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The Expressiveness of Moving Tones:
Roger Scruton on the Emotional Significance of Music

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Many people believe that art adds great significance to their lives. They think that their life is enriched through contact with artworks. Among the various arts, music is held in particularly high esteem. Here I do not want to broach the question of a criterion in accordance with which good music is distinguished from bad music. Rather, I will be concerned with the general question as to why people attribute such a great value to music in their lives. Are there good reasons for this high valuation that music enjoys in relation to the various arts? To anticipate my answer: I think that the particular esteem in which music is held among many people is based upon its ability to express emotions.

In his book *The Aesthetics of Music* Roger Scruton argues for an account of the significance of music which stresses precisely this expressive capacity of music.[1] I will not be considering his arguments against rival accounts of the meaning of music in any detail here. His main argument for his own positive claim consists of two premises: First, it is our aesthetic perception, rather than any particular social or psychological theory, that is the foundation of the meaning of music: "The *meaning* of a piece of music is *what we understand* when we understand it as music" (AM 344; my emphasis). Second, what many listeners actually perceive when listening to music is an expression of emotions. We do not perceive mere forms or symbols or a representation of nature. From these premises Scruton draws the (convincing) conclusion that the particular significance of music consists in the expression of emotions.

Obviously, both of these premises are open to objection. Here, I do not only want to discuss these objections, but I also want to explain the possibility of attributing particular emotions like sadness to particular works of music. What do we mean when we say: "This piece of music is sad",or: "This piece expresses joy"? A plausible account of the possibility of musical expression might be seen as an additional argument for an expressive theory of music. I want to develop such an account with the help of Scruton's theory. And I want to defend his account not only against rival theories of musical expression, I also intend to defend it, so to speak, against Scruton himself. Scruton presents a highly conservative and anti-modernist version of an expressive theory of music. But I am going to suggest that Scruton's controversial political and ethical views are not essential to his theory of musical expression.

Before beginning the argumentation for and discussion of this thesis, I want to address two preliminary problems. In a first section I will embed the question concerning the value

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[1] Roger Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). Hereafter "AM".

or the meaning of music in the context of the history of philosophical aesthetics and juxtapose it with an alternative question. In the end, philosophy is concerned not only with answering questions, one of its most essential tasks also consists in the testing of questions themselves and the presentation of alternative questions. And over and above the question of essence, the question of value has always stood at the centre of philosophy of art.[2] In the second section I then enter into some of the crucial elements of our conception of music. In a third section I will present an argument for my central thesis. In doing so, I want to be oriented by a couple of considerations that Roger Scruton has forwarded in his book *The Aesthetics of Music*. Additionally, in that section I want to show that this argument can be defended against two objections.

Now, regardless of whether this argument is valid and whether its premises are correct, in any case my thesis raises the further question of what the expressive qualities of music are actually based upon, and how talk of expression of emotions in music is to be understood. In the fourth section I will present some answers to this question that are, in my view, false. Then, in the fifth section I side with the theory of metaphoric imagination that Roger Scruton has developed in *The Aesthetics of Music*. In the closing section I want to touch upon some of the similarities and differences between the theory sketched and the traditional approaches of a romantic aesthetics of music. Discussion of the expression of emotions in music, as will also become clear in the overview of the various positions of philosophical aesthetics below, bears some similarities to romantic aesthetics of music. However, the proposed analysis differentiates itself from the latter on a couple of key points.

I. The Nature and the Values of Art

Let us begin with a more precise consideration of the question that I will be seeking to answer. Two distinct questions have always been central to philosophy of art. A first question concerns not the value, but rather the essence of art: What in general makes a particular object a work of art? Today one also speaks of the analysis or the definition of the concept of an "artwork". A second question is concerned with the values of art: Why do people go to the museum? What do they expect from a visit to the concert? By what basic principles can we justify the importance we attach to literature? To begin with, I want to present the classical answers to these questions while at the same time indicating the understanding of music they imply. I will close the section with a plea for giving priority to the question of value in relation to the question of essence.

One of the first answers to this question was formulated by Plato (*Republic*, Bk. 10) and Aristotle (*Poetics*, 1.2). The essence of art consists in imitation, or more precisely in the

[2] Cf. Malcolm Budd, *Values of Art: Pictures, Poetry and Music* (London: Allen Lane/The Penguin Press, 1995), 1: "The central question in the philosophy of art is, What is the value of art?"

production of resemblances. Aristotle (*Poetics*, 1.3) says for example that dancers "imitate, with the help of rhythms, characters, passions and actions". A more recent answer in analytic philosophy runs that art has the representation of facts as one of its essential tasks, and it is generally recognized that resemblance is not the only possible mode of representation. Arthur Danto, for example, thinks that artworks are differentiated from other objects by their "semantic properties". The idea here is that artworks have a definite meaning and embody that meaning in a particular material.[3] Andy Warhol's *Brillo Box*, which Danto saw in 1964 at the Stable Gallery in New York, is — in contradistinction to any Brillo Box at the supermarket — an artwork because it has a meaning and embodies that meaning in an appropriate form.

Now, in contrast to this view, the romantics contended that art consists essentially in the expression of emotions. (Of course here I can only outline in broad brushstrokes a debate that would require a very nuanced treatment.) For the romantics, the portrayal of objects or states-of-affairs of the outer world is not the essential task of art. The latter is rather to give a glimpse of something internal to an individual and in so doing to contribute to the cultivation of our emotional life. In his *Herzensergießungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders*, Wackenroder calls art "the flower of human emotions (*Kunst ist die Blume menschlicher Empfindungen zu nennen*)".[4] And Hegel then goes on to say that it is especially music that has "the innermost subjective and free living and weaving of the soul as its content (*das innerste subjektive freie Leben und Weben der Seele zu ihrem Inhalt*)".[5] The genuine expression of an emotion — and this is highly important for the systematic opposition of representational and expressive theories of art — can never make do with a mere description of facts. With the utterance, "I am angry at you", I may intend a presentation or a description of my inner life. But it would be quite odd if the expression of my anger consisted merely in a descriptive report of my emotional state.[6] An expression of an emotion will be usually far more than the mere reporting of its existence or the issuing of a description of it. Similarly, we don't say that tears *represent* the emotion of sadness, either in general or in a specific case of sadness. We would much rather say that tears *express* the sadness, or, indeed, that they are a constitutive component of that emotion!

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[3] Arthur C. Danto, *After the End of Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 195. See the closely related point regarding music made by Susanne Langer, who incidentally was Danto's academic teacher at Columbia University, in *Philosophy in a New Key*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1942), 218: "If music has any significance, it is semantic, not symptomatic."

[4] W. H. Wackenroder/Ludwig Tieck, *Herzenergießungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders*, 1797 (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1979), 46.

[5] G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen Über die Ästhetik III*, 1835, *Werke*, vol. 15 (Frankfurt a. M: Suhrkamp, 1986), 161.

[6] On this point, see Noël Carroll, *Philosophy of Art: A Contemporary Introduction* (London & New York: Routledge, 1999), 80.

At the latest, the departure from the romantic aesthetics of expression came toward the end of the 19th century with the formalists.[7] Kant can already be counted as one of their forerunners. In Section 52 of the *Critique of Judgment* he avers that "what is essential in all fine art is the form that is purposive for our observation and judging (*In aller schönen Kunst besteht das Wesentliche in der Form, welche für die Beobachtung und Beurteilung zweckmäßig ist*)".[8] The music critic and theorist Eduard Hanslick in his 1854 treatise *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* explicitly turns against what he calls a "dubious authority of feeling" in music.[9] Hanslick is ready to concede that music can stir emotion, in his eyes, however, its essential content consists in "tonally moving forms (*tönend-bewegte Formen*)".[10]

These three definitions of the essence of art are the most important systematic options for an answer to the first question of the philosophy of art. Of course we are not forced to exclude the possibility of a complementarity; indeed, various combinations of these three answers are possible. In particular, both of the first two interpretations of art have often integrated elements of formalism without thereby making the formal organization of the object itself to the essence of an artwork.

The answers to the second question concerning the value of art now stand in a loose connection to various answers to the question of the artwork's essence, yet still leave the question concerning value unanswered. To make the systematic options clear, I might take up Aristotle's succinct summary. What he says in the *Politics* (8.5) concerning the value of music could also be said of the possibilities of the valuation of art in general. He poses three answers for discussion: Music can, firstly, make a contribution to conduct and to knowledge; clearly the definition of the essence of art as representation can support this kind of evaluation. But, secondly, it can also promote education and the development of virtue; and the special capability of music to express emotions could be employed to promote this practical objective. And, thirdly, it can relieve us of our sorrows, serve as entertainment, and satisfy the pure desire to listen; mostly it is the formalists that indulge in an aesthetic hedonism and see the play of

[7] The abstract painters have been seen as directly critical of an interpretation of art that says that its essence consists in the imitation of nature, the representation of facts, or the expression of emotions; cf. the formalistic theory of Clive Bell, *Art* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1914), and Roger Fry, *Vision and Design* (New York: Meridian, 1956). On the questionability of the thesis that abstract painting has no representational content, see Richard Wollheim, *Painting as an Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 62 & 348-353.

