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EDWIN FISCHER AND BACH PERFORMANCE PRACTICE  
OF THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC

by

Bradley Vincent Brookshire

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Music in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2016

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Music in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

EDWIN FISCHER AND BACH-PIANISM  
OF THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC

by

Bradley Vincent Brookshire

Dissertation Supervisor: Professor Richard Kramer

Edwin Fischer (1886-1960) provided a synthesis of approaches to Bach pianism that resolved dialectical tensions of long standing between schools that opposed one another throughout the nineteenth century. I argue that Fischer's synthesis—which permits exegetical interpretation while maintaining a preservationist stance toward the integrity of the text—resembles both Felix Mendelssohn's bifurcated approach to Bach's music and Moses Mendelssohn's description of a similar duality within modern Judaism. Such resemblance may not be coincidental or superficial, given that Fischer married into the Mendelssohn family at the height of its cultural influence in Weimar-Era Berlin. Although pieces of the Mendelssohnian construct were in circulation well before Fischer's HMV recording of *The Well-Tempered Clavier* (recorded between 1933 and 1937), that recording served to codify and promulgate his synthesis, which was based on a crucial new approach. The foundations of this approach, which I call *musical interpretation through structural amplification*, we laid by Ernst Kurth, Karl Straube, Albert Schweitzer, and Ferruccio Busoni, all of whom were in Fischer's personal circle.

Fischer's exegetical manner of approaching Bach's keyboard music, through a combination of analysis and amplifying commentary (via pianistic interpretation), appears to have been instrumental in altering Bach pianism in the long term. Despite Fischer's significance, however, nothing yet has been written that analyzes his Bach-performance practice. I attempt to address that lacuna with this work, the execution of which stems from my belief that conducting a performance practice analysis alone would be insufficient, that such an analysis is best viewed within the complex matrix of Bach-reception in the Weimar Republic; in other words, as an exercise of network science. Fischer's network was rife with nationalist sentiment that gathered around a revolving diorama of Bach, Dürer, and German Gothic art and architecture during, and just prior to, Fischer's formative years; with statements of belief regarding the apotropaic power of Bach's music, which emerged naturally from the German social construction known as *Kunstreligion*; and with the aesthetics of *das neue Bauen* that were manifested by the Bauhaus, with which Fischer was very closely associated.

In pursuing my investigation and report of findings in this way, I also employ techniques and theories that I have borrowed from cognitive science, especially as it relates to religion, and from the social anthropology of art. On the whole, I suggest that performance practice change takes place within complex systems—which behave in ways that differ fundamentally from those of simple systems—and that such changes in performance styles are poorly described and understood if one indulges in conjuring notions of hovering entities (*e.g.*, “modernist Bach-performance”) in place of describing networks and processes.

## Preface – Issues and Methods in Analysis of Fischer’s Bach-Pianism

My aim in this dissertation is to provide a useful explanation of the system implicit in the Bach-pianism of Edwin Fischer (1886–1960), principally as manifested during the period of the Weimar Republic (1919–1933). A considerable part of Fischer’s worldwide influence rests on his widely distributed, iconic recording of *The Well-Tempered Clavier* (Book One, 1933-3; Book Two, 1936-37) for His Master’s Voice (hereafter, HMV), the first integral recording of the work. Its importance as a trendsetter can best be observed through analysis of the performance practices that it embraces. Such analysis is best undertaken within the context of Fischer’s relationship to the various streams of Bach performance that existed in his lifetime. Critics looking at Fischer’s recording outside of such a contextual frame have, I feel, consistently missed key elements of Fischer’s performance practice and thereby underestimated his contributions to twentieth-century Bach pianism.

Although there is only space in this dissertation, however, to provide an assessment and description of the methods, mental constructions, and systems behind Fischer’s Bach-pianism, I wish to facilitate future assessments of his influence. That being said, descriptions are often more useful and illuminating if they are compared against a standard, particularly one that serves well as a baseline for noting historical change: in this case, editions and/or recordings to which Fischer’s editions and recordings stand in close relation. The *Well-Tempered Clavier* (henceforth *WTC*) edition made by Ferruccio Busoni (1866–1924)—who was Fischer’s primary mentor with respect to

performing Bach’s music—may serve as a baseline in this case. In one case (the Prelude in C Major from *WTC I*), a recording by Busoni also exists.

### Corroboration of Source Materials

In pursuit of the above, I seek to interpret Fischer’s Bach-pianism in the context of everything of relevance that Fischer left behind—*i.e.*, his prose (manifested in freestanding essays that he published, and in the prefaces to his Bach-editions), the musical content of his Bach-editions, and, of course, his *WTC* recording. I will subject this body of data to integration with itself and with the universe of ideas in which Fischer moved in the period bracketed by the Weimar Republic. By “integration with itself,” I mean that I will look at Fischer’s prose in the context of his editions and the *WTC* recording, his editions in the context provided by his prose and the recording, and his recording in the universe of ideas fixed within his prose and his editions. By integration with “the universe of ideas in which Fischer moved,” I mean placing the process of integrating prose, editions, and recording within the context of the total pool of ideas – by which I mean perceived problems, techniques, and philosophies of art – in which Fischer was immersed.

Obviously, this is a tall order. Alone the task of assessing the “total pool of ideas in which Fischer was immersed” is immense—which may help to explain why I have needed over a decade to produce this document. However, by using two foundational principles of network science, this task becomes feasible. First is the relatively secure generalization that influence travels poorly beyond its second refraction in human transmission. In other words, direct influence between people known to have been in



contact is very likely; indirect influence via an intercessor that mediates the transmitted content is possible, but less effective, and the message itself is subject to corruption; beyond that, influence is so weak, and transmission so heavily mediated, that detecting transmission becomes an unacceptably speculative endeavor.

A second principle of network science on which I will rely is that a given subject will manifest preferential attachments to ideas circulating in his or her immediate environment on the basis of which the analyst may accordingly assign greater or lesser weight at any particular stage in the evolution of the subject's views. Discerning preference helps to narrow the field of ideas. One may have an Internet connection, for example, yet still might only surf a miniscule portion of the Web, returning to the same (or related) pages repeatedly, perhaps even obsessively. An historian attempting to reconstruct such a subject's constructions would not be effective if he or she assumed the subject to have taken in the whole of the Web; but a close assessment of preferences might reveal clear patterns of thought.

On the basis of these working principles, I drain the pool of ideas down to those with which Fischer had the most direct and least mediated contact; hence, the area of contact with ideas most likely to have exerted influence on him. I then look for Fischer's preferential attachments to a subset of those ideas. I then take on the task of integrating them with his prose, his Bach-editions, and his *WTC* recording.

Lack of any substantial and credible biographical study of Fischer posed a substantial problem. The process of writing a reliable biography of Fischer has required my acquiring and comparing all the various (although brief) biographical studies available. Unfortunately, conflicts arose between sources in almost every aspect of

biographic study: Fischer's lineage; his social circles; his intimate relationships; and his relations to the worlds of politics, culture, philosophy, music theory, and cultural theory have all proved to be fraught with errors, misunderstandings, and misinformation. In the case of Bernard Gavoty's study of Fischer, more than a pinch of dis-information potentially misleads the Fischer-scholar.

Compounding the problem, access to any substantial store of data on Fischer was blocked because the *Edwin-Fischer-Gesellschaft*—administrators of the *Edwin-Fischer-Stiftung*—had sealed his records for fifty years after his death, which came in 1960. I travelled to the *Zentralbibliothek* in Lucerne in 2012, where the staff graciously allowed me unlimited access to the whole of Fischer's personal diaries, correspondence, newspaper clippings, and other personal effects. My transcription of Fischer's diaries—substantial, but not complete—was made especially tricky by obvious excisions of many pages. German history and politics suggest that whoever made the excisions was attempting to hide Fischer's actions from later readers. In this context, the lack of any attempt to obscure the fact that the missing pages—spanning particularly fraught periods of the Nazi era—had actually been written (fragments of words were left behind in the excision) seems odd. In other places, Fischer made obvious erasures and alterations, later going back and annotating the changes, in one case, with a marginal note confessing that he had done so. Such an outright confession rules out the possibility that Fischer intended to sanitize his diaries in order to protect his reputation; on the other hand, they do suggest that he feared what the Nazis might make of their contents, should they be seized.

Despite the challenges, a good database eventually emerged. Although they provide rich documentation of the people with whom Fischer associated and the places

that he visited, Fischer diaries only periodically offer direct testimony about the set of ideas to which Fischer was attracted is. For long stretches, they read like the travelogues of eighteenth-century aristocratic diarists. Here, for example, is a typical entry:

[December] 6th [1925]. To London. Wigmore Hotel. Rehearsal with the London Symphony Orchestra. Low temperature of 18 degrees. At Mrs. Noble's. At Horsfall's. With Gibson. Depression. Chamber-concert at the Chenil Gallery. Barmarolli [sic! Barbirolli] conducting. – Fleury, flute. Miss Mayer, singer.<sup>1</sup>

However, enough information exists in Fischer's diaries to allow me to discern the circles in which he moved; on that basis, I recall the ideas that circulated most prominently in those circles during the period in which Fischer was associated with any given group. I regard those relatively few instances in which Fischer refers to concepts and musical-interpretive techniques to be evidence of strong preferential attachment to those ideas.

In Chapter One, I provide a brief biographical study of Fischer, the only one based on a broad range of primary source materials used to corroborate its claims. Also included in that chapter are a network study and brief, biographical descriptions of those in his immediate circles. In my second, third, and fourth chapters, I take up Fischer's writings on musical interpretation in general, and on Bach in particular, tracing Fischer's *Weltanschauung* in studies devoted to contemporaneous social and cultural movements that shaped the environment in which he moved. Fischer's exposure to hermeneutics, philosophy and psychology was extensive: he was ensconced in the Ludwig-Binswanger

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<sup>1</sup> "6. Nach London. Wigmore Hotel. 18° Kälte. Proben mit Lond. Sinf. Orch. Gibson. bei Missus Noble. bei Horsfall. Mit Gibson. Depression. Kammerkonzert in Chencil Gallerie[.] Dirigent Barmarolli [sic!] – Fluery, Flöte. Frau. Mayer Sängerin." Edwin Fischer, diary entry of December 6, 1925, covering the period December 6-11, *Edwin Fischer Nachlass*, Zentral- und Hochschulbibliothek Luzern.

and Aby-Warburg circles, of which the art historians Heinrich Wölfflin and Erwin Panofsky, as well as the Phenomenologists Edmund Husserl, Max Scheler, and Martin Heidegger, were part. In addition, he married into a branch of Mendelssohn family that particularly prized its philosophical and musical heritage.

Having presented some abstractions of Fischer's principles and processes in those chapters, in Chapter Five, I compare them to principles and processes of art revealed by Phenomenologists and those in Fischer's networks who translated Phenomenology into theories of artistic practice, by which I mean the Gestaltists. In the process, I offer my point of view on the implications offered by that comparison. However, I only intend this as the construction that makes the most consistent sense to me of the available data. The reader may naturally wish to subject them to another, equally systematic, exegetical framework and come to his or her own conclusions. By facilitating the hermeneutical process while eschewing a particular interpretation I will, in fact, have mimicked one of the principal attributes of Mendelssohnian-Fischerian exegetical tradition, a stance that I have come to admire.

#### Analytical Sub-Goals Implied by the Above

I have two aims in this dissertation that combine to enable a comprehensive view of Fischer's principles of Bach-pianism and that I regard to be inseparable: I seek to analyze the organization of Fischer's Bach-pianism in so far as it is accessible through surviving documents; and, equally importantly, I wish to describe Fischer's Bach-pianism as a set of processes, by which I mean the process of its origination, the process of its reception in Fischer's environment, and the processes instantiated in general when it

interacts with Bach's works, which is to say the way in which Fischer's Bach-performance style is likely to structure, inflect, or "color" one's perception of Bach's works. Structural analysis should, in my view, be guided by knowledge of original intent; however, analysis of effects in the work as received are only visible in the context of generalization on cognition and perception, in which one examines how a given performance style shapes perception of the work's unfoldment in time. A satisfyingly complete picture of Fischer's Bach-performance style will, I believe, emerge out of uniting these two halves.

With respect to the first sub-goal—that is, the analytical one—collecting and analyzing data from his recordings and editions and then subjecting the data collected to analysis and theorization now seems insufficient to me (even if that was the intention when I first set out). Although data on the contents of editions and recordings are useful, assessing the intent behind their organization and interpretation is highly subjective, resisting interpretation out of context. For example, one might take an edition containing relatively few expressive markings to suggest: (1) the belief that Bach's music is inherently un-dynamic and should not be inflected; (2) the view that dynamic flows immanent to the work are sufficient and should not be augmented in performance; (3) a preference for inflecting the score according to principles of performance practice, which by definition are orally transmitted and do not require explicit notation; or (4) a principled avoidance of notated inflections in the service of pedagogical principles that require that students master the art of interpretation through experimentation and practical exploration.

All of these four possibilities represent eminently credible explanations. Yet, without knowledge of intent, which of them (of what combination of them) represents the outlook of the artist who originated the approach being studied is obscure. It seems wiser to speculate only after looking closely for clues of intent that one might find buried in historical and social data, *i.e.*, in a known context. This is where my second sub-goal—*i.e.*, understanding the processes out of which the principles of Fischer’s Bach-pianism originated, their intended role of these processes in shaping views of Bach, and the mental processes by which they shape our perceptions—comes into play.

Here it is useful to bear in mind the strong emphasis that Fischer placed on pedagogy as the primarily goal of his Bach-editions; his prefaces make it clear that he never intended to document a particular performance that others might reproduce. Instead, his vision of pedagogy appears, instead, to have involved activating students’ imaginative and perceptive capacities by steering them away from executing a particular, detailed sequence of tasks—that is, away from a mechanistic view of themselves as mere executors of externally determined planning—and towards enhancing students’ sense of autonomy, agency, and self-directness.

Largely because of this pedagogical perspective, Fischer generalized about his Bach-pianism only selectively, and he tailored them to the situation at hand. Thus, his essays are lyrical and broadly philosophical, describing a general attitude and orientation towards Bach-performance; and it should not be surprising that they yield no clear, analytical generalizations. His editions relay more specifics about his principles of Bach-performance without being prescriptive; they describe a *method of constructing* a personal, consistent point of view on Bach-performance—which Fischer then *exemplifies*

in the musical content of the edition. Fischer leaves the building of a particular point of view to the reader/player. The comments that Fischer made to particular players in master-classes are the most detailed and specific to particular students and passages, but are also the least generalizable. However strong Fischer's inclination to discuss general processes of *music-in-the-life-of-the-spirit* in broadly philosophical terms may have been, and however greatly this complicates assessing and describing his methods, mental constructions, and systems of Bach-pianism, his approach seems—at least to this writer—to represent subtle and refined pedagogy.

My second sub-goal also entails taking the model of Fischer's Bach-pianism that I have built from contextual knowledge and evidence contained in the surviving documents and applying it to analyzing effects upon my perception—my mental structuring of the unfoldment of Bach's works—that emerge out of applying Fischer's performance style. Although my perceptions of the special qualities of Bach's works emphasized by Fischer's performance style are subjective, reporting on them as specific cases seems worthy. I choose to report perceptions that appear to me to be tied to cognitive universals of perception, for example, Fischer's handling of contours, of repetitions, of elements of formal organization, and the like. I have selected particular categories on which to report based, in part, on what I have learned about Fischer's understandings of the principles of Phenomenology and Gestalt Psychology.

## Acknowledgements

The Graduate Center at the City University of New York rolled the dice when admitting me to the Ph.D. program in Musicology. I was performer with a strong interest in musicology and a full-time teaching position at Purchase College in the State University of New York. Would I bring enough musicological acumen to the table? Would my performing career and teaching place such constraints on my time that I would be unable to see the degree through process of researching, writing, and depositing the requisite dissertation?

These questions raised their heads periodically, as I moved through the process. But another matter emerged that set me even further back: I became truly passionate—indeed, enflamed—with musicology, warts and all. I say “warts and all” because – despite my status as a neophyte – I was troubled by some of the practices that I encountered. This stormy romance with musicology meant for me that, each time a new epistemological, technical, philosophical, or historiographical vista opened, a new period of discovery began, a few of them requiring pauses of many months of study.

Granted, there are almost as many ways to “do musicology” as there are musicologists, and such personal license has produced much superb musicology. However, a few habits that are fairly standard for some of the most renowned musicologists stuck in my craw rather badly – *e.g.*, that of asserting mere chronological succession as evidence of historical cause and effect (as Richard Taruskin seems to do with impunity in *Text and Act*) without the benefit of any process explanation or demonstration of network connections whatever; or that of creating vague entities such as “objective Bach performance style” (which is subject to such widely variant



interpretations as to be practically useless) that stand in place of, and delay the development of, potentially more useful process-based explanations that might move musicology once and for all out of the realm of “*élan vital*” and the like and closer to the description of processes, described in terms that are primitive, fundamental, and precise.

How many of these treks can any Dissertation Supervisor or Defense Committee tolerate, standing on one foot waiting for the writer to settle into a working method? How much leeway should be given while the writer struggles to adopt consistent goals, techniques, and habits of mind? I was lucky. My Dissertation Supervisor—Richard Kramer—and the other scholars that made up my Defense Committee—Ruth DeFord, who led as Supervisor, Raymond Erickson, who served as Second Reader, and Julia Sneeringer, who brought the German historian’s perspective to the table—treated me with more patience and solicitude than I could ever have expected. Their collective willingness to indulge occasional fits of pique prompted by my, at times, frustrating search for suitable methodology was particularly valuable: at no point did they shut down my quest; instead, they encouraged me to analyze the problems of method that I sensed more precisely and to engage in more candle-lighting than darkness-cursing. Wise counsel, indeed. Beyond the great intelligence of their guidance, the volume of time and thought that they devoted to the cause were exceptional. The countless hours that they spent helping me to see where, and how, to improve the dissertation will not be forgotten; in my capacity as a college professor, I will most certainly take their generosity and “pay it forward” to my students.

The late Charles Kaufman was especially generous with his editorial advice, for which I am also extremely grateful. I only wish that he had lived to see the finished

product. Countless other friends have read bits and pieces of my dissertation, as well; keeping track of all of them would entail writing another chapter, so I have to hope that they are content with a more general appreciation of their kindness. Elliot Martinez, my partner of many years, was a boon; with his marvelous sense of humor and general good spirit, he lifted my mood during the most difficult periods of writing and editing.

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## Chapter One—Edwin Fischer’s Life to 1937

No monograph-length biographical study of Fischer exists yet. Most of short studies that have been written contain multiple errors on matters crucial to understanding Fischer’s personality. The paucity of information about Fischer’s life seems oddly out of step with his reputation as an artist, arguably one of a very select group of the most influential pianists of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. I will attempt a broad correction in this chapter. It will leave off at 1937, which is the point by which all of Fischer’s Ullstein Bach-editions had appeared in their first editions and when the serial release of his WTC recording was complete. This marks the effective developmental endpoint of the interpretive principles embodied in Fischer’s HMV recording. Although Fischer’s Bach-performance principles evolved significantly in the 1920s, after 1937 there is nothing to suggest that he changed them in any substantial way.

The picture of Fischer that I draw in this chapter is made up of three sketches. In Part One, I provide a critical overview of secondary sources such as biographical sketches, and entries in dictionaries and encyclopedias. Therefore, sources that treat Fischer’s life only after 1933 have been left to the side. The aim in this, initial sketch is to report briefly on the topics raised by each source, to assess their informants’ points of view and potential biases, and to arrange them in a provisional *stemma* based upon chronology and shared errors. Part Two comprises Fischer’s biography to 1937. In it, I focus on points of overlap in which biographers working independently from one another have come to similar conclusions; I corroborate these points with evidence that I have drawn from Fischer’s diaries. In Part Three, I combine that biography with data from biographies, histories, and ethnographic studies of other subjects in order to come to

some defensible conclusions about (1) the composition of Fischer's inner circles through the 1930s; (2) the ideas that members of those circles advanced that lend themselves to translation as interdisciplinary homologies; and (3) points at which concepts from Fischer's disparate circles overlap and mutually reinforce one another, which I assume impressed Fischer especially strongly.

In Part IV, I provide an overview of Fischer's Bach-editions for Ullstein Verlag. Part V establishes analytical objectives for the remainder of the dissertation.

### Part One: A Survey of Secondary Sources on Fischer's Life

**I – Walter Niemann (1919).**<sup>2</sup> One of the more significant bellwethers of Weimar-Republic culture, Walter Niemann, regarded Edwin Fischer as “one of the greatest of the great citizens of Berlin” during the Weimar Republic, when Berlin was at the peak of its stature as a world capital of the arts.<sup>3</sup> I quote Niemann at length in the biographical portion of this chapter.

**II – Alec Robertson (1934 and 1937).**<sup>4</sup> An HMV employee from the firm's earliest years, Robertson was a musicologist and assistant to Walter Legge, the producer of Fischer's *WTC* recording, who joined the firm in 1927. (Legge established a new financial model of subscription recordings at HMV, making Fischer's recording of the

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<sup>2</sup> Walter Niemann, *Meister des Klaviers: Die Pianisten der Gegenwart und der letzten Vergangenheit* (Berlin: Schuster & Loeffler, 1919), 100-101.

<sup>3</sup> “Neben Schnabel hat sich in den letzten Jahren der Schweizer Edwin Fischer einen allerersten Platz unter den “Großen Berlinern” errungen.” Niemann, *Meister des Klaviers*, 100.

<sup>4</sup> Alec Robertson [A.R.], recording review of *WTC I* (HMV/Bach Society), Edwin Fischer (piano), in *The Gramophone* 11/139 (December, 1934), 263–4. Alec Robertson [A.R.], review of *WTC II* (HMV/Bach Society), Edwin Fischer (piano), in *The Gramophone* 14/165 (February, 1937), 379.



WTC possible despite its projected low sales figures.) Robertson knew Fischer well and produced several of his post-war recordings. In the 1950s, he and Legge produced several recordings alongside Walter for EMI, including Fischer's May, 1954 recording of Mozart and Beethoven piano concertos with the Philharmonia Orchestra. His reviews of Fischer's WTC recording for *Gramophone* offer unusually profound insights into Fischer's interpretive process and philosophy.

**III – Bernard Gavoty (1948).**<sup>5</sup> In 1948-(54), French journalist Bernard Gavoty (1908-1981) published a study of Fischer in the “*Grandes Interprètes*” series by René Kister Verlag of Geneva in 1954-5. The story of Gavoty's life is almost as fraught as Fischer's. In any case, because his personality cast such a long shadow over his short biographical study of Fischer, it is important that the reader know some of the details of Gavoty's politicized point of view. Organist of *Les Invalides* and music critic at *Le Figaro* (under the pseudonym of “Clarendon”), Gavoty was inducted into the *Académie des Beaux Arts* in 1976. His popular musicology celebrated, for the most part, performers who were (rightly or wrongly) suspected of harboring Nazi sympathies; he is best known for his biography of Alfred Cortot. Gavoty was an outspoken opponent of some members of the French *avant-garde*: he attacked Olivier Messiaen and Pierre Boulez, in particular.<sup>6</sup> He also directed considerable bile at the historical-performance movement.

It is difficult to account for all the many factual errors and apparent slights of hand in Gavoty's Fischer study. The publication—which includes a transcript of an

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<sup>5</sup> *Les grandes interprètes: Edwin Fischer* (Geneva: Editions René Kister, 1954/5). French edition published in 1954, German edition published in 1955. Despite the date of publication, the text makes it clear that the interview took place in August of 1948.

<sup>6</sup> See Jane F. Fulcher, “The Politics of Transcendence: Ideology in the Music of Messiaen,” *The Musical Quarterly* 2002 86(3): 449-471.

interview, a photo-essay by Roger Hauert done at the site of Fischer's post-war home in Weggis-Hertenstein, creates the impression that Gavoty accompanied Hauert on the site-visit; Gavoty's approach makes the truth of the matter difficult to discern. Close inspection suggests that very little of the façade of Gavoty's study reflects its actual content. For example, the text is a portmanteau of pieces of an actual interview into which Gavoty promiscuously mixes passages lifted verbatim from Fischer's writings; this is done without the use of quotation marks or precise attribution to sources.<sup>7</sup> Gavoty obliquely reveals a bit of the truth to the reader, buried in a footnote: "These comments by Fischer—as well as many others—are found in expanded form in his work *Musikalische Betrachtungen* published by Insel Verlag."<sup>8</sup> Thus, it is difficult to judge how much in a Gavoty "interview" reflects actual conversation since at least part of it is transcribed from Fischer's essays.

Page nineteen of the German edition includes Gavoty's gratuitous denunciation of the historical-performance movement. Having devoted considerable space to this irrelevant topic, Gavoty finally turns to offering data on Fischer. There, he offers a biographical sketch that runs to a mere two hundred words. Gavoty commits a sin of omission in the opening of the Fischer *Lebenslauf*: it begins by accurately tracing Fischer's career with the aid of dated references; then, as the sketch approaches 1933, its

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<sup>7</sup> The interviews with Fischer seem to have been in a combination of French and German. Certainly Fischer's expostulations on Bach must have been offered in German, and in written form, given that they are verbatim citations from his *Musikalische Betrachtungen*. Likewise, the book reproduces two handwritten pages of Fischer's "Johann Sebastian Bach" essay, likely in the hand of his personal secretary, also in German. Those parts of the text written by Gavoty were originally in French, having been translated for the German edition by Eva Rechel-Mertens. Gavoty's study is accompanied by a photo-essay by Roger Hauert.

<sup>8</sup> Edwin Fischer, *Musikalische Betrachtungen* (Wiesbaden: Insel Verlag, 1949).

wording becomes vague and dating ceases altogether. “Starting in 1926, Fischer was appointed conductor of the Symphony in Lübeck and of the *Bachverein* in Munich [*sic*].<sup>9</sup> Then [the date is conspicuously absent] he founded a chamber orchestra that he took on tour.” The chamber orchestra in question is the *Kammerorchester Edwin-Fischer*, founded in Berlin in 1932; its members included students at the *Musikhochschule* as well as some members of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra.<sup>10</sup> Gavoty’s selective excision of Nazi-era dates suggests that he wished to protect Fischer from insinuations of Nazi sympathy—most likely, entirely unjust—that circulated after WWII.

Gavoty then states that Fischer “was for several years, until 1933 [*sic*], a Professor at the *Staatliche[n] Hochschule* [*sic*] in Berlin and was awarded an Honorary Doctorate by the Universität Köln in 1928.” By the time of Gavoty’s writing, the fact that Fischer only left Berlin in 1943 had been very widely discussed. Although it is true that Fischer left the *Hochschule* under circumstances that were not favorable to him, Gavoty’s having moved the date from 1936 to 1933 appears to be a sin of commission intended to create the impression that Fischer resigned in protest soon after the Nazi rise to power. Such an impression would be mistaken, since Fischer—like many, including those who

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<sup>9</sup> Actually, Fischer served in Lübeck only during the 1926-27 season. The correct years of his Munich appointment were 1928-1931.

<sup>10</sup> A friend of Gavoty’s performed exactly the same sleight of hand on his behalf: two years after Gavoty’s death, Michael David-Weill provided a short biography of Gavoty to the Académie des Beaux-Arts that is similarly sanitized, omitting any reference to Gavoty’s wartime record. Michel David-Weill, *Institut de France, Académie des Beaux-Arts: Notice sur la vie et les travaux de M. Bernard Gavoty (1908-1981) lue à l’occasion de son installation comme membre de la Section Membres Libres: Séance du Mercredi 27 Avril 1983*, URL: [http://www.academie-des-beaux-arts.fr/membres/actuel/libres/David-Weill/discours\\_hommage\\_gavoty.htm](http://www.academie-des-beaux-arts.fr/membres/actuel/libres/David-Weill/discours_hommage_gavoty.htm) (accessed March 7, 2016).

would later be Hitler's most vehement opponents—appears not to have realized the actual threat posed by the Nazis until somewhat later.

Fischer was actually a faculty member at the *Musikhochschule* from 1931, when he took over the class of Artur Schnabel, who declined to return to his Berlin residence after that year, due to the increasing influence of the Nazis. Gavoty has also tampered with the year in which Fischer left Berlin: he changes this year from 1943 to 1945. Being eager to avoid calling attention to the fact that he had stayed until 1943, Fischer surely did not originate that change.<sup>11</sup>

**IV – Grove V (1954).**<sup>12</sup> This article reproduces several of Gavoty's errors uncritically. It adds no new information.

**V – Georg Stieglitz (1955).**<sup>13</sup> Stieglitz also takes up Gavoty's predilections and errors uncritically. He simply reproduces the Gavoty *Lebenslauf* with minor editing. Like Gavoty, he fails to mention any of Fischer's many wartime performances.

**VI – Alfred Brendel (1960 and 1976).**<sup>14</sup> In "Edwin Fischer: Remembering My Teacher" (1960) and "Afterthoughts on Edwin Fischer" (1976), Brendel provides affectionate accounts of his study with Fischer. These, however, supply no real data.

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<sup>11</sup> Gavoty, *Les Grandes Interprètes: Edwin Fischer*, 8.

<sup>12</sup> "Edwin Fischer," *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, edited by Eric Blom (London: Macmillan, 1954).

<sup>13</sup> "Edwin Fischer," *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* 4 ("Fede – Gesangspädagogik"), First Edition, edited by Friedrich Blume (Kassel: Bärenreiter Verlag, 1955), col. 261.

<sup>14</sup> Alfred Brendel, *Musical Thoughts and Afterthoughts* (New York: Noonday Press, 1991)

**VII – Alfons Ott** (1961).<sup>15</sup> Ott avoids all of the errors that had appeared in the three earlier studies, but, curiously, omits any discussion of Fischer’s teaching at the Berlin *Hochschule für Musik*. He, fortunately, erases Gavoty’s mistaken claims that Fischer’s chamber orchestra and his summer master-class series were connected with the *Musikhochschule* (although it is true that some of its members came from the *Musikhochschule*, as well as from the Berlin Philharmonic). Ott’s biography also offers significant insights, of much greater depth than those by earlier authors, about the lasting influence of Fischer’s innovations as well as Fischer’s unusual mixture of textual fidelity and interpretive license.

**VIII – Elegiac essays from *Dank an Edwin Fischer*** (1962).<sup>16</sup> Essays by: (1) Wilhelm Löffler (1962); (2) Harald Isenstein (1962); (3) Paul Badura-Skoda (1962); (4) Jörgen Schmidt-Voigt (1962); (5) Elly Ney (1962); (6) Walter Strebi; and (7) F. Bäumle, Pastor of the Wasserkirche of the Evangelical-Reformed (*i.e.*, Lutheran) Church of Zurich (1962).

Isenstein relates a number of anecdotes in which Fischer, speaking in *Baseldytch* (and sometimes in English, before having had any instruction) astounds elders and fellow students with his prescience. Isenstein refers to Fischer’s strong interest in mathematics and natural sciences.

Löffler notes that Fischer was “thoroughly apolitical, of good heart, and by nature an overanxious artist who loved his art exclusively, and who only later learned of the

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<sup>15</sup> Alfons Ott, “Edwin Fischer,” *Neue deutsche Biographie* 5 (Berlin: Duncker & Humbolt, 1961, reprinted 1971), 180.

<sup>16</sup> *Dank an Edwin Fischer*, Edited by Hugo Haïd (Wiesbaden: F.A. Brockhaus, 1962).

perversity of the [Nazi] regime.”<sup>17</sup> There is some truth to this, even if Fischer was in a position—as a member of the Mendelssohn family—to have significant access to Jewish reports about Nazi atrocities. In an October 1942 diary entry, Fischer writes of being “depressed” by Graz Police-Chief Max Brand, as was Brand’s wife.<sup>18</sup> Both seem to have dismayed at Brand’s having taken on construction and management of a work camp for Sinti-Roma prisoners. As morally reprehensible as Brand’s actions were at that time, the camp was not a death camp and its prisoners would only be deported to Auschwitz in March-April of 1943, just as Fischer was leaving Germany.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> “Wenn manche später Edwin Fischer den Vorwurf machten, er sei zu lange in Berlin geblieben, so muss man bedenken, dass er dort Vollendung seiner Ausbildung und ungezählte Anregungen und schließlich hohe, wohlverdiente Anerkennung fand, als die heimatliche Kritik noch lange an seinem von starken Impulsen erfüllten Spiel herumnörgelte, muss bedenken, dass der durch und durch unpolitische, herzensgute, von Natur aber überängstlich Künstler, der ausschließlich seiner Kunst lebte, erst spät die Verworfenheit des Regimes empfunden und erkannt hat. In der Welt, in der er lebte, waren solche Ungeheuerlichkeiten nicht denkbar.” Wilhelm Löffler, “Von ‘G’ bis ‘D’”, *Dank an Edwin Fischer*, 15-16.

<sup>18</sup> The diary entry of October 6, 1942 reads: “Graz. Hotel Wiesler Landeshaus. deprimiert bei Polizeipräs. Brand. Frau Brand in trauer.” Edwin Fischer, diary entry of Oct. 6, 1942, *Edwin Fischer Nachlass*, Zentralbibliothek Luzern.

<sup>19</sup> For an overview of Max Brand’s role in the creation of the Sinti-Roma work-camps near Graz based upon current scholarship see: “Topografía de la memoria: memoriales históricos de los campos de concentración nacionalsocialistas 1933-1945,” found at: [http://www.memoriales.net/zip/zip\\_biblio.htm](http://www.memoriales.net/zip/zip_biblio.htm) (accessed July 31, 2016). “The creation of these labor camps was first raised in a discussion between the Reichskriminaldirektor Arthur Nebe and Polizeipräsident of Graz, SS-Oberführer Max Brand, in August 1940... The men worked in road construction and control channels; the women wove baskets, cleaned the field, cooked and took care of the sick. Generally, the camp conditions were not too bad, with some physical punishment and detention for violating camp rules, but no abnormal deaths. In March-April 1943, most Gypsy inhabitants were deported to Auschwitz, with a small group being sent to Camp Lackenbach in Burgenland.” (“La creación de estos campos de trabajos forzados se discutió por primera vez entre el Reichskriminaldirektor Arthur Nebe y el Polizeipräsident de Graz, SS-Oberführer Max Brand, en agosto de 1940 (StLA Landesregierung 384 Zi/1940, Schreiben Kriminalpolizeistelle Graz, gez. Brand, an Reichsstatthalter, Regierungspräsidenten Müller-Haccius, vom 20. August 1940, betr.: Arbeitseinsatz der männlichen Zigeuner)... Los hombres trabajaban en la construcción de carreteras y en el

Walter Strebi's essay takes the approach favored by Gavoty, bypassing Fischer's wartime life entirely, jumping from his appointment to the Berlin *Hochschule für Musik* in 1928 ahead to the post-war master-class that Fischer established in Lucerne in 1943,<sup>20</sup> glossing over his wartime Berlin career. Strebi justifies Fischer's having stayed in Germany during WWII, noting that "his star rose higher and higher" while there, and that "the year 1943 brought a new turn to his life..."

Coming home from a concert, he found his home hopelessly ruined by an aerial bombing raid. He had already given Berlin, which had he owed so much, enough, and returned with his entourage [*i.e.*, his elderly mother and Lina Gerlieb] to his homeland.<sup>21</sup>

Fischer's diary entries recording events of the night of March 2-3, 1943 describes this more vividly: "Alarm. Fighter planes crisscross the air—a torrent of panic. Attack on Berlin's Johannisbergerstrasse [the street on which Fischer's house was located]. Wilksch, Vedder, Straubitz lend a hand. Blown to bits. Lina [Gerlieb], Gisela to Warnecke's old friends' place." ("Alarm. Die Flieger zogen über den Himmel—Sorge-Sturm. Angriff auf Berlin Johannisbergerstr[asse]. Wilksch, Vedder, Straubitz helfen. Splittercafe. Lina, Gisela bei Warnecke's alte Freunde.")<sup>22</sup>

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control de canales; las mujeres tejían cestos, limpiaban el campo, cocinaban y tenían cuidado de los enfermos. En general, las condiciones de este campo no eran excesivamente malas, con algunos castigos físicos y detenciones por violar las reglas del campo, pero sin muertes anormales. En marzo-abril de 1943, la mayoría de los habitantes fueron deportados al campo gitano de Auschwitz, y un pequeño grupo al campo de Lackenbach, en Burgenland.")

<sup>20</sup> Walter Strebi, "Gedenkfeier im Gemeindesaal der Lukas-Kirche, Luzern, 18. Mai, 1960," *Dank an Edwin Fischer*, 123-124.

<sup>21</sup> Rev. F. Bäumle, "Abdankung für Prof. Dr. h.c. Edwin Fischer," *Dank an Edwin Fischer*, edited by Hugo Haïd (Wiesbaden: Brockhaus Verlag, 1961), 113.

<sup>22</sup> Edwin Fischer, diary entries of March 2-3, 1943, *Edwin Fischer Nachlass*, Zentralbibliothek Luzern.

Of all the essays in *Dank an Edwin Fischer*, the one by Elly Ney seems the most out of place, she having been an enthusiastic Nazi musician and a rabid anti-Semite to whom the designation “Hitler’s Pianist” (“Hitlers Pianistin“) was given. Although it may seem odd that Fischer remained close with Ney, particularly in the post-war period, Fischer was disinclined to remonstrate against others and seems to have taken a more complex, skeptical view of artists’ affiliations with Axis leaders than most. He did not generally take political choices made during WWII at face value or measure their value in binary terms.

**IX – Transcripts in *Dank an Edwin Fischer* (1962).**<sup>23</sup> Other chapters in *Dank an Edwin Fischer* are more oriented towards relating factual data than the elegiac pieces are. These include: “Undated Letter” (which relates Fischer’s pique upon being asked to justify his wartime activities); “Mechanization and the Human Spirit,” his opening oration to the *Potsdamer Meisterkurs* of 1939; an analysis of Fischer’s pedagogy by Paul Badura-Skoda; a transcript of a day’s lessons at the *Potsdamer Meisterkurs* of 1936; and the “Draft of a Preface to the *Tonmeister-Ausgabe* of *The Well-Tempered Clavier*. These provide invaluable data, to which I will refer extensively throughout this dissertation.

**X – Celine Staub Genhart** as told to Stewart Gordon (1965).<sup>24</sup> Celine Staub (I refer to her here as she was known to Fischer) studied with Edwin Fischer from 1921 to 1923.

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<sup>23</sup> *Dank an Edwin Fischer*, 43-111.

<sup>24</sup> Stewart L. Gordon, “Celine Staub Genhart: Her Biography and Her Concepts of Piano Playing,” DMA Thesis, Eastman School of Music, 1965. I’m grateful to the fortepianist and harpsichordist Penelope Crawford for alerting me to the existence of this important document.



She provides a finely drawn portrait of Fischer's personality, his pedagogy, and his relationships to Anna Fischer and Eleonora von Mendelssohn. She found Fischer not to be the "analytical pedagogue" that she sought.<sup>25</sup> Nonetheless, she found his coaching to be "marvelous. He had many beautiful ideas and he could demonstrate them for his students. He could not, however, always impart to his students exactly how he achieved his effects."

**XI – Timothy Tikker** (1981).<sup>26</sup> In a 1987 article in the *Journal of the American Liszt Society* Timothy Tikker provides a brief sketch of Fischer's life as prelude to a transcription of Joan Benson's recollections of her studies with Fischer. (Apparently unaware of Alfons Ott's fine article, Tikker uncritically reproduces all of Gavoty's errors.) After her studies with Fischer, Benson became an advocate of the clavichord and the fortepiano, performing and recording on both instruments. There may be some connection between the two: Fischer advocated reviving some historical performance practices, such as leading Mozart piano concertos from the keyboard, and his prefaces to several volumes of his U-A Bach-edition mention the importance for pianists of bearing in mind the sound of early keyboard instruments—which he describes. The truculent denunciation of early keyboard instruments contained in Gavoty's study appears not to be by Fischer but, instead, to be a case of Gavoty having used Fischer as a proxy to provide legitimacy to his anti-historical-performance-practice views. It may be the case that Fischer encouraged Benson's curiosity regarding period instruments.

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<sup>25</sup> Gordon, *Celine Staub Genhart*, 64.

<sup>26</sup> Joan Benson (as told to Timothy Tikker), "Recollections of Edwin Fischer," *Journal of the American Liszt Society* 21 (January-June, 1987), 22-25.

**XII – Joseph Wulf (1983).**<sup>27</sup> Wulf clears up the persistent confusion about the dates of Fischer’s appointment at the *Hochschule für Musik* in Berlin. Fischer took up his position in 1931 and left it in 1935, when he was replaced by the Nazi stalwart Carl-Adolf Martienssen (1881-1955). The Rosenberg Office requested that Martienssen be added to the piano faculty in 1934, but it took almost a year to accomplish this, during which time Fischer decided to ask to be released. Apparently, the plan to install Martienssen in place of Fischer had been in motion as early as 1933.<sup>28</sup>

**XIII – Roger Smithson (1980).**<sup>29</sup> Roger Smithson contributed a rather fine article on Fischer to Grove 6. Nonetheless, it is marred by the omission of some known data. The biographical portion of Smithson’s article reports that Fischer “resigned from the *Hochschule für Musik* in 1933 when his Jewish colleagues were expelled. There is plentiful evidence that contradicts that account. Fischer actually resigned only in 1935—it appears as though he was forced out in order to make room for a Nazi stalwart—at which point he took up a position in the music conservatory at Munich. Getting the date wrong and omitting that Fischer remained in Germany until 1943 leads the reader to believe that Fischer resigned in protest over the Nazi’s rise to power. This is certainly not the case. Citing Fischer’s writing on the history of pianistic performance style, Smithson finds it “interesting to note that distinct classical and romantic styles existed in Fischer’s youth,” but this represents a misinterpretation: it is true that discrete styles existed, but in

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<sup>27</sup> Joseph Wulf, *Musik im Dritten Reich: eine Dokumentation* (Berlin: Ullstein, 1983).

<sup>28</sup> Wulf, “Schreiben des Kampfbunds vom 1. April 1933, Unterzeichner Fritz Stein,” *Musik im Dritten Reich*, 100.

<sup>29</sup> Roger Smithson, “Edwin Fischer,” in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (first edition, a.k.a. “Grove 6”), edited by Stanley Sadie and Nigel Fortune (London: Macmillan, 1980).

Fischer's youth these had not yet been firmly attached to style periods. That association only became a commonplace only later in the twentieth century, driven by assumptions such as the one that Smithson makes in this case.

**XIV – John Hunt** (1994).<sup>30</sup> Hunt's discography in *Giants of the Keyboard*, 1994 provides useful data regarding dates of sessions, dates of release and other details of the recording industry, including much of value pertaining to Fischer's recording.

**XV – Elisabeth Montague** (2003).<sup>31</sup> Montague was an ardent anti-Nazi. In 1933, while applying for a German visa, she became so incensed by questions regarding her racial heritage that she swept to the ground all the contents on the official's desk, in the process smashing his silver-framed portrait of Hitler. (This caused her a great deal of inconvenience but earned her no official punishment.) After the war—when she worked in Allen Dulles' Office of Special Services—she had a brief romantic relationship with Fischer, whom she had met before the war. Two of her close contacts were connected with the July 20, 1944 attempt to assassinate Hitler. She was present at a 1934 meeting between Adam von Trott (who was the German Ambassador to England at the time) and Diana Churchill that paved the way for expanded anti-Nazi espionage and resistance. Later, while working for Dulles, she translated 1,415 pages of intelligence provided by Dr. Hans-Bernd Gisevius, a German resistance member—one of the few members of the team of the July 20 plot to escape torture and execution by the Nazis. Montagu expressed the highest regard for Fischer in her autobiography, *Honourable Rebel*. Her involvement

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<sup>30</sup> John Hunt, *Giants of the Keyboard* (self-published, 1994), 191-243. Roger Smithson's Grove 6 article appears on pages 193 and 194 as the introduction to the section on Fischer.

<sup>31</sup> Elisabeth Montague, *Honourable Rebel* (London: Montague Ventures Ltd., 2003).

in anti-Nazi espionage, her long and close friendship with Fischer, and records of Fischer's frequent travel to Basel (where she worked) throughout the war, collectively raise the possibility that more of significance remains to be discovered about Fischer's activities in WWII Germany, possibly as a member of the German Resistance.

**XVI – Mario Gertels** (2010).<sup>32</sup> Gertels provides some anecdotal reportage on two visits to the *Internationalen Musikfestwochen Luzern* in 1953 and 1954, in which Fischer appeared. He attended a rehearsal of Brahms' Second Piano Concerto with Fischer as soloist under Furtwängler and the subsequent concert. He also attended a concert the following year in which Fischer played Mozart's Piano Concerto in E-flat Major (K. 482) while conducting from the piano. Gertels mistakenly reports that "Fischer returned to Switzerland in 1942" (actually 1943),<sup>33</sup> Gertels does provide a little new data, however: *e.g.*, that Fischer's home in Weggis/Lucerne faced the *Vierwaldstättersee* near Rachmaninoff's villa, built later, in 1956; that, on Fischer's 70<sup>th</sup> birthday, he was named an honorary citizen of Weggis; and that he is buried in the municipal cemetery of Lucerne.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Mario Gertels, "Allumfassende Liebe: Edwin Fischer's 50. Todestag," *Musik Aktuelle* (Webpage of Hochschule Luzern, Feb. 1, 2010), URL: <https://www.hslu.ch/en/lucerne-school-of-music/campus/bibliothek/bibliothek-sammlungen/sammlung-edwin-fischer/>

<sup>33</sup> "1942 kam Edwin Fischer in die Schweiz zurück." Gertels, "Allumfassende Liebe," col. 2. Fischer did spend considerable time in 1942 concertizing in Switzerland, but that was typical for him. He took no other permanent lodgings in Berlin after March 2, 1943, the day on which his house in Berlin's Johannesbergerstrasse was gravely damaged by the Allied bombing; however, he visited Berlin off and on until the end of the war.

<sup>34</sup> "In seinen späten Jahren lebte Edwin Fischer in Hertenstein am Vierwaldstättersee – unweit jener Villa Senar, die sich Sergej Rachmaninoff als Sommersitz erbaut hatte. 1956, zum 70. Geburtstag, ernannte ihn Weggis zum Ehrenbürger. Am 24. Januar 1960 ist Edwin Fischer gestorben. Begraben liegt er im Friedental Luzern." Gertels, "Allumfassende Liebe," col. 2.

**XVII – Paul Badura-Skoda** (2011).<sup>35</sup> Badura-Skoda’s *Edwin Fischer: Meisterkurs in Luzern 1954* does not provide biographical data. However, his transcription of Fischer’s advice to students in the 1954 course is an invaluable source of insights into Fischer’s performance epistemology.

**XVIII – Tully Potter** (2010).<sup>36</sup> In *Adolf Busch: Portrait of an Honest Musician*, Potter recounts Adolf Busch’s receipt of a telephone call in which Fischer “said something like: ‘Now that the Jews are no longer allowed to play, a great time begins for us.’”<sup>37</sup> However, Katja Andy (*née* Aschaffenburg), a Jewish student of Fischer’s, reports that, “Fischer thought Hitler was a monster but at first believed that the Nazis would not remain in power for more than a little while. ‘It’s all a nightmare which cannot last long,’ he said. He was aware of what Busch was saying about him and it hurt him very much. What he told me was that he ran to the phone when he heard that Busch was leaving Germany, and said: ‘Adolf, why do you leave now, in the time when they need us more than ever?’”<sup>38</sup>

Interpretation of Fischer’s intended meaning depends entirely on whom “they” represents. Given the context of Andy’s report, a riposte to Busch’s interpretation, she appears to believe that Fischer meant, “Adolf, why do you leave now, when *our oppressed musical colleagues* need us more than ever?” If Andy’s recollection of the wording of Fischer’s statement is accurate, then this strongly suggests that Busch hastily

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<sup>35</sup> Paul Badura-Skoda, *Edwin Fischer: Meisterkurs in Luzern 1954* (Dusseldorf: Staccato-Verlag, 2011).

<sup>36</sup> Tully Potter, *Adolf Busch: The Life of an Honest Musician* (London: Toccata Press, 2010).

<sup>37</sup> Potter’s qualification that Fischer “said something like...” is tacit acknowledgment of the contested nature of what was said, although that has not prevented Potter’s judging Fischer rather harshly. Potter provides no transcript of the conversation by which one might judge the full context of Serkin-Buchthal’s comment. Potter, *Adolf Busch*, 521.

<sup>38</sup> Potter, *Adolf Busch*, 521.

and incorrectly assumed that Fischer meant *the German public*, by “they.” Although the whole affair may have been a tempest in a teapot, it did great damage to Fischer’s professional relationships. It may be significant that he was able to account for the misunderstanding well enough to satisfy most of his colleagues except those closest to Busch and Rudolph Serkin. The date of the phone call is also unclear: Andy retells the story in the context of her leaving Germany in August of 1933. However, Busch had moved to Basel in 1927. When Andy relates that Fischer “ran to the phone when he heard that Busch was leaving Germany,” she mostly likely means that Fischer had heard that Busch no longer intended to play in Germany, which would most likely place the call sometime in early April of 1933.

Potter claims to be impartial on this matter. However, without any apparent justification, he brings the gavel down resolutely on the Busch/Serkin side: “But after all the pros and cons have been weighed up, the fact remains that, when he had the chance to be a force for good in trying times, he chose the path of compliance.”<sup>39</sup> This is a harsh judgment that takes no account of readily available, published accounts that speak against Potter’s verdict. Over the entire span of Nazi rule, Fischer risked his life to rescue Jews in distress. He supported and protected Katya Andy from 1933, when she fled to Paris and he regularly sent her money, until her emigration in 1937.<sup>40</sup> This included hiding her in

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<sup>39</sup> Potter, *Adolf Busch*, 521.

<sup>40</sup> When the Nazi’s rose to power, Fischer sought permission from the *Reichsmusikkammer* for Aschaffenburg to continue performing in Germany; permission to perform on Aryanized stages was denied, and she was only permitted to teach non-Aryan students. With no work papers, she moved to Paris in April of 1933, where she survived on funds that Fischer illegally sent her from 1933 to 1937. In 1937, the Vichy government caught up with Aschaffenburg and seized her passport. Despite the risk of traveling without identity documents, Aschaffenburg returned to Berlin, where Fischer hid her in his attic, continuing to support her financially until she was able to secure a

his attic for a month, which raises the possibility that his Berlin home was a station on the German Resistance's "Underground Railroad." Likewise, Fischer gave material support to the pianist Greta Sultan without regard for Nazi laws.<sup>41</sup> In 1942, he again thwarted Nazi regulations in order to help a young Jewish pianist, Konrad Latte, who was in Berlin posing as a Catholic housepainter.<sup>42</sup>

It is difficult to know what Potter makes of the entirety of the "facts," which include Fischer hiding Jews in his Berlin home, and providing them with food stamps and considerable sums of money continuously in the period 1933-1943. Any one of the hundreds of violations of the Nuremberg Laws that Fischer committed in that decade would have earned Fischer a harsh prison sentence; collectively, they would have merited a death sentence. Potter has certainly not "weighed all the pros and cons," and he has missed that Fischer was likely much more a "force for good" than Potter's subject, Busch, who was safely ensconced in Basel during the war. It is difficult to understand how gossip handed around about a misunderstood telephone message could outweigh acknowledging the risks that Fischer assumed and the lives that he saved.

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forged exit-visa a month later. Moritz von Bredow, "Katja Andy," *Lexikon verfolgter Musiker und Musikerinnen der NS-Zeit*. URL: [http://www.lexm.uni-hamburg.de/object/lexm\\_lexmperson\\_00004446](http://www.lexm.uni-hamburg.de/object/lexm_lexmperson_00004446)

<sup>41</sup> In April of 1936, Fischer arranged a paying recital for Sultan in Zurich. He then placed her in the care one of his closest music-loving friends, the pioneering psychiatrist Ludwig Binswanger, who found additional concerts for Sultan in Switzerland. Moritz von Bredow, "Greta Sultan," *Lexikon verfolgter Musiker und Musikerinnen der NS-Zeit*. URL: [http://www.lexm.uni-hamburg.de/object/lexm\\_lexmperson\\_00001399.jsessionid=B6906A2AEDB7420F356C6D836D78718B?wcmsID=0003](http://www.lexm.uni-hamburg.de/object/lexm_lexmperson_00001399.jsessionid=B6906A2AEDB7420F356C6D836D78718B?wcmsID=0003)

<sup>42</sup> Fischer provided Latte with money and food coupons, giving him instruction free of charge. Peter Schneider, "Saving Konrad Latte," *The New York Times*, February 13, 2000.

**XIX – Thomas Blubacher** (2012).<sup>43</sup> In 2010, Fischer’s papers were unsealed. Since then, Thomas Blubacher’s thoroughly researched, richly detailed dual biography of Eleonora and Francesco von Mendelssohn has appeared, in which Fischer plays a major role. The picture that Blubacher paints of Fischer is more complex than any of the prior studies.

**XX – Victor Fenigstein** (2013).<sup>44</sup> Fenigstein offers some highly relevant biographical and psychological data about Fischer’s tortured relationship with his mother. Although he is surely mistaken, Fenigstein reports that Fischer’s 60<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration—on October 6, 1946, in Lucerne—was tarnished by the sudden appearance of August Wilhelm II, popularly known as “Auwi.” August Wilhelm was a passionate Nazi and a great political supporter of Hitler. His presence at the celebration would have been highly irregular.<sup>45</sup> However, it is just as unlikely: “Auwi” was continuously incarcerated from the end of WWII until his death.<sup>46</sup>

It is likely that the Hohenzollern that Fenigstein saw was not “Auwi” but, instead, his slightly older brother, Prince Adalbert von Hohenzollern (1884-1948). Adalbert spent

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<sup>43</sup> Thomas Blubacher, *Gibt es etwas Schöneres als Sehnsucht? Die Geschwister Eleonora und Francesco von Mendelssohn*, Henschel Verlag (2010).

<sup>44</sup> Fritz Hennenberg, *Victor Fenigstein: Lebensprotokoll; Werkkommentare; Kataloge* (Saarbrücken: PFAU-Verlag, 2013).

<sup>45</sup> *Am Sonntag, dem [sic] 6. Oktober 1946, waren die Schüler des Meisterkurses von Edwin Fischer zur Feier seines sechzigsten Geburtstages eingeladen. Sie fand im Himmelrych in Luzern statt...Leider kam ein Missklang in die Feier, als plötzlich Prinz ‘Auwi’ erscheint. August Wilhelm, Sohn des Abgedankten deutschen Kaisers Wilhelm II, hatte sich den Nazis angedient. Wie ich, so fand auch mein Freund Sebastian Benda, der ebenfalls Edwin Fischers Meisterkurs besuchte, diesen Einzug als äußerst geschmacklos. Jedenfalls standen wir auf und verließen die Feier.* Fritz Hennenberg, *Victor Fenigstein: Lebensprotokoll, Werkkommentare, Kataloge* (Saarbrücken: PFAU-Verlag, 2013), 44.

<sup>46</sup> He was arrested on May 8, 1945 by American soldiers and confined to the *Klak-Kaserne* in Ludwigsburg. He remained there until his trial in 1948, when he was found guilty and was released for time served. On his return to Berlin, the Soviets issued a warrant for his arrest. He died shortly thereafter.



his life after WWI in Switzerland, where he raised his children. Fischer's diaries record his having met with Adalbert on numerous occasions. The diary entry of December 17, 1942, for example, reads: "Vevy. Prinz Adalbert u. Pr. Dr. Nihaus [?], gelähmte Frau. Ansermet."<sup>47</sup> By contrast, Fischer's diaries contain no mention of "Auwi."

### **Overview of the Sources Above**

Gavoty's account is unreliable, being mistaken on many counts. Unfortunately, the *Grove* and *MGG* articles pick up his errors, as does Tikker. More regrettable is Potter's willingness to pass on third-hand tales about Fischer, which mistakes a community of error for corroboration. Ott repairs most of Gavoty's errors based on legitimate archival work. Wulf, Hunt, and Blubacher, likewise, are all based on admirable archival work. Their reports are highly informative and not excessively redundant. Reliable and informative sources exist from within Fischer's inner circles, including those by Robertson, Staub-Genhart, and Montague. The elegiac pieces and tributes from former students are, as might be expected, mostly hagiographic, although some (like Badura-Skoda's) are specific and helpful.

## **Part Two: Fischer's Life to 1937**

### **Childhood and Early Training in Basel, 1886-1904.**

Edwin Fischer was an only child, born October 6, 1886 to musical parents in Basel.<sup>48</sup> His father, Johann Baptiste Fischer, who had emigrated from Prague, was an

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<sup>47</sup> Edwin Fischer, diary entry of Dec. 17, 1942, *Edwin Fischer Nachlass*, Zentralbibliothek Luzern.

<sup>48</sup> One source, [http://agso.uni-graz.at/marienthal/biografien/fischer\\_edwin.htm](http://agso.uni-graz.at/marienthal/biografien/fischer_edwin.htm)

oboist from a long line of instrument makers who played oboe and viola with the Basel Symphony Orchestra.<sup>49</sup> Johann Fischer died in 1889. His death set two forces in motion that profoundly shaped the young Edwin's development. First, it placed three-year-old Edwin exclusively in the care of his mother, Anna Fischer (born circa 1865, died 1947), who dominated and controlled him for the rest of his life. Second, it led Fischer to form attachments to many men in roughly the age-range of his father. This circle of freely chosen ersatz fathers served as a foil to the crushing, stifling restrictions that Fischer's mother imposed on him.

Anna Fischer (*née* Friedli) was, by Alfonse Ott's report, "a moderately talented violinist." She was, by most accounts, a highly manipulative, controlling stage mother who inculcated deep mistrust of others, particularly of women, in her son. Nonetheless, Fischer's attachment to her was everlasting and pathological, absolutely forestalling any possibility that he might lead a normal, adult life. Victor Fenigstein, a Fischer student, reports that her death was "a liberation" for Fischer.

Edwin Fischer spoke a lot about his mother and was quite tied to her apron strings. When she died, it seemed to be an "exorcism," as though he was no longer possessed by her. Or am I just projecting something onto him out of my close relationship with my own mother?

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(Accessed July 19, 2009) makes the amazing claim that Edwin Fischer had a brother, the literary historian Max David Fischer (1893-1954). ("Edwin Fischer, Sohn des aus Prag (Praha) stammenden Oboisten Johann Jakob Fischer und Bruder des Journalisten und Literaturwissenschaftlers Max David Fischer (1893-1954)..."). They could be, at most, half-brothers, since Edwin's father died four years before Max David's birth. But Max David Fischer's obituary in *The New York Times* (NYT, May 22, 1954) lists his place of birth as "Breslau, Germany" (*i.e.*, Wroclaw), and refers only to a brother named Dr. Ernest Fischer, living in Richmond, VA, making it unlikely that he is any relation to Edwin Fischer.

<sup>49</sup> Alfons Ott corrects Gavoty's erroneous identification of Fischer's father—whom he claimed was Johann Jakob Fischer (1826-1891)—identifying him, instead, as Johann Baptiste Fischer. Alfons Ott, "Edwin Fischer," *Neue deutsche Biographie*, 180. URL: <http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/sfz60972.html> (accessed September 24, 2013).

One day, he showed me the place on his arm where his mother had burned a “reminder” into him with a hot curling iron. She hurt him as a child in order to teach him not to play with fire! This experience hounded him his whole life. Their over-intimacy seemed to be a plague upon him and to hector him.<sup>50</sup>

Pastor F. Bäumle’s oration at Fischer’s funeral in Basel put a positive spin on Anna Fischer’s relationship with her son.

He lost his father early to death, and his capable mother subsequently took over responsibility for guiding his life. She lived together with him, not merely during the days of his youth and development, but also at every [later] stage of his life... Into his old age, she shined the clearest light upon him... She was able to share in the experience of the entire developmental course of her son as well as in his many great successes and saw therein the fulfillment of her own life.<sup>51</sup>

John and Anna Gillespie emphasize Fischer’s ties to his mother’s apron strings in their 1995 survey of pianists: “Fischer adored his mother and never forgot the ‘sacrifices’ that she endured for the sake of his music. He lived with her until her death.”<sup>52</sup> This is not entirely true: throughout his married life, he lived separately from his mother.

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<sup>50</sup> “Edwin Fischer sprach oft von seiner Mutter; er hatte eine enge Bindung zu ihr. Als sie gestorben war, scheint es auf ihn wie eine “Befreiung” gewirkt zu haben—so, als habe sie ihn losgelassen. Oder projiziere ich hier etwas auf ihn, was mit meiner eigenen Beziehung zu meiner Mutter zu tun hatte?

Er hat mir einmal seinen Arm gezeigt, wo seine Mutter ihm mit einer heißen Brennschere, wie sie für die Haare verwendet wird, eine „Denkzettel“ verpasst hat. Sie hat ihn verletzt, um ihn als er klein war, davon zu warnen, mit dem Feuer zu spielen! Dieses Erlebnis hat ihn ein Leben lang verfolgt. Die enge Mutterverbindung scheint sowohl eine Plage also auch eine Beflügelung gewesen zu sein.“ *Victor Fenigstein, Lebensprotokoll; Werkkommentare; Kataloge* (Saarbrücken: PFAU-Verlag, 2013) 43–4.

<sup>51</sup> “Früh verlor er seinen Vater durch den Tod, und seine tatkräftige Mutter übernahm damals die verantwortliche Führung in seinem Leben. Nicht nur in den Tagen seiner Jugend und seiner Entwicklung, sondern auch auf allen Stufen seines Lebens lebte sie in Gemeinschaft mit ihm... Bis in sein Alter hinauf leuchteten sie ihm noch im Verklärten Licht... Den ganzen Entwicklungsweg ihres Sohnes und auch seine vielen und großen Erfolge hatte sie miterleben dürfen und darin den Sinn und die Erfüllung ihres eigenen Lebens gesehen.” F. Bäumle, “Abdankung für Prof. Dr. h.c. Edwin Fischer,” *Dank an Edwin Fischer*, 112–113.

<sup>52</sup> John and Anna Gillespie, *Notable Twentieth-Century Pianists* (Greenwood Press, 1995), 244.

However, the scare quotes in the above reflect an accurate understanding: Anna Fischer managed her son's upbringing as most stage mothers did, always reminding Edwin of the debt that he could never repay.

She arranged for Edwin to begin piano studies with Hans Huber (1852-1921), a student of Franz Liszt, from 1896 to 1904 at the conservatory in Basel. Huber composed a highly regarded set of 24 preludes and fugues in all keys, which provides some indication of the important role that *The Well-Tempered Clavier* played in his pedagogical method. During that time Fischer also attended, and graduated from, the Basel Gymnasium. Some of his schoolwork survives, and it confirms Harald Isenstein's observation that Fischer was intensely interested in mathematics and natural science.

Late in life, Fischer recalled his perception of the close association between Basel and its religious heritage.

The Rhine and the Basel Munster give Basel its special character and inclination: eternally in flux, conjoining nations, protected by the church, and inclined toward the spiritual.<sup>53</sup>

Another observation from his time in Basel confirms that religion had a central place in his pianism:

The first poetic impressions that I tried to inspire through my music were of biblical stories: Jacob's ladder, reaching up to Heaven; Elias' apotheosis in a carriage; the confusion of languages at Babylon's gate; Noah's Ark. All of them were archetypes of human existence. At the age of five, I set about portraying them in music. Nobody noticed: I was in my own world.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Bäumele, "Abdankung," *Dank an Edwin Fischer*, 113.

<sup>54</sup> "Die ersten poetischen Eindrücke, die sich in mir formten, musikalisch ans Licht drangen, waren von biblischen Geschichten angeregt: die herrliche Jakobsleiter, die in den Himmel drängte, der auf feurigem Wagen zum Himmel steigende Elias, die Sprachverwirrung des babylonischen Turmes, die Arche Noah, alles Archetypen der Menschheit; sie wollte ich mit fünf Jahren schon musikalisch darstellen. Keiner achtete

In Basel, Edwin took master classes with Ferruccio Busoni and established a bond with him that would last until Busoni's death in 1924. The meeting with Busoni was secondary to Fischer's having been befriended by the cultural historian of religion Alfred Bertholet (1868-1951). Bertholet was the first in Fischer's series of lifelong attachments to ersatz fathers—all of them, like Bertholet, being around eighteen years older than Fischer. Friends of Fischer and Bertholet—among them the theologian Rudolf Smend, father of the Bach scholar Friedrich Smend—observed an intimate, lifelong friendship between Fischer and Bertholet.<sup>55</sup>

Bertholet's career as theologian—either providentially or by design—led him to locations that were seldom very far from Fischer. His first major appointment was in Universität Basel where he earned his doctorate in 1896. He became an Associate Professor there in 1899 and was promoted to Full Professor in 1905. Fischer was in Basel until 1904. University appointments in Tübingen (1913) and Göttingen (1913) followed. Later, Bertholet was appointed to the faculty of the University in 1928 until being dismissed by the Nazis in 1936. His permanent membership in the Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften, however, allowed him to continue lecturing in Berlin until 1938. Fischer lived in Berlin until 1943. Bertholet returned to Basel in 1945, not far from Lucerne-Hertenstein, where Fischer lived from 1943 until his death in 1960.<sup>56</sup>

Adolf von Harnack was one of Bertholet's mentors. Of significance to Fischer's career, von Harnack was in Berlin from 1888 until his death in 1930, where he was

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darauf, es war meine Welt.“ Edwin Fischer, *Von den Aufgaben des Musikers* (Wiesbaden: Insel-Verlag, 1960), 36.

<sup>55</sup> Rudolf Smend, “Ein Göttinger Deuteronomiumkommentator Alfred Bertholet (1868-1951),” *Liebe und Gebot*, edited by Perlitt and Lothar, 173-189.

<sup>56</sup> Alfred Bertholet, *Neue deutsche Biografie* 2 (Berlin: Duncker & Humboldt, 1955), 168.

Director of the *Königliche Bibliothek* from 1905 to 1921.<sup>57</sup> Fischer's acquaintanceship with Harnack through Bertholet must have been of significance during the period when Fischer was editing Bach's clavier works, many autographs of which are among the library's holdings, among them the autograph copies of *WTC* I and parts of *WTC* II (Mus. Ms. Bach P 415).

Bertholet was a major figure in the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* (i.e., the School of Religious-Historical Studies, also referred to, in German, as *Religionswissenschaft*). He read Latin, Greek, Aramaic, and Arabic. His 1896 doctoral dissertation, submitted to the Baseler Universität, was on "The Orientation of Israelites and Judeans towards Foreigners." Outside of his academic career, he was a Bach-advocate and Bach-arranger.<sup>58</sup> Bertholet was the major organizational force behind the 1920 Göttingen revival of Handel's *Rodelinda*, among other musical accomplishments. He became a professor at the university in Basel, first as an Assistant Professor (1899) and subsequently as a Full Professor (1905-1913). In 1919, he published his most significant work, his "A History of Hebrew Culture" (*Die Kulturgeschichte Israels*).<sup>59</sup>

Among Bertholet's friends was a group of Swiss neo-Kantian philosophers and theorists, among them the renowned existential psychiatrist Ludwig Binswanger (1881-1966), whose sanatorium "Bellevue" in Kreutzlingen (Switzerland) became a hub of the

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<sup>57</sup> The library was renamed the *Preußische Staatsbibliothek* during his tenure. It is now the *Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin* of the *Preußischer Kulturbesitz*.

<sup>58</sup> Johann Sebastian Bach, *Jesu, meine Freude, suite pour orgue d'après le Motet BWV 227*, transcribed by Alfred Bertholet (Fleurier: Edition Cantate Domino, 2008).

<sup>59</sup> Alfred Bertholet, *A History of Hebrew Civilization*, A.K. Dallas. George G. Harrap and Company, 1926. The shown English translation of the German title is a misnomer. German speakers, most especially cultural historians, take great care to distinguish between *Kultur* and *Zivilisation*; entirely discreet entities that they insist should never be confused or promiscuously melded.

German artistic and philosophical world. Through Binswanger, Fischer would have certainly known Aby Warburg, who was institutionalized at Binswanger's asylum, Bellevue from 1918 to 1925.<sup>60</sup>

Fischer frequently sought psychiatric help for the anxiety attacks and psychosomatic illnesses that plagued him throughout life; it is possible that he was an in-patient at Bellevue and not merely a visitor. No matter what the nature of his visits, the time spent in Binswanger's company would have brought him into the Warburg circle, which bears significant implications that I will explore below, when I discuss the ideas of Ernst Cassirer.

Because of its connection with Ludwig [Binswanger], Bellevue became a center of European intellectual life. Binswanger's correspondence, as well as the Bellevue guest register, contains the names of leading scientists and artists of the day. Sigmund Freud, Edmund Husserl, Max Scheler, Martin Heidegger, Karl Löwith, Leopold Ziegler, Martin Buber, Werner Bergengruen, Leonhard Frank, Rudolf Alexander Schröder, Edwin Fischer, Henry van de Velde, Aby Warburg, Julius Schaxel, Kurt Goldstein, Wilhelm Furtwängler and Emil Staiger, among other intellectual celebrities, visited Binswanger in Kreuzlingen.

### **Early Berlin Period, 1904-1914**

In 1904, Anna moved the Fischer household to Berlin so that Edwin could study with Martin Krause, another Liszt student, at the *Stern'sches Konservatorium*, which almost all Fischer studies in English have described with the misnomer "Stern Academy."

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<sup>60</sup> "Durch vielfältige Kontakte von Ludwig wurde das Bellevue zu einem Zentrum europäischen Geisteslebens. Davon zeugt die umfangreiche Korrespondenz Binswangers ebenso wie das Kreuzlingen Gästebuch, das Künstler und Wissenschaftler von europäischem Rang verzeichnet: Sigmund Freud, Edmund Husserl, Max Scheler, Martin Heidegger, Karl Löwith, Leopold Ziegler, Martin Buber, Werner Bergengruen, Leonhard Frank, Rudolf Alexander Schröder, Edwin Fischer, Henry van de Velde, Aby Warburg, Julius Schaxel, Kurt Goldstein, Wilhelm Furtwängler und Emil Staiger und andere Persönlichkeiten haben Binswanger in Kreuzlingen besucht." Found at: [http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ludwig\\_Binswanger](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ludwig_Binswanger) (accessed August 20, 2013).

