CHAPTER 1

Diderot's Paradoxe *and C. P. E. Bach's* Empfindungen

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On his way home to Paris via The Hague, Denis Diderot paused for a few days in Hamburg at the end of March 1774. "I return from St. Petersburg in a housecoat under a fur pelt, and without other clothing, otherwise I should not have missed calling on a man as famous as Emmanuel [*sic*]," he wrote, in the first of two surviving letters to Bach.[1] We know the texts of these letters not from Diderot's autograph, but (tellingly) from their publication in four literary journals within weeks of Diderot's visit – the first of them in Claudius's *Wandsbecker Bothe* for 8 April.[2] The letters are work-a-day: Diderot wants Bach to provide some sonatas for his daughter, and Bach (we must infer from Diderot's second letter) spells out the terms under which he can agree to the request.[3]

That Diderot and Bach never met seems quite clear from the circumstantial evidence. In the continuation on Easter Sunday of a letter dated "Sonnabend vor Ostern, 2 Apr. 1774," the poet Johann Heinrich Voss, describing several visits to Bach during the weekend, adds: "Diderot has traveled through town and written several letters to Bach, asking for the copy of some unpublished sonatas for his daughter, who is an excellent keyboard player."[4] The following day, in a letter to Johann Martin Miller

[1] Stephen L. Clark, trans. and ed., *The Letters of C. P. E. Bach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), letters 54*a* and 54*b*. Bach's replies to Diderot have not survived.

[2] For the text of the letters, as they were published in the *Hamburgischer unpartheyischer Correspondent*, no. 57 (8 April 1774), see *Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach im Spiegel seiner Zeit: Die Dokumentensammlung Johann Jacob Heinrich Westphals*, ed. with commentary by Ernst Suchalla (Hildesheim, Zurich, New York: Olms, 1993), 51.

[3] "Ma fille, joue a Monsieur cette pièce d'Emmanuel Back," instructs the Philosopher (Diderot, we learn from Diderot's preface) in the Fourth Dialogue of the *Leçons de clavecin et principes d'harmonie*, *par Mr Bemetzrieder* (Paris: Chez Bluet, 1771). For the complicated issues surrounding the collaboration between Diderot and Bemetzrieder, who indeed taught keyboard and harmony to Diderot's daughter Angélique from as early as 1769, see *Diderot: Musique*, ed. Jean Mayer and Pierre Citron, with Jean Varloot, in *Œuvres complètes de Diderot*, XIX (Paris: Hermann, 1983), 47–387, esp. p. 162.

[4] The autograph letter from Voss is at Kiel, Schleswig-Holsteinische Landesbibliothek. For a fuller discussion of it, see my "The New Modulation of the 1770s: C. P. E. Bach in Theory, Criticism and Practice," *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 38/3 (1985), 579–80. The letter is published

and other members of the "Göttingen Grove" poets, Voss writes: "Diderot was here [in Hamburg], but has spoken to no one. He wrote a couple of letters to Bach."[5]

The provocations of this near confrontation of two grand idiosyncratic minds (theatrically staged, it might seem, to judge from the alacrity with which Diderot's personal letters were rushed into print) tempts me to juxtapose two of their works: a late, indeed final, Fantasy by Bach that plays openly with the idea of *Empfindung*; and a dialogue by Diderot that examines with great wit the distinction between the man of genuine sensibility, of sensitivity – of *Empfindsamkeit* – and the actor who only stages, enacts, mimics such feeling. Bach's Fantasy in F♯ minor was composed in 1787 (three years after the death of Diderot).[6] Unpublished in his lifetime, Diderot's *Paradoxe sur le comédien (The Paradox of the Actor)* was much on his mind during the months prior to his journey through Hamburg.[7] Had Diderot and Bach actually met, it does not stretch reason to imagine the conversation turning about these ideas which so vigorously probe Enlightenment aesthetic theory.

