



## Emotions in Music (A Postscript)

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## Emotions in Music (A Postscript)

I should perhaps apologize for addressing this topic so soon after no less an authority than Peter Kivy seemed to announce in the pages of this journal that debate on it is over.<sup>1</sup> In fact, however, by conceding that music can arouse ordinary emotions and even has a tendency to do so (a tendency, albeit, whose result remains unactualized for him and, in his view, for many other listeners), Kivy only ended debate (to his satisfaction) on that issue. He explicitly allowed for further discussion of the value of emotion properties in music, one of the topics I shall take up here. This question of value can be addressed both to those for whom arousal or feeling emotions perceived in music is central and to those, like Kivy, who do not feel the emotions (or similar states) they ascribe to musical pieces. Two further questions remain as well: “How does music arouse emotions?” (a question that Kivy believes has never been satisfactorily answered); and “Are these really ordinary emotions that are aroused?” (emotions that typically occur outside the context of listening to music as well).

I

One theory that does provide a clear answer to the question of value is the classic arousal theory of Tolstoy. According to it, an artist feels a certain emotion and communicates it to an audience by arousing the same state in them via the artwork.<sup>2</sup> Tolstoy holds that art, as opposed to ordinary language, is peculiarly apt for communicating feeling, as opposed to thought, and this communication creates bonds among people that are clearly of human value, especially when the feelings transmitted are of an ennobling kind. Other theories are less clear about the

value of expressive properties. Also in favor of this theory is the fact that the very concept of expression strongly suggests the model of someone’s expressing some feeling to someone else. If there is to be genuine expression, then must there not be someone who is expressing something he feels in a way that affects the person to whom it is expressed? Furthermore, we seem to ascribe emotion terms to both causes and effects of emotions, as well as to the states themselves. For example, we talk of sad events and sad demeanors. According to this theory, we call music sad because it is both an effect and cause of sadness, and this seems to fit with other ordinary uses of this term.

Despite these attractions, there are overwhelming and obvious objections to the theory in regard to both the nature and value of expression. Regarding the last point above, it can be responded that we do not ascribe emotion terms to all causes and effects of emotions, but only to their objects and expressions (e.g., events and demeanors).<sup>3</sup> Music is not the object of sadness—we are not sad about the music. And whether it is an effect of its composer’s sadness must be irrelevant to what the work expresses to an audience. There is a familiar argument regarding interpretation to the effect that an artist’s intended meaning must be irrelevant to what her work means, since, if she successfully conveys what she intends, then the intention will be evident in the work itself; and if the intention is unfulfilled or unsuccessfully conveyed, then it is once more irrelevant to what the work itself means. Whatever the merits of this argument, it is less compelling than the parallel point made in regard to artists’ feelings when they create. While we might be inclined to change our guess as to what an obscure literary

work means upon finding that its author could not have intended any such thing, we would not change our characterization in expressive terms of Mozart's sunny Nineteenth Piano Concerto or of his brooding and passionate Twentieth if we should find that he was depressed when writing the former and cheerful in composing the latter.<sup>4</sup> This last point contrasts artistic expression with natural expressions of emotions in people's faces or behavior. If we learn that a person is not sad, then we no longer take his droopy face and slow gait to express sadness. By contrast, attributing a feeling to an artist cannot be part of what it means to say that his work expresses that feeling.

This conclusion should not be taken too broadly. While expressive artworks do not necessarily express their creators' feelings or emotions, they do often express other traits, especially long-term character traits, of their creators. No one who knows Rossini's works can doubt that he possessed great wit, and this is evident from his music itself, independent of the texts. But the certainty with which we can infer the character trait from the music exists partly because wittiness, as opposed to such mental states as emotions or feelings, is just a disposition to make witty remarks or, in this case, artworks. Certain other characterizations of artworks seem to imply certain intentional states in their artists. If a work is ironic, then it seems that the artist must have been ironic in her creation of it or treatment of its subject. This claim is not necessarily true, since even if we accept that irony requires someone's being ironic, we can always attribute irony in a literary work to a fictional narrator instead of an author. And even if we accept the claim, we can take it once more to mark a contrast between irony and emotional states that artworks can express. Our conclusion regarding emotional states might be challenged by arguing that, although composers need not be sad in order to compose sad music, the latter is the sort of music that sad composers would produce if they wished to express their feeling through their music. But this is to say no more than that, if they want to express sadness, then they must make this evident in their works, which applies to cheerful composers also.

