Introduction

Is there really any need for another study of Bach’s Passions, particularly when these (and the Matthew Passion in particular) have inspired nearly two centuries of critical literature? When I first began to consider this project, the one approach that did not seem sufficiently explored was the detailed and comparative analysis of both Passions together. However, the customary methods of approaching Bach’s choral works – surveying the compositional history, verbal texts, musical forms, styles and genres – soon seemed inadequate in light of the sheer emotional and narrative scale of the Passions. Perhaps this is partly because they relate to a story that is seminal to Western history. But this could hardly be the entire reason, given that the Gospel narratives have been set so many times to music. Bach’s music interacts with the various levels of text in a way that seems to go beyond merely a successful presentation of the story and its attendant affects.

A complex of questions soon began to dominate my thought on the Passions: both of them originated in the relatively local purpose of furnishing the Leipzig liturgical year (they were heard in Leipzig only intermittently between 1724 and 1750), and the vast majority of recent research has centred on details of their composition and performance, together with issues of their original theological purpose and meaning. Yet both Passions have found a deep resonance in a wide range of historical and cultural contexts, most utterly foreign to Bach’s Leipzig.[1] To many, this would be because they are of universal value, transcending their original, local, purposes. But how then could one draw these works into a focus that reconciles their supposed universality with the local particulars of Bach's Leipzig, which remain the focus of so much scholarship? On the other hand, if the universalist thesis is simply mistaken, what remains as the motivation for the intensive scholarly interest in the historical details, something that is hardly evident in relation to the numerous Passion settings by Bach's contemporaries?

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[1] In this study I do not consider other Passions, such as the Luke Passion, that have at some point been attributed to Bach; nor those that undoubtedly existed but are largely lost, such as the Mark Passion, or an earlier Weimar Passion oratorio whose traces may survive in the two extant Passions. An examination of the way inauthentic works have been received as Bach’s would be an extremely interesting study in itself, and some issues of this kind are already covered in Daniel R. Melamed’s *[illegible]* (Oxford University Press, 2005); on the evidence for an earlier Weimar Passion oratorio, see Andreas Glöckner, ‘Neue Spuren zu Bachs “Weimarer” Passion’, *[illegible] 69. [illegible] 29. [illegible] 30. [illegible] 1994 [illegible] 1933 [illegible] 1945 [illegible] 1945 [illegible] 1989*, ed. Hans-Joachim Schulze, Ulrich Leisinger and Peter Wollny (Hildesheim, Zürich, New York: Olms, 1995), pp. 33–46.

To begin with, simply decreeing that works such as Bach's Passions are 'universal' does not necessarily do them justice, even for their most fervent supporters. For the more universal a human artefact is purported to be, the closer it begins to seem to a phenomenon of natural science and thus something to be interpreted at one remove from human concerns. Seeing the Passions more as 'particulars' surely gives us more of a chance of learning how they might resonate with certain aspects of the human condition, shaded as these will inevitably be by a range of cultural and historical variables. Nevertheless, the habit of proclaiming works of this kind to be of universal significance might in itself be telling, as evidence of a particular culture, albeit one of very long duration and broad geographical application. The overall aim of this project – perhaps one that is impossibly ambitious – is to try and understand Bach's Passions in relation to the wider 'particular' field in which they have been attributed some degree of universal significance. This field is, I suggest, *modernity*, a broad mental and cultural attitude that – in some threads at least – links Bach's musical world to the present. My study is 'traditionally' historicist in assuming that Bach's music is best understood within its cultural context, but I am obviously interpreting the notion of 'cultural context' far more broadly and ambitiously than would normally seem sensible for music in the Western tradition. Although I am by no means ignoring the circumstances and presuppositions surrounding the composition, performance and reception of Bach's Passions in Leipzig, I suggest that the context that really matters relates to the mindset that would see these works as significant well beyond their original purposes. But even this wider context does not necessarily bring values that are relevant 'under any skies', even if it may well appear so at first sight.

