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A LECTURE DELIVERED BY

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GLEN HAYDON

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In 1945 the Library of Congress received a bequest from the late Mrs. Bertha L. Elson, widow of Louis Charles Elson, to provide lectures on music and musical literature in memory of her husband. Professor Haydon's lecture was one of the series made possible by Mrs. Elson's bequest which also supplied the funds for this publication.

LOUIS CHARLES ELSON was born in Boston, April 17, 1848, and educated in his native city and Germany. As a teacher at the New England Conservatory of Music, as music editor for Boston newspapers, he exerted a great influence for music in this country over a period of many years. He also served as musical correspondent for several European and South American papers, and enjoyed distinction as a lecturer to the public and in the classroom.

Mr. Elson was the author of numerous books and a contributor to musical journals. He was an accomplished composer and a distinguished editor of musical publications. Among these were the well known *University Musical Encyclopedia* (New York, The University Society, 1912-1914) and other large compilations. His death, in Boston on February 14, 1920, closed a career of lasting importance to music in the United States.

Outstanding among Mr. Elson's books are the following:

Curiosities of Music. A Collection of Facts Not Generally Known Regarding the Music of Ancient and Savage Nations.

Boston, Oliver Ditson Co., 1880 and 1908.

Elson's Musical Dictionary.

Boston, Oliver Ditson Co., 1905.

European Reminiscences, Musical and Otherwise. Being the Recollections of the Vacation Tours of a Musician in Various Countries.

Philadelphia, Theodore Presser Co., 1891, 1896, and 1914.

Folk Songs of Many Nations.

Cincinnati, The John Church Co., 1905.

German Songs and Song-Writers.

Boston, J. F. Perry & Co., 1882.

Great Composers and Their Work.

Boston, L. C. Page and Co., Inc., 1898.

The History of American Music.

New York, The Macmillan Co., 1904, 1915 and 1925.

The History of German Song.

Boston, New England Conservatory of Music, 1888.

Mistakes and Disputed Points in Music and Music Teaching.

Philadelphia, Theodore Presser Co., 1910.

The National Music of America and Its Sources.

Boston, L. C. Page & Co., Inc., 1900 and 1924.

The Realm of Music. A Series of Essays, Chiefly Historical and Educational.

Boston, New England Conservatory of Music, 1892.

Shakespeare in Music. A Collation of the Chief Musical Allusions in the Plays of Shakespeare, with an Attempt at Their Explanation and Derivation, Together with Much of the Original Music.

Boston, L. C. Page & Co., 1901.

ON THE MEANING OF MUSIC

ANYONE undertaking a discussion of such a problem as the meaning of music is faced with two major difficulties: the complicated nature of the realities under consideration and the ambiguities of language. One's success in dealing with the former will depend in large measure on his ability to surmount the latter. A preliminary survey of certain matters pertinent to these difficulties seems advisable in order to clear the way for a more detailed investigation of the problem.

Art as Experience

All art may, for purposes of understanding, be conveniently regarded as a process involving the human organism and its environment. The several arts may be distinguished by the aspects of the environment or of the organism which come into play. The process may be thought of as an event requiring activity on the part of the organism related to an external stimulus, or as an interplay between the organism and its environment. One ordinarily thinks of the object of art as "the thing out there"—the painting, statue, or the vibratory motion in the air; but the science of aesthetics points out that the work of art is more than the physical object.

What any individual appreciates is not, strictly speaking, "the thing out there" but the thing-as-perceived; it is the perception plus all relevant elaboration by the organism. This fact is of particular importance for the study of meaning. Suppose two individuals attend a symphony concert. One, because of his

natural endowments, training, and experience in music, has a profound response; the other, because of his lack of musical gift, training, and experience, is little affected by the music. The objective stimulus in both instances is the same; the sense of hearing may be equally good. One person hears a highly organized work of art, rich in musical meanings; the other, a meaningless cacophony of sounds. The point I wish to emphasize is that the organism is always an implicit causal factor in any meaning situation.