I

"The man of sensibility," writes Diderot, "obeys only the impulses of nature, and utters precisely nothing less than the cry of his heart; once he moderates

in Johann Heinrich Voss, *Briefe von Johann Heinrich Voss nebst erläuternden Beilagen*, ed. Abraham Voss, I (Halberstadt, 1829; repr. with a foreword by Gerhard Hay, Hildesheim, 1971), 157–62, but omitting without comment the passage on Diderot. The passage is also omitted in Ernst Suchalla, ed., *Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, Briefe und Dokumente: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, 2 vols. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994), I: 381.

[5] Cited from Suchalla, *Briefe und Dokumente*, I: 383.

[6] "Freie Fantasie fürs Clavier," following the inscription on the autograph, is the title given in E. Eugene Helm, *Thematic Catalogue of the Works of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), item 300. The arrangement for keyboard and violin is called "Clavierfantasie mit Begleitung einer Violine" in ibid., item 536, no doubt after the entry in the *Verzeichniß des musikalischen Nachlasses des verstorbenen Capellmeisters Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach* (Hamburg: Schniebes, 1790), 41, "No. 46"; the "Verzeichniß" was reprinted as Rachel W. Wade, ed., *The Catalog of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach's Estate: A Facsimile of the Edition of Schniebes, Hamburg, 1790* (New York and London: Garland, 1981).

[7] Published posthumously in 1830, Diderot's *Paradoxe sur le comédien* was evidently the subject in a letter of August 1773 to Mme d'Epinay, written in The Hague on the eve of his departure for St. Petersburg: "un certain pamphlet sur l'art de l'acteur est presque devenu un ouvrage." See Denis Diderot, *Paradoxe sur le comédien précédé des Entretiens sur le fils naturel*, with a chronology and preface by Raymond Laubreaux (Paris: [Garnier]-Flammarion, 1981), 120. A translation is published in Denis Diderot, *Selected Writings on Art and Literature*, trans. with an introduction and notes by Geoffrey Bremner (London: Penguin Books, 1994), 98–158. These are the texts to which I refer in the following. My own translation is drawn from Bremner and to an extent from a translation by Walter Herries Pollack: Denis Diderot, *The Paradox of Acting*; and William Archer, *Masks or Faces?* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1957), 11–71.

this cry or forces it, he is no longer himself, but an actor in performance."[8] Isolating these lapidary words in his penetrating monograph on Johann Georg Hamann, Isaiah Berlin thought he recognized in Diderot's depiction a sense of self-alienation to which, as he puts it, Rousseau "and much modern psychology have given a central role."[9] For all its insight, Berlin's reading yet slights the paradoxical effect that Diderot is after. Spoken by "the man with the paradox" (as Diderot calls him), this central thesis in the dialogue means to argue not for the primacy of nature but rather for a more complex relationship between the man of feeling, the poet, and the actor. Toward the end of the dialogue, when the antagonists have wandered off, absorbed in their own thoughts, the man with the paradox bursts forth with an uncanny fable of human relations. Diderot gives us the sense of a man possessed:

> Here the man with the paradox fell silent. He walked with long strides, not seeing where he went; he would have knocked up against those who met him right and left if they had not got out of his way. Then, suddenly stopping, and catching his antagonist tight by the arm, he said, with a dogmatic and quiet tone: My friend, there are three types – nature's man, the poet's man, the actor's man [l'homme de la nature, l'homme du poète, l'homme de l'acteur]. Nature's is less great than the poet's man, the poet's less great than the great actor's, who is the most exalted of all. This last climbs on the shoulders of the one before him and shuts himself up inside a great basket-work figure of which he is the soul. He moves this figure so as to terrify even the poet, who no longer recognizes himself. He terrifies us . . . just as children frighten each other by tucking up their little skirts and putting them over their heads, shaking themselves about, and imitating as best they can the croaking lugubrious accents of the specter that they counterfeit.[10]

In this stunning evocation of theater, we are struck by the power ascribed to the actor, who becomes the soul of the figure – the poet's figure – within which he comes to life. In the greater hierarchy of things, the poet's figure is prior to the actor's, but in the end, it is the actor who holds the reins. How, by the way, one might transfer this elaborate construct to the performance of music is not quite so routine as it might at first seem: where the poet and the actor are always discrete and even distant from one another, the composer and the performer often inhabit the same body. And yet even in such cases, the composer as a performer of his own work will play out the tensions immanent in Diderot's subtle conceit.

