

Arnold Schoenberg and Judaism: The Harder Road

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In his 1963 volume *Expositions and Developments*, answering a question by Robert Craft, Igor Stravinsky drew comparisons between his own musical nature and Arnold Schoenberg's, on the basis of some twenty different criteria, of which Number 5 was: "Schoenberg: Hedgehog (Moses); Stravinsky: Fox (Aaron)." The fox-hedgehog metaphor comes from a fable by the Greek poet Archilochos, whose moral is this: "The Fox knows many things, but the Hedgehog knows one big thing." Stravinsky pointed to himself as the master of many styles, like Aaron, who could make himself intelligible to many audiences; but in pointing to Schoenberg as Moses, Stravinsky acknowledged Schoenberg's unassailable position as the supreme Lawgiver in music of the twentieth century. Schoenberg would not have approved of being singled out as a modern Moses figure, but that way of describing him, during his life that was as much mission as it was odyssey, is apt enough, I hope to show. Nor indeed am I the right one to be giving this lecture. Alexander Ringer's new book on Schoenberg and Judaism has just been published [1990]; I have not read it yet; but I have every expectation that this veteran scholar, to whose excellent earlier writings my talk here owes so much, will cover in his new book the same area as my own with far greater penetration and detail.

I will begin by assuming that today, 116 years after his birth, Arnold Schoenberg's enduring importance in the history of music is recognized by everyone who knows about music in this century, an importance quite comparable to that of Albert Einstein in physics. Schoenberg's renunciation of tonality and the major-minor scale system, and the twelve-tone technique which he invented to replace them, have been established as the most important revolution in twentieth-century music, and this fact has been accepted, though often reluctantly, by most musicians now living. Most of what you can read about Schoenberg deals either with his music itself, or with how difficult it is to understand and why you should try harder to understand it. Therefore I want to talk today about Schoenberg mostly from a different viewpoint, namely Schoenberg the Jewish philosopher, theologian, and political theorist, and particularly about Schoenberg as an ordinary and extraordinary human being.

It was just 57 years ago, too, that Schoenberg, after being driven penniless out of Europe, arrived in New York to begin the American phase of his career, which lasted seventeen years until his death in 1951. But the world unanimously calls him a Viennese composer, the heritor of a long tradition, and the leader of a group of three composers which came to be called the Second Viennese School. (The first Viennese school was of course the group of classicists that included Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert.) Schoenberg's own Viennese pride was always a mixed one, in that he bore feelings of both

love and hatred toward the city whose ultraconservative, ultraparochial musical institutions had perennially shut out his progressive ideas and denied him the employment he most desired. Small wonder that he spent much of his career in Berlin, and referred to his own music as "German music." We do not really know, however, how much his feelings were affected by the traditional, genteel, not particularly virulent anti-Semitism of Vienna at the time he was growing up there. Karl Lueger, the durable mayor, had been elected partly on the basis of his freely-expressed anti-Semitism, and yet even he was willing to give credit, perhaps even with some affection, to the role of the Viennese Jews in the flowering of Vienna's extraordinary cultural and intellectual life.

How much this mattered to the boy Schoenberg is not known, nor, indeed, do we have any clear picture of his religious training as a youth. We do know that when he was only sixteen years old, he wrote a love letter to his cousin Malvina Goldschmied in which are some of his earliest recorded thoughts on religion:

...You go on to say that you have only disputed the amount of nonsense that is in the Bible; now I must oppose you, as an unbeliever myself, by saying that nowhere in the Bible is there any nonsense. For in it all the most difficult questions concerning Morals, Law-making, Industry, and Medical Science are resolved in the most simple way, often treated from a contemporary point of view; in general the Bible really gives us the foundation of all our state institutions (except the telephone and the railway).¹

In 1898, not yet twenty-four, Schoenberg was baptized into the Austrian Lutheran Church, thus exchanging one minority faith for another. This was at the time when he was beginning to be a full-time musician, and a year before he wrote *Verklärte Nacht* (Transfigured Night), Opus 4, for string sextet, which is still one of his best-loved works.

