

**Mann's *Doctor Faustus*:  
Gestapo Music**

**John P. Anderson**

Universal Publishers  
Boca Raton

*Mann's Doctor Faustus: Gestapo Music*

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Universal Publishers  
Boca Raton, Florida • USA  
2007

ISBN: 1-58112-944-0

[www.universal-publishers.com](http://www.universal-publishers.com)

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## **Thanks**

To Janet MacLauglin and Dr. Beth Sutherland for helping me through some bad years and back to my senses.

## Protocol and Debts

I used two translations, one by John E. Wood and an earlier work by H. T. Lowe-Porter. Unless otherwise indicated, the quotations are from Wood.

The references to *Story* are to Thomas Mann's *The Story of a Novel*. This outlines in presumably reliable detail Mann's personal experience and intentions in writing the novel. Quotes from Mann about Schopenhauer are from the Schopenhauer volume in The Living Thoughts Library.

Quotes from Tillich are from his *The Interpretation of History*. The quotes from Adorno are from either his *Philosophy of Modern Music* or *Beethoven*. The quotes from Subotnik [about Adorno] are from her *Developing Variations*. General statements about music history were taken from various The Teaching Company lectures by Robert Greenberg. Piston's remarks about counterpoint are from his *Counterpoint*. Quotes from Schoenberg are from his *Style and Idea*. Comments about the history of music under the Third Reich are based on Kater's *The Twisted Muse* or Levi's *Music in the Third Reich*

Information about syphilis was contracted from Deborah Hayden's *Pox: Genius, Madness, and the Mysteries of Syphilis*. The summary of Freud's points of view is from Mark Edmundson's article *Freud and the Fundamentalist Urge* in the April 30, 2006 edition of the New York Times. The interpretation of Kierkegaard is from a paper by Dr. David Naugle. The quotes from Scaff are from *History, Myth and Culture*. Quotes from EB are from the Encyclopedia Britannica.

Eric Kahler's *The Orbit of Thomas Mann* provided insights about Mann's work in general and the history of the Faust legend. Michael Beddow's *Mann Doctor Faustus* is a sophisticated reading of the novel, and it schooled me particularly as to the implications of the main character's childhood and the challenge of the allegorical interpretation.

Capitalization of Devil and god are intended to be random and express the importance of the Devil. The Devil is alternatively a He or an It but never a She. Materials within [square brackets] inside of quoted material are my own editorial comments.

My intent is to explore this novel as an art object, to examine how it works as art. I am an amateur and do not research in depth to determine whether others have written along the same lines as I have.

## **Aperitif**

**Free** music: “Music doesn’t argue, discuss, or quarrel, it just breathes the air of freedom.” Harold Arlen

**Controlled** music: “Modern music sees absolute oblivion as its goal. It is the surviving message of despair from the ship-wrecked.” T.W.Adorno

## **Some Hors D’Oeuvres**

This novel is about control, not just a little practical control but way too much control. So much control that freedom is crushed, love is impossible and only despair endures. Control over who was a slave laborer at the Krupp factory and who was free enjoying nightlife in Berlin and Warsaw. Control even over who reproduced and who didn’t. And of course who lived and who died.

The displaced feeling the reader can experience in this novel about control is like that the architect Daniel Libeskind described in connection with the Berlin museum [in the form of a crushed Star of David] commemorating the Jewish holocaust dead. About the adjacent Garden of Exile, its architect said:

. . . 49 columns filled with earth are arranged in a square, standing vertically on a slanting floor. Olive willows grow out of the columns. The garden’s form—a square—is the only completely rectangular form in the building [the museum]. “One feels a little sick walking through it. But it is accurate, because that is what perfect order feels like when you leave the history of Berlin.”

Here is a history of Berlin, and the subject is perfectly controlled

order in German music composition, order that carried the seeds of its own destruction. So get ready for some really sick music, music with Nazi-type order, some Gestapo music. The subtitle of this novel is *The Life of the German Composer Adrian Leverkühn as Told by a Friend*. Not any composer, but a German composer.

## Main Course

Thomas Mann wrote this novel during and shortly after WWII, from 1943 to 1947. Note that he started writing it before he knew the outcome of the war and finished it just after the war was over. Written in the heat of the events, this novel wrestles with the implications for the future of mankind of the rise and fall of the Nazi behemoth. The noble purposes of this novel are to understand the nature and sources of Nazi evil and to help ban it from the ring in the future.

