The Schenkerian concept of Übergreifen remains difficult. The German term, contrarily to other terms coined by Schenker himself, is by no means a neologism. It is not a very common word in modern German, but it is documented since the 14th century at least, meaning “to overlap,” in various contexts. It is used today, among others, to denote the crossing of the hands on the piano keyboard. But Schenker himself defines it in confusing terms. In Der freie Satz, he writes:

Das Hinaufsetzen einer Mittelstimme in eine höhere Lage mittels einer mindestens zweitonigen Folge nenne ich ein Übergreifen (1935, 81 §129).²

I call Übergreifen (reaching over) the transfer of an inner voice into a higher register by means of a succession of at least two tones.

In the following paragraph he adds:

Eine Folge in der Form des Übergreifens muß fallen (1935, 81 §130).

A succession in the form of a reaching over must descend.

Ernst Oster, in an attempt to clarify the matter, translates:

When a group of at least two descending tones is used to place an inner voice into a higher register, I call the phenomenon a reaching over. (Schenker 1979, 47 §129)

The two-tone succession in the reaching over must descend. (Schenker 1979, 47 §130)

¹ See, for example, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, Das Deutsche Wörterbuch, s.v. Übergreifen, online: http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/?sigle=DWB&mode=Vernetzung&lemid=GU00742#XGU00742 (accessed 25 May, 2017).

² All my quotations of Der freie Satz in this paper are taken from the 1935 edition, unless otherwise stated, and newly translated. My translations are often more literal than those by Ernst Oster in Schenker 1979. In the 1935 edition, Schenker systematically writes Uebergreifen, modified to the more usual Übergreifen in the 1956 edition, which I retained both in the quotations from the 1935 edition and in my translations.
However, one fails to see how a descending succession could be used to perform an ascending transfer.

I submit that what Schenker means is this: Übergreifen is the displacement into a higher register of a descending progression belonging to an inner voice. The displaced voice must have at least two tones in descending order, but these descending tones obviously do not in themselves perform the displacement, they merely are subjected to it. What Schenker does not clearly indicate, however, is that the inner voice is displaced above another one which it overlaps—and that for this to be possible, the overlapped line must also be descending. The minimal Übergreifen therefore features two lines, with the second (the Übergreifzug) overlapping the first (the overlapped line) by a register transfer followed by a stepwise descent. More complex cases count two or more reaching-over (overlapping) lines in addition to the first overlapped one. In this case, of course, successive Übergreifzüge overlap each other. Each overlapped line must continue for at least one note below the overlapping one, and it is this continuation that confirms that the lines are distinct from each other. The main characteristic of a reaching over, therefore, is the intricacy of the voice leading of intertwined voices. It may result in a variety of successions: an ascending line, an ascending arpeggio, or even the repetition of a single note.

This rather complex definition has been deduced by considering all cases of reaching over in Schenker’s published analyses.\(^3\) Schenker often was not very clear in his descriptions, but the cases themselves demonstrate a high level of consistency, implying the above definition. Many definitions in modern Schenkerian literature are compatible with this one,

---

\(^3\) A list of these cases can be found at http://Nicolas.meeus.free.fr/Theorie/Uebergreifen.pdf (accessed 25 May 2017).
but they often fail to stress the most important characteristic: the intertwined lines. And some descriptions, even among the most authoritative ones, do not really correspond to this one.

In this paper, I comment on some of Schenker’s own early presentations of the device. I discuss some descriptions by other Schenkerians, and I consider some of the examples published in Der freie Satz. All these examples illustrate the difficulty of giving a single, simple and straightforward definition of reaching over.

* 

The earliest mention of Übergreifen by Schenker is in his analysis of Johann Sebastian Bach’s Little Prelude in D major, BWV 925, in Der Tonwille 5 (Example 1a). “In the first four bars,” Schenker writes, “1–3 actually are produced by the cooperation between reaching-over technique, against an octave descent in the bass . . . and an application of fugal form in the motivic imitation” (2004, 177). No further description of the technique is provided. The graph makes use of larger and smaller note heads, with normal note heads denoting the descending line d–c–B–A^\#g–f–e–d (marked “I. Oktavzug”) in the bass and larger ones stressing the ascending progression 1–2–3 (d–e–f) in the treble.4

