unlikely to make any slight too obvious. Not so Schoenberg, who, responding to the assumption of one reviewer of Doktor Faustus, that Mann obtained his information from Stravinsky and Bruno Walter, observed that “Walter does not know anything of composition with twelve tones, and Stravinsky does not take any interest in it”.

Music’s origin as a mass, cultic experience, related to its primal beginnings, is also seen to leave its mark in individual compositions, but Beethoven’s struggle to write a fugue for his Missa Solemnis testifies how far down the road of individualism music has come from its cultic past. The most important idea that Leverkühn takes away from ‘Das Elementare in der Musik’ is that the individualistic era of music is merely episodic. It is always possible for music to return to its natural, cultic, state, but - crucially - compositions need not necessarily be in the service of the church, whose liturgy had always been the natural home of Western compositions to date. The notion of music’s liturgical service is a theme introduced early on in the novel, when Zeitblom reports that one of Leverkühn’s first musical experiences as a boy is the organ music at the Oberweiler church. Whilst music’s natural ontological state is as a cultic phenomenon, the church is seen merely as a particular historical expression of that ontology. The cultic experience, rather than the church itself, is thus the necessary part of music’s ontology. The church is the particular form of service that has been placed into the waiting spiritual void of music’s ontology. Leverkühn speculates that the spiritual void, given the historical contingency of the church as a form of service, could equally well be fulfilled by service to some other authority:

[Er] phantasierte . . . von der wahrscheinlich bevorstehenden Wiederzurückführung ihrer heutigen Rolle auf eine bescheidenere, glücklichere im Dienst eines höheren Verbandes, der nicht gerade, wie einst, die Kirche zu sein brauche. Was er denn sein sollte, wüßte er nicht zu sagen.

Although Wagner is not explicitly mentioned, there is, nonetheless, something Wagnerian about this vision. Wagner saw the possibility of returning to a deeper unity of the arts through regression to primal beginnings. Adorno certainly viewed Wagner’s music as a

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67 Mann was impressed by Stravinsky, and referred to “den persönlich so anziehenden Strawinsky” in a letter to Agnes Meyer of 25 August 1944, *TM - AM*, p. 581. Lieselotte Voss notes that Mann used Stravinsky’s memoirs as a source during the writing of *Doktor Faustus* more than he explicitly acknowledged. See L. Voss, *Die Entstehung*, p. 226.
69 GW VI, p. 46.
70 Ibid., p. 82.
particular manifestation of music’s ontological property of unifying individualistic tendencies:

Die besondere Funktion der Musik . . . die allein die Idee einer >Kunstreligion< Wagnerschen Stils ermöglichte, bestand darin, daß sie mehr als andere künstliche Medien in der individualistischen Gesellschaft stets wieder das Bewußtsein zu erwecken schien, jene sei trotz aller Gegensatze der Interessen ein einstimmiges Ganzes.\textsuperscript{71}

Nietzsche had envisaged the resurgence of a more cultic, Dionysian music personified by Wagner. It is well known that Nietzsche was later deeply disillusioned by the reality of Bayreuth, realising that he had mistakenly taken the Romantic ‘Rausch’ of Schopenhauer and Wagner for the genuine tragic insight of the Dionysian, and had set his expectations too high - a prime example of historical manifestation not living up to the expectation based on music’s ontology. As David Dennis’s study shows, Beethoven’s works have long been used by the Germans to draw the people together in an almost religious unity. This has been the case right up to the present day. At the opening of the Brandenburg Gate, at Christmas 1989, there were performances of his ninth symphony in the Berlin Philharmonie in the West and the Schauspielhaus in the East. Dennis notes how, when he interviewed some of those watching the performances on video screens, this was deemed the most appropriate way to mark the momentous occasion: “I don’t think we have any other music for such an event, do we?”\textsuperscript{72}

The references in \textit{Doktor Faustus} to specific musical compositions are also used to reinforce Mann’s Lutheran conception of music’s spiritual nature. Music’s sense of unease at its own sensuality is seen to have an effect on the development of musical form by dictating the balance between its sensual aspects and the form into which these are placed by the composer. One of the roots of the tension between the Dionysian and Apolline, or subjective and objective, is a sense of sin and of a need to do penance for it. Leverkühn describes Bach’s music thus: “es sieht nach schlechtem Gewissen aus - nach dem schlechten Gewissen der homophonen Musik vor der Polyphonie”.\textsuperscript{73} The most striking example of this phenomenon is his description of the complexity of Dutch polyphony as music’s penance for the naked sensuality of the voices which sing it: “Die Musik tut immer im voraus geistige Buße für ihre Versinnlichung.”\textsuperscript{74}

\textsuperscript{72} D. B. Dennis, op. cit., p. 202-203.
\textsuperscript{73} GW VI, p. 105.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., p. 95.
The descriptions of composition in the novel, which act as examples for Leverkühn to follow, rarely, if ever, portray composition as a serene and fulfilling activity. Rather, the very fulfilment the composer seeks is driven by the quest for difficulty; again, a part of music's ontological nature. The ‘dear purchase’ of the struggle for expression is an indispensable part of the composer’s encounter with music. Bruckner is described as having: “mit der Musik und ihren heiligen Schwierigkeiten gerungen, wie Jakob mit dem Engel”. The struggle is especially clear in the depiction of Beethoven in his struggle to write a fugue for the Missa Solemnis:

Der Taube sang, heulte und stampfte über dem Credo, - es war so schaurig ergreifend zu hören, daß den an der Tür Lauschenden das Blut in den Adern gefror. Da sie sich aber eben in tiefer Scheu hatten entfernen wollen, war jäh die Tür aufgegangen, und Beethoven hatte in ihrem Rahmen gestanden, - welchen Ansehens? Des schrecklichsten!

The image of Beethoven’s tormented appearance in the doorway haunts the rest of the novel, as a most evocative prelude to Leverkühn’s image of his own torment in the throes of composition:

Ich werde begossen nach der Kunst wie ein Braten, ein Höllenbraten, es ist sehenswert, und du bist eingeladen, dich unter die aufrichtig interessierten Zuschauer hinter der Schranke zu mischen.

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75 Ibid., p. 540-541.
76 Ibid., p. 81.
77 Ibid., p. 471.
Chapter 4 Adrian Leverkühn and his music

4.1 The distinguishing feature of ‘Erkenntnis’

4.1.1 The nature of the artistic crisis

Adrian Leverkühn’s compositions are also historical manifestations of the ontological characteristics of music. Like Beethoven and other composers before him, Leverkühn must translate the ontological into a particular historical form. This chapter looks at the ontological characteristics of music as they are manifested in Leverkühn’s compositions, and at the composer himself as the intermediary between his music and contemporary German history. Before examining Leverkühn’s compositions and historical identity, however, it is worth making some general observations about ‘Erkenntnis’ - a feature that pervades all aspects of Leverkühn’s oeuvre.

Leverkühn is not simply composing at just another stage in a series of historical manifestations of music, but is working at a time of acknowledged artistic crisis. The crisis Leverkühn faces is partly familiar from Mann’s earlier characters. When approaching Doktor Faustus, Mann’s concept of a Faustian artist who succumbs to a fatal ‘Rausch’ remained largely unchanged from its original form, and as T. J. Reed notes, the account of Leverkühn has a close relationship with the tale of Gustav von Aschenbach.1 Perhaps the most important resonance between the two works comes from Mann’s conviction, explored in 2.2, that ‘Rausch’ was an integral part of music, at its worst mirroring the disintegration and infection that was the hallmark of Nazi Germany. Yet whilst this ‘Rausch’, or dangerous surrender, is something latent in any music, it is not the distinctive characteristic of Leverkühn’s compositions. ‘Rausch’ helps to prepare the ground for Leverkühn’s pact with the devil, but it is evident, as Reed’s analysis recognises, that his oeuvre could have arisen without the devil’s intervention.2 Mann’s own diary entry recording his first encounter with Adorno’s ideas shows that he, too, saw that Leverkühn might not necessarily need the pact. As noted in 2.3.3, he even worried that Adorno’s ideas about the problematic situation of art might come to eclipse the pact altogether:

In der Schrift von Adorno. Augenblicke der Erhellung über Adrians Position ... Die verzweifelte Lage der Kunst: stimmigstes Moment. Hauptgedanke der erkauften Inspiration, die im Rausch darüber hinwegträgt, nicht aus dem Gesicht zu verlieren.3

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1 T J Reed, Uses of Tradition, p. 360.
2 Ibid., p. 395.
3 Tagebücher 1940 -1943, p. 605 (26 July 1943).
Karol Sauerland attributes to the devil simply a symbolic role of "das Prinzip des Bösen, das in die Geschichte eingebrochen ist." The devil himself admits that his conversation with Leverkühn has no new determining influence on the course of the action, but that it simply strengthens what was already present in the composer: "die Kleinen...verstärken und übertreiben nur sinnreich alles, was du bist", and hell is "nur eine Fortsetzung des extravaganten Daseins".

Even Leverkühn's infection with syphilis does not play any part in his formulation of the system of serialism. Rather, it is his calculating intellect, the cold insight into reality, with him from childhood, which is most important in allowing this system to develop. Disease, like a drug, merely intensifies and speeds up the process. The 'Rausch' in Doktor Faustus is the decadence and breakdown that is an important precondition of the real crisis of 'Erkenntnis'. This decadence and decay is the same that Mann began to depict in Buddenbrooks nearly half a century earlier, of which Leverkühn is the ultimate inheritor. It is this 'Erkenntnis', perhaps best described as too great a knowingness, which is the real distinguishing feature of Leverkühn's compositions. This resulting crisis, rather than the decay that precedes it, is the central problem of Doktor Faustus.

The 'Rausch' is not only the precondition of 'Erkenntnis', but also, in the shape of disease, is something that Leverkühn actively seeks out as a means of response to 'Erkenntnis'. This 'Rausch' is not, however, the full story, or an end in itself, which differentiates between Leverkühn and Aschenbach. Although both are initially shocked and hesitant when faced with the object of their downfall, their stories are quite different. Aschenbach's story is all about succumbing to the 'Rausch', and, after the first page, does not dwell too much on his difficulties with artistic creation. Aschenbach is first drawn into the adventure in Venice as an escape from his artistic obligations, and is led to discover a hitherto unknown side of his character. This is made clear from the outset with phrases such as "eine seltsame Auswertung seines Innern ward ihm ganz überraschend bewußt", and "rächte sich nun also die geknechtete Empfindung". The resulting impulse to write is a welcome, yet unexpected, by-product, which is coupled with the troubling realisation that suspect emotions lie behind a good deal of the artistic impulse. Whilst there are points at which Aschenbach could have

4 K. Sauerland "'Er wußte noch mehr...'' p. 132-133. As T. J. Reed notes, however, simply demonising Nazism in this way would not have appealed to Mann. His understanding of the historical influences bringing about Nazism, and consequently, his use of the Faust myth, is rather more complex. See T. J. Reed, op. cit., p. 361.
5 GW VI, p. 332 & 329.
6 GW VIII, p. 446 & 449.
taken a different turning, he is presented as something of a helpless victim of ‘Rausch’, the object of external forces, feeling relatively early on “als zeige die Welt eine leichte, doch nicht zu hemmende Neigung, sich ins Sonderbare und Fratzenhafte zu entstellen”. In *Doktor Faustus*, despite Zeitblom’s best efforts to convince the reader of an element of love in Leverkühn’s encounter with hetaera esmeralda, Leverkühn’s actions in embracing ‘Rausch’ cannot be interpreted as something imposed on him by unstable external forces, but rather, as his own thoroughly calculated response to a deeply felt crisis.

Although at the time of taking the action, Leverkühn only really feels the ‘Erkenntnis’ of artistic crisis as a personal issue, it is clear to the reader that he is actually responding to a wider cultural imperative. This mirrors the development of the concept of ‘Erkenntnis’ in Mann’s work overall. Early on, Mann presented the troubled state of ‘Erkenntnis’ as a problem of the individual, rather than an intrinsic part of life itself. Thomas Buddenbrook, for example, considers his own, too reflective, nature, blaming this for his troubles rather than wider forces: “Habe ich je das Leben gehaßt, dies reine, grausame und starke Leben? Torheit und Mißverständnis! Nur mich habe ich gehaßt, dafür, daß ich es nicht ertragen konnte”. ‘Erkenntnis’ is an important issue in Tonio Kröger’s conversation with Lisaweta Iwanowa. Again, however, the problem is essentially a personal one, about Tonio’s pull between the two roles of ‘Künstler’ and ‘Bürger’:

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\text{Es gibt etwas, was ich Erkenntnisekel nenne, Lisaweta: der Zustand, in dem es dem Menschen genügt, eine Sache zu durchschauen... Hellsehen noch durch den Tränenschleier des Gefühls hindurch, erkennen, merken, beobachten und das Beobachtete lächelnd beiseite legen müssen noch in Augenblicken, wo Hände sich umschlingen, Lippen sich finden, wo des Menschen Blick, erblendet von Empfindung, sich bricht.}
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At the stage of writing *Tonio Kröger*, Mann evidently still believed that it was possible for the successful artist to find in art a means of freeing himself from the difficulties of ‘Erkenntnis’, by transforming it into art. Georg Lukács has noted that despite the artistic problems faced by both Tonio Kröger and Gustav von Aschenbach, they were at least able to write without the artificial means of creation to which Leverkühn is obliged to resort. There is no escape for Leverkühn from their existential ‘Erkenntnis’, which can no longer easily be covered with the comforting illusion of ‘Schein’. His apparently simple, spontaneous musical moments are inevitably the product of ‘Erkenntnis’.

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7 Ibid., p. 462.
8 GW I, p. 658.
9 GW VIII, p. 300-301.
The compulsion to create art still exists in *Doktor Faustus*, but the artist can now only go through a complex intellectual process in the hope that this will somehow yield the form he seeks. ‘Erkenntnis’ thus appears both as a symptom of, and as the inevitable remedy for the crisis. Leverkühn seeks to dispel the knowingness that has cancelled out ‘Schein’, but his environment offers him no resources to use other than this ‘Erkenntnis’. He must therefore proceed knowing all along that the heart-warming vision of “eine Kunst mit der Menschheit auf du und du” is unattainable.

4.1.2 ‘Erkenntnis’ of musical history and crisis in *Doktor Faustus*

In this context, the descriptions of Leverkühn’s compositions, like so much else in *Doktor Faustus*, form a commentary on themselves. They are more intellectual than sensual. Viktor Žmegač observes that technical language plays a much greater role in the descriptions of ‘erzählte Musik’ in the novel - that is, the fictional music of Leverkühn - as opposed to the non-fictional ‘beschriebene Musik’. Descriptions of music that the reader is already likely to know rely heavily on wordpainting, whereas the descriptions of fictional music tend to be more technical, not least because the reader can has no preconceived idea of the invented music on which the narrative can build. As noted in 2.2, twelve tone music was not a natural choice for Mann to use as the focus of a novel about a composer. He took it on as Adorno’s solution to a cultural problem that they both perceived. The descriptions of Leverkühn’s music rely heavily on montage, using material that Mann did not necessarily understand in its full technical depth.

One of the most important aspects of ‘Erkenntnis’ in Leverkühn’s oeuvre is the knowingness about the history of music. Such ‘Erkenntnis’, as opposed to direct experience, is prominent from an early stage of Leverkühn’s musical education. The instruction he receives from Kretzschmar whilst still at school means that he is steeped in the history of musical form. His extraordinarily wide knowledge far outstrips his practical ability to play music:

>Als in diesen Jahren ... seine musikalische Erfahrung, seine Kenntnis der musikalischen Weltliteratur sich rapide erweiterte, so daß freilich bald der Abstand zwischen dem, was er kannte und was er konnte, jener von ihm betonten Unterscheidung eine Art von Augenfälligkeit verlieh.<sup>13</sup>

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11 GW VI, p. 242-243.
13 GW VI, p. 102.
But Leverkühn's knowledge goes beyond simply being well-informed, and it certainly does not amount to an unquestioning reverence for the music of the past. He uses the image of 'gelernte Wurzelbehandlung', to illustrate his conviction that even what is now apparently irrelevant must still be mastered. The knowledge of historical problems or limitations is seen as a vital first step to solving them; only by confronting the chaos head on can there be any hope of overcoming it. Considering Leverkühn's predicament in the light of Adorno's writing, Mann himself realised that "die Schwierigkeiten müssen erst ganz auswachsen, bevor sie überwunden werden können". This sentiment is demonstrated in Leverkühn's first work, 'Meeresleuchten':

Er stimmte [Kretzschmar] darin zu, daß man Errungenes beherrschen müsse, auch wenn man es nicht mehr für wesentlich erachte.... Jenes klangfunkelnde 'Meeresleuchten' war ein in meinen Augen merkwürdiges Beispiel dafür, wie ein Künstler sein Bestes an eine Sache zu setzen vermag, an die er insgeheim nicht mehr glaubt, und darauf besteht, in Kunstmitteln zu exzellen, die für sein Bewußtsein schon auf dem Punkte der Verbrauchtheit schweben.

His attention to musical history means that Leverkühn is undoubtedly influenced by the past. Yet he can only approach it with scepticism, as his too-clever 'Erkenntnis' of musical history combines with knowingness about the crisis that history has now reached. He cannot see music as other than worn out, and therefore cannot refer to it without mockery. Thus, although the influence of composers such as Debussy and Mahler is apparent in Leverkühn's early works, there is less of the admiration for these influences than was shown, as already noted, by Leverkühn's real-life counterparts, such as Schoenberg. Leverkühn's 'Bekenntnisbrief' to Kretzschmar suggests, however, that he would like to have this sort of reverence. Despite his intellectual pride, he would like to be able to appreciate this music without seeing it in terms of parody:


This pathos means that his mockery of past music is rarely free of contradiction. The contradiction comes either through the evidence in Leverkühn's music of proper study of the very styles it mocks (such as his careful study of other violin concertos before writing his own), or - most importantly and frequently - a wish that things might be otherwise. David Roberts observes that the parody in Leverkühn's works takes the form of repetition as well as negation. He argues that parody is one of the inevitable consequences of Nietzsche's doctrine.
of eternal recurrence - seen in *Doktor Faustus* as a key ontological feature of music - as no object resulting simply from the repetition of recurrence can be truly authentic. The *Apocalypsis cum figuris* is a good example of this phenomenon, as it not only regresses to the pre-cultural barbaric state, but in doing so, recalls and repeats more or less the whole history of music, taking in styles as diverse as "Kläge des französischen Impressionismus, ins Lächliche gezogen, bürgerliche Salonzänke, Tschaikowski, Music Hall, die Synkopen und rhythmische Purzelbäume des Jazz".

The more conventional understanding of parody, as negation, is evident throughout Leverkühn's oeuvre, though it is never quite straightforward. The mockery of his early work, *Die Wunder des Alls* is likened by Zeitblom to blasphemy because of the composer's lack of reverence both for its cosmic subject matter and the music that depicts it. This is the work that begins to build Leverkühn's reputation as an anti-aesthetic nihilist. Yet, although Zeitblom says that: "Wesen und Essenz jenes ungefähr dreißig Minuten dauernden orchestralen Welt-Portraits ist der Spott", he sees the penitential Klopstock ode as a preparation for this piece. Even in the apparently sincere Klopstock ode, however, Leverkühn's avoidance of using musical thunderclaps for the voice of God implies a knowingness about historical musical effect, rather than total spontaneity. And although Leverkühn studies many other violin concertos before composing his own, these are said to be taken on board "in einer halb respektvoll, halb karikaturistischen Weise". Leverkühn's remark at the time of composing his chamber music neatly encapsulates the effect of the 'Erkenntnis' of music's historical past on his own compositions: "Ich habe, sagte er wohl, 'im Philosophiekolleg gelernt, daß Grenzen zu setzen schon sie überschreiten heißt. Danach hab' ich's immer gehalten". In Leverkühn's chamber music, his knowledge of the boundaries and conventions of both chamber music and orchestral music is crucial in enabling him to challenge them in his own composition, and thus to create something truly radical.

The 'Erkenntnis' of the historical limitations of music necessarily entails an 'Erkenntnis' of music's crisis, made explicit in the serialist method of composition. Composing a serialist work entails a prior admission that nothing will be possible without seeing through and giving up the tonality that composition has hitherto entailed, and working out in advance a formula

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18 GW VI, p. 499.
19 Ibid., p. 366.
20 Ibid., p. 544.
21 Ibid., p. 607.
that will dominate the composition. It also requires a thorough knowledge of tonality in order to repudiate it, and avoid its repetition via the tone row. As the ending of a soured relationship, this process is painful as well as liberating. Leverkühn’s compositions make constant reference to this pain, which lurks in their consciousness of their own state of crisis, particularly the awareness of the instability of tonality and the impossibility of ‘Schein’. The strange sensations caused by the simple tonal harmony in the Blake songs, the mockery of aestheticism in Verlorene Liebesmüh, and the ‘Geheul’ of the Apocalypsis cum Figuris are just a few examples.

Both these forms of ‘Erkenntnis’ - of music’s history and of its crisis - merge and reach their apotheosis in Dr. Fausti Wehklag, when the novel depicts Leverkühn’s revocation of Beethoven’s ninth symphony as a tragedy not only in the context of the resonance of Beethoven’s historical meaning for German music and society, but also because there can be no doubt by now that Leverkühn fully understands what he is taking back. This is no reckless, ill-informed iconoclasm by an angry young man. It is, rather, the despairing gesture of one who seems ancient, who, like T. S. Eliot’s Tiresias, has already “foresuffered all”, living through contemporary fragmentation from the perspective of a much earlier time.

At the heart of all this historical ‘Erkenntnis’ of music, is the realisation of what must be revealed once the ‘Schein’ projected by composers has been lifted. Adorno asserted that: “Was die radikale Musik erkennt, ist das unverkläerte Leid des Menschen”. Only quite late on does this ‘Leid’ become identified in Doktor Faustus with the pain of mankind generally, rather than the pain of one particular composer as he struggles with the crisis of his art. There is no explicit reference to a connection between an individual artistic and a more general crisis. Leverkühn’s own ‘Erkenntnis’ in Dr. Fausti Wehklag, though anguished, certainly does not reach much beyond the personal tragedy of Echo’s death and art itself.

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22 Erich Heller notes in his essay on the taking back of the symphony, that even in its own time, Beethoven’s monumental work probably hid more uncertainty than its jubilation suggested: “Epochs and souls that are surer of their place in the world conduct themselves less boisterously when they bear witness in their art to such integrity”. Erich Heller, “The Taking Back of the Ninth Symphony: Reflections on Thomas Mann’s Doktor Faustus”, in his In the Age of Prose. Literary and Philosophical Essays, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 134. Adorno thought that this false confidence was a feature of most works of art, from the earliest times. See 3.3, footnote 22.

23 “And I, Tiresias, have foresuffered all/Enacted on this same divan or bed/ I who have sat at Thebes below the wall/And walked among the lowest of the dead.” T. S. Eliot, The Waste Land (1922), in The Complete Poems and Plays 1909-1950, (New York, Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1952) p.44.

24 TWA GS 12, p. 46-47.
The ‘Erkenntnis’ in *Doktor Faustus* reflects on its author as well as its protagonist. It is a product of Mann’s own growing inclination to know rather than to feel, to assimilate material from others rather than to experience it at first hand. He spoke of his tendency at the time of writing “alles Leben als Kulturprodukt und in Gestalt mythischer Klischees zu sehen und das Zitat der selbständigen Erfindung vorzuziehen”. Quotation had traditionally been for most writers what Viktor Lange refers to as a “eine Form der bürgerlichen Selbstsicherung”. As Rilke had realised as early as the 1920s, however, such a means of assurance about one’s place in the world had become uncomfortable, if not impossible. Quotation could only point towards the fact that there were no longer any firm meanings and assurances any longer, as the world itself had become endless interpretation:

und die findigen Tiere merken es schon,  
daß wir nicht sehr verläßlich zu Haus sind  
in der gedeuteten Welt.

The many instances of parodistic quotation in Leverkühn’s works are, thus, themselves conveyed in a text full of self-conscious quotation, so that *Doktor Faustus* actually enshrines the cultural predicament of which it speaks. By the time of writing *Doktor Faustus*, Mann was well aware of the current artistic climate, and quite resigned to his reliance on montage, which reaches new heights in this novel. Lange observes, however, that Mann himself was far less avant-garde in his use of montage than some of his contemporaries. At the time of *Doktor Faustus*, he is still, despite the conditions in which he is working, seeking to reassure, rather than to unsettle, or at least, using his material to add a further dimension to what he is seeking to describe. Mann certainly did not go as far in ‘Erkenntnis’ as his fictional protagonist: if he had been a composer, he could never have been an atonalist. As it was, Mann knew that he was not as radical as some of his contemporaries, such as James Joyce or Alfred Döblin. In a letter to Agnes Meyer in August 1944, he wrote of his concern that a closer examination of Joyce’s works would reveal the Irishman to be more daring, and even a better writer than he was himself: “Ich ahne eine Verwandtschaft, möchte sie aber lieber nicht wahrhaben, weil, wenn sie vorhanden wäre, Joyce alles viel besser, kühner, großartiger

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25 GW XI, p. 248.  
28 “Seine Montagepraxis ist nicht, wie die des Dadaismus, schockierend und verfremdend, sondern konziliant und sinnbildlich den Leser bereichernd”, V. Lange, op. cit., p. 582.
gemacht hätte". Mann recognised the crisis of expression as well as any other contemporary writer, but, mainly by natural disposition, he was reluctant to relinquish all footholds in the certainties of the old world, however unsteady these might be:

"Mein Vorurteil war, daß neben Joyce’s exzentrischem Avantgardismus mein Werk wie flauer Traditionalismus wirken müsse. Daran ist wahr, daß traditionelle Gebundenheit, sei sie selbst schon parodistisch gefärbt, leichtere Zugänglichkeit bewirkt, die Möglichkeit einer gewissen Popularität in sich trägt. Doch ist sie mehr eine Sache der Haltung als des Wesens."

This attitude produces a compelling mixture of ‘Erkenntnis’ and ‘Hoffnung’ in *Doktor Faustus.*

4.1.3 The combination of ‘Erkenntnis’ and ‘Hoffnung’

Even at its worst, the pain in *Doktor Faustus* is not entirely undiluted. There are various reasons for this and, as noted above, the ‘Erkenntnis’ in Leverkuhn’s oeuvre has its own ‘Zweideutigkeit’ in recognising both the history from which it comes, with a tinge of regret, as well as its own state of crisis. It also has much to do with Mann’s attitude to modernism and the text of *Doktor Faustus.* There are varying views about the extent of the glimpse of ‘Hoffnung’ that is offered in *Dr. Fausti Weheklag.* Some studies have argued forcibly against viewing *Doktor Faustus* as a salvationist account of the Faust legend. The question to ask, however, is at least as much whether the music offers any relief from ‘Erkenntnis’, as whether Leverkuhn himself is redeemed. Perhaps the most important source of the ‘Hoffnung’ in the novel is that salvation is never totally denied, even though the spiritual void in music is filled with a perversive, non-Christian form of spirituality.

The most tangible sign of hope beyond despair is found in the high cello G at the end of *Dr. Fausti Weheklag.* This is a sure mark of Mann’s basic optimism, against all odds. It is well known that Adorno persuaded Mann to include a rather less hopeful ending than he had originally intended. Mann records in the *Entstehung:*

Ich war zu optimistisch, zu gutmütig und direkt gewesen, hatte zu viel Licht angezündet, den Trost zu dick aufgetragen. Die Bedenken, die mein Kritiker dagegen erhob, mußte ich als nur zu berechtigt anerkennen.

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30 GW XI, p. 205.

31 John Fetzer observes that the debate between the salvationists and those who feel Mann’s Faust more closely reflects the ending of the chapbook is, if anything, increasing. See J. D. Fetzer, *Changing Perceptions,* p. 87.

32 GW XI, p. 294.
But despite the agreement apparently reached between Mann and Adorno according to Mann’s account, Hans R. Vaget maintains that only the formulation of that chapter, rather than the basic idea of it, was changed. He still believes that the final feeling of the novel remains one of hope rather than hopelessness. Eberhard Bahr, taking into account Adorno’s later writing on aesthetics after the publication of Doktor Faustus, offers a more optimistic view of Adorno’s attitude by asserting that “Hoffnung jenseits der Hoffnungslosigkeit” is actually an early example of his theory of the identity of the non-identical.33 Vaget, however, offers convincing arguments to show that although Adorno was influenced by the same thinkers as Mann, his reading of Wagner, Goethe and Kierkegaard simply did not give the same credence to redemption as Mann’s did. On the contrary, Vaget notes, Adorno described redemption as a “sublime banality”.34 And despite the respect he undoubtedly had for Adorno’s views, it is Mann’s perspective that ultimately gains the upper hand. The reader is thus left with a more hopeful picture of the ultimate effect of ‘Erkenntnis’ than a strict account of Adorno’s modernism would have allowed on its own. In another essay, Vaget argues that there is a potentiality of grace in Doktor Faustus that is virtually equal to the damnation, and that in this respect, the novel is testimony to Mann’s anxiety to reconcile the good and bad in the German spirit, not merely, as some believed, to condemn Germany.35

It is possible, however, to place too much emphasis on the high G as the ultimate sign of ‘Hoffnung’. Herbert Lehnert notes that neither Leverkühn nor Zeitblom themselves ever hear the high G in Dr Fausti Weheklag performed.36 In fact, the last sound they actually hear in the novel is the “Klagelaut” that Leverkühn emits at his final collapse. This sound, although it is referred to less often in studies of the novel, not only occurs later in the text, but is as lasting a memory for Zeitblom as the high G, if not more so: “Dabei öffnete er den Mund, wie um zu singen, aber nur ein Klagelaut, der mir für immer im Ohre hängengeblieben ist, brach zwischen seinen Lippen hervor”.37 Whilst there may be hope in Leverkühn’s music, then, it is difficult to argue that this is a hope that is fully accessible in the midst of the state of ‘Erkenntnis’. It is more plausible to consider it as a hope for a future, less troubled time than the one in which Mann was writing. This future time is quite explicitly intended to interact with the novel, and is referred to directly by Zeitblom as “[die] Zeit, die eines Tages

37 GW VI, p. 667, with my italics.
der Leser sich zur geneigten Rezeption des Mitgeteilten nehmen wird". The time of novel is still the time of 'Hoffnungslosigkeit'. The words "jenseits der Hoffnungslosigkeit" are therefore extremely important, in that real hope can lie only beyond the hopelessness of the novel's time, not in the midst of it. The fragility of this hope is palpable in the text: "die Transzendenz der Verzweiflung, - nicht der Verrat an ihr, sondern das Wunder, das über den Glauben geht".

Holthusen compared Mann's notion of renewal through barbarism unfavourably with T S Eliot's conviction of the possibility of a spiritual renewal. Yet the sense in Doktor Faustus of a hope that cannot be too closely defined or explored seems to echo almost perfectly the lines written by Eliot a few years earlier. As with the 'Hoffnung jenseits der Hoffnungslosigkeit', Eliot's image is of a hope whose very nature is to be unknown, in the awareness that even to mention it makes it a tangible presence all the same:

I said to my soul, be still, and wait without hope  
For hope would be hope for the wrong thing; wait without love  
For love would be love of the wrong thing; yet there is faith  
But the faith and the love and the hope are all in the waiting.

Thus, although Doktor Faustus is modernist in many respects, Mann clearly had some difficulty in taking the final plunge into utter hopelessness. He could depict a modernist in Leverkühn, but could not himself fully embrace that creed, or use the apparatus of modernism in anything more than a half-hearted way for his own work. This is one important reason why any attempt to explore the structure of Doktor Faustus as twelve tone music must ultimately be doomed to fail. Nor could Mann find it in his heart to take Leverkühn all the way to despair without any possibility of an alternative. He reports, after all, that he told Leonhard Frank of Leverkühn "daß ich nie eine Imagination ... ausgenommen vielleicht Hanno Buddenbrook - geliebt hätte wie ihn". It is fair to say that whilst it is difficult to see much 'Hoffnung' from where Leverkühn stands, it is equally difficult to read of his music and not discern any chinks of light at all in the modern condition of 'Erkenntnis'. 'Hoffnung' shines through these, however dimly, from a more distant perspective. Lukács made a helpful comparison between Doktor Faustus and the endings of Shakespearean tragedies. These often end, he said, with a glimpse of a new world, but the ending does not give any details about what this new world might be like. It is the mere articulation of the possibility that offers a degree of comfort.

38 Ibid., p. 335.  
39 Ibid., p. 651.  
40 H. E. Holthusen, Die Welt ohne Transzendenz, p. 44.  
41 'East Coker' from Four Quartets (1944), in T. S. Eliot, op. cit., p. 126-127.  
42 GW XI, p. 203.
In Shakespeares größten Tragödien, in Hamlet, in Lear, leuchtet am Schluss das Licht einer aus dem tragischen Dunkel aufsteigenden neuen Welt auf. Und wer hat das Recht, von Shakespeare eine genaue gesellschaftliche Beschreibung dieser neuen Welt zu fordern? Reicht es nicht aus, daß ihre Vision imstande ist, dem Licht und dem Schatten im Tragischen Selbst die richtigen gesellschaftlichen-geistigen, künstlerischen Proportionen und Gewichte zu geben?  

In this respect, at least, transcendence is not as absent from *Doktor Faustus* as its contemporary critics, such as Holthusen, would have had readers believe. Mann himself cherished the notion of mercy and hope: “wie sollte ich kein Gläubiger der Gnade sein, da sie mir im Alter gewährte, dies Buch zu schreiben?” He was anxious that his readers should not emerge from the novel too despondent: “Es ist ein trauriges, ja unheimliches Buch ... Ich kann nur hoffen, daß ein Schimmer von Geist, Güte, Ironie all die Schrecknisse erträglich macht”. The hope of transcendence is a thin line running through the pervasive nihilism of Leverkühn’s oeuvre. The characteristics of that oeuvre need to be understood in both these contexts of ‘Erkenntnis’ and ‘Hoffnung’.

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43 G. Lukács, op. cit., p. 82.
45 Letter to Agnes Meyer of 17 February 1948, ibid., p. 693.
4.2 The manifestation of music’s ontology in Leverkühn’s compositions

4.2.1 The struggle for ‘Durchbruch’

The struggle for ‘Durchbruch’ to expression is, if anything, even more dominant throughout Leverkühn’s creative life than in that of any of his predecessor composers depicted in Doktor Faustus. Zeitblom states that: “Das Element eines zum Äußersten gehenden Ausdruckswillens war immer herrschend in ihm”.

Leverkühn struggles not for expression at any price, but to overcome the trap of ‘Schein’ and reach a genuine form of expression.

The relationship between music and words, an important manifestation, as noted earlier, of music’s urge for expression, is a key focus of Leverkühn’s struggle for ‘Durchbruch’.

Zeitblom notices that he becomes increasingly preoccupied with this relationship during his time in Leipzig: “Ich stellte fest, daß die Tendenz zur Vermählung mit dem Wort, zur vokalen Artikuliertheit ihn mehr und mehr beherrschte”.

Many of Leverkühn’s compositions are settings of words, rather than purely instrumental music. At the same time, however, he acknowledges that music and words can never be fully interchangeable. Speaking of Beethoven’s late quartets, he says:

Es ist nur ärgerlich - wenn du es nicht erfreulich nennen willst -, daß es in der Musik - wenigstens in dieser Musik - Dinge gibt, für die im ganzen Bereich der Sprache beim besten Willen kein wirklich charakterisierendes Beiwort, auch keine Kombination von Beiworten aufzutreiben ist.

Gunilla Bergsten has drawn attention to Mann’s own preoccupation with the literary texts chosen by Leverkühn. He would apparently have quoted far more had he not been encouraged to delete these later, probably by his daughter Erika.

On a purely practical note, the use of particular literary texts allows Mann to give Leverkühn’s music further layers of meaning. The decay of beauty and destruction of innocence in Blake’s verses, and the destruction and isolation combined in the Dante text are all poignant reminders of the composer’s eventual fate. And even if the Brentano songs were not based on the five note figure h-e-a-e-es, to evoke the memory of haeterta esmeralda, their texts could hardly be more evocative of a longing for lost naivety and goodness, contributing to the state of mind that will make Leverkühn receptive to the devil shortly afterwards.

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1 GW VI, p. 237.
2 Ibid., p. 215.
3 Ibid., p. 213.
4 G. Bergsten, Untersuchungen, p. 117.
Leverkühn’s work demonstrates that it is easier for a composer to bring some words together with music than others. Zeitblom notes that he chooses the texts of the Dante settings, in particular, for their affinity with music, and is particularly struck by the skilful wordpainting used in the settings. Zeitblom speaks of the music that is already latent in the Brentano poems, “die...in leichtem Schlummer liegt, daß die leiseste Berührung von berufener Hand genügte, sie zu erwecken.” Leverkühn’s development of the relationship between music and words reaches an important stage in the composition of his opera, Verlorene Liebesmüh. Here he is able to interchange words and music by reflecting and reinforcing the irony of Shakespeare’s subject matter (and the double irony of Zeitblom’s collaboration on a work mocking the humanism he represents) in the ironic musical setting:

Eine Erneuerung der opera buffa im Geist künstlicher Persiflage und der Persiflage der Künstlichkeit... Er sprach mit Begeisterung von dem Gegenstand, der Gelegenheit bot, das Naturwüchsig-Tölpelhafte neben das Komisch-Sublime zu stellen und eines im anderen lächerlich zu machen.

Serialism is the culmination of Leverkühn’s exploration of the relationship between music and words. Nothing in this music is mere accompaniment, because each note of the tone row is as important as any other. Each instrument achieves the fullest possible expression, gaining its own unique and important voice. Music itself is on the way to becoming text, in which each word helps another to gain its meaning, and must be read as a whole. Even Leverkühn’s early Keats settings, in 1913, point towards this ultimate goal, as this is described as music in which “kein Ton der Singstimme und der vier Instrumente unthematisch war.” Six years later, in the Apocalipsis cum figuris, both choir and orchestra are equally able to comment on the action. Their identities as human voices emitting words and instruments emitting music are seen to be virtually interchangeable:

Chor und Orchestra... sind in einander aufgelöst; der Chor ist instrumentalisiert, das Orchester vokalisiert, - in dem Grade und zu dem Ende, daß tatsächlich die Grenze zwischen Mensch und Ding verrückt erscheint.

Leverkühn’s serialism reaches its most complete form in the late 1920s. Zeitblom describes his chamber music of 1927 as a sort of musical prose, in which nothing is repeated and one new note follows another, like words in a text. The composer himself says, inverting Mann’s

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5 Ibid., p. 215.
6 Ibid., p. 246.
7 Ibid., p. 218.
8 Ibid., p. 351.
9 Ibid., p. 498.
own assertion that he wished to write music rather than a novel: “Ich habe ... keine Sonate schreiben wollen, sondern einen Roman”.¹⁰

In Leverkühn’s final work, Dr. Fausti Weheklag, his preoccupation with the relationship between music and word is at its most explicit, in his revocation of Beethoven’s ninth symphony.¹¹ Rather than the eruption of words at the end of Beethoven’s symphony, the gradual diminution of words into music in ‘Dr Fausti Weheklag’ shows how the struggle for expression has become pure despair:


And yet, this work of despair represents at the same time Leverkühn’s ‘Durchbruch’. It is dominated by the tone row, thus freeing the tonal language to achieve a fuller expression than had been possible before. Ultimately, however, the solution to the problem of expression comes about not simply because of Leverkühn’s successful application of his serialism, but because, in the death of his young nephew, he has found a much larger source of despair than the impossibility of musical expression. Paradoxically, in that realisation, he finds that expression is possible. In doing so, Leverkühn has broken his Faustian pact - not by achieving expression per se, but because the expression is of that genuine feeling, which the devil would have him deny. This combines the ‘Erkenntnis’ and the ‘Hoffnung’ that are both so crucial to Leverkühn’s work and life. The impossibility of ‘Schein’ means that the only possible expression is that of suffering itself, and its expression is Leverkühn’s greatest achievement, at once triumphant and tragic:

Klage, Klage! Ein De profundis, das mein liebender Eifer ohne Beispiel nennt ... die Rekonstruktion des Ausdrucks, der höchsten und tiefsten Ansprechung des Gefühls auf einer Stufe der Geistigkeit und der Formenstreng, die erreicht werden mußte, damit dieses Umschlagen kalkulatorischer Kälte in den expressiven Seelenlaut und kreatürlich sich anvertrauende Herzlichkeit Ereignis werden könne? ... die Klage ist der Ausdruck selbst.¹³

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 605.
¹¹ Spurred on by Mann’s own remarks in the Entstehung about the relationship of the form of his text to musical form, Gunilla Bergsten in particular has turned the relationship of music and the word around, to make a case for Dr. Fausti Weheklag itself being regarded as Mann’s attempt to render the whole of Doktor Faustus in musical form. This is both in terms of their common source in the Faust chapbook, and their common status as an ‘Endwerk’, also in the echoing of key motifs from the novel in Zeitblom’s description of the oratorio. See G. Bergsten, Untersuchungen, p. 230-258.
¹² GW VI, p. 649.
¹³ Ibid., p. 643.
Leverkühn has a particularly hard struggle with the natural beauty in the ontology of music, and its too frequent historical manifestation as ‘Schein’. He yearns for beauty, but knows that it will not be enough to take refuge in the comforting illusion of ‘Schein’. For most of the novel, however, Leverkühn’s concerns are purely musical, without the same wider cultural concerns about ‘Schein’ as Adorno and Mann. Leverkühn’s awareness of contemporary reality is so slight that it is impossible for him to be as concerned as Adorno about the stultifying effect of ‘Schein’ on people’s thought and action, or its uneasy relationship with the horrors of contemporary history. In this respect, Leverkühn diverges even from Nietzsche, who showed a keen awareness of the horrors lurking beneath the apparent beauty of art, although, as noted in 3.2, he had approved of ‘Schein’ as some kind of protection from the worst of this. Nietzsche hints at the pain and madness that lies in store for those who dare to probe the depths of ‘Schein’. Only the madman, for example, has the insight to announce the death of God, too early for most people to comprehend.14

Leverkühn’s much narrower problem with ‘Schein’ is his inability to be taken in by the artifice:

Ich sehe es kommen . . . daß ich mich vor der Abgeschmackheit, die das tragende Gerüst . . . auch des genialen Kunstwerks ist, von den Gepflogenheiten in der Erzielung des Schönen - daß ich mich davor genieren, davor erröten, davor ermatten . . . und das in aller Balde . . . Ich habe vielleicht zugleich Tränen in den Augen, aber der Lachreiz ist übermächtig.15

His regret is reflected in his personal life, in his longing to be seduced into the normal social behaviour that the gregarious Schwerdtfeger and marriage to Marie Godeau represent. Leverkühn’s concerns about ‘Schein’ are wholly self-centred. Indeed, Kretzschmar is obliged to point out to him that this is not a purely personal problem, but one that is common to the age:

Weil es nur zum Teil der privaten Persönlichkeit angehöre, zum anderen Teil aber über-individueller Natur und Ausdruck sei eines kollektiven Gefühls für die historische Verbrauchtheit und Ausgeschöpftheit der Kunstmittel, der Langeweile daran und des Trachtens nach neuen Wegen.16

Leverkühn is only properly forced to confront ‘Schein’ as a general problem, to which he might hold the key, during his dialogue with the devil, when it is again made clear that this is not simply a personal issue:

14 **Hier schwiegen der tolle Mensch und sah wieder seine Zuhörer an: auch sie schwiegen und blickten befreundet auf ihm... >Ich komme zu früh< sagte er dann, >ich bin noch nicht an der Zeit. Dies ungeheure Ereignis ist noch unterwegs und wandert - es ist noch nicht bis zu den Ohren der Menschen gedrungen”, FN2, Die fröhliche Wissenschaft, p. 127.
15 GW VI, p. 178-179.
16 Ibid., p. 181.
Because, despite all his intellectualism, Leverkühn cannot quite break free of the spell which ‘Schein’ casts, there is pathos in his harking back to the spontaneous beauty which must once have been possible. There is something of Mann’s own awareness of tradition in this - his own consciousness that the artist does not just operate in the present or even prepare the way for the future, but must also carry the burden of the past. The pathos of Leverkühn’s longing for beauty is first clearly shown in his Dante settings. Whilst he is disturbed by his friend’s choice of the damnation scenes, Zeitblom is nonetheless moved by the appeal in Leverkühn’s setting of Dante’s epigram:

So möge es, trägt ihm sein Schöpfer auf, die Leute bitten, wenn schon nicht seine Tiefe, so doch seine Schönheit wahrzunehmen. ‘So achtet wenigstens, wie schön ich bin!’*^18

The appeal to beauty in Leverkühn’s music is most obviously displayed in the violin concerto, as this is the product of Leverkühn’s relationship with Schwerdtfeger, which Zeitblom calls “einen kecken Anschlag der Zutraulichkeit auf die Einsamkeit”.*^19 Amongst Leverkühn’s compositions, it is the one that most obviously struggles between beauty and an inborn scorn and distrust for the artifice that composition entails. Zeitblom says that the first movement, the ‘Andante amoroso’, is “ständig an der Grenze des Spottes gehaltene Süße und Zärtlichkeit”.*^20 It is certainly clear from Zeitblom’s description that, in giving in to this pathos, he does not feel that his friend has lived up to the quality of his other works.