The next fifteen years were a period of amazing development and productivity for Schoenberg. During that time he wrote the huge *Gurrelieder* cycle and a number of works which were to change the history of music, including two string quartets; his first Chamber Symphony, Opus 9; the *Hanging Gardens* songs, Opus 15; Five Orchestra Pieces, Opus 16; the operas *Erwartung* and *Die glückliche Hand*; and the cycle *Pierrot lunaire*, Opus 21, for speaker and five players. He wrote a huge and brilliant textbook on harmony, and began what could well have turned into a successful career as a painter if he had pursued it. And he was intensely occupied as a private teacher of music theory and composition, gaining a number of distinguished pupils, including two, Alban Berg and Anton Webern, who achieved careers parallel to and on a level with his own.

It is curious that in these years Schoenberg completed only one piece of Christian sacred music, the chorus *Friede auf Erden* (Peace on Earth) of 1907. Or perhaps not so curious, when we realize that Schoenberg's personal theology may not have had a comfortable match with Christian concepts of God. We are now just beginning to know more about Schoenberg's unfinished efforts of these years. Here are some remarks Schoenberg made in a letter of December 13, 1912, to Richard Dehmel, the poet of *Verklärte Nacht*:

...For a long time I have been wanting to write an oratorio on the following subject: modern man, having passed through materialism, socialism, and anarchy and, despite having been an atheist, still having in him some residue of ancient faith (in the form of superstition), wrestles with God (see also Strindberg's "Jacob Wrestling") and finally succeeds in finding God and becoming religious. Learning to pray!...²

What eventually emerged from this contemplation of the Old Testament were a huge symphony and an even more enormous oratorio called *Die Jakobsleiter* (Jacob's Ladder), both sketched out to a great extent during the World War but never completed. Like Mozart and Schubert and other composers who wrote with feverish intensity, Schoenberg had a lot of trouble resuming work on something he had interrupted, and although these were only two of his many unfinished works, the symphony and the oratorio were unquestionably the largest and those that we should most regret not having complete. In the sketches, and in his correspondence, we find evidence of Schoenberg's intent to syncretize a variety of spiritual sources in the texts he was considering, including Dehmel and Strindberg, Balzac and Rabindranath Tagore, Isaiah and Jeremiah. There does not seem to be any New Testament vision or theme of redemption. The road at this time seems not to be to Damascus, but to Padan-aram; and as we shall see, eventually it would be the harder road, to the Promised Land.

Soon Schoenberg's personal artistic struggle in these works had to be shoved aside by his military service. After the war it was eventually resumed, all over again, but in different works. The problems of musical structure which Schoenberg had grappled with ever since 1908 were soon to find an answer during the early 1920's with his invention of the twelve-tone technique. It was probably in 1921 that Schoenberg was able to announce it to his closest disciples; as his pupil and biographer Josef Rufer later wrote, Schoenberg took him aside and said "Today I have discovered something that will assure the supremacy of German music for the next hundred years." In the light of subsequent political history in Germany this declaration sounds unpleasant to our ears today, but it is certain that the twelve-tone technique is the dominating characteristic of nearly all of Schoenberg's later music and that of his beloved pupils Berg and Webern, not to mention of the works of an entire generation of composers all over the world who adopted it after Schoenberg's death. The historical evolution of the last six decades of music confirms Schoenberg's central importance on the basis of the twelve-tone idea alone.

The discovery was contemporary with the early years of the Weimar Republic in Germany and with the catastrophic economic hardship there and in Austria. And in the wake of a relatively trivial anti-Semitic incident in the summer of 1922 came a crisis in Schoenberg's personal life. Can you imagine what a Bauhaus School of Music might have been like at Weimar, with Schoenberg at its head? That is what his old friend, the expressionist painter Wassily Kandinsky, sounded him out about. But word had reached Schoenberg that the Bauhaus artists, including Kandinsky, had expressed antisemitic sentiments, and Schoenberg's reply, in a letter dated April 20, 1923, was as poignant as it was terse:

Dear Herr Kandinsky,

If I had received your letter a year ago I should have let all my principles go hang, should have renounced the prospect of at last being free to compose, and should have plunged headlong into the adventure. Indeed I confess: even today I wavered for a moment: so great is my taste for teaching, so easily is my enthusiasm still inflamed. But it cannot be.