As shown in Example 1b, each of the three tones in the ascending line 1–2–3 belongs to a separate descending line of a lower level. The first line descends from d^\# to c–d and returns to d under the beginning of the second, overlapping line. At the beginning of this second line, f is a dissonant appoggiatura, resolving on e^\# (2), and the line further engages in a syncopated 7–6–7–6 succession that compels it to continue its downwards motion until the end of m. 3. In the third line, g^\# is the 7th of the dominant chord and it resolves on

---

4 There are three note head sizes in the graph, not easily distinguished: bass notes are of normal size, those in the ascending top voice are large, and the other notes are small. The slurs are not entirely clear. At the end of m. 2, two slurs, apparently from e^\# and c^\#, probably unite on d^\# in m. 3; another slur underlines the ascending progression a–b–c–d. In m. 3, the slur from a to g may indicate the transfer denoted by an arrow between the same two notes in Example 1b.
It will be noted that while the first step of the resulting ascending line, $d_2$ (1), is the head note of the first descending line, the following steps, $e_2$ (2) and $f_2$ (3), are the second notes in their respective lines. The overall effect of these successive reaching-over lines is that the D major chord of m. 1 is transferred one octave higher in m. 4. We will see below that Oswald Jonas finds this an important feature of the technique when he defines it in his *Introduction to the Theory of Heinrich Schenker*.


**EXAMPLE 1b.** J. S. Bach, Little Prelude BWV 925 mm. 1–4 and analysis

In the course of this first analysis, Schenker refers to another analysis (later in the same volume) that presents another case of reaching over in mm. 123–141 of the second movement of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony (Example 2a). He stresses the importance of the dissonance, which indeed is often decisive for the identification of the reaching over because the

*GAMUT* 8/1 (2018)
resolutions leave no doubt as to the descending character of the Übergreifzüge and compel their continuation:

Looking at the passage more closely, bars 123–138 are underpinned by a $7\to 6\to 5$ progression attached to an ascending register transfer. In the normal course of such voice leading . . . the seventh descends to a fifth and is thus lost to the upper voice (see the NB to Figure 6b [2a]); the technique of reaching over . . . however, renders the greatest service in enabling the seventh yet to remain in the upper voice by means of ascending register transfer. (Schenker 2004–2005, I, 206)

As shown in Example 2b, the dominant seventh chord is transferred an octave higher from m. 128 to m. 138; it is transferred higher still in mm. 140–142 (not shown), to resolve in m. 143. Here again, the overall effect is to transfer a chord (the dominant seventh) as a whole. The descending lines from which the transfer results are all present from the start. Their normal voice leading would produce the result shown in Example 2a NB. The reaching over makes them cross each other by ascending transfer. The most striking line, corresponding to the lower inner line in Example 2a NB, is transferred twice ($e_1\to e_2 \to d_2 \to d_3$). The descending motions, in this line and in the other ones, are rendered obligatory by the resolutions of dissonances: the seventh, $d_5$ (m. 129); the fourth, $a_5$ (mm. 131–138); and the chromatic passing note, $d_7$ (mm. 131–138).

**Example 2a.** H. Schenker “Beethoven: V. Sinfonie (1. Fortzetzung)”, Zweiter Satz, mm. 123–148. *Der Tonwille* 5, Figure 6b (fragment) and NB (2004, 205)
MEEÜS: ÜBERGREIFEN

EXAMPLE 2b. L. van Beethoven, Fifth Symphony, II, mm. 128–138

Analyzing the beginning of the Third movement of the same symphony, Schenker warns against a possible confusion:

An important decoration of the motive … is provided by the upper neighbor note, which leads to the individual [Urlinie] tones: \(e_3\) to \(d_1\) [\(\hat{2}\)] across bars 2|3, and \(f_2\) as a long appoggiatura to \(e_3\) [\(\hat{3}\)] in bar 7. Such neighbor notes, which should not be confused with reaching-over tones, continue to be applied to the motive in the further course of the movement (2005, 9).

