

Naturalism and the *Empfindsamerstil* in 18th Century Europe

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C.P.E. Bach was the most notable composer of the *empfindsamerstil*, an 18th-century musical style in Germany that highlights an important change in the production and reception of music. This change is seen in the aesthetic philosophy of this period, which reflects a conflict between old forms of naturalism and a new modality of taste, in which subjective avowals of like or dislike become the criteria for aesthetic judgment. This paper addresses the interrelationship of the *empfindsamerstil* and aesthetics of its period, providing an account of this conflict between old forms of objective musical codification and a wholly modern account of subjective pleasure.

The *Empfindsamerstil*, prominent in Germany in the mid to late eighteenth century, is known for an expressive and emotive style that has been labeled both proto-Romantic, subjective, and Rationalistic, qualities that seem to differ to the degree that these former two adjectives evoke the notion of feeling (as seen in the German word *empfindsam* and its inherently subjective implication), and are juxtaposed with the Rationalistic appellation, an equally important component of the *empfindsam* style that implies objectivity and which I will elucidate as essential to the conception of an objective, non-Romantic system of codification that engenders and exalts feeling and sentiment. I will argue that this glorification of feeling shows an aesthetic that is different from both the Baroque style, which bears resemblances to the *empfindsamerstil* concerning the objectification of musical meaning, and the Romantic style, whose aesthetic is often considered, and erroneously I feel, similar to that of the *empfindsamerstil*. The argument that conflates Romanticism and the *empfindsamerstil* is based on similarities in their respective listening modalities; moreover, the link between these aesthetics has been heightened by the ways in which the contemporary listener has become conditioned to overtly Romantic performances of the *empfindsamerstil* literature, a practice which, in trying to heighten the admittedly considerable sentimental content of work in the *empfindsamerstil*, does a great disservice to the style by distorting it and even changing its intrinsic aesthetic qualities. CPE Bach insisted on the importance of the performer in revealing (or ruining) the meaning of the music, a point which would be well-heeded by performers of not only the *empfindsamerstil* literature. In fact, the role of the performer gained new importance during the *empfindsamerstil*; notation

achieved greater specificity, and so it is unfortunate that this music, perhaps not surprisingly given the fragility with which its musical message must be experienced and articulated by its performer, has had its objectification of feeling upended through misrepresentative performances, had its systematic articulation of emotion forsaken in favor of a Romantic personalization of the passions, which gains demonstrative immediacy but risks stylistic infidelity. I will argue against this proto-Romantic view of the *empfindsamerstil*. My analysis will consider both performing and listening perspectives of the musical experience of the *empfindsamerstil*. To achieve this, I will situate the *empfindsamerstil* within the context of mid-eighteenth century aesthetics, exploring the texts of aestheticians like Batteux and Rousseau and focusing on the early French philosophers who are concurrent with the period of CPE Bach. What I will show is how the *empfindsamerstil*, as represented by CPE Bach, reflects the aesthetics of eighteenth century naturalism.

Naturalism was a school of thought that opposed complexity, intricacy, and elaboration, and proponents of the “cult of the natural” proclaimed a newfound support of simplicity and tastefulness. It argued that the highest aesthetic ideal is the natural, and it claimed that the transcendence of the natural is contrived and undesirable. Seen in this light, the complexity of J.S. Bach’s late music, for instance, explains his relative unpopularity during this period. Johann Adolph Scheibe, perhaps the most vehement proponent of naturalism, offers a clear account of naturalism. “True art always seeks that which natural, while too much art exceeds nature, leading one into bombast and confusion.... Art must imitate nature. As soon as this imitation is exceeded, however, art is to be condemned....

