ONE

PROLOGUE

HOW far is anyone justified, be he an authority or a layman, in expressing or trying to express in terms of music (in sounds, if you like) the value of anything, material, moral, intellectual, or spiritual, which is usually expressed in terms other than music? How far afield can music go and keep honest as well as reasonable or artistic? Is it a matter limited only by the composer's power of expressing what lies in his subjective or objective consciousness? Or is it limited by any limitations of the composer? Can a tune literally represent a stone wall with vines on it or even with nothing on it, though it (the tune) be made by a genius whose power of objective contemplation is in the highest state of development? Can it be done by anything short of an act of mesmerism on the part of the composer or an act of kindness on the part of the listener? Does the extreme materializing of music appeal strongly to anyone except to those without a sense of humor—or, rather, with a sense of humor?—or, except, possibly, to those who might excuse it, as Herbert Spencer might, by the theory that the sensational element (the sensations we hear so much about in experi-

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* MS: reasonable, i.e. artistic.
* MS: (as evidenced by some modern Germans).
mental psychology) is the true pleasurable phenomenon in music and that the mind should not be allowed to interfere.\textsuperscript{a} Does the success of program music depend more upon the program than upon the music? If it does, what is the use of the music? If it does not, what is the use of the program? Does not its appeal depend to a great extent on the listener's willingness to accept the theory that music is the language of the emotions and only that? Or, inversely, does not this theory tend to limit music to programs—a limitation as bad for music itself, for its wholesome progress, as a diet of program music is bad for the listener's ability to digest anything beyond the sensuous or physical-emotional. To a great extent this depends on what is meant by emotion, or on the assumption that the word as used above refers more to the "expression of," rather than to a meaning in a deeper sense—which may be a feeling influenced by some experience, perhaps of a spiritual nature, in the expression of which the intellect has some part.\textsuperscript{f} "The nearer we get to the mere expression of emotion," says Professor Sturt in his Philosophy of Art and Personality, "as in the antics of boys who have been promised a holiday, the further we get away from art."

On the other hand is not all music program music? Is not pure music, so called, representative in its essence? Is it not program music raised to the nth power, or, rather, reduced to the minus nth power? Where is the line to be drawn between the expression of subjective and objective emotion? It is easier to know what each is than when each becomes what it is. The "Separateness of Art" theory—that art is not life, but a reflection of it, that art is not vital to life but that

\textsuperscript{a} For a passage from Spencer's Facts and Comments expressing this theory, see Note 1.

\textsuperscript{f} The passage beginning "Does not its appeal . . ." was rewritten as follows in AR: If one is willing to go no further than to accept the theory that music is the language of the emotions and only that, the matter is perhaps an insoluble problem; but one becoming more interesting, perhaps more possible of solution, if instead of accepting the term "emotion" only as an "expression of" itself, it is received in a deeper sense—that is, that it is a feeling influenced by some experience, perhaps of a spiritual nature, in the expression of which the intellect has some part.

\textsuperscript{b} "The Separateness of Art" is the third section of Sturt's essay. The idea is summarized in this sentence on p. 314: Art lies outside the vital needs of our existence, and therefore must always be an episode.

"The Art of Life—The Scholar's Calling," in Dial. Quoted by Ives from Van Doren, Theoreau, p. 91.

\textsuperscript{1} For a passage from Tolstoi's What is art?, see Note 2.

\textsuperscript{2} In the chapter called "Spring," Writings, II, 349.
much less classified. The word inspire is used here in the sense of cause rather than effect. A critic may say that a certain movement is not inspired. But that may be a matter of taste; perhaps the most inspired music sounds the least so—to the critic. A true inspiration may lack a true expression, unless it is assumed that if an inspiration is not true enough to produce a true expression—if there be anyone who can definitely determine what a true expression is—it is not an inspiration at all.