The descending appoggiaturas indeed form mere local embellishments and do not prevent the ascending movement of the main line, from \(c_1\) to \(d_1\) across mm. 2–3 and from \(d_2\) to \(e_3\) (and \(b_1\) to \(c_2\)) across mm. 6–7, as indicated by arrows in Example 3. No superposition of descending lines is involved in this case; the voice leading is straightforward. I will call this an “apparent” or a “pseudo-reaching over,” involving neither true descending lines, nor an intertwining of voices.
In his article in the *New Grove Online*, William Drabkin proposes two definitions of reaching over. The first describes it as “the juxtaposition of two or more descending lines in such a way that the resultant line appears to climb from an inner voice to the upper voice,” a definition superficially similar to the one proposed here. Two points must be stressed, however. First, Schenker does not say that an Übergreifen should result in an ascending line. It often does, but the ascending progression may also leap, as in the example from Beethoven (Example 2). Moreover, there may even be no progression at all, as in Example 12 below.\(^5\) Second, the idea that the resultant line “appears to climb from an inner voice to the upper voice” is somewhat puzzling. Obviously, each overlapping line in turn becomes the local upper one, and the last one may remain the upper one at its own level. But the resulting line joins points where each overlapping line was the upper one—it climbs from one upper line to the next rather than joining an inner voice to the upper one. The resulting line can only belong to a higher level than any of the lines that produced it. Drabkin, in other words, apparently

\(^5\) In *Der freie Satz*, Schenker says that the reaching over in the middleground has the purpose of either confirming the original position or gaining a higher one (1935, 81 §129; 1979, 47); he adds that at later levels, “despite the descending direction of the entries, it serves either to maintain the original position, to realize an ascending motion aiming at an upper neighbor note, an ascending passing note or line or an ascending arpeggiation, or to prevent a descending arpeggiation from falling below its goal” (1935, 134 §231; 1979, 83).
sees this resulting line of higher level as merely a “line from an inner voice.” By doing so, he confuses the local level of the *Übergreifzüge* (i.e., the overlapping lines) with the overarching level of the resulting progression.\(^6\)

The second definition is not really compatible with the first. Drabkin illustrates this with his analysis of the beginning of Beethoven’s Sonata op. 2 no. 3 (his Figure 1), reproduced here as Example 4a. Here, he states “A method of prolongation whereby two notes that are conceptually simultaneous (Figure 1b shows both \(d_1\) and \(g_1\) to be part of the same dominant chord) are heard in succession, the higher note following the lower (Figure 1c).” This, in fact, is merely the definition of an unfolding, which Schenker defines as follows:

\[
Eine \text{ Ausfaltung liegt vor wenn der vertikale Zustand eines Klanges in einen horizontalen so hinübergeleitet wird, daß vom Ton der Oberstimme eine Verbindung abwärts zu einem Ton der Mittelstimme, dann von diesem zurück zur Oberstimme geführt wird oder umgekehrt (1935, 84 §140).}
\]

An unfolding is when the vertical disposition of a chord is transformed into a horizontal one in such a manner that a descending connection is led from the tone of the upper voice to a tone of the middle voice and back to the upper voice, or the reverse.

The passage from Beethoven’s Sonata can be read as an unfolding of the \(V^7\) chord, forming a double neighbor movement, as in Example 4b. This again is a case of “apparent” or “pseudo reaching over” because it involves no intertwining of lines.

---

\(^6\) Forte and Gilbert (1982, 221) write: “The overlapping process tends to be a foreground event, while the composite top “voice” belongs to the middleground.”
EXAMPLE 4a. W. Drabkin, “Reaching over,” *New Grove Online*, Figure 1

EXAMPLE 4b. Alternative analysis of Example 4a

Schenker, however, may appear to confirm Drabkin’s second definition when he writes:

*Das Uebergreifen im wirklichen Uebereinander, s. Fig. 41a und Beispiel 1, engt den Satz harmonisch ein, da die beiden Töne dem selben Klang zugeführt werden müssen. Lockerer wird der Satz im Nacheinander, s. Fig. 41, b–d, und Beispiel 2, wo die beiden in Frage kommende Töne auf verschiedene Intervalle gestützt werden können; dadurch wird auch die Bildung der Einsätze deutlicher* (1935, 81 §131).

The reaching over in true superposition, see Fig. 41a and Ex. 1, harmonically constricts the passage, as the two tones must be led back to the same chord. The passage in succession, Fig. 41b–d and Ex. 2, is more relaxed as the two tones under consideration can be supported by different intervals; the appearance of the entries will also be clearer.