For I have at last learned the lesson that has been forced upon me during this year, and I shall not ever forget it. It is that I am not a German, not a European, indeed perhaps scarcely even a human being (at least, the Europeans prefer the worst of their race to me), but I am a Jew.

I am content that it should be so! Today I no longer wish to be an exception; I have no objection at all to being lumped together with all the rest. For I have seen that on the other side (which is otherwise no model so far as I'm concerned, far from it) everything is also just one lump. I have seen that someone with whom I thought myself on a level preferred to seek the community of the lump; I have heard that even a Kandinsky sees only evil in the actions of Jews and in their evil actions only the Jewishness, and at this point I give up the hope of reaching any understanding. It was a dream. We are two kinds of people. Definitely!

So you will realize that I only do whatever is necessary to keep alive. Perhaps someday a later generation will be in a position to indulge in dreams. I wish it neither for them nor for myself. On the contrary, indeed, I would give much that it might be granted to me to bring about an awakening.

I should like the Kandinsky I knew in the past and the Kandinsky of today each to take his fair share of my cordial and respectful greetings.³

Kandinsky answered this letter immediately, and Schoenberg replied again on May 4 with a much longer letter which I quote here only in part:

Dear Kandinsky,

I address you so because you wrote that you were deeply moved by my letter. That was what I hoped of Kandinsky, although I have not yet said a hundredth part of what a Kandinsky's imagination must conjure up before his mind's eye if he is to be my Kandinsky! Because I have not yet said that for instance when I walk along the street and each person looks at me to see whether I'm a Jew or a Christian, I can't very well tell each of them that I'm the one that Kandinsky and some others make an exception of, although of course that man Hitler is not of their opinion. And then even this benevolent view of me wouldn't be much use to me, even if I were, like blind beggars, to write it on a piece of cardboard and hang it around my neck for everyone to read. Must not a Kandinsky bear that in mind?...

...How can a Kandinsky approve of my being insulted; how can he associate himself with politics that aim at bringing about the possibility of excluding me from my natural sphere of action; how can he refrain from combating a view of the world whose aim is St. Bartholomew's nights in the darkness of which no one will be able to read the little placard saying I'm exempt! I, myself, if I had any say in the matter, would, in a corresponding case, associate myself with a view of the world that maintains for the world the right view of the 2—3 Kandinskys that the world produces in a century — I should be of the opinion that only such a view of the world would do for me. And I should leave the pogroms to the others. That is, if I couldn't do anything to stop them!

...But what is anti-Semitism to lead to if not to acts of violence? Is it so difficult to imagine that? You are perhaps satisfied with depriving Jews of their civil rights. Then certainly Einstein, Mahler, I and many others, will have been got rid of. But one thing is certain: they will not be able to exterminate those much tougher elements thanks to whose endurance Jewry has maintained itself unaided against the whole of mankind for 20 centuries. For these are evidently so constituted that they can accomplish the task that their God has imposed on them: to survive in exile, uncorrupted and unbroken, until the hour of salvation comes!⁴

The letter goes on searingly for some pages, concluding with Schoenberg's regret that he and Kandinsky could no longer be friends but that he still respected him as an artist. Eventually they did renew their friendship; but what is really striking about this letter is Schoenberg's vision of the inevitability of a holocaust engulfing the Jews of Europe. The letter dates from May 1923, not 1933, and from Austria, not Munich, and in fact predates the Beer Hall Putsch by a few months.

In 1926 Schoenberg moved to Berlin, where he had also lived for a time before the war. The terms of appointment offered him at the Prussian Academy of Fine Arts were generous, in that he was able to spend up to six months each year abroad, conducting and composing. He took relatively little part in the vigorous artistic life of Berlin during these years, the cabaret years of Bert Brecht and Kurt Weill (whose music Schoenberg disliked), of the silent film and so much else. Perhaps it was just as well, because this was the second most productive period in his life, the time when he was able to fulfill the promise of his twelve-tone invention in a succession of richly varied works.

