


Are there any bad (or good)
transformational analyses?



Michael Buchler

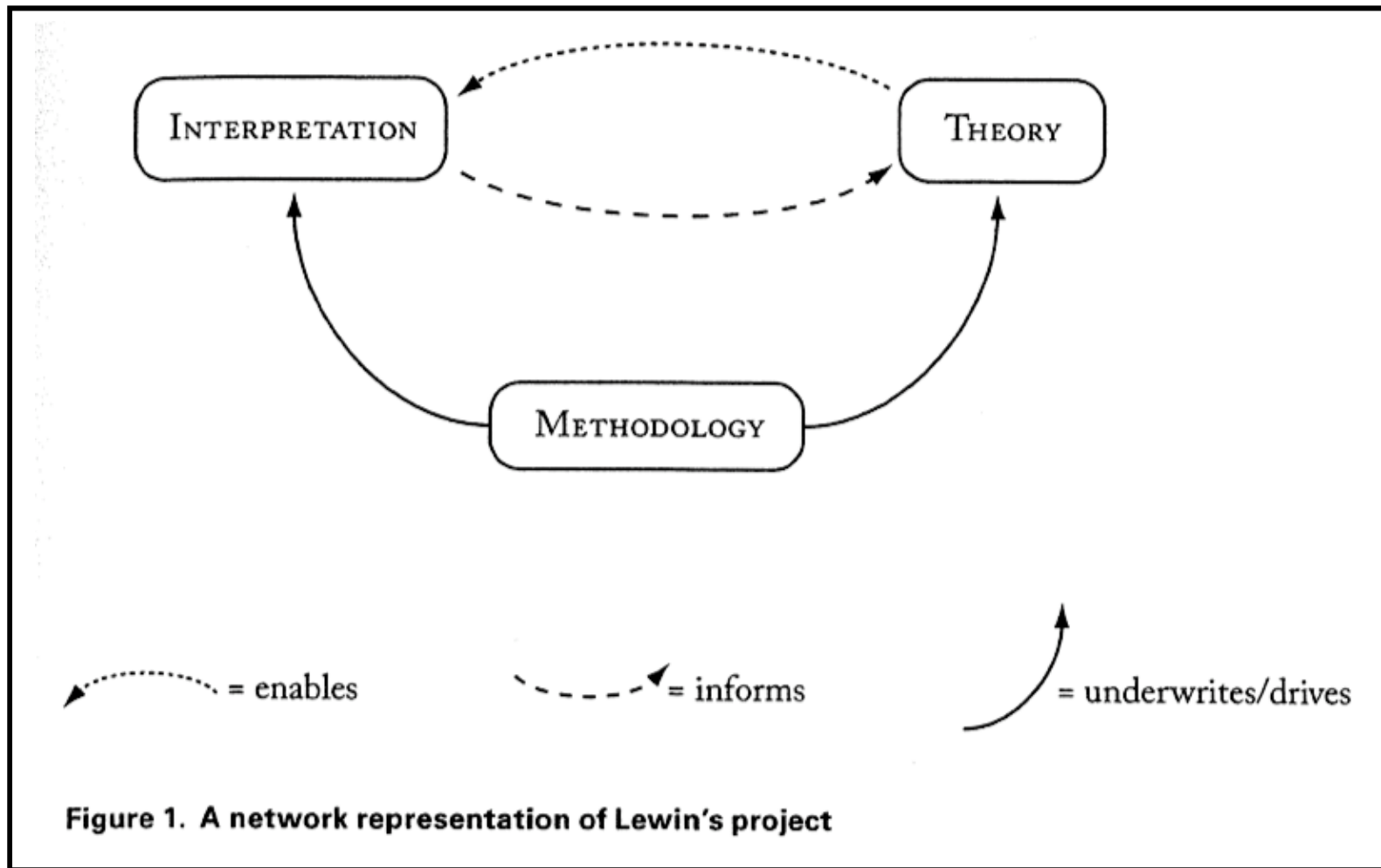
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Steven Rings, Network of “Lewin’s Project”