The history of the Conservatory – whose faculty Fischer joined in 1905, and where he continued to teach until 1914 – is worth noting. In 1850, at the time that Julius Stern, Theodor Kullak, and A.B. Marx founded it, the school was known as the *Städtisches Konservatorium für Musik in Berlin*. Kullak and Marx withdrew from the venture in 1855 and 1856, respectively, whereupon the name was changed to *Stern'sches Städtische Konservatorium für Musik*. In 1935, the Nazi government dismissed all Jewish students and faculty and renamed it the *Konservatorium der Reichshauptstadt Berlin*. At the end of the war, in 1945, it was again renamed, this time as the *Städtisches Konservatorium*.<sup>61</sup>

The Stern Conservatory had been strongly identified with Judaism from its founding in 1850 by Julius Stern, Theodor Kullak, and A. B. Marx. When Fischer studied there, its students and faculty were predominantly Jewish. His affiliation with the institution continued beyond graduation; he became a *Pädagog für Klavier* there in January of 1905 and served in that capacity until 1914.<sup>62</sup> Fischer's immediate supervisor

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<sup>61</sup> A great deal of confusion has resulted from various writers' imprecise designation of music conservatories in Berlin. For example, the English designation "Berlin Music Conservatory" might refer to at least four discreet entities, which the casual use of term promiscuously mingles. Later, Fischer would join the faculty of the *Musikhochschule zu Berlin*, founded in 1869, an institution that was completely independent of the *Stern's he Conservatorium* during Fischer's life. To 1945, the *Musikhochschule* absorbed multiple institutions while retaining its original name. In 1964, the *Musikhochschule* absorbed the *Stern's he Conservatorium*, as well. Eventually, multiple institutions joined to form the *Hochschule der Künste* in 1975, which became the *Universität der Künste* in 2001. None of these institutions is to be confused with the post-war, East-German *Hochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler*, which is extant, and which has never had any relation to the other music conservatories. For a useful graphic representation see the *Stammbaum der Universität der Künste* ["Etiological Stemma of the University of the Arts"] accessible at: [http://www.udk-berlin.de/sites/content/e177/e94/e138908/e138912/e138914/infoboxContent138915/StammbaumUdK\\_ger.pdf](http://www.udk-berlin.de/sites/content/e177/e94/e138908/e138912/e138914/infoboxContent138915/StammbaumUdK_ger.pdf) (accessed August 23, 2013).

<sup>62</sup> Confirmation of the date on which Fischer began teaching is found at in the PDF entitled "Lehrende Stern'sches Konservatorium (1850–1936)" on the page *Berlin als Ausbildungsort Berlin als Ausbildungsort—Personen-Datenbank des Stern'schen*



there was the theorist and composer Arthur Willner (1881-1959), who was also the conservatory's deputy director until 1924.

Fischer was influenced strongly in this period by Eugen d'Albert, Arthur Nikisch, Karl Straube, and Ludwig Wüllner, perhaps the most renowned singer of German Lieder at the time, whom he accompanied in Lieder recitals throughout Germany.<sup>63</sup> Fischer set the first of Hermann Hesse's *Elisabeth Lieder*.<sup>64</sup> He performed the song for Hesse when visiting the poet at his home in Gaienhofen in 1911.<sup>65</sup> Fischer was also befriended by Arthur Nikisch, upon whom Wilhelm Furtwängler modeled himself, the latter conductor taking over both of Nikisch's positions – with the Berlin Philharmonic and the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra – in 1922. Furtwängler had arrived in Berlin in 1920 to take a position leading the Berlin Staatskapelle, and it is likely that he and Fischer became acquainted then.

Karl Straube—organist and *Thomaskantor* of Leipzig—was an early influence upon Fischer. Like Schweitzer, Straube took a skeptical stance towards the supposed

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*Konservatoriums* of Berlin's Universität der Künste at [http://www.udk-berlin.de/sites/musikwissenschaft/content/forschung/forschungsprojekte/berlin\\_als\\_ausbildungsort\\_personen\\_datenbank\\_des\\_sternschen\\_konservatoriums/index\\_ger.html](http://www.udk-berlin.de/sites/musikwissenschaft/content/forschung/forschungsprojekte/berlin_als_ausbildungsort_personen_datenbank_des_sternschen_konservatoriums/index_ger.html)

<sup>63</sup> "Schüler der Basler und des Berliner Stern'schen Konservatoriums (Martin Krause) unter zuerst als Begleiter Ludwig Wüllners bekannt geworden, steht er heute bereits in der vordersten Reihe der deutschen Konzertpianisten." Niemann, *Meister des Klaviers*, 100.

<sup>64</sup> Edwin Fischer, *Vier Lieder*, Op. 1, No. 1, "Wie ein weiße Wolke," text Hermann Hesse; No. 2, "Schnitter Tod," No. 3, "Reue," text by Johanna Ambrosius; No. 4, "Ich weiß von einem blonden Kind mit kleinen Elfenfüßen," text by Friedrich Werner van Oesteren (Berlin: Verlag der Schlesinger Musik- und Buchhandlung, 1919).

<sup>65</sup> "...[Fischer] performed for me his *Lieder*, in which the verses to Elisabeth had been perfectly attuned to a chromatics [*sic*; a peculiar locution of the translators'] and a filigree technique derived from Chopin." Volker Michels, *Hermann Hesse: A Pictorial Biography*, translated by Yetta and Theodore Ziolkowsky (New York: Farrar Strauss & Giroux, 1975), 201 §189. Originally published as *Hermann Hesse: Leben und Werk im Bild* (Frankfurt: Insel Verlag, 1973).

reconstructions of early organs by members of the German *Orgelbewegung*. In his renowned edition of Bach's organ works for Peters Verlag, Straube supplied suggestions for registrations whose clarity aligned with notions that he entertained about organ registrations in which tonal complexity is often sacrificed in favor of clarity, built on his strong preference for foundation stops. Straube's concept of appropriate Bach-registrations seems to have at least as much in common with *das neue Bauen*, which also sacrificed complexity in order to achieve clarity, as with any data taken from stop-lists and other technical specifications of German baroque organs. The great weight that Straube placed upon using modern instruments, rather than reconstructions of historical ones, in pursuit of a clarity in Bach-performance typical of *neue Bauen* aesthetics may well have been a factor in Fischer's development, a point that I will discuss in detail under the Gestaltist rubric of *Prägnanz* in the coming chapters.

In 1914, Fischer began teaching at the summer master-classes offered at the aforementioned *Musikinstitut für Ausländer* in Potsdam (Brandenburg). The majority of the essays that Fischer published in the last decade of his life began as addresses to his students in these courses. Fischer became the major orator of the Potsdam courses after the Nazi seizure of power in 1933. Most of his later-published essays stem from the 1930s and 40s began as orations given at the start of these courses.

### **Rise as a Mendelssohn Protégé, 1915-1919**

Jürgen Schmidt-Voigt traced Fischer's rise in Berlin society back to an unnamed student and to Eleonora von Mendelssohn, whom Fischer married in 1919.

Through this first student, 'H', as well as through his own wife Eleonora (*née* Mendelssohn) Edwin Fischer came into close contact with Berlin's leading social circles. In these Sunday 'Salons', much insightful music-

making took place. Fischer often recalled that talent and hard work alone had not led to his success. Equal to those qualities was the power proffered his career by relationships with accepting and influential personages. Such relationships raised him, on the often rocky path, to recognition and, finally, to fame.<sup>66</sup>

My research in Fischer's diaries reveals the identity of 'H': this is the Englishman Charles Mendelssohn Horsfall.<sup>67</sup> Through Horsfall, Fischer met and became a favorite of the great banker and philanthropist, Franz von Mendelssohn (1865–1935). Beyond his pursuits in high finance and music, Franz von Mendelssohn was a senator of the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gesellschaft (the research institute later renamed the Max Planck Institut) from 1911 to 1935, a member of the *Verein* of the Prussian Royal Library (now the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin) and the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum (now the Bode Museum), and a co-founder of the Deutsche-Oriente-Gesellschaft.

His affiliation with Franz von Mendelssohn gave Fischer access to a predominantly Jewish group of Berlin artists and intellectuals, including the elite musical establishment that frequented the Mendelssohn villa in Berlin-Grunewald, which itself overlapped with the membership of the Berlin *Gesellschaft der Freunde*. Franz von

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<sup>66</sup> "Durch diesen ersten Schüler, H., aber auch durch seine eigene Frau Eleonora, geborene Mendelssohn, kam Edwin Fischer in engere Berührung mit den gesellschaftlich führenden Kreisen Berlins. In den "Salons" wurde sonntags viel und mit großem Verständnis musiziert. Er bekannte immer wieder, dass Begabung und Fleiß allein ihn nicht zum Erfolg geführt hätten. In fast ebenso großem Ausmaß hätten ihn Begegnungen mit aufgeschlossenen und einflussreichen Menschen gefördert. Sie hätten ihm den oft sehr steinigen Weg zur Anerkennung und schließlich zum Ruhm geebnet." Jörgen Schmidt-Voigt, "Musikalische Begegnungen," *Dank an Edwin Fischer*, edited by Hugo Haïd (Wiesbaden: Brockhaus Verlag, 1962), 30.

<sup>67</sup> "Vorspielen beim Herrn Horsfall." Edwin Fischer, diary entry of Oct. 13 1918, *Edwin Fischer Nachlass*, Zentralbibliothek Luzern.

Mendelssohn served periodically throughout the 1920s and 30s as deputy chairman<sup>68</sup> of the Berlin *Gesellschaft der Freunde*, an association co-founded by one of Moses Mendelssohn's sons, Joseph, and led exclusively by Jews.<sup>69</sup>

In 1916, Fischer began a period of intense concertizing as a traveling piano virtuoso – performing in the coming decades under Steinbach, Nikisch, Bruno Walter, Weingartner, Mengelberg, Beecham, and Furtwängler, at the premiere of whose *Symphonisches Konzert* he played the solo part.<sup>70</sup> In 1919 Walter Niemann, published the following summation of Fischer's significance to that point. Niemann's portrait is so finely drawn that it is well worth citing at length.

Beside Schnabel, the Swiss Edwin Fischer has achieved, in recent years, the highest place among the "great citizens of Berlin". Educated in Basel and in Berlin at the Stern Conservatory of Music (under Martin Krause) and first rising to prominence as the accompanist of Ludwig Wüllner, he is one of the foremost German concert pianists. This even though he is still in the process of becoming, still "Sturm und Drang." I say that because he so willingly overshoots the mark, prefers to fluctuate between extremes, and doesn't seem to me to be entirely free of striking farcical "Great Poses." The position he takes towards the classics is still clouded too much by an overweening subjectivism. And one looks upon his recent inclination to Brahms, and the threat posed by academically aloof internal stops and starts, with mixed emotions. These shortcomings aside, we nevertheless have before us, in Fischer, one of the few really meaningful pianistic personalities. The tender-intimate dreams in him remind us of Ansorge, of Buhlig; the musical baroque actor in his Beethoven [reminds one] of the modern Muscovite piano composer and pianist Nikolaus

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<sup>68</sup> "...Franz von Mendelssohn (1898-1935, zeitweise 2. [stellvertreter] Vorsitzender...." Sebastian Panwitz, *Die Gesellschaft der Freunde (1792-1935): Berliner Juden zwischen Aufklärung und Hochfinanz* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms 2007), 124.

<sup>69</sup> "The rule that leaders of the *Gesellschaft der Freunde* must be Jews was never stipulated as a regulation. However, it was from then on [i.e. 1856] followed as a kind of unspoken-but-acknowledged law until the club was dissolved in 1935." "Die Regelung, daß ein Jude die Gesellschaft der Freunde zu leiten habe, fand nie Eingang in die Statuten. Dennoch wurde sie—als seine Art stillschweigend anerkanntes Gesetz—von jetzt an bis zur Auflösung des Vereins 1935 stets befolgt." Panwitz, *Gesellschaft der Freunde*, 147.

<sup>70</sup> The concerto is dedicated to Fischer, who subsequently performed it often with Furtwängler.

Medtner, something he shares with Severin Eisenberger, whose every strong emotion likewise is reflected in strained facial expressions. Fischer is certainly no dazzling, elegant piano virtuoso. Instead, he is a more intellectually, humanly, and artistically ripe and interior musician, a pianist of the finest and liveliest artistic insight, as well as being possessed of a dreamy humor, as opposed to a locked-away heart. He is no great master of colorful touch – his forte and above often sounds hard, his piano and below sometimes thin and insubstantial. But his German capacity for characterization and polyphony, the clear style of his playing, offers other, no less praiseworthy, charms growing out of an art of delicate emotions and emotional transitions, with a subtlety of phrasing, a total security and beauty in management of formal elements, fostered through an equally assured sense of control, a healthy temperament ennobled by judgment in matters of large-scale organization and small-scale elements, which we find so harmoniously unified only in artists as developed as Pauer or Buchmann. If, because of Fischer's intelligence and musicianship one forgets all about wonderful and praiseworthy technical masters of the piano, then that seems the most honorable and German thing that one could say about him.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> "Neben Schnabel hat sich in den letzten Jahren der Schweizer Edwin Fischer einen allerersten Platz unter den "Großen Berlinern" errungen. Schüler der Basler und des Berliner Stern'schen Konservatoriums (Martin Krause) unter zuerst als Begleiter Ludwig Wüllners bekannt geworden, steht er heute bereits in der vordersten Reihe der deutschen Konzertpianisten. Und das, obwohl er noch ganz Werdender, ganz Sturm und Drang ist. Denn er schießt gern über das Ziel hinaus, bewegt sich am liebsten in Extremen und schient mir nicht ganz frei von Possartischer "großer Pose" zu sein. Seine Stellung zu den Klassikern wird oft noch allzusehr durch übergroßen Subjektivismus getrübt. Und mit etwas gemischten Gefühlen sieht man seine neuerliche Hinneigung zu Brahms und die damit drohend aufsteigende Gefahr eines inneren Stehenbleibens und Versandens im Akademisch-Spröden. Diese Mängel abgezogen, haben wir in Fischer trotz allem eine der wenigen bedeutenden pianistischen Persönlichkeiten vor uns. Der zartsinnige Träume in ihm erinnert an Ansorge, an Buhlig; der Darsteller des musikalischen Barock bei Beethoven an den modernen Moskauer Klavierkomponisten und Pianisten Nikolaus Medtner, mit dem er auch gleich Severin Eisenberger, das jede starke Gefühlsregung widerspiegelnde, gespannte Mienenspiel teilt. Fischer ist ganz gewiss kein blendender, eleganter Klaviervirtuose, sondern ein geistiger, menschlich und künstlerisch reifer und innerlicher Musiker, Klavierspieler von feinstem Kunstverstand und lebendigstem, auch einem versonnenem Humor nicht verschlossenem Gefühl. Er ist kein Meister des farbenreichen Anschlags – das forte höherer Stärkegrade klingt oft hart geschlagen, das piano und pianissimo zuweilen dünn und körperlos. Aber die deutsche zeichnerische und polyphone, kristallklare Art seines Klavierspiels hat dafür andere und nicht minder eigene Reize: sie wächst sich zu einer Kunst der zartesten Gefühlsregungen und seelischen Übergänge aus, mit einer Feinheit der Phrasierung, einer unbedingten Sicherheit und Schönheit im Formalen, einem durch ebenso unbedingte Selbstbeherrschung, durch im Großen ordernde und im kleinen gliedernde Besonnenheit geadelten gesunden

## Marriage to Eleonora von Mendelssohn, 1919-1925

In 1919, Fischer married Eleonora von Mendelssohn (1900-1951), daughter of the pianist Giulietta von Mendelssohn (*née* Gordigiani) and the wealthy financier Robert von Mendelssohn.<sup>72</sup> A direct descendant of Moses Mendelssohn, Eleonora was somewhat less directly related to Felix Mendelssohn. Fischer's initial connection to the Mendelssohn family was through Franz von Mendelssohn, Eleonora's uncle.

In 1919, Eleonora fell into a neurotic obsession with Fischer, which led her eventually to compose a suicide letter and take a loaded revolver to her room late one night. Her alarmed brother Francesco phoned Fischer for help. Upon arriving at the Mendelssohn villa, Fischer, over the course of many hours, chipped away at Eleonora's resolve to take her own life. By morning, he had somehow proposed to her. Almost immediately after having proposed to Mendelssohn, Fischer expressed extreme agitation and anguish. Upon learning of the proposal, his mother wailed, "Now I have lost you forever!" This set the stage for the remainder of the courtship, wedding, and marriage.<sup>73</sup>

Eleonora and Francesco von Mendelssohn's biographer, Thomas Blubacher, characterized the luxurious apartment that Fischer and his new wife occupied as being

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Temperament, wie wir sie zu gleicher harmonischer Einheit nur bei Künstlern, wie etwa Pauer oder Buchmayer, entwickelt finden. Wenn man aber über dem Geistigen und Musikalischen bei Fischer den sogar ganz hervorragenden und gediegenen Techniker vergisst, so scheint mir das [sic] das Eherne und Deutscheste zu sein, was sich über ihn sagen lässt." Walter Niemann, *Meister des Klaviers: Die Pianisten der Gegenwart und der letzten Vergangenheit*, (Berlin: Schuster & Loeffler, 1919), 100.

<sup>72</sup> Eleonora von Mendelssohn's correspondence is catalogued in "Inventory of the Eleonora Mendelssohn Papers, 1880-1949" (W90-a81), Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.

<sup>73</sup> Thomas Blubacher's biography of Eleonora von Mendelssohn and her brother Francesco, mentioned in the following paragraph, provides a detailed account of the courtship and wedding. Thomas Blubacher, *Gibt es etwas Schöneres als Sehnsucht?; die Geschwister Eleonora und Francesco von Mendelssohn* (Leipzig: Henschel Verlag, 2010), 58-61.

“exactly in the fashion of an eighteenth-century castle, even being elegantly appointed with a Chinese Room replete with furniture, statues, and porcelain from China. Priceless paintings grace the walls, among them El Greco’s outstanding *Laocoön*”<sup>74</sup> Continuing, Blubacher describes the building’s “well-off renters” (*wohlhabenden Mieter*), who were “in the main high government officials, businessmen, industrialists, and doctors, many of them of Jewish descent.”<sup>75</sup>

Blubacher’s reference to “Jewish descent” in this passage raises an important and subtle point. The question of who, precisely, **was** of “Jewish descent” in Berlin in the first two decades of the twentieth century is highly fraught, depending entirely upon whose standards of judgment are applied. This straightforward assignment of “Jewishness” to those who were born Jews and remained so all their lives is far more simplistic than the standard that seems to have held in the early-twentieth century. The *Berliner Gesellschaft der Freunde* provides a good example. Moses Mendelssohn’s son Joseph co-founded this association, whose membership was originally exclusively limited to those who were born as Jews and who did not convert. Furthermore, its bylaws specified that it must remain under Jewish leadership.<sup>76</sup> However, Franz von Mendelssohn, who was baptized as Lutheran and never converted to Judaism, served

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<sup>74</sup> “Ganz wie es im 18. Jahrhundert in Schlössern Mode war, wurde sogar ein chinesisches Zimmer eingerichtet, ausschließlich mit Möbeln, Statuen und Porzellan aus China dekoriert. Kostbare Bilder schmücken die Wände der Wohnung, darunter El Grecos 1610-1614 entstandenes Gemälde ‘Laocoon.’” Blubacher, *Gibt es etwas Schöneres als Sehnsucht*, 60-61.

<sup>75</sup> “...allesamt höhere Beamte, Kaufleute, Fabrikanten und Ärzte, nicht wenige von ihnen jüdischer Herkunft.” Op cit.

<sup>76</sup> “The rule that leaders of the *Gesellschaft der Freunde* must be Jews was never stipulated as a regulation. However, it was from then on [i.e. 1856] followed as a kind of unspoken-but-acknowledged law until the club was dissolved in 1935.” “Die Regelung, daß ein Jude die Gesellschaft der Freunde zu leiten habe, fand nie Eingang in die Statuten. Dennoch wurde sie—als eine Art stillschweigend anerkanntes Gesetz—von jetzt an bis zur Auflösung des Vereins 1935 befolgt.” Panwitz, *Gesellschaft der Freunde*, 147.

periodically as the deputy chairman of the *Gesellschaft der Freunde* throughout the 1920s and 30s.<sup>77</sup>

Although it is true that the regulations of the *Gesellschaft der Freunde* regarding Jewish birth were gradually relaxed over the course of the nineteenth century, the regulation requiring that solely Jews lead it was still on the books when Franz von Mendelssohn became one of its principal leaders. This seems to suggest that—at least within the ranks of the *Gesellschaft der Freunde*—Franz von Mendelssohn’s ties to Judaism were beyond any question.

This bears some relation to Fischer’s involvement with the family. The fact the membership of the Berlin *Gesellschaft der Freunde* overlapped very strongly with the largely Jewish group of Berlin artists and intellectuals that frequented the Mendelssohn villa suggests that *entjüdete* Jewish thought was a strong current of thought within the community of *gesellige* Jews that Fischer encountered through the Mendelssohn soirees. In this context, it is worth emphasizing that the relationship of Joseph and Franz von Mendelssohn to their *pater familias* Moses Mendelssohn was still strong, more than a century after his death. In honor of him, Robert and Franz von Mendelssohn erected a large bas-relief of him in the lobby of the Mendelssohn Bank—Germany’s largest bank at the time—as a constant reminder of his influence.

By the time Fischer arrived in Berlin, translation of Jewish values to a German-Christian context had become ingrained and well established within the confines of artistic salon culture. *Entjüdete* Jewish attitudes, viewpoints, and critical thought flowed

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<sup>77</sup> “... Franz von Mendelssohn (1898–1935, zeitweise 2. [stellvertreder] Vorsitzender ...” Sebastian Panwitz, *Die Gesellschaft der Freunde (1792–1935): Berliner Juden zwischen Aufklärung und Hochfinanz* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 2007), 124.



easily in salon culture. Therefore, it follows that the close proximity to Fischer of *gesellige* Jews would lead almost inevitably to him adopting *entjüdete* — but nonetheless essentially Jewish—beliefs and practices.

Fischer attributed great significance to Busoni giving Eleonora two rare books written by her great-great-grandfather Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786). She appears to have valued the memory of her illustrious forefather very highly:

Busoni was then a demigod for us young pianists, and I gladly accepted the invitation to visit him. I arrived with my wife, Eleonora Mendelssohn, and Busoni received us with his two lovely lads [a reference to Busoni's sons]. He had a passion for ancient languages and possessed a large library. I will never forget the graciousness with which he took down two old volumes by Moses Mendelssohn and presented them to [Eleonora] with an Italian dedication.<sup>78</sup>

Fischer's prose style is extremely concise, and, as a result, the enormity of what he relates here—as elsewhere—emerges only on scrutiny. Busoni was indeed an obsessive competitive bibliophile, so giving away a rare book would have been a significant sacrifice for him.<sup>79</sup> The Italian dedication was a meaningful flourish: Eleonora von Mendelssohn's godmother was the legendary Italian actress Eleonora Duse (1858–1924). The identity of the two books may be of some significance. The designation *zwei alte Bände* implies that these books comprised a two-volume set (otherwise *Bände* would probably have been replaced by *Bücher*) and that they were already quite old in 1920.

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<sup>78</sup> 'Busoni war damals für uns junge Pianisten ein Halb-gott; so folgte ich damals gern seiner Aufforderung, ihn zu besuchen. Ich war mit meiner Frau, Eleonora Mendelssohn, bei ihm, als er mit zwei bezaubernden Buben uns empfing. Eine Leidenschaft hatte er für alte Sprachen und besaß eine große Bibliothek. Nie werde ich die Grazie vergessen, mit der er zwei alte Bände von Moses Mendelssohn herunterholte und sie mit einer italienischen Widmung ihr überreichte'. Fischer, *Aufgaben des Musikers*, 51.

<sup>79</sup> Wassermann went so far as to speculate that Busoni's library must have been 'one of costliest in existence'. 'Er war ein passionierter Sammler von Büchern, und seine Bibliothek ist wahrscheinlich eine der kostbarsten, die heute existieren'. Jakob Wassermann, *In memoriam Ferruccio Busoni* (Berlin: S. Fischer Verlag, 1925), 17.

The mention of Busoni's fascination with ancient languages (*alte Sprachen*) implies that the set of books in question was at least partly printed in Greek, Latin, or Hebrew. The only set of books by Moses Mendelssohn that meets these three criteria is his two-volume parallel (German/Hebrew) translation of the *Psalms*.<sup>80</sup> Busoni's gift reflected the continuing importance of Moses Mendelssohn in German culture as well as to Eleonora's immediate family.

Documentation of Fischer's marriage is marked by significant errors. Apparently oblivious to the fact that Fischer never remarried after the couple divorced, Peter Schneider reports that "[Fischer's] first [*sic*] wife was a descendant of Mendelssohn, the Jewish-born composer."<sup>81</sup> Many Fischer sources have missed his marriage to Eleonora von Mendelssohn altogether. She is absent from Gavoty's sketch, as she is from John and Anna Gillespie's 1995 study, which claims that Fischer was "a lifelong bachelor."<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Moses Mendelssohn, *Die Psalmen, mit 12 Holzschnitten von Joseph Budko* (Berlin: Maurer, First Edition, 1783); Moses Mendelssohn, *Die Psalmen* (Frankfurt und Leipzig: [Publisher unknown,] 1787); *Die Psalmen; zweite, verbesserte Auflage* (Leipzig, 1791–2); Moses Mendelssohn, *Die Psalmen* (Budapest: Brian, 1819); Moses Mendelssohn *Die Psalmen* (Vienna: Anton Schmidt, 1823). The M.E. Lowy edition of 1864 is ruled out by the fact that in it the two volumes were bound together.

<sup>81</sup> Peter Schneider, "Saving Konrad Latte," *The New York Times*, February 13, 2000. Archived version available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/library/magazine/home/20000213mag-schneider2.html> (accessed August 26, 2013).

<sup>82</sup> The Gillespie's goes so far as to claim, mistakenly, that Fischer was "a lifelong bachelor" and, seemingly as evidence of this, emphasizes Fischer's ties to his mother's apron strings: "Fischer adored his mother and never forgot the 'sacrifices' she endured for the sake of his music. He lived with her until her death." It is surprising, but not uncharacteristic of Fischer studies, that such a lengthy biographical sketch, taken so recently, should contain so many errors. John and Anna Gillespie, *Notable Twentieth-Century Pianists: A Bio-Critical Sourcebook* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1995), 244.

## The Bauhaus/Symbolist Years, 1926-1932

In this period, Fischer's interest in the power of symbolism reached its peak, manifesting itself in the appearance of much of the language of the Gestalt Theorists in Fischer's essays of this period. Gestalt theory overlapped strongly with the ideas of Rudolf Steiner known to Fischer through his association with Swiss/German Theosophy. In this period—like Busoni before him—Fischer was a political supporter of the Bauhaus, whose membership included many of Steiner's adherents, among them Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1924) and Walter Gropius (1883–1969).<sup>83</sup> Fischer and Kandinsky were particularly well connected to one another: as followers of Rudolf Steiner, through Fischer's support of the Bauhaus as a Trustee (*Kurator*), and via their mutual friend Busoni (see Table 6, below).<sup>84</sup>

Table 6: The Bauhaus *Kuratorschaft*

<b>Peter Behrens</b> (1868-1940), architect.
<b>Hendrik Petrus Berlage</b> (1856-1934), architect and follower of Frank Lloyd Wright.
<b>Josef Hoffmann</b> (1871-1956), architect, founder of the Wiener Werkstätte.
<b>Hans Poelzig</b> (1869-1936), architect.
<b>Adolf Sommerfeld</b> (1886-1964, architect).
<b>Gerhart Hauptmann</b> (1862-1946), sculptor and playwright also connected to Fischer

<sup>83</sup> In 1932, when the Nazis moved to remove Mies van der Roë from his position at the Bauhaus, Fischer signed a declaration of confidence that was presented to the Mayor of Dessau. See Magdalena Dorset, *Bauhaus: 1919–1933* (Köln: Tauscher Verlag, 2002), 228–30.

<sup>84</sup> “The Board of Trustees of the ‘Friends of the Bauhaus’ are: Peter Behrens, Marc Chagall, Herbert Muhlenberg, Josef Josef Hoffmann, Adolf Somerfield, H. P. Barrage, Hans Driesch, Edwin Fischer, Hans Peeling, Josef Strzygowski, Adolf Busch, Albert Einstein, Gerhard Hauptmann, Arnold Schönberg, Franz Werfel. They lend to the tempest-tossed Bauhaus their considerable support.” “Im Kuratorium der »Freunde des Bauhauses« sind: Peter Behrens, Marc Chagall, Herbert Eulenberg, Josef Hoffmann, Adolf Sommerfeld, H. P. Berlage, Hans Driesch, Edwin Fischer, Hans Poelzig, Josef Strzygowski, Adolf Busch, Albert Einstein, Gerhard Hauptmann, Arnold Schönberg, Franz Werfel. Sie verschaffen dem umstrittenen Bauhaus erhebliche Unterstützung,” *Bauhaus: Zeitschrift für Gestaltung*, edited by Walter Gropius and Ladislaus Moholy-Nagy (Dessau, 1926).

through the Mendelssohn family.
<b>Marc Chagall</b> (1887-1985), painter.
<b>Josef Strzygowski</b> (1862-1941), art historian.
<b>Oskar Kokoschka</b> (1886-1980), playwright and painter, also connected to Fischer through Leo Kestenberg and Paul Hindemith.
<b>Franz Werfel</b> (1890-1945), playwright, author and poet.
<b>Herbert Eulenberg</b> (1876-1949), playwright and author, also connected to Fischer through Thomas Mann (discussed in Chapter Four) and Hermann Hesse.
<b>Adolf Busch</b> (1891-1952), violinist and Fischer's musical collaborator prior to his self-imposed exile in the Nazi era.
<b>Arnold Schoenberg</b> (1874-1951).
<b>Albert Einstein</b> (1879-1955), associated with Fischer until leaving Germany in 1932.
<b>Wilhelm Ostwald</b> (1853-1932), physicist and color theorist.
<b>Hans Driesch</b> (1867-1941), biologist and philosopher whose theories of entelechy and vitalism are strongly reflected in Fischer's writings.

Source: *Bauhaus. Zeitschrift für Gestaltung* (1926).

In 1928, the University of Köln awarded Fischer an honorary doctorate (a *Dr. jur. honoris causa*). He continued his conducting career as part-time director of the *Bachverein* of Munich (1928-31). Correspondence between Oswald Jonas (1897-1978) and Heinrich Schenker (1868-1935) reveals Fischer to have been an admirer of Schenker, a matter of considerable importance to this dissertation. Jonas wrote to Schenker (1930); “It may perhaps interest you even today to hear that the circle around Edwin Fischer is very interested in Schenker, that the best student, Conrad Hansen, whom I have nearly befriended, plays the Beethoven sonatas and has them played only in your editions, and moreover promotes (at your instigation) only the Urtext editions (thereby forming an 'island' here, of course).”<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> “Vielleicht interessiert es Sie schon heute zu hören, daß der Kreis um Edw. Fischer sich sehr für Schenker interessiert, daß der beste Schüler Conrad Hansen, mit dem ich mich fast angefreundet habe, die Beeth. Sonaten nur in Ihren Ausgaben spielt und spielen lässt, und im Übrigen (über Ihre Anregung) nur die Urtext Ausgaben propagiert (freilich damit hier eine “Insel” bildet.” Translation by John Rothgeb, 2006. See: [handwritten letter from Jonas to Schenker, December 5, 1930](http://mt.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/schenker/correspondence/letter/oj_126_6_12530.html) at [http://mt.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/schenker/correspondence/letter/oj\\_126\\_6\\_12530.html](http://mt.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/schenker/correspondence/letter/oj_126_6_12530.html) Available at:

Reporting on his reception by the pianists at that meeting to Schenker, Jonas wrote that, ‘the evening was very energetic...great interest was aroused in many, and that can have further repercussions’. Fischer promoted Schenker’s editions to his piano students<sup>86</sup> and invited Jonas to lecture at his master-classes.<sup>87</sup> Fischer was further connected to Schenker through his teacher Eugen d’Albert (1864–1932) and his two closest musical colleagues, Busoni and Wilhelm Furtwängler (1886–1954).<sup>88</sup> Schenker was acquainted with both d’Albert and Busoni as early as 1900, when he promoted his compositions to them. Schenker’s Op. 4 is dedicated to d’Albert, Op. 2 to Busoni. Both pianists expressed strong interest in performing Schenker’s compositions.

Jonas wrote several more letters to Schenker, in which he mentioned Fischer in a positive light, although Schenker’s letters to Jonas mention Fischer only once, and they strike a neutral tone in reference to him. Although there is no known direct correspondence between Schenker and Fischer, Schenker does mention him on two occasions in diary entries in 1920 and 1925.<sup>89</sup> In 1931, Franz Schrecker appointed Fischer to a teaching position at the *Hochschule für Musik zu Berlin*, taking the place left vacant by Artur Schnabel, who was in a process of gradual disengagement from Berlin.

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[http://mt.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/schenker/correspondence/letter/oj\\_126\\_6\\_12530.html](http://mt.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/schenker/correspondence/letter/oj_126_6_12530.html) (accessed: July 3, 2009).

<sup>86</sup> Jonas wrote to Schenker (1930) that Fischer actively promoted use of his editions. Ob cit.

<sup>87</sup> “... Der Abend war sehr angeregt ... jedenfalls wurde doch bei vielen großes Interesse wachgerufen und das kann ja noch weiterwirken.”

[http://mt.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/schenker/correspondence/letter/oj\\_126\\_33\\_62934.html](http://mt.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/schenker/correspondence/letter/oj_126_33_62934.html) (Translation by John Rothgeb, 2006).

<sup>88</sup> Helmut Federhofer, *Heinrich Schenker: Nach Tagebüchern und Briefen in der Oswald Jonas Memorial Collection, University of California, Riverside*, Studien zur Musikwissenschaft, 3 (Hildesheim: Olms Verlag, 1985), 15–16. Furtwängler was an unofficial student of Schenker’s. See Federhofer, *Nach Tagebüchern*, 38–9.

<sup>89</sup> See Federhofer, *Nach Tagebüchern*, 117, 229

Other Schrecker appointees to the faculty of the *Hochschule für Musik* alongside Fischer included Carl Flesch, Emanuel Feuermann, and Paul Hindemith. Schnabel maintained a residence in Berlin until 1933, but was more often in London in the period 1931-1933. Schnabel's leaving the *Musikhochschule* very likely had much to do with Fascist politics: the year 1931 saw much anti-Jewish violence, particularly in Berlin.<sup>90</sup>

In 1932, Fischer added a position as piano pedagogue at the music conservatory in Köln to his teaching duties. Eventually, in 1932, he founded his own chamber orchestra in Berlin,<sup>91</sup> as a unit of the *Hochschule für Musik*. Two hallmarks of his leadership of this ensemble were his conducting from the piano and his improvisation of cadenzas, comprising limited but nonetheless significant links with historical practice.

### **The Period of the WTC Recording, 1933-1937**

Fischer contributed the article on “Interpretation” to *Das Atlantasbuch der Musik* (p. 505-509), dated 1934, which appeared again in the 1953 edition (p. 486-489).<sup>92</sup> The contents of the 1934 edition, however—which refer to bureaus of the Nazi cultural

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<sup>90</sup> Artur Schnabel, *Reflections on music. A lecture* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1934).

<sup>91</sup> One important member of this chamber orchestra was the violist Emil Seiler (1906-1998), a close friend and associate of Hindemith who was an enthusiastic supporter of Hindemith's experiments to unite historical performance and modernist composition, and who performed Hindemith's viola d'amore works. “Angeregt wurde Emil Seiler nicht zuletzt von Paul Hindemith, der ihn seit 1929 für neue Bratschen-Kompositionen und seine Experimente mit den historischen Instrumenten der Berliner Instrumentensammlung begeisterte. Werner Eginhard Köhler hob bereits 1938 in seiner Dissertation über die Viola d'amore die Verdienste Emil Seilers als Advokat der Viola d'amore hervor und schreibt im Hinblick auf Hindemith und Seiler, die er anschließend erwähnt: ‘Künstler der jungen Generation...haben sich eifrig für eine Wiederbelebung des Viola d'amore- Spiels eingesetzt und sich besonders dadurch Verdienste erworben, daß sie die alte wertvolle Original-Literatur, die noch in den Bibliotheken der Auswertung und Veröffentlichung harrt, einem größeren Hörerkreis erschlossen haben.’”

Found at: <http://www.bertoldhummel.de/werkbeschreibungen/biographien/seiler.html> (accessed July 12, 2010).

<sup>92</sup>

machinery that are dated as late as 1936—make it clear either that publication of the first edition was delayed until 1936, or that the 1934 edition was reprinted in 1936 in slightly updated form. Fischer wrote a very small handful of original essays in his life, many of them tropes on passages taken from Busoni's publications and a set of ideas articulated in Schlesinger's *Geschichte der Symbol*. Exegetical concepts and practices articulated in Moses Mendelssohn's *Jerusalem*, as well as some of its specific diction, appear in slightly modified form in both Busoni and Fischer's essays. Fischer continually recycled his essays. *Das Atlantasbuch der Musik* contains several of his Potsdam essays joined together.

### Part Three: Network Study

#### Alfred Bertholet

Alfred Bertholet introduced the young Edwin Fischer to a number of important figures to whom he remained connected throughout his life, including Albert Schweitzer, Ferruccio Busoni (1866–1924), Karl Straube (1873–1950), Max Reger (1873–1916), the theologian Carl Albrecht Bernoulli (1868–1937), and Heinrich Wölfflin.

Bertholet directed the *Musikschule* as well as the recently founded Conservatory. At the latter, he met Ferruccio Busoni, who led a master-class there, as well as Edwin Fischer, who was a student. He remained closely connected with Fischer into his last years. Bertholet was the Housing Director (*Quartiermeister*) of the German *Tonkünstlerfest*, which took place in Basel in 1903. Via his own guest Karl Straube, who would later be the *Thomaskantor* of Leipzig, Bertholet came to know Max Reger. Among his friends in Basel were the theologian Carl Albrecht Bernoulli and the art historian Heinrich Wölfflin.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> “[Bertholet war] Administrator der Musikschule und des neugegründeten Konservatoriums, wo er Ferruccio Busoni als Leiter eines Meisterkurses zu begrüßen hatte und unter den Schülern dem Pianisten Edwin Fischer kennenlernte, mit dem er bis ins Alter eng verbunden blieb. Beim Deutschen Tonkünstlerfest, das 1903 in Basel stattfand, war er der Quartiermeister; durch seinen eigenen Gast, den späteren

Besides these musical figures, Bertholet also brought Fischer into contact with a great number of the most important Swiss intellectuals of the early twentieth century, including a circle of neo-Kantian philosophers of art, artists, art historians, and who felt architecture and music to be closely interwoven of great importance to Fischer's intellectual and artistic bearing.

Indeed, this subject arose in Fischer's closest circle. In 1906, the storied Berlin publisher J.C.B. Mohr (now Siebeck & Mohr) brought out Alfred Bertholet's historical and cultural study of *metempsychosis*—i.e., “transmigration of souls”—in a short book entitled *Seelen-Wanderung*.<sup>94</sup> The German sources that Bertholet sites in his historical overview of metempsychosis are many of the same German Idealists who advanced the idea of *Kunstreligion*. To this one must add remarks that Goethe made in his letter to Zelter on hearing some of Bach's organ music in 1827: “I declare this: I was moved to the very core, as eternal harmony must have been when it spoke only to itself, somewhere in God's breast, shortly before the Creation was about to take place. And it seemed like I didn't even have need of my ears, much less my eyes or any other of my senses.”<sup>95</sup>

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Thomaskantor Karl Straube, kam er mit Max Reger in Beziehung. Von den Basler Freunden seien der Theologe Carl Albrecht Bernoulli und der Kunsthistoriker Heinrich Wölfflin genannt'. Rudolf Schmend, 'Ein Göttinger Deuteronomiumkommentator Alfred Bertholet, 1868–1951,' *Liebe und Gebot: Studien zum Deuteronomium*, edited by Reinhard G. Kratz and Hermann Spieckermann (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 173–89.

<sup>94</sup> Alfred Bertholet, *The Transmigration of Souls*, English translation by H.J. Chaytor (Harper and Brothers, 1909).

<sup>95</sup> “Ich sprach mir's aus: als wenn die ewige Harmonie sich mit sich selbst unterhielte, wie sich's etwa in Gottes Busen, kurz vor der Welterschöpfung, möchte zugetragen haben, so bewegte sich's auch in meinem Innern. Und es war mir, als wenn ich weder Ohren, am wenigsten Augen und weiter keine übrigen Sinne besäße noch brauchte.” Johann



Bertholet notes that Goethe's brother-in-law, Johann Georg Schlosser wrote two dialogues on metempsychosis, which appeared in 1783. Bertholet also quotes extensively from the writings of Herder, who published three dialogues on metempsychosis in 1791. In his Kant dissertation, Albert Schweitzer overtly expressed his belief in metempsychosis, as well. Schweitzer refers on several occasions to Bach's capacity to inhabit living beings.

### **Heinrich Wölfflin**

Through Bertholet, Fischer would have come into close contact with the ideas of Heinrich Wölfflin (1864-1945). This is a matter of some significance to his later stance as an artist and interpreter. Like Bertholet, Wölfflin's migrations were similar to Fischer's. Swiss-born, Wölfflin taught at the university in Basel from 1893 to 1901, where Fischer attended the Gymnasium and studied music until 1904. He taught at the university in Berlin from 1901 to 1912, where Fischer lived from 1904 to 1943. Wölfflin spent his last years back in Basel, where he died in 1945; Fischer returned to Lucerne-Hertenstein in 1943, and made frequent trips to Basel.

Wölfflin's three major works—*The Renaissance and the Baroque* (Renaissance und Barock, 1888); *Classic Art* (*Die Klassische Kunst*, 1898); and *Principles of Art History* (*Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, 1915)—articulate a general theory in which formal analysis plays the dominant role in delineation of one style from another. He put in place specific, elemental stylistic criteria for distinguishing classic and baroque art.<sup>96</sup>

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Wolfgang von Goethe, "Letter to Zelter of June 26, 1827," *Briefwechsel zwischen Goethe und Zelter*, ed. Gerhard Fricke (Nürnberg: Hans Carl Verlag, 1949), 144–45.

<sup>96</sup> For the moment, I will leave to the side another important side effect of Wölfflin's work; *i.e.*, the epistemological consequences of creating historically adjacent style

In so doing, Wölfflin laid the groundwork for three elements of current aesthetics: (1) *the equation of style and chronological period*; (2) *period-based reception of old artworks*; and (3) *period-appropriate presentation of old artworks*. These attitudes arose gradually, mostly during the nineteenth century, but Wölfflin's work focused the growing preference for "classic" works into a fixed method of periodizing artistic style.

Periodization—which is the antithesis of gradual, incremental change—leads inevitably to exclusivity and binary opposition, as it did in Wölfflin's work, and as it has in much musicology. The outcome for musical performance style change—which is the subject at hand—is that Wölfflin's methodology encouraged performers to think afresh about the

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categories based on binary oppositions. On this subject, see Heinrich Wölfflin, *Die Kunst der Renaissance: Italien und das deutsche Formgefühl* (Munich: F. Bruckmann Verlag, 1931). See also Heinrich Wölfflin, *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (Munich: F. Bruckmann Verlag, 1915). There is nothing wrong with identifying elemental stylistic units; in fact, doing so is an important process missing from current criticism of musical performance styles. However, Wölfflin's system of binary oppositions, in which opposing style elements belong to one or the other style category, essentially delegitimizes "idiosyncratic" behavior by artists who may pick and choose style elements to form syntheses that historians fail to recognize as integral and denies that, in some circumstances, style change may be smooth and slow. The former leads to the impression that a hovering *Zeitgeist* (instead of human choices, which may be reflective or non-reflective) governs style change. The latter preferentially declares some periods to be "focused" and others to be "transitional." I am more inclined to believe that observer selection bias and social transmission factors exert greater influence on choices about the "focused" or "transitional" qualities of periods than the oft claimed "inherent" integrity of their aesthetic content does. Until precise nomenclature that describes "atomic" performance style elements is put in place, no complex systems of performance style epistemologies can be described; and with them, no taxonomies of performance style will ever have any credibility; and without taxonomies, there is no basis to compare or measure periodic changes, which frustrates any speculation about whether style change moves according to the model of Stephen Jay Gould's "punctuated equilibrium" or according to Richard Dawkins' model of "variable evolutionary speedism." See Stephen Jay Gould, "Punctuated Equilibrium—A Different Way of Seeing," *New Scientist* 94 (April 15, 1982), 137-141; and Stephen Jay Gould and Niles Eldredge, "Punctuated equilibria: the tempo and mode of evolution reconsidered," *Paleobiology* 3/2 (1977), 115-151. See also Richard Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996); and Richard Dawkins, *The Extended Phenotype*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1982).

correspondence between the values embodied in their non-reflectively received performance practice and new rigidity about supposedly “inherent” characteristics of musical periods.

This, I believe, encouraged the most philosophically sensitive of musical performers to judge their style by such correspondence, leading to judgments about the degree of “appropriateness” of one’s approach to any given repertoire. Knowing that one’s style may be “inappropriate” in some respects leads to a kind of expulsion from Eden, leading performers to avoid “stylistically inappropriate” behavior. The new shame, I believe, was the motor that drove the diversification and articulation of various individuals’ approaches to playing different repertoires—which is quite different from the earlier existence of diverse, individual styles of playing all repertoires—that emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Because of the key role that Wölfflin played in promoting the idea that historically adjacent styles may be based upon highly distinctive—even, as with Wölfflin’s Renaissance/baroque dichotomy, antithetical—aesthetic premises, I attribute a significant degree of influence to him for having helped to increase sensitivity in all disciplines to anachronistic or stylistically inappropriate presentation of historical artworks.

### **Ferruccio Busoni**

Fischer’s close association with Busoni is well documented. Fischer was an ardent admirer, although not a student of his. As Dent and Stuckenschmidt have observed, Busoni’s pianism developed substantially over time. This is certainly true of the two volumes of his *WTC* edition, which (as even Busoni acknowledges in his preface to *WTC II*) bear little resemblance to one another. In the period 1917–1920, Busoni had an

epiphany regarding Bach-pianism, which substantially affected his approach to the notation of pianistic nuances until his death in 1924.

As Stuckenschmidt observes, “A short article written [by Busoni] on Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* and Liszt’s *Don Juan Fantasia* introduces fresh ideas on piano playing and piano transcriptions,” in which Busoni “advises a musician to strive for the lucidity and lightness of Mozart’s language.”<sup>97</sup> Stuckenschmidt also reveals a possible motive for Busoni’s new aesthetic of restraint: ‘[Busoni’s] correspondence with his friend Hans Huber [who was also a close friend of Fischer’s], particularly during the years 1917 and 1918, shows how distressed he was by the frequently harsh criticism of his playing and his Bach editions’.

By 1920, Busoni had transformed his pianistic approach. Fischer noted of Busoni’s approach in these years that, ‘In maturity, I scarcely heard a forte from [Busoni]; he found this sufficient, for it was for him a question of the balance of tone, no longer of strength in itself.’<sup>98</sup>

The progressive stylization of Busoni’s Bach-pianism in the period 1917-1920 seems to have begun with a radical change in his approach to editing Bach’s keyboard music. The preface to his 1915 edition of the second book of *WTC* is heavily laden with references to the symbolic dynamics of fugal composition.

The symbolism of contrapuntal principles can be summed up in the words: harmony in the midst of struggle and equality of all participants, who communally engage the subject.

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<sup>97</sup> Stuckenschmidt, *Ferruccio Busoni, Ferruccio Busoni*, English translation by S. Morris (Calder and Boyers, 1970), 91. Originally published as *Ferruccio Busoni: Zeittafel eines Europäers* (Zürich: Atlantis Verlag, 1967).

<sup>98</sup> Edwin Fischer, “On Musical Interpretation,” *Reflections on Music* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1951), 21. The German original is *Musikalische Betrachtungen* (Munich: Insel Verlag, 1949). See also n. 30.

Practical and symbolic conclusion of the fugue: the exploitation of the subject to the point at which its potential is exhausted.<sup>99</sup>

Instead of treating Bach to coloration, as he was still somewhat inclined to do in his *WTC I* edition, Busoni now sees the internal dynamics of Bach's counterpoint as the function that dictates interpretive responses. The markings of his *WTC I* edition, which were highly mimetic, consist of phrases that corresponded to human breath and patterns of articulation that seemed to be later descendants of the speech-mimetic theories of articulation espoused in the eighteenth century. In the *WTC II* edition that he produced two decades later, Busoni sees contrapuntal music as embodiments of beautiful abstractions: of mutual engagement, of unity in diversity, of integrity, and of dynamic interaction. The dynamic markings in this edition are very sparse and hover in the lower dynamic range. Specific articulation markings are absent. Busoni offers much commentary, but he now restricts these mostly to footnotes and his preface. This practice sets the stage for the Bach-editions that Fischer will produce after Busoni's death.

### **Albert Schweitzer**

Like Bertholet, Schweitzer belonged to a group of Christian scholars that was unusual for its time for treating Judaism with respect and equanimity. Schweitzer emphasized the futility of viewing Jesus from the vantage point of current thought, which he demonstrated had yielded wildly divergent interpretations over the course of the

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<sup>99</sup> Die übernommenen Regeln für die Schreibweise der Fuge sind zum Teil praktischen, zum Teil symbolischen Ursprungs. So ist die Bildung der "Antwort" in Beziehung zu einem gedachten Modulationskreise gebracht. / Die Symbolik der Gesetze läßt sich in die Begriffe zusammenfassen: Harmonie im Kampf; Gleichberechtigung aller Beteiligten, die in dem Hauptgedanken sich vereinen. / Praktisches und symbolisches Endziel der Fuge: die Ausbeutung des Hauptgedankens bis zu dessen Erschöpfung. Ferruccio Busoni, "Preface," *Das Wohltemperirte Klavier*.

nineteenth century. As an alternative, in his 1906 *Historical Quest of Jesus*, Schweitzer took Jewish eschatology as its touchstone.<sup>100</sup> Throughout this enormously popular book, Schweitzer repeatedly cited the rich tradition of Jewish scholarship that had preceded him, particularly works by Isaak Troki (1533–1594), Rabbi Leon da Modena (1571–1648), and Abraham Geiger (1810–1874), whose works had been virtually ignored by Christian scholars prior to Schweitzer. His presence in Fischer’s life during the period of his early development surely reinforced the interest in Jewish culture and thought to which Bertholet exposed Fischer.

Schweitzer seems to have influenced Fischer in a second, equally important way. In publications appearing virtually alongside the Bach-biographies that made him famous, Schweitzer emphasized Bach’s relationship to Gothic architecture and the symbolic nature of his music.<sup>101</sup> Not surprisingly, given their virtually coterminous publication, Schweitzer raises the importance of symbolism as a key to understanding Bach’s music in three separate instances in his Bach biography.”<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Albert Schweitzer *Von Reimarus zu Wrede: Geschichte der Leben Jesu-Forschung* (1<sup>st</sup> ed., Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck Verlag, 1906; extensively expanded 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck Verlag, 1913). In this work, Schweitzer relied heavily on earlier Jewish scholarship, particularly works by Isaak Troki (1533–1594), Rabbi Leon da Modena (1571–1648), and Abraham Geiger, whose works published between 1856 and 1873 had been virtually ignored by Christian scholars prior to Schweitzer. Like Bertholet, Schweitzer belonged to a group of Christians that was unusual for their time for treating Judaism with respect and equanimity.

<sup>101</sup> Albert Schweitzer, “Le symbolisme de Bach,” *Revue germanique internationale* 1 (1905); German version, printed two years later as “Bachs Symbolismus” in *Kunstwart* 20/22 (August, 1907), 556–562.

<sup>102</sup> See Schweitzer, *J.S. Bach*, 391, 401, and 420.

## Max Schlesinger

Fischer's involvement with musical symbolism in his essays and editorial prefaces—a topic that overlaps with *neue Bauen* abstraction and Gestaltist *Prägnanz*—peaked in the period 1912-1930. This corresponds directly with Fischer's involvement with a major treatise on the history and aesthetics of symbolism, *Die Geschichte des Symbols* (i.e., *The History of the Symbol*, hereafter *GdS*) by Max Schlesinger (1854-1915), to which Fischer edited and co-authored an additional chapter entitled “Symbolik in der Tonkunst” (i.e., “Symbolism in Music,” hereafter *SdT*).<sup>103</sup> Schlesinger's publisher presented this as the eighth and final chapter of *GdS* when bringing out a revised version in 1930.

Although biographical data on Schlesinger are relatively scant, he was a member of the von Mendelssohn circle in Berlin.<sup>104</sup> He was also closely allied with the neo-Kantian school of philosophy, as his commemoration in the journal of the *Kant-*

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<sup>103</sup> Max, [*Grundlagen und*] *Geschichte des Symbols: Ein Versuch* (Withhelden: Domröse Verlag, 1912). Originally published with seven chapters. Fischer edited an expanded second edition that was published by the same firm in 1930). To this the publisher of Schlesinger's original version, Domröse Verlag, added *Symbolik in der Tonkunst: Ein Versuch* in 1930, further specified as *Grundlagen und Geschichte des Symbols, Kapitel VIII*. This makes clear that Fischer considered the additional chapter an integral part of the original, 1912 work, as does Fischer's preface, cited below.

<sup>104</sup> Max Schlesinger (1854-1915) needs to be disambiguated from the eponymous, late-nineteenth century American rabbi or the Hungarian biochemist. A copy of the first edition in the author's collection contains three newspaper-clippings, all apparently written at the time of Schlesinger's death (1915), that provide additional data about Schlesinger. In addition, *Hubbard's Newspaper and Bank Directory of the World*, (New Haven: self-published, 1882) lists Schlesinger as, at that time, the proprietor of his own bank in Mainz.

*Gesellschaft* attests, providing another point of overlap with Fischer, many of whose other intellectual friends were neo-Kantians.<sup>105</sup>

Fischer's forward further describes his editorial role and relationship to the author.

Max Schlesinger intended the work now before the reader to be the final part of his *History of Symbolism*.<sup>106</sup> In September 1914, the author read me the finished parts. Shortly thereafter, this noble man was parted from life, leaving his work behind nearly completed. Bearing this in mind, I would like to only be described as having facilitated its publication. In agreement with his family, I have here and there sorted and edited it for publication. The introductions to some of the main sections are mine.

If this work stimulates readers to contemplate musical aspects of the life of the spirit, if it manages to illuminate the relationships between the human psyche and musical expression, then the intention of the author has been achieved.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> "Further, the author of the work *The Symbol*, banker Max Schlesinger died as a result of 'over-exertion in the medical corps of the Red Cross, to which he devoted himself despite his advanced years with full dedication.' We shall faithfully honor and treasure his memory! *The Managing Directors [of the Kant-Gesellschaft], Vaihingen and Liebert*. ('Ferner verstarb an den Folgen ,bei grosser Anstrengung im Sanitätsdienst des Roten Kreuzens, dem er sich trotz seiner hohen Jahre mit uneingeschränkter Hingabe widmete,' der Verfasser des Werkes: Das Symbol, HERR BANKIER MAX SCHLESINGER, BERLIN W., AM KARLSBAD 4a. Wir werden ihr Andenken in Ehren und in Treue bewahren! Im Februar 1915. *Die Geschäftsführung*: [H.] Vaihingen, [Arthur] Liebert.") Kant-Gesellschaft, *Kant-Studien Philosophische Zeitschrift* 1915 (London: Forgotten Books, 2013), 132-3.

<sup>106</sup> Here, Fischer has unwittingly elided Schlesinger's title—*Die Geschichte des Symbols* (*The History of the Symbol*)—with the title of the chapter under his charge—"Die Symbolik in der Tonkunst" ("Symbolism in Music") forming the portmanteau *Die Geschicthe der Symbolik* (*The History of Symbolism*).

<sup>107</sup> "Die vorliegende Arbeit war von Max Schlesinger als letzter Teil seiner *Geschichte der Symbolik* gedacht. Der bescheidene Untertitel lautet: ein Versuch. Im September 1914 las mir der Verfasser die fertigen Teile vor. Kurz darauf schied dieser edle Mann aus dem Leben, und die Arbeit blieb nahezu vollendet zurück, und in seinem Sinne möchte ich sie nur als einen Wegstein bezeichnen. Im Einverständnis mit seinen Angehörigen gebe ich sie nun heraus, nachdem hier und dort geordnet und zusammengefaßt worden ist. Die Einleitungen zu einigen Hauptkapiteln stammen vom Herausgeber. / Regt die Arbeit andere zum Nachdenken über diesen Teil des Geisteslebens an, gelingt es ihr, die Zusammenhänge zwischen der menschlichen Psyche und dem musikalischen Ausdruck zu beleuchten, so ist die Absicht des Verfassers erreicht." Edwin Fischer, Forward to Max Schlesinger, "Die Symbolik in der Tonkunst," *Geschichte der Symbolik: Kapitel VIII*.



This implies that Schlesinger saw Fischer not merely as an editor, but also as a consultant. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine anyone else in Berlin in 1914 to whom Schlesinger would have been likelier to hand over such a task, given the wealth of intellectual friends whom the two shared. The part of *GdS* already published made copious reference to Saussaye's *History of Religions*, a monument to which Alfred Bertholet contributed a large section, and which Bertholet helped to edit.<sup>108</sup> Fischer and Schlesinger were also connected through their mutual friend Albert Schweitzer, who is quoted in an epigram to the work: "All art speaks through signs and symbols."<sup>109</sup> Aside from these already substantial connections, both men moved in the Berlin-Grunewald musical circle of Robert and Franz von Mendelssohn, and both knew Charles [Mendelssohn] Horsfall, who had studied with Fischer and who introduced him to the rest of the Mendelssohn family, as well as to the most influential members of Berlin's community of Jewish musical connoisseurship. Fischer's diaries mention Thea Schlesinger in passing rather often. One such example: "Berlin. Beethovenfest at the Philharmonic under Furtwängler. Coriolan. G-major [*i.e.*, Piano Concerto #4]. VII.[*i.e.*, Symphony #8], fantastic rehearsal in the Beethovensaal. Thea Schlesinger."<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> P.D. Chantepie de la Saussaye, *Lehrbuch der Religionsgeschichte*, edited by Alfred Bertholet (Freiburg I. B.: Akademische Verlagsbuchhandlung von J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1897).

<sup>109</sup> Albert Schweitzer, *J. S. Bach*, enlarged German edition published by (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1908). Originally published in French: *J. S. Bach, Le Musicien-Poète* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel with P. Costellot, 1905).

<sup>110</sup> "Berlin. Beethovenfeier der Philharmoniker mit Furtwängler. Coriolan. G-dur [*i.e.*, Piano Concerto #4]. VII.[*i.e.*, Symphonie #8], herrliche Probe in Beethovensaal. Thea Schlesinger." Edwin Fischer, diary entry of January 12, 1927, *Edwin Fischer Nachlass*, Zentralbibliothek Luzern. "Mit Mama in Potsdam. Thea Schlesinger." Edwin Fischer, diary entry of December 8, 1927, *Edwin Fischer Nachlass*, Zentralbibliothek Luzern.

It seems beyond question that Fischer—as editor and occasional contributor—read and understood every word of SdT. Given Fischer’s strong interest in religious matters and his friendships with two experts in the field—Bertholet and Schweitzer, both of whom are cited in *GdS*—it seems reasonable to assume that Fischer read and understood that book. Even if he had not done so prior to taking on editing SdT, it stands to reason that he would have undertaken to study the larger work—or, perhaps, deepened his prior acquaintanceship with it—in order to edit the new chapter expertly.

A rather long section in SdT is devoted to Jewish music and, somewhat more tangentially, to Jewish hermeneutics.

Subsequently, the words and music of the Jewish liturgy came to be dictated by the Lawgivers [*die Vormundschaft der Gesetzeslehrer*]. Far removed from the enthusiastic, metaphorical style of the prophets of the First Temple, it is the Sopherim (writers, scribes, literate people) who knew how to employ a sober and didactic tone by which to seize the reins of the government itself and the prestige of its academies, and thereby to procure power over the highest religious, national and legislative matters. They not only exactly specified the prayers for the high priest, but also turned the most niggling scrutiny [*die peinlichste Aufmerksamkeit*] to every melody, to every orchestral piece, as well as to every choice of instrument. Secular songs and the instruments associated with them were strictly taboo. The slightest change in the musical tradition was turned from musical ignorance into a sin of religious practice. In the centuries that followed, the diacritical marks of Scripture [*die Akzente der Heiligen Schrift*]*—*previously, like everything else, handed down within the tribes via oral tradition [*mündlicher Überlieferung den Geschlechtern vererbt*]*—*were dictated and notated by the Masoretes.

Through such strict fixation on the law, the people of Israel came to believe that the days and hours of each individual and every group were meant to move in prescribed, divinely ordained paths. In the end, they were not satisfied to express their innermost feelings [*die Innigkeit ihrer Empfindungen*], their suffering, their joys, and their thanksgiving solely in established, traditional texts and music. Thus, the office of the Cantor was created, the Chazan, whose members performed their own liturgical poems and melodies in addition to the prescribed chants. These liturgical poems, called Piutim, were a major component of the service. The form and content of these poems were derived from the manner in which the

prayer-leader/poet's soul reflected the collective life of the congregation [*die Erlebnisse der Gemeinde*], of times of severe repression or of joyful times of greater freedom.

The Jewish people are just as entitled to the innermost essence [*innersten Wesen*] of religion as the prayer-leader, authorized to perform as priest of his God in the Temple or at home; to express the whisperings of his heart in verse and song. Thus, Israel's music stands as a symbol of the Diaspora: "Ye shall be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."<sup>111</sup>

Much of the above passage appears to paraphrase parts of some of Bertholet's works, particularly *The Fall of the Jewish Nation* (*Das Ende des jüdischen Staatswesens*, of 1910, concerning events leading up to destruction of the Second Temple and the

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<sup>111</sup> "Seit damals kam die jüdische Liturgie mit Wort und Ton unter die Vormundschaft der Gesätseslehrer. Fern von der Schwärmerei und dem metaphorischen Stil der Propheten des ersten Tempels, verstanden es die Sopherim (Schreiber, Schriftkundige, Schriftgelehrte) durch einen nüchternen und didaktischen Ton, die Zügel der Verwaltung an sich zu nehmen und ihren Akademien Rang und die höchste religiöse, nationale und legislative Macht zu verschaffen. Es wurden nicht nur die Gebete für den Hohepriester auf das genaueste präzisiert, sondern jeder Melodie, jedem orchestralen Stück wie auch jedem Instrumente worden die peinlichste Aufmerksamkeit zugewendet. Die Heiden Gesänge und ihre Instrumente waren streng verpönt. Die mindeste Veränderung der musikalischen Tradition galt mehr als religiöse Sünde denn als musikalische Unwissenheit. Während der Jahrhunderte, die nun folgten, wurden auch die Akzente der Heiligen Schrift, die bisher, wie alles andere, nur in mündlicher Überlieferung den Geschlechtern vererbt worden waren, von den Massoreten festgelegt und aufgeschrieben.

Das israelitische Volk war durch die strenge Fixierung des Gesetzes dahin gekommen, daß die Tage und Stunden jedes Einzelnen wie die der Gemeinde sich in vorgeschriebenen heiligen Bahnen bewegten. Doch auf die Dauer genügte es ihnen nicht, die Innigkeit ihrer Empfindung, ihren Schmerz, ihre Freude, ihre Dankbarkeit nur in überliefertem, festgesetztem Wort und Ton auszudrücken, und so wurde das Amt des Vorbeters geschaffen, des Chasan, der neben den vorgeschriebenen Gesängen auch eigene liturgische Poesien und Melodien vortrug. Diese liturgischen Poesien, Piutim genannt, wurden ein Hauptbestandteil des Gottesdienstes. Je nachdem sich nun die Erlebnisse der Gemeinde, die Zeiten schwerer Unterdrückung oder frohe Zeiten größer Freiheit in der Seele des Vorbeter-Dichters spiegelten, entstand Form und Inhalt dieser Dichtungen.

Und gleich dem Vorbeter ist dem innersten Wesen seiner Religion zufolge Israelit berechtigt, in Tempel und Haus als Priester seines Gottes aufzutreten und die Eingebungen seines Herzens in Wort und Lied auszuströmen. So erscheint Israels Musik, der die Verherrlichung Gottes Quelle und Ziel ist, als ein Symbol für die Sendung des Volkes: „Ihr sollt mir sein ein Reich von Priestern und ein heiliges Volk.“ Schlesinger, "Symbolik in der Tonkunst," 19-20.

Diaspora) and *A History of Hebrew Civilization* (*Die Kulturgeschichte Israels* of 1919).<sup>112</sup>

In the latter, Bertholet observes:

The introduction of the Deuteronomic law made a deep cleft in Israel's religious life. That henceforth sacrifice was to be offered only at one place, that as a result the numerous places of worship throughout the land were suddenly suppressed, meant that Israel's religious life was apparently to be shorn at one stroke of its most sacred values. God, with whom they had had fellowship in the district where they lived, seemed now to be removed to a distance; all sanctity was removed from the places where their homes lay; the slaying of the victim, and the sprinkling of its blood on the soil of their own districts, had suddenly been reduced to a merely secular act.<sup>113</sup>

Bertholet closes *The Fall of the Jewish Nation* with the following:

When Jochanan and his followers were told of the destruction of Jerusalem and the burning of the Temple, they tore their clothes and mourned as though a close relative had died. However, Jochanan comforted his followers with the declaration that living righteously would serve to replace burnt offerings. In fact, this is the historical moment in which the Jews took the decisive step of irrevocably abandoning the outward worship as it was perceptibly embodied by Temple and Altar in order restrict themselves to what they possessed in the innermost, spiritual essence [*geistigen Gehalt*] of their religion. Jews progressively narrowed it, forcing it into the confines of ever stiffer, ever less forgiving—indeed, insufferable—legal strictures. This was to be their salvation and recompense for their political destruction.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Alfred Bertholet, *Das Ende des jüdischen Staatswesens; sechs populäre Vorträge* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1910). Alfred Bertholet, "A History of Hebrew Civilization," trans. Rev. A.K. Dallas (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2004). Originally published as *Die Kulturgeschichte Israels* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1919). The English translation of the German title is something of a misnomer: although German speakers, most especially cultural historians, take great care to distinguish between *Kultur* and *Zivilisation*, Dallas' title elides the two entities.

<sup>113</sup> Bertholet, *History of Hebrew Civilization*, 372-3.

<sup>114</sup> "Als Jochanan und die Seinen die Kunde vom Sturze Jerusalems und der Verbrennung des Tempels traf, zerrissen sie die Kleider und trauerten wie um den Tod eines nahen Verwandten. Aber Jochanan tröstete die Seinen mit den Worten, daß Wohltun das Opfer ersetze. In der Tat ist dies der Punkt in der Geschichte, wo das Judentum den entscheidungsvollen Schritt tut, den äußern Gottesdienst, wie ihn Tempel und Altar sinnlich verkörpert, endgültig fahren zu lassen, um sich auf den geistigen Gehalt dessen, was es in seiner Religion besaß, zurückzuziehen. Es engte und zwängte ihn

The same central themes pervade both passages: reference to the inflexibility of written Pharisaical Law; the function of the Law in the Jewish Diaspora, in which greater emphasis would be placed upon spiritual development than on outward displays of rectitude and piety; the need for local observance (suppressed when sacrifice was restricted to the Second Temple, but restored in the Diaspora); and, above all, the emphasis on interiority in the exercise of one's faith, as opposed to the superficiality of public rectitude. These matters are, in fact, precisely those that Fischer would take up in his own essays and editorial prefaces.

The instances in which Busoni and Fischer used language almost identical to that found in the above passage from SdT are too numerous to account for here, although I treat them extensively in Chapters Two through Four. Throughout *The Essence and Oneness of Music* (*Von der Einheit der Musik*, 1922), and the *Draft of a New Aesthetic of Music* (*Entwurf einer neuen Aesthetik der Tonkunst*, 1911), Busoni rails against the “lawgivers” in language that is almost identical to that found in the passage above. See, for example, this passage:

...certain composers poured *their* spirit and *their* emotion into just this mould as lying nearest them or their time. Our lawgivers have identified the spirit and emotion, the individuality of these composers and their time, with “symmetric” music, and finally, being powerless to recreate either the spirit, or the emotion, or the time, have retained the Form as a symbol, and made it into a fetish, a religion.<sup>115</sup>

Showing how Fischer took up and paraphrased similar sentiments will be a major focus of the coming chapters. Likewise, I will draw attention to Busoni and Fischer's

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immer mehr in die starren, unerbittlichen, ja unerträglichen Formen des Gesetzes ein; gleichviel, das wurde sein Rettung, und sie ist zugleich die Versöhnung für seinen politischen Untergang.” Bertholet, *Ende des jüdischen Staatswesens*, 164.

<sup>115</sup> Ferruccio Busoni, *Sketch of a New Aesthetic of Music*, translated by Theodore Baker (New York, G. Schirmer, 1911), 6-7.

apparent attraction to passages from Moses Mendelssohn's *Jerusalem*, a treatise on religious observance in the Jewish Diaspora that overlaps strongly with the contents of *SdK* and Bertholet's works.

### **The Families of Robert and Franz von Mendelssohn**

Franz and his brother Robert von Mendelssohn (1857–1917)—principals of the bank Mendelssohn & Co.—built large villas in Berlin-Grunewald, where they were important figures in its highly musical, predominantly Jewish culture. Europe's finest touring musicians routinely visited Franz von Mendelssohn's salon.<sup>116</sup>

Franz von Mendelssohn's musical soirees were the toast of Berlin during the first two decades of the century. Franz von Mendelssohn provided Fischer access to an

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<sup>116</sup> "In einem 23.000 qm großen Landschaftspark am Herthasee baute der kaiserliche Hofbaurat Ernst Ihne 1896-98 das Wohnhaus für Franz von Mendelssohn. Das schlossartige Anwesen wurde allgemein das Palais Mendelssohn genannt. Franz von Mendelssohn war begeisterter Kunstsammler und Mäzen. In den repräsentativen Räumen hingen Gemälde van Goghs, Cezannes und Manets und die Werke alter niederländischer Maler an den Wänden. Im Palais gab es auch eine private Grundschule, die außer den Kindern der Familie auch Nachbarskinder besuchten wie die Tochter Maximilian Hardens, Samuel Fischers Tochter Brigitte, genannt "Tutti" oder der Sohn des Wirtschaftswissenschaftlers Werner Sombart. Nicolaus Sombart hat darüber berichtet, wie er "eine Privatkasse im Mendelssohn-Palais besuchte – wo ich zwar noch nicht die Rembrandts und van Goghs in der Halle zu identifizieren wusste, aber sehr beeindruckt war von der Livree der würdigen Diener, die uns in den Unterrichtssaal führten.

