

Ordinary Expression and Musical Expressiveness

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1. *Ordinary Expression and Musical Expressiveness*

Expression is, in its paradigmatic sense, the activity through which we let others know about our own mental states and the perception through which we come to know others' minds. Expressive perception will be the perceptual ability to grasp expressive behaviour, gestures, etc. Now expressive perception seems to go beyond people's mind and is exercised in cases such as aesthetically judging a landscape or responding to a work of art. These two contexts in which expressive terms are used are at least different in one great respect. While in ordinary expression someone's mind is revealed through her expressive behaviour – either in the form of bodily behaviour or through linguistic expressions- in the case of applying emotional terms to objects, landscapes or artworks, no one's mind is revealed strictly speaking. This difference has motivated the distinction – at least within the treatment that this subject has received within the philosophical reflection of music – between “expression” properly and “being expressive of”, the latter referring to the quality a work of art –a landscape, etc.- possesses such that we correctly apply an emotional term despite the fact that no one's mental state is being literally expressed. “Being expressive of”, hence, allows us to describe perceptual experiences where some expressive content seems to be grasped without attributing an expressive act to anyone. Thus, for example, while the Saint Bernard is expressive of sadness or a piece of music might be expressive of happiness, neither of them expresses sadness or happiness as a person could -if she found herself in those states.

The distinction between ordinary and artistic expression does not only distinguish between two different sorts or uses of emotional terms – one in which we actually ascribe a particular mental state to a person, and another in which we do not-, it has also been characterized in such a way that it is assumed that ordinary expressive

behaviour is prior both temporally and conceptually to artistic expression. Thus, it is usually taken for granted that artistic expression is dependent on or relative to ordinary expression; and this, in turn, means that an explanation of what artistic expressive content is has to indicate some relationship between artistic and ordinary expression that explains how the former is constituted partly through that relationship. In section II, I will spell out some of the modes in which this idea can be understood and, in section III, I will try to show that, at least in some of them, it is ill-founded or misconceived. Thus, in this paper I would like to challenge the idea that artistic expression is to a great extent dependent on, or relative to, ordinary expression. Understanding both ordinary expression and artistic expression as lying on a continuum may be more appropriate in order to explain the modes in which our expressive repertoire heightens.

But before doing so, we need to explore the reasons behind such an assumption, particularly in the case of musical expression. The reason for concentrating upon artistic expressiveness in music is that its alleged pervasive non-representational character allows for a more straightforward approach to the problem of artistic expressiveness.

1.1. *Musical expressiveness*

To a great extent music appreciation involves grasping music's expressiveness. In fact, even if there have been some periods in the history of music where expressiveness was not one of the main features sought by composers and appreciators, the idea that music is strongly related to emotion or sentiment is at least as old as the Pythagorean account of music.

This prominent place of expression within musical practice has triggered a great amount of philosophical reflection, which has brought about a resurgence, especially in the last four decades, of what has been called the "problem" of musical expressiveness. Briefly put, this problem consists of explaining how a piece of music – a sequence of well-ordered sounds – can possess expressive properties – or be described using expressive terms – given that works of music are inanimate objects. Thus, questions such as "what is it to experience an expressive piece of music?" or "by virtue of which properties, relationships, etc., do we correctly ascribe expressive content to a piece of music?" have become part of the agenda of the philosophical approach to this issue.

Different accounts have been offered to explain musical expressiveness. One consists of denying that we use expressive predicates in a literal sense when applied to musical works. Scruton (1997), for example, has defended the view that expressive predicates are metaphorical shorthand for referring to musical properties that we seem impelled to

describe with emotional terms. Others have considered the need to locate musical expressiveness in the music itself and have characterized expressive properties as perceptual properties of musical works. A piece of music is sad (and its sadness is perceived in an experience of the music), as much as it is in a given tonality or it possesses a particular rhythmic structure (Budd [1985, 1995]; Kivy [1981; 1989], or Davies [1994]). A third approach has tried to account for musical expressiveness as resulting from some imagined state through which the listener perceives the music as the expression of a musical persona (Levinson [1996]) or as the experience of emotion “from the inside” (Walton [1988; 1994]). Finally, what is known as the causal or dispositional account of musical expressiveness denies expressive properties are perceptual properties of the music but holds instead the view according to which a piece of music is correctly described as sad if it is such that it provokes a particular feeling – or non cognitive state – which is the feeling component of an emotion in the appropriate listener (Matravers [1998]).

