Divine and Sublime Creativity:  
A Comparison Of Schenkerian And Ciceronian Principles

by

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Abstract

As is clear from the title, this thesis presents a comparison of Schenkerian and Ciceronian principles. The thesis will focus mainly on the characteristics of the creative process essential for producing a sublime and intellectual work. Admittedly comparing a Roman lawyer/philosopher (Cicero) to a 20th century musician/theorist (Schenker) will bring forth many obstacles and will suffer from numerous imperfections. Stressing the commonalities between two men of time frames too far apart is an arduous task. I found it most helpful to go about this problem through three stages: first, by presenting an overview of the lives, historical circumstances, and careers of the two mentioned figures; second, by presenting a basic comparison of the two branches of thought; and third, by dealing with some of the more complicated philosophical issues for a better understanding of the two doctrines.

Since many of the Schenkerian and Ciceronian principles are heavily rooted in Platonism, an overview of Plato’s theory of ‘forms and ideas’ is presented to guide the reader toward a better grasp of the concepts. The reader may, however, be uncertain regarding the objective of this thesis: is this a comparison of the two philosophies or an evaluation of them? Of course, in order to achieve a satisfactory comparison, one must first understand the two philosophies; this demands an explicit analysis which, in my view, is a form of evaluation. I have also shown and questioned some of the ambiguities of the two philosophies without offering any solutions. This will perhaps help the reader to
understand the path I had to take in completing this thesis. I have included these philosophical remarks in the endnotes. Furthermore, Schenkerian philosophy reveals many other important influences other than Platonism; although not the focus of this thesis, numerous references to great thinkers such as Nietzsche, Spinoza, Hanslick, and Freud illustrate this point.

Much of the presented bibliographical material on the life of Cicero can be found in the *On the Commonwealth* and *On the Laws*. Furthermore, Michael B. Fuster’s *Masters of Political Thought* has been used as a source of reference for a great portion of the philosophical interpretations.

Much of what I have presented on Schenker and Schenkerian literature has been gathered through my studies and conversations with Dr. Benjamin, my advisor: the most reliable source with whom I am acquainted. This is perhaps the reason for not including any other philosophical writings on Schenkerian literature in the bibliography.
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It is no secret to my friends that the reason for my staying at the University of British Columbia, after my bachelor degree, was to continue studying with Dr. William Benjamin. His constructive criticism, excellent sense of humor, and extensive knowledge of music, philosophy, history, and literature have been, and will be, a source of inspiration to me. This is perhaps the best opportunity to thank Dr. Benjamin whose enormous influence on my musical understanding cannot be described with words. Furthermore, I would like to thank Dr. Richard Kurth from whom I learnt logical and organized thinking toward musical analysis. Moreover, I would like to thank Dr. John Roeder for his second reading of this thesis and his useful suggestions. Many thanks to friends and above all my family who have ceaselessly shown me sincere and endless support.
Marcus Tullius Cicero

a. Life and Career

Marcus Tullius Cicero, born in 106 BC, was a member of one the leading families of the town of Arpinum, located about 115 kilometers southeast of Rome. After learning the ways of Roman politics and law under the tutelage of renowned orators and jurists such as Lucius Licinius Crassus and Quintus Mucius Scaevola, Cicero quickly became a consul. “Recruitment to the ranks of Roman aristocracy in Cicero’s day was real, but it usually took several generations to reach the highest offices.” Furthermore, quick elevation in the government system was generally the result of military achievements rather than oratorical accomplishments.

Cicero’s exceptional ability to reason and articulate made him the only member of his family who ever achieved a high office. An eminent public speaker at this stage of his life, Cicero addressed the corruption and abuse of power within the Roman system. He amazed the audiences by his rhetorical and political skills, and further added to his popularity.

In early December of 63 BC, Cicero “unmasked the conspiracy of Catiline and supervised the execution of several of the leading conspirators.” He was named a ‘father of the country’, and was appointed chief magistrate of the Roman Republic after a public thanksgiving. However, his role in executing citizens without a formal trial, in 63 BC, made him vulnerable. He was sent into exile and was recalled to Rome about eighteen months later. During the civil war between Caesar and Pompey, Cicero supported Pompey; and after Pompey’s defeat, Cicero was unable to pursue his political activities. It was not until after the assassination of
Caesar, on 15 March 44, that Cicero returned once more to the political stage. Around 44-43 BC, Cicero once again became the victim of the political events of his time. His opposition to Marcus Antonius, the young Caesar, led to his execution in 43 BC.

b. Philosophy and Main Works

Cicero’s writing reflects the Hellenistic philosophy of Greece. In *the Orator*, written in 55 BC, Cicero speaks of the growing popularity of Greek philosophy among the Roman senators. Cicero himself traveled to Greece, in the early 70’s, to study Greek philosophy at the Academy, and Greek influences had lasting effects on his subsequent thinking. *On the Commonwealth and On the Laws* are among the main works which reveal Greek influences. These two books are both written in style of Plato. In fact, *On the Laws* is modeled after Plato’s *Laws* and his *On the Commonwealth* has much in common with Plato’s *Republic*. Both books are written in dialogue form, a style invented by Plato. The number of characters, their roles in the dialogues, and the subjects under discussion are quite similar to what is found in Plato.

c. *On the Commonwealth* and *On the Laws*

Since this paper deals with the philosophical materials discussed in Cicero’s *On the Commonwealth* and *On the Laws*, a brief commentary regarding the history and the contents of these two philosophical works is called for. The only surviving copy of this book was discovered by Angelo Mai in the Vatican library. This copy dates back to the fourth century, and consists of 151 leaves; it had been erased and used for a copy of Augustine’s *Commentary on the Psalms*. 
Luckily, Cicero's *On the Commonwealth* was not carefully erased, and most of it is readable. *On the Commonwealth* is conceived in six books and written in dialogue form. Every book contains a preface by Cicero and presents one day of the conversation between the characters. Book I deals with analysis of different types of government (oligarchy, aristocracy and democracy) and stresses that an ideal government has elements of all three types. Book II addresses the development of the Roman constitution, claiming that it exemplifies the best type of constitution. In Book III the role of nature in human lives is brought up. In the remainder of this book Cicero discusses the meaning of goodness, justice, morality and their relation to nature. Book IV deals with the problems of maintaining a proper and just government. Unfortunately, a large portion of Books V and VI has not survived. The only surviving section of these books is the ‘dream of Scipio,’ which ends Book VI. This dream of Scipio is no doubt modeled after the ‘tale of Alcinoos’ in the last book of Plato’s *Republic*. Although the last two books are missing, it is evident from Cicero’s own references that they portray the ideal statesman and outline his proper training.3

Cicero’s *On the Laws* is believed, by many scholars, to have been written in conjunction with the *On the Commonwealth*. Cicero himself makes frequent allusions to the relationship between the two. Sadly, only fragments of the first three books of *On the Laws* and a small portion of its fifth book have survived. “It is clear, from one of the few ancient quotations of the *On the Laws*, that there were at least five books, but there is no certainty at all as to how many were written or how many were intended. A reference to midday in the fragment of Book V suggests that Cicero may have planned a work in eight books.”4 Book I of *On the Laws* deals with
natural laws and their relation to human laws. Aspects of natural law and its relation to universal/natural justice and to universal logic are among the major topics explored and discussed. Book II discusses the relation between natural law and the laws of an ideal government. In this discussion, Cicero uses the religious laws and rituals of Rome as a starting point. Book III deals with the role of natural law in magistracies and in training the statesman.
Heinrich Schenker

a. Life and Career

Most of what is available provides little insight into Schenker’s life as a musician. Born on June 19, 1868 in the Ukraine, Schenker started piano at an early age and continued taking instruction in the Vienna conservatory after he and his family immigrated to Austria. In Vienna, Schenker attended and graduated from the law school at the University where he studied Roman law, among other subjects. While pursuing legal studies, he continued his musical activities, and after taking a law degree, decided to devote himself entirely to music. He composed, taught piano, worked as an accompanist, and wrote newspaper critiques. While attending the conservatory, Schenker had attended Anton Bruckner’s harmony classes. However, Schenker was critical of Bruckner for the rest of his life. Strongly believing that composers were indeed bound by the true theoretical laws of music at all times, Schenker found himself in disagreement with Bruckner who viewed theoretical laws as mere guide-lines for the student, avoidable by the full-fledged creative personality. Brahms, whom Schenker spoke of with tremendous respect as a living example of German tradition, supported Schenker in publishing some of his compositions by recommending him to publishers. Finally, Busoni showed enthusiasm for young Schenker’s compositions by performing some of his works in concerts.