A German who dared to criticize the Nazis, Mann left his homeland as the Nazis took over. The revenge minded Third Reich revoked his citizenship. He watched and protested the horrors of WWII from the sidelines of Southern California, sidelines his German based critics later described as “comfortable box seats.”

From the safety of his box seats, Mann wrote this novel as his answer to the most compelling question of the 20<sup>th</sup> century— what could have possibly produced the Nazi killing machine in a country with a long civilized tradition. How could millions of Jewish men, women and children have been murdered by the government of a country that prided itself as the “land of music,” the land of Bach, Mozart and Beethoven?

Many answers have been given to this question. For example: World War I made the Nazis and World War II inevitable; or the Devil made the Germans do it. Digging in deeper, the philosopher Heidegger, who cooperated with the Nazis, thought the source was a structural defect in mankind in general, not just in Germans. Others simply said mankind is capable of being really bad from time to time but who knows why so let’s get on with it. Some viewed the Third Reich historically— as the third chapter in a repeating pattern of violent expansion and

collapse: the First Reich, the “Holy Roman” but really German-based empire in the years 926-1806; and the Second Reich, the German empire in the years 1871-1919 that ended with defeat in WWI.

Mann gives a different kind of answer. He gives an indirect answer. He does not confront the death camps head on. His answer is that the land of music produced not only the freedom-based music of Bach, Mozart and Beethoven. It also produced twelve-tone row music, “serial” music composed without freedom but with strict controls. This music must repeat each note in a series of twelve notes, a series known as the row, before using any of the notes again. Founded on repetition, this ultra-control music was also German and it arrived with the advent of the Nazis.

This kind of music, serial or twelve-tone music, was actually invented by the German Arnold Schoenberg. Once hatched, the serial method of composition bred much progeny. It was the new “groundbreaking” style. Many composers of serious music tried it. It swept through the world of music like a blitzkrieg attack.

Mann believed that this kind of music contains the key to what happened politically in Germany starting at that same time. The first composition using the serial method was published in 1921, the same year Hitler became head of the National Socialist party. The key is that the music is composed with a rigid set of rules that must be slavishly followed. Based in repetition, these rules were to govern all aspects of music—melodic progression, chord structure, rhythm. Control, control, control and repetition repetition repetition.

Mann’s point is not that Schoenberg or serial music was responsible for, led to or promoted the acceptance of Nazism but that the same force was at work in both cases. Mann finds a demonic force at the heart of both serial music and of Nazism. Both triggered the rise of a demonic force by reason of blind and slavish obedience to rigid rules designed to establish control over too much, control over so much that freedom-denying methods were necessary to try to hold the result together.

Further, Mann crafts the connection between serial music and the Third Reich using as a guide a theory of Theodore

Adorno, Mann's musical advisor for the novel. The theory speaks to the relationship between music composed in a society and the nature of the society. It is a more sophisticated version of the well-established view that music is a mirror of society. Adorno's theory is that the more isolated the artist the more the artist's work must reflect the nature of the society from which the artist is isolated. You will note the paradox—the more isolated the more the artist reflects his or her society.

In giving his answer to the most compelling question of the 20th century, Mann focuses this novel on a biography of a totally fictional music composer Adrian Leverkühn. In the novel Leverkühn invents the serial method actually invented by Schoenberg. Mann structures the fictional composer's life and work as aspects of a demonic energy field. Compared to the death camps, a subject Mann largely avoids in this novel, dealing with the demonic in the work of an artist is a soft approach, a set of comfortable box seats, even a sky box. Mann described his indirect effort as a disguise: as a "novel of my era, disguised as the story of an artist's life."

In Mann's era, the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the fictional composer Leverkühn's life and work increasingly reflect control by demonic forces. His increasing arrogance, pride and lack of consideration for others manifest increasing demonic control of his character. Deep in his egocentric development and isolation from humanity, the coldly intellectual composer receives what seems like a personal audience of the Devil, an audience that culminates in a pact, a *qui pro quo* understanding. As part of the deal, Leverkühn receives genius level energy but is rendered incapable of love, the demonic destroying the freedom that is the foundation for love.