[8] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987), 195.

[9] Eduard Hanslick, *On the Musically Beautiful* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1986), 1. The original *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen*, 21st ed. (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf&Hartel, 1989), 1, says: "Wer über das Wesen der Tonkunst Belehrung sucht, der wünscht eben aus der dunklen Herrschaft des Gefühls herauszukommen."

[10] Hanslick, *On the Musically Beautiful*, 29. On the difficulties of translating "tönend-bewegte Formen," see the essay by the translator Geoffrey Payzant, "Towards a Revised Reading of Hanslick", in Hanslick, *On the Musically Beautiful*, 101-102.

forms as the source of a state of well-being.[11]

Aristotle is a pluralist. He thinks that these three sources of the valuation of music need not be exclusive (1339b13). To this day music continues to be seen as containing both a cognitive-theoretic as well as a practical-ethical value. But at least since the revaluation of music in the age of the romantics, only a very few theorists remain of the view that music serves primarily hedonistic ends and is, as Kant said, "more a matter of enjoyment than of culture (*mehr Genuß als Kultur*)".[12] "Music," Kant contends, "since it merely plays with sensations, has the lowest place among the fine arts (*unter den schönen Künsten sofern den untersten . . . Platz, weil sie bloß mit Empfindungen spielt*)".[13] This ranking, as we know today, surely has not remained uncontested. However, I do not here want to go into this conflict surrounding the significance of music in comparison with the other arts.

More important, it seems to me, is rather how both these questions relate to one another. In my eyes, the question concerning the value of art takes precedence in relation to the question of its essence. And I think there are at least two considerations that support this order of priority. For one, there have been, at least since Wittgenstein's critique of the many failed attempts at a determination of essence throughout the history of philosophy, serious doubts as to whether the question concerning the essence of art is meaningful at all. Thus the so-called anti-essentialists think that there is in fact no unified concept,[14] under which all kinds of artworks can fall: The search for such a concept is a futile undertaking from the outset. The so-called institutionalists, who want to retain the question concerning the artwork's essence, draw from this the following consequence:[15] Their central thesis is that the essence of art is not determined through intrinsic qualities of the artwork. A certain object only becomes an artwork more by established and widely recognized procedures of the valuation and recognition within prevailing social institutions. The institutionalists are therefore of the view that an artwork is not placed in a museum because it possesses certain qualities. No, an object is an artwork for the reason that it is seen by certain people or institutions as an artwork. The institutionalists thus acknowledge only a certain kind of factual social valuation. My objection to this position is that the institutions themselves require evaluative reasons in order to

[11] That the formalistic definition of the nature of art does not, however, necessitate a hedonistic evaluation of music can be seen in Igor Stravinsky's *Autobiography* (New York: M & J Steuer, 1958), 53-54: Music is "by its very nature essentially powerless to express anything at all [. . .] The phenomenon of music is given to us with the sole purpose of establishing an order in things, including, and particularly, the coordination between man and time".

[12] Kant, *Critique of Judgment* § 53, 198.

[13] Kant, *Critique of Judgment* § 53, 199.

[14] See Paul Ziff, "The Task of Defining a Work of Art", *Philosophical Review* 62 (1951) & Morris Weitz, "The Role of Theory in Aesthetics", *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 15 (1956).

[15] The most prominent representative is George Dickie, *Art and the Aesthetic: An Institutional Analysis* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974) & *The Art Circle: A Theory of Art* (New York: Haven, 1984).

determine what they recognize as an artwork.[16] Accordingly, it is the task of philosophy to think through these reasons. And in this way the emphasis shifts from the question of nature to the question of the value and significance of art in our lives.

Even if we could determine the essence of art itself — and this is my second argument for the primacy of the question of value — this would still leave open the question as to why many people attribute such great importance to art in their lives. Just a short time ago, Arthur Danto himself conceded to have,[17] for a long time, neglected the particular *pragmatic* properties of artworks that are able to provoke an emotional reaction from an audience, over and above the *semantic* properties of an artwork. He self-critically acknowledged that the followers of conceptual painting in the 1960's who saw art above all as a medium for the transmission of meaning and in terms of "messages", in the first place wanted to remain "cool" and thus to vigorously deny the value of emotional expression. However, despite their intentions, this rigorous attitude is itself testimony to certain pragmatic characteristics of art: the energetic defence against the expression of emotions, in the very vehemence of the rejection, shows that for these artists, too, the significance of art is not confined to its semantic properties. This second question concerning the value of music will therefore be central to the present discussion. However, before I come to my central thesis, in the following section I want to at least touch upon a couple of elements central to our *conception* of music.

II. Our Conception of Music

If we want to pose the question as to the basis of the special significance of music, then an initial self-clarification suggests itself. For this we don't necessarily need to propose a definition of the essence or the nature of music that could be valid for all epochs and cultures. For our present purposes, a reflection on our present understanding can suffice. Here I want to focus on four elements.

Above all, music consists of acoustic events. I suggest that our conception of music distinguishes itself especially from that of Pythagoras and his followers. The Pythagoreans maintained that true music consists in the movements of heavenly bodies.[18] But this music of the spheres is not perceptible to mere mortals.[19] It seems to me, on the contrary, that the

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[16] In *After the End of Art*, 195, Danto defends himself quite decisively against being labelled an anti-essentialist, or even an institutionalist.

[17] In a lecture titled "Geschichte und der Begriff der Kunst" (MS 2002, 9) at the Akademie der Künste in Berlin.

[18] According to the Pythagoreans — and Plato closely follows this in Book 7 of the *Republic* (530d-531a) — true music allows us to know the order of the cosmos, see Enrico Fubini, *Geschichte der Musikästhetik. Von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1997), 18; Thrasybulos Georgiades, *Musik und Rhythmus bei den Griechen. Zum Ursprung der abendländischen Musik* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1958), 23.

[19] Incidentally, the experience of sound is not decisive for T. W. Adorno either; in his *Theorie der musikalischen Reproduktion* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 2001), 11, he speaks of an "Ideal stimmen Musizierens" and additionally says "Vielleicht ist [. . .] das 'Machen' von Musik schon ebenso infantil wie lautes Lesen",

sensible perception of sounds is for us indispensable. Even John Cage's famous composition titled *4' 33"* consists of acoustic events. In that instance, the sounds are the ones that the listener in the concert hall happens to perceive while the performing musician remains sitting silently before a blank sheet.

Apart from that it has long been thought that language has to be seen as an integral element of music. The dispute as to whether speech is a necessary element of music is prepared by the ancient debate between the adherents of the Lyre and the Kithara as opposed to the Aulos. The Lyre, the instrument of Apollo, was a stringed instrument and accompanied a narrative; the Aulos by contrast was a wind instrument that was brought into service in the ecstatic celebrations in honour of Dionysos.[20] Plato, of course, sides with Apollo when he says that key and rhythm are secondary to speech (*Republic*, 398 d-e); for Aristotle too, the word is an integral component of music, since music, as he says "consists in song and rhythm" (*Politics*, 8.7); and Kant, too, speaks of all music without words as being equivalent to mere wallpaper that can mean nothing on their own since they represent "no object under a determinate concept (*kein Objekt unter einem bestimmten Begriffe*)".[21] But at least since the romantics and the blossoming period of so-called "absolute music", there has been broad agreement that music can also get by without words. Purely instrumental music can mean more to us than mere decorative wallpaper. But from this it does not follow, as E. T. A. Hoffman thought, that only purely instrumental music — and Hoffmann, of course, had Beethoven's symphonies in mind — "purely expresses the peculiar essence" of music.[22]

Now, to be sure, music is for us more as just mere sounds or an acoustic event. Indeed, even in the aleatoric music of John Cage the distinction between mere sounds and music is not overcome.[23] The listeners' rustling of the programmes before this time span of 4 minutes and 33 seconds and their applause after it are not part of the "composition". That is to say, then, that we first begin to speak of music when definite sounds that are produced with the

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(13); on the relation between musical writing and execution, see also, 226-228 & 262-265. And Schönberg, in an interview with Dita Newlin (*Schönberg Remembered*, New York, 1980, 164), supposedly said, "music need not be performed any more than books need to be read aloud" (quoted in Nicholas Cook, *Music, Imagination, and Culture*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990, 227).

[20] Cf. Georgiades, *Musik und Rhythmus bei den Griechen*, 23.

[21] Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, § 16, 77.

[22] E.T.A. Hoffmann, "Beethovens Instrumentalmusik", in E. T. A. Hoffmann, *Kreisleriana* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1983), 26. Particularly in the music of the 20th century, the human voice has been rediscovered in as a formative element of music. Arnold Schönberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* and Pierre Boulez's *Le marteau sans maitre* come to mind here. Cf. also Boulez, *Orientations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 333-334. But according to Richard Wagner (see "Beethoven", in Richard Wagner, *Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen*, vol. 9, Leipzig: Hesse, 1888; offprint, Hildesheim, 1976, 103) Beethoven already had "die Gesangstimmen [. . .] ganz in dem Sinne wie menschliche Instrumente behandelt".