Denotative and Connotative Definitions of Music

When we speak of the problem of meaning in music, we do not ordinarily refer primarily to the meaning of the term *music*; nevertheless a consideration of the term itself is not without significance for the more general problem. In this connection it is interesting to note that most of our dictionaries of music omit *music* itself from the word list. Is this an oversight, or is the meaning of the term so obvious that it need not be included? Or could it be because of the difficulties of formulating a satisfactory definition? Definitions are logically of two types—denotative and connotative. Denotative definitions are extensive, and tend to point to particular instances to which a term is applied. Connotative definitions, on the other hand, are intensive, and try to specify the characteristics common to all particular instances. Most of our concepts of the meaning of terms are acquired by the denotative method. We point to the leaves of a tree, for example, and say: "The leaves on that tree are green." Thus we may come to know the meaning of the word *green*. Dictionary definitions are necessarily essentially connotative, and this is their essential weakness; in referring to qualities common to many particular instances, individual differences tend to get lost, meanings become abstract, and with the increasing abstractness they tend to get more and more ambiguous.

A denotative definition of music points to particular instances of music: a particular piece is played by a particular musician,

to a particular listener. A connotative definition of music, always incomplete and ambiguous, tries to comprehend under one formulation the common qualities of all instances. Such a definition might run somewhat as follows: *Music is the interplay of the organism with its environment in the organization and manipulation of the sensory materials of sound in which the values involved have to do with the pleasurable aspect of the experience as such.* Obviously the difficulties of formulating any such definition lie not only in the complicated nature of the realities referred to, but also in the inevitable ambiguities of language. The definition suggested does not sound very much like the ordinary dictionary definition, which, according to Webster, reads: "The science or art of pleasing, expressive, or intelligible combination of tones"; but it does have the merit of stressing the nature of music as an experience.

The Structure of the Musical Process

Before proceeding to a discussion of the problem of meaning let us pause briefly to consider some of the salient features of the process, activity, or event which we may refer to as an instance of music. The part of the event which occurs outside the organism is the physical aspect of music, the study of which falls primarily into the province of the branch of physical science which is known as acoustics. This science attempts the descriptive analysis of everything pertaining to the origin and transmission of sound impulses. The particular set of sound impulses in a given instance of music is normally a performer's realization of a design set down in a musical score which is the composer's "blueprint" of his musical composition. At the other end of the process, so to speak, is the auditor. At this stage it is the function of the sciences of physiology and psychology to study and account for the behavior of the organism whether as listener, performer, or composer. This is done primarily through the study of the sensory, perceptual, and meaningful aspects of the experience as manifested in the stream of consciousness. Closely related in the consideration of the

aesthetic experience are the correlative concepts of material, form, and expression.

In music the interplay between the organism and its environment takes place in terms of two complementary principles which philosophers have called the principles of *acquiescence* and *transformation*. Simply stated, the principle of acquiescence means that in the musical process the organism accommodates itself to the nature of the physical materials of music; the principle of transformation means that in the musical process the physical materials undergo a kind of metamorphosis which is determined by the nature of the organism. For example, although the composer cannot modify the inherent physical nature of his materials, nevertheless the musical composition is the result of his contrivance. I have mentioned the composer as an example, but it should be noted that the same principles apply, with necessary changes, to the activities of the performer and listener. We may say that a musical composition is the product of the individual's conception or imagination; within limits it assumes such form or design as he imposes on the raw material, and represents whatever meaning or purpose he may be able to realize creatively.

There remains to mention one more important aspect of the process: namely, that in the course of the experience the organism senses a certain kind of value. Here we come to the proper field of aesthetics; and here, too, we find ourselves confronted with the problem of meaning, for one's conception of aesthetic value in any art seems to hinge largely on one's interpretation of the problem of meaning in that art.

The Meaning of Meaning in Language

The meanings of meaning in language are not directly applicable without appropriate modifications in art in general or in music in particular. By this I mean especially that the meanings of meaning derived from the study of language cannot be applied to the arts without due regard for the differences in the materials of the several arts. For example, words have

chiefly conventional meanings; that a word like *chair* should refer to the particular objects it does refer to and not to others, is a matter of social usage and agreement. There is nothing intrinsic in the word itself that would lead one to its meaning. If we may take the individual musical tone as the equivalent of the sound of the word, we find there is little if any meaning in music; the sound itself has no conventional referent. Sounds not constituting words are frequently used like words to represent meanings in this sense: for example, to cite only a few instances, the conductor's clang of a streetcar bell, the starter's pistol shot at a track meet, and the timekeeper's shot at the close of a football game. But these are not the sounds of music. However, musical sounds are used as signals too: chimes used as door bells, the radio's signal "At the sound of the musical tone it will be 12 o'clock," etc. In the case of bugle calls we have musical patterns similarly used as signals; but in general the use of meaning in this sense is rare in music.

