

# Fugue No. 22

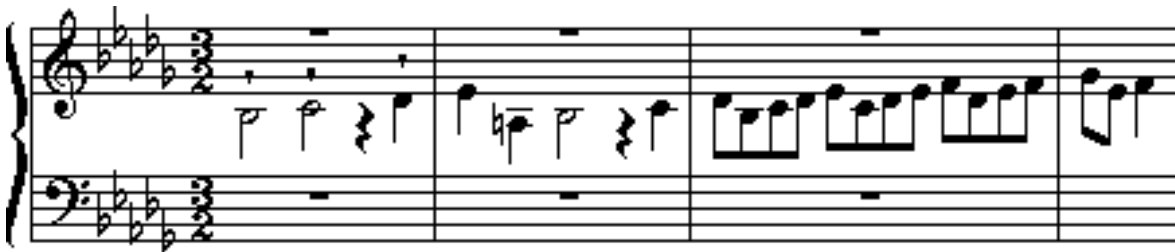
B-Flat minor

*Well-Tempered Clavier Book II*

Johann Sebastian Bach

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**Subject:** Fugue No. 22, *Well-Tempered Clavier*, Book II

Pay attention to nothing, no matter  
how fleetingly, except the *logos*.

Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*

The Greek **logos** (λογος), often translated *word*, also means thought, reason, principle, or logic. Of the fugues in the *WTC*, this is the most logocentric. Consider the fugue's *logos* of:

- logic and life
- identity, design, and conflict
- word, purpose, and will
- *Weltanschauung*

## Logic and Life

Albert Schweitzer has been described as the only man in the 20th century to become famous by being good.<sup>2</sup> In 1913 he forsook all to become a medical doctor in Africa. One lonely evening, while playing a Bach fugue, Dr. Schweitzer realized that this isolation offered him an opportunity. He could plumb the depths of Bach's music, unraveling its logic and deeper meaning.

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<sup>2</sup> British journalist, James Cameron, made this characterization in a 1953 BBC series on Schweitzer as well as articles in the *News Chronicle*.

Were this particular fugue to have joined the cacophony of frogs and crickets on that jungle night, Schweitzer would quickly have recognized the *logos* of its exposition *recto*, development in canon at the 7th and 9th, counterexposition *inverso*, canon *inverso* at the 9th and 7th, development of the subject *recto* with *inverso* and concluding hyperstretto. He would have perceived not just the logic, but also its Christological thought.

Eleven years before his mission to Africa, Schweitzer had established himself as a paeon of the European intelligentsia. Having earned doctorates in philosophy and theology (soon medicine), Schweitzer was also a renowned scholar and performer of Bach's music.<sup>3</sup> With good reason, the French organist, Charles-Marie Widor, had asked Schweitzer to write a biography of Bach. The Catholic Widor, puzzled by some of the strange constructions in Bach's cantatas, thought that Schweitzer, a German Protestant, might be able to shed light.<sup>4</sup>

Schweitzer's biography of Bach revealed how, in addition to the literal word, Bach's cantatas dwell on Jesus, the *Logos* of John's Gospel.<sup>5</sup> James Brabazon, author of an excellent retrospective, writes:

Bach's sonatas address Jesus intimately confidently, as friend and master. They speak of a whole life interwoven with Jesus. Studying Bach, Schweitzer could not avoid being aware of the deep personal religion that gave meaning to music . . . his own intense search through the Gospels was a search for the same man, the man with whom Bach shared his happiness and his agony, his hopes and fears. Schweitzer was saturating himself with Jesus.<sup>6</sup>

Before writing Bach's biography, Schweitzer had challenged Christian orthodoxy with his *Quest of the Historical Jesus*, a controversial study of the Gospels. Even more provocative, his *Mystery of the Kingdom of God* had concluded that Jesus' submission to Roman crucifixion was an attempt to hasten the coming of a kingdom that Jesus himself did not fully understand.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Dr. Schweitzer's enduring contributions to Bach scholarship are as biographer, editor of the organ works and chorales, and performer.

<sup>4</sup> When Schweitzer was born, his homeland of Alsace belonged to Germany; when he died it belonged to France. An ethnic German, Schweitzer was schooled and worked in both countries. His Bach biography was written first in French, then rewritten in a more expansive form in German. The English translation (of the German) remains an important reference work today.

<sup>5</sup> "In the beginning was the *Logos*, and the *Logos* was with God, and the *Logos* was God. He was with God in the beginning" (from the prologue of John's Gospel 1:1-5 and 1:14). Here St. John identifies Jesus with the Stoic concept of *logos* as the animating power of the universe. Pre-Socratic philosophers like Heraclitus had also employed *logos* to distinguish the changeable nature of human existence from an immutable and universal order.

<sup>6</sup> James Brabazon, *Albert Schweitzer* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 61.