It is interesting to note that there is no agreement over which question philosophical inquiry into musical expressiveness should primarily address¹. Thus, for example, for some views (notably, Kivy’s and Davies’ views) the core problem of musical expressiveness is to provide an account of what makes it the case that we perceive expressive properties in the music. Thus, they come up with the idea that musical expressiveness is based upon the perception of properties in the music that resemble ordinary expressive behaviour.

However, other approaches have rejected the idea that this should be the primary focus of a philosophical approach to the problem of musical expressiveness. Matravers’ view, for example, – who has rejected the idea that musical expression has anything to do with perceiving any resemblance between the music and ordinary expressive behaviour –, is partly developed under the assumption that finding the properties by virtue of which we experience music as expressive may not be, strictly speaking, a philosophical issue². Rather, a philosophical approach to the phenomenon of musical

¹ Nor is there a shared classification of these views. This means the classification offered here is just one of the possible classifications that can be found in the current literature on this issue.

² Matravers also thinks that pointing to the properties by virtue of which music is experienced as expressive will not clarify the phenomenal character of the experience of musical expressiveness for there is a wide range of properties owing to which music can be experienced as possessing expressive character. In fact the range of properties by virtue of which expressive content may be part of the musical experience is so broad and underdetermined that it is useless to try to

expressiveness should focus upon the nature of experiencing music expressively. That is, we should pay attention to the phenomenology of experiencing music that we describe in expressive terms. Thus, in line with Budd's remark in *Values of Arts*³, Matravers thinks "the" problem of musical expressiveness amounts to throwing «light on the character of this experience so as to make it clear why it is rightly described in terms drawn from the emotions» (Matravers [2007]: 196). However, it is not involved in determining which properties are responsible for the expressive content ascribed to a particular piece.

Now in spite of this complex philosophical scene, I think it is possible to examine the role that ordinary expression has played in determining different approaches to musical expressiveness and to assess to what extent this role has been characterized adequately. The significance of this inquiry will become clear after showing how different approaches make use of the notion of ordinary expression and how the role it plays in their accounts determines a wider or restricted notion of musical expressiveness.

2. *Ordinary Expression and Musical Expressiveness*

As we have seen, the problem of musical expressiveness has been characterized in different ways and has led to different accounts. While some aim at explaining what makes musical experience expressive, others think we should clarify the phenomenology of that experience without aiming at finding the properties (or relations) that make it so. As I hope to show, differences between alternative approaches do not stop here. Although most accounts make some reference to ordinary expression in order to build their views the role it plays varies notably.

Except for the defenders of the metaphoric approach, most of the views on offer tend to agree with the idea that the use of emotional terms applied to ordinary cases of the expression of an emotion and to works of art should be analogous. Thus, for example, Matravers believes that «[t]he content of the claim 'the music is sad' should overlap in the central and the aesthetic cases» (Matravers [2007]: 97). Similarly, Levinson claims that one of the «desiderata that an acceptable analysis of musical

identify them. As he puts it: «there is no reason to suppose that there are *a priori* limits on what properties of music can cause the experience of expression, nor that some of those properties will not turn out to be quite unexpected, even bizarre» (Matravers [2007]: 199).

³ «The crucial philosophical issue about the experience of hearing music as being expressive of emotion concerns the nature of the experience, not the features of the music that generate it» (Budd [1995]): 206, note 19).

expressiveness must try to meet' is the "analogy" requirement» according to which «Musical expressiveness should be seen as parallel or closely analogous to expression in its most literal sense, that is, the manifesting of psychological states through outward signs, most notably, behaviour» (Levinson [1996]: 91). What is less clear is what precise role ordinary expression plays in different accounts of musical expressiveness and the extent to which that role limits it.

I will try to distinguish between at least three senses in which this role has been conceived or characterized.