Nature already possesses everything of merit and need borrow no rouge from art....Through melody one can arouse and express all sorts of affections and passions, which proves that melody is the primary and most worthy element in music and is to be preferred to harmony [i.e., counterpoint]....¹ While Taruskin feels that "Scheibe reads like a humanist of 150 years before,"² Scheibe's bombast is an extreme but accurate reflection of naturalism; its resemblance to humanism is merely reflective of the numerous aesthetic movements which have decried complexity throughout history, whether the Catholic Church's crusade against polyphony or the pre-Renaissance composers who railed against the intricacy of the *Ars Nova*; in fact, there are resemblances regarding the importance of a natural, speech-like melody between Medieval chant, early Baroque opera, and, as we will see, music of the *empfindsamerstil*, and thus any proclaimed similarity that Scheibe shares with humanism is not a tenable argument against the acuteness with which he represents the eighteenth century school of naturalism. Namely, Scheibe's ideas raise several key points: first, the arousal of "affections and passions," second, the issue of imitation, and third, the importance of melody.

The aim of music according to naturalism is the arousal of the listener's subjective pleasure. This is different from the baroque affections, which endorse the objectification of emotions; it is a near-scientific catalogue of feelings that glorifies the power of reason and turns our basest subjective perceptions into rational ones. It is not my intention to delineate the ways in which this philosophical optimism would become tainted by skepticism, but needless to say, the ideas of Hume and Kant oppose Descartes's resolute faith in the mind, and they show a revalorization of the subjective perception which, as the only means by which to make aesthetic or moral judgments, becomes the end in itself and not the springboard, as it was for Descartes, for perceiving clear and distinct universal truths. In the aesthetic realm for instance, consider the writings of Shaftesbury, who claims that beauty is an objective and universal property of objects. By the time of Kant, beauty is entirely subjective, and it is the tool by which judgments of taste can be made. Taste, therefore, becomes the dominant principle in eighteenth century aesthetics, and the naturalist claims that all art must be tasteful and pleasing. If it is not, if it descends into incomprehensible complexity and rigor, if the intellectual capacities of the composer exceed those of the listener, if, in stimulating the

free play of the listener's cognitive faculties he is not moved to joy, sorrow, or some other synthesis of feelings and emotions, then the music is useless and incomprehensible.

One must recognize, however, that these pleasures are in fact contingent on the music, which both incites and embodies them; therefore, there is a causality between music and feeling. In his essay "How Are the Pleasures We Derive from Music To Be Accounted For?" James Beattie writes: "Does not part of the pleasure, both of melody and harmony, arise from the very nature of the notes that compose it? Some notes, when sounded together, have an agreeable, and others a disagreeable effect....there is something in harmony that pleases, and in dissonance that offends, every ear; and were a piece to be played consisting wholly of discords, or put together without any regard to rule, I believe no person whatever would listen to it without great disgust".³ Here, one sees the belief that musical harmony is based on universal perceptive responses, and that there is something intrinsically disagreeable about dissonance because it always arouses a feeling of disgust. This establishes a causality between sound and response, whose end is not the empty production of sounds but the subjective response that it evokes. Taruskin's view, that "[Beattie's] implicit recognition that the pleasures of musical sounds and the "meaning" of music are closely related makes Beattie a very 'modern' musical thinker"⁴ seems incoherent. In fact, it is not until modern times that any plausible theory that claims the expressive qualities of music are not transmitted by its sensuous form will be advanced; barring these appeals to a post-modern aesthetic ontology it seems that Beattie's theory is completely representative of naturalism and that any argument in favor of his "modernism" be necessarily (and absurdly, I believe) applied to both naturalism and the abundant history of pre-naturalist musical theories that also equate sensuous form with expressive meaning.

This issue of listener subjectivity is perhaps nowhere more clearly elucidated than with Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who creates an analogy between music and painting and between dead sounds or colors and live ones, those which stimulate and move us. He writes: "...melody is merely a succession of sounds. No doubt. And drawing is only an arrangement of colors. An orator uses ink to write out his compositions: does that mean ink is a very eloquent liquid?"⁵ Rousseau's analogy, though telling, is misleading: the physical resources