The symbols of musical notation, however, are used to convey conventional musical meanings. The meaningful relation of the written or printed musical notes to the sounds for which they stand is analogous to the relation between written or printed words and spoken word-sounds, or vocables. But it should be carefully noted that the analogy ceases at that point, for the musical sound does not normally evoke any further conventional meaning as does a word.

If at this stage of our discussion the question were raised: "What is the meaning of music?" in the same sense as the question might be asked "What is the meaning of language?" I should have to say that both questions are ambiguous, vague to a point that one would seem warranted to conclude that in either case the question has no meaning. It is simply a series of words with a question mark at the end. If the question should be worded: "What is meaning in music?" in the sense that one might ask "What is meaning in language?" referring to the previously discussed idea of conventional meaning, the answer would necessarily be that there is no meaning of this sort in music.

Various other meanings of meaning have been pointed out by writers on the subject: for example, *value* ("His friendship means a great deal to me."), *intention* ("He means well."),

significance in the sense of place of anything in a system (“What is the meaning of life?”), and *logical entailment* (“That means that I shall not be able to go.”) Some of these meanings of meaning might be implied in the question as to the meaning of music; and if one could discover which meaning was intended one might be able to attempt a reasonable answer. For example, if it is a question as to the value of music to an individual or to a people, or if it is a question as to its significance as a cultural element, a valid answer might be forthcoming. The other meanings seem less applicable.

Another important problem of meaning in language is that of the uses of language in communication. Two types of uses may be distinguished: the one is called *informative* or *symbolic*; the other *dynamic* or *emotive*. The former use of words is to make statements; the latter, to evoke feelings and attitudes. Often the two uses occur simultaneously. If I say: “The moon will be full tonight,” my intention is informative; if I say: “Do wait for the full moon!” my intention is dynamic; but if I say: “What a sight the full moon will be tonight!” my intention is of the two sorts at once. Except in the language of academic and technical information and business, almost every sort of language is permeated by emotive meanings. Furthermore it should be noted that in spoken language innumerable changes in meaning are effected, not by changes in the words used, but by the inflections of the voice or by accompanying gestures. We cannot dwell further on these problems of language, interesting as they may be in themselves; we must turn to a consideration of some of the musical implications of our discussion to this point.

Communication in Language and Music Compared

Music and language each has its own characteristic problems of material, form, and meaning or content. Some comparisons as to material and meaning have already been made; others have been hinted at; while still others will be considered later. At the moment it seems important to compare briefly communi-

cation in language and music. It has been suggested that, with comparatively few exceptions, words have primarily conventional meanings. This is especially true in the informative use of language; but in the artistic use of language as in poetry, for example, the situation is radically changed. Insofar as the poet's purpose is emotive rather than informative, he tends to the dynamic use of language. He attains his objectives largely by his choice of words not merely for their conventional meanings but also with a consideration of the range of emotional overtones which they tend to evoke. He further effects his purpose by the description of feelings by various methods: the use of names for emotions and attitudes (*anger, fear, joy*); the use of derivatives of such substantives and emotive adjectives (*passionate, tender, pretty, lovely, sublime*); and by various other similar methods but especially by the use of metaphor (*fleeting, massive, lofty, profound*). In the last instance it is important to notice that the use of metaphor depends on a supposed similarity between the feeling to be described and something in itself quite different; or between it and another feeling which is described by reference to its cause or object.¹

In music the situation is very different. Informative communication is almost entirely precluded by the absence of conventional meanings. This leaves for the composer only the possibility of the emotive type of communication. He cannot use his materials as conventional signs to describe emotions or attitudes, but must resort to means that prove to be far more subtle and by no means less effective. His principal method involves the use of temporal, spatial, and dynamic characteristics of his materials as the basis for analogies resting on similarities between the tonal-rhythmic patterns of music and the emotive-conative patterns of his experience.