2.1. *Appearance*

One sense has to do with how ordinary expression figures in the appearance or perceptual character of expressive music; this sense is typically used in what may be called resemblance accounts of expression. As we have seen, resemblance accounts characterize musical expressiveness in terms of the resemblance relationship that holds between some features of the music and the expressive behaviour typically associated with ordinary expression. Thus, according to this sense, ordinary expression fixes the appearance of musical expressiveness in the sense of providing the perceptual models to be resembled by musical features. It has been noted that a seeming limitation of resemblance accounts lies precisely in the limited range of ordinary expressive behaviour. If, as the resemblance account holds, only those emotions for which we have a standard mode of behavioural expression, which can in turn be replicated through musical means, can be expressed by music, then, the range of emotions that can be expressed musically is quite limited. Emotions for which we lack a precise expression that could be characterized through perceptual means cannot, therefore, be expressed through musical means. The defenders of the resemblance account usually regard this consequence as unimportant but it seems that some great musical works are sometimes endowed with a kind of expressive content that fits in within the narrow scope of emotional expression allowed within this picture.

What is noticeable in this account is that ordinary expression has a strong influence on both the appearance of expressive music as well as the range of emotional states that music can express. Musical expressiveness is characterized as a perceptual appearance modelled on the appearance of ordinary expressive behaviour.

2.2. Experience

A second sense in which ordinary expression has been used or included in a characterization of musical expressiveness has to do not just with the perceptual appearance of the music, but also with the emotional experience afforded by the music. Both Levinson's and Walton's account of musical expressiveness seem to make use of this sense when they characterize the experience of musical expressiveness either as an (imaginative) experience of someone who expresses herself or as an experience of the feeling as experienced from the inside. If we look first at Levinson's account we notice that, although Levinson coincides with the resemblance accounts in the idea that musical expressiveness is related to the perceptual experience afforded by the music, he does not assume this perceptual experience has to bear some resemblance relationship to ordinary expression. For him, we perceive the music as the *sui generis* expression of a musical *persona*⁴. This means that the appearance of the expression need not replicate or resemble ordinary expression⁵ in the sense stipulated by resemblance accounts.

In what sense does ordinary expression enter into the picture offered by Levinson? If musical expressiveness is a *sui generis* mode of expression, a mode of expression which will suit a pure musical being or persona, in what sense is the experience of such *sui generis* expressiveness like the experience of ordinary expression? Although Levinson has not offered a satisfactory answer to these questions⁶ we can assume that his endorsement of the 'analogy' requirement points to the idea that the experience of musical expressiveness is to be understood as being analogous to the experience of ordinary expression. Or so he seems to believe: «[T]he extension of "sounding like" beyond the range of actual human behavioural expression, in the form of music sounding like, or as if it were, an alternate, specifically "musical" mode of expression of emotion, is both natural and imaginatively unproblematic, suitably understood»

⁴ «A passage of music P is expressive of an emotion or other psychic condition E iff P, in context, is readily and aptly heard by an appropriately backgrounded listener as the expression of E, in a *sui generis*, "musical", manner, by an indefinite agent, the music's *persona*» (Levinson [1996]: 107).

⁵ However, he has been asked to specify how we shall understand the notion of a *sui generis* expression or an expression in purely musical terms; for unless this notion is clarified we seem to lack a precise understanding of the way in which musical expressiveness takes place.

⁶ For a critical analysis of Levinson's proposal and in particular of his characterization of musical expressiveness in terms of the experience of a *sui generis* mode of expression see Matravers (2007).

(Levinson [1996]: 116).

A similar role seems to be attributed to ordinary expression in Walton's account. For him, the experience of expressive music amounts to an imaginary engagement with the auditory experience provided by the music. The listener imagines her auditory experience of the music as an experience of perceiving someone expressing an emotion or an experience of the emotion as experienced from the inside. In both cases, imagination helps to cross the bridge between ordinary expression and musical expressiveness for it helps to imaginatively experience the auditory experience of the music as an experience of something else: the experience of an emotion either expressed by someone else or as felt from the inside. Walton's account is not free of criticisms either but what I would like to focus on is the similar role that ordinary expression plays in his account of musical expressiveness. For it seems that both Levinson and Walton aim at characterizing musical expressiveness as being in some sense akin to the experience of ordinary expression. Only in the case of music do we need to introduce the imaginary device that helps the listener to imagine the music – or her experience of the music – as expressive or as the expression of someone. This alleged similarity between the experience of ordinary expression and musical expression is frequently enriched with the claim that, as well as perceiving ordinary expression usually involving some affective response on the part of the observer, the listener of expressive music will experience some emotional response as a result of her experience of musical expressiveness. In this sense, both the perceptual experience of ordinary and musical expression will be highlighted by some emotional response. The listener will be moved by her experience of musical expressiveness.