Many would see the modern world as itself universal, because it has acquired a sort of timelessness through its obvious achievements in the progressive refinement and continuous expansion of knowledge. One fundamental tendency of modernity – to be sceptical towards past authority and to think of itself as always improving on the past – might well have led us to forget where its roots lay, how it is the product of various

revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[6] Culturally, it surely has some real presence in Montaigne, Shakespeare and Cervantes, and in the philosophy of Bacon, Descartes, Hobbes, Spinoza and Locke. It reaches both a peak and a crisis at the time of the Enlightenment and French Revolution and thereafter forges ahead with the Industrial Revolution and the increasing dominance of capitalism.[7] It is therefore tempting to divide it into three historical phases, the first dating from the sixteenth century to the end of the eighteenth; the second, from the time of the French Revolution to the late nineteenth century; and the final phase characterized by modernism (these latter two coincide with the German [illegible]).[8] The second phase coincides with the type of music that is traditionally termed 'Classical' and 'Romantic'.[9]

However, it is impossible to give the concept of modernity hard and fast chronological markers. After all, is there really such a pronounced change at the time of the Renaissance and Reformation, and does this period really have more in common with, say, the nineteenth century (presumably within the same 'era') than it does with the world an equivalent amount of time before it (back in the 'Middle Ages')? Furthermore, different national traditions might prioritize different starting points: the Reformation, for instance,[10] or Descartes's concept of the self-conscious, reflexive ego, or the political revolutions of the late eighteenth century. The precise bounds of modernity are clearly dependent on the sort of narrative one adopts to explain it, as if it contains the seeds of a story that can be unfolded in several ways.[11] We should therefore beware of false continuities and also of the sense that each era must have a ‘face’ to which everything must conform.[12]

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[6] The notion that modernity began in the late fifteenth century has been a mainstream historical view in English-language history since at least the publication of Arnold Toynbee's [illegible], vol. 8, [illegible] (Oxford University Press, 1954); see pp. 106–25, esp. pp. 115–16.

[7] For Karl Marx, modernity was simply capitalism itself; see Jameson, [illegible], p. 80.

[8] The model Michel Foucault consistently followed in his writings makes a further distinction between the Renaissance and the 'Classical age' (from c. 1650 to 1800), which is then followed by modernity proper. For a good survey of the ways in which modernity has been divided into periods or phases, see Barry Smart, 'Modernity, Postmodernity and the Present', in Bryan S. Turner (ed.), [illegible] (London: Sage, 1990), pp. 14–30.

[9] This is the music related to 'our modernity' by Karol Berger, [illegible] (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2007), pp. 5, 14.

[10] The Reformation became a strong feature of German conceptions of modernity, under the influence of Hegel's philosophy of history, particularly in the way the latter is grounded on the transfer of spiritual authority from the church to the individual. This conception was soon taken further in German thought on art by the work of Jacob Burckhardt. See also Jameson, [illegible], p. 31.

Modernity is perhaps better defined as a bundle of attitudes or mindsets that are only secondarily associated with specific eras and places. We might practices, the ‘extirpation of animism’.[14] With this came the view that the cosmos was not necessarily constructed entirely for mankind’s benefit, something that brought a reaction against customary beliefs, particularly against the Augustinian view (reinforced by Luther) that evil exists in the world entirely as a reflex of the original sin of mankind. Now a new form within modernity. Hence, in modernity, one could be active as a rational scientist while attuned to the feelings and traditional practice of religion, without necessarily feeling the need to reconcile the two; religion simply becomes a private matter, with its own rules and practices, which do not necessarily connect or interact with all other aspects of life. In Bach's time, the notion of religion and reason representing two separate spheres of knowledge and truth was already evident in Pascal's unfinished writings, and such a separation was recommended by Johannes Bredenburg as a way of protecting revealed religion from the threat of radical atheism that was inferred from Spinoza's writings. The most robust attempts at reconciliation were made by Gottfried Leibniz: to him (and perhaps Bach, too), all the contradictory elements would somehow cohere once they were viewed from God's point of view. Bach's Leipzig compatriot Johann Christoph Gottsched (who clearly embraced a much more fashionable aesthetic position than Bach) took a moderate stance that still left open the possibility of magic and the work of the Devil, but did not lay any particular stress on this.[18]