Legendären Ruf hatten die Wohltätigkeitssoireen und die Hauskonzerte im ovalen Musikzimmer der Mendelssohns. Franz von Mendelssohn spielte hervorragend Geige. Er war Schüler von Joseph Joachim gewesen, dem wohl berühmtesten Geiger seiner Zeit. Es gab in den Jahren vor 1933 wohl keinen Künstler von Rang, der in Berlin konzertierte hätte und nicht hier in der Villa Mendelssohn zu Gast war: der jugendliche Jehudi Menuhin, Edwin Fischer, Rudolf Serkin und viele mehr.

Bei Wohltätigkeitskonzerten spielten auch schon einmal Franz von Mendelssohn und Albert Einstein gemeinsam mit den Berliner Philharmonikern das Konzert von Johann Sebastian Bach für zwei Violinen und Orchester." Monika Thiemen, "Kiezspaziergang am 8.11.2003 durch die Kolonie Grunewald," *Web-portal of the city of Berlin*, URL: <http://www.berlin.de/ba-charlottenburg-wilmersdorf/bezirk/kiezspaziergaenge/031108.html> (accessed July 12, 2010).

echelon of Berlin society that proved pivotal for his career, leading him in 1919 to be declared one of the greatest of Berlin's "great citizens," although he was still recognized as second in stature to Schnabel. A few examples of the contacts that Fischer established among the family's closest friends were the poets Rainer Maria Rilke and Hugo von Hofmannsthal; the Weimar Republic's two most esteemed theatrical directors, Gerhart Hauptmann and Max Reinhard; Weimar Republic Secretary of State Walther Rathenau, a particularly close family friend who was assassinated directly in front of the von Mendelssohn villa; the musicians Vladimir Horowitz, Adolf Busch, Rudolf Serkin, the first of whom was the lover of Eleonora's brother, the cellist Francesco von Mendelssohn, and the latter two of whom were his constant chamber music partners; the couple Walter and Alma Gropius; the physicist and violinist Albert Einstein; and the Modernist polymath Oskar Kokoschka.

### **Rudolf Steiner**

Fischer's diary entry of 20 February 1915 records that he had become a theosophist.<sup>117</sup> His next entry, on 24 February, offers an explicit phrase of theosophist doctrine.<sup>118</sup> In 1915, Steiner—leader of the theosophy movement in the German-speaking countries—was in Berlin giving a series of nine lectures.<sup>119</sup> Fischer's writings towards

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<sup>117</sup> "... Theosoph geworden." Edwin Fischer, diary entry of February 20, 1915, *Edwin Fischer Nachlass*, Zentralbibliothek Luzern.

<sup>118</sup> "... knüpfen sich reale Vorstellungen daran kurzum: bete alleine eine Gottheit an: T.A.T." Edwin Fischer, diary entry of February 20, 1915, *Edwin Fischer Nachlass*, Zentralbibliothek Luzern. T.A.T. is the Anglicized version of a theosophist mantra, the Sanskrit phrase *Tat Tvam Asi*, rendered in English as "Thou Art That."

<sup>119</sup> Theosophy is the movement founded in 1875 (under the name "Theosophical Society") by Helena Blavatsky (1831-1891) and Henry Steel Olcott (1832-1907). Its general principles were shaped by Blavatsky's occultism and knowledge of hermeticism and neo-Platonism. In 1907, Steiner split from the Theosophical Society to found the

the end of his life are full of Steiner's peculiar ideas: his division of living things into three related "Kingdoms;" his assertions of supernatural relations among them; his belief in physiognomy; and his persistent use of crystals as metaphors for elegant organization.<sup>120</sup>

Apart from the stylistic influence of Steiner upon his writings, becoming a theosophist had two important effects on Fischer. First, it seems to have heightened his understanding of musical performance as a sacred ritual act. Second, Steiner's teachings include the idea that architecture and music are related expressions of the same spiritual ("supersensible") forces.

### **Ernst Kurth**

Daphne Tan reports that Fischer was a student of the theorist Ernst Kurth.<sup>121</sup> Their association is known to have extended at least until 1931, when, together with Paul Dikenmann, another Kurth student, Fischer compiled the *index rerum* and *index nominum* of Kurth's last work, *Musikpsychologie*.<sup>122</sup> Kurth thanks "Edwin Fischer, teacher in Berne" (along with Dikenmann) for the indices' "painstaking preparation."

Like Worringer, Kurth developed a theory of artistic personification and anthropomorphosis. He posited that human beings react to harmony out of "unconscious

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Anthroposophical Society, a version of Theosophy strongly colored by German Idealism and late-medieval German Mysticism. Its world headquarters is in Dornach, Switzerland.

<sup>120</sup> Physiognomy is the pseudo-science that holds physical characteristics to be indicative of personal capabilities, habits of thought, or personality.

<sup>121</sup> 'The index to *Musikpsychologie*, compiled by Kurth's students Edwin Fischer and Paul Dikenmann, cites two direct references to Kant on pages 25 and 59'. Daphne Tan, *Ernst Kurth at the Boundary of Music Theory and Psychology* (PhD dissertation, University of Rochester, 2013), 26, n. 37.

<sup>122</sup> Ernst Kurth, Paul Dikenmann and Edwin Fischer, *Musikpsychologie* (Berlin: Hesse Verlag, 1931).



reactive impulses” (*Reflexen der Unbewussten*) and that we naturally, in a manner that springs inalterably out of human nature, perceive music to be the embodiment of energy and movement in spatial dimensions and directions. To some extent, Kurth translated the findings of Worringer into music-theoretical understandings, and these understandings – although sometimes dismissed as pseudo-scientific – are being borne out by the revolution in cognitive science that is now taking place. The view of human impulses embodied in artistic abstractions that stands behind Worringer and Kurth corresponds very closely to interpretive elements of Fischer’s Bach-performance practice, as I will show.

### **Ernst Cassirer**

Fischer’s having chosen to edit Schlesinger’s text on symbolism is an indication of his strong interest in the subject. The philosopher most heavily involved with symbolism during Fischer’s life was Ernst Cassirer, whom Fischer knew through Binswanger and Warburg. Fischer’s connections with Cassirer are almost too numerous to list, but include: Fischer’s mentor, Alfred Bertholet, who cites Cassirer by name in his works, and who contributed a chapter to an anthology to which Cassirer also dedicated a chapter; their common friend, Albert Schweitzer; the neo-Kantian psychiatrist Ludwig Binswanger and the circle of artists and intellectuals who frequented *Bellevue* in Kreuzlingen; and Aby Warburg, another neo-Kantian, who was a very close associate of Cassirer’s. Among the Cassirer publications that Fischer is especially likely to have known are the three parts of his *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Ernst Cassirer, *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen: Die Sprache* (1921); *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen: Das mythische Denken* (1925); *Philosophie der*

#### Part Four: Fischer's Bach-Editions, Data, and Chronology

Artur Schnabel served as editor in chief of an imprint of Ullstein Verlag known as the *Tonmeister-Ausgabe* (henceforth, *T-A*). Schnabel engaged Fischer to edit almost all of Bach's solo keyboard works apparently leaving aside those that they believed were intended for the organ.<sup>124</sup> Almost immediately after Busoni's death, Fischer began work on this project.<sup>125</sup> Documentary evidence from surviving copies of Fischer's Bach editions show that, as originally planned, this would have comprised a 25-volume set. Fischer's prefaces to these editions are richly informative of his Bach-pianism. Comments in Fischer's prefaces to his *T-A* editions, together with his comments on editing in his essays, provide a useful overview of this evolution.

Given Fischer's penchant for absorbing Busoni's aesthetic outlook in his prose, it seems only logical that he would do so in the realm of editing Bach's keyboard music, an area of musical life in which Busoni had made equally great contributions. Almost immediately after Busoni's death, the media giant Ullstein Verlag approached Artur Schnabel with a proposal to direct the launching of a music imprint under their aegis.<sup>126</sup>

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*symbolischen Formen: Phänomenologie der Erkenntnis* (1929) (Berlin: Bruno Cassirer Verlag).

<sup>124</sup> Bach's seven *manualiter* Toccatas were included, apparently assumed to be works not for the organ. For a complete listing of the planned series, see Appendix I, Table 1.

<sup>125</sup> Ullstein Verlag published scores under the *T-A* imprint from 1923 (also the year of the earliest identified surviving volumes) to 1933 (when the Nazis dissolved Ullstein Verlag).

<sup>126</sup> "Unter der Leitung des österreichischen Pianisten und Beethoven-Spezialisten Artur Schnabel erscheinen die ersten "Tonmeister-Ausgaben" — anspruchsvolle Klavierliteratur. Die Edition muß 1933 eingestellt werden. Schnabel geht 1939 ins Exil." Olaf Simons, "Ullstein Verlag, Berlin," *Datenbank Schrift und Bild 1900-1960*, URL: <http://www.polunbi.de/inst/ullstein.html> (accessed July 9, 2010).

Ullstein published the imprint, the *Tonmeister-Ausgabe*,<sup>127</sup> from 1923 (also the year of the earliest identified surviving volumes)<sup>128</sup> to 1933, when it was terminated as part of the Nazi expropriation of the firm under the Nazi *Gleichschaltung*, which was a more-or-less systematic effort to bring German culture in all its manifestations into parallax with Nazi instrumental rationality.<sup>129</sup> Josef Goebbels continued to publish the Ullstein magazines and dailies under their original mastheads for several years after the take-over. However, Goebbels was apparently unwilling to continue with the *T-A* imprint beyond 1933.

Schnabel, who spent progressively less time in Germany as anti-Semitism rose throughout the late-1920s, left Germany for good in 1932. Even if he had stayed, the unfolding of the Nazi Nuremberg Laws, which imposed progressively greater restrictions on Jewish professional life and involvement in German culture, would have made his continued editorship of the *T-A* impossible. Schnabel left his position at the *Musikhochschule* in Berlin on the same grounds.

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<sup>127</sup> One of the principal informants regarding the Ullstein Verlag is Herman Ullstein, a son of the firm's founder who ran the house during the early-20<sup>th</sup> century. However, his *Rise and Fall of the House of Ullstein* (London: Nicholson & Watson) is disappointingly silent regarding the *Tonmeister-Ausgabe*.

<sup>128</sup> The Schnabel biographer Cesar Saerchinger relates that 1920 was the year of the proposal that Schnabel edit the Beethoven sonatas for the *Tonmeister-Ausgabe*. Although it may be that the offer was made in that year, evidence of the appearance of publications before 1923 has not yet surfaced. See Cesar Saerchinger, *Artur Schnabel: A Biography*, New York: Dodd, Mead & Co. (1957).

<sup>129</sup> The reasons for Ullstein's takeover had nothing to do with its classical-music division, a tiny portion of its media empire, but instead with the Judaism of the publishers, authors, and many members of its creative and advertising teams and with the Nazi's desire to assume total control over mass media. Without such control, Ullstein Verlag could have continued its previous close relationship with progressive causes. These included *die neue Sachlichkeit*, the Bauhaus, and other progressive aesthetic movements, provocative social forces such as the anti-war movement, and the group of incendiary topics relating to the "New Woman" that raised the ire of social conservatives across the board, including the Catholic Church and the National Socialists.

Surviving *T-A* exemplars provide evidence on which one can reconstruct its history and contents. On its interior cover, Fischer's Ullstein edition of Bach's Keyboard Concerto in A Major (*T-A* No. 11) carries a listing of the Fischer-Bach volumes that had appeared by the autumn of 1930, as well a précis of planned publications (see Table 1).

Table 1: Ullstein catalog numbers to Fischer's *T-A* Bach-editions as represented by the last known publication catalog

Title	Year	Ullstein Cat. No.
English Suites		
No. 1 in A major	1926	287
No. 2 in A minor	1926	288
No. 3 in G minor	1926	289
No. 4 in F major	1926	290
No. 5 in E minor	1926	291
No. 6 in D minor	1926	292
Fantasy in C minor		8
Chromatic Fantasy		7
French Suites		
No. 1 in D minor	1926	281
No. 2 in C minor	1926	282
No. 3 in B minor	1926	283
No. 4 in E-flat major	1926	284
No. 5 in G major	1926	285
No. 6 in E major	1926	286
Two-Part Inventions		5
Three-Part Inventions	1924	6
Italian Concerto in F major	1927	166
Partitas No. 1-6		13-15
Twelve little Preludes and Six little Preludes	1924	1
The Well-Tempered Clavier in 6 Volumes		(deest)
Variations in the Italian Style; Fugue on the name Bach; Prelude, Allegro and Fugue in E-flat [sic]; <sup>130</sup> Capriccio on the Departure of the brothers [sic] <sup>131</sup>		
Piano Concerto in F Minor	1930	10
Piano Concerto in A Major	[1931]	11
Piano Concerto in D Minor	[1931]	12
Piano Concerto in E Major	[1932]	23

\* Reprinted in the Dix Limited edition, London (Faraday House, 8-10 Charing Cross Road)  
*Source:* Rear cover of Fischer's edition of the Piano Concerto in E Major, Ullstein No. 23.

<sup>130</sup> The actual order of the movements is 1) Prelude, 2) Fugue and 3) Allegro.

<sup>131</sup> The title, translated from the original Italian to English, should probably read  
 "Capriccio on the Departure of the [composer's] most Beloved Friend."

In an editorial annotation at the bottom of the page, there is an explanation that “... the works designated with numbers already have appeared [as of Fall, 1930], while the remaining works are to follow in the near future.”<sup>132</sup> The back cover of Fischer’s Ullstein edition of the Keyboard Concerto in E Major (*T-A* No. 23) contains an expanded and updated *T-A* catalog, suggesting that this edition appeared shortly before the firm was closed: *i.e.*, definitely after 1930, and perhaps as late as 1932.

The catalog contains a wealth of important data. First, it establishes the full breadth and scope of the editorial task assigned to Fischer, something not discernible from the earlier listings. Apparently, he was to have edited a total of at least thirty-seven volumes, more if the Partitas and Toccatas were intended to be released one work per volume. If they are included in the tally, the total number of planned volumes rises to at least forty-seven. Second, in the catalog, one finds that, of the thirty-seven to forty-seven proposed volumes, Fischer actually had edited twenty by 1930. Third, the fact that the numeration is not a simple series corresponding to the order in which works appear in the catalog suggests that Ullstein assigned *T-A* catalog numbers on some unknown basis (see Table 2).

Table 2: Dix catalog numbers to reprints of certain volumes of Edwin Fischer’s *T-A* edition

Title	Dix Cat. No.
18 Short Preludes*	1.
Easy Compositions	2.
Two-Part Inventions*	3.

<sup>132</sup> “Die mit Nr. Bezeichneten Werke sind erschienen (Herbst 1930), die übrigen folgen in kurzen Zwischenräumen.” Unattributed editorial comment on inside cover of “Bach Klavier-Konzert A-Dur: Ausgabe für 2 Klaviere,” Edwin Fischer, ed. *Tonmeister-Ausgabe* No. 11, Ullstein, 1930.

Three-part Inventions*	4.
Fantasia and Fugues	5.
Preludes and Fugues	6.
Fantasia in C minor and Chromatic Fantasia	7.
French Suites, Book I, No. 1-3	8.
French Suites, Book II, No. 4-6	9.
English Suites, Book I, No. 1-3	10.
English Suites, Book I No, 4-5	11.
English Suites, Book III, No. 6	12.
Italian Concerto	11.
Partitas, Book I, No. 1-2	13.
Partitas, Book II, No. 3-4	14.
Partitas, Book III, No. 4-6	15.
Toccatas and Fugues, Book, No. 1-2	16.
Toccatas and Fugues, Book II, No. 3-5	17.
Toccatas and Fugues, Book III, No. 6-7	18.
The 48 Preludes and Fugues, Vol. II, Book 1	41.
The 48 Preludes and Fugues, Vol. II, Book 2	111.
The 48 Preludes and Fugues, Vol. I. Book 3	148.
Variations in the Italian Style, Fugue on the name Bach, Prelude, Allegro and Fugue in E-flat [sic] <sup>1</sup> , Capriccio on the Departure of the Brothers [sic] <sup>1</sup>	165.
Italian Concerto	166.
The 48 Preludes and Fugues, Vol. I, Book I	167.
The 48 Preludes and Fugues, Vol. I. Book 2	168.
The 48 Preludes and Fugues, Vol. II, Book 3	170.

Source: Dix back-cover catalogues to their reprints of Fischer's *T-A* editions

If one organizes the data presented above (in Table 2) by publication date, it emerges that Ullstein catalog numbers borne by Fischer's Bach editions correspond roughly with the chronology of their publication (Table 3).

Table 3: Known and inferred publication dates of Fischer's *T-A* volumes

Title	<i>T-A</i> . No.	Dix No.	Year
18 Short Preludes	1	1	1924
Two-Part Inventions	5	3	[1924]
Three-part Inventions	6	4	1924
Fantasia in C minor and Chromatic Fantasia	8, 7	7	1926
French Suites, Book I, No. 1-3	281-283	8	1926
French Suites, Book II, No. 4-6	284-286	9	1926
English Suites, Book I, No. 1-3	287-289	10	1926

English Suites, Book I No, 4-5	290-291	11	1926
English Suites, Book III, No. 6	292	12	1926
Italian Concerto	166	166	1927
Piano Concerto in F minor	10	(deest)	1930
Piano Concerto in A minor	11	(deest)	Fall, 1930
Piano Concerto in D Minor	12	(deest)	[1931-2]
Piano Concerto in E Major	23	(deest)	1932

Source: T-A and Dix back-cover catalogues

The sequential numbering of collations, set next to the fact that some the last group of publications bears a series of numbers in a range much lower than those published earlier, suggest that the Ullstein numbering process was somewhat complex. Presumably, Fischer submitted editions of his works to Ullstein grouped together in collations suggested by Bach scholarship at the time—*e.g.*, all the *English Suites* together, all the *French Suites* together, etc. This would explain why the catalog numbers assigned to the individual suites in the collations are in sequence and mostly in an unbroken series. Such an obviously rational process makes speculation about the dating of missing *T-A* volumes possible.<sup>133</sup>

One additional and important conclusion can be drawn from the 1930 *T-A* numbering. According to the 1930 back cover listing of Ullstein's available musical publications, about half of the available numbers in the series are unassigned to any works. If the numbering appears to be chronological, yet the series of numbers has gaps, this suggests that Ullstein's numbering was not chronological with respect to date of publication, but rather that Ullstein assigned numbers as manuscripts were received from their editors, or—less likely—as they were printed, but prior to distribution to music houses. Comparison of Ullstein catalogs printed on the back covers of their editions at

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<sup>133</sup> Exemplars of these volumes are either not extant, or are held only in private collections and are currently unavailable for examination.

various times does suggest that Ullstein printed these numbers next to their corresponding work titles only after the publication in question had been printed or had been distributed to music houses. Fortunately, a set of reprint editions made for publication abroad sheds some additional light on this.

Dix Limited (now a division of Faber, Ltd., London) issued reprints of the Ullstein *T-A* editions, apparently intended for promulgation in the English-speaking world. Fischer's student Konrad Hansen republished them again in the 1950s; Fischer's students report him recommending them in his post-war master-classes in Lucerne. The series adopted the musical text and prefatory materials of the original *T-A*, differentiated only by two folios comprising an English back and front cover and a new title page. The back cover page of these Dix reprints bears a catalog of Fischer's Bach editions, the majority of which never actually appeared as Dix reprints. This notwithstanding, the volumes that Dix planned to release are listed alongside those available at the time of the publication to which it is attached. That the number of titles is as large as it is suggests that the Dix Limited editors were working from a prospectus of *potential* Fischer editions, not that the editions were in hand at the time the catalog was drafted. The Dix Limited editors seem to have been somewhat in the dark regarding the existence of certain volumes of Fischer's Ullstein Bach set. Dix Limited could never have printed all of those listed in their back-cover catalogs; many proposed Fischer/Bach editions never actually appeared under the Ullstein colophon. In the event, the collapse of the Ullstein *T-A* would have forestalled continuation of their reprints, if in fact they actually intended to continue beyond their first few publications.



The Dix numbering reproduces that of the Ullstein edition only in the case of the *Twelve Little and Six Little Preludes* (No. 1 in both editions) and the *Italian Concerto* (No. 166 in both editions). The *versos* of the Dix Limited covers carry a portion of the Ullstein classical-piano catalog up through the latter publisher's own No. 244. In addition, the Dix Limited reprints bear the English indication "Printed in Germany" required for distribution in England and in the United States.

The numbering system in the Dix reprints became oddly irregular after the initial eighteen volumes. The fact that the works in the Dix ordering move fairly consistently from easy to difficult in the Dix ordering suggests that Dix may have replaced the alphabetical ordering of the *T-A* with one based on an unknown piano curriculum. That Fischer's edition of Bach's *Italian Concerto* (Dix No. 166) corresponds with the number of the *T-A* and that the Dix numbers of *The WTC* (Dix Nos. 41, 111, and 167-170) correspond to numbers *missing* in the *T-A* numbering system strongly suggests that Ullstein had assigned these numbers. Ullstein's practice of having published catalog numbers only *after* a work had been released, suggests that these volumes actually *did* appear.

The Dix numbering system appears to be a composite: for the first eighteen volumes, Dix assigned new numbers, in sequence; thereafter, Dix appears to have taken over the old *T-A* system, to which they apparently had access. The works that seem to be the most difficult already bore high numbers in the Ullstein numbering system. Therefore, it appears that Dix took those numbers from Ullstein, instead of cleaving to their own numerical sequence.

The numbering system for the Ullstein printings of Fischer's Bach editions was also composite. Ullstein seems to have adhered to the orderly sequence and series of the *T-A*'s numbering system early on. Later, these numbers became disordered, losing both sequence and series. The three volumes of Fischer's *WTC* edition with the lowest catalog numbers (Dix Nos. 41, 111, and 148) are widely spaced in time, an oddity for Dix. The later three volumes are roughly in series (except for Dix No. 169, which is passed over), according to the house norm evident in the numbering of *T-A* volumes overseen by editors other than Fischer. In addition, the numbers assigned—unlike the orderly, “projected,” Dix numbers—are out of sequence and inconsistent with the internal ordering of the work itself. This is curious; Dix took pains to assign catalog numbers in series and in sequence with all other repertoire issued in multiple volumes. Bearing all this in mind, and despite the lack of a strict chronological ordering, reasonable conjectures can be made about the publication years of the remaining volumes (Table 3).

This leaves a group of planned, but perhaps unpublished, volumes (Table 4).

Table 4: Fischer's *T-A* Bach-Editions, the publication of which cannot be verified

Title	Dix Cat. No. <sup>134</sup>
Partitas, Book I, No. 1-2	13.
Partitas, Book II, No. 3-4	14.
Partitas, Book III, No. 4-6	15.
Toccatas and Fugues, Book, No. 1-2	16.
Toccatas and Fugues, Book II, No. 3-5	17.
Toccatas and Fugues, Book III, No. 6-7	8.
The 48 Preludes and Fugues, Vol. II, Book 1	41.
The 48 Preludes and Fugues, Vol. II, Book 2	111.
The 48 Preludes and Fugues, Vol. I, Book 3	148.
Variations in the Italian style; Fugue on the name Bach; Prelude, Allegro	165.

<sup>134</sup> Because Ullstein apparently published only numbers next to entries that had already been printed and/or distributed, no published Ullstein numbers exist for these volumes, although the sequence of missing catalog numbers suggests that they had been assigned.

and Fugue [ <i>sic</i> ] in E-flat; Capriccio on the Departure of the brothers [ <i>sic</i> ]	
The 48 Preludes and Fugues, Vol. I, Book I	167.
The 48 Preludes and Fugues, Vol. I, Book 2	168.
The 48 Preludes and Fugues, Vol. II, Book 3	170.

*Source:* Dix back-cover catalogues

No *T-A* numbers had been published for any of these volumes as shown in the catalog on the interior back cover of the Piano Concerto in E Major, probably released in 1932. Since Ullstein had not published any of them by 1932, and none of them ever appeared, either in the Dix or Hansen reprints, it seems reasonable that they never were prepared, or that they were in the process of being engraved when the imprint was shut down in 1933. It is strikingly obvious that Dix Limited was never able to offer more than reprints of the 18 Short Preludes (Dix No. 1), the Two-Part Inventions (Dix No. 3), and the Three-Part Inventions (Dix No. 4), as indicated on their cover catalogs by an asterisk. These were the first three volumes published by Ullstein in 1924, the year of Busoni's death. Whether or not that confluence is significant—if, perhaps, Fischer wished to serve Busoni as he had earlier served Schlesinger, *i.e.*, by perpetuating his legacy and carrying out instructions to revise and update his works—is still unclear. Fischer may have begun producing these Bach editions only *after* Busoni's death because they were derivative of Busoni editions.

In the 1950s, Wilhelm Hansen of Copenhagen—an erstwhile student of Fischer's—reprinted many of Fischer's *T-A* Bach editions. Like the Dix editions, these editions appear to have been prepared from slightly modified Ullstein plates or from photostats of *T-A* exemplars. The musical text of the Hansen editions is typographically consistent with the Ullstein exemplars with respect to rastration, noteheads, stems, time signatures, the style of numerals used in the fingerings, the special articulation signs (*i.e.*, vertical hash

marks) that Fischer employed, type size and font of work titles, the type sizes and fonts used for expressive markings and footnotes, and the footnote style, in which the text is offered in three languages (Italic font), from left to right, in German, French, and English, respectively. The only noteworthy difference between the Ullstein style and that of the Hansen editions is that the latter employs a new style for the introductory text (Ullstein offers “*Vorbemerkung/Avant-propos/Introduction*,” in Italic font, whereas Hansen offers “*Vorwort/Préface/Preface*” in Roman font), the size of the musical text (Hansen appears to have photostatically reduced the text to approximately 90% of the original size), the inclusion of copyright indications and ISBN numbers in the Hansen edition, and the substitution of a Hansen catalog number as a footer to each page for *T-A* numbers as footers on each page of the Ullstein exemplars.

The covers of the Hansen edition differ significantly from both the Ullstein and the Dix Limited covers. Unlike Dix, Hansen does not attempt to reproduce the general style of the original *Tonmeister-Ausgabe* covers, nor does Hansen offer a numbered catalog. The languages employed on the covers of the Hansen edition are a curious mix of English and German: the front cover is in English for the indication of instrument; in German for work titles on the front cover and on the title page; English for the imprint title (*i.e.*, “Wilhelm Hansen Edition”) on the title page; and German for the editor’s attribution (*i.e.*, “Herausgegeben von Edwin Fischer”) on the title page.

As noted above, about a third of Fischer’s slated *T-A* Bach-editions never appeared in print. However, some evidence of their planning survives. A draft of Fischer’s preface to the *T-A* of *The Well-Tempered Klavier* survives, although no exemplars of this volume have been found. In fact, fewer than half of the volumes

published by Ullstein Verlag —or reprints thereof—appear to have entered into library catalogs (see Table 5).

Table 5: Surviving Fischer Bach-editions in library catalogues

Title	Edition
Two-Part Inventions	Hansen, 1954
Three-Part Inventions	Ullstein, 1924; Dix, n.d.; Hansen 1955
Italian Concerto	Ullstein, 1927; Hansen, 1954
Little Preludes	Ullstein, 1924; Hansen, 1955
French Suites	Ullstein, 1926; Hansen, 1955
English Suites	Ullstein, 1926; Hansen, 1954
Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue	Ullstein, 1926; Hansen, 1955
Fantasia in C Minor	Ullstein, 1926
Concerto in F Minor	Ullstein, c. 1930; International, 1943; Hansen, 1955
Concerto in A Major	Hansen, 1955
Concerto in E Major	Ullstein, c. 1920[32?]; Hansen, 1955
Concerto in D Minor	Hansen, 1955
Four Keyboard Concerti	Hansen, 1965
Arr. of Six-Part Ricercar	Bote & Bock, 1930

*Source:* WorldCat.org

## Part V: Analytical Objectives

Having laid out some fundamentals of sources, biography, and Fischer’s musical products, I will now specify the ultimate, analytical uses to which I will put them in the remainder of this dissertation. I have a number of goals: they are all necessary and they serve to reinforce one another. My first goal is to represent Fischer’s strong commitment to palpable expressivity. By “expressivity,” I mean rendering Bach at the piano in such a way that musical time, volume of tone, phrasing and articulation, pedaling, and other devices by which pianists inflect and color Bach-performances are perceptibly brought to bear, despite the fact that the surviving primary sources of Bach’s clavier music prescribe no such expressive flexion. My next goal is to demonstrate that Fischer invested a great deal of thought and care in structuring the expressivity of his Bach-pianism.

I can make these first two points quickly by citing a small amount of first-hand evidence. Charlotte Staub, mentioned above, was a sensitive informant on psychological matters relating to Fischer. Her finely drawn recollection of the profound fits of anxiety to which Fischer was prone prior to playing solo piano recitals merits close examination.

He was a sensitive man, given to fluctuating, unpredictable moods. He oftentimes wept like a child in the early evening because he could not bear to see the day slip away and die.

Before every concert, there was a scene, which bordered on hysteria. Elinor [*i.e.*, Eleonora von Mendelssohn, to whom Fischer was then married] and I would sit in the green room watching Edwin pace up and down, working himself into a bundle of nervous tension. He would repeat again and again in the dialect of Basel, “*I’ ka’ net; I’ ka’ net; I’ ka’ net*” [*i.e.*, “*Ich kann nicht.*”]

He would stare at Elinor first and then at me. He would throw his hands in the air and shake his head. Sometimes he would sigh with a whimper, “*I’ ka’ ei’fach net.*” Elinor and I would say anything to help: “They are nothing but cabbage heads in the audience,” or “They all have on red underwear out there,” or, truthfully, “You know how they adore you.”<sup>135</sup>

This might seem like ordinary stage fright, but there is something peculiar about it. Prior to recounting this story, Staub reported that Fischer was very highly regarded as a conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic in the years leading up to 1923, and that he never showed any sign of nervous behavior prior to leading that discerning and, potentially, highly critical group of musicians. Apparently, Fischer was up to that psychological burden but felt that playing a solo piano recital presented a special responsibility for the psychic well being of his audience, a task far more critical than the one that he recognized when standing on the podium.

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<sup>135</sup> Gordon, *Celine Staub Genhart*, 68.

One aspect of this pressure revolved around Fischer's adjusting to changes in the terms of engagement with the audience as they shifted significantly over the 1920s. Staub acknowledges this when pointing to the double-edged nature of Fischer's "flair, which of course resulted in many liberties which seemed right somehow when he took them."<sup>136</sup> However, Staub notes, "later in life he tried to temper the almost improvisatory mood of some of his playing in keeping with prevailing taste."<sup>137</sup> Thus, Staub notes a watershed in the 1920s, when Fischer's manner of performance—reflecting a larger shift exemplified by "prevailing taste," shifted slightly away from liveliness and spontaneity of the "improvisatory mood" that Fischer had cultivated.

What was in the air at the time that would have required that musical interpretation become more comprehensibly organized? One hint comes from the increasing frequency with which Fischer refers to the importance of logic—sometimes he refers to this as *logos*—as a fundamental element of musical interpretation in the 1920s and 30s. The following Fischer diary entry provides more insight. Here, Fischer is describing one of his earliest collaborations with his closest musical collaborators, Wilhelm Furtwängler.

His insistence that all tempi be logically justified in relation to those coming just before and just after. It should always be "liquid music," like a broad current of liquid gold, not taking on an arbitrarily shaped ebb and flow, or randomly chosen "rigid detail," but rather "music," *i.e.*, feeling made perceptible as matter that necessarily flows into this or that particular shape.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Gordon, *Celine Staub Genhart*, 69.

<sup>137</sup> Op cit.

<sup>138</sup> "Furtwängler Probe Beethoven g Dur für Opernhauskonzert. Seine Forderung alle Tempi durch vor- und nachherige tempi logisch zu begründen. Es sei stets 'flüssige Musik,' wie ein breiter Strohfließen, heißen Goldes, nicht jede zufällige

Here, Fischer praises Furtwängler for creating a link between the flux of a given, dynamic element of musical expressivity—in this case, change of tempo—and the logical relationships between sections in a musical form. Music is “liquid,” and flowing, it is dynamic and malleable; therefore, it cannot adequately be mirrored in an interpretation dominated static decisions, *e.g.*, the “rigid detail” of a single tempo for an entire movement. Fischer admires the absence of rigid detail, that is, shunning the application of a single, uniform approach in Furtwängler’s approach. Perhaps even more importantly, Fischer identifies musical “feeling” with the perception of *necessity* and of *inevitability* in the musical work and its concomitant amplification by the interpreter, who translates the work’s internal dynamics to set of parallel, expressive inflections.

Fischer’s entry is as important for what it does *not* imply as for what it does. He does not say that there is one, ideal tempo for any given section, nor does he say that one finds a series of ideal tempi and simply counts on them to manifest logical continuity. What he *does* say is that a series of subtle tempo shifts forms a *whole*; *i.e.*, a cohesive, logical, and dynamic entity.

Fischer’s emphasis on wholeness, on unity, on clarity, and on consistency within the fluctuations that take place within dynamic systems is consistent with ideas of the Gestalt Theorists as they emerged in the 1920s and 30s. The signal, positive value of Gestalt Theory is *Prägnanz*, *i.e.*, the property of forms that are cogent, immediately perceptible, and clearly coherent and correct. A side effect of such logical, formal coherence is that a form imbued with *Prägnanz* is greater than, rather than merely equal

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Wellenbildung also „erstarrtes Detail“ nehmen, sondern „Musik“ sichtbar gewordenes Gefühl, Materie, die strömt und diese oder jene Form annimmt. Edwin Fischer, diary entry of December 7, 1920. *Edwin Fischer Nachlass*, Zentralbibliothek Luzern.



to, the sum of its parts. In the case of musical performances imbued with *Prägnanz*, the listener does not simply perceive that the performance manifests several good decisions, but instead loses track of the individual successful decisions and is struck by a unified perception of *dynamic integration* of elements in a perceptible, clear, interpretive point of view.

Dynamics, by definition, involve fluctuations in intensity that, *abstractly* considered, represent *change*. However, in *perceptual* terms, such fluctuations in intensity are sensed as *movement with direction*. If dynamic fluctuations are obscure, it is either because they are insufficiently dynamic—that is, it is almost too faint to be perceived or, to come closer to Fischerian territory, because they are egregiously ornate. This sense of “egregious ornament” is functionally the antithesis of the concept of *Prägnanz*, which is founded on clear perceptibility and clarity of gesture and shape. *Prägnanz* requires logical consistency and cogency, as well. Logical consistency pertains to internal coherence of a dynamic movement, which should not deviate from its course without purpose—and cogency pertains to the utility of the dynamic movement to the aesthetic object that it adorns. They are mutually entailed: that is, if a dynamic motion is to be perceived as coherent, it must not deviate from its course willy-nilly; on the other hand, if the internal dynamics of it maintains logical coherence and moves towards increased *Prägnanz*; and if it does respond to motivations immanent to the object that it adorns, then it moves towards the other element of *Prägnanz*, which is cogency.

I turn to Staub, again, to illustrate this. She recalled witnessing one of Fischer’s lessons with an unnamed American student. In it, Fischer repeatedly played the opening of the Beethoven Piano Concerto in C Major, repeatedly demonstrating desired subtleties,

and occasionally offering verbal instructions such as “play to the harmony.” Staub reports that, after Fischer had spent quite a long time teaching the student in this manner, with scant improvement, the student “burst into tears and fled the room.” Staub’s subsequent, exceptional career as a pedagogue allowed her, in 1965, to put the matter in fine perspective.

The girl was unable to perceive in terms of physical values the difference, which she undoubtedly heard and recognized. As a result, she was unable to produce the effect she wanted. Fischer was unable to help her, because he had never abstracted as principles the concepts which he used almost subconsciously to achieve the beauty which was so apparent in his playing. When occasionally he did cite a principle, such as his comment to the girl to “play to the harmony,” he did not explain the principle or was not able to analyze it carefully enough at a lesson in the context of the passage under discussion.<sup>139</sup>

On its face, this hardly seems like an appreciation. However, Staub points in the direction of an apparent difficulty that is actually a strength: *i.e.*, that his interpretation was so oriented towards the formation of any number of *Gestalten*, that no single demonstration would do. To teach a student to form a *Gestalt*, one must first demonstrate one. Nevertheless, if one stops there, the student will merely feel that she is being shown the *unique solution* when she urgently needs to learn that *Gestalten* are manifold, almost innumerable. Then, the teacher needs to demonstrate another well-formed *Gestalt*, and another, and another. Just as one cannot teach, say, verb declension merely by showing the relation of the first-person-singular pronoun to its predicate, one cannot teach anything significant about *Gestalt*-expressivity by offering up for display a unique *Gestalt*.

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<sup>139</sup> Gordon, *Celine Staub Genhart*, 67-8.

In illustrating multiple *Gestalten*, the teacher has to depend on the perceptual acuity, perspicacity, memory, and capacity for organizing and manipulating complex systems in which a change of dynamic in any area will elicit restructuring of proportions and functions between all other elements. Just as the reader will immediately grasp my last sentence or will stumble over it for lack of prior experience with the phenomenon, so will the student either succeed or fail at keen perception and complex manipulation and organization. One can teach an aspiring juggler some rudimentary principles and steps, but, in the end, either the neophyte's intuitive capacities will throw the switch and juggling will commence...or it never will.

There is just one more fundamental area of inquiry in this dissertation left to raise, and that is the dialectical arrangements that Fischer evolved in order to avoid prior histories in which less creative thinkers simply oscillated between extreme hermeneutic positions, failing to resolve these positions into a stable, subtle dynamic. In each of the next three chapters, I deal with Fischer's facing unacceptable, simplistic choices and rejecting either pole. This is not because Fischer was indecisive or cowardly about taking stands. Instead, Fischer, in each case, seems to have turned a veritable blast furnace of creativity to the task of fusing disparate poles together, welding them together to form a mutually profitable, virtually unbreakable bond.

In the coming chapter, I will show that changing times presented Fischer with the choice of moving along with the progressive de-spiritualization of all experience or to cling fast to old forms of higher-order thinking, feeling, and expression. Fischer chose neither, preferring to insist that conceptual, perceptual, and expressive reductivism

proffered by a retreat into positivism and materialism must be resisted, but that maintaining intensity on all three fronts would require re-tooling. Fischer's sophisticated understanding of the potential of particular artworks to effect cultural healing—if engaged under the terms of *Kunstreligion* provided a middle path that avoided the pitfalls of both extremes.<sup>140</sup> Fischer avoided the spiritual void of positivism/materialism as well as antiquated spiritual solutions that were no longer perceived to be effective. At the same time, he managed to do so while conjoining their potential advantages, recasting Bach-performance in modern terms—that is, using the piano of his day along with all of the effects that it offered—while at the same time crafting an approach that eschewed drawing attention to the interpretation and that thereby kept listeners focused on the sacred text.

The next chapter makes the case that Fischer did not have to *invent* a means by which to discover approaches to old spiritual writings—by which one may understand the Torah, the Christian Bible, or the works of J.S. Bach, depending on that to which one is spiritual sensitized—appropriate to his time and context. Instead, I propose that Fischer needed merely to *adopt* a dialectical standpoint established earlier by members of his own extended family: *i.e.*, that of Schweitzer, Bertholet, and the Mendelssohns. Schweitzer and Bertholet made fundamental concepts of Jewish exegesis—which, in the end, is simply a more elaborate form of Lutheran exegesis—known to Fischer at a very early age. By the time he married into the Mendelssohn family, he had spent many years

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<sup>140</sup> The use of artistic, symbolic objects as totems central to the performance of healing rituals is generally known as *the apotropaic use of art*. Some artworks, thus, can be thought of as imbued with the potential to release apotropaic effects when the art work is presented within the confines of ritual. This topic will arise again in Chapter Two in connection with Max Weber, Jacques Combarieu, and the *Bach-Kult*.

surrounded by Jewish interpreters at the Stern Conservatory, at the Mendelssohn soirees, and in such intellectual circles as the *Berliner Gesellschaft der Freunde* that his patron Franz von Mendelssohn helped to govern. His apprenticeship in the Mendelssohn Dialectic, as I style it, would blossom when two other Jewish connections from the Mendelssohn family, to the Ullstein and Springer publishing dynasties, would envelop him in Jewish ideas and practices not far removed from those of Moses and Felix Mendelssohn.

Chapter Four deals with a dialectic related to that of Chapter Two, but from the opposite perspective: whereas, in Chapter Two, I look at Fischer's solution to the problems created when humans project simplistic, mechanistic notions onto society, in Chapter Four my focus is on the extent to which machines in human society inspired a trend in musical interpretation fostered by a widespread desire for the "objectivity" characteristic of simple mechanical systems, as opposed to the almost inscrutable complexity of human social systems. In perhaps his greatest *coup de théâtre*, Fischer demolished the notion that objectivity exists, showing that it is purely illusory, while at the same time offering a means of subjectively interpreting Bach that is so closely tied to amplifying the underlying dynamics of Bach's pieces that it fulfills every objective desire—*i.e.*, for communion between aesthetic object and its rendering, and for fulfilling a perceived ethical responsibility to avoid obscuring the work's intrinsic structures and dynamics—while simultaneously maintaining individuality and spontaneity. He offers that not only is the world richer for such individualism but that cyclical works such as the *WTC* gain in variety and expressive breadth if they "grow" "organically" in "humus," to mimic Fischer's Vitalist diction.

Only after having established these three dialectical approaches will it be reasonable for me to approach analyzing his recorded interpretation of *WTC I* and *II*. Fischer's viewpoints emerge only in the total context of knowing the meaning of the shorthand language of his day, the issues that were then most pertinent, and the entire social context in which Fischer was immersed. Outside of such a "thick reading," his observations appear hackneyed and trite. Surely, the assumption that Niemann, Robertson, and others cited above, assigned Fischer importance in error is a mistaken one. Fischer was most certainly a major figure: as Staub reports, "Edwin Fischer's name was such an impressive one that even as a conductor he could sell out a hall."<sup>141</sup>

In the case of Fischer and Bach, in general, the problem lies not with the subject under observation but, instead, resides in the misunderstandings resulting from changing context that surround them. In this dissertation, I do what I can to restore that context so that the reader can engage in his or her personal, integral interpretation of Fischer's Bach-pianism.

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid, 81.

## Chapter Two – *Entseelung*: Pseudo-Religious Responses to Germany's Perceived Spiritual Decadence

This chapter is about Germans' collective perception of their country's spiritual decay and the means by which Fischer and those in his immediate circles responded to it. In this matter, it makes sense to focus on Fischer's lifelong Hermann Hesse—whom he may have met as early as 1899, and which whom he was certainly associated from 1911 onward—and Thomas Mann, another friend and occasional collaborator of Fischer's.

The three make an interesting trio, having maintained the same resolutely apolitical stance, all certain that they could summon society's better angels by continuing to practice their art in spite of the chaos around them, all of them resolutely opposed to Hitler, although characteristically less defiant of the Nazis than merely uncooperative. Hesse and Fischer were both so politically detached that neither overtly denounced Hitler; and Mann's outright denunciation came relatively late, when he was safely out of Germany. However, Hesse helped Mann — as well as Berthold Brecht — to flee Nazi Germany. Moreover, Fischer saved a number of Jewish musicians, at least one of whom he hid from the Nazis in his home.

All of these men shared conservative leanings, were repulsed by negative effects that they felt to be emanating from new technology, and perceived German culture to be threatened with spiritual depletion, characteristics often in evidence in Fischer's prose publications. He and Hesse shared a strong attraction to religion: although both were raised as Lutherans, both of them became followers of Rudolf Steiner's branch of Theosophy, and — perhaps partly as a consequence — both were more interested in religious feeling as expressed through art through doing good works than they were in promoting a particular affiliation or religious confession. Hesse's third wife was Jewish,

as was Fischer's wife, and Hesse was strongly attracted to Indian and Buddhist religious practices. Despite their conservative leanings, only Mann was ever overtly associated with the Germany's *Konservative Revolution*, and he moved away from the movement in the late 1920s, as their *völkish* interests turned strongly to the right and towards National Socialism. The brand of conservatism espoused by Fischer, Mann, and Hesse was altogether different, being primarily a late resurgence of German Idealism. To the rootlessness caused by the Industrial Revolution, consequent, mass relocation to large cities, and *Entseelung des Mensch* (i.e., humanity's "de-souling"), they opposed the stability of German *Kultur*, inculcated in the nation's collective consciousness via *Bildung*, i.e., the particular sense of enculturation that Germans—then and now—identify with lifelong acquisition of culture as it is embodied in the arts and humanities.

Here it is useful to distinguish between two related movements in late-Wilhelmine culture, both of them reactions to the same cultural malaise that swept over Germany in the 1880s and thereafter. Members of the German social movement known as the *Konservative Revolution* searched for solutions to social problems perceived to be eroding the spiritual and cultural fabric of the German Empire and the Weimar Republic. Their aims and means somewhat overlapped with those of the movement known as *Lebensphilosophie*—which I will take up in Chapter Four. Both movements attributed Germany's perceived cultural decline to a tumult of industrialization, social dislocation, and the decadence and decline of German pedagogy and intellectual training. Hence, some of the same points of view appear in both groups.

However, there were distinguishing features, as well. Whereas the primary concern of *Lebensphilosophie* was the reduction of human life to a subsidiary function



within the mechanized world, the *Konservative Revolution* was less concerned with objectivism than with the perceived damage done to *Kultur* by erosion of *Bildung*, and the decline of German Idealism. Their principal objects were not science and epistemology, as was the case in spheres of *Lebensphilosophie*. Instead, the *Konservative Revolution* generally located this malaise—called *neurasthenia*, in the parlance of the day—within “decadent” German culture and owing to the faulty values promoted by Fordism, Taylorism, and urbanization.

As part of the Warburg circle, Fischer was privy to the cultural studies movement heralded by Jacob Burckhardt and Karl Lamprecht, who combined historical studies with analyses of art, culture, and society. Ernst Cassirer and Erwin Panofsky were two of the other brightest lights of this intellectual movement. Overlapping with this group, Fischer was surrounded by a group of phenomenologists grouped around the Phenomenological Psychiatrist Ludwig Binswanger at Kreuzlingen (Hesse lived just twenty-odd minutes away in Gaienhofen, and both cities are just two hours from Basel, where Fischer maintained strong ties). The luminaries from the performing arts (Furtwängler, Nijinsky, etc.) in Binswanger’s circle are generally more celebrated than the philosophers. However, Fischer’s prose publications reflect the philosophers in this group surprisingly often, displaying a degree of philosophical acumen that one might easily miss; Fischer carried himself unpretentiously, pretending to be more of a dreamy Romantic than he actually was.

In Basel and in the Warburg circle, Fischer was ensconced in a group of neo-Kantians. However, he seems to have absorbed much more philosophical knowledge from the group of Phenomenologists whose ideas Binswanger recast in his therapeutic

method: among them, Edmund Husserl, Max Scheler, and Martin Heidegger. Of the three, it may be of note that Fischer's writing least often reflected the ideas and prose of Heidegger, the only National Socialist in the group.

### German Cultural Malaise and Perceptions of Decadence

Almost immediately after victory in the Franco-Prussian war and the founding of Imperial Germany, a widespread cultural malaise set in across virtually all sectors of society. This led to conflicts in cultural, aesthetic, social, and scientific realms. Perceptions of the rootlessness and decadence of German culture and society in the *fin de siècle*, of the debilitating effects of commodification upon artistic production and reception, and of social and psychological ills seeming to arise from urbanization further contributed to the perception of decadence and instability. This tumult led to impassioned pleas for a return to spirituality via relatively exotic forms of spiritual renewal; these ranged from Anthroposophy to German Pantheism, a context in which proposals by members of the *Bach-Kult* regarding the apotropaic potential of Bach's music to effect socio-cultural healing cease to seem speculative or even unusual.

There is no need to dwell on the long list of rather undistinguished writers who achieved sudden fame by capitalizing on this malaise. For his elegant summation, I turn to Ernst Kurth's biographer, Lee Rothfarb, who provides an admirable précis of social pressures on "...the generation [*i.e.*, the generation of Kurth and Fischer] that witnessed the outcome of the German and Austrian industrial booms of the 1870s and 1880s, which brought rapid economic and urban growth, as well as the outcome of advances in science and technology.

Progress in natural science, for example, allowed a fuller understanding of phenomena that had previously been explained only fragmentarily. In physiological science, lines of inquiry reaching from Johannes Müller through Ernst H. Weber, Gustav T. Fechner up to Hermann von Helmholtz inspired confidence in the ability of science to explain complex biological processes. Mental science, too, advanced with the pioneering research of Wilhelm Wundt, who in founding the first laboratory for experimental psychology in 1879 removed the science of the mind from philosophical speculation and physiological research. With German science leading the way, Positivist doctrine in the last half of the nineteenth century supplanted Idealist doctrine of the first half.<sup>142</sup>

Germans around 1900 believed their country to be rife with criminality. This is probably a false perception since neither visiting foreigners nor contemporary studies of the exhaustively detailed crime records that German officials compiled in this period corroborate the purely anecdotal general sense of general decay to which Germans of the period persistently alluded.<sup>143</sup> Although the crime rate did spike somewhat in Germany just before 1900, it appears that the intensity of *reporting* on crime—which rose radically out of proportion to actual crime—played the most significant role in fostering Germans’ pessimistic estimates.<sup>144</sup>

The emergence of German criminology in the 1890s coincided with the rise of new (and often fanciful) psychoanalytic taxonomies, resulting in the naming of new maladies conjoining criminality and mental illness, or “degeneracy” in the parlance of the

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<sup>142</sup> Lee Rothfarb, “Introduction,” *Ernst Kurth: Selected Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 6.

<sup>143</sup> Eric A. Johnson, *Urbanization and Crime: Germany, 1871-1914* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995). Johnson’s study is also useful for its systematic demonstration of the failure of every one of this period’s general theories of criminality to model available data accurately. By contrast, Johnson offers no general theory; instead, he provides a detailed case study accompanied only by highly particular special theories.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid. 75-88. Johnson writes of “distinct changes in the way in which crime was reported in the liberal papers,” specifically its rising prominence and sensationalist tone. “By 1900 almost all liberal papers carried regular and separate ‘court news’ columns” that “frequently used liberal measures of bold print and stirring captions.” These were longer than earlier report and often “lurid”—as Johnson characterizes them—in nature.

day.<sup>145</sup> In 1893, Julius Koch assigned to them the neologism *psychopathische Minderwertige* (i.e., “psychopathic defectives”).<sup>146</sup> Starting in the early 1880s, as Richard Wetzell observes, “some German psychiatrists and prison doctors turned to the concepts of degeneration and *Minderwertigkeit* to explain the statistical correlation between crime and insanity...arguing that both [crime and insanity]...had their common breeding ground in [cultural] degeneration.”<sup>147</sup> German pessimism was not limited to hysteria over the criminal or the *Minderwertige*. It linked anti-social behavior to innate physical defects that pseudo-scientists of psycho-physiognomy declared to arise from exposure to degenerate art.

In 1887, Max Nordau (1849-1923) published a treatise on social illness entitled *Die Krankheit des Jahrhunderts* (*Our Century's Sickness*).<sup>148</sup> By 1892, he further developed the notion of social decline in the wildly popular screed entitled *Entartung* (*Degeneration*). *Entartung* proposed a total reversal of causality in the “art imitates nature” dictum: in Nordau’s view, art’s move away from tradition expressed its intrinsic immorality. William James lampooned Nordau’s work caustically.<sup>149</sup> Sigmund Freud also expressed great antipathy for Nordau’s metaphysics of the psyche.<sup>150</sup> Despite the

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<sup>145</sup> Richard F. Wetzell, *Inventing the Criminal: A History of German Criminology, 1880-1945* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 48.

<sup>146</sup> Julius Koch, *Die psychopathischen Minderwertigkeiten* (Ravensburg: Otto Maier Verlag, 1891-93), cited in Wetzell, *Inventing the Criminal*, 48.

<sup>147</sup> Wetzell, *Inventing the Criminal*, 49.

<sup>148</sup> Max Nordau, *Die Krankheit des Jahrhunderts*, 1887.

<sup>149</sup> William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (London: Longmans, Green, & Co, 1902).

<sup>150</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 1962). Originally published as *Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie* (Leipzig: Deuticke Verlag, 1905).

criticisms, Nordau's ideas resonated strongly with a society struggling to come to grips with its feelings of dislocation.

Another passage from Rothfarb's précis is relevant here:

Of the authors who wrote about *fin-de-siècle* cultural decadence, and of cultural renewal through a return to subjective knowledge, none was as fiery and fashion-able—nor any as erratic—as Julius Langbehn (1851-1907). An eccentric of checkered education, Langbehn anonymously published *Rembrandt als Erzieher. Von einem Deutschen* (1890), a "rhapsody of irrationality," which denounced "the whole intellectualistic and scientific bent of German culture, the extinction of art and individuality." The book was an instant and overwhelming success. In two years, it went through forty printings.<sup>151</sup>

Fischer and Mann shared a strong orientation towards conservatism as embodied by their aristocratic patrons. Hesse also played a substantial role building the *Konservative Revolution*, which was founded upon on fundamental ideas of Nietzsche. In the late 1920s, many members of the *Konservative Revolution*, as well as the related *Jugendbewegung* movement, were drawn towards National Socialism. Around that time, Mann—who was unsympathetic to National Socialism—ended his association with the *Konservative Revolution*. However, prior to that split, Mann took part in a 1922 celebration of Nietzsche in recognition of the sixtieth birthday of Gerhard Hauptmann. Held in a major concert hall—Berlin's *Beethoven-Saal*—the Hauptmann celebration provided Mann with the opportunity to unveil his essay "The German Republic." In that essay, Mann modified his prior, Nietzschean stance regarding the segregation of culture from politics, and enthusiastically embraced the idea of a Western-style German democracy devoted to their union.

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<sup>151</sup> Rothfarb, *Ernst Kurth*, 8-9.

In 1924, Mann and Fischer collaborated in the posthumous celebration of Nietzsche's eightieth birthday organized by the *Nietzsche-Gesellschaft* at Munich's Odeon Theater.<sup>152</sup> In his remarks, Mann celebrated Nietzsche's capacity for "overcoming the ego" (*Selbstüberwindung*), an allusion to the philosopher's use of the same term in his commentary on Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*. Mann offered that his intent was less to eulogize Nietzsche than merely to introduce a recital in which Fischer would perform works by Beethoven, Handel and Chopin, and to enjoying it alongside Nietzsche's ghost.<sup>153</sup> "We would do well to celebrate his memory with music, with the most elevated of music, performed by a master interpreter on the instrument on which we know Nietzsche to have been a master improviser. I am pleased [now] to fall silent in order to listen alongside you, and thereby to ponder him listening along with us."<sup>154</sup>

### Pseudo-Religious Responses

In order to understand relations between the world of musical performance and the *Konservative Revolution*, one has to appreciate the keen sense of *Entseelung* that drew them together. Included in this understanding is the phenomenon known as

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<sup>152</sup> The birthday in question took place on October 15, 1924, although the celebration was held on November 4<sup>th</sup> of that year).

<sup>153</sup> An unspecified player, possibly even Fischer, also performed a Bach Chorale-prelude.

<sup>154</sup> "Wie täten wir nicht gut, sein Andenken zu feiern mit Musik! Mit höchster Musik, heraufgeführt von dem geistigsten Meister des Instruments, auf dem auch Nietzsche, wie uns versichert wird, ein improvisatorischer Meister war. Ich bin froh, verstummen zu können, um mit Ihnen zu lauschen, – und dabei zu denken, er lauschte mit uns." *Ariadne, Jahrbuch der Nietzsche-Gesellschaft*, edited by E. Bertram, Hugo v. Hofmannsthal, Th. Mann, R. Oehler, et alia, (Munich: Verleger der Nietzsche-Gesellschaft, 1925), viewed at <http://74.125.47.132/search?q=cache:Y5yUoCaH3fIJ:www.virtusens.de/walther/mann.htm+nietzsche+Bach+selbstüberwindung&cd=9&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us> (accessed August 1, 2009).

*Kunstreligion*, in which religious sentiment and German *Kultur*—including, of course, German music and its performance—came to be deeply intertwined

### ***Entseelung***

Significant re-thinking of artistic expression emerged from diverse quarters of Germany in the early twentieth century. The Phenomenology of Husserl and Max Scheler addressed, among other issues, the problem of *Entseelung*, or destruction of the spiritual.

But not until the de-consecration, de-spiritualization, and devaluation of nature and the world caused by the extremely dualistic thinking of modern times, with which the Protestant attitude rent God from the world and the soul from the body, could nature be seen as inert material that one works and shapes in order to build houses for people.<sup>155</sup>

The Danish scholar Dan Zahavi describes Scheler in a passage that, with very slight modification, also describes Husserl's theory of empathy well.

Indeed, on Scheler's account, our primary knowledge of nature is knowledge of expressive phenomena, and the most fundamental form of perception is the perception of the psychophysically undifferentiated expression. He finds this claim corroborated by newborns' preferential interest in expressive faces and human voices. This knowledge of a living world is taken to precede our knowledge of a dead and mechanical world. Therefore, for Scheler, it is not the case that we first see inanimate objects and then animate them through a subsequent addition of mental components. Rather, at first, we see everything as expressive, and we then go through a process of de-animation. Learning is, as he puts it, a question of "de-souling" (*Entseelung*) rather than of "en-souling" (*Beseelung*). Scheler even postulates the existence of what he calls a universal grammar of expression, one that enables us to understand, to some extent at least,

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<sup>155</sup> "Aber erst die Entgottung, Entseelung und Entwertung der Natur und Welt, welche der hyper-dualistische Geist der Neuzeit Gott und Welt, — Seele und Körper auseinander reißende, protestantische Geist der Neuzeit bewirkte, konnte die Natur als die träge Massenhaftigkeit sehen, die man durch formende Arbeit erst zu einem Wohngebäude für Menschen einzurichten habe." Max Scheler, *Vom Umsturz der Werte*, vol. 2 (Leipzig: Neue Geist Verlag, 1919), 267.

the expressions of other species, be it the gasping fish or the bird with the broken wing.<sup>156</sup>

Thus, objectivity and positivism—along with the threat of *Mechanismus* that emerged from new technology, and which I will take up in Chapter Four, were seen to be among the principle causes of an ongoing, entrenched *Entseelung des Menschen* (i.e., the “destruction of the human soul”). On this, Rothfarb’s synopsis of social and intellectual shifts of Kurth and Fischer’s time is excellent and worth quoting at length.

By the late 1880s, the consequences of the preceding generation's achievements became clear to both its contributors and skeptical observers. In exchange for modern society, industrialization had brought a loss of community, individuality, and spiritual fulfillment. Externally, there was political unity. Internally, however, there was no sense of cultural unity. Although science could boast impressive accomplishments, even Wundt's experimental psychology was far from explaining the workings of the creative, artistic mind. Educational institutions, in their zeal to transmit facts, had failed to transmit both the cultural legacy that animates those facts, as well as the cultural awareness that appreciates them. Mass education had cheapened the goals of wisdom (*Wissen*) and learning for its own sake to the level of either knowledge (*Kenntnis*), necessary for a nation's bureaucracy and academies, or of specialized technical skills (*Können*), required for industry. Civilization flourished while culture foundered.<sup>157</sup>

### ***Kunstreligion***

The social construction known as *Kunstreligion* played a significant role by establishing a clear path through which religious behaviors were transferred to the arts. Nicole Heinkel finds *Kunstreligion* to be an actual “*Ersatzreligion*,” i.e., a substitute for organized religion, capable of reviving ancient practices associated with cult worship,

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<sup>156</sup> Dan Zahavi, *Self and Other: Exploring Subjectivity, Empathy, and Shame* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 122-3. See also Max Scheler, *Wesen und Formen der Sympathie* (Bonn: Friedrich Cohen Verlag, 1923), originally published under the title *Zur Phänomenologie und Theorie der Sympathiegefühle* (Halle: Niemeyer Verlag, 1913).

<sup>157</sup> Rothfarb, *Ernst Kurth*, 6.



totems, and icons.<sup>158</sup> Germans of the Second Reich retained habits of traditional religious practice but transposed them to a secular environment; Heinkel observes that “overcoming secularization” arose as a response to “longing and striving for lost religious practice.”<sup>159</sup> Mircea Eliade uses similar terms, noting that, “profane man cannot help preserving some vestiges of the behavior of religious man, though they are emptied of religious meaning. Do what he will, he is an inheritor.”<sup>160</sup> Moreover, “to whatever degree he may have desacralized the world, the man who has made his choice in favor of a profane life never succeeds in completely doing away with religious behavior.”<sup>161</sup> Eliade also confirms the sense of longing that Heinkel observed. Secular man has “desacralized the world in which his ancestors lived,” but religious behavior “is still emotionally present to him, in one form or another, ready to be re-actualized in his deepest being.”<sup>162</sup>

Adherents to *Kunstreligion* grew steadily in number from the late eighteenth century into the twentieth. In 1800, Johann Friedrich Rochlitz (1769-1842) declared the immortality of some works and promoted veneration of the memory of their composers as an element of their effective perpetuation. This represents the beginning of a strain of concern for proper execution of musical objects new to German musical culture at that time; indeed, it seems to situate one line of thought leading to the historical performance practice movement. The essential element of such enactments— without which the

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<sup>158</sup> Nicole Heinkel, *Religiöse Kunst, Kunstreligion und die Überwindung der Säkularisierung Frühromantik als Sehnsucht und Suche nach der verlorenen Religion* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Verlag, 2004).

<sup>159</sup> Nicole Heinkel, “Religiöse Kunst,”

<sup>160</sup> Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion*, translated by Willard R. Trask (San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1957), 204

<sup>161</sup> Eliade, *Sacred and Profane*, 23

<sup>162</sup> Eliade, 204

enactment is regarded as ineffectual—is “correct performance,” *i.e.*, performative acts that, when done in correct style and sequence, summon ancestor-deities.

In his 1814 “*Alte und Neue Kirchenmusik*,” E.T.A. Hoffman (1776-1822) observes that music is essentially, indeed *exclusively*, a form of ritual:

Nowadays we can speak of music—in its deepest and most characteristic sense, *i.e.*, as coming alive through religious ritual—as church music; for the words are no longer ignored as they used to be, when bitter resentment reduced even the noble and high-minded to deadened, catatonic indifference... As I’ve just said, music is religious cult by virtue of its deepest, innermost character; and it stems solely [!] from religion and the church. Coming to life with increasing richness and potency, it poured out its inexhaustible treasures over man. It was even able, with child-like delight, polishing the profane to a shine, and using its glamor to spread radiance over life, shining into every last one of the earth’s minuscule and small-minded interactions...<sup>163</sup>

The translation that I offer above differs from David Charlton’s on two matters: translation of the phrase “*ins Leben treten*,” and of the word “*Cultus*.” The frequency with which Hoffmann uses the term *Cultus* is striking. It appears eight times in the segment of his article that appeared on August 31, 1814, and fourteen times in the second installment, of September 7. In the segment of August 31, the word appears repeatedly in conjunction with the phrase, “*in das Leben treten*.”

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<sup>163</sup> “Jetzt darf von der Musik, in der tiefsten Bedeutung ihres eigentümlichsten Wesens, nämlich wenn sie als religiöser Cultus in das Leben tritt -- von der Kirchenmusik, geredet werden: denn nicht mehr verklingen die Worte unbeachtet, wie sonst, wo selbst die besser und hoher Gestimmten der bittere Unmuth zur regungslosen Gleichgültigkeit abstumpfte... Ihrem Inneren, eigenthümlichen Wesen nach, ist daher die Musik, wie eben erst gesagt wurde, religiöser Cultus, und ihr Ursprung einzig und allein in der Religion, in der Kirche, zu suchen und zu finden. Immer reicher und mächtiger ins Leben tretend schüttete sie ihre unerschöpflichen Schätze aus über die Menschen, und auch das Profane durfte sich dann, wie mit kindischer Lust, in dem Glanz putzen, mit dem sie nun das Leben selbst, in all seinen kleinen und kleinlichen, irdischen Beziehungen durchstrahlte...” E.T.A. Hoffmann, “Alte und neue Kirchenmusik,” *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* 35, (1814).

Charlton translates *Cultus* as “worship.” However, this passes over the two more common meanings—“cult,” and “ritual”—thereby negating any sense of the super-rationality, and indeed primitiveness, conveyed by these words.<sup>164</sup> Hoffmann’s having avoided a readily available German alternative to *Cultus*—i.e., *Gottesdienst*—somewhat contradicts Charlton’s translation, and suggests that Hoffmann consciously sought to convey a sense more primitive than that typical of contemporary church services. I find Charlton’s translation of the German idiom “*ins Leben treten*” into rather clunky English—as “to step into life”—to miss the point; the German original maps directly onto the readily available, idiomatic English expression “to *come* to life” (alternatively rendered, in the passive voice, as “to be *brought* to life”).

Although there is nothing particularly wrong about Charlton’s translation of “*ihr Ursprung einzig und allein in der Religion*,” it fails to emphasize the radicalism of Hoffmann’s observation that ritual is ultimately the *fons et origo* of all human musical expression. Equally striking is Hoffman’s claim that music alone has the power to bring ritual worship—previously so deadened by reduction to mere phonemes that it inspired “bitter resentment” and “catatonic indifference”—“back to life.” Together, the mutual enchainment of music and ritual testify to a train of thought running deep in German Idealism and musical culture: i.e., that the distinguishing characteristic of great music—

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<sup>164</sup> Most English-language writers consistently render *Cultus* as “worship,” without any commentary on the secondary and tertiary meanings that echo through it. Although it is true that, after the Reformation, the word was used somewhat interchangeably with the word *Gottesdienst*, Germans of the nineteenth century—most especially the German Idealists—deployed *Cultus* when they wished to refer obliquely to “the culture of worship,” or “the practice of worship,” or to access a strong secondary association of “worship” with “cult.” By the time the cult idea became associated with Bach, in the early-twentieth century, observers employed the balder form “*Kult*” (in the modernized spelling).

as opposed to that which is merely ingeniously wrought—is its inspiration of religious feeling; and that deep ritual experience, extinguished by the deadening effects of contemporary church worship, can be found, alive and healthy, residing in great art music.

### **Immanence**

German Idealists proclaimed *Kunstreligion* to represent the extension of a larger reform, sometimes called German Neo-paganism or Pantheism. These monikers are misleading for suggesting a return to the pre-Christian Paganism of “a fairy in every tree.” The movement that arose in Germany in the late-eighteenth century, and of which *Kunstreligion* is an extension, framed the laws of nature and of art as expressions of God’s immanence in the world. Lessing (some would say Spinoza, but this is no place to rehash that controversy) was the German source of this revival of interest in an immanent-but-impersonal God. Lessing appears not to have foreseen the determinism lurking behind God’s immanence in everything worldly, nor did Goethe, whose *Prometheus* set man in opposition to God. (Spinoza’s closely related position was that the world is merely a part of the Body of God, having no free will.)

Heine and Herder avoided a problem of Lessing and Spinoza’s positions by asserting that God was immanent in the forces and processes of nature and art, but detached from the earthly realm insofar as He did not intervene directly in earthly matters. They offered that a World Soul provides humanity with a common ground of understanding.

Fischer’s view of musical performance suggests that he believed that, despite divinely endowed rationality, human error may obscure human understanding of immanent truths embedded in revered texts, *i.e.*, that being endowed with rationality does

not assure success. Our contemplation of divine writings and our translating them into acts in the world depends upon the manner in which we engage them. Thus, the methods that we employ in contemplating and living out the immanent divinity contained in sacred texts must be carefully chosen for their concordance with the texts themselves. The immanent divinity of sacred texts can be obscured by the ego or revealed by use of appropriate exegetical methods. Moreover, one's conduct directly shapes one's readiness to perceive the divine. Fischer saw suspension of the ego and the conscious mind as central to accessing fundamental underlying principles embedded in revered musical scores.

...all bonds, all inhibitions disappear. You feel yourself floating. You no longer feel *I am playing*, but, instead, *the piece is playing*. And, lo and behold, everything sorts itself. Guided by a divine hand, the melodies somehow flow through you and out of your fingers, and you just let it happen. You humbly enter into the greatest happiness that a performer can experience: to be the conveying medium, the intercessor between the divine, the eternal, and humanity.<sup>165</sup>

I will develop this topic further in my discussion of Es-Musizieren in Chapter Four.

### **Apotropaic Healing**

In Chapter One, I raised the topic of the apotropaic effects of artworks and the conditions under which such effects may be released. There, I offered that, “the use of artistic, symbolic objects as totems central to the performance of healing rituals is generally known as *the apotropaic use of art*. Some artworks, thus, can be thought of as imbued with the potential to release apotropaic effects when the artwork is presented

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<sup>165</sup> “...da lösen sich alle Bindungen, alle Hemmungen schwinden. Sie fühlen sich schwebend. Man fühlt nicht mehr: ich spiele, sondern es spielt, und siehe, alles ist richtig; von göttlicher Hand gelenkt entfließen die Melodien Ihren Fingern, es durchströmt Sie, und Sie lassen sich von diesem Strömen tragen, und Sie erleben in Demut das höchste Glück des nachschaffenden Künstlers: nur noch Medium, nur Mittler zu sein zwischen dem Göttlichen, dem Ewigen und den Menschen.” Edwin Fischer, *Aufgaben*, 16-17.

within the confines of ritual.” I would further define “healing” as consisting of either inducing health or exorcising individuals or groups of perceived contaminants.

As Walter Frisch reports, in the first decade of the twentieth century the search for apotropaic healing led musicians consistently to Bach’s music. Frisch notes “the emergence of a Bach ideology of health can be seen at its clearest in the pages of the journal *Die Musik*, which began publication in Berlin with the new century, in the fall of 1901.” The first of these articles, “extending over the first three issues and written by Willibald Nagel, a critic-historian from Darmstadt, was entitled ‘*Johann Sebastian Bach und die deutsche Musik der Gegenwart*’ (‘Johann Sebastian Bach and German Music of Today’).”<sup>166</sup> In it, Nagel proposed that “Bach could help provide a *Wiedergesundung*, a regeneration of health.”<sup>167</sup> Frisch reports that *Die Musik* revisited the question of Bach’s potential for *Wiedergesundung* in a 1905 *Rundfrage* (i.e., survey) soliciting responses to the question, “*What does Bach mean to me and what is his significance for our time?*” This was sent to two hundred of the most influential musicians of the day, most of them German. Frisch finds striking “how often the responses evoke the metaphor associated with Bach by Nagel in 1901—that of ‘health’ or restoration.”<sup>168</sup>

Frisch observes a qualitative change in the responses between 1901 and 1905, during which period Nordau’s view rose in prominence. There is a difference between those more individual nineteenth-century views of Bach as healer and the tone of the responses to the survey of 1905. Frisch emphasizes the frequency with which respondents framed Bach as “more than a personal healer,” as “a balm for an entire culture that is seen

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<sup>166</sup> Frisch, *German Modernism*, 140.