With the devil's octane in his tank, genius-powered Leverkühn invents a serial method of composing that produces "music" of a dissonant, fragmented and irreconciled character. His compositions are a reflection of his character and seemingly inevitable products of his twisted soul. The nature of these compositions and their relationship to Leverkühn's character are at the heart of the novel. They show the demonic at work in one character, an artist.

In order to indicate that the same demonic process was at work on the national level in the case of the Nazis, this biography of Leverkühn's earlier life and music is told against a light sketch of the last years of the Third Reich [from 1943 to 1945]. The reader is invited to follow the path of an implied allegory from the serial music and the composer's character to the nature of Nazi Germany and Hitler's character. The implication is that in Nazi Germany the same demonic process arose for the same reasons with the same results. This allegorical implication is the lynchpin of the novel.

The reader has to follow this path of allegory from composer to nation state largely on his and her own. In the novel Mann touches only lightly on Nazi history and assumes the reader is familiar with Hitler's personal characteristics. Without much assistance the reader has to picture the ovens and hear the screams as AL composes music about vats of boiling oil and the lament of Dr. Faustus. This implied allegory worked for me because to my ear serial music sounds like barbed wire. And like the barbed wire that surrounded the death camps, twelve-tone music is made of repeating segments that function as control grids for the music.

So now we have another answer to the question of the 20th century—the demonic. So what? Is this a new answer or just another word? What does this answer teach us? Is the answer relevant for the future? Can it help avoid similar problems in the future?

Mann's answer is a new answer because Mann means something radically different by the demonic. This is not your father's devil and this devil does not wear Prada. Mann's demonic is real and intangible but not a supernatural force. It is of this world. It is not triggered by bad intentions or a bad angel clutching your shoulder. It is more like gravity; it is a force naturally in this world. It is triggered by humans trying to control too much, even if the control is ostensibly designed for a good purpose. It happens when the end justifies the means. Then the means can and often become anti-humanitarian.

The demonic is not the only source of evil. There is also "natural" evil such as when a child dies of disease and personal evil when one human intentionally harms another. But as history

has shown, demonic evil can be the most potent of evils because by definition it is organized, like the Nazi fascist state.

Mann's novel teaches us that too much control was the bottom side of the monstrosity of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and suggests the same analysis for the First and Second Reichs. Perhaps we can learn from this analysis not to push personal or political control to the point that anti-humanitarian means are necessary. With this learning, we would always carefully scrutinize the end objective if the required means are anti-humanitarian, such as personal abuse or war.

It is difficult to be optimistic about this issue because too much control is a real problem for humans, particularly males. Control seems to be one of our natural instincts, perhaps emanating from the original primal horde family group in which one male controlled all the females in the group and drove off his rival sons.

### **Mann's Demonic**

Mann's conception of the demonic is the rebar in the form and content of this novel. It gives shape to the patterns of self-destruction and irreconciled opposites, patterns that Mann uses throughout. These patterns also show up in Leverkühn's music.

Mann's approach to the demonic suggests that he found congenial ideas in the work of Paul Tillich, a 20<sup>th</sup> century theologian, and Arthur Schopenhauer, a 19<sup>th</sup> century philosopher. Apparently their ideas about UR-reality extended his own intuitive feelings. Mann's demonic is a blended mixture of his own and some of their ideas.

Unlike the divine, Mann's demonic is not in the realm of supernatural spirits. It does not hang around heaven and make bets with God on what Job will do under pressure. It does not come up out of a pit. The gods do not control it. Prayers do not help keep it in its hole. It is not a corruption in the heart of humankind. But it is the result of a mistake humans are prone to—trying to control too much.

Mann's demonic is a natural force always lurking in the very basic makeup of our secular world. Like gravity it is

automatic, always there ready to go. If that weren't bad enough, Mann's always ready to go demonic has unlimited horsepower. That is the ultimate meaning of the mythical Satan's "Fall" into this world and His status as the Prince of this World. The mythical Satan still has his powers, but now they only work here.

Mann builds this novel on the concept taken from the theologian Paul Tillich that any effort at too much rigid and unforgiving control in any realm at any time and any place will trigger a demonic force. Even if the control is motivated by a desire to do something better, or even help people. Evil intent is not necessary. Evil arises naturally from too much control in any field, even religion.

Mann makes this point by registering the rise of the demonic in music, in the arts. This is one of the last places you would think the demonic would or could invade, the arts usually being the last bastion of free protest and independence and a reliable source of pleasure and solace. How can it be bad to compose music? If the demonic can come in the arts, then it can come in any realm, even control by a church. Then, with the Nazis, the demonic came in politics and nationalism, more traditional venues for totalitarian control. With control at the heart of the Nazi soul, it gave us the death camps.