And for the largest and most important of these he chose the medium of opera, and a very big subject indeed. This was *Moses and Aaron*⁵, the longest of all his works even though he completed the music for only two of the three acts. The literary basis was the story of the Exodus and the Giving of the Law, but in setting his own libretto Schoenberg went way beyond the actual Biblical text, creating what was actually a philosophical Midrash in both text and music. Thus the very first scene, "The Calling of Moses," begins with the Voice from the Burning Bush, answered by Moses: "Only, eternal, omnipresent, invisible, and unimaginable God!" The voice of God answers with a line taken directly from Exodus 3:5: "Put your shoes aside; you have gone far, you stand on holy ground; now prophesy!" The part of Moses calls for the specially inflected speaking voice that Schoenberg had experimented with over

twenty years earlier; the voice of God, on the other hand, is much more complex, being represented by six solo singing voices and a four-part speaking chorus, the groups singing and speaking against each other in blocks of text simultaneously and at different times.

The dialogue of the scene, which continues in slow tempo for nearly a hundred measures, states clearly all of the dramatic and philosophical basis of the rest of the opera. Moses is called by God to lead his people to freedom in the name of the Only God. Moses is reluctant to accept the calling, saying that he is old, he wants to tend his sheep in peace, and above all, "Nobody will believe me!" (Exodus 4:1) God will enable Moses to be recognized for his wisdom and strength, and for the wonders wrought by his staff, by his hand, and by the water of the Nile. Moses protests further that his speech is clumsy: "I can think, but cannot speak." God's reply is a crucial one: "Just as the light of truth fell upon this dark thornbush, so will you perceive my voice in everything. I will illuminate Aaron; Aaron shall be your mouth! Your voice will speak from him as mine speaks from you!" (Exodus 4:15-16, in part)

That is where the trouble starts, and where it eventually ends. Moses is occupied for the rest of the opera with persuading the people to believe in a *concept*. He is locked in conceptual combat with his brother Aaron beginning in the second scene. Aaron's role is sung throughout by a lyrical tenor voice, in sharp contrast to Moses' fumbling basso speech. Aaron wants the image [*Bild*] of God, the vision [*Gebilde*] of God, the depiction of God: "O vision of the highest fantasy, how grateful it is to you, that you have enticed it to form you!" Moses' reply to this doubletalk is peevish: "No picture can give you a picture of the unimaginable." Schoenberg's German text is deliberately difficult and obscure here, with no less than seven different derivatives of the noun *Bild* appearing at various points in the opera, showing the desperate attempts of Aaron and the people to reduce the idea of God to something they can *see*. Aaron challenges Moses: "People, chosen for the Only One, can you love what you may not even conceive?" Moses replies heatedly but with difficulty: "May not conceive? Unimaginable, because invisible; because unsurveyable, because unending, because eternal; because omnipresent; because almighty. Only one is almighty."

In the rest of Act I the people are no less difficult to convince. Schoenberg's text makes it clear that the Israelites have lapsed into idolatry and polytheism during their captivity, and are ill-disposed to accept a single invisible god and a land that is only a promise. But under Moses' and Aaron's direction they accept the miracles and the challenge to Pharaoh.

Act II begins after the departure from Egypt, with the people once more restive and intractable, and in fact on the brink of mutiny. For forty days they have waited for Moses to come down from the Mountain of Revelation. Aaron gives in to their impatience, and the orgy of the Golden Calf results. Schoenberg made a big stage spectacle of this, with wonderfully exciting music, and it is the longest scene in the opera. Aaron starts it off by saying, "This image [*Bild*] bears witness that in everything that is, lives a god. Immutable, like a principle, is the material, the gold which you have given."

In the last scene of Act II, Moses, coming down from the mountain, disposes of the calf with a shout: "Vanish, you effigy [*Abbild*] of the powerlessness to enclose the boundless in an image!" The golden calf

is annihilated, but it is all the same to Aaron, who says to Moses: "But the image and marvels were denied to your word, because you disdain them. And yet the marvel was no more than an image, when your word destroyed my image." When Moses holds up the Tables of the Law, Aaron says, "They too are only an image, a part of the idea." A procession moves into the background, the happy people led by the Pillar of Fire and Cloud. Moses cries out in horror: "Image of idols! [*Götzenbilder*]" The people proclaim their allegiance to the God of their fathers, but Moses is in despair anyway. "Unimaginable God!" he exclaims:

Ineffable thought of many meanings! Will you allow this for an explanation? May Aaron, my mouth, create this image? Then I too have created an image, false, as an image can only be! Thus I am defeated! All was madness that I thought before, and it cannot, must not be uttered! O word, thou word, that fails me!

