

Why Care about Emotions in Music

The quite common fact that music is often emotionally expressive has been found to be quite enigmatic by many, and it has preoccupied philosophers. Some are concerned with the "how" question: How does music achieve this? How does it come about that music is emotionally expressive? Some are concerned with the "what" question: What does the ascription of emotive terms to music mean? In what does the emotive character of music consist? It is important to distinguish these two questions, which are often blurred, though some might adopt a "procedural" approach in which the second is answered by answering the first. Though these problems hover at the background of what I shall say, I shall not deal here directly with them. My direct concerns in what follows have two main aims: (1) Assuming the emotive character of (some) music and the intelligibility of ascribing emotive terms to it, I shall suggest that, from an aesthetical point of view, a different, and perhaps more important question about the emotive nature of music, should be why we should care about the emotive nature of music, what the awareness of the emotive expressiveness of music, and the emotive response to music contributes to its understanding and aesthetic evaluation. The question, in other words, is what one who misses the emotive content of music lacks **in understanding it**, apart from what he might lose e.g. in his own emotional life. Let us call it "the why care" question. I shall sketch the significance of this, and a direction for answering it. (2) A dubious dualistic or Cartesian picture of the mind and of the emotions is presumed, I believe, in much current work on the emotive nature of music; I cannot do here even partial justice to the rich literature, and to the many theories that have been suggested on this subject. I shall rather concentrate on, and try to show the traces of this picture in, some aspects of

Levinson's work, which, besides its intrinsic merits, undoubtedly is a major influence on the widespread currency of this picture.

These two issues are independent, and each deserves scrutiny on its own. But they are connected in a way that justifies, I hope, dealing with both of them in the same article: An extreme form of the Cartesian picture of the emotions, with its separating an "inner feeling" from other "components" of a full fledged emotion, makes it very hard to answer the "why care" question. If the gist of the emotive character of music is its capacity to arouse "inner feelings", which are somehow connected to the emotion concerned, this may be important in many other respects, but it makes it hard to see why sensitivity to such emotive properties should be important to understanding and appreciating the music itself rather than one's own feelings. And if I am right in arguing that essential elements of the Cartesian picture are presumed in Levinson's theory, this may cast doubt on the aptness of this theory in dealing with the "why care" question. Be it as it may, the "why care" question about the significance of realizing and being sensitive to the emotive properties of music and its contribution to understanding the music stands on its own, on any view of these properties. It should be addressed, I believe, even by those who doubt my strictures against the Cartesian picture and my attributing it to Levinson.

(1) The Contribution of Emotive Expressiveness to Understanding Music

Music is often described and "explained" in emotive terms. Many theorists, since Hanslick to the present, have found this to be irremediably subjective to the point of being even unintelligible. Defenders were not late in facing the challenge, and the two "big" questions of what does the emotive ascription to music mean, and how does music achieve its emotive expressiveness have been widely discussed. But

there is another question, which, quite surprisingly, has been relatively neglected: Granted that music is often emotional, and granted that we have some satisfactory explanation of what this may consist in (say, Levinson's) – what does this contribute to our understanding and appreciating the music? Why, in other words, is it important, for musical understanding, to conceive the music emotionally? How does the sensitivity to its emotional character contribute to its understanding? This is what I have called "the why care question".

One might say, and I incline to saying it myself, that if emotional properties are properties of the work, full understanding of the work must include awareness to them (as to any other property of the work). This perhaps is Goodman's view¹. It has been explicitly adopted and elaborated by e.g. Davies, who argues that "if the listener aims at understanding and appreciating the music, and if the emotional response is an aspect of the understanding she gains, then it is to be welcomed"... "The response is not an incidental accompaniment but rather something integral to the understanding achieved" (247).²

Many theorists have found it difficult to ascribe emotional properties to the work itself. Certainly, if they are not, if they are merely properties of the listener, or projections onto the work of feelings aroused in the listener, which are occasioned by listening to a musical work, their relevance to understanding the work is questionable. This applies to many versions of the "arousal theory" – that the meaning of emotive ascriptions to music is in fact the emotive response to the music. In fact, it applies to any non-realistic construal of these properties. On any such view, the relevance and significance of experiencing the emotions, or of being aware of them, poses a problem. And the above Goodmanian answer to this, at least in its simple form, would

be unavailable. It is available on realistic views, in which the emotive expressiveness is a property of the music itself.