The violin concerto is a good example of the continuing tension in Leverkühn’s work between seeking the large audience of the ‘Volk’ and the appreciation of the more elite ‘Publikum’, a key manifestation of the ontological struggle between music’s inwardness and its desire for ‘Durchbruch’. The composer himself is well aware of this, recognising exactly what Schwerdtfeger wants: “daß ich ein Violinkonzert für ihn schreibe, mit dem er sich in der Provinz hören lassen kann”.*^21 Despite Leverkühn’s assurance to Clarissa Rodde that he will not be swayed, Schwerdtfeger’s wish is eventually granted. Zeitblom’s pejorative

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17 Ibid., p. 321.
18 Ibid., p. 217.
19 Ibid., p. 467.
20 Ibid., p. 543.
21 Ibid., p. 272.
designation of the concerto as the “Apotheose der Salonmusik”\textsuperscript{22} is not simply an outburst of sour grapes about his friend’s intimacy with Schwerdtfeger. It is also a clear indication that Zeitblom feels the elite ‘Publikum’ is the natural audience for music of real quality, because anything less than or other than that would be in danger of becoming part of the poor taste of Adorno’s dreaded ‘Kulturindustrie’.

The problem of the ‘Kulturindustrie’ was an important and vigorously debated question in the first half of the twentieth century, at the time when Zeitblom is writing his account of Leverkühn’s compositions. In 1936, Walter Benjamin’s essay *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit* drew attention to the effect on the work of art of the possibility of mass reproduction, separating it from elevation as a select cult object. This was central to Benjamin’s concept of politics as the new function of the work of art, an important concept in terms of music’s spiritual capacity, as well as in this context of it gaining a wide audience:

> Der einzigartige Wert des >>echten<< Kunstwerks hat seine Fundierung im Ritual, in dem es seinen originären und ersten Gebrauchswert hatte....An die Stelle ihrer Fundierung aufs Ritual tritt ihre Fundierung auf eine andere Praxis: nämlich ihre Fundierung auf Politik.\textsuperscript{25}

Benjamin saw the mass production of a work of art as a step forward, in terms of opening the way to appreciation by the whole of society. This view was, of course, at odds with that of Adorno who saw great danger in freeing works of art from their aura of authority. He saw the homogenising effects of commercialisation, and easy appeal to a wide audience, as ultimately harmful for that audience. Isolation was a noble, if lonely, state for a work of art, and the inevitable fate of the avant-garde, which did not have wide appeal:

> Durch die Übermacht der Verteilungsmechanismen, die dem Kitsch und den ausverkauften Kulturgütern zur Verfügung stehen, wie durch die gesellschaftliche hervorbrachte Prädisposition der Hörer war die radikale Musik unterm späten Industrialismus in vollkommene Isolierung geraten.\textsuperscript{24}

In *Philosophie der neuen Musik*, Adorno traces back the mass conformism of music to trivia such as radio and advertising jingles. He sees the isolation of the avant-garde, if painful, as the only artistically honourable course for the composer to take:

> Das als Menschheit drapierte Einverständnis mit dem Hörer beginnt die technischen Standards zu zersetzen, welche das fortgeschrittene Komponieren erreicht hatte . . .Die Suche nach der verlorenen Zeit findet nicht einfach heim, sondern verliert

\textsuperscript{22}Ibid., p. 544.

\textsuperscript{23}Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Volume 1.2, edited by Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser, (Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1974), p. 480 & 482. This essay does not seem to have been a source for *Doktor Faustus*. Mann does not mention it in the *Entstehung*, but is impressed by Benjamin’s “tiefsinnige Buch über das deutsche Trauerspiel”, GW XI, p. 172.

\textsuperscript{24}TWA GS 12, p. 15.
We probably have a keener sense of the division between works of art for a mass and elite audience, now that the popular cinema is so much further developed than in the relatively early days in which Benjamin was writing so hopefully of its potential. He perhaps overstated the power of the commercial work of art, whilst Adorno may have been too optimistic about the power of the avant-garde.

Adorno’s view of the honourable status of the avant-garde seems to be the main message on the question of musical taste in relation to Leverkühn’s works. It is quite clear that Leverkühn’s music falls into the category of music that appeals to the ‘Publikum’ - none of it is accessible outside an initiated musical elite. The premiere of his *Apocalysis cum figuris*, for example, is not a popular success, and attracts a good deal of criticism. Its supporters, however, are deemed more intelligent than its detractors:

> Aber das Werk und das Wagnis seiner Darbietung fanden intelligente, des Wortes mächtige Verteidiger... dies Widerspiel zur nationalistisch-wagnerisch-romantischen Reaktion, wie sie namentlich in München zu Hause war, bildete durchaus auch schon ein Element unseres öffentlichen Lebens in der ersten Hälfte des Jahrzehnts.  

It might be imagined that Leverkühn’s creative ‘Durchbruch’ should have been one to a wider listening public. But he certainly never attains the ‘Kunst mit der Menschheit auf du und du’ that he once wistfully envisages.  

In any event, by Adorno’s reckoning, a ‘Durchbruch’ of this kind would have been no triumph at all, as such comfortable intimacy was no longer possible in the contemporary world; genuine expression may be difficult to reach, but it is almost as difficult to hear. Adorno’s brusque contrast between the feelings conveyed by Tschaikovsky’s ‘Schlagermelodien’ and by Schoenberg makes clear that he does not consider there is usually a correlation between the quality and genuineness of musical expression and the number of people who appreciate it:


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25 Ibid., p. 15-16.  
26 GW VI, p. 515-516.  
27 Ibid., p. 429.  
28 TWA GS 12, p. 20. It is important to emphasise that Adorno did not think there was usually such a correlation. This quotation says as much about Adorno’s view of Tschaikovsky as about the merits or otherwise of popular orchestral music generally. Adorno obviously did not believe that every melody that captured the imagination of the wider public was poor quality of musical expression, given his high estimation of the depth of Beethoven’s compositions “deren Themen der Mann in der Untergrundbahn
Leverkühn, and the novel as a whole, both take this message on board intellectually. There is, nonetheless, a lingering sense of tension between the two audiences, in which the longing for intimacy and popularity is never wholly quelled. Leverkühn’s attitude towards performance, however, is telling, and suggests that the isolation of the avant-garde has the upper hand. This is not out of intellectual snobbery, and a desire to appeal to a high class coterie, but simply artistic necessity. Leverkühn’s highly cerebral style means that although his compositions strive towards expression, paradoxically, he does not really see them as pieces of music for performance. Leverkühn’s main pleasure in composition - if indeed, it could be described as pleasure at all - is essentially selfish and inward-looking, so that his interest in his work seems to die once the score has been produced. This dismissal of performance goes beyond his rejection of the wider fame offered by the impresario, Saul Fitelberg. He often seems unwilling to attend performances of his own works, such as the 1926 premiere of his major oratorio, *Apocalipsis cum figuris*. He states quite clearly that he does not consider a performance to represent the actual composition, and incidentally, reinforces the divide between music’s ontology and its historical expressions, with the latter seen as a pale imitation:

Nach meiner Meinung genügt es völlig, wenn etwas einmal gehört worden ist, nämlich, als der Komponist es erdachte... Als ob die Leute je hörten, was da gehört worden ist. Komponieren heißt: einen Engelschor dem Zapfenstößer-Orchester zur Exekution auftragen.²⁹

4.2.2 Tension between sensuality and cerebralism

Like all other compositions, Leverkühn’s works embody both the sensual and cerebral aspects of music’s ontology. Although they are criticised by some for their bloodless intellectualism, the works are nonetheless unable to eradicate the natural sensual warmth of music. In one sense, the balance between subjectivity and objectivity is tipped, in the case of Leverkühn, to the extreme of objectivity. Yet, as noted in 3.3, it is excess subjectivity, foreshadowed in the use of sonata form by Beethoven and Brahms, that has culminated in this dialectical reversal in favour of objectivity:

Aber Freiheit ist ein anderes Wort für Subjektivität, und eines Tages hält es nicht mehr mit sich aus, irgendwann verzweifelt sie an der Möglichkeit, von sich aus schöpferisch zu sein, und sucht Schutz und Sicherheit beim Objektiven. Die Freiheit neigt immer zum dialektischen Umschlag³⁰

vor sich hin pfeift”. See 3.3, footnote 25. In the case of Beethoven, Adorno would say that the public did not fully appreciate the significance of what they were hearing. In the case of Tschaikovsky, presumably, that there was no deeper significance to appreciate.

²⁹ GW VI, p. 349.
³⁰ Ibid., p. 253.
Indeed, it must be arguable that the choice of twelve notes for a tone row is as subjective as the choice of a motif on which to base the development section of the sonata. In any event, surrender to an order that is self-imposed, however strict, must equate to extreme subjectivity of a kind: “gebunden durch selbstbereiteten Ordnungszwang, also frei”. In one sense, therefore, it is difficult to speak at all of a balance between sensuality and cerebralism in Leverkühn’s compositions, as they encapsulate both extreme cerebralism and the most complete subjectivity in a total surrender to serialism, and to the disease that enhances his creativity. This, in Zeitblom’s eyes, constitutes a deadly and unstable combination:

Hitze und Kälte walteten nebeneinander in seinem Werk, und zuweilen, in den genialsten Augenblicken, schlugen sie ineinander, das Espressivo ergriff den strikten Kontrapunkt, das Objektive rötete sich vor Gefühl, so daß man den Eindruck einer glühenden Konstruktion hatte, die mir, wie nichts anderes, die Idee des Dämonischen nahebrachte.

Fetzer notes that the combination of a cooling effect on the heat of inspiration, as a necessary part of the creative process, is a characteristic of Leverkühn that has its roots as far back as Tonio Kröger. Tonio says of feeling:

Das Gefühl, das warme herzliche Gefühl ist immer banal und unbrauchbar, und künstlerisch sind bloß die Gereiztheiten und kalte Ekstasen unseres verdorbenen, unseres artistischen Nervensystems ... Die Begabung für Stil, Form und Ausdruck setzt bereits dies kühle und wahrerische Verhältnis zum Menschlichen, ja, eine gewisse menschliche Verarmung und Verödung voraus.

There are many examples throughout Doktor Faustus of Leverkühn’s compositions combining cerebralism, of which he is very aware, and a yearning for the simple, spontaneous beauty that owes so much to music’s sensual warmth. One of the Brentano songs in particular, Die Lustigen Musikanten, reflects the same kind of dualism of system and human warmth as Beißel’s hymns. Despite the knowing ‘Erkenntnis’ with which the song is composed, it is sung by a boy whose voice Zeitblom describes as “unbeschreiblich zu Herzen gehend”. This dualism continues to the end of Leverkühn’s composing career. Bergsten notes that in taking back Beethoven’s ninth symphony, reversing the ending into an orchestral adagio, Dr. Fausti Wehklag is actually cancelling out the human voice, the prime representative of music’s sensual warmth. Yet even in this apparently final defeat, the sensual makes one final assault, returning as the sublime cello note offering the warmth of “ein Licht in der Nacht”, and acting as a final reminder that any true expression of music’s

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31 Ibid., p. 257, with my italics.
32 Ibid., p. 237.
33 J. Fetzer, op. cit., p. 52
34 GW VIII, p. 295.
35 GW VI, p. 246.
36 G. Bergsten, op. cit., p. 245.
ontology can never cancel out an essential part of it. The dangerous sexuality that is inherent in music’s sensuality is an important feature of Leverkühn’s compositions. In their artificial construction through the tone row, however, these compositions reflect the awareness of sterility, as opposed to the natural fertility of healthy, normal sexuality. The latter is surely an essentially human property of music, and as such, it could hardly be adequately expressed by the composer to whom Schwerdtfeger remarks:

War deine Musik unmenschlich bisher? Dann verdankt sie ihre Größe am Ende ihrer Unmenschlichkeit . . . Ich möchte kein menschlich inspiriertes Werk von dir hören.  

Whatever the sensual and sexual undertones and longings that constitute Leverkühn’s work, there can be no doubt that these works also reflect the other side of music, in their intense cerebralism. Despite Leverkühn’s very occasional lapses into sentimentality, his mission is to overcome the falsehood of ‘Schein’, with the weapon of cerebralism, which he already knows to be a property of music. He thus opposes the notion of ‘Erkenntnis’ to the sensual appeal of ‘Schein’, as explored in 4.1. This means that Leverkühn’s compositions have an almost, but not quite, complete objectivity: as noted above, even serialism has its measure of subjectivity. Zeitblom is obviously concerned that the extremes of cerebralism in ‘Erkenntnis’ will pervert the nature of the art that Leverkühn’s system sets out to rescue. He is worried that the delicate balance in music between subjectivity and objectivity will be tipped too far in favour of cerebralism:

Mit tiefer Sorge fragte ich mich, welche Anstrengungen, intellektuellen Tricks, Indirektheiten und Ironien nötig sein würden, [die Kunst] zu retten . . . und zu einem Werk zu gelangen, das als Travestie der Unschuld den Zustand der Erkenntnis einbekannt, dem es abgewonnen sein würde!

Leverkühn does seem to seek out something of the cerebralism that is part of the ontology of music, quite apart from his serialist system. In his description of his Brentano songs, Zeitblom says “Es wendet Musik hier ihr Auge auf sich selbst und schaut ihr Wesen an”\textsuperscript{40}, recalling the Schopenhauerean vision of music’s ‘Anti-Sinnlichkeit’ in Kretzschmar’s lecture ‘Die Musik und das Auge’, in which music reaches a state where it can contemplate itself objectively. Leverkühn’s compositions offer many examples of Kretzschmar’s description of this ‘Anti-Sinnlichkeit’, namely music’s ability to be judged qualitatively as much by close visual study of the score as by the more sensual means of simply listening to the music.

Griepenkerl, who transcribes the opera, \textit{Verlorene Liebesmüh}, calls it “eine musikalisch kaum

\textsuperscript{37} GW VI, p. 651. 
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., p. 579. 
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., p. 242. 
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., p. 245.
noch wirksame Töne-Mosaik, das eher zum Lesen als zum Hören bestimmt scheine".  
Leverkühn’s nephew, Echo, likes his uncle to show him the wordpainting in the score of the Ariel Songs, where the cock crows and the dog barks. Zeitblom notes that the ethereal quality of the settings is perceptible even “mit seines Geistes Ohr, beim Lesen”.

Leverkühn himself often seems indifferent to whether his music can be heard at all. His compositions sometimes appear to be purely academic exercises, so complex that they are destined only to be fully appreciated on the printed page. Zeitblom describes Verlorene Liebesmüh as: “ein nie entspanntes und spannend halsbrecherisches Spielen der Kunst am Rande der Unmöglichkeit”. And even though the violin concerto has a potentially wider audience, it is still technically very difficult, and performing it pushes Schwerdtfeger to his limits: “Der Schweiß perlte jedesmal, wenn er die Aufgabe durchgeführt”. Leverkühn’s string trio is described as “kaum spielbar…ebenso durch seinen konstruktiven Furor, die Hirnleistung, die es darstellt, wie durch die ungeahnten Klangmischungen”. The cerebralism of the tone row lies at the heart of this almost selfish notion of creativity. The complexity of its construction cannot be perceived by Leverkühn’s audience - a criticism that Zeitblom makes the first time Leverkühn explains the method to him. Leverkühn’s reply reflects the idea that cerebralism, rather than sensual appeal, can often be the mark of the greatest music. It also rather interestingly reveals the paradox that whilst serialism demonstrates both an ‘art for art’s sake’ complexity that the audience cannot appreciate, it also helps to retain some of the comfort of ‘Schein’ in that it shows merely an overall order, rather than detailed inner workings:

Wenn du unter ‘Hören’ die genaue Realisierung der Mittel im einzelnen verstehst, durch die die höchste und strengste Ordnung, eine sternensystemhafte, eine kosmische Ordnung und Gesetzhchkeit zustande kommt, nein, so wdrd man’s nicht hören. Aber diese Ordnung wird oder würd man hören, und ihre Wahrnehmung würd eine ungekannte ästhetische Genugtuung gewährn.

Despite this paradox, however, it is obvious that Leverkühn’s prime motivation is not to offer any new sort of ‘Schein’ substitute to his audience. His music comes across as unremittingly intellectual. The audience needs to think about it, rather than enjoy it. It is pure expression with no comfort or protection, typified by the counter-tenor Evangelist of the Apocalypseis cum figuris, “dessen kaltes Krâhen, sachlich, reporterhaft, in schauerlichem Gegensatz zu

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41 Ibid., p. 349.  
42 Ibid., p. 623.  
43 Ibid., p. 290.  
44 Ibid., p. 544.  
46 Ibid., p. 257.
dem Inhalt seiner katastrophalen Mitteilungen steht”. As Adorno wrote of Schoenberg, atonal music is still expressive of emotion, but the emotion is looked upon without disguise, almost clinically:

Es sind nicht Leidenschaften mehr fingiert, sondern im Medium der Musik unverstellt leibhafte Regungen des Unbewussten, Schocks, Traumata registriert . . . Die ersten atonalen Werke sind Protokolle im Sinn von psychoanalytischen Traumprotokollen.48

Despite the strong cerebralism, however, the tension between sensual emotion and high objectivity is never far away. Zeitblom notes that even the highly intellectual work, Apocalipsis cum figuris, has its paradoxes. It can prompt an emotional response to the music of the angelic choir (albeit a longing entirely without hope) amidst the realisation that the strictness of the composer’s system is such that these are the same notes used for the laughter in hell. Even in the most cerebral of its manifestations, Leverkühn’s compositions cannot quite do away with sensual response, and this oratorio music, says Zeitblom, “ist Adrian Leverkühn ganz. Es ist ganz die Musik, die er repräsentiert”.49

4.2.3 Lack of stability

Leverkühn begins composing with a high awareness of music’s lack of stability, at a time when tonality seems to have become entirely exhausted. His music sweeps away any illusion that accepted musical language can have been anything but convention, rather than something fixed for all time. He avoids using conventions that he considers tired out, and his very avoidance makes them more conspicuous. By setting Klopstock’s Frühlingsfeyer simply for baritone, organ and string orchestra, for example, he avoids obvious wordpainting such as the timpani for God’s thunderclap, or the harp for heaven. The contingency of musical language is even clearer in the Apocalipsis cum figuris, which turns on its head the longstanding convention that dissonance equals hell and harmony equals heaven:

Das ganze Werk ist von dem Paradoxon beherrscht (wenn es ein Paradoxon ist), daß die Dissonanz darin für den Ausdruck alles Hohen, Ernstes, Frommen, Geistigen steht, während das Harmonische und Tonale der Welt der Hölle, in diesem Zusammenhang also einer Welt der Banalität und des Gemeinplatzes, vorbehalten ist.50

The novel asserts that in the early twentieth century, composers seem to have no more solutions to the problems of the lack of stability of tonality as they now manifest themselves. The subjective inspiration of individuals is no longer enough. Leverkühn, however, chooses

48 TWA GS 12, p. 44.
49 Ibid., p. 503.
50 Ibid., p. 498.
not to operate within the parameters established by these difficulties. He takes the ultimate step of rejecting the worn-out system of tonality altogether, and imposing on music a system of his own. Although his system has been imposed on music from the outside, offering only a false stability and security, it does free the composer in binding him only by his own constraints: "Gebunden durch selbstbereiteten Ordnungszwang, also frei". Leverkühn's attitude to the tone row differs from that of Schoenberg, his real-life counterpart. For Schoenberg, there was never any sense of a sudden imposition, whereas Leverkühn imposes serialism quite coolly, as a pre-requisite for composing anything at all. Arnold Whittall says, in his study of music since 1918, that the technique grew for Schoenberg out of music itself. The decision was organic, not to be traced back to a single point of decision, and serialism was not seen by Schoenberg as a substitute for tonal harmony:

> To describe it as a decision is to minimise the instinctive, impulsive forces at work when he found himself moving away from the traditional tonal techniques he had used so powerfully and imaginatively. Leverkühn's very full explanation of the theory before he has properly tried it for composition is the very opposite of this almost unconscious approach. It has the flavour of a violent imposition of the will on the course of musical history. As such it quite properly provokes Zeitblom's political comparison with "die aus der Revolution geborene Diktatur".

The problem with imposing order in the way that Leverkühn does, is that such a system can never be genuinely objective. It is delivered on the composer's authority only, and has no prospect of appeal to any outside, larger cosmic order as tonal music does, even at its least stable. The subjective, imposed system can only attain objective status in so far as others are prepared to accept it as such. Adorno noted the danger of assuming this subjectivity was the objectivity it appeared to be:

> Das Zahlenspiel der Zwölfortechnik und der Zwang, den es ausübt, mahnt an die Astrologie, und es ist keine bloße Schulle, daß viele ihrer Adepten dieser verfielen. Die Zwölfzehntonalität nähert als ein geschlossenes und zugleich sich selbst undurchsichtiges System, in welchem die Konstellation der Mittel unmittelbar als Zweck und Gesetz hypostasiert wird, dem Aberglauben sich an.

Whilst Schoenberg certainly discouraged such an approach to the tone row, Leverkühn consciously exploits music's mathematical nature to an extreme degree. He uses the tone row to hide cyphers referring directly to his pact with the devil - hetaera esmeralda and "denn ich
sterbe als ein böser und guter Christ” - thus relating the technique to the dark, cabalistic side of music’s relationship to mathematics. Far from imbuing his compositions with precision, Zeitblom is suspicious that this mathematical so-called rationalism is, in reality, an abandonment of composition to chance, sliding into superstitious numerology:

Die Rationalität, nach der du rufst, hat viel von Aberglauben, - vom Glauben an das ungreißbar und vag Dämonische, das im Glücksspiel, im Kartenschlagen und Loseschütteln, in der Zeichendeutung sein Wesen treibt. Umgekehrt wie du sagst, scheint dein System mir eher danach angetan, die menschliche Vernunft in Magie aufzulösen.56

Zeitblom’s words of caution are a sharp reminder that cards and dice rely on apparently rational mathematics, but that we call those who trust in these gambles foolish or superstitious. We might make an exception for those who are abnormally mathematically clever, and might be able to ‘beat the cards’. In this case, concern is properly reserved for those who are less adept, but who might be encouraged by the abnormal successes to a faith in chance that they are unable to direct themselves. Zeitblom’s criticism of Leverkühn is made in precisely this spirit.

Leverkühn’s twelve tone system operates like a mathematical formula, given in advance as the method or assumption by which a set of problems should be solved. The tone row could be described as a set of musical assumptions that forms the basis of the whole composition, even if the simplicity of these is well hidden in the work’s complexity. Within these initial assumptions, Leverkühn is able to develop themes to an almost unlimited extent. When describing Leverkühn’s chamber music, Zeitblom says that themes are never recapitulated without some sort of embellishment, and that different sounds and themes are held together only by the remotest of connections. The music is thus akin to the higher reaches of mathematics, in that what is created is internally consistent, and works within the given formulae, but appears to most people to have little relationship to reality. The chamber music is a case in point, as it is virtually unplayable. Leverkühn appropriately describes the string trio in mathematical language:

Ein Tumult von Problemen, die zusammen mit ihren Lösungen hereinbrachen; ‘eine Nacht’, sagte Adrian, ‘in der es vor Blitzen nicht dunkel wird.57

4.2.4 Spiritual capacity

Leverkühn’s compositions reflect the spiritual capacity of music in a number of ways. Virtually all of them demonstrate in some form the ability of music to revisit its primal

56 GWVI, p. 258.
57 Ibid., p. 607.
beginnings, the most frequent and important manifestation in *Doktor Faustus* of the spiritual capacity that is part of music’s ontology. Leverkühn’s own compositions are seen to relate to each other in a cyclical way; they revisit each other, rather than representing a linear, forward development. Zeitblom remarks that the *Gesta Romanorum* reverts to the tonal language of *Verlorene Liebesmüh*, whilst the style of *Die Wunder des Alls* is more like that of the two later oratorios. Zeitblom notes that this is a phenomenon his friend has in common with other composers: “solche Vorwegnahmen und Überlagerungen kommen im kreativen Leben ja häufig vor”.

Leverkühn’s most important method of renewing and revisiting music is his use of the tone row. In exactly the same way that it yields dissonances, the tone row can also yield ‘banalities’ such as a simple triad or diminished seventh chord - any of these simply arise from the notes chosen from the row. Taken out of the context of tonality, and put into the new context of the tone row, these instances of tonality no longer appear outdated, but are in fact renewed. This phenomenon in Leverkühn’s compositions is a key example of the cyclical nature of music history; ‘eternal recurrence’ of elements of tonality happens even when they have been thought to be exhausted. Zeitblom’s description of this phenomenon explicitly associates it with Nietzsche’s concept of ‘ewige Wiederkehr’, which he believes to lie at the very heart of the way in which the world works:

Die Vereinigung des Ältesten mit dem Neuesten . . . die doch mitnichten eine Tat der Willkür ist, sondern in der Natur der Dinge liegt: sie beruht, so möchte ich sagen, auf der Krümmung der Welt, die im Spätesten das Früheste wiederkehren läßt.

This recurrence in the tone row is seen to be a truly revivifying phenomenon in Leverkühn’s compositions. The appearance of tonal harmony in the midst of atonality even makes it seem more daring than the most outrageous dissonance. One example is the Blake songs, in which Leverkühn’s use of very simple harmony, “im Verhältnis zu der Tonsprache des Ganzen - ‘falscher’, zerrissener, unheimlicher wirkten als die gewagtesten Spannungen”. Later, Zeitblom’s description of the *Apocalipsis cum figuris* as “eine explodierende Altertümlichkeit” perfectly captures the paradox of the ancient and familiar made to be shocking. In this ‘Nietzsche novel’ of *Doktor Faustus*, such instances also reflect Nietzsche’s doctrine of ‘Reaktion als Fortschritt’, which is suggested by Leverkühn’s reflections when he first explains his system to Zeitblom:

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58 Ibid., p. 425.
59 Ibid., p. 499. This recurrence in the *Apocalipsis cum figuris* is also mirrored by the similarity of the different apocalyptic visions, in which “einer nachfiebert, was andere vorgefiebert”, ibid., p. 475.
60 Ibid., p. 350.
61 Ibid., p. 501.
Interessanter Lebenserscheinungen . . . haben wohl immer dieses Doppelgesicht von Vergangenheit und Zukunft, wohl immer sind sie progressiv und regressiv in einem. Sie zeigen die Zweideutigkeit des Lebens selbst.62

The combination of progress and regression is, crucially, a result of the knowingness with which Leverkuhn composes, in his reliance on ‘Erkenntnis’. What appears simple and spontaneous is usually the product of a severely intellectual process. Thus, although Dr. Fausti Wehkleag clearly recalls Monteverdi and his contemporaries, it has an extra layer of intellect and complexity:

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Nur daß der dialektische Prozeß, durch welchen auf der Entwicklungsstufe, die dieses Werk einnimmt, der Umschlag von strengster Gebundenheit zur freien Sprache der Affekts, die Geburt der Freiheit aus der Gebundenheit, sich vollzieht, unendlich komplizierter, unendlich bestürzender und wunderbarer in seiner Logik erscheint als zur Zeit der Madrigalisten.63

Another example of Leverkuhn drawing out the complexity of the very old occurs in his continual development of the fugue theme in the *Apocalipsis cum figuris*, which is reminiscent of the elaborate counterpoint of the earliest ricercares:

Dieser Weg, in dem Rückschritt und Fortschritt, das Alte und Neue, Vergangenheit und Zukunft eins wurden . . . ein neuigkeitsvolles Zurückgehen über Bachs und Händels bereits harmonische Kunst hinaus in die tiefere Vergangenheit echter Mehrstimmigkeit.64

Apparent simplicity is thus not truly spontaneous, but, as Zeitblom remarks of the Brentano songs, a “Travestie der Unschuld”.65 Leverkuhn often deliberately seeks to reverse normal assumptions about simplicity and complexity, as in the *Gesta Romanorum*, where the most complex music is used for the simplest parts of the stories, and an almost childish simplicity for the most complicated parts.66 Carnegie notes that this reversal of expected values, too, can be traced to Nietzsche, who recognised that it was necessary to reverse values before they could be subject to the revaluation for which he strove.67

Some of Leverkuhn’s compositions even regress to an era that predates civilisation itself, in a quest for the cultic experience of whose demise in modern, individualistic music he is only too aware. When this topic is first raised, Zeitblom expresses fear that going back beyond music’s cultural state would mean embracing barbarism.68 This fear stems from his belief that however great a capacity music has to revisit its earliest beginnings, it cannot be right or

62 Ibid., p. 258.
63 Ibid., p. 644.
64 Ibid., p. 494.
65 Ibid., p. 494.
66 Ibid., p. 242.
67 Ibid., p. 426.
68 GW VI, p. 82.
safe to ignore progress altogether. The return to the cultic is particularly apparent in Leverkühn’s two great oratorios, which are full of instances of regression to an almost dithyrambic manifestation of music, in which everything is subordinated to a collective ecstatic experience. The style of the *Apocalipsis cum figuris* abandons all interest in the individual. It is described as “am Psychologischen nicht länger interessiert”, and in composing it, Leverkühn styles himself as Perotinus Magnus, thus referring to one of the first known composers of polyphony. The music of the oratorio regresses to a point even before musical expression of any kind, in which musical notes are scarcely identifiable, singing is whispering, and orchestral accompaniment mere sound.

Wie oft ist dieses bedrohliche Werk in seinem Drange, das Verborgenste musikalisch zu enthüllen, das Tier im Menschen wie seine sublimsten Regungen, vom Vorwurf des blutigen Barbarismus sowohl wie der blutlosen Intellektualität getroffen worden!

So it is that the *Apocalipsis* is described as having “Geheul als Thema”, and that Zeitblom sees a clear danger of inhumanity and barbarism in the extreme regression it undertakes, not least because, as noted in 3.2, the service of music to the church is viewed in *Doktor Faustus* as a merely historical phenomenon. Music has far more sinister options open to it, once the spiritual capacity that is part of its ontology is entirely separated from its traditional function in organised religion:


The formlessness of the sound is encapsulated in Leverkühn’s use of the uncontrolled glissando in the voice as well as in orchestral instruments:

Ein aus tief kulturellen Gründen mit größter Vorsicht zu behandelndes Mittel, dem ich immer eine anti-kulturelle, ja anti-humane Dämonie abzuohören geneigt war . . . Aber das Markerschütterndste ist die Anwendung des Glissando auf die menschliche Stimme, die doch das erste Objekt der Tonordnung und der Befreiung aus dem Urzustande des durch Stufen gezogenen Heulens war.

Leverkühn also regresses to primeval sound in *Dr. Fausti Weheklag*. In this case, however, although the expression also focuses on the human voice, it is (a pun on Nepomuk’s nickname) in the form of an echo. The composition therefore represents progress from the all too natural, primeval ‘Geheul’ of human pain. Rather, the expression it attains is depicted as nature’s giving back of the voice to man. Even though this, too, is something reaching back beyond the cultural form of music, the process of the echo does transfigure the sound from ‘Geheul’ into the more focused ‘Klage’:

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69 Ibid., p. 496 & 494.
70 Ibid., p. 497.
71 Ibid., p. 495.
72 Ibid., p. 497.
Das Echo, das Zurückgeben des Menschenlautes als Naturlaut und seine Enthüllung als Naturlaut, ist wesentlich Klage, das wehmütvolle 'Ach ja!' der Natur über den Menschen und die versuchende Kundgebung seiner Einsamkeit.\(^73\)

Despite the apparent barbarism of Leverkühn’s compositions, the reader is rarely allowed to overlook the fact that the devices he uses emanate from the spiritual capacity of music that is so vital a part of its ontology. This capacity is a void that must be filled, and which Leverkühn has chosen to fill with a belief in the devil, constantly referring to this in his compositions. *Doktor Faustus* presents a number of different forms of this brand of spirituality. As shown in the identity between the diabolic laughter and the angelic choir in the *Apocalipsis cum figuris*, and similar convergences in *Dr. Fausti Weheklag*, it is difficult to assert that either good or evil ever truly gains the upper hand in the novel. In many ways, Leverkühn’s music shows him to be the most spiritual character in the novel, as it appears to manifest a longing for belief on both a spiritual and artistic level. It is significant, in this context, to note Constant Lambert’s remark in his 1934 study of the supposed decline of music, that atonalism “like blasphemy, requires a background of belief for its full effect”. Lambert also observes that Schoenberg’s earlier work shows how devout a believer in tonality he once was, and that “his later eccentricities are in direct ratio to his conventionalities, just as the excesses of a revolution are in direct ratio to the previous oppression”.\(^74\) Whilst it could never be said that Leverkühn had ‘believed’ in tonality, it is perfectly possible to see the excesses of his radical intellectualism as in direct proportion to his desire to have believed.

Zeitblom appreciates Leverkühn’s background of belief when he realises with some dismay that the Klopstock ode setting is composed as a form of atonement. Leverkühn’s belief in his chosen, diabolical, form of transcendence is nothing if not genuine. The Ode is “ein Werk der attritio cordis, geschaffen, wie ich schaudemd vermute, unter den Drohungen jenes auf seinem Schein bestehenden Besuchers”.\(^75\) One critic in the novel, Jimmerthal, commenting on the opera *Verlorene Liebesmüh*, gives some credence to the notion that this is the work of a “gottgeistiger Mensch”.\(^76\) It is therefore not entirely wishful thinking on Zeitblom’s part when he perceives in Leverkühn’s music a “Verlangen nach Seele”, which is symbolised in his friend’s identification with Hans Christian Andersen’s mermaid’s struggle to gain a human soul:

\(^{73}\) Ibid., p. 644.  
\(^{75}\) GW VI, p. 353.  
\(^{76}\) Ibid., p. 350.
Seelenlosigkeit! Ich weiß wohl, dies ist im Grunde, was diejenigen meinen, die das Wort 'Barbarismus' gegen Adrians Schöpfung im Munde führen . . . Man verzeihe mir die gewissermaßen ins Blaue gerichtete Polemik, aber Barbarei, Unmenschlichkeit sehe ich darin, ein solches Verlangen nach Seele - das Verlangen der kleinen Seejungfrau - Seelenlosigkeit zu nennen!  

Leverkühn's longing for the otherworldly becomes more pronounced towards the end of his creative life, partly because of his feeling that his nephew is a visitation from another sphere. His Ariel songs, composed during Nepomuk's visit, are very ethereal, and the culmination of his work, Dr. Fausti Weheklag, is shot through with the notion of salvation, despite its composer's conviction that he can never attain it.

There is also some evidence in Leverkühn's music of manifestations of the Lutheran ontological characteristics of music. Mann clearly intended Leverkühn's music to equate with his view of the harmful musicality emanating from the German soul from Luther's time, making the devil state: "Wenn du den Mut hätttest, dir zu sagen: 'Wo ich bin, da ist Kaisersaschem', gelt, so stimmte die Sache auf einmal". Leverkühn's pact with the devil provides the supreme example of the 'dear purchase' of composition, the sublime struggle and difficulty. In the constant reminders of the pact that appear in his compositions, they manifest clearly the Lutheran sensitivity to sin. In Leverkühn's case, however, the 'dear purchase' of composition lies not in the process of composition itself, for the diabolic inspiration makes this much easier than is normally the case. The Apocalipsis cum figuris, for example, is described as if Leverkühn were more or less taking dictation. Zeitblom writes of the

... ganz und gar unheimliche Rapidität, mit der es zustande kam - der Hauptsache nach in viereinhalb Monaten, in einer Zeitspanne, die man ihm allenfalls als mechanischer Schreiberei, als bloßer Abschrift zugemessen hätte.

The struggle lies in the price that Leverkühn must pay for this ease, rather than in the process of composition itself. This may be because if composition itself has become so impossible, the struggle that is a necessary part of it must be found elsewhere. In this struggle, Leverkühn is as terrifying a figure as Beethoven in the doorway. The reader is left in no doubt, however, that the suffering is a necessary concomitant of Leverkühn's musical achievements, perhaps even an honourable sacrifice. It is certainly not something that can be separated from music:

Die Schauer der Selbstverehrung, ja des köstlichen Grauens vor sich selbst, unter denen er sich wie ein begnadetes Mundstück, wie ein göttliches Untier erscheint ... Das sind Schmerzen, die man für das enorm Genossene mit Vergnügen und Stolz in Kauf nimmt.

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77 Ibid., p. 501.
78 Ibid., p. 301-302.
79 Ibid., p. 477.
80 Ibid., p. 307.
4.3 Adrian Leverkühn's historical identity

4.3.1 Leverkühn as intermediary between music and historical reality

Section 3.1 identified the composer as the link between the timeless ontology of music, and particular socio-historical circumstances. Music itself is unable to participate in these historical situations without the composer’s intervention to mould its ontology into specific compositions. Having examined the way in which Leverkühn’s compositions manifest the ontology of music, the next step in understanding the connections between music and history in Doktor Faustus must be to consider how Leverkühn acts as an intermediary between his compositions and the society in which they are created. So far, this chapter has shown Leverkühn’s music as a music of crisis. It is reasonable to suppose that this crisis arises not only from music itself, but ultimately from some crisis of the society in which it is composed, which the composer cannot help but express. As this chapter will show, however, it is actually very difficult to make this sort of connection through Leverkühn, beyond the generalised sense of a crisis of modernity. His identity as a composer does not readily bind him to the Germany of the first half of the twentieth century. He is uninvolved in public life, and there is little sense of him as a psychological personality beyond his tormented composing.

There can be no doubt that if Mann had wanted to bridge the gap between music and history by showing a clear effect of one on the other, he could easily have done so by depicting a composer who wrote music specifically to glorify the Third Reich. Music was an essential part of the aesthetic experience of Nazism. This is clearly demonstrated in Leni Riefenstahl’s film of the 1934 Nuremberg Nazi Party Rally, Triumph des Willens. The rally was planned from the outset as a film set, and uses Wagnerian music at salient points. If Mann had wanted to show a composer of a higher quality and broader range than the average composer of Nazi marching tunes, he could have turned to the more subtle link between music and history when music is appropriated, often after the composer’s death, to promote political objectives, a category into which Beethoven falls, as well as Wagner. Beethoven was seized as a political symbol even though, as Celia Applegate notes in her essay on the Germans and music, he was himself “clearly more concerned with human beings than with Germans as

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1 Peter Nowotny, in his detailed study of the film, suggests that not enough attention has been given to the prominence of music in its effect. The music, he says, reinforces the powerful images throughout: “In der Verbindung von Bild und Ton erfährt der Film erst seine Präzisierung”. See Peter Nowotny, Leni Riefenstahl: Triumph des Willens, Arbeitshefte zur Medientheorie und Medienpraxis, Vol. 3, (Dortmund, Nowotny, 1981), p. 128.
such". Although Wagner was a well-known anti-Semite, the Nazis did not simply use his views to reinforce their own stance on German nationalism. Much more important was the extraordinary force of Wagner’s music, and his whole sense of myth and its staging, to encourage people to suspend their rationality and be carried along unthinking on the tide of the moment, as Triumph des Willens set out to do. Goebbels’ broadcast for Hitler’s birthday celebration on 19 April 1942 sought to orchestrate the people’s response to Beethoven’s ninth symphony, the key composition in Doktor Faustus. The speech lays bare the ends to which the Nazis sought to use what had started out as innocent, if stirring, music (and, incidentally, the Germans’ awareness of the Faust legend):

> Wenn jemals die deutsche Nation sich vereint gefühlt hat in einem Gedanken und in einem Willen, dann in dem, ihm zu dienen und seinem Gebot zu folgen. Diesmal sollen die Klänge der heroischen Titanenmusik, die je einem faustischen deutschen Herzen entströmten, dieses Bekenntnis in eine ernste und weihevolle Höhe erheben.

