

February 19, 1981

As I read through the first three chapters of The Corded Shell, I was presented with two problems that seem worthy of comment. The first problem has to do with an element of Professor Kivy's argument that seems to be unhelpful to the argument as a whole. The second problem involves some distinctions absent from his argument but perhaps of importance to it.

1. I take it that Chapter III is devoted to establishing the difference between the arousal speech theory of musical expressiveness and the cognitive speech theory of musical expressiveness. The arousal theory is what some wags have referred to as a "feely" theory of expression with respect to the listener. According to this theory, a piece of music can be said to be expressive of an emotion or range of emotions if the piece's expressive properties resemble the expressive properties of a ~~singing~~<sup>SPEAKING</sup> voice, and if these expressive properties evoke or produce in the listener that emotion or range of emotions. That is, the listener must be able to feel at least one emotional state among the range of states of which the music he is listening to is expressive. The cognitive theory treats musical expressiveness not as a stimulus partially dependent on the occasionally idiosyncratic affective faculties of listeners, but as an embodiment of the "natural language" of the emotions, to be interpreted in standard ways by the cognitive faculties. The cognitive theory is designed to avoid at least two major drawbacks of the arousal theory: first, the critical

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excesses or absurdities<sup>v</sup> to which the arousal theory leads; and secondly, the inability of the arousal theory to account for cases in which the musical expressiveness of emotions cannot evoke the corresponding emotional states in any listener.

My problem relates to a surprising argument that occurs in the midst of Professor Kivy's otherwise careful differentiation of the two theories in the last part of Chapter III. On page 24, he seems to argue that the germ of the cognitive theory is already present in one of the "two speech theories lurking in the Camerata."

There may indeed be some confusion here. (over)

The first theory is the full-fledged arousal theory. The second theory states (in propositions (1), (2), and (3) on page 24) that the purpose of musical expressiveness is not to arouse, but to move the passions of the listener, or to arouse a passion in the listener different from the passion of which the music is expressive. I cannot understand how these two theories are essentially different. They both seem to be arousal theories, and both rest on propositions (1) and (2), though they differ somewhat with respect to (3). To bring in a second arousal theory as a transition from the first arousal theory to the cognitive theory seems at best irrelevant and at worst misleading.

2. There are two distinctions, both of which have been outlined by Tormey, that might have been usefully employed at the beginning of The Corded Shell (I do not know whether they are considered after Chapter III). The first is the distinction between non-expressive properties and expressive properties, whether of human behavior or of works of art. In so far as technical description is really talk about non-expressive

properties, and emotive description is really talk about expressive properties, I think that this first distinction is already implicit in Chapter I. The implicit could have been made explicit.

The second is the distinction between expressive properties of the work and represented expressions in the work. In Tormey's example, the gestures or countenance of David represented in Michaelangelo's painting constitute expressions of one set of emotions. The configuration of colors, of spatial perspective, etc., <sup>IN THE WORK AS A WHOLE</sup> constitute expressive properties that may refer to an entirely different set of emotions. While representative painting can possess both kinds of expressive properties, non-representative painting can possess only the more "formal" expressive properties of the work.

If the distinction between expressive properties of the work and represented expressions in the work were brought into the analysis of musical expression in Chapter III, then the following problem might arise. Songs, like representative painting, may possess both kinds of expressive properties. What one is singing about may constitute expressive properties different from those constituted by one's tone of voice, rhythm pattern, etc. If this is so, then the composer seems to have two sorts of expressive properties to choose from, when he approaches the expressive properties of songs for models for the expressive properties of his music. But now the composer, if he pretends to model musical expressiveness on singing expressiveness, is faced with a dilemma. If he models his musically expressive properties on

This will come up later in the book  
in "Tone Text" and "Style"

the expressiveness represented in the song, then he can just as well take the same models from the expressiveness represented in other modes of vocalizing, such as oratory, advertising, or ordinary conversation. Alternatively, if he looks for his models among those expressive properties constituted by the "formal" non-expressive properties of the song, such as tone, rhythm, and mood, then he really is modelling the expressive properties of music on the expressive properties of music.

If musical expressiveness is modelled on the expressiveness of what is sung about, there may be grounds for a speech theory of musical expressiveness, but one that can give no priority to song over other forms of speech. If musical expressiveness is modelled on the expressiveness of the song, then a music theory of singing expressiveness is needed to supplement the speech theory of musical expressiveness.

<sup>THE</sup>  
~~I see no way out of this dilemma for the Camerata theorists,~~  
~~though perhaps it is resolved by the end of The Corded Shell.~~  
<sup>IS TO SIDE WITH THE FIRST HORN.</sup>

It is interesting to note, by the way, that Mahler's songs and his reflections about songs exhibit a strong pre-Camerata tendency to treat the voice as but one instrument among others in the orchestra (in which, of course, the violins also "sing"). He is also known to have attacked the modern tendency of composers - of Wagner in particular - to model their music on the singing voice.

We will have to talk about this. I am not quite clear what you are saying.