But this in itself is still unsatisfactory. For, understanding a musical work is not just awareness to its properties – it includes also understanding of their relative importance, interrelations and role in the development and course of the work. This applies equally to realistic and non-realistic views. Davies, of course, may be right in claiming that an emotional response to music (whether negative or positive) "is not something with which one puts up for the sake of understanding; it is an element in that understanding" (ibid. 247). But this is what we need to understand – in what way the emotional response, and even a "cold" cognizing of the emotive expressiveness, is an element in understanding the music and its course.

It is also unsatisfactory in this context to explain the significance of emotive expressiveness of music in e.g. enriching our own emotional life. This may be true and important, but it is not pertinent to our question about the significance of emotive expressiveness in understanding music (but perhaps rather to the significance of music and of listening to music in general). Levinson, for instance, writes that

"In a nutshell, the value for a listener of expressiveness in music, understood as its ready hearability as personal expression, is the value of confronting images of human experience...images which are in a sense woven out of the substance of music, as substance in which one...becomes the music while listening, and so participates in the mental life embodied in the music" (125).

This, again, may be true, but impertinent to our question – how this expressiveness of a piece of music contributes to understanding it, to playing it or listening to it with understanding. With regard to this question it is also not enough to insist (rightly of course) that in identifying the kind of emotion we are subject to by a work, close

attendance to the work is necessary (cf. NE 228). For our question is in the opposite direction: what attendance to the emotive nature of the music contributes to understanding and appreciating it aesthetically.

I wish to suggest another answer, or a general direction for an answer, to this question. Understanding a piece of music involves a dynamic process of forming relevant expectations and sensitive responses to the music, and of "moving together with it". It involves sensitivity to its minutest details, gestures and turns, to the tensions and relaxations, expansions and contractions, as well as to its grand design and general character. In attending to all these, and responding to them, we are in a permanent move with the music, somewhat like that of good chamber players, or of dancers, who are permanently engaged in such sensitive awareness and response to each other and to the music. Unlike the sensitivity to another player or dancer, which is dual and reciprocal, the sensitivity to a work is one-sided and asymmetrical. Listening to music with understanding is like a truncated dancing to it. Moving with the music is moving to the music. This kind of moving together – with a co-player, a dancer, or to the music - and the co-ordination it manifests is an enormous challenge of perceiving rich and subtle information, and responding to it in real time. Two interrelated factors are prominent here: expectations and satisfaction.

There is a rich maze of expectations on every turn – melodic, harmonic, rhythmic, etc. These expectations are in a flux – they are often frustrated, and others emerge in their stead. But when the frustration is too gross we may stop expecting, we may stop moving with the music, and in fact, stop listening to it with understanding. This richness and complexity of the maze of expectations and our reactions to the music may often require grasp of general designs and heuristics, programs and

concepts that determine sets of expectations, spontaneous moves, immediate and natural turns, adjustments and responses in reaction to the gestures of the music. This enormously complex set of actions and reactions must proceed in immediate response to the music – almost simultaneously with it. Losing track of the highly demanding and curvy trail of the music, and getting off its course – when expectations are too grossly frustrated, and satisfaction is lacking - mean stopping to understand the music – stopping to be attuned to it and to its moves.

Some of the expectations and attunements concerned are grounded in analytical concepts of counterpoint, harmony, rhythm, form etc., as well as with familiarity with a style. But some, I suggest, are the result of recognizing and being sensitive to the emotive nature of the music.

Keeping the required sensitivity and attunement is difficult and demanding, and it is gradually accomplished by study and training. Some of the gestures and turns involved are relatively obvious and manifest on the foreground; some, however are more hidden and require exploring. We must educate ourselves to gain the required sensitivity, to get to the position of savoring them.