[23] In *After the End of Art*, 35, Danto suggests that every object could be understood as an object of fine art. And every noise can in these terms be valid as music, just as long as it intends a message. On the relation between sound and noise in music, see also Pierre Boulez, *Orientations*, 59-60.

intention of being perceived by the listeners in the concert hall, or as part of a birthday celebration. Behind the music, behind every artwork, stands the intention of an artist; artworks have their origins in human actions and also become understood as attempts at communication (AM 18, 107-108).[24] That is not to say that the intention of the artist must consist in the communication of a message. Nor is it to say that the composer or the musician alone holds the key to the meaning of a piece of music in their hands, since it is only the intentional perception of the listener that makes meaningful music out of sounds. However, the decision of the listener to perceive sounds as music is not of itself sufficient: the chirping of birds that I hear on a walk through the forest can be to my liking, but it is still not music. It was only in the *Catalogue d' Oiseaux* for piano by Olivier Messiaen that the imitation of birdsong was made into genuine music that can mean something to the listener qua music. And, by the same token, random sounds in a concert hall are not music as such; it is only the intention of John Cage to make the audience pay attention to those sounds that makes them music.[25] But in what the main intention of the composer consists is still another question. However, this intention need not be of any interest to the listener.

However, many sounds that are produced with the intention of being perceived by others are not artworks. If I warn a pedestrian with the bell on my bicycle, while I am intentionally producing a sound, I am still, of course, not producing music. This means that there is at least one further element that belongs to our conception of music. We only recognize as music sounds that are organized in specific ways. It is only through a particular form that musical content is perceived. Scruton says in the second chapter of his book that it is only (in our culture at any rate) through melody, rhythm and harmony that the mere sound becomes a substantive musical tone. Now, against Scruton, I would suggest that it is especially the sound that can be brought to an independent formal meaning. But here is not the place to enter into the age-old debate over the meaning of the various formal elements of music.[26] Suffice it to say that nobody seriously disputes the basic idea that formal arrangement plays an indispensable role in music.

One problem remains open. If I hear non-European music, I will mostly have the impression that I lack understanding of what I am hearing. It seems to me, then, that one would not be sure, in such instances, whether it is actually music one is hearing, and what this music should mean. Music therefore also requires a second creative act on the part of the

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[24] See also John R. Searle, *Expression and Meaning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 66 and Richard Wollheim, *The Mind and its Depths* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 155.

[25] Nicholas Cook is therefore misleading in *Music, Imagination, and Culture*, 12, when he says "anything can be heard as music, Cage is saying, if the listener chooses to hear it that way". The decision of the composer, even if it is to leave the sounds to chance, always precedes the decision of the listener.

[26] But compare the remarks by György Ligeti in Ernst Thomas, ed., *Form in der Neuen Musik. Darmstädter Beitrage zur Neuen Musik*, vol. 10 (Mainz, 1966).

listener.[27] It is only when the listener perceives a certain movement and a certain form in the intended and formally organized acoustic events that one is able to speak of a perception of music. This does not entail that there cannot be music that I do not understand. The point is simply whether the "forms of tonal-movement" do become understood at least by *some* people as music. The question regarding the value of music can, however, only be posed for those formally organized sounds that come to be perceived by the listener as music.

III. The Argument and Two Possible Objections

After attempting to clarify my leading questions and the elements of our conception of music, I would now, with the help of Roger Scruton's argument, like to argue for the following thesis: the value of music is based in its capacity to express emotions. One must now, of course, clarify more precisely what emotions are. In view of a veritable flood of new literature on the topic of "emotions",[28] here I want to limit myself to a couple of observations. Most authors today think that an emotion is comprised of a complex conglomerate of cognitive (beliefs), volitional (desires), affective (qualitatively differentiated pleasurable and unpleasant sensations) and physiological (blood-pressure, adrenalin rush) components. Beyond that, emotions also contain certain dispositions to act.[29] If I sense fear, then it is not simply a matter of me thinking that a particular object presents danger to me. I do not simply have the wish to escape from this danger, sense a greater or lesser degree of displeasure and perhaps begin to lightly tremble. I would rather take measures of self-protection, of escape, or of defence. Emotions therefore contain certain propositional attitudes, and, accordingly, have an intentional content; indeed, their affective and psychological components do not allow of a reduction to beliefs and desires. But this view is not uncontested; indeed, here I am simply following the predominant view, and will not attempt to provide adequate explanation of it.[30]

Let us now begin to examine the decisive argument for my thesis a little more closely: The first premise of Scruton's argument is that the well-informed subjective perception of the hearer comprises the foundation of the value or meaning of music: "A theory of musical

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[27] Cf., e. g. Donald Davidson, *Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 245, on the "creative effort" that allows the understanding of a metaphor.

[28] Out of this flood, the most recent titles that stand out are: David Pugmire, *Rediscovering Emotions*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998); Jon Elster, *Alchemies of the Mind: Rationality and the Emotions*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), ch. 4. 2., "The Nature of the Emotions"; Peter Goldie, *The Emotions: A Philosophical Explanation*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000); Richard Wollheim, *On the Emotions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999); Martha Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[29] See Malcolm Budd, *Music and the Emotions* (London: Routledge, 1985), ch. 1, "The Emotions"; Jerrold Levinson, "Music and Negative Emotion" in *Music, Art and Metaphysics: Essays in Philosophical Aesthetics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 313.

[30] In addition, one must draw a distinction between simple (joy, sorrow) and complex (hope, jealousy); but I shalll not enter into this. Levinson argues in "Hope in the Hebrides", in *Music, Art and Metaphysics*, for the view that music can also express complex emotions such as hope.

meaning is a theory of what we understand when we hear with understanding (AM 169)." The understanding of music therefore always has its foundation in an acoustic experience, and not in a philosophical proposition or a musical analysis. This does not mean that the acoustic experience of music has nothing to do with a conceptually structured and therefore verbally expressible perception of certain objects and is ultimately comparable to the pleasure of eating a good meal.[31]

Scruton's second premise then says that the informed listener actually perceives music as an expression of emotions. The expression is, at the very least, always seen as an important part of the meaning of music (AM 344). Scruton assumes that artworks have an aesthetic meaning that especially exceeds their representational or their semantic content (AM 140). We simply do not perceive art as a representation of states-of-affairs; and that is particularly valid for the abstract art of music. In comparison with other genera of art, music is particularly unsuitable for the direct representation of states-of-affairs. It can, perhaps, as in Arthur Honegger's symphonic composition *Pacific 231*, imitate the sound of a locomotive, but it cannot express a specific message about that locomotive.[32]

From these two premises Scruton now draws the conclusion that the meaning of music consists in its ability to express emotions. And I think that this conclusion is valid and that both of the premises are correct. Here perhaps one should add that the argument requires the additional fundamental premise that music does have value at all. I do not want to deal with the radical sceptic who would continue to doubt this premise. Instead I want to assume that our esteem for music presents a fact that requires an explanation — or, better, a justification. Rather than respond to the sceptic, I want to consider two important objections that Adorno might make against this type of argument. Adorno does not, of course, argue directly against Scruton. But Scruton's argument, in any case in the form that I have just reconstructed it, is also not especially new. And therefore I am here in the first place interested in the general structure of an argument, and not in the specific form, that is accepted by Scruton and rejected by Adorno.

To the first premise Adorno objects that the perception of the hearer can be no unshakeable datum and therefore cannot serve as a foundation for the justification of the meaning of music. Artistic production and reception can only be adequately understood within their respective social contexts. In the *Aesthetic Theory*, Adorno says: "For time immemorial human reactions to artworks have been mediated in the extreme (*Die menschlichen Reaktionen auf Kunstwerke sind seit undenklichen Zeiten aufs äußerste vermittelt*)."[33] And in the *Philosophy of New*

[31] As Cook maintains in *Music, Imagination and Culture*, 68, 149, 186.

[32] Cf. Scruton (AM 124) with Peter Kivy, *Sound and Semblance: Reflections on Musical Representation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 29-35.

[33] T.W. Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1973), 339. He maintains that "die Arbeit am Kunstwerk [...] gesellschaftlich durchs Individuum hindurch [ist] ohne daß es dabei der Gesellschaft sich bewußt sein müßte" (250). Cf. also Adorno, *Theorie des musikalischen Reproduktion*, 250: "In den innersten Zellen

Music, it is said that the artwork is the result of a process of "mediation" — he speaks of the "mediated" (*Vermittelten*) — and that it should be understood as "being produced by relations of social power (*ein von Herrschaft erst Produziertes*)".[34] The subject with his acoustic experiences can never grasp the entire meaning of music. One could therefore say that Adorno postulates a primacy of theory over perception. Since Adorno rejects altogether an "invariant understanding (*invariantes Verstehen*)" of music, a "constancy of the musical subject (*Konstanz des musikalischen Subjekts*)", this corollary quite clearly follows.[35] The understanding of works of art is for him ultimately always a historical phenomenon.

