

## Latent Possibilities of the Tonal System – Definitions

- **latent:** (of a quality or state) existing but not yet developed or manifest; hidden or concealed
- **tonal system/tonality:** a system of musical (particularly *harmonic*) organization characterized by a few essential principles, originating in late 17th-century Western Europe and persisting to the present day
- **axiom:** a statement which is regarded as being established, accepted, or self-evidently true
- **octave:** the interval between a pitch and another pitch either half or double its frequency. Octave-separated pitches are considered equivalent in the tonal system.
- **chromatic scale:** the 12-note scale produced by the 12-fold division of the continuous pitch space between any two octaves
- **half step (H):** the interval between any two adjacent notes in the chromatic scale
- **whole step (W):** the interval comprised of two consecutive half steps
- **diatonic scale:** a 7-note scale comprised of five whole steps and two half steps in which the two half steps are maximally separated. There are seven possible diatonic scale configurations, which, starting on each of the 12 notes, yields a total of 84 distinct diatonic scales, from which only 24 (12 major, 12 minor) are used in the tonal system
- **major scale:** a diatonic scale with intervallic structure W-W-H-W-W-W-H
- **minor scale:** a diatonic scale with intervallic structure W-H-W-W-H-W-W
- **syntactical rule:** (derivative of *syntax*) any rule prescribing order or directionality amongst notes or chords in the tonal system. In English, an example of a syntactical rule is “subjects precede verbs.”
- **proposition:** a statement which is provable/demonstrable by recourse to axioms and logical reasoning
- **chord:** a combination of notes built on a scale’s notes, constructed in *thirds* in the tonal system (e.g., C-E-G is a chord while C-D-E is not)
- **key:** a set of notes and chords sourced from a particular major/minor scale upon which syntactical rules obtain. Tonal music is typically “in” a key or in the process of changing keys at any given moment.
- **tonic:** the pitch center of a key, after which the key is named
- **dominant:** the chord five diatonic scale steps above the tonic, which syntactically precedes the tonic
- **subdominant:** the chord four diatonic scale steps above the tonic, which syntactically precedes the dominant
- **function:** the role of a chord (or note) with respect to the prevailing key
- **half-diminished seventh chord:** a dominant-functioning chord built on the seventh scale note