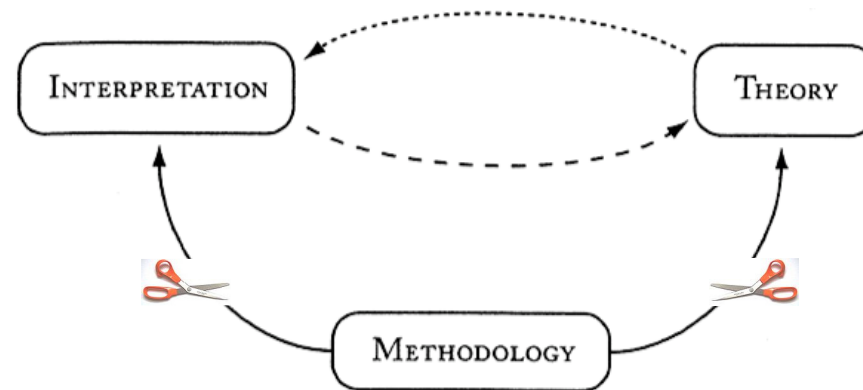


Rings, Steven. 2006. Review of three David Lewin books: *Generalized Musical Intervals and Transformations*; *Musical Form and Transformation: Four Analytic Essays*; and *Studies in Music with Text*. *JMT* 50/1: 111-127.

Rings on O'Donnell & Klumpenhouwer on Buchler on the methodology node

19 The polemical upheaval such abstraction can cause was recently on display in *Music Theory Online* 13/3 (September 2007), as various writers responded to Michael Buchler's (2007) critique of Klumpenhouwer networks. Tacitly at work in many of the responses was an effort to articulate the methodological principles that seemed violated by Buchler's

proposal. The responses to Buchler from Henry Klumpenhouwer (2007) and Shaugn O'Donnell (2007) can be read as the most explicit attempts to "reattach the Methodology node" of Figure 1 to the questions of theory and interpretation circulating in the discussion.



Rings, Steven. 2006. Review of three David Lewin books: *Generalized Musical Intervals and Transformations*; *Musical Form and Transformation: Four Analytic Essays*; and *Studies in Music with Text*. *JMT* 50/1: 111-127.

Roeder's (2009) Preference Rules

[12.1] Across these various transformational approaches to the Bartók passage, I have taken care to articulate the goals and principles underlying their construction, proceeding from and elaborating upon those discussed by Lewin in *MFT*. Achieving an expressive analysis is by no means assured. It is always an art, but certain constant concerns have been evident, which are summarized below as a series of guidelines for choosing objects and transformations:

- Choose the most aurally salient analytical objects that will still belong to a single family and have an economical transformational structure.
- Choose an object family that is complete (including all objects that appear in the piece) but minimal (not entailing many objects that do not appear).
- Choose transformations that occur prominently (preferably manifesting distinctive aural signatures) and repeatedly, so establishing themselves as characteristic, while satisfying the formal constraints necessary for network structure and isography.
- Choose transformations that may be applied to other families of objects in the same composition.
- Organize the transformational network to be homologous with musical form, such that the characteristic gestures correspond to segments, phrases, sections, and the processes that constitute them.
- Event-oriented networks (in which two nodes may have the same content) are good for illustrating isomorphic gestures statically, or for discussing network structures that are not easily visualized as temporal gestures.
- Spaces are most effective for analysis if the pathways taken by the piece are made evident, for example, by the characteristic gestures of an animated agent. Agents and their motions should be designed to focus on the musical processes identified by the analysis (clarifying the musically relevant sameness and difference of gestures), and to elicit viewers' empathetic participation in the ongoing making of musical structure, while minimizing extraneous connotations.
- Suitably constrained representation can enhance signification.

[12.2] The presentation above of so many different views of the same passage shows that multiple representations are sometimes needed to get at different aspects of a passage, even those that are consistent with each other. This is not to say that there is no best analysis—on the contrary, I have given many bases above for judging which analyses are most effective—but only to acknowledge that, like words, transformational analyses are at best imperfect and incomplete signifiers of musical experience.

Schubert, Piano Sonata, D. 959, iv, mm. 1-8

RONDO

Allegretto

The first system of the musical score consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. Both staves are in the key of D major (two sharps) and 3/4 time. The music begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The right hand features a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, while the left hand provides a steady accompaniment of eighth notes. The system concludes with a repeat sign.