<sup>167</sup> *Ob cit.*

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.* 141.

as degenerate, perverted, effeminate and unhealthy.”<sup>169</sup> In other words, for early-twentieth-century Germans, Bach possessed apotropaic powers potentially sufficient to avoid social threats posed by perceived German cultural degeneration. Like Jesus, Bach “satisfies [others say “fortifies”] the soul,” “speaks like a father to a son,” and intercedes for anyone living in an “age of temptation.” This satisfies one condition of religious statements, which cognitive scientists identify as consistently “attention gaining” for the counter-intuitiveness, by attributing miraculous power to Bach, *i.e.*, by making the provocative suggestion that Bach and Jesus are more or less interchangeable, and by bearing witness to Bach’s apotropaic power. Likewise, the metaphors usually associated with Jesus appear with remarkable consistency in the evaluations of Bach at the time cited by Frisch: “comforter,” “healer,” “Father.” For other respondents, Bach is “like a physician,” “a healthy spring.” The metaphors of health and healing commonly associated with the miracles of Jesus pervade more of the *Rundfrage* responses than one could cite; the sense of imminent danger is palpable in each of them.

Max Weber—who, alongside Fischer’s friend Aby Warburg, was a founding figure of *Kulturwissenschaft*—brought a new, scientific perspective to the study of the apotropaic use of artworks under the terms set by *Kunstreligion*. Weber’s influence in cultural and science no doubt helped to spread belief in the apotropaic potential of artworks that shared many of their qualities with holy relics. His 1921 *Rational and Social Foundations of Music* links music directly to two of the greatest of social needs: those of cult worship and of healing.

Sociologically primitive music appears to a considerable extent to have been removed at an early evolutionary stage from the sphere of pure

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<sup>169</sup> Op. cit.

aesthetic enjoyment and subjected to practical requirements. It was addressed to magical ends, particularly apotropaic (cult) and exorcistic (medicinal) needs. Therewith it was subjected to the stereotyping [i.e., abstraction] to which any magically important action or object is inevitably exposed. This holds for works of fine art, mimes or recitations, instrumental or vocal devices (or, often all of them together) when used for influencing the gods or demons. Since any deviation from a magical formula once proved to be effective destroys its potency, in fact, since such deviation can attract the wrath of metaphysical powers, the exact memorization of the tone formulae was a vital matter.<sup>170</sup>

As support for this, Weber repeatedly cites Jules Combarieu's 1909 *Music and Magic*. Weber focuses specifically on Combarieu's assertion that, "all modern music" has developed from the magical incantation, which is "the oldest fact in the history of civilization."<sup>171</sup> According to Combarieu, "the magician chants without thought of aesthetic form or an artistically appreciative audience, yet his spell contains in embryo all that later constitutes the art of music."<sup>172</sup>

Combarieu agrees with Weber that apotropaic and aesthetic modes are separate and that they serve discrete ends. Nonetheless, he rejects Weber's Hegelian assertion that European society, at some point in antiquity, discarded apotropaic musical rites in favor of purely aesthetic appreciation. He likens German, music-inspired intuitions to "a somnambulist permeated with the magnetic fluid, informing us of matters of which, in his waking state, he has no notion." The German subject's obliviousness to his intuitive,

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<sup>170</sup> Max Weber, *The Rational and Social Foundations of Music* [1921], translated by Don Martindale (Southern Illinois University press, 1958), 40.

<sup>171</sup> Jules Combarieu, *Music: Its Laws and Evolutions*, Ch. 5, "Music and Magic," (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1910), 94. Combarieu resided in Berlin for a year in the 1880s, where he was a student of Philip Spitta's. Lynn Thorndike has studied Combarieu extensively. See Lynn Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964).

<sup>172</sup> The excerpts cited are from Combarieu's *La musique et la magie* (Paris, 1909), pages v and 13-14, respectively.



quasi-religious reception of music in no way diminishes the veracity or credibility of outside observations.

Combarieu sees German musical culture as a special case within modern Europe, but one that strongly resembles pre-modern, non-European modes of musical reception: “the German conception of musical art, instead of being a peculiar view of the modern mind arrived at the highest pinnacles of abstraction, is in accord with the most remote origins of the history of music, *i.e.*, with the opinion of primitive folk.”<sup>173</sup> Combarieu offers that, “The musical metaphysics of the Germans and primitive magic are one and the same thing.”<sup>174</sup> Like primitive folk, Germans “have attributed to music a supernatural power which seems due to two causes: first to the absolutely special character, unique, and isolated in the internal life of musical thought; then to the lofty generality of this emotional dynamics, which is not that of a certain given emotion, but that of life itself.”<sup>175</sup>

Although correct in a general sense, Combarieu’s views on German musical reception are not sufficiently nuanced to describe its true complexity. Later scholars agree with Combarieu’s insistence that apotropaic use of artworks persists in modern European cultures. As the late Alfred Gell put it, “we have neutralized our idols by reclassifying them as art; but we perform obeisance’s before them every bit as deep as those of the most committed idolater before his wooden god...it is only from a very parochial (blinkered) Western post-Enlightenment point of view that the separation between the beautiful and the holy, between religious experience and aesthetic experience,

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<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.* 90.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.* 95.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.* 107-108.

arises.”<sup>176</sup> However, Combarieu’s assignment to Germans of just one mode of reception—*i.e.*, the apotropaic/exorcistic/cultic mode—erroneously implies that aesthetic and apotropaic modes of reception are mutually exclusive. He is right to cite Schopenhauer as evidence of the pantheistic strain of German musical reception: “*as music exists in the heart of things and lives on their essence, it results that it has a hold on all objects whatever* [italics original].”<sup>177</sup>

Pascal Boyer has written persuasively on “the strangeness of counterintuitive quality of religious representations” as a defining feature of primitive religions. “Religious claims take their attention-demanding quality, which is crucial for acquisition and transmission, precisely from the fact that they are not entirely compatible with ordinary intuitive expectations.”<sup>178</sup> This entailed advancing a number of “religious claims” on behalf of Bach’s music that are unlike more conventional assumptions about Bach and religion: *e.g.*, that Bach’s liturgical music is theologically consistent, appropriate, and rich in inspiring, illustrative gestures.

#### Ancestor Presence and Its Implications for Musical Performance

Weber and Combarieu both note that adherence to ritualistic norms is required in order to release music’s apotropaic or exorcistic effects. Weber asserts that, in matters of music’s apotropaic or exorcistic powers, “any deviation from a magical formula once proved to be effective destroys its potency, in fact, since such deviation can attract the

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<sup>176</sup> Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 97.

<sup>177</sup> Combarieu, *Music: Its Laws and Evolution*, 95.

<sup>178</sup> Pascal Boyer, *The Naturalness of Religious Ideas: A Cognitive Theory of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 59.

wrath of metaphysical powers.”<sup>179</sup> Placing the matter within modern culture, Combarieu adds that activating music’s apotropaic/exorcistic effects depends on summoning an ancestral presence via “adequate rendering” of his compositions.

The notion that the presence of the inhabiting composer requires that interpreter be absent, or at least inconspicuous, is also a core value of *mechanische Musik*. Hindemith and Stravinsky insisted upon rendering the artist’s effectively invisible; but such insistence—which essentially subverted ritual enactment by a celebrant—was ultimately self-defeating. Fischer fought back – partly in the composers’ own interests – by insisting that human management of exegesis is necessary behavior in a healthy community: it promotes training, study, and deep reflection; it continually re-connects musicians with the vetting process of their communities; it fosters the preservation of sacred texts in a form that is not overwhelmed by later accretions; if executed extremely well, and in a ritual setting, the performer essentially disappears from view, replaced by a sense of the composer’s presence, which in turn can engender strong, positive psychological (and even physical) effects.

#### The *Bach-Kult* as a Particular Manifestation of a Pseudo-Religious Response

German Bach-devotees of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries frequently compared Bach to Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528), to Raphael (*i.e.*, Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino, 1483-1520), and claimed that his music represented the generative principles of Gothic architecture. Frederick Flindell’s “Bach and the Middle Ages,”

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<sup>179</sup> Max Weber, *The Rational and Social Foundations of Music [1921]*, translated by Don Martindale, (Southern Illinois University press, 1958), 248.

analyzes Germans' recasting of Bach as a hero of the middle Ages.<sup>180</sup> Flindell recalls Heinrich Bessler's article, "Bach und das Mittelalter," which contributed strongly to the notion of "Gothic Bach," in general.<sup>181</sup> Flindell observes that Bessler "developed the idea of an *Einheitsablauf* (unitary [and] common run-off) in the works of Perotin, Dufay, and Bach."<sup>182</sup>

Rochlitz observed that "J.S. Bach is the Albrecht Dürer of German composition, because of his capacity for expressing greatness principally through a thoroughgoing development and constant recombination of the most basic elements."<sup>183</sup> Here, two of the attributes that Germans associated most with Bach's music—*i.e.*, thoroughness and integration via thematic economy—arise. Richard Wagner's comparison of the two seems entirely original and bears no indication that he knew Rochlitz's assessment:

Bach's book of spells [*i.e.*, *The Well-Tempered Clavier*] became [Beethoven's] bible; therein he read, and entirely forgot the clangorous world, which he no longer heard. In it lay written the answer to the riddle of his deepest dream, the answer that the poor Leipzig Cantor once penned as an eternal symbol of the new, the other, world. The same mysteriously in-woven lines [*räthselhaft verschlungenen Linien*] and wondrously curvilinear shapes [*wunderbar krausen Zeichen*] wherein the secret of the world of light and all its shapes had dawned upon the great *Albrecht Dürer*, the spell-book of the shaman who bids the macrocosmic light shine upon the microcosm. That which only the eye of the German spirit could look on, only a *German* ear perceive; that which impelled the spirit's inmost conscience to struggle without ceasing against all the strictures imposed

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<sup>180</sup> E. Frederick Flindell, "Bach and the Middle Ages," *Bach* 36/2 (December, 2005), 1-119.

<sup>181</sup> Heinrich Bessler, "Bach und das Mittelalter," *Bericht über die Wissenschaftliche Bachtagung, Leipzig 23. bis 26. Juli 1950* (Leipzig: C. F. Peters, 1951), 108-30 and 114-18. English translation in *The Score* 9 (1954), 31-42. Cited in Flindell, "Bach and the Middle Ages," 120.

<sup>182</sup> Flindell, "Bach and the Middle Ages," 2, fn. 2.

<sup>183</sup> Johann Friedrich Rochlitz, "Über den Geschmack an Sebastian Bachs Kompositionen, besonders für Klavier," *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 5, No. 31 (April 27, 1803), 509-22, and "Brief an einen Freund," *Für Freunde der Tonkunst*, Vol. 2 (Leipzig: Carl Cnobloch, 1830), 203-229.

upon it from without... Beethoven deciphered these things in this, the holiest of all books, and thereby became sanctified.<sup>184</sup>

Later, citations and tropes of Rochlitz's Bach/Dürer alliance become too frequent and widespread to catalog, although they seem to have reached a peak in the period 1910-1930.<sup>185</sup> Schweitzer cited it in his 1908 Bach study. Hermann Kretzschmar's lectures on Bach at the *Universität zu Berlin* in 1922 referred to it again.<sup>186</sup> It appeared again in 1955, in a collection entitled *Dürer und die Nachwelt*.<sup>187</sup> More recently, in 1984, Reinhold Hammerstein raised the comparison in his overview of various historical meeting points between music and the visual arts.<sup>188</sup> Although not as frequently as they drew the Bach-Dürer comparison, German Bach-devotees of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also frequently allied Bach and Raphael. Many of them proposed that Bach underwent a transfiguration while composing *Die Kunst der Fuge* akin to Raphael's while painting the *Transfiguration of Christ*.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Richard Wagner, "Beethoven," *Sämtliche Schriften und Dichtungen*, Vol. 9 (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1911), 95.

<sup>185</sup> See, for example, Hans Preuss, *Dürer und Bach* (Gutersloh: Bertelsmann Verlag, 1935).

<sup>186</sup> Hermann Kretzschmar, *Bach-Kolleg: Vorlesungen über Johann Sebastian Bach gehalten an der Universität zu Berlin* (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1922).

<sup>187</sup> *Dürer und die Nachwelt*, edited by Heinz Lüdecke and Susanne Heiland (Berlin: Rütten & Loehning, 1955), 76.

<sup>188</sup> Reinhold Hammerstein, "Musik und bildende Kunst," *Imago musicae I: in memoriam Emanuel Winternitz* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, and Durham: Duke University Press, 1984), 9.

<sup>189</sup> The notion that Bach was transfigured ("verklärt") appeared in several nineteenth-century sources: in 1810 a writer known only as 'August' in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* wrote of a dream in which he saw a trio of transfigured composers – Mozart, Haydn, and Bach – who represented a Holy Trinity in which Bach served as "the Son," i.e., Jesus Christ. August, "Das Reich der Harmonie oder Fahrt auf den südlichen Helikon: Eine musikalische Vision in der Neujahrsnacht 1810," *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 12 (1810), 365. In 1825, A.B. Marx referred to Bach as "the Evangelist" uniting holy and earthly entities. Adolf Bernhard Marx, "Über Mozarts Requiem," *Berliner allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 2 (1825), 380.

Bernd Sponheuer has traced the transformation of Bach's association with Gothic art "from a pejorative in the first half of the eighteenth century to a quality of wonder around 1800."<sup>190</sup> Citing Dahlhaus, he notes that this shift allowed Bach to be framed, with no apparent shame of anachronism, as a Gothic musician for his embodiment of a "mixture of depth, mystery, and pedantry."<sup>191</sup> Sponheuer's survey of the Bach/Gothic meme extended into the middle of the nineteenth century; he cites the "mysterious shudder," the "inner horror" that Bach's music aroused in E.T.A Hoffmann, who identified a "romantic metaphysics of instrumental music—in which musical...turns from the beautiful to the sublime, abandons all that is empirical or utilitarian, and is free to express the meta-empirical or absolute." Hoffmann's invocation of the German Idealist aesthetic terminology is particularly interesting. Indeed, Hoffmann places Bach's music in an "infinite spiritual realm." Pursuing the theme of Gothic Bach and spirituality further, Sponheuer adds,

The idea of musical Gothic in the German reception of Bach from the time of Weber to Wagner...combined a number of ideas. First, it embodied the idea of art as a religion, as in the metaphor of the "Gothic cathedral dedicated to the arts." It also encompassed a historical and national impulse to overlook Italian and French music and to consider Bach the profound, contrapuntal "patriarch of German music," influencing Beethoven and beyond. Finally, it made an aesthetic distinction between the sublime and the merely beautiful and pleasing (connoted by the Italian and French styles).<sup>192</sup>

Continuing, he identifies the formation of "a national cultural myth" in "an imaginary 'spiritual realm' of German music in which absolute music retroactively

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<sup>190</sup> Bernd Sponheuer, "Reconstructing Ideal Types of the 'German' in Music," *Music and German National Identity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 48.

<sup>191</sup> Carl Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, trans. Roger Lustig (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 38-39. Cited in Sponheuer, "Reconstructing Ideal Types," 48.

<sup>192</sup> Sponheuer, "Reconstructing Ideal Types," 51.

furnishes a meaningful identity. In this national myth, Bach was seen “as the Gothic foundation of an age of German, which is to say absolute, music...” As one German Idealist—Christian Hermann Weisse (1801-1866)—put the matter: “tones [are] produced by mechanical art; not merely in order to subordinate them externally to the will of the striving spirit that rules them, but also to purify them of all special, finite meaning that, as an alien content, would disturb and could the absolutely spiritual content with which they are to be imbued.”<sup>193</sup> In other words, instrumental tones are superior to vocal tones because of the relative lack of empathy that they engender, *i.e.*, because of their salutary “dissolution into cosmic forces,” as Ernst Kurth would later posit the Bach characteristic most admirable to him.<sup>194</sup>

Even outside of the ritual enactment, Bach’s music was reported to have tremendous power. Recounting Brahms’s last days, Max Kalbeck (1850-1921) noted that, “the piano remained closed: he could only read Bach, that was all. He pointed to the piano, where on the music stand, which stood on top of the closed cover, lay a score of Bach.”<sup>195</sup> In Kalbeck’s accompanying interpretation, Brahms was facing a transformation from physical to spiritual being in which Bach served as intercessor. Bearing the power of both Orpheus and Christ, Bach provided the means by which Brahms could bridge the physical world—now restricted to the total interiority of reading and silent contemplation of Bach’s music—and the spiritual world into which he was passing.

Having been given a strong push quite early by Forkel, by the twentieth century overt references to a *Bach-Kult* began to appear: in 1802, two years after Rochlitz

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<sup>193</sup> Christian Hermann Weisse, *System der Ästhetik als Wissenschaft von der Idee der Schönheit*, vol. 2 (Leipzig: Hartmann Verlag, 1830), 49.

<sup>194</sup> Ernst Kurth, *Bruckner*, vol. 2 (Berlin: Max Hesse Verlag, 1925), 264.

<sup>195</sup> Walter Frisch,

established the musical branch of *Kunstreligion*, Forkel described Bach as being “more like a true, transfigured spirit than like a human being”<sup>196</sup> In 1810, an unspecified writer for the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* referred to the “trinity of beauty, truth, and goodness” embodied by Mozart, Haydn, and J.S. Bach. Interestingly, in this analogy to the Holy Trinity, Haydn is described as the Father, Mozart as the Holy Spirit, and Bach as Jesus Christ, the Son.<sup>197</sup> This seems to echo and support the Bach-Raphael parallel-transfiguration that I noted above, which implied that *Die Kunst der Fuge* is a musical image of Jesus equivalent to Raphael’s painted image.

Members of the unofficial *Bach-Kult* frequently troped Christian prayers, in the process making claims for Bach usually reserved for religion, *i.e.*, claims of Bach’s perfection and, by implication, his superior standing among competing musical deities; claims regarding real presence; claims regarding Bach’s apotropaic power, claims regarding the transaction of service and rewards; and formulas of speech that suggest biblical language, prayers and petitions, and the like. Albert Schweitzer only intensified the frequency of an already unabashed general practice of substituting Bach’s name for that of God or Jesus in tropes of prayers.<sup>198</sup> As Walter Frisch reports,

In his response to the survey [*i.e.*, the *Rundfrage* sent by *Die Musik* to leading musicians in October of 1905], Albert Schweitzer stressed the more religious and mystical side of Bach: Bach as Tröster, as comforter.

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<sup>196</sup> J.N. Forkel, *Über Johann Sebastian Bachs Leben, Kunst und Kunstwerke*, edited by Claudia Maria Knispel (Kassel: Henschel Verlag, 2000). For a more comprehensive view of religious formulae attributed to composers of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, see James Webster, “The Creation, Haydn’s Late Vocal Music, and the Musical Sublime, *Haydn and His World*, edited by Elaine Sisman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 57-102.

<sup>197</sup> *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, August 1810: 364-65.

<sup>198</sup> For a very brief overview of Schweitzer’s attitudes towards Bach and metaphysics see: Wolf Kalipp, “Albert Schweitzer und seine Kultur der Orgel,” *Musik und Gottesdienst* 4 (2011), 168-178.



Yet a few years, he may be said to have put his two pfennige into the discussion reflected in the pages of *Die Musik*. In the German edition of his Bach study, published in 1908, Schweitzer added at the very end the plea that “Bach help our age to attain the spiritual unity and fervor of which it so sorely stands in need.”<sup>199</sup>

To pave the way for publication of the German edition of his Bach study, in 1907, Schweitzer published a piece in *Die Musik* bearing the significant subtitle: “A History of the Origins of the Bach Cult.”<sup>200</sup> Schweitzer does not seem to have used the term *Bach-Kult* with any sense of irony, although he was quite willing—in his *Quest for the Historical Jesus*—to engage (and dispel) the notions of the Jesus Cult and to ridicule the lack of scientific and methodological rigor in writings on Jesus to that time.<sup>201</sup> In his *New Music* of 1919, Paul Bekker again referred to a “*Bach-Kult*.” Bekker identifies it as a phenomenon of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, suggesting that, although the cult designation was new,

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<sup>199</sup> Walter Frisch, “Bach, Regeneration, and Historicist Modernism,” *German Modernism: Music and the Arts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 143.

<sup>200</sup> Albert Schweitzer, “Von Bachs Tod bis zur ersten Wiederaufführung der Matthäuspasion. Eine Geschichte der Anfänge des Bachkults,” *Die Musik* 7/25, edited by Bernhard Schuster (*erster Quartalsband*, 1907/8; Leipzig and Berlin: Schuster & Loeffler, 76-88). [N.B. the digitalized version of this volume, widely available online and in on-demand reprints, has been defaced by the addition of a text-box bearing the title “*Die Musik: Nationalsozialistische Kulturgemeinde. Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiter-Partei. Beauftragter des Führers für die...*” (N.B., the superimposed title breaks off with this ellipsis). Although *Die Musik* was artificially conjoined with three other German music magazines – *Zeitschrift für Musik*, *Allgemeine Musikzeitung*, and *Neues Musikblatt* – during the Nazi *Gleichschaltung* and subsequently published under the banner *Musik im Kriege*, this began in 1943. Although nationalist and conservative leanings are clearly evident in the pages of *Die Musik* throughout the 1920s, its retroactive designation as an organ of the Nazi party is unjustified. See URL: <http://books.google.com/books?id=4ECDPXQv2kkC&lpg=PA84&ots=xxZyMtGkIm&dq=rochlitz%20Bach%20ist%20der%20Albrecht%20D%C3%BCr%20der%20deutschen%20Tonkunst&pg=PP7#v=onepage&q=rochlitz%20Bach%20ist%20der%20Albrecht%20D%C3%BCr%20der%20deutschen%20Tonkunst&f=false>.

<sup>201</sup> Albert Schweitzer, *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Mohr Verlag, 1913).

the phenomenon was relatively old.<sup>202</sup> In 1931, Schoenberg expressed impatience with the “acolytes” of Bach scholar Ernst Kurth, a designation that might have been intended to include Fischer, who was his student.<sup>203</sup>

In a series of Berlin lectures given in 1922 under the title “Bach-Kolleg,” Hermann Kretzschmar (1848-1924) spoke of Bach’s “Disciples” (*i.e.*, Jünger). In that series, Kretzschmar advised listeners that, “everyone, according to his abilities, can serve Bach, for which service his soul can rest assured it will receive immediate reward. Thereby, he is one of the greatest of the Greats.”<sup>204</sup> Kretzschmar’s implication that even the meek might render service unto the *Thomaskantor* is strongly evocative of Christ. Kretzschmar appears, in fact, to have conflated the Sermon on the Mount and Matthew 19:14 within an implied, Bachian trope that might read *blessed are even the poorest of keyboard players; suffer such as them unto me, and they shall enter a transcendent realm*. In addition, the formula “greatest of the Greats,” besides being an important claim of Bach’s superior standing in the hierarchy of the ersatz gods of *Kunstreligion*, follows an important rhetorical formula of classical and biblical prose, being evocative of “King of kings,” “Lord of Lords,” “Song of Songs,” “seven times seven,” and other, related examples of the Phoenician prose style adopted by Solomon.<sup>205</sup> Note that Kretzschmar—

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<sup>202</sup> Paul Bekker, “Neue Musik,” *Neue Musik* (Berlin: Erich Reiss Verlag, 1919), 100-101.

<sup>203</sup> Arnold Schoenberg, Cited in Frisch, *German Modernism*, 277, n. 27.

<sup>204</sup> “So kann jeder Musikfreund nach seinem Vermögen der Bachschen Kunst Dienste leisten, Dienste, für die die eigene Seele sofort den Lohn sicher hat. Denn auch dadurch ist Bach einer der Größten unter den Großen, daß er seine Jünger nur mit Glück und Erhebung erfüllt.” Hermann Kretzschmar, *Bach-Kolleg: Vorlesungen über Johann Sebastian Bach gehalten an der Universität zu Berlin* (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1922), 90.

<sup>205</sup> See, for example, the inscription of the Sarcophagus of Ahiaram—*i.e.*, the ancient city of Byblos—in the National Museum of Beirut, which Reinhard G. Lehmann renders, “Und wenn ein König unter Königen / und Statthalter unter Statthaltern, / und

in the phrase “his soul can rest assured it will receive immediate reward”— implies that Bach-worship offers an exchange of service and rewards that is actually *superior* to divine worship: Bach’s spiritual benefits materialize immediately in the temporal realm.

Such claims on behalf of Bach’s music were by no means limited to Kretzschmar, sometimes taking the form of transposing Bach’s salutary attributes backward to Jesus. In many of these deifications, Jesus is posed as having Bach’s attributes, and not the reverse. In the formulas of the *Bach-Kult*, Bach seems not only to be an ersatz for the God lost to Nietzschean nihilism but, indeed, to constitute a superior deity. Bach is more proximate, more potent, and more materially beneficial than God is because Bach’s apotropaic qualities can effect a cultural healing of the temporal world.

One of the most remarkable documents of the *Bach-Kult* was Richard Benz’s “Die Stunden der Musik” of 1925. As Albert Mass-Haagen summarizes it in a review for the periodical *Die Musik*, Benz regards the “Gothic Middle Ages as a period of contradictions: of lofty architecture and lowly human servitude, shorn of spiritual supports.”

...The Gothic cathedral remained an empty vessel. The Renaissance arrived, and [temporal] life as opposed to Christian life became ascendant. In fact, the Renaissance was unproductive because it

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Heerlagerkommandant Byblos überfällt, / und deckt dann diesen Sarkophag auf / es sei entblättert der Stab seiner Gerichtsbarkeit, / sei umgestürzt der Thron seines Königtums, / und die Ruhe fliehe von Byblos, / und er - man lösche seinen Memorialeintrag für die Totenpflege.” “Now, if a king among kings and a governor among governors and a commander of an army should come up against Byblos; and when he then uncovers this coffin – may the scepter of his authority be strip barren, may the throne of his kingdom be overturned, and may any peace flee from him and from Byblos – let his entry in the annals of the honored dead be blotted out.” Translation of Lehmann’s German translation. No direct translation from Old Phoenician to English is known. Reinhard G. Lehmann, *Die Inschrift(en) des Ahirom-Sarkophags und die Schachtinschrift des Grabes V in Jbeil (Byblos)*, 38.

copied foreign influences from ancient Greece. This failed to engender a new mythology.

The mythic aspect of Christianity was traded away for the concrete, for humanism. Martin Luther's attempted to retrieve it, by infusing it with Christian terms. The result was academic and unsubstantial with one exception: his invention of the German chorale, upon which a new wave of belief and a new cult were founded...Bach's greatest accomplishment was a "gigantic mystical reflection of the mythic-cultic idea" of the German chorale. Bach had a proper understanding of religion, as it ought to be: a truly visionary experience – a Christian, aesthetic vision capable of reshaping the world. Bach has only grown and grown in stature. Now he has provided the cultural content for the Gothic cathedral, about which the German cultural historical Establishment has always fed us the line that it was just a hollow, empty wreck. Bach's soul became the soul of the whole world. He will live forever in the hearts of Christians. He took the impoverished Christianity of the middle Ages and restored it to religion, transfiguring it such that its light will never be extinguished.<sup>206</sup>

It is not difficult to see the implications of repeated and sustained association of Bach with the technical religious designations "cult," "disciple" and "acolyte." These are not easily dismissed as metaphors.

#### Fischer's Elective Affiliations as Response to German Cultural Malaise

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<sup>206</sup> "Der gotische Dom bleibt ohne entsprechenden Inhalt. Die Renaissance kommt: das Leben wird unchristlich bejaht. Doch die Bewegung bleibt unproduktiv, denn sie kopiert Fremdes: die griechische Antike. Sie schafft keinen neuen Mythos. Christlicher Mythos war durch begrifflich vorgehende humanistische Kritik verworfen. Luther versuchte zu retten, indem er Worte christlicher Lehre noch mehr festlegte. Das Resultat bleibt philologisch und unproduktiv. Nur in einem bleibt Luther mythisch-dehnungsfähig...im Choral. Der wird zum Glaubensbekenntnis. Das Resultat ist tiefst mythisch-kultisch...Bach findet das choralische Thema vor. Aber die mystische Riesenreflexion über dieses mythisch-kultische Thema ist Bachs größte Leistung. Ein Kult, sonst durch Wort übermittelt, wird durch Musik über enge Begrifflichkeit hinaus in metaphysische Sphären getragen und somit gerettet. / Bei Bach bleibt Religion das, was sie sein muß: stärkste Vision. Bei ihm geschieht die einzig noch mögliche: die künstlerisch-christliche Deutung der Welt. Riesig wächst Bachs Werk auf. Wie der gotische Dom. Und siehe: der gotische Dom bekommt somit durch Bach seinen entsprechenden Inhalt. Er bleibt nicht leer, bleibt nicht Trümmer, wie die offizielle deutsche Geistesgeschichte stets feststellte. / Bachs Seele wurde zur Allseele. Christliche Gedanken werden bei ihm ewig. Und er erlöste somit religiös das christlich bedingte Mittelalter und verklärte es zu ewigem Geist." Albert Maass-Hagen, "Review of Richard Benz, "Die Stunde der Deutschen Musik," *Die Musik* 18 (Jena: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1924).

## Fischer and the *Konservative Revolution*

Judging by the accounts offered by friends in the elegiac book *Dank an Edwin Fischer* and corroborated by Charlotte Staub's testimony, Fischer retained a thick, Swiss accent throughout his life. Judging by the many friends who described him as apolitical—in this context, his close association in the 1920s with Thomas Mann, author of the 1918 *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* is relevant—it appears that Fischer viewed himself largely as an outsider to German politics.

Fischer's associates were spread across the entire German political spectrum. One should bear in mind the political gulf that estranged wealthy Jews—many ennobled, most of them conservative—from those of the intellectual and working classes, who tended to be arrayed on the political left. Fischer's circles included both. In 1928, for example, he became conductor of the Munich *Bach-Verein*, after the resignation of Ludwig Landshoff (1874-1941), its founder, and stayed in that position until 1931. The *Bach-Verein* historically shared the leftist orientation of its sister ensemble, Munich's *Vereinigung für Zeitgenössische Musik*. He left ostensibly because he wished to focus solely on his pianistic career; however, shortly thereafter, he founded the *Kammerorchester Edwin Fischer*, primarily staffed by members of the Berlin Philharmonic. Carl Orff (1895-1982) succeeded Fischer as conductor of the Munich *Bach-Verein* in 1932. Orff produced a number of left-leaning, populist productions with them, most notably, “a new, rustic Bavarian arrangement of Bach's St. Luke Passion (after a manuscript thought to be in Bach's hand).”<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> Michael Kater, *Composers of the Nazi Era: Eight Portraits* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 115-116.

On the other side of the spectrum, Fischer's patronage came from conservative and aristocratic sources. It would be inaccurate, however, to attribute to him any sort of naïve conservatism to Fischer's views on musical expression, or to his choice of repertoires, both of which had deep intellectual and aesthetic foundations. As his prose publications show, Fischer struggled against the increasing dominance of industrial rationalism in German life—despite his closeness to some of one of its principal underwriters, the Mendelssohn Bank—adopting increasingly conservative positions with regard to culture and social change.

## Fischer and *Kunstreligion*

Albert Schweitzer's Bach study is famously rich with florid allusions to the metaphysical and supernatural powers of Bach's music. They are far too numerous to catalog here. Schweitzer even attributes belief in *Kunstreligion* to Bach himself, thereby providing the ultimate justification for the *Bach-Kult*. Perhaps most significantly, Schweitzer saw the greatest expression of Bach's religiosity not in the works with religious texts but, instead, in *The Well-Tempered Clavier*. In his declaration, "Nowhere does one grasp so clearly that Bach experienced his art as a religion as in *The Well-Tempered Clavier*!"<sup>208</sup>

Schweitzer's lesser-known 1899 dissertation on the religious philosophy of Kant offers a detailed resume of the history of *Kunstreligion* in the context of German Idealism.<sup>209</sup> It is remarkable for the frequency, casualness, and unabashed nature of its appropriations of religious language to describe Bach and his music.<sup>210</sup>

A remarkable book from within Fischer's intellectual circle provides insight into just how far the interpenetration of art and religion had gone around the time that Fischer made his WTC recording. Joachim Konrad's 1929 *Religion und Kunst* (quoted in Chapter Two) renders the equivalency between art and religion baldly explicit. Konrad's footnotes refer to works by many authors to whom Fischer was close, including Bertholet,

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<sup>208</sup> "Nirgends versteht man so gut wie im Wohltemperierten Klavier, daß Bach seine Kunst als Religion empfand." Albert Schweitzer, *J. S. Bach*, (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1908), 313. Originally published in French as: *J. S. Bach, Le Musicien-Poète* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel with P. Costellot, 1905).

<sup>209</sup> Albert Schweitzer, *Die Religionsphilosophie Kants von der 'Kritik der Reinen Vernunft' bis zur 'Religion Innerhalb der Grenzen der Bloßen Vernunft'*, Doctoral Dissertation, University of Strasburg (Freiburg: Mohr Verlag 1899).

<sup>210</sup> For a very brief overview of Schweitzer's attitudes towards Bach and metaphysics see: Wolf Kalipp, "Albert Schweitzer und seine Kultur der Orgel," *Musik und Gottesdienst* 4 (2011), 168-178.

Riemann, Cassirer, and Wölfflin. In his speeches and writings, Fischer reproduced several of the quotations that Konrad chooses in his summary of the history of *Kunstreligion*.<sup>211</sup> This places *Religion and Art* within Fischer's circle.

Alfred Bertholet surveyed the German history of metempsychosis; his sources were, unsurprisingly, those same German Idealists who advanced the idea of *Kunstreligion*, Bertholet cites Goethe's 1776 letter to Wieland ("I cannot explain the significance to me of this woman or her influence over me, except by the theory of metempsychosis. Yes, we were once man and wife. Now our knowledge of ourselves is veiled, and lies in the spirit world."), and in his 1781 letter to Frau von Stein ("How well it is that men should die, if only to erase their impressions and return clean washed.").

Alfred Bertholet notes that Goethe's brother-in-law, Johann Georg Schlosser wrote two dialogues on metempsychosis, which appeared in 1783. Bertholet also quotes extensively from the writings of Herder, who published three dialogues on metempsychosis in 1791. As noted in Chapter One, Albert Schweitzer also believed in metempsychosis, having referred often to Bach's capacity to inhabit living beings. Bertholet wrote a short piece on the ease with which cultures transfer symbols from one religion to another, interpreting them anew. In the treatise *Über kultisch Motivverschiebung*, Bertholet observes that "motivic transference exists across the board in all spheres."

According to Shiite legend, the slaughter of Hussein at Kerbela is depicted in the red of the setting sun, prior to which the sunset was never red. Earlier, however, the red sunset was attributed to the blood that flowed from Adonis after being killed by the boar – an obvious transfer of motif in the realm of myth. Indeed, I might just as well have undertaken to

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<sup>211</sup> Joachim Konrad, *Religion und Kunst: Versuch einer Analyse ihrer prinzipiellen Analogien* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr Verlag, 1929).



explain the transfer of motives to myth as to religion, and thereby might have provided just as extensive a disquisition. Seen, then, at the macro-level, the whole infinitely diverse *topoi* of allegorical exegesis—which one can pursue equally well through interpretation of the Koran as of any version of the Bible—resolves into this one aspect: one can attribute a constantly shifting set of meanings to any enduring foundational text. In the end, not only dogma—which builds theorems upon such signifiers—but also our [*i.e.*, religious scholars'] interpretation of changing views of religious phenomena to some extent exemplifies how constantly religious axioms are able to move about. Therein arises something like a law of polarity, a *coincidentia oppositorum* unique to religion regarding the immensely conservative influence of religion's written manifestations, on one hand, and the inexorable progress that continually yields new variants of meaning, on the other.<sup>212</sup>

### Fischer's Contributions to Schlesinger's *Symbolik in der Tonkunst*

As noted in Chapter One, Fischer edited Max Schlesinger's essay entitled *Symbolik in der Tonkunst* (*The Symbol in Music*), which formed the final chapter of *Geschichte des Symbols* (*GdS*), which had previously been published—in 1912—with

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<sup>212</sup> Nach schiitischer Legende erscheint in der Abendröte das Blut des auf dem Schlachtfeld von Kerbela gefallenen Husejn; vor seinem Tode sei das Abendrot nicht vorhanden gewesen; früher aber hatte man es auf das Blut des vom Eber getöteten Adonis zurückgeführt — eine ausgesprochene Motivverschiebung auf dem Boden des Mythos! Ja, ich hätte es ebensogut unternehmen können, statt von kultischer von mythischer Motivverschiebung zu sprechen und damit den Rahmen eines Vortrages ebenso reichlich auszufüllen gehabt. Und im großen gesehen ist das ganze unendlich verzweigte Kapitel allegorischer Exegese, die man in der Auslegung des Korans so gut wie in derjenigen der Bibel verfolgen kann, nichts anderes als ein Seitenstück zu dem hier Behandelten: bei gleichbleibendem Grundtext eine stets sich wandelnde Fülle der seinem Wortlaut unterlegten Deutungen. Schließlich ist nicht nur die Dogmatik, die darauf ihre Lehrsätze aufbaut, sondern unsere ganze religionswissenschaftliche Interpretation eines religiösen Phänomens im Wandel ihrer Auffassungen in gewisser Weise eine Probe aufs Exempel, wie religiös Gegebenes stetiger Verschiebung seiner Motivierung fähig ist: darin bekundet sich nur etwas vom Gesetz der Polarität, die nun einmal aller Religion eigen ist, die *coincidentia oppositorum*: des ungeheuer konservativen Zuges in ihren Erscheinungsformen auf der einen Seite und auf der andern eines unaufhaltsam fortschrittlichen, der stets neue Varianten ihrer Deutung schafft. Alfred Bertholet, *Über kultische Motivverschiebung: Sonderausgabe aus den Sitzungsberichten der Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 18 (Berlin: Verlag der Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1938), 22-23.

seven chapters. Dörmose Verlag brought out the second edition, which included SdT, in 1930.<sup>213</sup>

Fischer's general interest in the subject of symbolism probably extends back to Albert Schweitzer's publications (1905 and 1907) on symbolism in the music of J.S. Bach; in them, Schweitzer emphasized Bach's relationship to Gothic architecture and the symbolic nature of his music.<sup>214</sup> In three separate instances in his Bach biography, Schweitzer speaks of Bach's "Symbolismus."<sup>215</sup> An epigram by Albert Schweitzer stands at the head of Schlesinger's treatise: "All art speaks through signs and symbols."<sup>216</sup> Because Fischer edited and contributed to this chapter of Schlesinger's book, he was likely the one who chose the epigram.

In Chapter One, I noted that, by the age of five, Fischer had already made a strong connection between his pianism and religious expression. Other, autobiographical reflections confirm that this sentiment not only lasted, but also intensified.

The musician's highest calling is in ritualistic performance. Early cultures experienced profundity, holiness, and the like to a much greater extent. Some artists—who are often priests, i.e., advocates of religion—possessed greater understanding of how ritual enactments play upon the innate.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> Max Schlesinger, *Geschichte des Symbols: Ein Versuch* (Withhelden: Domröse Verlag, 1912). First edition published with seven chapters. „Kapitel 8 – Symbolik in der Tonkunst: Ein Versuch,” added to second edition, entitled *Grundlagen und Geschichte des Symbols: Ein Versuch* (Withhelden: Domröse Verlag, 1930).

<sup>214</sup> Albert Schweitzer, "Le symbolisme de Bach," *Revue germanique internationale* 1 (1905), 556-562.

<sup>215</sup> See Schweitzer, *J.S. Bach*, 391, 401, 420.

<sup>216</sup> Albert Schweitzer, *J. S. Bach*, enlarged German edition published by (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1908). Originally published in French: *J. S. Bach, Le Musicien-Poète* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel with P. Costellot, 1905).

<sup>217</sup> "Damit bin ich bei der höchsten Aufgabe des Musikers angelangt: beim Kultischen. Frühere Zeiten hatten viel stärkere Empfindung für die Tiefe, Heiligkeit solcher Vorgänge. Jene Künstler, oft Priester, Vertreter einer Religion, waren sich des Dienstes am Unvergänglichen tiefer bewußt und strafte streng den sich am Geiste versündigenden Ausübenden." Fischer, *Aufgaben*, 17.

And...

The further that the overt practices of religion that supported our forefathers recede, the more we must summon gods out of our innate religious disposition via art. Art is, in the final analysis, a type of divine revelation of fundamental wisdom extending back to the evolution of humans.<sup>218</sup>

### **Fischer and Physiognomy**

Eugenics and physiognomy are topics that most readers find distasteful today. As regrettable as it might be, Fischer was strongly attracted to the pseudo-science of physiognomy, which litters his prose publications. The implications of the following exchange between Fischer and Gavoty, for example, deliver something of a shock, even at a remove of more than a half-century:

Fischer, smiling at me from behind his bushy eyebrows, stood up and bowed to me. In his good, honest, candid face an entire culture is reflected: the courteousness and formality of the good old days. I peer at him closely: of whom does he remind me? Since I can't place it, I ask him. His small eyes now narrow to slits:

[Fischer]: "That's not the first time that someone has asked me that..."

[Gavoty]: "...?"

[Fischer]: "In order to play a composer's works as they ought to be played, one must, of course, love them; that's obvious. However, one must, I believe, also resemble the composer. Cortot looks so much like Chopin's daguerreotypes that it seems as though he had served as a stand-in for him. Looking at Kempff, when he bows his head down, one has to think of Beethoven... As for me..."

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<sup>218</sup> "Je ferner uns die äußeren Formen der Religion rücken, jene Formen, die unseren Vorfahren sicheres Geleit waren, um so mehr müssen wir die göttlichen Maße aus der Tiefe der religiösen Empfindens holen, aus der Kunst, denn Kunst ist, Musik ist letzten Endes eine Form göttlicher Offenbarung der ureigenen Weisheit." Fischer, *Aufgaben*, 28.

[Gavoty]: “But of course! — Johann Sebastian Bach.” — Not just the body, but also the square face; the deep-set eyes; the broad, stable forehead shot through with deep smile lines; the full, kindly mouth; the strong-willed chin shaped by [deep] thought. Only a wig is lacking, in whose place Fischer’s fluttering hair, parted in two, casts a shadow on his forehead. I can well imagine that the *Thomaskantor* had similarly strong hands with heavily padded fingertips, hands that fit in the contours of the keys and do not fatigue easily. It would be great to have a side-by-side comparison, but...<sup>219</sup>

Because Fischer participated actively in the preparation of this booklet, it is unlikely that Gavoty has fabricated it. Although discussion of physiognomic types was a fundamental element in the Nazi eugenics movement—and, ultimately, in their plans for Germany’s racial purification—the eugenics movement and physiognomy were popular long before the Nazis. That being said, the strongly racist implications of Fischer’s statement that only those who physically resemble Bach—which would imply those with the same ethnicity—are likely to be the ablest interpreters of his music falls harshly on the ear.

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<sup>219</sup> “Fischer steht vor mir und beugt sich, unter buschigen Augenbrauen lächelnd, zu mir herab. In dem guten, ehrlichen, freimütigen Gesicht spiegelt sich eine ganze Kultur, die Zuvorkommenheit und Förmlichkeit der guten alten Zeit. Ich sehe ihm mir scharf an: an wen erinnert er mich? Als ich nicht darauf komme, frage ich ihn selbst. Er kneift die kleinen Augen jetzt fast völlig zu:

[Fischer]: “Das ist nicht das erste Mal, dass mich einer das fragt...”

[Gavoty]: “...?”

[Fischer]: Um einen Komponisten so zu spielen, wie es sich gehört, Muss man sein Werk natürlich lieben, das liegt auf der Hand. Aber man Muss ihm auch, glaube ich, ähnlich sein. So scheint Cortot für Chopins daguerrotypiertes Porträt als Vorbild gedient zu haben. Beim Anblick von Kempff, wenn er den Kopf herunterbeugt, Muss man an Beethoven denken... Was nun mich anbelangt...”

[Gavoty]: “Aber natürlich, — Johann Sebastian Bach.” — Nicht nur die Gestalt, sondern auch das vierkantige Gesicht, der tiefliegende Blick, die breite, unbeugsame Stirn, die von grossen Wohlwollensfalten durchzogen ist, der volle, gütige Mund, das eigenwillige und von Gedanken geformte Kinn. Nur die Perücke fehlt, an deren Stelle das in zwei Strähnen sich teilende flatternde Haar Fischers Stirn beschattet. Ich kann mir gut denken, dass der Thomaskantor wie er kräftige Hände mit stark gepolsterten Fingerkuppen hatte, Hände, die sich den Tasten anschmiegen und nicht leicht ermüden. Man möchte es am liebsten gleich einmal vergleichen, jedoch —.” Bernard Gavoty, *Les grandes interprètes: Edwin Fischer* (Geneva: Editions René Kister, 1954/5), 8-10.

### **Chapter Three – Fischer’s Hermeneutics of Bach-Pianism: Bach-Interpretation and Editing in Relation to Scriptural Exegesis and the Editing of Sacred Texts**

This chapter treats the strong resemblance that Fischer’s interpretive and editorial practices bear to principles regarding scriptural exegesis and the editorial presentation of sacred texts that were understood within the circles in which Fischer was educated and musically trained, and in which he rose to prominence. Fischer was well acquainted with the exegetical segment of this set of principles first, through his direct connection to several important exegetes in Basel around 1900, and through indirect connections to a larger field of exegetes surrounding Fischer in Berlin slightly later. Fischer gained experience as an editor through two projects: first, his edition of Bach’s solo-clavier works for Ullstein Verlag, and his editing of Max Schlesinger’s *Symbolik in der Tonkunst*, published posthumously, in 1930.<sup>220</sup> It is of note that these two efforts, which spanned the period from 1924 to 1930, were led by Jewish authors, editors, and concerns.

Fischer’s education was, in fact, dominated by scholars of Jewish history and hermeneutics, musical training in Berlin’s historically-Jewish conservatory, and close association with Berlin pianists closely acquainted with Jewish exegetical and sacred-editorial practices, among them Arthur Schnabel, Ferruccio Busoni. Further exposure came through his family ties to the exegetical and editorial traditions fashioned by Moses Mendelssohn, and to parallel, musical expressions of the same principles provided later by Felix Mendelssohn.

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<sup>220</sup> Max Schlesinger, *Symbolik in der Tonkunst*, edited by Edwin Fischer (edited and published posthumously under the title “Grundlagen und Geschichte des Symbols, Kapitel VIII,” as final chapter of second edition of Schlesinger’s *Geschichte des Symbols* (Withhelden: Domröse Verlag, 1912).

Subsequent to recounting this history, I will compare segments of various exegetes' published works to parallel passages that seem to represent Fischer's tropes. These are found in Fischer's essays, in the prefaces to his Bach-editions, and in passages in *Symbolik in der Tonkunst* (as in prior chapters, hereafter referred to as *SdK*) that appear to be Fischer's interpolations. In troping Moses Mendelssohn's exegetical writings, Ferruccio Busoni appears to have served as Fischer's model. Busoni may have either inspired Fischer to adapt practices surrounding sacred texts to performance and editing Bach's keyboard works or, alternatively, may have reinforced similar notions that Fischer developed through his direct association with noted exegetical scholars. Of note, the scholars with whom Fischer had the most prolonged contact from his earliest years were also excellent organists and Bach scholars.

In the final segment of this chapter, I will speculate on the implications of this apparent consecration of Bach-pianism suggested by those in Fischer's closest circles. The movements organized under the umbrellas of Symbolism, Theosophy, and Gestalt Psychology—known to Fischer via his affiliations with Schlesinger, Steiner, and the various Gestaltists and Phenomenologists of the Bellevue Circle—persistently asserted strong connections between abstraction and the sanctity of totems and icons. As well, the *neue Bauen* architects that Fischer knew through the Bauhaus and via the salons of Jenny Mautner and Marie von Bülow asserted that emphasizing geometric and architectonic elements in art had the effect of sanctifying and consecrating artworks with equal vehemence and frequency.

Two historical developments in German culture prior to Fischer's arrival in Berlin are of central importance to understanding Fischer's context. The first of these is the

backdrop of *Kunstreligion*, which allowed for the transferal of religious sentiment from the actual practice of religion to a particular class of artworks whose qualities identified them as objects of veneration with special, supernatural powers. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the growing movement towards German unification implied placing emphasis on elements of *Kultur* that could be shared by all Germans and the concomitant de-emphasis of the three religious affiliations—Judaism, Roman Catholicism, and Lutheranism—that separated groups, potentially threatening the cohesiveness of German national identity. This provided a motivation for secularization.

This raises an important question: *what happens to religious feeling when a group with diverse religious affiliations declares overt expression of religious sentiment to be undesirable or, at least, not instrumental to other social projects?* In other work, I have pointed to the likelihood that English Recusants used symbols and song texts to imbue musical works with Catholic sentiment, essentially turning musical works into Catholic totems. On similar lines, Nicole Heinkel suggests that *Kunstreligion* served as a substitute for extra-ecclesiastic expressions of religious sentiment. By Heinkel's lights, music and art were no less than a commonly agreed-upon, mutually acceptable *Ersatzreligion* into which Germans could pour quasi-religious feeling without fear of weakening cultural cohesiveness.<sup>221</sup>

I turn now to an introductory exploration of these two developments in German culture, *i.e.*, secularization of public sphere—by which I mean any extra-ecclesiastic sphere, including salon culture—in Germany during the half-century or so prior to

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<sup>221</sup> Nicole Heinkel, *Religiöse Kunst, Kunstreligion und die Überwindung der Säkularisierung Frühromantik als Sehnsucht und Suche nach der verlorenen Religion*, (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Verlag, 2004).

Fischer's arrival in Berlin, and *Kunstreligion* as a public-sphere *Ersatzreligion* via which religious sentiments, as well as certain habits of mind developed in a religious setting, were transposed to, and found expression in, German music and art. Subsequently, I will treat Fischer's exegetical contacts and constructs, finishing with my thoughts about the implications of Bach-consecration for performance.

### German Secularization

Germany was religiously diverse at the *Reichsgründung* (i.e., founding of the German state). Jews had ascended to positions of great importance in German industry and financial infrastructure, and German Catholics controlled much of the new nation. Protestant worries over the integration of German Catholics into the fabric of the new nation-state led them to support the completion of Cologne Cathedral, at staggering expense. This issued in a short-lived period of German triumphalism.

This did not hold, however: German Catholics suffered under Bismarck's *Kulturkampf*. In addition, Treitschke's *Studien über die Judenfrage* (Studies on the Jewish Question) and Richard Wagner's anti-Jewish essays both express the belief that Jewish identity was antithetical to German cohesiveness. German society as a whole turned to secularization, sublimating religious desires in art as means of achieving a religious entente. This trend was particularly pronounced with Germany's Jewish middle classes.<sup>222</sup>

“Overcoming Secularization,” *Entjüdung*, and *Geselligkeit*

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<sup>222</sup> On this subject, see Marion Kaplan's excellent study, *The making of the Jewish middle class: women, family, and identity in Imperial Germany*, New York, 1991.



Heinkel's perspectives on "overcoming secularism" also shed significant light on Jewish movements in German salon culture, in which any hint of religious affiliation or belief ran against the polite, secular code of the institution. This motivated the translation of Jewish values to a German-Christian context. Suppressing overt expression of religious feeling, and consequently transposing it to art, was a feature of the *Geselligkeit*—i.e., the social integration of Jews into German polite society—that permeated nineteenth-century Berlin musical salons, of which Franz von Mendelssohn Edith Andrae (*née* Rathenau) salons were the last in a German-Jewish tradition that ended under the Third Reich.<sup>223</sup>

Under the terms set by *Geselligkeit*, one needn't suppress one's personal values, but instead only translate them into terms that all present could understand, and which were not clearly identified with any particular Abrahamic affiliation. This, in essence, established a code by which German Jews could retain and express Jewish values while defining themselves as Germans and moving freely in German society. Within such terms, Jews could also retain essential Jewish values while expressing them within the context of Christian conversion. This is key to understanding, for example, the fact that Edwin Fischer's primary Berlin exponent, Franz von Mendelssohn, was a Christian by baptism,

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<sup>223</sup> "If salon-culture's high point had come and gone by the turn of the century, it enjoyed one, final resurgence... Thus one met of a Sunday at the residence of Walther Rathenau's sister, the banker's-wife Edith Andrae, to listen to music... The concerts that Robert and Franz von Mendelssohn presented were especially spectacular. Franz had had a special, oval concert-hall with a stage and four hundred seats built in his villa." Gilt auch der Höhepunkt der Salon-Kultur um die Wende zum 20. Jahrhundert als überschritten, so erlebt noch einmal eine Blütezeit... So trifft man sich sonntags bei Walther Rathenaus Schwester, der Bankiersgattin Edith Andrae, und hörte Musik... Spektakulär sind insbesondere die Konzerte, die bei Robert und Franz von Mendelssohn veranstaltet worden. Franz lässt an seine Villa dafür eigenen einen ovalen Konzertsaal mit Bühne und 400 Plätzen anbauen." Thomas Blubacher, *Gibt es etwas Schöneres als Sehnsucht*, 38-39.

but also served as President of the *Berliner Gesellschaft der Freunde*, an organization led exclusively by Jews.

It is reasonable for Fischer-scholars, as well as others writing about German culture from the establishment of the German Reich until the onset of the Third Reich, to bear in mind that translation of Jewish values to a German-Christian context was an ingrained and well-established social practice. Consequently, one should remain alert to the likelihood that values entering German culture initially as translations of Jewish attitudes flowed easily in that culture, once *entjüdet worden*, i.e., having been freed of any particularly Jewish aura.<sup>224</sup> Attributing anti-Semitism automatically to the term *entjüden* out of context can easily lead to mistaken interpretations: the general cast of the term shifted with changing views about the relationship of Jews to German nationalism; therefore, the precise implications of the term depend on the circumstances in which it has been used.

The assimilation of Jews into the culture of the German lands—largely set in motion Moses Mendelssohn and the *Haskala*—imposed (or implied) restrictions on traditionally Jewish behavior. Prussian leaders exerted pressure on German Jews (as well as Catholics) to sublimate their respective religious confessions in order to facilitate national cohesiveness. This catalyzed the progressive secularization of German polite

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<sup>224</sup> The term *entjüden* is far older than the Nazis and not necessarily associated with the later German campaign of Jewish annihilation. See, for example, George J. Adler's relatively value-neutral English definition: "to free from Jewish manners" George J. Adler, *A Dictionary of German and English Language* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1848), 171. Even after the Nazi campaign of anti-Jewish 'purification,' the practice of 'sanitizing' valuable cultural objects of their overt Jewishness can be seen, if one is particularly charitable, as embodying the rescue of Jewish cultural products by helping them to pass muster with censors. Naturally, such 'rescue' was not at all aimed at lionizing Jewish creative artists, but rather at cultural appropriation of their products.

society, which was already well underway before the establishment of the German Empire in 1871. This took the form of the rise of Jewish *Geselligkeit*—i.e., the code-switching that allowed for Jews’ smooth social integration into German polite society—and *Entjüdung*.<sup>225</sup> The move towards cultural adaptation was particularly pronounced among the Jewish middle classes in Germany. The arts, and particularly music, provided Jews with a forum in which to employ Jewish critical thought without invoking religious difference.

Early-twentieth-century Germans were certainly not oblivious to the cultural diffusion of Jewish values in German culture, despite the radical shift in perceptions regarding the Jews in Germany during Fischer’s lifetime. The Nazis engaged Fischer’s friend and colleague Georg Schünemann to produce an entjüdet German translation of the libretto for Mozart’s *Marriage of Figaro*, a work in which no mention of Judaism or Jewish thought is present.<sup>226</sup> This suggests that ‘entjüdete’ remnants of Jewish practices

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<sup>225</sup> On *Geselligkeit*, see: Arndt, Andreas, “Geselligkeit und Gesellschaft. Die Geburt der Dialektik aus dem Geist der Konversation in Schleiermachers “Versuch einer Theorie des geselligen Betragens,”” *Salons der Romantik: Beiträge eines Wiepersdorfer Kolloquiums zu Theorie und Geschichte des Salons*, edited by in Hartwig Schulz (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1997), 45–61. See also Dollinger, Petra, “Die jüdische Salontradition in Berlin. Vom späten 18. Jahrhundert bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg,” *Mitteldeutsches Jahrbuch für Kultur und Geschichte* 8 (2001), 75–102. The definition of *Entjüdung* is found in George J. Adler, *A Dictionary of German and English Language* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1848), 171.

<sup>226</sup> As in the case of Wilhelm Furtwängler and Richard Strauss, Schünemann’s relationship with the Nazis was fraught and is difficult to interpret without a fuller hearing of evidence. He became director of the Berlin Musikhochschule in 1932. However, due to his denunciations of the Nazis, he was relieved of his post in 1933, when Fischer also fell out of favor with the Nazis (he was forced out of his position the following year). In March of 1933, Schünemann capitulated and joined the Nazi Party. The Nazis then provided him an official position caring for Berlin’s musical instrument collection, subsequently raising him to the directorship of the Music Division of the *Preußischer Staatsbibliothek* (now the *Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin* of the *Preußischer Kulturbesitz*), filling the position left vacant by the death of Fischer’s friend von Harnack

persisted in German cultural circles well into the Nazi era and that Germans were well aware of them.

### Fischer's Exposure to Christian and Jewish Exegetical Thought Early in Life

In Chapter One, I discussed Fischer's close attachment to Alfred Bertholet as an ersatz father, as well as Bertholet's extensive publication record in the areas of Jewish history, exegesis, and eschatology.<sup>227</sup> It is worth noting that few non-Jews of the early-twentieth century knew more about Jewish exegetical practice or were more respected by Jewish religious *Wissenschaftler* than Bertholet, and that he later moved to Berlin and

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in 1930. Although Schünemann later became Music Director of the *Rosenberg Amt*, as such responsible for the "purification" of Reich culture by routing out "degenerate" music (*entartete Musik*), it is as difficult to interpret his desire to be effective in that position as it is that of Strauss. Fischer co-edited Beethoven's *Zwölf Deutsche Tänze* (Twelve German Dances) with Schünemann in 1937. Ludwig van Beethoven, *Zwölf Deutsche Tänze* [WoO 13], herausgegeben von Edwin Fischer und Georg Schünemann (Berlin: Verlag Rudolf Eichmann, 1937 (with a short forward in German, English, and French by Georg Schünemann)).

<sup>227</sup> See Alfred Bertholet, *Das religionsgeschichtliche Problem der Spätjudentums* (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr-Paul Siebeck Verlag, 1909). See also Alfred Bertholet, *Über kultische Motivverschiebungen: Sonderausgabe aus den Sitzungsberichten der Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften Philosophisch-historische Klasse 1938* (Berlin: Verlag der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Kommission bei Walter de Gruyter und Co., 1938). See also Alfred Bertholet, "Apokryphen und Pseudepigraphen," in Karl Budde, *Geschichte der althebräischen Litteratur* (Leipzig: C.F. Amerlings Verlag, 1906). See also Alfred Bertholet, "Zum Verständnis Des Alttestamentlichen Opfergedankens," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 49/3 (1930), 218-233. See also Alfred Bertholet, "Eid," *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* II, §49 ff. See also Alfred Bertholet, "Über Geminatio von Kultriten," *Reinhold-Seeberg-Festschrift*, Leipzig 1929, II, 151 ff. See also *Lehrbuch der Religionsgeschichte, begründet von Chantepie de la Saussaye*, second (expanded) edition edited by Alfred Bertholet and E. Lehmann (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr-Paul Siebeck Verlag, 1925). Alfred Bertholet, *Die israelitischen Vorstellungen vom Zustand nach dem Tode* (Freiburg: J.C.B. Mohr-Paul Siebeck Verlag, 1899). See also Alfred Bertholet, *Die Stellung der Israeliten und der Juden zu den Fremden* (Freiburg: J.C.B. Mohr-Paul Siebeck Verlag, 1896). See also Alfred Bertholet, *Der Verfassungsentwurf von Hesekiel in seiner religionsgeschichtliche Bedeutung* (Freiburg: J.C.B. Mohr-Paul Siebeck Verlag, 1896). See also Alfred Bertholet, *Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament*, edited by Karl Marti (Leipzig and Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr-Paul Siebeck Verlag, 1897).

held forth on Jewish perspectives until well into the Nazi era, that is, until the Nazis dismissed him. This suggests that Bertholet had an open channel with Jews in Berlin, which further suggests that Fischer may have come into contact with Bertholet's colleagues in the Berlin-based *Jüdische Wissenschaft* movement.

As the seat of the *Hochschule für Wissenschaft des Judentums* (1872-1942), Berlin was central to twentieth-century Jewish intellectual life throughout Germany. Fischer's relocation to Berlin coincided with a boom in German-language studies of Jewish history, culture, and religion, much of it centered upon Midrash and re-publication of the works of Moses Mendelssohn. Numerous publications appeared during Fischer's lifetime that might easily have reinforced knowledge about Jewish imaginative exegesis that he had gotten first-hand from his friend Alfred Bertholet.

Although arbitrary speculation about conversations between Fischer and Bertholet on Jewish exegetical topics is probably unwarranted, it is also unnecessary: given congruence between areas in which Bertholet was an expert and their appearance in some form in Fischer's writings and Bach-editions, it stands to reason that Bertholet was Fischer's source—although not necessarily the exclusive source—and that Fischer adapted ideas transmitted by Bertholet to his particular needs. Because of Bertholet's focus on exegetical techniques particular to the history of Judaism, it makes particular sense to look for corollaries to these in Fischer's output. Jewish exegetical and scriptural-editorial principles are so particular that evidence of them in Fischer's writings and editions are so particular that would be difficult to manufacture absent a real correlation.

## Fischer and Berlin's Jewish Culture

Berlin just before and during Fischer's lifetime was a hub of publication and study of Midrash, an exegetical process on the basis of which one may understand the Masoretic texts' instructions and prohibitions within one's current context. Shifts in the immanent can block access to the transcendent: the new circumstances in which Jews found themselves in the diaspora entailed reading of sacred texts in their new local and historical contexts.

Fischer did not depend on his lifelong friendship with Bertholet for insight into Jewish hermeneutics: he attended a predominantly Jewish conservatory (the *Stern'sches Konservatorium*), was the protégé of one descendant of Moses Mendelssohn and the husband of another, and was present in Berlin in the heyday of the *Jüdische Wissenschaft* movement—which was centered there—during an especially rich period of publication on Midrash. Indeed, the number of Berlin authors, publishers, and publications of Jewish books in first decades of the twentieth century far outstripped earlier numbers.

Fischer's name was closely associated with the Mendelssohn family and with Jewishness as late as 1942 when Fischer gave considerable support to Konrad Latte, a young Jewish musician who was living in Berlin under the cover of false papers. Although Latte made his Jewishness plain to Fischer, the pedagogue became his advocate without hesitation.

The first person [Latte] turned to was the most famous teacher imaginable: the pianist and conductor Edwin Fischer. About Fischer's politics, Latte knew only that he was Swiss and that his first wife was a descendant of Mendelssohn, the Jewish-born composer. "Under those circumstances," Latte says, "he couldn't be too much of an anti-Semite."

During one of Fischer's rehearsals at the philharmonic, Latte came in through the stage entrance wearing his paint-stained work outfit. At the

door to the green room, which was reserved exclusively for the use of the top artists, his heart stopped. He was intimidated at the prospect of entering the holiest place in German music. But Fischer promptly invited in his unusual paint-spotted visitor, and Latte, with the desperate courage he had acquired during his Breslauer apprenticeship in living on the edge, told Fischer straight out who he was and what he wanted.

The star understood that he had before him a young man driven at once by Nazi thugs and his love of music. He impulsively invited Latte to the concert the next day. Latte explained that he couldn't come in the clothes he had on and that he had nothing else to wear. "Fine," Fischer said. "Wait for me on the street after tomorrow's concert and I will find you." Fischer kept his promise: after the concert, he quickly left his admirers, went over to the "painter's apprentice" who was waiting in the shadows and gave him an envelope with a 100-mark bill and a sheaf of ration cards inside. "Call me!" Fischer said, and gave Latte his telephone number. And so Latte had his first piano lessons in Berlin with the idol of his youth, Edwin Fischer, the teacher every talented young musician dreamed of.<sup>228</sup>

Because Fischer's first mentor, Alfred Bertholet, was a scholar of the Masoretic texts and because his Berlin mentor, Fritz von Mendelssohn, was a direct descendant of one of the greatest scholars of the Masoretic texts it makes sense to look for traces (even *entjüdete* ones) of their thought in outlooks that Fischer expressed. If musicians well-known to Fischer can be identified who established precedents for translating Jewish critical and interpretive concepts into musical terms, then this would add significantly to the argument that such traces exist in Fischer's output.

It seems logical to assert that close proximity to *gesellige* Jews would lead almost inevitably to the adoption of *entjüdete* beliefs, particularly in an arena such as Bach-editing and performance, which *Kunstreligion* had imbued with quasi-sacred significance. Fischer's life being a particularly florid example of such a case, taking a look into his work for signs of *entjüdete* exegetical, pedagogical, and editorial practices seems logical

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<sup>228</sup> Peter Schneider, "Saving Konrad Latte," *The New York Times*, February 13, 2000.

and warranted. Prior to searching for such evidence, exploration of Jewish attitudes, principles, and practices that circulated within Fischer's circles is essential.

### The Exegetical Framework of *Midrash* and Jewish Editorial Attitudes

Chief among them are two, intertwined practices surrounding the transmission and reception of Jewish sacred texts: the interpretive construct known as Midrash, and an editorial attitude shaping the presentation of scriptural *Urtexten* in a particular pedagogical surround. This method of presentation was comprised of two elements, both of which were codified and exemplified in the publications of Moses Mendelssohn, to whom I will turn shortly: (1) highly sophisticated translation of meticulously preserved scriptural *Urtexten* into regional vernacular languages, and (2) the surrounding of the hermetically isolated *Urtext* with commentaries that exemplify various Midrashic constructions of use in the training of Jews, who collectively comprised a community of lay scholars. In this section, I will deal with Midrash; I will treat Mendelssohn's inclusion of Midrash in his larger, editorial view in the following section.

The need for "guidance regarding making acceptable adjustments to the Law and to devotional practice" to which Bertholet refers is a direct consequence of the devotional rupture that occurred with the destruction of the Second Temple (*i.e.*, Herod's Temple, destroyed by the Romans in 70 BCE during the First Jewish-Roman War, 66-73 BCE). The Temple's destruction ended the traditional, ritual practice of Judaism and caused it to be instantiated in individual practice spread across the globe as the Jewish Diaspora. The principled adaptation of respected, old texts to modern circumstances that stands at the center of Midrash is also central to Bach-pianism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which because of changing culture and instrument technology necessarily



diverged from original performance practice. Midrash is a response to the Jewish diaspora. Given the barriers to precise enactment of the ritual imposed by transposition from the Temple to widespread settings (*i.e.*, distance; and loss of original, ritual instruments), the individual adapts his performance of the text in order to rescue its deeper meaning and significance. Midrash, therefore, is a codified process of contemplating multiple interpretations of sacred texts offered by earlier, respected scholars and the various adaptations of historical practice to local practice that descend from them.

This community of lay scholarship is, in fact, a central characteristic of Jewish exegetical practice after the destruction of the Second Temple, loss of Jewish statehood, and the dispersal of Jews in the diaspora, all of which were topics on which Bertholet was a published authority. It is not by chance that this developed among Jews of the Diaspora, given the two contrary pressures that fuse together in Midrash: *i.e.*, loss of stable terms of consecration and practice, and the unifying force of oppression from without. There can be no ostracism or exile among the ostracized living in exile: that is, one cannot be turned out of society because of one's non-canonical interpretations of scripture if one is already out.

Midrash offers a model under which individual interpretation is socially structured, designed to direct the individual back to social concerns and social thinking. In turn, the community bears a responsibility not to ostracize, but instead to integrate new thought. This plays into the German *Gesellschaft/Gemeinschaft* dichotomy, in which Jews were typically characterized as having only superficial relations to German culture through commerce and civil society, rather than through shared racial, ethnic, and

cultural roots.<sup>229</sup> This is of significance because Mendelssohn's hermeneutics—*i.e.*, Midrash—is not homeless, rootless, or individualistic, but instead is grounded in a cultural and intellectual heritage held in common with the German *Gemeinschaft*. The principal assumption of Midrash is that the exegete, having engaged in an established, accepted process of interpretation, must be trusted to have found wisdom: therefore, it falls to the *Gemeinschaft*—out of which the process originated—to deal with the authentic individual, and to integrate him and his views into the community. Midrash presupposes a permanent home in an internalized Zion.

What stood out as a real and palpable threat—indeed, this represents the major problem of life in exile— was the threat of fragmentation into ever-smaller communities of practice; the identity of Zion is thus truly lost, a victim of its dispersal. Thus, Midrash played an important role in maintaining cohesiveness within various Jewish communities. Diverse interpretations were held to be acceptable, given that one arrived at them at via the processes of Midrash, which could be relied upon to provide logical cohesiveness and insights and to solve problems arising from the two aspects of Judaism that are the most problematic: *i.e.*, from Hebrew writing's inherent polysemy (*i.e.*, notational ambiguity leading to characteristic semantic ambiguity) and from the Jews' dispersal in the diaspora.