The coexistence of practices that are in their strongest sense contradictory – even within a single human subject – invariably gives each a new, specifically autonomous, quality. The ongoing, unlimited development of each could engender a new sense of openness in terms of both external reality and the human mind.[19] Pragmatically, the separation of activities could also be exercised in the name of efficiency, something most obviously demonstrated in the division of labour necessary for industrialized production. In such ways, modernity typically drives a wedge between the natural world and human civilization, by which humankind is progressively alienated from the secure and harmonious place in the natural order that our cultural memories always seem to evoke. Hans Robert Jauss usefully relates this line of thinking to a trajectory leading from Rousseau to Adorno, suggesting an intellectual epoch characterized by a profound ambivalence towards modernity (a dialectic that is born of nothing but modernity itself), stretching from the eighteenth to the twentieth century.[20] B(er)16(7.3lk(er)e)20(d33(d)1Pt(es)-9(tu)276(

that such chronological distinctions are not so absolute, and that Bach, and

instrumentalized rationality, the ability to adapt rational principles from one situation and apply them in another, in order to progress the material comforts of humankind (Max Weber's description of equal temperament as an essential element of rationalization is, of course, of particular interest for anyone interested in the role of Bach in the unfolding of modernity).[27]

If the world is to be mapped and increasingly controlled through a system that treats all things equally and dispassionately, any resulting representation can only be useful and practical if it takes account of how the object will appear from different viewpoints. The sense of accurate portrayal relative to a specific viewpoint is obvious – to the point of truism – in the development of perspective in painting. But this shows precisely how 'representation' becomes a particular issue within modernity, since it involves the sense that there is no longer any direct means of duplicating or mirroring reality; any attempt at depicting or imitating it is fundamentally a human construction that partly shapes and colours that which it represents. This clearly makes it important to understand the human subject position in more detail. Indeed, the period from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century shows the development of a specifically modern form of human subject, one characterized by its sense of individuality and autonomy, and which in some forms appropriated the pre-existing concept of the single, divine standpoint.[28]

To summarize: there are clearly many ways of defining modernity, and the concept is only going to provide illumination if I draw together those aspects that resonate with the concerns of this study. Foremost is the notion of the human born into a world that provides it with no specific place in a broader, enchanted, cosmic order (regardless of one's beliefs in what such an order might be); nor should the social order into which one is born provide any necessary constraints on what one can do or think. The natural world is accessible through reason, but the range of potential knowledge is infinite. Both social structures and the development of the individual contain elements that are necessarily artificial, tailored to effect a sense of change or progress in real time. Each area of knowledge and experience can be developed along its own trajectory, engendering a new sense of autonomy. Such a sense can begin to colour both the character of the individual (in the direction of increasing independence from inherited traditions, but also in the opposite sense of being a powerless component within divided labour) and the human artefact. Pieces of music might start to acquire an aura that somehow transcends their original purposes or the intentions of the composer; such an aura might be a factor both of the composer's attitude to the music and of the way it is heard and received. All these factors are in constant circulation, so there is no sense of any having an identity that is absolutely fixed.

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[27] Max Weber, [illegible] ([illegible], appendix to [illegible], written 1911, published Tübingen, 1921), trans. and ed. Don Martindale, Johannes Riedel and Gertrude Neuwirth (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1958). For an excellent, if idiosyncratic, study of the origins of musical modernity, see Daniel K.L. Chua, [illegible]