At no point during his lifetime or after his death, however, is Leverkühn’s music used in such a way. The Nazis would have dismissed it, like other atonality, as degenerate, and a threat to the ‘Volk’. Indeed, so remote is Leverkühn himself from the ‘Volk’, so enclosed, as Georg Lukács observed, in the ‘Studierstube’ of the original Faust, that he cannot think of the ‘Volk’ outside inverted commas, as something real that could include him personally. The devil whom Leverkühn struggles with is not, like Goethe’s, from the external world, but, as in Dostoyevsky’s The Brothers Karamazov, a projection of his inner life. His life in the ‘Studierstube’ is depicted apart from, rather than entangled with, the fate of Germany:

> So entsteht ein Faust, dessen Umwelt ausschließlich die ‘kleine Welt’ der Studierstube bildet, in Wechselwirkung mit jenem Leben, das an die Tür der Studierstube pochen muß und pochen kann.

Leverkühn deliberately seeks out isolation, and his contact with the outside world is so scarce that it is difficult to imagine that anything he does could possibly affect any other individual, much less a whole society. The impresario Fitelberg understands that Leverkühn sees his destiny “als etwas zu Einmaliges . . . und . . . zu heilig . . . um es mit anderen auszumauern”. In the three main discussion circles that depict the intellectual history in the novel - the Winfried student group, the “stubenreine Bohème” of Munich before the war, and the Kridwiß circle during the Weimar Republic, he plays practically no role at all. Zeitblom later reflects that even when Leverkühn studied theology - an otherworldly,

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5 Ibid., p. 46.
6 GW VI, p. 537.
intellectual pursuit in which he might have felt more at home - he was not really a part of the faculty: "Du warst von ihrer Fakultät . . . und im Grunde mehr Hospitant als ich". It is clear from Zeitblom's description of Leverkühn in his student days that he is not destined to participate in society in the same way that his contemporaries will. His life is simply not running on the same plane. His existence is in the realm of metaphysics, argument and symbol rather than the real world in which the other students will eventually play their parts:

Ich spürte, nicht ohne Beklemmung, einen Schicksalsabgrund zwischen dieser strebend gehobenen Jugend und seiner Existenz, den Unterschied der Lebenskurve zwischen gutem, ja vortrefflichem Durchschnitt, dem bald aus dem vagierenden, versuchenden Burschentum ins bürgerliche Leben einzulunken bestimmt war, und dem unsichtbar Gezeichneten, der den Weg des Geistes und der Problematik nie verlassen, ihn wer weiß wohin weitergehen sollte, und dessen Blick, dessen nie ganz ins Brüderliche sich lösende Haltung, dessen Hemmungen beim Du- und Ihr- und Wir-Sagen mich und wahrscheinlich auch die anderen empfinden ließ, daß auch er diesen Unterschied ahnte.*

It is taken for granted in the novel that Leverkühn knows nothing of events in the world outside, and it must therefore be impossible for him to connect his music with the contemporary history of which he knows little and cares nothing. This isolation from external events is especially evident when Zeitblom goes to take his leave of him at the beginning of World War One: "Um Adrian Lebewohl zu sagen, dessen personliche Unberührtheit von dem Ganzen mir die selbstverständlichste Sache der Welt war, führ ich nach Pfeiffering hinaus". Although Leverkühn says to Zeitblom "Ihr geht statt meiner", he goes on to admit that even if this substitute had not been available, he would not have participated in the war: "Ich wäre ohnedies nicht gegangen. Ihr helft mir aus einer Verlegenheit".  

Even in artistic matters, Leverkühn is quite abnormally self-absorbed. As already noted, it takes some prompting from Kretzschmar to make him realise that his own perception of the difficulties with the 'Schein' of late Romantic music indicates a more general cultural crisis shared by his fellow musicians. And at no point does he begin to articulate the possibility that cultural problems might reflect a deeper social crisis. The only hint of social awareness or conscience comes during his highly stylised final speech at Pfeiffering:

Daß alles zu schwer worden ist und Gottes armer Mensch nicht mehr aus und ein weiß in seiner Not, das ist wohl Schuld der Zeit . . . Denn es heißt: Seid nüchtern und wacht! Das aber ist manches Sache nicht, sondern, statt klug zu sorgen, was vonnöten auf Erden, damit es dort besser werde.  

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7 Ibid., p. 662.
8 Ibid., p. 409.
9 Ibid., p. 404.
10 Ibid., p. 410.
11 Ibid., p. 404.
Hans R. Vaget argues that this speech offers some sort of glimpse of a new social order, or at least, an alternative to what has gone before. It is difficult, though, to see Leverkühn’s ‘Klage’ in Dr. Faustus Wehklag as anything other than intensely personal. The impetus for the composition springs directly from the death of his nephew, although those who, like Zeitblom, stand outside this personal situation see the revocation of far more. In his dialogue with Leverkühn, the devil does hint at a more direct relationship between the cultural and political crises, although if his remarks are meant to refer to the Holocaust, they would have more resonance for Zeitblom, Mann and the reader than Leverkühn himself, as the actual events did not occur until nearly thirty years after the dialogue is supposed to have taken place:

\[\text{Es wird getan . . . im schalldichten Keller, tief unter Gottes Gehör, und zwar in Ewigkeit. Nein, es ist schlecht davon zu reden, es liegt abseits und außerhalb der Sprache . . . Richtig ist, daß es in der Schalldichtigkeit recht laut, maßlos und bei weitem das Ohr überfüllend laut sein wird von Gilfen und Girren, Heulen, Stöhnen, Brüllen, Gurgeln, Kreischen, Zetern, Griesgramen, Betteln und Folterjubel, so daß keiner sein eigenes Singen vernehmen wird, weil's in dem allgemeinen erstickt, dem dichten, dicken Hollengejauchz und Schandgetriller.}\]

Mann did say that the description of hell was directly connected to Nazi atrocities: “Im Ohr der hysterischen Deklamationen der deutschen Ansager über den >>heiligen Freiheitskampf gegen die seelenlose Masse<< schrieb ich die Seiten über die Hölle ... nicht denkbar übrigens ohne die innere Erfahrung des Gestapokellers”. These horrifying sounds could be seen to be reflected in the raw and unfocussed sounds of the Apocalipsis cum figuris, but there is nothing to compare with the direct referentiality of a work such as, for example, Schoenberg’s A Survivor from Warsaw (Op. 46, 1947). Schoenberg composed this work following a report of Jews finding courage, on their way to the gas chambers, in singing ‘Shema Yisroel’, the command to love God. It is difficult to link Leverkühn with contemporary events, or indeed to indict him as complicit in anything at all. Even his guilt at the murder of Schwerdtfeger, for which he blames himself, is unconvincing: “ich...will’s gebeicht haben, heut und hier vor euch allen, daß ich vor euch sitze auch noch als ein Mörder.” Any direct link of responsibility between Leverkühn with the horrors of Nazism, which happen after his mental collapse, is simply unthinkable. There is, as J P Stern has observed, “very little objective evil ... that Adrian actually commits”.

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13 GW VI, p. 327.
14 GW XI, p. 217.
15 GW VI, p. 664.
16 J. P. Stern, History and Allegory, p. 12.
Even without taking account of his political non-engagement, and his lack of awareness of the important historical events unfolding around him, nothing marks Leverkühn out definitely as a citizen of early twentieth century Germany. Zeitblom makes clear in the very first chapter of *Doktor Faustus* that Leverkühn does not himself have any sense of belonging to particular groups, and by implication, to his contemporary world: "Seine Gleichgültigkeit war so groß, daß er kaum jemals gewahr wurde was um ihn her vorging, in welcher Gesellschaft er sich befand...".17 If anything, Leverkühn is part of a Germany long past. His home town of Kaiseraschern not only holds the remains of Kaiser Otto III, but also recalls Luther and Faust. As such, the town recalls the most ancient Germany history. Although Leverkühn moves away from Kaiseraschern when he grows up, his environment does not change substantially. Zeitblom muses, when they go to study theology in Halle: "wenn ich mich umsah in unserem neuen Lebenskreis, so fand ich, daß der Schauplatz sich zwar erweitert, aber nicht wesentlich verändert hatte".18 Leverkühn certainly never loses his roots in the past rather than the present. Gunilla Bergsten observes that: "Das geographische und soziologische Symbol der „faustisch-dürerischen“ Sphäre, die Adrian ständig umgibt, ist Kaiseraschern".19

None of Leverkühn’s homes seems to touch contemporary German society. When he goes to study theology in Halle, the reader is reminded that it is a city “dessen geistiger Raum seit Jahrhunderten voll war von religiösen Kontroversen”, and is told some of the highlights of its sixteenth century religious history.20 Leverkühn lives in a room overlooking the medieval marketplace, with his magic square on the wall, and his lecturers, especially Kumpf, recall a much earlier time: “auf gut alt-deutsch, ohn’ einige Bemantelung und Gleisnerlei”.21 When he moves to Leipzig, also full of history, to concentrate on music, Leverkühn writes to Zeitblom in a parody of old German. Palestrina, where the dialogue with the devil takes place, is the birthplace of the sixteenth century composer, and its deep roots in the past, rather than modern life, are emphasised when the reader is told: “Praeneste mit ihrem antiken Namen und als Penestrino, Trutzburg der Fürsten Colonna, von Dante im 27. Gesange des >Inferno< erwähnt”.22 Perhaps most importantly, Leverkühn’s residence for eighteen years - most of his composing life - is in a relic of a bygone age, the Schweigestill farm at Pfeiffering. Frau Schweigestill is initially surprised that someone like him should want to lodge there, in a place so apart from modern life:

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17 GWVI, p. 13.
18 Ibid., p. 124.
20 GWVI, p. 118.
21 Ibid., p. 129.
22 Ibid., p. 281.
But Leverkühn very deliberately uproots himself from the contemporary culture of Munich, to move to the timeless Pfeiffering. In doing so, he not only deliberately repeats his country childhood, but transports himself to a bygone age: "Bald war das Klosterbarock von Haus Schweigestill in Sicht". Gunilla Bergsten's observation that Leverkühn's life does not proceed horizontally like a melodic line, but is like a chord, into which many centuries of German history are compressed, is justly much quoted. Leverkühn unifies a range of historical periods in one creative life, rather than acting as a composing intermediary between the ontology of music and his contemporary German history. Leverkühn seems to be intended as the musical Faust Mann referred to in Deutschland und die Deutschen as "der Repräsentant der deutschen Seele", rather than a historically specific person in his own right. Leverkühn does not connect with one specific contemporary period of history - in this case, the early twentieth century Germany in which he is composing - but several at once.

4.3.2 Leverkühn’s universal identity

A number of studies of Doktor Faustus have examined Leverkühn’s personal characteristics in the light of important figures in German cultural history such as Nietzsche, Luther, Mahler, or Mann himself. Each of these is relevant to the composer’s historical identity, but more important than any single one of these identities is the total character they create. Because this character encompasses so much, it can hardly be seen as an individual psychological identity in its own right. Indeed, the similarities to German figures seem greatly outweighed by the fact that Leverkühn’s characteristics strongly resemble the ontological characteristics of music itself. A closer examination reveals that whilst some of the characteristics are the same, others are the inverse, or perhaps, as Mann said of Hitler’s relationship to art, a perversion or ‘Verhunzung’ of music’s characteristics. Leverkühn seems far from being a composing individual who can mould music in interaction with his own contemporary society. He not only appears to have no real connection with the specifics of German society.
in the twentieth century, but is also in some sense an embodiment of music itself, and must therefore find it difficult to stand outside it.

Leverkühn has characteristics in common with each of the key features of the ontology of music. First, his whole life is a tragic reflection of music’s struggle for ‘Durchbruch’. His string of failed relationships reflects this impulse to escape natural inwardness, as well as music’s uncertainty about who its audience should be. Whilst Leverkühn’s capitulation to Schwerdtfeger’s advances and his bungled marriage proposal to Marie Godeau demonstrate his longing for intimacy, to be accepted as part of a larger whole, like the ‘Volk’, his self-imposed isolation and elitism dooms him to remain outside this collective happiness. His relationships with Zeitblom and Jeannette Scheurl might be said to be more successful, but neither involves love. Other than this, Leverkühn’s relationships essentially rest on shared intellectual interests, as in his contact with Schildknapp, or the unequal admiration of acolytes, such as the comical figures of Meta Nackedey and Kunigunde Rosenstiel. His relationship with the Schweigestill family is more fulfilling. Indeed, T. J. Reed has argued that Frau Schweigestill is perhaps the only character who properly understands and pleads for Leverkühn. And he does achieve a union of sorts with Frau von Tolna, symbolised in the ring he wears when composing. Yet if we take as read her identity with hetaera esmeralda, Leverkühn’s union is with nothing other than his art, coming full circle to music, so that he has not reached beyond himself at all.

Leverkühn reflects both the sensual and cerebral side of music’s ontology. His character is obviously heavily weighted towards cerebralism. His concentration on the mathematical and highly theoretical, whether the subject is marine biology or music itself, mirrors music’s capacity for high abstraction. The relationship of his character to the sensual side of music is more complex. Leverkühn’s coldness is an important leitmotif in the novel, which Zeitblom emphasises at the very beginning and connects with the later dialogue with the devil: “Um ihn war Kälte - und wie wird mir zumute, indem ich dies Wort gebrauche, das auch er in einem ungeheuerlichen Zusammenhange einst niederschrieb.” Ignace Feuerlicht draws attention to Gottfried Benn’s identification of coldness as the inevitable state of the modern artist. Coldness, however, is Leverkühn’s natural state, not simply a forced attitude out of necessity for art, and as such his character is a direct inversion of music’s natural warmth.

28 GW VI, p. 13.

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This coldness does, however, exist in some tension with its opposite, in the form of the heat of the - admittedly artificial - inspiration given to Leverkühn through his pact with the devil. It is clear, however, that coldness will always be Leverkühn’s dominant characteristic: “kalt wollen wir dich, daß kaum die Flammen der Produktion heiß genug sein sollen, dich darin zu wärmen. In sie wirst du flüchten aus deiner Lebenskälte”. The feverish red cheeks Zeitblom reports Leverkühn to have in the process of composition indicate the unhealthy tension between the two which rages within him.

Leverkühn also reflects music’s inherent sexuality. Although celibate for most of his life, sexuality plays a vital role in his existence. The sexual act is necessary for him to contract the disease that will give him his fevered inspiration. His diseased sexuality is inevitably a perversion of the natural, spontaneous sexuality which is so often at the heart of music. Leverkühn’s abnormality is emphasised by comparison with Zeitblom’s youthful experiments and his later contented marriage. There is never any prospect of Leverkühn regaining a natural sexuality, as he is forbidden the love that would render it natural and healthy, and never has the innocence that must be a precondition of natural pleasure. His knowing ‘Erkenntnis’ stretches to the realm of sexuality, which he can discuss only if it is not on a personal level. Zeitblom reports that:

... das Gebiet der Liebe, des Geschlechtes, des Fleisches war niemals in unseren Gesprächen auf eine irgend persönliche und intime Weise berührt worden; niemals anders als durch das Medium von Kunst und Literatur, anläßlich der Manifestationen der Leidenschaft in der Sphäre des Geistes, hatte dies Wesen in unseren Austausch hineingespielt, und dabei waren sachlich wissende Äußerungen von seiner Seite gefallen, bei denen seine Person völlig aus dem Spiele blieb....Dergleichen hatte nichts Jungferliches; es zeugte vom einem freien und gelassenen Ins-Auge-Fassen der Welt der Begierde.

It is made obvious that Leverkühn takes the initiative in sealing the pact with the devil. He is led to the brothel unexpectedly on his first encounter with hetaera esmeralda, but freely chooses to return to her, and to proceed even when she warns him of her infection. Despite Zeitblom’s vain attempts to introduce the notion of love into the event, there is no real sense of the presence of Eros or any other form of love. The pact is thus sealed long before Chapter XXV, and the devil is justified in saying he is an invited guest, because of something inherent in Leverkühn’s character: “Da siehst du’s, auf die Disponiertheit, die Bereitschaft, die Einladung kommt alles an.....Wir schaffen nichts Neues - das ist andrer Leute Sache. Wir entbinden nur und setzen frei”.  

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30 GW VI, p. 332.
31 Ibid., p. 195.
32 Ibid., p. 311 & 315.
As a result of his failed relationships, Leverkühn’s life, like music, never really achieves stability. Each failed relationship is marked with a composition: for example, the violin concerto for Schwerdtfeger, \textit{Dr. Fausti Weheklag} for Echo. Both Leverkühn and music thus have a history that amounts to a series of episodes, seeking to solve problems that lie in their innermost beings. At the same time, Leverkühn’s childhood and family life at Buchel is an image of stability to which his life returns in an ‘eternal recurrence’ of its own, reflecting music’s ability to revisit its primal beginnings. His lodgings at Pfeiffering mirror his own family home and its inhabitants in extraordinary detail, such as the dog whom he renames Suso, the siblings and the simultaneous death of both fathers. Leverkühn’s return to his mother in his madness at the end of his life is the final ‘Wiederkehr des Gleichen’.

Leverkühn also reflects music’s spiritual aspects. He has an affinity with nature, which starts from his father’s ‘spekulieren’ in experiments, though even as a child, he is unable to take these experiments entirely seriously. This culminates in his quasi-scientific imaginary trips to the bottom of the ocean with Dr Capercailzie. It is clear from these explorations that, just like music, Leverkühn connects with the irrational, sublime aspects of nature, which have least relationship to what man can grasp. Zeitblom finds this aspect of his interest in nature especially disturbing:

\begin{quote}
Ist überhaupt eine Veranstaltung als Gottes Werk anzusprechen, zu der man ebensogut ‘Wenn schon’ wie ‘Hosianna’ sagen kann? Mir scheint eher das erste als das zweite die rechte Antwort zu sein auf zwei Dutzend Nullen hinter einer Eins oder auch hinter einer Sieben, was schon gleich nichts mehr ausmacht, und keinerlei Grund kann ich sehen, anbetend vor der Quinquilhon in den Staub zu sinken.\footnote{Ibid., p. 361.}
\end{quote}

Zeitblom is surprised to discover Leverkühn’s spiritual side at an early age, when he unexpectedly quotes from the Bible: “Er erröte und ich sah ihn groß an. Es stellte sich heraus, daß er religiös war”\footnote{GW VI, p. 64.}. This religiosity does not, however, manifest itself in adherence to a particular creed. Like music, Leverkühn has a spiritual void to be filled which does not necessarily gain its fulfilment in service to the Christian church. He chooses to fill this void with his belief in his pact with the devil, and as noted in 4.2, the void is manifested in his music as a “Verlangen nach Seele”. The emphasis on belief in the devil marks him out as an adherent of Mann’s particular brand of Lutheranism. The Lutheran connection is also reinforced by his father’s study of the Lutheran Bible, his youth in the Lutheran town of Kaisersaschern, and in his theological studies in Halle. The intellectualism and medieval

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\footnote{Ibid., p. 361. Leverkühn’s attitude to the natural sublime also marks him out as a less impressionable and more irreverent incarnation of Goethe’s Faust. There is no Erdgeist in the novel to counter Leverkühn’s audacity in the face of nature with: “Du gleichst dem Geist, den du begreifst,/Nicht mir!”, Goethe, \textit{Faust}, p. 24.}

\footnote{GW VI, p. 64.}
superstition of Luther is to the fore in his modern reincarnation in Professor Kumpf, who echoes Luther’s actions in throwing a bread roll at the devil’s supposed hiding place in a dark corner.35

It is evident from this short analysis that Leverkühn is not a historical composer as normally understood, and as outlined in 3.1. His connections with both German history, and the ontology of music are too universal to allow for this. Nonetheless, he is extremely important. To return briefly to the analogy with Tiresias in T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, referred to in 4.1, Tiresias, like Leverkühn, is timeless, not a character specifically tied to the events in the poem, and yet the pivotal figure for what Eliot seeks to express. Eliot described his role thus:

> Tiresias, although a mere spectator and not indeed a “character”, is yet the most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest... What Tiresias sees, in fact, is the substance of the poem.36

Leverkühn’s loss of individual identity gives him potential to be used in the novel as a paradigm, or a mythic figure. To attain meaning, both must transcend the specific and timebound. Anni Carlsson neatly encapsulates this concept in relation to Leverkühn by suggesting that in creating his protagonist, Mann had moved from the “ich” to the “es”.37 Part of Leverkühn’s mythical stature derives from his sense of the spiritual desperation in the quest for both musical creativity and truthfulness in the modern age. It is this ‘Erkenntnis’, explored in 4.1, which is his only real contact with his historical world. The idea of myth will be returned to later in the thesis. For the present, however, it is sufficient to note that Leverkühn’s lack of individuality and specific relationship to the Germany of the early twentieth century means that he does not function quite as other composers do in making the link between the universal phenomenon of music and the specifics of society at a given historical point.

Can it be that works of art cannot help but reflect the society in which they are created, or even have an effect on it, whether or not their creator is an active member of that society? Perhaps this is so. But this explanation is not quite satisfactory. It is clear that Leverkühn can be understood as some sort of paradigm or myth connecting music with society. But how can this understanding gain force? A myth depends for its status and effectiveness on continuing to be understood in a particular way by members of a society at a given historical point. The next task of this thesis must therefore be to consider the role of Serenus Zeitblom in *Doktor Faustus*, focusing particularly on his account of Germany. Although Leverkühn’s

35 Ibid., p. 132.
commentary on music in general and his own music in particular tends to highlight ontological issues, the novel also shows the historicity of his creativity, and Zeitblom is a key witness in establishing that historicity.

As with music, the narrative about Germany can be divided into descriptions of its timeless, ontological characteristics, and particular historical manifestations of those characteristics in the early twentieth century, contemporaneous with Leverkühn's music. These characteristics fall into the same broad categories as the characteristics of music: the struggle for 'Durchbruch', the tension between sensuality and cerebralism, lack of stability, and a spiritual capacity. There is less detailed narrative in *Doktor Faustus* about German contemporary history than about music. As explored in 2.3, however, this may well indicate the relatively greater importance with which Mann regarded the historical and political material. The references to Germany that there are in the novel certainly reflect Mann's known views, and wider information that is available about Germany in this period. These sources will be used, where appropriate, to expand on the exploration of Zeitblom's narrative about Germany in 5.1 and 5.2.
Chapter 5 Serenus Zeitblom's account of Germany

5.1 The ontological characteristics of Germany

5.1.1 The struggle for 'Durchbruch'

Zeitblom's narrative sees at the heart of the ontology of Germany, just like that of music, a fundamental desire and struggle to achieve a 'Durchbruch' to the world beyond. In both cases, there is a tension between this outward impulse and a natural inwardness, which makes it difficult for those outside to reach a proper understanding of either music or Germany. Chapter XXXVII of Doktor Faustus, in which Leverkühn is visited by the impresario Saul Fitelberg, explores how this inwardness leads Germany to resent the rest of the world, and to become painfully isolated from it. Mann described Fitelberg's approach to Leverkühn thus: "Es ist, als würbe die Welt um Deutschlands gesellschaftliche Einfügung. Sie wird auch jetzt wieder vergebens werden". Fitelberg sees as typically German all the things that are isolating in Leverkühn's music - its difficulty, mathematical precision and deliberate lack of easy elegance:

Ihre Themen - sie bestehen fast durchweg aus geraden Werten, Halben, Vierteln, Achteln; sie sind zwar synkopiert und hinübergebunden, verharren aber gleichwohl in einer oft maschinell arbeitenden, stampfenden, hämmern den Unwendigkeit und Uneleganz. C'est>boche< dans un degré fascinant.

This inwardness with which Germany struggles is not simply the result of an unfortunate lack of understanding or tolerance on the part of the rest of the world. Germany, like music, is seen to have the difficulty of choosing between a desire for popular appeal, and the feeling that it would be more appropriate to be reserved for an elite audience. Fitelberg makes clear that the isolation has much to do with German pride, with thinking that the German destiny is "etwas zu Einmaliges...und...zu heilig., um es mit anderen zusammenzuwerfen". This is an attitude that Leverkühn only too obviously epitomises. Zeitblom explicitly equates 'die Welt' with 'das Außer-Deutsche', that is, foreign to Leverkühn. Fitelberg is inevitably particularly familiar with the way in which this German pride divides nations in the cultural sphere, although the divisions are seen to go deeper than that. He notes that this proud isolation

1 Letter to Agnes Meyer of 11 August 1946, TM - AM, p. 666.
2 GW VI, p. 534.
3 Ibid., p. 537.
4 "Trat nicht in [Marie Godeau] ihm die >Welt<, vor der er seine Einsamkeit scheute - auch was man in artistisch-musikalischer Hinsicht >die Welt<, das Außer-Deutsche, nennen mochte ... entgegen? Liebte er sie nicht aus seiner Oratorienwelt heraus von musikalischer Theologie und mathematischem Zahlenzauber?", ibid., p. 561.
prevented Wagner, for example, from appreciating the artistic value of French impressionist painting. The Germans' adherence to this belief in their uniqueness is neatly and amusingly summed up in Fitelberg's observation: "Zwar ist es ein deutscher Aberglaube, daß es draußen nur Valse brillante gibt und Ernst nur in Deutschland."^6

Early on in his career, especially in the Betrachtungen eines Unpoliti schen, Mann had taken a pride in what he saw as Germany's uniqueness and otherness. Through the 'Bildung' of Der Zauberberg, however, and as his political insight matured, he became more and more conscious of the dangers of this inwardness and pride. He later exhorted his country to be ready to learn from the rest of Europe. In 1923, he compared Germany's experience unfavourably with that of Switzerland and Austria, which had not taken on the full sense of German isolation:

Spielarten deutschen Volkstums, die, vom Hauptstamm politisch frühzeitig getrennt, seine geistigen, sittlichen Schicksale nur bis zu einem gewissen Grade teilten - ich denke an die Schweiz und selbst an die Deutschen Öster reichs - haben die Fühlung mit westeuropäischem Denken niemals, wie wir, verloren, und die Entartung des Romantismus, die uns zu Einsamen und Outlaws machte, nicht miterlebt. Es fragt sich, ob wir sie darum beneiden sollen.?7

The problem of German inwardness is raised early on in Doktor Faustus, in a conversation between Leverkuhn and Zeitblom that is crucial to understanding both the musical and political problems of the novel. The problem of an inwardness that frustrates the desire for contact with the outside world is expressed in aesthetic terms. Both music and Germany are said to require a 'Durchbruch' - in the same way that Faust, ultimate representative of the German ontological state, seeks to overstep his boundaries. The 'Durchbruch' of both music and Germany requires their problematic ontology to project an appealing form to the outside world. Whether regarded from a musical or a political perspective, beauty is the ultimate objective, and the fate to be most dreaded is that of appearing ugly to others:

Es gibt im Grunde nur ein Problem in der Welt, und es hat diesen Namen: Wie bricht man durch? Wie kommt man ins Freie? Wie sprengt man die Puppe und wird zum Schmetterling?*8

Whilst it is Leverkuhn who makes this statement, it is clear that he has not himself thought through the potentially wider implications of his assertion that there is "nur ein Problem in der Welt". The statement is then eagerly seized upon by Zeitblom, who immediately goes on to apply this aesthetic notion of pleasing form specifically to Germany:

Sage aber nicht >Nur vom Ästhetischen handelt es<, sage nicht: >Nur!<. Man tut sehr unrecht, im Ästhetischen einen engen und gesonderten Teilbezirk des Humanen

^5 Ibid., p. 538.
^6 Ibid., p. 539.
^7 GW XII, p. 628, (Naturrecht und Humanität in der Weltpolitik).
^8 GW VI, p. 410.
zu sehen . . . Ästhetische Erlösheit oder Unerlösite, das ist das Schicksal, das entscheidet über Glück oder Unglück, über das gesellige Zuhausesein auf Erden oder heillose, wenn auch stolze Vereinsamung . . . Durchbruchsbegierde aus der Gebundenheit und Versiegelung im Häßlichen . . . ich fühle, habe immer gefühlt und will es gegen viel derben Augenschein vertreten, daß dies deutsch ist kat exochen, tief deutsch, die Definition des Deutschtums geradezu, eines Seelentums, bedroht von Versponnenheit, Einsamkeitsgift, provinzlerischer Eckensteherei, neurotischer Verstrickung, stilm Satanismus.  

Leverkühn’s blank and mocking reaction to this outburst suggests that Zeitblom has gone too far. But the idea of German unsightliness and the pathos of the struggle for beauty continues to haunt the novel. At the end, after the horrors of World War Two, the image is tellingly evoked once more when Zeitblom describes Germany as “ein Volk, das sich nicht sehen lassen kann”.  

German inwardness is not only seen in Doktor Faustus as a problem to do with German contact with other countries, but for unity of the people within Germany itself. The notion of beauty or attraction of any kind as a binding social force is a compelling one. Beauty has long been associated in Germany with a sense of wholeness and binding principles of order. The sense of classical beauty as a unifying and lasting monument to a great civilisation was later important to Hitler, who translated such ideals into the gymnastic movement and the quasi-classical architecture of Nazism. Schiller recognised the social quality of aesthetics, and wrote of the idea of beauty as a social unity, bringing out the capacity for perfection in all people:

Wenn schon das Bedürfniß den Menschen in die Gesellschaft nötigt, und die Vernunft gesellige Grundsätze in ihm pflanzt, so kann die Schönheit allein ihm einen geselligen Charakter erteilen. Der Geschmack allein bringt Harmonie in die Gesellschaft, weü er Harmonie in dem Individuum stiftet.

It is no coincidence, then, that Leverkühn, as the representative German in Doktor Faustus, has problems of integration into society. His lack of social skills are sometimes deeply felt, and he periodically yearns for intimacy with other human beings, or, on a grander scale, a universal brotherhood of music. Fitelberg implies that Leverkühn is not the first German composer to have difficulty even with contact with his peers, mentioning that Wolf, Brahms and Bruckner lived in the same city, but always avoided one another. Zeitblom, too, recognises the importance of being socially included, and finds this easier than Leverkühn does. With a touch of irony, owing much to the similarity to his own situation as the author

9 Ibid., p. 411.  
10 Ibid., p. 638.  
12 GW VI, p. 537.
of the *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*, Mann makes Zeitblom refer to himself as “das höhere Individuum”, when he, too, recognises the relief of surrendering to a collective mood in the euphoria of entering World War One:

Und doch ist es für das höhere Individuum auch wieder ein großer Genüß, einmal - und wo hätte dies Einmal zu finden sein sollen, wenn nicht hier und jetzt - mit Haut und Haar im Allgemeinen unterzugehen.  

In this statement of collectivity, and in others in *Doktor Faustus*, there is almost as much a sense of danger as of relief. Mann implies that when Germany does make the ‘Durchbruch’ to internal unity, which is as difficult as unity with others, it is a formidable and dangerous force. There is always a sense of mystical significance attached to the notion of the ‘Volk’, which is clear from the description of Kaiseraschern near the beginning of the novel:

Für den Freund der Aufhellung behalten Wort und Begriff des >Volkes< selbst immer etwas Archaisch-Apprehensives, und er weiß, daß man die Menge nur als >Volk< anzureden braucht, wenn man sie zum Rückständig-Bösen verleiten will. was ist vor unseren Augen, oder auch nicht just vor unseren Augen, im Namen des >Volkes< nicht alles geschehen, was im Namen Gottes, oder der Menschheit oder des Rechtes nicht wohl hätte geschehen können!

It is not only in the fiction of *Doktor Faustus* that ‘Volk’ is seen as an ontological phenomenon. G. L. Mosse, in his history of mass movements in Germany, emphasises that although the collapse following World War One undoubtedly helped fascism to appeal to the Germans, it could not have become a viable alternative to Parliamentary democracy without having roots much deeper in German history - in this case, he believes, in the long-standing importance of mass movements and the unity of leader and people in the ‘Volk’. A key premise of Daniel Goldhagen’s book exploring the role of the German people in the Holocaust is that explanations of anti-Semitism to date have given too much weight to Nazi coercion and not enough to underlying, long-standing ideology:

Germany . . . was a society which was in important ways fundamentally different from ours today, operating according to a different ontology and cosmology, inherited by people whose general understanding of important realms of social existence was not “ordinary” by our standards.

### 5.1.2 Tension between sensuality and cerebralism

These dual characteristics are as important to the ontology of Germany in *Doktor Faustus* as they are to that of music. Mann had long recognised the need to preserve balance between the two forces in the German temperament, designating the forces of irrationalism and order

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13 Ibid., p. 402.
14 Ibid., p. 53.
early on as ‘Natur’ and ‘Geist’. Keith Buvivant draws particular attention to the care with
which Mann illustrated the balance between the two in crafting the earlier and later versions
of his essay Goethe und Tolstoi in 1921 and 1925, and how this concern for balance, rather
than cancelling out one force in favour of another, continued to dominate his writing
thereafter.\(^17\) Mann was concerned to achieve the right equilibrium both in his own life and in
the life of Germany between the two concepts of irrational, spontaneous ‘Natur’ and the more
rational and cerebral ‘Geist’. In a letter to the critic, Harry Slochower, in 1935, he noted that:

Mein Gedanke steht hier im Dienste der humanen Idee selbst, wie ich es verstehe, der
Idee nämlich, daß das Wesen des Menschen das Naturhafte und Geistige zugleich
umfaßt, und sich erst in beiden vollendet. Es ist die Idee des Gleichgewichts, die ich
vertrete, und die meine, ich möchte sagen: taktische Partei- und Stellungnahme zu
den Problemen der Zeit bestimmt.\(^18\)

The ‘Strohgespräche’ of the theology students in Halle, in which both Leverkühn and
Zeitblom participate, are perhaps the most important means of establishing, at an early stage
in Doktor Faustus, Germany’s identity as a nation that is, like the students, youthful and
spontaneous, close to nature. The natural, effortless appeal of music’s warmth and sensuality
is matched in Germany by what Deutschlin, a key member of the ‘Winfried’ group, calls
“eine gewisse gewaltige Unreife”.\(^19\) The group of students, which Deutschlin sees as
representative of this phenomenon, is an example of a form of youth mass movement that
was firmly established in Germany long before the time of Doktor Faustus. Theodor
Fontane’s guidebook combining history and nature, Wanderungen durch die Mark
Brandenburg (1862-1889) had become required reading for youth movements by the end of
the nineteenth century, and remained so until well into the twentieth.\(^20\) The ‘Wandervogel’
movement was established in 1901, and became very strong within ten years. Folk songs
stemming from a much earlier period were an important part of the culture of the
movement.\(^21\) Mann was very sceptical about this early twentieth century reaction of
‘wholesome’ youth against decadence. Whilst aware of his own problematic affinity with the
decadent movement, he was nonetheless both fascinated and somewhat appalled by the
opposite urge to “das Leben mit gesunden Händen an[z]ufassen”. Writing about Wilhelm
Speyer’s novelle for young people, Wie wir einst so glücklich waren (1909), Mann observed:

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\(^{17}\) K. Buvivant, ‘TM and the Weimar Republic’, p. 58.
\(^{18}\) Letter to Harry Slochower of 1 September 1935, Briefe I, p. 398.
\(^{19}\) GW VI, p. 158.
\(^{20}\) G. L. Mosse, op. cit., p. 19.
\(^{21}\) Ibid., p. 175.
It is no surprise that Zeitblom observes that most of the students were probably quite flattered by this idea of personal and national youthfulness and naturalness. Despite the sense that this is an ontological characteristic of Germany there is, even at this stage in the novel, a creeping suspicion that, as with music, this apparent ‘German’ naturalness can be rather more studied and less spontaneous than it appears. Indeed, echoing Kretzschmar’s claim that music’s strongest characteristic might actually be its ‘Anti-Sinnlichkeit’, Leverkühn asserts that spontaneity and closeness to nature are very far from the real nature of youth:

Der Junge ist zum Sehen und zum Naturgenuß gar nicht sehr aufgelegt. Er ist nach innen gerichtet, geistig gestimmt, dem Sinnlichen abgeneigt, meiner Meinung nach.23 Leverkühn wonders whether Germany’s appearance of youthfulness is not simply attributable to the historical circumstances under which Germany came together as a nation, relatively late in its history. Deutschlin, however, clearly sees this characteristic in firmly ontological terms. There is an emphasis throughout Doktor Faustus on the tendency, in early twentieth century Germany, to see in ontological terms, characteristics which, whilst they might be partly ontological, are also caused by historical circumstance. Characteristics seen, as Deutschlin does, “im höchsten Sinn”, could not be seen as contingent, and thus open to change, but rather, as having the dignity of unchangeable ontology, even if they were undesirable or harmful:

Jugend im höchsten Sinn hat nichts mit politischer Geschichte, überhaupt nichts mit Geschichte zu tun. Sie ist eine metaphysische Gabe, etwas Essentielles, eine Struktur und Bestimmung.24 From the beginning of the novel, there is a clear sense that this youthful spontaneity and naturalness can be dangerously unstructured if left to its own devices, in the same way that music is seen to have become engulfed in subjectivity. It is for this reason that Leverkühn invokes the church as a ‘Burg der Ordnung’, when an extremely subjective version of religiosity is seen by the group as a particular gift of this ‘German’ youthfulness: “Religiosität, das ist vielleicht die Jugend selbst, es ist die Unmittelbarkeit, der Mut und die tiefe des personalen Lebens”.25 Leverkühn’s response is:

Ich sehe in der Kirche auch noch, wie sie heute ist, sakularisiert und verbürgerlicht, eine Burg der Ordnung, eine Anstalt zur objektiven Disziplinierung, Kanalisierung, Eindämmung des religiösen Lebens, das ohne sie der subjektivischen Verwilderung.

23 GW VI, p. 157.
24 Ibid., p. 159.
25 Ibid., p. 160.
At the same time, also from an early stage in the novel, cerebralism is seen as an essential part of Germany’s ontological state. The very fact that the students are taking part in such ‘Strohgespräche’ is held up as evidence that the German nation, despite its natural youthfulness, is at the same time excessively prone to self-contemplation. This dual nature makes the German nation inherently problematic, though the subtext of the students’ discussion is that this should be a matter of pride rather than regret:

‘Was ich wissen möchte’, bemerkte von Teutleben, ‘das ist, ob die Jugend anderer Völker auch so auf dem Stroh liegt und sich mit den Problemen und Antinomien plagt.’
‘Kaum’, antwortete Deutschlin wegwerfend. ‘Die haben es alle geistig viel einfacher und bequemer.’

Leverkühn is, of course, the supreme representative in the novel of this cerebral lack of comfort, and at the end of the ‘Strohgespräche’ chapter, Zeitblom notes that Leverkühn’s difficulty is that he will never leave this excess of cerebral self-consciousness behind, and achieve a satisfactory balance between this and simpler, everyday life, whilst for the other young people, this is simply a phase of growing up:


Confirmation of Leverkühn’s problematic future comes not long afterwards, when he seeks out his liaison with hetaera esmeralda. Zeitblom sees this as an alarming instance of the union of extreme cerebralism and extreme sensuality, rather than a balance between them:

Es ist eine Tatsache . . . daß die stolzeste Geistigkeit dem Tierischen, dem nakten Triebe am allerunvermitteltsten gegenübersteht . . . es ist auch der Grund, weshalb ich das verdammt Abenteuer, von dem er mir berichtete, als etwas so erschreckend Symbolisches empfand.

Although the ‘Strohgespräche’ are the most comprehensive exposition of the ontological theme of Germany’s cerebralism, there are other references later in the novel. These often have emotional overtones - a longing for a spontaneity that lies below the surface, but has become overshadowed by its opposite characteristic. Ines Institoris is one example. She has an active emotional life, but needs to articulate this life rather than simply to live it, which is

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26 Ibid., p. 161.
27 Ibid., p. 166.
28 Ibid., p. 169.
29 Ibid., p. 197.
one of the causes of her unhappiness. Zeitblom, as her somewhat ambivalent confidant, says of Ines:

\[\text{Sie war ja belesen und gewohnt, ihr inneres Leben nicht stumm zu führen, sondern es zu artikulieren, und hatte sich als Mädchen sogar in der Dichtkunst versucht.}\]

There is an ironic, but touching, illustration of the futility of extreme cerebralism with little practical application when Ines’s affair with Rudi Schwerdtfeger reaches its tragic conclusion. Dr. Kranich, a member of the KriWiB circle and a fellow passenger on the tram on which Ines shoots her former lover, laments that with all his learning, he is not a “real” doctor who can give Schwerdtfeger the medical attention he needs:

\[\text{Er fuhrte hinzu, nie habe er mehr bedauert, nicht Mediziner, sondern nur Numismatiker zu sein, und wirklich erschien mir in diesem Augenblick die Münzenkunde als die müßigste der Wissenschaften, noch unnützer als die Philologie, was keineswegs aufrechttzuhalten ist.}\]

On a wholly unironic note, the curious German combination of spontaneous innocence and extreme self-consciousness is central to Zeitblom’s despairing lament at the end of the novel about Germany’s fate, and the evil she has done. Zeitblom curses in particular those who have exploited this ontological state to bring about the tragic historical conclusion:

\[\text{Fluch, Fluch den Verderbern, die eine ursprünglich biedere, rechtlich gesinnte, nur allzu gelehrige, nur allzu gern aus der Theorie lebende Menschenart in die Schule des Bösen nahmen!}\]

Mann made clear in \textit{Deutschland und die Deutschen} that he believed the balance of Germany’s relationship to music, whilst both sensuality and cerebralism were part of it, to be more weighted towards the cerebral than the spontaneous and sensual: “die Deutschen sind... dem Gelehrten und Spirituellen in der Musik weit mehr zugewandt als dem Gesanghaft-Volksbeglückenden”.\textsuperscript{33} This also seems to be the burden of the ontological argument in \textit{Doktor Faustus}. Both sets of ontological characteristics are part of Germany’s timeless essence, but even at an early stage, the sensual is seen to be less spontaneous, and more cerebral, than it might initially appear.

\textbf{5.1.3 Lack of stability}

Germany does not have a firm, long-standing identity, and much of its history appears to be about a search for national identity. Like the ontology of music, the ontology of Germany consists more of a series of developments than a single, stable identity. The unity of Imperial Germany was established only in 1871, an event closely followed by rapid and unsettling

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., p. 443.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., p. 596-597.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., p. 638.
\textsuperscript{33} GW XI, p. 1132.
social and economic changes, with no period of calm consolidation. The speed of industrialisation was quite alienating for many people, so that, in a reaction to this change, their concepts of ‘Volk’ often tended to emphasise traditional rural values and virtues. The unity achieved was itself tenuous. Individual states retained, as they still do, strong regional identities dating back centuries, which could not easily be dissolved into a sense of nationhood overnight. Ferdinand Hoffinan notes, in his study of Mann’s epoch, that German unity was really first attained only in 1990, and that the unity in 1871 was somewhat ambiguously claimed in the name of “Das deutsche Volk, einig in seinen Stämmen”. Although there was a sense of national unity at the outset of World War One - the ‘Hurra-Lautheit’ from which Zeitblom barely holds himself back - any stability Germany had attained was not strong enough to withstand the economic, social and political ravages of war without lasting damage. It is not surprising that a nation with no national identity to cling to should look for inspiration in a Romantic past, which Mann himself had invoked during the war in the Betrachtungen. All this forms the context for the picture in Doktor Faustus of the lack of stability in Germany’s ontology.