Alfred Bertholet's principal occupations—Jewish hermeneutics, Bach performance (as organist and arranger) and music pedagogy—overlap significantly in Midrash, as my explication of Fischer's editorial practice, below, will demonstrate. In his 1952 *Dictionary of Religions*, Bertholet defines *Midrash* as:

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<sup>229</sup> Ferdinand Tönnies gave this distinction its most cogent and detailed description in *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (Leipzig, 1887). Ferdinand Tönnies, *Community and Civil Society*, translated by Jose Harris and Margaret Hollis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

Hebrew for “research,” but usually further defined by type of orientation to the study of the Biblical text, whether from the perspective of the Law (‘halachic Midrash’ → Halacha) or from a narrative and poetic point of view (“haggadic Midrash” → Haggadah). The scientific quest for knowledge is not the driving force behind Midrash, rather instead the search for the guidance regarding making acceptable adjustments to the Law and to devotional practice. Midrash makes use of imagination and speculation, whereby anything becomes possible because nothing whatsoever is impossible with God. Midrash is not just interpretative work in general but stands for the concrete sense of the particular tasks that comprise such work...<sup>230</sup>

Fischer would not have needed to rely on Bertholet to transmit information about Midrash. Although he may not have personally read any of the books contained in Table 6, it does provide an indication of how numerous were German-language publications on Midrash—which is a relatively esoteric topic in any age—during Fischer’s lifetime.

Table 6: German Midrashic Publications Appearing During Fischer’s Life

Year	Author or Editor	Title
1878-80	Julius Theodor	“Zur Composition der Agadischen Homilien,” <i>Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums</i>
1880	Edited by August Wünsche	<i>Bibliotheca Rabbinica: Eine Sammlung alter Midraschim</i> , 4 vol. (Leipzig: Otto Schulze Verlag, 1880)
1884-1890	Bacher, Wilhelm	<i>Die Agada der Tannaiten</i> (Strassburg : K.J. Trübner, 1884-1890)
1885-87	Julius Theodor	“Die Midraschim zum Pentateuch und der Dreijährige Palästinische Cyclus,” <i>Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums</i> .
1892-	Bacher, Wilhelm	<i>Die Agada der Palästinischen Amorrrhæer</i> (Straßburg:

<sup>230</sup> “Hebräische ‘Forschung’ bezeichnet diese aber meist in ihrer speziellen Bezogenheit auf die Beschäftigung mit dem Bibeltext, sei es dem gesetzlichen („halachischen Midrasch’ → Halacha) sei es dem erzählenden und poetischen („haggadischen Midrash’ → Haggada). Nicht wissenschaftlicher Erkenntnisstreben ist Triebfeder des Midrasches, sondern das Verlangen, die Richtlinien zu untadeligem Wandel im Gesetz und Frömmigkeit zu gewinnen. Midrasch bedient sich der Phantasie und Spekulation, der alles möglich ist, weil auch bei Gott kein Ding unmöglich ist. Midrasch heißt aber nicht nur im allgemeine solche Auslegungsarbeit, sondern bezeichnet im konkreten Sinne die Werke, die solcher Arbeit gewidmet sind...” Alfred Bertholet, *Wörterbuch der Religionen*, Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner Verlag (1952), 311.

99		K.J. Trübner, 1892-1899)
1893-95	Julius Theodor	“Der Midrasch Bereschit Rabba,” <i>Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums</i>
1895	S. Buber, ed.	Midrash Zutah, <i>al Shir ha-Shirim, Rut, Ekhah ve-Qohelet...</i> (Berlin: Meikitze Nirdamim, 1895)
1898-99	Samuel Krauss and Immanuel Löw	<i>Griechische und lateinische Lehnwörter in Talmud, Midrasch und Targum</i> (Berlin: Calvary, 1898-99)
1900		<i>Midrash Sekhel Tov</i> (Berlin: Ittskovski, 1900).
1903-4	Julius Theodor	<i>Midrasch Bereschit Rabba mit kritischem Apparate und Kommentare</i> (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1903-4)
1908-9	D. Hoffmann, ed.	<i>Midrasch Tannaim zum Deuteronomium</i> , 2 vol. (Berlin, 1908-9)
1914		<i>Midrasch zum Exodus</i> (Berlin, 1914).
1920	Korotschin, ed.	<i>Talmud Yerushalmi</i> (reproduced Berlin, 1920)
1921		Ibid., republished with additions by Hanoach Albeck (Berlin: Poppelauer, 1921).
1924		<i>Osar Yirael</i> (i.e., Hebrew Encyclopedia) in 10 vol. (Berlin and Vienna, 1924)
1925		<i>Midrasch zum Leviticus</i> (originally published Venice, 1545; facsimile edition Berlin, 1925).
		<i>Midrash zum Numeri und Deuteronomium</i> (originally published Venice, 1545; facsimile edition Berlin, 1925)
1927	Albeck, Hanoach	<i>Untersuchungen über die halachischen Midraschim</i> (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1927)

Source:

### Moses Mendelssohn and Received Revelation as Idolatry

Moses Mendelssohn’s profound influence on the practice of Judaism in Germany needs no special emphasis. More interesting is the dialectical tension in which Mendelssohn enmeshed textual fidelity in transmission of sacred Jewish texts with the techniques of creative interpretation that he taught German Jews to apply to reading those texts. His *Sefer Netivot ha-Shalom* (The Book of the Paths of Peace, 1780-1783), colloquially referred to as the *Bi’ur*, consists of two elements somewhat at odds with one another: a literal translation of the Pentateuch into German—transliterated via Hebrew script—and an accompanying set of subjective commentaries that were often difficult to reconcile with one another. Indeed, this is a feature of the *Bi’ur*: it embodies Jewish

polysemy, teaching exegesis not by endorsing a single, authoritarian interpretation, but instead by providing numerous interpretive exemplars from which the reader might learn exegetical principles.

More than a century after his death, the association of Robert and Franz von Mendelssohn's families with this *pater familias* was still strong. They erected a large bas-relief of him in the lobby of the Mendelssohn Bank as a constant reminder of his influence. By the time Fischer arrived in Berlin, translation of Jewish values to a German-Christian context had become ingrained and well established within the confines of artistic salon culture. *Entjüdete* Jewish attitudes, viewpoints, and critical thought flowed easily in salon culture. Therefore, it follows that the close proximity to Fischer of *gesellige* Jews would lead almost inevitably to him adopting *entjüdete* — but nonetheless essentially Jewish—beliefs and practices.

In the second part of *Jerusalem* (1783), Mendelssohn identifies universal, metaphysical truths in Judaism that apply equally to all humans, regardless of their affiliation. This is consistent with the biblical-rabbinical Noachide theology, which holds that “the pious of all nations have a share in the world to come.” (To that universal, religious truth, Mendelssohn opposes Jewish, divine legislation, which he says is a product of divine revelation. This unchangeable legislation was a bulwark separating pure monotheism from corruption by practices—such as received revelation, i.e., divinely inspired exegesis—that he held to be idolatrous.

In the well-known case in which the Duke of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel challenged Mendelssohn's reconciliation of Rationalism and Judaism, the latter offered that the New Testament included Christian doctrines—such as the Trinity, Jesus as

incarnation of God, God as suffering hero, original sin, and intercessory reconciliation—that Mendelssohn felt were irrational. However, Judaism did offer a structured set of rational procedures from which to derive exegesis. Because of Fischer’s long, sustained, and close contact with the Mendelssohn family in Berlin, because Midrashic studies blossomed in Berlin just when Fischer arrived there, because Fischer’s ersatz-father Alfred Bertholet was a scholar of Jewish history, and for many additional reasons, it makes sense to look at Fischer’s hermeneutics through a Midrashic lens.

Mendelssohn’s point of view is not exclusive to Jewish exegesis. In some Christian denominations—most characteristically, Roman Catholicism—the interpretation of sacred texts is assigned to an authority standing at the top of a hierarchical structure within the Church that manages divinely inspired interpretation, commonly known as dogma. Mendelssohn distinguishes Judaism strongly from reliance upon dogma, which is the product of “direct revelation” that is “promulgated by words or writing, which are understood only in this or that place, at this or that time.” Mendelssohn characterizes dogmatic worship as a form of idolatry, i.e., the worship of theology as graven image that is as fixed precepts. He admits that it might be supposed that a Jewish form of dogma exists, but stipulates that, although it may look like received revelation, the revelation in question is actually transmitted “by events and by ideas”—i.e., by innate and unalterable aspects of human rationality lived out in the world; God has “inscribed them in their soul, in a character legible and intelligible at all times, and in all places.”<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>231</sup> Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem*, 150.

## The Editorial Standpoint of the “Mendelessohnian Dialectic”

In Chapter Two, I noted that Bertholet had observed a “law of polarity, a *coincidentia oppositorum* unique to religion regarding the immensely conservative influence of religion’s written manifestations, on one hand, and the inexorable progress that continually yields new variants of meaning, on the other.”<sup>232</sup> This view—*i.e.*, that stability of texts stands in dialectic opposition to the flexibility demanded in their interpretation—grew out of Bertholet’s long study of the interpretive concepts and practices of Jewish hermeneutics. It opposes textual stability (which is a function of preservation) and textual reinterpretation (which presupposes a cultural and intellectual tradition that enables some degree of non-dogmatic, flexible interpretation).

Although intended as a general statement about all book religions, Bertholet’s *coincidentia oppositorum* essentially summarizes those of Moses Mendelssohn’s religious works that dealt mainly with codifying principles for editing canonical texts in a manner that would maintain their purity as written texts yet allow them in interpretive practice to be adapted to local and current circumstances. He expressed these views in several publications, including his *Sefer Megillat Kohelet* (1770),<sup>233</sup> the *Sefer Netivot ha-*

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<sup>232</sup> “Schließlich ist nicht nur die Dogmatik, die darauf ihre Lehrsätze aufbaut, sondern unsere ganze religionswissenschaftliche Interpretation eines religiösen Phänomens im Wandel ihrer Auffassungen in gewisser Weise eine Probe aufs Exempel, wie religiös Gegebenes stetiger Verschiebung seiner Motivierung fähig ist: darin bekundet sich nur etwas vom Gesetz der Polarität, die nun einmal aller Religion eigen ist, die *coincidentia oppositorum*: des ungeheuer konservativen Zuges in ihren Erscheinungsformen auf der einen Seite und auf der andern eines unaufhaltsam fortschrittlichen, der stets neue Varianten ihrer Deutung schafft.“ Alfred Bertholet, *Über kultische Motivverschiebung: Sonderausgabe aus den Sitzungsberichten der Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 18 (Berlin: Verlag der Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1938), 22-23.

<sup>233</sup> Moses Mendelssohn, *Sefer Megillat Kohelet* (Berlin, 1770); reprint edited by Ismar Elbogen, J. Gutmann and E. Mittwoch (eds.), *Gesammelte Schriften / Moses*

*Shalom* (1783)<sup>234</sup>—colloquially referred to as the *Bi'ur*—and his translation of the Psalms (1783).<sup>235</sup> The *Bi'ur* was an epochal publication that achieved widespread recognition even outside of Jewish circles. In the *Bi'ur*, Moses Mendelssohn removed haggadic (legalistic) and halachic (rhetorical, poetical) interpolations that had infiltrated the Masoretic texts and which the reader could not distinguish from it.<sup>236</sup>

Mendelssohn's *Sefer Netivot ha-Shalom* (i.e., *The Paths of Peace*, 1780-1783) is one of modern Judaism's most important documents (see Illustration 5-1, below). It consists of two elements: a literal translation of the Pentateuch into German – which is transliterated with Hebrew script – and a set of accompanying commentaries in Hebrew. Mendelssohn's German translation, in German *Fraktur*, had been previously published (Figure 1).

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*Mendelssohn*, vol. 14: Hebräische Schriften, I (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog Verlag, 1972; facsimile of 1938 Breslau edition), 145–207.

<sup>234</sup> Moses Mendelssohn, השלום נתיבות ספר (*Sefer Netivot ha-Shalom; The Book of the Paths of Peace*) (Berlin: George Friedrich Starcke, 1783).

<sup>235</sup> Moses Mendelssohn, *Die Psalmen, mit 12 Holzschnitten von Joseph Budko* (Berlin: Maurer, first edition, 1783).

<sup>236</sup> As Eliyahu Stern notes, “One might mistakenly assume that Mendelssohn wrote the *Bi'ur* strictly for Jews and therefore addressed strictly Jewish communal concerns. Mendelssohn's views in the *Bi'ur* vis-a-vis rabbinic authority, however, were consistent with exegetical and philosophical positions he expressed throughout his life in multiple venues and before primarily German Protestant audiences.” Eliyahu Stern, “Genius and Demographics in Modern Jewish History,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 101/3 (2011), 347–82.





Figure 1: Moses Mendelssohn, *Sefer Netivot ha-Shalom* (detail; the large-font text at upper right is not Hebrew, but merely a transliteration of Mendelssohn's German translation using the phonemes of Hebrew represented in Hebrew letters. The surrounding text is Talmudic exegesis in actual Hebrew)

Mendelssohn emphasized that Judaism is distinct from Christianity because salvation takes place not through intercession but through experience and enactment of the text's meaning: first, of interpretation (*i.e.*, private analysis of the text using canonical methods); second, as performance embodying the instructions provided by enactment of the text in social acts. In so doing, the exegete honors the sacred texts upon which the traditions of Judaism are founded.

Moses Mendelssohn considered the primary text's purity to be the foundation upon which all interpretation rested. His editions provided an ideal text (the only markings added are diacritical marks indicating vowels and basic punctuation). Although Mendelssohn was resolute in rejecting textual criticism as a means of adjusting the wording of the *Urtext*, in the *Sefer Megillat Kohelet* he strongly advocated the Midrashic framework known by acronym PRDS in its practice.<sup>237</sup> Traditionally, this method was founded on four manners of reading: *peshat*, the obvious, surface meaning; *remez*, the allegorical, symbolic meaning; *derash*, the homiletic, rhetorical aspects of the text, typically acquired by comparing word choices in parallel passages; and *sod*, the esoteric, mystical meaning, primarily as revealed to religious authorities. However, Mendelssohn rejected received revelation as idolatry and dogma (primarily transmitted by *remez*- and *sod*-based commentaries). Instead, he placed emphasis on *peshat* (which focuses the reader's attention upon the primary sense of the text as a whole) and *derash* (focused upon deriving insights from analysis of style, rhetorical devices, structures, and word choices). Mendelssohn bound them together: knowledge of the one is used to interrogate the other; in rare cases of irreconcilable conflict, *peshat* takes precedence. In other words, interpretation must be grounded in exoteric, hermeneutic/philological analysis of the sacred texts, but the interpretative layer must never obscure or obfuscate the text's underlying sense. I style Moses Mendelssohn's opposition of these two antagonistic-complementary processes the *Mendelssohnian Dialectic*.

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<sup>237</sup> On this subject, see Wilhelm Bacher's watershed article "Das Merkwort PRDS in der jüdischen Bibelexege," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentlich Wissenschaft* 13 (1893), 294–305.

Based on this dialectic, Moses Mendelssohn defended the continuing relevance of Midrash as a means of codifying and interpreting the Masoretic as a source of revealed meaning in the context of Jewish life in Germany. This guided the new commentaries of the *Bi'ur*, as well as Mendelssohn's exemplary translations of the *Pentateuch* into refined, subtle *Hochdeutsch*. Mendelssohn was revolutionary for advocating translation, which he believed would maintain the relevance of Jewish sacred Law and facilitate its deep understanding by a wide swath of the German-Jewish population. The act of translation inevitably entails interpretation and this opens the door to potential editorial tampering; however, Mendelssohn believed that his device—*i.e.*, the *peshat-derash* dialectic—mitigated the dangers encountered in translating Hebrew texts.

Despite—or, perhaps, because of—the much-discussed anti-Semitism of Martin Luther, Lutheranism mimicked many of its structures and procedures: the intercessions of which Mendelssohn complained were much restricted in Luther's Reformation. As well, Luther encouraged deep, exegetical study of the Christian Bible. Although not explicitly Midrashic, Lutheran exegesis does mimic many of its features, although they are spread among members of the church with varying stations in the ecclesiastical hierarchy: lay people were concerned mostly with *peshat*, the obvious, surface meaning of the text; *remez*, the allegorical, symbolic meaning was represented in religious art and music, the latter of which was especially prominent in Lutheranism from the start; pastors were responsible for *dershat*, the homiletic, rhetorical aspects of the text; and *sod*, the esoteric, mystical meaning, was the mostly the province of religious authorities.



Figure 2: Title page of Mendelssohn's translated into German as *Die heilige Schrift: nach dem masorethischen Texte* (i.e., "The Masoretic Texts of the Holy Bible")

Mendelssohn's editions offered non-prescriptive commentary that was kept outside of the typographical realms of the text proper. The attendant commentaries are, by their nature, subjective interpretations of the biblical texts. This was hardly new in Mendelssohn's time. What was truly novel about the *Bi'ur* was its union of textual objectivity and exegetical subjectivity. David Sorkin observes that "Mendelssohn's translation aimed to convey the literal meaning of the text through a fluent German translation," in the process replacing unacceptable, Christological translations or corrupt translations that, "by not adhering to the Masoretic text...imparted the idea the Bible was

not divinely revealed and immutable but was a human document subject to corruption and correction.”<sup>238</sup>

In the *Bi'ur*, Moses Mendelssohn removed Haggadic interpolations, accretions that had infiltrated the main text and which the reader could not distinguish from it. Moses Mendelssohn considered the primary text's purity to be the foundation upon which all interpretation rested. His devotion to textual purity and clarity was threefold, entailing editorial transparency, removal from the text of any accretions (traditional, *halachic* interpolations), and rejection of anti-rationalist obscurantism and scholasticism (*pilpul*).

Despite the common exegetical inclinations of Judaism and Lutheranism, Moses Mendelssohn distinguished Judaism sharply from Christianity, noting that written “dogmas...saving truths...[and] general self-evident propositions” are anathema to Jewish belief in immanence, which “the Lord always reveals to [Jews], the same as to the rest of mankind, by nature and by events; but never in words or written characters.”<sup>239</sup> Mendelssohn cherishes the sacred principles that govern exemplary life and acts but mistrusts the fixity and deadness of written dogma.

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<sup>238</sup> David Sorkin, *Moses Mendelssohn and the Religious Enlightenment* (London: Peter Halban, 1996), 53-57.

<sup>239</sup> “I believe that Judaism knows nothing of a revealed religion, in the sense in which it is taken by Christians. The Israelites have a divine legislation: laws, commandments, statutes, rules of life, instruction in the will of God, and lessons how to conduct themselves in order to attain both temporal and spiritual happiness: those laws commandments, etc., were revealed to them through Moses, in a miraculous and supernatural manner; but no dogmas, no saving truths, no general self-evident propositions. Those the Lord always reveals to us, the same as to the rest of mankind, by *nature* and by *events*; but never in *words* or *written characters*.” Moses Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem: A Treatise on Ecclesiastical Authority and Judaism 2* (1783), translated by M. Samuels (London: Longman, Orme, Brown and Longman, 1838), 89.

## Felix Mendelssohn's Bach-Editing and the Mendelssohnian Dialectic

Felix Mendelssohn was almost ideally positioned to grasp the significance of the actual unity represented by the bifurcation of Bach reception into two branches, one based upon textual purity and one upon exegetical revelation. Brought up in Berlin, the place of origin of the *Haskala*, his grandfather's movement influential movement to integrate the principles of Rationalism with Jewish life and thought, Mendelssohn was heir to the habits of mind that his paterfamilias, Moses Mendelssohn, brought to bear on religious scholarship and practice. To some extent, the younger Mendelssohn established a Reformed Bach tradition equal to that of his forefather's Reform Judaism.

Felix Mendelssohn's approach to editing and performing Bach's keyboard works balanced textual fidelity with charismatic, subjective interpretation, which seems a mirror of his grandfather's hermeneutic approach to the Masoretic texts, or at least of Midrash in general. Midrash seems almost tailor-made for any situation in which the strict requirements of any classic text are no longer practicable. Michael Fishbane describes "Midrashic-like modes of relating to a scriptural or canonical text" that can apply "to any type of mental relationship that entails the concern for establishing relevance or relatedness to any given fact or piece of information."<sup>240</sup> Fishbane offers that Midrash can be applied to any classic texts; but it seems especially relevant to Bach-pianism, breathing the same air as the *Bach-Gesellschaft* Edition, whose production involved using philological techniques of biblical scholarship.

Moses Mendelssohn's works were widely available: German publishers repeatedly reissued his works until the Nazi era. Given the continual reprinting of his

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<sup>240</sup> Michael Fishbane, *The Midrashic Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 7.

grandfather's books on Jewish religious practice and the widespread currency of his grandfather's ideas and techniques in Germany, it seems likely that Felix Mendelssohn would have applied them to performance problems posed by the nascent Bach revival. Moses Mendelssohn's attitudes might also be relevant to understanding the significant role that Felix Mendelssohn's played in allying nineteenth-century Bach-performance and *Kunstreligion*.<sup>241</sup>

In his edition of Bach's organ works, Felix Mendelssohn continued in the Mendelssohnian Dialectic. He altered 'neither jot nor tittle' (to cite the old phrase of Torah scholarship) of the text as represented in the autograph (which, in the case of the *Forty-Four Short Preludes*, he owned). When invited, he abruptly declined to add expressive markings and other interpretive suggestions to Bach's text, choosing to "deviate as little from Bach's original writing" as possible.<sup>242</sup> Crucially, however, Mendelssohn's prefaces invite exercise of the performer's "taste and fancy," offering suggestions of colorful registrations along the way. He seems not to have intended his editions of Bach's organ works solely to engender ascetic, "objectivist" performance.

In similar fashion, Mendelssohn performed Bach on the nineteenth-century piano without qualms, even freely adapting Bach's text in performance. Writing to Fanny of his manner of interpreting Bach's *Chromatic Fantasy*, Mendelssohn observed:

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<sup>241</sup> On this subject, see Eva-Maria von Adam-Schmidmeier, "Priester des Publikums: Felix Mendelssohn im Kontext einer neuen 'Kunstreligion,'" *Musik und Unterricht* 1 (2009). See also Hans-Joachim Hinrichsen, "Choralidiom und Kunstreligion: Fanny Hensels Bach," *Fanny Hensel, geb. Mendelssohn Bartholdy: Komponieren zwischen Geselligkeitsideal und romantischer Musikästhetik* (Furore Verlag, 2002).

<sup>242</sup> Felix Mendelssohn, preface to *John Sebastian Bach's Compositions on Corales* [sic] (London: Coventry & Hollier, 1845).

“I permit myself the freedom to render the arpeggios with all sorts of crescendos and pianos and fortes, with pedal of course, and with the bass notes doubled. Furthermore, at the beginnings of the arpeggios, I emphasize the little connecting notes...just as I do occasionally with melodic notes...thereby adapting these remarkable harmonic progressions to our stout new pianos.”<sup>243</sup>

The process of adapting Bach’s works from performance on baroque instruments to performance on later instruments is akin to literary translations. Mendelssohn’s pianistic “translations” reflect his understanding of newer instruments in the context of their predecessors (*i.e.*, adapting them to then-current, heftier pianos), just as his grandfather’s German translations necessitated keeping the original Hebrew texts clearly in view. Moses Mendelssohn justified the radical act of translating Hebrew into modern German by arguing that it kept the text before the public, an argument that Felix Mendelssohn also made regarding adapting Bach’s keyboard works to the instrument available for any given performance.

Within Fischer’s immediate circles, the organist and Leipzig *Thomaskantor* Karl Straube, valued translating Bach’s organ music via modern instruments and anachronistic registrations deployed to elucidate intrinsic elements of musical structure and process. Straube’s seems to have appealed to Fischer, who was never moved to seek after the “ideal” Bach keyboard instrument, but instead to form an interpretation appropriate realizing Bach’s music on his chosen instrument, *i.e.*, the piano of his time. In the

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<sup>243</sup> “Ich erlaube mir nämlich die Freiheit, [die Arpeggien] mit allen möglichen crescendos und pianos und ff’s zu machen, Pedal versteht sich, und dazu die Baßnoten zu verdoppeln, Ferner die kleinen durchgehenden Noten...zu Anfang des Arpeggios zu markieren...und dann thun die einzigen Harmoniefolgen auf den dicken neueren Flügeln wohl.”] Letter of November 14, 1840 from Felix Mendelssohn to Fanny Hensel (*Bach Dokumente*, VI, E9).



Straube/Fischer view, one arrived at appropriate interpretation through *awareness* of the salutary qualities of Bach's own instruments; however, this did not necessitate their use.

In this context, I find Felix Mendelssohn's insistence on precise reproduction of Bach's texts as conveyed by study of source materials, when set alongside his personal interpretations of Bach in public performances, to embody the same general principles as his grandfather's *Netivot ha-Shalom*. His preface to this edition does invite the performer to exercise "taste and fancy," however. As a guide, he suggests colorful and imaginative registration,<sup>244</sup> a practice he followed in his public performances of Bach's organ music. The relationship between Felix Mendelssohn's discrete editorial and performance approaches to Bach's keyboard works was dialectical: Mendelssohn kept such additions and adaptations within bound by choosing an approach that plays up the essential features of the genre of the movement or section he is performing. He advocates doubling at the lower octave and improvising freely only in the context of free musical idioms—*e.g.* *arpeggiando* sections and cadenzas—not in strict ones.

This makes his commitment to added nuances clear, and suggests that he was prescient for having identified a potential danger of the historical performance practice movement then emerging around him at a very early date: *i.e.*, the perceived danger that performers might mechanically re-enact old conventions in a later, altered context.

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<sup>244</sup> Felix Mendelssohn, preface to *John Sebastian Bach's Organ Compositions on Corales* (London: Coventry & Hollier, 1845).

### Busoni's Tropes of Moses Mendelssohn's *Jerusalem* as Fischer's Model

Busoni's extensive adaptations of Bach's works to the concert hall and to the resources offered by the piano are well known (although the subtlety with which Busoni paired various techniques of adaptation to the particular genres of Bach's works is less often mentioned). Fischer's editions come much closer to the views that Moses Mendelssohn articulates in *Jerusalem*. Instead of setting down particular adaptations in the musical text—*i.e.*, adding expressive nuances to the text that exploit the piano's resources—Fischer provides instruction in principles of Bach-pianism. By 1928, he had arrived at the editorial point of view that he emphatically related to his student Paul Badura-Skoda at a master-class: "*Anmerkungen von Text getrennt!*" (*i.e.*, "editorial remarks kept separate from the text!").<sup>245</sup>

There is a fascinating and suggestive contradiction at work here: although Fischer explicitly advocates that performers add expressive nuances, his editions contain fewer and fewer of them. Those expressive nuances that he does provide are editorially transparent, being placed in parentheses. In the editions from 1924 to 1928, Fischer includes a limited number of dynamic indications alongside fingerings in his editions, but after that point, even these editorial additions fall away. Why would Fischer repeatedly endorse making textual emendations in his essays and editorial prefaces if he never intended to exercise such freedom in his edition of the musical text? What is the point of Fischer's having troped writings in which Busoni declared the act of musical composition to represent a *de facto* transcription of an ideal concept via temporal compromises, if not to justify editorial emendation and adjustment of the text?

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<sup>245</sup> Badura-Skoda, *Edwin Fischer: Meisterkurs in Luzern*, 15.

The answer to such questions is evident only if one realizes that there is a silent cultural partner at work. If one approaches the matter through the perspective of Midrash, then the apparent contradictions and tensions between Fischer's prose and his musical texts evaporate. Midrash provides individuals, not editors, with a framework for adapting a sacred text to the particular set of circumstances provided by the individual's environment. Such adaptations can never be set in the text because doing so turns a set of principles of textual adaptation and interpretation into written commands, into dogma.

According to Mendelssohn, "the lawgiver...God himself" provided Jewish "laws, judgments, commandments, rules of life." Moreover, God "gave them publicly, and in a marvelous manner never before heard of." Yet, although "these laws were revealed, that is, they were made known by the Lord, by words and in writing...only the most essential part thereof was entrusted to letters." For the rest, Jews depend upon unwritten laws, since "without explanations, limitations, and more particularly definitions, even these written laws are mostly unintelligible, or must become so in the course of time; since neither any words or written characters whatever retain their meaning unaltered, for the natural age of man."<sup>246</sup> Thus, interpretation is a fundamental aspect of Judaism; because of the polysemy of the texts upon which it is founded, the practice of Judaism without interpretation is inconceivable.

### **Fischer's Practice of Midrash and the Mendelssohnian Dialectic**

Beyond Fischer's associations with Bertholet, the Mendelssohn Family, and Busoni, one additional source suggests that Fischer was intimately acquainted with Jewish exegetical and editorial practices: that is, Fischer's having edited a chapter

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<sup>246</sup> Moses Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem*, 152-3.

intended to be issued with the second edition of Max Schlesinger's *Geschichte des Symbols* as "Symbolik in der Tonkunst." In his editorial preface to this work, Fischer admits to having made his own contributions to the manuscript, where needed.

Although it is not always possible to tell which passages are Schlesinger's and which are Fischer's, making such a distinction is not necessary: the relevant matter here is Fischer's contact with historical Jewish attitudes towards musical performance, to which it attests abundantly. Schlesinger died in 1914 and SdT was not published until 1930: even where Fischer merely edited Schlesinger's text, quotations, and references to outside sources, his prolonged association with the manuscript suggests that he became very well acquainted with the works that it cites. In this context, Fischer's close association with Schlesinger's ideas, as well as those of the sources on which he draws. Pages 17-20 are of particular interest because they offer a detailed description of a wide range of interpretive and notational matters relating to the history of Jewish service music.

Now knowing the set of concepts to which SdT exposed Fischer, it would be useful to compare Fischer's approach to the Mendelssohnian Dialectic. In order to augment and enhance what is known about Felix Mendelssohn's views towards Bach-interpretation, it seems useful to project Moses Mendelssohn's ideas into the realm of musical interpretation. Transposing some central concepts of Jerusalem to a musical context, the following practical implications emerge: the composer is a God-like "lawgiver" and his "marvelous" publication of a composition represents the "Law." However, only "the most essential part" of the Law immanent in a holy musical work is transmitted by its written text. For the rest, one is dependent upon unwritten conventions and upon interpretation; these necessarily flex with times and circumstances. To insist

upon fixity and inscription of the part of a musical composition that is properly assigned to unwritten conventions and personal interpretation degrades interpretation, corrupting the process with the received revelation of express interpretive instructions fixed in the authoritarian dogma of a composer who usurps the interpreters prerogatives. “Events and ideas” arising out of the interaction of the work within the context of human rationality and life should properly shape its reception. However, reliance on idolatrous received revelation reduces performance to a mechanical, subservient task rather than the living, wholly felt embodiment of a sacred text.

The view just articulated is wholly consistent with Fischer’s editorial approach, as well as with statements made in many of his essays that corroborate it. In his Bach-  
editions, Fischer provides an ideal text (the only markings are Bach’s original ones and some punctuation markings; these, however, are merely structural aids and have no fixed interpretive implications), an exegetical method that is focused on individuation of pieces, and non-prescriptive commentary (kept outside of the musical text). Instead of executing a canonical interpretation fixed in an edition, the student using Fischer’s text is to consider how Fischer has organized his system and created his own system of amplifying the inner content of Bach’s music.

The Mendelssohnian Dialectic implicit in the *Bi’ur* and in the *Sefer Megillat Kohelet*, likewise transposed to musical practice might look like this:

- (1) An *Urtext* must be found and its unadulterated transmission ensured by rejecting and removing interpolations. [This principle and the one that follows are derived from Mendelssohn’s *Bi’ur*.]
- (2) However, editorial explanations of signs and symbols are useful, as long as they are kept typographically separate from the *Urtext* and as long as they don’t tend towards obscurity.
- (3) Interpretative practice and accommodation to one’s contemporary context is essential if the *Urtext* is to maintain its cogency when realized

in a Performance/Index. [This principle and the one that follows are derived from Mendelssohn's *Sefer Megillat Kohelet*]

(4) Two principles of interpretation are of great importance. The goal of the exegete/interpreter is to understand the text's significance and meaning. Moreover, the keys to understanding the text are analyses of its stylistic, rhetorical, formal, and thematic content.

Fischer's editorial prefaces provide correlations to each of Moses Mendelssohn's four areas of concern. His posthumously published "Draft (*Entwurf*) for a Preface of *The WTC*" is undated but was most likely prepared between 1927 and 1928.<sup>247</sup> It would have stood at the head of his *T-A* publication of Bach's *WTC*, had those volumes appeared. The *Draft Preface*'s length—more than 500 words—makes it by far the longest of his prefaces, which usually were between 100 and 300 words.<sup>248</sup> That Hugo Haïd, the editor of *Dank an Edwin Fischer*, gave this document the title "*Entwurf*" in contradiction of its polished, completed, appearance suggests that he knew that it never actually stood at the head of a published edition. Here is a portion of the Draft Preface that is particularly relevant as the basis of a comparison to the terms of the Mendelssohnian Dialectic:

Various manuscripts exist of J. S. Bach's 'Well-Tempered Clavier'. The *Staatsbibliothek* in Berlin owns one of them. None of them bears tempo indications or expressive markings of any kind. The symbols for forte, piano, staccato, legato and the tempo markings are additions by the editor representing his personal taste. With as much justification, anyone can often read into Bach's notes alternative moods, tempi, and phrasings. And this kind of independent thinking, the interpretive task, cannot be recommended strongly enough. With the passage of time, it develops into a true stylistic sense. For this reason, it fell to me, as editor, to falsify Bach's original text as little as possible. The advanced player will riddle out Bach's meaning for himself. For the instruction of beginning students,

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<sup>247</sup> Edwin Fischer, "Draft Preface to the *Tonmeister-Ausgabe* of [J.S. Bach] *The Well-Tempered Clavier*," *Dank an Edwin Fischer*, edited by Hugo Haïd (Wiesbaden: Brockhaus Verlag, 1962), 105–6. My hypothetical dating is based upon its strong resemblance to Fischer's edition of Bach's *Italian Concerto*, which appeared in 1927, and the extent to which it dwells on performance practice and appropriate stylistic choices, which mark it as uncharacteristic of Fischer's earlier *T-A* editions.

<sup>248</sup> The entire text is found in Appendix II.

I have turned my experience to the task of making interpretive suggestions, which are set beneath the musical text.<sup>249</sup>

### **Similarities I: Insistence on an *Urtext* Free of Adulterations**

Fischer offers *Bach-Urtexten* accompanied by editorially transparent interpretive commentaries. This runs parallel to the segregation of text and commentaries in Moses Mendelssohn's *Bi'ur*, and in Felix Mendelssohn's edition Bach's organ music. Those few interpolations in the text that Fischer allows are identified explicitly in his prefaces. As a member of the *Verein* of the Prussian Royal Library (now the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin) and the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum (now the Bode Museum), Franz von Mendelssohn afforded Fischer extraordinary access to Bach sources. His association, through Alfred Bertholet, with Adolf von Harnack, Director of the *Königliche Bibliothek* from 1905 to 1921, would have further extended Fischer's access.

### **Similarities II: Inclusion of Necessary Explanations of Signs and Symbols**

Fischer's Bach-editions provided a table of ornament signs and their execution at a time when this was not yet standard practice. This accords with Moses Mendelssohn's emphasis on explaining the signs and symbols used in Hebrew texts, where the absence

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<sup>249</sup> "Von Johann Sebastian Bachs 'Wohltemperiertem Klavier' existieren verschiedene Handschriften. Einige davon besitzt die Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin; sie alle haben keinerlei Tempo- noch Vortragsbezeichnungen. Die in den heutigen Druck befindlichen forte-, piano-, staccato-, legato-Zeichen und Tempo-Vorschriften sind Zutaten der Herausgeber und stellen deren persönliche Auffassung dar. Es können oft mit demselben Recht andere Charaktere, Tempi, Phrasierungen aus den Noten Bachs herausgelesen werden. Und diese selbständige Arbeit des Interpretierens kann nicht genug empfohlen werden. Mit der Zeit entwickelt sich dadurch ein echtes Stilgefühl. Mir lag als Herausgeber aus diesem Grunde daran, das Bachsche Original möglichst unverfälscht zu reproduzieren. Der Fortgeschrittene wird selbst den Bachschen Sinn erraten. Für die das Studium Beginnenden habe ich meine Erfahrungen in Interpretationsvorschlägen und Anmerkungen niedergelegt." Edwin Fischer, "Entwurf eines Vorwortes für die Tonmeister-Ausgabe des 'Wohltemperierten Klaviers' [circa 1929]," *Dank an Edwin Fischer*, 105.

of notated vowels requires editorial explanation of interpretive principles by which the reader may add them. Fischer justifies his addition of a few dynamic indications along similar lines of argumentation: dynamics, although necessary, remain mostly un-notated; his provision of very basic dynamic indications provisionally fills the gap.

A further connection to Jewish notation practice is Fischer's choice of words for the vertical hash marks that he uses to articulate phrases varied over the course of his editorial career. The earliest term that he used for them—*Interpunktionszeichen*—seems at first to represent a glaring inconsistency in Fischer's editorial practice: why would he eschew adding slurs, local articulation marks, octave doublings, indications of rubato, pedal markings, and the like, yet feel that the *Interpunktionszeichen* belonged to the *Urtext*? However, it may be significant that *Interpunktionszeichen* is the term used to describe the marks made in Hebrew texts that have both diacritical and punctuation functions.

It is also interesting that Fischer declares that the true significance of these marks resides in the help that they give to “recitation” of the text. The choice of this word—which might be considered inadvisable because of its resonances with “recitative”—implies that Fischer equated these marks with similar marks, absent in historical texts but traditionally supplied in publications of Hebrew, intended to prevent errors in reciting the text aloud. The addition of such marks to an *Urtext* is justified because by the fact that they fall into a special category of textual interpolations that are salutary for clarifying the structure of the work for the reader/performer and whose addition is tolerable to reader/performers who strongly prefer *Urtexten*. Therefore, with respect to terminology



and function, Fischer's *Interpunktionszeichen* appear to be borrowed from Jewish editorial practice.

*Would Fischer have had any particular knowledge about Jewish diacritical marks and their relation to music?* His having edited SdT shows that he would have. With regard to diacritical marks added to Hebrew texts, a footnote in SdT reads:

Accents or *Neginot*: dots, lines, and checkmarks above or below words of the Torah, which signify how one should intone the text (literally: "sing the tone"). These are also called *Ta'amim* after the word *Ta'am* (i.e., sense, meaning), since tradition tells us that they promote understanding of biblical texts.<sup>250</sup>

### **Similarities III: Pedagogical Exemplification of a Cogent, Relevant Interpretation**

Like that of Moses Mendelsohn a century-and-a-half earlier, Fischer's interest in hermeneutics was intertwined with pedagogy. In his prefaces from 1930 onward, Fischer encouraged students to evolve their own principles of Bach-pianism according to certain, consistent principles: "Fingering is a matter for the individual to decide upon; however, it should be conceived such that it more or less compels the desired musical outcome."<sup>251</sup>

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<sup>250</sup> "Akzente oder Neginnoth: Punkte, Striche und Häkchen, die unter und über den Worten der Thora stehen und Merkmale sind, wie der Ton zu singen ist, heißen auch Taamin nach dem Worte Taam (Sinn, Verstand). Denn die Überlieferung sagt, sie fördern das Verständnis des biblischen Textes." Schlesinger, *Symbolik in der Tonkunst*, 29, fn 11. The equation of "Akzente" and "Neginnoth" conflates two of the three functions of cantillation signs, i.e. syntax, phonetics, and music. *Neginot* (נְגִינֹת) are musical symbols associated with notation of the trope, somewhat akin to neumes in the Christian tradition. They were associated particularly with notating string parts that were a feature of the performance of Psalms. *Ta'amim* (טעמים), on the other hand, are diacritical marks conveying accentuation and punctuation that are found in some versions of the Mishna.

<sup>251</sup> "... Die Fingersätze sind natürlich individuell und manche ungewohnten sind durch den beabsichtigten musikalischen Ausdruck zu klären." Edwin Fischer, preface to Bach's *Klavier-Konzert d-Moll* (T-A 12; Berlin: Ullstein, 1932). "... Die Fingersätze sind nicht immer nur auf Bequemlichkeit bedacht, sondern sie sollen zu guter Phrasierung und musikalischem Ausdruck zwingen. Edwin Fischer, preface to Bach's *Klavier-Konzert A-Dur* (T-A 11; Berlin: Ullstein, 1930). Regarding the dating of this edition, an updated catalogue of printed T-A editions appears on the inside rear paper-wrapper of this volume

The decisions made about “practical, technical matters” should be systematic and, indeed, should “compel” the performer by building interpretive viewpoints into the technical means of execution.

As one means of freeing the student, Fischer notes that “Bach’s original scores do not include nuances regarding tempo, articulation, detailed dynamics, and the like. The editor has taken pains to preserve Bach’s notation whenever possible. In place of making copious editorial notations, he recommends that the performer focus on healthy playing, clarity and simplicity of dynamics and other interpretive means, and careful phrasing. By no means is this meant to exclude imagination, feeling, and liveliness.”<sup>252</sup>

I find two phrases from Fischer *WTC Draft Preface* particularly interesting in the context of the Mendelssohnian Dialectic. First, there is Fischer’s decision “as editor, to falsify Bach’s original text as little as possible.” The original German locution—*i.e.*, “*Mir lag als Herausgeber aus diesem Grund daran, das Bachsche Original möglichst unverfälscht zu reproduzieren*”—seems to be a direct translation of Felix Mendelssohn’s desire (expressed, in English, in the Preface to his Hollier edition of Bach’s *Forty-Four*

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(see footnote 47, above). The key at the bottom of the page now reads: “Die mit Nr. bezeichneten Werke sind erschienen (Herbst, 1930), die übrigen folgen in kurzen Zwischenräumen.” This provides a *terminus ante quem* for publication of Fischer’s edition of the *Klavier-Konzert A-Dur* (T-A 11). Distribution delays may account for discrepant reports of publication dates provided by other sources. By the time that Fischer’s edition of the Keyboard Concerto in D Minor (BWV 974) appeared in 1932, the Ullstein editorial staff had conspicuously altered the key so that it no longer referred to forthcoming publications. By that time, Arthur Schnabel—general editor of the T-A—had left Berlin permanently.

<sup>252</sup> “... Sie tragen weder Tempo- noch irgendwelche Vortrags-vorschriften von [Bach] selbst: also keine Fortes, keine Pianos, keine Phrasierungen. Der Herausgeber hat sich bemüht, das Bachsche Notenbild nach Möglichkeit zu erhalten, und an Stelle vieler Bezeichnungen empfiehlt er dem Spieler: Gesundheit, Klarheit und Einfachheit in Ton und Vortrag, sorgfältig Phrasierung; dieses schließt Phantasie, Empfindung und Leben nicht aus.” Edwin Fischer, preface to *Englische Suite in A-Dur / J. S. Bach* (T-A 287; Berlin: Ullstein, 1926).

*Chorale Preludes*, and cited above) to “deviate as little from Bach’s original writing” as possible.

The second passage of interest follows immediately thereafter: “The advanced player will riddle out Bach’s meaning for himself. For the instruction of beginning students, I have turned my experience to the task of making interpretive suggestions, which are set beneath the musical text.” Again, Fischer’s original German seems to serve almost as a direct translation of Felix Mendelssohn’s expression of the same pair of exhortations: *i.e.*, Mendelssohn’s invitation to performers to indulge their “taste and fancy,” twinned with having used his considerable experience performing Bach’s organ works to fashion registration suggestions.

#### **Similarities IV: Interpretation as Embodiment of Stylistic, Rhetorical, Formal and Thematic Content**

In Chapters Two and Four, I present evidence that Fischer was especially intent upon projecting the immanent dynamics of any given piece of Bach via a personally derived system of correlations between elements of style, rhetoric, form, and motives and interpretive nuances. I will not duplicate that discussion here, although I will offer that Fischer’s consistent emphasis on “simplicity and clarity” combined with “imagination, feeling, and liveliness” based upon the performer’s having “riddled out Bach’s meaning” corresponds closely to the two modes of Midrash upon which Moses Mendelssohn placed the greatest emphasis: the clear understanding of literal meaning of *peshat*, and the subtle, contextually oriented meanings of *derash*.

## The Performance of Icons in Rituals of *Ersatzreligion*

Although Fischer operated in the world of the German-Jewish synthesis, it would be irrational to assume that *all* of his notions about the reception of Bach's music under the terms of *Kunstreligion* operated within Jewish structures. Non-Jewish associates of Fischer's also conveyed a concept of Bach as a being of particular spiritual significance within German culture extending far beyond the limitations of mere symbolism and leading closer to quasi-religious belief. As noted, in *J.S. Bach*, Albert Schweitzer expostulates almost constantly upon the notion of Bach as deity.<sup>253</sup> In *Seelen-Wanderung* Alfred Bertholet, wrote about belief in the transmigration of souls (*i.e.*, the ability of an immortal soul to inhabit living persons, a useful device for explaining Bach as a manifestation of an ancestral presence in modern German culture.<sup>254</sup> In his essay "On Transfer of Religious Homologies," Bertholet reported on the ease with which human societies transfer religious motives between various aspects of their cultures, which also may have led Fischer towards the belief that Bach's music may be seen as a musical transliteration of religious concepts.<sup>255</sup>

It seems worthwhile, in this context, to consider a term that has often been associated with recordings of large musical cycles: that is, the *icon* or—in the formulation that Fischer knew from citations in Schlesinger's *GdS* of the ideas of Emile Durkheim (1858-1917)—the *totem*. Durkheim located the source of religious effects—such as

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<sup>253</sup> Albert Schweitzer, *J.S. Bach* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1908).

<sup>254</sup> Alfred Bertholet, *The Transmigration of Souls*, English translation by H.J. Chaytor (Harper and Brothers, 1909). Originally published as *Seelen-Wanderung* (Tübingen: J. B. Mohr/Paul Siebeck, 1906).

<sup>255</sup> Alfred Bertholet, "Über kultische Motivverschiebung," *Sonderausgabe aus den Sitzungsberichten der Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 18 (Berlin: Verlag der Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1938).

apotropaic effects—in totemism, that is the identification of sacred objects specifically identified with a particular heritage, culture, and chain of clan relations. Adherents to a Durkheimian form of *Kunstreligion* could be expected to invest particular power in the apotropaic effects of artworks especially closely identified with the adherents' heritage, culture, and tribal relations.

The act of transposing a work of art to a ritual context provides it with spiritual significance; a strong desire for purity—typical of human attitudes towards the performance of rituals—is thereby projected onto the artwork, motivating the removal of polluting details. At the same time, because religion and symbolism are so strongly associated, and because symbolic power is a function of the concentration of meaning in abstract symbols, the desire for intensification of spiritual-*qua*-symbolic power motivates increased abstraction in ritual performances. In the same vein, emphasis upon sequence and order are aspects of a preference for correct ritual performance that appears to be universal.

All of these traits of ritual performance have cognates in musical performance in the ritual mode. The importance assigned to ordering behavior, for example, rises steeply when a piece of music is considered to be a ritual icon. Great significance is attached to performing cycles of preludes and fugues, sonatas, and the like (even if the composer intended no such cyclical performance); to observing all repeats, performing all movements, and to playing them in the order known to be “correct” within the group (even if that order is specious). Most importantly, ritual performance of pieces entails great stylization, which is to say that naturalistic declamation, gesture, and the like are supplanted by highly abstract and artificial regularization, elimination of elements of

variability, and smoothing out of detail. Stylization—heightened speech, stylized gesture, and the like—is a natural byproduct of ritual behavior; it comes as unselfconsciously to performers of rituals as it does to children attending birthday celebrations: no training is needed. The simple request to play, sing, or speak in ritual fashion is sufficient to elicit an array of ritual stylistic features with startling predictability.

The stylized representation of deities typically coincides with the desire for defense offered by powerful, authoritarian gods. As Amanda Porterfield notes, “the fast-growing popularity of pictorial representations of Christ and his saints in seventh-century Byzantium fed a demand for religious healing in an era of tumultuous change...”

Amid the incursions of Islam on the one hand and the prevalence of indigenous healers on the other, icons became increasingly popular as stand-ins for Christian holy men and as accessible, alternative means of enlisting the same kind of healing power that holy men offered...The artistic style of icons changed in response to the growing demand for their use as vehicles of healing power. Flatter and more solemn, austere, and commanding depictions of Christ and his saints replaced the more naturalistic depictions characteristic of early, Hellenistic icons, thus reflecting the growing authority of these images of sacred persons and devotion to their healing energies.<sup>256</sup>

If the thesis holds that stylized representations coincide with politically unstable periods in which safety and identity were perceived to be threatened from without, then early-twentieth-century calls for rescue by Bach would suggest that a preference for stylized Bach-performance would emerge soon thereafter. There is not room here to pursue the strength of such a correlation, but, surely, this would best be undertaken from a local/national point of view rather than a pan-European or worldwide one.

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<sup>256</sup> Amanda Porterfield, *Healing in the History of Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 77.

In his reception history of religious icons, Hans Belting relays stories that explain the origination of Christian icons from the apostolic era; these divide into two types: (1) those that attribute the painting in question consistently to a saint, and (2) those in which the painting is attributed to a *wholly non-existent* artist. Attribution to St. Luke made the icon “dependent on the will of the model, or even of heaven.” There is also a large body of icons described as *non manufactum*, i.e. “not made by a human hand.” Belting describes this as “the legend of the unpainted image,” which essentially manufactured itself.<sup>257</sup> In such cases, the Artist becomes a temporal extension of the deity with no agency of his own. Its sacredness and efficacy descend from the absence of the artist’s personality.

It was not the original body but an authentic imprint of it that propagated itself. The contact between image and image, like the original contact between body and image, became retrospective proof of the image’s origin. It also transferred miraculous power to the copy, as happened with the relics that continued to perform miracles through the substances that had come into contact with them. When the miraculous image duplicated itself of its own accord, it acted like its original: Christ’s wish to make an image of himself was passed on to the image when it made a copy of itself.<sup>258</sup>

In the realm of musical performance, the performer’s knowledge of listeners’ desire to possess a *non manufactum*—in other words, “authentic”—icon could easily motivate him to minimize the perception of the performer’s presence in favor of letting the immanent principles enshrined in the work itself take center stage as the dominant *in shaping its own expression*. That is, of course, exactly the mechanism of the icon painter, who suppresses self-expression in favor of letting the image of the deity shine through. In short, icon-receivers drive artists to make themselves disappear. If Fischer held the

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<sup>257</sup> Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image Before the Era of Art* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1997), 49-53.

<sup>258</sup> Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 53.

classical *non manufactum* view of the icon as the model of Bach-pianism, then one would expect to see certain, predictable structures in his editions and recordings that use the work as scaffolding on which to erect a performance whose inflections and nuances mirror the contents of the work rather precisely.



## Chapter Four – Vitalism and Dynamism as a Defense against Mechanization

“...Don’t listen to recordings until  
you become one, always repeating yourself.  
Instead, suffer, love, live in a state of constant change!”<sup>259</sup>

Edwin Fischer,  
*Von den Aufgaben des Musikers*

In Chapter Two, I argued that individuals and societies define one another, to some extent. That chapter approached the problem of *Entseelung* starting with the negative social and economic developments—perceived or otherwise—and then looked at effects that they may have brought to bear on individual, intellectual/spiritual life. I recalled proposals made by Weimar-Era leaders to address the internal, spiritual problem by looking outward and repairing what ailed society via collective exercises of the spirit such as quasi-religious, public celebrations of music, art, and philosophy.

The main point of this chapter stands more or less in obverse relation to that of Chapter Two (although structurally it will be similar, starting with society and then narrowing down to consider individuals). Here, I will examine inward, philosophical developments in Germany before the turn of the twentieth century and will recall perceptions held at the time that attitudes, approaches, and methods arrived at philosophically threatened to diminish spiritual expressions in German social and economic life. I will also describe the various proposals that cultural leaders made to address outward problems in social relations by looking inward and effecting philosophical repairs to individual world-views.

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<sup>259</sup> “...laßt euch nicht Platten vorspielen, bis ihr selbst eine Grammophonplatte seid, euch immer wiederholend; sondern leidet, liebet, lebet ein ewig sich erneuendes Leben!”  
Edwin Fischer, *Aufgaben*, 20.

As I did in Chapter Two, I will refer to Lee Rothfarb, who understands the valence of the problem examined in this chapter (and its potential solutions) as flowing in the direction that I have just described:

During the 1890s...ardent anti-modern and anti-Positivist sentiments arose, expressing, on the one hand, a nostalgic remembrance of a past age of higher cultural awareness, and on the other a fascination with the unquantifiable and irrational spirit that produces culture. In the educational realm that desire meant retreating from utilitarian instruction and training in technical skills (*Ausbildung*), and returning to self-cultivation, to the personal cultivation of mind and spirit (*Bildung*) in the tradition of Heinrich Pestalozzi and Wilhelm von Humboldt.

In the social realm, it meant abandoning the quest for material products in favor of acquiring an understanding and appreciation of cultural products. Social reform and cultural rebirth, in order to succeed, had to start with individual spiritual well-being and growth. As a means of coping with modernity, adverse external forces were offset by cultivating internal, psychic forces. Those hoping to stimulate a cultural renewal emphasized subjective, intuitive understanding of the world as an alternative to the objective, calculative methods of physical science.<sup>260</sup>

### Problems

In the mid-1920s, advances in photographic technology prompted its integration into the fine arts, provoking a turbulent period in which the respective values of subjective vs. objective observation and representation oscillated wildly. Photography, once praised for its representational objectivity—*i.e.*, prized because it was not a medium of artistic expression—developed into a form of abstract, subjective expressivity. Moreover, painting, once prized for its capacity for representational subjectivity—*i.e.*, prized because it used figures to convey personal expression—moved towards equally abstract, non-representational subjectivity.

In psychology, changes to the relations between humans and

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<sup>260</sup> Lee Rothfarb, “*Ernst Kurth: Selected Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 7.

machine technology led to a similar degree of turbulence. Questions arose regarding subjects and objects similar to those I've just described in the fine arts. Machines, once prized purely for their instrumentality—*i.e.*, as aids to goals emerging almost exclusively out of human consciousness—were regarded with increasing suspicion as shapers of human values. And humans, once prized for super-rational characteristics like intuition, insight, and spontaneity, came to be viewed as inferior, unpredictable, error-prone by comparison with their simulacra fixed within machines: *i.e.*, in the cinema, recorded sound, and the like. German psychologists of the early-twentieth century made broad, alarming claims about the psychological damage that they perceived to arise from prolonged exposure to this technologically-driven inversion; they located the new maladies in the regions in which new technology was most available, *i.e.*, in urban environments.

### Photography and Positivism

Photographers such as Renger-Patzsch, August Sander and Hugo Sieter became enthusiastic promoters of positivism and materialism in the arts. As John Roberts notes, they:

“all looked to the new aesthetic positivism to remove the dead wood of ‘artistic spirituality’ in photography. All embraced the New Objectivity as finally negating the subservience of photography to the hierarchies of art history. Photography was no longer treated as being in debt to painting. As Renger-Patzsch argued in *Das Deutsche Lichtbild* in 1927, the new photography ‘offers the opportunity to capture the magic of material things...’<sup>261</sup>

Roberts attributes part of the transition to the new ease of operation offered by cameras, starting in the mid-1920s, when new technological advances led to a profound transformation in the institution of photojournalism and the cognitive possibilities of the reportorial, as street photography and the ‘close-up’ became easier options and significant sources of visual experience in their own right. Roberts cautions against reversing causes and effects: “this is not to argue that the new technology somehow *caused* the New

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<sup>261</sup> John Roberts, *The Art of Interruption: Realism, Photography, and the Everyday*, 42-3.

Objectivity.

The new cameras and film stock only came into common use in the early 1930s. Most photographers were still using large or medium cameras on tripods. What the new technology established was a continuing sense of the cognitive possibilities of photography which had been accumulating since the weakening of the influence of pictorialism at the beginning of the century. Thus when Carl Georg Heise declared in 1928 in his preface to Renger-Patzsch's *Die Welt is Schön* that "a revolution in aesthetic perception" has occurred, "the camera is capable of perceiving certain natural objects more clearly than the eye," he was not referring to the influence of the *Leica* but to the modern legacy of camera technology as such.<sup>262</sup>

This celebration of the objective superiority of the photographic eye is relevant to the performing arts, where some composers—discussed in detail below—came to view the role of the performer in relation to the work as essentially that of the camera lens, *i.e.*, to reveal the work without inflecting it in the least. As I will show, they sought after the equivalent of a camera that could "perceive...more clearly than the eye.

German psychologists addressed problems stemming from the new, fast pace of urban life, although these often seem to consist of ninety-nine parts lament and denunciation to every one part helpful advice. Emil Kugler's *Systematics of Neurosis* exposed a number of themes of life in the Weimar Republic that appear in several of Fischer's socio-cultural diagnoses. Kugler writes of "the unbearable agitation of modern economic life that is particularly advanced and concentrated in big cities," which he calls the "source of vasomotor neurosis, as well as increased nicotine contamination, and the cause of early-onset cardiac and cerebral arteriosclerosis..." He finds urban life to be infested with, "hypochondriac disorders among retirees, as well among artists, in whom hypochondria emerges secondary to the egocentricity that attends genius." He asks,

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<sup>262</sup> Roberts, *The Art of Interruption*, 42.

“whether the neurotic dispositions particular to each of these sub-groups might also be thought of as attributable to the neurosis that is induced by urban life,” in particular, “by modern rapid transit.” No corner of urban culture is immune from these effects, the city’s “unhealthy agitation being transmitted to the whole of urban life, thought, and entertainment...”

Indeed, the serious damage to modern intellectual life that is done by its lamentable mechanization—given stark, culture-negating expression in journalism and in the cinema—is also largely attributable to urban culture...Intelligentsia and underclass cozy up to one another in the filth of the cinema, which accursed mechanization utterly depletes of cultural value, just as color printing does in the visual arts and the phonograph does in music. It degrades and debases our hitherto artistic and productive populace with kitsch and trash that is as sentimental as it is brutal. The total mechanization of intellectual life—with its undermining of all personal thoughts and feelings, all personal judgment in the big questions of life—leads, under the harmful influence of pseudo-medical claptrap and flapdoodle, to the urban population’s mass hypochondria. From regular exposure to such a thoroughly witless source of mental activity, mass suggestibility often vents itself in mass hysteria.<sup>263</sup>

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<sup>263</sup> “Wir haben in der unerträglichen Hetze des modernen Wirtschaftslebens, die es besonders in seinen Konzentrationspunkten der Großstadt entfaltet, die es auf das gesamte Großstadtleben überträgt und auch im übrigen Verkehr und im Genießen der Großstadt zur Geltung bringt, die Quelle der vasomotorischen Neurose gefunden, die zugleich mit der zunehmenden Nikotinverseuchung auch die Ursache der frühzeitigen kardialen und zerebralen Arteriosklerosen bedeutet...Unter der Gruppe der „Privaten“ dürfen wir in den Pensionisten und den kleinen Rentnern eine gewisse Neigung zu hypochondrischen Erkrankungen erwarten, ebenso unter den Künstlern dieselbe Disposition aus der Egozentrizität des Genialen ableiten. Die ganzen Intelligenzberufe tragen oft aus der Schulzeit noch eine gewisse Angstdisposition an sich...Es muß noch die Frage erörtert werden, ob außer diesen neurotischen Dispositionen, wie sie den einzelnen Ständen der Großstadt eigen sind, auch noch von einer Großstadtneurose an sich gesprochen werden kann...Doch haften der Großstadtkultur daneben auch die schweren Schäden des modernen Geisteslebens in erhöhtem Maße an, die in seiner traurigen Mechanisierung bestehen und im Journalismus und im Kino ihren krassen und kulturverneinenden Ausdruck gefunden haben...Und Intelligenz und Unterschicht trifft sich behaglich im Schmutz des Kinos, dem ebenso wie dem Farben druck in der bildenden Kunst und dem Phonographen in der Musik der Fluch der Mechanisierung jeden kulturellen Wert raubt und unser, gerade in seinem Genießen bisher so künstlerisch-produktives Volk mit seinem sentimental und brutalen Kitsch und Schund herabzieht und entwürdigt. Diese Mechanisierung des ganzen geistigen

Although Kugler's tone is far from dispassionate or clinical, it is typical of the scorn that conservatives heaped upon the new, urban culture of Germany in the first decades of the twentieth century. The *Völkish* and, later, National Socialist, movements both stimulated and built upon such anxieties.

The above, besides providing a cogent snapshot of the level of anxiety that attended changes to the relationship of human society to new technology, is useful for placing Fischer in the context of contemporary views about mechanical representations of human musical expression. Fischer's views, as I will show, were complex, alighting neither at one extreme—*i.e.*, that of celebrating the mechanical qualities of mechanical reproduction—nor the other—*i.e.*, that of rejecting mechanical reproduction as inherently decadent and deadening—but finding purchase in a sophisticated middle ground.

#### Negative Musical Effects: the Threat Posed to Expressivity by *Mechanische Musik*

Berlin in the 1920s was the world center of experiments with *mechanische Musik* by a movement that explored potential applications of electric or mechanized instruments—among them piano rolls, Trautonium, Ondes martinot, Theremin, and the record turntable—to composition and, eventually, their implications for musical performance as a whole.<sup>264</sup>

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Lebens mit ihrer Untergrabung alles persönlichen Denkens und Empfindens, alles persönlichen Urteils in den großen Fragen des Lebens, führt unter dem schädlichen Einfluß der medizinischen Halbweisheit und pseudoärztlicher literarischer Betriebsamkeit zu einer Massenhypochondrie des Großstadtpublikums und zugleich durch die Gewöhnung an diese einheitliche trübe Quelle aller Geistigkeit zu einer Massensuggestibilität, die sich oft auch in Massenhysterien Luft macht.“ Dr. Emil Kugler, *System der Neurose* (Berlin: Urban und Schwarzenberg, 1922), 177-8.

<sup>264</sup> A superb summary of this first type of *mechanische Musik* is found in Mark Katz, “Hindemith, Toch and *Grammofonmusik*,” *Journal of Musicological Research*, Volume 20/2 (2001), from which I have extracted his précis of the movement's Berlin history.

*Mechanische Musik* can be taken to signify two, distinct cultural trends. One trend—encouraged by Igor Stravinsky, Paul Hindemith, Hans Haaß, László Moholy-Nagy, and the young musicologist H.H. Stuckenschmidt—celebrated the regularization of musical rhythm and expression, accurate reproduction of the composer's putative wishes as notated in the score, the phenomenon of the *Trick-Aufnahme* (i.e., using recording equipment to create novel effects not achievable with performers and instruments alone), and a repudiation of the performer's role as intercessor between the composer and his audience. A related trend flourished concurrently in which music composers writing for performances using conventional instruments embraced, ennobled, or portrayed aspects of machines. This chapter concerns the former of these two.

The principal benefits that Ernst Toch, Stravinsky, and Stuckenschmidt asserted for *mechanische Musik* were: 1) an expansion of tonal and rhythmic possibilities, especially those that bypassed conventional musical notation by employing a direct engraving process by the composer; and 2) the potential elimination of the interpreter from musical life, placing all control over execution in the hands of the composer. Performers reacted to the second of these possibilities with some horror, especially to these composers' most vituperative assertions. A 1923 essay by Moholy-Nagy strikes a decidedly antagonistic tone.

The composer would be able to create his composition for immediate reproduction on the disc itself, thus he will not be dependent on the absolute knowledge of the interpretive artist. Instead of the numerous 'reproductive talents,' who have actually nothing to do with *real* sound-creation (in either an active or a passive sense), the people will be educated to the *real* [both emphases original] reception or creation of music.<sup>265</sup>

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<sup>265</sup> Kristina Passuth, *Moholy-Nagy* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1987), 291.

As Stuckenschmidt put it in two years later, “the resistance of sentimentalists will not hamper the development of music. The role of the interpreter belongs to the past.”<sup>266</sup>

Haaß, writing in 1927, went still further.

It is often stated that mechanical music stands in the closest connection to the concepts of objectivity and detachment. I wish here to ask the question again briefly: what is objective music? In any case, the main characteristic of this music is the complete emancipation from any individuality, *i.e.*, the exclusion of voluntary and involuntary behavior by the interpreter as well as the composer. Thus the problem of a purely objective music would be solved if we had compositions by which one could dispense with every dynamic gradation and every tempo change within the piece and within the individual phrase.<sup>267</sup>

In 1930, Igor Stravinsky—a composer of far greater stature and influence in Germany than Haaß and, potentially, an even greater threat to German performers’ notions of the expressive task of the musical performer—added his voice to the growing chorus of composers wishing to eliminate the interpreter. In language that drew into question any role for performers, Stravinsky seemed drawn to the possibility that they might be eliminated altogether: “It would be of the greatest interest to create music specifically for the phonograph, music whose true image—its original sound—could only be preserved through mechanical reproduction.”<sup>268</sup> The emphasis provided by the word *only* in this observation seems to indicate Stravinsky’s eagerness for a future in which only the mechanical reproduction of a putatively “true” and “original” vision of a composition would be allowed to exist.

This passage—which Stravinsky wrote in German and published in the short-

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<sup>266</sup> H.H. Stuckenschmidt, “Die Mechanisierung der Musik,” *Pult und Taktstock* (1924), 8.

<sup>267</sup> Hans Haaß, “Über das Wesen mechanischer Klaviermusik,” *Musikblätter der Anbruch* 8/9 (1927), 351.

<sup>268</sup> Although this quote is often passed over by writers on early music in favor of the more explicit statement that Stravinsky made in his 1936 autobiography, it is clear that he is thinking in terms of authenticity as early as 1930.



lived Berlin journal *Kultur und Schallplatte*—would have been even less likely to have escaped Fischer’s notice than those of lesser composers like Toch and Haaß, or of Moholy-Nagy, who—although a first cousin to Georg Solti—was known primarily as a photographer and painter.<sup>269</sup> They took the position that the “true image” of a composition “objectively” executed via mechanical reproduction was automatically, unquestionably to be preferred to one that featured “any individuality, *i.e.*, the exclusion of voluntary and involuntary behavior by the interpreter as well as the composer.” This was a radical view that, if left unopposed, might have become a substantial threat to expressivity in musical performance. Fischer was particularly attuned to this potential problem.

Social and Philosophical Reactions:  
*Lebensphilosophie*, and Phenomenology/Gestalt Theory

In Chapter Two, I recalled the intent of the *Konservative Revolution* to reinvigorate the *Volk* in a collective exercise of the German spirit in order to rescue the soul of individuals. In this chapter, I will focus on two philosophical areas. One of these is a composite formed of Phenomenology and Gestalt Theory. The latter emerged as a practical application of the philosophical speculations of the former. Hence, they are best considered as two expressions of the same set of ideas; in keeping with that, I refer to them in the composite term Phenomenology/Gestalt Theory in this chapter. For ease of reading, I will refer to the German *Lebensphilosophie* movement, using the closest equivalent in English, as “Vitalism.”

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<sup>269</sup> Due to the short life of the journal, the source of this quotation is rare and difficult to access directly. However, it is cited in Frank W. Hoffman and Howard Ferstler, *Encyclopedia of Recorded Sound* (Routledge, 2004), 1026, fn.7. The footnote refers to the journal as having been published without a certain end-date: “1929-1931?”

Both Phenomenology/Gestalt Theory and Vitalism sought to rescue culture and society from the negative effects of *Mechanizierung* (i.e., human life debased by dehumanizing machines), and both focused attention and study on aspects of thought and action peculiar to human beings, i.e., aspects that articulated human behavior from purely mechanical forms. In addition, Phenomenology and Gestalt psychology share their “assertion of the primacy of perception over sensation.”<sup>270</sup> That is, they assign priority and value not to the process of acquiring sensuous data from the world, but rather to the analytical and creative processes involved in organizing and interpreting that data.

Fischer had two means of access to phenomenological knowledge: first, directly, through his associates in the Warburg-circle; second, indirectly, translated into musical terms through Kurth. In all likelihood, the two paths open to Fischer served to reinforce Fischer’s exposure to, and interest in, the implications of phenomenology for musical performance. Fischer appears to have learned about principles of Gestalt theory, on the other hand, from Kurth; in any case, no direct contact with Gestalt psychologists has emerged from my studies of Fischer’s life.

Lee Rothfarb sees manifestations of both Phenomenology and Gestalt Theory in the ideas of Ernst Kurth. Rothfarb connects Kurth to the nascent Gestalt movement in the following passage:

The idea of the whole being more than the aggregate sum is one of the central theses of *Gestalt* psychology. In the years just before 1917, when Kurth was writing *Grundlagen [des linearen Kontrapunks]* there was no established "school" of Gestalt psychology nor any extensive body of Gestalt-psychological writings from which Kurth might have derived his ideas. In the late 1800s, before the Gestalt movement got under way with Max Wertheimer's pioneering “Experimentelle Studien” (*Zeitschrift für Psychologie* 60 [1911]), there were a few authors who had written about

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<sup>270</sup> Frederic J. Schwartz, *Blind Spots* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005). 154.

holistic perception. Before Wertheimer, both Ernst Mach and Christian von Ehrenfels wrote about supersummative qualities of objects of perception...Significantly, both [Kurth and Mach] referred to supersummative properties in melodies to illustrate their points.<sup>271</sup>

In another passage, Rothfarb links Kurth to Phenomenology.

Phenomenology is relevant for Kurth's writings because, in accord with its general tenets, his analyses describe and try to elucidate the organic function of manifest aural events. Moreover, his contemporaries counted his work among the newly emerging phenomenological approaches to analysis and aesthetics. The aesthetician Arthur W. Cohn and the musicologists Hans Mersmann, Herbert Eimert, and Rudolf Schafke, for example, all cite Kurth's research as being phenomenological.<sup>272</sup>

Summing up Rothfarb, because Phenomenology was established prior to Kurth's *Grundlagen*, and Gestalt theory emerged alongside the period in which Kurth wrote and published *Grundlagen*, it makes some sense to refer to Kurth and Gestalt theory as two, coterminous byproducts of Phenomenology.

Kurth's views on performance are particularly clear in his emphasis on dynamic fluctuations of Bach's music and the performer's responsibility to realize and amplify them. Kurth gives voice to a theory of dynamism in musical expression that is not only resolutely anti-mechanistic and expressive, but which demonstrated that musical dynamism was intrinsic and that it could be heightened by the appropriate application of expressive nuance. The following text from *Grundlagen* is key to understanding Fischer's Bach-pianism.

Instrumental performance must be guided by an understanding of the dynamics of motion and of the striving forces that lead to the formation and realization of lines in developmental-transitional passages. Essentially, a performance should co-form—hence, always re-enact—[a work's] linear motions on the basis of the energy inherent in their shape, with the sole aim of bringing out the now-rising, now-falling, swaying of dynamic

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<sup>271</sup> Rothfarb, *Ernst Kurth*, 43, footnote 10.