For the power plant of the demonic, Mann uses the concept of the Primal Will force as described by the philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer. This Tillich/Schopenhauer combination would make the demonic very powerful. It would much easier to avoid it in the first place by not trying to control too much.

While Nazism was one of the worst cases of the demonic, the demonic has appeared many times in human experience as humans tried to control forces that were beyond their means. These included the blood sacrifices of first-born children practiced in order to propitiate or control bloodthirsty gods like Moloch. And the regular blood sacrifices by the Aztecs in order to make the sun behave.

In building the background for the Nazi manifestation of the demonic, Mann focuses on the Christian Middle Ages when the First Reich was in charge. Then, in the name of the religion of love, a demonically driven Catholic Church burned humans in

order to save them from the devil and stamp out their wrong ideas. In these tragic activities, we can sense a purpose [controlling the behavior and thoughts of everyone] that was so far beyond human capacity that it had to be carried out with rigid controls that involved taking human life—the ultimate denial of the connection among all humans.

This is the formula for the demonic—trying to control too much necessarily draws on anti-humanitarian means. Trying to do too much means going too far—just as a practical matter. In this process freedom and the spirit of humanism are victimized.

In addition, the demonic effort has a built-in tendency for self-destruction. This self-destruction is the work of an inherent aspect of the demonic. In its effort to control too much, it tries to control inconsistent and irreconcilable forces. Forced together, these irreconcilable components eventually explode. With self-destruction, at least the attendant evil goes away, but many are caught under the ensuing rubble.

Mann's demonic force distorts the human energy field—energy is increased as the freedom of choice is reduced. Under the demonic, human energy is channeled by restrictions, focused by lack of freedom. Like a laser that achieves power through controlled alignment of light frequencies, the demonic focuses greater energy through limited possibilities. The Nazis were excited by and aligned to the frequencies given off by Hitler. Their controlled alignment enhanced their power. They all vibrated together, and they burned their way through the Jews.

This demonic force is a natural associate of the Faustian spirit, the ego-based spirit in humans that reaches for the infinite. Thus the title Doctor Faustus. The Faustian spirit to disregard limits first raised its head in Eve's disobedient desire in the Garden of Eden to have god-like knowledge. The Faustian reach is also featured in the often-told story of Doctor Faustus, the man who was willing to sell his soul to the devil because he wanted to know everything, to know and thus control too much. Reaching for the infinite may be good for energy enhancement and creativity, but it is bad in terms of the spiritual energy field that results. We can't provide health care for all children because we "have" to go to the moon.

This demonic force is seductive and therefore highly dangerous because it always involves both a creative and destructive side—regardless of the motivation for the control. The essence of the creative side is genius ability and energy while the essence of the destructive side is denial. The demonic, always a package deal, is good and bad and therefore ugly. Eve gained the knowledge of good and bad but had to suffer more childbearing pains and eventual death. Leverkusen invents a new method of composition but suffers headaches, syphilis, inability to love and eventual total collapse. The Nazis invented important rocket and jet propulsion technology that enhanced subsequent peaceful scientific programs but murdered millions in history's greatest pogrom, the ultimate denial of life.

In general terms, the characteristic nature of the creative/destructive demonic package is a combination of opposites. And the nature of the combination is odd—the opposites are not reconciled or mediated in the combination. They do not mix or compromise. Neither is changed in the process. They just repeat. They are irreconcilable. Like black and white that don't mix to gray.

Both sides of this demonic are marked by possession, a seizure that robs the person or society of normal self-control and dictates what the person or society does. Possession is the epitome of too much control. Possessed by her desire, Eve just had to eat the fruit. The artist is under the control of his muse and can't be bothered with the needs of others. In order to be born again, Germany must conquer Europe despite the human toll. We must force democracy in the Middle East despite the costs.

At the individual human level, demonic possession denies the essence of a human being as a creature with at least some free will, a partial freedom above and beyond instinct controls. The demonic perverts this all-important freedom, which is necessary for some of humanity's highest pursuits. Art needs freedom. Individuality needs freedom. Humanism needs freedom; humane treatment of others is to grant them a measure of freedom. Love needs freedom, for control destroys love. With possession the demonic destroys the humane essence of the human—free will, individuality, concern for others and love. This is a high cost

indeed. It lowers us to the primitive state from which we arose. In that controlled state we just repeat instinctive behavior. Control control control and repetition repetition repetition.