[8] *Paradoxe*, 151; trans., 124–5.
[9] Isaiah Berlin, *The Magus of the North: J. G. Hamann and the Origins of Modern Irrationalism*, ed. Henry Hardy (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1993), 83.
[10] *Paradoxe*, 186–7; trans., 154.

Diderot's argument has everything to do with an apparently simple observation on the nature of acting, framed in an apothegm early on in the dialogue: "Extreme sensibility," he writes, "makes middling actors; middling sensibility produces the multitude of bad actors; in complete absence of sensibility is the possibility of the sublime actor."[11] For Diderot, the "sorrowful accents" that seem to be drawn from the depth of feeling are, by that measure, evidence not of true feeling but of something planned. They are, he writes,

> part of a system of declamation; in that, raised or lowered by the twentieth part of a quarter of a tone, they would ring false; in that they are in subjection to a law of unity; in that, as in harmony, they are arranged in chords and discords; that laborious study is needed to give them completeness; in that they are the elements necessary to the solving of a given problem; in that, to hit the right mark once, they have been practiced a hundred times; and in that, despite all this practice, they are yet found wanting.[12]

And further to this paradox is an imaginary theater of mirrors and reversals in which Diderot now envisions the world as itself a stage enacting madness, from which the cold eye of the poet constructs its play:

> In the great play, the play of the world, the play to which I am constantly recurring, the stage is held by the fiery souls [that is, by the people governed by their feelings], and the pit is filled with men of genius. The actors are in other words madmen; the spectators, whose business it is to paint their madness, are sages. And it is they who discern with a ready eye the absurdity of the motley crowd, who reproduce it for you, and who make you laugh, both at the unhappy models who have bored you to death, and at yourself.[13]

To question this hierarchy, to suggest that within the bosom of the great actor is some fundamental well of sensibility, that actors and poets are no less capable of true feeling than these primary figures of nature, would be to disable the cunning of Diderot's *Paradoxe*. It has much to tell us of the Enlightenment mind engaged in an inquiry into the nature of thought and idea, and provokes us finally to interrogate this distinction, implicit in the *Paradoxe*, between feeling and expression. What, precisely, is this distinction that Diderot is after between the cry from the heart (surely, this is *expression* of some kind) and the perfectly calibrated gesture of the actor, within whose calculations are choreographed the rhetoric of spontaneity?

Somewhere from within this distinction springs language itself, the origins of which captured the imagination of Enlightenment thinkers: witness Vico's notion of the beginnings of language, where metaphor precedes the

[11] Ibid., 133; trans., 108. [12] Ibid., 132; trans., 107. [13] Ibid., 131, 132; trans., 106.

literal and song precedes speech;[14] and Rousseau's similar inclination, in the *Essay on the Origin of Languages* (1749).[15] In Herder's *Essay on the Origin of Language* (1770), the dialectical argument leads inexorably to a confrontation of the utterance of passion with a grammar of reason, a confrontation which Bach's Fantasy will bring to life. For Herder, the acquisition of grammar is not without sacrifice: "For as the first vocabulary of the human soul was a living epic of sounding and acting nature, so the first grammar was almost nothing but a philosophical attempt to develop that epic into a more regularized history."[16] The regulation that comes of grammar takes language in its grip: "the more it becomes simplified, the more it declines: the more it turns into grammar."[17] And yet it is implicit in all this that grammar itself is not arbitrary, but a natural, if reasoned, consequence of speech.