Musical Meaning as Intrinsic or Extrinsic

As we speak of communication in art the question naturally

¹ For a more detailed analysis of the topic see Karl Britton, *Communication*, pp. 244 ff. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1939.

arises: "What is it that is communicated?" If we could discover this in music could we not point to it as the meaning? Stated from this point of view the question: "What is the meaning of music?" is equivalent to asking: "What is communicated in music?" That music has a meaning in this sense is generally agreed; but opinions differ greatly as to just what this meaning is. The opposing views may be distinguished according to whether they hold that the meaning is extrinsic or intrinsic. In other words the question is whether music is a means of expressing or communicating realities or meanings of any kind that have their existence independent of their expression in music, or whether music is a means of expressing or communicating realities or meanings that have their existence only within the music itself.

The Autonomous Viewpoint

The theory that regards the meaning of music as intrinsic is called autonomous. According to this view the meaning of music is purely musical and as such it is to be found at all levels and in all aspects of the musical experience: in material, form, content, subject matter, expression, composition, performance, and listening. In carrying out the analysis of meaning in this sense, which I shall ordinarily refer to simply as *musical meaning*, we find there is both an intellectual and an affective side to its perception. The acid test of any rational explanation of a musical meaning is to play the passage in question and to see if the intellectual analysis checks with the felt quality.

The materials of music, the individual tones, are full of musical meanings, direct and indirect, intellectual and intuitive. The meanings of tones are identified in terms of the intrinsic qualities of tones: *pitch, loudness, quality, and duration*. Thus the individual tone has as a meaning a pitch, a loudness, a quality, and a duration component, each of which is labeled with an appropriate name. These are meanings which are perceived both intellectually and intuitively. Furthermore, each tone has an affective quality which we attribute to it as a

meaning, and for which we often, but not always, have a name. Such meanings are rather emotive than intellectual, and can be varied over a wide range of subtly differentiated meanings by ever so slight a change in any one or all, or any combination of, the intrinsic qualities, orders, or dimensions of tone. Here I think we have the key to the solution of the problem of the affective power of music; for if, at this level, the composer or performer can control so sensitively the emotive pattern of our experience, how infinitely great are his resources at the higher levels of musical complication! But I am getting ahead of the discussion.

So far we have considered the meanings of tones more or less in isolation. A further type of musical meaning accrues to individual tones by reason of their use in a musical context. For example, a single tone has a certain felt quality or meaning which we may identify in nontechnical terms as "stationary" or "static"; the musical term for such a feeling is *tonic*. (Strike the tone D on the piano.) However, as all musicians know, the felt quality of that same tone may be changed by introducing it into a scale pattern as the second degree. It now has a different felt quality (although acoustically it is the same tone), which we recognize by calling it by a different name—*supertonic*. (Play the descending scale of C major stopping on D.) If we introduce the tone D into a scale as the third degree, we again change its felt quality to that which we call *mediant*. (Play the descending B-flat major scale stopping on D.) What we have done in each case is to change the musical meaning of the tone. The felt qualities become the conventional meanings of the respective terms *tonic*, *supertonic*, *mediant*. If we analyze this meaning situation further, we can detect a certain intellectual activity in the experience which produces another meaning which we identify when we call the tone the first, second, or third degree of the scale. The felt quality is different from the intellectual identification. If we should carry the analysis still further, I think we should find that the felt qualities which we have identified in turn give rise to, or are attended by, additional affective qualities whose presence in the

experience is suggested by the fact that insofar as we can give them names these names are of a subjective nature, such as *stolidity, restlessness, sweetness*. Regardless of whether or not my analysis is strictly accurate in all details, there can be little doubt as to the wealth of resources in meaning that the composer or performer has at his disposal, even at this very elementary level, for the control of the meaning-patterns in both their intellectual and emotive use.