There are, nevertheless, cases in which features of works reflect creative acts that seem indissolubly linked to emotional states of their

creators. One example from painting is the agitated brushstrokes of van Gogh, which both express agitation in his works and seem so immediately revealing of an agitated psyche. A copy of a van Gogh is not similarly expressive to us once we know that the brushstrokes themselves are copied. This would seem to indicate that the absence of the requisite emotional state in the artist is relevant to the expressive quality of the work, contradicting our present claim. But two points can be combined in reply to this case. First, while an intent merely to copy may cancel many expressive qualities of the product (just as an accidental natural object formally identical to an artwork might not express the same), this does not imply that each expressive quality of a work depends on a like mental state in its creator. The claim still holds that such states are normally irrelevant. Second, in the case mentioned, our independent knowledge of van Gogh's personality and mental problems makes his paintings seem so much an expression of his troubled mental states. In this case, I believe that if we had knowledge instead that van Gogh was of stable and cheerful disposition, we would interpret his brushstrokes as expressive of some state other than anguish, perhaps bold exuberance. But we cannot generalize from this case, as is clear from other cases, such as Mozart's, which involve different relations of artists to their works.

## II

Returning to our domain of music and from the artist or composer back to the listener, we can break into parts the question that Kivy has debated. First, is a musical work's arousing an emotion in its audience part of the concept of expression or the means by which we must identify expressive qualities? Here we must agree with Kivy's negative answer. A work that I recognize to be sad need not make me sad when I listen to it if, for example, I am in an irrepressibly cheerful mood. What if we think, as Kivy now does, of a work's tendency to affect its audience affectively? Once more its tendency to cause an emotion in its audience cannot be necessary or sufficient for characterizing a piece as expressive of that emotion. It cannot be sufficient because a work may tend to make an audience sad or angry because of how

pitifully bad it is, how lacking altogether in expressive power. Indeed, an audience is more likely to be made angry by a poor work than by one recognizably expressive of anger or naturally characterized as angry. A work's tendency to arouse a feeling cannot be necessary for its expressing that feeling because, like Kivy, we can recognize expressive qualities in works without ever experiencing the like emotions, just as we can recognize a weeping willow tree or a bloodhound's face (his earlier example) as expressive of sadness without being made sad by seeing them. If there are listeners who never experience the likes of ordinary emotions in listening, then they will not ascribe emotion properties to music on grounds of ascribing a tendency to arouse such emotions. Thus the tendency is not a necessary condition for the music's containing the emotion properties.

That arousing an emotion, or even tending to do so, is neither necessary nor sufficient for expressing that emotion leaves open the question whether music can and sometimes does arouse emotional reactions, and also whether its doing so might sometimes be a criterion for its expressing emotions. As Kivy now admits, here there can be no doubt that the answer to the first question is affirmative. He had previously resisted this conclusion on three grounds. First, musical pieces do not provide objects to which ordinary emotions can attach, as they ordinarily do.<sup>5</sup> If a piece of music expresses anger or sadness, we are not angry at the piece nor sad about it. If emotions require both objects and appropriate beliefs about them, and they often are differentiated in these ways, then music does not seem capable of arousing them. Second, it seems puzzling, if music arouses emotions, why listeners would want to hear sad or angry music. If we normally want to avoid sadness, why should we seek to feel sad when listening to music? Why should we not generally prefer cheerful pieces (which many listeners do not)? Third, the arousal theory has provided no explanation of how music can arouse ordinary emotions, no indication of the method by which it does this.<sup>6</sup> The usual way in which such emotions are aroused is once more via an object to which certain affectively charged beliefs refer. In the absence of objects, emotions might be caused by direct chemical reactions in nervous systems, but such causes

seem to provide no explanation of how music is supposed to arouse emotions.

As just hinted, the first argument is answered by recognizing that not all emotions have objects. We are sometimes sad or angry without knowing what we are sad or angry about. The cause may be a hormonal reaction rather than an object, in which case there may be nothing we are sad or angry about. Only some emotions can lack objects, however, those also characterized as moods, and these are the ones that can be differentiated solely according to their feeling tones and/or behavioral manifestations. There may be no difference in feeling between jealousy and contempt, but there does seem to be a feeling unique to sadness. And anger, unlike jealousy and contempt, is typically manifested in particular patterns of agitated or violent behavior. The noteworthy fact here is that those emotions that can be differentiated without having objects or beliefs about them are precisely the ones that music is ordinarily said to express, such states as sadness or anger, but not jealousy or contempt (without accompanying texts or programs). This fact defeats this argument against the claim that music expresses these emotions by arousing them in listeners (although the emotivist still owes an explanation of how this is done).