Again, suppose the same composer at another time writes a piece of equal merit to the other three, as estimates go, but holds that he is not conscious of what inspired it—that he had nothing definite in mind—that he was not aware of any mental image or process—that, naturally, the actual work in creating something gave him a satisfying feeling of pleasure—perhaps of elation. What will you substitute for the mountain lake, for his friend's character, etc.? Will you substitute anything? If so, why? If so, what? Or is it enough to let the matter rest on the pleasure, mainly physical, of the tones—their color, succession, and relations—formal or informal? Can an inspiration come from a blank mind? Well, he tries to explain and says that he was conscious of some emotional excitement and of a sense of something beautiful—he doesn't know exactly what—a vague feeling of exaltation, or perhaps of profound sadness. What is the source of these instinctive feelings, these vague intuitions and introspective sensations? The more we try to analyze, the more vague they become. To pull them apart and classify them as subjective or objective, or as this or that, means that they may be well classified and that is about all; it leaves us as far from the origin as ever. What does it all mean? What is behind it all? "The voice of God," says the artist. "The voice of the devil," says the man in the front row. Are we, because we are human beings, born with the power of innate perception of the beautiful in the abstract so that an inspiration can arise through no external stimuli of sensation or experience—no association with the outward? Or was there present, in the above instance, some kind of subconscious, instantaneous, composite image of all the mountain lakes this man had ever seen, blended as kind of overtones with the various traits of nobility of many of his friends embodied in one personality? Do all inspirational images, states, conditions, or whatever

1 AR: Whence comes the desire for expression? What is the source . . .

they may be truly called, have for a dominant part, if not for a source, some actual experience in life or of the social relation? To think that they do not—always at least—would be a relief. But as we are trying to consider music made and heard by human beings (and not by birds or angels), it seems difficult to suppose that even subconscious images can be separated from some human experience; there must be something behind subconsciousness to produce consciousness, and so on. But whatever the elements and origin of these so-called images are, that they do stir deep emotional feelings and encourage their expression is a part of the unknowable we know. They do often arouse something that has not yet passed the border line between subconsciousness and consciousness—an artistic intuition (well named, but—object and cause unknown!) Here is a program!—conscious or subconscious, what does it matter? Why try to trace any stream that flows through the garden of consciousness to its source only to be confronted by another problem of tracing this source to its source? Perhaps Emerson in "The Rhodora" answers by not trying to explain:

... if eyes were made for seeing,
Then Beauty is its own excuse for being;
Why thou wert there, O rival of the rose!
I never thought to ask, I never knew:
But, in my simple ignorance, suppose
The self-same Power that brought me there brought you.m

Perhaps Sturt answers by substitution: "Now we cannot in the strict sense explain the origin of the artistic intuition any more than the origin of any other primary function of our nature. But if, as I believe, civilisation is mainly founded on those kinds of unselfish human interest which we call knowledge and morality, it is easily intelligible that we should have a parallel interest, which we call art, closely akin and lending powerful support to the other two. It is intelligible too that moral goodness, intellectual power, high vitality, and strength should be approved by the intuition."n This reduces, or, rather, brings the problem back to a tangible basis; namely, the translation of an artistic intuition into musical soundso approving and reflecting, or endeavoring to approve and reflect, a "moral good-

m Sturt, p. 328.

n MS: into (musical) sounds.
ness,” a “high vitality,” etc., or any other human attribute—mental, moral, or spiritual.

Can music do more than this? Can it do this? And if so, who and what is to determine the degree of its failure or success? The composer, the performer (if there be any), or those who have to listen? One hearing, or a century of hearings? And if it isn’t successful, or if it doesn’t fail, what matters it? The fear of failure need keep no one from the attempt, for if the composer is sensitive, he need but launch forth a countercharge of “being misunderstood,” and hide behind it. A theme that the composer sets up as “moral goodness” may sound like “high vitality” to his friend, and but like an outburst of “nervous weakness” or only a “stagnant pool” to those not even his enemies. Expression, to a great extent, is a matter of terms, and terms are anyone’s. The meaning of “God” may have a billion interpretations if there be that many souls in the world.

There is a moral in the “Nominalist” and Realist* that will “prove all sums.” It runs something like this: No matter how sincere and confidential men are in trying to know or assuming that they do know each other’s mood and habits of thought, the net result leaves a feeling that all is left unsaid; for the reason of their incapacity to know each other, though they use the same words. They go on from one explanation to another, but things seem to stand about as they did in the beginning “because of that vicious assumption.” But we would rather believe that music is beyond any analogy to word language and that the time is coming, but not in our lifetime, when it will develop possibilities inconceivable now—a language so transcendent that its heights and depths will be common to all mankind.

* Omitted in AR: The fear of failure . . . hide behind it.

* Omitted in AR: an outburst of “nervous weakness.”

* Emerson, Essays 2, III.

* See Note 3 for the passage.