Schoenberg's Moses speaks eloquently for the condition of man in relationship to his God. Yet this Moses is unmistakably also Schoenberg himself, struggling to make the public understand the unchangeable unity of his music. I don't know that Schoenberg ever mentioned this nice irony to anyone, but he could hardly have been unaware of it, especially as his works continued to be ignored or reviled by all but a dedicated few.

Schoenberg prepared the text for a third and final act of *Moses and Aaron*, but he did not compose it. In this single short scene, Moses has recovered his self-command and the leadership of his people, and Aaron is brought before him in chains. After Moses' sermon, Aaron is set free, then falls down dead. Moses' peroration prophesies the future suffering and eventual triumph of Israel. Doubtless Schoenberg would have created a wonderful musical setting of this scene; but he must have realized, during the nearly twenty years that remained of his life, that all the essential parts of his message had been fully stated in the two completed acts. For the suffering of Israel, as foretold by Schoenberg's Moses, was about to begin in Schoenberg's Germany on a previously unimagined scale, and Schoenberg himself would soon have little time for such relatively ordinary matters as composing music.

The end of Act II is dated March 10, 1932. Events followed quickly after Hitler was proclaimed Chancellor at the end of January, 1933. In response to denunciations of Jewish influence in the arts in Germany, Schoenberg offered his resignation on March 20. On May 17 he left Berlin for Paris, where six days later he received a letter granting him a leave from his post. On September 20 he was notified that he had been dismissed as of October 1. But on July 24 he had taken a step that he had clearly been preparing for for some years; he sought out the Liberal Jewish congregation in Paris and made a formal declaration of intent to re-enter the community of Israel. Rabbi Louis-Germain Lévy wrote out a certificate of this declaration, which was witnessed by Dimitri Marianoff, the stepson-in-law of Albert Einstein, and by the artist Marc Chagall.

With no salary, nor any royalties from his published works, which by then were banned in Germany, Schoenberg had to look for a job immediately. The prospect of a conservatory position in Boston seemed to hold out the best promise for his personal security, and on October 25 he sailed on the *Ile de*

France, arriving in New York six days later. He never went back to Europe again. During most of the next year he divided his time between Boston, New York, and Chautauqua, teaching a few pupils at the Malkin Conservatory, doing some occasional conducting, practicing his English in a few lectures, and being guest of honor at one or two occasions, but he was unable to find a suitable regular job. At this time Schoenberg was fifty-nine years old and his asthma suffered in the New England winter, and so in September 1934 he moved permanently to California, where he bought a house in Hollywood. He found a position at UCLA and was to hold it until retiring in 1944 at age seventy.

During his first year in America, involved in a host of arduous and poorly-paid activities and much traveling, struggling successfully to learn English quickly, and with a wife and child to support, he nevertheless continued his efforts in behalf of the hapless Jews of Europe. These efforts were frustrated by a general indifference in America to the tenebrous developments in Germany. If the Jews of Europe largely failed to foresee their eventual fate under Nazi domination, the Jews of America were even more oblivious and unwilling to act. Even before leaving Europe, Schoenberg had proposed to raise in America enough money to in effect ransom the Jews of Europe. In the spring of 1934 Schoenberg wrote a long letter to Rabbi Stephen Wise of the American Jewish Congress in which he said:

But please don't misunderstand me: I have no political ambition: my ambition would be fulfilled entirely on music paper, if I had any ambition at all. I strive only for the ignominious honor of being able to give up my life for the existence of the Jewish people. And only, if no more suitable person is found, above all no one younger or healthier than I, only then, in order not to shirk a recognizable duty, would I want to step forward.