Mann saw the disjointedness of the German nation as one of the major causes of difficulty in forming the Weimar Republic. He argued in an interview in 1920 that the proposed imposition of a centralist model for the Republic, as opposed to a federation, would doom it to failure. This lack of ‘wholeness’ was a problem that was seen by the Germans not as political expediency, but as something truly ontological, buried deep within the German soul. Hans Sluga begins his study of the influence of philosophers on the Third Reich by noting a long-term problem in Germany of illusory order. He argues that the main issue in German politics has been a clearly ontological need “to restore and maintain an order that was threatened by a decay and chaos of metaphysical dimensions,...a permanent and true order had to be discovered”. This lack of stability is not something contemplated only in philosophical circles. The journalist Luigi Barzini, in his study of European nations, refers to “the mutable Germans”, arguing that Germany’s forms and structures have always been short-lived:

> Germany is a trompe l’oeil, Protean country . . . What is the shape of Proteus when caught unawares, at rest? . . . Germany is, as it always was, a mutable, Proteuslike, unpredictable country, particularly dangerous when it is unhappy.

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34 Ferdinand Hoffmann, Thomas Mann und seine Welt, (Hildesheim, Georg Olm AG, 1992), p. 141.
35 D. Prater, Thomas Mann, p. 129.
Mann himself identified the short-lived, episodic nature of Germany’s history in his Leiden an Deutschland, in terms that make clear that he saw this not as a new phenomenon, but as something much more deeply rooted:

Die geschichtlichen Epochen sind sehr kurz, gerade in Deutschland. Während das französische Königttum schlecht gerechnet ein halbes Jahrtausend gedauert hat - eine außerordentlich lange Frist -, hat in Deutschland kein Geschichtsabschnitt länger als hundert Jahre gedauert ... Wer hätte gedacht, daß dem Kaiserreich von 1871 nur vierzig Jahre beschieden sein wurde?^{38}

The students of the ‘Winfried’ group identify a continual search for order, seen in unmistakably metaphysical terms, as a key part of Germany’s ontology. Deutschlin asks his fellow students: “Hast du nie vom deutschen Werden gehört, ... vom unendlichen Unterwegtsein des deutschen Wesens?” The implication throughout Doktor Faustus is that this sense of becoming never ends in a reality of arriving, creating an uncertainty and instability that damages others. In its spontaneous, youthful exuberance, this may not always matter much to Germany. Leverkühn has the insight to remark that: “seine Revolutionen...sind der Budenzauber der Weltgeschichte”.^{39} The theme is taken up by Zeitblom when he writes of the mood of Germany when approaching World War One. Germany is said to regard the war as part of its process of becoming - the never-ending urge for ‘Durchbruch’ to a higher form of social life, which spells disaster for innocent bystanders:

Hier waltete nun freilich ... ein völlig naiver Egoismus ... der es für ganz selbstverständlich anzieht, daß für die deutschen Werde-Prozesse (und wir werden ja immer) eine ganze, schon fertigere und keineswegs auf Katastrophendynamik versessene Welt mit uns ihr Blut zu vergießen hat.^{40}

For Germany, as well as for music, the periods of transition between different historical ‘solutions’ are the most painful, echoing Adorno’s words about music, that “in der Geschichte ... sind die Spätwerke die Katastrophen”.^{41} This connection with music is an important theme in Mann’s essay, Deutschland und die Deutschen, where he comments on the habitually late development of Germany’s political concepts, seeing this as an extremely destabilising phenomenon:

Die Deutschen kommen immer zu spät. Sie sind spät wie die Musik, die immer von allen Künsten die letzte ist, einen Weltzustand auszudrücken - wenn dieser Weltzustand schon im Vergehen begriffen ist.^{42}

^{38} GW XII, p. 765.
^{39} This and the previous quotation, GW VI, p. 159.
^{40} Ibid., p. 400.
^{41} TWA GS 17, p. 17. See 3.3, footnote 52.
^{42} GW XI, p. 1140-1141.
The lack of stability leads in German ontology to the kind of abstraction and complexity that is also so much a part of music's ontology. Much of the discourse about Germany in Doktor Faustus is highly theoretical, constantly valuing the abstraction of future possibility above the solidity of present reality. In Deutschland und die Deutschen, Mann says that “[die Deutschen] sind auch abstrakt und mystisch wie diese ihnen teurerste Kunst - beides bis zum Verbrechen”.43 Deutschlin identifies this problem early on as an inevitable consequence of Germany’s eternal state of ‘werden’: “Sollen und Sein klaffen bei uns weiter auseinander als bei anderen, weil eben das Sollen sehr hoch gesetzt ist”.44 The fateful combination of myth and intellectual abstraction is typified in the highly conceptual discussions of the Kridwiß circle, and the reflections by Zeitblom, which form much of the material about contemporary Germany in Doktor Faustus. Whilst this kind of material undoubtedly makes it one of Mann’s more difficult novels, it is a tribute to the skill of its author that in the midst of all this, the narrative rarely loses its sense of being a novel, rather than a philosophical treatise. One of the novel’s most compelling features is its embodiment of the problem it seeks to diagnose. The very complexity of Doktor Faustus demonstrates a key ontological feature of music and, most importantly, of Germany.

Mann was keenly aware that he was well qualified to write this supremely German novel, in that he personally tended towards a high level of abstraction in both his political writings and in his fiction. It is possible to criticise Mann for demonstrating the very characteristics, in his writing about Germany, of which he should perhaps have been offering a sharper, more detached critique. Yet Mann’s writing - particularly in Doktor Faustus - can be seen as a highly self-aware and astute portrayal of a system in which debate and political movement did actually function on a very abstract level. These two possibilities are explored in Keith Bullivant’s essay about Mann and the politics of the Weimar Republic and Martin Swales’s response.45 Whilst Bullivant castigates Mann for his tendency to jump from solid political ideas to the abstract, Swales argues that the solidity of German political ideas was often illusory. It was, after all, a lecture on Wagner, rather than politics, which caused enough alarm to the Nazi regime to lead to Mann’s exile: this kind of impractical discourse, not rooted in the mundane business of everyday politics was, as Swales notes, a long-standing German characteristic.46 Those who complained about Mann’s views about Wagner found it difficult to believe that anyone, including Mann, could suppose that his words about Wagner

43 Ibid., p. 1141.
44 GW VI, p. 166.
46 M. Swales, op. cit., p. 74.
were anything other than political provocation. This is shown in a letter from Dr. Siegmund von Hausegger, one of the leading signatories of the ‘Protest der Richard-Wagner-Stadt München’. Hausegger appears to explain this state of affairs partly through Germany’s lack of stable political values and structure:

Wenn Sie die Frage »Richard Wagner« als ganzlich unpolitisch ansehen, so kann ich Ihnen darin nicht folgen. In Zeiten einer Umgestaltung aller Werte, wie sie die gegenwärtige ist, will Politik im Sinne einer ganz bestimmten gearteten Weltanschauung verstanden sein... Wenn Sie aber, sehr geehrter Herr, fragen, weshalb unser Protest in einem Augenblick hochgesteigerter politischer Empfindlichkeit erfolgte, so möchte ich mit der Gegenfrage antworten, weshalb Herr Thomas Mann gerade in diesem Augenblick seinen Artikel erscheinen ließ, von dem er wissen mußte, daß er als eine Herausforderung empfunden wurde.47

This kind of abstraction was hardly a new phenomenon in the 1930s, but a long-standing characteristic of the German worldview, evidence of something running much deeper. The idealism of Kant, for example, had a strong emphasis on the superior reality of the inner life of the mind. This was hardly a philosophy to encourage practical action or real political engagement. Peter Gay notes in his study of the culture of the Weimar Republic that the key characteristics of Germany’s abstraction in the early twentieth century were not new:

The striking mixture of cynicism and confidence, the search for novelty and for roots - the solemn irreverence - of the twenties, were a child of war, revolution, and democracy, but the elements that made it up came from both distant and the recent past, recalled and revived by a new generation. Goethe and Schopenhauer, historic dates like 1848 and 1871, were living realities for the new Weimar.48

5.1.4 Spiritual capacity

The ontological characteristic of a spiritual capacity is shown in Doktor Faustus to be reflected in the ontology of Germany probably more clearly than any other of the characteristics it shares with music. The roots of this parallel characteristic can be found in Mann’s perception of both music and Germany as essentially Romantic phenomena. In Deutschland und die Deutschen he attributes to Germany

... eine gewisse dunkle Mächtigkeit und Frömmigkeit, man könnte sagen: Altersüblichkeit der Seele, welche sich den chthonischen, irrationalen und dämonischen Kräften des Lebens, das will sagen: den eigentlichen Quellen des Lebens nahe fühlte und einer nur vernünftigen Weltbetrachtung und Weltbehandlung die Widersetzhchkeit tieferen Wissens, tieferer Verbundenheit mit dem Heiligen bietet.49

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49 GW XI, p. 1142-1143.
This could just as easily be a description of the ontology of music. Mann’s description of Germany’s ‘nearness to the source of life’ implies a relationship with nature that was a Romantic staple, as well as a key feature of the ontology of music. This spiritual dimension of Germany can be seen before the twentieth century in the quasi-religious visions of Lagarde, whom Mann referred to as the ‘praecceptor Germaniae’. G. L. Mosse emphasises a perennial German tendency to see this type of spiritual knowledge as superior to the more tangible knowledge of scholarship, manifested in Germany’s fondness, not only during the Nazi era, for festivals and monuments - physical and mental space in which this sense of the cultic and universal could flourish.

The Romantic roots of Germany’s spiritual capacity are established early on in Doktor Faustus, when, in the ‘Strohgespräche’, Deutschlin defines the religiosity of Germany in pantheistic Romantic terms:

Religiosität, das ist vielleicht die Jugend selbst, es ist die Unmittelbarkeit, der Mut und die Tiefe des personalen Lebens, der Wille und das Vermögen, die Naturhaftigkeit und das Dämonische des Daseins . . . in voller Vitalität zu erfahren und zu durchleben. 

This establishes a tendency throughout the novel to see Germany as a nation with spirituality at the core of its ontology, something borne out by the evidence of German thought. Martin Heidegger, for example, spoke of Germany as the most spiritual of all nations. For the Germans, he said, the spirit was “das Tragende und Herrschende, das Erste und Letzte, nicht ein nur unentbehrliches Drittes”. This is echoed by Zeitblom when he observes that Germany is a nation, for whom ‘das Seelische’ is always the primary motivating factor, with practical politics coming a poor second:

Bei einem Volk von der Art des unsrigen . . . ist das Seelische immer das Primäre und eigentlich Motivierende; die politische Aktion ist zweiter Ordnung, Reflex, Ausdruck, Instrument.

One important aspect of the spiritual capacity in Germany’s ontology comes in the theme in Doktor Faustus of Germany seeking out a fate, as some sort of metaphysical, otherworldly obligation, somehow separate from practical considerations. This relates not just to Leverkühn’s decisive action in contracting syphilis and securing his own artistic destiny, but also to Germany as a nation. Zeitblom refers to the concept of ‘Schicksal’ in relation to both World War One and World War Two, saying of the word: “wie >deutsch< dies Wort, ein

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50 G. L. Mosse, op. cit., p. 47-72.
51 GW VI, p. 160.
52 Martin Heidegger, Einführung in die Metaphysik, (Tübingen, Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1966, 3rd ed.), p. 36.
53 GW VI, p. 408.
This attitude removes the concept of fate to a quasi-religious realm, far beyond the control of human rationality. Writing of the war that rages about him as he writes his account of Leverkuhn's life, Zeitblom reflects on the German urge to seek out a fate, no matter what the practical cost, and no matter how much this militates against reason. He concludes that this is a distinctively German characteristic:

Ja, wir sind ein gänzlich verschiedenes, dem Nüchtern-Ußlichen widersprechendes Volk von mächtiger tragischer Seele, und unsere Liebe gehört dem Schicksal, jedem Schicksal, wenn es nur eines ist, sei es auch der den Himmel mit Götterdämmerungsröte entzündende Untergang!

Writing about Germany's defeat in World War One in his essay *Kultur und Sozialismus*, Mann concluded that the spiritual aspect of the defeat was the most shattering for the Germans, rather than the physical destruction:

Der Krieg ging verloren. Was aber das deutsche Gemüt am tiefsten zerrüttete und quälte, war nicht die physische Niederlage, der Ruin, der ungeheuere Sturz in staatliches Elend von der Höhe äußerer Macht. Es war eine schreckliche Beirrung: das Zusandenwerden seines Glaubens, das ideelle Besiegtsein, der Zusammenbruch seiner Ideologie, die Katastrophe des Kraftzentrums dieser Ideologie, seiner Kulturidee, welche in diesem Krieg mit überwältigt worden war.

Another aspect of Germany's spiritual capacity that plays a major part in *Doktor Faustus* is that the nation is drawn to collective, cultic experience, of which the ontology of music is supremely representative. Early on in the novel, Zeitblom's description of the claustrophobic, superstitious medieval town of Kaisersaschem is made to stand for this cultic nature, in which, no matter what the century, "Volk immer Volk bleibt". The notion of 'Volk' gains its power from its collectivity, and Zeitblom believes that it can only be counterbalanced by the more individualistic ends of literature:

Ich spreche vom Volk . . . ich halte die Religion nicht für die adäquatesten Mittel, sie unter sicherem Verschluß zu halten. Dazu hilft nach meiner Meinung allein die Literatur, die humanistische Wissenschaft, das Ideal des freien und schönen Menschen.

Considering the obstacles to true democracy in Germany long before he wrote *Doktor Faustus*, in *Kultur und Sozialismus* in 1928, Mann identified Germany's concept of the collective and mysterious 'Volk' as a major stumbling block. Germany was simply unable to think of itself as the more modern, democratic 'Nation'. He used the German theatre as an example of this phenomenon; a contemporary instance of the religious cultic experience:

54 Ibid., p. 402.
55 Ibid., p. 232.
56 GW XII, p. 642.
57 GW VI, p. 53.
58 Ibid., p. 54.

Liselotte Voss shows how Mann took care to create an atmosphere in Doktor Faustus that underlined this primal state not by bringing together specific places he knew from personal experience, but by using written sources such as the Hexenhammer and the Faust Volksbuch. She stresses the importance of Kaisersaschem’s ‘Unterteuflheit’, the central notion of an underlying primitivism belying the apparent modernity of the town. As noted in 4.3, the combination of modern sophistication and ancient cultic sense of the collective ‘Volk’ occurs in both Kaisersaschem and Halle, where “eine...hinter der Aktualität liegende Zeitentiefe beständig mit leiser Geisterstimme in sie hineinspricht”. It is clear that Mann saw this ‘Reaktion als Fortschritt’ - a potent cocktail of the radical modern and the archaic - as an ontological German characteristic, which formed both its glory and its downfall. He described Luther himself, in Deutschland und die Deutschen, as “groß im deutesten Stil, groß und deutsch auch in seiner Doppeldeutigkeit als befreiende und zugleich rückschlägige Kraft, ein konservativer Revolutionär”.

Like music, Germany’s spiritual capacity is seen in Doktor Faustus to go beyond a generalised Romantic inwardness, and revisitation of cultic origins. The spiritual capacity also has a specifically Lutheran flavour. This is introduced at a very early stage in the novel through Kaisersaschem, the town which is referred to thereafter as Leverkühn’s spiritual home and, taking Leverkühn as the timeless representative of German history, the identity which the whole of Germany can never quite shake off. For example, the devil retorts in response to Leverkühn’s disbelief in his visitation in Italy: “Wenn du den Mut hättest, dir zu sagen: >Wo ich bin, da ist Kaisersaschem<, gelt, so stimmte die Sache auf einmal.” The heavily Lutheran atmosphere is reinforced by the detailed portraits of Leverkühn’s theology lecturers in Halle, Schleppfuß and Kumpf. Both of these are humorously drawn characters, but they nonetheless underline the serious notion of Luther the ‘rückschlägige Revolutionär’

59 GW XII, p. 645.
60 L. Voss, Die Entstehung, p. 47.
61 GW VI, p. 125.
62 GW XI, p. 1133.
63 GW VI, 301-302.
with their combination of archaic language, superstitious belief in the devil, liberal theology and psychosexual analysis.

The Lutheran sense of sacrifice is also extremely important in the portrayal of Germany in *Doktor Faustus*. Leverkühn's difficulties are another manifestation of the theme of struggle and sacrifice that is constant in Mann's oeuvre. As such, he is, J. P. Stern argues, the apotheosis of an ethic of sacrifice dating back to Frederick the Great. Stern sees in Mann's own essay about Hitler's hero a picture of German ontology in which greatness is derived not from obvious success but from the cost of effort and achievement to the individual. Over the course of developing this theme: "a scheme emerges in which value is commensurate with the catastrophic nature of man's existential project". Stern develops this theme, and expands on its relevance to the tragic course of German history this century, in his posthumously published study, *The Dear Purchase*, in which *Doktor Faustus* features strongly.

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64 J. P. Stern, *Hitler*, p. 20.
5.2 The manifestation of Germany’s ontology in its twentieth century crisis

5.2.1 The struggle for ‘Durchbruch’

The historical manifestations of Germany’s ontological characteristics in the period covered by Doktor Faustus - roughly the first half of the twentieth century - correspond closely with the historical manifestations of music’s ontology in the more or less contemporary compositions of Adrian Leverkühn. Germany shares with music two key historical manifestations of the struggle for ‘Durchbruch’.

First, this ‘Durchbruch’ has become the main, and ultimately tragic, focus, whether in the struggle for musical or political expression to the outside world. Looking back on World War One in 1928, Mann said that his position in the Betrachtungen was caused by his conviction that the outer world of politics and democracy was entirely foreign to Germany. Germany’s isolation from political realities that were everyday matters for other countries was evident in the war:

Es war das dunkel-unträgliche Gefühl, daß zuletzt diese Fremdheit und Widersetzhchkeit die Ursache des Krieges -, daß sie es gewesen, wodurch Deutschland der Einsamkeit verfallen sei und was die Welt gegen uns auf die Beine und in Hannisch gebracht habe.¹

Prefiguring Fitelberg’s remarks in Doktor Faustus, and drawing a close comparison with the representative medium of music, Mann had spoken of World War One in the Betrachtungen as a struggle between “dem Geist des Lohengrin-Vorspiels und der internationlen Eleganz”.²

In Doktor Faustus, Germany’s urge to attain a form more acceptable to the countries outside is seen to reach a desperate point in World War One, and then to be taken to truly iniquitous lengths in World War Two. Both wars are seen to be the result of a personal crisis on Germany’s part, rather than something caused mainly by wider world political events. As Zeitblom reflects on World War One whilst World War Two rages around him, he sees the difference between the two wars as the wilful desire in the second to involve the world beyond Germany in what is essentially a personal catastrophe, whereas world conflict was not seen as the inevitable consequence in 1914:

Auch will ich nicht vergessen, daß wir damals vergleichsweise reinen Herzens zum Kriege aufbrachen und nicht meinten, es vorher zu Hause so getrieben zu haben, daß

¹ GW XII, p. 641-642, (Kultur und Sozialismus).
² GW XII, p. 80. Saul Fitelberg remarks that it is “ein deutscher Aberglaube, daß es draußen nur Valse brillante gibt, und Ernst nur in Deutschland”, GW VI, p. 539.
eine blutige Welt-Katastrophe als die logisch-unvermeidliche Konsequenz unserer inneren Aufführung hätte betrachtet werden müssen. So war es, Gott sei’s geklagt, vor fünf Jahren, aber nicht vor dreiBig.3

Whilst Leverkühn merely jokes about World War One, and his lack of participation in it, Zeitblom talks to him about the desire to be loved which, in Germany’s case, has taken on the unfortunate clothing of war. He sees this state of war as Germany’s own attempt at the ‘Durchbruch’ to effective expression that Leverkühn is seeking at the same time for music:

Was mit dem Durchbruch zur Weltmacht, zu dem das Schicksal uns beruft, im tiefsten gemeint ist, das ist der Durchbruch zur Welt - aus einer Einsamkeit, deren wir uns leidend bewußt sind, und die durch keine robuste Verflechtung ins Weltwirtschaftliche seit der Rechtsgründung hat gesprengt werden können. Das Bittere ist, daß die empirische Erscheinung des Kriegszuges annimmt, was in Wahrheit Sehnsucht ist, Durst nach Vereinigung.4

The failure of the first ‘Durchbruch’ is seen to drive Germany to World War Two. When Mann was interviewed by the New York Times in September 1933, he described Hitler as the means by which Germany had regained her international pride, and was able to present a more compelling image to the rest of the world: “Deutschland ist - in ihren Augen - endlich wieder ein Land geworden, mit dem man rechnen muß, ein Land, auf das man aufpassen, das man fürchten und respektieren muß”.5

The bungled and tragic attempt to look outwards from isolation is a key element of the Faust story. Georg Lukács rightly stresses the insularity of Faust’s ‘Studierstube’ that permeates both the Faust legend and Mann’s version of it. In Goethe’s version, Faust’s ambitions gradually become wider and more worldly, through the Emperor’s court, and culminating in the land reclamation project. In Mann’s Faust, however, the bid to attain political form leaves Germany facing inwards towards a ruin that is not only political and economic, but ontological, striking at the country’s very being. Yet even at this stage, when the reader is left in no doubt of Germany’s guilt, it is still possible to see, through Zeitblom’s eyes, a country whose desire to appeal to others has become an object of pity:

Ach, es ist wohl mehr als eine Frage, daß dieses geschlagene Volk jetzt eben darum irren Blicks vor dem Nichts steht, weil sein letzter und äußerster Versuch, die selbsteigene politische Form zu finden, in so gräßlichem Mißlingen untergeht.6

A second important similarity with the historical manifestation of music’s struggle for ‘Durchbruch’ is that both Leverkühn’s music and early twentieth century Germany are seen to

3 Ibid., p. 400.
4 Ibid., p. 408-409.
6 GW VI, p. 639.
be dominated by an acute sense of the artifice of ‘Schein’. The problem of ‘Schein’ is an
important part of the struggle for ‘Durchbruch’ in terms of projecting an appealing image to
the outside world; indeed, an inevitable concomitant of it, quite as relevant to Germany as to
music at the historical point of Doktor Faustus.

The notion of politics as an aesthetic enterprise was widespread in Germany from early in the
twentieth century. In its short life from November 1918 to May 1919, the Bavarian
Räterepublik was, for example, associated with many writers and intellectuals, including
Heinrich Mann, who was a member of its Council of Intellectual Workers established in
1918. The idea of politics as an aesthetic phenomenon was, however, never more thoroughly
hijacked than by the Nazi regime, which perverted reality into an extreme form of ‘Schein’.
Under Goebbels, the Reichskulturkammer ensured that all art served the Nazis’ objectives.
The domination of the visual arts in particular, and condemnation of all forms of artistic
modernism as ‘degenerate’ was spurred on by Hitler’s view of himself as an artist. As noted
earlier, as a young man he had failed to gain admission to the Austrian Academy of Painting.
He never properly recovered from this rejection, though he did not take steps to gain the
qualifications in architecture that were recommended to him by the Academy.  
Whilst the
Nazi influence was easy to effect, and most obviously identified, in the visual arts, music was
also a target. As noted in 4.3, the Nazis sought to appropriate the great German traditions of
music for their own ends. They even recorded some success in the rise of attendance at
concerts and operas, and in amateur music-making during the period of the Third Reich. The
musical experience was all part of the total aesthetic experience of Nazism.  
The aestheticisation of politics in Germany extended far beyond the appropriation of culture
for political ends, however, to the aestheticisation of the political process itself as a
masterpiece of outward ‘Schein’, masking deeper reality. There could be no more impressive
work of art than the orchestrated mass party rallies, for which Hitler took much of his
inspiration from the Wagnerian ‘Gesamtkunstwerk’ he had always so admired. The close
relationship between these musical and political works of art was a source of great sadness to
Mann:

8 Richard Grunberger partly attributes the recorded increase in popularity of opera and concerts to the
Nazis’ musical conservatism, and the wider appeal of the more conventional pieces that they chose to
put on. He also notes that whilst Goebbels quoted impressive figures for amateur music-making, and
even the sale of pianos, these statistics masked the stultifying effect that organised Nazi groups had on
both adults and young people and, in some cases, very low numbers of children receiving music tuition
at school. See Richard Grunberger, A Social History of the Third Reich, (London, Weidenfeld &
Die Begeisterung, die [sein Werk] erzeugt . . . darf nicht vergessen machen . . . daß es mit seinem Wagalaweia und seiner Stabreimerei, seiner Mischung aus Urtümlichkeit und Zukunftigkeit, seinem Appell an eine klassenloses Volklichkeit, seinem mythischreaktionären Revolutionarismus die genaue geistige Vorform der >metapolitischem< Bewegung ist, die heute den Schrecken der Welt bildet.9

The late Wagnerian decadence that Leverkühn finds so disturbing thus has its political counterpart in Nazi Germany. But the parallel is not complete. Although members of the audience listening to Wagnerian excess might be aware that it is just that, the average German appears to have been more thoroughly seduced by ‘Schein’ of the Nazi regime. Siegfried Kracauer, commenting on Nazi propaganda films, saw this as an essential part of the effect of this ‘Schein’, given the lack of real substance and the sinister subtext of the political promises:

The emphasis on these living ornaments can be traced to the intention of captivating the spectator with their aesthetic qualities and leading him to believe in the solidity of the swastika world. Where content is lacking or cannot be revealed, the attempt is often made to substitute formal artistic structures for it: not for nothing did Goebbels call propaganda a creative art.10

The suspension of individual critical faculties does seem to have been very much part of the Nazi ‘Schein’, leading frequently to an unquestioning response to a phenomenon that seems to have been profoundly appealing on an aesthetic level. A comment from a German woman more than fifty years after she participated in the ‘2000 Years of German Culture’ procession in 1939 shows both the mood of the ordinary people at the time and the lasting impression made by the Nazi version of ‘Schein’, including the suppression of what lay beneath it:

It was a lovely experience that I haven’t forgotten to this day at the age of seventy. And officially for us, it didn’t have anything to do with politics. For us it was just a lovely day, where you met other people and also where we could show ourselves off with different sorts of clothes and really show something - and then we were really quite happy. I was a rococo lady and belonged to the float with an organ on it.11

The ‘Schein’ of the regime may have more in common with serialism, Leverkühn’s imposed musical solution, than with ‘Wagnerian’ late Romanticism. Serialism is the result of calculated use of effect, surrendering free invention to a pre-established framework. Zeitblom applies to the contemporary political situation in Germany Leverkühn’s quotation of Kleist’s view that a new ‘Erkenntnis’ is necessary to rediscover an attractive ‘Schein’:

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9 GW XIII, p. 357-358.
Das Bewuβtsein müsse, meint [Kleist], durch ein Unendliches gegangen sein, damit die Grazie sich wiedereinfinde, und Adam müsse ein zweites Mal vom Baum der Erkenntnis essen, um in den Stand der Unschuld zurückzufallen.12

A surrender to an all too convincing ‘Schein’, which is actually manufactured by calculating ‘Erkenntnis’ must sooner or later be betrayed. Towards the end of Doktor Faustus, Zeitblom describes the frustration of hopes and illusions of ordinary people caught up in the ‘Schein’ when he writes of:

Der Blutstaat . . . bei dessen das Menschenrecht durchstreichenden Verkündigungen ein Taumel von Überglück die Menge hinriß, und unter dessen grellen Bannern unsere Jugend mit blitzenden Augen, in hellem Stolz und im Glauben fest, marschierte.13

The ordinary German might well lament, therefore, with Leverkühn, his or her seduction by ‘Schein’ - something apparently a source of innocent aesthetic pleasure, but which, in reality, conceals a terrible poison: “es war nur ein Schmetterling und eine bunte Butterfliege, die hatt es mir angetan durch Berührung . . . da war ich eingeweiht und die Versprechung geschlossen”.14 It may be tempting to criticise those in Nazi Germany who were taken in by the deception of ‘Schein’. Yet the imagery of Hitler and the Nazi regime still seems to exert compelling power, even when the objective is to treat it as a legitimate and important object of serious historical enquiry. Saul Friedländer argues in his essay on this subject that even where a work of art seeks to understand the historical phenomenon of Nazism, it can lead to a new fascination with Nazi mythology, demonstrating its extraordinary staying power as an aesthetic phenomenon. Friedländer expresses unease about “the declared moral and ideological position of the author or film-maker, the condemnation of Nazism and the will to understand, and the aesthetic effect, be it literary or cinematographic”.15

5.2.2 Tension between sensuality and cerebralism

The particular balance between sensuality and cerebralism at this crisis point in Germany’s history is as important as the balance in Leverkühn’s music, and takes a similar form. The simple, sensual, eternal youth of Germany is manifested in the early twentieth century as the rather less attractive phenomenon of the youth who refuses to grow up, whose simplicity is played upon by a cunning political operator. The success of the Nazis owed much to Hitler’s ability to simplify values and concepts in ways that were readily accepted by the general

12 GW VI, p. 410-411.
13 Ibid., p. 638-639.
14 Ibid., p. 660.
public because they built on currents that were already present in German society. Hitler’s manipulation of young people’s movements - the youth of the ‘youthful’ nation - was particularly effective. In *Doktor Faustus*, the devil describes the susceptibility of the young as they throw their energies into selfless devotion without pausing to differentiate between what is healthy and what is not:

Vor dem Faktum der Lebenswirksamkeit, mein Guter, wird jeder Unterschied von Krankheit und Gesundheit zunichte. Eine ganze Horde und Generation empfänglich-kerngesunder Buben stürzt sich auf das Werk des kranken Genius, des von Krankheit Genialisierten, bewundert, preist, erhebt es, führt es mit sich fort, wandelt es unter sich ab.\(^{16}\)

Though not all youth groups were favourable towards Hitler, he certainly drew inspiration from them, and the common ground of the ideal of the ‘Volk’. The ‘Rebarbarisierung’ of Germany was, Mann noted in his diary, “mit Hilfe einer stark vereinfachten Jugend vorgenommen”.\(^{17}\) This was the very simplification about which Mann had expressed fears in his letter to Ernst Bertram ten years earlier.\(^{18}\) Mann saw Nazism as a simple fairytale which, when transposed into politics, became a lie:

National-Sozialismus heißt: >Ich will überhaupt das Soziale nicht, ich will das Volksmärchen.< Er ist damit, versteht sich, auf seine allermildeste, allergeistigste Formel gebracht. Daß der außerdem, realiter, eine schmutzige Barbarei ist, kommt daher, daß im politischen Bereich das Märchen zur *Lüge* wird.\(^{19}\)

Mann was acutely aware of several forms of this simplification. The one shown most clearly in *Doktor Faustus* is the ‘Rebarbarisierung’ of politics to make it a politics of action rather than reflection, and certainly one with scant regard for established political institutions. The collapse of political institutions, or at the very least, serious questioning of their value, was an inevitable part of the Weimar period, living through the aftermath of World War One. Zeitblom, however, encounters the extreme form of this simplification in discussions in the Kridwiß circle, and finds it particularly disturbing. The intellectuals of the Kridwiß circle simplify political institutions to achieve ‘absoluter Macht’, as opposed to the more complex, but more humane, ‘freie Einrichtungen’, which they dismiss as old-fashioned:

Man zitierte Tocqueville (Alexis de), der gesagt hatte, aus der Revolution seien wie aus einer gemeinsamen Quelle zwei Ströme entsprungen: der eine führe die Menschen zu freien Einrichtungen, der andere zur absoluten Macht. An >freie Einrichtungen< glaubte von den bei Kridwiß konversierenden Herren niemand mehr. . . Auf Diktatur, auf Gewalt lief ohnehin alles aus.\(^{20}\)

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\(^{16}\) GW VI, p. 324.

\(^{17}\) Tagebücher 1933-1934, p. 54, (20 April 1933).

\(^{18}\) Ich verlege die >Betrachtungen< nicht und bin der Letzte, von der Jugend Enthusiasmus für Dinge zu verlangen, über die sie innerlich hinaus ist, wie Sozialismus und Demokratie. Aber die mechanische Reaktion habe ich schon einmal sentimentale Roheit genannt”. Letter to to Ernst Bertram of 8 July 1922, *TM an EB*, p. 112. See 2.1, footnote 16.

\(^{19}\) GW XIII, p. 357, [Zu Wagners Verteidigung].

\(^{20}\) GW VI, p. 485.
This subjugation and simplification of reflection and political institutions to the blind law of force touched Mann personally in his early days of exile. He noted in his diary when he suspected that his house in Munich was to be commandeered by the Nazis:

Die vereinfachende Gewalt, die im Grunde alles Rechtsleben überflüssig macht. Ein Nazi will jemandes Wohnung. Betreibt die Exmittierung. Während der Anwalt des Inhabers an seinem Schriftsatz arbeitet, schickt der Nazi den >Sturm so und so< der die Wohnung einfach wegnimmt.21

The politics of unreflective action as the problematic side of Germany’s youthful enthusiasm and spontaneity is actually first noted by Leverkühn during the ‘Strohgespräche’, when he mockingly terms Germany’s revolutions the “Budenzauber der Weltgeschichte”.22 At the end of the novel, the image recurs again, with a red-cheeked Germany rushing to conquer:

“Deutschland, die Wangen hektisch gerotet, taumelte dazumal auf der Höhe wüster Triumphfe, im Begriffe, die Welt zu gewinnen”. 23 The phrase has about it not only the echo of Leverkühn’s feverish and dangerous inspiration, but also a sense of a blind, youthful blundering into battle in search of uplifting experience. Zeitblom says that World War One was something the Germans positively sought out as ‘Erhebung’, whilst the French greeted it with horror.24 J. P. Stern sees Hitler’s transposition of the concept of ‘Erlebnis’ to the political sphere from the world of genuine personal experience as one of his cleverest techniques. He notes that this personalisation of politics helped in the process of casting aside supposedly ‘impersonal’ institutions, such as the rule of law, which were actually meant to protect the individual.25 In doing this, Hitler whipped up the enthusiasm of the Germans into a frenzy which, Stern notes, several contemporary commentators described in quasi-sexual terms.26 Like Leverkühn’s sexual abandon, then, twentieth century Germany reaches points of abandon to Dionysian carnality.

Perhaps the most striking example in Doktor Faustus of the tendency towards simplification of discussion and values at this point of German history is the concept of the ‘tote Zahn’. Zeitblom is alarmed to find this image, which he and Leverkühn had used to discuss music, seized upon by Dr. Breisacher to support the ultimate consequences of the tendency towards simplification under the Nazis. In the musical context, the ‘tote Zahn’ had come to symbolise

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22 GW VI, p. 159.
23 Ibid., p. 676.
24 Ibid., p. 398-399.
26 Ibid., p. 25.
a throwback to the old-fashioned, apparently worn-out art form, which Leverkühn realises that he must nonetheless master.

In the social and political context, Breisacher notes that dentists are increasingly tending to extract a dead tooth, disregarding the sophisticated development of techniques for treating roots. He goes on to draw an extreme conclusion:

Zweifellos würde man auch die Nicht-Bewahrung des Kranken im großen Stil, die Tötung Lebensunfähiger und Schwachsinniger, wenn man eines Tages dazu überging, volks- und rassehygienisch begründen, während es sich in Wirklichkeit . . . um weit tiefere Entschlüsse, um die Absage an alle humane Verweichlichung handeln würde, die das Werk der bürgerlichen Epoche gewesen war.28

This kind of debate, in which a number of different fields - biology, medicine, politics, philosophy - were merged falsely into simplified conclusions was typical of German academicians in the late twenties and early thirties. Martin Swales notes the accuracy of the Kridwiß debates, quoting from Fritz Ringer’s study of the German academic community in the early twentieth century, where it is noted that: “Synthesis, the whole, understanding, viewing: the slogans were always the same..... In every discipline, scholars made war upon individualism, naturalism, mechanism and the like”.29

As with music, however, the simple, sensuous response evidently did not exist apart from cerebralism in Nazi Germany. In the same way as Leverkühn’s compositions, the apparently simple ‘Schein’ in Germany at this time was the manufactured product of ‘Erkenntnis’. It is significant that Zeitblom notes early on in Doktor Faustus that naivety is part of even the greatest complexity: “Von Mangel an Naivität möchte ich nicht sprechen, denn zuletzt liegt Naivität dem Sein selbst, allem Sein, auch dem bewußtesten und kompliziertesten, zum Grunde”.30 The Nazis calculated very carefully how much simplification their audience could absorb. Much of Hitler’s success rested on techniques more akin to marketing a commodity than offering a political programme designed to address the complex social and economic difficulties of the post-Weimar period. Whilst the historical circumstances gave him the right opportunity, Mann was clear that what happened was the exploitation of longstanding, ontological characteristics. He said of Hitler in 1940:

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27 GW VI, p. 201.
28 Ibid., p. 491-492.
30 GW VI, p. 203.
Manipulation of radio, in particular, was identified by Horkheimer and Adorno in their *Dialektik der Aufklärung* as a key plank of the Nazis' calculated success. It was available free to everyone, and was able to sound like a voice of authority. Both of these factors made people inclined to suspend their own powers of questioning and accept the message of radio, so that it became a key instrument of mass culture, in stunting people's ability and inclination to contemplate something different. In a speech to German directors of broadcasting in 1933, Goebbels sought to involve them quite explicitly in an objective of simplification, using language that the Kridwiß circle would have recognised only too well:

> Allerdings muß man dann die Kunst verstehen, komplizierte Tatbestände zu entkomplizieren, zu vereinfachen, zu primitivisieren, sie auf das allereinfachste Maß wieder zurückzuführen und im einfachsten Maße auch wieder dem Volk vor Augen zu geben.\(^{31}\)

The German love of cerebralism was also to the fore in its own right in the Nazi era, exemplified in *Doktor Faustus* by the tortuously intellectual discussions of the Kridwiß circle, in which even supposedly 'beautiful' poetry can only be appreciated as such in an intellectualised way: "es war \(>\)schön< auf eine grausam und absolut schönheitliche Weise".\(^{33}\)

Looking back at the end of the war on the real-life counterparts of the Kridwiß circle, Franz Werfel painfully acknowledged the part that such gratuitous intellectualism and absence of real feeling played in the historical events:

> Es [gibt] keinen verzehrenderen, frecheren, hohnischeren, teufelsbesesseneren Hochmut als den der avantgardistischen Künstler und radikalen Intellektuellen, die von eitler Sucht bersten, tief und dunkel und schwierig zu sein und wehe zu tun. Unter dem amüsiert empörten Gelächter einiger Philister waren wir die unansehnlichen Vorheizer der Hölle, in der nun die Menschheit brät.\(^{34}\)

Unlike as it seems, extreme cerebralism also served to advance the Nazis' crude manipulation of the masses. It did so by lending statements a false dignity and authority. Much attention has been focused on Heidegger's espousal of the Nazi cause, though he was by no means the only philosopher to associate himself with the Nazis. The numbers associated with the party rose especially dramatically once Hitler had come to power.\(^{35}\)

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31 GW XIII, p. 358.
33 GW VI, p. 483.
35 Whilst barely a dozen of the roughly 180 philosophers with posts at German universities were members of the Nazi party at the beginning of 1933, by 1940 almost half of German philosophers were members. See H. Sluga, op. cit., p. 7.
Heidegger himself explicitly identified his philosophy of Being with the political movement he saw happening around him, and - however strange the idea of Sein und Zeit as a populist read - joined the ranks of those writers and thinkers whom ordinary Germans saw as articulating the hopes and dreams that they had invested in the Nazi regime, following the instability of the Weimar Republic. The difficulty of Heidegger’s philosophy was less important than the resonances its phrases found within the people themselves, so that cerebralism truly acted in the service of the political process of simplification. Peter Gay sums this up when he defines Heidegger’s role as giving “philosophical seriousness, professorial respectability, to the love affair with unreason and death that dominated so many Germans in this hard time”.36

5.2.3 Lack of stability

Section, 5.2 noted that Germany’s history is seen in Doktor Faustus to be similar to that of music, in being a series of episodes with no underlying continuity or stability. The historical crisis point portrayed in Doktor Faustus is both cultural and political. In both cases, there is a realisation that a system taken for granted as stable - whether musical or political - is actually inherently unstable. The lack of real stability in the Weimar Republic was crucial to future disaster. In both music and Germany, the subjective freedom given by this state of affairs is seen in the novel to have become intolerable, with a sense that desperate measures must be taken to resolve the crisis. There is both exhilaration and fear in that realisation. The political equivalent of the increasingly outlandish variations of Beethoven’s last piano sonata is found in Zeitblom’s description of “die Auflösung eines so lange disziplinar gebundenen Staatsgefüges in debattierende Haufen herrenlos gewordener Untertanen”.37 The desperation of this state allows the Kridwiß circle to contemplate so calmly the destruction of longstanding values:

Wurde nicht dort am runden Tisch eine Kritik der Tradition auf die Tagesordnung gesetzt, die das Ergebnis der Zerstörung von Lebenswerten war, welche lange für unverbrüchlich gegolten?38

The Nazis’ opportunity to fill a vacuum of power thus came at a time of historical crisis when almost any solution seemed possible. Perhaps this was because so many factors contributed to the crisis, and the priority was simply to escape from it. It is interesting that there was apparently little real agreement about the nature of the crisis; Sluga notes that although Hitler tended to focus fairly narrowly in his speeches on the hardships of the aftermath of World

36 P. Gay, Weimar Culture, p. 84.
37 GW VI, p. 453.
38 Ibid., p. 493.
War One, different Nazi authors gave widely differing analyses of the origins of the crisis. Sluga also underlines the predisposition of the Germans to regard themselves as in search of a monumental 'Schicksal', in his observation that it is somewhat paradoxical to regard a particular moment as a crisis of world proportions, as that historical judgement can surely only properly be made retrospectively. The wide-ranging discussions of the Kridwiß circle give some sense of the very uncoordinated intellectual basis of many of the ideas of the period, fuelled by a sense of destiny born of a cycle of instability:

"Das Gefühl... daß ihre Stunde geschlagen hatte, eine Mutation des Lebens sich vollziehen, die Welt in ein neues, noch namenloses Sternzeichen treten wollte... Kein Wunder nun, daß die auflösende Niederlage dieses Gefühl auf die Spitze trieb, und kein Wunder zugleich, daß es in einem gestürzten Lande, wie Deutschland, entschiedener die Gemüter beherrschte als bei den Siegervölkern, deren durchschnittlicher Seelenzustand, eben vermöge des Sieges, weit konservativer war."®

As with Leverkühn’s imposition of a false stability on music through serialism, cancelling out the insecurity of subjectivity, so Zeitblom also witnesses in Doktor Faustus the imposition of the false stability of the Nazi regime. Towards the end of World War Two, Erich Fromm noted in Die Furcht vor der Freiheit that the feeling of insecurity at having a larger degree of control over their political lives was a very real motivating factor for large sections of German society in the 1920s. People fled to dictatorship precisely because it was certain, and not as disorientating as belonging to an individual freedom that did not, in any case, seem to guarantee any solutions to their severe economic problems. Fromm described this phenomenon in terms that recall Leverkühn’s musical solution of a freedom within self-imposed boundaries:

"Die Tatsache der menschlichen Individuation, der Auflösung aller primären Bindungen läßt sich nicht aus der Welt schaffen... Wir sahen, daß der Mensch diese negative Freiheit nicht aushält, daß er ihr in neue Bindungen zu entrinnen sucht, die einen Ersatz für die von ihm aufgegebenen primären Bindungen sein sollen... Mochten deutsche Bürger auch noch so sehr gegen die Nazigrundsätze sein - sobald sie zwischen Alleinsein und ihrer Zugehörigkeit zu Deutschland zu wählen hatten, wählten die meisten das letztere."®

When Leverkühn explains his serialist system to Zeitblom, the latter immediately questions it, and sees the political equivalence of the ‘Herren- und Dienertöne’ in fascism, although Leverkühn quickly dismisses such comparisons: “Aber in Wirklichkeit ist sie doch dann nicht Freiheit mehr, sowenig wie die aus der Revolution geborene Diktatur noch Freiheit ist”.®

³⁹ See H. Sluga, op. cit. p. 57-70.
⁴⁰ GW VI, p. 469.
⁴¹ Erich Fromm, Die Furcht vor der Freiheit, (Zürich, Steinberg Verlag, 1945), p. 23 & 206.
⁴² GW VI, p. 254.
In artistic terms, the lack of stability from which people fled, and the artificiality that replaced it was illustrated in the two art exhibitions that opened in Munich in July 1937. The first, opened by Hitler on 18 July, was the ‘Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung’ which was filled with idealised images of rustic landscapes, and, in particular, the Aryan ideals of youth, health and strength communicated through pictures of peasants, soldiers and mothers with children. The exhibition of ‘Entartete Kunst’ opened the next day, showing the so-called ‘degenerate’ images of the German avant garde, the distortion of colours and forms echoing the social and political distortion that artists like Beckmann, Kokoschka and Kollwitz had felt so keenly during the years of the Weimar Republic.