upon which melody and painting draw—sound and color—do not mirror the smaller units that comprise an oratorical work, and they would more accurately be called “words,” as “ink” is the circumstantial physical medium through which the work and its constitutive elements are conveyed, much like “bow” or “brush” would be with music or painting. Of course, a word has a distinct discursive cognitive association that neither a sound nor a color can have, so perhaps the analogy that works well between sound and color (music and painting) given their abstract conceptual realms fails due to the inherent differences concerning cognitive concreteness versus abstraction. Rousseau’s point, however, is that sound and color are not intrinsically valuable: their value is derived from the feelings of pleasure that they evoke in their observers. He writes: “The beauty of sounds is natural. Their effect is purely physical. Everyone in the world takes pleasure in hearing beautiful sounds.”⁶ As I will later discuss, Rousseau supports a form of imitation based on direct utterance, and he does not favor a formalized or universal view of harmony in which feelings are evoked in a systematic or codified way. I have shown that both Rousseau, Beattie, and Scheibe believe the listener’s subjective pleasure in some form is the aim of artistic creation, and with that having been established I will now address the more complex naturalist issues, whose controversies may hopefully be reconciled, and the similarities acknowledged and applied to the *empfindsamerstil*.

The issue of imitation is essential to the examination of eighteenth century naturalism, and I will proceed by addressing the imitative theories as they range from the most mimetic to the most abstract. The questions of what music should imitate and whether it should imitate anything at all arouse considerable controversy. To the modern audience, it seems absurd that music should imitate the effects of chirping birds and thunderstorms, yet the prevalence of literal imitation can be seen as late as Beethoven’s portrait of nature in the Pastoral Symphony or even in Strauss’s *Don Quixote*, in which he depicts bleating goats. While these instances may represent isolated effects instead of a unified compositional doctrine, the exclusively narrative or pictorial nature of art in the eighteenth-century made music an exception. Painting always imitated scenes or objects; literature created an imaginary scenario; but what could music imitate?

Du Bos argues for a highly imitative sort of

musical expression, and he raises the point of music’s effects being linked to the natural expressivity of the human voice. He writes: “...the musician imitates the tones of the voice – its accents, sighs and inflections.”⁷ This point will be further discussed by Rousseau, and it relates melody to human speech. Du Bos continues, saying: “He imitates in short all the sounds that nature herself uses to express the feelings and passions. All these sounds, as we have already shown, have a wonderful power to move us because they are the signs of the passions that are the work of nature herself, from whence they have derived their energy.”⁸ Nature, then, is the source of artistic power, which reflects a typical enlightenment view espoused by Kant, for instance, who claims that the artist channels nature through his creative process and attempts to forge an aesthetic totality that mirrors the purposiveness of a beautiful vista or flower. Of course, this view is inherently teleological, as the “purposiveness” of nature implies a purpose-giver or God, and the artistic process becomes an allegorical exercise affirming the way in which beauty and nature seem to have a profound purpose that our mental faculties simply cannot comprehend. This concept is relevant to Du Bos, though he takes an even more literal stance regarding nature: the artistic process actually imitates the sounds of nature and thus transmits the expressive power of nature itself. Kant claims that art will always be inferior to nature, whereas Du Bos implies that an excellent piece of imitative art would create the same effect that nature has on our souls. In this sense, Du Bos’s philosophy is reminiscent of Spinoza, though in this case Nature is the absolute substance and all art is the modifications of its attributes.

Nonetheless, I must clarify that Du Bos’s theory of imitation is highly literal. He does not claim that music should merely imitate the feelings that nature evokes but that it should actually mimic the physical effects of nature, which in turn will inevitably arouse the identical sentiments. He writes: “The imitative truth of a symphony lies in its resemblance to the sound that it seeks to imitate. A symphony that is composed in imitation of a tempest has a truthfulness about it when its melodies, harmonies and rhythms conjure up sounds that are reminiscent of roaring winds and the thunder of waves dashing against each other or breaking against the rocks. The tempest symphony of M. Marais’s *Alcione* is just such a work.”⁹ Du Bos clearly describes how physical musical affects imitate natural, real ones. For example, agitated

rhythms and heavy percussion would imitate a storm, and swooping melodies could imitate wind.