I take it that the age-old question of negative emotions and their (negative?) value has not been answered to Kivy's satisfaction, and I want to address it below. He has now dropped his argument against the arousal theory based on its lack of an explanation of means or method. He has done so because of a single analogy proposed by Colin Radford: if we admit that sunny and overcast days can cause opposite moods without our knowing how, we must admit the same of music.<sup>7</sup> The analogy is not perfect according to Kivy. Since weather patterns are both of longer duration and more pervasive in our consciousness than emotion properties in music (only part of what we attend to in pieces), the meteorological tendency to arouse moods is actualized, while the musical tendency is not for listeners like Kivy.

In fact, of course, there is much more direct evidence of music's ability to cause affective effect. The widespread and effective use of music in all societies for ritualistic, ceremonial, political, and military occasions would be largely

inexplicable if it did not have the effect of arousing and coordinating emotional reactions of social groups, aiding them in or preparing them for communal actions. Kivy dismisses the use of music outside the concert hall as being irrelevant to its typical effects within it.<sup>8</sup> But if music is the main stimulus to coordinated affective reactions within groups on many public occasions, reactions which would not occur in those settings without it, then it is unlikely that setting makes as much difference as he seems to think. Music's therapeutic effects are well known to clinical psychologists and to ordinary listeners. Its bodily effects are easily measured. Its rhythms stimulate bodily movements, sometimes irresistibly, some of which themselves naturally express emotional states as well. Animals and infants react affectively to intensity, pitch, and rhythm in the human voice without understanding content, and these are musical characteristics.

### III

Nevertheless, if the emotivist (arousal theorist) really can have no explanation for how music provokes emotional reactions, then the cognitivist (who used to deny arousal) continues to enjoy an advantage, despite Kivy's recently generous characterization of the debate as a stand-off. The cognitivist does claim to have an explanation for how we come to recognize expressive properties in music, how we come to describe musical passages in emotional terms without feeling the emotions. The main basis for this recognition is the resemblance of the music in its pitch, volume, and rhythmic and melodic contours to the natural expressions of emotion in voice, demeanor, and behavior. Thus sad music tends to be low, soft, and slow, perhaps including descending sequences of tones, and angry music tends to be higher pitched and loud, with rapid and unpredictable rhythms and sharp breaks in melodic contour. Literal imitation is only of the voice; bodily movements are not heard, but the same predicates apply to them and to "movement" in music.

The scare quotes indicate what is obvious and has been noted by others, that musical movement itself is not literal movement through space. Notes are not spatially higher or lower, except in scores. Part (but only part) of what

makes it so natural to use spatial terms in describing pitch and progressions of tones may be that higher notes seem to require more energy (perhaps this claim reflects only the bias of an old trumpet player for whom it is literally true), just as it requires more energy to move to higher spatial positions. This suggestion, and the general spatial descriptive framework for music, connects once more to the ascription of certain emotional qualities, since, for example, sad people not only speak in low tones, but generally lack energy and move more slowly, while angry people tend to be animated and energetic. Once we accept spatial descriptions of notes, description as movement follows, since change of spatial position is perceived as movement. Once we describe music as moving, we can compare it to human movements that naturally express emotion (variants of which the music can also directly stimulate by its rhythm).

This account is plausible as far as it goes. Surely the association between the features of music mentioned and vocal and behavioral expressions of emotion is not merely coincidental or conventional. It is no real objection that we notice emotional properties in music without noticing the analogies to voice or behavior,<sup>9</sup> since we often apply terms without being aware of the criteria by which we are doing so (otherwise, analytic philosophy would be far easier). But the account is also incomplete and problematic as part of an attack on the arousal theory. It is incomplete because it contains no explanation for the difference in emotional tone between major and minor keys, for example. The cognitivist must hold that the association of minor keys with sadness or negative emotional states is purely conventional, but this claim is no more plausible than a corresponding allegation in regard to dull and muted versus bright and saturated colors. If colors express certain moods by arousing them, and these connections are not merely conventional, why should not the same be true of tonal harmonies?

The other problem for the resemblance account is that many things other than expressions of emotion resemble musical contours, rhythms, and volumes. Many things, for example, move slowly and even emit low and soft sounds without being associated with music that has these qualities. Kivy has a response to this objection. We naturally pick out for asso-

ciation from among all the phenomena that resemble music in these ways human emotional states because of our innate tendency to animate perceived phenomena, to view them in human terms.<sup>10</sup> A weeping willow or bloodhound's face looks sad to us, although they could equally be associated with many other objects or shapes that droop. This tendency toward anthropomorphic categorization, well-evidenced especially in children, can in turn be explained in terms of the biological and psychological centrality of human relations to us.