Regarding this first objection, for my part, I would contend that of course the knowledge of social contexts of the production or reception of a piece of music and knowledge of the logic internal to music, inform, change, and can thereby also expand the perception of the subject. The hearing of music is surely a capacity that is influenced by social circumstances, moreover, it is a capacity that one can learn to expand in conjunction with theoretical analysis, whether it be of a philosophical, social-historical, or music-theoretical kind, and which one can, through exercise, also learn to cultivate.[36] But in this expanded reading, which admits certain external influences on the subjective experience of hearing, I take Scruton's first premise as correct. Since the theoretical analysis can never be its own end, it can never completely take the place of the concrete acoustic experience: "What matters is the experience with which the analysis concludes" (AM 427). Scruton also speaks of an intentional understanding of music that he opposes to a mere intellectual understanding of music (ibid.). Analysis can change the perception of music, however the reverse also holds: a new perception of music, a new acoustic experience, can necessitate the revision of determinate theoretical analyses. And therefore the analysis itself is not self-sufficient. Otherwise one could in the end dispense with the acoustic experience altogether. But in doing so, one has not explained the high esteem in which music is held by so many people.

Regarding the second premise, Adorno then goes on to object that the so-called "emotional hearer" who perceives music as the expression of emotions is widespread only among Anglo-

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der Musik [. . .] wohnt die Geschichte".

[34] *Philosophie der Neuen Musik* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1973), 23. On the concept of "Vermittlung" in Adorno, see also Max Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), ch. 3, 'The Problem of Mediation', as well as Max Paddison, "Immanent Critique or Musical Stocktaking? Adorno and the Problem of Musical Analysis", in: N. Gibson & A. Rubin, eds., *Adorno: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 218-223.

[35] Adorno, *Philosophie der neuen Musik*, 39. The idea of a "Konstanz des musikalischen Subjekts" is for Adorno's part a reactionary interpretation of music, see here again Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music*, 89-90.

[36] Also our moral intuitions were already in the French moralists, then later in Nietzsche and Freud, put under the suspicion of being socially mediated and ultimately the expression of social interests. Indeed, a moral theory that wants to be based on these intuitions does not have to be immune from all criticism by them. In Rawls's reflective equilibrium it can come to be one of the principle means by which many intuitions are corrected. See John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), sec. 9.

Saxons. In Anglo-Saxon countries, Adorno contends, "that the stricter civilisatory pressions require a giving way to inner realms of emotions beyond control (*der striktere zivilisatorische Druck [nötigt] zum Ausweichen in unkontrollierbar inwendige Gefühlsbereiche*)".[37] That is already questionable as an empirical thesis: Apart from England, was not the emotional hearer to be found also within the German romantics?[38] But for the contemporary composer Helmut Lachenmann it is then the entire "bourgeois cultivation of music (*bürgerliche Musikpflege*)" that understands music as an "art of expression (*Ausdruckskunst*)" as a "medium of the reflection and transmission of emotions (*Medium der Widerspiegelung und Vermittlung von Empfindungen*)".[39] The aesthetics of expression is here also suspected of being ultimately ideological. It is precisely musical entertainment that deceives its listeners about its true meaning. That, in any case is what Helmut Lachenmann affirms as a follower of Adorno's sociology of music. In his book *Musik als existentielle Erfahrung* he argues that entertaining music insofar as it transmits plain and unbroken emotions (*ungebrochene Affekte*) guarantees the illusion of the unbroken subject (*ungebrochenes Subjekt*).[40]

To the "emotional hearer" (*emotionaler Hörer*), Adorno now opposes, on the one hand the ideal of the "expert", whose attention is directed towards the "concrete musical logic", the technique and the inner meaning of music, and, on the other hand, the "good listener" (*guter Zuhörer*) who "understands music as one understands one's own language, even if one does not know very much about its grammar and its syntax (*Musik etwa so [versteht)] wie man die eigene Sprache versteht, auch wenn man von ihrer Grammatik und Syntax nichts oder wenig weiß*)".[41] The expert does not interest me any further here, since I am concerned with the value that music can have for non-experts. But as far as the "good listener" is concerned, the argument hinges on the kind of understanding that this good listener is considered to have. He is compared by Adorno to a person competent in the use of a language. But what does the music tell him? What does it communicate to him? Does the music in any way — like a language — consist of definite words whose meaning is based on convention? Scruton (AM ch. 7) rejects the analogy of music and language, with the (in my eyes convincing) argument that we do not perceive music as

[37] T. W. Adorno, *Einleitung in die Musiksoziologie* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1975), 22. Adorno's jargon is not only notoriously difficult to translate into English, it is hard to understand even for a native speaker of German.

[38] Even the "expert" Adorno perceives the expression of an emotion of gratitude at the end of Beethoven's *Frühlingssonate* (op. 24); see T. W. Adorno, *Beethoven. Philosophie der Musik, Fragmente und Texte*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt a. M: Suhrkamp, 1993), 252. Scruton's (AM 141) perception of an expression of gratitude at the beginning of Beethoven's *4th Piano Concerto* (op. 58) should come as no surprise when one considers his remarks on the function of music as socially foundational. I will return to this point later.

[39] Helmut Lachenmann, *Musik als existentielle Erfahrung. Schriften 1966-1975* (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1996), 64.

[40] Lachenmann, *Musik als existentielle Erfahrung*, 66.

[41] Adorno, *Einleitung in die Musiksoziologie*, 19. Cf. his differentiated theory in *Theorie der musikalischen Reproduktion*, 274, according to which the "musikalische Sinn" may not, as in the romantics, be equated with "expression". The latter is a mere moment of the former.

an established code of communication, whether it be a natural or an artificial one. At the same time, he gives a highly plausible explanation for the reason that many listeners with an educated perceptual capacity decline to describe music by taking recourse to emotional terms (AM 343). Scruton also writes: "If people refuse to describe their response in emotional terms, it is often because these suggest *wrong ways of listening* — as though we should be interested in something *other* than the music (AM 360; emphasis in original)." They give rise to the false impression that the correct understanding of music and an appropriate answer to its perception would consist in words alone.

But what is it that the emotional hearer understands when he listens to music? Let us then now turn to the related question that arises from my thesis: what do we mean, then, when we say that music expresses emotions? How might these expressive qualities be explained? I will try to gain a clearer sense of this remark and of my thesis, independently of the argument that I have developed here, so that I can perhaps give it greater plausibility.

IV. Explaining the Expressiveness of Music

In this section I would like to present three answers to the question concerning the expressive qualities of music which are in my eyes false. In the following section I will turn to Scruton's theory of the metaphorical imagination, which offers a much more plausible analysis of the expression of emotions in music.

An interesting thesis which I cannot here consider in its broader context,[42] is proposed by Schelling in his *Philosophy of Art*: "*Das Schallen [ist] nichts anderes als die Wiederherstellung oder die Affirmation, wodurch sich der Körper — aus der Identität gesetzt — zur Ruhe und zum Seyn in sich selbst reconstruiert. Der Klang selbst ist nichts anderes als die Anschauung der Seele des Körpers selbst.*"[43] If I understand this correctly, Schelling means that the tone is an expression of the fact that a body is not just a piece of lifeless material. The tone for him, is worth much more as testimony to the divine origin and animated essence of nature. From the perspective of the modern natural sciences this view must appear strange, it is a thesis that cannot be empirically verified all

[42] On the connection of this thesis with Schelling's philosophy of identity, see Manfred Frank, *Einführung in die frühromantische Ästhetik* (Frankfurt a. M: Suhrkamp, 1989), 208-30.

[43] F. W. J. Schelling, "Philosophie der Kunst" (1802/1803), in: F. W. J. Schelling, *Ausgewählte Schriften*, vol. 2 (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1985), 318. In the *System der gesammten Philosophy und der Naturphilosophie insbesondere* (1804), in: F. W. J. Schelling, *Ausgewählte Schriften*, vol. 3 (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1985), 363-364, Schelling writes: "Der Klang ist die Wiederherstellung, d.h. die Affirmation der Identität des Körpers mit sich selbst oder des in-sich-selbst-Seyns des Körpers. Da er also hier als die Seele der Selbstheit erscheint, so ist der Klang überhaupt ein Nachbild des Ausgehens aller Dinge aus Gott." Cf. also Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, 134. Already Rousseau says under the keyword "son" in his *Dictionnaire de la Musique* (1764) in *Œuvres Complètes* V, Pléiade, (Paris: Gallimard, 1995), that sound arises from a collision of two bodies. Indeed, in contrast to Schelling, Rousseau retains the significance of the air and the transmission of soundwaves; experience teaches us that sound depends on the existence of the air or of other media. Indeed, in Schelling it almost appears that tones could exist without soundwaves and without the perception through a subject. But that is not the most important reason that this interpretation is today no longer taken seriously.

empirical evidence is missing. But in philosophy it is, of course, disputed whether empirical experience can constitute the sole source of knowledge. For that reason, my critical remark suggests a different direction. In music, do we in fact hear aroused, trembling bodies, which return to a state of rest, and in doing so affirm the real? Here I find more convincing Scruton's thesis (AM 2-11), according to which identification of a sound does not presuppose the identification of its cause. Thus, we do not necessarily attribute a body to a sound that we perceive. *Colours*, by contrast, are always properties of bodies. But sounds can be independent objects of our perception. *For this reason*, it is not necessary for us to understand tones as appearance of the soul of a body.