The artificial nature of the stability of the Nazi system of government was partly evidenced by the rapidity with which the regime was established, and as J. P. Stern notes, by its rapid decline. When Hitler died, the ideology he claimed to represent almost totally died with him: “the reason why it proved next to impossible to find out what people had believed in was not so much their disingenuousness and wilful forgetting as rather, their real difficulty in recalling the message now that the voice was gone”. Sluga notes that Nietzsche, from whom so much of the Nazi sense of historical crisis and upheaval was drawn, took much of this idea of crisis from his colleague Jakob Burckhardt. Burckhardt saw history as a series of conflicting and competing powers, and wrote of crisis as a time when history was accelerated:

Der Weltproceß gerât plötzlich in furchtbare Schnelligkeit; Entwicklungen, die sonst Jahrhunderte brauchen, scheinen in Monaten und Wochen wie flüchtige Phantome vorüberzugehen und damit erledigt zu sein.

Such artificial speed might equally well describe the developments necessary to produce a totalitarian system, or Leverkühn’s subversion of the musical historical process to produce a tone row. In Doktor Faustus, the falsehood of the stability in the imposed political system becomes tragically apparent as Zeitblom watches his sons’ belief in the regime shattered. He compares the emptiness of their belief to the physical destruction of the German cities by the Allied air raids:

Ich... meide den Anblick unseres gräßlich zugerrichteten München, der gefällten Statuen, der aus leeren Augenhöhlen blickenden Fassaden, die das hinter ihnen gähnende Nichts verstellt, aber geneigt scheinen, es offenbar zu machen, indem sie die schon das Pflaster bedeckenden Trümmer mehrern. Mein Herz krampft sich in Erbarmen zusammen mit den törichten Gemüttern meiner Söhne, die geglaubt haben wie die Masse des Volks, geglaubt, gejubelt, geopfert und gekämpft, und nun längst schon, wie Millionen ihrer Art, mit starrenden Augen die Vernichtung schmecken, die bestimmt ist, zu letzter Ratlosigkeit, zu umfassender Verzweiflung zu werden.

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43 J. P. Stern, Hitler, p. 6.
45 GW VI, p. 600.
One particularly sinister way in which the imposition of the false security of the Nazi regime echoes that of serialism is the fact that once this imposition has been accepted, its ‘themes’, like those of the tone row, can be developed to an almost unlimited extent. The relationship to what is normally acceptable matters little, as long as what is created is intellectually defensible in relation to the tone row or, in this case, the regime, as is clear in the discussions of the Kridwiß circle. It is, perhaps, an inevitable part of a crisis that, in our efforts to respond to it, it can be wise to liberate ourselves from any constraints that have gone before. There is surely an expectation, however, that human decency and understanding will curb any dangerous excesses of such a reaction. Not so with the Kridwiß circle, for whom not even moral relativism exists, but all is a matter of purely intellectual justification. A horrified Zeitblom observes that they lightly dismiss the loss of value of the individual as inevitable, merely confirmed by, rather than caused by, World War One. The circle considers this “keine Sache des Lobes oder Tadels, sondern eine solche sachlicher Wahrnehmung und Feststellung”. Zeitblom goes on to observe:

Daß es Männer der Bildung, des Unterrichts, der Wissenschaft waren, die diese Kritik übten - und zwar mit Heiterkeit, nicht selten unter selbstgefällig-geistefrohem Gelächter übten -, verlieh der Sache noch einen besonderen, prickelnd beunruhigenden oder auch leicht perversen Reiz.**

These intellectuals are happy to pursue their arguments to their ultimate conclusion, however horrific: they regard such conclusions as “schon...vollendet, oder doch als notwendig kommend”. But they are extremely reluctant to test their arguments against anything that lies outside them. This, like Leverkühn’s musical system, is the ultimate self-contained, self-sufficient system. Thus, Zeitblom reports that the Kridwiß circle has an attitude of supreme condescension towards the rational claims of science:

Das hieß: dem gemeinschaftlichen Glauben von dieser Seite gar nicht beizukommen war und ihre Verfechter desto höhnisch-überlegenere Gesichter machten, je emsiger man sich mühte, sie auf ganz fremder und für sie irrelevanter Ebene der biederen, objektiven Wahrheit zu widerlegen.47

5.2.4 Spiritual capacity

The religiosity of Germany is extremely significant in relation to the point of historical crisis depicted in Doktor Faustus. The wave on which Hitler swept to power owed much to the Romantic affinity with nature, and the worship of the irrational Will over rationality which, as noted in 5.2.4, is seen in Doktor Faustus to underly Germany’s ontological spiritual
capacity, making 'Re barbarisierung' relatively easy. J. P. Stern shows how deep the affinity was between Hitler’s language and nineteenth century Romantic visions of nature, tracing a line from Goethe to Nietzsche, to Spengler and to the language of Mein Kampf itself.\textsuperscript{48} Jung, the inventor of the notion of the ‘collective unconscious’, wrote in 1936 that in Germany’s case this unconscious was now more or less a reawakening of the restless wanderer in the mythical (and Wagnerian) figure of the god Wotan.\textsuperscript{49} This is the mentality to which, Mann said in Deutschland und die Deutschen, the rational, concrete business of politics was so profoundly alien, with twentieth century German history proceeding accordingly:

\begin{quote}
Von Natur aus nicht böse, sondern fürs Geistige und Ideelle angelegt, hält er die Politik für nichts als Lüge, Mord, Betrug und Gewalt, für etwas vollkommen einseitig Dreckhautes und betreibt sie, wenn er aus weltlichem Ehrgeiz sich ihr verschreibt, nach dieser Philosophie.\textsuperscript{50}
\end{quote}

The language of Mann’s Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen struck a particular chord with the Germans. The war became an irresistible, inevitable fate - an intensification of that sense of fate seen to be ontologically central to all German experience. Doktor Faustus is full of references to the intensely spiritual way in which the Germans perceived their twentieth century crisis. Zeitblom writes of “das Pathos...der heiligen Not” as an important part of the German conception of World War One.\textsuperscript{51} In World War Two, he is shocked at the spiritual terms of the propaganda directed at the Allies:

\begin{quote}
Unsere Propaganda hat eine seltsame Art, den Feind vor der Verletzung unseres Bodens, des heiligen deutschen Bodens, wie vor einer grausen Untat zu warnen...Der heilige deutsche Boden!\textsuperscript{52}
\end{quote}

The Kridwiß circle is united in its pitting of belief against rational argument, with an unquestioning conviction that is highly religious in nature. It is akin to the unquestioning faith of the religious peasant in a much earlier age, and as such, a true ‘Re barbarisierung’:

\begin{quote}
Sie konnten sich nicht genugtun im Amusement über das verzweifelte Anrennen von Kritik und Vernunft gegen den durch sie ganz unberührbaren, völlig unverletzbaren Glauben.\textsuperscript{53}
\end{quote}

J. P. Stern remarks that the Kridwiß circle is a perfect example of the phenomenon of perverted Romanticism he describes as fertile ground for receiving Hitler. This particular brand of Romanticism is coupled with an aggression that is alien to the nineteenth century

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{48} J. P. Stern, Hitler, p. 39.
\item \textsuperscript{50} GW XI, p. 1140.
\item \textsuperscript{51} GW VI, p. 401.
\item \textsuperscript{52} Ibid., p. 448-449.
\item \textsuperscript{53} Ibid., p. 488.
\end{itemize}
version, and Stern makes clear that this is German ontology that has gone seriously wrong in this particular historical manifestation:

The point that needs making is a historical one: the Romantic exaltation of the natural being of man and of his Nature-given condition is the intellectual background against which, in the circumstances of lawlessness and anomie prevailing in the twenties and early thirties, a social praxis arises in which men are judged, condemned and eventually done to death, not for what they have done, but simply for what they are.⁵⁴

One important consequence in the Nazi era of clinging to a quasi-religious conviction above rationality was to demonstrate to the full Germany’s capacity, noted in 5.2.4, to re-enter a pre-cultural era, showing, like music, the ability to revisit primal origins. As already observed, this sense of Germany’s furthest history had always been important to her people. In the first half of the twentieth century, the new celebration of the cultic, pre-individualistic era, took the form of the revivification of the ‘Volk’. In Nazi hands, Zeitblom sees this ontological feature become an extreme indifference to the fate of the individual. He notes this indifference to the fate of the individual as an historical manifestation of something much more deeply rooted than the particular historical experience of war:

Diese Achtlosigkeit, diese Indifferenz gegen das Schicksal des Einzelwesens konnte als geziichtet erscheinen durch die eben zurückliegende vierjährige Blut-Kirmes; aber man ließ sich nicht täuschen: wie in manch anderer Hinsicht hatte auch hier der Krieg nur vollendet, verdeutlicht und zur drastischen Erfahrung gemacht, was längst vorher sich angebahnt, einem neuen Lebensgefühl sich zugrunde gelegt hatte.⁵⁵

In other words, this is the barbarism that Zeitblom fears when Leverkühn adumbrates a return to the cultic in a musical context. In Deutschland und die Deutschen, Mann described the mass, anti-individual feeling created by the Nazis precisely as barbarism:

“heruntergekommen auf ein klaghches Massenniveau, das Niveau eines Hitler, brach der deutsche Romantismus aus in hysterische Barbarei”⁵⁶

With the cult came the myth that sustained it, and Georges Sorel’s writings on this subject are an important focus of discussions in the Kridwiß circle. Sorel stated that the truth or otherwise of myths were irrelevant to their appeal, and the circle’s discussion of Sorel puts the case for Hitler’s use of crass mythology as the vehicle of mass political movement:

Dieses war in der Tat die krasse und erregende Prophétie des Buches, daß populäre oder vielmehr massengerechte Mythen fortan das Vehikel der politischen Bewegung sein würden: Fabeln, Wahnbilder, Hirngespinste, die mit Wahrheit, Vernunft, Wissenschaft überhaupt nichts zu tun zu haben brauchten, um dennoch schöpferisch

⁵⁴ J. P. Stern, Hitler, p. 42
⁵⁵ GW VI, p. 484.
⁵⁶ GW XI, p. 1146.
The Nazis went back into the furthest German past to find images to sustain the myth they created, and the German people responded eagerly. Picking out Lagarde, Langbehn and Moeller von der Bruck as key influences, Fritz Stern identifies the quasi-religious tone of these thinkers, in particular, even if unaccompanied by genuine faith, as a key factor in their appeal to the Germans. The Nazis despised the recent past, especially the culture of the Weimar Republic, which they saw as supremely representative of modernity. Stern identifies the mistrust of the present and recent past of the modern liberal society as a wider European phenomenon in the 1930s, but it was, he believes, especially strong in Germany because the shallower roots of liberalism in that country made it more vulnerable to attack.

Alfred Rosenberg’s *Mythus des XX. Jahrhunderts*, published in 1930, portrayed the ‘myth of the German blood’, depicting the struggle between the Nordic German spirit almost to the beginning of time itself, and seeing the (highly individualistic) movements of Christianity, the Renaissance and the Enlightenment not as progressive movements in the service of humanity, but a means of disintegrating this Nordic truth. The book became a best-seller in Germany second only to *Mein Kampf*. The elaborate ritual of Nazi party rallies and meetings did much to reinforce the German sense of participating in a myth, filling the German spiritual capacity with a powerful quasi-religious experience. J. P. Stern explores the way in which Hitler used his speeches at mass meetings not as a means of conveying new information, but rather, as an act of ritual to consolidate and reinforce the solidarity necessary for the Nazi myth to take root and prosper. The atmosphere and timing on such occasions were extremely important. Films show how Hitler accompanied his speeches by more or less ritualistic gestures specifically designed to generate responses from his audiences. The deliberateness of this ploy is tellingly parodied in Brecht’s play, *Der Aufstieg des Arturo Ui*, when an actor comes to coach Ui even in sitting and walking: “Wenn ich gehe, wünsche ich, daß es bemerkt wird, daß ich gehe”.

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57 GW VI, p. 486.
59 500,000 copies had been sold by December 1936, and a million copies were in print in 1944, suggesting that the interest in myth as part of the Nazi world view was far from a minority one. See Louis S. Snyder, *Encyclopedia of the Third Reich*, (London, Blandford, 1989), p. 300.
This preoccupation with the past during the Nazi period meant that it was easy for cyclical, rather than teleological, views of history to dominate the German world view. Although Spengler’s relationship with the Nazis rapidly deteriorated when he realised the extent and brutality of the regime’s anti-Semitism, his fatalism in Der Untergang des Abendlandes was a powerful force in the 1920s. The Kridwir circle’s notion of a ‘mutation’ of life, and its calm acceptance of what this entails, owes much to Spengler. One consequence, and perhaps attraction, of such cyclical views of the progress of history, which recall Nietzsche’s ‘ewige Wiederkehr des Gleiche’ is that their inevitability excludes cause and effect. Nietzsche noted that “der Glaube an den Willen, als an die Ursache von Wirkungen, ist der Glaube an magisch wirkende Kràfte”. In a cyclical view of history, revisiting ancient myth, events are only predictable in that they replicate something that has gone before, however distant. They have no causality, as a particular effect cannot be predicted by or linked with a specific cause, thus eliminating any sense of moral responsibility for an event. Participants in historical events are thus offered a vision of those events unfolding apparently driven by forces outside human control, which they believe they are powerless to alter. Despite differing opinions about his merits as a philosopher, Spengler offered to all kinds of people in Germany the vocabulary to define a crisis that they did not care to examine too closely. Mann’s own essay on Spengler summed up the paralysis of humanity that this entailed:

Man muß das Notwendige wollen oder nichts, sagt er - und merkt nicht, daß das gar keine Alternative ist und daß der Mensch, indem er nur das will, was die unerbittliche Wissenschaft für das Notwendige erklärt, einfach aufhört zu wollen, - was nicht eben sehr menschlich ist.

The combination of the power of myth with modern, calculating knowledge, like the false banalities of the calculated tone row, make Nazism as portrayed in Doktor Faustus a deadly example of ‘Reaktion als Fortschritt’, the world that the Kridwir circle refers to as a paradoxically “revolutionär rückschlägige Welt”. The Nazi regime explicitly sought to build a vision for the future on a powerful nostalgia for a supposedly glorious distant past, with simple, not to say brutal and aggressive, messages delivered with all the efficiency that the technology of the media could muster. Hitler’s lasting monuments are not only the unspeakable barbarism of the concentration camps, but also the Autobahn network. Although, quite rightly, we are more inclined to remember the barbarism, there is no doubt that both were key elements of the Nazi programme. Technological advances tended to be seen in the rosy, ancient light of Romantic nostalgia. Goebbels, for example, referred to the

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62 FN 2, Die fröhliche Wissenschaft, p. 128.
63 GW X, p. 176.
64 GW VI, p. 489.
Volkswagen car as a paradigm for the 'steel-like romanticism' holding together the German soul and the perfection of technology. Whilst the references to the Nazi regime in Doktor Faustus tend to concentrate on its ideology, there is nonetheless an occasional nod in the direction of its technological emphasis, as in Zeitblom's reference, in a quasi-religious tone, to "die Robot-Bombe, ein bewunderungswürdiges Kampfmittel, wie nur heilige Not es dem Erfinder-Genius eingeben kann".

Doktor Faustus portrays the spiritual void waiting to be filled as an important ontological factor in the twentieth century historical crises of both music and Germany. The creation of a new mythology, and the blind faith with which the German people were willing to pursue it, was facilitated by this spiritual void. Just as music is seen to have once been in the service of the liturgy, so the German people had once been able to place their faith in a higher reality. But Christian belief had gradually been eroded over the last hundred years. Germany played a central part in this process of erosion, and Nazism was well fitted to take the place of religion once the erosion was complete. Christianity had been the subject of radical attack in Germany from well over a century before the Nazis, following on from the currents of secularism that had been at work in Europe generally during the eighteenth century, when even deists such as Voltaire had argued for a 'rational' form of religion rather than traditional biblical Christianity, and Kant and Hume had refuted the traditional arguments from reason for the existence of God.

In the nineteenth century, as the world became ever more scientifically sophisticated, the demise of traditional Christianity came, in Germany, from within the church itself. More than ten years before Marx attacked the church from outside, in his Communist Manifesto of 1848, the theologian D. F. Strauß published his seminal two volume work, Das Leben Jesu, kritisch bearbeitet (1835-6). This saw the supernatural aspects of the Gospels not as historical fact, but as religious symbolism, whose literary explanation could be found in the Old Testament. The book caused a sensation in Germany at the time of its publication, and cost Strauß his theological career. It ultimately proved to be a decisive step towards dispelling for good the hitherto unquestioned idea that the Gospels contained uncomplicated religious truth. Shortly afterwards, Nietzsche famously proclaimed the 'death of God' through what he saw as Christianity's self-cancellation, and the urge to fill the spiritual void with an exceptional personality followed soon after. Nietzsche's warning sign of the death of

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66 GW VI, p. 448.
God actually received far less attention than the concept of the ‘Übmensch’, which was certainly the part of his philosophy that was a key focus for the Nazis. Again, they sought reinforcement in past history. Mosse notes that the symbolism of Dürer’s painting, *Ritter, Tod und Teufel*, became extremely significant. Hubert Lanzinger’s painting of Hitler as a heroic knight became a Nazi icon: in the literal sense of the term, a religious artefact.  

The result of such developments was to create a situation in which it was, in the words of the theologian Don Cupitt: “less and less possible to suppose that you can read the New Testament and there find a body of pre-packaged divine truth presented to you for your acceptance”. The Nazi regime was able to pre-package its own version of transcendent truth remarkably effectively, and in *Doktor Faustus*, the Kridwiß circle explicitly equates the new myths with the mass religious belief of a bygone age. These myths offer the same sense of security and release within a pre-ordained system, which exactly equates, in turn, with the creative freedom that Leverkühn experiences within the imposed objectivity of serialism:

Gerade weil das geistig Uniforme und Geschlossene dem mittelalterlichen Menschen durch die Kirche von vornherein als absolut selbstverständlich gegeben gewesen, war er weit mehr Phantasiemensch gewesen als der Bürger des individualistischen Zeitalters, hatte er sich der persönlichen Einbildungskraft im einzelnen desto sicherer und sorgloser überlassen können.  

The Germans’ longing to fill the spiritual void during the historical period covered by *Doktor Faustus* is also seen in the novel to embrace the specifically Lutheran notions of sacrifice and redemption, in the same way that Leverkühn’s artistic endeavour does. Leverkühn says in his final speech: “Vielleicht auch sieht Gott an, daß ich das Schwere gesucht und mir’s habe sauer werden lassen...”. Hitler played knowingly on the Germans’ inherent love of fate, invoking the inbuilt feeling for strenuousness and sacrifice as something necessary to realise a great reward. This is clearly illustrated in a passage quoted by J. P. Stern from a speech given by Hitler on 30 January 1936:

If somebody tells us ‘The future too will demand sacrifices’, then we say, ‘Yes, indeed it will’. National Socialism is not a doctrine of inertia, but a doctrine of conflict. Not a doctrine of happiness or good luck, but a doctrine of struggle, and thus also a doctrine of sacrifice.

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67 G. L. Mosse, op. cit., p. 203. The symbolism was taken up Hans F. K. Günther, social anthropologist, in *Ritter, Tod und Teufel: Der heroische Gedanke* (1924). Günther combined science and myth in what was later used as one of the ideological foundations for Nazi ideas on race.


69 GW VI, p. 490.

70 Ibid., p. 666.

71 J. P. Stern, op. cit., p. 23.
There are many references in *Doktor Faustus* to the shame and guilt of Germany, coupled with an elevation of the idea of sacrifice as part of this burden of guilt, as payment for Germany’s forced ‘Durchbruch’. Leverkühn, in a rare non-musical reference, sees this sacrificial carrying of guilt as Germany’s preordained destiny: “Und werdet sie mit Würde zu tragen wissen ... Deutschland hat breite Schultern”.

Writing to Hans Reisiger in 1946, Mann clearly stated his own impatience with the quasi-religious concept of Germany bearing sins, and the false dignity that this concept lent to Nazism:

> Offen gestanden höre ich überhaupt nicht gern vom deutschen Schicksal reden - und in Deutschland ist unaufhörlich, in den abgeschmacktest-larmoyanten Tönen, die Rede davon, direkt in dem Sinn, als sei dies Volk eine Art Jesus Christus und trage der Welt Sünden ... Das deutsche Schicksal ist gar kein Schicksal und keine Tragödie, sondern der ehrlose Bankerott verbrecherischer Dummheit.

As the novel hastens in its darkest moments towards the end of the war and of Leverkühn’s sentient life, it becomes ever more direct in condemning Germany, with clear references to the horrors perpetrated by the Nazi regime: “Der dickwandige Folterkeller...ist aufgebrochen, und offen liegt unsere Schmach vor den Augen der Welt”. Zeitblom scorns the German compulsion to tinge this guilt explicitly with the redeeming flavour of Lutheran sacrifice:

> Eine Vaterlandsliebe aber, die kühnlich behaupten wollte, daß der Blutstaat, dessen schnaubende Agonie wir nun erleben; der unermessliche Verbrechen, lutherisch zu reden, >auf seinen Hals nahm<.

This chapter has illustrated the striking similarities between the characteristics of music and German history as they appear in Zeitblom’s narrative in *Doktor Faustus*. It has shown that, like the description of music, Germany has both timeless, ontological characteristics, and specific manifestations of these characteristics at different historical points. The novel suggests a conceptual overlap between the ontological characteristics of music and Germany, and their historical manifestations in Leverkühn’s music and in early twentieth century Germany. The next task is to look at the significance of this overlap. What does it mean, and does it amount to a closing of the gap between music and history in *Doktor Faustus*? That is to say, is some real - perhaps even causal - connection being disclosed?

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72 GW VI, p. 410.


74 GW VI, p. 637-638.

75 Ibid., p. 638-639.
5.3 Zeitblom as narrator and historical vehicle

5.3.1 The unsatisfactory and subordinate narrator?

Despite the prominence of Serenus Zeitblom’s voice in the novel, it can be tempting to relegate him to the status of a background figure, for several reasons. First, it is easy to categorise him as a vaguely comic; the bumbling schoolmaster who continually doubts his own ability to measure up to the task he has in hand. Mann himself admitted that part of Zeitblom’s role was to lighten both the atmosphere for the reader and, more immediately, his own task as author, in what is fundamentally a grim and harrowing tale:

\[\text{Gewiß hatte die Erinnerung an die parodistische Autobiographie Felix Krulls dabei mitgewirkt, und überdies war die Maßnahme bitter notwendig, um eine gewisse Durchheiterung des düsteren Stoffes zu erzielen und mir selbst, wie dem Leser, seine Schrecknisse erträglich zu machen.}\]

Indeed, Zeitblom can fit this bill so well in many ways that one study has even gone so far as to suggest that his ‘light relief function is his most important one.'

The reader is exposed to Zeitblom’s doubts about his own adequacy as a narrator even before the end of the first page of Doktor Faustus. He voices his uncertainty about his ability to write the account that follows, questioning: "ob ich meiner ganzen Existenz nach der rechte Mann für eine Aufgabe bin, zu der vielleicht mehr das Herz als irgendwelche berechtigende Wesensverwandtschaft mich zieht". He continues to reinforce these doubts throughout the novel. As Hubert Orlowski notes, looking at Zeitblom’s style of authorship, he is especially keen to stress when he is unsure of details, or whether something is definitely the case. Orlowski gives many examples of Zeitblom casting doubt on his accuracy, including frequent phrases such as: "meiner Meinung nach", "so zweifelte ich nicht", and "ich vermute". This is not just a matter of what Zeitblom sees as his remoteness from his demonic subject matter. It is also because, although he spends as much of his life with Leverkühn as possible, it is clearly totally impossible for him to be present at every event he narrates, which gives a comic effect. Whether through fastidiousness that any pretence at omniscience would quickly be noticed as an inconsistency, or from pure mischief, Mann makes sure that Zeitblom’s elaborate explanations leave us in no doubt about this. The irony comes particularly to the fore in his account of Rudi Schwerdtfeger’s delivery of Leverkühn’s

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1 GW XI, p. 164.
3 GW VI, p. 9.
marriage proposal to Marie Godeau. Zeitblom begins with a painstakingly detailed account of the weather and the clothes that Leverkühn and Schwerdtfeger are wearing in their initial conversation, having said a page earlier: "Nein, ich war nicht dabei. Aber heute ist seelische Tatsache, daß ich dabei gewesen bin". The mundane details are hardly "seelisch", nor even particularly relevant to the story. By the time Zeitblom comes to narrate the conversation between Schwerdtfeger and Marie Godeau, his protestations are transparently ironic:

Zweifelt irgend jemand, daß ich, was zwischen Rudolf und Marie Godeau sich abspielte, in derselben Wortlichkeit wiedergeben könnte wie das Gespräch in Pfeiffering? Zweifelt jemand, daß ich 'dabeigewesen' bin? Ich denke nicht.

Second, for all his humorous touches, Zeitblom's attention to detail can also irritate the reader, so that it can be tempting to dismiss him as an irksome pedant. There are, after all, several literary precedents for this type of character. Helmut R. Boeninger focuses on this aspect of Zeitblom's character in his 1959 essay, suggesting that he is a descendant of the original Faust's acolyte, or the critic Beckmesser from Wagner's opera Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg. But neither of these comparisons is convincing as an overall account of Zeitblom. If anything, it is Leverkühn who is more at home in Wagner's dusty 'Studierstube', and Zeitblom who visits him there from the 'real world'.

The third possibility, perhaps most tempting of all, is that of having little respect for Zeitblom, seeing him as a less talented impediment on a real genius, with echoes of the ultimately pitiable character of Charles Kinbote in Vladimir Nabokov's Pale Fire (1959), who edits the final poem of the murdered poet John Shade. Zeitblom, whilst a saner character than Kinbote, might also be said to worship Leverkühn unreasonably, writing a hagiographic account of his life. It is certainly clear that Zeitblom is prepared to sacrifice more than Leverkühn for the sake of their friendship: "Ich sagte besser: der meinen, denn er bestand ja durchaus nicht darauf, daß ich mich neben ihm hielt". For example, Leverkühn persuades his friend to collaborate on his opera Verlorene Liebesmüh, yet the plot of the opera mocks the very tradition of humanism that Zeitblom represents. Despite this, and the fact he is second choice behind Rüdiger Schildknapp, whom he dislikes, Zeitblom agrees. This is just one amongst many examples of dismissive remarks from Leverkühn, or instances where he takes Zeitblom’s devotion for granted. It is certainly clear from Zeitblom’s own references to his shaking hands - tangible physical reactions to the biography he is recounting

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5 GW VI, p. 576.
6 Ibid., p. 587.
8 GW VI, p. 150.
that his involvement with his subject is deeply emotional. It is this involvement, rather than any particular qualifications for the task, which draws him into it. One of the most appealing analogies for the relationship is that of Leverkühn as an eccentric yet brilliant Sherlock Holmes, the dark secret of his disease replacing Holmes’s cocaine addiction, with Zeitblom as Dr Watson. Zeitblom is, after all, happy to abandon ‘meine gute Frau Helene’ for days at a time to take part in Leverkühn’s life, and, if not armed with service revolver, just as ready to defend his friend against his detractors. Like Watson, Zeitblom also sets out to chronicle his friend’s work for posterity. Margrit Henning notes, however, that the literary relationship between Holmes and Watson operates so effectively because Watson’s ignorance of what is going on is the perfect foil for Holmes’s dénouements of his cases. In contrast, whilst the discussions between Leverkühn and Zeitblom often seem to be taking place from opposing viewpoints, they are rarely on widely different levels of understanding. Zeitblom may not fully appreciate Leverkühn’s motivation, and is happy to admit that he is not Leverkühn’s musical and intellectual equal, but is nonetheless able to discuss the mechanics of his work with him perfectly sensibly.

Zeitblom may be all these things - comic, pedantic, even slightly obsessed. But this is not all that he is. The affectionately ironic treatment of Zeitblom lulls the reader into a false sense of security. It is the very characteristics that might cause the reader to dismiss Zeitblom that serve to underline his significance. He is far from being simply a foil for Leverkühn. It is surely important that Mann chose to include a reference to Zeitblom in the title of the novel, rather than leaving it simply as Doktor Faustus: “erzählt von einem Freunde” is an integral part of the title. The reader should be very suspicious of what a writer has to hide, when he goes to the lengths that Zeitblom does to push himself into the background. His very first sentence makes clear that he wants to remain as unobtrusive as possible:

Mit aller Bestimmtheit will ich versichern, daß es keineswegs aus dem Wunsche geschieht, meine Person in den Vordergrund zu schieben, wenn ich diesen Mitteilungen . . . einige Worte über mich selbst und meine Bewandtnisse vorausschicke.

Edgar Kirsch, in his 1962 essay on the novel, urges extreme caution in the face of this overwhelming self-effacement. Zeitblom’s lapses into writing of his own situation are usually followed by some sort of apology, and the reader quickly gains the impression that he
protests rather too much. One good example is his description of his own reaction to the *Apocalypse cum figuris*, which he is all too anxious to dismiss as self-indulgent:


Despite his impression of inadequacy, however, Zeitblom is still concerned to establish his reliability whenever he can. He is quite honest in areas where he is vague about the details, but very anxious to give them where he has them. The experiments by Jonathan Leverkühn, for example, although they took place in Zeitblom’s childhood, are recalled in considerable detail, with Zeitblom even apologising for not remembering everything accurately: “Ein Tropfen... - ich erinnere mich nicht mit Bestimmtheit, woraus dieser bestand, ich glaube, es war Chloroform.”  

His reconstruction of conversations to which he is a party, even from a very long time before, as with the ‘Strohgespräche’, or Leverkühn’s exposition of the ‘Zweideutigkeit’ of tonality, are painstaking. As already noted, Zeitblom is also capable of mastering the musical detail, and as “ein Musensohn im akademischen Sinne des Wortes”, provides a useful filter for the intelligent layman.

Volker Hage, in his study of the narrative in *Doktor Faustus*, argues strongly for the essential modernity of the narrator figure in the novel, though he admits this is somewhat diluted when compared with Joyce or Döblin. Hage sees the modernist undermining of certainty as one of Zeitblom’s most important functions, extending both to certainty about the whole process of writing and the validity of the first person narrator. Perhaps the most important feature of Zeitblom’s narration, however, is that it draws the reader much more closely into the action than might otherwise be the case. Zeitblom creates a kind of ‘Verfremdungseffekt’ all his own, as whilst it is possible that the reader will simply lose patience with him, it is more likely that his hesitations will compel the reader to look more closely at the substance of the narrative.

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12 GW VI, p. 470.
13 Ibid., p. 29-30.
14 Ibid., p. 10.
16 The latter viewpoint is certainly favoured by Margrit Henning. See M. Henning, op. cit., p. 125.
This effect is enhanced by Zeitblom's doom-laden tone, and his hurry to tell the story: “Die Begierde, alles auf einmal zu sagen, läßt meine Sätze überfluten.”17 By the middle of the novel, there are few surprises left. Zeitblom's remarks, for example, when he gets carried away in telling the story when he recalls the Blake songs, are typical: “Doch das sind spätere Dinge”.18 Readers are certainly no longer in any doubt that Leverkühn will come to a painful end. Thus, with a mind more or less free of anticipation of the plot, they are left to ponder the more general implications of Leverkühn's life and work. It is difficult to believe that these narrative slips are merely intended to enhance Zeitblom's bumbling persona. They are surely a device concocted by a more sophisticated author than he is, or claims to be. In an interesting comparison of Doktor Faustus with two other novels using 'unreliable' first person narrators, Jacqueline Viswanathan observes that the inability of such narrators to penetrate their main characters' symbolic interpretation of their own fates leaves these characters significantly shrouded in mystery. Thus, as “the narrators' full reliability is undermined, but no other truth is substituted”, readers are encouraged to consider for themselves what the 'truth' might be.19

5.3.2 Zeitblom as historical vehicle

Mann himself stated that neither Leverkühn nor Zeitblom was a fully rounded physical character, whilst the peripheral characters of the novel were more filled out:

Romanfiguren im pittoresken Sinn durften nur dem Zentrum ferneren Erscheinungen des Buches, alle diese Schildknapp, Schwerdtfeger, Roddes, Schlaginhaufens etc. etc. sein - nicht seine beiden Protagonisten, die zu viel zu verbergen haben, nämlich das Geheimnis ihrer Identität.20

This 'Identität' is not just a matter of the psychological characteristics of the two protagonists complementing one another. Neither character is a total opposite of the other - William Honsa Jr. remarks that Zeitblom has a little of the artist about him, and Leverkühn just a touch of the bourgeois.21 It has often been claimed that the characters of Zeitblom and Leverkühn represent different sides of Thomas Mann himself.22 But even this does not tell

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17 GW VI, p. 468.
18 Ibid., p. 221.
20 GW XI, p. 204.
22 Michael Beddow, for example, calls Doktor Faustus "as close as Mann ever came to a comprehensive autobiography", M. Beddow, Doctor Faustus, p. 16. Hans Mayer sees the two characters as representing two sides of Nietzsche, as well as Mann himself, 'Thomas Mann's Doktor Faustus: Roman einer Endzeit und Endzeit des Romans', (1959), in R. Wolff (ed.), DF und die Wirkung, Part 1, p. 108 & 115.
the full story. It is easier to see Mann in Zeitblom; not just in the psychological characteristics of the humanist, but in his attitude to contemporary events, from which Leverkühn is much more detached. Although it is possible to argue that this remoteness offers some reflection of Mann’s exile, it is fair to say that however vigorously the members of the ‘Innere Emigration’ might have protested to the contrary, Mann did not see his geographical distance as a handicap to genuine engagement with Germany. The two characters simply do not balance one another out. Zeitblom is much more real, and is visibly rooted in events that Mann himself faced. Kirsch goes so far as to suggest that the Entstehung is simply a replay of Doktor Faustus itself, with Mann’s tale of artistic creation, like Zeitblom’s, written in a counterpoint with political events.23

Donna Reed’s study of the German novel and Nazism stresses that the significance of Zeitblom lies at least as much in sociological features as in more metaphysical aspects of balance to Leverkühn’s character.24 His credentials as a typical member of the middle classes are established early on, and his opposition to the Nazis is extremely cautious. Zeitblom’s own awareness of his inadequacy in the latter respect does nothing to improve it:

Während ich treulich von Tag zu Tag . . . dem Intimen und Persönlichen eine Gestalt zu geben suchte, habe ich geschehen lassen, was draußen geschah, und was der Zeit angehört, in der ich schrieb.25

Even though Zeitblom is aware that he does not properly confront these matters, his concerns about the Nazis seem to focus largely on a general unease about their threat to the cultural tradition he holds dear. This is nowhere clearer than in his comparison of Nazism with Bolshevism, in which his assessment of their relative merits is apparently entirely based on the attitude of the two regimes to culture: “Meines Wissens hat der Bolschewismus niemals Kunstwerke zerstört”.26 It may be just about possible to take a government’s attitude to works of art as a fair guide to their treatment of the individual, but Zeitblom’s concern seems to be directed more towards the preservation of culture for its own sake, rather than as an indicator of the will to preserve human life and dignity.

This attitude is quite significant, for Zeitblom’s involvement in political events, and his increasing understanding of their import largely mirrors Mann’s own political development. Mann himself said that: “Sereni Zeitbloms ‘Politik’ . . . [entspricht] ziemlich genau den Stationen meiner eigenen Entwicklung”.27 Early on in the novel, with shades of the

23 E. Kirsch, op. cit., p. 204.
24 D. K. Reed, Novel and the Nazi Past, p. 17.
25 GW VI, p. 447.
Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen, Zeitblom freely admits that he was swept along by the fervour of World War One:

Angriff und Verteidigung waren dasselbe in unserem Fall: sie bildeten zusammen das Pathos der Heimsuchung, der Berufung, der großen Stunde, der heiligen Not...

ich [konnte] in keiner Weise prägendieren, mich von der allgemeinen Ergriffenheit ausgeschlossen zu haben, Ich teilte sie redlich, mochte auch die natürliche Gesetzesheit des Gelehrten mich von jeder Hurra-Lautheit abhalten.28

The development of Zeitblom’s understanding of political realities during the novel is marked by the increasing references to the gathering chaos of World War Two as the biography of Leverkühn, too, draws towards its tragic climax. The development is near enough to Mann’s own experience, even though it does not exactly coincide. T. J. Reed notes that Mann allows Zeitblom to be ignorant of Nazi extermination camps until 1945, which was three years after Mann himself first reported atrocities against the Jews in his BBC broadcasts.29 If Zeitblom had had the same awareness, he would have known before he began writing the Doktor Faustus narrative in May 1943, and Mann would have lost the opportunity to depict his growing awareness of events as they unfold. This development is very effective within the narrative; as the chaos escalates, and Leverkühn’s life hastens to its tragic conclusion, so Zeitblom’s references to the historical chaos increase in their frequency and desperation.

Leverkühn’s striking lack of historical specificity, discussed in 4.3, makes it significant that Zeitblom can be seen so clearly in this very specific contemporary social and historical context. Perhaps the most powerful factor in the identity of the two characters is, then, the way in which Zeitblom acts as the vehicle to give Leverkühn the historical specificity he would otherwise lack. Might this be the ‘Geheimnis ihrer Identität’ to which Mann referred? Leverkühn’s hermetically sealed ‘Studierstube’ is so universal that it is ideally adapted to time travel, and could be transported to any German historical setting from Luther’s Wittenberg onwards. Leverkühn is incapable of doing this on his own, however, or at least, he shows no inclination to bind himself specifically to his own time. It is only through the intervention of Zeitblom that the gap between Leverkühn’s creative output and his contemporary history can be closed so that, to all intents and purposes, as an intermediary between music and twentieth century Germany, Zeitblom is Leverkühn. In this context, it is

28 GW VI, p. 401-402.
29 T. J. Reed, Uses of Tradition, p. 400. In his broadcast in January 1942, Mann reports what he has heard about the experimental gassing of up to four hundred Dutch Jews in Germany, and warns of the dangers of an unwillingness to believe such reports. See GW XI, p. 1025. When Zeitblom writes in the second chapter of Doktor Faustus “daß ich gerade in der Judenfrage und ihrer Behandlung unserem Führer und seinen Paladinen niemals voll habe zustimmen können, was nicht ohne Einfluß auf meine Resignation vom Lehrfach war”, this is quite an understatement in the light of Mann’s knowledge at the time.
interesting to note that Helmut Koopmann’s study of the Leverkühn and Zeitblom figures as an expression of the dividedness of exile rejects the notion that they are opposites. Instead, Koopmann sees them as a single, identity which, though internally divided, cannot be separated. He underlines not just the more commonly cited identification of Mann’s life with Zeitblom, but also with Leverkühn, as what Mann saw as “eine versetzte, verschobene, verzerrte, dämonische Wiedergabe und Blößstellung meines eigenen Lebens”. In other words, both Zeitblom and Mann have it in themselves to become a Leverkühn; in a perverse form, Leverkühn stands for the same things as they do.

Zeitblom’s narrative points to his extensive identification with Leverkühn in several ways. He is involved in his friend’s life to a degree which is abnormal, even for a relationship with an element of obsession, so much so that he often seems to he less observing Leverkühn’s life than actually living it for him. Even in his student days, Zeitblom admits that his friend’s life and career are much more important than his own:


Later, Zeitblom says that he lived his own life: “ohne es gerade zu vernachlässigen, immer nur nebenbei, mit halber Aufmerksamkeit”. He stresses the nearness of Leverkühn’s life to his own, apologising almost painfully for his inability to distance himself from his subject. It is significant that he draws attention to the difficulty of separating narrator and subject in his account:


Zeitblom is particularly affected by Leverkühn’s liaison with hetaera esmeralda, as if it is he, rather than Leverkühn, who has experienced it: “Tagelang spürte ich die Berührung ihres Fleisches auf meiner eigenen Wange”.

