

Emotions in Music: Hanslick and His False Follower

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Nick Zangwill (2004, 2007) appears to be acquiring the status of repudiator-in-chief of emotion in music. He is invoked in this role by such authors as Kraut (2007, p. 67), Bonds (2014, p. 5), Robinson (2014), Young (2014, pp. vii, 1, 3–4, 151), Davies (2017) and Kania (2017). His ‘manifesto’ paper (2004) was recently reprinted in Lamarque and Olsen (2018, pp. 574–582). This development is unfortunate, because Zangwill, for all his radical-sounding theses, actually argues against views that hardly anyone holds. What is more, some of his arguments in favour of the obvious seem confused and defective. But as for his really radical thesis that ‘Music, in itself, has nothing to do with emotion’, he provides hardly any justification. What is more, contrary to what Zangwill believes, such justification is not to be found in Hanslick, who in fact sees emotional content as a relatively important element of music.

1. Against Emotion

In his article ‘Against Emotion: Hanslick Was Right about Music’, the principal thesis of which is contained in the title, Nick Zangwill (2004, p. 29) claims that ‘Music, in itself, has nothing to do with emotion’. He goes on to argue that ‘it is not essential to music to possess emotion, *arouse* emotion, *express* emotion, or *represent* emotion’, before concluding (2004, pp. 42–43): ‘What role, then, does emotion play in what music is, and in our experience of music? Answer: none of any significance. . . . Hanslick was right’. Zangwill thereby adheres to the standard view of Eduard Hanslick (1986)¹ as a representative of formalism, which is most often regarded as extreme and untenable.

At the same time, although Zangwill formulates theses that ostensibly sound radical and extreme, one may gain the impression that he is actually arguing solely against views that no one really holds. In other words, that, far from proposing anything controversial, he is merely preaching to the converted, since already in the preface of his article he declares:

My targets here are restricted to what I call ‘literalist’ theories, which invoke the existence of genuine emotion. There are theories that propose that in musical experience we *imagine* music as somehow connected with emotions, without real emotions being in play. Roger Scruton and Jerrold Levinson have proposed theories of this sort, and I offer no objections to these views here. The theories I criticize in this paper postulate some real relation between music and genuine emotion. (Zangwill, 2004, p. 29)

1 I refer to Payzant’s translation (1986), instead of the newer translation by Rothfarb and Landerer (2018), as Zangwill obviously used the former.

However, theories postulating that it is essential to music that it express or represent genuine emotions—those of the composer and/or the performer, one may surmise—or arouse genuine emotions in the listener are widely considered—not without good reason—to be naive and unsound (see below, Section 2). At issue here is not the weaker assertion that music can arouse, and sometimes does arouse, real emotions or that it may perhaps also represent the expression of such emotions. Such a possibility is usually accepted, and Zangwill is no exception here (2004, pp. 34, 35, 38). What is usually questioned is the stronger thesis that such arousal or expression of real emotions is essential to music, partly in the sense that it explains the widely used emotional descriptions of music. The legitimacy of such descriptions—so it turns out—is also accepted by Zangwill (2004, pp. 31, 36, 42), perhaps somewhat surprisingly in the context of his assertion that ‘Music, in itself, has nothing to do with emotion’ (2004, p. 29). What is more, in relation to such descriptions, he declares: ‘A positive account needs to be given of this’ (2004, p. 42). What he is really criticizing is the assumption that emotional descriptions of music can be explained in terms of the possession, expression, representation or arousal of real emotions experienced by someone.

But that is precisely what is widely regarded as naive and is maintained by virtually no one. Indeed, in relation to the possession of emotions, Zangwill himself admits as much: ‘Let us start with the simplest case, the possession theory, even if *no one has actually held it*’ [italics added] (2004, p. 30), since—one may easily infer—it would be a theory according to which music was literally sad or cheerful; that is to say, it experienced sadness or cheerfulness.² Yet already with regard to the view that an essential feature of music is the arousal of genuine emotions in the receiver, Zangwill writes: ‘Many theorists say that it is’ (2004, p. 33). In respect to the position that an essential feature of music is the expression or representation of emotions genuinely experienced by the composer and/or performer, he declares: ‘Some writers on music think ...’ (2004, p. 37). Yet he gives no names.³ This is hardly surprising, since, as noted above, such theories are widely regarded as naive and inadequate, and virtually no one upholds them. Admittedly, in his later article (2007), which represents the continuation of the article discussed here, Zangwill points to four such supposed theories:

For an example of an expression theory, see Aaron Ridley, *Music, Value and the Passions* (Cornell University Press, 1995); Derek [sic] Cooke, *The Language of Music* (Oxford University Press, 1990). For an example of an arousal theory, see Derek Matravers, *Art and Emotion* (Oxford University Press, 2001). For an example of a representational

2 It is curious that Zangwill sees the need to argue against such a standpoint: he devotes two whole pages to it!

3 Only when considering the possibility of the arousal of moods—by which Zangwill understands feelings that lack intentional objects—does he explicitly refer to the standpoint of Jenefer Robinson, which he subjects to criticism. However, Robinson’s theory is not one according to which, in general, ‘it is essential to music to arouse moods’, since she postulates that only some emotional descriptions of music can be explained in this way. In any case, even if we assume that this theory—as far as it goes—is indeed a genuinely existing opposition for Zangwill, he fails to fully repel that single purported opponent, as will be shown below, in Section 5.

theory, see Susan [sic] Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1953). (Zangwill 2007, p. 399, n. 2)⁴

As will be shown below, however, these ascriptions are to a greater or lesser extent false: none of the enumerated theories can really be considered ‘literalist’ as Zangwill understands it. But there is a theory that could be seen as a real target of his attacks. In the famous formulation of Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910), it reads as follows:

Art is a human activity consisting in this, that one man consciously, by means of certain external signs, hands on to others feelings he has lived through, and that other people are infected by these feelings, and also experience them. (Tolstoy 1899, p. 43)

This is one of the ‘classic’ theories of expression, which, combined with arousal theory, as in the passage quoted above, is known as ‘transmission theory’; that is, transmission from the artist to the recipient. Also usually cited as representatives of classic expression theory are John Dewey (1859–1952), Benedetto Croce (1866–1952), Curt Ducasse (1881–1969) and R. G. Collingwood (1889–1943). The thing is, such views were challenged from the 1940s onwards and by the 1960s had been in principle abandoned, as will be shown in the following section.

2. Historical Overview

Before recalling some points in the history of that debate, in order to show that the literalist stances criticized by Zangwill have long since been conclusively rejected, a certain remark should be made. What follows will inevitably be of a historical character, and as such may be held to be missing the point. After all, Zangwill unequivocally declares, ‘My discussion will be resolutely ahistorical’ (2004, p. 30, n. 6), and compares his method to science that in principle advances general theses with universal, suprahistorical pretensions. Yet the impression that a survey of the standpoints and arguments that preceded Zangwill’s article is irrelevant to his ahistorical way of arguing is entirely false. One might even say that in some sense precisely the opposite is true.

The purpose of such a historical survey is to establish the status of the arguments that Zangwill uses and the theses he defends, since the suspicion arises that they have long since been regarded as proven and uncontroversial. Arguing in favour of such theses could only be regarded as neither redundant nor superfluous if their intended discussion was of a historical character. Then one might say that in the new, present-day context those theses needed analysing and evaluating anew, and possibly redefending. If, however, they are treated as suprahistorical and possessing ‘justifiable claim to objective truth’ (Zangwill, 2004, p. 30, n. 6), then the fact that they have already been conclusively substantiated is absolutely fatal to the project of presenting and demonstrating them once again. The

4 Deryck Cooke’s book was originally published in 1959, which is of some importance in the present context (see below, Section 3). ‘London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1953’ applies in fact to another of Susanne Langer’s books: *Feeling and Form*. The correct information for *Philosophy in a New Key* is Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1942.

comparison with science proposed by Zangwill might be thus continued: a physicist submitting Newton's theory of gravity to a refereed journal or a mathematician presenting proof of a theorem published just a couple of years previously by his colleague—such situations are utterly inconceivable.