A causal theory of musical expression offers an explanation of the capacity of expression that is simpler and more compatible with a modern and scientific view of the world. Scruton distinguishes two variants of this causal theory (AM 144-145): a biographical theory and an arousal theory. In general, causal theories explain the expressive properties which we attribute to music as either the *effects* of the state of mind of the composer or as the *causes* of the state of mind of the listener. More particularly, biographical theories explain the expression of the emotion of a piece of music as an effect of the emotions of a composer. The proposition "The 'Funeral March' from Beethoven's *Eroica* is sad" means nothing other than the proposition "When he composed the 'Funeral March', Beethoven was sad". The music, therefore, expresses *his* sadness.[44] His sadness is here the cause, the music the effect. The first thing that speaks against this attempted explanation is that many listeners are usually uninterested in the emotional state of the composer, and do not perceive music as an expression of the emotions of a specific person. Besides, the expression of emotion does not necessitate an aesthetic form.[45] We do not normally express our sadness by composing a symphony. There is also, lastly, a quite simple empirical consideration which speaks against a biographical theory of musical expressiveness: A composer in a joyful state of mind is not thereby prevented from composing sad music. And, contrariwise, a sad person may compose music that is happy and abounding with joy. Take Mozart and the finale of his *Jupiter* symphony as an example. The expression of emotions that is proper to music possesses an intentional content — regarded from the viewpoint of the composer — to which a purely causal analysis cannot do justice.

The so-called arousal theory, by contrast, explains the expression of emotions of a piece of music in terms of its effect on the listener.[46] "The funeral march expresses the emotion of

[44] Leo Tolstoy, *What is Art?* (New York: Macmillan, 1985) is accepted as the classic representative of a kind of biographical theory of art; on this point, see Carroll, *Philosophy of Art*, 61. J. W. N. Sullivan has employed this theory in an interpretation of Beethoven in his *Beethoven: His Spiritual Development* (New York: Vintage, 1927).

[45] Cf. Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 216.

[46] For a long time there was a broad consensus within the philosophy of music in rejecting an arousal theory. See R. G. Collingwood, *The Principles of Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), 110; Peter Kivy, *The Corded Shell* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980); Stephen Davies, *Musical Meaning and Expression*

sadness" here means: "The funeral march makes the listener sad". There are also counterarguments to this analysis: Firstly: people also listen to sad music with a certain enjoyment, but in real life do not seek out sad occasions. Besides, a glass of wine might be a much more effective medium for the stimulation of joy than the last movement of Mozart's *Jupiter* symphony. Secondly, the reaction to a piece of music is a possible act of understanding. We say that a piece of music can also be falsely understood. But, of course, the effect of a cause does not require that the cause itself is correctly understood. To be sure, I do not want to deny that a work of music has certain causes and certain effects. It is true that music *may* be at the origin of a peculiar *affective* resonance in the listener. But this is not a relation of causes and effects. It is the outcome of a certain understanding of music which might be oriented by reasons. Thirdly, the arousal theory has an implausible relativism as a corollary. One and the same piece of music brings about various emotional states in various human beings, thus a piece of music could no longer express a determinate emotion. The arousal theory is therefore, in this causalist form, false. But as we will see in the next section, Scruton himself defends a non-causalist form of an arousal theory. He assumes that the hearer effectively participates in an aspect of the emotions that the music expresses.

Now, it appears important to me to not completely identify the expressive theory of music with the causalist arousal theory. Already in the 19th century this mistake was made by Hanslick[47] and, as it seems to me, in the last century, again by Adorno.[48] With the critique of the arousal theory, they also took the expressive theory of music to be altogether finished. There are, however, better explanations of emotions in music. Here I would like to address the cognitive theories that have been much discussed in recent times, which ground the attribution of emotions in a resemblance between music and emotions. And even if this approach is proved false, it is, however, legitimate to keep it open as an important option for the explanation of the expression of emotions in music.

One might distinguish three variants of this cognitivist approach to the expressiveness of music: Susanne Langer begins with a *formal*, structural resemblance between music and emotions. She says that there is an isomorphism between musical structures and the dynamic

(Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 184-199; R. A. Sharpe, *Music and Humanism: An Essay in the Aesthetics of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). Recently, there have been a couple of interesting proponents of this second variant of the causalist expression theory: Peter Mew, "The Expression of Emotion in Music", *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, 25 (1985) and "The Musical Arousal of Emotions", *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 26 (1986); Colin Radford, "Emotions and Music: A Reply to the Cognitivists", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 47 (1989); Jerrold Levinson, "Music and Negative Emotion"; Aaron Ridley, *Music, Value and the Passions* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995); Derek Matravers, *Art and Emotion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); Geoffrey Madell, *Philosophy, Music and Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002).

[47] Hanslick, *On the Musically Beautiful*, 4.

[48] Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, 362-363.

forms of emotions.[49] That is why music is more appropriate, even more so than language, for symbolizing emotions. Through music we obtain, as it were, access to emotions in our representation. In a second variant Peter Kivy has defended the thesis that we can recognize a *material* resemblance between musical forms and the real expression of emotions in people.[50] Music, then, can express emotions in the same way that a weeping willow or a St. Bernard can appear sad to us. Particular properties of the weeping willow then become identical to properties of the expression of the emotion of sadness in a person, or, at least resemble them — without that we would, of course, actually be ascribing the emotion of sadness to the tree.[51] In contrast to a formal (Langer) and a material (Kivy) resemblance theory one could thirdly speak of a *phenomenal* resemblance between music and emotions; this third variant retains a resemblance-relationship, however this resemblance is no longer an object of recognition, it no longer has a symbolic function. Malcolm Budd affirms, for example, that "when you hear music as being expressive of emotion E — when you hear E in the music — you hear the music as sounding like the way E feels".[52] Here the resemblance only obtains between the perception of a piece of music and the perception of an emotion; the resemblance then must not be grounded in identical properties. Indeed, two things can appear similar to each other without actually being so. To be sure, Scruton dismisses this thesis as "senseless". One really cannot say that music sounds like a mental state. What would a mental state sound like? "If you say that the sounds and the state of mind resemble each other, then you must also admit that they resemble each other less than the sounds resemble other things — and other states of mind". (AM 147) This objection sounds rather plausible, however in one respect Budd's thesis comes close to Scruton's position, as I will show in a moment. And it seems to me that it also not susceptible to the objections that have been levelled against the first two variants of resemblance theory.

In particular, against Kivy's theory — and Scruton also speaks of a realist position (AM 153) here — one may object that resemblance is a symmetrical relationship. When an object A resembles an object B, of course B also resembles A. When, therefore, the funeral march resembles the emotion of sorrow, then this emotion of sorrow would also resemble the funeral march. The expression of emotions through a piece of music cannot, however, be understood as a symmetrical relationship. A piece of music can express sadness, but one would not say

[49] See Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 226: "That musical structures logically resemble certain dynamic patterns of human experience is a well-established fact". See today in connection with Langer's approach also Laird Addis, *Of Mind and Music* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999).

[50] Kivy, *The Corded Shell*, 50-51.

[51] Kivy, *Sound and Semblance*, 132-133. Mountains, too, could therefore have expressive qualities. The pictures of the late Paul Cézanne of the *Mont Sainte-Victoire* are a good example here. Indeed, the question is, do the objective characteristics of the mountain make up its objective qualities? Or is it not rather our perception which, guided by Cézanne's overwhelming pictures, ascribes these qualities to the real mountain in a way that is merely metaphorical?

[52] Budd, *Values of Art*, 136.

that the emotion of sadness can also express Beethoven's funeral march. The relation of expressiveness we are interested in is clearly non-symmetrical (AM 122). And the consideration that we don't have a merely cognitive, merely instrumental interest towards music as the presentation of an emotion speaks against Susanne Langer's theory.[53] The mere perception of formal or even material resemblances between music and our emotions cannot explain our special interest in music. The realists thus "must face the objection that you could . . . note the expression while being aesthetically unaffected, and that a successful expression may be an uninteresting piece of music" (AM 149). The resemblance theorist thus cannot adequately explain the value of music. If, as Langer assumes, every piece of music can be considered a symbol of an emotion, remaining unanswered is the question of what the difference between good and bad music should be grounded upon at all.[54]

V. A Theory of Metaphoric Imagination

While the different variants of cognitivist resemblance theory could not adequately explain our esteem of music, both causalist proposals for the explanation of the expressive content of music overlook the intentional content in both the composition and the perception of a piece of music. Therefore, an explanation of the expression of emotion in music is confronted with the task of escaping the snare of the Scylla of cognitivism without thereby getting swept into the Charybdis of causalism of biographical theory and arousal theory.