In Figure 41, reproduced here as Example 5a, the superposition of the two notes in 41a prevents our considering that one follows the other in an unfolding. In Figure 41b.1 on the other hand, the succession may be considered an unfolding, in a case similar to that of Beethoven’s Sonata in Example 4a above.
Schenker gives examples only for 41a.4 and for 41b.2, reproduced here as Example 5b.

In the example for 41a.4, the two lines are clearly distinct because the first of them continues its descending movement under the beginning of the second. The example for 41b.2 is less clear. Here, the line $c_1-b_2$, apparently does not continue and may regain $d_1$ by unfolding. The second line on the other hand—the one starting at $d_1$ and moving down to $g$—is clearly distinct from the third one from $e_1$. A closer examination of the score however shows that $d_1$ is gained by a voice exchange, by virtue of which the line $c_1-b_2$ may be considered to continue at $B_1$, and $d_1$ to result from a register transfer $d_1-d_1$. The head note of the third line, $e_1$, similarly results from an ascending transfer (Example 5c). The reason why Schenker considered this a case of reaching over becomes obvious.

Example 5b. H. Schenker, *Der freie Satz*, Examples 1 and 2 to Figure 41.

---

7 The first $B_1$ in Schenker’s graph must be an error: it should read $d_1$. See the score in Example 5c, m. 2.

8 Schenker (2004), 203 indicates a continuation of $b_2$ from m. 2 to m. 3, under $d_1$, stressing that they belong to separate voices.
Oswald Jonas’s *Introduction to the Theory of Heinrich Schenker* (1972, 114–118) proposes a definition that does not correspond to Schenker’s own later definitions, as John Rothgeb noted in his translation (n83). This definition nevertheless deserves our attention because Jonas may have discussed it with Schenker himself, and because it does somehow correspond with Schenker’s earliest descriptions. “This technique,” Jonas writes, “consists in two successive inversions of an interval, so that the same interval reappears in a different register.” The example given makes this perfectly clear:

**Example 6.** O. Jonas, *Introduction to the Theory of Heinrich Schenker*, Example 167, p. 115

In jazz theory, this would be called a change of “voicing.” There is no question of descending voices, nor is there a question of any other resulting motion than the octave transfer of the initial chord. In Example 6, the note tied between the successive voicings might justify the analysis as a crossing of voices, but Jonas makes no mention of this. The melodic motion resulting from successive chord inversions necessarily produces an
arpeggiation. Although Schenker does envisage this possibility (see note 5 above), very few of his descriptions of the technique involve such cases. The only obvious ones, clearly identified by Schenker as arpeggiations, are Fig. 41.3, 47.2, and 101.5 (see Example 9 below).

Jonas appears to consider changes in the voicing of a single chord, for instance C major in Example 6 above, as a defining feature of Übergreifen. The early examples in Schenker (e.g. 2004, 178, 205; see Examples 1 and 2 above) also result—from begin to end—in a change of voicing of the initial chord. But they do so by passing through other chords or other harmonic configurations. It does not seem that Schenker retained the change of voicing as an important characteristic of the reaching over technique, and the cases quoted by Jonas raise complex questions that would lead beyond the scope of the present study. We nevertheless find occasions hereafter to recall his definition.

Cadwallader and Gagné propose a description of reaching over that is not specific enough to be really useful here: “Reaching over . . . involves, in a general sense, the transfer of inner-voice tones to a higher position. You might also think of it as a technique by which a descending tone succession decorates and prolongs a single tone or expands a broader upward motion” (2011, 147–148). They probably mean that reaching over involves an ascending octave transfer of several notes from an inner voice, but they provide no information as to the nature of these notes, which, as we have seen, must at least begin descending by step. Because reaching over must involve at least two descending lines, it could hardly decorate a single tone; and the broader upward motion, even if frequent, is not a necessary characteristic of the technique. The notion of overlapping lines is strikingly absent from this definition, as it was from Jonas’s discussed above.

The example illustrating this, mm. 18–28 of the second movement of Schubert’s Sonata D. 960, is more interesting. I reproduce it here as Example 7 with a slightly different graphic
analysis. Cadwallader and Gagné identify three successive cases of reaching over in this passage, which I discuss in turn.