Following that clarification, let us return to the presentation of the pre-Zangwill theses and arguments challenging literalist views on the relation between music and emotions. One of the first authors to do so was Susanne Langer (1895–1985). In her well-known book *Philosophy in a new key* (1942, pp. 214–217), she roundly criticized the view that it was of the essence of music to express the genuine emotions of the composer or performer (which Langer calls self-expression) or to arouse real emotions in the listener (1942, pp. 218–219). Her positive view is that music represents emotions. In this sense, Zangwill is right to call this a representational theory. Yet according to Langer music does not represent real emotions experienced by anyone:

Feelings revealed in music are essentially *not* 'the passion, love or longing of such-and-such an individual', ... but are presented directly to our understanding, that we may grasp, realize, comprehend these feelings, without pretending to have them or imputing them to anyone else. (Langer 1942, p. 222)

Another restriction is the assertion that music represents only 'dynamic patterns of human experience' (Langer 1942, p. 226) or 'only the morphology of feeling; and it is quite plausible that some sad and some happy conditions may have a very similar morphology' (1942, p. 238). It is clear that we are not dealing here with real, genuine emotions, and so in no way can such a view be regarded as literalist in the Zangwillian sense.

However, it is not Langer's position that is regarded as the most categorical break with classic expression theory, but the famous pronouncement made in 1950 by Oets Kolk Bouwsma:

now, unabashed, we shall say that the music is sad, and we shall not go on to say that this means that the music expresses sadness. For the sadness is to the music rather like the redness to the apple, than it is like the burp to the cider. And above all we shall not, having heard the music or read the poem, ask, 'What does it express?' (Bouwsma 1950, p. 94)

So Bouwsma perceives in music certain emotional qualities, which—on account of the analogy with the apple's redness—may be regarded as its perceptual properties. Naturally, his standpoint is not literalist, since he did not mean to suggest the absurd idea that music could literally experience an emotion. In Zangwill's terminology, it might be called a theory of nonliteral possession. Bouwsma explains music's possession of such properties as follows:

Sad music has some of the characteristics of people who are sad. It will be slow, not tripping; it will be low, not tinkling. People who are sad move more slowly, and when they speak, they speak softly and low. (Bouwsma 1950, p. 95)

He thereby subscribes to the centuries-old tradition initiated by Plato (*Republic*, 399a–c; *Laws*, 654e–655b, 669c), and in general currency during the seventeenth and eighteenth

centuries (cf. [Guczalski 2012](#), pp. 201–202), according to which music imitates the outward expression of emotion in the human body: in one’s voice, posture, gesticulation, and so on. A much more influential aesthetician to share a similar opinion was Monroe Beardsley, who even goes on to say with respect to music: ‘There is no need for the term “express”’ ([1958](#), p. 332).

The view that music’s emotional properties reside within it, that they are perceptual qualities of music, found a place in the more wide-ranging theory presented by Peter Kivy, in his well-known book *The corded shell* ([1980](#)), and at the latest from that moment on it became widely and generally accepted, as Kivy himself observed nineteen years later:

the central thesis of *The Corded Shell*, that expressiveness is in the music, the redness to the apple, not the burp to the cider, was accepted by almost the entire community of British and American philosophers interested in the question. ([Kivy 1999](#), p. 1)

Yet in relation to further issues concerning the relationship between music and emotions, there exist a number of controversies, as indeed Kivy himself admits in the above-quoted article. One such controversy concerns the listener’s reaction to the emotional qualities present in music. In his book Kivy robustly defended the view that the emotions present in music are not experienced by the listener but are merely read from the music as its qualities—a standpoint that is sometimes called ‘cognitivist’.⁵ This view met with quite widespread criticism and rejection. Most authors are of the opinion that music typically has a tendency to arouse expressed emotions, something that Stephen Davies, for example, calls ‘mirroring responses’ ([1994](#), p. 279).⁶ Yet no one comes out in favour of full-blown arousal theory, according to which music’s emotional qualities would simply amount to its power to arouse those emotions in the listener; as already mentioned, such a view is generally held to be untenable. Davies states plainly:

music possesses its expressive character *independently* of its arousing emotions reflecting that character. Nevertheless, I believe that sad music might lead some listeners to feel sad, *even if music’s expressiveness is not to be explained by its power to awaken that response*. ([Davies 1994](#), p. 279, italics added)