Roger Scruton's theory of the metaphorical imagination offers good prospects for a solution of this task; I will, however, shortly also consider some problems with the theory. The central thesis is: When we say "The music is sad", then we do not mean this literally, but metaphorically (AM 153-154). With this sentence no description of properties of the music itself are intended. Rather, we want to capture in words a particular aspect under which we perceive a piece of music. The metaphor should bring the perception of a piece of music close to the perception of the emotional expression of a sad person. The perception of the expression of emotion is in these terms no mere effect of the piece of music. Rather, it assumes an ability to describe the music, and therefore is only possible for sentient beings that have the capacity of rationality at their disposal. Without that capacity the music could have no effect upon us. The perception is not to be causally explained, it is rather guided by *reasons*.

Now, the most important difference between this theory and the resemblance theories consists in the fact that the metaphorical description of music is not grounded in a relation

[53] Laird Addis, *Of Mind and Music*, 32, recognizes this objection as valid, indeed her only response to the question of value (122-123) leads into giving up the resemblance theory in favour of an earlier mentioned and very vague arousal theory.

[54] Cf. Budd, *Music and the Emotions*, 118.

of resemblance.[55] Granted, it ends in a perception of resemblances, but this perception is for its own part grounded in a metaphorical attribution. One could even say that it is the metaphorical attempts at description of the movements executed by the music which makes possible the perception of resemblances between emotions and music in the first place.

One can now ask: does not this proposal itself also end up in a resemblance theory? Perhaps, but I do not want to argue over mere words. Besides, it was the cognitivist components, and therefore the claim within the analysis of music to come to know something real and objective, that gave us license to dismiss resemblance theories, and not resemblance as such. The *factual* difference between the first two resemblance theories and Scruton's theory consists in the fact that the latter holds onto an irreducible difference between music and mental states. Metaphorical paraphrases of music always contain, therefore, *false* statements. We do not speak about objective properties of music when we speak about it metaphorically. Scruton formulates, if one still wants to speak in terms of resemblance, a non-cognitivist resemblance theory, which takes our perception as its starting point. The adherents of cognitivist resemblance theories, on the contrary, try to translate the emotional description of music by rephrasing it into statements that could be true or false and to use such statements as a basis for justification. Scruton, on the one hand, rejects the possibility of a true ascription of emotional properties to music, but, on the other hand, does allow a certain analogy between moving tones and emotions. In his ears, it is not that music is analogous to emotions, but rather that the *experience* of hearing the music is analogous to the *experience* of perceiving the expression of an emotion.

And the point of a metaphorical description of music, according to Scruton (AM 80), consists precisely in the fact that we ascribe a concept to a thing, although we know full well that this ascription can never be true of it. Quite intentionally, we make a false statement. However, the goal of a metaphor is not the description of an object, but the suggestion of the perception of a particular aspect of an object. Its goal consists precisely in the recommendation of a specific answer to the perception of this aspect. As Scruton also puts it: "When I describe a work as moving, I do not mean merely that *I* am moved by it: I am also recommending my response" (AM 154).

Above all, the metaphorical imagination leads us to perceive in music intentional objects and forms that move in an imaginary musical space. But for all that, we fully know that in reality — besides the soundwaves that meet our ears — nothing moves. No physical reality corresponds to the musical space. Moreover, we perceive these movements as gestures of an

[55] Here one must dive into the problem of a general theory of metaphors; I will, however, simply refer to the remark made by Aristotle in *Rhetoric* (4.3), according to which comparisons are always a special form of metaphors without details (1406a20). On the relation between comparisons and metaphors in Aristotle, see Paul Ricoeur, *La métaphore vive* (Paris: Seuil, 1975), 34-37. On the actual debates see John R. Searle, "Metaphor" in John Searle, *Expression and Meaning*, 76-116; Donald Davidson, "What Metaphors Mean" in Donald Davidson, *Truth and Interpretation*, 343-371; David Cooper, *Metaphor* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986).

expression of emotion. And, although we are of course, aware that it is not possible to ascribe mental states to music,[56] we react to this perception in the form of a sympathetic participation. Music moves the listener, and it is here that there is a parallel to arousal theory. However, music is not the cause of the stimulation and emotional involvement of the hearer. Scruton's proposal amounts to a non-causalist arousal theory. Music, in other words, gives us a good reason to respond to the metaphorically imagined perceptions of movements and gestures in music with our participation. In contrast with the causalist arousal theory, we do not identify ourselves completely with the emotions that the music evokes, we merely sympathize with them.[57] Even when I share in the sadness of a person, I need not be actually sad myself: "To respond sympathetically to grief is not to feel grief: sympathy has a logic of its own, and does not imitate its object" (AM 145).

When we perceive the expression of emotions in music, along with it we execute, as it were, "a dance of sympathy" (AM 354-355). In particular, our response to music in general represents, according to Scruton, a form of "latent dancing" by means of which an interior understanding of the perceived movements of the music occurs (AM 391).[58] For Scruton, dance is a good example of the way in which music may gain meaning as an expression of emotions through the response of the hearer. In dance, the perception of the hearers is transformed into movements. And in dance the movements occur in the form of the music and are oriented by the perceived movements, precisely through which this form is made possible. For Scruton, dance also has a social dimension. In dancing I orient myself not only by the music alone, I simultaneously try to coordinate my movements with those of my fellow dancers. I adjust my own movements in such a way that they harmonize with the movements of others. In doing so, all dancers are oriented by the music. The expression of sadness that I perceive in the funeral march of the *Eroica*, prompts the hearer to a compassionate involvement, to a movement, which itself provokes a sympathetic involvement. In sum, by an imitation in dance of an external expression, a gesture or a facial expression of another

[56] Scruton speaks of a "intransitive" use of the concept "expression" as distinct from a "transitive" use (AM 158). Along with the intransitive use goes the supposition that the expression must not express a definite mental state. Thus, we say that landscapes express a feeling. The transitive use, by contrast, assumes the presence of a mental state. On the inaccuracies of these distinctions in Scruton, see Davies, *Musical Meaning and Expression*, 253.

[57] There is ultimately a difference between whether I fear myself, or whether I participate in the fear of another person, without directly fearing myself (AM 354). On the difference between an ideal of the merging of persons in a monastic metaphysic, and the ideal of empathy in which the distance between people and their consciousnesses maintains its distance, see Max Scheler, *Wesen und Formen der Sympathie*, 1912 (Bonn: Bouvier, 1985), 75.

[58] Nietzsche, too, in *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* (Kritische Studienausgabe, eds. G. Colli & M. Montinari, vol. 2, 2nd. ed., Berlin: dtv/de Gruyter, 1988, § 219), sees music as an art of imaginary gestural articulation, that "der sichtbaren Bewegung gar nicht mehr bedarf".

person, the listener can imagine himself feeling the emotions of that person.[59] He need not necessarily be sad himself, and he also need not identify with the perceived emotion.[60]

The hearer perceives an emotional expression of an internal perspective, without ascribing that internal perception to a particular person, real or fictional. He perceives "how" it feels to be sad. And this "how" does not allow of a complete reproduction in the form of conceptual propositions. We have seen above that emotions do not allow of a reduction to propositional attitudes, beliefs or desires. As far as music does not — like language — quite possess the capability of articulating beliefs and desires, it cannot express the cognitive and volitional content of emotions. Music can, however, help to express the quality of certain states of mind. And if it is correct that these qualitative states also enter into the motivation of human action and hence also play a role in the justification of the action to others, the appropriate perception of music is also connected with the interest that human beings have in practical reason.

Scruton's view regarding the perversion and pathologies of the expression of emotion in music is also very enlightening. In this context, sentimental music is the most important target of his critique.[61] Sentimental music only has the appearance of expressing emotions in music, but this is a deception — a deception that is not, of course, necessarily intended by the composer. This is not to say that sentimental music is to be identified with bad music (AM 387-388 & 485-486), for bad music originates from the composer inability to realize an expression of emotions in music. On the contrary, in a certain way sentimental music is completely successful. Bad music from the outset is incapable of captivating the hearer (AM

[59] See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* § 219: "Aelter als die Sprache ist das Nachmachen von Gebärden [. . .] Die nachgeahmte Gebärde leitete Den, der nachamte, zu der Empfindung zurück, welche sie im Gesicht oder Körper des Nachgeahmten ausdrückte. [. . .] Im Allgemeinen mögen schmerzhafte Empfindungen wohl auch durch Gebärden ausgedrückt worden sein, welche Schmerz ihrerseits verursachen (zum Beispiel durch Haarausraufen, die-Brust-schlagen, gewaltsame Verzerrungen und Anspannungen der Gesichtsmuskeln)." Nietzsche's own explanation of this process is possibly still too causalist, he does not sufficiently distinguish between a real and an imaginary empathy. But still, his general assumption, which is our sole concern, is confirmed by new empirical research. Cf. Michael Tye, *Ten Problems of Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), 126-128.