If time permitted we could continue the analysis through the successively higher levels of musical complication in intervals, chords, motives, themes, melodies, and entire compositions. The study of these meanings is, in a sense, one of the main purposes of all our courses in theory, harmony, counterpoint, form and analysis, and orchestration. A knowledge of them is basic to all kinds of specifically musical activities whether in composition, performance, or listening.

Material, Form, and Content as Purely Musical

According to the autonomous theory the material, form, and content of music and the attendant intrinsic meanings are all strictly musical. The meanings involve both intellectual and emotional or affective perception. The basic raw materials of music are sounds, which may be defined from a physical viewpoint in terms of vibrations, or from a psychological viewpoint in terms of sensation. Meanings in music at this level have already been discussed. Form refers to the organization of the sensory materials into perceptual groups. The content is the thematic material as it is elaborated in the composition. When the sounds of music are put together in accordance with the principles of musical composition there arise musical meanings rich in intellectual and emotional significance.

Consider the opening bars of the Brahms first symphony. The materials are the tones. The form is the way these tones are organized. The content is the specifically musical idea which is to be distinguished from any reality existing apart from the specific musical structure as it is perceived. It is embodied

in the musical material and form, but is not identical with it. It cannot be expressed in words for it is not a matter of discursive knowledge. It can only be grasped in perceptive intuition. It involves thinking and feeling in terms of tones.

Let us examine the music more in detail. The movement begins with the full orchestra (except for the E-flat horns which rest for three eighths) sounding the tone C in octaves. This C is sustained in some instruments and is repeated in eighth note values in others until the fourth beat when some of the instruments move to B-flat and G as dotted quarter notes. Now there arises a new meaning by virtue of the new combination of sounds. This in turn is modified as, on the sixth beat, some of the instruments take the C-sharp, and so on. Each tonal movement produces new meanings which are conditioned by what has gone before, by what is going on at a given moment, and by some feeling of anticipation of what is to come. The analysis of the composition, in itself an intellectual process, helps to bring out the musical meanings; it is the kind of thing that goes on in analysis in all the arts.

In short, the formal structure of music is full of meanings that are intellectually perceived and emotionally felt. Not that anyone listening could get all the meaning of the music at any one hearing—or perhaps ever for that matter. One could scarcely get all the meanings at a given point in the music at one time because even in a relatively simple situation the range of possible meaning is exceedingly wide. And as the music continues, the complexity becomes so great that it is beyond the capacity of the human mind to encompass it. But each time a person hears the composition he may attend to different relations and perceive new meanings. This is doubtless part of what makes the composition of continued interest to the listener.

Composition, Performance, and Listening as Autonomous

From the autonomous viewpoint, composition is the creation of specifically musical meanings, meanings that have no existence apart from their expression in the particular composition.

The composer may be motivated in the act of composition by a desire to express an emotion arising out of a nonmusical life-situation. Indeed, he may be successful in evoking, through his music, a similar emotion in an auditor; even so, this is irrelevant to the specifically musical expressiveness of the music, to the intrinsic meaning of the music. It is the function of the composer to create compositions that will evoke in the listener an awareness of significant musical meanings, meanings that are both intellectual and emotive in character. The intellectual meanings can be analyzed and described in musical-technical terms: but emotive meanings can only be hinted at discursively. Some attempts to describe the emotive meanings have been made in the field known as musical hermeneutics. One can get the musical meaning only by studying, playing, and listening to the music. This is undoubtedly why musicians, when talking shop, revert to their musical-technical vocabulary and refer to this musical effect (or meaning) as a "Neapolitan sixth," and to that as a "transition to the submediant minor," etc. But even this is something like getting the dictionary meaning of a word, because it only suggests the generic meaning of these expressions and misses the specific meaning inherent in the particular context.

Effective musical performance is dependent, in large measure, on the individual's grasp of the autonomous musical meaning. Unfortunately, many students of music depend too much on imitation; the results remind one of a child's delivery of a poem or an oration he has learned by rote, or of an inexperienced actor's "reciting" his lines.