<sup>7</sup> The urgent message of the Gospels, according to Schweitzer, is that the Kingdom of God is near, meaning close in time, imminent. This belief, so indelibly marked in the consciousness of the first Christians, required mystical reinterpretation when Jesus did not return to establish that kingdom. In response, theorized Schweitzer, the Church resorted to a paradoxical interpretation of a kingdom both spiritual (close in proximity, "within you") and physical (yet to come).

Schweitzer's interpretation of the Gospels remains controversial. Not until 1947 did the BBC lift a ban on radio discussions of his ideas, while Walter Lowrie's introduction to *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God* observes that Schweitzer's writing was met with silence.

Schweitzer responded to the silence with confidence and action. "Truth," he often said, "belongs to the spirit of Jesus." In confidence he would seek the truth, even if it cost. And cost it did. Today, as then, many people consider Schweitzer not to be "in the stream of the Christian tradition" (the charge behind the BBC's ban).

In addition to Jesus, Schweitzer was inspired by Goethe, whose maxim, "In the beginning was the deed," elaborates upon St. John's "in the beginning was the *Logos*." Schweitzer developed this variation by responding to the silence with action. His affinity for Bach as doer of the word was inevitable. Like Bach, Schweitzer was an organist and builder of organs. Both stood between eras.<sup>8</sup> Both loved Scripture. Both put their love for Jesus into action: Bach in leaving a comfortable court appointment to return to the service of the Church, and Schweitzer in resignation of pastorate and professoriate to bind the wounds of African lepers.<sup>9</sup> In short, each was resolved to losing his life in order to save it.<sup>10</sup>

The first indication of Schweitzer's missionary aspiration would come in a sermon while he was writing the Bach biography. "Then Jesus said to them, 'I will make you fishers of men'." Of this passage Schweitzer concluded: "I will only hold onto one thing: that in the first command the Lord gave on earth, a single word stands out: the word 'man.' He does not speak of religion, faith, the soul or anything else, only about 'men.' 'Come, I will make you fishers of men.'"

This is the source of what some have portrayed as Schweitzer's humanitarian (by implication distinct from Christian) message. Everyone, regardless of belief, can be sure of two things. First, we are alive. Second, our strong desire to stay alive reveals that life has a purpose. *The purpose of life is to preserve life.* In Schweitzer's own words:

I am life which wills to live, in the  
midst of life which wills to live.

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<sup>8</sup> Brabazon writes (p. 81) that Schweitzer "stood exactly between two centuries. Although he used the phraseology of the nineteenth, he spoke of the despair of the twentieth. He felt, sooner than most, the abyss that lay under the crust of progress."

<sup>9</sup> Schweitzer's most-quoted passage is from *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (p. 401): "He comes to us as One unknown, without a name, as of old, by the lakeside, He came to those men who knew Him not. He speaks to us the same word: "Follow thou me!" and sets us to the tasks which He has to fulfill for our time. He commands. And to those who obey Him, whether they be wise or simple, He will reveal Himself in the toils, the conflicts, the sufferings which they shall pass through in His fellowship, and as an ineffable mystery, they shall learn in their own experience who He is."

<sup>10</sup> See Luke 9:23-24. Brabazon (p. 87) writes of Schweitzer: "The notion of losing one's life in order to save it had haunted his thoughts for a long while. Self-denial and self-transcendence summed up in one way what his whole life had been about . . . . It had become rooted in his mind that if he wanted to achieve his potential . . . it could only be at the cost of some sacrifice."

Schweitzer's "universal ethic," popularly known by the enduring phrase "reverence for life," holds that destruction of life is contrary to the *logos*, the underlying thought, reason, principle, logic, and animating force of the universe. Seeking a worldwide audience, Schweitzer argued his ethic on philosophical, not religious, grounds.<sup>11</sup>

In *Civilization and Ethics*, begun while he was under house arrest during World War I, Schweitzer inverted Descartes' famous dictum, *Cogito ergo sum*. Descartes had concluded that consciousness of being is a consequence of thinking: *I think, therefore I am*. But the ability to think, Schweitzer objected, is impossible without life. Because life comes first, reason must yield to experience, which brings to bear the capacities of instinct and intuition.<sup>12</sup> The ultimate "necessity of thought" is that we are alive, and the self-evident "will to live" proclaims life's purpose.<sup>13</sup>

While Schweitzer's argument is philosophical, they misrepresent his ethic who portray it as somehow distinct from Christian. The will to live, thought Schweitzer, cannot be separated from what he called "the true understanding of Jesus," which he identified as "will acting on will." Schweitzer continues: "The true relation to him [Jesus] is to be taken possession of by him. Christian piety of any and every sort is valuable only so far as it means the surrender of our will to his."<sup>14</sup>

But what must we surrender? Schweitzer's answer: we must sacrifice what is most precious to us, life itself--our own lives. Self preservation cannot equate to the reverence for life that dies to self for the sake of another. In *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God* Schweitzer argues that Jesus laid down his life in order to avert the mass execution of his followers. Accordingly Schweitzer conceived of life itself as the *logos* upon which Christianity is founded. To be fully human is to be filled with the spirit of Jesus, in whom was life, and that life was the light of men.<sup>15</sup> In 1905 Schweitzer preached:

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<sup>11</sup> Recalling that Schweitzer's first doctorate was in philosophy (*Sketch of the Philosophy of Religion in Kant's "Critique of Pure Reason"*) it is enlightening to compare his justification for an ethic of life with Kant's categorical imperative. Kant had concluded that, since metaphysical propositions can't be proven by pure reason, it is necessary to *assume* the existence of God, freedom, and immortality if we are to derive any meaning in life. By contrast, Schweitzer argued that the will to live is not an assumption but an existential reality--the essence of being alive--therefore *a priori* to reason.