[60] Levinson, in "Music and Negative Emotion", 326, emphasizes only that element of music in the expression of negative emotions such as sorrow or angst. Also in Adorno's *Philosophie der neuen Musik*, the negative emotions stand in the foreground. New music has "all ihr Glück [. . .] daran, das Unglück zu erkennen; all ihre Schönheit, dem schein des Schönen such zu versagen" (126). But to be sure, the property of music in the expression of joy should not become undervalued; also the expression of joy, I think, is in need of cultivation.

[61] On the phenomenon of sentimentality in art in general, see also Scruton, *Art and Imagination: A Study in the Philosophy of Mind* (London: Metheun, 1974), 81, and, on the oppositon of sentimentality and integrity, see Peter Rinderle, "Liberale Integrität", *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 42 (1994). However, Scruton himself, at some points of his book, tends towards rather sentimental images, for instance, of the possibility of the creation of a community through dance. Here Adorno would quite rightly object: the propagation of values in society is — under the conditions of fragmented modern society — ideological, it primarily serves the consolidation of unjust structures of domination, see Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music*, 54. Instead of this, Adorno also shifts the ideal to one of integrity of the individual, not of society, as a critical corrective against every trace of sentimentality in the middle point of his aesthetic of music. And every successful piece of music must therefore also reflect this ideal in the inner consistency of its formal arrangement.

379). Sentimental music captivates the hearer completely, however he won't be prompted to the honest involvement in an expression of emotions.[62] Certainly, the effectiveness of kitsch presupposes a capacity for intentional perception and thus a capacity for rationality. Sentimental music must be understood in its own way, however, it represents a perversion of music's capacity of expressing emotions. While an intentionalist theory of expression serves the imaginary, playful-serious expression of the participation in the qualities of the mental states of the subjectivities of others, sentimental music, on the contrary, denies the separation of persons and moves the hearer with mere moods.[63] The hearer of sentimental music is a Narcissus, who likes himself in the fact of being happy or sad. His pseudo-emotions bear no relation to reality. They are unconcerned with other people. These feelings do not contain any sympathy for other people. The Narcissus himself is the sole object of his sympathy, for the reason that self-compassion is in the foreground for the sentimental hearer. Ultimately, for the sentimental hearer the question is not one of involvement, but of the pleasant shower of a feeling of sadness. This sentimentality, by contrast with an authentic emotion, does not have any significance for the motivation of action. On the contrary: it stands in the way of it. Because the question for him is merely his own emotional life, to the real experience of pain in others he remains indifferent. In the perception of sentimental music the hearer loses sight of the reality of other people, of their needs and claims.[64] The possibility of analyzing these pathologies is an additional argument in support of Scruton's proposal; causal and cognitive theories of expression do not have any comparable potential of explaining the perversions of the musical expression of emotions.

Now, there are two objections against which Scruton's theory of the metaphorical imagination can be relatively easily defended. In the first place, one could object that this theory of metaphorical imagination is just as relativistic as the causalist arousal theory. Does not this theory leave underdetermined the correct understanding of a piece of music? What might first

[62] Music, thus, certainly may be used to arouse emotions. But, as Scruton convincingly argues in *Art and Imagination*, 81, "the use of art as a means of arousing emotion in this sense is a perverted use, and the whole failing of sentimental art is that it employs whatever means are available for the end of feeling". The mere fact, however, that music is sometimes quite successfully used to stir emotions does not necessarily imply that the emotions aroused by music are constitutive of the significance or the value of a piece of music.

[63] In connection with this, see Arnold Schönberg, "Herz und Hirn in der Musik", in Arnold Schönberg, *Stil und Gedanke* (Frankfurt a. M: Fischer Verlag, 1992), 169-170: "Es ist nicht das Herz allein, das alles Schöne, Gefühlvolle, Pathetische, Zärtliche und Bezaubernde schafft ebensowenig ist es allein das Hirn, das das gut Konstruierte, das klar Organisierte, das Logische und das Komplizierte hervorzubringen vermag. [. . .] Man könnte [. . .] mißtrauisch werden gegenüber der Aufrichtigkeit von Werken, die unaufhörlich ihr Herz zur Schau stellen die nach unserem Mitleid verlangen; die uns einladen, mit ihnen von vager und unbestimmter Schönheit und von unbegründeten, grundlosen Gefühlen zu träumen; [. . .] Solche Werke demonstrieren lediglich das völlige Fehlen eines Hirns und zeigen, daß diese Sentimentalität einem ganz armen Herzen entspringt."

[64] And therefore one can also ascribe to music an importance in the shaping of character; indeed, already for Plato and Aristotle music was a decisive element of education; Martha Nussbaum has, in *Upheavals of Thought*, ch. 5 "Music and Emotion", 249-250, recalled this capability of music in the cultivation of emotional life.

appear to be a weakness in the theory of metaphorical imagination seems to become one of its great strengths: Namely in the sense that it can clarify our intuition that a piece of music can be heard and understood in different ways. Since there are no limits to the constitution of metaphors, however, new metaphors must in every instance be validated through the concrete acoustic experience. A theory that explains the expression of emotions in music with the help of the metaphorical imagination thereby allows a pluralism of possible interpretations, without thereby opening the door to arbitrariness.[65]

Another objection could be that, on the contrary, Scruton's particular use of metaphors places too many limitations on our understanding of music.[66] Scruton often speaks of the expression of "life", of "reconciliation", of "belonging to a community", of "gratefulness for the gift of life," and so on (AM 359). Scruton sometimes comes remarkably close to the position of Schelling briefly mentioned above when he says that "great art ... involves some affirmation, however qualified, of the actual (AM 492). And furthermore, at the end of his book he suddenly expands this perspective: Where the issue had concerned sympathy for a single person, he suddenly begins to speak of participation in the first person plural (AM 465, 495).

To be sure, a couple of doubts could be raised here: does not music also speak of the anxiety of subjects in a modern society,[67] of the solitude of the individual, of the brokenness of the subject in a confusing world? Art, according to Adorno in the last sentence of *Aesthetic Theory*, (p. 387) is a kind of historical scripture, which safeguards the "memory of accumulated suffering (*Gedächtnis des akkumulierten Leidens*)".[68] And in the *Philosophy of New Music*, he writes about the „expressive content of music (*Ausdrucksgehalt der Musik*)": "What radical music comes to know is the unredeemed pain of men (*Was die radikale Musik erkennt, ist das unverklärte Leid des Menschen*)".[69] There is surely much to be discussed regarding these alternative descriptions, but that should not concern us here. Suffice it to say, that even if doubts remain regarding Scruton's *particular* use of metaphors, this does not in itself constitute an objection to his *general* theory. I take it as well known that Scruton is a conservative thinker. His use of notions like "tradition" (AM 449), like "true community" (AM 359, 489) show that he holds some rather anti-liberal ethical convictions and a non-democratic political standpoint. Scruton thinks that music, like religion in traditional societies, opens up the perspective of a first-person plural (AM 460). Scruton thinks music might help to integrate people in certain traditions and communities. Now, I think that this might be true for *some* of the music he discusses and takes to be the central instances of "our" (!) musical tradition. But it is already questionable whether

[65] On the indeterminacy of metaphors, see, among others, David Cooper, *Metaphor*.

[66] See Fiona Ellis, "Scruton and Budd on Music and Meaning" , *British Journal of Aesthetics* 41 (2001), 54.

[67] Adorno, *Philosophie der neuen Musik*, 48. On this point, see also Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music*, 31.

[68] Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, 387.

[69] Adorno, *Philosophie der neueren Musik*, 47.

this holds true for *all* of the central instances of our musical tradition. Emotions of loneliness, of individual self-reliance, of resistance against social demands might find expression in some of the music Scruton himself values, for example in Beethoven. But his thesis clearly does not apply to certain kind of music he does not value. As I have said already, atonal music also might be understood as expressing certain emotions. Possibly Scruton never has experienced these emotions himself. But, as Adorno has shown, atonal music might challenge conventions and bad habits, it might express emotions critical of traditions or communities, and it might express the desire of individual freedom and authenticity. Indeed, the very fact that, in rejecting the idea that music has claims as a medium for the transmission of knowledge, Adorno employs so many metaphors to describe its expression, confirms — at least in these terms — the possibility of a theory of the metaphorical imagination.