2.3. Expressive judgement content

Finally a third way in which ordinary expression seems to enter into the philosophical approach to musical expressiveness is present in remarks such as Matravers' pointed out above. The role ordinary expression plays here seems more general; for the requirement expressed in Matravers' remark refers to the content of expressive attributions in ordinary and musical cases rather than to the experience the music creates or the appearance the music possesses. For him, ordinary expression does not lay down a perceptual pattern for musical expressiveness to imitate or an experience akin to the perception of expressive behaviour. His demand seems to concern the content of expressive attributions to music. In this sense, there seem to be no limits on the appearance of expressive music and no requirement that our experience of

expressive music be analogous to the experience of ordinary expression. Any explanation of the phenomenology of the experience of musical expressiveness will be unconcerned with either of these two aspects.

Nevertheless, he thinks our pervasive use of expressive predicates in order to characterize music constitutes a philosophical problem, whose core is «to throw light on the character of the experience of hearing the music» (Matravers [2007]: 96). Allegedly, clarifying the phenomenology of the experience of expressive music could, in turn, throw some light upon the aforementioned commitment according to which the content of expressive judgements both in ordinary and musical contexts should overlap. That is, experiencing ordinary expression and musical expression, although distinct experiences⁷, should share some phenomenal quality, which gives us a reason to think the content of these two sorts of judgements coincides⁸.

3. Rethinking the relationship between ordinary expression and musical expressiveness

Now that we have distinguished between different senses in which ordinary expression is related to musical expressiveness we can address the concern expressed at the beginning.

I think that only under some of the characterizations of the relationship between musical expressiveness and ordinary expression does the notion of ordinary expression badly constrain our notion of musical expressiveness. In what follows I will try to show why I think certain models of the relationship between ordinary and musical expressiveness should be rejected. In order to do so, I will argue that the relationship between ordinary and musical expressiveness should be reconsidered. Rather than explaining musical expressiveness as dependent upon ordinary expression we should place both expressive repertoires on a continuum.

⁷ «If the account was that expressive music was music that was heard as if it were within the range of actual human behavioural expression of emotion, it would be enlightening were it true — although obviously it is not true. The problem of expression surely is just that we do not hear expressive music as falling within the range of actual human behavioural expression of emotion» (Matravers [2007]: 106).

⁸ As it is well-known, Matravers account of musical expressiveness holds that our attributions of musical predicates to pieces of music are based upon the following phenomenon: «a passage of music expresses an emotion if, among the mental states caused by the music, is some non-cognitive state (a feeling) which stands in the right relation to the appropriate reaction to the expression of that emotion in the central case» (Matravers [1998]: 146).

Thus, I would like to understand musical expressiveness without assuming that ordinary expression is the paradigmatic model from which musical expressiveness, and other forms of artistic expression, will follow. That is, I will argue that it may be beneficial for our understanding of musical expressiveness to give up the idea that musical expressive character must to some extent mimic or mirror ordinary expression in order to be fully expressive.

To motivate this idea I will appeal to a couple of thoughts which may, if convincing, show that our understanding of ordinary and artistic expressiveness, and, in particular, of musical expressiveness need not be radically differentiated.

The first thought centres on the shared practices and circumstances where both ordinary and artistic (or what is taken to be a somewhat more elaborated form of expression) expression are displayed and developed. The second explores some analogies between music and language in order to motivate the idea that expressive language and expressive music may be used in order to clarify each other and, in turn, enrich each other.