<sup>12</sup> Schweitzer was comfortable with reason insofar as it embraced "every side of human experience, the spiritual included." Brabazon (p. 51) continues: "There might even be times when reason itself said that reason here could go no farther. . . . Reason to him was not a dry logic. The German word *denken* has a much wider, deeper meaning than the English *think*. It covers all the faculties of the concentrating, absorbed mind, which include intuition and experience besides logic."

<sup>13</sup> Schweitzer believed that the realization of nature's purpose, preservation of life, was a "necessity of thought." Brabazon (p. 276) explains: "It was not implanted; it was inborn. It was not invented; it was discovered. It was undeniable. The fact that it was discovered at the heart of all consciousness by the brooding mind, and once discovered could not be denied, led Schweitzer to call it a necessity of thought."

<sup>14</sup> Schweitzer, *Out of My Life and Thought*, 51.

<sup>15</sup> John 1:4; see also Matthew 5:21-24, 38-41, and Luke 6:27-36. Brabazon (p. 61) observes that, "In humanity Schweitzer found the raw material of Jesus, in Jesus the completion

To content oneself with becoming small, that is the only salvation and liberation. To work in the world as such, asking nothing of it, or of men, not even recognition, that is true happiness. . . . There are things which one cannot do without Jesus. Without Him one cannot attain to that higher innocence . . . the strength to be childlike and small in that higher sense.<sup>16</sup>

If reverence for life is a universal ethic, the way that Schweitzer chose to practice it was Christian. He lost his life to save it by literally saving the lives of others.<sup>17</sup> He rejected self-love in favor of love for fellow man--a humanism that finds its greatest expression (Schweitzer believed) in Jesus of Nazareth. It was will acting on will that impelled Dr. Schweitzer's 1957 radiobroadcast, "a Declaration of Conscience," on the dangers of nuclear devices. In response, two thousand American scientists signed a petition to end the testing of nuclear bombs. It was reverence for life that compelled him to oppose the use of pesticides long before environmentalism became popular. It was will acting on will that led Dr. Schweitzer to oppose armed conflict in all its guises. For his articulate defense of life Albert Schweitzer was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1953.

### **Identity, Design, and Conflict**

If the fugal *logos* is one of logic and of life, it can be explored from yet another angle, one that will require us to leave Dr. Schweitzer momentarily in the African jungle in order to visit the ponderosa forests of northern Arizona. This dramatic scene change will allow us to unpack the unusually graphic quality of this particular fugue. But I promise to return.

I live and work in Flagstaff, Arizona, near one of the great natural wonders of the world: Grand Canyon of the Colorado. In addition to its geology, the American Southwest is proportionately "grand" in archeological sites. By some estimates, more people lived in the four-corners region before Columbus than live here now! Evidence for these communities exists in thousands of ancient pueblos, cliff dwellings, stone tools, and ever-present rock art.

A petroglyph is made by scratching an image into stone. By contrast, a pictograph is made with pigments that survive in protected places. Whether petroglyph or pictograph, it is a *logogram*--a symbol designed to represent, in simple graphic form, a concept or attitude.

Many people have attempted to decipher the meaning of the petroglyph. Was it artistic, religious, mnemonic, magical, calendrical, territorial, alien, or some

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of humanity." In 1905 Schweitzer wrote to the music critic von Lüpke: "For me the whole essence of religion is at stake. For me religion means to be human, plainly human in the sense in which Jesus was."

<sup>16</sup> Brabazon, *Schweitzer*, 345.

<sup>17</sup> Dr. Schweitzer tells of a man who came to his Ogowe hospital in excruciating pain from a strangulated hernia--a deadly condition if left untreated. After surgery, the man would not let go of Schweitzer's hand, repeatedly exclaiming that he felt the pain no longer. "Then I begin to tell him and the others who are in the room that it is the Lord Jesus who has told the doctor and his wife to come to the Ogowe." (*On the Edge of the Primeval Forest*, pp. 69-70).

combination? For every theory, the truth is that nobody knows for sure. Of course the pictograph is beautiful; it has reason enough to exist as art. But common sense tells us that its purpose was to mark something, to distinguish one thing, place, or idea from another. The petroglyph says that this place belongs to my clan (not yours), this is our belief (not that), go here (not there), plant now (not later). It is not just art, but sign and symbol, therefore laden with meaning.