To use Zangwill’s words, one might say that ‘it is not essential to music to arouse emotions’—music can only occasionally arouse them in some listeners. What is more, Davies asserts that when music arouses emotional responses, they are not typical, full-blown emotions: they are not accompanied by corresponding emotional objects, beliefs, dispositions to act in a certain way, implications for one’s life, etc. Consequently, they are not feelings of the type or the strength of ordinary, true emotions ([Davies, 1994](#), pp. 302–308). So his view is not literalist in the Zangwillian sense. Thus for two reasons this is not the standpoint

5 In ([1993](#)), reacting to Colin Radford’s critique ([1989, 1991](#)), Kivy slightly moderated his view by allowing that ‘the expressive properties of music have a *tendency* to arouse those same emotions in listeners’ ([1993](#), p. 5). At the same time Kivy partially eviscerated his concession by asserting: ‘for me and my ilk ... whatever tendency expressive music may have to arouse in us the emotions it is expressive of, is systematically suppressed’ ([1993](#), p. 6).

6 Other adherents to such a view include Jerrold Levinson, Colin Radford, Alan [Goldman](#) and Aaron Ridley.

that Zangwill is criticizing: neither is it claimed that aroused feelings are essential to music, nor are they real, genuine emotions. In this respect, the standpoint of other authors is similar, even if they propose a slightly different description of an emotional response to music that does not amount to real, genuine, full-blown emotion (cf. e.g. Levinson, 1990, pp. 313–314; 1996, p. 113).⁷

3. Alleged Literalist Theories

Such is also the case with Derek Matravers, who is identified by Zangwill as being a representative of one kind of arousal theory. Matravers proposes the following definition:

A work of art *x* expresses the emotion *e* if ... *x* arouses ... a feeling which would be an aspect of the appropriate reaction to the expression of *e* by a person ... (Matravers 2001, p. 146)

In so saying, Matravers is one of very few authors to equate an expressive property of an artwork with the arousal of some feeling (but not, *nota bene*, with the feeling aroused) and so in this instance it should be said that the arousal of feelings is essential to expressive art; but here too there is no question of real, genuine emotions, but only of ‘an *aspect* of the appropriate reaction’. He goes on to give the following qualification:

The claim that it is appropriate to react to expressive art with a feeling or emotion ... exists in weak and strong, plausible and implausible versions. The strong and implausible version is that the emotional state ... is of the full-blooded kind. ... The weak and more plausible version is the claim that a purely cognitive response is inappropriate when faced with an expressive work of art. Amongst the mental states caused by perceiving such a work, it would be appropriate if there were a state (or incipient state) whose nature were in some way bound up with the emotions. (Matravers, 2001, pp. 146–147)

This shows that Zangwill’s classification of Matravers’s standpoint—which he himself distinctly calls ‘weak arousal theory’—as literalist is wrong, and so Zangwill is deprived of another opponent and object of criticism.

Also Aaron Ridley calls his view ‘weak arousal theory’ (1995a, pp. 52–54; 1995b, pp. 128–134), although, unlike Matravers, he does not equate the emotional description of music with the arousal of some emotional response or other. He recalls a standard argument against the full-blown ‘strong arousal theory’ of the literalist sort:

7 The views of Davies and Levinson motivated Kivy to an even greater concession in (1999) than in (1993). While in (1993) he basically upheld his earlier opinion that ‘some listeners experience music as I do, deeply moved by its beauty, but not moved to sadness by the sadness of the music, happiness by the happiness of the music, and so on’ (1993, p. 9), in (1999) he was ready to admit: ‘where the musical emotion, on my view, has, as its intentional object, musical sadness, or musical happiness, and so forth, it is *sadness-like*, or *happiness-like* [italics added], or whatever, because like some real cases of sadness and happiness, it has those emotions, at least as expressive properties of the music, as its intentional objects’ (1999, p. 11).

we can and do describe pieces of music as jolly even if we feel nothing at all when we listen to them. ... we can find a jolly piece of music acutely irritating just *because* of its jollity. (Ridley 1995b, p. 127)

This means that the feeling ascribed to music and the feeling aroused by it can be distinctly different. What is more, since the arousal of a certain feeling (irritation in Ridley's example) can be caused by a different feeling quality (jollity) perceived in music, the latter precedes the former and so obviously cannot be explained in terms of it. Furthermore, Ridley declares:

I agree with the widely held view that any such account [of musical expressiveness] will include reference to the resemblance of certain passages of (instrumental) music to human expressive behaviour. (Ridley 1995a, p. 49)