I have already suggested that modernity is not primarily a historical category, even if any description of it can hardly avoid falling into a narrative; a historical trajectory seems to follow to the degree that a modern mindset is in place. Although my emphasis so far has been on modernity as a mindset, this is obviously impossible to pin down in terms the interplay of traditional techniques of musical construction, rhetorical presentation, dance patterns and newly expressive gestures, music seemed capable of pursuing a life of its own. It could certainly continue to parallel human emotion and the implications of text, but seemed to acquire the potential to go beyond these. As Walter Benjamin has suggested in relation to German tragic drama, perhaps in the seventeenth century a deep-rooted intuition of the problematic nature of art was emerging as a reaction to its self-confidence during the Renaissance.[29] Karol Berger perceptively notes how Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo* actually seems to end with the reaffirmation of the *musica mundana*; Orfeo achieves bliss not through the music that aims to express the passions of the speaking subject, but rather through the sonorous harmony of the spheres, his beloved's resemblance to be seen in the sun and stars.[30] But perhaps there is more than this sense of restoring the 'modern' Renaissance cosmology of music (where music resonates with a reality that is only partially seen) – since so much about the opera seems to suggest the triumph of music as a system in its own right. For instance, the instrumental display can be heard as an end in itself and the recurring ritornelli that seem initially to encapsulate a particular emotion or situation later reappear in different contexts. However much humanist reformers at the end of the sixteenth century (together with many later critics) might have prized music for its supposedly 'natural' qualities, what were becoming increasingly effective were precisely its independent aspects, its deviations and its modification of supposed natural principles (whether of the broader, if hidden, reality – *musica mundana* – or of human passions – *musica humana*). With this potential for autonomy came the sense that musical works were individuals, following their own implications and potentials, and almost of a piece with the emergent individuality of those who created them.

Although the fully fledged concept of originality – essential to the type of genius usually associated with the Romantic era – was not yet fully in place, it might be possible to infer that seventeenth-century composers were less wary than their predecessors of the potential accusation of 'secondary creation'. The notion of everything stemming from the single God's creative act had been strongly enforced since the early centuries of

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[29] Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* ([illegible], 1963), trans. John Osborne (London and New York: Verso, 1998), p. 176. Chua, *Absolute Music*, pp. 23–8, relates this sense of anxiety to the dividing mechanisms of early modernity, by which music and speech were no longer unproblematically connected to the divine truths of the heavens.

[30] Berger, *Bach's Cycle*, pp. 25, 40–1.

[illegible]

The feature that I consider especially important in discerning issues of modernity in music (or at least in the attitude it seems to display) is the notion of artificiality, the idea that progress can be achieved by acknowledging the imperfections of nature and modifying the systems at hand to improve things from a human perspective. This is perhaps the one area the Fall and the inherent sinfulness of mankind; instead, improving the material worldly realm makes it easier to become a better person.[34] Bach evidently set great store by personal improvement, and his restless search for new musical experience seems almost to be unprecedented. His obituary, largely constructed by his son Carl Philipp Emanuel, may well have rendered this story stronger than it actually was, but it is clear that both father and son together reflect a historical trend towards the virtues of self-improvement and even the notion of individual genius.[35]

One of my crucial presuppositions is already obvious: that the condition of modernity does not exclude or supersede the pre-modern (or even, simply, the 'non-modern'), but that many such elements are newly inflected, energized or transformed within a modern outlook. Most significantly, the older elements often become spheres of knowledge and practice developed along their own specialist trajectories (hence the flurry of treatises on fugue in the years after Bach's death?).[36] Bach's Passions are therefore not specifically of value to the degree that they contain modern elements ('the more up-to-date/ahead of their time, the more impressive'). This would be something reminiscent of the old trope of Bach as a 'progressive' composer, even if – or even because – he appeared archaic to his contemporaries.[37] Adopting the notion of 'Bach the progressive' too wholeheartedly could bring with it the uneasy corollary that – in a world governed by progress – nothing is more outmoded than yesterday's progressive. I am trying to move away from defining musical modernity in terms of specific contents – say, identifiable motives, harmonies or gestures – by seeing it more in a certain attitude, even in a certain result, and one to which diverse components might contribute.

I nevertheless retain at least a trace of the progressive model by suggesting that modernity is a historical particular that links some of our concerns to Bach's, albeit in ways that he could not possibly have

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[34] Blumenberg, *[illegible]*, p. 54.