While arguments claiming proof of the pictograph's meaning are suspect, they are on solid ground who attribute purposefulness to the design. One need not "prove" that Southwestern rock art was made by humans (as opposed to aliens, or the natural processes of wind and water); common sense tells us what is, and is not, a plausible explanation.<sup>18</sup> Magical, territorial, religious, and calendrical inferences are consistent with contemporary shamanistic art where indeed we know the purpose and meaning.

In addition to illustrating the human fascination with signs, my purpose is to show how the *logos* signifies conflict and competition. Because the *logos* cannot contradict itself, the inevitable product of logic is discrimination. The logogram itself distinguishes one idea from another, and we do it again when we conclude that the petroglyph has meaning, even if we do not know what the meaning is. If such inferences are as old as humanity, they are as familiar to us today as in Bach's day.

In 2004 Northern Arizona University, where I teach, redesigned its logo. This was required by research indicating an insufficiently focused "verbal and visual identity." A marketing firm was contracted to build "positive brand awareness." The change was initiated by "surveys, focus groups, and interviews with thousands of individuals, including faculty, current and prospective students, staff, parents, teachers, high school counselors, business leaders, and alumni."<sup>19</sup>

What exactly does NAU represent? How are we different from other universities, and how do we accomplish our mission more effectively? Administrators agreed with the consultants that, "NAU should better emphasize its academic strengths, which historically have been overshadowed by messages focused on the university's location."

For its verbal identity the university chose the slogan, "Mountain air makes you smarter." NAU's academic strengths would now be represented visually in a "nameplate with heraldic shield" made of a sage-green mountain and pine bough, these graphic symbols retaining much loved traits of NAU's historic identity--rooted in a sense of place. In subsequent testing, people "consistently used terms such as 'prestigious,' 'sophisticated,' 'academic,' and 'tradition' to describe the new logo."

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<sup>18</sup> Design inferences are often dismissed as "faith-based." But the disciplines of archaeology, forensic science, and information science would be impossible without authority to make such inferences, abduce their purposes and imply their meanings. Although not a science, the singular purpose of music theory is to detect design.

<sup>19</sup> <http://web.archive.org/web/20050421181419/http://www4.nau.edu/marketing/faq.asp>

Unlike the pictograph, one need not speculate about the meaning of the logo. Its upward movement of the pine tree "symbolizes forward-thinking growth and progressive development," while the mountain suggests "dignity, stability, and knowledge." Whether or not one gets these ideas from the logo is less important than the intention that people *should* get it. If the received message is that of a prickly pear cactus, or a black widow spider, not the intended twig of Ponderosa pine, then the logo will have failed its purpose. By the same token, if people perceive it only as a graphic design--a "mere" work of art--without the resonance of its intended meaning, the logo likewise will have failed.

Upon adoption of the new, the university community was instructed to remove all instances of the old logo. Here again we see the tendency of the logogram to assert the preeminence of its message by suppressing competition. The sanctioned symbol cannot tolerate anything that might muddle its meaning.

In our consumerist society, with its pervasive branding and competition for market share, the logo has become an indispensable tool. It creates brand loyalty, and associates products with quality. Regrettably, the concept of *logos* is often employed to manipulate consumers in subliminal ways. Whether it is Wendy's at war with MacDonal'd's, or Nike with Reebok, we are continually bombarded by the hidden power of *logos*.

Bach, too, understood this power. His monogram, comprised of the initials JSB superimposed upon their mirror image and topped by a crown, represents his motto: Christ will crown those who carry his cross (*Christus Coronabit Crucigeros*). The most telling element is the Greek *Chi* ( $\chi$ ), first letter in the spelling of *Christ* ( $\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma$ ) and an ancient symbol for the cross.<sup>20</sup> Like the petroglyph, or Nike swoosh, Bach's monogram demands interpretation as *a symbol designed to represent a concept, or attitude*.



So what was Bach's attitude? In answering this question, let us categorically dismiss the notion that his logo is mere decoration. It connects the man to his music. Nor let us fall prey to the modern idea that musical structure and contrapuntal technique can be estranged from their *logos* of inspiration. The fugue is music to be sure, but that is not all it is. It also has meaning and purpose.

We discover the meaning of this fugue in the dialectic of its counterpoint. We hear its purpose in the inversions of his counterexposition, strettos of his subject *recto* with *inverso*, and hyperstretto. Like a watermark, these represent the mirrored initials of his monogram, the musical analogue of  $\chi$ , a symbol of Christ and his cross. This fugue is the tonal expression of a graphic design.