The first instance of reaching over is in mm. 18–21, where “g₂₁ moves down to f₂₁, after which the line ‘reaches over’ to a₁, the upper neighbor to the local primary tone g₂₁.” If this were a true reaching over, a₁ should belong to a transferred inner line overlapping the upper one, g₂₁–f₂₁. However, Cadwallader and Gagné appear to think that there is only one line, which somehow “reaches over” itself; this, once again, involves no idea of overlapping. The case, in other words, is merely one of a double-neighbor figure, producing a single line g₂₁–f₂₁–a₁–g₂₁, which could also be seen as an unfolding of V⁷. It is almost identical to the Beethoven fragment discussed in Example 4 above. Schenker would not have called this an Übergreifen.

The second instance of reaching over is in mm. 21–25, with “a different elaboration, the characteristic ‘up a third, down a step’ motion that here decorates the underlying stepwise line g₂₁–a₁–b. The top tones of the reaching-over figures are tones superposed from an inner voice (indicated by the arrows)” (2011, 148). Arrows in Cadwallader and Gagné’s analysis indeed indicate the ascending register transfers from b to b₁ and from c₂₁ to c₂₂; additional arrows in Example 7 show that the lines overlapped by these transfers continue their motion underneath the transferred notes, g₂₁ under b₁ and a₁ under c₂₂. Seen locally in mm. 21–22, the reaching over merely performs a change of voicing, as in Jonas’s description but with the addition of the 7th, d₁ in m. 22. However, the reaching-over line aims at a₁ in m. 23, the 4th of the ⁶/₄ chord. In mm. 23–24, c₂₁, the 6th of the ⁶/₄ chord is transferred to c₂₂, the 7th of the VII⁷ chord (figured as V) in m. 24, and aiming at b₁ in m. 25. The resulting (rather than “underlying”, as Cadwallader and Gagné describe it) line g₂₁–a₁–b₁ also performs a change of voicing, but a
more complex one than those envisaged by Jonas, with a full cycle of tonal functions, I–Ped. ₄
–(V)–I.

The third reaching over is inescapable, involving three continuous lines overlapping each other by register transfer, as indicated by additional arrows in my analysis, from top to bottom: \( b_1 \rightarrow b_1 \rightarrow c_{z1} \rightarrow b_2 \); \( g_{z1} \rightarrow f_{z1} \rightarrow g_{z2} \rightarrow f_{z2} \rightarrow g_{z2} \rightarrow f_{z2} \); and \( e_1 \rightarrow e_2 \rightarrow d_{z2} \rightarrow e_2 \rightarrow d_{z2} \rightarrow e_2 \rightarrow d_{z2} \). This once again involves changes of voicing—in this case of the V chord—from the second beat of m. 26 to the second beat of m. 28, and with a resulting ascending arpeggio, \( d_{z2} \rightarrow f_{z2} \rightarrow b_2 \); the reaching over introduces the \( \frac{6}{4} \) chord twice in between the different voicings of the \( V \frac{5}{3} \) chord. Even so, the main characteristic remains the intertwining of voices, which neither Jonas nor Cadwallader and Gagné mention.⁹

---

⁹ Cadwallader and Gagné discuss another example of reaching over in Bach’s Little Prelude in C major, BWV 924, which is discussed below along with Example 14. Other examples can be found in Forte and Gilbert 1982—especially pp. 265–267 and Examples 214 and 215. Forte and Gilbert do not particularly stress the continuation of the overlapped lines under the overlapping ones, but their graphic analyses show these quite clearly.
Ernst Oster devotes an extended note in *Free Composition* (1979, 48–49) to the discussion of Schenker’s Figure 41 (see Example 5a above). “Übergreifen,” he writes, “means literally reaching over, or across, the top voice in order to get hold of the following higher tone.” He distinguishes between two “basic forms,” depending on whether the resulting line is formed of the head notes of the reaching-over entries (as in Figs. 41b2 and b3), or the notes of the resulting line are introduced from above (as in Fig. 41d); he adds that a combination of the two forms is also possible (as in Fig. 41c and e). A variant of the first form is when “the last tone of the first group [i.e. the first reaching-over entry] and the superimposed tone of the inner voice [the second entry] appear simultaneously. Thus, Fig. 41a2 and a3 show the contracted forms of Fig. 41b2 and b3.” This is the “reaching over in superposition” (Übergreifen in Uebereinander), as opposed to the “reaching over in
succession” (Uebergreifen in Nacheinander) mentioned by Schenker himself in §129, §131, §231, and §232.