The second system of the musical score continues from the first system. It features the same two-staff arrangement in D major and 3/4 time. The right hand's melodic line continues with grace notes and slurs. The left hand maintains its eighth-note accompaniment. A *cresc.* (crescendo) marking is placed above the right hand staff in the fifth measure of this system, indicating an increase in volume. The system ends with a repeat sign.

Schubert, Piano Sonata, D. 959, iv, mm. 1-8

RONDO

Allegretto

The first system of the musical score shows the beginning of the piece. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 3/4. The music begins with a piano (p) dynamic marking. The right hand features a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, while the left hand provides a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes.

The second system of the musical score continues the piece. It features a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The right hand has a melodic line with a slur over the first four measures and a dashed line indicating a continuation. The word *Anstieg* is written above the staff, and a fermata is placed over the fifth measure. A triplet of eighth notes is marked with a '3' and a hat symbol (^) above it. The left hand has a bass line with a slur and a dashed line below it.

Chorale from Schoenberg, op. 11, no. 2

Sehr langsam (♩=120)

11

(12/8) *p*

cresc. ... *f*

poco string.

Example 1

(p. 80 of Lewin's article)

Lewin, David. 1994. "A Tutorial on Klumpenhower Networks, Using the Chorale in Schoenberg's Opus 11, No. 2." *Journal of Music Theory* 38: 79–101.

Lewin's segmentation into chords for analysis

The image displays a musical score for Example 9, consisting of two staves. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The music is segmented into 13 numbered chords, indicated by vertical lines and brackets above the notes. The chords are numbered 1 through 13. Chords 6, 7, 8, and 11 are specifically highlighted with brackets above the notes. Chord 7 is marked with a circled '2' below it. The notes are primarily eighth and quarter notes, with some chords being dyads or triads. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 12/8.

Example 9

(p. 87)

Lewin, David. 1994. "A Tutorial on Klumpenhouwer Networks, Using the Chorale in Schoenberg's Opus 11, No. 2." *Journal of Music Theory* 38: 79–101.

Sehr langsam (♩=120)

Lewin's segmentation into chords for analysis

Lewin's agenda for analyzing this excerpt

Agenda 1: To formulate an overall view of the chorale, we must somehow relate the $4-19$ sets of its middle to the $4-16s$ and $4-Z15s$ of its opening.

$$= [0148]$$

$$= [0157]$$

$$= [0146]$$

Agenda 2: The cadence chord of the chorale must be integrated into that view.

Agenda 3 : So must the verticalities at the end of measure 11 and the beginning of measure 12, chords that strongly project diminished triads. Example 5 showed to some extent how the left and right hands of the chords fit into a scheme of $4-19$ sets, but the effect of the chords as vertical totalities cannot be ignored. Furthermore, the $\{D4, F4\}$ of the chord at the beginning of m. 12 was not addressed by example 5; this dyad has yet to be integrated into any overall harmonic view of the chorale.⁶

(p. 86 of Lewin 1994)

Chorale from Schoenberg, op. 11, no. 2

Sehr langsam (♩=120) 11

cresc. ... f

poco string.

[0146] [0157] [0157] [0146] [0157] [0347] [0136] [0236] [0148] [01458] [013568]

[01257] [01257]

T5

Chorale from Schoenberg, op. 11, no. 2

Sehr langsam (♩=120) 11


3 - 5	5										
5	6										
6	8	3 - 5	8	11	4	8	4	7			
		5	7	3	6	8	4	7			
		6	8	3	3	7	3	2			
							4	7			
							8	6			

harmonic spacing, measured in semitones

Diverse or Unified?

The passage is clearly a single phrase, yet its harmonic structure sounds diffuse. That is a significant aspect of its aesthetic effect, and we shall take some time to explore more precisely some of its diverse features. Then we shall approach a question which arises naturally from this context: is there some way in which we can sense the harmonic field of the phrase as unified, rather than diverse? We shall see that Klumpenhouwer Networks provide a positive answer to that question.² We shall also see how they provide useful theoretical machinery for exploring further aspects of harmonic diversity in the passage.

(p. 79 of Lewin 1994)



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