[35] For a study of the way Bach's official obituary was designed to demonstrate his isolated and lifelong quest for musical self-improvement, see Peter Williams's biography, *[illegible]* (Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[36] Habermas makes a useful distinction between 'spheres of knowing', 'spheres of belief' and those of legally organized and everyday life; see *[illegible]*, p. 19. Charles Taylor separates secularization – the end of society structured by dependence on God or the beyond – from the continuation of religion in both public and private life, *[illegible]*, pp. 187–8, 193–4.

[37] The clearest formulation of this position is Robert L. Marshall's 'Bach the Progressive: Observations on His Later Works', *[illegible]* 62 (1976), 313–57, revised in Robert L. Marshall, *[illegible]* (New York: Schirmer, 1989), pp. 23–58.

the secular practice of Bach's time, so the same was doubtless true of church.[41] Putting together the Lutheran injunction to cultivate the faith of the individual, on an urgent day-by-day basis, with the affective and narrative techniques developed in opera, Bach may have been instrumental in the development of a new, intensive, form of musical listening, one that may have been only partially realized by the members of his own congregation. If there is any evidence that Bach was indeed 'ahead of his time' in terms of the type of listening he both presupposed and helped to constitute, it lies in the fact that the intensity of the reception of his music in the nineteenth century was of an entirely different magnitude from that of his own time.

A close study of anything in relation to 'the modern' is always in danger of provoking the insinuation that any pre-modern elements are to be devalued; this danger is particularly acute in a society where we are continuously enjoined to 'modernize' (often nowadays a euphemism for assimilating all values towards what some term 'the postmodern' condition of seamless capital).[42] But many of our specific problems in the contemporary world stem precisely from some of the unintended (and, at their worst, intended) consequences of modernity. This is something surely acknowledged in contemporary reactions against modernity, such as the desire to return to traditional crafts – albeit often funded by the surplus generated by capitalism and industrial production – and to prize cultural difference over global standardization.[43] Music that comes from pre-modern contexts may have specific value for us on account of its relating to aspects of life, experience and belief that have survived from before the modern era, that are contrary to the modern, or that have somehow been revived within it. Pre-modern music may even have gained ground in our time as a consequence of the overcoming or completion of modernity – an issue that could equally apply to the exponential growth in non-Western, pre-modern or – most significant of all – popular music.

One thing that Bach's Passions might seem to achieve in the process of performance is a sort of counterpoint of modern and non-modern, something that stretches well beyond the mere combination of musical lines. To take the most obvious example of this sort of counterpoint, the religious element of Bach's Passions is clearly inherited from pre-modernity (without our falling into the generalization that modernity necessarily excludes or unremittingly threatens religion),[44] while their elements of autonomous musical form – perhaps parallel with the sort of autonomy being developed by the individual human from the seventeenth century onwards – represent a more specifically modern development.

This crude picture becomes more complicated if we consider that Christianity, in its own split from the traditional association of religion with a particular community, provided some of the seeds of the modern condition and its conception of independent individuals, able to develop themselves in contexts beyond that into which they were born. In Christianity uniquely within the ancient theistic religions, the divine became both a transcendent viewpoint, unified and omnipotent (but invisible to the world as we know it), and also humanly present in the world through the ministry of Jesus.[45] The Gospel should be proclaimed to all who are competent to receive it, regardless of background, race or birth; existing laws are neither to be blindly followed nor overturned without subjecting them to the scrutiny of personal experience and faith; and progress can be achieved by exploiting the contradictions in the inherited laws. This new situation can therefore give temporal and ethical goals to the individual within the actual span of one's life and irrespective of birth or cultural circumstances. If we consider the fact that the principal source relating to Jesus' life, ministry, death and resurrection is fourfold (or, bearing in mind the close relationship between the three synoptic

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[44] Habermas, [illegible], pp. 148–51, sees Christianity as more than merely a

