

Schenker's Disservice to Schenkerianism: Three Bach Examples

Olli Väisälä

Abstract

This article argues that Schenker made a disservice to “Schenkerianism” by his failure to identify an evidential basis both for analytical readings and for the underlying theory. Pertaining to these two aspects, the concepts of *first-order* and *second-order* evidence are advanced. It is suggested that both evidential questions can be approached on the basis of four kinds of compositional features or *structural indicators*: design, register, meter, and gestural emphasis. It is shown that these indicators support the two fifth-descents in Schenker's analysis of Bach's Fugue in C Minor (*WTC I*), suggesting that they offer implicit first-order evidence for it. Moreover, the strength in which they support archetypal Schenkerian patterns seems to go beyond chance level, offering second-order evidence for their compositional significance. By contrast, two other of Schenker's analyses, those of the little Prelude in D Minor (BWV 926) and the Fugue in D Minor (*WTC I*), contain salient features *not* supported by the four indicators or other readily apparent compositional features. While in these cases the indicators fail to offer first-order evidence Schenker's analyses, they nonetheless offer second-order evidence for his theory, since they support archetypal Schenkerian patterns not detected by Schenker, as is demonstrated by alternative analyses.