A pact with the Devil is a symbol of the effect of the perverse control caused by the demonic. But the pact is just a symbol and a way of speaking. The symbol is not exact because the pact is not a voluntary contract but the result of involuntary possession. The demonic, a natural force, is the reality and the Devil is the symbol, a symbol that as traditionally interpreted can distort the reality. In the following, the demonic and the Devil are used interchangeably but remember which is the reality and which the symbol. The demonic/Devil is here, and there, and here and there all the time, and everywhere, just waiting. Like gravity.

Possession and control are the antithesis of freedom. As Mann notes in this novel, freedom was so important to God that God gave humankind the freedom of choice—to sin, to separate and alienate from God, to distrust God. This is the divine spark we all carry—the power to choose more or less moral possibilities. Mann operates on the premise that creative freedom is as necessary to music as moral freedom is necessary to humans as humans.

### **The Demonic in this Novel**

This novel presents the demonic in two biographies. One is the personal biography of a fictional German composer Adrian Leverkühn [“AL”] and the twelve-tone composition system he brings into the world of music. This biography occupies most of the novel and is presented in detail. It shows Leverkühn’s personal heritage and his personal, intellectual and musical development, a development increasingly influenced by the denial or destructive aspect of the demonic. The other is the historical political biography of Germany just prior to and under the Nazis and the destruction it brought into the world of humanity. In the case of Germany the factual treatment is relatively sketchy and largely incomplete.

Total control rising to the level of the demonic is the common element in the biographies of the composer and

Germany—the demonic rules in both. AL tries to control all aspects of his compositions with a repetitive technique. This destroys creative freedom and victimizes the human aspects of his compositions. More fundamentally, his compositions self-destruct as music; they emerge as sounds organized in the spirit of denial. Likewise, the Third Reich tries to control all aspects of life in Europe and beyond with government by arbitrary fiat backed up by murder. They victimized millions, sought to rule absolutely everywhere they conquered and eventually self-destructed as a government. And the rubble rained down.

In the novel the fictional composer Leverkühn invents a musical composition style based on the twelve-tone row. This style—known as serial composition—is one form of atonal music [music not based on a key]. It is distinguished from other atonal music by strict control of the order of notes used by the composer for the entire piece. It is the ultra-atonal music. Creative freedom is restricted. Using the strict control of the twelve-tone row Leverkühn composes with superhuman concentration. He composes music of power limited and focused by these strict controls.

Early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century twelve-tone was considered the avant garde, a major creative development in music. Many composers followed Schopenhauer's lead. Against the grain of opinion and following the lead of his musical advisor Theodore Adorno, Mann believed that this radically new kind of music was infused with a demonic spirit, creative but also dangerous.

Nazi Germany was a fascist state strictly controlled by the concepts developed by Hitler. He became President of the National Socialist German Workers' Party in 1921, the same year Schoenberg first published a composition using the twelve-tone serial method. You numbers oriented readers will notice that 1921 adds to the unlucky number 13, the symbol of birth and death.

The principles in Hitler's prophetic manifesto *Mein Kampf* were implemented as Hitler came to power in the 1930's. Hitler's totalitarian Nazi government was the twelve-tone row for Germany. The laser-aligned Nazis controlled everything, including all music. In the grip of the Nazis, Germany made rapid advances by focusing on war technology and, with Japan and Italy, took on

and nearly vanquished most of the civilized world.

Mann said in *Story* that the Devil is the secret star of this novel. The Devil certainly has many of the best lines, and Mann works hard to have the Devil appear in the exact middle of the novel, between Chapters 24 and 25 in a 48 chapter novel. The Devil is the proxy for the demonic.

And the Devil, our international celebrity, comes with full-blown syphilis. Both Hitler and AL had syphilis. Syphilis is a manifestation of the demonic in the germ realm; it can give genius energy but in its late stages it seizes control of brain and heart functions. The growing infestation of the disease symbolizes increasing control by the Devil, by the demonic.

### **Historical Relationship Between Nazi Germany and Twelve-Tone Music**

In this novel the fictional character Leverkuhn invents the method of composition that was actually invented by Arnold Schoenberg. However, the character AL is not based on Schoenberg. The fictional Leverkuhn is an Aryan.