That is, he considers music's expressiveness—as do many others—to be a property of music itself, that is, a quality which makes it similar to human expressive behaviour. He only takes the view that referring to the above-mentioned similarity is insufficient to account for musical expressiveness, and some additional appeal to emotional response has to be made. In this context, it seems surprising that Zangwill cites Ridley as a representative of literalist *expression* theory, that is, a theory according to which 'it is the main function of all or most music to express [real] emotions' (Zangwill, 2007, p. 391). We find an explanation of such a designation of Ridley in chapter VIII of his book, where he sets forth a theory of expressiveness as the expression of a fictive persona that we sometimes construct while perceiving a work and endow with the emotional qualities we find in music (Ridley, 1995b, pp. 181–195). So under no circumstances is this the expression of real emotions; it is merely a notion of the expression of emotions that are inferred from a work's emotional qualities.

The last alleged representative of literalist emotion theory is Deryck Cooke, with his book *The Language of Music*, first published as early as 1959, which Zangwill cites as an example of expression theory. Admittedly, Cooke makes a number of statements to the effect that 'music does in fact express composers' subjective experience' (1959, p. 10), still in the spirit of the classic expression theory which in his time had only quite recently been undermined. At the same time, however, it is clear that what Cooke is most concerned with is acknowledging—contrary to Stravinsky's famous declaration, for example—that music is in some way expressive:

those who have found music expressive of anything at all (the majority of mankind) have found it expressive of emotion. ... Dryden ... showed that he regarded music as emotionally expressive ... (Cooke 1959, p. 12)

As part of his 'evidence', Cooke quotes Mozart speaking of the expression of the emotions of characters in one of his operas (1959, p. 13)—and so by no means the expression of any real emotions. At the same time, it might be noted that the defence of one literalist emotion theory or another was by no means the principal subject of Cooke's book. Its subject is expressed in its title, and the main thesis reads as follows: 'it is undeniable (as Chapters 2 and 3 attempt to demonstrate) that composers have consciously or unconsciously used music as a language, from at least 1400 onwards' (Cooke 1959, pp. 13–14).

But even allowing that Zangwill may be partially right in this one case, there has not really been any significant representative of literalist emotion theories since 1959, when Cooke published his book, and so no real opponents against whom Zangwill's criticism could be directed. As Kivy noted, there is a relatively broad consensus that emotional descriptions of music refer to emotional qualities present within it as perceptual properties (1999, p. 1). And since no one, of course, means to suggest that music actually experiences emotions, we must be dealing with a *nonliteral* use of emotional terms in relation to music.⁸ Just such a view was expressed by Beardsley as early as 1958: "This music is joyful" . . . is a metaphorical description, to be sure, but it is no less a description for being metaphorical' (1958, p. 328).

4. Zangwill's Repudiation of Emotion

This relatively common view—that emotional descriptions of music are in a sense metaphorical—proves to be Zangwill's main positive thesis: he mentions it already in the conclusion of his first article (2004, pp. 42–43), and develops and substantiates it in the second (2007):

if an emotion word is applied to a person, it is likely to be literal, but if it is applied to the sky ('angry sky'), it is likely to be metaphorical. This gives us a criterion for telling whether an emotion word is used metaphorically. (Zangwill 2007, p. 393)⁹

It should be noted that he speaks not about nonliteral descriptions of music, but about metaphoric descriptions, on the basis of the following argument: 'Metaphors are, of course, not the only nonliteral linguistic device, but to simplify matters it will help to assume that they are' (2007, p. 399, n. 1). In other words, he simply uses the term 'metaphorical' in the place of 'nonliteral'.

Naturally, the reason why this nonliteral use should be metaphor suggests itself quite easily if we recall the widespread opinion concerning the basis for the use of emotion words, pointing to music's *similarity* to such-and-such an aspect of emotion (e.g. to human expressive behaviour). After all, it is usually similarity or analogy that is regarded as the basis of metaphor (as opposed, for example, to metonymy, based on a relationship of contiguity, proximity, part to whole, etc.).