Good listening to music, according to the autonomous viewpoint, involves the grasping of a comparatively large amount of the musical meaning of a composition. The average listener, whether a trained musician or not, probably attends chiefly to the affective qualities of the music since they are most readily accessible to all through perceptual intuition. The untrained musician misses the less obvious meanings, chiefly intellectual in character, the apprehension of which depends largely upon technical analysis. The important point here, according to

the autonomous theory, is to note that the affective qualities referred to are intrinsic. The measure of the aesthetic value is to be found in the pleasurable aspects of the experience. Criticism involves a rational evaluation of the musical experience in terms of the interaction between the organism and the tonal-rhythmic structure.

The Heteronomous Viewpoint

The theory that regards the meaning of music as extrinsic is called heteronomous. According to this view the meaning of music is in itself nonmusical, a reality existing independent of the tonal-rhythmic pattern of music, but which is referred to, expressed, or communicated by it. The most plausible of several varieties of heteronomous doctrine maintains that the independent reality is the whole wide range of man's emotive-conative impulses; that music is the art *par excellence* for the expression of man's feelings, moods, emotions, and attitudes such as yearning, wishing, desiring, willing, and striving. The composer communicates these meanings by evoking through the tonal-rhythmic patterns of his music, if not the same, at least notably similar emotive-conative states in the listener. In other words the composer translates into sounds feelings that existed in him prior to, or apart from, the actual musical composition.

Before we attempt an evaluation of the relative merits of autonomous and heteronomous theories, let us consider briefly how extrinsic meanings may be expressed in music, or, stated in other words, how ideas of realities existing independently may, through music, be evoked in the listener. We have suggested earlier that the chief means is by use of analogy. The basis of most of the analogies used is the time-space concept of movement that permeates all musical experience. That the idea of space itself is closely related to that of movement is indicated by the fact that space is sometimes referred to as "the possibility of motion." The idea of movement in space also obviously implies a time element. Thus the ideas of time, space, and movement are closely interrelated. The psy-

chology of music has shown that these ideas are intrinsic to our experience of music.

That these concepts, as they are applied to our musical experience, are not merely metaphorical can be readily shown. Extensity, a spatial concept, is to be found in the vibratory motion of the transmitting medium which constitutes the physical nature of tones. For purposes of analysis we may think of the individual particle of air as moving to and fro within a certain spatial orbit. As the intensity is increased the orbit described by the moving particle is increased in size; its amplitude is greater. Therefore when we speak of a loud tone as bigger than a soft tone we find that we are not using the term metaphorically but literally as referring to the actual reality. In fact, some textbooks still use the term *volume* for *loudness*. If time permitted we might find it interesting to explore the situation further, but perhaps enough has been said to illustrate the point.

That tones in succession should be observed as motion has not, so far as I know, been explained psychologically. However, the facts are well known and generally acknowledged. The whole musical-technical vocabulary used to describe changes occurring in any one of the intrinsic orders of tonal organization is full of words indicating movement, including many temporal and spatial terms. Melodies move up and down in going from tone to tone. In the visual and kinesthetic fields the movement involved is generally that of a thing or an object, whereas in the auditory field it is not. This difference has led to the notion that movement in music is a kind of "idealized" or "pure" movement. Although I cannot discuss the matter in greater detail now, I should like to suggest that, in my opinion, a more tangible physical basis could be found for our perception of movement in music with a closer investigation of the spatial characteristics of sounds. I shall cite only a single example of what I mean. I have already pointed out that a soft tone is smaller than a loud tone. If a soft tone is followed by a loud tone, similar in pitch, quality, and duration, the space occupied by the second tone is greater than

that of the first; and the change from the smaller to the larger space involves movement in a very real sense. This movement would be comparable to that in the field of vision if a rubber balloon of a certain size were suddenly inflated to a perceptibly larger size. Or, if a single tone were gradually increased in intensity the increase in extensity would resemble the gradual inflation of a balloon.

At any rate, whether movement in music is real or illusional, it undoubtedly provides the basis for the expression by analogy of anything nonmusical that is itself characterized by movement in any way. This principle of movement, if we may call it that, has been exploited in various ways in different periods of musical history. Its clearest use is to be found in music with text. In the sixteenth century, for example, words of movement such as "ascending" and "descending" were often simply set to ascending or descending melodic movements. Numerous other words suggestive of spatial or temporal ideas of movement were represented in music by similar analogies—height, depth, speed, slowness, stepping, jumping, shortness, and length. This sort of procedure, which may be traced in considerable detail throughout the Baroque period, is especially prominent in the works of J. S. Bach, as has been amply demonstrated in the monumental volume of André Pirro, *L'Esthétique de J. S. Bach*.² The perception of the analogies between the music and text here is essentially an intellectual matter. Most of them would pass unnoticed unless they were called especially to the listener's attention.