Schoenberg was born Jewish, and his “Bolshevik” music was banned by the Third Reich as part of the total control of music—what music could be played, recorded or sold and who could conduct, sing or play in any orchestra, band or group anywhere in Germany at any time. Even Mozart’s operas were stripped clean of Da Ponte’s librettos. The quarrelsome critics were controlled. The Nazis hated Schoenberg so much that the music of Schoenberg’s non-Jewish students such as Webern and Berg was also banned.

But not all twelve-tone music was banned. The control, order and sense of strict selection inherent in the twelve-tone method were too much in the Nazi blood. Moreover, the Nazis liked to think of themselves as modern, the Third Reich as the new secular order for 1000 years. The music of other twelve-tone composers, Aryan of course, was allowed in the totally controlled Nazi environment.

Schoenberg wrote in 1947 that during the time of Hitler twelve-tone music was at least in some quarters considered

reflective of Nazi totalitarian principles:

The German composer, Paul von Klenau [Danish], during Hitler's time, composed a whole opera in twelve-tone style. After a successful performance, he published an essay in which he 'demonstrated' that this method is a true image of national-socialist principles.

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In a 'fascist' interpretation, the basic set accordingly would represent the leader, the Duce, the Fuehrer, on whom all depends, who distributes power and function to every tone, who also is the originator of all the three mirror forms and who is responsible for all the subsequent transpositions of the basic set and its derivatives—to function as sub-Fuehrer in minor affairs [technical terms basic set and mirror forms to be discussed].

Schoenberg and Mann were friends, both exiled to Los Angeles during the Nazi regime. They spoke often as Mann wrote this novel. Not surprisingly, the novel resulted in a breach of their friendship. It portrayed Schoenberg's music as demonic. Schoenberg claimed that by this novel Mann stole his intellectual property in the twelve-tone system, a claim that resulted in the disclaimer at the end of the novel setting the record straight.

This is the background for Mann's presentation. AL can't be modeled on the person of Schoenberg because his music was banned whereas Mann wants to emphasize the affinity of the spirit of serial music and of the Nazis. Mann does try to close the loop by having a character assert that in important respects Jews are very much like the Germans.

But before we totally leave Schoenberg, note that the important year 1921 featured both the first composition by Schoenberg in strict twelve-tone style and the elevation of Hitler to the head of the Nazi party. Connecting to these events, Mann has AL compose his first masterpiece in 1921. That "ground breaking" composition is about the apocalypse, the death of all. His last composition is done in 1930. It is *The Lament of Dr. Faustus*, a lament from the prison of the pact with the Devil. Then

AL collapses, the final payment on his pact with the demonic, the Devil's due. AL dies in 1940, shortly after Germany invaded Poland and starting the blood bath of WWII.

Unlike the treatment of Schoenberg, the Nazi regime was ambivalent about Igor Stravinsky, an Aryan who supported the Third Reich. His music appears in the novel as an example of compromise. He composed using multiple keys rather than atonally. His acceptance and support by the regime was part of a Nazi effort to find a German resident musical genius. Mann also uses the music of R. Strauss; Mann believed Strauss composed fascist music [Kater]. In a meaningful conjunction, Mann has AL visit a syphilitic prostitute and hear a Strauss opera on the same trip.

### **Relationship Between Germany and the Fictional Composer Leverkühn**

In the novel, AL's life functions as an allegory of Germany. The allegory is a loose one, and it acts prophetically. The allegory breaks down at the end when AL laments his pact and confesses to his group of acquaintances, acts without known counterpart in Nazi Germany's political hierarchy. Perhaps this is an example of the literary demonic, an allegory that tried to do too much and self-destructed.

As a sensitive barometer of culture, AL's music anticipates the force and collective nature of the Nazi German political system. They are aligned on the same repetitive frequencies. As depicted by Mann, AL's system of music composition demonstrates both sides of the demonic. It is highly creative, the positive side of the demonic. But it used a procedure of total control over too much. As a result, it had to be infused with the diabolical, the negative side or denial side of the demonic. Lacking artistic freedom, his music has no warmth or love. Its natural subjects are way over on the dark side—parody, the apocalypse and loss of soul. His natural tools are a sense of strife and lack of reconciliation. Without any freedom, the superhuman energy received by Leverkühn turns out to be a poisoned source of inspiration.