For an equally strong endorsement of imitation, we turn to Charles Batteux, whose views are somewhat contradictory and seem to support both a literal sort like Du Bos and a more abstract imitation that endorses the expression of passions and emotions, rather than mere physical effects. Le Huray supports this contradictory nature of Batteux when he writes: "In applying the principle of the 'imitation of nature' to all the fine arts Batteux failed to make a clear distinction between imitation as representation and imitation as expression."¹⁰ Batteux is thus a useful figure in illuminating the controversy over imitation by nature of his own seeming uncertainty. First, he writes: "The musician is no freer than the painter: he is continuously subject in every way to comparison with nature. In depicting a storm or little stream or a gentle breeze, the sounds come from nature, and from nature alone must he take them."¹¹ This resembles Du Bos's theory: he suggests a literal imitative interpretation in which the artist takes physical sounds from nature and thus replicates a natural scene as accurately as possible. Unlike Du Bos, Batteux does not suggest why an imitation of nature is desirable, and he mentions only in passing that this literal depiction might be related to feelings or sentiment. He claims the musician is subject to comparison with nature, but he does not state why. He writes: "How much more then can it accomplish in song, where it becomes a picture of the human heart. Thus, sounds in continuity will form a kind of discourse. And if there are expressions that puzzle me because they are inadequately prepared or explained within their particular contexts, if there are distractions, or contradictions, then I certainly will not be satisfied."¹² While the reader may not be satisfied by the contradictions created by Batteux in this passage, his reference to song may reveal the possibility that, similar to Rousseau as we will later see, his previous support of literal imitation is in reference to the symphony and that the "picture of the human heart" is reserved for the natural expressivity of the human voice, which arouses feelings and is transmitted through melody, whose natural conduit is song and not the symphony, which is inherently more rhythmic and harmonic than melodic. In fact, Batteux seems to generally support a more encompassing sort of imitation, and it is the aforementioned mimetic quotation that appears contradictory. To further support his imitation of the feelings, he writes: "It is true, you

may say, that a melodic line can express certain passions: love, for instance, or joy, or sadness. But for every passion that can be identified there are a thousand others that cannot be put into words. That is indeed so, but does it follow that these are pointless? It is enough that they are felt; they do not have to be named."¹³ Here, Batteux seems to endorse an even broader view of imitation, for he says that the emotions evoked do not even have to be ones which we can name, and thus music seems quite free to express a limitless variety of feelings and emotions; insofar as we cannot name these emotions it is possible we have not experienced them, and the power of music potentially becomes a form of self-revelation as we discover hitherto unexperienced feelings and are able to understand them through a self-referential construct (system of tonal harmony). Batteux's views therefore engender a variety of interpretations that differ concurrent to the contradictions of his own philosophy, yet he seems to argue more convincingly for a non-mimetic form of imitation, and contrary to Du Bos, for whom this mimetic view is absolute, it seems for Batteux to be the outlier in an otherwise cogent argument for a flexible imitation that avoids dispassionate replication in favor of an expression of the passions, even those which are nameless and ineffable.

Next, we turn to Rousseau because of the way in which his interpretation of imitation reveals a newfound emphasis on the relation between music and natural phenomena like speech, thus providing another important aspect of naturalism that will link music to the human voice and allow it to embody the expressive characteristics of direct utterance. Clearly, Rousseau is an anti-formalist who denies the expressivity inherent in artistic media; thus, it is not the color of paint that moves us, nor is it the sound of music that stirs us; instead, the power of art is in its ability to imitate scenes and move us through the moral power of the signs and images it conveys. Thus, he writes: "Beautiful, subtly shaded colors are a pleasing sight; but this is purely a pleasure of the sense. It is the drawing, the representation, which gives life and spirit to these colors. The passions they express are what stir ours; the objects they represent are what affect us."¹⁴ His theory of music is equally imitative; however, unlike Du Bos or Batteux he does not advocate a literal imitation of natural phenomena, perhaps because he realizes the superfluity of music if its aim be to awkwardly imitate physical events, a task to which painting is far more suited, and so he establishes the interrelationship between voice and melody