This, I believe, is often underrated by theorists who overemphasize the experiential character of music understanding.³ It is, to be sure, experiential. But the experience involved is an educated one. Analytical and structural properties of a work may give us appropriate heuristics, and may direct our attention and cultivate our ability to have the “right” kind of experience, the right kind of gestural response and move to the music. It enables the player, or listener, to "feel at home" with many features and turns of the work, and to have the appropriate feeling for how they fit together. It is somewhat similar to the importance of having a clear model for a formal structure (say, a set of equations) – a model that makes it easier to follow the formal

step-by-step moves within it, and to find one's way in the maze. It is, to give another simile, like grasping the general design or strategy of a complicated proof, or program or even a machine – a picture that enables one to get its logic, and to move freely within it.⁴

Musical concepts, such as those of form, counterpoint, harmony, rhythm etc. are pertinent to musical understanding precisely because they make such a set of expectations and attenuations available to the listener. This is why familiarity with the style in which a piece of music is written is so often felt to be necessary for its understanding. Some of these concepts are quite elementary and are at the disposal of the common listener; some are more sophisticated and demanding and are gained only by long study, and sometimes, exceptional talent. But ultimately they are all aimed, to a greater or lesser degree, in the same direction – making this enormously complicated set of expectations and attenuations in understanding a work available "in real time" (i.e. while listening).

Emotive concepts, and discerning the emotive expressiveness in a piece of music, belong, I suggest, here too. They are important, perhaps necessary, for listening with understanding because they contribute to shaping a form of sensitivity to the required expectations and satisfactions that makes keeping on the trail of the music possible in "real time". Keeping on the trail involves, as I have said, forming the right expectations, the right kind of satisfactions and of responses to the unexpected. These may result from analytical knowledge (of counterpoint, line development, periodic structure, harmony, etc.). But very often, and at crucial moments, this is not enough: most turns and moves in a piece of music can perhaps be analyzed by these methods, but they cannot be expected or even perceived as appropriate or inappropriate by them alone. For such expectations and judgments, and

for the appropriate reactions to these moves and turns, one needs to be attuned to and to get in line with the mood of the work and of the passage, to perceive its expressive power and its emotive expressiveness.

Just as the coordination of a dancer or that between two dancers are possible only on the background of such an enormously complex set of expectations and sensitivities, so it is in music – both in playing and in listening with understanding. They are part of the mental kind of alert that is necessary for moving with the music. For, both in the details and in grand designs, the "technical", formal concepts of music theory, though certainly part of the required capacity, may often not be enough – they are too general and leave too many degrees of freedom. But they may serve as a model: For, just as sensitivity to tonality, harmonic functions, contrapuntal textures, thematic developments and relations, designs and forms, shape one's expectations and attenuations, and filter out irrelevant or discarded possibilities, so do the emotive expressiveness and the appropriate emotive responses to the character of the music. Certain moves and turns are filtered out by hearing the music as of a particular emotion, and certain others are made natural and expected. And between these extremes lies a whole spectrum of moves and reactions, expectations and their satisfactions, tensions and relaxations, etc. that make up the fabric of music understanding and of listening with understanding.

And what I have said here of expectations is true also of our sense of satisfaction and of understanding certain musical moves: why a certain move is "convincing", is "logical". Sometimes an answer can be given in analytical, formal terms, pertaining to the style, compositional techniques etc. But very often these, again, are not enough and too general: many moves are sensed to be convincing, satisfactory and logical because they fit in an emotive mold we recognize in the piece.

Some theorists have claimed that we conceive and experience the emotive expressiveness by a certain power of empathy and identification – be it with the composer or other people, or an imagined *persona* (I say more on Levinson's and Scruton's views on this in the next part). The above consideration show, however, that it is not enough to say (with Levinson, Scruton, and many others) that emotive response to music is dependant on some form of empathy (with an imagined *persona*, or what have you); it is necessary, even if we do chose to talk in these terms, to explicate in what this kind of empathy consists and how it is manifested. It consists, I suggest, in this complicated fabric of sensitivities and responses to the music - in being able to move with it. Pushing that to the extreme, I would say that the order of things here is just the opposite of that suggested by Levinson and Scruton: If the empathy involved consists in this fabric of responses and attenuations, the emotive response to music is not more its result than part of what makes it possible. In being aware of, and sensitive to, the emotive character of a piece of music, and in an appropriate emotive response to it, we get into a position that enables us to move with the music, to be attuned to it and to its turns and gestures in real time.⁵