3.1. *Expression and community*

According to some views of how ordinary expression evolves and is acquired by a subject, it may become easier to show that ordinary and artistic modes of expression can only be artificially separated. It is widely accepted that what we call natural expression is partly the result of the processes involved in being brought up within a culture. That is, we become expressive subjects as we grow within a culture or community. We all cry and smile, but the way we perform these gestures or the circumstances for doing so are partly fixed by the acquisition of certain patterns of expressive behaviour within our culture. Under this view, ordinary expression – what is also called natural expression – is strongly tied to how expressive practices have been acquired and integrated into our expressive repertoire.

Now, as we acquire expressive abilities that manifest themselves in certain behaviours or verbal expressions, we grow up surrounded by music, dance, pictures, etc., through which we learn our expressive repertoire as much as by looking at other expressive subjects. Especially in early childhood expressive forms are taken from both adult expressive behaviour (usually displayed in an exaggerated manner) and songs – lullabies, songs through which we learn animal and natural sounds; songs that facilitate language learning, etc. – pictures or toys, which represent expressive faces, dances where certain bodily movements become associated with both emotional states

and certain musical patterns, etc. Given the pervasive presence of such expressive devices, there is reason to believe that our expressive repertoire becomes as much constituted by behavioural and linguistic practices as by certain musical patterns, dancing movements, or visual configurations. That is, our expressive repertoire feeds equally from exercising behavioural and linguistic expression and from engaging with expressive artworks⁹.

Of course, the extent to which these two sources become predominant or effective in the constitution of our expressive repertoire will depend on how much or how little we actually relate to these expressive resources. We can easily imagine cases where there is very little contact with these expressive forms and, consequently, ordinary expression permeability to artistic forms of expression will be less noticeable. Thus, the truth of this claim will largely depend on the usual presence of certain artistic forms and practices within a “form of life”¹⁰. Nevertheless, it could be claimed that in general we grow up as much in a behavioural atmosphere as in an artistic – broadly understood – atmosphere. That is, our expressive repertoire grows not only as we acquire a particular behavioural repertoire within a community but also through our artistic expressive works and practices.

I have intentionally introduced the Wittgensteinian notion of «form of life» in order to refer to the imbrications of behavioural, linguistic and artistic forms of expression and their simultaneous role in constituting our expressive repertoire. For him, understanding expression both in ordinary and artistic cases requires familiarity and acquaintance with the form of life embedded in a community. For example, certain expressive features of a piece of music may be related to aspects – such as intonation¹¹ – that belong to a shared language, or to characteristic movements or gestures usually embedded in that culture or community. In fact, part of the inspiration for the claim defended here – the idea that artistic expression should, in some sense, be considered on a par with what we call

⁹ By artwork I refer here to a very broad class of artefacts, which may possess expressive forms that are usually taken to be artistic means. It does not need to be of a very high quality or possess a lot of sophistication. But if it does, and it is sufficiently popular, the better.

¹⁰ The Wittgensteinian notion of «form of life talpa» can be found in several of his writings, see, for example, Wittgenstein (1953) and Wittgenstein (1978), § 47.

¹¹ «Does the theme point to nothing beyond itself? Oh yes! But that means: — The impression it makes on me is connected with things in its surroundings — e.g. with the existence of German language, and of its intonation, but that means with the whole field of our language games» (Wittgenstein [1980]: 51-52e).

ordinary expression and not as its substitute- comes from some remarks that can be found in Wittgenstein's writings on the understanding and appreciation of music, and, in particular, on grasping the expressive character of music.

Wittgenstein frequently clarifies expressive perception both in ordinary contexts and in musical (or artistic) ones using the notion of «aspect perception». Aspect perception or seeing-as is the perceptual ability that allows us to see a particular arrangement as fitting alternative descriptions. Thus, for example, we can see in the duck-rabbit figure a “duck” or a “rabbit” without any alterations in the drawing's configuration. Perceiving the duck or the rabbit will illustrate the possibilities of seeing-as afforded by that configuration. Similarly, for Wittgenstein, perceiving the sadness of a face, or the sadness of a piece of music, is to see its features under a certain aspect. The two phenomena are part of a unified whole; that is, they involve the same sort of recognitional abilities. Moreover, the descriptions that usually help to clarify the content of perceiving an expressive aspect in ordinary and musical contexts tend to be reciprocal. The two phenomena illuminate each other. Thus, for example, a facial expression or a gesture may be what clarifies the expressive content of a musical passage¹². And, maybe, vice versa, someone could clarify her perceptual experience of an expressive face or gesture by comparing it with a musical piece. Thus, a musical passage, phrase or piece could be used instead of an ordinary expressive means in order to elucidate our feelings.