and thus provides a more sensible, non-mimetic imitative theory. He writes: "By imitating the inflections of the voice, melody expresses pity, cries of sorrow and joy, threats and groans. All the vocal signs of passion are within its domain. It imitates the tones of languages, and the twists produced in every idiom by certain psychic acts."¹⁵ If Rousseau seems to conflate music with melody, it is indeed his intention to declare the superiority of melody to harmony by nature of the imitative expressivity of the former, and lest his entire imitative conception be discarded he must oppose harmony due to the extent to which he is unable to form a viable imitative interpretation for it. He writes: "Even if one spent a thousand years calculating the relations of sounds and the laws of harmony, how would one ever make of that art an imitative art? Where is the principle of this supposed imitation? Of what harmony is it the sign? And what do chords have in common with our passions?"¹⁶ Interestingly, Rousseau does not entertain the notion that musical harmony could be the imitation of a greater universal harmony, which was a popular Rationalist belief started by the Greeks and passed onto the Medievals, and thus there is no answer to his rhetorical questions. Still further, he describes the destructive effect that harmony can have on music. He writes: "...in the process it [harmony] also shackles melody, draining it of energy and expressiveness. It wipes out passionate accent, replacing it with the harmonic interval."¹⁷ Thus, we see the deleterious influence of harmony on melody. He has established melody as the dominant force by which music achieves expressive power insofar as it is free from excessive harmony and mimetic interpretation, and he claims melody alone can achieve the qualities of passion and sentiment that it shares with direct utterance; not language, but the natural inflections and intonations that are universal to the human voice.

I conclude this discussion of imitation with Johann Jakob Engel's essay "On Painting in Music," which provides an excellent account of imitation that draws upon and to some degree reconciles the ideas previously explored by Rousseau, Batteux, and Du Bos. Engel's interpretation opposes the literal mimesis that Du Bos and Batteux suggest, yet he solves Rousseau's concerns regarding harmony by delineating the numerous ways in which all aspects of music, including harmony, rhythm, and melody, can be imitative in an expressive, generalized sense. Engel feels that music should imitate the feelings that objects evoke, and he endorses an expressive

naturalism of non-mimetic subjectivity that avoids the literal imitation which he makes seem absurd. He writes: "*Third*: when he imitates not a part or a property of the object itself, but the impression that this object tends to make on the soul. Imitation in music obtains its broadest range by this means.... In order to understand how these impressions, or indeed all inner feelings of the soul, can be painted, and why such painting succeeds best in music..."¹⁸ He thus achieves a theory that glorifies music and does not make it an ineffective form of literal sound-painting; instead, he establishes it as the quintessential subjective art form, which is uniquely skilled at arousing one's inner feelings. Treating not only melody but the various aspects of music, he writes: "...the way these compounded proportions [harmonies] progress, which can occur in an endless number of shifts; the slowness or rapidity of the shifts; the fullness or emptiness, clarity or obscurity, purity or impurity, of the harmony (an impurity that is often only apparent), and so on."¹⁹ We thus see the various types of harmony that conjure states of mind concurrent with their various qualities of speed, fullness, or purity. This is an appropriate solution to Rousseau's concerns. While Rousseau's imitative conception is based on the replication of the human voice, an inherently non-musical attribute, Engel is able to explain the ways in which the elements intrinsic and constitutive of the musical experience can have autonomous expressive powers that evoke human feelings without merely imitating physical objects. His views are nonetheless supportive of the naturalistic theory of subjective pleasure; in fact, by creating a thesis based entirely upon the internal world rather than the external he appears to have gained a quintessentially naturalist position that is coherent with a valorization of subjective perception.

In concluding this discussion of imitation, it seems that the literal imitative theory is to be discarded in favor of an imitation of the passions, not due to a contemporary perspective that renders the former absurd, the latter tenable, but because of the ways in which an expressive imitative style more appropriately fulfills the aims of naturalism by glorifying the subjective feelings of the aesthetic observer. Furthermore, the literal imitative theory, which replicates objects of nature in the attempt to evoke their effects, is less able to evoke a varied subjective response than a fluid art form that is able to employ its numerous expressive devices to affect a limitless range of emotions with ease. With the former, the musical process becomes a rigidly

teleological process that attempts to mimic the purposiveness of a prime substance—nature—that is assumed to have a powerful emotive influence to begin with, whereas the latter method, if its effectiveness is to be assumed, ensures a variety of feelings that follow causally from the emotive musical fabric as long as the music is tasteful and thus comprehensible. The role, therefore, of taste and what is “natural” is not to be overlooked, for what naturalism wants to avoid is not “nature” but a banal cataloguing of the physical sounds of the woods and the oceans. One’s inner nature, even the feelings evoked by nature, are better served by the consensus against literal imitation established by Engel, Rousseau, and to some degree Batteux.