8 As Zangwill notes, Stephen Davies suggests (1994, pp. 163–165) that the use of emotional descriptions in relation to music is literal secondary use, which could have arisen as dead metaphor, and therefore no longer metaphor. Such a view has any kind of credibility only in relation to general, clichéd descriptions like 'sad', 'melancholy' and so on, but certainly not in relation to novel, original emotional descriptors. But if someone wished to accept Davies's view, it would have to be said that emotional descriptions of music involve the non-primary, derivative use of emotional terms.

9 Strictly speaking, Zangwill's positive thesis reads as follows: 'Emotion descriptions of music are (mostly) metaphorical descriptions of its aesthetic properties' (2007, 394). At present, however, I am interested in his repudiation of emotion. This general stance of Zangwill against emotion is also maintained in a later article (2014) and is further confirmed by the fact that he chose to reprint his first article (2004) in (2015, pp. 27–40).

In his next (third) article (2008), Zangwill agrees to a greater or lesser extent with the popular opinion regarding the basis of the use of emotional descriptions. For instance, he cites a similarity to ‘the vocal noises produced by a person who has the emotion’ and to ‘the typical behavioural manifestation of sadness or anger’ (2008, pp. 53–54).¹⁰ So it turns out that nothing distinguishes Zangwill’s stance from what has been deemed above the most uncontroversial core of nearly all theories of the relationship between music and emotions: that music’s expressiveness consists in its possession of nonliteral emotional qualities (or emotional qualities in a secondary, derivative sense; compare note 8 above), based on such-and-such a similarity/analogy displayed by music to certain aspects of emotion. Hardly anyone, however, would conclude from this that music has nothing to do with emotion. On the contrary: if it is in some sense similar—as Zangwill himself concurs—that means that it does have something to do with them. And virtually everyone considers this aspect of music to be important. Not so Zangwill. So how does he justify his conclusion that ‘music itself has nothing essential to do with emotion’ (2007, p. 391 and 394; very similar formulation in Zangwill, 2004, p. 29)? In his first article, one seeks in vain for such a justification beyond his attacks on various literalist views—attacks that are essentially superfluous (and not entirely convincing, as will be shown below), given that almost no one subscribes to such views. In the second article, the justification takes the following form:

If emotion descriptions do not literally refer to emotions, then surely music itself has nothing essential to do with emotion. (Zangwill 2007, p. 394)

The conclusiveness of such an inference depends, of course, on the way one understands the wording ‘to have something essential to do with’. If it means simply ‘to have literally to do with’, then the quoted sentence is essentially a tautology. So we ought to interpret ‘to have something essential to do with’ in some other way. But then the above reasoning would be patently false.

Let us consider, for the sake of comparison, the example of a representational picture. If I point at it and say ‘Look at that person on the right’, it goes without saying that I am not using the word ‘person’ in the literal sense, since there is no real person on the picture (Does such a truism really need to be mentioned?). The picture does not literally contain any of the objects represented, and descriptions of the picture that contain references to those objects are not literal. (For the sake of simplicity, we may assume that we are dealing with a picture representing fictitious objects—people, places or buildings—that do not exist and have never existed.) However, it certainly does not follow that the picture has nothing essential to do with those objects. Quite the reverse is true: the represented objects constitute the essence of the representational picture as such; they are its essential element, which for us is important and interesting. To put it briefly, something may be nonliteral yet still essential.

In relation to music, we may state that even if emotional descriptions of music (which are accepted also by Zangwill) are in an obvious sense nonliteral, those descriptions, as

10 Interestingly, in the first article, in which Zangwill fiercely opposed emotions, he opposed the view expressed here: ‘It might be suggested ... that music represents, not the emotions themselves, but the behavioural manifestation or upshot of emotion. ... But this theory has next to nil in the way of plausibility’ (2004, p. 41).

well as the relationship between music and emotions that informs them, may be one of the essential aspects of music and its significance for us. Zangwill's antiliteralist reasoning does *not* constitute any counterargument to such a view, which actually presupposes that emotional descriptions of music are nonliteral.

So how might we describe Zangwill's strategy? He places great emphasis on justifying what practically everyone agrees on and then suggests—in fact without any further arguments—that this gives rise to a much weightier conclusion, which is controversial and implausible: that 'music has nothing essential to do with emotion'.