Concepts of representation in music belong here as well. Representative features and verbal titles may, when successful, direct our attention and tune our minds to the complex fabric necessary to move with the music. Music, it has been rightly claimed, hardly ever describe anything. It can hardly be claimed even to represent things: For the gist of representation is that it is preparatory for expressing thoughts about the object represented; and we seldom have this kind of representation in music.⁶ This is true. And yet I claim that musical representations, like the verbal titles that are often attached to musical pieces, may help shaping our mind in the right direction – "right" in the sense of forming the appropriate fabric of expectations and

attenuations. In an extreme form this shows up in the fact that music written to words is better understood when the words are understood.

The problems raised by representative concepts in music are different from those raised by its emotive expressiveness, and I shall not dwell here into this wide subject. Moreover, I haven't dealt here with the basic question of what the very ascription of emotive expressiveness to music amounts to. My sole purpose in this part of the paper was to discern and explain another problem – that of the significance and role of emotive notions in understanding music, in performing it or listening to it with the appropriate understanding – and to suggest a direction for answering it.

(2) Levinson, Negative Emotions and the Cartesian Picture

Some philosophers believe that the meaning of saying that music is emotionally expressive lies in its arousing emotions in the listener (the "arousal theory"). Many proposals and speculations have been offered for explaining how music can do that, and what kind of conditions should be satisfied in order for this effect to be achieved. A subsidiary problem within this approach is the problem of "negative emotions": If conceiving music as, say, sad means that it saddens us, why should we value, cherish and savor such music?

In the course of his (by now classical) dealing with this problem (MNE)⁷, Levinson offers an analysis of the meaning of describing music as, say, sad. He proposes a qualified arousal theory. He admits that sad music does not make us sad in the full and strict meaning of the term. In particular, the sadness we may feel in listening to sad music is not the full-fledged emotion, with its "content", or "object", and the world-implications of the emotion of sadness. Yet, he insists, it is something similar, which we feel in empathetic perception of the music, in which we identify

with an imagined subject, whose emotions the music imaginatively expresses, and makes us aware of.

Levinson is not entirely clear as to whether the emotional properties are properties of the work itself, or just properties of our response to the work. The general tenor of his discussion in MNE presses towards the latter:

"We are saddened in part by perception of a quality in a passage that we construe as sadness, but we in part denominate that quality "sadness", or confirm such denomination of it, in virtue of being saddened by the music or sensing its capacity to sadden us under somewhat different conditions.

Recognizing emotion in music and experiencing emotion from music may not be as separable in principle as one might have liked" (MNE 226).

"When we identify with the music...we share in and adopt those emotions as our own" (MNE 228).

But some formulations, already in this early paper, suggest the former, objective view. For instance, in explaining the cognitive element involved in the empathetic attitude towards a work, he says that "If I don't perceive what **emotions are in the music** by attending to it intently I have nothing to properly identify and empathize with" (MNE 229; emphasis added). This suggests that the emotional properties of the music itself are a pre-requisite for our empathetic response. It is not that the response is explicative or constitutive of the emotive ascriptions themselves.⁸ This is more explicitly stated in later works, for instance, "Musical Expressiveness" (ME).⁹ The third "desideratum" of an adequate analysis Levinson posits there is: "Musical expressiveness should be seen to belong unequivocally to the music – to be a property or aspect thereof..." (ME 91).¹⁰