In December 1933 Schoenberg had already begun writing a propaganda statement, proposing the immediate financing of an independent state for Jewish refugees. Working on and off through several drafts for five years, he eventually completed a remarkable document summarizing his ideas about the political future of the Jews. He called it "A Four-Point Program for Jewry," and the four points (in capital letters) were these:

- I. THE FIGHT AGAINST ANTI-SEMITISM MUST BE STOPPED.
- II. A UNITED JEWISH PARTY MUST BE CREATED.
- III. UNANIMITY IN JEWRY MUST BE ENFORCED WITH ALL MEANS.
- IV. WAYS MUST BE PREPARED TO OBTAIN A PLACE TO ERECT AN INDEPENDENT JEWISH STATE.

In the hindsight of half a century some of these words have a special ring. The fight against anti-Semitism had to be stopped, Schoenberg held, because it expended precious energy and resources which would be better put to use by the Jews in their own behalf, specifically the acquisition of land they could call their own. Boycotts he declared to be futile. He went so far as to excoriate the World Zionist Congress for betraying Theodor Herzl and not accepting the British offer of Uganda, and was blistering in his criticism of Herzl's successors for their failure to achieve any degree of political unity that would

lead to effective positive action. Of course, like everyone else, Schoenberg looked ultimately to the homeland in Palestine; but he insisted that a temporary settlement in Uganda would have completely changed the current desperation in Europe, and assured a unified, stable, and powerful Jewish political entity.

Schoenberg was acutely aware that internal disagreements had paralyzed the Zionist movement ever since Herzl's time. About half of his essay is given over to the question of how to get Jews to stop arguing with each other and take positive action even at the eleventh hour of their existence in Europe.

How different would be today's Jewish situation were there now an independent state in Uganda, founded in about 1905, counting perhaps a population of five to ten million, able to provide homes for ten to twenty millions in addition, independent economically, perhaps also provided with a modern armament and even perhaps not without political and diplomatic influence. It might be that this state could not offer protection from the persecutions of anti-Semitic powers, nor offer anything of value in negotiations. But certainly it could offer a land, a home, a place where refugees were safe.

The fourth part of Schoenberg's essay shows how well he understood the future political destiny of Palestine.

If one considers the political, geographic, and strategic position of Palestine, one will doubt whether ever the opportunity can arise which will allow us to take possession of it. The other religions to whom Zion has become a sacred place would not cease to dispute our right. And surrounded by Mohammedans, Palestine will be in the worst strategical situation. ... We Jews did not lose this land because other people did not like us, but only because other people liked our land — for their trade. Only a powerless nation can possess it, one which cannot deny others the right to cross it.

To know history is one thing and to understand it is another thing. But it seems that politicians neither know nor understand. And it seems that they become leaders only by "virtue" of a lack of understanding of historical processes.⁶

Most of the rest of Schoenberg's essay is in this same vigorous and penetrating style, full of an amazingly accurate understanding of the events and forces of his time. And he foresaw the Holocaust with uncanny clarity. His essay dates from a few months before *Kristallnacht* showed to an unbelieving Western world the most emphatic and unmistakable evidence of what lay ahead. Within just a few months the fate of millions of Jews in central Europe would be sealed, and a few months after that the coming of war put an end to any international efforts that might have been raised on their behalf.

His reaction to what people who had directly experienced the Nazi terror told him can be gauged from a short piece he wrote for narrator, chorus, and orchestra called *A Survivor from Warsaw*, Opus 46, composed in twelve days in August, 1947. It is a very grim work indeed, but one that has become well

known because it so clearly and powerfully demonstrates his feelings of the time, with all of his musical skills under full control.

During the war years there could be no thought of any American action that would focus on the future of Palestine, and Schoenberg could not have known much of what was happening there. He hoped and expected to be able to play even a leading role in gathering up the remnants of the multitude that had nearly been extinguished in Europe. We know this from an unpublished draft dating from 1945 of a plan for a Jewish government in exile, in which Schoenberg saw himself as a president, with an unshakeable mission to reestablish the Jewish state. If some see Schoenberg's unabashed willingness to take on once again the mantle of Moses merely as unbridled megalomania, others may see it as humble self-sacrifice, naive as it was. Yet not even Schoenberg imagined that the West's realization of the dimensions of the Holocaust would provide a moral mandate for the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine barely three years later. Schoenberg's last works, from 1949 on, include several that deal with his appreciation of the miracle of Israel. These include an unfinished work called *Israel Exists Again*, to his own text; a setting of Psalm 130, *Shir ha-ma'alot*, in Hebrew; and a series of texts called *Modern Psalms*, one of which he set in part. The text of *Israel Exists Again* is as follows:

Israel exists again.
 It has always existed.
 though invisibly.
 And since the beginning of time,
 since the creation of the world
 we have always seen the Lord,
 and we have never ceased to see him.
 Adam saw him.
 Noah saw him.
 Abraham saw him.
 Jakob saw him.
 But Moses
 saw he was *our* God
 and we *his* elected people:
 elected to testify
 that there is only one eternal God.
 Israel has returned
 and will see the Lord again.⁷

And less than three months before his death he wrote this to the Israel Academy of Music:

While with pride and satisfaction accepting my election as honorary president of the Israel Academy of Music, I nevertheless feel myself under an obligation to explain why it seems to me so important that you should have chosen to bestow this honour on me.

...I have already declared that for more than four decades my dearest wish has been to see the establishment of a separate, independent State of Israel. And indeed more than that: to become a citizen of that State and to reside there.

...I have no words to express how much I should like to make my contribution by taking charge personally, and by teaching at this Academy. I have always had a passion for teaching. I have always felt the urge to discover what can most help beginners and how they can be made thoroughly acquainted with the technical, intellectual, and ethical demands of our art; how to teach them that there is a morality of art, and why one must never cease to foster it and always combat to the utmost any attempt to violate it.

I am unfortunately compelled to resign these hopes. ...I would have tried to make this Academy one of world-wide significance...

For just as God chose Israel to be the people whose task it is to maintain the pure, true, Mosaic monotheism despite all persecution, despite all affliction, so too it is the task of Israeli musicians to set the world an example of the old kind that can make our souls function again as they must if mankind is to evolve any higher.⁸

Thus some of the final written words of a seventy-six-year-old musician, a paragon of the modern composer, a man with an extraordinary range of interests which he pursued passionately and with outstanding wisdom, who bridged the cultural gap between Europe and America, who was a modern Jew with every fiber of his intellect and being.

And difficult though his music is, Schoenberg was no dweller in an ivory tower, and in fact he had no greater wish than that his music could be accepted by as wide a public as possible. Understanding the man may help to understand the music as well. One is hard put to name another composer in the history of music — perhaps only Beethoven — whose musical language shows such a remarkable evolution and integrity from first to last. "Mr. Schoenberg," an interviewer once asked him, "why do you no longer compose the way you did when you wrote *Verklärte Nacht*?" His reply was, "I do, but I can't help it if people don't recognize the fact." Or, as Schoenberg explained near the end of his life, talking about his Chamber Symphony of 1907:

When I had finished my first Chamber Symphony, Opus 9, I told my friends: "Now I have established my style. Now I know how to compose."

But my next work showed a great deviation from this style; it was a first step toward my present style. My destiny had forced me in this direction---I was not destined to continue in the manner of *Transfigured Night* or *Gurrelieder* or even *Pelleas und Melisande*. The Supreme Commander had ordered me on a harder road.⁹

ENDNOTES

1. H. H. Stuckenschmidt, *Schoenberg: His Life and Work*, translated from the German by Humphrey Searle, London, John Calder, 1977, page 26.
2. *Arnold Schoenberg Letters*, selected and edited by Erwin Stein, translated by Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1965, page 35.
3. *Letters*, pages 88-89.
4. *Letters*, pp. 89-93.
5. Arnold Schoenberg, *Moses und Aron*, Studien-Partitur, Edition B. Schott's Söhne, Mainz, No. 4590, n.d. [1958]. (Translations here by M. DeV.)
6. Arnold Schoenberg, "A Four-Point Program for Jewry," *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute*, Volume III, No. 1 (March 1979), pp. 49-67.
7. Text quoted from Josef Rufer, *The Works of Arnold Schoenberg: A Catalogue of his Compositions, Writings, and Paintings*, London, Faber & Faber, 1959, page 121.
8. *Letters*, pp. 286-287.
9. Arnold Schoenberg, "On revient toujours," in Schoenberg, *Style and Idea*, London, Faber & Faber, 1975, pp. 108-110.