These remarks concerning understanding expressive music may be regarded as favouring the idea put forward above: that musical expressiveness and ordinary expressiveness may be considered as two forms that constitute our expressive repertoire in tandem within a given «form of life». Of course, as we have already pointed out, the spontaneity with which an expressive musical passage can be perceived will depend on the degree and intensity with which a particular community of expression is acquainted with musical forms. But, once music practice and appreciation

¹² «There is a certain expression proper to the appreciation of music, in listening, playing and at other times too. Sometimes gestures form part of this expression, but sometimes it will be just be a matter of how a man plays, or hums, now and again of the comparisons he draws and the images with which he as it were illustrates the music. Someone who understands music will listen differently (e.g. with a different expression in his face), he will talk differently, from someone who does not. But he will show that he understands a particular theme not just in manifestations that accompany his hearing or playing that theme but in his understanding for music in general» (Wittgenstein [1980]: 70e).

is strongly embedded within a culture, it does not seem unreasonable to hold that the common expressive repertoire is as much behavioural as musical.

It should be noticed that this idea also fits quite nicely with the more or less established thought that artworks may stimulate and enrich our perceptual abilities so that we can become, in turn, finer in our ordinary perceptual practice. If this is so, and, given that a special sort of perceptual ability, i.e., expressive perception, has been said to allow the grasping of expressive content, it could be claimed that the way artistic, and, in particular, music expressiveness constitutes new expressive modes can in fact enrich our expressive perceptual abilities.

3.2. *Music and Language*

I would like now to examine another motivation for rejecting the idea that musical expressiveness should be understood as being dependent upon ordinary expression, which can be traced back to some considerations about the relationships between music and language. If these considerations are cogent, it could be said that the expressive character music possesses when it is somehow experienced *as* a language, or as possessing linguistic features, needs not undermine the main idea defended in this paper: that ordinary expression and musical expressiveness should be conceived as lying on a continuum.

Much has been said about the relationship between music and language, both for and against it. It has been frequently claimed, in order to argue against the Romantic idea that music is the language of emotion or sentiment, that music is not a proper language for it lacks semantic content¹³. However, the syntactic character of music is much more widely-recognised and the idea that musical understanding frequently involves, among other things, grasping syntactic relations seems to be more or less accepted. Now although the lack of semantic content seems to deprive music of the possibility to “say” things the way ordinary language does, the possibility of possessing expressive character by virtue of the syntactical relations exemplified in a piece of music could still be explored.

¹³ Usually the denial that music is a sort of language focuses upon the lack of semantic content of musical structures. This, in turn, has been frequently used in order to deny that music can convey any meaning or communicate propositional thought, ideas, concepts, etc. For a canonical defence of these ideas see Hanslick (1854).

Now assuming music and language are akin in the sense of possessing syntactic features, we need to answer the following questions: is the expressiveness of language and music related at least to some extent to these features? If so, does music acquire expressive content by imitating expressive language? Or, as I will try to suggest, can music become expressive without necessarily mirroring expressive utterances? In order to answer these questions we need to see, first, how to understand the similitude between music and language; and, secondly, whether this resemblance involves that musical expressiveness being dependent upon language's expressiveness when it is experienced as resulting from music's linguistic appearance.

In order to explore the relationship between music and language I will draw, once more, on Wittgenstein's reflections on the understanding of music for they abound in the idea that understanding music and understanding language may overlap in certain respects. Wittgenstein frequently compared the activity of understanding a musical "phrase" with that of understanding a proposition. As he put it: «understanding a musical phrase may also be called understanding a *language*» (Wittgenstein [1967]: paragraph 172, 30e). Or, similarly, «Musical themes are in a certain sense propositions. Knowledge of the nature of logic will for this reason lead to knowledge of the nature of music» (Wittgenstein [1961]: 7.2.15, 40e).