In answering the negative emotions problem, Levinson analyzes the emotion involved into "components" – the phenomenological component of the feeling (Levinson refers to it as the "affective" component (MNE 221) and adds that it is an "inner affect" (229) or "inner feeling" (222)), its physiological correlations (which he sometimes call physiological "disturbances"), and its intentional content or object. There is nothing bad, of course, in discerning components in an emotion and emotional state, and this is quite common in the psychological literature on emotions.¹¹ But such an analysis can lead astray when these components are regarded as separable or detachable into "sadness-feeling", sadness physiological processes, and sadness-content etc. in the way suggested by Levinson's analysis. He presents a picture in which the full-fledged emotion E is composed out of these separate components, so that we may entertain one without the others. He even talks of them as "parts" of the emotion (MNE 222). In the state of what we may call "proto-feeling" of an emotion E, which Levinson portrays, one can have the physiological disturbances 'characteristic' of E, the affect or inner feeling (of E), the general idea of E, the imagining of oneself feeling E etc., in a way that still falls short of really feeling E; it is only a pale or "etiological" E (MNE 217, 222). The real emotion E is all these plus something (229). Moreover, he expressly assumes that the characteristic "inner feelings" of emotions can be separately individuated independently of the full-fledged emotion: "The majority of common emotions have affective components (comprising both phenomenological and sensational aspects) that are more or less distinctive of them, apart from the cognitive components that are perhaps logically distinctive of them" (MNE 223). And he is then quick in cashing in on the alleged model: "We can attain insight into what the feeling of anguish is like...this in turn

cashes out in an improved ability to recognize and to recollectively contemplate this feeling in the future" (MNE 232-2).

But this "modular" picture, with its separation of the cognitive-intentional component from the phenomenal-feeling, the behavioral manifestation, etc., seems to rely on a dubious conception of the emotions, and in fact, of the mind. It presumes a Cartesian dualistic conception of the mind in which we may be conscious of an "inner" phenomenological world (of, say feelings), independently of, and separately from its content and world-involving "components". These may or may not be added to the inner components to get a fully fledged emotion. This is, by now, a notorious picture that has been forcefully criticized, mainly by Wittgenstein and many others (particularly J. McDowell).¹² Do we have a coherent picture of this "modular" view of the mind with its separate components of the inner feeling, the content, the world-involvement etc.? Suppose an emotion E is analyzed in the above manner into an inner E-feeling, and a cognitive E-content, and a type of behavior characteristically associated with it. Can we conceive, for instance, of one E-feeling combined with an E'-content to form a new emotion? And then combine it with an E''-behavior to form perhaps a third? And is the "characteristic" behavior conceivable independently of the emotion and defeasibly associated with it? How exactly is the "inner feeling component" combined with the others to form a full-fledged emotion? And how are these allegedly separate parts combined anyhow?

It seems that these questions, and others, posit insurmountable difficulties for this picture. I shall not resume here a detailed analysis of this picture and its shortcomings, which have been very ably discussed in recent philosophy of mind. My intention is much more modest - to draw attention to the way in which it is presumed (perhaps unintentionally) by much of the current work on the emotions in music,

including that of Levinson. There are, of course, alternatives to this Cartesian conception – alternatives that do not see an emotion as thus composed out of separable "components", and are not committed to a separable "inner feeling" component in the manner suggested by Levinson. But for our purposes here it is not necessary to indulge into a detailed presentation of such an alternative. We need not adhere even to the principle – evidently presumed by Levinson – that explicating the "nature of the emotions" is a pre-requisite for an account of the meaning and the intelligibility of emotive ascriptions in music. As we have seen in the first part, much can be said about the significance of realizing the emotive nature of a piece of music, without going into a general account of the nature of the emotions, whatever this means.

Levinson's idea is that we may perceive the sadness-feeling separately – as detached from the full dimensions of the emotion of sadness.¹³ Likewise, he maintains that we may perceive the "outer" (behavioral) expression of sadness, and other "components" of a full-fledged emotion without perceiving the sadness itself.

Levinson is, of course, well aware of the thoughtful character of emotions and of their intentionalistic nature. He discusses these at length, e.g., in his criticism of Hanslick-inspired objections to the possibility of music being expressive of emotions (See "Hopes in the Hebrides", part I).¹⁴ Moreover, it may well be that an appreciation of the inseparability of an emotion and the ways it is expressed and manifested form the basic rationale of Levinson's notion of *persona* or imagined subject that expresses emotions by music. I shall later argue that this idea also discloses an inclination towards the Cartesian picture of the mind, but my point here is yet different. We may grant for the moment this general conception of the emotive expressiveness of music, and also grant Levinson's criticism of arguments against its possibility. My point is

rather than in the detailed working out of this, Levinson presumes a "dualistic" Cartesian picture of the emotions as composed of various ingredients – inner feelings and outer behavior among them.