Gospels, at least twofold), the eminently ‘modern’ notion of taking account of plural perspectives in viewing a singular phenomenon is modernity necessarily points towards an ordered regulation of obedient, individualist subjects, always on the brink of some new Auschwitz. What seems to have been forgotten is the fact that many examples of art – even some of the most supposedly canonical – articulate a resistance and oppositional character that represent the complex tensions of modernity

to show in *L*[illegible] *M*[illegible] (first published, well after his death, in 1664), the notion of fictional worlds becomes the prototype for the way we gain our knowledge of the real world, as if we were imitating God's creative capabilities, trying them out on a fictional world in order to adapt them to the real world. The Cartesian representation of the world becomes a form of metaphor, a representation of what things ideally should look like, rather than something essentially of a piece with nature, as metonymy.[57]

Having brought up the relation of music, not only to modernity as a broad cultural attitude, but also to the novel, I am perhaps beginning to fall victim to a common problem in recent music scholarship. This is the tendency to translate music into other phenomena, to reduce it to more concrete and readable models, particularly the verbal. However, having used such models as analogies in order to bring music out of its habitually autonomous territory, I propose that the type of music I am addressing is specifically important because it also helps to constitute modernity in the actual process of reflecting, opposing or interacting with it. Taking the novelistic analogy as a starting point, it is clear that most forms of music relate to narrative in the broadest way (that is, to a human sense of organization in time, rather than necessarily to the specific implication of a storyline) and also to some sort of voice.[58] Indeed, the latter can – as in novels – be overtly multiple, but, given the way lines and gestures may be combined simultaneously in music, this can present multiple voices and associated viewpoints in a way that is entirely unique. While some forms of musical narrative can come closer to the novelistic than others – sonata form, for instance, in its relation to novels of the Enlightenment era – what is significant is that a narrative element is palpable in music precisely because it is performed in time.

A 'modern' listener might try to piece together elements of narrative in any music that contains a plethora of events and gestures (even if the emerging temporality is relatively static or recursive). Indeed, it is the implication of a stronger form of listenership – akin to the reader of a novel – that makes music so significant in the development of the modern subject. In hearing relationships both between figure and ground and between events passing in time, one is not just testing out a possible world, as one might in reading a novel, but exercising a real form of consciousness over time. And what is specifically significant about this form of consciousness is that it is purposely artificial, based on fictional were fortuitously misread/misheard by Mendelssohn and his colleagues. This issue relates back to the historiographical relation between modernity as a broader age stretching back to the Renaissance (to which Bach would, unremarkably, belong) and a stronger sense of ‘the modern’ most commonly associated with the later eighteenth century, together with the nineteenth century and much of the twentieth. Part of the argument of this book is that the stronger modernity is partially constituted through Bach’s musical embodiment of the productive tension between pre-modern and modern elements.

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[57] Judovitz, [illegible], pp. 92–4, 189–90.

[58] I use the term 'narrative' here in its broadest sense, as covering the way human understanding is organized in relation to time, thus implying that most music evokes a sort of temporality, even if this may be relatively cyclical or even static. This broader concept of narrative is theorized at exhaustive length by Paul Ricoeur, in his [illegible]

The success of the Matthew Passion (within classical music culture, at least) also generates questions about the John Passion, which was equally available for restoration in 1829. This clearly did not command anything close to the same respect as the Matthew Passion, enjoying far fewer performances and often written off as a hurried and functional work.[61] Nonetheless, this smaller Passion did begin to gain ground during the twentieth century, with, for instance, Friedrich Smend’s exhaustive study in 1926 of what he believed to be its profound theological content, before the advent of historical performance. The public disgrace of not performing in the ‘approved’ historical style was simply too heavy to bear for cash-strapped orchestras; moreover, the Passion’s traditional outing purely because our climate of reception predisposes us to see or value something that was irrelevant before, but because there is an unpredictable and circulating relation between the piece and its reception – it is not merely a one-way process. From this point of view, the favourable reception of the Matthew Passion in 1829 might have involved as many elements that were unexpected – not hitherto formulated as carrying cultural value – as those that resonated with current concepts.