Schenker’s early major publications, subsequent to his apprenticeship as a critic, were a study of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony and a treatise called Harmony (published in 1906). The latter marked the beginning of Schenker’s search for a new method of musical analysis. This search was motivated by his dissatisfaction with the common
pedagogical practices of the time, and its outcome includes many remarkable essays as well as a second treatise, *Counterpoint* (published in 1910 and 1912). Schenker’s progressive search for a more penetrating approach to musical analysis culminated in a third treatise, *Free Composition*, which was published a few months after his death in 1935. This book presents arguably the most original ideas in the history of musical theory, illustrated through analytical graphs and extensive commentaries. Heavily grounded in counterpoint, Schenkerian analysis begins with basic two-voice harmonic-contrapuntal patterns, and shows how these can be elaborated to generate the surface of tonal music. He describes the process of elaborating the underlying patterns as one of three stages, or levels, which he names background, middleground, and foreground. Presenting both philosophical and theoretical arguments, *Free Composition* explores the unique properties of a composition --tonality, form and rhythm-- and views them as the outcome of this process of elaboration.

In dealing intelligently with theoretical issues, Schenkerian literature reveals a strong influence of other academic fields, including philosophy, psychology, and history. Many references to the writings of eminent figures such as Nietzsche, Spinoza, Freud, Plato, and Aristotle increase the interest of Schenkerian literature for the reader with a background in the history of ideas.
Introduction

It was in grade 10 that I was introduced, for the first time, to the Platonic literature; not by choice, but because this was part of the religious education mandatory for every boy attending my school. I had seen some of Plato’s dialogues sitting somewhere on a bookshelf in our house, but their unappealing condition—old covers with a thick layer of dust on top—killed the slightest inclination of interest and curiosity. Encouragements of any sort, in form of bribery or threat from family members, led to disappointment as hopeless as the descent of Orpheus to Hades’s kingdom in search of Eurydice. Every attempt to pursue reading those dialogues failed miserably. A dialogue by Plato is just not something a sixteen-year-old boy is fascinated with; the subject matter and the writing style were a little too dry for one who thought of nothing but soccer.

College was, however, a different story altogether. In order to gain admission to certain circles one is expected to have a smattering knowledge in basic areas, not least the history of ideas. It is the vain desire to earn acknowledgement as an intellectual that forces the freshman to modest actions, or at least, immodest pretension. For the second time in my life I had to face the dialogues of Plato. Surprisingly, this experience had a very different outcome from the previous one. While it would be exaggerating to say that my life was changed in a profound way by reading the dialogues, they certainly left a deep impression, the lasting effect of which has been a serious and enduring preoccupation with philosophical thought. The encounter with the works of Aristotle and Cicero took place as the result of further examination of the Platonic branch of philosophy. My particular interest in Cicero was motivated, as well,
by a fascination with Roman arts and history. I don't claim that I gasped well what I was reading; perhaps it was the supernaturals of the Roman and Greek myths that were the subconsciously motivating forces behind this joyful interest; at any rate, I have enjoyed these myths since childhood.

Undergraduate music theory classes, while a priority in my musical education, were, in their monotony, a cause of Promethean suffering; and soon philosophy and classical studies became my place of refuge. No medicine works better for a fatigued mind than stories of gods and epic heroes. Although theory as a subject was of importance to me, I found myself suffering from a short attention span while attending theory classes. This, however, changed towards the end of my undergraduate years when I was introduced to Schenkerian analysis. A broader picture of a composition, created by visually effective analytical graphs, was something I had not encountered before. This led to a new curiosity, that I gratified in classes designed particularly for students interested in this type of analysis.

This history explains why it was natural for me to seek to combine these two subjects in this thesis. The chosen topic occurred to me in an uncanny fashion: not while looking at the stars, or admiring a woman of virtue, as has been the case with many writers, but in the course of soothing contemplation in my temple of Poseidon, where I usually spend a fair amount of time after endless and exhausting hours of practice and study.

The present paper will discuss the use of a three-stage explanatory model in the works of Schenker and Cicero, with references to the former's *Free Composition* and the latter's *On the Laws and On the Commonwealth*. This model or construct provides
instructional methods for identifying the controlling components in environments posited as ideal, and illustrates the way in which perfection can be achieved through the suggested stages. For Schenker and Cicero, every law or composition (third stage) has an origin (first stage); furthermore, that particular composition or law comes to being through a certain process (second stage). The terms 'origin', 'development', and 'present' have been chosen to label the mentioned three stages. The above discussion will progress in three steps:

I. Pointing out the similar historical obstacles that led both Schenker and Cicero to the development of their thoughts.

II. Presenting a comparative illustration of the two philosophies.

III. Addressing general philosophical issues regarding the qualities of the three stages and presenting several interpretations of these philosophical issues.

Since Schenkerian and Ciceronian principles are deeply rooted in Platonic foundations, a condensed overview of the Platonic theory of 'forms and ideas' has been presented to aid the reader in better comprehending the forthcoming material.
**Plato's Theory of 'Forms and Ideas'**

In Plato's view, whenever there is a plurality of individuals (particulars), there is a corresponding idea or form. This is the common nature or quality which is shared by the individuals. Plato examined the relation between the universals and particulars as well as the nature and existential state of the both. This investigation led to the maturation of the theory of 'forms and ideas.' According to this theory, a universal is a single substance or form, existing timelessly and independently from any of its particular manifestations and apprehended not by sense but by intellect. It must not be supposed that ideas, in his sense, exist in minds, though they may be apprehended by minds. A universal is something other than particular things, which particular things partake of. Not being particular, it cannot itself exist in the world of sense. Moreover it is not fleeting or changeable like the objects of sense: it is eternally itself, immutable and indestructible. Plato used this concept in almost all of his dialogues to arrive at different conclusions. The following is a summary of some of the more important dialogues that deal with this subject.

In the *Phaedo*, the concept of the immortality of the soul is under investigation. Plato points out that the fact that a man can judge of a particular as more or less beautiful, or as more or less just indicates the fact that there is a universal knowledge of beauty or justice. But how could one possess such knowledge? Over the course of this dialogue, Socrates argues that the soul must have pre-existed before its unification with the body in another place. The soul must have been acquainted with the universal essences during its pre-existence. According to Socrates, learning in this world is only a process of recollection.
In *Symposium*, Socrates is portrayed as reporting the words of the
prophetess *Diotima*. The dialogue concerns the ascent of the soul to true beauty (to the
essence of beauty): a beauty that is eternal and immutable, eternally self-subsistent. All
other entities are beautiful through participating in it, with the qualification that, unlike
absolute beauty, they are subject to destruction, change, and decay.

A similar idea is explored in the last book of *Republic*. Here, Plato questions
and downgrades the value of art because of its distance from reality. Plato’s audacious
theory is not only a polemical attempt to evaluate the merit of art, but also a cogent
attempt to accentuate the status of humans in the cosmos by pointing out the
perspicuous bond between humans and their God. In the last book of *Republic*, Plato
refers to both the painter and the craftsman as ‘imitators,’ who create an object, a
painting or a table, by imitating an idea. This ‘idea,’ which exists in their imagination, is
perfect and is the representation of an absolute reality: a higher degree of reality, which
is in the mind of God. The craftsman and the painter’s works then become respectively
one and two steps removed from the absolute reality. Consider the following dialogue:

\[... I think we have usually assumed a general form or idea, one idea, in each class of many particulars to which we give the same name.\]
\[... Now take any class of particulars you please, for instance, if you like, there are many beds and tables.\]
\[... well, we usually say that the craftsman, in making either of these articles of furniture, keeps his eye upon the idea, and so makes the beds or\]
tables which we use accordingly, and so with other things. For I suppose no craftsman makes the idea itself; how could he?

. . . but you will, say, I think, that there is no truth in what he [the painter] makes. Yet, in a way at least, even the painter makes a bed, . . . . . .

. . . and what of the maker of beds? Surely you said just now that he does not make the idea which we say is the bedhood of a bed, but only some particular bed?

. . . then if he [the craftsman] does not make the bedhood, he would not be making real being but only something resembling a real thing, but not itself real.

. . . here are three different beds: one the nature of things, bedhood, which we would say God made, as I think . . . and one that the carpenter made . . . and one that the painter made . . . painter then, and maker of beds, and God, there are three superintendents of three kinds of bed. . . . God then, whether it was his will, or whether some necessity was upon him not to complete more than one in the nature of things, at any rate God made one only, that very bed which a bed really is; two or more such were not made by God and never shall be, world without end . . .

God knew this then, I think, and he wished really to be the maker of actual bedhood, not of particular bed, not to be a mere bed-maker; consequently he created one bed unique in the nature of things.
The theory of ‘universals’ and ‘particulars’, originally brought into philosophy by Socrates, was introduced as a method to explain the nature of the world which we experience as sentient and reflective beings; it was also an attempt to classify and examine different kinds of experience and knowledge. Socrates’ main interest was in human virtue. Almost all his questions were in the form of ‘what is x?’ where ‘X’ stood for goodness, knowledge or justice. All the answers were, however, repudiated by him, since they were too narrow and incapable of defining the essence (universality) of what was under investigation; the answers only gave instances (particularity) of the virtue. Plato took this concept further and expressed that a common essence must be applicable to all things, not only to human virtue such as beauty, justice or goodness, but also applicable to all the sense-objects such as trees or tables.

