

James K. Wright, *Schoenberg, Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle* (Peter Lang, 2005). 191, price £27.00pb.

R. A. Sharpe, *University of Wales, Lampeter*

Wright draws a number of parallels between the *Tractatus* and Schoenberg's theorising about music, the most significant being the fact/value distinction, the idea that we cannot speak meaningfully about value and, perhaps most interestingly, the idea that musical logic answers to "facts" about "real", material works of art. There is a particularism in Schoenberg, a concern with individual pieces of music which Wright finds at odds with the radical formalism of the Princeton School of theorists and composers such as Babitt, Boretz and Forte, a formalism often thought of as a development of Schoenberg's ideas. There is a realism in Schoenberg and his relativism is essentially a matter of aesthetic relativism, a belief that the artist should be free to plough his own furrow.

Behind this, of course, is the old debate as to the extent that tonality is "natural" and essential to music. I suspect that the whole business is rather misconceived. The analogy with language, rather *passé* now, is central to understanding this. No language, not German, Greek or even Welsh, the language of heaven, is natural to mankind. But some language is. A "language" involving some form of tonality is required for the intelligibility of music, and human beings will develop a tonality much as they develop their natural languages. We have been hampered by the dominance of the Austro-Germanic tradition. Consider French music of the late nineteenth century. Fauré, Ravel and Debussy use scales other than the diatonic, and their music is intelligible enough.

This book bears the marks of the PhD thesis from which it seems to have developed, but it is clear and useful to anybody interested in the culture of the early twentieth-century Vienna.

Department of Philosophy
University of Wales, Lampeter
Lampeter
Dyfed SA48 7ED