How, then, does the sequence of my chapters address the basic question of Bach's dialogue with modernity? As I have already stated, any developing definitions of modernity work in a circular relation with the musical study, each aspect informing the other. Given the predominant function of the Lutheran liturgy as a means of cultivating and reinforcing the individual's faith, an obvious starting point is the question of the way this music relates to the individual. The solidification of the individual consciousness as something with its own degree of independence and autonomy is an essential aspect of modernity, one which was partly seeded in the Reformation itself. But is not the variety of individualities within modernity so extremely great as to render the concept of a 'modern subject' meaningless? Charles Taylor provides a useful starting point by linking the growing sense of internalization with the move against an external, pre-existent order that is 'found' and that determines our station and role in life, and more towards a form or order that is made, or internally discovered, within our own minds. This is something made overt in Descartes's work on subjectivity, particularly in the *Discourse on Method* (1637), and later developed on a much more complex scale by Kant.[65]

Something of this inward turn was already evident in Augustine (a fundamental inspiration for Luther's Reformation), but with him it was coupled with a sense of our moral sources as lying outside us (like Plato's cosmos), moral sources that are by definition good. A telling comparison can be made between Augustine's *Confessions*, on the one hand, and Rousseau's, on the other: Augustine's are carried out according to a particular type (e.g. the convert who, through various temptations, eventually finds the right path to a divine, pre-existent, truth), while Rousseau's are a search for that which is specifically unique to the self.[66]

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[65] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 124, 152.

[66] See H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 132–5.

Charles Taylor suggests that there were two discernible sides to emergent modern subjectivities around 1700, thus when Bach was reaching adulthood: self-control and self-construction on the one hand and the sense of the self as a unique particular waiting to be discovered, on the other.[67]

The focus on the individual as someone with specific responsibilities of self-development and constructed through the application of a discipline (from both within and without) is endemic to Protestant practice in general. Moreover, this tendency underwent particular developments closer to Bach's own age, both at the macro level (the increasing emphasis on the absolute monarch at the expense of inherited structures of aristocratic and municipal government), and at the level of the individual (with the new emphasis on personal feeling and conversion within the broader Lutheran movement, and specifically within Pietism). The sense of subjectivity at both these levels is specifically pertinent to Bach's Passions: the central subject of both Passions is undoubtedly Jesus himself, represented not just in the way his words are set and sung, but also by the way the music [illegible] his characterization works to magnify his presence. The Evangelist's narration of his harrowing fate, together with the strongly felt reactions and personal statements of the ariosos and arias in 'our' present, are part of the same musical event that brings him to representation. Within the political climate of Bach's own time, the increasing focus on the absolute ruler would have been nothing without the attitude of the subjects around him, 'authorizing' his power, to adopt a term from Hobbes. While in appearance this might seem similar to traditional structures of order, in which everyone has his or her pre-established place, Hobbes's monarch has power by virtue of the authorization from below, rather than exercising a natural power that is distributed downwards.[68] Bach's 'musical commonwealth' creates for its 'monarch' a degree of presence that has scarcely been exceeded, yet this presence lies in the world created by the music; it is not something that the music merely reflects or depicts.

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[67] Taylor, [illegible], p. 185.

[68] See Kraynak, [illegible], pp. 179–80: the 'author' (individual subject) is the 'real' person with real power, while the 'representative' (monarch) is the artificial construct, but whose commands thus bind the author as if these were ordained by the author himself. While, in one sense, the concept of absolutism deprived the individual of certain powers and rights, in another it intensified the individual's activity by greatly developing the precise role he (and normally 'he' in the seventeenth century) was expected to play. This was something particularly evident in military organization under absolutism, which Bach himself seems to have envied in his comments about the musicians of Dresden, who were only expected to play one instrument within the court orchestra, but at the highest possible level. See Ulrich Siegele, 'Bach and the Domestic Politics of Electoral Saxony', in John Butt (ed.), [illegible] (Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 17–34.