Of course I could be wrong about this. It is possible, I suppose, that the mountain air has not made me smarter. Conceding the hypothetical, I have no

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<sup>20</sup>  $\chi$  has symbolized the cross, and Christ, for two millennia. Bach occasionally employed the symbol in place of the word *Kreuz* ("cross") in his manuscripts.

proof that this fugue is Bach's representation of the *Logos*, but I believe it nonetheless. So I plead guilty to Laurence Sterne's wry observation that:

It is in the nature of an hypothesis, when once a man has conceived it, that it assimilates everything to itself as proper nourishment; and, from the first moment of your begetting it, it generally grows the stronger by everything you see, hear, read, or understand. -- This is of great use.<sup>21</sup>

The *logos* of Bach's counterpoint has historically divided scholars into camps: those who believe that meaning in Bach's music ends with his technique, and those who believe that this is but where it begins. Schweitzer belonged to the latter group. His analysis shows how Bach's counterpoint elucidates the metaphysical *logos* of thought, reason, principle, and logic.

Which returns us, as promised, to the doctor playing fugues in the jungles of Africa. In response to Widor's puzzlement about the cantatas, Schweitzer revealed how "Bach is essentially a *painter of pictures* . . . different motifs in the music representing *specific images*" (Brabazon's words, emphasis mine).

Schweitzer's ideas redirect those of Phillip Spitta, who had recently published what some consider as the definitive Bach biography. Brabazon interprets:

Spitta was a leader of the fashionable view that Bach's work was at the opposite pole to the descriptive composers . . . and obeyed only the pure laws of music. Spitta believed that the occasions when the music of a cantata seemed pictorial were subconscious accidents, to be ignored by the listener.

Schweitzer believed that these descriptive elements were of the essence of the music and, moreover, that proper performance was impossible until the performer had understood the pictorial purpose of the writing.<sup>22</sup>

### **Word, Purpose, and Will**

At the age of seventy, Jean-Paul Sartre was asked about the meaning of music in his life. He had studied piano as a youth, learning to play Bach tolerably well. Although he wrote little on musical philosophy, he once tried composition, and enjoyed playing fugues into his old age. Sartre praised Bach for having "taught how to find originality within an established discipline; actually 'how to live'."

But why Sartre? How does existentialist dread relate to this discussion? Albert Schweitzer answered that question this way: "It is true that Sartre and I are

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<sup>21</sup> Sterne, *Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*, vol. 2, chap. 19, par. 26, quoted in Michael Marissen, *Lutheranism, Anti-Judaism, and Bach's St. John Passion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), viii. I also heartily agree with Marissen's observation that all scholarship is advocacy.

<sup>22</sup> Brabazon, *Schweitzer*, 174.

related, but neither of us will admit it."<sup>23</sup> Sartre belongs to our story because he and Schweitzer were cousins.

Which makes me curious: why would Sartre and Schweitzer, related by birth and boyhood faith, not claim each other in the end? This may seem like a small question, one with little relevance to Bach, but I assure you that it is both relevant and big. The answer to this question will help us to understand our own age and why we find it difficult to apprehend Bach's music at any level other than technical process.

Let's begin with words, of which Sartre was master. In 1963 he wrote an autobiography, *Les Mots*, the title of which ("the Words") plays a pun on St. John's personification of Jesus as the *Logos*, the "Word made flesh." Throughout most of his life Sartre believed in literature as reality, and the author as creator of reality. This belief parallels St. John's assertion that "All things came into being through the Word, apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being." Of his youthful faith Sartre writes:

God would have managed things for me. I would have been a signed masterpiece. Assured of playing my part in the universal concert, *I would have patiently waited for Him to reveal his purposes* and my necessity. I reached out for religion, I longed for it, it was the remedy. Had it been denied me, I would have invented it myself. It was not denied me. Raised in the Catholic faith, I learned that the Almighty had made me for His glory.<sup>24</sup>

But something happened. Sartre retells the loss of his Christian faith by analogy to Jesus' parable of the sower. A farmer broadcasts seeds, some of which fall on the path, are trodden under foot, then eaten by birds. Others fall on rocks where they die for lack of water. Still others are choked by thorns. But the remaining seed yields a good harvest.

The parable is about the Kingdom of God, a topic of lifelong interest to Sartre's cousin, Schweitzer. The Kingdom of God is like a field of wheat. The seed represents the *Logos*, the word of God. This seed is planted in every heart. In some it is plucked out, or receives no water, or is suffocated by worldly cares. The Kingdom of God grows in hearts where "the Word" is properly nourished and yields a crop.

In the foregoing quotation I have italicized a sentence about the *revelation of purposes*. This sentence foretells the essential Sartre, whose mature philosophy

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<sup>23</sup> Schweitzer read Sartre, but felt that his treatment of ethics could not be supported by his philosophy. In addition to Schweitzer's distaste for the bad name that Sartre was giving to existentialism, Schweitzer resented Sartre's portrayal, in *Les Mots*, of the Schweitzer family as crude-talking German country folk. In an uncharacteristic tit for tat, Schweitzer once related how he would take the toddler Sartre for buggy rides. Sartre's mother would remind Albert to remove Jean-Paul for a wee-wee. Careful to follow these instructions, Schweitzer related how he was ever dismayed that his cousin would answer nature's call only in the buggy--what Schweitzer then characterizes as Sartre's lifelong pattern.