<sup>272</sup> Rothfarb, *Ernst Kurth*, 17.

movement, as absolute shapes almost absolved of being tones. With regard to dynamics, a performance first and foremost has to reflect such fluctuations...<sup>273</sup>

In invoking the analysis of the immanent dynamics of a composition by Bach to guide the performer's application of audible dynamic nuances, Kurth had laid a cornerstone of Fischer's Bach pianism, which took that principle and expanded it to other expressive dimensions. I will describe Fischer's Bach-pianism as emerging out of his coupling particular expressive variables to immanent dynamics in Bach's music extensively in Chapter Five.

Fischer's connections to leaders of the Vitalist movement are direct. The German biologist and philosopher Hans Driesch (1867-1941), was one of the primary leaders of the Vitalist movement; both Driesch and Fischer were *Kuratoren* of the Bauhaus. Driesch's ideas overlap strongly with those of Rudolf Steiner, whom Fischer also followed, so much so that it is often difficult to discern which of the two might have been of greater influence upon Fischer. As in the case of Fischer's multiple connections to Phenomenology, the reinforcement of ideas held in common between Driesch and Steiner probably explains the appearance of similar-sounding ideas in Fischer's writings. Here, for example, is Steiner's formation of some fundamental principles of Vitalism:

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<sup>273</sup> "Das Verständnis für die Dynamik der Bewegungen und strebenden Kräfte, welche in den Zwischenspielentwicklungen zur Liniengestaltung und Ausspinnung führt, muss vor allem auch die Wiedergabe auf dem Instrument leiten; diese soll im Wesentlichen nichts anderes sein als ein Mitgestalten, daher stets wieder Neugestalten der Linienzüge nach ihrer Formenergie und nur unter Hervorkehrung der wechselnden steigenden, schwebenden oder abwärtssinkenden Bewegungskräfte; absolutestes, fast von den Tönen gelöstes Formen. Vornehmlich in der äußeren Dynamik muss die Wiedergabe von dieser Bewegungsentwicklung abhängig sein; insbesondere die Gestaltung der Schwebebewegungen erfordert auf dem Instrument-entsprechenden Zartheit in der Tongebung und Einfühlung in den Charakter dieser Themenbildung." Kurth, *Grundlagen*, 427.

In crystals we find the transition from the formless mineral world to the living capacity of the plant kingdom to produce forms. The spiritual archetype of crystallization is the transition from a formless spirit germ point to a spiritual formation with a shape. If this transitional process condenses to the point where our senses can perceive its result, it manifests in the sense-perceptible world as the process of mineral crystallization. In the plant world, too, a spirit germ that has assumed form is present, but in this case the formed being retains the living sculptural ability that the crystal's spirit germ lost when it took on shape, exhausting its life in the formation it produced. In contrast, plants possess both form and the ability to go on forming; this characteristic of spirit germs is retained from the spiritual world's upper regions. Thus, a plant is both form, like the crystal, and formative force.<sup>274</sup>

Around the same time as Steiner was promoting them, Driesch presented the ideas that appear in Steiner's paragraph above in a long series of lectures and books published starting in 1908 and extending almost to the end of the Weimar Republic.<sup>275</sup> Fischer offers paraphrases of Vitalist doctrine in a number of his essays. In his 1932 "Art and Life," Fischer refers to the poet and playwright August Strindberg's "crystallographs," the products of an experimental photographic process with which he was engaged from 1892 to 1896. Strindberg was drawn to these images because of their potential for "verifying his analogical, monist conception of the universe."<sup>276</sup> Fischer found support in Strindberg's experiments, which he seems to have taken at face value, much as others of

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<sup>274</sup> Steiner, *Theosophy* (Chicago: Rand, McNally & Co., 1910), 54.

<sup>275</sup> Hans Driesch, *The Science and Philosophy of the Organism: The Gifford Lectures delivered before the University of Aberdeen in the Year 1907 and 1908* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1908; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1929). Hans Driesch, "The Justification of Vitalism," *The Cambridge Magazine* 1/15 (1912), 397. Hans Driesch, *The History and Theory of Vitalism*, translated by C.K. Odgen (London: Macmillan Publishers, 1914).

<sup>276</sup> Noting a strong similarity between the photographic traces left by plants and water crystals, Strindberg wondered, "Could water in vapor form, having passed through plants a number of times, have taken and kept the imprint of their shape? Could that same water, leaving the primitive state of its crystalline shape, be capable of developing and creating free shapes in crystal formations? Did water give plants their shape, or is it the other way round?" "The Elemental Photographer: Clément Chéroux on August Strindberg. *August Strindberg: Painter, Photographer, Writer*. Tate Modern, 17 February – 15 May 2005. <http://www.tate.org.uk/tateetc/issue3/auguststrindberg.htm> (accessed June 25, 2009).

his generation accepted Weininger's pseudo-science. Fischer thought of the phenomena that Strindberg observed as "a beautiful analogy for the thought and practice of the interpreter: we must absorb the nature of the composer that his formative forces pass over into us, so that, unconsciously, his essential character appears in our interpretation of his works."<sup>277</sup> Elsewhere, Fischer articulates his belief slightly differently: the organic unity of musical works as expressed in a "constant character." Troping Goethe (*e.g.*, "and no time, no power, can dismember characteristic form which develops in living fashion"), Fischer writes: "If a work has *grown*, as a tree grows...with its own constant character...it is good." And this bears implications for performers, who must strive "to understand this profound logic, to follow it in essentials" as "the first task of the interpreter."<sup>278</sup> This is not far afield of another line of thought that emerged from Vitalism, *i.e.*, physiognomy, to which I referred in Chapter Two. Fischer's belief system regarding physiognomic types and inborn performance capacities may have stemmed from Ernst Kretschmer's correlation of body types and psychological predispositions in *Körperbau und Charakter*.<sup>279</sup>

Vitalism also encompassed a point of view regarding attaining historical knowledge through present-day, subjective, empathic experience of—*i.e.*, imaginative

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<sup>277</sup> Both passages in Edwin Fischer, "Art and Life," *Reflections on Music*, 11-12. Fischer may have borrowed the title for this essay from Heinrich Schekner's "Kunst und Leben," published in *Die Zeit* (February, 1896). Fischer's musings seem to paraphrase Goethe's philosophical poem "Urworte, Orphisch." "Und keine Zeit und keine Macht zerstückelt / Geprägte Form, die lebend sich entwickelt." Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, "Urworte, Orphisch," *Zur Morphologie* in Stuttgart: Cott'sche Buchhandlung, 1820.

<sup>278</sup> Fischer, "On Musical Interpretation," *Reflections on Music*, 23.

<sup>279</sup> Ernst Kretschmer *Körperbau und Charakter. Untersuchungen zum Konstitutionsproblem und zur Lehre von den Temperamenten* (Berlin: Springer Verlag, 1921).

speculation and musing about—historical artifacts, as they were the past. This point of view posits that present-day understandings about historical objects are constructed and mediated, and that, if one is going to rely upon constructions, knowledge about historical constructions provides an important context in which to make judgments about historical change, as well as about intentions and originally intended meanings.

Under the Vitalist banner, Georg Simmel posited that historical knowledge of artifacts can only be grasped through a projection into the past of one's experiential knowledge, "an empathic understanding, or *Verstehen*, of the experience of the past," as Frederic Schwartz puts it.<sup>280</sup> However, Schwartz continues, "Verstehen is radically ahistorical; the empathic re-experience of an event can be divorced from reality—the experience of a fictional event...[but this] is not historical knowledge," since historical knowledge relies upon locating an artifact precisely in the historical sequence of time and events. "Simmel's solution," per Schwartz, "[is] that...ahistorical *Verstehen*...and the exact placement in a series...can be met at the same time only when history, or a portion of it, is grasped as a totality...in which each event...can have only one determinate position."

The essential elements may be seen in Fischer's writing, in which he declares the empathic interpretation of Bach to be possible only once one has relocated it in the historical past through an act of the will that suppresses knowledge of intervening events. Fischer describes this line of thinking in his 1943 essay on Bach.

"In order to understand an historically great figure, to interpret his works aright, one must take into account the contemporary scene which was his setting. One must accomplish the difficult task of putting out of mind all mental and material creations which did not exist before him, had

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<sup>280</sup> Schwartz, *Blind Spots*, 114-115.

not been discovered, written, had not occurred. In our case, in order to understand Bach against the background of his time, we must set aside all the music of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, the whole Romantic movement, and also all the philosophy and free thought, the political conceptions and ideas of space of a later generation.”<sup>281</sup>

This not only echoes Simmel’s “ahistorical *Verstehen*,” but also Jules Combarieu’s concept of the “adequate rendering.” The performer achieves this, Combarieu’s posits, if he or she intuitively “understands the [composer’s] musical thought, identifies with it, and reproduces it exactly.” Combarieu identifies Anton Rubenstein as a model of this kind of pianism, which seeks to provide “so adequate a rendering that, in listening to him, one no longer thought of the presence of the pianist but of Beethoven himself.” Combarieu disparages the “original rendering,” in which the performer “gradually falls into the ridiculous error of substituting his own thoughts for those of a Beethoven or a Bach, and of thrusting his own personality in front of these great masters’ own.”<sup>282</sup> If the listener requires the “presence” of “Beethoven himself,” then the performer must suspend or conceal his personal identity and autonomy in order not to obscure that of the revived, inhabiting composer.

Another theme of Vitalism that arises with regularity in Fischer’s writing is that of human artistic expression radiating metaphysical power on a cosmic scale. His

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<sup>281</sup> Edwin Fischer, “Johann Sebastian Bach” (1943/47), *Reflections on Music*, 43. This essay was originally published in German in 1943. When *Musikalische Betrachtungen* was released in English as *Reflections on Music*, in 1947, an English translation of excerpts from the 1943 essay was included.

<sup>282</sup> Jules Combarieu, *Music: Its Laws and Evolution*, *Music: Its Laws and Evolution*, “authorized translation” into English by an unnamed translator, (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1910), 248-9. Originally published as *La musique et la magie. Étude sur les origines populaires de l’art musical son influence et sa fonction dans les sociétés* (Paris: Alphonse Picard et fils, 1909).



mysticism likely stems from his involvement with Steiner's Anthroposophy movement, although it also strongly resembles the Catholic mysticism of Olivier Messiaen.<sup>283</sup>

Stare at the starry sky and feel the eternity of the millions of light-years spanned by the Milky Way! The anxious, conscious mind asks: "where does this far-flung world come from, where is it going?" Then a deep comprehension tells you: "the arms of God bind together the whole, boundless system." You turn your gaze back to the mundane world and feel all that you once thought was so important fall away. That which is truly important looms large now: the ancient Trees of Life.<sup>284</sup> You perceive the systemic organization of the particular and begin to calculate in new, cosmic terms.<sup>285</sup>

One of the most significant points of agreement between principles that Fischer espoused in his writing and Vitalism is in the idea that sincerity of feeling manifests real effects in the world. In the case of music, Fischer felt strongly that the interior feelings of the performer were essential to connection with an audience. In Fischer's view, for any gesture to have effect, it "must be experienced, it must be felt [by the performer], just like all the eternally beguiling gestures that people exchange: as one opens his arms to hug

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<sup>283</sup> For one example, see Messiaen's comments to "Joie du sang des étoiles," *Turangalila-Symphonie* (1949). "This is a long and frenetic dance of joy. In order to understand this movement's excesses, one must bear in mind that the lovers' transformation takes place for them on a cosmic scale." «C'est une longue et frénétique danse de joie. Pour comprendre les excès de cette pièce, il faut se rappeler que l'union de vrais amants est pour eux une transformation, et une transformation à l'échelle cosmique. » Olivier Messiaen, "Programme des Concerts," *III<sup>e</sup> Festival International de Musique, Aix-en-Provence*, (booklet of July 15-August 4, 1950).

<sup>284</sup> This appears to be a reference to Revelation 22:2, which is the only source, biblical or poetical, that I have found which refers to the more common form *Baum des Lebens* in the plural, i.e., *Bäume des Lebens*.

<sup>285</sup> "Und dann schaue in das gestirnte Himmelsgewölbe dieser Augustnacht und fühle das Walter der Ewigkeit in den Millionen Lichtjahre entfernten Milchstraßen – angstvoll fragt dein Verstand: woher kommen, wohin fliehen diese auseinanderstrebenden Welten, bis ein tiefes Ahnen dir sagt: da sind Götterarme, die den ganzen, grenzenlosen Kreis zusammenhalten – du atmest auf – dein Blick wendet sich auf dein Tägliches Leben, und du siehst alles, was dir so wichtig schien, kleiner und kleiner werden, und immer machtvoller erstehen die wirklich großen Dinge – die alten Bäume des Lebens – du fassest die Einzelheiten zusammen in Systeme und rechnest mit Lichtjahren..." Edwin Fischer, "Entspannen und Leben," *Aufgaben*, 22-3.

someone and the invisible wall separating two souls disappears without a word spoken between them. It is a thing of beauty when an artwork comes to life and draws souls together.”

Indeed, feeling the work as the composer once did is the source of authenticity in Fischer’s philosophy of performance. Nothing other than that which performer subjectively experienced was of any use to Fischer’s performance philosophy. “The forced tone knocks at the heart’s door without effect; it won’t gain entry. The pulsating tone is the right vehicle to transmit your feelings straightaway into the recipient’s emotions, as though one were riding a wave of radiation right into the hearer’s sensibilities.”<sup>286</sup> “Nothing is more blissful than communally experiencing the flow of a musical structure as the composer originally felt it and to play a small role in the processes of its instantiation.”<sup>287</sup> In a passage that echoes the Phenomenologists whom he knew from Kreutzlingen, Fischer speaks of musicians who “enact processes that music holds in common with painting, architecture, and science, all of which play upon universal, *a priori* principles.”<sup>288</sup>

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<sup>286</sup> “Ein gepreßter Ton klopft vergebens an das Herz des Hörers; er wird nicht eingelassen, der schwebende Ton ist aber ein geeignetes Vehikel, auf dem deine Empfindungen wie ein Reiter auf der Ätherwelle ins Gemüt des Empfängers gelangt.“ Fischer, *Aufgaben*, 15.

<sup>287</sup> “Ritardandi, Crescendi, und Diminuendi sind nur Mittel, um die Gliederung hörbar zu machen, und haben nur als solche Mittle Berechtigung. Man soll nicht bei jeder Modulation, sie sei auch noch so schön, bei jeder ausdrucksvollen Wendung ein Ritardando oder ein Diminuendo anbringen, damit ändert man den Grundriß eines Werkes und bleibt nicht im Gesetz]...Nichts ist schöner, als mit seinem Publikum den Ablauf der Gestaltung, wie ihn der Komponist vorempfunden hat, noch einmal zu erleben und ein wenig teilzuhaben am schöpferischen Vorgang der Gestaltung.“ Fischer, *Aufgaben*, 54.

<sup>288</sup> “Es gehört ein jeder Musiker zu jener Schar der Eingeweihten, die als Maler, Baumeister, Wissenschaftler, Weise am geistigen Weiterleben wirken. Fischer, *Aufgaben*, 17-18.

Closer to Fischer's immediate circles, Hindemith was also prone to such mysticism. In 1937, Hindemith described tonality as being "a force, like Earth's gravity." Because of the likelihood that Fischer paraphrased it, Hindemith's claim is worth considering within its original context: "[Pitches in the scale] are related in a progressive sequence of degrees of relationship to a starting pitch...And wherever relationships of pitches to one another is concerned, tonal relationships appear. It is absolutely impossible to recognize groups of tones without tonal relations. Tonality is a power like Earth's gravity."<sup>289</sup> In an essay published in 1949, Fischer appears to have married the sentiments that Hindemith expressed in the passage just cited with the perspectives of Kurth: "The gravitational pull of the tonic of any given scale creates tension in musical melodies. Every interval of the scale has its own particular degree of gravitational pull. You could compare the two Cs of an octave scale with two suns pulling on the planets. Put this to the test some time with the themes of the *WTC*; observe how they defy the laws of gravity, thereby revealing their kinetic energy."<sup>290</sup>

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<sup>289</sup> "...in der absteigenden Folge ihrer Verwandtschaft zu einen Ausgangston geordnet erscheinen" And, "Und wo Tonverwandtschaften gegeneinander ausgespielt werden, treten tonale Beziehungen auf. Es ist darum gänzlich unmöglich Tongruppen ohne tonale Bezogenheit zu erfinden. Die Tonalität ist eine Kraft wie die Anziehungskraft der Erde." Paul Hindemith, *Unterweisung im Tonsatz* 1 (Mainz: B. Schotts Söhne, 1937), 78, 183.

<sup>290</sup> "Zur melodischen musikalischen Spannung gehört die Anziehungskraft des Grundtones einer musikalischen Skala. Jedes Intervall in der Oktave besitzt einen verschiedenen Grad der Anziehungskraft, und man kann in der C-Dur-Tonleiter die beiden C der Oktave ruhig mit zwei Sonnen vergleichen, die ihre Planeten zu sich heranziehen. Untersuchen Sie daraufhin einmal die Themen der Fugen des Wohltemperierten Klaviers, wie sie diesen Anziehungsgesetzen unterworfen sind und wie ihre Kraft sich an der Überwindung dieser Spannungen offenbart." Fischer, *Aufgaben*, 13-14.

Four, Closely Related Developments in Art and Music:  
Organic Unity, Anti-Ornamentalism, Geometric Abstraction, and *Prägnanz*

**Organic Unity**

To the superficiality of highly decorated surfaces that Germans supposed obscured form and function in French Gothic architecture, they opposed the systemic unity that they detected in Gothic architecture, cleansed of barriers to perceiving its foundational elements as German culture adopted and adapted it. Out of these, the Bauhaus' inner/outer coupling emerged as a modern, fresh expression of German organic unity. By the start of the twentieth century, Germans had reframed the Gothic as a precursor to Bauhaus architecture. This transformation that profoundly shaped Bach reception. Bach, as a stand-in for Gothic art and culture, came to represent a proto-modernist strand of particularly Germanic art, laudable for its severity, its weight, its structure, and, above all, its embodiment of organic unity and economy of means, particular regarding surface decoration. This ruled out the kind of decoration—typically framed as a French problem—that Germans perceived to be emblematic of putatively groundless, spiritually empty “civilization.” In this way, Bach came to represent the fundamental concepts of *Kultur* and *Bildung*: *i.e.*, organicism, integrity, abstraction, thoroughness, and deep spirituality.

All of these ideas—*Einheitsablauf*, spiritual possession of Bach by the souls of Dürer and Raphael, and Bach's absorption of the principles of Gothic architecture—presuppose some kind of mechanism of transmission, even if a supernatural or fanciful one. A significant number of German-speaking scholars of the early twentieth century

wrote about the phenomenon of metempsychosis, which (it is argued) allows ancestral entities to possess people or objects.

The frequent association of Gothic architecture with the music of J. S. Bach in German throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth gave rise to the popular notion that Bach's music somehow conveyed, or was the product of, Gothic architectural design principles. This typical passage from the classic 1856 *History of Architecture* by Franz Kugler (1806–1858) offers an elegant summary of design concepts that became attached to Bach's music via the Bach-Gothic association. It describes the mission *neue Bauen* architects to “bring the [French] system back to basics, removing some of the obscuring elements that the French passion for decoration had covered it over with, thereby updating it by reshaping it in severe, chaste simplicity.”

They penetrate to its inner, life-giving substance, to the depths of its fundamental ideals, and give the organism more lifelike fluidity than French masters had been able to attain. They relay fundamentals to higher structural levels, and likewise convey the structure of the inner parts to the shape taken by the outer walls. In a stupendous triumph of the Gothic mind, they allow the implications of systematic logic to express themselves at every level, until the last hurdle is overcome: namely, the exterior pinnacles, where a denouement is reached that figures as the greatest, most stupendous achievement of the Gothic era.<sup>291</sup>

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<sup>291</sup> “Sie führen das System auf seine Grundzüge zurück, entkleiden es mancher verhüllenden Zuthat, welche die dekorative Lust der französischen Architekten darüber gebreitet hatte, gestalten es aufs Neue in strenger, keuscher Schlichtheit. Sie versenken sich in sein innerliches Lebenselement, in die Tiefe seines idealen Gehaltes und geben seinem Organismus eine flüssigere Belebung, als die französischen Meister zu erreichen vermochten; sie führen das Prinzip hiermit in der That auf eine höhere Stufe der Entwicklung, sowohl was die Gliederung der inneren Theile als was die Gestaltung des Außenbaues betrifft; sie lassen die in dem Systeme gegebenen Consequenzen sich fort und fort weiter entwickeln, bis die letzten Probleme erledigt sind und namentlich auch in den Gipfeltheilen des Äußeren jene wundersame Auflösung erreicht ist, die den höchsten staunenerregenden Triumph der Gothik ausmacht.” Franz Kugler, *Geschichte der Baukunst* (Stuttgart: Ebener Verlag, 1856), 204.

Beside its reference to the Bach-Gothic association, this remarkable manifesto is essentially a blueprint of the fundamental precepts of *das neue Bauen*. Kugler's admires the "strict, chaste simplicity" and the "life-giving" capacity of the ideal substrate, revealed by reducing ornamentation and systematizing and integrating the whole; the fluid movement resulting from the total integration that couples interior construction and outer shape; and, overall, treatment of the artwork as a functional, living organism whose parts are inseparable.

The suite of values that emanated from German diction about Gothic (later, *neue Bauen*) architecture and Dürer's paintings are applied to Bach's music. These included assignment of priority to an internal structure's symbolic meaning; reflection of internal in external structure; and freedom of external structure from occluding decorations. German critics characteristically applied the same set of values to their analyses of Dürer's paintings.

Fischer clearly derived his interpretive ideas analytically: they correspond closely to underlying text, elucidating and amplifying its compositional features via the principles that Ernst Kurth laid out in his *Grundlagen des linearen Kontrapunkts*.<sup>292</sup> In his early Ullstein editions, Fischer's application of interpretive marks reveals his understanding of contrapuntal material as un-evolving, even as it takes on varied coloration through transposition, re-harmonization, registral shift, and other techniques of development. He applies expressive marks in his Bach editions (*i.e.*, articulation marks and dynamics) in identical fashion each time a subject or particle of a subject appears. He preferred also to indicate the start of the subject or theme with an articulation, even at the

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<sup>292</sup> Ernst Kurth, *Grundlagen des Linearen Kontrapunkts: Einführung in Stil und Technik von Bachs Melodischer Polyphonie* (Bern: Drechsel Verlag, 1917).

expense of maintaining the integrity of a more fundamental line, somewhat akin to quasi-a Schnkerian *Mittelgrund* sketch. The possibility that the subject might evolve, or at least flex, to meet the demands of new musical circumstances and context – for example, to reflect an elided entry of a subject – does not seem to have been part of Fischer’s viewpoint.

### **Anti-Ornamentalism**

In 1910, Adolf Loos (1879-1922) gave a lecture in Vienna entitled *Ornament and Crime* (*Ornament und Verbrechen*); he published it (in French) in 1913. Although not published in German until 1929, news of the lecture and the contents of the French publication spread widely and quickly among the German intelligentsia.<sup>293</sup> Loos lampooned the *horror vacui* that he claimed had moved nineteenth-century artists and architects to decorative excess. He further proposed that artistic ornament was symptomatic of cultural decline and primitive thinking. As an example of the latter, he claimed that tattooing demonstrated the putative “primitiveness” of Papuan culture. He declared ornamented artworks to be transient objects of passing fashion and “smooth surfaces” to be emblematic of an upwardly striving culture. Loos’ incessant references to “cultural evolution” in his works give his cultural teleology a scientific patina. However, his application of Darwin’s theories is completely specious.

### **Geometric Abstraction (a.k.a. “Streamlining”)**

Before joining the Bauhaus faculty in 1922, Kandinsky had already written compellingly and at length on the importance of *Kunstreligion* to modern art in

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<sup>293</sup> On this, see Janet Stewart, *Fashioning Vienna: Adolf Loos's Cultural Criticism*, (London: Routledge, 2000).

*Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, transposing biblical rhetorical formulas to the world of modern art, as in this trope on the biblical “kingdom of heaven.” Kandinsky—echoing Steiner—equates spirituality with abstraction in art.

The more one uses these abstract forms, the deeper and more confidently will he advance into the Kingdom of Abstraction. And after him will follow the viewer...who will also have gradually acquired a greater familiarity with the language of that kingdom.<sup>294</sup>

Note Kandinsky’s formula, “the Kingdom of Abstraction,” used in place of the religious formula, “the Kingdom of Heaven.” This is a borrowing from Steiner, whose writings refer to discrete domains of perception as “Kingdoms.” Other leaders of the Bauhaus leaders shared Kandinsky’s views on *Kunstreligion*, especially Gropius, who also followed Steiner.

The New Objectivity of the Weimar Republic also found replacements for the old, abandoned project of representation in the dynamism and expansion of consciousness offered by non-representational photography. Moholy-Nagy opened new possibilities in the latter by exploring the potential of photography to aid in creating abstractions that expanded, modified, or shattered expectations and assumptions about objects that arose in one’s everyday experience of them.

Essentially, Moholy and his wife and collaborator Lucia introduced questions of the performative into the New Objectivity debate on realism and the everyday: it was the potential kinetic powers of the non-representational that stood to transform perceptions of the everyday, and not the dutiful recording of the continent.<sup>295</sup>

At the Bauhaus, Walter Gropius and Kandinsky formed positive, fulfilling gestural languages out of the elegant geometric reductions of industrial-mechanical design: their resulting Machine-Art never reduces to stasis, or even to predictable oscillation, but instead consists of gestures with which the public—as Wölfflin had

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<sup>294</sup> Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, English translation by M.T.H. Sadler (New York: Dover, 1977), 32.

<sup>295</sup> Roberts, *Art of Interruption*, 44.



posited—could respond on the basis of empathy, taking the place left empty when photography, among other factors, brought an end to pictorial representation.

.... Forms become meaningful [in the physical world] to us solely because we recognize in them the expression of a sentient mind. We instinctively anthropomorphize everything. It is mankind's primordial instinct to do so. It is the cause of the mythological imagination and the present one: does it require a long period of enculturation to come to the understanding that a shape exists in a state of functional equilibrium? Really, does this drive ever pass out of existence? I think not; it would be the death of art.<sup>296</sup>

The camera was catalytic for shifting cultural attention towards objectivity and positivism in the 1920s.

The first camera to break with the traditional box camera was the Ermanox made by Ernemann in Dresden in 1924...[Its] changes led to a profound transformation in the institution of photojournalism and the cognitive possibilities of the reportorial, as street photography and the “close-up” became easier options and significant sources of visual experience in their own right. With this the new technology's extended powers of observance provided a renewed sense of the categories of the everyday as lost to vision. The contingent world of everyday objects and events was opened up in all its finely gradated and unexpected detail...The new photography's extension of the categories of the everyday allowed photography to draw the whole of the visual world into the orbit of aesthetic value without loss of vividness on the part of the photography – in short, nothing was too mundane, undistinguished or unpleasurable for aesthetic appropriation...driven by a desire to capture photography for some Hegelian world “aesthetic spirit.” Shows such as “Neue Wege der Fotografie” organized by Walter Dexel (Jena 1928), the “Film und Foto” show (Stuttgart 1929), and the 1930 “Deutsche Fotografische Ausstellung” in Frankfurt, all formulated the claims of the new aesthetic positivism... and of course Renger-Patzsch's *Die Welt ist Schön*. These books and shows set out to establish a new truth-relation between the new

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<sup>296</sup> “Und so in der Körperwelt. Die Formen werden uns bedeutend dadurch allein, dass wir in ihnen den Ausdruck einer fühlenden Seele erkennen. Unwillkürlich beseelen wir jedes Ding. Das ist ein uralter Trieb des Menschen. Er bedingt die mythologische Phantasie und noch heute - gehört nicht eine lange Erziehung dazu des Eindrucks los zu werden, dass eine Figur, deren Gleichgewichtszustand verletzt ist, sich nicht wohl befinden könne? Ja, erstirbt dieser Trieb jemals? Ich glaube nicht. Es wäre der Tod der Kunst.” Heinrich Wölfflin, *Prolegomena zu einer Psychologie der Architektur* (Universitäts Buchhandlung C. Wolf und Sohn, Munich, 1886), 3-5.

photographic technology and the everyday the exceeded both “art” photography and previous reportorial work...<sup>297</sup>

Berlin’s visual culture underwent a radical transformation during Fischer’s time there, being seized in the period just after World War I by an urge to streamline its visual culture comprehensively, what Janet Ward organizes under the term “façade stripping.” As she puts it, in *Weimar Surfaces*, “the loss of a city’s recent architectural memory seemed to many Germans to be more than worthwhile: the eradication of the Wilhelmine building style signified a convenient eradication of the empire’s defeat in World War I.”<sup>298</sup>

### ***Prägnanz***

Fischer was explicit about the importance of aligning interpretive inflections and shadings directly with immanent dynamics: “Ritardandos, crescendos, diminuendos, and the like, are only means to an end: that of elucidating structure. They are only justifiable when used to that end. One should not provide every modulation, no matter how beautiful, with a ritardando or a *diminuendo* such that one thereby changes the master plan of the piece from lack of restraint.”<sup>299</sup> This simplicity, in Fischer’s view, allows musical form (and function) to be perceived unhindered.

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<sup>297</sup> John Roberts, *The Art of Interruption: Realism, Photography, and the Everyday*, 41-2.

<sup>298</sup> Janet Ward, *Weimar Surfaces: Urban Visual Culture in 1920s Germany* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), 49.

<sup>299</sup> “Ritardandi, Crescendi, und Diminuendi sind nur Mittel, um die Gliederung hörbar zu machen, und haben nur als solche Mittle Berechtigung. Man soll nicht bei jeder Modulation, sie sei auch noch so schön, bei jeder ausdrucksvollen Wendung ein Ritardando oder ein Diminuendo anbringen, damit ändert man den Grundriß eines Werkes und bleibt nicht im Gesetz...Nichts ist schöner, als mit seinem Publikum den Ablauf der Gestaltung, wie ihn der Komponist vorempfunden hat, noch einmal zu erleben und ein wenig teilzuhaben am schöpferischen Vorgang der Gestaltung.” Fischer, *Aufgaben*, 54.

Sounding a bit like Wölfflin for seeing an oscillation between opposing styles, Fischer places the shift towards *Prägnanz* in historical, teleological terms.

It was natural, then, that after some decades [of high Romanticism] the refiners should come: Busoni, Stravinsky, Bartok, Hindemith, Honegger, Toscanini, and, as interpreter, Richard Strauss gave us examples of Mozartian simplicity.<sup>300</sup>

Using similar terms in his other 1929 essay, “On Musical Interpretation,” Fischer repeatedly praises simplicity: “But the main law of interpretation will be simplicity.”<sup>301</sup> And “I heard him [Busoni]<sup>302</sup> say, when a passage in a Mozart work was being dragged out in sentimental fashion, “Simply, gentlemen!” And “indeed, in simplicity, in unimpeded motion, in the natural impetus of the music lies the secret of good performance.”<sup>303</sup> And, yet again, “one should never forget that the most enduring effect comes from simplicity.”<sup>304</sup>

Fischer and Wassily Kandinsky were especially well connected, via three routes: as followers of Rudolf Steiner, via Fischer’s support of the Bauhaus as a *Kurator*, and through their mutual friend Busoni. Although Fischer’s interest in the Bauhaus – and by extension in Berlin’s architectural streamlining – is clear enough from his documented support, there are other reasons that Fischer might have brought the concept of *neue Bauen* to bear on his Bach-pianism. By 1917, Ernst Kurth had already begun to erect a

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<sup>300</sup> Edwin Fischer, “On Musical Interpretation,” (1929) *Reflections on Music*, translator unknown (London: Williams and Northgate, 1951), 18-19. Originally published in German as *Musikalische Betrachtungen* (Wiesbaden: Insel Verlag, 1949).

<sup>301</sup> Fischer, “On Musical Interpretation,” *Reflections*, 22.

<sup>302</sup> The speaker is presumably Strauss, although, in his typical fashion, Fischer has intermingled two subjects – Strauss and Busoni – in the paragraph, making it unclear which he intends. However, since the sentence seems to refer to conducting, Strauss is the obvious choice of the two.

<sup>303</sup> Fischer, “Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart,” *Reflections on Music*, 24.

<sup>304</sup> Fischer, “Johann Sebastian Bach,” *Reflections on Music*, 44.

theory that translated many of the implications for music raised by Phenomenologists and Gestalt theorists into terms of musical performance...specifically, *Bach*-performance.

Fischer was especially eager to draw connections between musical interpretation, Phenomenology, and Binswanger's variety of post-Freudianism, which integrated all three areas. Fischer attributed healthy musicianship with the free flow of creativity between conscious and unconscious reflective realms: "Two realms adjoin one another: that of the fixed, of the complete, of consciousness; and the realm of change and the unconscious. The latter retreats when it is disturbed. When that happens, nothing innovative evolves, nothing emerges..."<sup>305</sup>

A passage from Fischer's *Bach*-study contains what looks to be paraphrases of passages from publications by Kurth (in *Grundlagen*; or perhaps these same ideas, later recapitulated in *Musikpsychologie*, in whose publication Fischer played a small but significant editorial role) or Busoni (*New Esthetic of Music*). His passage may even represent an amalgamation of both. Fischer writes:

From purely harmonic thinking and vertical listening an alternation of dominant and tonic, of tension and relaxation, evolved; this simplicity ultimately came to be tyrannical. At the same time, the rhythmic variety that had originated in free declamation gradually gave way to regularity and to the complete dominance of the four bar period. It is true that the greatest works of the classical period are subject to these principles, but for the many[,] less creatively gifted composers it led to mere routine, to spiritual impoverishment. Of course, rich harmony has within it the power and means for building up a formal architectural structure, and above all enormous potentialities for evoking atmosphere and mood; with it, the composer paints and illumines. Bach made sovereign use of both these possibilities, he anticipated the whole scope of colorful harmony,

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<sup>305</sup> "Es sind zwei Welten, die einander gegenüberstehen: die Welt des Fertigen, des Gewordenen, Bewußten und die Welt des Werdenden, Unbewußten. Diese zweite zieht sich in sich selbst zurück, wenn sie gestört wird, und damit geschieht nichts mehr, wird nichts mehr." Fischer, *Aufgaben*, 34-5.

enharmonic changes, the full advantages of the tempered scale, and is in many respects unsurpassed in modernity even today.<sup>306</sup>

Fischer offers an assessment that one might term his “teleology of decadent performance.” It begins by lamenting the deadening quality of regular, predictable dynamic oscillations and of its parallel in the symmetry of periodic phrase structure, which corresponds to Kurth’s concept of geometrization. Like Kurth, he views this as an outgrowth of elements of Classicism that had outlived their teleological purpose. Then Fischer allies harmonic complexity with “architectural” structure and with expressivity. Finally, he folds in the advantages of equal temperament. The whole mix, epitomized by Bach, he declares to be “unsurpassed in modernity.”

These ingredients also appear in slightly different form in Busoni’s *New Aesthetic*. “‘Absolute music’ [the scare quotes are Busoni’s] is something very sober, which reminds one of music-desks in orderly rows, of the relation of Tonic to Dominant, of Developments and Codas... This sort of music ought rather to be called the ‘architectonic,’ or ‘symmetric,’ or ‘sectional’”...<sup>307</sup> In a phrase that implies sympathy for *Kunstreligion*, Busoni notes that “...routine transforms the temple of art into a factory. It destroys creativeness.”<sup>308</sup> Busoni refers to Bach’s timeless modernity, noting “in spirit and emotion [Bach and Beethoven] will probably remain unexcelled; and this, again confirms the remark at the beginning of these lines: That... [these] ephemeral qualities give a work the stamp of ‘modernity;’ [their] unchangeable essence hinders it from becoming

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<sup>306</sup> Edwin Fischer, “Johann Sebastian Bach,” *Reflections on Music*, 35.

<sup>307</sup> Busoni, *Sketch of a New Esthetic of Music*, translated by Thomas Baker (New York: G. Schirmer, 1911), 6-7.

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid*, 42.

‘obsolete.’”<sup>309</sup> He also attributes this to Bach’s use of equal temperament: “...the still novel acquisition of equal temperament opened a vista of – for the time being – endless new possibilities...”<sup>310</sup>

### A Reductive Aesthetics of Musical Performance

In a discussion of *Geometrizierung*, Ernst Kurth alludes to the art-historical theories of Wölfflin, who posited that oscillations of creative and classicizing phases characterized the history of art.<sup>311</sup> A potential confusion must be dealt with here by disambiguating two processes to which the term *Geometrizierung* might apply. It would be easy to associate this with the reduction of surface detail in artworks in the manner of *Prägnanz*; but this is not what Kurth addresses in the text cited below, nor does his allusion to “art historians” – which is, essentially, a placeholder for Wölfflin, the historian most closely associated with the view to which Kurth refers. Instead, Kurth refers to music based on regular, predictable, oscillating phrase structures. As Kurth summarized the problem in his *Musikpsychologie* of 1931:

Beyond the basic theoretical error of the century after the Classical period already mentioned – which forces symmetrical emphasis, too narrow even for Classical works, upon all melodies – was allowing themselves to be misled into a system quite obviously lacking the slightest capacity for shading or inflection of musical time.<sup>312</sup>

### Fischer’s Assessments, his Philosophical Reactions, and his Musical Responses

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<sup>309</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>310</sup> Op cit.

<sup>311</sup> See page 164, above.

<sup>312</sup> “Im übrigen war der erwähnte theoretische Grundfehler des nachklassischen Jahrhunderts, die Betonungssymmetrie der gesamten Melodik aufzuzwängen, schon für jenen Kreis klassischer Werke zu eng, die sich dem System rein äußerlich ohne geringste Differenzierung, ohne einzige Taktabweichung einfügen lassen.“ Ernst Kurth, *Grundlagen des Linearen Kontrapunkts*, 308.

## Fischer's Assessments

Fischer often lamented the regularity, uniformity, and inherently anti-expressive rationalism of *Mechanismus*, which he cited one of the principle causes of the progressive *Entseelung des Menschen* (i.e., the “destruction of the human soul”).

How can I best explain it except to say that any disease seems to me to have a psychological cause? How much would I have to know in order to address the principal issues faced by today's youth: i.e., “the destruction of humanity's soul,” and the fight against the harm done by mechanization?<sup>313</sup>

Another threat comes from the total mechanization of human life, which leads to the annihilation of spirit and intellect. The machines that we have created as servants now threaten to rule over us. Spiritual and intellectual death makes everything that one does mechanistic. Drop by drop, the blood seeps out of organic life forms, the ones that the Creator endowed so richly with gifts.<sup>314</sup>

Fischer's focus on this problem was intense and sustained. Here, in another of his diagnoses of the problem, Fischer offers more details emerge about the origins of the troubles.

Today a great conflict exists that places upon you a great task: to retain the purity of human ideas of justice, of humanity, and of compassion, as opposed to the cold indifference of the machine. You must hear the difference between a tone that is generated electrically through a speaker

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<sup>313</sup> “Aber wie soll ich begründen, daß mir zum Beispiel jede Erkrankung einen psychischen Ausgangspunkt zu haben scheint? Oder wieviel müßte ich wissen, um das Hauptproblem der heutigen Generation, die ‘Entseelung der Menschen,’ den Kampf gegen die Schäden der Mechanisierung zu erörtern?” Edwin Fischer, *Aufgaben*, 19.

<sup>314</sup> “Ein anderer Feind, ein anderes Problem ist die Gefahr der vollständigen Mechanisierung des Menschen, was zu Tode seines Seelenlebens führt. Die vom Menschen geschaffene Maschine droht nicht mehr sein *Diener*, sondern sein *Herr* zu werden. Entseelt macht ein jeder mechanisch, was alle tun. Tropfen für Tropfen fließt das Blut inneren Seelen-Lebens aus seinem vom Schöpfer so froß und reich gedachten Organismus. Fischer, *Aufgaben*, 33.

and one that is genuine because it comes directly to you from a human voice, a cello, or the like...and you must teach others to hear it.<sup>315</sup>

In a deprecation of these ills—addressed to students at the post-war continuation of his *Potsdamer Sommerkurs*, then held in Switzerland—Fischer takes up much of the language of the text excerpted above.

These days an especially powerful enemy threatens our inner peace: irrational, runaway material consumption (*i.e.*, the so-called ‘rise in the standard of living’). To the extent that it provides access to the things that one really needs (*e.g.*, air, light, sanitary conditions, human interactions, and freedom from pointless, mind-numbing busywork), consumption is a net gain. But when it leads to desire for more, more, more; when more desires lie just around every corner; when it causes one to pitch compassion overboard, to race around constantly; when it leads to dependence on alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drugs, or to withdrawal into the narcosis offered by incessant noise, constant motion...this I see as more injurious than helpful.<sup>316</sup>

Fischer’s jeremiad on overabundance – written in a period in which Germans were still living in difficult conditions (Fischer’s letters tell of his having sent aid to families suffering post-war deprivations) – shows how out of touch Fischer could sometimes become when lost in clouds of idealism. Appropriate or not, his lament has

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<sup>315</sup> “In der heutigen Zeit der großen Auseinandersetzung ist Ihnen eine große Aufgabe anvertraut: die Reinheit der humanen Idee, der Gerechtigkeit, Menschlichkeit, des warmen Fühlens zu erhalten gegenüber der Unbarmherzigkeit der Maschine. Sie müssen den Unterschieden hören lernen zwischen einem elektrischen, durch Lautsprecher verzerrten Ton und einem echten, direkten Ton, wie ihn eine menschliche Stimme oder ein Cello hervorbringt.” Fischer, *Aufgaben*, 26-7.

<sup>316</sup> “Unsere Zeit hat aber gegen diesen inneren Frieden besonders heftige Feinde: die Tastlosigkeit, die gesteigerten Bedürfnisse (der sogenannte höhere Lebens-standard). Solange man Teilnahme aller an den Gütern der Natur darunter versteht, Luft, Licht, Hygiene, Teilhaben an den geistigen Errungenschaften der Menschheit, Beschränkung der geist-, gedankenlosen Fronarbeit, ist er ein Segen für die Menschheit; wo er aber nur zur Steigerung der Reize, Erweckung neuer Wünsche, zum Aufpeitschen der Leidenschaften, zum Rasten um Schnelligkeiten, Abhängigkeit von Trinken und Rauchen, zur Flucht in die ewige Geräusch- und Lärm-Narkose führt, da sehe ich im erhöhten Lebensstandard mehr Schaden als wirklichen Nutzen.” Fischer, *Aufgaben*, 32-3.



generally conservative roots that stretch back to the *Konservative Revolution* of the Weimar Republic, to which some of his associates were central.

Fischer's familiarity with Walter Benjamin's *The Work of Art in the Age of Technical Reproducibility* is evident.<sup>317</sup> Although Fischer doesn't speak overtly of "loss of aura," it is clear that Benjamin's concept was his inspiration.

This includes the unprecedented and truly wonderful means to technical reproduction: photography, records, radio, television, and the like. That which is unique, that which is personally experienced is transformed into a commodity. With each act of copying, with every instance of mass-production, the experience of things is worn away a bit more, since true depth of experience is a function of the effort required to acquire something. As this takes place, it is accompanied by a new point of view that supplants artistry: *i.e.*, the mentality of seeing the instrumentality of reproductions and imitations for their commercial value.<sup>318</sup>

As Fischer judged it, performers had no obvious way out of an additional philosophical bind: he believed that it would be impossible for a musician simply to opt out of the threat posed to expressivity from without. Fischer addressed the problem of musical expression being held hostage by the surrounding culture in his 1929 essay "On Musical Interpretation."

The interpreter cannot escape from his own personality. This is the product of a *psychophysical unity* – the whole man –; it is conditioned by inherited qualities, is formed by *education*, the strongest educational factor being example. Its development is further influenced by the spirit of the period (the environment) and by advancing maturity... The interpreter is dependent, too, on the spirit of the age. The frivolous playfulness of the

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<sup>317</sup> Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction (1935)," *Illuminations*, edited by Hannah Arendt, translated by Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969). Originally published as "Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit," *Schriften* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1955).

<sup>318</sup> Edwin Fischer, "On Musical Interpretation," *Reflections on Music* (London: Williams and Northgate, 1951), 19.

rococo had no less influence on the musicians of that time than the ecclesiastical severity of the middle Ages on the church composers.<sup>319</sup>

### Fischer's Reactions

There is considerable evidence in Fischer's prose of Vitalist thinking, which appears to have encouraged him to see the adoption of certain principles of musical interpretation as a significant contributor to the health of the social organism. Vitalism also is evident in Fischer's devotion to a life-like, dynamic approach to performing Bach's music. Fischer followed their lead by writing somber warnings to his students: *e.g.*, "don't listen to recordings until you become one yourself!"

...A spirituality that knows no bounds weaves together those of different races, nationalities, language, and climate into the divine tapestry of universality, whose vaults arch far above any such artificialities of the material world. In that tapestry wisdom and compassion reign, a sense of the temporal and the eternal forces that unite the everlasting laws of the cosmos, the law of the stars. To serve in this pure endeavor is the highest duty and the greatest honor that an artist can enjoy.<sup>320</sup>

It is unsurprising that Fischer would be at daggers drawn with *mechanische Musik*. Looking back later on the curious intersection of his musical inclinations as a child and the role that he would later play in the man-versus-machine struggle, Fischer wrote,

My musical destiny was revealed when, as a three-year-old toddler, I lost all interest in the twinkling of the Christmas tree and crawled underneath it

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<sup>319</sup> Ibid, 21.

<sup>320</sup> "...Hoch über Rassen, Nationen, Sprachen, Klimate hinweg weben sie alle am himmlischen Teppich der unbegrenzten Geistigkeit, der unvergänglichen Kuppel des Seelischen über den Lauern der Materie. Dort reichen sich Weisheit und Liebe, Sinn für das Dauernde, für irdische und überirdische Kräfte die Hände, ahnend den ewig dauernden Kanon des in den Sternen befestigten Gesetzes des Alls. In dieser reinen Sphäre dienen zu dürfen, ist eines Künstlers heilige Pflicht, höchste Ehre und letztes Glück." Fischer, *Aufgaben*, 17-18.

on all fours to play with a music box that was hidden there. Even now the metal prongs of the roller mechanism – O, glorious miracle! – glitter in my mind’s eye; I, of all people, who would later be the sworn enemy of every manifestation of *mechanische Musik*.<sup>321</sup>

Fischer’s reaction to the performer-hostile efforts of composers to circumvent performance was reasoned, rather than ideological. He acknowledged that *mechanische Musik* had played a role in altering performance practice of his time particularly with respect to clarity [presumably of texture] and rhythmic precision. He clearly saw a teleological progression leading away from “all the plush sofas, curtains and dark interiors of the preceding [post-Romantic] period.”<sup>322</sup> He even associates some of his most cherished values with mechanization: “Clarity and rhythm were the solution and it cannot be denied that mechanization had a share in this orientation. It is no coincidence that many great musicians of our time are passionate railway enthusiasts, clock lovers, radio constructors.”<sup>323</sup>

Another of Fischer’s reactions was to develop a stance to notation as neither objective nor proscriptive. Fischer would have no truck with the notion that the notated score somehow captures the essence of music. For him, the score is merely a prototype from which a given piece can be instantiated, not the thing itself. Like Busoni, Fischer was alarmed at the growing tendency of young musicians to identify musical expression

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<sup>321</sup> “Eine vital Freude am Klang, am Rhythmus, ein absolutes Gehör, ein Hindrängen zur Musik im Kinde sprechen eine deutliche Sprache und machen oft einen Zweifel über die Lebensbestimmung zur Unmöglichkeit. So war meine Berufswahl für meine Eltern entschieden, als ich im dritten Lebensjahr den ganze Lichterglanz des Weihnachtsbaumes vergaß und auf allen vieren zu einer Musikkdose hinkroch, die unter dem Tannenbaum versteckt war und spielte. Noch heute blinken mir die Stahlzähne jener Orgelwalze in der Erinnerung als herrlich Wunder auf, gerade mir, dem späteren Feinde aller mechanischen Musik.“ Fischer, *Aufgaben*, 11-12.

<sup>322</sup> Fischer, “On Musical Interpretation” (1929), *Reflections on Music*, 18-19.

<sup>323</sup> Op cit.

with simple realization of the crude and unsophisticated music surface conveyed by musical notation.

In his addresses to students, Fischer sometimes posed notation as a physical threat; one is trapped in the staff as though it were a maniacal spider web: “Don’t get stuck in the bar lines! Breathe! Sing melodies!” he scolds.<sup>324</sup> At other times, he raises the plight of the composer whose metaphorical children are squished into injurious, torturous, and ultimately fatal, confines: “Musical notation is the antithesis of making music. That which resides in the artist’s interior is crammed into measures, where the poverty of available dynamic levels of the few miserable expressive indications that exist squeeze the life out of it. But how many degrees of shading there really are, how variable our ability to phrase and emphasize!”<sup>325</sup>

The score gives us the composer’s intention in a form determined by a specific instrument or group of instruments. In the writing down, there is already a kind of transcription. There are musical ideas, it is true, which are immediately thought of for one definite instrument, for example, the choice, and the imagination of the sound of an instrument can be the direct source of a musical idea; yet, on the whole, the composer arranges the pure music of his imagination for an instrument which is more or less adequate. Often, in the process, he must do violence to his vision, for the possibilities, the limitations of the instrument confine him. Often he is forced to write in unison, to break up chords; he must break off an unending melody because the bowing of the violinist, the breathing of the singer, the scope of the instrument compel him to do so.<sup>326</sup>

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<sup>324</sup> “Also halte dich nicht an die Taktstrichgitterstäbe, sondern atme, singe Melodien.“ Fischer, *Aufgaben*, 21.

<sup>325</sup> “Ein Feind unseres Musizierens ist auch die Notenschrift. Was einst im Busen des Künstlers leuchtend, tönend erschien, was einst so heiß dem Herzen entquoll, wird beim Niederschreiben in Takte gepreßt, in drei bis vier Stärkegrade eingeschnürt und mit einigen wenigen Vortragsangaben versehen. Und wie viele Nuancen gibt es, wie verschieden können Takte phrasiert, betont werden.“ Fischer, *Aufgaben*, 21.

<sup>326</sup> Fischer, “On Musical Interpretation,” *Reflections on Music*, 16.

This is a close paraphrase of a passage from Busoni's *Draft of a New Aesthetic of Music*:

Every notation is, in itself, the transcription of an abstract idea. The instant the pen seizes it the idea loses its original form. The very intention to write down the idea compels a choice of measure and key. The form, and the musical agency involved [*i.e.*, the musical forces deployed]—which the composer must decide upon—define the way and the limits to an even greater extent.<sup>327</sup>

The central ideas here, and even the order in which they are deployed, are essentially identical:

- (1) the act of notation is really an act of transcription, because
- (2) the ideal *Gestalt* of the work is formed in the composer's imagination, which subsequently
- (3) is compromised by the act of arranging it for available resources, that
- (4) bring with them limitations that require compromises.

In other words, the precedent established by the composer's first "transcription" of the work sanctions performers' later, principled modifications. Busoni's idea that music—particularly Bach's music—appears as a vision in the mind of the composer that the composer subsequently renders in an acceptable—although imperfect—manner, using the means available at hand. Thus, the interpreter has both license and a duty to modernize the composer's expression of his musical idea if he perceives thereby that, through his "re-transcriptions," he is coming closer to the ideal conception of the work.<sup>328</sup>

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<sup>327</sup> Busoni, *Draft of A New Esthetic of Music*, 18.

<sup>328</sup> Beyond his general justification for making textual emendations in Bach's keyboard works, Busoni also maintained a practical distinction between the principles employed in arrangements (*Bearbeitungen*) and transcriptions (*Transkriptionen* or *Übertragungen*). On this distinction, see Jürgen Kindermann, *Thematisch-chronologisches Verzeichnis der Werke von Ferruccio B. Busoni in Studien zur Musikgeschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts*, 19 (Regensburg: Gustav Bosse Verlag, 1980), 464-5. See also Larry Sitsky, *Busoni and the Piano. The Works, the Writings, and the Recordings, second edition* (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2008), 177-9.

The central concept behind both authors' statements is that notation reduces a transcendent conceptual act to the status of written dogma. Once frozen in notation, observers are prone to worship the static simulacrum dogmatically, mistaking it for the transcendent, fluid, abstract conception that it replaces. This rules out performers' later modifications of a composer's works and limits performance to a single "original" instrument. The insufficiency of notation thus degrades the transcendent original conception, robbing it of its universality. Furthermore, objective performance is detrimental.

Having dismissed objective performance as a function, Fischer offers an alternative so-called "objective performance"—which must have seemed radically and conspicuously inexpressive at the time and, hence, not value-neutral in the least—and to the manner of subjective performance to which he objected, as well: *i.e.*, performance based on effects and ground-plans that were external to the piece at hand. Somewhat fancifully, I will give Fischer's breakthrough a thoroughly Heideggerian name: I style it *Es-musizieren statt Ich-musizieren*, a neologism that I will explain below.

Fischer also addressed the subjective/objective problem that plagued Bach-performers in the early-twentieth century. As I've established, a diverse array of leading figures addressed the threat of *Abtötung* posed by mechanized life. In particular, the rise of photography challenged the fundamental premises upon which representation had been built, raising questions about the relationship of subjective and objective approaches to art and their relative benefits. The "objective" representation available in photography

offered a replacement for “subjective” representations of artists that matched objectivist, materialist desires.

Fischer saw hermeneutics as an important—indeed, absolutely necessary—process in the Artist-Receiver relation. On the surface, his defense of the prerogatives of the performer may appear to be a simple case of advocacy on behalf of his own constituency. However, as I will explain in detail below, Fischer regarded editing and performing the music of Bach to be a quasi-sacred duty. In dealing with sacred texts, the faith into which he was born (*i.e.*, Lutheranism) and the faith with which he was strongly associated as an adult (*i.e.*, Judaism) agreed completely on the essential role played by exegesis.

Fischer repeatedly disparaged two areas in which developments in his environment threatened to weaken, destabilize, or otherwise diminish the potential for expressivity in Bach-pianism. He particularly attacked implications about “objective” performance emanating from *die neue Sachlichkeit* as well as claims from Hindemith’s circles that *mechanische Musik* rendered the performer – indeed hermeneutics of any kind – obsolete. In his 1939 address to students at his Potsdam summer course, he abjured them to:

...be personal, be subjective, recognize your own nature, your own rhythm, fill and fulfill yourselves. In a performance that is merely objective, the work of art fails to speak to human beings, and you will awaken no other latent talents with such objective performances. Objectivity is truly nonsense, it doesn’t exist, it *is* not. Therefore, any so-called objective performance is also fundamentally subjective. One also employs the term “objective” to signify *werktreu* [“faithful to the musical work”], and that is truly a beautiful expression. But it should not be understood as fidelity to superficial markings, fidelity to the printed page, rather as fidelity to the effects that they elicit. Has anyone of us heard Beethoven play, so to be able to pronounce ‘Thus is the right way?’ When Brahms was asked for metronome markings for his works, he declined: ‘Do you believe that I am

such a nincompoop as to play the same way every day?’ In the long run, objective is subjective.<sup>329</sup>

In Fischer’s view, which is consistent with that of Husserl and the other Phenomenologists, objectivity is “enchained”—to use Husserl’s term, “*eingekettet*”—with objectivity; individuals and society mutually define one another, as do performers and receivers. Therefore, indulging subjectivity at the expense of objectivity simply destabilizes the ideal object, making it overly personal and hermetic. On the other side of the coin, Fischer describes objective performance as “nonsense.” Fischer stands on secure philosophical ground when he observes that, until a piece of music has passed through one’s perceptive capacities, no object at all exists upon which one might base criticism, be it subjectively or objectively framed.

### **Fischer’s Musical Responses**

One of Fischer’s most cogent responses to these problems involved adoption of the principle of *Prägnanz* from Gestalt theory. In music, theorist Ernst Kurth and Fischer, his student and assistant, devised similar approaches that solved a difficult problem that plagued Bach-performance in the early-twentieth century: the resolution of conflicts

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<sup>329</sup> “Also seid persönlich, seid subjektiv, erkennt Eure eigene Natur, Euren Rhythmus, erföhlt und erfüllt Euch selbst. In einer nur objektiven Darstellung spricht das Kunstwerk nicht zu den Menschen, und Ihr weckt mit einer solchen keine auch in anderen schlummernden Talente. Eigentlich ist Objektivität ein Nonsens, denn was nicht durch meine Sinne, durch meinen Geist gegangen ist, existiert nicht, *ist* nicht! Also ist auch eine sogenannte objektive Darstellung im Grunde eine subjektive. Objektiv nennt man auch werktreu, und dies ist eigentlich ein schönes Wort. Es darf aber nicht verstanden werden als treu den äußeren Zeichen, der Druckerschwärze treu, sondern treu den darüber wirkenden Kräften. Hat jemand von unseren Zeitgenossen Beethoven spielen gehört, um zu sagen, nur so ist es richtig? Als von Brahms Metronomzahlen für seine Werke verlangt wurden, hat er erwidert: ‘Glaubt Ihr, ich sei ein solcher Trottel, daß ich jeden Tag gleich spiele?’ Objektiv ist subjektiv, gesehen aus der Entfernung der Zeit.” Ursula Wildgrube, “Auszüge aus einem Stenogramm des Meisterkursus Potsdam 1936,” *Dank an Edwin Fischer*, 60–61.



between the objectivity that Germans demanded of Bach-performance when they raised his music to the status of a sacred document of music with magical, apotropaic powers and the expressivity demanded in the performance of ritual. Kurth arrived at a theory of Bach's inherent, self-performing dynamism that required very little inflection by the performer, a notion evident in Fischer's observation:

...When Richard Strauss asked me – when I didn't play the opening of Beethoven's G major concerto simply enough – "Why do you make so much of it? You only need to leave your visiting card," or when Wilhelm Furtwängler so prepared the slightly slower tempo of a second theme that one was unaware of the new tempo, then I experienced something decisive.<sup>330</sup>

Fischer disdained composers – Reger, by name, and Stravinsky, by implication – whose "indications are excessive" and in whose music "every nuance of interpretation is indicated, being even legally protected against "capricious interpretation."<sup>331</sup> He seems to have been among the very first musicians to have taken such exception, at least in print, to the egregious restriction of the interpreter's prerogatives vis-à-vis 20th-century music, an objection that has by now become a commonplace in any discussion of the history of musical interpretation.<sup>332</sup>

Fischer further addressed the problems he perceived by adopting a practice of amplifying a work's underlying structure, as perceived by the interpreter. Fischer's

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<sup>330</sup> Edwin Fischer, "Art and Life (1932)," *Reflections on Music*, 10-11.

<sup>331</sup> Fischer seems to refer here to legal actions taken by Stravinsky to protect the notated performance practice published with his works.

<sup>332</sup> In a footnote to his edition of the D-major Prelude (#4 of the "Little Preludes"), Fischer mentions a *sempre staccato* rendition offered in the Reger edition of the piece. The Max Reger Institute, however, appears unaware of its existence, listing only Reger's editions of Bach's Inventions, the *French suites*, the *English suites*, a Toccata and Fugue, the *Italian concerto*, the Fantasy in C minor, and the *Capriccio in B flat major*. See the website of the Max Reger Institut at [http://www1.karlsruhe.de/Kultur/Max-Reger-Institut/en/sammlung\\_ma.php](http://www1.karlsruhe.de/Kultur/Max-Reger-Institut/en/sammlung_ma.php) (accessed May 24, 2011).

belief's about the performer's main tasks—i.e., the most prominent of all the *Aufgaben des Musikers*—concern conveying the immanent divinity of the works themselves, without interference, to the listener; in doing so, the performer is ennobled.

Performance is really about revealing and amplifying higher orders; this, in turn, fosters true, pure performance. Such purity of execution plays irresistibly upon the instinctive forces of the listener, causing an upward [hermeneutic] spiral. The music's collective reception takes the performer out of himself and gives him special powers. The recipients are released from mundane life and are subsumed into the noblest currents of love and appreciativeness...<sup>333</sup>

Fischer arrived at a unification of that immanent dynamism with musical expressivity in a synthesis that, above, I styled "*Es-Musizieren statt Ich-Musizieren*." The best English translation that I can effect—since literal translation as "It-Music in place of I-Music" makes a nonsensical hash of the German original—would be something like "performance as amplification of immanence in place of actualization of ego." However, that hardly seems as elegant. Fischer's line of thinking here, which originates in the neo-Kantians with whom Fischer was in lifelong contact, is perhaps the most significant proposal that was implied in his writings and was exemplified in his Bach-pianism. Fischer returned to the concept several times in his writing and teaching.

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<sup>333</sup> "Die Darstellung eines Kunstwerkes ist eigentlich ein Sichtbarwerden – ein Leuchtendwerden einer Welt höherer Gattung – und erfordert volle, reine Hingabe. Eine reine Hingabe zieht magnetisch die hohen sittlichen Kräfte des Hörers, des Publikums an, und es findet eine gegenseitige Steigerung statt. Der Künstler empfängt von seinen Zuhören eine Welle des Mitempfindens, die ihn über sich selbst hinaushebt und ihm ungewöhnliche Kräfte verleiht. Das Publikum aber fühlt sich ebenfalls über sich selbst hinaus jeder Alltäglichkeit enthoben, und die edelsten Ströme der Liebe und Dankbarkeit gehen hinüber und herüber." Edwin Fischer, *Aufgaben*, 16-17.

The following passage out of Fischer's writings is admittedly a poetic formation of the idea; however, it represents all the essentials of "*Es-musizieren*." Fischer describes a phenomenon that arises when, under the right attitudinal circumstances,

...all bonds, all inhibitions disappear. You feel yourself floating. You no longer feel *I am playing*, but, instead, *the piece is playing*. And, lo and behold, everything sorts itself. Guided by a divine hand, the melodies somehow flow through you and out of your fingers, and you just let it happen. You humbly enter into the greatest happiness that a performer can experience: to be the conveying medium, the intercessor between the divine, the eternal, and humanity.<sup>334</sup>

Although Fischer expresses the concept lyrically, he conveys a principle that seems to stand at the core of Fischer's Bach-pianism as an exercise of *Es-Musizieren*: i.e., *that Bach's music contains the instructions to its own vivification*. Where the inexpressive mode of Bach-performance fails, because it imposes a very definite point of view onto Bach's music, Fischer's amplification of the immanent structures of Bach's music only projects the piece in with added dimensionality, as though a person represented in a two-dimensional photograph were to "step into the world" in three dimensions. *Ins leben treten...* To come to life... Here, Fischer finds the solution to the subjective/objective problem, and fulfills the mission of the *Bach-Kult*, writ large: that is, to project Bach's music into listeners' psyches, to "ride a wave" into their conscious being, and—if the promise of ritual performance is real—to serve as a virtual priest delivering apotropaic healing to the supplicants ritually gathered around a transcendent entity.

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<sup>334</sup> "...da lösen sich alle Bindungen, alle Hemmungen schwinden. Sie fühlen sich schwebend. Man fühlt nicht mehr: ich spiele, sondern es spielt, und siehe, alles ist richtig; von göttlicher Hand gelenkt entfließen die Melodien Ihren Fingern, es durchströmt Sie, und Sie lassen sich von diesem Strömen tragen, und Sie erleben in Demut das höchste Glück des nachschaffenden Künstlers: nur noch Medium, nur Mittler zu sein zwischen dem Göttlichen, dem Ewigen und den Menschen." Op cit.

## **Chapter Five – Principles of Fischer’s Bach-Pianism: Evidence of the Editions and the *WTC* Recording**

In this chapter, I provide my analysis of Fischer’s embodiment of *Prägnanz* and other Phenomenological principles alongside Kurth’s principles in his *WTC* recording. I build on the reductive summaries of principles that Fischer expressed in the prefaces of his *T-A* editions for Ullstein Verlag, analyzing the musical text of the editions and the interpretation manifested in Fischer’s *WTC* recording to show how they relate to one another.

In the first half of this chapter, I analyze the musical text of Fischer’s editions. This falls into the following sections. First is a discussion of the manner in which Fischer defended pianistic expressivity in Bach-performance; his did so by addressing the following areas: the exegetical foundations of Bach-pianism (necessary to keep expressive means flexible and related to current environment); techniques of systematically organizing the application of expressive nuances; eschewal of expressive plans typical of later works—*i.e.*, inflections “external” to the work, as Fischer liked to frame it—simply lain atop Bach’s works rather than being reflective of their contents; and the practice of amplifying immanent dynamics of work’s hierarchical, interior structure by coupling them directly to pianistic expressive devices or capabilities. Subsequently, I compare Fischer’s editions to their prototypes, the Bach-editions of Busoni, looking for reflections of *Prägnanz* in both, giving particular emphasis to Fischer’s *WTC* recording and using Busoni’s editions for context.

Finally, I look at areas in which Fischer’s editions and *WTC* recording couple expressivity organically to the dynamics of musical processes immanent in Bach’s works as notated. Pianistic expressivity and *Prägnanz* are both relative, not absolute, terms.

Therefore, any attempt to show that Fischer's *WTC* recording embodies these qualities will gain from placing it alongside the sources to which Fischer was exposed at greatest length and which he evidently admired, as measured by the extent to which his recording shares foundational ideas, if sometimes expressed differently. By evaluating degree and extent of Fischer's similarities to and deviations from the sources around him, one can judge the strength of those sources' influence and see clearly where Fischer felt the need to make adjustments.

Fischer's admiration for Busoni's Bach-pianism, above that of all other Bach-pianists, is clear. He never speaks of any other pianist's approach to Bach with the special degree of appreciation that he reserved for Busoni. However, Busoni's *WTC I* and *WTC II* editions differ strongly from one another. Busoni's *WTC I* edition contains detailed expressive markings, whereas his *WTC II* edition is almost an *Urtext* edition; their approaches stand on either side of the approach that Fischer takes in his *WTC* recording. It is especially useful to note where, and in what manner, Fischer modifies Busoni's *WTC I* markings, since these address matters of *Prägnanz*, including the removal of layers of detail that potentially could detract from perception of the *Gestalt* of any given prelude or fugue by focusing the listener's perception on degrees of detail that only complicate perception of their most fundamental dynamic contours.

Therefore, most of my Busoni/Fischer comparisons in this chapter are of Busoni's *WTC I* edition to Fischer's *WTC* recording. In one special case—that of the Prelude and Fugue in C Major from *WTC I*—a Busoni recording has survived; in that case, I compare Fischer's recording to Busoni's recording, Fischer's recording to Busoni's *WTC I* edition, and Busoni's recording (which dates from 1922) to his 1894 *WTC I* edition. All three

comparisons have something to offer a total view of Fischer's *WTC* recording and the extent to which it sometimes extends and at other times amends Busoni's various conceptions of Bach-pianism.

Because of the paucity of interpretive markings contained in Busoni's *WTC II* edition, I do not compare Fischer's recording to that edition. As a result, in this chapter, I cite examples from Fischer's recording of *WTC I* preludes and fugues in this chapter. However, I observe the principles that Fischer employed throughout his *WTC* recording—regardless of the volume in which any given prelude or fugue is contained—to be fundamentally stable and consistent.

## Part One: The Evidence of the Editions

### ***Prägnanz* and Music Editing**

Some terms, in Busoni's two prefaces and in Fischer's Draft Preface, appear repeatedly. It is, notably, also one of the two words—alongside function (Ger., *Funktionalität*)—used almost obsessively by the artists of the Bauhaus to describe their design perspective. Busoni's later Bach editions also reflect increased concern for clarity. In Busoni's two prefaces and in Fischer's 'Draft Preface', some terms appear with great frequency. Busoni's *WTC II* edition displays a pronounced increase in use of the terms *Struktur*, *Form*, and *Symbolik*. Clarity (Ger., *Klarheit*) is an important touchstone for Fischer, mentioned in virtually every one of his speeches on pianism and in the prefaces to his editions. Alongside function (Ger., *Funktionalität*)—it was used almost obsessively by the artists of the Bauhaus to describe their design perspective. Joining with *Klarheit*—

previously discussed in its incarnation as *Prägnanz*—*Struktur* and *Funktionalität* joined to form a trinity of values associated with modernity in Bach-pianism.

In the last years of his life, Busoni became increasingly interested in aligning interpretive nuances with the compositional structure of Bach's keyboard works.

Although this above example, taken from Busoni's 1894 *WTC* edition, may be open to interpretation, an incontrovertible instance of the alignment of structure and nuance is found in Busoni's 1916 edition of the Prelude in C Minor, BWV 999. There, Busoni appended a footnote in which he marveled at the balance and symmetry of the prelude's phrase structure (Figure 3).

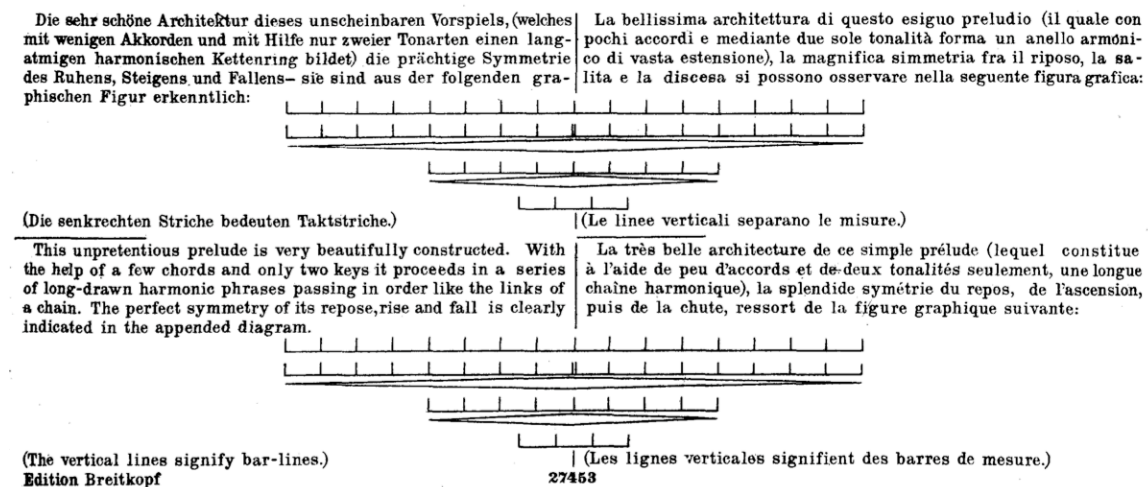


Figure 3: Unnumbered footnote to Bach, Prelude in C Minor (lute), BWV 999, piano arr. by Ferruccio Busoni. Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1916.