Equally striking are the individual characters themselves, given voice in the arias and meditative choruses. These are presences that invite us to share in their experience, even to become one with them. The role of subjectivity in this music is not merely a question of representing historical personages, or even the typical citizen to whom Bach and his librettists addressed their works, but involves the development of emotion and consciousness on the part of any individual listener who is prepared to give the music some degree of attention. This is something subtly different from the standard role of a listener empathizing with the representation of a character within an operatic role, since the characters developed within the 'present' of Bach's Passions are themselves listeners and witnesses to the representation of Jesus' Passion. They stand, like us, in the time of the storytelling rather than in the secondary time of the represented story.[69]

Given this emphasis on types of subjectivity emerging in the process of the performance, the next obvious topic is therefore the way in which time is involved in the development of the various kinds of individual consciousness and how the temporality of performance relates to the larger-scale implications of a religion dating from the latter years of the ancient world. Do the Passions create a sense of linear time, everything changing irrevocably in the course of performance, or do the recurring and repetitive elements suggest something more cyclic, governed by eternal truths and laws?[70] Do the notions of progress and change, undoubted tendencies of the modern age, mean that the Passion story has to be interpreted in a transformational way that could not have been possible before? Does Christian eschatology somehow coincide with some of the more utopian ideals of modern progress?

How does this relate to the personal, subjective consciousness of time? If Christianity itself already occupies some of the modern forms of subjectivity, it may also have provided some of the impetus for the development of the modern notions of subjective time, especially if Augustine's perceptive meditations on time are anything to go by. With the neo-Augustinian emphasis on personal development engendered by the Reformation, there was increasing attention on the way time was harnessed towards the cultivation of sustained consciousness and awareness of being. Time became for the soul what, in early modernity, extension became for the body; the soul became a living biography of itself.[71] It may well be that Bach's music can demonstrate the subjective consciousness of time, in terms both of the abstract consciousness represented by each singer–personage in the actual process of singing and, particularly, of the way this could be mapped by the attentive listener. Time consciousness did not become a matter of sustained intellectual study until the turn of the twentieth century (in, for instance, the literature of Proust and the philosophy of Husserl and Bergson); but modern novelists and philosophers undoubtedly built their systems on much that had already been articulated through the arts, and especially in music.

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[69] Karol Berger, *Bach's Cycle*, p. 107, observes that, since it is the narrator who brings the story to life, the 'time of the storytelling is ontologically prior, more fundamental, than the time of the story told'.

[70] One of the central theses of Berger's *Bach's Cycle, Mozart's Arrow* is that Bach's Matthew Passion shows the composer's determination to subvert the linear principle to the cyclic and eternal. This issue will be explored further in Chapter 2.

Having explored some of the parameters of subjectivity as part of what is both represented and potentially developed by the listener, through the interaction of musical and subjective time, how are we encouraged to interpret what we experience? Does the music simply transmit obvious meanings latent in the texts (whether biblical or of more recent origins), or does it encourage us to y10(cem62]10s tobeh(cem62the)-334[ioens-275(6f)-273(8he)-286(0ext

practice – perhaps to unprecedented levels – brings with it the potential detachment of the work from its specifically religious context (something that was amply demonstrated by the nineteenth-century revival of Bach's Passions).

The type of polyphony that seems to emerge from the hermeneutic approach has something in common with the most innovative literary genre to emerge around the time of Bach (even if it blossomed in Germany a little while after his death), namely the modern novel. The openness of meaning and the multiplicity of voice in the novel lead me on to consider the voices we hear in the Bach Passions, and their types: do we hear the voices of specific characters, the voices of individual singers themselves or a guiding authorial voice, which we might infer to be Bach's, or the Evangelist's, or even that of God himself (since, for many, God is the source of all Scripture)? And, if there is indeed the sense of voice, or several as music is devised to depict a particular reality in as deep and committed a manner as possible, it imparts something of its own form or flavour on that of which it is presumed to be the effect, a phenomenon that has also been observed as a characteristic of the ‘naturalistic’ turn in painting within Western modernity.[76]