Again the explanation is plausible if highly speculative. The problem for Kivy as a cognitivist is that it is just as plausible that we are wired not only to animate what we perceive, but to react emotively to recognition of human-type states in perceived phenomena. Once more this reaction will not be based on a conscious process of inference or drawing of analogy. If it were, then our knowledge that musical pieces are not sentient would block an affective response to music. But such recognition would equally block the initial ascription of emotion predicates to music if that were based on conscious inference or analogizing. If, therefore, Kivy's own explanation for recognition of emotional states in music, appealing as it does to biologically wired dispositions, can be plausibly extended to explain the disposition to be affectively aroused by the same pieces, then the advantage enjoyed by the cognitivist over the emotivist disappears.

It is plausible, once again, given the importance of human relations and the emotional ties that they require, that we naturally react both sympathetically and empathically to the recognition of human emotional states. Thus, for example, we might react to the recognition of sadness with either sadness of our own or pity, or both. Since pity requires an object, however, it must be sadness rather than pity that is aroused by sad musical pieces. But isn't this claim contradicted by the fact that seeing bloodhounds and weeping willows does not tend to make us sad? There may be several differences between these cases and the perception of emotional states in music. First, it may be that weeping willows do tend to provoke at least a mild wistfulness, which, however, wears off with complete familiarity, much as a piece of music we have heard ten thousand times loses

its expressive power for us (unlike other pieces). Second, although, as argued above, we need not attribute to its real composer the emotional states that we ascribe to a musical work, we do tend to perceive such works as human expressions, unlike natural objects such as trees or animals. Perceiving music as a human product makes it more likely that we react to it affectively.

Thus the cognitivist and emotivist are much more on a par in regard to conceivable explanations of method than Kivy, even in his more conciliatory recent stance, acknowledges. It is furthermore likely that recognition and arousal of emotional states interact and reinforce one another for most listeners to music. We might be affected emotionally by the recognition of some structural features of natural expression in music, and we might in turn recognize such features more readily when we begin to feel their effects. Factors that contribute directly to affective reactions, such as minor tonalities, are insufficient in themselves to produce this effect, but it seems clear that they operate together with recognitional factors to prompt affective responses from listeners.

#### iv

If music did not arouse as well as represent emotional states (or close analogues to them), if, as Kivy maintains in his case, we were moved only by the beautiful way in which certain pieces capture certain emotions, then we would be moved in the same way by (great) cheerful and sad music, in the same way by the overture to *The Barber of Seville* and by the slow movement of Mahler's Fifth Symphony.<sup>11</sup> Kivy responds that these pieces instantiate different sorts of beauty, and so our response to their beauty is not the same.<sup>12</sup> But it seems to me that our responses are not the same because they are at least typically mixed with something like exuberance in the one case and sorrow in the other.

When affective responses are aroused by music, we should think of its expressive properties as relations between objective properties of the music and these responses. The objective base properties for these relational expressive properties can take a variety of forms. As we have noted, they can be structural or formal

features of melody and/or rhythm that resemble natural expression of emotion in voice or behavior, or they can be harmonic properties that directly stimulate affective reactions in the proper contexts (changes in volume can fall into both categories). There are also conventional factors noted by Kivy: relations to texts, programs or titles, or stylistic conventions such as the association of horns, especially in romantic music, with expansive outdoor feelings. We must add causal relations to the base properties to get full-blown expressive properties: the former cause the proper listeners to ascribe emotion predicates either via recognition or affective reaction, or most commonly both.

Without doing violence to our linguistic use or intuitions we can identify instances of these properties with the base properties that cause the expressive ascriptions or reactions in the particular cases. A piece of music's being sad consists in its being such as to elicit these responses, and the "being such" can be identified in particular works with base properties of the types specified above. But use of emotion terms and reference to affective reactions cannot be eliminated for at least two reasons. First, they are ineliminable from the epistemic viewpoint of listeners, since they ascribe emotion properties to music without normally conceptualizing the objective bases on which they do so. Second, as I will argue below, reference to emotion-type reactions is crucial for understanding the value of expressive properties in artworks. Our sense of the tragic and our affective reaction to it are necessary for a full appreciation of the Adagietto movement of Mahler's Fifth Symphony, although we can identify these particular instances of such expressive properties with the long-lined melodies of the movement, its excruciatingly drawn-out harmonic suspensions, and its muted volumes punctuated by simmering crescendos.