How we should construe our talk of feelings and their relationships to emotions is a difficult and important problem I shall not discuss here. Let me just say that talk of feelings is often either an expression of sensations, or talk of emotions in particular contexts, e.g. where we lack relevant knowledge about the particular emotion concerned, its content, its intentional object etc.. In any case, an E-feeling, I wish to claim, is not an inner feeling we detect in ourselves in hearing a piece of music, on the basis of which we ascribe expressing E to the music. But as noted, I shall not argue for this here, and I mention it mainly in order to point to the place where the picture goes Cartesian, and where an alternative seems feasible.

In articles later to MNE, Levinson modified much of this earlier position and defended a much more realistic stand. First, as we have already noticed, he emphasized that expressive properties are properties of the music itself, and not of the composer or listener: "Insofar as we simply find the music expressive, we hear the expressiveness as relating not primarily to our own feelings but rather to those of the music, or its persona" (ME 94).

A musical passage, according to Levinson, expresses an emotion when it is readily perceived as a sui generis musical expression of a (fictional or imagined) persona expressing this emotion:

"On my view, expressive music is music that encourages a listener to imagine emotions, true enough, but only and specifically in the sense that the listener is disposed to perceptually imagine that the music is an outward though nonstandard manifestation of some emotion – that is, to hear it as a personal

expression, of a sui generic sort, of that emotion by an unspecified individual"
ME p. 97)

"A passage of music P is expressive of an emotion or other psychic condition E iff P, in context, is readily and aptly heard by an appropriately backgrounded listener as the expression of E, in a sui generic, musical manner, by an indefinite agent, the music's persona" (ibid. p. 107).

Levinson's basic idea is that music may be a sui generic expression of sadness of an imagined indeterminate individual - persona. It is not easy to flash out the sui generic qualification. Levinson is well aware of the difficulty; he speaks of it as musical alternate to regular ways of expressing emotions, and tries to explicate this by suggesting that

"music expresses E if it strikes us as how a person experiencing E would behaviorally express his or her E if persons naturally behaved 'in music' – i.e. if the physical gestures and resulting sounds involved in playing musical instruments were a natural (unlearned, unmediated) manifestations of human emotions" (Hope in The Hebrides, 338, n.5; cf. also n.6).

However, some traces of the previous, Cartesian conception still creep in:

"Though in my estimate the evocation of the feeling component of emotions by expressive music is an important and aesthetically valid phenomenon, I concur in the consensus position that traditional evocation accounts of musical expression are fundamentally mistaken..." (ibid. 93).

This is also suggested by the way he describes the relationships between (phenomenological) feelings and emotions:

"Often, the music makes one feel a certain way, e, and then one starts to find, as a consequence, that the music sounds like E – that is, like someone

expressing E, where e is related to E by similarity, association, or partial identity" (ME 114).

It is not entirely clear whether Levinson talks here of causal relations, or some other accidental empirical correlations between feelings and emotions as two independent episodes or experiences. But in any case it seems to suggest that (phenomenological) feelings are inner components or some kind of inner shadows of emotions.

We have seen before that although in MNE Levinson is not entirely clear as to whether emotive properties are genuine properties of the music itself, the latter is unambiguously and boldly stated in his later writings (ME, for instance). However, it seems to me that on closer inspection, in spite of these bold statements, the hesitant earlier position is still echoed. In his detailed discussion of Hanslick-inspired views in "Hope in the Hebrides"¹⁵, he repeatedly talks of musical properties, which "bring to mind" an emotive expressiveness, or "suggest" it. The properties of the music are not emotive *simpliciter*, but they bring to mind emotive expressiveness. Levinson in fact argues that the fact that music is incapable of representing or signifying or expressing the thought and the intentional object that characterize and individuate a certain high emotion (like hope), does not imply that music is incapable of expressing the emotion. But in the course of this argument, it is made clear that what this means for him is that the music expresses or signifies other components of the "profile" of the emotion (like inner feelings, physiological disturbances, features of behavior, etc), and this may suffice for it to "effectively guide imaginative projection" (345) "bring to mind" (351) or "suggest" (350) the emotion. He speaks, for instance, of "a psychological state's being intentional... reliably arising in the minds of listeners" (147). These formulations obviously suggest, again, that the emotion concerned is not in the music itself – it is not something that is readily open to perception as a property of the