Of course, other types of allusion to extrinsic meanings have been used than those based on movement. An extreme case is to be found in the Bach cantata "And Thou Shalt Love the Lord Thy God," in which as many as five different types of reference have been used simultaneously: (1) The fugal treatment refers to canonical law; (2) the chorale melody "These Are the Holy Ten Commandments," used as thematic material, alludes to the Ten Commandments; (3) the occurrence of

² Paris: Librairie Fischbacher, 1907.

the melody canonically in augmentation in the bass suggests the fundamental importance of the Ten Commandments in life; (4) the trumpet, used to state the theme, represents the majesty or even the voice of God; and (5) the tenfold repetition of the theme is a perhaps almost too subtle reference to the number 10. If the music is good, it cannot be because of these references to extrinsic meanings, it must almost rather be in spite of them; and yet one's enjoyment of the music may be enhanced by an awareness of them.

Of much greater importance in the problem of the meaning of music is the exploitation of the dynamic elements in music in the representation or expression of emotion. This type of expression in music depends upon similarities between the temporal and spatial patterns of movement in music as heard and the dynamic structure of the emotions as felt, and the transfer of perceptual qualities of experience from one sense modality to another, from hearing to feeling and *vice versa*. Thus we may say that the music sounds the way the emotions feel. The transfer from one sense modality to another does not seem so strange or mysterious on close examination as it does at first glance. Psychologists have pointed out that auditory sensation is intimately connected with tactile sensation. In fact it has been suggested that the organs of the inner ear developed phylogenetically from some more general type of tactile structure, so that one may not be too far wrong in regarding the sensation of sound as a very highly refined type of tactile response.

Although attempts at this type of representation of emotional content may be traced in the history of music from the sixteenth century on, its use became particularly prominent in the music of the Romantic era. Here, at the risk of oversimplifying a rather complex situation, we may say that in general the composer set himself to the task of expressing in music the entire gamut of man's emotions, moods, and conative impulses. Reverberations of this viewpoint are still prevalent in contemporary writings on musical aesthetics. That music can, within limits, accomplish such an objective, is beyond doubt. This has been demonstrated on countless occasions in all kinds of func-

tional music and in all types of music with texts. But the question still remains in all such music and in pure instrumental music as to whether or not this kind of expression represents the primary meaning of the music.

Before turning to a consideration of this question, I should like to comment briefly on the activities of composition, performance, and listening, from the heteronomous viewpoint. Composition, according to this theory, is the translation of so-called "life-feelings" into tone; performance is primarily a matter of the performer's attempting to understand these meanings and to interpret them through his performance so as to evoke similar feelings in the listener; and listening is a process of attending to the music so as to permit the evocation of emotive-conative states similar to those of the composer prior to his translation of them into tone.

Partial Reconciliation of Opposing Viewpoints

The truth of the situation is to be found in a partial reconciliation of the two extreme viewpoints on the basis that intrinsic, autonomous musical meanings are direct and primary, and afford the principal criteria of musical value; and that extrinsic, heteronomous meanings are indirect and secondary, and can afford only subordinate criteria of musical value. Intrinsic musical meanings are direct and primary because they tend to be at the center of attention in the highest type of composition, performance, and listening. Extrinsic musical meanings are indirect and secondary because they tend to be in the background of attention in the highest type of composition, performance, and listening. In this interpretation of the situation, I believe adequate answers can be found to most, if not all, significant questions concerning the meaning of music.