When we speak of types of expressive properties instead of instances (instantiations), the nearest relation we can have of these properties to their bases is one-many, since, as we have seen, there are many combinations of base properties of different kinds that can prompt ascriptions of such properties as sadness. With such broadly specified mood properties as sadness or anger, the relation may well be one-many, because qualified listeners may well

agree on their presence in various musical passages. But if instead we think of melancholic versus funereal versus anguished, or furious versus stormy versus sullen (we have ruled out such descriptions as contemptuous), then such agreement may vanish, and the relations of bases to subjective reactions and full-blown expressive properties becomes more complex.

Here we can ask whether these relations can be captured by principles. Is it the case that whenever music has certain base (objective) properties, it also has or tends to have (has in the absence of defeaters) certain expressive or emotion properties? One might think that since the relation between base and full-blown expressive properties is causal (the base properties cause certain qualified listeners to recognize emotion and react), the answer must be affirmative. This might seem to follow from the fact that causes require laws or principles. But, although we may assume that there are psychophysical laws of the kind required here, the problem is that the causal relations in question may differ from individual listener to listener. The lack of objective grounds for agreement in ascribing specific emotion properties to music blocks not only type identification of these properties with their bases, but also principles that could capture the relation between them. Nevertheless, the skeptical conclusion must be accepted here only for the narrower emotion properties, as opposed to the ascription of broadly specified moods. It is also the case that the more composers combine bases (harmonic, rhythmic, melodic, loudness) for ascribing specific emotion properties to their pieces, the more circumscribed we are (and less skeptical we need be) in describing and reacting to the pieces in these terms.

v

I said above that Kivy cannot claim an advantage over emotivists in explaining the means by which music expresses emotional states. Both camps can offer plausible if highly speculative explanations. By contrast, Kivy is too lenient to the opposition in now granting that expressive music has a tendency to arouse *ordinary* emotions. Traditionally, cognitivists going back to Hanslick admit certain affective reactions peculiar to the experience of listening to music.<sup>13</sup>

These feelings are crucial to listening with understanding. Musical forms, as these combine harmonic, rhythmic, and melodic elements, are heard and often identified through developing affect. Formal developments that are not yet complete, for example, harmonic progression from tonic or subdominant to dominant, or regularly rising melodic patterns, create expectations for further development and resolution. These expectations are felt as tensions, and the affective effect is heightened by delay or prolongation of the fulfillment of expectation or closure.<sup>14</sup> Those who appreciate music do not listen passively and passionlessly. They actively listen for what is to come in light of what has been foretold, pointed ahead by the unfolding progressions. The listener absorbed in a piece becomes like an agent whose will is involved in pursuit of the musical goals defined by these patterns of building tension and release. The affective states internal to the perception of music may be more or less unique, but they are most like those which arise in the course of contested goal-directed action.

Cognitivists about expressive qualities in music have not denied that these feelings internal to the proper perception of musical pieces are aroused in the course of listening. As pointed out above, Kivy has also acknowledged being moved by the beauty of a piece or a performance and even by the beautiful way in which a piece expresses some garden-variety emotion. In now granting that music can arouse ordinary emotions, Kivy seems to ignore his earlier claims about our reactions to music lacking certain components of ordinary emotions. We noted their lack of objects and the typical beliefs of ordinary emotional states. They also lack the typical motivations to behavior—to flee from, or offer aid to, or strike the object of one's ordinary emotions. They consist instead of feelings or sensations characteristic of certain emotional states, in this case arising not from usual objects or beliefs, but from recognition of analogues of natural expressions of like states in the music.

If we think that emotions must include cognitive states or analogues to them, then we will be inclined to substitute for genuine beliefs other cognitive or quasi-cognitive states in analyzing affective reactions to artworks. This is what Kendall Walton and those who follow his the-

ory of artistic representations and expression do. According to him, we do not experience real emotions in attending to art or music, but it is fictional or make-believe that we experience such emotions.<sup>15</sup> This amounts to the claim that we experience the feelings, as I have maintained, but that these result from our recognition that we are to imagine the contents of the beliefs that would ordinarily give rise to the full-blown emotions. For example, in a horror movie we recognize that it is fictional that the monster is lurking about (we are to imagine that he is, according to the rules of the fictional game that the movie establishes), and this recognition and imagination (as opposed to belief) cause the sensations of fear and thus make it make-believe that we are afraid. This theory provides answers to certain puzzles, for example, why lovers of tragedy feel sympathy for the heroes while still wanting the plays to end tragically. The answer lies in the claim that it is only fictional that they sympathize with the heroes. Despite its virtues, however, the theory cannot be generalized to all our affective reactions to art. It specifically does not apply to music, despite Walton's claim to the contrary.