The anti-literalist arguments that he does present are superfluous and redundant, because they try to establish what is already widely accepted and considered to be well justified. Still, some analytical philosophers would probably feel frustrated if I did not examine Zangwill's arguments. They would probably feel that I had not given him fair treatment. So now I will dwell for a moment on the arguments that Zangwill does put forward in his first article and consider whether they at least demonstrate what is agreed upon by almost everyone. Unfortunately, I will be forced to conclude that at least some of those arguments are confused and mistaken.

5. Zangwill's Arguments Assessed

A number of Zangwill's arguments derive from the premise—in itself utterly uncontroversial and virtually a truism—that 'our state of mind when we listen to music has the music as its object' (Zangwill, 2004, p. 33). However, the reasoning based on that statement is most often confused and marked by equivocation. For example, one of the arguments reads as follows:

Given that almost all emotions, like pride or fear, have intentional objects other than the music, in so far as we are having such emotions when listening to music, we are not listening to or thinking about the music. We are thinking about what the emotions are about instead. The object of such emotions is not the music. Such emotions are a *distraction* from musical experience! (Zangwill, 2004, p. 33)

This argument displays the following form: if, while experiencing X (in this case music), we also experience some emotion Y that has the object Z, and Z is not equal to X, then Y is a *distraction* from the experience of X. What can we say about such an implication scheme? We may notice that if Y is a part (or element or aspect or property) of X or if Z is part of X or for example represented by X, then the experience of Y may be part of the experience of X rather than a distraction from it, so Zangwill's conclusion is unwarranted.

Going back to music, we may say: if an emotion—possibly together with its object—were in some sense in the music (or represented by the music), then the perception of it while listening to music would not be a distraction from musical experience but rather a part of it. Similarly, if experiencing emotions in response to music were a natural—possible or inevitable (see nn. 5–7 above)—part of musical experience, then clearly it would not be a distraction from musical experience but again part of it. There would be no mutual exclusion ('the experience of either emotion or music') but the possible concurrency

of both. Of course, we do not want to make any presuppositions as to whether perceiving or experiencing emotions or their objects in response to music is or is not a natural part of musical experience. The point of Zangwill's argument is to show that it is not, and his conclusion—'Such emotions are a *distraction* from musical experience!'—is intended to serve this purpose. But this conclusion follows only if we presuppose that which Zangwill's argument seeks to prove, namely that emotions and their objects are in no way part of music or of musical experience.

Naturally, the failure of Zangwill's argument does not mean that music—contra Zangwill—*has* something to do with emotion, in one way or the other. His argument simply does not prove anything about the relationship between music and emotions. To be sure, the conclusion which Zangwill seeks to prove here ('it is not essential to music to arouse genuine, full-blown emotions') is widely agreed upon, as has been shown above, in Sections 2 and 3. It is just Zangwill's argument that is defective, not his conclusion.

Indeed, it may seem surprising that Zangwill, after giving various arguments against the thesis that it is of the essence of music to arouse real emotions or moods (which 'differ from emotions in that they lack intentional objects' (Zangwill, 2004, p. 35)), is unable to convincingly repulse the sole opponent whose views he discusses, namely Jenefer Robinson. She agrees that descriptions of music in terms denoting cognitively complex emotions, such as 'unrequited passion', cannot be explained by referring to the arousal of such emotions by music. At the same time, she states that music can arouse feelings devoid of the cognitive element: 'Music can make me feel tense or relaxed; it can disturb, unsettle, and startle me' (Robinson 1994, p. 18). In such a situation, according to Robinson:

the feelings evoked 'directly' by music explain some of the cases of musical expressiveness. ... Music that disturbs and unsettles us is disturbing, unsettling music. ... Melodies that soothe us are soothing. ... it seems to me that the expression of a feeling by music can sometimes be explained straightforwardly in terms of the arousal of that feeling. (Robinson 1994, p. 19)

How does Zangwill react to such suggestions? Paradoxically, he agrees with them, even though Robinson speaks unequivocally about the arousal of genuine feelings, or 'moods' in Zangwill's terminology. His only charge is that they do not account for all emotional descriptions of music (something which Robinson by no means claims):

Robinson is right that some music is calming or disturbing, in virtue of its capacity to arouse the corresponding states in us. But we also want to describe *some* music as optimistic, resolute, proud, and so on, and Robinson's account does not cover these descriptions. (Zangwill 2004, p. 36)