<sup>24</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Les Mots*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: George Braziller, 1964), 97.

admits to neither revelation nor purpose. He denies a purposeful creation because revelation requires a Revealer. He continues: " I needed a Creator; I was given a Big Boss." Here Sartre demurs at the implication that being created for a purpose would limit one's freedom.

Because freedom lies at the heart of Sartre's philosophy, he cannot acknowledge Schweitzer's universal ethic: the proposition that nature reveals life's purpose. For Sartre, nature has nothing to say about why we exist; every purpose emanates from ourselves. We are free to do as we determine. So Sartre and Schweitzer cannot claim each other because they have antithetical beliefs about nature. For Schweitzer, nature is purposeful; for Sartre it is purposeless, impersonal, indifferent, and meaningless. For Schweitzer, "purpose" is a noun; for Sartre a verb. Let me explain.

Whereas Schweitzer believed that the *purpose* (noun) of our existence is to preserve life, Sartre believed that whatever one *purposes* to do (verb), that is the reason for one's existence. Sartre can have it no other way. Because there is no Creator, there can be no purpose for creation. If life is the product of non-directed materialist processes, it has no inherent *reason* for being, it just *is*.

Without purpose, Sartre believed, we are autonomous: utterly free. Since nature has nothing to tell us about why we are here, we can do anything. We are free to lie or tell the truth, be honest or cheat, save a life or take it. Nothing is better or worse, good or bad, moral or immoral. There is no criterion, outside ourselves, that one can use to make such distinctions. There is no *logos*.

But the price of this freedom is anguish. Because we have no appeal to an external authority, what Sartre called a "Big Boss," we are answerable only to ourselves. And, being answerable only to ourselves, we have no need for reason. Without the need to make distinctions, reason has no reason and is therefore of no use. For want of *logos*, a fixed external point of reference against which one can discriminate between x and y, logic is absurd. This is Sartre's dilemma. Our only hope is to "authenticate" ourselves through an "act of the will." This purposing to be authentic in a meaningless and purposeless universe is, for Sartre, a sad thing.

In his famous "Existentialism as Humanism," Sartre admits to "extreme embarrassment" that God does not exist: "for there disappears with Him all possibility of finding values in an intelligible heaven." Without God we are, in Sartre's most memorable phrase, "condemned to be free." He asks:

If God does not exist, are we provided with any values or commands that could legitimize our behavior? Thus we have neither behind us, nor before us in a luminous realm of values, any means of justification or excuse. We are left alone, without excuse. That is what I mean when I say that man is condemned to be free.

But I've gotten ahead of the story. You see I am less interested in Sartre's philosophy than in why he stopped waiting for God to reveal his purposes. This view of purposes is where Sartre's philosophy, and by implication western civilization, begins and ends. This is true because they who apprehend no

purpose in nature find it difficult to apprehend anywhere. The deterministic view, when taken to its logical conclusion, perceives the intelligence, creativity, and design of a fugue to be just another manifestation of the accidental processes that made Bach himself (see fn. [27]).

So which soil was Sartre? In *Les Mots* he writes: "Confidence and sorrow made my soul a choice soil for sowing the seeds of heaven." In this amazing sentence Sartre identifies himself with the fertile soil into which the seeds of the Kingdom of God were sown. His heart was neither the trampled path nor stone. Why then did the "the Word" not bear in Sartre, as it did in Schweitzer, a prolific harvest?

In the next sentence Sartre writes of a mistake but for which he would "now be a monk." The mistake was to fall among thorns, which he identifies as his own family: "But my family had been affected by the slow movement of dechristianization that started among the Voltairian upper bourgeoisie and took a century to spread to all levels of society." Five pages later he reminisces:

I have just related the story of a missed vocation: I needed God, He was given to me, I received Him without realizing that I was seeking Him. Failing to take root in my heart, He vegetated in me for a while, then He died.

These "words," like most of Sartre's *Les Mots*, have a surface meaning relating to Sartre himself, and a deeper application to the state of the western mind in the modern era. One can legitimately apply his quoted pronouns "I" and "me" to western culture. Which brings us to the defining trait of modernism, and the reason why we find it difficult to hear the fugue as anything more than contrapuntal process. The reason has to do with the "death" of God in modern thought, the most articulate expression of which is found in Friedrich Nietzsche.

Nietzsche often gets a bad rap, as if he were the one who slayed God himself. In fact, he was a brilliant observer, able to foresee the *Zeitgeist* of the 20th century and beyond. To the reader who may not be familiar with it, I encourage a thoughtful reading of the following extended quotation from section 125 of *The Gay Science*. Here, in the anguished cry of his main character *The Madman*, Nietzsche foretells the death of *logos* and the nihilism of our time:

"Whither is God" he cried. "I shall tell you. We have killed him--you and I. All of us are his murderers. But how have we done this? How were we able to drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What did we do when we unchained this earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Whither are we moving now? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there any up or down left? Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space? Has it not become colder? Is not night and more night coming on all the while? Must not lanterns be lit in the morning? Do we not hear

anything yet of the noise of the gravediggers who are burying God? Do we not smell anything yet of God's decomposition? Gods too decompose. God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. How shall we, the murderers of all murderers, comfort ourselves. What was holiest and most powerful of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives. Who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must not we ourselves become gods simply to seem worthy of it? There has never been a greater deed; and whoever will be born after us--for the sake of this deed he will be part of a higher history than all history hitherto."