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31 GW VI, p. 118.
32 Ibid., p. 415.
33 Ibid., p. 235, with my italics.
34 Ibid., p. 198.
Another significant moment occurs when Leverkühn says, as Zeitblom goes to war in 1914: “Ihr geht statt meiner!” Zeitblom carries his friend with him into the conflict, and lives it for him. He does not see what Leverkühn makes of the political situation, for he makes of it precisely nothing. Nor does he seek to make Leverkühn aware of the importance of this epoch-making event, seeing his friend’s detachment as understandable and not to be tampered with. Even more importantly, Zeitblom continues to carry Leverkühn with him into World War Two, at the time of writing his text, after his friend has died. Zeitblom is glad that Leverkühn has not witnessed this war - however politically detached, this is understandable. But just when Zeitblom might have been wholly taken up with his own survival and maintaining human decency in the Germany of that time, he seems mainly preoccupied with continuing to live on behalf of Leverkühn, who had died in 1940, having been mentally incapacitated since 1930:

Die Geborgenheit Adrians vor unseren Lebetagen ist mir teuer, ich halte sie wert vor mir und nehme dafür, daß ich mir ihrer bewußt sein darf, gern die Schrecken der Zeit in Kauf, in der ich fortwähre. Es ist mir, als stände und lebe ich für ihn, statt seiner, als trüge ich die Last, die seinen Schultern erspart geblieben, kurz, als erwiese ich ihm ein Liebes, indem ich’s ihm abnähme zu leben; und diese Vorstellung, so illusorisch, ja nörrisch sie sei, sie schmeichelt dem stets gehegten Wunsch, ihm zu dienen, zu helfen, ihn zu schützen.

Kirsch suggests that one of the measures of the importance of Zeitblom’s identification with Leverkühn can be found in the fact that Mann allows Zeitblom to enter so intimately into Leverkühn’s life up to its end, and to live on in his madness and after his death. He contrasts this ever-deepening connection with Schwerdtfeger’s apparent intimacy with Leverkühn, which ends in his murder, calling the latter “angemaßt und illegitim”. It is in Zeitblom’s willingness to live for Leverkühn beyond his death that Leverkühn’s true timelessness lies. Leverkühn can continue to be significant after his death, and his music can be connected with contemporary history for as long as Zeitblom is prepared to live his extinguished life for him. As it is Zeitblom, rather than Leverkühn, who acts as a link between music and contemporary German history in Doktor Faustus, his narrative about Germany is important in showing what kind of history he believes this is. The next chapter considers the significance of this link, and how Zeitblom makes it.

36 Ibid., p. 337.
37 E. Kirsch, op. cit., p. 211.
Chapter 6  Closing the gap between music and history

6.1  *Doktor Faustus* and the concept of ‘one Germany’

6.1.1  The ‘one Germany’ argument

A striking feature of the correlation between the characteristics of music and Germany in *Doktor Faustus* is that it brings to life Mann’s view of his homeland as ‘one Germany’, rather than a separate good and bad Germany. In doing so, the novel demonstrates the plausibility of Mann’s argument - Germany in its twentieth century crisis is seen to be one particular historical manifestation of Germany’s ontology. For Mann, Germany shared both the credit for the cultural greatness of the land of Goethe and Wagner, and the responsibility for the evil of Hitler. The way in which Leverkühn’s compositions manifest music’s ontological characteristics has much in common with the way in which Germany in the first half of the twentieth century manifests Germany’s ontological characteristics. This historical manifestation of Germany was a terrible perversion, or ‘Verhunzung’, of many of the things he most treasured about his country, as is clear from a letter Mann wrote to Walter Rehm, thanking him for a book about Jakob Burckhardt: “Hier bin auch ich noch zu Hause, d.h. im 19. Jahrhundert . . . Heute ist seine Welt gründlich dahin . . . Die besten Dinge von damals sind verhunzt”.¹ The presentation in *Doktor Faustus* of this temporary ‘Verhunzung’ of their permanent ontology of music and Germany is mutually reinforcing.

The roots of the ‘one Germany’ argument reach far back into Mann’s early thought. He was always fascinated with the ambiguity of appearances, often referring to Nietzsche’s concept of ‘doppelte Optik’. In *Doktor Faustus*, the theme of deceptive ‘Schein’ is, of course, important from the beginning, finding concrete representation in Jonathan Leverkühn’s experiments with natural phenomena. Ambiguity and double meaning was also a central characteristic of Mann’s great love/hate figure, Richard Wagner. Writing about Wagner in 1940, in the context of his being seen as a representative of the ‘good’ Germany, Mann made clear that the same ontology could reveal different sides at different times: “wahr ist, daß Völker nicht immer dasselbe Gesicht bieten, und daß es auf Zeit und Umstände ankommt, wie ihre konstanten Eigenschaften sich ausnehmen”.²

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² GW XIII, p. 358.
The idea of dual characteristics was much on Mann’s mind just before he embarked on the writing of *Doktor Faustus*. He was reading R. L. Stevenson’s *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1896), the link with ‘man’s dual nature’ suggesting both the secret identity of Leverkühn and Zeitblom referred to in the *Entstehung*, and the good and bad Germanies. In 1940, Mann had received from his English publisher a copy of Sebastian Haffner’s book *Germany: Jekyll and Hyde* (1940). At that time, Mann was rediscovering his early Faustus plan, and apparently found the book the most instructive he had ever read on the subject of Germany, referring to it as a “vorzügliche Analyse”. Mann’s concept of the one Germany thus became inextricably linked with the writing of *Doktor Faustus*. He made explicit in public statements whilst he was writing the novel that the concept of ‘Germany’ should not be taken to be identical with particular historical manifestations of any sort, whether good or bad. Mann wrote in his open letter to Walter von Molo in 1945:


In the novel, this notion is reinforced by its identity with the concept of the ontology of music being separate from particular compositions.

Mann saw *Doktor Faustus* as an important part of his understanding of Germany. Over the years, he became probably more engrossed in writing the novel than his political essays and lectures on Germany. In 1943, Agnes Meyer accused him (albeit apologetically) of not properly engaging in the serious issues of Germany’s return to ‘human society’, which was the subject of *Krieg und die Zukunft*, Mann’s imminent lecture in the Washington Library of Congress:

> I can see readily enough how this lecture came into being. Fatigued, you turned from the strain of what I am certain is a great new novel, to toss off a sop to everyday life. But this is no time for so ungenerous an effort. Isolated in your refugee atmosphere, you do not realise at what an intensity America is living and thinking.

Mann was irritated by Mrs Meyer’s intervention - “unverschämter und tief verstimmter Brief von der Meyer - fühlte mich elend von dem Brief” - though outwardly polite. His reply was “freundlich beherrscht”. As far as Mann was concerned, however, his fiction was his real

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4 *Tagebücher 1940-1943*, p. 80, (21 May 1940).

5 GW XII, p. 961.


task, and the fictive world supremely the means to explain the real world. Donna Reed contrasts this approach with that of Döblin and Brecht, neither of them admirers of Mann, who interwove real material in their works to corroborate their fictive worlds. In his reflections on his work in the Thomas Mann archive, Hans Wysling described Mann’s treatment of political themes in his fiction as more subtle and complex than in his speeches. This is consistent with Mann’s whole ‘political’ career, as described in 2.1. He was an artist not a politician, but this did not prevent him from making serious and meaningful political statements in his art. This was not least because Mann believed that, certainly in Germany, artistic and cultural issues impacted upon the political sphere. So it is that Doktor Faustus actively illustrates, rather than simply states as a concept, the simple but dramatic assertion that the good and bad Germany are all one.

There are many prompts in Doktor Faustus to cause the reader to consider the highly ambiguous nature of Germany. The town of Kaisersaschem is fictional, yet intended to be typical of real German towns: “Kaisersaschem ... fühlt sich, wie jede deutsche Stadt, als ein Kulturzentrum von geschichtlicher Eigenwürde”. It has both the dignity and cultural richness of the Holy Roman Empire, and the oppressive medieval atmosphere that gives a dark undertone to its current modernity:

> Aber in der Luft war etwas hängengeblieben von der Verfassung des Menschengemütes in den letzten Jahrzehnten des fünfzehnten Jahrhunderts ... Sondernbar zu sagen von einer verständig-nüchternen modernen Stadt (aber sie war nicht modern, sie war alt, und Alter ist Vergangenheit als Gegenwart, eine von Gegenwart nur überlagerte Vergangenheit).

Later on, confronting the terrible final decline of his country, Zeitblom uses words that suggest that Germany has always contained this fatal potential, just as Kaisersaschem had always contained more than one identity: “Wie wird es sein, einem Volke anzugehören, dessen Geschichte dies gräßliche Mißlingen in sich trug?”.

The theory of ‘one Germany’, with all its people participating equally in the good and the bad, and thus all guilty of the evil of Nazism, was famously and bitterly opposed by Mann’s fellow literary exile, Bertolt Brecht. Brecht undoubtedly represented the majority view of the Californian exiles on the matter of Germany’s post-war rehabilitation. According to Brecht,

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10 GW VI, p. 50.
11 Ibid., p. 51-52.
12 Ibid., p. 638.
and the other advocates of the ‘two Germanies’ theory, Nazism was a dictatorship imposed
by a Fascist ruling class on the bulk of a decent, peace-loving people. Perhaps the most
visible opponent of this view was the former English diplomat, Robert Vansittart. It was a
source of dismay to the exiles that Mann, the most prominent member of their community,
thought to have the ear of the Americans and therefore seen as a potentially effective
advocate for Germany, should apparently side more with the Germanophobe, Vansittart, than
with his own compatriots. Brecht could not fulfil the advocate’s role. Despite his fame in
Berlin and his secure position now in the theatrical canon, he was not then well known in
America. Although he had been interested for some time in popular culture and America
itself, Brecht had no American public and had as little time for their culture as they had for
him: “his responses to American life were as negative as his estimate of American
entertainment”. He scorned Hollywood in particular, though the absence of a theatrical
audience forced him to seek work there alongside fellow émigrés, including Heinrich Mann.
Perhaps more than all his contemporaries, Brecht was seeking to make a reality of a ‘new
Germany’ after the war, to be created by its intellectuals in exile and then taken back to
Germany itself. Despite his personal dislike of Thomas Mann, he would have expected the
writer who had famously uttered, on arrival in New York in February 1938, “where I am,
there is Germany”, to join him in this endeavour. Vaget observes that both Brecht’s and
Mann’s positions on Germany’s guilt were equally impractical: “Für Brecht zählten
unerlistischerweise 99 Prozent der Deutschen zum anderen Deutschland, für Thomas Mann,
ebenso unrealistischerweise, höchstens 10 Prozent”. In fact, the percentage for Mann was
probably even lower than this, since he also counted himself amongst the guilty.

In a sense, the dispute over Germany between the two writers stemmed from a long time
before. Brecht had criticised Mann even in the 1920s for not including the whole of society in
his writing, but rather, being concerned with the fate of the bourgeois artist, representative of
only a small part of society. By World War Two, this appeared to some to translate into
Mann holding the whole of the oppressed working class responsible for Nazism without ever
properly engaging in their lives. But in truth, Mann did not really deal in class distinctions,

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13 In fact, Mann denied that he was in agreement with the extreme views of Vansittart, in a letter to C.
14 A number of Brecht’s works had had an American theme or setting (albeit usually Chicago, not Los
Angeles), long before he went to live there, e.g. Im Dickicht der Städte (1923), Aufstieg und Fall der
Stadt Mahagonny (1930), Die Heilige Johanna der Schlachthöfe (1931, first performed 1959).
17 Hans Rudolf Vaget, ‘Deutsche Einheit und nationale Identität. Zur Genealogie der gegenwärtigen
Deutschland-Debatte am Beispiel von Thomas Mann’, Literaturwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch 33
or indeed, any distinctions at all. He had always been inclined to talk about a 'collective German soul'. Whilst he felt that the Faustian characteristics of that German soul had been perverted in Nazism, the collective soul still held responsibility for that perversion. Mann’s rhetoric of guilt took place on a different plane from Brecht’s “Erst kommt das Fressen, dann kommt die Moral” outlook. This was perhaps partly because the early success of Buddenbrooks had meant that ‘das Fressen’ had never been an issue, whilst Brecht and his family lived in Santa Monica more or less in poverty. Brecht would certainly never argue that the average German worker would see himself as part of a Faustian “collective soul”. Yet however impractical it might sound, it is likely that Mann’s approach captured something of the German psyche. The Viennese workers whom he addressed in October 1932 must, surely, have had ‘das Fressen’ fairly close to their hearts, yet Mann reported that they seemed to appreciate his talk on such grand themes: “Wie dankbar sie sich erwiesen! Es ist mir unvergeßlich!”. Even taking into account that Mann may have somewhat exaggerated their appreciation, this is a notable reaction.

The crisis point in Mann’s relations with Brecht came shortly after he began writing Doktor Faustus in 1943. On 1 August, Brecht convened a meeting of a number of other prominent German writers, including Heinrich Mann, Lion Feuchtwanger and Bruno Frank, at the home of Berthold Viertel, the Austrian theatre director, in order to draft a manifesto in support of the Free Germany Committee. The Committee had used the Russian press to call on German soldiers to fight against Hitler. The writers’ efforts turned into a manifesto of their own, distinguishing between Hitler’s Germany and the bulk of the German people: “scharf zu unterscheiden zwischen dem Hitlerregime und den ihm verbundenen Schichten einerseits und dem deutschen Volk andererseits”. Although Mann signed the manifesto at the meeting, he telephoned Brecht the next day to withdraw his signature, provoking Brecht’s extreme rage. The dramatist believed that Mann suspected him of acting under orders from Moscow: “das reptil [sic] kann sich nicht vorstellen....daß man überhaupt ganz von sich aus, sagen wir aus überzeugung, in deutschland etwas anderes erblicken kann als ein zahlkräftiges leserpublikum.” He suspected that Mann simply wanted to retain his American readership and citizenship.

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19 A. Heilbut, op. cit., p. 182.
22 Ibid., p. 621, (entry for 9 August 1943).
6.1.2 A shared ontology

There was, however, much more to Mann’s action than either suspicion of Brecht, or self-preservation. It could not have been easy to maintain the view of Germany that he did amongst the exiles, and the fact that he left it until the day after the meeting to withdraw his signature shows the peer pressure he must have faced. Most of the other exiles, even his brother, disagreed with Mann’s stance, feeling that it was the exiled writers’ duty to support their fellow Germans, not to sit in judgement. Brecht wrote to Mann later in 1943 that it was: “weder ihr Recht . . . noch ihre Pflicht sich dem deutschen Volk gegenüber an einen Richtertisch zu setzen, ihr Platz scheint . . . auf der Bank der Verteidigung”. Yet if Mann was sitting in judgement on anyone, he was equally sitting in judgement on himself. He was not acting from impulse, but from a conviction that coloured all his work, seeing the rise of Hitler and its consequences as a crime in which he shared along with all Germans.

Mann’s politics had always been a politics of self-reflection, and in identifying himself as Germany when he arrived on American soil, he was not, as some exiled Germans might have hoped, heralding a new Germany to be built in America and one day return. Instead, he was describing himself as part of the unchanging nature of Germany - the ontology - and as guilty as any other German for the evil he had left behind. In an interview with the New York Times in 1933, about the rise of Nazism, he said: “als Deutscher kann ich verstehen, was geschehen ist und warum es geschehen ist. Als Mensch kann ich es nicht rechtfertigen”. Mann was very concerned about the suspicions that would arise about the activities of a Free Germany Committee so soon after the war, when most of the civilised world recoiled in fear and horror from Germany. He wrote barely a week after the manifesto incident:

Und schließlich finde ich, daß man es dem liberalen Amerika überlassen soll, vor der Vernichtung Deutschlands zu warnen . . . Es gibt unter deutschen Links-sozialisten eine Art von patriotischer Mode, darauf zu bestehen, daß Deutschland >>nichts geschehen darf<< . . . aber rein moralisch und pädagogisch gesehen, können zunächst einmal der Fall und die Buße gar nicht tief genug sein nach dem lästerischen Übermut, der wüsten Superioritätsraserei und Gewaltsphantasterei, die dies Volk sich rauschvoll geleistet hat.

Mann’s view of the German situation was no act of American appeasement, but represented a long-held belief about the danger of German power. As early as 1934, Mann had noted in his diary that the destruction of the Reich would be desirable, because whilst Germany would be economically powerful, it would not be a political force that was a threat to the rest of the

world.\textsuperscript{26} He thought that the only way for Germany to re-enter the company of other countries was to have its power reorganised and quelled by the Allies - total disintegration as the path to new birth. This is reflected in \textit{Doktor Faustus}, when Leverkühn’s \textit{Dr. Fausti Weheklag} shows that the only possibility of real hope is granted to those who reach the deepest despair and must go beyond hopelessness to find it. It is at this point that something described as an almost theological ‘grace’ is activated: “Es wäre die Hoffnung jenseits der Hoffnungslosigkeit, die Transendenz der Verzweiflung, - nicht der Verrat an ihr, sondern das Wunder, das über den Glauben geht”.\textsuperscript{27}

Mann did not see the potential destruction of Germany as the end, but as a new beginning; the ‘Stunde Null’ from which the democratisation of Germany could begin. He was disillusioned when the attempt to set up a federation of the Allies’ different parts of Germany foundered in the wake of their differing politics, even in the early days of the occupation. The death of Roosevelt, whom Mann greatly admired, in 1945, effectively ended any hope of genuine reconciliation. His hopes sank lower with the onset of the Cold War, the confirmation of the division of Germany, and McCarthyism in the USA, when he was personally under FBI suspicion:

\begin{quote}
Es ist nicht zu leugnen, daß dieses große, materiell so begünstigte Land, dessen innere Entquicckung entscheidend geworden ist für das Schicksal der Menschheit, seinen Bewunderem seit dem Ende des Krieges manche Enttäuschung bereitet hat.\textsuperscript{28}
\end{quote}

It is important to distinguish between the concepts of guilt and responsibility in Mann’s assessment of Germany after the war. Guilt can be hopeless and passive, but responsibility is a more dynamic concept, which can be seized and acted upon. In Mann’s eyes, a new start could happen only if every German could move beyond a generalised, sometimes crippling, feeling of guilt, and actively accept shared responsibility for the Third Reich. This is clearly expressed in one of Mann’s BBC broadcasts to the German people towards the end of the war. He gives a sense of underlying determinism attached to being German, noted in 5.1 as part of its ontology, but also states that it is possible, and indeed necessary, for individuals to take hold of that fate, and shape it at particular points in history. In doing so, Mann makes explicit not only the idea that ontology can take on particular manifestations at different historical points, but also that individuals can make a difference to those manifestations:

\begin{quote}
Schuld des deutschen Volkes, das in einem blutigen Popanz den Erlöser sah? Wir wollen von Schuld nicht reden. Es ist kein Name für die fatale Verkettung von Folgen einer unglücklichen Geschichte . . . Aber Verantwortlichkeit ist etwas anderes
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{27} GW VI, p. 651.
\textsuperscript{28} GW XIII, p. 779, (\textit{An David McCoy}).
als Schuld. Verantwortlich sind wir alle für das, was aus dem deutschen Wesen kam und von Deutschland als Ganzem geschichtlich verübt wurde ... Gibt es das: Deutschland; gibt es das Volk als geschichtliche Gestalt, als eine kollektive Persönlichkeit mit Charakter und Schicksal, dann ist der Nationalsozialismus nichts anderes als die Form, in die ein Volk, das deutsche, sich vor zwölf Jahren gebracht hat.  

Mann did not believe that there were sufficient forces for democracy in Germany immediately after the war to effect on their own the type of changes that Brecht and his supporters envisaged. But Mann’s concept of hope and mercy that balances out this apparently harsh approach is often overlooked, not least in *Doktor Faustus* - the combination of ‘Genugtuung’ and ‘Erbarmen’ that he wrote of in April 1945, in the midst of the novel, to Agnes Meyer: “Welche Zeiten, in denen wir leben! Welche täglichen Erschütterungen! Und was das röchelnde Deutschland betrifft, - wie wird das Gemüt zwischen Genugtuung und Erbarmen hin und her gerissen!”  

The merciful side of Mann’s attitude to Germany was certainly overlooked by the writers of the ‘innere Emigration’ who had stayed in Germany during the war. Their bitter opposition to Mann disputed in particular that he had any right, after his long absence, to speak about Germany as it was at the end of the war. After all, the notion that there were not two Germanies, good and bad, could be interpreted as implying not only that all good Germans were complicit in evil, but also that Nazism might have some influence on the good aspects of Germany. This was a bold statement indeed for someone who had not lived through the regime. The harshness of Mann’s words in responding to these writers did not help to endear him to the ‘innere Emigration’. In his reply to Walter von Molo, Mann stated that he felt the books produced in Germany between 1933 and 1945 were “wertlos, und nicht gut in die Hand zu nehmen. Ein Geruch von Blut und Schande haftet ihnen an; sie sollten eingestampft werden”.  

Mann’s view of Germany’s constant ontology, shared by all Germans, does not mean that everyone is good, or that everyone is evil. The ontological characteristics of Germany depicted in *Doktor Faustus* are neither inherently bad nor inherently good. Above all else, they are inherently problematic, as are the ontological characteristics of music. Germany’s ontological characteristics can, at a given point of history, lead to triumph or destruction. In the case of music, it is apparent from the picture in *Doktor Faustus* that the same characteristics that make for beauty at one point can slip too far and become degeneration and

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29 GW XI, p. 1109.  
31 GW XII, p. 957.
decay at another. The key concept, offered by Mann in *Deutschland und die Deutschen*, is of the bad as ‘das fehlgegangene Gute’:

[Es] gibt nicht zwei Deutschlands, ein böses und ein gutes, sondern nur eines, dem sein Bestes durch Teufelstlist zum Bösen ausschlug. Das böse Deutschland, das ist das fehlgegangene Gute, das gute im Unglück, in Schul und Untergang.32

Zeitblom’s summing up of Nazi Germany towards the end of *Doktor Faustus* reflects this concept of ‘das fehlgegangene Gute’. He states that the worst characteristics of twentieth century Germany were also to be found in its greatest historical moments:

War diese Herrschaft nicht nach Worten und Taten nur die verzerrte, verpobelte, verschäumliche Wahrwerdung einer Gesinnung und Weltbeurteilung, der man charakterliche Echtheit zuerkennen muß, und die der christlich-humane Mensch nicht ohne Scheu in den Zügen unserer Großen, der an Figur gewaltigsten Verkörperungen des Deutschums ausgeprägt findet?33

Mann emphasised the temporary nature of Germany’s problem. Writing to Ernst Bertram after Rathenau’s assassination, he had said: “Ich leide unter einer Verzerrung des deutschen Antlitzes”, a phrase that suggests a temporary disturbance of something that can change again.34 The time immediately after World War Two was, nonetheless, a period of history from which it would take a long time to recover. Mann said that profundity (‘Tiefe’) should be banned from the German vocabulary for fifty years: “Ich spreche auch von deutscher Tiefe und wie leider diese Tiefe jeden Zusammenhang mit dem Gedanken der Humanität eingebüßt habe”.35

Far from balancing out good or evil into a neutral state, the problematic nature of Germany’s ontology seems to lead to extremes of either greatness or evil. As in the sanatorium in *Der Zauberberg* where “nur die Wahl zwischen Extremen gegeben war”, there is no place for the mediocre in *Doktor Faustus*, whether in music or politics.36 A key idea in Leverkühn’s conversation with the devil is that the devil is only interested in a pact with him because of his genius, and does not care about his fellow syphilitic, Spengler. What the devil has to offer the composer is no ordinary productivity, but ‘geniale Zeit’ - a phrase constantly repeated in the course of their dialogue. This is like the tremendous mercy referred to in Leverkühn’s final speech. The mercy that the sinner can expect is in proportion to the enormity of the sin; those who sin most and are forgiven can be most conscious of the grace that forgives them. The beginning of a ‘Stunde Null’ in which Germany’s huge sins were wiped should therefore take them on to better things:

32 GW XI, p. 1146.
33 GW VI, p. 639.
34 Letter to Ernst Bertram of 8 July 1922, *TM an EB*, p. 112.
36 GW III, p. 696.
Ihr werdet zugeben, daß der alltäglich-mäßige Sünder der Gnade nur mäßig interessant sein kann. In seinem Fall hat der Gnadenakt wenig Impetus, er ist nur eine matte Betätigung. Die Mittelmäßigkeit führt überhaupt kein theologisches Leben.

Doktor Faustus makes explicit that the good is indivisible from the evil, underlining the fact that these qualities come from one entity, rather than two separate ones. The devil is never divided from Leverkühn himself: “Ihr sagt lauter Dinge, die in mir sind und aus mir kommen, aber nicht aus Euch”. The devil changes his outward appearance in the course of his dialogue with Leverkühn, so that he can never be seen as a solid and separate entity. Perhaps because of this intermingling of good and evil, Mann evidently found the dialogue chapter difficult to write: “verteufelt schwer zu komponieren”. It is also significant that Leverkühn’s pact with the devil has been entered into long before the dialogue happens. The pact reinforces what the composer already is. Helmut Koopman notes that the dialogue with the devil is almost wholly parody. It is therefore not to be taken as the decisive moment in which the contract with evil is made. Rather, it is a culturally sophisticated discussion of things that have already happened.

6.1.3 Germany’s culpability and the power of myth

The idea of a constant ontological nature with distinct, particular historical manifestations has implications for the culpability of Germany - that is, whether the Germans had the power to act differently, but chose not to. The prospect of different historical manifestations of ontological characteristics suggests that people have some control over those characteristics at the different points in history. Individuals have the power to determine whether their ontology is a force for good or bad. Although in Deutschland und die Deutschen, Mann presents different faces of Germany in the shape of Martin Luther, and the woodcarver Riemenschneider, in Doktor Faustus ontology seems to triumph over everything else. There appears to be no possibility of acting any differently, whatever the consequences. Even if the historical circumstances change, ontology dooms the nation to ‘ewige Wiederkehr’.

Mann was concerned that he might unwittingly have created a new German myth in Doktor Faustus:

Das Sündendasein und das vom Teufel Geholt werden ist in Parallelen gestellt zum deutschen Rausch und zum deutschen Kollaps, und das ist es, was Sie ärgert und womit ich mir wahrscheinlich unwillkommene Freunde mache. Es läuft auf die

37 GW VI, p. 329.
38 Ibid., p. 300.
39 Letter to Agnes Meyer of 7 January 1945, ibid., p. 613.
One of the dominant impressions in the novel is of the German tendency in the first half of the twentieth century to see the merely historical in ontological terms. That is, to see things that were a product of their time, and therefore open to change, as fixed for all time, past, present and future. This idea of a fixed state is an important feature of myth. Myth can be described as the metaphysical basis of a society - the story a society tells to explain why it is the way it is, believed by the members of the society. Mann explored the concept of myth quite extensively in his talk, *Freud und die Zukunft* (1936). He was aware that the tendency to use myth was not exclusively German, seeing it as a general human characteristic to confuse the universal and the particular: “Denn dem Menschen ist am Wiedererkennen gelegen, er möchte das Alte im Neuen wiederfinden und das Typische im Individuellen”. Myth had, however, been a major part of the German consciousness since the Romantics had sought the dignity and roots of the German people in the ancient past. Many of the key German works about myth were written in the early nineteenth century. In the search for a unifying and all-explaining world order, Romanticism was a complement to the Enlightenment’s trust in the powers of man alone. Nietzsche, the guiding spirit of *Doktor Faustus*, took myth to new extremes in his exploration of the birth of tragedy in 1871. He rejected rationality as a means of explaining the world order, glorifying instead the individual hero who imposes a world order, using stirring Wagnerian imagery to create a new German mythology that could later be discerned in the foundations of Nazism:

Glaube niemand, daß der deutsche Geist seine mythische Heimat auf ewig verloren habe, wenn er so deutlich noch die Vogelstimmen versteht, die von jener Heimat erzählen. Eines Tages wird er sich wach finden, in aller Morgenfrische eines ungescheuerten Schlafes; dann wird er Drachen töten, die tückischen Zwerge vernichten und Brünnhilde erwecken - und Wotans Speer selbst wird seinen Weg nicht hemmen können.

This kind of myth-making, with its suspension of rationality, also became a key weapon in Hitler’s quest to ensure that his seizure of power should seem inevitable - a manifestation of the collective will of the German people. Bullock’s biography of Hitler notes that he read a mish-mash of books about mysticism, superstition and ancient belief: “He spent much time in the public library . . . Ancient Rome, the Eastern Religions, Yoga, Occultism, Hypnotism,

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42 GW IX, p. 492.
43 The most influential works included Friedrich Schlegel, *Sprache und Weisheit der Inder* (1808), Jakob Grimm *Deutsche Mythologie* (1835) and Johann Jakob Bachofen, *Das Mutterrecht* (1861).
44 FN1, *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, p. 132.
Astrology, Protestantism, each in turn excited his interest for a moment". Hitler was heard to ridicule Rosenberg's *Mythus des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts* (1930), which spoke at length about the notion of the German mythology as 'faith', as the Nazi answer to Christianity. Hitler's reaction came about presumably not least because he was anxious to avoid a clash with the powerful church. Yet despite this, as explored in 5.2, the Nazis saw the potential of the myth to help them achieve their ends, in a sinister combination of gross irrationality and extreme calculation. Jung saw the 'faith' developed by the Nazis as a genuine 'archetypal' faith, and apparently cautioned against holding the Germans responsible for it. Indeed, J. P. Stern notes, Jung seemed to see a value in it on its own account, quite independent of the damage it caused. Mann, however, had no doubts about the evils of the Nazis' exploitation of myth. He saw his own *Joseph* as a counterbalance to the Nazi use of myth, wanting to reharness it in the service of humanity: "Man muß dem intellektuellen Faschismus den Mythos wegnnehmen und ihn ins Humane umfunktionieren". Ernst Bloch, who had invented the concept of 'umfunktionieren', thought that Mann achieved this very successfully in *Joseph*. Adorno was well attuned to the Nazis' highly calculated use of myth, and with Horkheimer, sought to expose its 'Massenbetrug' in the *Dialektik der Aufklärung*. Mann himself had recognised early on the Nazis' expertise in creating a myth that responded to people's needs, and the fact that this made the regime all the more difficult to displace. Writing in his diary in 1933, Mann said:

Die neuen Machthaber, wenn sie die simpelsten Bedürfnisse der Menschen nicht zu befriedigen vermögen, werden davongejagt werden. Es ist jedoch ein ganzer Retter-Mythus zu zerstören.\

The heavy, mythical determinism in *Doktor Faustus* is obvious from the start, with the fate of Leverkühn seemingly unalterably mapped out. The mood is heightened by Mann's heavy reliance on the German Faustian legend. Despite modelling his career on Goethe, Mann himself freely admitted that his Faust owed little to that of his literary hero: "Mit Goethes >Faust< . . . hat mein Roman nichts gemein, außer der gemeinsamen Quelle, dem alten Volksbuch". At the start of the novel, Mann dwells on the characteristics of Leverkühn's parents, describing them in some detail. His father has "eine Physiognomie, wie geprägt von vergangenen Zeiten". Jonathan Leverkühn's interest in theology, combined with his

46 J. P. Stern, *Hitler*, p. 91-93.
49 *Tagebücher 1933-1934*, p. 128 (6 July 1933).
51 GW VI, p. 20.
tampering with nature are both akin to the Faust of legend, and prefigure the course that his son’s life will take:

Neben der geistlichen Tendenz seiner Lektüre lief jedoch eine andere, die von gewissen Zeiten dahin charakterisiert worden wäre, er habe wollen >>die elementa spekulieren<<.52

The chapter dealing with Leverkühn’s early life contains within it virtually all the motifs that shape his fate, notably the butterfly hetaera esmeralda: “ein solcher Schmetterling in durchsichtiger Nacktheit den dämmrden Laubschatten hebend”.53 The butterfly, of course, prefigures the prostitute who infects him with syphilis, a recurring image in his music. The image is invoked by Leverkühn at his final collapse in virtually the same words used at the very beginning of the novel. It is evident that actions could not change Leverkühn’s fate, even if Leverkühn himself might sometimes have attempted to avoid it:

Denn es war nur ein Schmetterling und eine bunte Butterfliege, die hat es mir angetan durch Berührung, die Milchhexe, und folgt ihr nach in den dämmrden Laubschatten, den ihre durchsichtige Nacktheit liebt.54

The same early chapter introduces the idea of blue eye colour as deception, “Nennst du das Himmelsblau Trug?”55 later fulfilled in the figure of Rudi Schwerdtfeger. The osmotic plants and their growth “zwar mit so sehnsüchtigem Drängen nach Wärme und Freude”56 foreshadow the fruitless struggle for warmth and intimacy that will dominate Leverkühn’s adult life. The preponderance of such images in Jonathan Leverkühn’s research and experiments is very striking. Agnes Schlee argues in some detail that each of the experiments provides a motif for the future course of the novel, so that this third chapter of Doktor Faustus lays out, like the tone row of serialist composition, the basis of all that follows.57

The determinism is also inherent in the town of Kaisersaschem, which appears, as noted earlier in this chapter, to have had its characteristics set many years before, despite any attempts to be a modern ‘Weltstadt’. Little wonder, then, after the early part of the novel, that the dialogue with the devil which is the turning point of every other Faust story, necessary for the rest of the action to happen, does not occur until Chapter XXV. As already noted, the impossibility of seeing the devil as separate from Leverkühn himself is an important contributory factor to the determinism of Leverkühn’s life, and his appearance simply confirms what has already occurred: “gesehen hab ich Ihn doch, endlich, endlich; war bei

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52 Ibid., p. 22.
53 Ibid., p. 23.
54 Ibid., p. 660.
55 Ibid., p. 23.
56 Ibid., p. 31.
mir hier im Saal, hat mich visitiert, unerwartet und doch längst erwartet".\textsuperscript{58} Not only in this introduction, but in the devil's words at the end of the dialogue, it is made abundantly clear that this is an affirmation, but no turning point: "wir auferlegen dir beileibe nichts Neues, die Kleinen machen nichts Neues und Fremdes aus dir, sie verstärken und übertreiben nur sinnreich alles, was du bist".\textsuperscript{59}

This last quotation perfectly sums up the portrayal of both Leverkühn and Germany in the novel: nothing new is possible, and certain situations will intensify the worst ontological characteristics. Both seem to see themselves as at the mercy of preordained characteristics. There is no portrayal of the individual interacting successfully with the ontology of either music or Germany to change the way in which it is manifested at this particular historical point of crisis. This is precisely the way in which Mann describes myth and its effects in the Freud lecture - the "Vollzüge eines Vorgeschriebenen".\textsuperscript{60} This is where the danger of myth lies. It is a story written in a time that is now inaccessible, and constrains the individual to understand and act on events within its framework. The apparent authority of ancientness banishes any thought that things could or should be changed. This is not only evident in \textit{Doktor Faustus} in Leverkühn's following of his fate. Although Zeitblom considers the implications of resistance to the Nazi regime, this possibility is hardly a theme at all in the novel. He freely (and guiltily) admits the conspiracy of silence that allowed the worst to happen, in an anguished passage worth quoting at some length, for it surely also reflects the shared sense of culpability that Mann himself felt:

"das Grausen, so scheint mir, vollendet sich, wenn eigentlich alle schon wissen, aber zusammen in Schweigen gebannt sind, während einer dem andern die Wahrheit von den sich versteckenden oder angstvoll starrenden Augen liest. Während ich treulich von Tag zu Tag, in stiller Dauer-Erregung, meiner biographischen Aufgabe gerecht zu werden, dem Intimen und Persönlichen eine würdige Gestalt zu geben suchte, habe ich geschehen lassen, was draußen geschah, und was der Zeit angehört, in der ich schreibe"\textsuperscript{61}

Zeitblom's stance, if realistic, is also somewhat disappointing. If, as explored at the end of the previous chapter, he stands outside the novel as a type of 'Verfremdungseffekt', can there be any message for the reader if even he does not learn from the narrative? If myth - whether the fate of Leverkühn or the course of German history - is the "Vollzüge eines Vorgeschriebenen", must it not be "vollgezogen" by someone? And is the myth so real and so powerful that this someone really has no choice at all? Zeitblom's role in conveying these

\textsuperscript{58} GW VI, p. 296.  
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., p. 332.  
\textsuperscript{60} GW IX, p. 497.  
\textsuperscript{61} GW VI, p. 447.
myths warrants close attention, as we consider how the gap between music and history is closed in *Doktor Faustus*. 
6.2 Zeitblom’s hesitant closure

We have already seen that Zeitblom is the means by which Leverkühn gains historical specificity and significance. It is therefore important to consider how he - Zeitblom - approaches the gap between music and this history in his narrative. This is not a simple matter. At no point does Zeitblom connect music with contemporary German history in the sense that he sees music in general, or Leverkühn’s works in particular, as overt and explicit political statements. The sharp contrast between Zeitblom’s attitude and that of Professor Holzschuher, a member of the Kridwiß circle, late on in the novel shows that we should not look for straightforward connections of this kind. When Holzschuher bumps into Zeitblom after Schwerdtfeger’s last concert with the Zapfenstößer orchestra, the former expresses great concern about the orchestra’s decision to programme Wagner with Berlioz, seeing this as an overtly political statement urging pacifism. Zeitblom’s report of the conversation shows that he prides himself on taking a more sophisticated approach:


Zeitblom is subsequently able to distract Holzschuher from the subject quite easily, and he rapidly becomes “ganz glücklich, weich, unpoltisch und heiter”. This suggests both that an obvious connection between music and contemporary historical events should not be looked for in Doktor Faustus, and that the real significance of the connection is more serious and more deeply felt than the simple ideas that Holzschuher expresses.

6.2.1 The portentious biography

At a general level, Zeitblom connects Leverkühn with historical events by loading his account of his life with portent. It could be argued that the mere existence of Leverkühn’s biography, Zeitblom’s decision to tell the tale at all, should be seen as a means of closing the gap between music and German history. Zeitblom is both the historical agent through which the gap between music and contemporary history can be closed, since Leverkühn does not fulfil this function, and the sole writer of Doktor Faustus. It must therefore, in a sense, be possible

1 GW VI, p. 593.
The novel is narrated entirely from Zeitblom’s point of view, with no other points of reference available to the reader with which to compare his account. This is summed up by Hubert Orlowski’s observation that: “die Geschichte ist in ihrer Wahrhaftigkeit dadurch begrenzt, was Zeitblom geben will und was er zu geben vermagg.”² Like any biographer, Zeitblom’s authorship inevitably influences the way in which the reader understands the life of his subject, and the interaction of that life with events contemporary with it. He is, in a special sense, Leverkühn’s ‘public’. In this way, of course, a biography can usually tell the reader at least as much about the biographer as about his or her subject - a point to return to in the next section, 6.3. This is enhanced in Doktor Faustus by Zeitblom’s personal relationship with Leverkühn, and his almost obsessive engagement with his subject, discussed in 5.3. This intimacy makes the text more of a personal memoir than a conventional biography. The purpose of the latter is usually to attain a new level of detail in knowledge, or reveal new (and sometimes scurrilous) facts about the subject. Zeitblom’s account, however, is more likely to reveal personal feelings and beliefs than an academic or political agenda. He appears to be writing from memory. Although he has all of Leverkühn’s papers at his disposal, they do not feature in the novel as they might in a “real” biography. Consequently, the reader’s knowledge of Leverkühn’s intentions has to rest, whether by necessity or not, almost entirely on Zeitblom’s memory. There is no indication that Leverkühn kept a diary, often one of the most useful tools at the biographer’s disposal. But a diary would suggest both an inner life on Leverkühn’s part, filling him out as a more substantial historical character, and a consciousness of interest that the public might have in him after his death, though Zeitblom seems to be the only one worried about that. Perhaps more surprisingly, Leverkühn’s ‘Nachlaß’ does not appear to contain any papers that explain individual compositions. The dialogue with the devil is the only account of the rationale for his work that is not conveyed by Zeitblom, and even this is written in a dubious state of mental health and with a high degree of self-stylisation on Leverkühn’s part.

The inadequacy of relying totally on Zeitblom’s interpretation of events becomes more obvious as his account progresses beyond the relatively straightforward tales of incidents in school and university days to events later in Leverkühn’s life. By then, Zeitblom can only interpret and remember at a physical distance from Leverkühn key events at which he could

² H. Orlowski, Prädestination des Dämonischen, p. 102.
not have been present. This leaves a space into which Zeitblom can place meaning that there might not have been if he had had a closer and more comprehensive experience of the events. Anna Hellersberg-Wendriner suggests that Mann demystifies, or indeed, demythologises, the Faust figure by introducing him first as a child, as opposed to Goethe’s approach of showing Faust as a fully adult and almost mythical figure from the outset.\footnote{Anna Hellersberg-Wendriner, \textit{Mystik der Gottesferne. Eine Interpretation Thomas Manns}, (Bern, Francke Verlag, 1960), p. 121-23.} Yet there is, as noted in the previous chapter, a heavily deterministic tone in Zeitblom’s description of Leverkühn’s early life. Can it be that Zeitblom has burdened an ordinary, if unusually intellectual, childhood with a weight of the symbolism to ‘explain’ the inevitability of what follows - the “Vollzüge eines Vorgeschriebenen”? Margrit Henning notes that Zeitblom’s interpretation limits the reader’s perception of the relationship of Leverkühn and his music to the wider world:

> Die Art dieser Darstellung ist getragen von der Subjektivität des Erzählers, der das Bindeglied ist zwischen Leverkühn und der Welt: Leverkühn kann also immer nur in die Welt aus der Perspektive Zeitbloms eingeordnet werden.\footnote{M. Henning, \textit{Die Ich-Form}, p. 79.} Zeitblom’s extreme subjectivity would matter less if his account really were, as he claims at the outset, an act of love undertaken in memory of his friend, with little immediate prospect of publication. But despite this protestation, there is always a strong sense that he is writing for an audience. There is also a feeling from the outset that there is more meaning in what he is about to relate than appears on the surface, enhanced by the ‘Verfremdungseffekt’ discussed in 5.3. Although Zeitblom does not have a high awareness of contemporary historical events at the beginning of the novel, the reader nonetheless gets a sense even in the first chapter of a great portent behind the tale to be recounted. Zeitblom seems to sense this dimly, and gradually allows himself to admit to it more fully as his account develops. The last sentence of the first chapter certainly has ironic significance in this context:

> Einzelnen Vokabeln können Leben und Erfahrung einen Akzent verleihen, die sie ihrem alltäglichen Sinn völlig entfremdet und ihnen einen Schreckensnimbus verleiht, den niemand versteht, der sie nicht in ihrer fürchterlichsten Bedeutung kennengelernt hat.\footnote{GW VI, p. 13.}

This mood of portent is enhanced by the atmosphere that Zeitblom sets, within which his readers are to understand the events he relates. Orlowski cites many instances in which Zeitblom seems deliberately to create an uneasy atmosphere, noting more than eighty examples using vocabulary such as “Schrecken”, “Unbehagen”, gräßlich”, “dämonisch” and “Verwirrung”.\footnote{H. Orlowski, op. cit., p. 85-93.} Even as Zeitblom denies his own affinity with the demonic, he plunges the...
reader into a demonic understanding of his account of Leverkühn’s life as early as his second paragraph. Zeitblom’s urgent claims that he has to force himself to overcome his own aversion to the demonic, means - in another touch of irony - that he finds himself almost involuntarily dwelling on it:

Ich breche aufs neue ab, indem ich mich daran erinnere, daß ich auf das Genie und seine jedenfalls dämonisch beeinflußte Natur nur zu sprechen kam, um meinen Zweifel zu erläutern, ob ich zu meiner Aufgabe die nötige Affinität besitze.  