Paradigm emotional states involve objects, beliefs about them, motivational effects or behavioral dispositions, and associated sensations and/or physiological effects. Deviations from the paradigms may vary along any of these dimensions. According to Walton, the subject reacting to art lacks the beliefs and motivations of real emotions, substitutes imagination for belief, and experiences the typical sensations, making her states make-believe rather than real emotions. But, on the one hand, real emotions, we have noted, can lack objects, and they can also lack the beliefs and motivations of their more ordinary counterparts. Phobias involve fearing what their subjects do not believe to be really dangerous, and we may pity victims of a distant disaster without being motivated to aid or comfort them. On the other hand, some viewers of horror movies might be disposed to flinch, block out the monster from view, or even to flee from the theater (although they usually suppress the latter motivation). And we would intuitively think of make-believe emotions, as in children's games, as involving some of the behavioral dispositions of real emotions, but without the real sensations that Walton



takes to be included in our affective reactions to art.

Returning again to the domain of music, the question for Walton's theory is what we could be imagining when listening to music that would produce the sensations involved in what he characterizes as make-believe emotions. One possibility would be that we imagine that the music is an expression by the composer of his emotion (what Tolstoy's theory held to be literally true). The easiest way to do this would be to imagine that the music is a voice expressing emotion, since the voice is the closest natural means of expression.<sup>16</sup> But instrumental music is still not much like a real voice expressing anger or any other emotion, so the task for imagination would be formidable. More to the point, it is unnecessary, since we can recognize structural analogues of natural expressions and ascribe emotion properties to music without performing this feat of imagination. Certainly we can react affectively without the superfluous imaginary object, as is clear from the fact that we react directly to progressions of chords in much the way we react to combinations of colors, without imagining them to be other than they are.

Walton's own choice of imaginary object for the music listener is not the human voice. Instead he claims that we pretend to introspect directly our own emotions when listening to expressive pieces. The meaning of this claim is not clear. Is it that we pretend to experience certain emotions and to attend to them at the same time? Doing so might make it difficult to attend to the music. Walton suggests, perhaps to keep our attention anchored to the music in his analysis, that we imagine that our own auditory sensations when listening are emotions,<sup>17</sup> but I must confess to difficulty in even understanding this possibility. I know that I do not attempt this imaginative feat when listening to music, and I find no evidence that others do so, other than the very fact that they ascribe expressive properties to the passages they hear. Only the assumption that there must be cognitive or quasi-cognitive states included as aspects of emotions or their art viewer analogues could motivate the ascription of these states of imagination, but we have seen that that assumption does not always hold even in cases of real emotions (such as objectless anger or phobia).

In my view, it is generally less perspicuous to say that we have imaginary emotions in reacting to art than to say that we react emotionally to the imaginary worlds of the artworks. We do not imagine that we are sad, but we have feelings of sadness in the contexts of the works' worlds (the latter metaphor, I have argued elsewhere, applies to musical works as well<sup>18</sup>). Since, when attending to a work, we remain aware of the artistic medium even while reacting affectively (and must remain aware of the medium if we are to appreciate the work fully), we are normally not disposed to act in response (we can act only in the real world). But neither are we emotionally detached from the world of the artwork. Arousal theorists hold that artworks cause ordinary emotions; cognitivists have seen nothing like ordinary emotion in our reactions (except in our reaction to beauty or skill). The correct middle view is not Kivy's new position that music has a tendency, unactualized for many listeners like him, to arouse ordinary emotions. It is rather that emotion states that are not ordinary or paradigm occur in the full engagement of typical listeners (although perhaps not strongly analytically-oriented ones) with many musical works. The unusual features of these emotions (or their lack of usual features) are explained not by the fact that we only imagine experiencing them, but rather by our experiencing them in the context of being engaged in other ways as well with the works to which we react. Full appreciation, as Kivy notes, normally requires some attention to form, for example, as well as affective reaction, and attention to such other matters is sufficient to block full-blown emotional reactions.