Oster’s note calls for three general remarks. First—as already mentioned in relation with Drabkin’s first definition—it seems difficult to describe reaching over in terms of “top” and “inner” voices. The process indeed inverts the order of the voices, with the top one becoming an inner one and, reciprocally, an inner one emerging on top. If more than two successive descending lines are involved, one’s considering any of them as “the top voice” would only result in confusion. Second, the purpose of reaching over is not always of gaining a higher tone, as we have seen (see note 5 above). Schenker of course often stresses the resulting lines, especially those ascending by step, but this merely is a natural consequence of the paramount importance of conjunct lines (Züge) in his theory as a whole. The third remark is that if one agrees with the definition proposed here, reaching over is characterized by the fact that the overlapped line continues at least one note under the beginning of the overlapping one, and therefore the technique necessarily involves some level of superposition.

Oster refers to several examples in Der freie Satz. Most of these are unproblematic and do illustrate the forms of reaching over that they concern; but some deserve further comments. Example 2 to Fig. 41 has been discussed above (see Examples 5a and 5b).

Schenker’s Figure 101.3, reproduced here as Example 8a, is difficult because of Schenker’s own description. Oster attempts to clarify by saying that in this reaching over “the descending group appears in the form of a third arpeggiation” (Schenker 1979, 48). This seems to conform to what Schenker shows, four entries beginning with a descending third—g=e1–d1, a1–f=e1, b1–g=f1 and c2–a1–g1 respectively; but Schenker’s description of these thirds in the text is not clear. He writes:

\[\text{Bei einem Quartabstand zwischen dem Endton des einen und dem Anfangston des anderen Einsatzes ergibt sich eine Reihe von Sekundschritten empor zur Nebennote;}\]
A syncopation counterpointing the arpeggiation of a third continues the entry up to the tone in fifth relation with the head note [of the next entry].

That is to say that the second note (which Schenker calls the “final” note) of each entry is prolonged by syncopation under the first note of the next entry, then goes down a step to obtain a fifth below this note. Reaching-over entries descending by leap appear problematic, however; this is the only such case ever mentioned by Schenker, and another reading of the voice leading is possible, as shown in Example 8b, with five lines descending by step and overlapping each other.

EXAMPLE 8a. L. van Beethoven, Sonata op. 109, III, var. 2 mm. 9ff. *Der freie Satz*, Fig. 101.3

EXAMPLE 8b. L. van Beethoven, Sonata op. 109, III, Vvar. 2, mm. 9ff. (Suggested analysis)

Fig. 101.5, reproduced here as Example 9a, concerns a passage from Mozart’s Concerto KV 488 which Schenker comments as follows:

Das Uebergreifen zielt auf die Brechung des Dreiklanges a–cis\(^{-1}\)–e\(^{1}\), demnach lägen zwischen den Einsätzen eigentlich Quartabstände; mit dem Uebergreifen im Nacheinander verknüpft aber Mozart eine Art Uebergreifen im Uebereinander, indem
er den Kopftönen des zweiten und dritten Einsatzes Quint-Intervalle vorhängt, die ein Übergreifen im Uebereinander erst möglich machen. (1935, 135 §232)

The reaching over aims at the arpeggiation of the triad $a-c_1-e_1$. [This corresponds to the definition by Jonas discussed above.] Thus, there would normally be intervals of a fourth between the individual entries. But Mozart combines a reaching over in succession with a sort of reaching over in superposition in that he precedes the head notes of the second and third entries with intervals of a fifth, which make the reaching over in superposition possible.