Let us consider the definition of justice under Plato’s theory. In answer to what justice is, one starts off by characterizing just acts and continues expounding in this direction. This is the best method, given that there is no way of defining the term ‘justice’ directly. Then one investigates the commonalties between all the just acts under discussion, hoping to find their common nature. This common nature then is justice itself, and it can be used as a standard or touchstone to measure and evaluate other acts. In this method, every just act is called a particular, and justice, which is the general form under investigation, is called a universal. A universal can be applied to a potentially infinite number of particulars as long as they share that common nature. This method can be used and applied to all abstractions, including concepts such as justice, beauty, or even whiteness.  

Despite many differences that will be discussed later, Cicero (this applies to a large extent to Schenker, too) adheres to Platonic fundamentals in
formulating his theory. In a sense Cicero’s theory can be understood as a rectified
version of Plato’s. Unlike Plato, Cicero avoids an extensive scrutiny of the whole and
instead focuses mainly on the concept of universal and particular justice. Furthermore,
Cicero, as we will see, seems to avoid any nonessential elaboration of the matter in
order to avoid falling into philosophical traps by way of problematic cases. One major
problem with Cicero’s theory, inherited also from Plato’s ideas, is his failure to provide
the reader with a satisfactory account of the origin of universals and their place of
existence. Of course, these obstacles can be due to the incapacity of the human mind to
perceive them. The presence of religious speculation, in particular, is an obstacle to be
dealt with in coming to grips with this philosophy. Religious assumptions such as are
frequently mentioned over the course of the mentioned dialogues stand in an uneasy
relationship to profound and convincing philosophical reasoning, at least for those of us
today who separate the two.
I. Schenker and Cicero: Protectors of the Past

Cicero spent the majority of his life active as a lawyer in Roman public courts. The last decade of his life coincided with the fall of the Republic of Rome and the establishment of the dictatorship of the young Caesar. In the last two years of his life, Cicero was the only public figure who audaciously attacked the young Caesar, Marcus Antonius, speaking against corruption in the new system.

Cicero’s activities as a social and political critic can be summarized as follows:

1) Cicero maintained his role as a public speaker. He frequently lectured on the life and works of renowned Greek philosophers. The main portion of these lectures, a few of which survive today, stresses the parallelism between the social and political ideology of the Republic of Rome and that of ancient Greece.

2) Cicero, as an educator, felt a responsibility to inform the people of Rome of flaws in the new system, resulting from its deviation from republican ideals. Advocating the weakening of Caesar’s influence over his empire, Cicero presented a series of easily understood lectures on the superiority of the Republic of Rome as a civilization over the new Roman Empire. These lectures, read even today in classical studies, illustrate Cicero’s extensive knowledge of history, classical studies, and philosophy.

3) Cicero’s main area of expertise, however, was the legal system. His active role in both public and private Roman courts, for nearly 20 years, gave him the competence to attack the new Roman legal system and legislation. He
addressed many issues including standards for legislation, the character of
government, the need to prevent abuse of power by limiting the influence of
government officials, and most importantly, ways of involving the people in
social and political decisions.

Unfortunately Cicero was no match for the young Caesar, who had him killed
before any threat he represented had gone beyond talk. It took the world of philosophy
nearly 300 years (until the time of Augustine) to discover the richness of his thought.

As mentioned before, Schenker started his career as an accompanist and a
critic for music journals. He remained active throughout his life, as theorist and
editor, without holding a university position, being quite limited academically
due to the anti-Semitism of Viennese life. Schenker's main avenues of effort can be
summarized as follows:

1) Improving the theoretical methodologies of his time became his lifetime
   preoccupation. From his earliest publication to his last incomplete and unpublished
   work, the Free Composition, Schenker aimed at revealing what he called the flaws
   of common theoretical methodologies. Mustering historical facts as well as
   philosophical and scientific arguments, Schenker stressed the failure of common
   practices, in both theory and performance, to understand and interpret the masters.
   As he remarks:
Even up to the present day, theory has not always been able to 
read foreground intervals correctly; one can only recognize them by 
examining their relation to background and middleground. All to 
frequently theory has failed to recognize many events in the foreground, 
simply because it has not understood their origin in the more elemental.

2) It should be stressed that proper education was of enormous importance to 
Schenker. He openly criticized the pedagogical methods frequently taught in 
music institutions. He stressed the importance and indispensability of his theory as an integral aspect of training young composers and performers in the ‘art of listening.’

3) Not only did Schenker strive towards unraveling the mysteries of the masters’ works, but also he tried to provide the musician with a set of rules to evaluate the craftsmanship of a work. He felt a responsibility to save and differentiate elevated music from the modern movements of his time such as Impressionism and Expressionism, which he viewed as irrational and childish compositional styles.

Whether due to similar historical circumstances or to resemblances in their personalities, Schenker and Cicero reveal striking similarities in ideology and logical thinking. Guardians of their ideal traditions, critics, and public educators, Schenker and Cicero endeavored to protect and better comprehend what they perceived to be the best of human achievements.
In embarking upon a comparison of these two theorists and to avoid any confusion, I have thought it useful to provide the reader with a graphic presentation of the corresponding and parallel components being compared over the course of this paper. The following figure illustrates this point:

**Figure 1.**

```
    God
     /\
    /   \
Nature--
   / \
Composer of genius /  Statesman
      /\
     /   \
Schenker--
   /  \
1) Background /  Origin
   /  \
2) Middleground /  Development
    /  \
3) Foreground /  Present
         /\
        /   \
German tonal music /  Legal system of Roman republic
```

1) Universal law
2) Development of Mind
3) Law
II. Origin, Development, and Present

a. The Origin

Cicero hypothesized the notion of an existing divine universal law that is prerequisite to any other laws or principles; this universal law, which is occasionally referred to as natural law, occupies the highest level in hierarchy of laws. Cicero identifies divine law with universal logic and universal justice. Cicero further aspires to rationalize the harmony and accordance of the human logic and laws with the divine; in other words, for Cicero, divine logic and justice must become models for every human activity. The universal law must be the source of all logic and justice in the cosmos. As Cicero proclaims:

. . . before we get to particular laws, let us consider again the meaning and nature of law, so that - since everything else in our discussion rests on this - we don't slip from time to time in the misuse of language and make mistakes about the meaning of the word by which our laws are to be defined.

. . . This has, I know, been the opinion of the wisest men: that law was not thought up by human minds; that it is not some piece of legislation by popular assemblies; but it is something eternal which rules the entire universe through the wisdom of its commands and prohibitions.

It [logic] did not begin to be a law only at that moment when it was written down, but when it came into being; and it came to being at the same time as the divine mind. Therefore, they said, that first and final law
is the mind of the God who compels or forbids all things to be reason.¹⁰

The divine law, according to Cicero, is constant and eternal. Furthermore, he believes that this law came to being in the same time as the birth of God; as the consequence of its creation, divine law partakes of the very nature of God: eternity. This becomes an important premise in Cicero’s philosophy. As he states:

... there will not be one law in Rome and another in Athens,

one now and another later, but all nations at all times will be bound

by this one eternal and unchangeable law, and the God will be the one

common master and general of all people.¹¹

Schenker, similarly, theorized the notion of an unchanging pattern that determines and controls all aspects in a tonal structure, calling it background. After forthrightly expressing his trenchant repudiation of standard theoretical methodologies --remarking on their uselessness and fatuousness-- and praising his new method as a breakthrough in the field of theory, Schenker draws our attention to some philosophical issues concerning the background. He states that:

The whole of foreground, which men call chaos, God derives from

his cosmos, the background. The eternal harmony of his eternal being

is grounded in this relationship.¹²
In the introduction to *Free Composition*, Schenker refers to this concept as the ‘origin of music.’ Furthermore, the background is viewed by Schenker as the most essential component of the work of the genius; this is the secret ingredient of a masterpiece. Schenker describes the task of the background and its fundamental line by stating that:

*Musical coherence can be achieved only through the fundamental structure in the background and its transformations in the middle and foreground.*

Schenker further depicts the evolutionary development of the fundamental line by employing the following analogy:

*The hands, legs, and ears of the human body do not begin to grow after birth; they are present at the time of birth. Similarly, in a composition, a limb which was not somehow born with the middle and background cannot grow to be a diminution.*
Although both Schenker and Cicero speak of the consistent form of the origin, there exists a difference between their concepts of this entity: the mentioned universal law exists only as an idea which can be comprehended only by the mind, but the background exists as an idea (comprehensible by mind), as an actual written progression (visible signs), and as a physical form (audible sound).

b. The Development and the Present

Cicero categorizes human legal principles as a second group of laws. The term 'law' is used by Cicero to only refer to a just and beneficial act or decision. Laws, Cicero asserts, were not initially conceptualized by humans. Cicero seems to be insinuating that acts of legislation are driven impulsively by natural instincts as well as by certain social-political demands; that they are motivated by the same urges that lead to the foundation of human societies and communities. Legislation, for Cicero, is not the result of indoctrination in laws or legal concepts, but a process by which the registration of a pre-existing universal law takes place. Cicero believes that these laws --concerned with the good of a nation-- occur as a matter of course to a wise and mature mind. As he states:

*Therefore, just as that divine mind is the highest law, so too when in a human being it [divine logic] is brought to maturity, it resides in the mind of wise men. . . . From this it should be understood that those who wrote decrees that were destructive and unjust to their peoples, since they did the opposite of what they had promised and claimed, produced*
something utterly different from laws.