v i

Kivy suggests that debate should now center on the value of expressive properties in music. Traditional cognitivists have a problem explaining this value. We do not listen, for example, in order to acquire knowledge of our emotions or affective life, to achieve some kind of self-understanding. Some have held that music provides a map of the way our emotional states change and develop; others claim that music can capture nuances among emotions that language cannot adequately describe. But the map provided by musical works could not be very

accurate, since, for one thing, expressive qualities change in music far more rapidly than do emotions in real life. And, as I indicated above, language is, if anything, more capable than music of differentiating emotional states, since language can describe the objects and beliefs by which such states are often differentiated. To learn human psychology we would do better to study literature than music, since the former can specify the objects and causes of our emotions in as much detail as authors care to provide; or, perhaps better still, we should study psychology itself. Indeed, if we did not recognize analogues of expressions of particular emotions in musical passages, we could not recognize expressive properties in the music. Since we must know of the real emotions before such recognition occurs, it is doubtful that this recognition could teach us anything about the emotions.

In opposition to these cognitivist views, Kivy now holds that expressive properties function in music as additional formal or syntactic elements, and that their value lies therein. For example, he points out that the typical modulation to the tonic major at the end of Mozart's *Serenade in C Minor* (K. 388) provides the piece with a decisive close, more so than a minor cadence would.<sup>19</sup> But this strikes me as an harmonic element that also happens to be expressive playing a typical syntactic or formal role, not an expressive quality itself interacting with other expressive qualities in a formal way. In general, compared to melodic phrases and harmonic developments, for example, there are too few elements and too little opportunity for variation, development, and combination for expressive properties to be very valuable in this regard. Thus cognitivism still has no general explanation for the value of emotion properties in music.

It was noted above that the classic arousal theory, by contrast, does have such an explanation. According to it, the communication of emotions allows individuals to share their affective lives and to improve them through the arousal of the noblest kinds of emotional states. But this theory faces telling objections in this area as well. Many great musical pieces and other artworks communicate mainly negative emotions rather than noble ones. And if the artwork is merely a means to the communica-

tion or arousal of specific emotional states, and if this source of value is, as it were, detachable from any other kinds of worth the work might possess, then any other means of expressing the same states, if equally effective in arousing them, must be equally valuable. Not only would there be nothing uniquely valuable about art in this regard, but more direct means of communicating or arousing anger or fear, for example, would have to count as better. Arousing emotion cannot therefore be the primary end in itself of art, musical or otherwise. It might be claimed that art (or music) is uniquely apt for arousing emotions, or that it is able to arouse unique emotional states, but there is no evidence in regard to either claim that art can accomplish what real life cannot.

The arousal of negative emotions has been noted as a problem for the classic arousal theory, but indeed, as Kivy pointed out earlier, it is a problem for any arousal theory. Throughout the history of aesthetics, beginning with Aristotle, there has been no shortage of attempts to dismiss the negative and account for the positive value of such arousal. Explanations for our enjoyment of works that express and arouse negative emotions include Aristotle's idea of catharsis, the claim that what we enjoy is the artistic skill involved in the expression, that we enjoy the lack of real objects or threats connected with these emotions in real life, that we gain mastery over them or reassurance in our own sensitivities from experiencing them in the context of art.<sup>20</sup> None of these explanations is without serious problems, however.

The idea of catharsis or release as the value of negative emotions in art assumes that these emotions exist in us and need release, whether or not they are caused by real-life situations, and that their release in viewing art is either enjoyable in itself or mitigates their harmful effects when they do occur in real life. To my knowledge these assumptions lack convincing psychological evidence. The claim that we enjoy the skill with which artists capture these emotions may be sometimes true, but it fails to explain why many viewers enjoy junk horror movies or pulp novels, for example. This thesis makes it seem as if we endure the negative emotions in order to appreciate the skill, but many seem to enjoy the experience itself within the artistic context. Similarly, the lack

of real objects and threats once more may help to explain our endurance of these emotion properties in art, but not their value. Turning to the final claim, there is no evidence that music or art lovers master their emotions better or are more sensitive than others. The idea that one can be reassured of one's sensitivity by listening to music (as opposed to empathizing with other real people) is strange at best and implausibly egotistical as an explanation for the value of expressive properties. In regard to mastery, if we seek to master our reactions by maintaining full control over them while experiencing art, this may eliminate or dampen the affective response itself that is supposed to be of value. If the sense of mastery is to derive instead from the overcoming of negative emotions in the course of works themselves (and hence in the course of experiencing them), then this sense (of relief as much as mastery) might be part of a full explanation of our enjoyment of some works. But since we do not normally seek out negative experiences simply to enjoy the relief from their coming to an end, this once more cannot constitute a full explanation for the value of negative emotion properties in artworks.