music, but is rather something that may be readily called to mind or associatively correlated with the music by perceiving other "components" of the profile of the emotion.

In fact, even in the formulation of his main suggestion quoted above, Levinson talks of "emotion or other psychic condition". What are these other psychic conditions? What is the "feeling component" of an emotion? These are presumably none other than the Cartesian inner feelings of the earlier view. Once this picture of emotions as "composed" of the phenomenological "inner feeling", and the "outer" content and behavior is discarded as resting on a confused picture of the mental, it is hard to see in Levinson's analysis a basis for solving the enigma of the meaning of emotive expressiveness in music.

Levinson's basic idea, as quoted above, is that in ascribing emotive expressiveness to a piece of music we imagine a *persona* that expresses its emotions, in a sui generic way by the music. Levinson repeatedly claims that we conceive and experience the emotive expressiveness by an empathy and identification with this imagined persona. Apart from many other problems it may involve, I wish to argue that the main rationale for this move relies again on a Cartesian picture, in which emotions are accessible only from a first-person point of view. It is mainly for this reason that we allegedly need an imagined *persona*, and it is mainly for this that the empathetic attitude towards it and identification with it is called for. The emotive expressiveness, on this conception, is not just out there in the music, open to view by an attentive listener. Such a listener can know an emotion directly only in his own case, from the first-person point of view. For perceiving the expressions of feelings and emotions of others he needs a special power of identifying - empathy. This, quite miraculously, is claimed to enable him to accomplish what cannot be accomplished

otherwise - to perceive the emotions of others (including our imagined *persona*) from a first-person point of view, by identifying with them – putting himself in their position.

But, we might ask, why do we need this detour via "empathy"? The answer, I believe, is that it discloses, once again, a reliance on the Cartesian picture, in which emotions are "inner" entities accessible only from a first-person point of view. It is, it seems to me, unfaithful to the way we perceive the feelings and emotions of others. These are directly perceivable and manifested to us in their behavior and expression.

In his *The Aesthetic of Music* Scruton criticizes Levinson's idea of a *persona* as being vacuous (351-352). It is posited as a dummy, whose sole function is to enable us to imagine a subject expressing the emotions, which are expressively manifest in the music. But the intelligibility of this, according to Scruton, relies on our ability to perceive or experience the emotive expressiveness of the music, and if this much is presumed, appeal to the imagined *persona* becomes superfluous and empty.¹⁶ I think there is much validity in this criticism, but the above point about the presumed Cartesian picture of the appeal to empathy, applies to Scruton's positive suggestion as well. For he emphasizes, much like Levinson, the significance of empathy (*Einfuehlung*) and its role in perceiving emotive expressiveness in music. In fact, it applies to his position even more directly than to Levinson's. According to Scruton, in perceiving an emotion or its expressiveness

"I imagine what it is like to be you, feeling this; I then entertain your emotion within my own point of view" (362).

"Indeed, *Einfuehlung* may give us a complete, but non-discursive, picture of a state of mind which, from the third-person, is barely manifest" (363).

"Observing a gesture or expression we may have the experience of *einfuehlung*, of 'knowing what it's like', whereby the gesture becomes in imagination our own. We then feel it, not from the observer's, but from the subject's point of view" (ibid.).

This appeal to empathy, as necessary for making emotional expressiveness accessible to us, displays, once again, the Cartesian picture of the emotions as metaphysically "inner" in a way that is accessible only from a first-person point of view. It is thus open to the same kind of objections made against this picture.