Perhaps this is not all Zeitblom’s fault. It is true that the archaic and demonic atmosphere owes quite a lot to the documents written by Leverkühn - few though they are - which Zeitblom quotes verbatim. The letter from Leipzig reporting his first meeting with hetaera esmeralda, and the dialogue with the devil are extremely significant. Yet Zeitblom seems almost too eager to assure readers in the case of the letter that “ihre altertümliche Ausdrucksweise natürlich parodisch gemeint und Anspielung auf skurrile Hallenser Erfahrungen, das sprachliche Gebaren Ehrenfried Kumpfs ist”.  

If Zeitblom had not introduced the possibility of doubt that the letter could be understood as anything else, it might have seemed no more sinister than an intellectual joke. And when Zeitblom recounts Leverkühn’s dialogue with the devil, he does not hide from the reader his own difficulty in shaking off the possibility that the devil might be real - “Ein Dialog? Ist es in Wahrheit ein solcher? Ich müßte wahnsinnig sein, es zu glauben”. Although he wants to dismiss the authenticity of the devil beyond question, Zeitblom does not ever resolve satisfactorily the question of his separate existence or lack of it. This may be because Mann himself was troubled by the same doubts: “Der Teufel spielt von Anfang an in den Roman hinein, um in der Mitte persönlich den schon geschlossenen Pakt zu verabreden. Zeitblom bemüht sich, nicht an seine Realität zu glauben. Ich auch”.  

Heightening the portentous atmosphere still further, Zeitblom, once he has raised these doubts in the mind of the reader, shrugs off any responsibility for having done so. In the chapter following the dialogue with the devil he says that - “Die damit verbundene Zumutung liegt außer meiner Autorenverantwortung und darf mich nicht kümmern”. But surely this does not absolve Zeitblom? Given his readiness to interrupt his own authorial flow, it would not be unreasonable to expect him to insert some qualifying “asides” in the dialogue with the devil. Instead, he copies the account verbatim from Leverkühn’s manuscript without

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7 GW VI, p. 12.  
8 Ibid., p. 185.  
9 Ibid., p. 295.  
10 Letter to J. C. de Buisonjé of 26 February 1948, DüD, p. 144.  
11 GW VI, p. 333.
interjection, and attempts to justify this at some length in the next chapter. He always allows
the text to speak for itself, rather than tempering it with his own voice of sceptical humanism.
If anything, Zeitblom dwells much more on the intense physical manifestations of his unease
with Leverkühn’s account, and is clearly far more taken in by the vision than he cares to
admit:

So schreibe ich denn ab, - und ich fürchte, kein Rütteln ferner Explosionen an meiner
Klause wird nötig sein, um meine Hand zittern und meine Buchstaben ausfahren zu
lassen beim Schreiben.12

6.2.2 Textual and linguistic juxtaposition

At a more detailed level, Zeitblom sometimes connects music and contemporary history by
placing the historical events affecting Germany and the musical events of Leverkühn’s
composing career next to each other in the narrative. Zeitblom’s emphasis on the three
temporal levels of the novel - Leverkühn’s time, his own time of writing, and the future time
in which it will be read - is important for this means of connecting the two sets of events. His
apparent confusion about why these levels intrigue him is another ironic touch, surely
designed to draw the reader’s attention very firmly to the time in which Zeitblom is writing
the account of Leverkühn’s life, not just to the account itself:

Ich weiß nicht, wanim diese doppelte Zeitrechnung meine Aufmerksamkeit fesselt,
und weshalb es mich drängt, auf sie hinzuziehen: die persönliche und die sachliche,
die Zeit in der der Erzähler sich fortbewegt, und die, in welcher das Erzählte sich
abspielt.13

There are several instances in which, simply by virtue of placing references to real political
events within the text, particularly the accounts of the Hitler regime and World War Two,
Zeitblom suggests a connection between music and contemporary events. He then usually
draws even more attention to the juxtaposition by an authorial aside. One example is the
opening of Chapter XXVI, immediately after the dialogue with the devil, which starts with a
description of the destruction in Germany as the war nears its end, including almost daily air­
raids and the bombing of Leipzig. Again, Zeitblom’s extraordinarily self-deprecating
narrative serves to emphasise the importance of the coincidence:

Möge [der Leser] meine Pedanterie belächeln, aber ich halte es für richtig, ihn wissen
zu lassen, daß, seit ich diese Aufzeichnungen begann, schon fast ein Jahr ins Land
gegangen und über der Abfassung der jüngsten Kapitel der April 1944
herangekommen ist.14

12 Ibid., p. 296.
13 Ibid., p. 335.
14 Ibid., p. 334.
One very obvious example of the technique of textual juxtaposition is Zeitblom’s interweaving of the discussions of the Kridwiß circle with descriptions of Leverkühn’s *Apocalypsis cum figuris*. Even though these are ostensibly three chapters, they are designated as Chapter XXXIV, its continuation and conclusion, to show that the concept of a single whole is important. Even without Zeitblom’s asides about his own tendency to see these discussions and the *Apocalypsis* as confirming one another, this arrangement of the text leaves the reader in no doubt that the two are to be understood as connected in some way.

Then, towards the end of the novel, the accounts of the hastening decline of both Leverkühn and Germany gradually pile on one another to create a powerful overall effect - “meine Erzählung eilt ihrem Ende zu - das tut alles”. Leverkühn’s exhaustion and the shattering effect of Echo’s death coincide with Germany’s final defeat in 1945 - both stand “vor dem Nichts”, as their plans come to nothing.

Zeitblom’s use of language in the text also binds the musical discourse together with German contemporary history. At the level of individual words, the easy interchangeability of concepts such as ‘Durchbruch’, ‘Barbarei’, ‘Reaktion als Fortschritt’, ‘Ordnungszwang’, and the ‘tote Zahn’ to speak of both music and German events has a powerful cumulative effect. It suggests to the reader that the same phenomena are at work in both music and history. As noted earlier, Zeitblom shows alarm, and even hysteria, when the Kridwiß circle uses the same argument and imagery - the ‘tote Zahn’ - which he and Leverkühn had used to symbolise a worn-out device in modern music, to rationalise the idea of getting rid of those not meeting standards of health that would ensure the future of the German race.

There are also instances in which leitmotifs recur both in Zeitblom’s narrative about Leverkühn and his work, and in what he says about the events unfolding as he writes. One example is the personification of Germany tumbling into war with flushed cheeks, which recall Leverkühn’s feverish state when composing:

Deutschland, die Wangen hektisch gerötet, taumelte dazumal auf der Höhe wüster Triumpe, im Begriffe, die Welt zu gewinnen.

Ich sehe ihn plötzlich aus lassiger Lage sich aufrichten, seinen Blick starr und lauschend werden, seine Lippen sich trennen und eine mir unwillkommene, anwandlungshafte Rote in seine Wangen steigen.

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15 Ibid., p. 599.
16 Ibid., p. 491.
17 Ibid., p. 676.
18 Ibid., p. 478.
Another striking example is Zeitblom’s use of words from the *Apocalipsis cum figuris* to depict the state of Germany as the war draws to an end. Leverkühn first puts the apocalyptic text into the mouth of the witness in his oratorio, then Zeitblom takes up the words as the witness of the contemporary apocalypse happening around him in World War Two:

‘Das Ende kommt, es kommt das Ende, es ist erwacht über dich; siehe, es kommt. Es geht schon auf und bricht daher über dich, du Einwohner des Landes.’ Diese Worte, die Leverkühn seinen testis, den Zeugen, den Erzähler . . . verkünden läßt.¹⁹

Über Deutschland schlägt das Verderben zusammen . . . das Ende kommt, es kommt das Ende, es geht schon auf und bricht daher über dich, du Einwohner des Landes.²⁰

6.2.3 A hesitant framework for the reader’s understanding

Zeitblom’s mere placing of musical and contemporary historical references together, whether through textual or linguistic methods, may prompt the reader to see music and history as in some way connected, but it does not prove that connection. None of this, in itself, suggests what kind of relationship might exist between musical and historical events. It does not offer a full explanation of why, at the end of the novel, Zeitblom invokes in the same prayer for mercy - indeed, almost in the same breath, as if they were the same thing - both his ‘Freund’ and his ‘Vaterland’. This is virtually the only time, apart from the ‘deutsche Tonsetzer’ in the subtitle of the novel, that music is linked with German history without qualification.

There are just a couple of hints about how the reader is to understand the two accounts. Zeitblom asserts early on in his account that Leverkühn’s music is to be identified with Kaisersaschern, and thus intimately with Germany itself. He states that it could only have come from Kaisersaschern, itself the symbol of the ‘one Germany’ combining old and new, but never overcoming its basic ontology. He does not allow for the music to be seen as a free-standing creative entity that can be understood independent of its provenance:

Aber wenn es sehr kühne Musik war, die er schrieb, - war es etwa ‘freie’ Musik, Allerweltsmusik? Das war es nicht. Es war die Musik eines nie Entkommenen, war bis in die geheimste genialisch-skurrile Verflechtung hinein, in jedem Kryptenhall, und -hauch, der davon ausging, charakteristische Musik, Musik von Kaisersaschern.²¹

Then, at the end of the novel, having agonised over Germany’s defeat, Zeitblom hints that the decline of both Leverkühn and Germany have come from the same source:

Denn die letzten Jahre des geistigen Lebens meines Helden, diese beiden Jahre 1929 und 30 . . . sie gehörten ja schon dem Heraufsteigen und Umsichgreifen dessen an, was sich dann des Landes bemächtigte und nun im Blut und Flammen untergeht.”²²

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 474.
²⁰ Ibid., p. 576.
²¹ Ibid., p. 113.
²² Ibid., p. 639.
Beyond this indefinite framework, however, Zeitblom does little to guide the reader's understanding of how the musical and historical elements of his narrative affect each other. Herbert Lehnert observes that the play of Zeitblom's biographical account and the symbolical deep structure of the novel merely suggest a connection between high art and political evil, but that this never reaches closure. Part of the reason why Zeitblom can never make headway with this closure is because Leverkühn himself never contemplates a connection between his music and contemporary historical events. When, for example, Leverkühn explains the twelve tone system to Zeitblom in Chapter XXII, the latter is only too ready to make the leap from the aesthetic to a metaphorical political reading of what is said, in terms of mentality, structure and hierarchy. Leverkühn, on the other hand, is unable or unwilling to understand what is said on this level, and dismisses the notion entirely. There are three instances in this exchange when Zeitblom clearly senses, and articulates, the political implications of the musical form that Leverkühn is describing to him. First, when Zeitblom describes Leverkühn's notion of the "Schulmeister des Objektiven und der Organisation ... das Archaische mit dem Revolutionären zu verbinden" as "etwas sehr Deutsches". Leverkühn resists this description, saying that the concept is merely "etwas zeitlich Notwendiges". Shortly afterwards, Zeitblom refers to politics again, when he rejects Leverkühn's assertion that the tone row gives the composer genuine freedom. This, he says, is not real freedom, "sowenig wie die aus der Revolution geborene Diktatur noch Freiheit ist". Leverkühn responds in a reference to the scene in Auerbachs Keller scene from Goethe's Faust, when the drunkards' song is rejected as too political. He dismisses Zeitblom's reference as irrelevant and continues talking about art: "Übrigens ist das ein politisch Lied. In der Kunst jedenfalls...". Finally, near the end of the chapter, Zeitblom asks Leverkühn whether the concept of combining progression and regression is not a general reflection of "häuslichen nationalen Erfahrungen", rather than just a musical phenomenon. Again, Leverkühn deflects the political reference: "Oh, keine Indiskretionen. Und keine Selbstgratulation! Alles was ich sagen will, ist...".

There are a few occasions when Zeitblom reveals in his narrative, rather than in conversation with Leverkühn, the way in which music is connected in his own mind with real historical events. He does this mainly by revealing an understanding of Leverkühn's life and work as the creative affirmation, the expression in an aesthetic form, of the political ideas he hears discussed and the shattering historical events he sees enacted around him. In none of these

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24 "Ein garstig Lied! Pfui! ein politisch Lied/Ein leidig Lied...", Goethe, Faust, p. 68.
25 See GW VI, p. 252-258 for these three examples.
cases, however, does Zeitblom ever claim that the connection he sees is an objective fact, and he usually goes on to qualify his view as entirely subjective. A typical example is when he refers to his tendency to see Leverkühn’s poor health before the composition of the *Apocalipsis cum figuris* as connected with the political situation. Zeitblom admits that he finds this connection “unbesieglich” despite his conviction that the link springs from nothing deeper or more sinister than the contemporaneity of the two facts:

> So wenig es möglich war, das Absinken seiner Gesundheit mit dem vaterländischen Unglück in gemütliche Verbindung zu bringen, - meine Neigung, das eine mit dem anderen in objektivem Zusammenhang, symbolischer Parallele zu sehen, diese Neigung, die eben nur durch die Tatsache der Gleichzeitigkeit mir eingegeben sein mochte, war unbesieglich durch seine Ferne von den äußeren Dingen, mochte ich den Gedanken auch sorgsam bei mir verschließen und mich wohl hüten, ihn vor ihm auch nur andeutungsweise zur Sprache zu bringen.26

There is, of course, a strong pinch of irony in all this. The more Zeitblom denies that music and contemporary history are connected anywhere other than in his own mind, the more the reader is inclined to think that they might be. Yet however closely *Doktor Faustus* is read, it is impossible to find the text itself doing anything more than strongly suggesting a connection between music and German history. It does not close the gap between the two explicitly, much less give a definitive answer to the question of what such closure might actually mean. This is consistent with Mann’s own view. He rejected the notion that music could operate as a simple parallel or allegory for real events. At the same time, however, he encouraged the reader to engage with his urgent concern in *Doktor Faustus* for the German catastrophe, through which, despite being in exile, he had lived no less painfully than Zeitblom:

> Sie haben gewiß recht, den Adrian Leverkühn eine Symbol-Gestalt zu nennen. Aber als eine bloße Allegorie möchte ich ihn so wenig wie das ganze Buch betrachtet wissen . . . Natürlich sind die symbolischen Beziehungen Deutschlands stark herausgearbeitet. Das ganze Buch, als fikitive Biographie verkleidet, ist eben eingegeben von den Erschütterungen, die wir durch das krankhafte Abenteuer und den Zusammenbruch Deutschlands in den Jahren erfahren haben, in denen das Buch geschrieben wurde.27

This suggests that any scheme of correspondences between music and German history in the novel was not created in an objective, detached frame of mind. Whilst not wishing to place excessive weight on biographical factors, it is worth taking a number of these into account when considering the way in which *Doktor Faustus* works, such as Mann’s indifferent physical health at the time of writing, which seems to have inclined him to a half-superstitious sense of suffering with and from Germany. Certainly, his anxiety about his fellow Germans’ understanding of his motives is important. Time after time, he wrote in

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26 Ibid., p. 454-455.
letters that he hoped the book would convince Germans “daß es ein Irrtum war, einen Deserteur vom Deutschtum in mir zu sehen”. Above all, it is important to acknowledge Mann’s emotional involvement in his subject. Even if Mann had been inclined to create a straightforward allegory, he was unlikely to be able to summon up the necessary detachment that the clarity of a straightforward allegory would require. The question of *Doktor Faustus* as an allegory will be explored in more detail in the next section.

The reader has an important role in unravelling the correspondences between music and German history in *Doktor Faustus*. Mann’s letters around the time the novel was published show him to be more anxious than ever about critical reception of the novel, chiefly in Germany, and, in a letter to Hermann Hesse, not wholly certain himself about the full import of the novel in relation to the German question:

> Mehr als 800 Seiten - eine gewisse moralische Leistung bedeutet es immer, so etwas durchzuhalten. Ob sonst noch etwas Anerkennnswertes daran ist, muß die Zukunft lehren. Ich bin blind für die Frage zur Zeit. Etwas provokant Deutsches ist es jedenfalls.  

No wonder, then, that Mann makes Zeitblom mention the time of the reader as the third temporal level on which his account operates. The reader faces a considerable task to understand the significance of the novel, and the perspective of the reader coming to it even after Zeitblom’s and Mann’s time is seen as extremely important:

> Es ist dies eine ganz eigentümliche Verschränkung der Zeitläufte, dazu bestimmt übrigens, sich noch mit einem Dritten zu verbinden: nämlich der Zeit, die eines Tages der Leser sich zur geneigten Rezeption des Mitgeteilten nehmen wird.  

Mann valued the involvement of his readers in the novel very highly. His letters after the publication of *Doktor Faustus* mention many times that they had been moved to tears:

> „Früheres von mir hat allerlei Wirkung hervorgebracht, aber zum erstenmal sehe ich *Tränen* in den Augen meiner Leser“. Mann was particularly keen on Emil Staiger’s commendation of the novel as a work that brought the reader into a new relationship with his present.

*Doktor Faustus* does not, however, lay out clearly what this new relationship ought to be, and

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28 In *DüD*, see, for example, letters in 1947 to Carl Maria Weber of 3 August (p. 97), Hans Reisiger of 4 September (p. 98), Hans-Egon Hass of 1 October (p. 100), Max Rychner of 26 October (p. 103), Wilhelm Ludwig von Cornides of 8 November (p. 108), Johannes R Becher of 16 November (p. 109), and Paul W Freedman of 26 November (p. 111).


30 GW VI, p. 335.


32 Mann comments in his letter to Ida Herz of 11 December 1947 that Staiger believes the novel brings the reader “in ein neues Verhältnis zum Gegenwärtigen ... sein Bewußtsein vertieft und erweitert”, *DüD*, p. 137.
Zeitblom as narrator is little help. For someone who claims to have so little affinity with the demonic, Zeitblom himself is slow to debunk it, and the effect it appears to have on him, in order to make a pragmatic analysis of his feelings and the action he should take. Thus, although there are many correspondences between music and contemporary German history in the novel. Zeitblom is hesitant in his closure, and in the end, still leaves a gap between music and history. Readers are left with only the sketchiest of frameworks in which to pick these correspondences up, and learn from them, which places a great responsibility on them. The next section examines how Doktor Faustus might be read in the light of the correspondences between music and history, in order to close the gap between them, in the absence of a clear framework from its narrator.
Chapter 6.3 Closing the gap

What, then, is the reader to do with Zeitblom’s highly suggestive juxtaposition of real historical events in Germany and Leverkühn’s musical life and work? Having begun this thesis with the aim of reducing the ambiguity with which the novel is interpreted, the ultimate objective must be to suggest some answers to this question, having teased out the detailed correspondences that exist in Doktor Faustus between the accounts of music and German history. It is evident that the gap will not be closed by Zeitblom himself. The previous section showed that the reader is left with only a vague framework from which to draw his or her own conclusions, as Zeitblom simply leaves music and history tantalisingly close together without closing the gap between them. The tables in the Appendix to this thesis bring together the points made in the relevant sections of the thesis to illustrate just how detailed the parallels are in the text between the ontological characteristics of music and Germany, and their historical manifestations in Leverkühn’s compositions and Nazism respectively.

Zeitblom’s hesitation to set a clear framework does not in itself mean that Mann did not intend his readers to close the gap between music and history, simply that the readers need to consider carefully how best to do this. The detail of the parallelism summarised in the tables in the Appendix suggests that the potency of the relationship between music and German history in Doktor Faustus outstrips Zeitblom’s willingness to discover and describe it. From what we know of Mann’s creative process in writing Doktor Faustus, we can safely conclude that he did not begin with a table of correspondences, and certainly not one approaching the level of detail in the Appendix. The correspondences that emerge are all the more striking for that. But what relationship are music and German history meant to have to one another?

6.3.1 Allegory or realism?

The most obvious explanation of the correspondences between music and Germany in Doktor Faustus is to describe the novel as an allegory. This would attribute to the story of Leverkühn a coherent meaning in addition to the literal (biographical) meaning it has on the surface. It would make Leverkühn and his suffering for his music ‘stand for’ Germany and her decline into Nazism. The correspondences between music and German history in the novel would certainly suffice to make a detailed and coherent system of double meaning work on this allegorical level. An allegorical explanation is, therefore, an attractive option. But did Mann really intend his readers to see an artist submitting to serialism as an allegory of a nation submitting to fascism? Whilst the correspondences between music and Germany
have been shown to be comprehensive, it would not necessarily be wise to be seduced by this into imposing a simple, one to one system of meaning on the novel.

Both music and German history surely have a role to play in Doktor Faustus on their own account, rather than one merely providing the symbolism for the other. The reader should not feel compelled to impose an allegorical interpretation on the novel along the lines of, say, George Orwell’s Animal Farm (1945). Whilst there may be allegorical moments in Doktor Faustus, a sustained allegory separates its subject and the vehicle for understanding that subject rather more clearly. It would, for example, be possible (though not necessarily desirable) to read and enjoy Animal Farm without thinking about the Russian Revolution. Or it would be possible to read the book, and be told about the correspondences between Russia and the farm much later on, after it was finished. But Doktor Faustus simply does not work in the same way; German historical events and forces are implicated in the music on every page. It is impossible to read Leverkühn’s life story without thinking of Germany. The sheer enormity of the historical events, especially for Mann’s German audience, is consistently invoked, bringing with it, therefore, the attendant wish for explanation. The emphasis on German events is also deliberate, in that Zeitblom takes great pains to remind his readers of the different levels of his account. There is no chance of the reader being totally caught up in the musical story, and losing sight of German reality. The thread of the tale of Leverkühn’s life is continually interrupted, particularly towards the end of the novel, with quite detailed accounts of specific events in World War Two, as Germany stumbles towards defeat.

Statements such as the following can, after all, hardly be seen as a subtext:

Die Zeit, in der ich schreibe, die mir dienen muß, in stiller Abgeschiedenheit diese Erinnerungen zu Papier zu bringen, trägt, gräßlich schwellenden Bauches, eine vaterländische Katastrophe im Schoß.¹

Thus, whilst the specificity of the correspondences identified in this thesis does help to demystify Doktor Faustus, giving something concrete from which to derive meaning, there is still no avoiding the fact that the reality with which the novel seeks to grapple is complex. It demands much more of its readers than fitting together two sets of characteristics, of music and Germany, to form an allegory. This complexity and the attendant ambiguity is not something wilfully imposed by Mann. The novel tackles large and emotive questions, which do not have simple answers. To some extent, therefore, ambiguity is unavoidable. Yet, as stated at the beginning of this thesis, it cannot be right to respond to Doktor Faustus by using this ambiguity as an excuse for never properly answering these questions. At the other

¹ GW VI, p. 446.
There seems to have been more of a tendency for the earlier critics to understand *Doktor Faustus* at an allegorical level than there is now. This was perhaps because their proximity to the reality of Germany’s historical problems made it all the more painful to confront the complexity of the novel and what it might mean. Werner Milch, for example, stated in 1948 that “die beiden (mein Freund, mein Vaterland) stehen für einander, das ist die politische Symbolik des Romans” and later went on to say “es ist kein Buch, das die Probleme unserer Gegenwart anpackt”. Later critics have been more likely to reject the purely allegorical approach. Erich Heller, for example, was not attracted to an equation between Leverkühn and Germany. He argued that there is nothing particularly noteworthy in the composer’s life; all artists suffer and Leverkühn simply chooses a new way of doing so. In his recent survey of *Doktor Faustus* literature, John Fetzer concludes that an allegorical interpretation of the novel, even at a general level, does not fully explain the text: “The allegorical argument is at best approximate, not absolute.”

These later interpretations seem closer to Mann’s intentions. As already noted, he rejected the notion of a straightforward allegory. It is true that he did not mean Leverkühn to be seen as a wholly realistic human character - a personality reflecting the society in which he lived and worked. Section 4.3 established that Leverkühn is the representative of the whole of German society and history. Mann stated in the *Entstehung* that the composer was to rise above the particular to a more universal symbolism:


This fear of banality is not, however, the same as an intention to reduce Leverkühn to a non-human, allegorical cipher, created only as a means of conveying the significance of the layer of meaning beneath him. In the same part of the *Entstehung*, Mann admitted that he loved Leverkühn more than virtually all his other characters. Leverkühn was certainly a real personality for his creator, which must partly reflect Mann’s feelings about Germany.

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5 GW XI, p. 204.
6 Ibid., p. 203.
heightened by his exile, and also, surely, his identification with Leverkühn as a fellow artist. Despite being conceptually outside time, and able to relate to the whole of German history, Leverkühn has a real, not simply symbolic, role to play in relation to the cataclysmic historical events in *Doktor Faustus*. There is evidence for this both in the *Entstehung* and in Mann's letters, sometimes in words that leave no doubt that Leverkühn is a 'real' character, and conferring on him almost Christ-like characteristics in carrying the weight of suffering of the age:

Übrigens mag ich es gar nicht gern, wenn man den Leverkühn allzu sehr als Allegorie und Repräsentanten des Deutschtums nimmt. Er ist vielmehr ein Held unserer Zeit, ein verzweifelt Herz das das Leid der Epoche trägt.⁷

The status of *Doktor Faustus* as more than an allegory is not only due to the weight of Leverkühn's character, but also the importance of music to the narrative. Music far surpasses the function of an allegorical representation of Germany. In an essay exploring the detailed musical knowledge underpinning *Doktor Faustus*, Rowland Cotterill argues that an attempt to explain the novel as an allegory fails to do justice to this detail. He asserts that the primary level of the novel is realism, and any allegory is only a hesitant one - like its narrator.⁸ This is an important point. The musically detailed realism of the novel is surely the key to its meaning, partly because the relationship of the artist (with the musician as the ultimate representative) to his world was always a key theme for Mann. He was unlikely to forsake this theme in this, his ultimate book about Germany. Music itself is therefore essential to understanding *Doktor Faustus*, in itself and through the detailed parallels with the German history contemporary with the novel. To return to the comparison with *Animal Farm*, Orwell's novel could have been constructed with some other allegorical representation. Pigs, or even animals in general, are not essential for the understanding of the political message. And there is certainly not the level of circumstantial detail about farm life that there is about music in *Doktor Faustus*. In *Animal Farm*, there is interest only in the details that interlock with the underlying theme, whereas music is vital to Mann's text. *Doktor Faustus* speaks of music on its own account. It says something about the power of music and of human potential, whereas *Animal Farm*, even at its most brutal, does not set out to tell us anything about the nature of animals. We know that animals could never really do the things they are described as doing in Orwell's novel. But human beings have the potential both to compose music and create war, to write a poem or participate in the murder of innocent Jews and others.

⁷ Letter to Friedrich Sally Grosshut of 30 September 1949, *DüD*, p. 239.
Some of the early critics of *Doktor Faustus*, such as Hans Egon Holthusen, claimed that it was inappropriate to suggest that music might be complicit in Nazism. But this claim surely does not do justice to the complexity either of the novel or of human potential, both good and evil. On one level, *Doktor Faustus* is a serious book about music. Mann understood the social and political importance of art, and loved music deeply. This compelled him to explore the relationship between music and Nazism, however painful that might be. He was upset by the accusations of his critics, who tended to imply that he did not love music as they did: “Und was für ein gehässiger Esel muß einer sein, um aus dem Buch Feindschaft gegen die Musik herauszulösen! Zu glauben, er müsse die Musik gegen mich verteidigen!” But writing a novel about his much-loved music on this level was not necessarily an easy task for Mann. The importance of the relationship between music and German history meant that he could not necessarily operate in musical territory that was comfortable for him. In his study of music and the twentieth century novel, Alex Aronson notes that most modernist writers remained immersed in music that did not actually reflect the complex and difficult states of mind they sought to convey in their writing. In *Doktor Faustus*, however, Mann broke away from the music with which he was naturally comfortable and sought to make the music itself speak of the time of which he was writing. Adorno, of course, saw music as something closely involved in human life. It should not only give pleasure, but have profound meaning in itself. He believed that twentieth century art could only describe suffering, and was powerless to offer the quasi-religious comfort that it had done in earlier times. Adorno described suffering in his *Ästhetische Theorie* as “the humane content of art”:

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Mehr zu wünschen wäre, daß eines besseren Tages Kunst überhaupt verschwand, als daß sie das Leid vergäße, das ihr Ausdruck ist und an dem Form ihre Substanz hat. Es ist der humane Gehalt, den Unfreiheit zu Positivität verfälscht.
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For both Mann and Adorno, therefore, Leverkühn’s music needed to be as comfortless as the situation in which it came about, with its only salvation the ability to find a voice to express this suffering: “[der] Trost . . . der . . . darin liegt, daß der Kreatur für ihr Weh überhaupt eine Stimme gegeben ist”. Thus, art in *Doktor Faustus* does not stand for an underlying reality, but for itself. The novel is not primarily an allegory. It speaks of art not as if it were life, but of art as it really is in life.

The close affiliation between the two realities in the novel - music and German history - does not, however, necessarily mean that there is a causal relationship between them. That is to

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11 TWA GS 7, p. 387.
12 GW VI, p. 651.
say, it does not necessarily imply that an artist can make bad things happen. Can an artist be
guilty in this way? And can some artists be more complicit in harm than others? George
Steiner recently recalled Georg Lukács saying to him in 1957: “There is not a single crotchet
in Mozart that can be used for an inhuman or reactionary political end”. And what about
the reverse question, whether Mozart can actually promote enlightened and humane ends?
Such huge questions have been long debated, and certainly cannot be answered in this thesis.
But it should be possible to explore whether Doktor Faustus begins to answer, or even
properly ask, questions of causality between music and historical situations contemporary
with it.

6.3.2 The art of politics

Doktor Faustus does not appear to suggest that artists directly cause events, whether desirable
or undesirable - to happen. The artist is not a politician - just as, as explored in 2.1, Mann did
not see himself as a politician, despite his active engagement with contemporary German
events. Yet as also noted in that section, Mann certainly believed that his writing of novels,
however ‘unpolitisch’ these were on the surface, constituted some kind of political statement.
It is reasonable to suspect, therefore, that he would see the writing of music, ultimate amongst
the arts, in the same light. Mann’s political view had developed a great deal up to the time of
writing Doktor Faustus. In a lecture delivered in 1934, he had argued that not every artist
would have political effects. Some, for example, would not be affected by Hitler’s Germany:
“Dieser Kampf wird den Schriftsteller, der sich nach innen wendet und über innere Dinge
schreibt, nicht stark beeinflussen”. Ten years later, however, the reality of Hitler’s
Germany meant that virtually all art could be implicated in historical events. As already
noted, Mann’s condemnation of the ‘Innere Emigration’ was relentless. In his response to
Walter von Molo, he viewed every book that had been produced in Germany during the Nazi
period, however apparently innocent on the surface, as tainted with the stain of the regime:
“Es mag Aberglaube sein, aber in meinen Augen sind Bücher, die von 1933 bis 1945 in
Deutschland überhaupt gedruckt werden konnten, weniger als wertlos und nicht gut in die
Hand zu nehmen”. But Mann did not simply blame others more firmly rooted in Nazi
Germany than he was. A major part of his political sense was a well-developed feeling for
his own guilt in relation to Germany.

13 George Steiner, ‘Great music falls on deaf ears’, an edited version of a 1998 Proms lecture,
14 GW XIII, p. 326 (Literatur und Hitler).
15 GW XII, p. 957.
Guilt is a strong theme in Doktor Faustus. Leverkühn regularly assumes guilt in situations that he does not appear to cause directly, especially the deaths of people he loves. One of the few overtly sinister moments of the novel occurs when Zeitblom begins to telephone Leverkühn to tell him about the murder of Rudi Schwerdtfeger. Zeitblom replaces the telephone receiver when he realises: “daß es nicht nötig sei, Adrian meine Erlebnisse zu erzählen”. Leverkühn explicitly takes responsibility, in his most anguished moment, for the death of his beloved nephew, Nepomuk Schneidewein:


By this stage, the atmosphere of guilt in the novel has been built up to such an extent that despite the fact that Leverkühn is obviously not responsible for the meningitis that kills his nephew, it is difficult for the reader to decide whether to pity him in his madness, or agree with him in his self-flagellation. It is not satisfactory, however, simply to say that Leverkühn’s general sense of guilt reflects the general guilt of the artist. Whilst there may be some truth in this, stopping at this as an explanation of the novel would leave it with the vague general interpretation of ‘Zweideutigkeit als System’, which this thesis has set out to clarify. It does nothing to explain what the guilt might consist of, and why it exists.

A statement made by Mann in the Entstehung about the role of the artist gives an important clue to his understanding of the nature of the artist’s role and the guilt that accompanies it. Mann sees the artist as a seismograph. In other words, the artist, like the instrument recording earthquakes or other movements within the earth, is a kind of visual aid that illustrates and measures forces that are often unseen. Mann described art as “eine geistige Erhöhung der Wirklichkeit”. In the Entstehung, he describes the artist who gives concrete - albeit sometimes inexact - form to the forces operating in the history of the age in which he creates his work:

Der Dichter (und auch der Philosoph) als Melde-Instrument, Seismograph, Medium der Empfindlichkeit, ohne klares Wissen von dieser seiner organischen Funktion und darum verkehrter Urteile nebenher durchaus fähig - es scheint mir die einzige richtige Perspektive.

A good example of this concept of the seismograph, picking up and reflecting forces that already exist, is given by Adorno in his 1962 radio lecture, Engagement. Adorno accuses critics of railing against the horror of artistic perversion of life as if nothing had happened in

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16 GW VI, p. 599.
17 Ibid., p. 633.
18 GW XIII, p. 326 (Literatur und Hitler).
19 GW XI, p. 240.
the world since 1933: "als hätten die Autoren schuld an dem, wogegen sie sich aufbäumen, indem, was sie schreiben, jenem Äußersten gleichmacht". He cites the particular example of Picasso's painting Guernica: "Als [Picasso] ein deutscher Besatzungsoffizier in seinem Atelier besuchte und vorm Guernica-Bild fragte: >>Haben Sie das gemacht?<<, soll er geantwortet haben: >>Nein, Sie<<." 20 Mann's own work is as good an example as any of the phenomenon of the seismograph. The hermetically sealed ferment of ideas and experience in the sanatorium of Der Zauberberg, for example, effectively highlighted the introverted and fevered search for a coherent set of values in Germany before World War One.

Mann thought that the artist could not only reveal the contemporary forces at work in society, but unwittingly predict what was to come. In his informal Tischrede in Amsterdam, in 1924, Mann remarked that "Talent ist im wesentlichen Sensitivitäts- Empfindlichkeit für Zukunftsnotwendigkeiten". 21 He saw Nietzsche, on whom he based Leverkühn's character - his background, his recurring headaches, his syphilitic infection, his embrace of the piano (instead of a horse) before collapsing into final madness - in precisely this way. In his 'farewell' essay to Nietzsche in 1947, Mann felt forced to take his leave of one of his philosophical 'Dreigestimm' as anything other than an aesthetic thinker, rejecting his general philosophy and ethical thought in the light of the use to which it had been put by the Nazis. He said that he did not blame Nietzsche for causing Nazism, but saw him as someone exceptionally sensitive to the forces in history that had led to Nazism, and thus the unwitting indicator of what was to come:

Unter derhand bin ich geneigt, hier Ursache und Wirkung umzukehren und nicht zu glauben, daß Nietzsche den Faschismus gemacht hat, sondern der Faschismus ihn, - will sagen: politikfem im Grunde und unschuldig-geistig, hat er als sensibelstes Ausdrucks- und Registrierinstrument mit seinem Macht-Philosophen den heraufsteigenden Imperialismus vorempfunden und die faschistische Epoche des Abendlandes, in der wir leben und trotz dem militärischen Sieg über den Faschismus noch lange leben werden, als zitternde Nadel angekündigt. 22

In the same way, Leverkühn's works uncannily echo the downfall of Germany in World War Two, which Zeitblom lives through after his friend's death. Zeitblom is quite clear that Leverkühn's compositions illustrate and reinforce the disturbing intellectual discussions to which he was a party in the Kribwiß circle. Indeed, he even describes the music as having "prophetische Beziehungen" to the discussions, implying its relationship to the horrors that the discussions prefigured. 23

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20 TWA GS 2, p. 424.
21 GW XI, p. 355.
22 GW IX, p. 701-702, (Nietzsches Philosophie im Lichte unserer Erfahrung).
23 GW VI, p. 470.
The role of seismograph is thus not free of problems, despite Mann's claims that the artist is not necessarily aware of his function. The artist can have an influence or impact, can be an emotional, intellectual or cultural force that a seismographic print-out cannot be. Mann asserted that the artist should not convey the spirit of the times just as it is, but that this - whatever it is - should undergo a transition, or at least have some sort of comment, as it passes through the artist's hands. This could be approximately compared to the difference between painting a picture like Guernica and taking a photograph at the scene of a battle simply to record the facts of what has happened. The artist should be neither unthinking nor blindly accepting. Whilst it would be a generalisation, or indeed an injustice, to claim a journalist to be either of these things, Mann clearly saw the artist as having a higher duty. A number of photographic surveys of the twentieth century were published towards the end of 1999. These illustrated particularly forcefully that the best journalistic photography can be far more than a factual record; it can shed new light on an event or make a moral point.

Perhaps the most important difference between even the best newspaper photograph or journalistic writing and a work of art is that the photograph is normally intended to be ephemeral, even if it subsequently becomes widely used for many years. It is not surprising, however, that Mann was sceptical of the media at a time when Goebbels had described it as a musical instrument in the hands of government: "Das, was fur den Pianisten das Piano ist, das ist fur Sie dann der Funkturm, auf dem Sie spielen, die souveraisnen Meister der öffentlichen Meinung." Mann made a clear distinction between the work of the journalist and the writer of literature in his essay Literatur und Hitler:

Das geistige Klima der Zeit ist ein Medium, aus dem der Schriftsteller sich nicht herauslösen kann. Dies bedeutet jedoch nicht, daß der Künstler die Funktionen des Feuilletonisten oder des reinen Reporters übernehmen solle, und ebensowenig bedeutet es, daß er von den Anforderungen der künstlerischen Disziplin befreit ist.

Mann clearly felt that the artist could affect what happened in society, and did not treat his fellow writers or himself with the same detachment and lack of blame with which he treated Nietzsche. In his diary, for example, Mann questioned whether Hofmannsthal had thought through the implications of an important speech, circulated a few years later, in 1933, as a pamphlet - Das Schriftum als geistiger Raum der Nation: "Seine Rede aber muß als Prophétie und Bestätigung herhalten... und trägt damit zur geistigen Stützung und >>historische<< Rechtfertigung weltgefährlicher Greuel bei". Peter Gay notes in his study

25 GW XIII, p. 325.
26 Tagebücher 1933-1934, p. 194 (26 September 1933). Mann does admit, in partial mitigation for Hofmannsthal, that the possible consequences were clearer in Germany than they were in Vienna, where Hofmannsthal originally made the speech.
of the Weimar Republic that the speech was elegant, civilised yet “strenuously vague”,

exactly what was not needed in the climate of the times:

This elusiveness was itself, though perhaps not intentionally, a political act, for if the
Germany of 1927 needed anything, it needed clarity, concreteness, demystification.27

Once living in the midst of the reality of Nazi Germany, the duty of writers became all the
more pronounced, because there could be no doubt about the evil of the social forces with
which they were grappling. Mann’s condemnation of the writers of the ‘Innere Emigration’
has already been mentioned. He also rebuked “Gerhart Hauptmann’s apostasy” in 1934: “er
goht mit den augenblicklichen politischen Ereignissen mit”.28

_Doktor Faustus_ goes further than merely awakening a sense of danger in response to the
awareness of the potential of the artist’s seismographic function. It shows two sides of this
function at work. The artist can either point a way to solving the hidden problems of his age,
or he can intensify them. Leverkühn is seen at least beginning to solve, on an artistic level,
one of the key problems that Germany also faces, namely, the need to attain ‘Durchbruch’ to
a satisfactory form of expression. Mann meant the search for expression in both music and
Germany to be closely interwoven - a prime example of art as “eine geistige Erhöhung der
Wirklichkeit”29. The composer is seeking to break through the stagnation of musical form,
and Germany wages war in an attempt to find an acceptable political form with which to
relate to rest of Europe. Leverkühn does achieve a breakthrough of sorts, even if only in
finding a voice for expressing his pain at the death of his nephew in the _Dr. Fausti Weheklag._
Mann means this to be seen as a triumph over the devil who had forbidden the composer to
love, for in this darkest of despairs, the famous “Hoffnung jenseits der Hoffnungslosigkeit,
die Tranzendenz der Verzweiflung” remains in the lingering cello note at the end of the
composition.30

Leverkühn’s struggle with musical expression also reflects Mann’s own struggle with the
difficulty of expression as a novelist. He described music in the _Entstehung_ as one example
of this general difficulty: “Darstellung der kulturellen Gesamtkrise wie der Musik im
besonderen”.31 Expression in German carried with it the particular difficulty of the
perversion of German language by Nazism. The ‘hollow miracle’ of George Steiner’s essay
of the same name is the deadened German language hiding behind the indisputable economic

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28 GW XIII, p. 327.
29 Ibid., p. 327.
30 GW VI, p. 651.
31 GW XI, p. 187.
miracle that ensured the country’s recovery as a major European power: “at the heart, there is
a queer stillness”.32 Steiner argues that the language finally foundered under the literally
unspeakable weight of the combination of irrational horror and cold calculation that Doktor
Faustus illustrates so effectively. The German language, in Steiner’s view, has never fully
recovered:

It was one of the peculiar horrors of the Nazi era that all that happened was recorded,
catalogued, chronicled, set down; that words were committed to saying things no
human mouth should ever have said and no paper made by man should ever have
been inscribed with. It is nauseating and nearly unbearable to recall what was
wrought and spoken, but one must.33

There is something of this flavour in Doktor Faustus when the devil speaks of hell, in what is
generally taken as a reference to the concentration camps: “Nein, es ist schlecht davon zu
reden, es liegt abseits und außerhalb der Sprache”.34 None of this is to suggest that the
artistic illumination of the political problem can necessarily make it any easier to solve.
Neither serialism nor Nazism provided permanent or satisfactory solutions to the problem of
musical or political expression respectively. The use of the artistic version of the problem
lies in helping the historical problem to be seen more clearly by being placed in, and even (if
only temporarily) solved in, a new context.