I have argued elsewhere that we cannot provide a full explanation for the worth of the different sources of aesthetic value (expression, representation, form, etc.) if we consider them in isolation from the others and from the way they contribute together to the overall value of artworks. This claim is perhaps most obviously true of negative emotion properties, but it is more broadly true of our affective reactions in general to works of art. These reactions are part of our full involvement with artworks, especially challenging works, such involvement including also our cognitive capacities in appreciating form and content as well as our imaginations. Only in the context of our full appreciation of various works can we understand the contributions of the separate sources of value.

I claimed above that to be engaged with a piece of music is at least to be caught up in the affects internal to the proper perception of its form when listening. When listeners are so involved, they become like agents willfully pursuing the musical goals established by the piece, and the work becomes like a world in which these agents are engaged. This illusion

is made more real to the degree that the listeners' cognitive capacities are involved as well in grasping the unfolding musical forms. Experiencing the more common human emotions adds further to their full immersion in the world of the work, and it makes this world more of a human world, and so often more absorbing as well. If this complete absorption in the world of a work, involving to the fullest the occupation of our cognitive and affective capacities, and making the experience of each element of the work richer in relating it to others, explains the value of many artworks, including musical works, for us, then it also explains the contribution to that value of those features of works that engage our emotions. It explains also the value of negative emotions in the context of art, which is inexplicable in other terms when considered in isolation from other sources of value and from their contribution to the overall value of works. Full absorption in the worlds of artworks, which implies escape from the real world (and possibly subsequent reflection on it), can be intensely satisfying even when particular aspects of it in isolation are not. Negative emotions parallel on the affective side the cognitive challenge that many works present. Such challenges help to prompt our full engagement in the works that present them.

The fact that musical works can condense many emotional states and changes into a much smaller time frame than occurs in real life, which, we noted above, makes music an inaccurate map of emotional life, also makes the experience of musical passages more intense and intensely significant. To say that our involvement in such intense experience is its own reward, and that the value of emotion properties in music lies in their contribution to this experience, is compatible with acknowledgment that there can be great works of music that do not arouse anything like ordinary emotions. Many string quartets of Haydn, for example, engage us through their perfectly crafted forms, sensuous beauty, and internal affects, without being naturally categorized in typical emotion terms. On the other side, there are also pieces naturally categorized as sad or happy that are not particularly good pieces. This is once more compatible with the fact that emotional expression can add to the value of many pieces, even be essential to it, by

being an essential part of our full involvement with those works.

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1. Peter Kivy, "Auditor's Emotions: Contentions, Concessions and Compromise," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 51 (1993): 1-12.

2. Leo Tolstoy, *What is Art?*, trans. A. Maude (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1960).

3. See Aaron Ridley, "Pitiful Responses to Music," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 33 (1993): 72-74.

4. Compare John Hospers, "The Concept of Artistic Expression," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 55 (1954-55): 313-344, p. 325; also Alan Tormey, *The Concept of Expression* (Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 105.

5. The point was made first by Eduard Hanslick, *On the Musically Beautiful*, trans. G. Payzant (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1986), p. 9.

6. Kivy, *Music Alone* (Cornell University Press, 1990), chap. 8.

7. Colin Radford, "Emotions and Music: A Reply to the Cognitivists," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 47 (1989): 69-76, p. 70.

8. Kivy, "Auditor's Emotions," p. 2.

9. The objection is raised by Francis Sparshott, *The Theory of the Arts* (Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 219.

10. Kivy, *The Corded Shell: Reflections on Musical Expression* (Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 58.

11. Compare Radford, op. cit., p. 72.

12. Kivy, "Auditor's Emotions," p. 2.

13. See Hanslick, op. cit., pp. 31-33.

14. Compare Leonard Meyer, *Music, the Arts, and Ideas* (University of Chicago Press, 1967), p. 33.

15. Kendall Walton, *Mimesis as Make-Believe* (Harvard University Press, 1990), chap. 7.

16. See Malcolm Budd, *Music and the Emotions* (London: Routledge, 1985), pp. 131-132.

17. Walton, op. cit., p. 336.

18. A. Goldman, "The Value of Music," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 50 (1992): 35-44.

19. Kivy, "Auditor's Emotions," p. 10.

20. For recent arguments incorporating many of these claims, see Jerrold Levinson, "Music and Negative Emotion," in *Music, Art, & Metaphysics* (Cornell University Press, 1990).