### ***Weltanschauung***

Modernism is the consciousness of what once was presumed to be present and is now seen as missing. It might be considered as a series of felt absences: knowledge without truth, power without authority, society without spirit, self without identity, politics without virtue, existence without purpose, history without meaning.<sup>25</sup>

Were John Patrick Diggins to have applied his definition of modernism to music, he might have written of an *Agnus Dei* without the Lamb of God, a *Credo* without *unum Deum*, or this fugue without its cross. He might have written of time without *telos*, the journey without a destination, myth without moral, and story without plot.

We live in a world of narrative, language, and symbol. Each of us has his own story, each story intersecting with those of others. Everything we do, from how we dress to the cars we drive, involves communication--each act a representation of ourselves, our varied stories.

With Nietzsche's "death" of God also died the great story of western civilization. It is the language of metanarrative, the account that makes sense of every other. The death of the western metanarrative is the death of *logos*, a belief that all that exists is endowed with purpose, outside itself, possessed of some degree of inevitability and unequivocal meaning.

Yet the ghost of *Logos* haunts our language in every word ending in "ology." **Biology**, for example, is the "*logos* of life." And **ecology**: what do biospheres and ecosystems tell us about the reason we are here? What does global warming have to say about the continued dumping of greenhouse gasses into the atmosphere? In Schweitzer's day, what did the atom have to say about the atmospheric testing of radiological weapons? Does nature herself offer answers for the haunting questions of our existence, questions eloquently framed by

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<sup>25</sup> John Patrick Diggins, *The Promise of Pragmatism: Modernism and the Crisis of Knowledge and Authority* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994).

Immanuel Kant in Bach's generation: What is man, What shall I do; What may I hope, What can I know?

For Albert Schweitzer, the *bios* whispers that we exist to preserve life. By contrast, modern science no longer recognizes the "ology" of the "bios." In a most eloquent articulation of this blindness, Richard Tarnas writes:

The world revealed by modern science has been a world devoid of spiritual purpose, opaque, ruled by chance and necessity, without intrinsic meaning. The human soul has not felt at home in the modern cosmos: the soul can hold dear its poetry and its music, its private metaphysics and religion, but these find no certain foundation in the empirical universe.<sup>26</sup>

"We experience the limits of science," writes Karl Jaspers, "as the limits of our ability to know and as limits of our realization of the world through knowledge. *The knowledge of science fails in the face of all ultimate questions.*"

So what *can* we know? That is the question of **epistemology**, the *logos* of what can be known to be the case. **Ontology** presupposes that, of all the things that are the case, many cannot be proven.<sup>27</sup> We build our lives on such unprovable things because we *believe* that they *ought* to be the case: **axiology**.

Does Bach exist? Today I mean . . . yes, he died, but does he survive as a spirit; or does our asking of such a question mean that he lives in our mind and memory at least? These are ontological questions. The extent to which we can know there is a Bach, or his fugal purpose, is an epistemological problem.

Assuming that Bach exists, should this affect our valuation of his art? This is an axiological question, one most likely to be answered by **musicology**--the *logos* of music. What is the fugue's purpose, logic, *final word*, what does it say to us? What reason undergirds this particular fugue; what principle does it support?

To the reader who thinks these subjects too profound for a fugue to answer, I'm convinced that how we hear the fugue is shaped by the toughest questions we can ask. Our answers to the hardest questions--who are we, why do we exist, how should we relate to each other and our environment, God (if God exists), what will happen when I die--dictate how one hears the fugue: Bach's logo, his final word, his deepest thought, purpose, and logic.

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<sup>26</sup> Richard Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1991), 418.

<sup>27</sup> A revealing collection of contemporary ontological assumptions can be found in the responses of 120 of the world's great minds to John Brockman's *Edge* question of 2005 ([http://www.edge.org/q2005/q05\\_print.html](http://www.edge.org/q2005/q05_print.html)): "What do you believe is true even though you cannot prove it?" I am especially intrigued by the answer of evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins: "I believe that all life, all intelligence, all creativity and all 'design' anywhere in the universe, is the direct or indirect product of Darwinian natural selection."

In his biography of J. S. Bach, Albert Schweitzer wrote of the *Well-Tempered Clavier*:

What so fascinates us in the work is not the form or the build of the piece, but the world-view that is mirrored in it. It is not so much that we enjoy the *Well-Tempered Clavier* as that we are edified by it.