From this analysis, Busoni directly derives a plan for the addition of dynamics to the piece, indicated by the two double-hairpins in his diagram. In measure seventeen, he introduces an eight-bar crescendo, which is answered in measure twenty-five, just as in his diagram, by an eight-bar *diminuendo*. In the next, eight-measure phrase, Busoni

suggests—all of these indications are contained within parentheses, as is typical of his later editions—that the middle four bars should be graced with another swell, this one taking the form of a two-bar *poco crescendo* followed by two bars of *diminuendo*.

### **Fischer's *Entwurf* as Blueprint for Reforming Bach-Pianism**

In Chapter Three, I dealt extensively with the exegetical and editorial stances reflected in Fischer's "Draft Preface to an Edition of *The Well-Tempered Clavier*." Here, it seems useful to revisit the "Draft Preface" for the particular attitudes and principles of performance that it conveys. Fischer begins by treating these matters successively: clarity and structure; articulation; and the execution of pedal points/suspensions. He then provides an elegant summary of his approach to Bach's fugues. In characteristically economical prose, he offers that a successful fugue performance is fashioned out of the internal dynamics of the fugue at hand: if one's application of interpretation reflects and responds directly to these dynamics, then the beauty of the form itself will carry the day, with no need for the imposition of extrinsic and artificial means of generating musical interest. Beyond that, he notes that one should—again, as before—place clarity at the summit of all the aesthetic values; one should keep patterns of articulation simple (a "refreshing independence"); and one should avoid tempo extremes (in fugues); and maintain logical consistency throughout.

Of particular interest is Fischer's advocacy, in playing Bach's fugues, of reliance on, and heightening of, the progressive layering effects characteristic of fugal counterpoint.<sup>335</sup> "In Bach's fugues, intensifications—the inner progressions of the piece—

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<sup>335</sup> Edwin Fischer, "Entwurf eines Vorworts für die Tonmeister-Ausgabe des 'Wohltemperierten Klaviers,'" *Dank an Edwin Fischer*, 104-110.



–make themselves evident by an increase in the frequency of [fugal] entries and [progressive] deployment of all the available voices. Thereby the form reveals itself...”<sup>336</sup>

Fischer’s admonition to avoid “external means, such as dynamic extremes” in fugues is reminiscent of one of the footnotes to Busoni’s *WTC I* edition:

The infinitely divisible scale of gradations in tone that the modern pianist—in the best of cases—has available will not, however, be deployed when playing Bach’s “performance pieces.” Such successive changes of shading in registration cause the movement, to some extent, to proceed in a herky-jerky fashion. In most cases, one tone color must extend over the whole of a movement.<sup>337</sup>

In actuality, the above proscription of dynamic nuances describes Fischer’s Bach-pianism far more accurately than it does the overall approach to added dynamics that Busoni took in his *WTC I* edition.

From this brief review and from Fischer’s written comments in his Draft Preface, cited above, one can deduce the following general principles:

- 1) Fischer gives pride of place to clarity as “the foremost principle;” this is achieved by attention to the remaining principles.
- 2) Attention to “interchange between the voices,” *i.e.* to rendering the imitative counterpoint vivid and lucid.

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<sup>336</sup> “In den Bachschen Fugen zeigen sich die Steigerungen, das innere Geschehen, durch Häufung der Themeneintritte, Beschäftigung aller verfügbaren Stimmen an. Daraus ergibt sich die Gestaltung von selbst...” Fischer, “Entwurf,” 106.

<sup>337</sup> “Die unendlich theilbare, Abtönungsscala der Nüancirung, über welche ein moderner Clavierspiele im besten Falle verfügt darf indess bei der Wiedergabe Bach-scher ‘Vortragsstücke’ nicht zu voller Anwendung kommen. Vielmehr muss hier die Aufeinanderfolge der Schattirungen gewissermassen ruckweise, wie durch Registerwechsel bewirkt, vor sich gehen; auch hat sich – in den meisten Fällen – eine Tonfarbe unverändert auf einen ganzen Satz zu erstrecken.” *Nota bene* to the Prelude in E-Flat Minor, in J.S. Bach, *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, edited by Ferruccio Busoni (New York: G. Schirmer, 1894). Busoni’s repudiation of dynamic nuance here is somewhat astonishing, given the density and subtlety of dynamic indications that Busoni provides in his *WTC I* edition.

3) Attention to compositional structure; this, taken in the context of his editions, is shorthand for applying nuances in such a way that they draw attention to structural elements of the piece.

4) Three aspects relating to articulation: precision, consistency, and control; “sparing use of the pedal;” and ensuring that “tied notes” (*i.e.*, suspensions and pedal points) can sustain long enough to fulfill their changing harmonic functions. This leads to a discussion of dynamic concerns.

5) Because the tied notes of suspensions and pedal points might decay to such a degree that their harmonic function is undermined, they need to be heavily accented in proportion to their length, longer pedal points receiving the strongest accentuation, brief suspensions the least.

6) Individual voices should be carefully balanced. In the context of Fischer’s editions, it is clear that this means that a hierarchy of subjects and motives determines dynamic level; the more central and cogent the motive, the more it should be balanced up so that it predominates in the contrapuntal texture.

7) In fugues, performance practice descends from “the inner progressions of the piece” in such a way that “the form reveals itself.” In the context of Fischer’s editions and his *Well-Tempered Clavier* recording, this can be interpreted to mean that 6) above, when applied to the entire fugue, sculpts the fugue in such a way that expositions, strettos, and episodes have particular dynamic profiles that directly reflect the structure and/or technique at hand.

8) Because “intensifications” are composed into fugues by virtue of “the inner progressions of the piece,” no extraordinary inflection is needed to render them dynamic and mobile. Fischer does not rule out dynamic inflection but emphasizes that interpretive additions that are “external”—*i.e.*, not justified by structure—are superfluous. The implication is that those, and only those, expressive additions to Bach’s text that reflect and elucidate structure can pass muster as “internal.”

9) A summation, in which Fischer cautions that, because interpretation of fugues consists of rendering their lineaments evident, any inflections the performer applied need be in the service of structural lucidity: clear phrasing (as opposed to the ornate, detailed articulations of the “colorists”), moderate tempo (as opposed to more extreme choices of tempo in the antipodal preludes), and attentiveness to the inner workings of the piece (a “clear head”) are sufficient.

## Busoni's Bach-Edition in Relation to Fischer's *T-A* Editions

Of all of Fischer's *T-A* editions, those published in the period 1924-26 resemble Busoni's 1916 editions most strongly. Given this similarity and Fischer's general penchant for paraphrasing Busoni's prose, it is likely that Fischer worked directly from Busoni's editions, adapting them to conform with performance attitudes that Busoni evolved after 1916, in the last phase of his life, and to principles of notation and typography that Fischer adopted from the Mendelssohns.<sup>338</sup> By looking closely at Fischer's adaptation of Busoni's editions, one can see Fischer's editions both as autonomous structures and within an historical progression.

In his essay "On Musical Interpretation," Fischer notes that a significant shift in his own performance practice and that of Busoni had taken place. This shift was generally away from "storm and fury" (in his case) and from brilliant or overpoweringly loud playing (in Busoni's case) towards a more strategic deployment of the piano's dynamic resources: "In maturity, I scarcely heard a forte from [Busoni]; he found this sufficient, for it was for him a question of the balance of tone, no longer of strength in itself."<sup>339</sup> Fischer ascribes this to advancing maturity, but it also seems to have been Busoni's direct response to his environment. As I noted in Chapter One, Stuckenschmidt

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<sup>338</sup> A catalogue showing the full extent of the Fischer-Bach editions as planned appears in the far-left ruled column on the rear paper-wrapper of *T-A* Nr. 287 (i.e., Fischer's edition of the *English Suite in A Major*). The numbering system is not chronological. A key appears between the four ruled columns of the catalogue, just above the publisher's colophon at the bottom of the page: 'Die mit Nr. bezeichneten Werke sind erschienen (Dezember, 1926), die übrigen folgen in kurzen Zwischenräumen'. This provides a *terminus ante quem* for publication of Fischer's U-V editions of the *Zwölf kleine Präludien und Fugen und Sechs kleine Präludien* [contents and ordering as in BG Jahrgang 36/4] (*T-A* #1), the *Zweistimmige Inventionen* (*T-A* #3), the *Dreistimmige Inventionen* (*T-A* #4), the *Französische Suiten* (*T-A* #281-86) and the *Englische Suiten* (*T-A* #287-92).

<sup>339</sup> Fischer, "On Musical Interpretation," 21.

reported that “a short article written [by Busoni] on Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* and Liszt’s *Don Juan Fantasia* introduces fresh ideas on piano playing and piano transcriptions,” in which he “advises a musician to strive for the lucidity and lightness of Mozart’s language.” Busoni’s stated goal in editing Liszt’s transcriptions in this period is “simplifying the mechanics of piano playing and reducing it to the least possible movement and physical effort.”<sup>340</sup>

Busoni’s editions and compositions, which contain an extremely wide dynamic range early on, show that the shift to a more restrained deployment of dynamic resources took place relatively late in his life.<sup>341</sup> Expressive markings in Busoni’s later work works also stand in strong contrast to works before 1915-17.<sup>342</sup> Busoni has also radically

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<sup>340</sup> Hans Heinz Stuckenschmidt, *Ferruccio Busoni*, English translation by S. Morris (Calder and Boyers, 1970), 91. Originally published as *Ferruccio Busoni: Zeittafel eines Europäers* (Zürich: Atlantis Verlag, 1967).

<sup>341</sup> The Sonatina No. 2 of 1912 rises to *forte* and higher rather frequently, even containing the indication *fff*. This is typical of his style prior to the shift; but it is the last of Busoni’s piano works to feature a wide dynamic range. The range and emphasis of his expressive markings shifted significantly starting at around 1915. The *Indianische Fantasy* of 1915 represents something of a transition to Busoni’s late expressive style. Although relatively long stretches are marked *forte* or *fortissimo*, most of the work is confined to the lower dynamic ranges. In his *Toccata* (1920), only the final eight bars of this long composition rise to *forte* and above, while over half of the composition is in *mezzo forte* to *piano*. The *Drei Albumblätter* of 1921 presents a yet more extreme truncation of dynamic range. Virtually all of the set is in the range *mezzo piano* to *pianissimo*. The solitary *forte* found in the set is actually just a fleeting *forte-piano* lasting a mere second or so. In the *Perpetuum Mobile* of 1922, Busoni’s use *sotto voce* and *piano* throughout, with the exception of three bars in which an inner voice is brought out in *mezzo-forte* and nine bars of gradual crescendo to a brief *più forte* that is immediately cancelled out by the indication of *pianissimo*. Even the *Carmen Fantasy* (the Sonatina No. 6) of 1920, a work that one might expect to be fairly boisterous, contains only a total of nine bars of *forte* and two of *fortissimo*.

<sup>342</sup> An abundance of markings implying delicacy predominate: *dolce*, *sotto voce* and *molto sotto voce*, *dolcemente legato*, *sommesso diminuendo*, and repeated use of *tranquillo* in various contexts. Expressive words such as *dolce* and *sotto voce* are employed almost to the total exclusion of any other expressive indications. In the *Perpetuum Mobile*, indications of *leggero*, *con grazia*, and *sotto voce* strongly

trimmed the virtuoso technical requirements of the piece, in which his normal, extensive use of octave doublings is almost entirely absent, yielding to a delicate, contrapuntal texture. This suggests a watershed transformation of Busoni's interpretive outlook around 1917.

Stuckenschmidt reveals a possible motive for Busoni's new aesthetic of elegance and economy: "[Busoni's] correspondence with his friend Hans Huber, particularly during the years 1917 and 1918, shows how distressed he was by the frequently harsh criticism of his playing and his Bach editions." By 1920, as Stuckenschmidt notes, Busoni achieves new success in this period playing recitals of his most recent works—composed using a radically restricted dynamic range—and the works of Mozart.

The main thrust of this chapter is to provide what Phenomenologists call "evidence"—*i.e.*, not necessarily conclusive proof (whatever that might mean in the realm of ideal forms), but instead exemplifications—of what I call "couplings" between immanent structures underlying the movements of Bach's *WTC* and pianistic-expressive means used to enhance their *Prägnanz* (*i.e.*, elegantly-formed cogency that is intuitively sensible to the observer).

### **Fischer's Adaptations of Busoni's Interpretive Approach**

Fischer has streamlined the dynamic profiles and reduced the complexity of articulations shown in Busoni's edition substantially. Fischer retains most of Busoni's fingerings but replaces his phrasing slurs with his *Atemzeichen* (a.k.a., *Interpunktionszeichen zum Atmen*, or *Atemzugzeichen*), which are vertical dashes

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predominate. Even the section marked *Tempestoso* is qualified by the accompanying marking *sotto voce*.

representing the breath-like manner of phrasing, the precise execution of which is left to the performer.

Because Fischer's is a synthetic performance practice—meaning that it was intentionally contrived, and not merely received socially and passively—it forms a consistent system that lends itself to analysis: a small group of socially derived concepts governs the whole system; interpretive elements supervene upon those values; higher levels of branching supervene upon each interpretive element. Thus, the system is built upon a foundation of form/function, inner/outer integration, which provides an “honest” view of the piece unadorned by “external” and irrelevant nuances. In order for the inner/outer organic unity to be convincing, the outer surface cannot be excessively detailed. This imposes bounds and limits upon the scale of decorations, which must be generally large in scale. Seen in historical order, this entails streamlining of older practice. Busoni did not edit the Beethoven sonatas, and therefore would have fallen outside the group under consideration in Fischer's précis. Therefore, Fischer's comments do not exclude the possibility that Fischer may have used Busoni's *WTC* edition when preparing for his recording of that work.

Fischer's earliest Bach editions, although clearly based on Busoni's editions, diverge significantly from them. No octave doublings or displacements are indulged, articulation marks are added only extremely sparingly, and editorial dynamics are added in parentheses. Most importantly, Fischer's dynamics correspond with Busoni's analyses of musical structure underlying Bach's keyboard music.<sup>343</sup> Although Fischer manifestly

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<sup>343</sup> These are found scattered throughout Busoni's editions of both books of the *WTC*, as well as in his later edition of the remainder of Bach's clavier works. See also: Bach,

believes in the concept of the Urtext as an editorial foundation, he also believes that this text is only the foundation for interpretive adaptation to later, local circumstances

Fischer's process of adapting Busoni's Bach *Sinfonias* edition consists almost entirely of three actions. In one layer of adaptation, Fischer made slight changes to Busoni's fingerings. Of the 241 fingering numerals that Fischer employs in his edition of the C-major *Sinfonia*, for example, only twenty-eight of them contradict Busoni's fingerings. He seems to have changed these in the interest of simplifying technical procedures or facilitating greater legato.

Second, Fischer translated Busoni's phrasing slurs. By "phrasing slurs," I mean the layer of articulation devoted to periods and phrases above the local articulations of themes, motives, and individual tones. Heinrich Schenker railed against the *Phrasierungsbogen*, insisting that the double layer of slurs was visually confusing and that the apparent means by which each layer was realized involved discrete expressive types that were ill-served by the same visual signs.<sup>344</sup> Fischer solved this problem by translating Busoni's *Phrasierungsbogen*, into vertical hash marks, called, at various times in his editorial career, either *Atemzugzeichen* (i.e., "signs indicating the taking of a breath") or *Interpunktionszeichen* (i.e., "punctuation marks"). Fischer also suppressed almost all of Busoni's local articulations.

Third, Fischer suppressed approximately 75% of Busoni's dynamic inflections, along the way softening many of those that remained. Fischer reduced the number and

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Prelude in C Minor (lute), BWV 999, piano arr. by Ferruccio Busoni. Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1916.

<sup>344</sup> Schenker published a manifesto against the *Phrasierungsbogen* in 1925, i.e. just after the first of Fischer's U-V editions appeared. See Heinrich Schenker, „Weg mit dem Phrasierungsbogen," *Das Meisterwerk in der Musik*, 1 (München, Wien and Berlin: Drei Masken Verlag, 1925), 41–59.

extremity of dynamic markings, in the process smoothing the somewhat jagged dynamic plane of Busoni's detailed dynamic indications into relatively straightforward and "geometric" dynamic planes. In this matter, it is worth noting that Busoni anticipated Fischer. In the last volumes the Busoni-Bach edition, the range and the number of added dynamics applied is greatly restricted. This is consistent with my observations in Chapter Five, regarding dynamic markings in Busoni's original compositions in the last few years of his life and Fischer's anecdotal reports on the same after Busoni's death.

### **Fischer's Approach to Adding General Dynamic Markings**

Those of Busoni's dynamic indications that Fischer takes over in his Ullstein Bach-edition correlate overwhelmingly to major structural divisions in the pieces. That is, Fischer's biggest dynamic contrasts are in big blocks that correspond to major formal sections. Fischer used smaller contrasts to highlight motivic development — *e.g.*, to differentiate discrete legs in sequential developments and, often, to establish a dynamic progression shaping the sequence as a whole. He used relatively small dynamic contrasts, as well, to point up registral shifts, either within a given melody or between legs in sequences in which legs moved around the circle-of-fifths; he consistently rendered the alternating higher and lower legs as relatively louder and softer, respectively.

The Busoni edition includes numerous strong contrasts (*forte* phrases in *piano* sections and *piano* phrases in *forte* sections) that Fischer has eliminated in order to maintain the prevailing dynamic without interruption or local coloration. Second, Fischer has deployed a consistent dynamic shape for each subject entry, replacing Busoni's treatment that is more varied. Third, Fischer has reduced the overall dynamic range. In Busoni's edition, this extends from *piano* to *fortissimo*; in Fischer's the higher end of the



range is truncated at forte. Fourth, Fischer has moved the final dynamic peak of the movement from the final note, where Busoni had located it, to the last note before the codetta, implying that Fischer was concerned with conveying the movement's functional close by marking it with a significant dynamic event.

In the C-Major Sinfonia, Fischer simplifies Busoni's dynamics by simply marking each instance of the subject forte. This retains generalized crescendo that Busoni achieves by different means. Busoni's crescendo is the product of a general direction *sempre crescendo poco a poco*, and of the increased volume of each subject entry. Together, these two types of crescendo outweigh the reduced volume of the voices accompanying the subject. Fischer's crescendo, on the other hand, results from the layering of each voice, which rises to forte when it states the subject and subsequently maintains that dynamic.

In his Bach-editions, Fischer appears to have been less intent on mirroring shifts within sequential legs to reflect harmonic shifts that occurred because of their transposition. For example, if a dissonance forms a major second in one leg, but when transposed forms a more dissonant minor second, Fischer's editions typically will include an emphasis on the dissonance without acknowledging the difference of dissonance strength between the major- and minor-second dissonances. That Fischer does not provide such local coloration—although it would be eminently logical as an expressive reflection of the piece's tonal content—suggests that he placed expression of the formal element, in terms of the unity of the sequence, ahead of drawing attention to smaller elements.

Nor does Fischer color shifts of chord quality in sequential legs. In rare instances, Fischer's applied a dynamic indication to point out a jarring or unexpected harmony, but these appear only in special circumstances: in a non-sequential context, and where the dissonance corresponds to a turning point, such as the high-point of a melodic ascent. All of the tendencies just cited, in fact, are characteristic of Fischer's interpretive markings in general: they tend consistently to move the listener's attention away from local, particular events and to direct it towards the perception of formal structure.

An approach to added dynamics that had been typical in mid- to late-nineteenth century German Bach-editions, remnants of which one sees in Busoni's *WTC I* edition, is the use of added dynamics to apply what one might call a "novelistic, narrative patina" atop the work itself. One might also call this an "independent, artificial, dynamic superstructure." By this, I mean using added dynamics to impress a Romantic arc into Bach's works that is not immanent to any of the structures or techniques of the work at hand. Fischer's approach to added dynamics—and, in fact, to every variety of nuance added to Bach's music—totally excluded the "external" approach, replacing it with an "amplifying" approach to underlying, structural dynamics.

### **Fischer's Streamlining of Added Local Dynamic Markings**

Closely related to Fischer's smoothing of Busoni's dynamics is his consistently having shifted the degree of accentuation implied by emphasis marks downward, thereby softening their impact and reducing their tendency to interrupt or dislocate the larger, streamlined dynamic line. For example, Fischer generally replaced a *szforzando* in Busoni's edition with a strong accent (symbolized by an inverted V). Likewise, generally, he replaced a strong accent generally with a weaker accent (>) and an accent with a

tenuto mark; a tenuto mark in a Busoni edition usually was removed entirely in Fischer's version.

The similarities and differences of practice in the matter of added dynamics and their general or relative strength are clear-cut. The relative strength of emphasis marks and their placement in Fischer's practice (as understood from analysis of the practice seen in his Ullstein editions as well as his *WTC* recording) mimics that of Busoni's *WTC I* edition. In addition, like Busoni, Fischer felt that long note values should be emphasized in direct proportion to their length in order to counter the tendency of long notes to decay—or threaten to disappear entirely—before reaching following note. The strong emphasis that Fischer provides long note-values seems to have been aimed both at maintaining linear continuity and—as I discuss below—with ensuring that long, tied notes are able to serve their harmonic functions as pedal-points and suspensions, a concept that Czerny emphasized in his *WTC* edition.<sup>345</sup>

That being said, there are significant, if subtle, differences. The emphasis marks that Fischer applied to long notes are proportional to their length and are generally stronger than those found in Busoni's *WTC I* edition. As well, where Busoni used an emphasis mark to heighten a cadential arrival, Fischer generally omitted or softened Busoni's emphasis; this suggests that Busoni was more intent upon highlighting the function of cadences as fulfillments and that Fischer saw cadences, instead, as self-evident syntactical markers.

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<sup>345</sup> See the discussion of Fischer's treatment of "*liegende Töne*" ("static tones," that is, long, tied notes that typically fall into two categories: pedal-points and suspensions), below. Although J.S. Bach's practice allowed for the breaking of long, tied notes in accordance with the sustaining power of the instrument at hand, Fischer advocates exploiting the piano's dynamic range and the fact that notes played at a louder dynamic decay more slowly, obviating the need to break long, tied notes.

## Fischer's Added Phrasing Marks

In the Preface to his 1924 edition of the Bach *Sinfonias*, Fischer made an extremely curious observation when he said that “one detaches where a ‘phrase mark’ (*Bogen*) ends: correct phrasing is more crucial to expression than an abundance of dynamic nuances.”<sup>346</sup> In fact, Fischer included a mere handful of phrase marks in the edition, preferring to use *Atemzugzeichen*<sup>347</sup> instead of *Bogen*.<sup>348</sup> Those few phrase marks that remain are in places that make irrelevant his request that the player detach in almost all cases, the phrases in question ending before rests, *e.g.*: as in the Sinfonia in E Major, mm. 13-16); where a voice disappears from the texture, *e.g.*: as in the Sinfonia in D Major, mm. 2-3, where the soprano voice trails off after the phrase ends; and where the piece ends altogether, *e.g.*: as in the conclusion of the Sinfonia in E Minor. Therefore, it is unlikely that this comment applies to *Bogen* of the kind that English speakers might render as “phrase marks.”

By this short *Bogen*, could Fischer have meant an indication of motivic articulations? This seems equally unlikely because it contradicts other directives. For

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<sup>346</sup> “Wo ein Bogen endigt, wird abgesetzt, die richtige Phrasierung ist für den Vortrag wesentlicher als viele fortes und pianos.” Edwin Fischer, Preface to *Three-Part Inventions*, Ullstein “Tonmeister-Ausgabe” (Dix reprint No. 4), 3.

<sup>347</sup> At various times, Fischer uses a long-form term (*Interpunctionszeichen zum Atmen*) and an abbreviated-form term (*Atemzugzeichen*) for this mark. For brevity, I will employ the latter style, except in direct quotations. The practice of using such marks is derived directly from Hugo Riemann, as practiced in his *Analysis of J.S. Bach's Wohltemperiertes Clavier* (1890). Translated by J.S. Shedlock (Leipzig: Augener Verlag, N.D.) and in his *Catechism of Musical Aesthetics*, trans. H. Bewerunge (London: Augener & Co., 1895). Originally published as *Katechismus der Musik-Ästhetik*, (Leipzig: Augener Verlag, 1890).

<sup>348</sup> Because the English word “bow” is so unsatisfactory, I have used the German, except in places where I posit that it might mean “phrase marks” (*i.e.*, long *Bogen*) or “motivic articulations” (*i.e.*, short *Bogen*). The distinction is not made in German, both types of “bows” being lumped together.

example, Fischer rendered the three-sixteenth-note motive that makes up the theme of the Sinfonia in B Minor under short *Bogen*, three sixteenths under each. This might indicate that Fischer intended the third to be “*abgesetzt*” (discontinued, truncated). However, in a footnote to this articulation, Fischer explicitly forbids such “elegant detaching” (*elegante Abzischen*). In other places, such as in the opening motive of the Sinfonias in F Major, in G Minor, and in D Major, Fischer explicitly wrote a staccato dot over the final note of the motive. Alternatively, as in the opening of the Sinfonia in D Minor, Fischer wrote an *Atemzugzeichen* after the last note under the *Bogen*. This is wholly redundant if one observes the remark that Fischer had already made in his Preface.

Another explanation seems more likelier: *i.e.*, that Fischer had the Busoni *WTC I* edition in mind when he penned this phrase. In that context, it makes sense to instruct the player to detach after *Bogen*, because they proliferate in the Busoni edition, and, in addition, because Busoni generally did not add staccato dots to the final notes of motives or phrases under *Bogen*. It could be that Fischer wrote his Preface as a kind of prolegomena to his edition, before even having fully worked out its editorial and typographical apparatus.

However, Fischer’s reasoning regarding such “*absetzen*” is, moreover, fraught with contradictions. If he wants the player to detach after *Bogen*, and if his *Atemzugzeichen* are essentially his replacements for Busoni’s long *Bogen*, then it stands to reason that the player should detach at the *Atemzugzeichen*. However, with the first volume of his Ullstein *Tonmeister-Ausgaben*, Fischer already had clearly proscribed such an approach: “The little interstitial marks show the motivic construction: one should not

break the line, rather instead declaimed songfully.”<sup>349</sup> He reiterated this in the first footnote to his *Three-Part Inventions*, where he noted, “the interstitial breath marks” are “for the elucidation of the motivic structure.”<sup>350</sup>

### **Fischer’s Marks of Local Articulation**

In his edition of Bach’s *Sinfonias*, Fischer consistently streamlined—or even completely suppressed—the interpretive markings of Busoni’s edition. Even though he let Busoni’s indications of phrase breaks and sectional divisions stand, he suppressed more “local” articulations devoted to the notation of long and short notes in motives and melodies. In addition, he streamlined or suppressed most of Busoni’s dynamic nuances. Fischer’s apparent motivation was twofold: first, to translate the relative typographical clutter of Busoni’s articulation marks into a cleaner, more easily read, form; second, to introduce a greater legato to Busoni’s articulation by decreasing the overall frequency of articulations implied by Busoni’s marks. The effect of this was, in the main, to the detriment of local articulations, while letting a select group of the phrase breaks—*i.e.*, those that mark the grandest pillars of the composition—stand as Busoni had originally indicated them, and by diluting the effect of those articulation marks of any type that he let stand from Busoni’s editions. Essentially, Fischer streamlined Busoni’s articulations by removing a number of them and by softening a greater number of them.

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<sup>349</sup> “Die kleinen Interpunktionszeichen zeigen den motivischen Bau : es soll nicht abgesetzt, sondern nur sinngemäß deklamiert werden.” Edwin Fischer, untitled forward to *18 Short Preludes*, Ullstein “Tonmeister-Ausgabe” (Dix reprint No. 1), 2.

<sup>350</sup> “Die Interpunktionszeichen zur Atmung (d.h. zum Erkennenlassn der motivischen Zusammensetzung) finden sich hier meist nach dem ersten der vier Sechzehntel, weil das Thema auf dem zweiten beginnt.” Fischer, forward to *Three-Part Inventions*, 5.

## Fischer's Added Tempo Indications

Fischer, in his edition of the Bach *Sinfonias*, used a great variety of Italian words to convey instructions regarding articulation and temporal deflections (*tenuto*, *legato*, *espressivo*, *con espressione*, *dolce espressivo e legato*, *poco marcato*, *marcato*, *sempre legato*, *con molt'espressione*, *sempre cantabile e legato*, *poco agitato ma in tempo*, *portamento*, *tranquillo*, *egualmente non forte*, in addition to such commonplace expressions as *meno*, *più*, and the like).<sup>351</sup> He employed Italian and German terms indicating mood and/or genre, often in combination (“*Allegro–Fließend*,” “*Allegretto*,” “*Vivace–Leicht und zierlich*,” “*Cantabile–Ruhig, ernst*,” “*Andante*,” “*Pastorale–Einfach, fließend*,” *Poco adagio–Sehr ausdrucksvoll*,” “*Allegro–Lustig*,” “*Largo*,” “*Allegro–Leicht, rasch*,” “*Andantino*,” *Allegro non troppo*,” “*Andantino–Einfach*,” and “*Tranquillo–Gesanglich*”). Likewise, as noted above, Fischer added vertical hash-marks indicating “breath” (*Interpunktionszeichen zur Atmung*); fingerings clearly neither Bach’s nor reflective of Bach’s practice; and a wide variety of dynamic markings, including various degrees of accent marks, “double hairpins,” and Italian abbreviations similar to those used by Beethoven in his piano sonatas (e.g., *fp*, *rinf.*, and *sfz*).

### The Above as Evidence of *Prägnanz*

In several areas of musical expression, Fischer recasts the relatively jagged musical planes created by expressive markings in Busoni’s edition in a streamlined form more consistent with Weimar Republic notions of *Prägnanz* and geometric, unbroken planes. In fugues, for example, Fischer simplifies Busoni’s dynamics by simply marking

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<sup>351</sup> As well as the occasional German marking, although rarer (*heller*, *etwas heller*, *dunkel*, *wie zu Anfang*, *klagend*, *kurz*, and *breit*).

each instance of the subject *forte*. This creates a generalized crescendo as the number of simultaneously sounding voices rises. Busoni marks the same passage *sempre crescendo poco a poco* and provides each subject entry with a dynamic indication that is higher than that of the accompanying voices. Fischer's crescendo, on the other hand, results from layering of each voice, which rises to *forte* when it states the subject and subsequently maintains that dynamic.

The scaling back of detail in order to increase the impact of the greater whole is also typical a feature of *Prägnanz*. In his edition of the *Inventions and Sinfonias* and the *16 Preludes* (both 1924), Fischer has simply erased the lion's share of Busoni's dynamics, in general leaving the overall dynamic profile of Busoni's edition intact while reducing local detail (see Table 7).<sup>352</sup>

Table 7: Comparison of editorial dynamics in Busoni vs. Fischer editions of J.S. Bach's Sinfonia in C Major

Measure No.	Busoni Dynamic	Fischer Dynamic
	In general:	In general:
	Notes of three beats are marked with an accent wedge. Notes of longer than three beats are marked <i>tenuto</i> in addition to the accent wedge. Notes longer than one beat but shorter than three are typically marked <i>tenuto</i> .	In cases where Busoni supplied long notes with an accent wedge and a <i>tenuto</i> , Fischer has supplied a dash and a <i>tenuto</i> . Fischer has generally converted Busoni's accent wedges to a <i>tenuto</i> or a dash.

<sup>352</sup> Elsewhere, this results in nonsense, as in made of the dynamics for the Sinfonia in C Minor. Busoni's edition begins piano, ascends to mezzo-forte in measure 3, descends to piano in m. 7, rises to forte in the middle of m.8, and falls back to piano by the middle of m. 9. Fischer's edition eliminates Busoni's dynamics after the opening piano, but eliminates Busoni's markings until measure 9, when he gratuitously reproduces Busoni's piano marking, now made completely redundant by the lack of any contradictory dynamic after the piano opening. This supports the idea that Fischer was working from Busoni's edition and that his essential procedure was one of erasure, followed by the application of a more generalized dynamic scheme.



	Syncopations are generally given accent wedges.	On rare occasions, Fischer has retained Busoni's accent marks on syncopations.
1	<i>mf</i> on beat 1	<i>mf</i>
	Crescendo on beat 2 in treble voice	In a footnote, Fischer suggests that a double-hairpin dynamic shape be applied to each entry of the subject, with <i>cresc.</i> for the nine notes of the theme, and <i>decresc.</i> for the last five. This suffices for most dynamic shaping of the piece.
2	<i>mf</i> on beat, 1 leading directly to crescendo in middle voice	
	<i>p</i> on bass voice in 2 <sup>nd</sup> half of bar	
3	<i>mf</i> /crescendo on entry of subject in bass	
4	Slight decrescendo on inversus of subject in bass	
5	Crescendo on rectus of subj. in bass	
6	Slight decrescendo on inversus of subject in middle voice	
7	<i>p</i> /cresc. on b. 1	
8	Slight crescendo on particle of subject in treble	
	Two-beat crescendo on rectus of subject in bass	
9	<i>f</i> ; short decrescendo on inversus of subj. in the middle voice	
10	Slight decrescendo on inversus of subject in the treble	
11	Slight decrescendo on inversus of subject in bass; general <i>diminuendo</i> starting on beat 2	<i>Decrescendo</i> (hairpin)
12	<i>p</i> followed by <i>sempre cresc. poco a poco</i> . A footnote	<i>f</i> on treble entry; <i>crescendo</i> (hairpin)

	explains that this is a general dynamic justified by “the increasingly richer modulation.”	
13	Subject in middle voice is marked <i>mf</i> ; treble, by contrast, is marked <i>p</i> ; entry of a truncated inversus statement in bass is w/o dynamic at outset, but marked with a short decrescendo to <i>p</i>	<i>f</i>
14	cresc. (no starting dynamic) on entry of subj. in bass	
15	another cresc. intensified by the addition of <i>più</i> before the hairpin on the bass entry of the subj.	
16	addition of <i>molto</i> under the hairpin on the middle-voice entry of subj.; sm. descresc. on inversus in bass.	<i>crescendo</i> (hairpin)
17	<i>f</i> , at start of bar; sm. cresc. on fragment of subject in middle voice; general dynamic of <i>più cresc.</i>	<i>f</i>
18	sm. cresc. on fragment of subject in treble	
19	<i>ff</i> , on bass entry of subj.	<i>crescendo</i> (hairpin, under bass)
20	short cresc. on two micro-fragments of subj. opening in bass; treble C2, which will form a 7-6 suspension marked <i>fz</i>	<i>decrescendo</i> (hairpin)
21	<i>ff</i> , on final chord	<i>p</i>

Parallel to Fischer’s streamlining or suppression of Busoni’s dynamic indications and contours is his softening of Busoni’s articulation marks. In general, Fischer rendered Busoni’s staccatos *mezzo staccato* or suppressed them altogether. Likewise, as in the Sinfonia in D Major, Fischer generally adopted Busoni’s articulation, but replaced half of Busoni’s *mezzo staccato* indications (represented by dots under slurs) with legato and by

removing half of Busoni's staccato dots. Fischer consistently smoothed the profile of Busoni's articulations—i.e., making them more “geometric”—by moving virtually every indication of articulation one degree closer to legato.

All of this very likely was a response to the strong criticisms of the “Busoni staccato,” a misnomer spread by Busoni's adversaries. Looked at more closely and without the partisanship of the day, the “Busoni staccato” actually presents a finely distinguished array of degrees of detachment, ranging from pedaled over-legato, to half-pedaling, to legato, to half-staccato, and onward to staccato. Busoni employed these various types of articulation in a manner expressive of the motivic and rhythmic features of the material at hand and in a speech-like manner, not entirely unlike that which is described by Quantz and C.P.E. Bach in their mid-18<sup>th</sup> century treatises. That being said, the so-called “Busoni staccato” became something of an anti-Busoni slander. Apparently unmoved by the mimetic-linguistic and, indeed, historical arguments in its favor, Fischer jettisoned most of Busoni's subtle articulations and adhered to a more consistent use of legato. The general lineaments of Fischer's phrasing parody those of Busoni extremely closely, but they replaced the relatively jagged decorative surfaces of Busoni's Wilhelmine perspective with a streamlined form that is consistent with Weimar Republic notions of simple, unbroken, planes.

Busoni's *WTC* I edition is littered with subtle and detailed specifications of articulation, reflecting his application of articulation markings in a manner that reflects the motivic and rhythmic features of the material in a speech-mimetic manner in which slurred and detached notes alternate with one another, similar to the alternation of vowels and consonants in speech. This bears a strong resemblance to the practice described by

Quantz and C.P.E. Bach in their treatises, and therefore one wonders if there is not evidence here of a consistent thread—Besseler’s *Einheitsablauf* comes to mind again, in this context

Running parallel to Fischer’s streamlining or suppression of Busoni’s dynamic indications and contours, Fischer consistently softened Busoni’s articulation marks. While shadowing the basic lineaments of Busoni’s articulation marks precisely, Fischer nonetheless translated virtually every one Busoni’s articulation marks to marks that lay one step closer to legato. In almost all cases, Fischer either has rendered Busoni’s staccatos as mezzo-staccatos or suppressed them altogether. As exemplified by his treatment of the Sinfonia in D Major, Fischer generally adopted Busoni’s articulation; however, he removed about half of Busoni’s staccato dots, and replaced about half of Busoni’s *mezzo staccato* indications (represented by dots under slurs), marking the passages in question *legato*.

As I described in Chapter One, Phenomenology and Gestalt theory perpetuated devotion to organic unity in German artworks. Busoni and Fischer’s Bach-editions consistently reflect their desire to move Bach-pianism closer to Phenomenology and Gestalt theory in this regard. In coupling editorial additions so deliberately with elements of compositional structure, both pianists intrinsically mounted a defense of the appropriateness of pianistic expressivity in Bach-performance; they accomplished this by adapting, rather than discarding, pianistic expressive devices and capacities.

### **Dynamics Coupled to Harmony**

Fischer’s preference for highlighting structural events extended to his treatment of local harmonic coloration. Fischer’s editions do not emphasize pitches that are chromatic,

*i.e.*, those lying outside the diatonic scale (as opposed to pitches in a chromatic sequence). Instead, he limited his use of various types of accent marks almost exclusively to syncopations, to the clarification of the extent of “legs” in sequences, and to subject entries. Thus, he is well outside of the much older tradition established by Quantz and Emanuel Bach, standing closer to the twentieth-century tradition of emphasizing the *onset* of rhythmic, structural, and formal musical events. In general, where sectional divisions between fugal expositions are clear in Bach’s composition, Fischer highlights the division with a clear dynamic shift at the onset of the new section. In the case of the new introduction of thematic material—as in the Fugue in E-Flat Minor of *WTC I*—Fischer plays the initial entry fortissimo, progressively reducing the dynamic associated with the new subject as it becomes more familiar to the listener.

### **Dynamics Coupled to Formal Structure**

Although both editors agreed that the syncopations in m. 8 of the Prelude in C major in *WTC I* merit accent wedges and that m. 11 should be rendered with a decrescendo, they disagreed about the shape of the remainder of the piece. Busoni marked m. 12 with a general crescendo to fortissimo at the end of the piece, modified by a host of smaller dynamic details over a fairly wide dynamic span within the general crescendo. Fischer marked the first note after the downbeat of 12 forte and added a crescendo to the subject without his usual balancing decrescendo. This is somewhat akin to Busoni’s usual marking for the subject. Fischer brought up each of the remaining voices to forte at their statements of the subject and, further, he marked a crescendo for the top C of the piece. For Fischer, this top C clearly is the peak, whereas, for Busoni, the peak is reached with the final chord.

On the macro level, Fischer sees the piece as an elegant arch that reaches its registral and dynamic peaks simultaneously. However, Busoni presents a vision of the work that is more “baroque” in its detailed dynamic contours. Fischer also chooses not to reflect Busoni’s vision of the piece being in two halves: 1) an expository half in which his dynamics elucidated the subject entries and 2) a half in which *stretti* and growing harmonic interest require a progressive dynamic march to the final cadence. Still, within the general crescendo to the final chord, Busoni provided the entry of *each* subject with a dynamic intensification. A smooth crescendo in the manner of Fischer apparently held little attraction for him.

### **Emphasis Marks Coupled to Functions in Suspensions and *Liegende Töne***

The matter of Fischer’s application of emphasis marks to pedal points is somewhat different. The degree of accentuation that he notated seems to have had more to do with the position of the pedal-tone in the work than with the manner in which register determines the degree to which it can sustain, the latter of which influenced Busoni more. Fischer marked pedal points appearing in the interior of any given work, in general with a normal accent wedge, but usually, he employed the stronger *sfz* marking for pedal points near the end of the work. If register had been his main concern, he likely would have prescribed a greater degree of accentuation for the dominant pedal of the Sinfonia in G minor, for example, which is higher and which, therefore, sustains relatively poorly in comparison with the tonic pedal. Interestingly, Fischer preferred structural to harmonic thinking in this area, *i.e.*, his decision to weight pedal points relative to one another is determined by the position of each in the piece, the one nearer the end of the work receiving greater emphasis, regardless of its harmonic function. This

choice reveals reflects Busoni's strong preference for rendering the final measures of each work as a push to the final tonic cadence, not as the resolution of harmonic and tonal tensions at their height in the *narratio* and *argumentatio* segments of Bach's structures. Fischer generally did not return to the Baroque arch, or precisely to Busoni's preference for the emphasizing the final chord, but instead, often placed the climax of the piece a little before the final chord, often at the point of the codetta. In sum, derivation of dynamics from the kind harmonic hierarchy that 18<sup>th</sup>-century writers such as J.J. Quantz and Emanuel Bach advanced is of little interest to Fischer relative to the use of dynamics to underscore formal and structural events.

### **Articulation and Phrase Marks Coupled to the Unifying and Bracketing of Themes**

As with the above couplings, Fischer applied his *Interpunktionszeichen zur Atmung* in sequences with militaristic precision and consistency. He marks every leg of each of his sequences with the phrase break in precisely the same place. Apparently, Fischer believed that a consistent approach with regard to articulation and phrasing was essential for integration and lucidity of musical interpretation. For example, it does not seem to have been a matter of any great urgency to Fischer that, in sequences consisting of four or five legs, the inflexible application of the same phrasing to each leg might grow tiresome, or even annoying, or that an interpretation might gain from the surprise of establishing an expectation as to phrasing and then violating it by joining two legs in an enjambment.

## Part Two: The Evidence of the *WTC* Recording

One essential quality divides the editions from the *WTC* recording. In the editions, Fischer's clear aim was to provide an exegetical framework on the basis of which others might structure their own performances. In his *WTC* recording, as in all recordings to date, technological limitations required that Fischer commit a unique *performance* of the work to shellac, one technically barred from responding to its perceivers or the revised general set of assumptions and requirements of any society of listeners. In the *Mendelssohnian Dialectic*, editions pass on a pristine text, surrounded by a pedagogical/exegetical framework, whereas performances involve free adaptations and exegesis that, properly speaking, should not find its way back to the sacred text: notation of a unique, correct performance is anathema to the Mendelssohnian dialectic, which leaves texts unadorned as a constant reminder to the reader that forming a consistent, cogent interpretation of the text is his (or her) responsibility: it cannot, must not, be abdicated and placed on the shoulders of an authority, lest one descend into idolatry and orthodoxy.

Standing at the very the beginning of the era of widely distributed Bach-recordings, Fischer may not have completely grasped that they would be treated, essentially, as the aural equivalents of musical editions. The fixity and lack of malleability of recorded instantiations of musical scores run contrary to the pedagogical and editorial desiderata that Fischer expressed plainly throughout his publications, be they of prose or of musical editions. Therefore, I will avoid treating Fischer's *WTC* recording as an authoritative document that implies that others ought to replicate his approach, but instead will only give it the status of one possible reading, likely intended to teach others methods by which they might make quite different recorded versions,



potentially infinite in number and variety. Fischer, it will be remembered, offered his students successive exemplars of well-formed *Gestalten*. This suggests that one should view his WTC recording as just one of a great number of possible, potentially equally well-formed, *Gestalten*.

At the close of this chapter, I will briefly expand on what I mean to imply by this “potentially infinite” numbers and varieties of Bach-performance styles, and show that the strict coupling of musical structures to consistent processes does nothing to reduce the “number and variety” of possible manifestations of any of Bach’s works.

### **Pedaling**

Because it is one of the most fraught of the pianistic effects that one might apply to Bach-performance, I begin with pedaling. The two volumes of Busoni’s WTC edition contrast strongly with respect to use of the sustaining pedal. In his Book One edition, Busoni sees fit to indicate pedallings explicitly, and even to describe its use in some preludes as “absolutely necessary.” However, he qualified his pedaling instructions, as well. See, for example, the close of his *Nota bene* to the Prelude in E-flat Minor from his edition of Book One of *The Well-Tempered Clavier*: “the use of the pedal in this piece is absolutely essential, but what is notated here is not necessarily the only allowable type of pedaling; it may, however, provide the individual performer with a suggestion, a frame of reference [*Anhaltspunkt*].”

In his *WTC I* edition, Busoni indicates pedal only within clearly delimited parameters. In some of the preludes—most of them of the type that I call “pattern” preludes—Busoni indicates more or less constant pedal, indicating that the pedal should be lifted on the last note of one harmony and depressed again at the first note of the next.

He is careful to indicate that the pedal is to be lifted when passing tones appear (Figure 4).

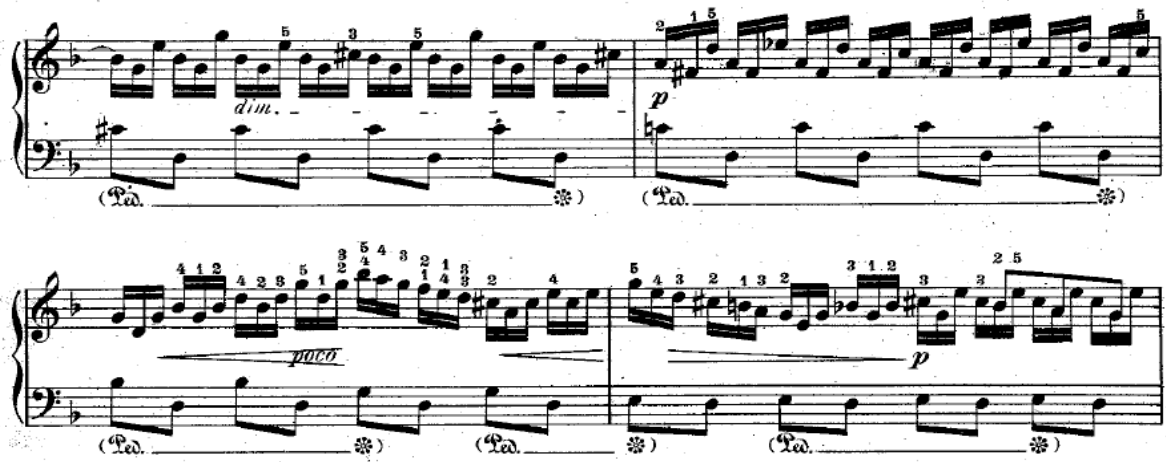


Figure 4: Prelude in D Minor, excerpt from Busoni's *WTC I* edition

In *WTC* preludes that are based upon a single motive, Busoni will sometimes indicate use of the pedal for a short series of notes that belong to the same harmony. He is meticulous about indicating release of the pedal precisely at the onset of the first non-chord tone. Busoni also repeats the same pattern of pedaling at each iteration of the motive (Figure 5).



Figure 5: Prelude in C-sharp Minor, Busoni *WTC I* edition

Busoni's markings in the fugues of *WTC I* are somewhat curious. Busoni's editorial policy in this volume is to provide explicit pedal indications, even if he qualifies them as "point of departure." Therefore, the total absence of pedal in the fugues, while internally consistent, is at odds with an eyewitness account, which Dent describes it as concluding with, "a haze of pedal-held sound that was not confusion but blinding clearness." But no such indication is found in his edition (Figure 6).

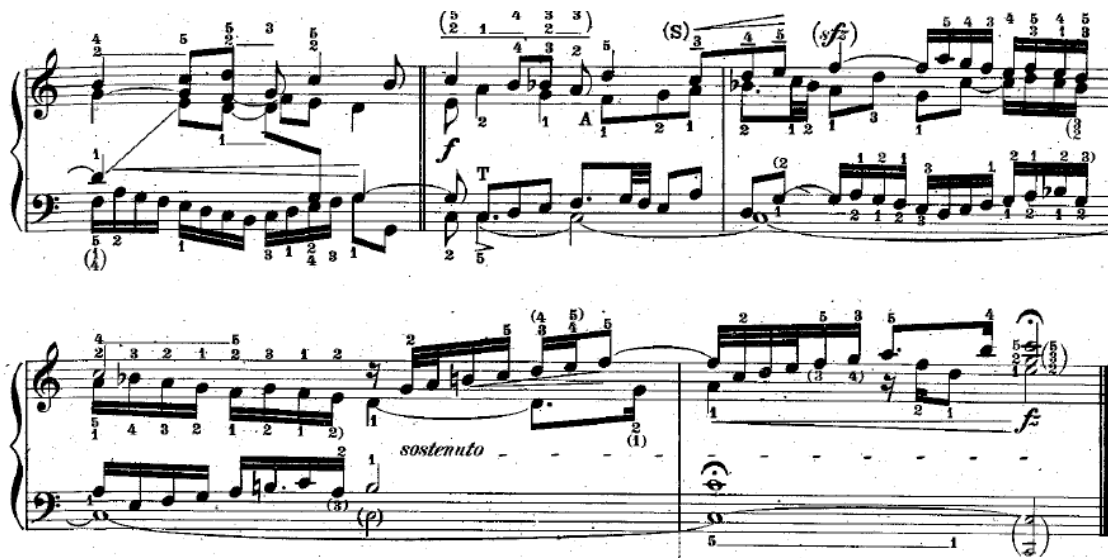


Figure 6: Fugue in C Major, Busoni *WTC I* edition

In another instance, Busoni's edition and his 1922 recorded performance are similar but not identical. In the recording, Busoni begins without pedal, only adding it after measure four. His edition, on the other hand, while consistent in general principle of changing pedal with each change of harmony, calls for pedal from the prelude's outset (Figure 7).

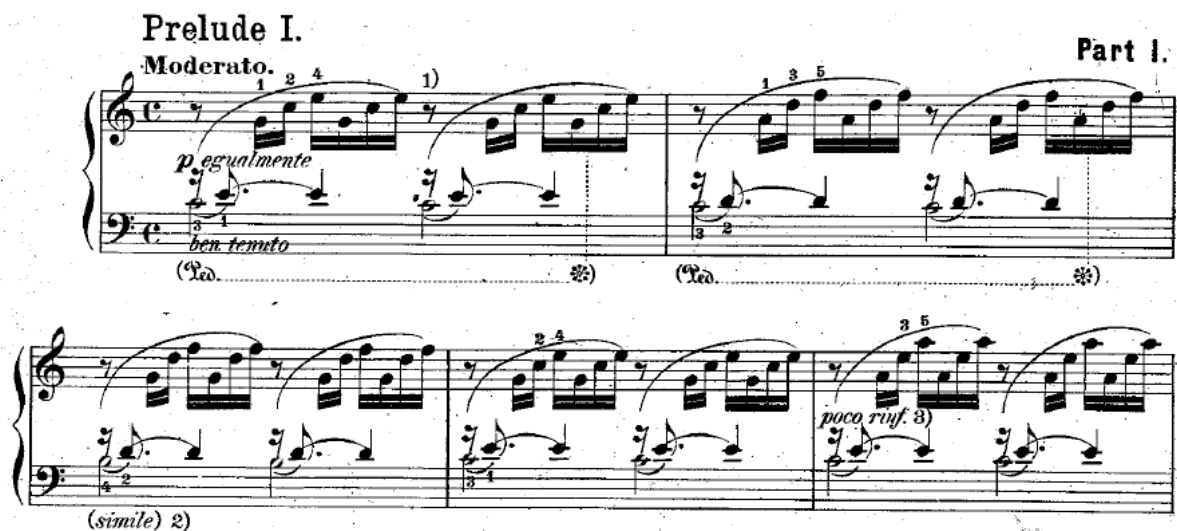


Figure 7: Prelude in C Major, Busoni *WTC I* edition

Busoni's *WTC II* edition, as in other matters of added interpretive suggestions, radically restricts pedaling indications. This reflects a change of attitude about editions and their purpose but does not reflect a shift of Busoni's Bach-pianism. If Busoni had reassessed the appropriateness of the pedal in performing Bach at the piano at the time of his recording, he might have trimmed its use back substantially. However, outside of its absence in the first four measures, Busoni still applies the pedal throughout the Prelude thereafter. In the preface to his *WTC II* edition, Busoni explains that he had "turned away from purely pianistic considerations," and wished to direct the *WTC II* edition primarily to teaching composers, instead of pianists, who were his target readership for the *WTC I* edition.

Fischer employs pedal less often and for shorter stretches than shown in either Busoni's *WTC I* edition or his recording of the Prelude in C Major. Fischer's *Draft Preface* is unambiguous regarding his philosophy of pedaling in *WTC*, which one can presume would extend to Bach-pianism as a whole: there, Fischer notes that the best performance would be attained "through the most sparing use of the pedal" ("durch

*sparsamsten Pedalgebrauch*”).

In the case of some pianists, proscribing use of the pedal seems part of a general asceticism appropriate to reading sacred documents, as though one should be restricted to bland and tasteless wafers and wine in order to be truly spiritual. Fischer was no such Bach-pianist. His advocacy of only “sparing use of the pedal” seems to be entirely a product of his concern for *Prägnanz*—*i.e.*, for rendering gestures clearly and economically, instead of in overblown fashion that compensates for a surrounding haze of pedal.

### **Deviations from Strict Musical Time**

Over several stages of development, Busoni and Fischer’s philosophy of rubato evolved in a consistent direction. In the first stage, that set down in his *WTC I* edition, Busoni demonstrated a highly detailed, varied, and sophisticated rubato technique that appears always to have been intended to highlight elements of the composition at hand. By the time of his *WTC II* edition, twenty years later, Busoni had significantly curtailed the number and type of indications of deviations from strict musical time. Although his 1922 Bach-recording (analyzed below) is not extensive, it nonetheless testifies that rubato was still very much a part of Busoni’s Bach-pianism during the years of the Weimar Republic. However, his rubato practice seems to be subtler in 1922 than it was at the end of the nineteenth century, as judged by his *WTC I* edition. Rubatos in Fischer’s *WTC* recording are far fewer in number, significantly less detailed, and much less complex than those that Busoni used in his *WTC I* edition and in his recording of the Prelude in C Major. Fischer consistently reduced the number of deviations from strict musical time notated in Busoni’s *WTC I* edition (see Table 8, below).

Table 8: Deviations from strict musical time indicated in first twelve pieces of Busoni's *WTC I* edition (movements without any such indications omitted)

Genre/Key/Measure	Indication	Structural Element
Pre/Cm/m28	poco più vivo ma leggero	quasi cadenza
Pre/Cm/m34	poco a piacere	cadenza
Pre/Cm/close	allargando	close
Fugue/Cm/m29	poco largamente	
Fugue/Cm/ close	rallantando	close
Pre/C#M/close	deciso	close
Fugue/C#M/m21.5	ritenutamente	
Fugue/C#M/m22.5	a tempo	
Pre/C#m/m11.5	poco slentando	
Pre/C#m/m14	a tempo	
Fugue/Dm/close	allargando	close
Pre/EbM/m. 9	ritenuto al recitativo	
Pre/EbM/m. 24	poco ritenuto	
Pre/EM/m. 7	poco ritenuto	
Pre/EM/m. 21	poco ritenuto	
Pre/Em/m. 8	poco sostenuto (followed by “ <i>a tempo</i> ” in next m.)	
Pre/Em/m. 15	poco agitato	
Pre/Em/m. 17	allargando	
Pre/Em/m. 19	più sostenuto	
Pre/Em/m. 41	deciso	
Fugue/FM/m. 55	poco slentando (followed by “ <i>a tempo</i> ” in next m.)	
Pre/Fm/m. 16	poco slentando (followed by “ <i>a tempo</i> ” in next m.)	

Comparing Fischer's *WTC II* recording with Busoni's *WTC II* edition is not highly informative; there, as was true of other types of nuance already discussed, interpretive markings are so spare that nothing can be asserted about Busoni's use of rubato in Bach.

#### Analysis of Busoni's 1922 Bach Recording

Busoni recorded the Prelude and Fugue in C Major from *WTC I* at the London Studios of Columbia Records on two occasions: once November 18-19, 1919, and again

on February 27, 1922. Marc-André Roberge, who documented the earlier session, believes that those recordings were deemed unsatisfactory and were likely lost or destroyed.<sup>353</sup> Larry Sitsky has documented the later session.<sup>354</sup> In this section, I take advantage of this rare, indeed unique opportunity, to compare two recordings in this instance, instead of Fischer's recording to Busoni's edition.

Busoni's 1922 recording presents a sophisticated study in the application of tempo rubato to Bach's music. In her study, *Ferruccio Busoni and the Ontology of the Musical Work*, Erinn Knyt summarizes Busoni's recording of the Prelude.

...although he plays the piece with great fidelity in terms of notes, he creates special effects using the pedal and a widely varied tempo. Busoni lingers on important structural pitches and on areas with interesting harmonic color. He takes extra time on the first pitch of the prelude, for instance, and slows down to fully portray the poignancy of the most distantly related harmonies and pitches, such as a low A-flat in the bass in measure 23. He also uses rhythmic fluidity to create a sense of climax when he rushes and increases the dynamics before broadening and gradually slowing toward the end. He combines a slightly detached, articulated, and delicate touch at the keyboard with the use of the sostenuto pedal, which he uses for coloristic purposes. When he first uses the sostenuto pedal in the fifth measure as the harmonies begin to move away from C major, the effect is ethereal.<sup>355</sup>

Although what Knyt observes is accurate, it may be possible to describe Busoni's rubato technique with greater specificity. For example, during the Prelude's closing section—extending over a relatively long stretch from measure twenty-eight to measure thirty-three—Busoni gradually and irregularly eases the tempo with a series of

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<sup>353</sup> Marc-André Roberge, *Ferruccio Busoni: A Bio-Bibliography* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), 127-139.

<sup>354</sup> Larry Sitsky, *Busoni and the Piano. The Works, the Writings, and the Recordings*, 2nd ed., (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2008).

<sup>355</sup> Erinn E. Knyt, *Ferruccio Busoni and the Ontology of the Musical Work: Permutations and Possibilities* (Doctoral Dissertation, Stanford University, April, 2010), 258.

zigzagging micro-rubatos. This is essentially a compound of a *ritardando poco a poco* and *tempo rubato*. Busoni's approach makes a strong effect with highly economic means: although he only gives up twelve BPM, from M.M. 88 to M.M. 76, the general effect of Busoni's closing tempo zigzag of a massive ritenuto. Fischer's approach is far closer to those of current Bach-pianists: the ritardando that he makes at the end of the Prelude is very straightforward, taking place in the space of just the penultimate measure. In place of Busoni's sophisticated means of deploying rubato in combination with ritardando to suggest a close, Fischer, like most later pianists, substitutes a more prosaic, geometrically smoothed approach that eschews local detail in favor of elucidating structure on a relatively grand scale.

Knyt also provides an overview of Busoni's approach to structural rubato in his recording of the Fugue in C Major from *WTC I*.

The most unusual uses [*sic*] of structural rubato, however, occurs in the fugue, where he portrays each voice with stunning clarity. After playing the opening in a fluid but fairly regular tempo, Busoni retards to draw attention to inner voices and harmonic cadences.<sup>356</sup> He slows down considerably to emphasize the entrance of the subject in the tenor voice and then again at the end of nearly every successive phrase or cadence. Using rubato in this structural manner Busoni draws attention to harmonies, cadences, and the shapes of phrases, as well as to the individual voices.<sup>357</sup>

Fischer and Busoni's recordings of the Prelude and Fugue in C Major from *WTC I* differ strongly with respect to dynamics, pedaling and tempo rubato. Fischer's recording removes the highly detailed dynamic contours found in Busoni's *WTC I* edition and replaces them with a more generalized system of structural elucidation, the details of

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<sup>356</sup> Here, I would beg to differ with Knyt: Busoni's tempo is certainly "fluid" in the opening measures of the Fugue in C Major, but it is hardly "fairly regular."

<sup>357</sup> Knyt, *Busoni and the Ontology of the Musical Work*, 258-9.



which I describe in detail, below. Busoni, on the other hand, went in quite a different direction, retaining most of the dynamic details of his *WTC I* edition while lowering overall dynamics and exploiting his control of the quietest range of the piano's dynamic range. Fischer noted this—first in his 1929 essay “On Musical Interpretation,” to which he added detail during a master-class that he led in Potsdam in 1936—with absolute accuracy:

Busoni, who is among the greatest virtuosos of all time, played glitteringly, loudly, enchantingly during his youth; in later years, I hardly ever heard him play anything forte. He was content with that. For the relationship of dynamic levels to one another was all that mattered to him, not absolute volume.<sup>358</sup>

I once asked Busoni why his sound was so particular. “The secret of that is quite elementary,” he answered. “You see, I play mezzo-forte where others play forte.” He set the scale of dynamic gradations a degree lower. Whereas a definite limit exists at the loud end of the scale, one can always extend the soft side further.<sup>359</sup>

Although this satisfied Busoni, Fischer eschewed Busoni's constant manipulation of extremely fine dynamic gradations when editing and recording Bach.

The two pianists pursued different approaches to pedaling in Bach, as well.

Throughout his *WTC* recording, Fischer holds to his recommendation of “exceedingly sparing” use of the *sostenuto* pedal (“*sparsamsten Pedalgebrauch*”) in Bach performance.

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<sup>358</sup> Busoni, der zu den größten Virtuosen aller Zeiten gehörte, spielte in seiner Jugend so glanzvoll, laut, hinreißend; im Alter habe ich von ihm kaum ein Forte gehört; es genügte ihm so, denn ihm kam es ja da auf die Relationen der Tonstärke, nicht mehr auf die Stärke an sich an.” Edwin Fischer, “Über musikalische Interpretation,” *Musikalische Betrachtungen*, 34.

<sup>359</sup> “Ich fragte einmal Busoni, warum es bei ihm so klingt. Er antwortete mir: ‘Das ist ein ganz einfaches Geheimnis. Wissen Sie, mein mezzoforte ist da, wo die anderen forte spielen.’ Er legte also die Skala nach unten. Das Leise kann man immer noch nach unten drücken, aber für das forte gibt es eine Grenze.” Ursula Wildgrube, “Auszüge aus einem Stenogramm des Meisterkursus Potsdam 1936,” *Dank an Edwin Fischer*, 65.

In his recording of the Prelude and Fugue in C Major from *WTC I*, Fischer only momentarily touches the *sostenuto* pedal in error on one occasion in the Prelude—in what sounds like a momentary lapse—and not at all in the Fugue.

As Knyt notes, Busoni employs rubato as a structural device. Fischer, likewise, employs rubato only as means of structural elucidation; but he does only very infrequently, compared with Busoni. In addition, the degree of deviation from the base tempo in the relatively few *rubati* heard in Fischer's *WTC* recording is extremely modest by comparison with Busoni's.

Overall, comparison of Fischer and Busoni's recordings of the Prelude and Fugue in C Major from *WTC I* suggests that Fischer mimicked Busoni's general dynamics while suppressing the multitude of nuances that Busoni's *WTC I* edition contains. Fischer's approach is, in essence, a "façade stripping" in the realm of dynamic flow; this goes in tandem with Fischer's evident objectives as an editor of Bach's solo keyboard works. Fischer should probably be counted as among the Bach-pianists who most severely restricted tempo rubato in performances of Bach by comparison with the practice of other Bach performers of the early twentieth century.

In the period after Fischer's *WTC* recording appeared, the practice of *tempo rubato* became so estranged from Bach-pianism that even the relatively subtle *rubati* that Fischer employed came to be seen as egregious. The same is true, in fact, of Fischer's Mozart recordings. In a 1991 review of Fischer's recording for *Gramophone* of Fischer's recordings of the Mozart piano concertos with the Philharmonia Orchestra, Lionel Salter noted that "his good qualities are evident on these discs: graceful phrasing, great beauty of tone and sensitive nuances, liquid passage work, plus delicacy and purity. Against

these have to be set missed or split notes, muffed ornaments and, worst of all, a seemingly fundamental instability of pace.”<sup>360</sup>

### **Rubato in Fischer’s *WTC* Recording**

Fischer’s deviations from strict musical time don’t seem, on close inspection, to be arbitrary but, instead, to correspond to important elements of musical structure. The few deviations from strict musical time found in Fischer’s *WTC* recording are limited to three categories: 1) a few casual, momentary deviations from tempo that seem to be to no expressive purpose and which probably represent lapses of concentration and 2) closing ritardandos; and 3) occasional shifts in tempo in order to set an entire segment of a piece apart from that which surrounds it. Fischer eschews micro-rubatos of the kind seen in Busoni’s described above. However, Fischer does shift tempo significantly for the sake of structural elucidation. In the Fugue in C minor from *WTC II*, for example, Fischer performs the section in which the fugal theme appears in rhythmic augmentation (measures fourteen and fifteen) at a very significantly slower tempo than the rest of the fugue. As a rule, Fischer does not indulge in any audible deviation from strict musical time except at sectional breaks or to highlight the onset of a special contrapuntal or textural effect.

### **Evidence of *Prägnanz* in Fischer’s *WTC* Recording**

Fischer’s impulse to streamline and simplify interpretive contours in the service of *Prägnanz* is evident on all of the levels noted in my discussion of his Bach-editions. A

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<sup>360</sup> Lionel Salter, “Mozart Piano Concertos, etc.,” *The Gramophone* (February, 1991), 249.

brief analysis of Fischer's habits and patterns of articulation in his *WTC* recording reveals a bit more.

Partisanship regarding articulation and legato in piano playing goes quite far back in the history of performance practice, and in general, as the piano rose and the harpsichord fell in popularity, the use of *detaché* as the usual or normal touch fell out of fashion. However, there is some evidence that practice became bifurcated. Czerny's report on Beethoven's disapproval of Mozart's "*zerhacktes*" piano touch, echoes well into the nineteenth century, when many partisans of legato touch still complained of the widespread use of non-legato. In 1825, Schubert wrote of being unable to endure "the accursed chopping in which even distinguished pianoforte players indulge and which delights neither the ear nor the mind."<sup>361</sup> If "even distinguished pianoforte players" still employed non-legato this late, it may be premature to declare that this style died with Mozart. At the end of the century, articulations marked by Busoni in his *WTC I* edition reflect much the same outlook as that which C.P.E. Bach and Türk espoused. The articulations in Busoni's *WTC I* edition are decidedly speech-mimetic, elucidative of motivic contrasts, and structurally oriented.

In the twenty years that separated his *WTC I* and *WTC II* editions, Busoni's approach developed further. Principles of articulation in his *WTC II* edition are difficult to discern from its sparse markings and, indeed, they are often ambiguous. Busoni's stated goal in this volume was to offer compositional pedagogy instead of the piano pedagogy that served as the guiding mission of his *WTC I* edition. Consequently, Busoni indicates much less about interpretive nuances in the later volume.

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<sup>361</sup> Otto Erich Deutsch, *Schubert: A Documentary Biography*, translated by Eric Blom (London: Dent, 1946), 436.

In his *WTC* recording, Fischer introduces a technique that I have never observed elsewhere. Possibly building upon the importance that his teacher Kurth attached to line, Fischer couples degree of detachment directly to linearity: *i.e.*, in the least linear of the preludes, Fischer detaches the most; in the most linear of the preludes, his approach consists of unbroken legato used as a “bracketing” device, *i.e.*, to set off a given subject or theme from surrounding material by the use of small articulations.

Fischer’s approach to articulation, which is texturally determined, is consistent with Busoni’s progressive abandonment of speech-mimetic articulation. However, Fischer’s practice does represent a strong departure from Busoni’s in two respects. First, Fischer’s tendency to render *arpeggiando* preludes with a relatively *detaché* touch contrasts with that of Busoni, who—in both his edition and his recording of the Prelude in C Major from *WTC I*—seems to have used “finger-pedaling” in much of the movement where he does not use the *sostenuto* pedal.<sup>362</sup> In the Prelude in C-Sharp Major from *WTC I*, Fischer moves articulations in both directions: in order to highlight the structural melody formed by the treble pitches on downbeats—which repeatedly make cohesive gestures of four bars in length—Fischer uses unbroken legato, combined with discreet use of the sustaining pedal (in this case, eschewing “finger-pedaling”) in four-bar periods. However (and this is the crux), at the onset of the dominant pedal point, he suddenly pivots to a *detaché* touch, marking a structural arrival with a significant change of texture.

In contrast to the preludes, Fischer generally shunned articulation in the fugues of *WTC*, consistent with their linear nature. In the Fugue in C Major from *WTC I*, for

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<sup>362</sup> In the edition, Busoni placed each arpeggio under a slur, and deployed the sustaining pedal somewhat after the opening. The 1922 recording seems to conform exactly to these editorial markings.

example, Fischer plays the entire subject as one, unbroken line. In place of Busoni's combination of articulation and a relatively strong accent at the syncopation, Fischer provides a rather gentle dynamic emphasis and does not break the subject's continuous line, here or, remarkably, at any point in the fugue.

On rare occasions, Fischer was willing to break from strict legato for fugue subjects. In so doing, he obeyed a general *desideratum*: articulations should serve to highlight pitches contained in a structural melody lying beneath the subject's ornamental surface. This seems to reflect his connections with Schenker—whose editions he promoted, and whose prose he occasionally mimicked—as well as sympathy for the general Bauhaus principle of sublimating surface decoration and highlighting basic structure.<sup>363</sup>

In the Fugue in C minor from *WTC I* for example, Fischer breaks the legato just before each restatement of the C–B–natural–C head motive. Besides drawing attention to the structure of the subject, this articulation also helps highlight the underlying A–flat–G–F–E–flat structural melody. A similar case in point is the subject of the Fugue in D Major from *WTC I*, which contains a dotted figure that suggests a *coup d'archet* typical of the French *ouverture*, a figure historically performed with a rather substantial articulation silence between dotted eighths and sixteenths. Busoni distinguishes this dotted figure from the rather more linear thirty-second-note segment of the subject by marking it *non-legato*. Such a contrast provides the two halves of the subject with articulations tailored to their musical essence, one boldly disjointed, the other lyrical. Fischer, in accordance with his strong preference for legato in fugues, erases this contrast of articulation.

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<sup>363</sup> As I noted in footnote 19 of Chapter Four, Fischer's essay *Kunst und Leben* appears to be a reference Schenker's work of the same title.