Such a concession may appear surprising; after all, it means that in some cases it is essential to music to arouse genuine emotions, or at least objectless feelings. So it turns out that Zangwill is not entirely successful in his antiliteralist crusade. Should we come to Zangwill's aid then? That seems quite a straightforward task: it is enough to reiterate the standard argument already invoked earlier (quoted above, in Section 3, in the formulation of Aaron Ridley). We can simply say: it is entirely conceivable that we could describe

some music as relaxing or disturbing whilst not actually feeling relaxed or disturbed by it. Relaxing music is often not enough to relax us. Disturbing music, if it employs trite musical means, for example, might simply bore us. But in no way does that undermine the possibility of describing that music as relaxing or disturbing respectively. And so, contrary to Robinson's view, those designations cannot be explained in terms of the actual arousal of corresponding feelings.¹¹

It is worth noting here that a similar argument would not be effective against any arousal theory of the kind represented by Derek Matravers, namely one that explains emotional descriptions in terms of not full-blown, genuine emotions, but merely some aspects of them. According to such a theory, relaxing (disturbing) music would be that which stimulates a feeling of a certain aspect or of a certain quality of relaxation (disturbance). And it might be entirely plausible that whilst not being relaxed by music we could still feel a certain aspect or quality of relaxation sufficient to describe that music as 'relaxing'. Just as it is possible to feel warmth with a finger without getting warm right away.

6. Conclusion

To close, we might ask whether Zangwill's radical thesis that 'music has nothing essential to do with emotion', which acquires no justification in his own exposition, could result from the arguments of Hanslick, whom Zangwill invokes. The answer would again appear to be negative. Contrary to what Zangwill seems to believe, Hanslick does not formulate such a radical thesis at all, let alone provide a justification for it. He is quite prepared to say, for example, something to the contrary:

as the creation of a thinking and feeling mind, a musical composition has in high degree the capability to be itself full of mental content [ideality] and feeling. This mental [ideal] content we demand of every musical artwork. It is to be found only in the tone-structure itself, however, and not in any other aspect of the work. (Hanslick 1986, p. 31)¹²

Or else:

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- 11 It is not being suggested here that all views of Jenefer Robinson on the relation between music and emotion, as presented in her later publications (e.g. in (2005) which appeared after Zangwill's paper discussed here), can be undermined in this way. The adequate appraisal of her theory is beyond the scope of this paper.
- 12 In the above passage, I have slightly revised the translation (the terms used by Payzant are given in brackets). The problem concerns the translation of the German word 'Geist' and the related adjective 'geistig'. It is normally rendered in English as 'mind', 'spirit' or 'intellect', and the adjective respectively as 'mental', 'spiritual' or 'intellectual'. Payzant gives 'ideality' and 'ideal'. (He is not consistent, however, as the first occurrence of the word 'mind' in this passage is his translation of 'Geist'.) This is probably attributable to the fact that in German idealist philosophy of the first half of the nineteenth century—and so in Hanslick's day—and especially in Hegel, the word 'Geist' signified, among other things, the idealist principle governing the world. However, there are no grounds for assuming that Hanslick was referring here to Hegel. When he does so elsewhere, he uses the German term 'Idee', which Payzant translates as 'Idea' (p. 29). Here, though, he clearly uses the word 'Geist' in its standard sense, given the deduction contained in the first sentence of the quoted passage.

I share completely the view that the ultimate worth of the beautiful [in music] is always based on the immediate manifestness of feeling. (Hanslick 1986, p. xxii)¹³

This shows that Zangwill is wrong to see in Hanslick a supporter for his thesis that the role played by emotions in music is ‘none of any significance’ and that ‘music itself has nothing essential to do with emotion’, thus dispelling perhaps the last hope for any defence of such an extreme position. If ‘Hanslick Was Right about Music’, then Zangwill certainly is not.^{14,15}

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13 For a more comprehensive treatment of Hanslick and a demonstration that the widespread interpretation of him as a pure formalist is strongly lopsided, see e.g. Wilfing (2016).

14 I would like to thank Ewa Schreiber for helpful discussions and comments on an earlier version of this paper.

15 This article develops ideas previously presented in Polish in Guczalski (2015).

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