In addressing the ways in which this aesthetic may be reflected in the *empfindsamerstil*, we turn to CPE Bach, the most notable practitioner of this style. His “Essay on the Correct Manner of Playing the Clavier” is useful for beginning a discussion of the ways in which he may represent tenets of naturalism. It is clear that Bach is not concerned with mere technical feats of the keyboard, and he emphasizes the importance of the keyboard artist in expressing the feelings of the piece. He writes: “A mere sharpshooter ought not to lay claim to the true merits of one who is capable of causing the ear (rather than the face) and the heart (rather than the ear) to be gently affected, to be transported hither and yon at will.”²⁰ This statement is sympathetic to the naturalist notion of music affecting the heart and the passions, and he continues by saying: “But what constitutes a good performance? Just this: the ability, by means of singing or playing, to make musical ideas perceptible to the ear in accordance with their true content and affection. We must play from the soul, not like trained birds.”²¹ This passage is essential for emphasizing a new concept, the notion of a “true” content or affection. This means that the music has a definite and absolute meaning or content, and it is the performer’s task not to interpret this meaning at his whimsy but to transmit the musical idea that he has perceived objectively. This also means that the performer’s role gains newfound importance, for the transmission of the composer’s “intention” is dependent on the musician-artist’s ability to perceive it. Concerning the conveyance of this intention, Bach writes: “Since a musician cannot move us unless he himself is moved, it follows that he must be capable of entering into all the affections which he wishes to arouse in his listeners; he communicates his own feelings to them and thus most effectively moves

them to sympathy. In languid and sad passages he becomes languid and sad. We see and hear it.”²² In this revealing excerpt, Bach elucidates several characteristics inherent to the musical experience in all its aspects: composing, performing, and listening. First, the affections that must be “entered into” by the performer are the *meaning* of the musical experience, and they have the intention of arousing concurrent feelings in the listener. This means that the subjective experience of the listener is intended to be that of the affection conveyed; the sad affection must evoke a sad response unless there is something defective in either the creation of the affection or in the reception of the beholder. While this opposes the distinction that Engel makes between subjective and objective emotions and the disparity that can arise between a conveyed emotion and the way in which it is perceived, it is perfectly reflective of the naturalist aestheticians we have discussed insofar as its message is natural—plausible considering the emotions evoked, which would be considered natural (expressive) ones—and tasteful, which is not referred to here but is assumed from a naturalist position given the lucid transmissibility of the emotion and the way in which the observer understands it free from confusion or opaqueness. Next is the dramatic statement that the performer cannot move the audience unless he himself is moved. This comment is contrary to any conception of an imagined aesthetic idea, and it aligns the musical experience with real emotions, rather than the semblance of emotion. Bach’s statement that “he communicates his own feelings,” however, seems curious, and he makes no similar remark about the composer’s creative process. One can only assume that the “personal feelings” of the performing artist are the subjective assimilations and experiences of those manifested in the musical fabric and that the seeming personalization is merely an inevitable step in the transmissibility of a feeling that must necessarily be one’s own in order to be conveyed with maximum integrity and accuracy. The latter portion of Bach’s statement, however, that we “see” the sadness of the performer, risks Lisztian theatricality but ensures effective transmissibility of the “message,” and the teary visage of the performer becomes an expressive device toward this end. In fact, Bach even writes: “That all this can be done with an impassive countenance will only be asserted by those whose insensibility obliges them to sit at their instruments like engraved portraits. Ugly faces, to be sure, are unmannerly and detracting; but suitable expressions are useful,

in that they help to reveal our intentions to the listener.”²³ This might appear to be a Romantic mindset, and it is not my attempt to eradicate any trace of a proto-Romantic aesthetic in the *empfindsamerstil*. In fact, Bach’s own statement, that the performer communicates his very own feelings, may be used as strong evidence for the type of Romantic approach that I have opposed; however, I would emphasize the way in which Bach’s conception of the performer must communicate a fixed and objective musical message despite the ways that it is felt and personalized, which is contradictory to the Romantic mindset in which the composition maintains its integrity while encouraging a variety of subjective realizations that differ according to the performer yet are equally faithful to a musical message that comprises numerous latent potentialities. For music of the *empfindsamerstil*, a deviation in the performance risks distorting the musical message, and thus the performer becomes essential in transmitting or besmirching a single accurate interpretation whose potential realizations are not manifold but singular.