... This has, I know, been the opinion of the wisest men: that law was not
thought up by human minds; that it is not some piece of legislation by
popular assemblies; but it is something eternal which rules the entire
universe through the wisdom of its commands and prohibitions.¹⁶

In discussing the way that human law comes about, Cicero speaks of a two-
stage process. The first is determined by an unappeasable desire for logic
and justice, which is man's as a natural endowment, a birthright by nature. The
individual achieves a maturation of the mind, through proper education, as he struggles
to satisfy this desire. Not only does this stage includes man's awareness of his divine
abilities, but also includes his awareness of the demands of the society he lives in; he will
learn then, how to employ his divine gift and develop useful laws for the betterment of
others. This stage can be described as the development of the human mind under
nature's guidance. The second consists in formulation of specific laws according to the
demands of the people of a commonwealth. Once again the reader must be reminded
that these laws must be in accordance with the universal law. As we will see, the
statesman is the only member of the commonwealth who has the ability to lay the
foundation for such laws. In a sense, the laws of the commonwealth are representative
of the statesman's immense lifetime commitment to bring divine justice to the people of
commonwealth; he lives his life to fulfill this very obligation.

It is worth mentioning that the middleground in Schenker is a musical entity, just
like the background and foreground. The development in Cicero is a process of mental
maturation, and thus unlike the other two levels, which are laws, or bodies of law, one
divine, the other human. In other words D (development) in the two cases is not the
same kind of thing in relation to O (origin) and P (present).

Schenker’s middleground and foreground seem to be addressing a similar issue.
Interestingly, Schenker refers to these two stages as the ‘development’ and the
‘present,’ the so-called ‘present’ refers to the actual piece of composition
that is the development of the background (and is the goal of all musical
manipulations); it is under the guiding beam of this beacon, that the evolutionary
transformation of the fundamental line reaches the shores of musical coherence. As
Schenker remarks:

_The goal and the course to the goal are primary. Content comes
afterward, without a goal there can be no content._\(^7\)

It is the veins of the middleground rushing into the beating heart of the background
which secure the survival of the living body of the foreground. One can not live without
the other.

More importantly, a composition reflects the life of a composer whose “power
of will and imagination” reaches us “through the transformation of a masterwork.” A
composer lives through his music as he creates it. This recalls Nietzsche, who remarks
(by quoting Schopenhauer):
We interpret music as the immediate language of the will, and our imaginations are stimulated to embody that immaterial world, which speaks to us with lively motion and yet remains invisible.\textsuperscript{18}

The most important affinity between a law and a composition lies in their common dependence on a higher order of reality, namely the ‘origin.’ It should be stressed that both Cicero and Schenker define their ideal ‘present’ by considering the ‘origin’ as its most crucial and indispensable property. The idea can be formulated and presented as a general form of $P = D \cdot O$. Here, $P$ stands for a particular law or composition, which comprises the variable $D$ (representing transformations unique to a particular $P$, better-understood as ‘development’), as applied to a constant component known as $O$. This constant component is the ‘origin,’ and is equivalent to Cicero’s universal justice in one case, and Schenker’s background in the other:

Figure 2.

```
  \hspace{1cm}
  \text{Origin} \hspace{1cm} \text{Development} \hspace{1cm} \text{Present = Origin \cdot Development}
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There is an important way in which a particular law and a composition must be distinguished. While divine law is eternally the same, and its immutable presence throughout time sets it apart from human law that is unable to transcend the framework
of present contingencies, human laws depend on the circumstantial demands of different
nations throughout the course of time. As the result of this limitation, human laws
reflect the spirit of the present, and they are bound to become obsolete once their time is
past. Therefore, reform of laws is required in a society from time to time. This
requirement (or obstacle) has been the root of many historical conflicts, since the need
to adapt to reforms that challenge social and moral traditions causes difficulties and
provokes resistance. A composition, on the other hand, remains the same, throughout
time. Having been recorded by the composer, the actual written composition is treated
as immutable, not subject to alteration. Of course, a composition does in fact change in
its historical presentation. Different performance practices, various artistic approaches,
and development of instruments lead to different presentations of the same work.
III. General Philosophical Issues

Having examined the two branches of thought, one observes that the affinities between the two ideologies exceed a rudimentary parallelism growing out of their common Platonism. The common ground in which the trees of Schenkerian and Ciceronian doctrines are securely rooted is formed of a broad range of philosophical issues such as the relations between universal law, God, the human mind, and the particular. The role of nature and genius, as the two essential forces in the transformation of the origin into the foreground, manifest themselves as a Leitmotif in both Schenker’s theories and Cicero’s. It should be stressed that in both doctrines, there are a great number of philosophical and religious assumptions (that can be confusing to the reader) such as the relation between the man and God, divine inspiration, and the role nature in the development of man’s mind. For example, Cicero adheres to the belief, whether rational or not, that the birth of the divine being occasioned the coincident appearance of divine law in the cosmos; that is to say, that divine law and logic—as two interchangeable terms—are both one constituent of the essence of God (divine being) and are dependent on it; divine logic and mind, then, consolidate to form what Cicero refers to as the divine being:

*From the time we were small, we were taught to call “if there is a summons to court” and other things of that sort “laws.” But in fact it should be understood that both this and other commands and prohibitions of peoples have force for summoning to proper behavior and deterring from crime, a force which is not only older than the age of
peoples and states but coeval with the God who protects and steers heaven and earth. That is not possible for there to be a divine mind without reason, nor does divine reason lack this force in sanctioning right and wrong.¹⁹

... Reason existed, derived from nature, directing people to good conduct and away from crime; it did not begin to be a law only at that moment when it was written down, but when it came into being, and it came to being at the same time as the divine mind. And therefore that divine and original law, suitable for commands and prohibition, is the right reason of Jupiter, the supreme God.²⁰

... this animal -provident, perceptive, versatile, sharp, capable of memory, and filled with reason and judgment - which we call a human being, was endowed by the supreme God with a grand status at the time of its creation. ... When it [reason] has matured and come to perfection, it is properly named wisdom. And therefore, since there is nothing better than reason, and it is found both in humans and in God, reason forms the first bond between human and God. And those who share reason also share right reason; and since that is law, we humans must be considered to be closely allied to gods by law. Furthermore, those who share law also share procedures of justice; and those who have these things in common must be considered members of the same state, all the more so if they obey the same commands and authorities. Moreover, they do obey this celestial...
order, the divine mind and the all-powerful God, so that this whole cosmos
must be considered to be the common state of God and humans.\textsuperscript{21}

What is the source of these streams of assumptions regarding the essential commonalties between the man and God? The rejuvenation of the old Greek phrase, ‘man and Gods belong to the same community’, in Cicero’s theory is a clear indication of the creation of Roman philosophy and religion from the ribs of Greek mythology. This notion prepared the ground for the construction of the pillars of the monuments of Roman ideology; and resulted in many more premises addressing the mutuality of man and gods. Religion, in Roman and Greek philosophy merges with philosophy to fortify it where logic fails to provide an adequate foundation for assumptions needed to guide inquiry. Whether successfully accomplished or not, philosophy and religion consolidate in order to plug holes in the systematic vessel.

One is faced with a similar problem when dealing with Schenkerian literature. Religion has found its way to the depths of Schenkerian theory.

Consider the following quote:

\textit{All that is organic, every relatedness belongs to God and remains his gift, even when man creates the work and perceives that it is organic.}\textsuperscript{22}

This quote and many others reveal the coruscating influence of religious thought on Schenker’s works. Spinoza, at the peak of his philosophical and intellectual thinking, similarly states that:
Whatever is, is in God, and nothing can be granted or conceived without him.\(^{23}\)

Since such religious speculation is a characteristic not only of the Schenkerian literature, but also the writings of many western philosophers and prominent thinkers, the reader need not to be distracted when encountering it in Cicero and Schenker. He/she must instead focus on the main idea; an attempt to evaluate Schenkerian and Ciceronian theory must be conducted through an investigation of the theoretical and philosophical methodology, disregarding the religious underlay. In what follows, I will avoid any criticism of religious dimension, since I am not qualified to answer for or clarify any religious or theological uncertainties.

As the first step toward a positive comparison of the content of the two theories, one should look more deeply into their common conception of the role of nature in the nourishment of human mind. Before undertaking this investigation, however, it is important to understand Cicero’s definitions of the term virtue and the virtue of the ‘better man,’ and to be aware that Schenker suggests similar ideas.

a. The ‘Better Man’ and His Virtue

Originally, the term ‘virtue’ in Greek philosophy was understood as the unification of four sublimated components: wisdom, moderation, courage, and justice. This is extensively dealt with in Plato’s dialogues. Cicero, however, departs from this Greek view in defining the nature and essence of virtue. He
defines virtue as the full blossoming of an individual's physical or mental potentials under the tutelage of proper education comprised of philosophy and gymnastics. He further adds:

... and it [virtue] is found in no other species besides; and virtue is nothing else than nature-perfected and taken to its highest level.\textsuperscript{24}

The statesman, Cicero claims, possesses the most excellent of all virtues for leading the commonwealth: the gift of making the most appropriate decisions with regard to the development of legislation. This statesman, who is referred to by Cicero as the better man, becomes the pilot of the ship of humanity, steering the way to the horizons of enlightenment. He further comments on the legitimacy of this better man as the ruler of the commonwealth. The statesman in Cicero’s prototypical constitutional government is the only member of the community designated as having, by nature, the intrinsic abilities to establish justice in the commonwealth.

Examination of Schenker’s remarks reveals a parallel argument and viewpoint regarding the essence of virtue and what it means to be a virtuous man, although Schenker employs a different terminology in describing the two issues. Even though Schenker neglects providing the reader with a punctilious definition of 'virtue,' numerous appearances of such statements as “enhancement of nature in the genius” or the “perfection of nature in the genius,” may be understood as referring to a notion of virtue similar to Cicero’s:
In order to comprehend what lives and moves behind the phenomena of life, behind ideas and general and art in particular, we ourselves require a definite background, and a soul predisposed to accept the background. Such a soul, which constitutes a peculiar enhancement of nature in man—being almost more art than nature—is given only to genius.\(^{25}\)

The "enhancement of nature" is what sets a musical genius apart from the average man who "is unmusical, even incapable of singing a folk tune":

\textit{The masses, however, lack the soul of genius. They are not aware of background, they have no feeling for the future. . . it is always the individual [the genius] who creates and transmits connection and coherence.}\(^{26}\)

The "enhancement of nature" and many such phrases are idiosyncratic expressions typical of Schenkerian literature. Perhaps less abstruse is the following:

\textit{The phenomenon of the genius signifies a breath drawn from the subconscious} . . . \(^{27}\)

Whether intended as such or not, the above statement shows an affinity with the Freudian conception of the artist's kinship with his subconscious. As Freud remarks:
The key to sublime creativity relies in the artist’s ability of self-elevation through his art, and his kinship with his subconscious.

The terms ‘genius’ and ‘master’ are used by Schenker to refer to what Cicero describes as the better man, or the virtuous man. Whether the genius is the possessor of Platonic divine inspiration, Pythagorean ears, perfected nature, or an accessible unconscious, he strives towards one goal: using his ideas to provide inspiration and to promote the elevation of mankind. The genius is filled with orphic inspiration and enabled to speak the harmonious language of Apollo; he brings into being great and genuine art by mastering “such progressions [elements of voice-leading] in a creative sense . . .”

It should be added that the relation between the statesman and the common man, in Cicero’s theory, can be described as one of complete servility of the common man to the statesman; as in the case of genius and common man in Schenker’s theory, it is a question of understanding and appreciating, i.e., the efforts of the genius must be understood and appreciated by the others. Both Schenker and Cicero stress that the common man must realize and accept the fact that the better man is absolute superior to others in every aspect of his field of creative endeavor.

A certain commonality in the work of the musical genius and that of statesman is also crucially important, and merits discussing. The work of the statesman, according to Cicero, is essential for the survival of the commonwealth. The statesman’s intellectual contribution guarantees harmony and justice and thus a better life for the people of commonwealth. The music of a genius, on the other hand, lacks this particular function. Nevertheless, in Schenker’s view, music
clearly serves humanity as vitally as a system of laws. Lack of art music may not occasion social upheavals, but will impoverish society as surely as any lack of law, reducing it to a comparably sub-human condition.

One important difference between the two philosophies has to do with the principles by which the value of a genius or a statesman and the merits of the works of each are determined. Although both Cicero and Schenker provide a series of norms and typical characteristics to be found in such works, Schenker’s methodology is replete with reference to aesthetic criteria that are totally absent in Cicero’s. Schenker addresses the presence of melodic coherence and harmonic interest as well as other elements such as surprises and the development of material. Since the mentioned ‘three stages’ can be found in even weak and less satisfying compositions and cannot, on their own, decide the merits of musical works, one is forced to consider these other deciding factors. In effect, Schenker’s harsh criticism of works by Bruckner, Dvorak, Debussy and Schoenberg rest as much on general aesthetic criteria as on the specifics of his theory. To this extent, his thinking about music is not to be compared to Cicero’s about law.


In Cicero’s metaphysics, nature and God function correlative as the forces accountable for human wisdom and intelligence. For instance he states that:
You must understand that there is no subject for discussion in which it can be made so clear what nature has given to humans; what a quantity of wonderful things the human mind embraces.\textsuperscript{29}

And in another instance he points out that:

This animal . . . which we call a human being, was endowed by the supreme God with a grand status at the time of its creation.\textsuperscript{30}

Is God responsible for human intelligence and wisdom or is nature? These are a few possible approaches to this question:

1) To assume that God and nature in these phrases are used interchangeably.

Although possible, it is quite unlikely that Cicero had this particular concept in mind. Even though pantheism was an integral aspect of three Indian religions --Buddhism, Hinduism, and Janism-- its formulation and admission into Western philosophy took place only after centuries of resistance. Even Spinoza, an esteemed and elevated icon in the world of philosophy, was ridiculed for identifying God with nature.

2) To assume that God is responsible indirectly for human wisdom and intelligence: God created nature, and nature created man; and since harmony and logic are features of nature, they were passed on to humans. This interpretation, however, contradicts the thought, expressed in many Roman and Greek myths, that 'God
3) The last interpretation, which is the most satisfactory, explains that man was created by God and endowed with wisdom and intelligence. Then nature, which is harmony and justice and itself the creation of God, brings about the dispersal of these attributes among mankind. Cicero stresses that:

\[
\ldots \text{you must understand that there is no subject for discussion in which it can be made so clear what nature has given to humans; what quantity of wonderful things the human mind embraces; for the sake of performing and fulfilling what function we are born for and brought into the world.}^{31}\n\]

According to Cicero then, nature endows the man with its gifts and facilitates the complete intellectual development of his mind. What is made clear here is that every man is born for a higher purpose; and he is responsible for achieving it to the best of his ability. Although each man according to Cicero, is granted all five senses, nature also gives him unique abilities for achieving an intended purpose. In this respect, the abilities of men are distinguishably diverse from one another. This is precisely the rationalization behind Cicero's endorsement of social bureaucracy and slavery in the commonwealth:

\[
\ldots \text{there is no similarity, no likeness of one thing to another, so great as the likeness we all share.} \ldots \text{all the same things are grasped by the senses; and the things that are impressed upon the mind, the rudiments of}
\]
understanding which I mentioned before, are impressed similarly on all humans, and language, the interpreter of the mind, may differ in words but is identical in ideas. There is no person of any nation who cannot reach virtue with the aid of a guide.  

... but if an imperial state, a great commonwealth, does not subscribe to that injustice [slavery], then it cannot rule over provinces. The answer made by justice is that empire is just because slavery is useful. ... do we not see that the best people are give the right to rule by nature herself, with the greatest benefits to the weak? 

The reader must be made aware that the concept of slavery in Cicero’s theory specifically refers to the servility of the weak to the better man. This should not be confused with the standard notion of slavery as the proprietorship of a man by another. Since such examples of injustice are observed in nature, Cicero adds, one can only gather that nature itself is ‘unjust.’ This is the law of the kingdom of Zeus (or Jupiter), which nature is modeled after:

... justice, therefore, is not natural at all: and that leads to the conclusion that no people is naturally just.

This use of ‘injustice’ demands an explanation. Injustice, in this context, is employed interchangeably with the term inequality. This must not be interpreted negatively as is common in much religious philosophy or in the modern liberal tradition; it simply
suggests a condition based on the recognition of natural differences. Cicero, in my opinion, is insinuating that there exists a gradation with regards to human body and mind. Being endowed with the same senses and general physical capacities, and being chosen for a specific purpose, every individual is granted, by nature, a unique level of particular mental and physical abilities. These must then be recognized and dealt with distinctly. As Nietzsche similarly remarks:

_There are some that preach my doctrine of life, and are at the same time
preachers of equality, and tarantulas._

_I will not be confounded with and mistaken for these preachers of equality._

_For to me, justice saith: men are not equal
Neither shall they become so! Where were my love for the
superman if I spake otherwise._35

What is made clear here, however is that humans are given equal opportunities for self-exploration and fulfillment of the task they are born for. Nature therefore demands both equality and inequality, each at its own stage and for its own reason.36

For Cicero, man is not born just. If otherwise, there were no need for a legal system. It is only with the aid of proper education and guidance that man realizes the gift of divine logic within him; even then, he remains free to chose between the path of good or evil. As Cicero’s remarks in the following statement:
The person who knows himself will first recognize he has something divine and will think that his own reason within himself is a sort of consecrated image of the divine. . . . and when light has been cast on them [his awareness of his abilities and his purpose] under the guidance of wisdom he recognizes that he is a good man and for that he will be blessed. 37

What is clear is that nature supplies each person with the essentials that enable him to achieve and fulfill his intended purpose.

Nature and its role in musical composition was a lifetime preoccupation for Schenker. Even in his early writings, such as *Harmony*, Schenker shows an abiding concern with this subject. Although Schenker does not explain them adequately, ‘natural hearing’ as well as ‘natural intervals’ become two of the most frequently recurring concepts in his writings. Perhaps it would be helpful to refer to one of these early writings to seek out an adequate explanation regarding the relation between nature and music. As Schenker explain in his *Harmony*, there is no immediate correlation between music and nature. He states that:

All art, with the exception of music, rests on association of ideas, of great and universal ideas, reflected from nature and reality. In all cases nature provides the pattern; art is imitation-imitation by word or color or form.... Intrinsically, there is no unambivalent association of ideas between music and nature. 38
The idea that music, alone among the arts, is essentially non-mimetic has been a topic of intense disagreement in the field of musical aesthetics. It receives a most thoughtful defense in Eduard Hanslick’s *The Beautiful in Music*:

*The function of nature to supply art with models is most strikingly exemplified in painting and sculpture.*

*We have seen that nature is destitute both of melody and harmony; but there is a third factor regulating the two former, which existed prior to man and is consequently not of his creation. This factor is rhythm. In the galloping of the horse, the clack of the mill, the singing of the blackbird and the quill, there is an element of periodically recurring motion in the successive beats which, when looked at in the aggregate blend into an intelligible whole.*

What is carefully disputed here by Hanslick, is the hypothesis concerning the necessity of a relation between nature and music: why should there be a relation between the sounds of nature and the music of man? As Hanslick states:

*The music of nature and the music of man belong to two distinct categories. The transition from the former to the latter passes through the science of mathematics.*
Years later, in his *Free Composition*, Schenker’s contribution to the topic reads as follows:

> Music is not only an object of theoretical consideration. It is subject, just as we ourselves are subject. Even the octave, fifth, and third of the harmonic series are the product of the organic activity of the tone as subject, just as the urges of the human being are organic. Accordingly, the quest for a new form of music is a quest for homunculus. But nature will endure, indeed, will conquer, in music also; she has revealed herself in the works of the masters and, in this form, she will prevail.\(^4\)

Schenker’s prophecy could be interpreted as suggesting that man channels (perhaps unconsciously) the influence of nature in every aspect of his creative life; that since there is no direct association of ideas between music and nature, music connects to nature only indirectly, through the manner in which the behavior of tones reflects our human natures. At the same time, Schenker seems to recognize at least one small intervention of nature itself in the fashioning of human music:

> Nature’s help to music consists of nothing but a hint, a counsel forever mute, whose perception and interpretation were fought with the greatest difficulties. . . . This hint, then, was dropped by nature in the form of the so-called “overtone series.”\(^4\)
According to Schenker, the composer’s musical superiority grants him the right to artistic individuality. He openly asserts, that “the masses lack the soul of a genius” which constitutes a “peculiar enhancement of nature in man.” The genius of a master, a gift from nature, is his ability to realize and reflect “nature’s hint” in his creative work, as if his mind has been designed in such a way to grasp this hint. Nature’s interference is inevitable; it determines all, in itself or as human nature. One can hear the voice of Spinoza whispering the words of his *Ethics* that “in the nature of things nothing contingent is granted, but all things are determined by the necessity of divine nature for existing and working in a certain way."43 Realization of nature’s benevolent contribution in form of a hint is the first step in the process of creating an elevated and surviving musical art. The lack of this very substance in Greek music, as Schenker explains, led to its gradual disappearance from the face of the planet.

Although certain topics are thoroughly discussed both by Schenker and by Cicero, there are philosophical issues in the Platonic tradition that one or both of them avoid. The reason for such neglect on Cicero’s part may be that he assumes the reader’s previous knowledge and basic familiarity with Platonic philosophy. Schenker, on the other hand, was no philosopher and was not concerned with extravagant philosophical elaboration of his theory. After all, he was expounding a musical doctrine and not a philosophical one.

The following is an attempt to consider some of the most frequently asked questions raised by readers of Schenkerian and Ciceronian writings, for which no totally clear answers emerge in these texts. In this discussion, I will refer to the Platonic literature for further clarification.
c. Origin: an Eternal Entity

First, I would like to examine the unconditional existence of the universal as contrasted with the contingent presence of the particular. Let us examine Schenker’s theory first since it is simpler in this respect. It should be reminded that only ideal compositions (masterworks) are the subject under discussion. As mentioned before, Schenker refers to the background as the ‘origin’ of a composition. For Schenker, a piece of composition is the development of an idea and the transformation of the background into the foreground. Thus, for him the direction of this process takes as its starting point the background. This clearly indicates the independence of the background. In fact the background is presented as a progression fully comprehensible on its own. For Schenker, an ideal foreground (the masterwork) must contain the background as its most fundamental and rudimentary stage. In his view, the background is the vital spirit of the living body of the foreground. As he states:

Musical coherence can be achieved only through the fundamental structure in the background and its transformation in the middleground and foreground.

The fundamental structure represents the tonality. It is the mark of unity and, since it is only vantage point from which to view that unity, prevents all false and distorted conceptions. In it resides the comprehensive perception, the resolution of all diversity into ultimate wholeness.44
This particular issue is the focus of one of the most important disagreements between the Platonic (or Ciceronian) and Aristotelian branches of philosophy. The question is whether the universal entity is capable of subsisting on its own. The argument regarding the separate subsistence of a universal is extremely difficult and when one investigates the question, it becomes evident that the definition of universal is in conflict with the logical methods used to prove this point. Cicero’s theory, in dwelling upon this matter, has been the subject of many disputes throughout the history of philosophy. It is explained by Cicero, as well as by Plato, that the universal idea, in this case universal justice, exists separately from its particulars. Aristotle was the first who objected to this Platonic view. In his metaphysics, Aristotle states that Plato held the view that particulars and universals are separate. He then asks how it is that a universal, being the essence of many of its particulars, can exist fully apart from them.

