4.3 Tonal Answers

It has been possible to answer every subject you have employed so far by precisely replicating the whole of it a perfect Fifth higher or a perfect Fourth lower. When the answer and subject are related in this way, they are termed **real**.

Subjects with real answers invariably begin and end on the tonic, and move predominately by step within a limited compass. They involve no leaps to or from the fifth scale degree or dominant.

Subjects that begin and/or end on the dominant, and those that involve leaps to or from the dominant, require a modified form of answer that is called **tonal**.

A tonal answer closely resembles its subject, but does not replicate it exactly. It enables an entire fugal exposition to emphasize the tonic and dominant whenever a real answer would undesirably emphasize the dominant and supertonic.

The formula for tonal answers is thus:

> Dominant answers tonic
> Tonic answers dominant

Remember that this formula is applicable **only** when the movement to or from the tonic and/or the dominant involves a leap of some kind.

The simplest type of tonal subject opens with a leap from the dominant:

Its answer is like a real one but with the important exception of the first note. Notice that the dominant in this subject's sixth bar is not answered by a tonic because it occurs in a context of stepwise movement:

From the second note onwards, this subject and answer are intervallically identical, and could therefore be combined with a regular countersubject commencing on minim 2 of the second bar.

The rules for tonal answer apply also when a subject briefly visits the dominant by leap soon after its opening. Because their answers are for the most part real, subjects of this kind too can take a partially regular countersubject—which, in the case of the following subject, could commence on minim 2 of the second bar (the previous two minims being filled with freely composed, non-invertible counterpoint that can be different with every entry):

Task 4.3.1—Compose fugues on the Set Five <u>subjects</u>.

A tonal answer can be more substantially different from its subject, especially if the subject ends in the dominant:

This subject could be dealt with by treating as much of it as possible to a real answer (a **Fifth** higher) while answering the dominant cadence with a tonic cadence (a **Fourth** higher). Notice that this strategy converts a Fourth leap to a Third leap:

Tonal answers tend to be deemed correct if they reproduce a **Fifth** higher as much of the subject as possible. It is not unusual, however, to observe an effective tonal answer that reproduces a **Fourth** higher more of the subject than is strictly necessary.

Notice how, by converting a different Fourth leap to a Third leap, the following, alternative tonal answer reproduces more of the subject a **Fourth** higher than the preceding tonal answer did:


The tonal answer to a subject that ends in the dominant must, at a moment chosen by you, switch from lying a Fifth higher than the subject to lying a Fourth higher. An **ascending** interval in the subject might be converted to an interval one step **smaller** in the answer; a **descending** interval might be converted to an interval one step **greater**. Whatever happens, though, a repeated note should **never** be converted into a step, and a step should **never** be converted into a repeated note.

You will thus often be obliged to choose between one possible tonal answer and another, either of which may be perfectly acceptable. Provided you have correctly managed your tonics and dominants, and have avoided prohibited melodic intervals, residual doubts over the rectitude of **any** fugal answer—real or tonal—can probably be resolved by reference to the following two simple rules:

> Never answer a Tone step with a Semitone step
> Never answer a Semitone step with a Tone step

In fugues with subjects that cadence in the dominant, the answer is so different from the subject that it is best to scrap a regular countersubject altogether, and compose free, non-invertible counterpoint against each entry.

Since in such fugues the last entry cadences in the dominant, you will need to append a short coda that cadences in the tonic. In such a coda, the voices should exchange their respective cantus firmus and fourth-species functions in the two cadences, so that the voice that has the cantus firmus function in the dominant cadence assumes the fourth-species function in the tonic cadence, and vice versa:

END OF FINAL ENTRY | CODA WITH EXCHANGED
AND ITS COUNTERSUBJECT | CONTRAPUNTAL FUNCTIONS
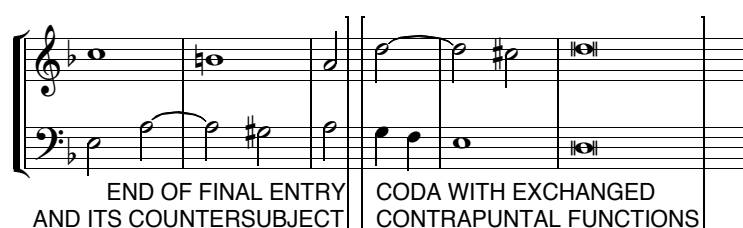
The following fugue illustrates the use of (a) free, non-invertible counterpoint against a tonal subject and its answer, and (b) a coda cadencing in the tonic. Note that, although the counterpoint is non-invertible, all cadences are still constructed in the usual fourth-species manner. Note too that, even with the addition of the coda, the fugue still ends, as it should, in an odd-numbered bar.

Task 4.3.2—Recompose the foregoing fugue (a) with the same answer, but beginning with the upper voice, (b) with the alternative answer given above, and beginning with the lower voice, and (c) with the alternative answer, and beginning with the upper voice.

Task 4.3.3—Compose fugues on the Set Six subjects.