II

Music has long been called a language of feeling, and consequently, the similarities that lie beneath the coherence of its expression and the expression of spoken language have been deeply felt.[18]

With these vivid lines, Emanuel Bach opened his review of the first volume of Forkel's *Allgemeine Geschichte der Musik* in the *Hamburgischer unpartheyischer Correspondent* for 9 January 1788. In Forkel's view, the efficacy of harmony in the service of a more complex range of expression, only recently

[14] See *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, trans. and ed. Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1970), 87–91, on the primacy of metaphor in early speech, and pp. 112–13 on the origins of song.

[15] "As man's first motives for speaking were of the passions, his first expressions were Tropes," writes Rousseau. Here Rousseau evidently draws upon Bernard Lamy's *La Rhétorique, ou l'Art de parler* (4th edn., 1701), II: 3: "Tropes are names that are transferred from the thing of which they are the proper name, to apply them to things which they signify only indirectly: thus, all tropes are metaphors, for the word, which in Greek, means translation." Cited from Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Languages and Writings Related to Music* (*The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, vol. VII), trans. and ed. John T. Scott (Hanover, NH and London: University Press of New England, 1998), 569, n. 27. For another translation see *On the Origin of Language. Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Essay on the Origin of Languages; Johann Gottfried Herder: Essay on the Origin of Language*, trans. John H. Moran and Alexander Gode (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 12.

[16] Herder, *Essay*, cited from Moran and Gode, *On the Origin of Language*, 161. Herder's argument is toward the proposition that language is the invention of Man and not a Divine gift, an argument served by the demonstration that grammar evolved only through the application of reason.

[17] Herder, *Essay*, 163.

[18] "Man hat die Musik schon lange eine Sprache der Empfindung genannt, folglich die in der Zusammensetzung ihrer und der Zusammensetzung der Sprachausdrücke liegende Aehnlichkeit dunkel gefühlt." *Hamburgischer unpartheyischer Correspondent*, 9 January 1788. Reprinted in Johann Nikolaus Forkel, *Allgemeine Geschichte der Musik*, ed. Othmar Wessely, I (Leipzig, 1788; Graz, 1967), xvii.

achieved, would enable the creation, as Bach puts it, "of a music that, as a truly coherent language, can speak to our feelings" (einer Musik, die als eine wirklich aneinander hängende Sprache zu unsern Empfindungen reden soll).[19]

This provocative formulation – more Forkel than Bach[20] – only aggravates the paradox which Diderot is at pains to articulate. For if music is a language of *Empfindung*, we want to know with some precision how it negotiates, as language must, among something felt, something thought and something expressed – and further, whether to identify music as a language of *Empfindung* means to rule out its efficacy to embody language in the rational mode of grammar and syntax, or means rather to construe *Empfindung* as a more complex phenomenon containing within itself – as Herder seems to have believed – the trace of grammar.

The notion of music as modeled on spoken language – even as an intensified instance of it – is often encountered in theoretical discourse in the 1770s. Sulzer, in the article "Gesang" in his *Allgemeine Theorie*, worries the distinction between speech and song. "Human song," he proposes, cannot have arisen through the imitation of something song-like in the natural world (the singing of birds is his example). Rather,

> the individual tones from which song is formed are expressions of animated *Empfindungen*. These tones that are forced from man from the depth of feeling [von der Empfindung dem Menschen gleichsam ausgepresste Töne] we shall call tones of passion [leidenschaftliche Töne]. The elements of song are not so much a discovery of man as they are nature itself. The tones of speech are signifiers [zeichnende Töne] which originally served to awaken images of things that shared the properties of those sounds. Today, the sounds of speech are indifferent or arbitrary in this regard; passionate tones, on the other hand, are natural signs of *Empfindungen*. A sequence of arbitrary tones indicates speech; a sequence of passionate tones, song.[21]

For Sulzer, there is an immediacy of feeling, of *Empfindung*, that characterizes the tones of song. Tones do not depict, but express. They are not reasoned and learned, but of nature itself, even as *Gesang*, like speech, "is the invention of Genius." "The Fine Arts," he writes (in the article "Empfindung"), "have two ways of releasing Man's *Empfindungen*. 'If you

[19] Forkel, *Allgemeine Geschichte*, I, xviii.