This would explain CPE Bach’s preoccupation with performing and the large number of treatises that he wrote, which describe proper stylistic techniques and warn against excessive embellishment, which could distort the affections. Yet the naturalism of Bach is seen by the way in which he valorizes the performer’s expressivity and demands the personalization of the affections. Consider, for instance, Bach’s great *C minor Fantasia*, for which the poet Heinrich Wilhelm von Gerstenberg created lyrics. His attempt was to show that “pure instrumental music, in which the artist had only dark, passionate concepts in his soul, would be suitable for an analysis into clearer, more definite ones.”²⁴ Gerstenberg’s fantasy monologue thus seeks to delineate the passions which are present and, he might feel, latent in the music. The lyrical nature, however, is undeniable, that this fantasia can in fact be sung. The scholar Tobias Pleblich writes: “One could play [the Fantasia]... on a non-chordal instrument, a cello for example, or sing them if a voice were able to encompass five octaves. This greatly increases the emotional tension, since monophony implies a single ‘lyrical self’...”²⁵ This lyrical, recitative-like quality is typical of the fantasies of Bach. The performing artist gains the power of direct utterance, and his instrument becomes his voice, through which he is able to feel a wide variety of affections in order to communicate them. His sensitivity and nuance of expression is vocal,

and we are reminded of Rousseau by the ways in which the performer is linked to melodic utterance and the effects of the voice. Consider then the capriciousness of recitative and the difficulty in controlling the unified presentation of a medium which is inherently improvisatory and free. It is a contradictory concept, that of the composer’s predestined intention coexisting with the supposed free will of an improvisatory recitative style, and the juxtaposition of Rousseau’s melodic sensibility with the artist’s control over the dissemination of his message creates a paradox. The media which seem to encourage a greater degree of compositional control, like the sonata for instance, are successful due to rhythmic stability and a non-vocal integrity of harmony and motif that seems to violate the melodic fetishism of Rousseau; indeed, the singing quality is one of rubato and capriciousness, versus a fugue, at the extreme end, which allows for little personal freedom and is harder to distort. It may also seem that this fantasy style more accurately represents the naturalist aesthetic insofar as it embodies a spontaneous variety of emotions through a vocal quality resembling the intonation of speech, as endorsed by Rousseau. Is this an irreconcilable paradox internal to the *empfindsamerstil*?

The scholar Etienne Darbellay believes so, viewing the rationalistic drive for codification seen in the specificity of Bach’s notation as contrary to the vocal spontaneity that seems to mark a greater realization of the naturalist tendencies of the *empfindsamerstil*. Darbellay writes: “The fantasia can now be no better than schematically notated, and so it represents the breaking-point of an [this] aesthetic...”²⁶ Yet one need not situate the recitative and sonata styles as antipodes, and perhaps the seeming antinomy is resolved by nature of their respective aesthetic experiences as understood and manipulated by Bach. For the recitative is only more naturalistic according to the degree that it imitates melody and creates an illusion of spontaneous direct utterance, the key being that this effect is a calculated one and not a true one (as the performer is not actually improvising *a piacere*) and that the success of the style is dependent on the extent to which the illusion therein is preserved and the range of emotions presented as real and fluid ones. This is a medium whose style is not dependent on a convincing formal unity but on the realistic conveyance of a series of feelings that appear to be circumstantial and random, and while this does not mean that a recitative cannot be distorted or ruined by excessive rubato, nor does it mean that