Hitler was Germany's pact with the Devil. For Hitler, the Aryan race was the sole creative force for mankind, another poisoned source of inspiration. Germany also experienced the creative side of the demonic—the invention of the V-1, V-2 and the jet plane. On the destructive side, the Nazis were inhumane on a scale apparently never seen before on the face of the earth.

In the biography of the composer, the novel focuses on the kind of soul that could have produced such music. That soul is a reclusive, arrogant, inconsiderate and barely human German. Frozen under strict and intellectually grounded self-control, he gives nothing to others. He is possessed by egocentricity. Self-regard leads to debilitating creative self-consciousness and composer's block with respect to ideas beyond parody. Only tragedy experienced by others frees him up to invention. Harm to others is his inspiration. His transcendent source is the demonic; only the demonic muse can take him out of himself. As an individual he is the analog of the Nazi state.

In the biography of Nazi Germany, the same demonic and inhumane traits appear. Except for the Fuehrer, the Nazi leaders were both incandescently egotistical and abject lickspittles. They strutted around in brashly ornamented uniforms, abused their subordinates and licked the boots of their superiors, particularly after the Nazi Party members took over the important government administrative positions. At the summit of this pyramid of control, the Fuehrer was ego monstrosly personified—he was genius and could not brook any disagreement. He was subject to no standards or rules. The only development that pleased Hitler was starting another military campaign. What country can we invade next? What is left? But the Great Genius Fuehrer couldn't recognize defeat when it was in his face and at his backside. He didn't care even about the German soldiers. The last orders were to defend Germany to the death. All officers disobeying were to be shot.

Mann shows that certain ideas paved the way for the Nazis. They included the idea in the writings of Oswald Spengler [*The Decline of the West*] that a "breakthrough" to a new culture was needed in Germany—and that the necessary energy for a breakthrough inevitably involved a return to an energetic if primitive and barbaric heritage. Mann thought these ideas were an

advance team for evil. Similar breakthrough ideas inspire AL's notions of the need for a new form of musical composition.

The prophetic allegory of the composer and Nazi Germany uses the superimposition of two different time lines. The fictional biographer Serenus Zeitblom ["SZB"] writes in Germany during the later stages of WWII [1943-45] about AL's experience and music in the period 1910 through 1930. This form of organization of the novel presses the earlier time line on the later. It fuses the two time fragmented biographies into an allegory.

Mann shaped the allegory of serial music and Nazi state pursuant to the theories of Theodore Adorno, Mann's musical advisor for the novel. Since Leverkühn is isolated and independent, the nature of his music must reflect the coming of the Third Reich according to Adorno's theory, discussed in detail below. Over his lifetime AL initially moves away from all of society and then attempts a partial return. As discussed below, this movement is consistent with Adorno's theories as to the relationship of artist and society.

Mann supports the prophetic allegory of composer and Third Reich by giving Hitler's personal characteristics to his fictional composer. [Mann assumes the reader knows about Hitler's personal characteristics and does not refer to them in the novel.] The shared characteristics include those associated with then incurable late stage syphilis, which produced a slow and painful death. Both AL and Hitler claimed genius status, which in some cases syphilis was thought to give.

Both Hitler and AL had steely blue eyes, eyes being the window on the soul. Given the emphasis on eye color in the novel, we should note Goethe's ideas about color [Goethe is the author of the famous version of the play *Doctor Faustus*]. He states that darkness seen through a turbid medium gives the illusory impression of blue [instead of darkness] and that a light source seen through the same turbid medium gives the sensation of yellow [instead of full spectrum light]. In this novel the turbid medium is the demonic. Through this illusory medium black appears as blue. Goethe indicates that the color blue produces a "restless, susceptible, anxious impression" and brings a "principle

of darkness with it.” These are the dark tunes in AL’s soul. His black soul appears through blue eyes.

Characteristics shared by Hitler and AL also include the restricted use of the familiar “du” [you] and an inability to establish normal human emotional and sexual relationships. Hitler married Eva Braun in the Berlin bunker at the end. They celebrated not with a wedding night but with suicides by poison, a particularly sharp form of control and self-destruction. AL commits his form of suicide by not guarding against compulsive lust and wittingly exposing himself to syphilis.