In my eyes, the very limited (and highly controversial) set of metaphors that Scruton uses do not do any damage to his *general* theory of musical expressiveness. Music surely has ethical implications, but the large variety of music which one might value for its capacity to express emotions will rather, contrary to Scruton's views, support the possibilities of a pluralist understanding of aesthetic experience. A theory of musical expression which emphasises the value of the cultivation of character might also be compatible, *contra* Scruton, with a liberal conception of ethics and a more democratic conception of politics.

However, an important question still remains open: when one speaks of metaphors and imagination, then one cuts short the explanation of the expressive qualities of music at a relatively early point. One defends the thesis that while the perception of emotional content in music may allow of verbalization through metaphors, it does not allow a justification through objective properties of music. It depends solely upon the perception of music in the hearer's consciousness. I myself am of the view that this general thesis is correct. In fact, the perception of the expression of emotions — contrary to Peter Kivy's view — cannot be explained on the basis of real characteristics of music. Scruton quite rightly emphasizes the difference between music and emotions! However, the question is whether Scruton breaks off his analysis too soon.[70] A theory of metaphorical imagination as Scruton formulates it can lead to subjective perception being rendered immune to all criticism, whether it be from a theoretical or a formal standpoint. This may have the unpalatable consequence that the perceptions of the untrained and uncritical ear which has acquired certain bad listening habits become elevated to the most essential meaning of music as such. This danger is present throughout Scruton's theory —

[70] See Ellis, "Scruton and Budd", 56-57. See also Paul A. Boghossian, "On Hearing the Music in the Sound: Scruton on Musical Expression", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 60 (2002), 50: „It is surely the beginning of wisdom about this subject matter that the descriptions under which we hear sounds, when we hear them as music, are not literally true of anything. There is nothing either out there or in here that literally rises or falls in the way that a melody does. But this starting point leaves open two questions. Are there nonetheless facts about whether some descriptions of a particular passage are more appropriate than others? And is it right to call these descriptions metaphors?"

for him, for example, there is no reason to confront the challenge of atonal or serial music. To his ears, experiments such as these are only sequences of expressionless noises.[71] Yet composers such as Arnold Schönberg are seriously interested in the expansion of the expressive capacity of music. His aesthetics of music aside, it does, however, seem that Scruton carries more or less clear convictions of the value and non-value of particular emotions, even if they are slightly restricted. By the same token, there are some emotions that Scruton appears not to know at all. And so, of course, he cannot recognize any particular value in the music that expresses them. But having said that, one should not on this basis judge his broader theory of the metaphorical imagination, which leaves open a plurality of diverse interpretations of the expression of emotions in music.

VI. A Romantic Aesthetics of Music?

Let us recapitulate. I began with two questions concerning the essence and the value of art, and in the first instance I sought to identify the most important elements of our conception of music. I then went on to argue with Scruton for the thesis that the particularly high esteem in which we hold music is based on its ability to express emotions. At the centre of my discussion has stood the question of the possibility of the expression of emotions in music. I have defended Roger Scruton's theory of metaphorical imagination against three alternative accounts. We ascribe to music an expression of emotion, because we perceive music as a gesture that invites us to a sympathetic participation. With this, the particularly high esteem in which we hold music is grounded in the fact that music is able to open up to us an imaginary access to the emotional world of others, and in doing so, to cultivate our capacity for reciprocal participation. In this way, music can also be effective in the shaping of character.[72] Finally, I raised some questions regarding Scruton's theory that, to this point, remained open.

If, finally, I limit the scope of my argument, I should thereby simultaneously locate my results within the broader philosophical context of aesthetics, ethics and metaphysics. I do not want to pose any new thesis here. In closing, rather, I simply want to say which claims I have not made and which positions I have not argued for. At the same time, I want to indicate some similarities and differences between the theory sketched here and a couple of

[71] The theory of tonality and functional harmony are concepts in the theory of music that allow for a perceptive understanding. Therefore, Scruton also says "Most music that seems meaningful to us is tonal" (AM 233). Atonal and serial music (AM 304) are on the contrary, merely theoretical constructions that do not allow a perception of musical movements: "Music then retreats from the intentional to the material realm" (AM 281). Stockhausen's *Gruppen* is therefore also not music, but merely a series of sounds. Against this, see the convincing thesis of Charles Rosen, *Arnold Schoenberg* (New York: Viking Press, 1975), 60-61: "The filling out of the chromatic space is clearly a movement toward stability and resolution. [. . .] The filling of the voids in a chromatic work is evidently as much a natural instinct as the recognition of the perfect triads of tonality." Similarly, see Adorno, *Philosophie der neuen Musik*, 80.

[72] Scruton (AM 151-152, 348) explicitly follows Hegel's view, according to which emotions exist only in their expression.

the positions within a romantic aesthetics of music.

If the expression of emotions is a good reason for our holding music in such high esteem, it does not directly follow that this is the *only* reason for this high esteem. Music can serve as entertainment, it can offer pleasure through a play of forms. Here I want to side with Aristotle's tolerant position that I briefly outlined above. When, for example, in a piece of music there is a variation on a theme, we perhaps only deal with a self-referential game of our own capability for a perception of resemblances, a perception of relations of identity and difference.[73]

Secondly, it does not follow from my thesis that we must necessarily elevate music to the highest rank in relation to the other arts.[74] Of course, here I have not argued the contrary. I have not showed that music is *not* the highest form of art. I would therefore agree with neither Plato nor Kant, who both disputed the claim of music to be a form of art. But is it in fact necessary to establish a ranking of the different forms of art at all?

For many romantics, for whom the development of individuality holds the highest value, the expression of emotions in art and music takes precedence over other values. In this respect, Scruton is also a romantic, when he asserts, for example, that rational beings define themselves according to their emotions (AM 347). A position, based on the idea that the capability of music to express emotions is good reason for the high esteem in which we hold it, can, thirdly, acknowledge that music provides valuable means for individual self-realization. However, this is not necessarily connected with the thesis that the expression, and the concomitant cultivation of emotional life, in themselves constitute the highest value in life. In particular, Nietzsche's position that existence and the world are "justified only as aesthetic phenomenon (*nur als ästhetisches Phänomen . . . ewig gerechtfertigt*)",[75] and that only music "may give an idea what has to be understood by the justification of the world as an aesthetic phenomenon (*einen Begriff davon geben kann, was unter der Rechtfertigung der Welt als eines aesthetischen Phänomens zu verstehen ist*)"[76] may well require some additional arguments. Values such as friendship, freedom, or social justice, are legitimate rivals of the value of aesthetic experience.

Fourthly, if music opens access to innermost life of human subjects, and if this realm of inner desire is simultaneously considered the deepest ground of reality, which is in any case the position of Schopenhauer, then music is perhaps actually the "most immediate form of

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[73] On this point, see Budd, *Values of Art*, 170-171: "A common form in music is that of theme and variation. Since an appreciation of a work of this form requires the listener to hear the variations as variations of the theme, the work can be said to be about the relational property of similarity in difference".

[74] As, for example the romantic aesthetic of music does and, again today, Dieter Henrich, *Versuch über Kunst und Leben* (München: Hanser, 2001), 89, 163.

[75] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, Kritische Studienausgabe, eds. G. Colli & M Montinari, vol. 1, 2nd ed. (Berlin: dtv/de Gruyter, 1988) sect. 5, 47.

[76] Nietzsche, *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, section 24, 152.

knowledge (*unmittelbarste Erkenntnisweise*)".[77] Schopenhauer heads chapter 39 of his supplementary notes with *Zur Metaphysik der Musik*, and says, "a symphony of Beethoven is a truthful and perfect image of the essence of the world (*ein treues und vollkommendes Abbild des Wesens der Welt*)".[78] Schopenhauer here elevates music to metaphysics. But this additional assumption of Schopenhauer's is certainly questionable. If my argumentation is correct, then music can in fact transmit a particular form of knowledge. Scruton speaks of a kind of "knowledge by acquaintance" which "lies wholly outside the reach of any third-person perspective" and whose content "cannot be described since it contains no proposition known" (AM 362). But this is not sufficient reason to attribute less value to other kinds of knowledge within the empirical sciences and philosophy. For that reason, in my eyes, there are also good reasons for doubting that music could represent the highest form of knowledge of reality.

[77] Arthur Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, vol. 2 (Frankfurt a. M: Suhrkamp, 1986), 576.

[78] Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, vol. 2, 577. See also Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, vol. 1, 368-369. "Wenn ferner [. . .] die Philosophie nichts anderes ist als eine vollständige und richtige Wiederholung und Aussprechung des Wesens der Welt in sehr allgemeinen Begriffen [. . .]; so wird, wer mir gefolgt [. . .] ist, es nicht so sehr paradox finden, wenn ich sage, daß, gesetzt, es gelänge, eine vollkommen richtige, vollständige und in das einzelne gehende Erklärung der Musik [. . .] in Begriffen zu geben, diese sofort auch eine genügende Wiederholung und Erklärung der Welt in Begriffen oder einer solchen ganz gleichlautend, also die wahre Philosophie sein würde". In connection with this, see Wagner, "Beethoven", 66-68.