[20] "But here, as in language, a dark sense for harmony and musical logic lay at the foundation," writes Forkel, ibid., I, 24.

[21] Johann Georg Sulzer, *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste*, 4 vols. (2nd edn., 1792), II: 369. The translation is drawn in part from Nancy Kovaleff Baker and Thomas Christensen, eds., *Aesthetics and the Art of Musical Composition in the German Enlightenment: Selected Writings of Johann Georg Sulzer and Heinrich Christoph Koch* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 93.

wish to move me to tears,' says [Sulzer's] Horace, 'then you too must cry.' This is the one way. The other is the animated depiction or performance of those objects which induce *Empfindung*."[22] Often invoked, the passage may be found in the midst of Diderot's lengthy discourse on a painting by Joseph Vernet in the *Salon of 1767*: "but you'll weep all alone . . . if I can't imagine myself in your place." The reader, Diderot continues, has "a double identity": he is the actor who shudders and suffers and yet remains himself, experiencing the pleasure of the work.[23] The contradiction in Sulzer's formulation, where *Empfindung* is captured in the creative mind, is played out for Diderot in some amalgam of critical reception and performance – performer and critic as surrogate participants in this act of creation – and reconciled in the mode of paradox.

What, then, can Bach have meant in inscribing "C. P. E. Bachs Empfindungen" above the Fantasy in F♯ minor, purchasing distance from his own feelings through this evocation of himself in the third person? The inscription curiously appears only on the autograph of the version for keyboard and violin (yet another riddle to which we must return).[24] Knowing, as we must, that there can be no verifiably right answer, the call to inquiry and argument is yet implicit in the formulation itself, no doubt heightened in the effort to find a way to put Bach's phrase into English. Even the genitive case needs parsing, for the good grammarians would make a distinction between simple possession ("Bach's *Empfindungen*") and the formality of a title ("The *Empfindungen* of C. P. E. Bach"). And then there is that word itself, which English cannot quite capture: feelings, perceptions, sensibilities, sensitivities, sentiments. If any of these might satisfy the local conditions of translation, they each seem misleadingly specific, overly determined, when perhaps Bach means only to suggest some inscrutable journey of the sensitive soul. When we write about Bach's music, we tend to leave *Empfindung* (and *empfindsam*) untranslated, in the unspoken understanding that we presume to know precisely what is meant, knowing all the while that to say so

[22] "Wenn du mich willst zum Weinen bewegen, sagt Horaz, so weine du selbst." *Allgemeine Theorie*, II: 57. My translation differs somewhat from Christensen's (*Musical Composition in the German Enlightenment*, 31). The passage is from Horace, *Ars Poetica*: "Si vis me flere, dolendum est / Primum ipsi tibi." ("If you would have me weep, you yourself must first feel grief").

[23] *Diderot on Art, II: The Salon of 1767*, ed. and trans. John Goodman (New Haven and London, 1995), 103.

[24] In the *Nachlaß-Verzeichnis* of 1790, this version is entered under the Trios, where it is identified as "Clavier-Fantasie, mit Begleitung einer Violine; Die 210te Sonate zu einem Trio umgearbeitet." See Wade, ed., *Catalog*, 42. The autograph manuscripts of both versions are in Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin–Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Mus. Ms. Bach P 359, 211–18; and Mus. Ms. Bach P 361. The opening pages of each are shown in facsimile in *"Er ist Original": Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach*, Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Ausstellungskatalog 34 (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 1988), 88–9.

in actual language is to risk a loss in nuance, if not to betray a more fatal misunderstanding.