How shall we understand this simile? Under some weak or thin reading, Wittgenstein will be merely drawing a comparison between music and language in order to illuminate some aspects of the activity of understanding the former by appealing to our allegedly more intuitive grasping of the latter. However, I think this weak or thin reading is not coherent with some of the ideas Wittgenstein seemed to endorse and, therefore, does not do justice to the implications that this comparison may convey.

In order to motivate the idea that the relationship between understanding language and understanding music should be understood in a stronger sense, I will focus upon the idea, developed in several of his writings, which holds that understanding music may involve a kind of structural or grammatical perception that is shared by both language and music. There seems to be a similarity between noticing that a sequence of words makes sense as a proposition and perceiving that a musical sequence, or "phrase", makes sense or possesses a certain orientation. In both cases, there is a certain logical or grammatical structure the listener must be able to grasp if she is to understand both language and music. In this sense, there is a sense of grammatical or syntactic correction that applies to our grasping of musical and linguistic "phrases" which is determined by their respective grammatical structures. This kind of understanding may take place even

if no semantic aspect is involved. As when one understands that a sequence of sounds is an utterance without knowing the language the utterance is in. In this regard, Wittgenstein, in clarifying the notion of music understanding, claims that «If I say for instance: here it's as though a conclusion were being drawn, here as though someone were expressing agreement, or as though *this* were a reply to what come before, -- my understanding of it presupposes my familiarity with conclusions, expressions of agreement, replies» (Wittgenstein [1980]: 52e).

Beyond the fact that both music and language understanding seem to involve the ability to grasp certain logical or syntactical relationships, Wittgenstein also notices two more significant phenomena. On the one hand, it seems as if music could be heard as an unknown language; that is, it is as if music was a language whose semantics are hidden to us. On the other hand, Wittgenstein notices that language seems to possess musical features. To illustrate these two ideas, Wittgenstein invites us to imagine the following: «Mightn't we imagine a man who, never having had any acquaintance with music, comes to us and hears someone playing a reflective piece of Chopin and is convinced that this is a language and people merely want to keep the meaning secret from him? There is a strongly musical element in verbal language (A sigh, the intonation of voice in a question, in an announcement, in longing; all the innumerable *gestures* made with the voice)» (Wittgenstein [1967]: paragraph 161, 20e). Thus, if we can sometimes talk of the "way the music speaks" we can also acknowledge that verbal language contains a strong "musical element".

These remarks suggest that there are also features that go beyond structural coherence, which might be characterized as expressive, and which are grasped in the processes of understanding both language and music. Noticing whether a musical phrase – or a linguistic expression in a language we do not know – is angry or serene will be an example of this sort of understanding. This would further support the claim defended here, for as well as musical expressiveness may possess features that suggest or indicate other modes of expression, such as verbal expression, ordinary modes of expression could get mixed up with musical expressive motifs (like when a singing tone of voice may convey some expression to the hearer¹⁴).

¹⁴ Maybe rap music is an interesting example in this regard. It could be described as a form of language communication or style, which makes a considerable musical use of rhythmic and phonetic-tied features or as a style of music that exploits linguistic features.

Thus, Wittgenstein would not only point to a similitude between music and language with respect to the fact that both seem to possess a particular grammatical or logical structure, he would also be inviting the thought that some of the features that a hearer or listener typically identifies with when engaging with speech or music are of the same kind or belong to the same family. Similar grammatical structures or similar gestural features will be part of grasping music and language. In exploring this idea he claims: «Don't we have an impression that a model for this theme already exists in reality and the theme only approaches it, corresponds to it, if this section is repeated? (...) Yet there just *is* no paradigm apart from the theme. And yet again there *is* a paradigm apart from the theme: namely, the rhythm of our language, of our thinking and feeling. And the theme, moreover, the theme is a *new* part of our language; it becomes incorporated into it; we learn a new *gesture*. The theme interacts with language» (Wittgenstein [1980]: 52e).