This can be better examined by utilizing a logical approach. Let us assume a set of particulars, each indicated by a small letter such as a, b, c, etc. Every particular can be defined as possessing a common nature (X) that is acted on by a variable (a’, b’, c’, etc.); together they create a unique particular. The common nature shared by all these particulars, which is a universal, is then X:

![Figure 3.](image-url)
According to this diagram the universal X subsists apart from its particulars, but the opposite of it is not true since the existence of the particulars is dependent on the common nature X. Of course one could argue that the subsistence of X is dependent on the existence of the particulars as well; after all we need a plurality of particulars to form a universal idea. Like Plato, Cicero surprisingly ignores this fact and holds to the subsistence of the universal independently of its particulars. He views universal justice as a prerequisite substance in the formation of a particular human law.

**d. God and the World of Universals**

As a second step in this discussion, I will examine the relation between the universals and God. For Schenker, every entity in the cosmos owes its existence to God. What is not quite clear here, is that whether or not God is a symbolic element in Schenker's thought. I am inclined to believe that Schenker makes use of this term in a purely religious context and makes a strong reference (by his numerous references to the Bible) to his Jewish heritage. As Schenker states:

> *All that is organic, every relatedness belongs to God and remains his gift, even when man creates the work and perceives that it is organic.*

Cicero similarly says that:
It [logic] did not begin to be a law only at that moment when it was written down, but when it came into being, and it came to being at the same time as the divine mind. Therefore, they said, that first and final law is the mind of the God who compels or forbids all things to be reason.  

For Cicero, the divine being is the same as, perfect logic and justice. By combining these entities, Cicero intelligently solves one the most controversial problems in classical philosophy (see endnote 48).

Both Cicero and Schenker agree that this world owes its existence to God; all that exists in this world has been granted by God; this also includes every thought and idea. The ideas (foreground) inspiring the ideal creative process to which both Schenker and Cicero refer to are no exception. Schenker remarks while expressing his deep religious beliefs that:

All that is organic, every relatedness belongs to God and remains his gift, even when man creates the work and perceives that it is organic.  

This recalls Spinoza’s well-known phrase that “thought is an attribute of God, or God is a thinking thing.”

e. Human Mind and the World of Universal

Now that I have referred repeatedly to the two concepts of genius and universal entity, it is only natural that I investigate these notions in relation to
each other, and consider the extent to which universal entities exist independently of the mind of the genius and statesmen. Assessing Schenker’s sentiment towards this issue, one must first answer two fundamental questions:

1) Were the great composers fully aware of concepts such as the background?

2) If yes, was this real awareness or unconscious motivation?

One could gather, based on historical facts and studies, that the masters would have been unfamiliar with Schenker’s new concepts of musical coherence; however, having been convinced by Schenker’s suggesting that the masters’ works are clear indications of their awareness of such concepts, one might assume that the masters were only unconsciously motivated by Schenkerian concepts:

... that the masters in fact knew nothing of that false theory which for more than a century has been taught and learned as the only practical one. Neither J.S. Bach, C.P. E. Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, nor Mendelssohn knew any such concepts of harmony, Through bass, or form. And Brahms would have none of it! The objection can be answered very simply: the great composers in their works have shown a mastery which evinces, both in preconception and in total recall, such a clear overall comprehension of the laws of art that they need say no more to us. ... Consequently, should the reader find that what I say
about a composition is verified in the work itself, he must surely concede

that the masters did have a keen awareness of such relationships. 52

How is it possible for an entity to exist throughout the history of music and be present in the works of the masters without being spoken of or being taught? This very circumstance regarding the background could present a strongly convincing case for its existence outside the mind of the composer. Likewise, 'justice' in Cicero’s theory can be approached by adopting a similar deductive methodology. Since justice has been an essential part of human law throughout history, the assumption of its subsistence separate from time and the mind is logical. Furthermore, Cicero and Schenker stress that these two concepts, respectively background and justice, belong to God. This indicates that they have both existed long before the creation of man.
Conclusion

Having presented an overview of the two bodies of thought, one important question remains to be answered: what has occasioned this fascination with allegedly timeless and non-historical entities such as universal law or the background? Throughout history, people of many nations and cultures have expressed their captivation with the world of universals -- unchangeable, rigid, exact, delightful to the mathematician and all who love perfection more than life-- which confers an essential reality the world of existence -- fleeting, vague, without sharp boundaries, without any clear plan or arrangement, but containing all thought and feelings, all the data of sense, and all physical objects. Perhaps this fixation is a solution for the absence of what Nietzsche calls “aesthetic principles:”

*What we lack in music is an aesthetic which would impose laws upon musicians and given them a conscience; and as a result of this we lack a real contest concerning ‘Principles.’ For as musicians we laugh at Herbart’s velleities just as heartily as we laugh at Schopenhauer’s. As a matter of fact, great difficulties present themselves here. We no longer know on what basis to found out concepts of what is ‘exemplary,’ ‘masterly,’ ‘perfect.’ With the instincts of old loves and old admiration we grope about in a realm of values, and we almost believe, ‘that is God which pleases us.’*
Indeed, Schenker and Cicero’s searches were motivated by their fascination with a consistent and timeless guiding model for all generations. Acknowledging the many imperfections of human laws, Cicero strongly suggests that a member of a society, at a time of tension between two laws, is obligated to ignore the human law and obey only the divine law. To Cicero, divine justice is supreme and must be obeyed at all times. This issue is addressed to the statesman in particular, and requires him to recognize the divine law as the primary source of his judgment. In Cicero’s view, establishment of justice and the reference to divine law are inseparable. In a word, the accomplishment of justice requires a virtuous statesman who is enlightened through divine inspiration.

Schenker similarly views his model of musical structure as a pre-requisite for a genuine composition. His structuring principles reveal themselves to the subconscious of the genius through the blessing of the Muses. As Schenker says:

*I would not presume to say how inspiration comes upon the genius, to declare with any certainty which part of the middleground or foreground first presents itself to his imagination: the ultimate secrets will always remain inaccessible to us.*

Education, then, becomes the most essential and effective tool for reaching the utopian state either in art music or in a justice system. Although both Cicero and Schenker suggest that the masses lack the genius’s ability to bring foreword
an elevated and ingenious creation, they also agree on the masses’ ability to recognize sublime craftsmanship. Social cultivation is only possible through a resourceful educational system. As Cicero comments:

> At this point, the state first seems to have become more cultivated by a sort of graft of education. It was no mere trickle from Greece that flowed into the city, but a full river of education and learning.\(^56\)

It is not, however, quite clear whether the genius is subject to this education or not. Can education, which is not much more than a proper social system for categorizing the products of humans, be of any aid to the genius? Perhaps these theories aim more at the education of the masses than at the training of the master. The master will achieve and capture the divine simply because he has been chosen by nature to carry out this very mission. Thus education is important in Cicero’s prescription for the commonwealth, since the statesman’s glory and success depends on the support and understanding of the people. As Tacitus remarks:

> Quando etiam sapientibus gloriae cupido novissima exutur.\(^57\)

Education then becomes an indispensability without which the Ciceronian ideal commonwealth cannot be attained. This is even more evident in the case of Schenker; he ceaselessly attacks the teaching methods of the modern schools of
music calling them the "greatest disaster for music," while criticizing the influence of machinery on our modern lives, stating that "today one flies over the work of art in the same manner as one flies over villages, cities, places, castles, fields, woods, rivers, and lakes."\(^{58}\) He ironically suggests that "at best, one might allow music schools to serve as centers where the construction and performance of instruments would be taught."\(^{59}\) He forthrightly and cogently argues that "we cannot indulge the student in his favorite objection that he will never be able to reach such a high goal . . . but despite all the difficulties, the school ought definitely to give some suggestion of this secret."\(^{60}\) Schenker continues by profoundly describing the purpose of his theory:

\textit{Thus my teaching, in contrast to more rapid methods, slows the tempo of the educational process. This not only leads the student to genuine knowledge, but also improves the morale of artistic activities in general. Surely it is time to put a stop to the teaching of music in condensed courses, as languages are taught for us in commerce. It is also time that the educational authorities cease to employ textbooks which are designed only for the less capable student. In spite of all this, I would hope for a great increase in educational activity, for a multiplicity of geniuses by nature demands also the multiplicity of non-geniuses. Even though it is fundamentally only vanity which causes the average musician to compose, we must be grateful that, through vanity itself, people are brought to dedicate themselves to art.}\(^{61}\)
In this study I have tried to illustrate the parallel structure of two systems of thought. Admittedly, such comparisons suffer from glossing over many differences and relying heavily on general similarities. As Nietzsche remarks:

*Where does the logic of human mind come from? Obviously from the irrationality, which has broad dimensions. . . . this [logic] caused the view of dissimilar entities as identical, an irrational inclination since there do not exist two identical entities. It was this inclination which formed the foundations of logic. . . . by this means, the change in objects must, for a considerable length of time, be avoided.*

What we are dealing with here are evidently two completely different divisions of human thought, namely, law and music. I am not suggesting, by any means, that Schenker was to any degree under the influence of Cicero or Roman philosophy. Although it is possible that Schenker acquired a basic knowledge of Cicero’s main works during his academic education in law, the high degree of affinity between the two thinkers cannot be, in my opinion, the result of any conscious effort. The only commonality between Schenker and Cicero, beside their pre-occupation with law, is their familiarity with the Platonic literature, which might have provided the common ground for the two. After all, the influence of the Platonic literature —along with the Aristotelian trend of thought, as another source of inspiration— on western thinking and civilization is undeniable. Of course, it must not be overlooked that Schenker’s writings are also reflective of prominent
philosophical and scientific trends of his time as well as of his Jewish heritage, none of which are relevant to Cicero. Nonetheless, Schenker and Cicero’s striving for, respectively, a set of aesthetic models and one of practical principles, is a clear indication of their concern with the cultivation of human creativity, understanding, and critical thinking as well as the betterment of human lives. It is this common and Bauboiesque desire,63 this rejuvenating hope that has motivated the perpetual search for the ‘doors of Portunus’ throughout the centuries.64

2 Ibid., viii.

3 Interestingly, "[Cicero's] On the Commonwealth is the last known Roman literary and philosophical work completed before the outbreak of the civil war between Caesar and Pompey which effectively ended republican government in Rome." (Ibid., xiv.)