One gets some taste for the lexical problem in an extraordinary letter that Lessing wrote in the summer of 1768 to Johann Joachim Christoph Bode, then engaged in the translation of Laurence Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*. Bode had originally thought to render "sentimental" as "sittlich," and then tried out a range of other expressions and "Umschreibungen." Admiring Sterne's boldness in creating, out of necessity, a new adjectival form for "sentiment," Lessing urges upon Bode the right of the translator to engage in this same creativity. "The English," he writes, "had no single adjective for 'sentiment.' For 'Empfindung,' we have more than one: 'Empfindlich,' 'empfindbar,' 'empfindungsreich': but they each say something rather different. Give '*empfindsam*' a try."[25]

Often enough, *Empfindung* is set in opposition to reasoned thought. Such an opposition is at the seat of Türk's definition of cadenza, in the *Klavierschule* of 1789: "For the cadenza in its entirety ought to resemble a fantasy created from an abundance of feeling [aus der Fülle der Empfindung] more than a properly worked out piece," to which is added a footnote that penetrates to the more obscure relationship between experience and feeling: "Perhaps the cadenza could be compared not inappropriately with a dream. One often dreams through in a few minutes, and with the liveliest *Empfindungen*, but without coherence and subconsciously, events that were actually experienced and which made an impression on us. So too in a cadenza."[26]

By these lights, spontaneity of intuition "aus der Fülle der Empfindung entstehenden" – indeed an intensified *Empfindung*, "ohne Zusammenhang, ohne deutliches Bewußtseyn" – is a defining property of the Fantasy, the work conceived in a dreamlike somnambulance. The Fantasy in F♯ minor has, however, plenty of *Zusammenhang*, itself the hardest evidence of "deutliche Bewußtseyn." Setting all this against the "regelmäßig ausgearbeitete Tonstück" invokes as well one of the grand epistemological problems in Enlightenment aesthetics: how the mind engages in creative thought. We are returned to Diderot's paradox, and beyond, to a famous passage in the dialogue between Diderot and the mathematician D'Alembert, contained

[25] The letter to Bode is given in *Briefe von und an Gotthold Ephraim Lessing* in *Gotthold Ephraim Lessings sämtliche Schriften*, "Dritte, auf's neue durchgesehene u. vermehrte Auflage," ed. Franz München, vol. XVII, ed. Karl Lachmann (Leipzig: G. J. Göschen'sche Verlagshandlung, 1904), letter 201, p. 256. For more on this, see Harvey Waterman Thayer, *Laurence Sterne in Germany* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1905; reprint New York: AMS Press, 1966), 42–3.

[26] Daniel Gottlob Türk, *Klavierschule oder Anweisung zum Klavierspielen für Lehrer und Lernende* (Leipzig and Halle, 1789; facs. reprint ed. Siegbert Rampe, Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1997), 312.

in *D'Alembert's Dream*, written in 1769. The D'Alembert in the dialogue is having trouble reconciling the actuality of thought – "we can think of only one thing at a time," he says – with the complexity of constructing vast chains of reasoning, or even, as he puts it, "just one simple proposition." Diderot responds in another of his penetrating similes, invoking the phenomenon of strings vibrating sympathetically.