Notes

- ¹ N. Goodman, *Languages of Art*, Indianapolis, 1974, 248 ff. ; it is, at least, the way Levinson understands him (NE 226-7)
- ² S. Davies: "Why Listen to Sad Music If It makes one Feels Sad?", *Music and Meaning* (J. Robinson ed.), Ithaca; Cornell University Press, 1996, 242-253, see especially pp. 247-9. Davies endorses Goodman's view on p. 249.
- ³ An extreme version of what Levinson calls "concatenationism" may belong here; see his *Music in the Moment*, Cornell University press, 1997.
- ⁴ This, I believe, is ignored or at least underrated in Levinson's "concatenationist" position. See his *ibid.*.
- ⁵ The general approach propounded here has some affinity to De Sousa's suggestion about the biological usefulness of emotions. See R. de Sousa: *The Rationality of Emotion*, MIT Press, 1990, ch. 7, in particular pp. 190-203. De Sousa's suggestion, which is not presented in connection with music, is different from what is suggested here in being concerned with the emotions themselves (the having of an emotion), and not with the recognition of their expression. Moreover, in one sense, it is much broader, as appealing to the role of emotions in general in a theory of rationality, while in another it is narrower, confined to the role of emotions as selective principles of salience. I would urge a broader view in which emotions regulate not only principles of salience of various features (in a situation), but also regulates their organization, reactions and responses to them.
- ⁶ The point has been emphasized by e.g. Scruton (see his *The Aesthetics of Music*, ch. 11), and Budd.
- ⁷ Levinson, Jerold: "Music and Negative Emotions" (1982), reprinted in: *Music and Meaning* (J. Robinson, ed.) 215-241.

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- ⁸ Such a view about the role of our response to the emotive expression of music as being constitutive of its meaning, is characteristic of a anti-realistic views such as Scruton's. See R. Scruton: *The Aesthetics of Music*, Oxford, 1996, ch. 11.
- ⁹ "Musical Expressiveness", in *The Pleasure of Aesthetics*, Cornell University Press, 1996, ch. 6, pp. 90-128.
- ¹⁰ See also his criticism of Davies, ME 104.
- ¹¹ See for instance R. Atkinson et al. *Hilgard's Introduction to Psychology*, Harcourt Brace, 1996, ch. 4.
- ¹² See, for instance, J. McDowell: "One Strand in the Private language Argument", "Intentionality and Ineriority in Wittgenstein", both re-published in his *Mind, Value & Reality*, Harvard, 1998, and from a broader perspective - *Mind and World*, Harvard University Press, 1994.
- ¹³ The point here is related to some of Davies' remarks in the concluding section of his article on the same subject ("Why Listen to Sad Music If It Makes one Sad?", *Music and Meaning* (J. Robinson ed. Cornell University Press, 1997, pp. 242-253). Davies' remarks there are so general that they may seem to be off-target, but I think they are not. He does, however, a disservice to this point when he presents his view as a call to change the subject: instead of asking why listen to music that raises negative emotions we should rather ask, he proposes, why listen to music? But the point is not confined to the question of why listen to this or that, but rather to the analysis of the emotions presumed in answering the question.
- ¹⁴ See "Hope in The Hebrides", in *Music, Art. & Metaphysics*, Cornell University Press, 1990. Levinson distinguishes the "cognitive aspect" (the thought), the "intentional aspect" (directedness to an object) and the specific object the "objectual focus" involved in an emotion. He claims that the first two pertain both to types and tokens of an emotion. The third – only to tokens (143). I have doubts about Levinson's construal of the intentional aspect, but the last remark is certainly mistaken – There are types

(having many tokens) like Love of God, Love of Beethoven's op 111, or love of Brigit Bardot, which have objectual foci; on the other hand, a particular token of hope may lack an objectual focus – one may hope that someone will come in, without having anyone in particular in mind, or that peace will prevail.

¹⁵ In J. Levinson, *Music, Art, and Metaphysics*, ch. 14, PP. 336-375. See especially Part I, pp. 337-357.

¹⁶ Scruton in fact argues that the idea of a persona is not only vacuous, but misleading. For it obliterates the "double intentionality" characteristic of perceiving emotions in music (352). I shall not go into this here.