Hence, the fact that music may lend some features to language and that music can be perceived as if it was a language also favours the idea, pointed out earlier, that understanding both music and language may be embedded in a shared form of life. Accordingly, this embedding would also explain their mutual borrowings.

Given these similarities, we can now ask whether musical expressiveness must be pictured as dependent on language expressiveness or if we should embrace a more balanced view of the relationship between the two. It seems that, at least as the relationship between music and language is understood within a Wittgensteinian spirit, we could shed light on our comprehension of language expressiveness through musical keys and vice versa, we could make sense of our understanding of music and its expressive character by experiencing it as if it were a language. This invites the idea that music expressiveness, albeit resulting from perceiving music as if it were a language, does not need to replicate language expressiveness. Rather, the fact that language could borrow expressive features from music seems to suggest these features are not necessarily derived or taken from expressive language, but they have, as it were, a life of their own. Language and music could not illuminate each other in the way suggested by Wittgenstein if the latter could only acquire its expressive content by imitating the former. Besides, the idea that understanding expression, both in linguistic and musical manifestations, requires general abilities to locate these expressions within a form of life and also favours a view of expression that tends to erase the boundaries between ordinary and artistic expression. Understanding both forms of expression may require performing similar activities within the same form of life.

These two ideas, in my view, pave the way for a picture of understanding music that is akin to the main thought put forward in this paper; i.e., the thought that the expressive features that can be developed within musical practices can possess a life of their own in the sense of being the result of working out specific musical structures. Thus, musical expressive content should not be understood as being strongly dependent on our prior grasp of ordinary expression – be it linguistic or behavioural – but as contributing to our more expanded expressive repertoire. We have seen that this idea could be supported by the fact that musical expressiveness is, at least in certain forms of life, as pervasive in the processes through which we acquire our expressive repertoire as other forms of expression. Moreover, the fact that music understanding shares some significant aspects with understanding language, for both sorts of understandings seem to be based upon grasping something like grammatical or structural features, seems to favour the idea that similar patterns of understanding are shared by language and music. Consequently, the thought that music can borrow certain aspects from language is complemented by the idea that language can borrow certain features from music and, hence, that expressiveness in both domains can be enriched both ways. Of course, the degree to which musical expressiveness can enrich our expressive repertoire will depend upon the pervasiveness of musical practices within a culture and upon the insertion of musical activities within different aspects of daily life. But just as we can illuminate our understanding of a musical passage by drawing on a comparison with a gesture or a verbal expression, we can enrich our understanding of an emotion through its musical expression.

4. Coda. Final remarks on the relationship between ordinary and musical expressiveness

In section II, I have explored different ways in which the relationship between ordinary expression and musical expressiveness has been understood. I distinguished three different modes in which this relationship could be characterized. Now, if the claim defended in III is reasonable, we can examine whether any of these three senses are compatible with it. I think there is clearly a mode of understanding the relationship between ordinary and musical expressiveness, i.e., the view defended by the resemblance accounts of musical expressiveness, which will be incompatible with the idea defended in III. This incompatibility follows from the fact that, for a defender of the resemblance view of musical expressiveness, music can only be experienced as expressive if it possesses features that resemble features of ordinary expression. This means that musical expressiveness can only constitute itself by mimicking ordinary

expression and not by producing a sort of expressiveness that could have a life of its own. Furthermore, the picture defended by resemblance accounts would also preclude one of the thoughts that I have tried to motivate in this paper: that musical expressiveness, and artistic expressiveness in general, can enrich our ordinary expressive repertoires once they are fully embraced.

What can be said about the other two modes of understanding the relationship between ordinary and musical expressiveness? It seems that the focus upon the experience and the content of expressive judgements does not directly conflict with the ideas put forward here. Although they both aspire to offer some picture of that relationship between ordinary and musical expressiveness they do not seem to subdue musical expression to a prior grasp of ordinary expressive behaviour. To that extent the idea defended in this paper would not conflict with these modes of understanding the relationship between ordinary and musical expressiveness. Neither of them constrains the possibilities of musical expressiveness in terms of an established repertoire of ordinary expression and, thus, it could be possible for musical expression to have the sort of life portrayed in this paper.¹⁵

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