In closing, I should like to point out that the interpretation of the problem of meaning in music which I have sketched in barest outline provides for the functioning of a wide range of conceptual and perceptual meaning in the musical experience of the individual as he operates in the process or event which

I have identified as a particular instance of music. Let us consider an extreme case to illustrate how knowledge of facts in themselves nonmusical may work to enrich meaningfully the musical experience. Last week I attended an organ recital at which the organist made a few comments about each composition before he played it. Of a *Fantasia in F minor* by Mozart he said that it was originally written for a mechanical instrument and that it was transcribed for organ. As I listened to the performance of the piece I found meanings in the music that arose from my knowledge of the facts mentioned about it. To some extent the experience became more meaningful. This may be a poor example, but it suggests something of how matters in themselves extrinsic to the music as such may color the experience and add to the richness of its meaning. This bit of meaning, though obviously indirect and secondary in my experience, contributed something to it. The example also illustrates how the perceiving self contributes to the meaning of every musical experience and suggests how extensive the potential range of meaning is. And yet, in all instances, intrinsic meanings are primary; extrinsic, secondary.

One point which I should like especially to emphasize is that the peculiar expressive quality which we ordinarily attribute to the music is an essential meaningful element in music. Most aestheticians seem to be referring to this when they speak of the beauty of the work of art. Psychologically it is a quality of the experience evoked within the organism by the objective stimulus. It is the part of music which musician and layman can most readily follow in listening, and yet which they have the most difficulty in identifying discursively. One may simply say the music is more or less expressive according to the quality he perceives. Another may resort to adjectives related to space-time-movement concepts: vigorous, forceful, graceful, elegant, flowing, sparkling, scintillating, full, heavy, thin, and the like. Still another may use terms of a more pronounced emotional character: tragic, gay, sweet, sentimental, exalted, earthy, morbid, sad, happy, and so on. Still another may speak in terms of more violent passion: love, hate, anger, ravish-

ment, ecstasy, grief, misery, etc. If anyone should be interested in following out the possibilities, I should suggest that he examine *Roget's Thesaurus* in which he will find hundreds of pages of lists of English words and phrases, an amazing number of which can be meaningfully applied to the description of music. Those terms which we can apply without diverting our attention from the music to nonmusical affairs of life point to essential meaningful elements in music, and are intrinsic meanings. Those terms which do indicate a diversion of the attention from the music to nonmusical interests point to meanings which, if they are musical at all, are indirect and secondary. Insofar as they are relevant, that is, insofar as they do not turn the experience into an experience of an entirely different sort, one not aesthetic, but religious, practical, or what not, they may broaden and enrich the musical experience. If one is able to keep clearly in mind the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic meaning, he should be able to find his way about in the many knotty problems of the meaning of music.

Music and Life

When a composer writes over a note or a phrase in the score the word *espressivo*, indicating that it is to be played with expression, just what does this mean from the point of view of performance? Ordinarily it means that the performer is to produce a tone rich in overtones, he is to pay particular attention to the intensity of the tone, he is expected to make unusually sensitive adjustments in the phrasing, but more than anything else, if the instrument permits, it means that he is to use a vibrato. To put it bluntly, to play a tone *espressivo* in general means to play it *vibrato*. This simple device may have a profound meaning. In order to suggest something of what I refer to I should like to analyze the situation in some detail. I begin by saying it is expressive of life; it means life. How is this possible? you ask. By way of analogy, an analogy based on movement. How do we detect life except by evidences of movement? I once found an opossum in my garage.

When I first saw it I thought it was feigning death because it made no movement. But as I poked it I found it was stiff and cold—dead. We may carry the analysis into as much detail as may be desired, but perhaps what I have said is enough to show how the slight movement of the tone characteristic of the vibrato is felt as life. We say the tone has life; without the vibrato it may be described meaningfully as “lifeless,” “flat,” or “dead.” It should not be necessary to point out that pieces in fast tempo and with plenty of notes are called “lively.” This is a metaphor, based on an analogy of movement, but it is very intimate in our inmost emotional feeling, for the bodily states most characteristic of our internal feeling of life are likewise shot through with movement. When we awaken from a deep sleep we may not be able to tell for an instant whether we are alive or dead. But as we “come to our senses” and manage to start moving around, we are able to decide that we are alive. I mean this seriously, for in both a superficial and a profound sense our conception of life depends on an awareness of movement. Therefore it should not be surprising that music, with all its infinite resources of movement, should be an extremely vital art.