The arrows in the graph, from $d_1$ back to $g_2$ and from $f_2$ back to $b$, illustrate what Schenker has in mind: the second and third notes of the ascending arpeggiation, $c_2$ and $e_1$, are approached from an upper-neighbor note at a fourth above the preceding note of the arpeggiation. But each entry also continues down a step, reaching the fifth below the first note of the next entry; it is these fifths that Schenker considers “in superposition.” The reason why he says this becomes clear when one realizes that, in Mozart’s score, the fifths arise from a voice exchange between violin 1 and viola (and between violin 2 and cello) (Example 9b): the fifths are not “in succession,” as the first violin part might suggest, but “in superposition” between the first violin and the viola. While the fourth progressions between the entries imply a change of chord, the “fifth progressions” (conceptually at least) may be considered to belong to one and the same chord. It is in this abstract sense also that they are “in superposition.”

---

10 Oster appears somewhat confused about the situation here. In editorial additions to §232 (Schenker 1979, 83), he describes the “reaching over-in-succession” as consisting in the progression $d_1-c_2$ and the “superimposed reaching over” as “a sort of contracted reaching-over”, $g_3-d_1$, both probably read in the first violin part. But what Schenker calls “reaching over in succession” obviously is the case of the entries following each other, here $a \mid (d_1)-c_2 \mid (f_2)-e_1$, producing the arpeggiation $a-c_2-e_1$ with each note preceded by an appoggiatura, and the “reaching over in superposition” denotes the fact that the head note of each entry, the appoggiatura, appears above the note a fifth lower in the alto part (or, for the entry doubled in the second violin, in the cello part).
Oster notes that “Fig. 41, a2 and a3 show the contracted forms of Fig. 41, b2 and b3,” i.e., cases of reaching over in superposition (Schenker 1979, 49). He quotes examples from Der freie Satz supposed to illustrate this, among which is Fig. 65.6 from Händel’s Suite in F major, reproduced here as Example 10. Schenker writes: “the tied-over \( \sim 7 \) is apparently forced upward, but in reality \( e_2 \) is obtained through reaching over, by which the ascending passing note is given at the same time” (1935, 110 §182). The line \( d_2-c_2 \backslash c_{21}-d_1 \), clearly indicated in Schenker’s analysis of the voice leading, may indeed be a reaching-over line overlapping a–g in the left hand. But \( e_2 \), on the other hand, even if Schenker calls it a reaching over, does not belong to a descending overlapping line and really is a passing note, forming an exchange \( d_2-e_2-f_2 \) above \( f-e-d \) in the left hand, as shown in the right part of Schenker’s figure. This may at best be a “pseudo-reaching over.”
The concept of Untergreifen, which Schenker had defined as “a reaching down to a lower register of the inner voice and regaining from there the higher register” (1935, 83 §135), has been abandoned in modern Schenkerian literature where it is described merely as a “line (ascending) from an inner voice.” The “pseudo-reaching over,” in some cases at least, could be treated in the same way and described as a “line descending [to the upper voice] from a [transferred] inner note.” The idea of a line descending to the upper voice may seem odd, unless one conceives that the transferred inner note remains an inner note even after the transfer. Example 11 is one among numerous examples in the repertory (see also Example 12b). The basic motion in the upper voice is a neighboring motion, $b_1$–$c_2$–$b_1$, but the neighbor note itself is reached by a descent from $e_2$, a note transferred from the bass voice. This could also be described as an unfolding of the E major chord, but it is inherent in the structure of triads that an unfolding (arpeggiation) also is a change of voice. There is no overlapping of descending lines in such cases.\(^{11}\)

\(^{11}\) The descending line that follows the unfolding may be considered an extended appoggiatura of the upper neighbor note: the case is not unlike that of Example 3 above.
Example 11. J. Haydn, Sonata (Divertimento) in E major, Hob. XVI:13 II (Minuet), mm. 1–4 and analysis

In Example 101.1 of Der freie Satz, Schenker gives an example of a reaching over that does not result in an ascending movement in mm. 1–8 of the third movement of Haydn’s Sonata in E flat major, Hob. XVI:52. His commentary of this example is short: “The pitch level $g_1$ is maintained by means of a reaching over” (1935, 134 §232).

Example 12a. H. Schenker, Der freie Satz, Figure 101.1: J. Haydn, Sonata in E flat major, Hob. XVI:52 III mm 1–8.