4 Ibid., xxi.

5 "My temple of Poseidon” is my bathtub.

6 The reader can very well understand the great deal of distress I have gone through for including these very lines which may put in question the merits of my work. I evoke Nietzsche as my savior from the thrashing criticism of my reader:

   In the great majority, the intellect is a clumsy, gloomy, creaking machine that is difficult to start. They call it “taking the matter seriously” when they want to work with this machine and think well. How burdensome they must find good thinking! The lovely human beast always seems to lose its good spirit when it thinks well; it becomes “serious.” And “where laughter and gaiety are found, thinking does not amount to anything”:

   that is the prejudice of this serious beast against all “gay science.” —well, then, let us prove that this is a prejudice.
This theory of 'universals' and 'particulars' was, however, denied by some philosophers. These adversaries, including the school of empirists, led by such renowned philosophers as Hume and Berkley, completely rejected the idea of universals and their relation with their particulars. Rationalists, on the other hand, emphasized the existence of universals and offered many logical ways to infer that existence. For example, the rationalists claim that in order to prove a special property about all the triangels, we draw many triangels of different kinds. Then we consider whether that particular property holds for all of our triangels. This is not, however, the difficulty. The real problem arises when we are asked what a triangel is. The resemblences among all our triangles constitute the universal triangularity. According to the empirists when we speak of a triangle we form an image of some particular triangle in mind. Then we judge any other shape according to the triangle in mind. We examine to see whether our shapes have the same resemblences with the imaginary triangle. These resemblences necessarily form the universal triangularity. Even if we refuse the idea of universality, we have created it unwontedly.


9 The reader must not confuse this with 'natural laws' in modern scientific philosophy. The following example will explicate this point. The force of gravity effects every object on the earth. It is not possible for any object not to be affected by this force. The natural law or the divine law of Cicero, however, does not contain this property. It can only be exemplified in the action and behaviour of a person of wisdom. Comprehension of this law is only possible for humans since their nature consists of many components,
including logic and wisdom. The divine law under discussion refers mainly to morality and its origins; furthermore, natural law in Cicero’s language refers to the nature of God, but in scientific language it refers to the laws governing the harmony of the universe. Cicero’s theory, however, does not contradict the scientific definition of this term, since God, according to him, is the source of both kinds of laws.


11 Ibid., 71.

12 Heinrich Schenker, *Free Composition*. I: xxiii.

13 Ibid., 6.

14 Ibid., 6.

15 Similarly to Cicero, I have presented these two stages together.


17 Heinrich Schenker, *Free Composition*, I: 5.


20 Ibid., 133.

21 Ibid., 113.

22 Heinrich Schenker, *Free Composition*, I: xxiii.


26 Ibid., 3.

27 Ibid., xxiv.


30 Ibid., 113.

31 Ibid., 110.

32 Ibid., 115.

33 Ibid., 73.

34 Ibid., 65.


36 Nietzsche in a similar fashion expresses that nature is not just at all. Democracy and equality, in Nietzsche’s view, are not characteristics of nature.


40 Ibid., 110.


44 Heinrich Schenker, *Free Composition*, I: 5-6.
One common interpretation of Plato is to regard sense-particulars as existing separately from universals. Thus, in his *Phaedo*, Socrates teaches that the soul has pre-existed in another realm where it beheld the subsistent intelligible entities or ideas. Here, Socrates proves his point by examining a slave and guiding him to recollect a mathematical property:

Socrates. But if he always possessed this knowledge he would always have known; or if he has acquired the knowledge he could not have acquired it in this life, unless he has been taught geometry; for he may be made to do the same with all geometry and every other branch of knowledge. Now, has anyone ever taught him all this? You must know about him, if, as you say, he was born and bred in your house.

Meno. And I am certain that no one ever did teach him.

Socrates. And yet he has the knowledge?

Meno. The fact Socrates is undeniable.

Socrates. But if he did not acquire the knowledge in this life, then he must have had and learned it at some other time?

... which must have been the time when he was not a man?

... and if there have been always true thoughts in him, both at the time when he was and was not a man, which only need to be awakened into knowledge by putting questions to him, his soul must have always possessed this knowledge, for he always either was or was not a man?

Meno. Obviously.
Socrates. And if the truth of all things existed in the soul, then the soul is immortal. Wherefore be of good cheer, and try to recollect what you do not know, or rather what you do not remember.

Also in Timaeus, it is mentioned that God or the Dimiurge creates things according to the independent forms or models.

An extensive investigation of this issue is presented in the Republic by offering a parallelism between goodness and the sun. Here goodness is compared to the sun that makes all the objects in the world visible to the eye. In speaking of a man who has come out his cave where he has been chained up and unable to see only shadows on the walls, Socrates says:

Last of all he will be able to see the sun, and not mere reflection of him in the water, but he will see him in his own proper place, and not in another; and he will contemplate him as he is.

... He will then proceed to argue that this is he who gives the season and the years and is the guardian of all that is in the visible world, and in a certain way the cause of all things which he and his fellows have been accustomed to behold...

In a sense, the value of the objects is due to the light of the sun. Although the objects owe their value to the sun, both the sun and the objects exist separately from each other.

Similarly in Parmenides, Socrates explains that:
. . . but the idea may be like the day which is one and the same in many
places at once, and yet continues with itself, in this way each idea may be
one and the same in all at the same time.

Goodness, in Plato’s view, presents a similar case; although it gives being to the objects
of knowledge, it can exist or subsist separately from its particulars. Socrates in
*Parmenides*, describes the relation in two ways:
a) as an imitation of the idea by a particular
b) as a participation of the particular in the idea:

*Parmenides*. Then each individual partakes either of the whole of the
idea or else of a part of the idea? Can there be any other mode of
participation?

Socrates ultimately chooses the imitation-theory, and expresses that particulars in this
world are copies or imitations of ideas; the resemblance between the idea and the
particular then constitutes the participation in it.

47 Heinrich Schenker, *Free Composition*, I: xxiv.


In the *Republic* Plato remarks that the ideas exist in the mind of God. This explanation
may seem adequate at first, but on second thought it creates more problems. Assuming
that the ideas or forms are in the mind of God, this means that their existence is
dependent on God. This contradicts the main principle of the theory of ‘forms and
ideas.' According to Plato, ideas and forms exist independently from their particulars as well as the mind of the thinker. Of course, both of these notions disagree with some other principles. Firstly, how can anything, including ideas or forms, exist separately from the God who is the cause of all beings in the universe? And secondly, if the forms and ideas do exist separately from God, they possess a higher reality than that of God; and since only God possesses the highest of all realities, this is impossible. We have an antinomy of reason here. As Plato sees it, every object corresponds to an idea which possesses a higher or absolute reality. This idea exists separately from both the mind of the thinker and the object. Recall the example of the bed-maker who builds a bed according to the idea he has in mind. In this case both the bed and the bed-maker exist at the same level of reality; the idea, on the other hand, possesses a higher degree of reality. In this interpretation it is God who has an idea in mind and is creating models according to them. Let us consider the creation of man. God had an image of man in mind and created him accordingly. Then both man and God must exist at the same level of reality, which is of course nonsense; and the idea of man, in the mind of God, possesses a higher degree of reality, which goes against the definition of God. This seems to be one of the main weaknesses of Plato's theory.

49 Heinrich Schenker, *Free Composition*, I: xxiv.


51 Generally speaking, in our language names and adjectives express qualities or properties of single things; verbs on the other hand express relations between nouns. Names, however, are the only words that stand for particulars; adjectives, verbs and substantives, on the other hand, stand for universals. Of course, there are many words
in English, such as some pronouns, that are ambiguous and must be dealt with in their context. It is quite obvious that making up a sentence without using at least one universal is impossible. Let us examine a simple sentence such as ‘Romans killed Christ.’ Here the two words ‘Romans’ and ‘Christ’ stand for particulars. The verb ‘killed’ or ‘killing’ stands for a universal, although the term ‘killed Christ’ stands for a particular. Killing in this case is an ‘idea,’ since there are many particular ways of killing. A better example for showing the dependence or independence of a universal from the mind which has thought of it is: Haney is east of Vancouver. The statement obviously demands no mind to be comprehended; it stands as a fact, even if there are no minds to perceive it. The term ‘east of’ also stands for a universal, which expresses a relation between the two names. This universal is completely independent of both the names; it is, in fact, the particulars of this statement which are dependent on the universal. If we take the ‘east of’ away from our statement, we are left with a meaningless or incomplete sentence. Our universal also exists independently, as an ‘idea,’ from both of the locations. In this case the mind is merely apprehending a relation which was there before we knew it. This indicates that the universals are fully independent of the mind and attests that a particular universal does not exist within the mind.

52 Heinrich Schenker, *Free Composition*, I: xxii.

53 Ibid., xxiv (footnote).

54 This is perhaps one of the most important differences between the Platonic and Ciceronian notions of laws. Plato argues that although human laws are open to imperfection and flaws, it is the obligation of a responsible member of the society to
obey them at all times. Socrates in reply to Crito who is trying to convince Socrates to escape from prison a night before his execution says:

Socrates. Then I will go on to the next point, which may be put in the form of a question: ought a man to do what he admits to be right, or ought he to betray the right?

Crito. He ought to do what he thinks right.

Socrates. But if this is true, what is the application? In leaving the prison against the will of the Athenians, do I wrong any? Or rather do I not wrong those whom I ought least to wrong? Do I not desert the principles which were acknowledged by us to be just—what do you say?

... then consider the matter in this way: Imagine that I am about to play truant, and the laws and government come and interrogate me: 'tell us, Socrates,' they say, 'what are you about? Are you not going by an act of yours to overturn us—the laws, and the whole state, as far as in you lies? Do you imagine that a state can subsist and not be overthrown, in which the decisions of law have no power, but are set aside and trampled upon by individuals?'

... 'tell us—what complaint have you to make against us which justifies you in attempting to destroy us and the state? In the first place did we not bring you into existence?...'

... this, dear Crito, is the voice which I seem to hear murmuring in my ears, like the sound of the flute in the ears of the mystic; that voice, I say,
is humming in my ears, and prevents me from hearing any other. And I
know that anything more which you may say will be vain. Yet speak, if you
have anything to say.

Crito. I have nothing to say,

Socrates. Leave me then to fulfill the will of God, and to follow whither he
leads.

55 Heinrich Schenker, Free Composition, I: 9.


57 Being praised is the last thing a statesman avoids.


58 Heinrich Schenker, Free Composition, I: 6.

59 Ibid., 9.

60 Ibid., 9.

61 Ibid., xxiii.


63 In Greek mythology, Baubo (or Baubo) was a spirit in the woods disturbing the
travelers by her endless questions. She is a symbol of boundless curiosity.

64 Portunus was the God of doors, revealing the mysteries of the universe to those who
truly desired them.


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