### The Special Balance of Variety and Unity in Fischer's *WTC* Recording

Fischer intensifies the effect of his *WTC* recording by pushing two manifestations of organic unity vigorously in opposite directions. This was noted at once by a particularly well-informed reviewer from within Fischer's circles. In 1937, *The Gramophone* published a review of Fischer's *WTC* recording by "A.R." – the abbreviation under which the Bach scholar Alec Robertson contributed his reviews.

Besides being associated with *Gramophone*, Robertson was an HMV employee from the firm's earliest years. On at least one occasion, he was a close associate of Walter Legge, the producer of Fischer's *WTC* recording. Later, he even teamed with Legge to co-produce a Bach recording for HMV.<sup>364</sup> His potential direct involvement in Fischer's *WTC* recording would have been forestalled by personal circumstances: Fischer's studio sessions fell during a period in which Robertson devoted himself to the Episcopal priesthood and had consequently resigned from HMV. That notwithstanding, his close association with Legge provided him access to details of Fischer's recording and may have brought him into direct contact with the pianist. The review is as insightful as it is concise. (Robertson is commenting here upon the first volume of Fischer's recording of *WTC I* only.)

Following the Busoni edition on many points, Fischer retains a refreshing independence of view: and his power of seizing the inner spirit of each work results in showing us how wide is the range of Bach's thought. But Fischer's greatness as an artist consists not in this or that point of technique—things one takes for granted in one of his stature—but in his power to see each work as a whole, and so to present it thought out from first note to last with all its parts resolved into unity.

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<sup>364</sup> Johanna Martzy's 1955 recording of Bach's Sonata No.3 in C major for Unaccompanied Violin (BWV 1005).

Robertson's précis deserves some unpacking. Robertson confirms Fischer's importance and potential influence as a model to others, bestowing upon him "greatness." This bears emphasis, in light of the obscurity into which Fischer fell later, and in light of the fact that listeners these days are unaccustomed to hearing the *WTC* recorded extremely quickly, and with no recourse to editing.

Robertson's review seems to point into different directions. On the one hand, he speaks of the impression of diversity conveyed by Fischer's recording, which "shows us how wide is the range of Bach's thought." This suggests that Fischer is a master of diversification and variety, which is surely admirable. Continuing, however, he reels around in the opposite direction, emphasizing Fischer's skill in presenting a view of "each work as a whole," "thought out from first note to last with all its parts resolved into unity." How can a pianist simultaneously succeed at unity and diversity, at articulating "parts" and "resolving [them] into unity?" This a combination of accolades commonly reserved for composers, most especially for Bach.

Looking closer, it appears that Robertson is pointing to a dialectical relationship between enhancing *unity within* each movement as well as *diversity between* movements, most especially between genres. Historically, no one prior to Fischer seems to have been intent on these twin goals. Some performers have emphasized inter-movement unity. Busoni was one: he searched extensively for unifying points between the prelude and the fugues of the *WTC* and made heightening this often obscure, and sometimes forced, putative unity a driving force of the expressive markings in his *WTC I* edition. Others placed radical emphasis on unity within a give piece or movement but did so in a manner that defeated expressivity: Rubinstein advocated playing each of the preludes with a



single touch and volume throughout. This reduced intra-movement expressivity and dynamism essentially to zero. Although Rubinstein did not advocate total uniformity of approach between pieces, he never advocated exploring inter-movement diversity as a desideratum.

Clearly, emphasizing unity between movements will limit variety within any cycle. Similarly, emphasizing variety within a movement could add so much local color and behavior as to threaten perception of its structural elements by failing to provide resemblances that could serve as repetitions: and perception of form depends on repetitions of some kind.

By comparison with evidence logged in musical editions of Fischer's time, few provide as many discrete modes of coupling expressive devices to compositional ones as one hears in Fischer's recording. At the same time, analysis of data taken from Fischer's recording compared against *WTC* editions widely available in his time suggests that Fischer pushed individual Preludes further apart from one another than was conventional. Fugues, because of Fischer's particular manner of coupling expressivity to contrapuntal procedures, stand in another expressive category from the diversity of the *WTC* preludes. Fischer's emphasis on structuring elements that serve to bind individual movements together combined with his exploration of highly diverse, varied approaches to each movement or movement type results in a particularly dynamic, dialectical set of expressive oppositions. Emphasis on either organic unification or intra-movement variety is conventional thinking that offers relatively plebian results; balancing the two in tension with one another, on the other hand, results in a high degree of perceived complexity and rationality.

Balance is key: without maintaining a *dialectical* relationship between these two processes, one could dominate the other, reducing the overall dynamism of the cycle. For example, if I were to add an additional layer of distinction between, say, *movements with strong, internal structure and unity* and *movements that are made to appear as chaotic as possible*, I would indeed have added another with which to increase inter-movement contrast; but, of course, I will have compromised the other pole of the dialectical balance, destabilizing it and reducing its dynamism.

The above is, I believe, absolutely key to understanding Fischer's *WTC* recording. Reading Robertson's review in this light, it ceases to look like a parroting of clichés about whole being more than the sum of their parts and looks, instead, like a desideratum of dynamism and useful complexity. Fischer's having abandoned Busoni's obsession with prelude-to-fugue integration frees up expressive resources to employ where form is readily perceptible, *i.e.*, inside of any given movement. Having modified and extended Busoni's approach, without abandoning the expressivity at the heart of the *WTC I* edition or the safety of the inexpressive *WTC II* edition—in which expressivity never threatens to overwhelm perception of form allows Fischer to bring together the best elements of both volumes while also achieving a "refreshing independence of view."

In the next sections, I will illustrate some of the particular means that Fischer employed to energize the dialectical dynamism that I have just described.

### **Generic/textural differentiation in Fischer's *WTC* recording**

Fischer achieves inter-movement differentiation on two levels of meaningful organization of parts within a dynamic whole. On one level, he flings the preludes and the fugues into separate corners by treating preludes as an especially variable group of

movements. Fischer is unusually inventive at finding means by which to base each of the preludes on a special degree of linearity, on an individualized position in the spectrum of dissonance acuity, on non-uniform degrees of arc as some movements become more unstable during their “travels” while others shift less dramatically, or on a particular range in the temporal continuum (meaning that he does not merely use tempo differentiation, but also applies expressive means to change perception of pieces with different harmonic rhythms, causing pieces with slow harmonic-rhythm to appear to have fewer changes of harmony that they actually contain, while enhancing perception of the rapidity of changes in pieces with the fastest harmonic rhythm), by crafting articulations for various genres: preludes, as opposed to fugues; and preludes as judged relative to one another on a scale of melodic linearity. On one level, Fischer apparently based the individuation of preludes upon a grand narrative contour for each that is derived from underlying structural elements. This seems to have been the foundation upon which Fischer organized his application of dynamics and rubato.

On another level, Fischer appears to have categorized the preludes into three groupings based on their relative linearity and to have devised discrete interpretive approaches for each.<sup>365</sup> Many of the preludes of the *WTC*, especially those of *WTC I*, might be called “pattern preludes” that unfold in the vertical dimension, including those in C Major, C Minor, C-sharp Major, D Minor, E Minor, F Major, and B Major. These preludes repeatedly adumbrate a given figure over various harmonies that describe a

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<sup>365</sup> Lawrence Dreyfus treats the matter of genre and subdivisions of genres in Book One of *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, as I do here, although his focus is the fugues and not the preludes. See L. Dreyfus. “Matters of Kind: Genre and Subgenre in Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier, Book I,” *A Bach Tribute: Essays in Honor of William H. Scheide*, ed. P. Brainard and R. Robinson (Kassel and Chapel Hill, NC, 1993), 101–19.

more or less luxuriantly decorated arpeggio. Even if these arpeggios are often lavishly filled in with passing tones, their essential nature is vertical. For this reason, they contrast starkly with the strong linearity of the fugues. Two additional prelude sub-types stand between the verticality of the pattern preludes and the highly linear fugues. The first of these I would term *monothematic* preludes. Like the pattern preludes, they repeatedly adumbrate a given figure; but in the case of these pieces, the given figure is an amalgam of at least two motives, the result being somewhat more linear than the pattern preludes. The preludes in C-Sharp Minor, F Minor, F-sharp Minor, G Major, G Minor, G-sharp Minor, A-flat Major, A Minor, and B-flat Major and B-flat Minor.

A third genre must be added to pattern preludes and monothematic preludes in this taxonomy. These preludes are not limited to a short phrase built out of two or three motives, but instead are relatively expansive melodic complexes composed of many motives. In addition, each of these preludes exemplifies a particular stylistic or generic boilerplate upon which Bach's sons and students could base their own compositions. I refer to these, after Elwood Derr, as "*vade-mecum*" preludes in recognition of Bach's apparent aim, especially pronounced in *WTC II*, to provide his sons and students – and, indeed, many future generations – a "composers' *vademecum*" of compositional techniques and stylistic templates.<sup>366</sup>

Although it would certainly be possible simply to gather all the preludes together into one rubric, patterns of Fischer's thought emerge much more clearly when considering them in these three groupings. His interpretation suggests that he aimed to

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<sup>366</sup> I would argue that *WTC II*, as opposed to *WTC I* is largely laid out as a "composer's *vade mecum*," as the late Ellwood Derr aptly described Bach's Inventions and Sinfonias. See Ellwood Derr, "The Two-Part Inventions: Bach's Composers' Vademecum," *Music Theory Spectrum*, Vol. 3 (Spring, 1981), pp. 26-48.

provide each sub-genre its own performance style. Fischer chose articulations for the “pattern” preludes featuring a greater use of staccato than in either of the other two prelude types. Moreover, in the *vade-mecum* preludes, which employ the longest lines and the least-detailed articulations, of the three types, Fischer deployed unbroken legato for the longest stretches. Such step-wise deployment of expressive means according to a given piece’s position along a continuum might seem casual if limited merely to one expressive parameter, such as articulation. However, Fischer’s application of rubato and dynamics reflects the same distinction of preludes from one another.

The preludes in C Major, C Minor, C-sharp Major, D Minor, E Minor, F Major, and B Major, for example, are primarily vertically oriented, repeatedly outlining decorated arpeggio figures over various harmonies in a consistent harmonic rhythm. The preludes in C-sharp Minor, F Minor, F-sharp Minor, G Major, G Minor, G-sharp Minor, A-flat Major, A Minor, and B-flat Major and B-flat Minor form a group that is somewhat more linear than the *arpeggiando* preludes. The remaining preludes comprise a *vade-mecum* of compositional models that feature fully wrought themes of longer scope. For the most vertically oriented, *arpeggiando* preludes Fischer’s articulations are generally *detaché*. At the other end of the spectrum, in the *vade-mecum* preludes (which employ the longest lines of the three types), Fischer deploys unbroken legato for long stretches.

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In fugal expositions, Fischer consistently voices the subject more loudly than its counterparts; indeed, Fischer consistently gives subject entries dynamic emphasis across the board, as Busoni did. He makes massive crescendos during his *stretti* by playing each subject entry more loudly than the previous one. The coupling of stretto to dynamic intensification is clear throughout Fischer's *WTC* recording. Fischer plays fugal episodes at a lower overall dynamic than that of fugal expositions, corresponding to the absence of the fugal subject in its full form. Fischer and Busoni differ with respect to scope and duration of dynamic gestures in episodes. Busoni generally provides each sequential leg with a dynamic profile, which he replicates for each leg. Fischer, on the other hand, generally shapes the sequence as a whole, usually applying a long crescendo to sequences that rise and a long decrescendo to those that fall. Although both of these approaches couple dynamics to a musical–structural element, Fischer's approach creates longer, less detailed gestures. As a result, Fischer's interpretation characteristically reads as more streamlined than Busoni's.

In the fugues of *WTC*, Fischer coupled expressive nuance to particular

contrapuntal procedures and fugal-sectional types, *i.e.*, expositions, episodes, strettos, and codettas. Fugues, by their very nature, are individuated through the particular choices that a composer makes regarding which procedures to employ at what time, in what sequence, and for what duration. Fischer's relatively strict application of particular interpretive devices to particular procedures heightens such distinctions, highlighting the variety inherent in each fugue's structure.

### **Tempi in Fischer's *WTC* Recording**

However cogent a comparison of Fischer and Busoni's *WTC* tempi might be, the absence of metronome markings in either book of Busoni's *WTC* edition renders this impossible. This notwithstanding, other means are available for placing tempo in Fischer's *WTC* recording in perspective: (1) Fischer's written commentary, (2) internal evidence gleaned from comparing tempo trends in preludes contra fugues, and (3) comparison with selected editions that do bear metronome markings.

Fischer's only written comment on tempo in Bach performance is in his Draft Preface, in which he notes that, in performing Bach fugues, "a nice, moderate tempo" is required.<sup>367</sup> This begs two questions: *Why should fugues be more in need of moderation than preludes?* and *does Fischer's WTC recording adhere to this desideratum?* Conversely, *does Fischer's comment suggest that some preludes may be most effective at relatively immoderate speeds, and to what extent does he play preludes in his WTC recording at relatively radically displaced tempi?*

A contextual frame is needed here, lest analysis criticism be reduced to purely

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<sup>367</sup> "...eine klare, einfache Phrasierung, ein schönes Mittelmaß im Tempo und ein klarer Kopf genügen meist." Edwin Fischer, "Entwurf eines Vorworts für die Tonmeister-Ausgabe des 'Wohtemperierten Klaviers,'" *Dank an Edwin Fischer*, 106.

subject valuations of “moderate” versus “immoderate,” “radical” versus “conventional.”

The mere presentation of tempo data from all available sources would be worse than useless. The transmission of prototypes from the “material entities which motivate inferences, responses or interpretations” – in Alfred Gell’s elegant summation – to recipients cannot be assessed without evaluations as sophisticated as those that musicologists apply to textual criticism. Not all sources are created equal, *pace* graphs representing statistically adduced “tempo trends,” which reduce all agents to the same degree of influence.

To begin to provide the needed context, I collated those *WTC* editions available to Fischer before 1933 that all bear metronome markings. From them, I selected two that stand in closest proximity: the 1908 edition by fellow Busoni follower Mugellini, and the 1907 edition by the Schenker associate Julius Röntgen.<sup>368</sup> Both editions are from within Fischer’s inner circle, and therefore enjoy special status.

Czerny’s assertion that his edition of the fugues of *WTC* more or less represented a transcription of Beethoven’s private performance of these works in lessons with Czerny

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<sup>368</sup> Julius Röntgen (1855-1932) edited *The Well-Tempered Clavier* for Universal Edition. The Schenker Documents Online page reports the following [http://mt.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/schenker/profile/person/rontgen\\_julius.html](http://mt.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/schenker/profile/person/rontgen_julius.html), accessed August 29, 2012).

“At Weinberger’s request, Schenker asked Röntgen whether he would collaborate in practical editions of works of the classics for the newly founded Universal Edition (NMI C 176-02: March 15, 1901), to which Röntgen replied affirmatively (OJ 13/27, [1]: March 18, 1901). Schenker thanked him for undertaking the work (NMI C 176-01: April 13, 1901), advising him to demand ‘a higher honorarium than usual’ because his “intellectual property” is greater than that of ‘run-of-the-mill editors.’ Röntgen ‘was on friendly terms with Schenker, who for his part spoke well of his playing. The two had at any rate already been acquainted for several years’ by 1901 (Federhofer, p.189). Later, however, Schenker spoke disparagingly about his editing. Of J. S. Bach’s works, Röntgen edited for UE the Little Preludes and Fugues, the Two- and Three-part Inventions, French Suites, English Suites, Partitas, Italian Concerto, D-minor Concerto, and Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue, and the *Well-tempered Clavier* (in 1907).”



has lent them considerable authority. Czerny's 1837 edition, the first edition to have provided metronome markings, serves reasonably well as "control" against which the later editions may be compared.

Nevertheless, a simple comparison is of no more use than a graph that claims to prove tempo trends is. In other words, simple adduction of relations is not sufficient. The true standard of comparisons that anthropologists like Gell have brought to the table lies in adducing "relations between relations," in this case, by making comparisons of comparisons. By comparing the extent to which the Mugellini and Röntgen editions, as well as Fischer's recording, either confirm or modify Czerny's metronome markings, relations might emerge between the three post-Czerny sources. If results were to show that Mugellini, Röntgen and Fischer were all equally deviant from Czerny, then no particular claim of originality could be advanced for any one of them. However, if one emerged as clearly more deviant than the other two, then this would suggest that the outlier among the three non-Czerny sources provided a fresh, perhaps even experimental, view of tempo in the context of *The Well-Tempered Clavier*.

I first calculated, for each movement, which of the four sources deviated from a general trend established by the other three. In this calculation, a total of fourteen of Fischer's tempi emerged as furthest outside the general trend. In second place is Röntgen, whose tempo choices were the most extreme within the trend set by the later three in ten cases. Mugellini was the least extreme. Just one of his choices was the most extreme of the group of three latter-day artists, his choice of tempo for the Fugue in G major being slower still than Fischer or Mugellini, who both chose tempi slower than Czerny's. In the cases of twelve pieces in Book One, the results were so scattershot in relation to Czerny

or duplicated one another to such an extent and they obscured the leader of the trend. In these cases, I declared a toss-up (Table 9).

Table 9: Comparison of Tempi and Analysis of Relative Relations Between Fischer's *WTC I* Recording and Metronome Markings in Printed Editions

Movement	Czerny 1837	Mugellini 1908	Röntgen 19--	Fischer 1933
Prelude in C Major	112	108	100	100
Fugue in C Major	58	60	60	64
Prelude in C Minor	144	120	112	138
Fugue in C Minor	80	80	88	84
Prelude in C# Major	92	92	80	80
Fugue in C# Major	104	96	92	100
Prelude in C# Minor	112	100	72	84
Fugue in C# Minor	112	100	72	104
Prelude in D Major	132	126	126	138
Fugue in D Major	76	69	60	60
Prelude in D Minor	80	84	60	76
Fugue in D Minor	66	72	60	66
Prelude in Eb Major	80	76	72	84
Fugue in Eb Major	112	96	100	96
Prelude in Eb Minor	100	84	96	69
Fugue in D# Minor	76	72	72	50
Prelude in E Major	84	88	72	96
Fugue in E Major	108	108	100	120
Prelude in E Minor	84	69	69	63
Fugue in E Minor	126	126	112	120
Prelude in F Major	88	76	80	92
Fugue in F Major	66	60	63	58
Prelude in F Minor	52	52	54	56
Fugue in F Minor	63	66	72	56
Prelude in F# Major	96	104	92	126
Fugue in F# Major	88	76	80	76
Prelude in F# Minor	100	104	108	116
Fugue in F# Minor	88	100	100	69
Prelude in G Major	100	96	92	100
Fugue in G Major	80	69	76	72
Prelude in G Minor	69	92	52	80
Fugue in G Minor	80	60	60	72
Prelude in Ab Major	96	108	100	92
Fugue in Ab Major	60	66	66	72
Prelude in G# Minor	126	132	120	112
Fugue in G# Minor	54	60	60	54
Prelude in A Major	80	80	80	90

Fugue in A Major	69	66	66	69
Prelude in A Minor	84	80	80	96
Fugue in A Minor	72	66	72	72
Prelude in Bb Major	84	76	76	88
Fugue in Bb Major	116	104	108	100
Prelude in Bb Minor	92	84	88	66
Fugue in Bb Minor	60	52	52	48
Prelude in B Major	76	80	84	63
Fugue in B Major	126	120	132	112
Prelude in B Minor	80	76	76	69
Fugue in B Minor	92	104	108	104
Analysis: <i>Fischer in extremis</i>	13 pieces			
<i>Mugellini in extremis</i>	1 piece			
<i>Röntgen in extremis</i>	10 pieces			
Toss-ups	24 pieces			
Total	48 pieces			

In a second calculation, I noted which of the sources deviated most strongly from the baseline established by Czerny, simply by counting the differential in MM numbers, with no reference to trends. This lessened the number of toss-ups to cases of ties. Using this type of calculation, Fischer emerged as being even more extreme than he had appeared in the first analysis of the database. Calculated this way, Fischer's tempo choice is the most extreme in twenty of the 48 pieces in *WTC I*. Röntgen and Mugellini are far behind, with eleven and four cases of extremity, respectively (Table 10).

Table 10: Analysis of Deviations from Czerny's Tempi in Preludes and Fugues from Various Editions and Fischer's *WTC I* Recording

Movement	Czerny 1837	Mugellini 1908	Röntgen 19--	Fischer 1933
Prelude in C Major	112	108	100	100
Fugue in C Major	58	60	60	64
Prelude in C Minor	144	120	112	138
Fugue in C Minor	80	80	88	84
Prelude in C# Major	92	92	80	80

Fugue in C# Major	104	96	92	100
Prelude in C# Minor	112	100	72	84
Fugue in C# Minor	112	100	72	104
Prelude in D Major	132	126	126	138
Fugue in D Major	76	69	60	60
Prelude in D Minor	80	84	60	76
Fugue in D Minor	66	72	60	66
Prelude in Eb Major	80	76	72	84
Fugue in Eb Major	112	96	100	96
Prelude in Eb Minor	100	84	96	69
Fugue in D# Minor	76	72	72	50
Prelude in E Major	84	88	72	96
Fugue in E Major	108	108	100	120
Prelude in E Minor	84	69	69	63
Fugue in E Minor	126	126	112	120
Prelude in F Major	88	76	80	92
Fugue in F Major	66	60	63	58
Prelude in F Minor	52	52	54	56
Fugue in F Minor	63	66	72	56
Prelude in F# Major	96	104	92	126
Fugue in F# Major	88	76	80	76
Prelude in F# Minor	100	104	108	116
Fugue in F# Minor	88	100	100	69
Prelude in G Major	100	96	92	100
Fugue in G Major	80	69	76	72
Prelude in G Minor	69	92	52	80
Fugue in G Minor	80	60	60	72
Prelude in Ab Major	96	108	100	92
Fugue in Ab Major	60	66	66	72
Prelude in G# Minor	126	132	120	112
Fugue in G# Minor	54	60	60	54
Prelude in A Major	80	80	80	90
Fugue in A Major	69	66	66	69
Prelude in A Minor	84	80	80	96
Fugue in A Minor	72	66	72	72
Prelude in Bb Major	84	76	76	88
Fugue in Bb Major	116	104	108	100
Prelude in Bb Minor	92	84	88	66
Fugue in Bb Minor	60	52	52	48
Prelude in B Major	76	80	84	63
Fugue in B Major	126	120	132	112
Prelude in B Minor	80	76	76	69
Fugue in B Minor	92	104	108	104
Analysis:				

Fischer <i>in extremis</i>	20 pieces			
Mugellini <i>in extremis</i>	5 pieces			
Röntgen <i>in extremis</i>	11 pieces			
Toss-ups	12 pieces			
Total	48 pieces			

Where Fischer stands at the extreme edge of the trend, it is most often because he chose faster tempi for pieces marked in the Czerny edition between Allegro and Presto, and slower tempi for pieces marked between Andante and Largo. In pieces marked Allegretto or Moderato, Fischer's choices are evenly divided between either markedly faster or markedly slower than Czerny (Table 11).

Table 11: Tempo Outliers in Fischer's *WTC I* Recording

Fast Outliers	As Percentage of Tempo of Nearest Other	Tempo Word <sup>369</sup>
Prelude in F-sharp Major	121% of Mugellini	<i>Allegretto</i>
Prelude in A Minor	114% of Czerny	<i>Vivace</i>
Prelude in A Major	112% of Czerny, Mugellini, or Röntgen	<i>Moderato</i>
Fugue in E Major	111% of Czerny	<i>Allegro vivace</i>
Fugue in A-flat Major	109% of Mugellini or Röntgen	<i>Andante</i>
Prelude in E Major	109% of Mugellini	<i>Allegretto</i>
Prelude in F-sharp Minor	107% of Röntgen	<i>Allegro mod.</i>
Fugue in C Major	106% of Mugellini or Röntgen	<i>Allegro</i>
Prelude in D Major	105% of Czerny	<i>Allegro vivace</i>
Prelude in E-flat Major	105% of Czerny	<i>Lento moderato</i>
Prelude in F Major	104% of Czerny	<i>Vivace</i>
Prelude in B-flat Major	104% of Czerny	<i>Vivace</i>
Prelude in F Minor	103% of Röntgen	<i>Andante espressivo</i>
Slow Outliers	As Percentage of Tempo of Nearest Other	Tempo Word
Fugue in D-sharp Minor	69% of Mugellini or Röntgen	<i>Andante con moto</i>
Prelude in E-flat Minor	72% of Röntgen	<i>Lento moderato</i>
Fugue in F-sharp Minor	78% of Czerny	<i>Andante maestoso</i>

<sup>369</sup> As found in the Czerny edition.

Prelude in B-flat Minor	79% of Mugellini	<i>Andante sostenuto</i>
Prelude in B Major	83% of Czerny	<i>Allegretto moderato</i>
Prelude in C-sharp Minor	86% of Röntgen	<i>Andante con moto</i>
Fugue in F Minor	89% of Czerny	<i>Andante espressivo</i>
Prelude in E Minor	91% of Mugellini or Röntgen	<i>Allegro</i>
Prelude in B Minor	91% of Mugellini or Röntgen	<i>Andante</i>
Fugue in B-flat Minor	92% of Mugellini or Röntgen	<i>Largo</i>
Prelude in G-sharp Minor	93% of Röntgen	<i>Allegretto moderato ed espressivo</i>
Prelude in A-flat Major	96% of Czerny	<i>Moderato</i>
Fugue in B-flat Major	96% of Mugellini	<i>Allegro vivace</i>
Fugue in F Major	97% of Mugellini	<i>Allegretto</i>

One should consider, as well, if alternate means of viewing available data contradict one's working hypothesis. In order to do, I compared Fischer's tempo uniformly to that of Czerny, instead of against his nearest neighbor in the general trend, which is more frequently Mugellini or Röntgen. The results confirmed, or perhaps intensified, the previous hypothesis regarding Fischer's tempi relative to the other sources: Fischer emerges as even more deviant from the baseline established by the Czerny edition

In all, it would be difficult, I think, to point to any other performer or editor of *The Well-Tempered Clavier* before Fischer who even approached his then-radical experiments with tempo differentiation. I deduce from these data Fischer's apparent fascination with expanding the parameters of tempo within the collection. Given what Robertson's *Gramophone* review has revealed about Fischer's capacity for providing each piece with greater specificity of character, and in differentiating them more profoundly from one another than historically had ever been the case, Fischer's bold tempo choices seem particularly significant.

Fischer chose relatively extreme tempi more often in the preludes than in the fugues, as one might expect given his stated preference for avoiding extremes of tempo in the performance of fugues. This is especially true of the fast outliers. Of the fast outliers, ten are preludes and only three are fugues. In addition, the three most extreme fast outliers are all preludes. The slow outliers are slightly more evenly split, eight of them being preludes, and four of them fugues. Where Fischer does choose radically displaced tempi for a small number of the WTC fugues, these are exclusively extremely slow tempi – most particularly in the fugues in D-sharp Minor and F-sharp Minor from *WTC I*.

#### Fischer's Use of Interpretive Inflections Devices of Organic Unity

##### **Added Dynamics**

Fischer and Busoni share the same general approach to dynamics in the fugues of the *WTC*, which is founded on the premise that added dynamics – if applied in a manner that is logically consequent – can heighten perception of structure and function. However, Fischer differed from Busoni regarding the level of dynamic detail appropriate to Bach's music. Busoni indicated a great number of dynamic nuances in his edition of Book One and almost none in Book Two. Fischer's recording retains Busoni's general dynamics but deletes his detailed dynamic inflections. Fischer's strong or sudden contrasts generally occur only at structural divisions, apparently to serve as markers of form. Fischer was a master of the perfectly apportioned, long crescendo, a device with which he unified large formal segments in the WTC recording.

Busoni's decisions regarding added dynamics generally reflect two considerations in a hierarchical relation to one another: the rise and fall of the principal melodic line and dynamic coloration of harmony on the basis of relative dissonance content, their

chromatic content (*i.e.*, whether they contained non-diatonic pitches), or tonal exoticism (*i.e.*, their relative distance from the local tonic); in cases in which two dynamic structures did not agree, Busoni gave preference to coloring the rise and fall of the melodic line with a change of volume.

Fischer's approach to added dynamics in the preludes differs from Busoni's in complexity and in span. He does not indulge in the kind of oscillating alternation of strong and weak bars that that is a feature of Busoni's recording of the Prelude in C Major from *WTC I*. In its place, Fischer substitutes smoother and more geometric dynamic contours in the form of long crescendos and decrescendos (see Appendix 1, Table 5).<sup>370</sup> Fischer apparently saw the Prelude in C Major from Book One as comprised of three, long dynamic sweeps: a *decrescendo poco a poco* from measures nine to twenty, *crescendo poco a poco* from measure twenty to the downbeat of measure twenty-nine, concluding with a *decrescendo poco a poco* in the codetta from measure twenty-nine to the end of the piece.

A brief comparison of Busoni and Fischer's respective dynamic plans in this Prelude conveys the essential differences between them. In his recording, Fischer suppresses all of the double-hairpin swells of Busoni's *WTC I* edition, except for the tiny one in the penultimate measure. Fischer does allow one other detail present in the Busoni edition to add a bit of complexity to his dynamic arches: in measure twenty-three, Busoni has indicated a *meno mosso* and a dynamic marking of piano at the downbeat, which Fischer does execute in his recording. In the short term, this seems to interrupt Fischer's

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<sup>370</sup> Although one cannot speak of absolutes when comparing a pre-electric with an electric recording, it does seem to me that Fischer only reaches a maximum dynamic of forte in this prelude, a curtailing of the dramatic crescendo to an apparent fortissimo evinced in Busoni's recording.



grand crescendo from measure eighteen to the end of the piece; however, the interruption allows Fischer to maintain the impression of crescendo over a longer span that would otherwise be possible. In general, Fischer shuns local dynamic shadings, which focus the listener's attention on short-term gestures. He tolerates breaking of the smooth, "geometric" dynamic shape only in cases, like this one, in which the break facilitates extending the overall dynamic gesture.

A similar split distinguishes chromatic tones in melodies. When playing polyphonic melodies, Busoni created a hierarchical relationship between the two, implied voices, using dynamic nuances to highlight structurally important pitches, so that ornamental pitches would be subjugated. Likewise, Busoni employed dynamic means to single out structural pitches forming what Schenker might call a "*Mittelgrund*" melody. In the C-Major Prelude from *WTC I*, for example, Busoni marks *decrescendi* after each downbeat pitch in measures twenty-two through twenty-four, in order to emphasize of the slow-moving, structural melody, i.e., the *cambiata*-like succession of F-sharp, A-flat, and G. Likely in order to avoid the prosaic, in Busoni's edition the arrival at G offers a dynamic surprise: a sudden descent to piano that breaks the expectation raised in the prior two bars (Figure 5).

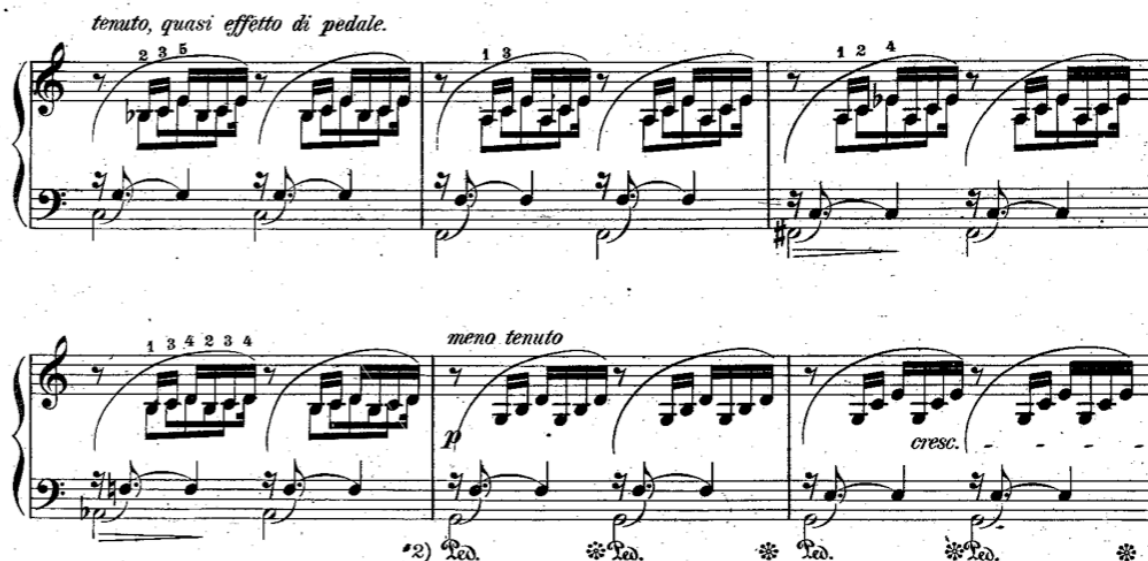


















Figure 8: Bach, Prelude in C Major from, mm. 20-24 of the Busoni *WTC I* edition

Fischer's recording includes little such highlighting of local rhetoric: his recording omits the *decrescendi* that Busoni indicated in measures twenty-two and twenty-three to highlight the first two pitches of the *cambiata*. Instead, Fischer crescendos to the *subito piano* at measure twenty-four.<sup>371</sup> In so doing, Fischer retains Busoni's long-term plan, *i.e.*, the surprise of the sudden drop in dynamic level, but suppresses all of Busoni's dynamic details. The effect, again, is to enable perception of the largest, most architectonic, level of structure by shifting attention away from more ornamental, short-term dynamic and rhetorical gestures (Table 12).

<sup>371</sup> At the very moment of the *subito piano*, Fischer seems to forget himself and momentarily uses the *sostenuto* pedal, something indicated in Busoni's edition, but which Fischer evidently did not wish to commit to disc, since he returned immediately to the *senza pedale* approach that he takes throughout this movement.

Table 12: Comparison of dynamic indications in Busoni's edition of the Prelude in C Major from Book One of *The Well-Tempered Clavier* with estimated dynamics of Fischer recording

M.#	Busoni Dynamics	Comments	Fischer Dynamics (estimated)	Comments
1	<i>p</i>		<i>p</i>	
5	<i>poco rinf.</i>			Right hand only
6	<i>p subito</i>			
7	<i>poco rinf.</i>	Left hand only		
8	<i>p</i>	Left hand only		
9				
10-11	 <i>mp</i> 	Left hand only		
12	<i>p</i>	Left hand only		
13	 <i>mp</i> 	Left hand only	<i>decrescendo poco a poco</i>	To measure 20
14				
17				
18		Left hand only	<i>crescendo poco a poco</i>	To measure 24
22		Left hand only		
23	<i>p</i>		<i>p</i>	
24	<i>crescendo</i>	To measure 28	<i>crescendo</i>	To measure 29
25	<i>più</i> 			
29	<i>sfz</i> 	To measure 32	<i>sfz</i> 	To measure 32
32	<i>p</i>			
33	 		 	
35	<i>p</i>		<i>pp</i>	

I see Fischer as having integrated techniques of Schenker's reductive analysis with Kurth's concept of the structural dynamics inherent to Bach's music. On the one hand, Fischer reduces dynamic shifts (here, I intend to refer to any shift that creates a gestural effect by deviating from an established norm) arising out of interpretive inflections at the smallest level of artistic detail. This, like Schenker's progressive levels of reductive analysis—the *Urfinie* being the most basic—enhances perception of the largest units of structure. On the other hand, Fischer's dynamic flows and oscillations represent a pianistic translation of the interior, structural dynamics of Bach's music that was so important to Kurth. Both of these are consistent with the principles of Gestalt Theory (with Phenomenology hovering in the background as the source of many of its key concepts): in his reductive analyses, Schenker strove to reveal the essential, underlying structures that unify and provide logical coherence to pieces of music; Kurth's emphasis on dynamism bears strong resemblance to theories of motion and direction advanced by the Gestaltists. Fischer's fusion of Schenker and Kurth's successfully amplifies the *Prägnanz* inherent in Bach's music by casting it as a system of unified, relatively undecorated, dynamic gestures. Aside from hints offered by Busoni just prior to his death, no other pianist prior to Fischer seems to embody such a unification of Schenker and Kurth under the umbrella of Gestalt Theory.

### **Audible Dynamics in Fugues and their Couplings**

Although I have shown how Fischer's devotion to *Prägnanz* caused him to diverge significantly from the expressive markings recorded in Busoni's *WTC I* edition, in some respects the two obey an almost identical set of general principles. This is the case with Fischer's recording of the fugues of the *WTC*. Consistent with Busoni's

practice, Fischer couples audible dynamics to the structural dynamics of various fugal procedures. Busoni characterized the general structural dynamic of a fugue as an outcome of the “struggle” of each thematic voice to be heard in various intersubjective relations. In accordance with this struggle, Fischer and Busoni dynamically voice all subject entries over the counterparts (and, in turn, all counterparts containing motivic or thematic material over non-thematic, free counterpoints), in every type of fugal procedure, except when contextual factors—for example, a gradual transition between sections—called for a modified approach.

#### Unification via Couplings that Highlight Strettos and Other Contrapuntal Artifices

Fischer and Busoni are in agreement regarding the implications of *stretti* for audible dynamics. Whereas in fugal expositions they both play each subject entry louder than the counterparts, in *stretti* each new entry is typically voiced more loudly than the already-dynamically-foregrounded prior entry, creating a pronounced crescendo. By extension, when the number of voices simultaneously handling the subject is reduced, the overall dynamic drops significantly.

Busoni reflects this in his recording of C-Major Prelude from *WTC I* in measures nine through ten and again in measures twelve and thirteen; in both instances, a prior stretto—played in the *forte* to *fortissimo* range—yields to a single statement of the subject. Reflecting the reduced number of voices in which the subject is present, Busoni drops the overall audible dynamic level. Fischer follows the same plan in his *WTC* recording.

Fischer tends to voice contrapuntal artifices loudly, especially when they first appear. In the case of rhythmic augmentations of fugal subjects, Fischer plays the

augmented version of the theme especially loudly, particularly when it appears in the lowest voice.

Fischer consistently renders fugal episodes at a lower overall dynamic than that of the expositions. The absence of the fugal subject in its entirety motivates a drop in intensity. A weakness of this procedure—as Tovey forcefully decried it—is that it places the development of thematic material from the subject in the conceptual frame of “relief” from the demanding presence of the perpetually emphasized subject entries. This does seem, perversely, to shift emphasis away from the dynamic and inventive process of development and directs attention to the canonical and repetitive subject, which – after even just a few entries – grows to sound dull in its inevitability.

Fischer and Busoni generally differ with respect to their handling of fugal episodes. Busoni, generally points out each instance of a small motive by giving it with a characteristic and easily recognized dynamic shape; he does not, however, crescendo or decrescendo in sequences in order to emphasize the overall progression (see Mus. Ex. 5-6, below).



Figure 9: Fugue in D Major, Busoni *WTC I* edition

On the other hand, Fischer tends to shift dynamics incrementally with each “leg” of episodes that ascend or descend sequentially. For example, in a descending sequence, the first leg might be mezzo-forte, the second mezzo-piano, and the third piano. By so doing, Fischer eschews Busoni’s practice of shaping the particular unit (i.e., the

sequential leg) and shift emphasis to the sectional unit (*i.e.*, the overall shape of the episode).

Like earlier ones, this modification of principles of Busoni's Bach-pianism seems born of Fischer's commitment to streamlining and to emphasizing the unity and integrity of each fugal segment—*e.g.*, exposition, *stretto*, episode, *codetta*.

Whereas Busoni's interpretive/structural alliance leads him to draw attention to relatively small motivic units, Fischer's interpretive/structural alliance leads him to emphasize the overall progress outlined by a sequence's rise or fall. This also seems to reflect Fischer's consistent effort to direct attention, in all structural matters, to direct attention toward larger, long-term progressions. Schenker, Kurth, and the Bauhaus hover over Fischer's *WTC* recording; their influence can be seen in virtually all of its interpretive decisions.

### **Couplings to *liegende Töne***

Fischer employs term "*liegende Töne*" in his editorial prefaces and prose writings. The term cannot be directly translated into an English equivalent: at the most literal level it means "tied notes;" however, contextually Fischer used it to signify either suspended dissonances or pedal points, both of which, of course, involve tied pitches. It refers to a principle of coupling that Fischer mentions a number of times in his writings: *i.e.*, that *liegende Töne* must be accented in proportion to their length.<sup>372</sup> The longer the note is to be tied, the greater the accentuation it receives, in the interest of countering the

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<sup>372</sup> "*Liegende Töne*" cannot be directly translated into an English equivalent. At the most literal level, this means "tied notes." However, contextually this term is actually used to signify either suspended dissonances or pedal points, both of which, of course, involve tied pitches.

detrimental effect of the piano's natural decay on the function of tied pitches: if they are not struck strongly, *liegende Töne* cannot fulfill their intended harmonic functions.

Busoni's *WTC I* edition also evinces this approach. However, looking at this principle illustrates the contextual nature of interpreting expressive markings, which are relative, not absolute. In the closing stretto of the Fugue in C Major from *WTC I*, Busoni's edition shows each of the tied notes to be marked with an accent; this is accompanied by a crescendo marked in measure twenty-two, further amplified by the long crescendo hairpin that extends over the whole of measure twenty-three. This seems to require that the actual volume implied by the same accent sign will increase along with the crescendo, each one being played more loudly than the one before it. By the end of the passage, accents appearing *in fortissimo* suggest an extraordinarily harsh degree of accentuation. However, this is not the only possible interpretation of Busoni's markings. One could just also interpret the notation to imply that the accents gradually fade in significance as the overall volume increases.

The difference between these two interpretations of Busoni's markings reflects the relative position of each value in a hierarchy of values. If one believes that accentuation relative to local volume at any given moment in the crescendo is the primary value, the absolute volume of each accent will increase; this will somewhat limit the upper limit of the overall crescendo, however, since a volume ceiling does exist. However, if one believes that the crescendo is of primary importance, one is more likely to sacrifice some potential for maintaining the same degree of contrast between the accented pieces and those surrounding them. Situations like this are among the most interesting for performance analysts because they structure the value systems of



performers in hierarchical decision trees revealing the system's logical structure.

### **Couplings to Ambiguous Subject-Entries**

Above, I noted subtleties of approach called for “when contextual factors—for example, a gradual transition between sections” require them.

Recognizing that not all fugue subjects have clear beginnings and ends, Kurth urges that “we must continue to recognize that, when motives are engaged in processes, often no delineation is explicitly called for; that is, a motive can imperceptibly and gradually emerge out of the melodic flow and then become lost in it again, losing its definition. The best evidence can be found in Bach's fugues, where even a subject in developmental episodes sometimes enters in such a way that its initial motive is woven into to the previous voice leading; the first note is not singled out, nor does it always lead onward as it ought to, and yet a subject entry is the main event of a fugue's developmental process.”<sup>373</sup>

Consistent with their general practice of coupling expressivity to structural dynamics, Fischer and Busoni typically mirror the ambiguity of such dovetails, passing

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<sup>373</sup> “...Riemanns Lehre zwar, wonach auch diese nur nach metrischen Gesichtspunkten abzugrenzen seien, bleibt wieder zu einseitig; aber auch wo man nur im geschlossenen Bewegungszug die Einheit des Motivs erkennt, ist die Frage der Abgrenzung nicht immer so einfach. Sehr oft ist sie – schon durch sofortige oder spätere Sonderung eines Motivs – klar für alle Wiedergabe gegeben. Andererseits muß man weiter erkennen, daß in der Verarbeitung von Motiven vielfach ausdrücklich keine Abgrenzung gewollt ist, d.h. es kann ein Motive unmerklich aus dem Zusammenhang einer Linie herausfließen und sich ebenso ungesondert wieder in deren Weiterfließen verlieren. Die besten Beweise finden sich in Bachs Fuge, wo sogar ein Thema in Durchführungen zuweilen so eintritt, daß sein Anfangsmotiv in den vorherigen Stimmenverlauf verkettet ist; weder der Anfangston ist herauszuhaben, noch ist überhaupt der Anfangszug dabei stets unverändert gewahrt, und doch ist ein Themeneintritt Hauptereignis einer Fugendurchführung.” Kurth, *Grundlagen*, 270.

over their usual process of dynamic foregrounding in favor of a subtler expression (most typically, a slight crescendo/decrescendo into, and out of, the subject entry).

#### Envoi: Fischer's Defense of Pianistic Expressivity in Bach-Performance

There is a logical through-line that connects Fischer's Bach-Pianism to Felix Mendelssohn's and, indeed, to the exegetical principles of Moses Mendelssohn. Fischer's defense of pianistic expressivity in Bach-performance is similar to Felix Mendelssohn's, in that although Mendelssohn advocated strongly on behalf of expressive performance in his prefaces and although he took his own advice in this matter during live performances of Bach's works to a remarkable degree, he did not allow his personal interpretation to become fixed on ink and paper. His grandfather found this distinction to be a fundamental tenet of Judaism and even declared the fixing of a unique, putatively correct interpretation of scripture to be equivalent to the idolatry that he saw as one of Christianity's most significant flaws. God gave Jews the Torah and a flexible apparatus with which to derive its interpretation in accordance with whatever world, or state of world, into which Jews might find themselves thrust. As Bertholet explains to us—and, no doubt, as he explained to Fischer—Midrashic flexibility was the solution to the problem of the Second Temple's destruction and the loss of Jewish statehood.

In the realm of Bach-pianism, the same Midrashic flexibility is the solution to what one might style the *temporal/instrumental diaspora* in which one finds oneself when approaching Bach at such an historical and cultural remove, and using an instrument with expressive qualities and requirements that, although admirable, differ very substantially from those of any of Bach's claviers.

In his edition of Bach's organ works and in his translation of the Chromatic Fantasy to the piano of his day, Felix Mendelssohn embraced—indeed, in which he appears to have reveled—the expressive qualities and requirements of the instruments before him, dealing with them on their own terms, unwilling to reduce them to faint simulacra of themselves out of a false sense of piety for the holiness of Bach's notated text. He served the text by editing it according to sound, culturally vetted principles. Therefore, there was no need for him to bow before the text, sacrificing expression, in its homiletic delivery. The logical substrate of Felix Mendelssohn's approach to canonical Bach texts bears strong similarity to Moses Mendelssohn's defense of exegesis in the *Bi'ur* and in his translations of the Masoretic texts (a.k.a., the Tanakh, the “Books of the Jewish Canon,” or the “Jewish Bible”) into *Hochdeutsch*.

Like Both Mendelssohns, Fischer insisted that one start with a pure text, free of any but the most necessary diacritical marks: in the case of the Tanakh, comprehension of breaks between groups of consonants—written Hebrew does not explicitly notate vowels; which must be chosen on an exegetical, sometimes with typographical help from scholars—through *Interpunktionszeichen* is tolerable; in the case of Bach, Fischer finds the parallel—which is the use of *Interpunktionszeichen* at phrase endings—to be equally tolerable. Neither Moses Mendelssohn nor Edwin Fischer insists that their placement of the *Interpunktionszeichen* represents the last work in interpretation of the text, and neither one requires an explicit, audible division at each punctuation mark. These are provided to aid comprehension; they are descriptive but not prescriptive.

For Fischer, the *Bach-Gesellschaft* edition of Bach's keyboard works—with which his *T-A* editions are consistent—evidently served as the canonical text that he

translated, via performance, into the language of diasporic setting, that is, performance on the piano in early-twentieth century Germany. Like Moses Mendelssohn, he considered translation to be urgently needed, highly instrumental to diffusion of the sacred text, and—because of the care with which Fischer made his translation—eminently respectful.

In effecting that translation to the pianistic language, Fischer employed a consistent, multifaceted and integral framework, which gave him exoteric and esoteric perspectives on the text: *i.e.*, the literal and rhetorical (exoteric) perspectives of Midrash, and—because Fischer was a priest and a scholar of his sacred texts—a homiletic (esoteric) perspective. For the benefit of others, Fischer surrounds the texts with these multiple perspectives, just as Moses Mendelssohn had surrounded the Torah with exoteric literal and rhetorical readings, further augmented by medieval homiletics, in his *Bi'ur*.

In keeping with the *Mendelssohnian Dialectic*, Fischer approached editions, on the one hand, and the homiletic realization of the sacred texts in the world, on the other, in discrete manners, each of them appropriate to their situation viz. the community. For the most part, he did not interpolate adaptations typical of his performances into his editions of the sacred text, although he made them available, if one wished to have them (see, for example, Fischer's editions of Bach's keyboard concertos, in which the original, solo part is essentially an Urtext and the orchestral reduction in the Secondo part contained all the nuances typical of his manner of performing Bach publicly).

Consistent with the teachings of Kurth, the expressive layer of Fischer's Bach-pianism functions as an organic extension, an amplification of the immanent structures of the work at hand. This might appear to suggest that Fischer and Kurth believed that a

unique, ideal correlation of added nuances existed, and that, therefore, the historical progression of future Bach-performance would incline, almost as an asymptote to its point of tangentiality, toward an ever-more-refined ideal performance. Indeed, both Kurth and Fischer rejected such suffocating idealism. This is a crucial but easily missed point. Therefore, at this end of this long exposition of Fischer's approach, it might be useful to speculate on the range of possibilities that it contains.

Two performances may be built on precisely the same couplings of dynamics to harmony, articulation to motive, and the like, and yet still emerge as distinctive simply *because the hierarchical arrangement of these couplings relative to one another differs*. Take, for example, Busoni and Fischer's differing approaches to the sequence in Example 5-6, above. Both pianists operate with the same principle—*achieving Prägnanz through consistent application of dynamic shape over a fixed temporal unit of variation in sequences*—in mind. By “temporal unit of variation,” I mean the length of time over which a dynamic shape unfolds. Because, in this case, the temporal unit of variation for Busoni is *one sequential leg* and the temporal unit of variation for Fischer is *the sequence as a whole*, the result suggested by the same principle are quite different.

Although neither Busoni nor Fischer does so in this case, one may superimpose one on the other. This is easy to do, although it raises the level of dynamic complexity to a point that may have been unattractive in the 1920s. In this manner, one executes the same dynamic shape at the temporal unit *one sequential leg* but superimposes on it the larger dynamic structure of *the sequence as a whole*; say, providing the sequence with an overall crescendo while maintaining a consistent dynamic gesture within each leg.

The Busoni-Fischer synthesis appealed to multiple Bach constituencies. His

amplifying interpretive model extended to the realm of performance the theoretical foundations laid by Kurth, and Schenker, the first of whom was his teacher and the latter of whose editions Fischer actively promoted. This application of the amplifying interpretive model essentially draws the Receiver into closer contact with the *Werk*, which—if one believes the findings of recent scholars of *Kunstreligion*—is elevated by ritual performance to the status of an icon, thus satisfying the two interrelated requirements that they set for correct performance: *i.e.*, removal of awareness of the Performer interposed necessarily between the icon and its Receiver, and providing the Receiver with a heightened perception of the icon and the sensation of intimate touch – touching the icon, literally, and being touched, figuratively – that characterizes interactions with icons in other religions.

Fischer also satisfied his own, requirement regarding *Werktreulichkeit*—shared by many of his listeners—*i.e.*, that performances realize the composer’s intent. The fact that interpretation of “the composer’s intent” has shifted radically since 1937 does nothing to diminish the clarity of Fischer’s actual intent, although it certainly has rendered it obscure—almost invisible—to those who cherish him today for being an apostate—a *Refusnik*, a Recusant—to the Church of Authenticity.

The genius of Fischer’s synthesis is that it derives interpretation almost exclusively from the icon itself. It does not so much mediate the icon as gives it amplification, pushing the believer close to the icon’s essence. Thereby, Busoni and Fischer sidestepped both the problem of the pianistic colorists—who laid hands on Bach’s works so forcefully as to damage their magical properties—and that of the objectivists—whose distancing of the icon depleted it of its magical, healing power,

leaving it for dead, which is to say for the museum.

The Fischer/Busoni approach poses no threat to the icon; because the icon itself is sufficiently complex, it is still outside the immediate grasp of the listening supplicant and, therefore, capable of enchantment. Value is added by the listener's knowledge of the sanctifying aura of *Werktreue*, which serves as an invisible, benevolent, and protective presence. Musicologists and other scholars have inculcated the belief in *Werktreue* in musical reception to such a degree that its evocation—through rituals, expert testimony, and performance in a temple and in the presence of collateral icons—activates listeners' belief systems powerfully and movingly.

The foregoing analysis has pointed to performance processes immanent to Fischer's Bach-editions and to his WTC recording that closely echo the processes explained and exemplified within Fischer's immediate circles. Taking the broadest possible view of Fischer's Bach pianism—a useful exercise—the following qualities emerge: interpretive gesture is relatively streamlined; the integration of part-to-whole relationships is remarkable; each type of musical figure is provided a particular treatment that allows the figure to assume well-etched characteristics; and each genre, each prototype emerges clearly – pattern piece as pattern piece, not made to become something “evolutionary,” something beyond its obvious function. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, interpretive nuance in Fischer's *WTC* recording directly reflects the immanent, underlying structure of the pieces at hand, effectively amplifying them.

On balance, Fischer's Bach pianism demonstrates a comprehensive and thorough integration of the expressive tenets of art, culture, and society of the Weimar Republic, while simultaneously rejecting the fetishization of mechanization, un-dynamic sameness,

or industrial uniformity that Fischer loathed and feared.



## Appendices

Appendix A: Edwin Fischer, “Preface” to *T-A* edition of *J.S. Bach, 18 Short Preludes* (1924).

No tempo-, execution-, or phrasing indications whatever are to be found in Bach’s works. Exceptions are particularly mentioned. The small punctuation marks indicate the motivic structure; the player should not make breaks, should not “detach”, but only “recite”. The rich poetic substance of these pieces should not be overlooked; they are in the same degree bearers of musical thought and expression as, f[or] i[n]stance, the *Préludes* of Chopin or the *Fantasias* of Schumann.<sup>374</sup>

[translator unknown]

Appendix B: Excerpts from Edwin Fischer, “Preface” to *T-A* edition of *J.S. Bach, Three-Part Inventions* (1924).

Bach has made the following introductory remarks to these pieces: “This is an exact and upright instruction for showing to the lovers of the clavichord [*sic!* – The German version employs the word *Clavier*] a lucid manner not only to learn how to play neatly with two voices, but also, in due progress, to deal well and accurately with three obbligato voices; at the same time not only to get into possession of good *Inventions*, but also to given a good execution; but most of all to obtain a cantable [*sic*] way of playing; and, besides, to get a strong foretaste of [the] composition.”

As auxiliary notes for trills and embellishments, tones belonging to the identical scale which dominates the whole passage should be used. Indications for tempi, phrasing and execution are not from Bach – the exceptions being distinctly pointed out as such. Where an arc [phrase mark] ends, the phrase is detached; correct phrasing is more essential for the rendering than a multitude of fortes and pianos. Transposing several pieces into other tonalities might be useful both technically and musically. A trifold value, to be well heeded while studying, lies in these plain pieces, viz.:

1) a piano-technical one: each “*Invention*” serves another purpose (staccato, legato, fluency, rhythm);

2) technique of composing: every piece helps to develop the pupil’s sense of form;

3) the third and chief task – and this should ever be borne in mind – is to bring to the surface the poetic substance, the warm sentiment. Never forget that these *Inventions* are not pieces for exercise, but genuine works of art.

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<sup>374</sup> The unknown translator has transliterated the German conventional abbreviation “z.B.” (*i.e.*, *zum Beispiel*) into English via the neologism “f.i. (*i.e.*, “for instance”).

Note. As regards printing, take notice that in the Inventions for 3 voices all notes of the upper system are played with the right hand, all notes of the lower system with the left hand.

EDWIN FISCHER

[English translator unknown]

Appendix C: Edwin Fischer, “Preface” to *T-A* edition of *J.S. Bach, Italian Concerto* (1927).

The original title ran as follows: “Second part of the Exercises for the Clavier, consisting of a Concerto after the Italian fashion and an Overture in the French manner for the Harpsichord with 2 Keyboards. Composed for the pleasure of amateurs by J.S. Bach, Capellmeister and Choir-Director at the Court of Weissenfels. Leipzig 1735.”

From a period probably preceding the appearance of the above-mentioned work, there exist 16 Concerti, composed by Vivaldi, Marcello and others, which Bach adapted for the piano. Here one can recognize the particular style of this class of composition and is full of admiration for the high level to which Bach raised this musical form.

The indications for time and interpretation rendering are not Bach’s, except where especially marked or when the signs Piano and Forte are not abbreviated (in contrast to *P.* and *F.*). The original phrasing is given just as it left the Composer’s hand. Generally speaking a distinct telling articulation is more important than small dynamic differences. These conditions of true phrasing and correct emphasis the Editor has tried to further, by entering articulation-marks

( ‘ ) similar to the comma in writing or the breath-taking signs for singers. This however does not mean that a pause or break is to be made each time. We advise keeping on certain fundamental dynamics during entire larger sections<sup>375</sup> [sic!] analogous to the Tutti and Solo of a Concerto. The change from Tutti to Solo, as we believe it to occur, is marked in brackets. As a whole, this piece should be performed in a brisk and simple manner though not lacking an air of festivity and brilliance.

[translator unknown]

Appendix D: Edwin Fischer, Excerpt from “On Musical Interpretation” (1929).

Whilst an earlier period allowed the interpreter much freedom – left ornaments, cadenzas, and the general performance to his taste – the moderns are very exact in their notation... That is not to say that older music is simply to be played without interpretation... an interpretation which is based on purely stylistic and historical considerations and seeks to exclude the emotional element in the rendering of music of the pre-Bach period is not correct. Music has always been a language of the heart, and

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<sup>375</sup> This is a rather disfiguring transcription error: “sections”—corresponding to the word “*Abschnitte*” in the German text—appears to have been meant by the translator.

subjectivity is modern only in so far as, today, players speak in their own name, whilst formerly, they were the servants of their period and as such anonymous. If only this original conception of the composer had been handed on to us unadulterated – but then came the editors and competed with editions. A Beethoven, a Bach were strewn over with phrase marks, stops, fortes and pianos, and one might still allow these some validity if it were possible to recognize what comes from Beethoven and what from Mr. X. In recent times, much has been set to rights again, and the efforts of Breitkopf, Peters, Steingräber, and others to reconstruct the original text cannot be welcomed enough. What is given into our hands already written down, is the material from which we are to make the original conception of the composition live again...<sup>376</sup>

...The score we receive represents a clear ground plan, worked over it is true, with indications as to the use of materials and interior decoration, but still only a ground plan we must build —; we should consider it our highest duty, to build exactly according to this ground plan, to allow no alteration, neither in quantity nor in form, to add nothing, but to build as beautifully and with as good material as possible.<sup>377</sup>

Appendix E: Excerpt from Edwin Fischer, “Preface” to Hansen edition of *J.S. Bach, Piano Concerto in A Major* (1930).

It seems hardly credible that this piano Concerto is comparatively unknown belonging as it does to one of the most beautiful and concise works which Bach has written for the piano; all three movements are equally valuable and effective, without being technically difficult.

Up to now this Concerto has only appeared in orchestra score and arranged as a pianoforte duet.

It is the only one out of seven Pianoforte concertos, which was perhaps originally intended for the piano; the others are nearly all adaptations from violin concertos.

Scarcely any of the interpretation signs are Bach’s; the sign | is intended for the phrasing, though it is not always necessary to detach.

The purpose of the fingering is not only to facilitate execution, but to compel good phrasing and musical expression.

[translator unknown]

Appendix F: Excerpt from Edwin Fischer, “Preface” to Hansen edition of *J.S. Bach, Piano Concerto in E Major* (1932).

#### P R E F A C E

The editor leaves the solo part, as compared with Bach’s manuscript, unaltered. He has only added the phrasing (breathing) mark | and complementary notes – all these in small print.

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<sup>376</sup> Fischer, “On Musical Interpretation,” *Reflections*, 16.

<sup>377</sup> Fischer, “On Musical Interpretation,” *Reflections*, 17.

The editor's ideas as to interpretation, phrasing etc., are to be seen in the accompanying part.

The second piano part represents an arrangement of the string orchestra accompaniment, a few facilities have been interspersed for the sake of resonance. Bach's "Fortes" and "Pianos" indicate the "Tutti" or "Solo" character of the passage in question and to facilitate their rendering have been retained as tutti and solo signs.

For the performance of this work in Bach's time the string orchestra was augmented by a second cembalo which had to fill up the harmonies.

The first two movements of this Concerto were used later on by Bach in the Cantata in D major "God alone shall have my heart". There the first movement forms the introductory Sinfonia with concertante organ instead of the cembalo and the Siciliano is somewhat extended. Bach composed an additional contralto part, too, beginning "Die in me". The third movement, again accompanied by the concertante organ instead of the cembalo, was used by Bach for the introduction to the Cantata "I go and seek with longing."

[translator unknown]

#### Appendix G: Chronology of Fischer's Cultural Environment to 1933.

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|------|---|
| 1903 | Karl Straube becomes Organist of the Thomaskirche in Leipzig. In the same year, he becomes the Chorus Master of the Leipzig Bachverein.   |
| 1904 | Straube publishes his <i>Orgelmusik Alte Meister</i> , which proposes creative registrations in order to rehabilitate old music.  |
| 1905 | First concert of the Deutsche Vereinigung für Alte Musik (Munich, November 18). Ernst Bodenstein, cond.; Christian Döbereiner, vln da gamba.<br><br>Albert Schweizer undertakes "to preach the gospel of the ideal organ" in a pamphlet entitled <i>The Art of Organ Building and Organ Playing in Germany and France</i> . This, effectively, represents the start of the Orgelbewegung. |
| 1906 | Johann George Steingraeber moves to Berlin and opens his harpsichord shop. It produces only seven instruments by his death in 1932.   |
| 1907 | Felix Mottl (director of the Bavarian Opera from 1903 to 1911) conducts first uncut performance of St. Matthew Passion. Continuo accompaniments and Evangelist's <i>accompagnati</i> provided by organ.<br><br>Straube joins faculty of Königlichem Konservatorium der Musik in Leipzig as organ teacher. The following year, he is promoted to Professor.                                |

- 1908 Dedication of the Leipzig Bach-Monument (June 17).
- 1910 First modern-day performance of the Sonatas for Viola da Gamba and Harpsichord Obbligato, Wanda Landowska, harpsichord, Christian Döbereiner, vla da gamba. Deutschen Bach-Fest (Duisburg).
- Founding of Munich Vereinigung für Alte Musik.
- 1911 First performance of the Sixth Brandenburg Concerto in “Originalbesetzung,” given by the Munich Vereinigung für Alte Musik.
- 1912 Munich Vereinigung für Alte Musik gives performance of St. Matthew passion with reduced forces, A. Schmid-Lindner, cond.
- 1914-1918 *World War I.*
- Landowska, under house arrest in Berlin, trains a generation of German harpsichordists as a member of the Berlin Musikhochschule faculty.
- 1917 *Peace Resolution passed by Reichstag (July 19).*
- Döbereiner gives eight performances of Brandenburg cycle, this time employing the “hohen F-Bachtrumpete” as part of the “Originalbesetzung.”
- 1918 *Peace Treaty with Soviets (March 3). Supreme Command calls for armistice with Allies (September 29). Germany forms short-lived constitutional monarchy (October 28).*
- Munich Vereinigung für Alte Musik changes its name to Munich Bach-Verein. Ludwig Landshoff serves as its conductor until he moves to Berlin, in 1928. Landshoff specializes in performance of the choral works of Bach and Handel with reduced forces, including performance of *L'allegro, il pensieroso ed il moderato*, which arouses great admiration.
- Straube is promoted from Organist to Kantor of the Thomaskirche in Leipzig. He replaces Gustav Schreck, who is too ill to continue as Kantor. Straube is the first Kantor of the Thomaskirche who is not also a composer. Günther Ramin is appointed Organist of Thomaskirche.
- 1919 “*Spartacus*” uprising (January 5-12).
- Constitution of Weimar Republic becomes law (August 11).*
- Period of rampant political murders in Berlin and Munich (to 1922).*

Initial expressions of the impending end of Expressionism by some leading artists. By 1925, Expressionism will, by common agreement, no longer be considered viable. Gradually taking its place are two emerging objectivist strands: *die neue Sachlichkeit* and *magischer Realismus*.

Schoenberg publishes *Rechtlinien für ein Kunstamt* (Vienna) promoting the nationalist musical education of the German *Volk*.

Straube founds the Kirchenmusikalische Institut at the Leipzig Conservatory, relinquishes the post in 1941, but returns to it 1945-1948.

Weimar Bauhaus (1919-1925). Johannes Itten teaches the radical Preliminary Course at the Bauhaus (to 1922). Like Klee and Feininger, he performs Bach expertly, and frequently, while there.

1920 Straube fuses the Leipzig Bachverein and the chorus of the Gewandhaus, leading the newly-combined ensemble until 1932.

Ramin is appointed organ instructor at the Leipzig Conservatory.

In the fall, Straube takes the Choir of the Thomaskirche on a foreign tour to Denmark and Norway, establishing the group's international visibility.

1921 Walcker of Ludwigsburg builds "Praetorius Organ," based on disposition conceived by Praetorius in 1618. It becomes the focal point of the 1926 Freiburg Conference.

The Staatliche Akademie der Tonkunst (Munich) initiates "Alte Instrumente und Alte Kammermusik" as a major subject, as suggested by Döbereiner, who cites Wagner's letter on the opening of the music conservatory of Munich (1864) as support for their offering "geschichtliche Bildung in der Musik."

192? Straube becomes a member of the Orgelbewegung circle, adopts more (although not entirely) historical attitude for his remaining "Alte Meister" editions.

1922 *Rapid acceleration in rate of inflation* (August).

Publication of seminal essay by Paul Bekker—"Improvisation und Reproduktion" (1922) which predicts that the combination of a decline in improvisatory skill among musicians and the rise of recorded music will result in increasing diffusion of a new, mechanized performance style.

Performance of St. Matthew Passion on Palm Sunday by the "Musikalische Akademie," Hugo Röhr, cond. According to Döbereiner,

- this represented only the second performance in modern times that featured a viola da gamba in the aria “Komm, süßes Kreuz.”
- Helmut Walcha studies in Leipzig with Günther Ramin (to 1927).
- Orchestra (to 1928) Furtwängler becomes music director of the Leipzig Gewandhaus (1928).
- 1923 *Hitler stages failed putsch in Munich* (November 9).
- Inflationary crisis reaches its peak. Establishment of Deutsche Rentenbank (October 16) and introduction of Rentenmark (November 15) gradually bring runaway inflation under control. Republic enters period of relative peace and economic stability (through 1928).*
- 1923/24 “Döbereiner-Trio” (Anton Huber, violin, viola d’amore, viola, violino piccolo; Christian Döbereiner, viola da gamba, Li Stadelmann, harpsichord) gives a 22-concert tour in Spain of baroque chamber music.
- Ramin and Straube change orientation of Orgelbewegung with their public appreciations of Arp Schnitger’s 1693 organ in the Jakobikirche of Hamburg. Hans Henny Jahnn had earlier also done so.
- 1924 First performance of all six Brandenburg Concertos as a cyclical set in “Originalbesetzung” with Münchiner Vereinigung für Alte Musik, in collaboration with members of the Bayerische Staatsorchester.
- Busoni dies.
- 1925 Gurlitt and Burgemeister participate in *19. Tage für Denkmalpflege und Heimatschutz* in Breslau.
- Institution of “Münchener Bachfest” on the occasion of the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Bach’s death and under the auspices of the City of Munich and its Mayor, Karl Scharnagl. First modern-day performance of Bach’s concerti for 2, 3 and 4 harpsichords, Elfriede Schunck, Li Stadelmann, Julia Menz, Franz Rupp, harpsichord.
- Dessau Bauhaus (to 1932).
- 1926 Spitta begins work on German folk-songs.
- 1927 15<sup>th</sup> *Deutsche Bach-Fest* of the *Neue Bachgesellschaft* is held in Munich.
- Jacques Handschin publishes seminal article entitled “Die alte Musik als Gegenwartsproblem.” Identifies unity of the “radical-modern” movement

with the “retrospective-historical” movement in their common reactive posture: that of overcoming Romanticism.

Paul Hindemith joins the faculty of the Berlin Musikhochschule, promotes the use of the school’s collection of old instruments for the performance of new compositions celebrating mechanization and new technology.

1928        Straube records three Bach motets with the *Thomanerchor*.

Rudolf Serkin makes first recording of Bach’s *Goldberg Variations* (on a Welte piano roll).

1929        *New York’s “Black Thursday” begins worldwide economic crisis* (October 24).

Alois and Michael Ammer found their “Spezialwerkstätten für historisch Tasteninstrumente.”

Premiere of Schoenberg’s arrangement of Bach’s “St. Anne” organ prelude and fugue for full orchestra. Berlin Philharmonic, Wilhelm Furtwängler, cond. (November 11).

1930        *Nazi’s make substantial gains in Reichstag elections* (September 14).

19<sup>th</sup> *Deutsche Bachfest* is held in Kiel.

The firm of J.C. Neupert opens shop, maintaining the upper hand in German harpsichord making for half a century to come.

1931        *German and Austrian banks in crisis. Unemployment reaches nearly 5 million.*

Arnold Schering’s *Aufführungspraxis alter Musik* published as part of Leo Kestenberg’s *Musikpädagogische Bibliothek* by Quellen & Mayer in Leipzig. (Forward dated September 1930).

Robert Haas’s *Aufführungspraxis der Musik* published by Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft in Potsdam.

Straube begins to record cut versions of Bach cantatas with the *Thomanerchor* for radio broadcast.

Distler becomes Kantor and organist of Jakobikirche in Lübeck (to 1937).

Edwin Fischer records Bach’s *Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue*.



- 1932            *Unemployment rises to over 6 million.*
- Ramin is promoted to Professor at Leipzig Conservatory.
- Berliner Bauhaus (to 1933).
- 1933            *Hitler forms cabinet as Reichskanzler (January 30).*
- Hitler suspends basic constitutional rights under emergency law “for the Protection of the People and the State” (February 28).*
- May declaration by members of the *Orgelbewegung* – Gurlitt and Distler were signatories – calling for a revival of Protestant church music.
- Fischer begins recording the complete *WTC I*; it is completed in to 1934. (Recording of *WTC II* will commence in 1936; it will be completed in 1937.)

*Sources:* (On the career of Straube) Hans-Rainer Jung, *Das Gewandhausorchester. Seine Mitglieder und seine Geschichte seit 1743* (Leipzig, Faber & Faber, 2006). (On the career of Ramin) Doris Mundus, “Thomaskantor in schwieriger Zeit – Günther Ramin (1956),” *Leipziger historischer Kalender 2006* (Leipzig: Lehmstedt Verlag, 2005).

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