The case is in fact slightly more complex than what Schenker shows. As can be seen in Example 12b, the chord of E₃ major first unfolds with $g_1$–$b₃$ in the treble, from which a line descends back to $g_1$ in m. 4. This first descending line is but a pseudo-reaching over, similar to that in Example 11 above; there is no overlapping of lines at this point. It is only in mm. 6–8 that two reaching-over lines overlap, after a register transfer from $a$ in the alto to $g_1$ in the treble.
A special mention must be made of the reaching over through voice exchange, as in Example 13, where the exchange blurs the voice leading. Example 13b shows that the underlying movement is ascending without any overlapping of lines and that the upper notes all belong to the same voice. This might be taken to mean that the case is one of “pseudo-reaching over.” However, there is a genuine crossing or lines in this case, even if it merely results from the voice exchange.

12 Examples 5c and 9b above already described cases of reaching over by voice exchange.
EXAMPLE 13b. J. S. Bach, Prelude in E minor, BWV 941, alternative analysis of mm. 3–7

As a last example of reaching over among many others, let us quote Bach’s Little Prelude in C major, BWV 924 (Example 14), where the overlapping lines are most striking. The resulting ascending line is $e_2-f_2-g_2$, $\hat{3} \hat{4} \hat{5}$. The line further goes to $\hat{6}$, but involves no more transfers and reaches $a_1$, an octave lower, in m. 6, without reaching over. The ascending motion continues to $b b_1$ and $c_2$, not represented, realizing an inner line from $\hat{3}$ to $\hat{8}$ that spans the whole piece.\(^{13}\) Each of the three upper voices begins its descending progression from the start and goes down one octave or more in mm. 1–6, from the chord of I (m. 1) to that of IV (m. 6): $e_2-d_2-c_2-b_1-(a_1)-g_1-(f_2)-(e_1)-(d_1)-c_1$, $c_2-b_1-a_1 \downarrow a_2-g_2-f_2-e_2-d_2-c_2-b_1-a_1$ and $g_1 \downarrow g_2-f_2-e_2-d_2-c_2-b_1-a_1-g_1-f_1$. The resulting movement at the deeper level is an ascending line, $e_2-f_2-g_2\uparrow a_1 (-b_1-c_2)$.

EXAMPLE 14. J. S. Bach, Little Prelude in C major, BWV 924, mm. 1–6, and analysis

\(^{13}\) Schenker’s analysis of this Little Prelude in *Der Tonwille* 4 ([1923] 2004, 3–6), presents it with an ascending line (*Urlinie*) from $\hat{3}$ to $\hat{8}$, but the Example for 43b in *Der freie Satz* shows this line as an inner line, an *Untergreifen*.
To conclude, reference must be made of Schenker’s earliest mention of the *Urlinie*, in the *Erläuterungsausgabe* of Beethoven’s op. 101, II (Example 15). Schenker is trying to elucidate *das thematische Dunkel*, “the thematic obscurity” of this movement, and succeeds by presenting overlapping descending lines—some of which obviously would later have been described as reaching-over lines. It is especially striking that what Schenker calls *Urlinie* in this instance are phenomena he would later describe as *Übergreifzüge*. His early conception of the *Urlinie* was that of generative motives, perhaps not unlike the idea of the *Grundgestalt* that Schoenberg was developing at about the same time. It appears that, in the later development of these two concepts, *Übergreifen* still corresponded to at least some the motives that earlier would have been conceived as *Urlinien*, while the *Urlinie* itself increasingly represented the primal descending line that unified the work as a whole.

**Example 15.** Heinrich Schenker, *Erläuterungs-Ausgabe der letzten fünf Sonaten*, *Sonate A dur, op. 101*, II mm. 1–8. Wien, Universal, 1921, Figure 25.

---

14 About possible links between Schenker’s and Schoenberg’s ideas on this point, see among others Schmalfeldt 1991 and Borio 2001.

15 This question has been alluded to in Cadwallader and Pastille 1992, especially pp. 123–126.
WORKS CITED


ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Nicolas Meeûs is Professor emeritus in the University Paris-Sorbonne. He is the French translator of Schenker’s freie Satz (L’Écriture libre) and the author of Heinrich Schenker: Une introduction, both published by P. Mardaga, Liège, 1993. He also published with Luciane Beduschi a manual of Schenkerian analysis for the University Paris-Sorbonne (CNED, 2014; http://nicolas.meeus.free.fr/Manuel.html).