AL and Germany shared the perception that what was needed was a revolutionary new start rather than evolutionary progress from the old. On the political side, life was so bad in Germany after WWI that many influential Germans came to the conclusion that progress was impossible within liberal humanism and democracy. They felt that an old cultural epoch was ending and had to be replaced in political sphere with a totally new “binder” or intensified focus such as fascism. The parallel development on the musical side was the view that the old and traditional romantic and key-based harmonic convention was worn out. It was sterile and incapable of carrying inspiration forward, and a totally new system of composition was necessary for a potent artistic “breakthrough.”

The novel is in one sense a study in human thermodynamics—what it takes to make certain kinds of total and fundamental changes. In totally starting over, as opposed to gradual evolution, the Nazi experience suggests that what is necessary is a collective quantity of energy that is available only in the primitive and unconscious human energy centers, those energy centers deposited by hundreds of thousands of years of survival tactics—the reptile centers in our brains. In politics this kind of energy erupts in xenophobic blood lust that in turn can be contained only by brutal fascist control. In music this kind of energy is available only from human power centers that can harbor the demonic. Born of survival in brutal times, those centers are in “hell’s horrid hole,” the primitive human instincts. In other words, the objective of achieving a totally new beginning risks the use of bad means stemming from vicious human instincts.

The novel's narrator Serenus Zeitblom ["SZB"] is a humanist who is devoted to AL. AL does not reciprocate in the slightest. He remains removed. Unlike AL and the Nazis, SZB believes that all persons are important. He is an individualist but not an egotist. He is within the tradition of what was then called bourgeois humanism, and now is called secular humanism.

Secular humanism is the kind of society in which Germany lost faith between the two world wars. Secular humanism features a belief in rationality, progress and human welfare. But most important is its humanism—it safeguards from collective force the basic human freedom of those in opposition, what we now call the rights of the minority. By its very nature it promotes reconciliation of the individual and society. This is what Mann hoped to promote with this novel. Militant Islam would be proof that much of the world has not been listening. The collective rises again at the expense of basic human freedoms.

### **Skelton—Dem Dry Bones**

The skeleton for this novel is a set of ideas borrowed by Mann. He gave these bones a unique common spine. These ideas are summarized here and then discussed in more detail below:

[1] Views of the theologian Paul Tillich [Mann's theological advisor for the novel, dates 1886-1965] that the demonic comes into play whenever any partial aspect of reality is taken as the ultimate reality—e.g., if the state, the church, a class or a race tries to control everything. The ultimate and unconditional nature of the claim—in other words trying to do too much—inevitably brings about contradictions, conflicts and splits within the controlled arena. This fractured or split condition is a prime characteristic of the work of the demonic and reflects its irreconciled dual creative/destructive nature.

[2] Views of Arthur Schopenhauer [19<sup>th</sup> century philosopher] that an always unsatisfied, constantly striving, blind Will force is the fundamental element in the world,

this Will produces an illusory sense of separate, fragmented and selfish existence, and music is a direct copy of the Will.

[3] Views of musicologist Theodore Adorno [Mann's musical advisor for the novel] that [a] the more isolated the composer is from society the more the composer's music will reflect the nature of the society and [b] compared to traditional tonality or key-based music, twelve-tone row music shares characteristics with the more primitive components of the human mental makeup.

[4] Views of Oswald Spengler set forth in his book *The Decline of the West* [1926] that each culture, such as that of Western Europe, inevitably experiences the life phases of a living creature: birth, youth, adulthood, decline and death. This biographical pattern inevitably controls the experience of the culture. Each of the phases is registered characteristically in the arts and commerce. According to Spengler, the Western European culture spearheaded by Germany is to die about the year 2000.

[5] Views of Sigmund Freud—that [a] the human mind harbors an archaic layer in the *id* or unconscious that tends to control the organism for purposes of repeating previous constituent primitive states and ultimately returning to its inorganic chemical elements, a return that would fracture the organic nature of the human being and [b] the view that the human mind in its various “centers” harbors irreconciled psychological forces.

You will sense the common emphasis on control, lack of freedom and instinct in these concepts. You will also note that these concepts are highly intellectual. In Mann land ideas count, even at the risk of a dry story.

Control directs the shape of the novel, holds up the death head of Mann's skeleton. The bones of the skeleton are connected: the Tillich bone connects to the Schopenhauer bone connects to the Adorno bone connects to the Spengler bone connects to the