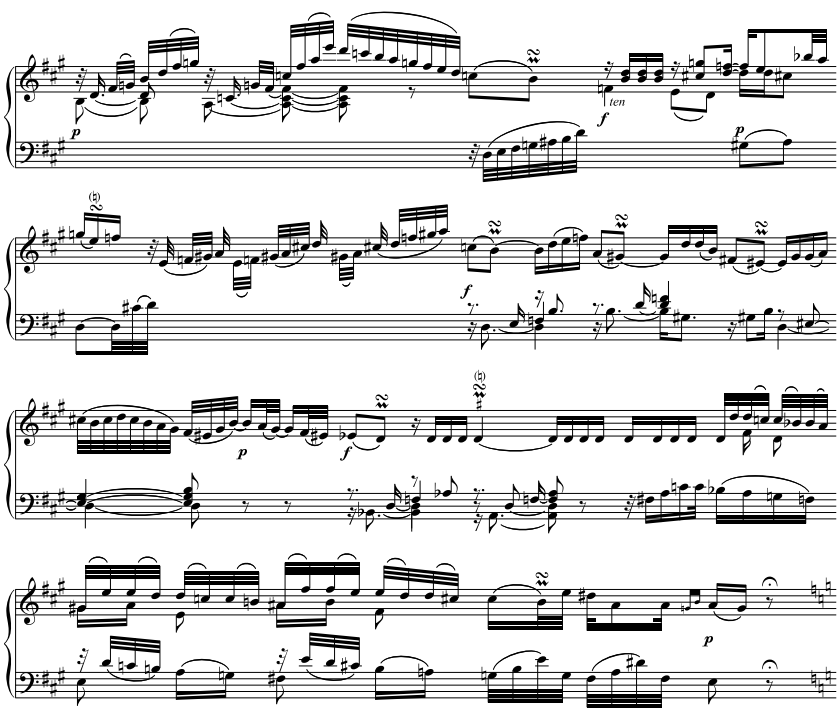
> Vibrating strings have yet another property: that of making others vibrate, and it is in this way that one idea calls up a second, and the two together a third, and all three a fourth, and so on. You can't set a limit to the ideas called up and linked together by a philosopher meditating or communing with himself in silence and darkness. This instrument can make astonishing leaps, and one idea called up will sometimes start an harmonic at an incomprehensible interval. If this phenomenon can be observed between resonant strings which are inert and separate, why should it not take place between living and connected points, continuous and sensitive fibres?[27]

Seizing upon the image of sympathetic vibration, Diderot conjures the mind of the philosopher enacting complex thought much as vibrating strings induce harmonics. The process, at once intuitive and involuntary, even incomprehensible, is yet grounded in acoustic principle. In this, the foundational relationship between model and process bears an uncanny resemblance to those passages of enharmony in Bach's fantasies which set us to analytical hand-springs: the musical work (as fiction, as narrative) means to invoke this fleet, intuitive process that Diderot describes. The paradox returns, for we are left to wonder whether this journey that the Fantasy depicts is an authentic record of some internal, intuitive process or merely a fictional reconstruction of such a process: whether the *Empfindung* embodied in this or that Fantasy is the trace itself – the real thing – or an artifact, an invention.

III

The process is in any case a syntactical one: Diderot's model has more to do with the connections between thoughts – with the grammar of relationships, rather – than with the substance of thought, of idea itself. Even

[27] The translation is taken from Denis Diderot, *Rameau's Nephew and D'Alembert's Dream*, trans. with Introductions by L. W. Tancock (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1966), 156. For the original text, see, for one, Diderot, *Entretien entre D'Alembert et Diderot; le Rêve de d'Alembert; Suite de l'Entretien*, ed. Jacques Roger (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1965), 48–9.



Example 1.1 C. P. E. Bach, Freie fantasie fürs Clavier, H. 300 (1787)

Türk's invocation of dream has to do with the intensification of what might be called explanatory process – how events are recalled (a syntactical concept) – and not with the imaging of the surreal. The aptness of Diderot's conceit to Bach's Fantasy comes vividly clear in several passages upon which the sense of the work seems to turn. The first of them (shown in example 1.1) comes at a moment where the music hovers about a first confirmatory cadence in F♯ minor. For all its suggestion as leading tone, the E♯ is led unexpectedly down, through E♭! The D♮ in the bass, primed to resolve as ninth to the root C♯, is instead displaced up an octave and made over into a leading tone. As it plays itself out, the music expires weakly in E minor, the subdominant of the subdominant, a few cadences away from the middle section: the Largo which begins in B minor.

We cut away now to the analogous passage (example 1.2), deep in the recapitulation – a recapitulation that begins, by the way, in B minor, a key to which the music continually retreats. The original syntax is broken. Here, finally, is a true half-cadence in F♯ minor. All the notes are