the recitative cannot have a large-scale formal plan or a unifying affection of which the others partake, it does seem that the way in which a recitative is shaped is unimportant as long as the free quality is preserved and the range of emotions is conveyed to the audience. In fact, a system of codification that fettered performers to a single pacing would be deleterious to the intrinsic naturalist ideals of the art form. Yet how far can a performer exercise his freedom? The answer, according to naturalism, is taste. As long as he respects the bounds of taste and clarifies the message of the piece, he is successful. This can be measured by the audience's understanding and reception of the piece's true message. If, first, the audience is revolted by the blatant ostentatiousness of the performer, the music is obscured and the performer has failed. The second case, however, is slightly more ambiguous and is perhaps epistemologically unknowable: if the audience happily receives musical ideas which are not inherent to the piece. For instance, if the affection of "longing" is mistakenly but effectively conveyed as "joy." Both these examples are because of the tastelessness of the performer. The performer remains tasteful as long as he successfully conveys the affections to his listeners.

Meanwhile, the sonata is a formal construct whose success depends on the interrelationship of its parts, on the ways in which individual affections are contextualized within the unifying affection of a single movement and, ultimately, an entire piece. This style is not based on the literal conception of Rousseau's melody, and as such the issue of direct utterance is irrelevant. This does not mean, however, that the sonata cannot equally fulfill naturalist aims, albeit not Rousseau's. Consider Engel or Beattie, for whom the sonata is abundantly endowed with the means—rhythm, harmony, etc—through which to truly conjure a limitless range of subjective feelings according to the nature of its affections, which are not achieved through an illusion of the human voice—though this aspect can be employed in a theme to heighten its power—but by the ways that they imitate the effects of nature on the soul and thus stir the passions. For this art form, which is dependent on the ways that the repetition of an exposition may alter a listener's temporal perception according to the speed it is played (and thus his perception of the affections given the ways that a melody's meaning is altered by speed and volume), the control of tempo, dynamics, and articulations becomes essential to an accurate realization of the piece's meaning.

Concerning the issue of taste, whose primary aim is the educated listener's understanding of a piece, it seems the boundaries of the performer's personal liberties are limited by the perceptions that the subjective observer brings to the performance. As taste (and the entire purpose of art, according to naturalism, I might add) is dependent on the listener, the performer must consider the fetters of standard performance practice, in which a march is generally played in time. The listener is used to this and is therefore far more likely to be offended by "distasteful" playing, thus ruining the musical experience, than he is with a recitative style, which is conventionally free and improvisatory. Thus, the tasteful performer must pay respect to convention lest he alienate the audience and prevent the affections from being properly understood. The listener is the measuring stick for the success of the musical experience. The success of the performance, the performer, and the composition is based on the listener's ability to perceive the affections. And so I have attempted to resolve this internal paradox of the *empfindsamerstil* by appealing to the ways in which codification is contingent on the principles of naturalism and the ways that these principles are inherent to these different styles. I feel Bach would have supported the qualities of direct utterance and encouraged an improvisatory feeling, and his specificity of notation results from a concern over the tasteful transmission of his musical message as appropriate to specific musical genres.

To conclude, the aesthetics of the *empfindsamerstil* closely resemble those of naturalism, and the period reflects a glorification of listener subjectivity that is different from the earlier intellectualism of the Baroque period. CPE Bach's high level of aesthetic consciousness for the nature of musical meaning and apprehension suggests that he was neither unnecessarily bound to a musical style flawed by its own method of encoding, nor naïve of the ways in which his music was contingent upon the aesthetic and political tenets of his day. By pioneering specific musical genres like the sonata and recitative, whose techniques of realization are often antithetical to one another, and even blending these disparate elements by incorporating recitative-like styles into his piano music, Bach achieved a consistency of artistic success that outstripped the efforts of aestheticians of this period, who struggled to conceptualize his music with conflicting accounts and varying degrees of success. If the *empfindsamerstil* reflects a conflict between the old musical forms of objective codification, and a wholly modern

account of subjective pleasure, it shows the pivotal moment of a musical style that demands a philosophy that can speak to the antinomies of a judgment of taste and raise the question of the proper form of aesthetic judgment within the modern social space of aesthetic and political self-critique.

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