An important message of Doktor Faustus is that the artist can actually intensify a problem
rather than helping to solve it. This does not mean that the artist can necessarily be blamed
for finding the prevailing spirit of the age within himself, and thus in his work. What it does
mean is that an artist of public prominence should not be indifferent to the effect that an
unthinking translation of the spirit of the age into art might have in reinforcing that spirit, and
legitimising it in people’s minds. In good times, this can be positive and uplifting. Where
the spirit of the age is dangerous or undesirable, however, there is a difficult line to be
trodden between laying it bare for public inspection that gives the potential for corrective
action, and elevating it for public affirmation. There can be few better descriptions of this
phenomenon than Fetzer’s phrase “existential malingering”. 35 Such a phrase does not
condemn a piece of art or philosophy, but the indifference of the artist or philosopher to its
social and political effects. J. P. Stern cites the lyric poet Stefan George as an example of
this phenomenon. George claimed to be both in touch with his historical context, and, since
he saw man as justified only in an aesthetic context, also above it. Others, however, applied

p. 117.
33 Ibid., p. 122.
34 GW VI, p. 327.
35 J. Fetzer, op. cit., p. 63.
his ideas to politics in a concrete and inflammatory way. George’s vision of *Das neue Reich* (1928) led Hitler to offer him the presidency of the Dichter-Akademie, which caused George to emigrate to Switzerland. Stern writes:

> The events of 1933, which George watched perhaps with horror, certainly with distaste, showed that there was a realistic political dimension to this tragic view of life, which a politician of supreme skill could exploit. \(^{36}\)

In *Doktor Faustus*, Leverkühn’s music does little to lower the general temperature of the opinion formers in Germany. On the contrary, Zeitblom sees that it confirms and reinforces the worst excesses of the Kridwiß circle by reproducing these intellectual forces on a higher plane. He takes part in the circle’s discussions:

> Während ich zugleich mit ganzer, tief erregter und oft entsetzter Seele der Geburt eines Werkes aus freundschaftlicher Nähe bewohnte, das gewisser kühner und prophetischer Beziehungen zu jenen Erörterungen nicht entbehrt, sie auf höherer, schöpferischer Ebene bestätigte und verwirklichte. \(^{37}\)

In Lukács’ view, the potential of Leverkühn’s works to raise the political and intellectual temperature is exacerbated by the characteristics of inwardness and ‘Weltscheu’ that he and Germany both share. Lukács sees Leverkühn as a Faust who is unlike previous literary manifestations of Faust, in that he does not venture out into a wider world. Instead, his world remains essentially that of the ‘Studierstube’ of the first scene of the Faust drama. In each of Leverkühn’s homes, his study is described in detail, and is always very similar, with the clear implication that it forms the limits of his world. Lukács believes that in this small space, there is no space for the spirit of the age to develop and change. Rather, it can only intensify it in a damaging way:

> Die Studierstube des neuen Faust ist zwar - äußerlich gesehen - weit hermetischer von der gesellschaftlichen Außenwelt abgeschlossen, in Wirklichkeit ist sie aber die Hexenküche in der alle verhängnisvollen Tendenzen der Zeit zu ihrem konzentriertesten Ausdruck gebracht werden. \(^{38}\)

Mann applied his own strictures to himself. He was painfully aware of the damage that artists could do in the tense and febrile atmosphere of Germany in the 1930s, and was careful to remain a measured, democratic opponent of Nazism, whilst clearly a German Romantic at heart.

Mann does not explicitly write about politicians in *Doktor Faustus*, but was well aware of the phenomenon we have already noted - that in Germany culture and politics are closely intertwined. Mann’s essay *Bruder Hitler*, published in 1939, treated the theme of the artist

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\(^{36}\) J. P. Stern, *The Dear Purchase*, p. 239.

\(^{37}\) GW VI, p. 470.

within the politician. Mann examined the phenomenon of Hitler seen as an artist, and found a disturbing kinship between himself as an artist and the fascist leader, even if some of these features were in a perverse form in Hitler, a product of ‘Verhunzung’. Politicians must, of course, take responsibility for creating the spirit of the age, the realities of contemporary history. There is also a sense, however, in which they respond to and exploit this spirit of the age. It is a simple fact that the politician who tells the people what they want to hear is more likely to get elected. Hitler was probably the most extreme example of this, and Mann found a disturbing parallel between him and the writer’s ‘telling of stories’, which also appeal to the people:

Märchenzüge sind darin kenntlich, wenn auch verhunzt (das Motiv der Verhunzung spielt eine große Rolle im gegenwärtigen europäischen Leben) . . . muß man nicht, ob man will oder nicht, in dem Phänomen eine Erscheinungsform des Künstlertums wiedererkennen? Es ist, auf eine gewisse beschämende Weise, alles da.\(^\text{39}\)

It is this view that the Kridwiß circle calmly accept when they conclude that politics will henceforth be carried out in the language of myth-making:

Seine Einsicht und Verkündigung, daß im Zeitalter der Massen die parlamentarische Diskussion sich zum Mittel politischer Willensbildung als gänzlich ungeeignet beweisen müsse; daß an ihre Stelle in Zukunft die Versorgung der Massen mit mythischen Fiktionen zu treten habe, die als primitive Schlachtrufe die politischen Energien zu entfesseln, zu aktivieren bestimmt seien.\(^\text{40}\)

Many writers identified and explored the phenomenon of politics as art in the first half of the twentieth century. According to Walter Benjamin, the aestheticisation of politics in addition to the politicisation of art was a peculiarity of fascism; communism simply sought to politicise art. Aestheticisation of politics in fascism, however, was a means of drawing people’s attention away from the gap between rhetoric and reality. Adorno believed that even the worst aspects of fascism were experienced by the people as ‘the ultimate sensation’, albeit a mass sensation of low quality:

Faschismus war die absolute Sensation . . . Genossen ward im Dritten Reich der abstrakte Schrecken von Nachricht und Gerücht als der einzige Reiz, der zureichte, das geschwächte Sensorium der Massen momentweise zum Ergrühen zu bringen.\(^\text{41}\)

The Nazis obviously persisted in their quest for quasi-aesthetic effect because they knew that attractive visual images, short stirring words, and theatrical splendour have an immediate, almost involuntary appeal, which neither demands nor encourages critical reflection, as noted earlier with Siegried Kracauer’s observation that aesthetic qualities could lead spectators to “believe in the solidity of the swastika world”.\(^\text{42}\) Politics as an aesthetic experience makes it

\(^{39}\) GW XII, p. 847-848.  
\(^{40}\) GW VI, p. 486.  
\(^{41}\) TWA GS 4, p. 269.  
\(^{42}\) S. Kracauer, From Caligari to Hitler, p. 302.
possible for people not have to engage in the detail of what their political choices mean, but
simply to enjoy the spectacle. The aesthetics of politics was never more comprehensively
exploited than in Hitler’s Germany - a country which, as Helmut Wiegand observes, had
always had a tendency to explain life from an aesthetic perspective.\(^43\) It is evident, then, that
the artist does not work in isolation as the seismograph of his age. He certainly cannot be
isolated from the effects of his seismographic function. Nor, it seems, can he be separated
from the politicians, who will, in some circumstances, become quite like artists themselves.
When one becomes virtually indistinguishable from the other, the truth becomes even harder
to distinguish.

6.3.3 Zeitblom’s pact

Oscar Wilde wrote that: “There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are
well written or badly written. That is all”.\(^44\) This is an extreme statement. But it does serve
to remind us that the moral power and influence of art does not exist solely in the work as
created by the artist. It also depends on its reception by the public, as is apparent from
Mann’s own reluctance in taking on a political role that his public were anxious to give to
him. Speaking in 1928 about Bruno Frank’s Politische Novelle, he attributed to the audience
an important function in determining the quality and influence of a work. Whilst he was
speaking principally of aesthetic quality, what he says is an important reminder that the
audience and the artist together determine the outcome of a work. It is a “schwebendes
Anerbieten”, not completely fixed in advance:

\begin{quote}
Ein Kunstwerk ist nicht an sich und von vorherein gut oder schlecht; es ist keine
Sache mit unleugbar feststehenden Eigenschaften, es ist vielmehr ein schwebendes
Anerbieten an das Herz und den Geist des Menschen, und erst zusammen damit wird
es zur wirkenden Einheit, zum Wert.\(^45\)
\end{quote}

It is evident, then, that art cannot change much in society on its own, but its audiences might.
The view that the artist has a potentially serious impact on society also has implications for
the artist’s audience, for there is obvious danger in being merely a passive recipient of either
art or contemporary events. The character of Zeitblom is helpful in illuminating the
significance of the artist’s audience. As already noted, whilst he is not the intellectual equal
of the genius Leverkühn, he is certainly capable of insights into the composer’s work. He
shares Leverkühn’s early musical education, and actively participates in several key
discussions about the nature of music. Zeitblom sets out his academic credentials at the

\(^{43}\) Helmut Wiegand, Thomas Manns ‘Doktor Faustus’ als zeitgeschichtlicher Roman. Eine Studie
über die historischen Dimensionen in Thomas Manns Spätwerk, Frankfurter Beiträge zur neueren
\(^{45}\) GW X, p.689.
beginning of the novel: “Ein Gelehrter und conjuratus des >Lateinischen Heeres<, nicht ohne Beziehung zu den Schönen Künsten (ich spiele die Viola d’amore)”. He is later readily accepted as a member of the Munich salons, even though he does not consider himself much of a conversationalist:

Bei Roddes sowohl als im Schlaginhaufen’schen Säulen-Salon hörte man gern mein Viola d’amore-Spiel, das allerdings der gesellschaftliche Beitrag war, den ich, der schlichte und in der Konversation niemals sehr vive Gelehrte und Schulmann, vonnehmlich zu bieten hatte.

Zeitblom’s choice not to be more active in the salon is more about reticence than a lack of understanding, though he plays this down. He later claims to take part in the discussions of the Kridwöß circle “aus purer Gewissenhaftigkeit”. It is at this point that Zeitblom is inclined to place Leverkühn’s music and the alarming political discussions together. He seems to feel most distressed about the discussion at the moments of realisation that the music illuminates the politics happening around him, rather than as a direct result of the content of the discussions themselves:


This testifies to the power of Leverkühn’s music in the function of highlighting the spirit of the times, but not to the strength and alertness of its audience. The music does not steel Zeitblom to challenge what he hears in the discussions. On the contrary, it simply seems to alarm him and render him powerless for anything other than silent acquiescence: “Obgleich mir unwohl war in der Magengrube, durfte ich nicht den Spielverderber machen und mir von Widerwillen nichts anmerken lassen.” He seems totally unable to act to take his somewhat tentative juxtaposition of music and contemporary history a step further and deal with the consequences.

The audience cannot wash its hands of responsibility for the effects of art. Nietzsche was well aware of this, and conscious of his joint responsibility with his readers, for what he wrote. He believed that his works should be read intelligently, and not accepted blindly: “eine Dosis Neugierde, wie vor einem fremden Gewächs, mit einem ironischen Widerstande, schiene mir eine unvergleichlich intelligentere Stellung zu mir.” Nietzsche was especially conscious of the responsibility of the audience in relation to his great obsession, Richard

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GW VI, p. 10.
Ibid., p. 367.
Ibid., p. 470.
Ibid., p. 493.
Ibid., p. 488.
Wagner. He did not think that the effects of Wagner could solely be attributed to the composer, calculated though he believed his effects to be. Nietzsche also believed that people had created for themselves the Wagner that they wanted to hear, not necessarily seeing through him as a 'decadent': "Die Deutschen haben sich einen Wagner zurechtgemacht, den sie verehren können: sie waren noch nie Psychologen, sie sind damit dankbar, daß sie mißverstehen". 52 Extending this principle of the joint complicity of artist and audience to the artefact of Nazi Germany, the question - as posed in the first chapter of this thesis - must be not so much what creates an individual like Hitler, but how, whatever the extreme economic circumstances, his regime could come to have such a hold on a country. The willing participation of the 'audience' of Germany must be seen as complicit, as its national fascination with Hitler the 'artist' was essential for his success.

A similar temptation to focus on the artist almost to the exclusion of his audience also exists when considering the meaning of *Doktor Faustus*. The reader's attention tends to be drawn much more readily by the central, almost tragic figure of Leverkühn than by the much more 'normal', hesitant, even comical, Zeitblom. Yet it is he, the narrator, who carries more weight. Leverkühn has been shown to have no historical specificity, with Zeitblom acting as the means by which he can gain historical and political significance. Zeitblom both gives Leverkühn meaning within the contemporary society in which he is composing, and carries him forward in history even after the composer's death. Eckhard Heftrich notes in his essay on *Doktor Faustus* as autobiography that Zeitblom has less freedom and carries more historical weight than Leverkühn: "Daß Zeitblom viel von dem zu tragen bekommt, was Thomas Mann der Zeit unmittelbar an Tribut gezollt hat, macht gerade den andern frei für das gefährliche Leben der Kunst". 53

It is important to be wary of Zeitblom's self-deprecating style, and his keenness to place himself in the background. As we have already seen, the irony with which Mann treats Zeitblom's narrative points towards his significance in *Doktor Faustus*. Zeitblom may place music and contemporary events side by side in the hesitant framework discussed in the previous section, and then retreat, leaving the reader to bridge the gap between the two. Yet utterances like the one below are surely designed to encourage the reader to do the very opposite of what Zeitblom suggests:

52 FN2, *Der Fall Wagner*, p. 912.
We come to know far more about Zeitblom’s motivation, and the way he feels about both art and politics than about Leverkühn’s inner life. The lengthy description of the *Apocalypsis cum figuris*, for example, is all from Zeitblom’s perspective: about his compulsion to understand it in a particular way, rather than about Leverkühn’s motivation for writing it.

The notion of Leverkühn’s ‘sacrifice’ is a significant theme in *Doktor Faustus*. Yet the connection between this creative sacrifice and German history does not come mainly from Leverkühn himself, but from Zeitblom’s narrative. Even if the reader is encouraged to see the composer as making a symbolic sacrifice for Germany, Leverkühn does not see it in the same way. This is partly because music never seems to be anything other than a personal crusade for Leverkühn. He knows that he suffers, and his suffering is certainly genuine, but does not himself suggest that this suffering might be on behalf of others. The devil advances the idea that “einer muß immer krank und toll gewesen sein, damit die anderen es nicht mehr zu sein brauchen . . . auf deinen Namen werden die Buben schwören, die dank deiner Tollheit es nicht mehr nötig haben, toll zu sein”, but Leverkühn does not develop the theme. Whilst Leverkühn does have a highly developed sense of guilt, the notion of sacrifice, in which he might be able to take some comfort, barely occurs to him, even though the reader is encouraged to see him as someone carrying the suffering for the whole of Germany, in an almost Christ-like sense. When Leverkühn calls his acquaintances together for his final speech before his descent into madness, it is not to reveal to them a master plan in which they are the beneficiaries of his suffering. He mentions sacrifice only once, and then in a self-conscious and stylised manner as “die Schuld der Zeit auf eigenen Hals”. The substance of his speech is an extended confession reflecting his own acute sense of guilt. This is not guilt that his listeners can relate to, but, for them, a ridiculous claim that he has been in thrall to the devil. They take it first for poetry, and then for madness, when he falls insensible at the piano. Leverkühn’s sense of guilt is more acute than that felt by any of the Kridwiß circle. Peter Pütz suggests that the key difference between Leverkühn and the Kridwiß circle is in their respective attitudes to what they produce. Although Leverkühn’s suffering does not connect directly with anything in the external world, he experiences the reality and genuine pain of ‘Klage’ within himself. The same cannot be said, meanwhile, for the intellectuals, who do not even express regret about the themes they are discussing:

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54 GW VI, p. 470.
55 Ibid., p. 314 & 324.
56 Ibid., p. 662.
Naturlich konnte man es sagen, nur hûtte man es, da es sich schlieBlich um die
Beschreibung einer heraufziehenden Barbarei handelte, für mein Gefühl mit etwas
mehr Bangen und Grauen sagen sollen.\textsuperscript{57}

In Pütz's view, this contrast with his own sense of guilt allows Leverkühn, for all his isolation
from society, to come closer to an ideal of humanity than anyone else in the novel.\textsuperscript{58}
Perhaps, then, it is those other than the artist who have more to learn?

It may be more appropriate to see \textit{Doktor Faustus} as a novel that is as much about the artist’s
audience as about the artist himself - about collective understanding of artists, rather than the
individual process of creating art. The image in the Dante songs of the man with the lamp on
his back, which is emphasised in Zeitblom's description of the songs, is important for this
reading of the novel. The man cannot see the light himself, but it does illuminate the path of
those who come after him. Zeitblom is moved by
die bewegende musikalische Diktion die dem Purgatorio-Gleichnis von dem Manne
verliehen war, der in der Nacht ein Licht auf seinem Rücken trägt, das ihm nicht
leuchtet, aber hinter ihm den Weg der Kommenden erhellt. Ich hatte Tränens dabei in
den Augen.\textsuperscript{59}

In the same way, the vision the artist provides of the society in which he lives may not be of
any significance for him, but it should be noticed and acted upon by those of his audience
who are able to see it. The image is a perfect metaphor for the light that Leverkühn's oeuvre
should cast on the undercurrents that helped Nazism gain such success. Despite the tears in
Zeitblom's eyes, it seems he is unable to detach himself from Leverkühn's music sufficiently
to see the light that it is casting on what comes after it, and to act on what this reveals.
Zeitblom's sense of his own responsibility by the end of the novel is very unclear, and it is
not obvious whether he includes himself in the prayers for 'Freund' and 'Vaterland'.

With all this in mind, it must surely be possible to argue that the greatest Faustian pact in the
novel is not between Leverkühn and the devil, who are, after all, virtually identical with one
another; rather it is between Zeitblom and Leverkühn. A number of critics have argued that
Leverkühn's supposed Faustian pact is unrealistic. The motivation for the pact is not
immediately obvious, as there was no need for it if the twelve tone system solved the
problem of achieving satisfactory musical expression. There are small ways in which
Leverkühn's situation and the traditional Faustian pact are dissimilar. Anni Carlsson draws
attention to the fact that in the usual account of Faust, his horizons gradually broaden, as in
Goethe's \textit{Faust} when, after being Gretchen's lover, he enters the mythical realm to become

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., p. 486.
\textsuperscript{58} P. Pütz, \textit{Kunst und Künstlerexistenz bei Nietzsche und Thomas Mann}, p. 130.
\textsuperscript{59} GW VI, p. 217.
the lover of Helen of Troy, and ends the second part of the play with a huge project to
reclaim the land from the sea. Carlsson observes that Leverkühn's world becomes, if
anything, ever more enclosed as the novel develops. Käte Hamburger had strong views
about the novel. Her initial inclination was not to like it at all, and Mann was wounded by
her reaction. At the root of this, as Hubert Brunträger notes in his introduction to the recent
dition of correspondence between Mann and Hamburger, was probably Hamburger's deep
humanism. She could not understand Mann's lingering attraction to the decadence at the
heart of Leverkühn's pact, nor appreciate the musical world as Mann did. Though she
wondered initially about Zeitblom's function, she later realised that: "ohne ihn das Leben des
Leverkühn nicht darstellbar und erträglich gewesen wäre". Käte Hamburger's later essay on
Doktor Faustus, quite apart from these reactions, however, concentrates on the legitimacy of
interpreting Leverkühn as a genuine Faust figure: "Ja, wir wagen zu fragen: ist Leverkühn
ein Doktor Faustus weil er Dr. Fausti Weheklag komponiert?".

In his 1985 essay on Zeitblom, Osman Durrani explicitly refers to a pact entered by
Zeitblom:

- His unquestioning dependence on his friend is also an unacknowledged pact with
evil, which paralyses the schoolmaster in much the same way as Adrian is paralysed
emotionally by what he sees as his compact with the devil.

To paraphrase these words, Leverkühn's pact is illusory even though he believes it to be real,
whilst Zeitblom has entered a pact of which he consciously knows nothing - surely all the
more dangerous for his lack of awareness of it? And if sacrifices are to be weighed up as part
of the pact, it is easier to see that Zeitblom has sacrificed his whole life to Leverkühn's art,
rather than any sacrifice by Leverkühn himself, who is simply what he has always been,
though perhaps at a higher intensity. Becoming Leverkühn's friend is surely a 'pact' that
changes what Zeitblom would otherwise have been, and much more of a turning point than
Leverkühn's dialogue with the devil? Zeitblom admits that he was far more concerned with
the composer's life than with his own. There is a sense beneath Zeitblom's words that he
always considered himself thoroughly 'ordinary', giving himself no credit for any real
potential to reflect. Instead, Zeitblom prefers to sacrifice his own potential to the life of an
exceptional individual.

dessen Sein, dessen Werden, dessen Lebensfrage mich im Grunde mehr interessierte
als meine eigene. Diese war einfach; ich brauchte ihr nicht viele Gedanken zu

60 A. Carlsson, 'Das Faustmotiv bei Thomas Mann', p. 96.
63 Ibid., p. 139.
64 Osman Durrani, 'The Tearful Teacher. The role of Serenus Zeitblom in Thomas Mann's Doktor
widmen, sondern nur durch treue Arbeit die Voraussetzungen für ihre vorgegebene Lösung zu schaffen.

Although Zeitblom clearly does not have the special talents that Leverkühn does, it is at least possible that he might have been a more prominent academic if he had allowed his life to deviate from the path of always following Leverkühn. Leverkühn, however, always seems destined for music. At no point does he speculate that his suffering might have been less if he had chosen a different career, but Zeitblom seems at least dimly aware that his life might have been different if he had not been so closely involved with Leverkühn and his music. He admits that this has not always been easy: “Es gibt Menschen, mit denen zu leben nicht leicht, und die zu lassen unmöglich ist.” Near the end of the novel, Zeitblom’s dedication to Leverkühn does seem to be seen in terms of some sort of burden that he has assumed: “Mir ist, als käme diese Treue wohl auf dafür, daß ich mit Entsetzen die Schuld meines Landes floh.”

This, then, could be part of the ‘Geheimnis ihrer Identität’ that Mann refers to in the Entstehung; Leverkühn’s creativity cries out for an active, creative and critical response, not near-identification and surrender. There is a potential lesson in this for everyone who engages with art, including readers of Doktor Faustus. Hans Mayer, having argued for the identity of both protagonists as Mann himself, refers to the novel’s secret epigraph, from Goethe’s Torquato Tasso: “Vergleiche dich! Erkenne, was du bist!” Mayer interprets this not only as a warning to artists, including Mann, but as an instruction to every reader of Doktor Faustus. Having identified the link between music as the ultimate art, and the reality of historical events in Germany, Mann suggests that the artist can either exacerbate problems or help to solve them. He does not, however, tell us exactly how non-artists - who must include politicians as well as the wider audience - can help to prevent or change this in the way in which they receive art and interact with it. It seems, prima facie, that they should be able to do something. If the artist illuminates, and the lamp shines behind him, the solutions to the problems of the age must surely be made clearer for those in a position to see and act?

On the contrary, Zeitblom thinks it is not seemly to contradict when he sees the real-life version of the music that has enthralled him being played out by the German intelligentsia. It is only in retrospect that he realises his intellectual respect was misplaced: “Heute sieht man wohl, daß es der Fehler unserer Zivilisation war, diese Schonung und diesen Respekt allzu

\[65\] GW VI, p. 118.
\[66\] Ibid., p. 294.
\[67\] Ibid., p. 669.
\[68\] H. Mayer, ‘Roman einer Endzeit und Endzeit des Romans.’, p. 113.
hochherzig geübt zu haben". Compared with Leverkühn’s agonies of contrition in his final speech, however, it is difficult to see Zeitblom as a repentant, changed man, who would do things differently if he had to repeat the experience again. Towards the end of the novel, Zeitblom admits that the recognition of evil in something is not necessarily incompatible with loving it. The argument is meant to apply to both Germany and Leverkühn:

Die unvermeidliche Anerkennung der Heillosigkeit ist nicht gleichbedeutend mit der Verleugnung der Liebe. Ich, ein schlichter deutscher Mann und Gelehrter, habe viel Deutsches geübt, ja, mein unbedeutendes, aber der Faszination und Hingabe fähiges Leben war der Liebe, der oft verschreckten, der immer bangen, aber in Ewigkeit getreuen Liebe zu einem bedeutend deutschen Menschen- und Künstlertum geweiht, dessen geheimnisvolle Sündhaftigkeit und schrecklicher Abschied nichts über diese Liebe vermögen.

The idea of devotion ‘in Ewigkeit’, and the overtones of religious sacrifice in “geweiht” conspire to make this statement by Zeitblom sound as much an admission of a fatal pact as anything Leverkühn ever says. The statement is ultimately unsatisfactory, because it places the evil of Nazi Germany on the same plane as atonal music and an imagined pact with the devil. Zeitblom needs to learn not to see these two entities as the same thing, but to recognise how a better understanding of the meaning of the lesser of them might have affected his attitude to the other. Whilst Zeitblom considers his contribution as ‘unbedeutend’, his capacity, along with thousands of others, for ‘Hingabe’, meant that it had very serious meaning indeed. He is unable to stop being taken in by the composer or by the forces that create Nazi Germany. He may not be an artistic genius or a politician, but he is certainly no fool, and a more detached and critical attitude might have made a difference.

The way in which Doktor Faustus closes the gap between music and history, then, is not by straightforward allegory, but by a web of very suggestive conceptual correspondences, woven into a narrative that shows that without a public, such correspondences would have little or no effect. In this sense, the novel rises above the tendency that Judith Ryan identifies in German literature immediately after the war, of accepting the mythological status of Nazism, and transposing it to a plane beyond reality. Mann was, after all, wary of the “Vollzuge eines Vorgeschriebenen”. Ryan notes that German writers after the war were continually asking why the German people were the victims of such an outrage, never considering that they might also be the perpetrators. In showing Zeitblom in thrall to something that he could actually have the power to overcome, Doktor Faustus begins to invoke the notion of an

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69 GW VI, p. 378.
70 Ibid., p. 600.
audience with a mind of its own, and freedom to act. This is an important encouragement to
the reader to ponder the question of how this freedom might best have been exercised in the
historical circumstances of the day.
Chapter 7 Conclusion

The objective of this thesis was to examine what is said about music and German history in Doktor Faustus, and to consider how the novel bridges, or conceivably closes, the gap between them. The original hope was to analyse in as concrete and systematic a way as possible how the novel speaks of music and German history.

The thesis has shown that the novel views both music and Germany in two ways. They are seen at once as timeless entities with a continuing ontology, and as historical entities that manifest their ontology in particular ways at different points in history. Doktor Faustus describes the ontology of music and Germany, and the historical manifestation of that ontology at their time of twentieth century crisis. The close similarities between music and Germany in their ontological and historical descriptions in the novel are established by the insistent presence of a number of concepts, which embrace both the artistic and historico-political spheres. For ease of reference, the Appendix to this thesis offers an overview in the form of two tables: one on the ontological characteristics of music and Germany, and the other on their historical manifestation in Leverkühn's music and in Nazism.

I am aware that in doing this, I have come perilously close to schematizing a hugely complex text. As one recent essay on Doktor Faustus notes: "Beziehungszuber wird leicht zu Beziehungswahn oder gar Beziehungszwang". I believe, however, that this is a risk worth taking, not least because it makes possible a helpful degree of conceptual clarification. Doktor Faustus is a profound novel, but it is, after all, a text that can be clarified, rather than something that works on a metaphysical level. The clarification offered can, I believe, explain more clearly than has been done to date the connection between Leverkühn's music and the German historical crisis that is the substance of Doktor Faustus. This thesis has found that relationship to be analogous rather than causal, but certainly mutually reinforcing. That is, art (in this case, music) both reflects, and reflects upon, the spirit of the historical age in which it is created. In doing so, it has the power to intensify the problems of the age, or perhaps even help to relieve them. The role of the audience in responding to the artist has been identified as crucial to this process, and the figure of Zeitblom as worthy of further exploration, for it is he who specifically connects Leverkühn with twentieth century German history.

Chapter 1 of the thesis held out the possibility that discovering more about the links between music and history in *Doktor Faustus* might have wider lessons. The chapter pressed the case for considering literature as a potential contribution to serious historical study, in this case, in terms of attaining a deeper understanding of a society in which Nazism could come about, moving away from an isolated demonisation of the figure of Hitler, and perhaps even revealing something about the wider relationship between culture and historical and political events. The thesis points towards a de-demonisation of Nazism in two ways. First, it has shown in the text of *Doktor Faustus* a view of the Nazi regime that is very far from seeing it as a mysterious, unstoppable force, but rather, perceives it as made up of a number of identifiable characteristics. One example is the combination of quasi-Romantic, irrational feeling and cold calculation that fed into Nazism. I am not for a moment suggesting, of course, that Mann set out to write the novel with a detailed table of characteristics of music and Germany like the one in the Appendix. At the very least, however, this table shows Mann exposing Nazism, perhaps more than he realised, as a phenomenon capable of deconstruction and critical understanding. Second, in highlighting the difference between timeless ontology of Germany, and those ontological characteristics as manifested at a specific historic point, *Doktor Faustus* expresses and reinforces Mann’s view that Germany could not be divided into two Germanies, good and bad. The whole country was responsible for Nazism, at a particular historical juncture, but the implication, surely, is that this episode need not be repeated, nor viewed as something ontological and inevitable. *Doktor Faustus* does seem to contain, then, helpful wider lessons about the relationship between culture and politics. It is especially helpful in its discussion of the relationship between art and historical events contemporary with it. Music and German events are not directly equated in the novel, but nor are they ever completely separated. This corresponds to Mann’s own view of his role as an artist - as one not directly equatable with politics, but also, never completely separate from contemporary events. Up to the end of his life, he could never quite take seriously the political role that he found himself having to play: “Unleugbar hat ja das politische Moralisieren eines Künstlers etwas Komisches”. At the same time, he was acutely aware of the responsibility he carried. The suggestion in *Doktor Faustus* is that whilst artists cannot be held responsible for causing events to happen, they can increase or diminish the impact of what is happening around them, as living seismographs or ‘visual aids’ for the age in which they live. In its contribution to the understanding of the Nazi period of German history, Mann’s novel exemplifies this phenomenon of the artist being able to illuminate the problems of his age, although, as noted earlier, Mann was anxious that he

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2 GW X, p. 397 (*Der Künstler und die Gesellschaft*).
might have intensified them by helping to create a new mythology of Germany. This relationship with contemporary events means that all artists must assume responsibility for what they communicate and how. This was something that Mann realised only gradually in his creative development. The story of Adrian Leverkühn makes clear that culture is never so exalted that the strictures of responsibility cannot apply to it. Zeitblom is misguided when he supposes that Leverkühn’s isolation and lack of responsibility is completely understandable: “dessen persönliche Unberührtheit von dem Ganzen mir die selbstverständlichste Sache von der Welt war”. This is particularly so in Germany, where, as noted at the beginning of this thesis, culture plays a greater role in the public’s understanding of contemporary events than in some other countries.

Perhaps the most universal lesson that can be drawn from Doktor Faustus is that the artist’s responsibility is not his alone, but shared with his audience. The theme of the artist’s audience runs subtly through the novel, in Dante’s image of the man with the lamp on his back illuminating the path for those coming after him, and in the specific reference to the novel’s ‘third’ temporal level: “die eines Tages der Leser sich zur geneigten Rezeption des Mitgeteilten nehmen wird”. It is only through the attention of an audience, after all, that the artist can gain any social or political significance. Zeitblom’s surrender to the total experience of Leverkühn’s music is crucial. It is evident that, if he is to play a part in bringing Germany out of its historical crisis, he needs to be more sceptical in his appraisal of this art than his narrative manages to be.

Yet Zeitblom’s ultimate failure to be discerning enough can also be seen as a point of enrichment for the novel’s readers. In his self-conscious reflections on his own performance as a narrator, Zeitblom frequently raises the issue of coherence, of how the different strands of his narrative hang together, and is often concerned to register some sort of correspondence. In this way, he contributes to the cementing of ontology and history of both music and Germany into a total interpretative package. At other times, he criticises this kind of conflating discourse in the Kridwiß circle. Zeitblom’s narrative is thus laid before its readers in a way that invites us to be critical and discerning, in the same way that Leverkühn’s music invites, but does not receive, such a response from Zeitblom. The readers’ response should surely be to see what Zeitblom writes as itself in some way complicit in the early twentieth century German tendency to conflate ontology and history in such a way that political

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3 Letter to Kuno Fiedler of 5 February 1948, DüD, p. 136. See 6.1, footnote 41.
4 GW VI, p. 404.
5 Ibid., p. 335.
acquiescence becomes invested with a sense of unalterable destiny. This very imperfection of Zeitblom may be one of the triumphs of Mann's work, and ensure its lasting relevance.

We may, of course, think that the impact of art on debates about contemporary issues is fairly limited in 2000, because technology or economics are generally held to be far more significant. This may well be partly true. But there is certainly evidence that in Germany, at least, the view expressed in _Doktor Faustus_, that high art can connect with real historical events is as timely as ever. Grass's novel about Germany's reunification, _Ein weites Feld_, was published in 1995, and popularly described as a 'Deutschlandroman', with Grass widely condemned for his apparently sceptical, and by that token unpatriotic, views. The condemnation of the book, especially by the critic Marcel Reich-Ranicki, sparked a furious debate in the media, almost as if it were a political tract under discussion. Yet any reader who picks up the novel in search of overt political didacticism will be disappointed in _Ein weites Feld_. On the contrary, the novel is a dense, complex work, steeped in the life and writings of Theodor Fontane. It is more obviously about the love of Fontane's work than about recent history, in the same way that _Doktor Faustus_ was more obviously about music than about Nazism. It is noteworthy that an article in the _Bildzeitung_ - a newspaper for which a novel of this sort was surely not an obvious topic - said: "Was ist das Buch sonst? Keine Story, keine Seele. Was dann? Leeres Gerede". The writer of the article seems to have been preparing to make an onslaught on Grass's unacceptable stance as a political doubter, but was unable to find the politics in the novel. The political dimension is certainly there, but couched in the mode of understatement and implication. Both this mode, and the spirit of scepticism in the face of triumphalism, generated intense controversy. The result was that a novel of high cultural sophistication became a political event, and the process generated higher sales figures than might otherwise have been the case.

Perhaps the most lasting and universal message in _Doktor Faustus_, however, is about the power of the artist as seismograph, and the necessity of watchfulness and adequate response by the audience. Two recent examples from our own country show that we also respond to that seismographic function. The indignant articles about modern art that fill newspapers around the time of the Turner Prize each year are more than just reactionary forces being pitted against a Damien Hirst or a Tracey Emin, or a need to fill the features pages. What underlies these is surely an unspoken fear that if a sheep in formaldehyde, or a dirty, rumpled

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7 Ibid., p. 49.
bed surrounded by the unsavoury detritus of everyday life, are seen as legitimate, perhaps even the only possible, artistic expression, then this disparages the quality of our collective life. There were also concerns recently that Simon Armitage, the Poet in Residence for the New Millennium Experience Company (NMEC), painted too bleak a picture of the last year of the twentieth century in Killing Time, his Millennium poem. Armitage said of the NMEC’s reaction: “I was talking about larger issues. I think that they thought I was going to write about ferris wheels, which I did, but maybe not in the way they expected”. Like Zeitblom, we, too, seem to have moments of alarm about “what the world is coming to” when we see what passes for art or entertainment: “Hier kann niemand mir folgen, der nicht die Nachbarschaft von Ästhetizismus und Barbarei, den Ästhetizismus als Wegbereiter der Barbarei in eigener Seele, wie ich, erlebt hat”.

There may well be moments when it is worth pausing to consider what the art we engage with is a ‘Wegbereiter’ for. Or perhaps we think that we are now living in a post-modern world, and are beyond worrying about such things. But it is important to remember that Zeitblom is no simpleton. If he is intended as the man in the street, he is a relatively sophisticated one. Perhaps we need to ponder at what point we are a little too pleased with ourselves in our increasingly self-aware entertainment. At what point does ironic use of violence, bad language, racism, sexism slip into easy acceptance of it? This question can be applied to any number of success stories, from Quentin Tarantino films to South Park.

Doktor Faustus may not give us a model of how to change what art reveals about society. But it is a powerful reminder of what art - however far it appears removed from real life - can tell us about ourselves, if we only interact critically with it. As such it is a fitting testimony to Mann’s belief that the lessons of art could sometimes eclipse those of life in their power: “Die Sache ist schwer, düster, unheimlich, traurig wie das Leben, da immer Idee und Kunst das Leben übertreffen und übertreiben”.

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9 GW VI, p. 495.
10 Letter to Agnes Meyer of 2 June 1943, TM - AM, p. 487.
## Appendix

### Table 1  The ontology of music and Germany

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Ontological characteristics of music (3.2)</strong></th>
<th><strong>Ontological characteristics of Germany (5.2)</strong></th>
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</thead>
</table>
| **Struggle for 'Durchbruch’**<br>• desire to reach out to world from inwardness of itself;  
• struggle demonstrated by appeal through beauty, and in relationship between music and words;  
• better at communicating with an elite, but unresolved struggle between this and desire for wider communication. | **Struggle for 'Durchbruch’**<br>• desire to reach out to world from inwardness and pride;  
• struggle demonstrated by appeal through a quasi-aesthetic attraction; and  
• better at communicating with an elite, but in tension with desire for more universal social feeling, also within Germany, - manifested in the powerful sense of the 'Volk'. |
| **Tension between sensuality and cerebralism**<br>• natural sensuality and spontaneity, with potential to slide into dangerous carnality; and  
• natural inclination to form and order, and to detached self-contemplation. | **Tension between sensuality and cerebralism**<br>• natural 'youthful' sensuality and spontaneity, but potentially dangerous if left too subjective and unstructured; and  
• inclined to excessive self-contemplation, but with a wistful pull back to spontaneity. |
| **Lack of stability**<br>• despite underlying sense of order, tonal system is contingent on what composer does with it historically; and  
• contingent nature of system lends itself to high intellectual abstraction of mathematics, which can be exploited by someone with the right skills. | **Lack of stability**<br>• not a long-established nation, but a series of short historical episodes, never arriving at a stable state; and  
• constant “becoming” lends itself to high intellectual abstraction, not solid reality and practical politics. |
| **Spiritual capacity**<br>• generalised capacity for non-rational gives affinity with nature and primal beginnings;  
• can revisit its own primal elements e.g. the triad, with pull back to origins as mass, cultic experience; and  
• Lutheran in sensitivity to sin and in seeing virtue in the pursuit of difficulty. | **Spiritual capacity**<br>• general Romantic affinity with nature, with a non-rational sense of fate and destiny at the centre of all experience;  
• strong sense of primal, cultic roots as 'Volk’, revisited even in the midst of apparent modern sophistication - 'Reaktion als Fortschritt’; and  
• specifically Lutheran model of German ontology, especially in glorification of the idea of struggle and sacrifice. |
Table 2 Historical manifestation of the ontology of music and Germany in their twentieth century crises

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Leverkühn's compositions (4.2)</th>
<th>Early twentieth century Germany (5.3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Struggle for 'Durchbruch' | - entire oeuvre reflects this struggle, turning especially on the relationship between music and words, which culminates in the musical language of the tone row;  
- unbearably acute sense of "Schein" as artifice, combined with longing for innocent beauty; and  
- tension between honourable isolation and good taste of the avant-garde, and longing for popularity and intimacy, but isolation as artistic necessity has the upper hand. | - entire history of this period dominated by this struggle - manifested in two world wars - out of isolation to an acceptable political form; and  
- the need to appeal aesthetically can be politically exploited by the Nazis, who are expert at using the artifice of 'Schein'. |
| Tension between sensuality and cerebralism | - plagued by excesses of subjectivity, but longs for simple sensuality, which he can artificially recreate through the 'Erkenntnis' of serialism; and  
- extreme cerebralism of compositions, whose complexity can only be appreciated through intellectual examination rather than listening. | - artificial simplification of values (e.g. action without reflection) to appeal to youthful naivety of the German nature; and  
- extreme cerebralism lends false intellectual weight to this process and the Nazi cause generally. |
| Lack of stability | - solutions to lack of stability have dried up, and he is forced to impose false stability through his own system of the tone row; and  
- serialism is highly abstract and cerebral, setting its own limits like a mathematical formula worked out in advance - dark and cabalistic at its extremes. | - instability becomes intolerable, making it easier for Nazis to establish fairly rapidly the false stability of dictatorship; and  
- limits of what is acceptable behaviour set only by regime's ideology, with no external reference point, which leads to terrible extremes. |
| Spiritual capacity | - the intellectually calculated tone row can revivify outdated "banalities", making them sound as shocking as extreme dissonance;  
- regression to the cultic, pre-cultural state of music because there is nowhere else to go, filling music's spiritual void with a demonic belief; and  
- Lutheran sensitivity to the sin of the pact, which brings with it intense struggle and sacrificial suffering in the creative process. | - a 'Rebarbarisierung' of the German people is carried out with ruthless political calculation and technological efficiency;  
- Nazi regime underpinned by myth and quasi-religious ritual, a timely means of filling the void left by the demise of traditional Christianity; and  
- an inclination to see Germany's guilt as a sacrificial burden, encouraged by Hitler's exhortations to strenuous self-sacrifice on behalf of the regime. |
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All references to Thomas Mann’s works are taken from the Gesammelte Werke in zwölf Bänden, (Frankfurt am Main, S. Fischer Verlag, 1974). References are cited as GW followed by the volume and page number. The title of the text follows in brackets where this is not clear from the context in which it is quoted.

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