Schweitzer's use of the word *edify* speaks volumes. It is a preacher's term, one sooner spoken from a pulpit than university lectern--more said in sermons than in scholarly biographies. *Edify* implies that we are drawn to the *Well-Tempered Clavier* because it strengthens us spiritually, profits us morally, informs and instructs us ethically.

But how could a cycle of preludes and fugues profit us spiritually, or supply our society with moral strength? Schweitzer's answer: the work espouses a "world-view," the English translation of *Weltanschauung*, a term invented by Nietzsche, whose writings Schweitzer both admired and abhorred. What, then, is the *Well-Tempered Clavier's* world-view?

The *Weltanschauung* of the *Well-Tempered Clavier* is that all of creation was crafted by the *Logos*; beauty and rightness in the world is related to order, coherence, relationships, thoughtfulness, and logic; art is purposeful, it has a definitive word, something to say to us, something that is reasonable and consistent with what the heavens themselves declare.

The view of the *Well-Tempered Clavier* is that nature is orderly, and that this order manifests intentionality, forethought, and design. The purpose of the design is to reveal relationships, the connection of parts to the whole, and the whole to everything else. In so doing, the artwork reveals the skill of the artist only secondarily, with its primary purpose being to reveal the *logos* of nature and of nature's Designer.

In advancing Bach's world-view, Schweitzer repudiates modernism, a view of the world that he believes to be dangerous--to the point of threatening human survival. The modern *Weltanschauung*, espoused by philosophers from Nietzsche to Sartre holds that there is no *logos*: there is no "natural" reason for anything. Nature attaches to herself no purpose or meaning. All meaning and purpose is gotten by dint of human will and definition. Because nature is silent on these subjects, we create our own purposes, define our own meanings, and bequeath our own identities.

Nietzsche defined life's purpose in the "salvation" of humanity achieved by slaying traditional ethics and religion. The purpose of life is to indulge one's self in a sensual affirmation of all that exists, evil as well as good, pain as well as pleasure. Given the "death" of God, man must resurrect himself to the glory of higher man.

Most disturbingly Nietzsche espoused purpose in the "will to power," an attitude that modernity has exploited to justify domination of the weak, the sick, and the poor. There is no place in Nietzsche's world-view for the compassion of an Albert Schweitzer or of dying to self for the sake of another. Nietzsche's

*Weltanschauung* regards these ideals as evidences of cultural and individual weakness. Instead he glorifies war.

Dr. Schweitzer saw it coming. Troubled by Nazi misappropriation of Nietzsche to propagandize domination of the world by Arian supermen, he repudiated the modern "force of will" in favor of "spiritual independence from any sort of mass will."<sup>28</sup> On the eve of World War II, he was invited to deliver a memorial oration, begun in the precise hour of Goethe's death one hundred years earlier. He reminded his audience of Goethe's plea:

Remain human with your own souls! Do not become mere human things which allow to have stuffed into them souls which are adjusted to the mass-will and pulse in measure with it.

This had been Goethe's warning . . . on the susceptibility of the human will to exploitation. Schweitzer, who for forty years had decried the danger of mass will (which he had learned from Nietzsche), was yet horrified by the latter's idea that human destiny was to become dominant rather than good. Now, with Europe tottering on the brink of another war, Schweitzer warned against "breaking away from nature," and yielding to "a monstrous unnaturalness."

Schweitzer's warning was that nature has something to say to us, and that one plugs his ears to his own peril. Nature says that the world is not plastic; one cannot, through sheer force of will, "reinvent" the world however he might wish. The *logos* of nature will inevitably have the final "word."

While the farmer is free to strew his wheat upon the rocks, the beaten path, or among the thorns, nature says that there is one way to grow a bountiful harvest. The *logos* says that we must plant the seed here, in the fertile ground, not there; now, not later; we must choose between the right way and the wrong.

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<sup>28</sup> Flirtation with eugenics, as popular in the 1930's in England and the U. S. as in Germany, was conceptually driven by an amalgam of Nietzsche with a liberal dose of Darwin. Although the Nazis misconstrued Nietzsche, the English and Americans unfairly crowned him godfather of Nationalist Socialism, which Walter Kaufmann likens to blaming St. Francis for the Inquisition. Wherever cast, blame is fairly heaped on Nietzsche for championing war for the sake of an idea. While he foresaw world war, Nietzsche was blind to its disastrous consequences for Europe. Some people recognize the same *logos* of idea (**ideology**) and unforeseen consequences in Lincoln's justification of war to preserve "the union," or President George W. Bush's gift of democracy to Islam (borrowed no doubt from Wilson's having made the world "safe for democracy"), wars that ruminates in Nietzsche's "Preparatory Men" (section 283 of *The Gay Science*):

I welcome all signs that a more manly, a warlike, age is about to begin, an age which, above all, will give honor to valor once again. For this age shall prepare the way for one yet higher, and it shall gather the strength which this higher age will need one day--this age which is to carry heroism into the pursuit of knowledge and *wage wars for the sake of thoughts and their consequences*.