

some of our best philosophers in India as well as in the Occidental world. We believe that the problem ought to be weighed and considered, but we trust that any clear-headed thinker will reject the theory. It is a question of either there is a thing-in-itself or there is not, *tertium non datur*. And in this dilemma we see no other solution than the Buddhist conception of the theory of the soul.

BEETHOVEN'S NINTH SYMPHONY.¹

BY BARON VON DER PFORDTEN.

CLOSE to Beethoven's *Missa solemnis*² in miraculous power stands another of his works, the Ninth Symphony in D minor, Op. 125, known briefly as the "Ninth." There is hardly another composition about which there has been so much controversy as about this one. There is a superabundance of literature dealing with the subject, and the layman is almost submerged in the flood of attempts at its elucidation. The most serious feature is that the opinion is thus spread abroad again and again that the Ninth Symphony is quite peculiar, and if comprehensible at all can be understood only by the aid of complicated explanations. For this reason I shall here attempt to simplify its exposition as much as possible. Our course shall lead, as always, from the outside inward, from the external form to the content of the symphony.

It has been authentically proved that ever since the year 1793 Beethoven had it in mind to elaborate the theme of Schiller's well-known "Hymn to Joy." To all appearances he was so persistently affected by this hymn that he could not get away from it. Nevertheless, thirty years went by before the plan was consummated, and indeed quite differently from the way originally sketched. For instance, Beethoven's first idea had been to set the whole poem to music. It would then have become a cantata arranged for solo voices, chorus and orchestra, and at all events we would have had a magnificent work in it; scruples with regard to style would hardly have been aroused. It could then have been a matter only of feeling Beethoven's conception with him and comprehending from it his arrangement into form, just as with all his creations. But now he surprises us with something quite unexpected. He puts separate

¹ Translated from the German by Lydia G. Robinson.

² For Baron von der Pfordten's appreciative analysis of this remarkable composition see *The Open Court* for September, 1910.

selected passages of the text to music and inserts them into the finale of a symphony which has simultaneously arisen in the meantime. This is something new which it is well to notice particularly. Beethoven's fantasy for piano, chorus and orchestra, Op. 80, may be regarded as the forerunner of the Ninth Symphony, but we need not enter into it here.

If we examine the construction of the symphony closely it will be a long time before we discover the new element which perplexes us. The first movement is an *Allegro ma non troppo, un poco maestoso* in two-four time. It may safely be said that the theme itself and its construction are particularly rich, interesting and significant. In form it is one movement of a symphony, and as such it is not hard to understand, at least for those who have approached it through a progressive study of Beethoven's works. I purposely refrain from speaking here of the emotional content; we shall come to that later.

The second movement, a *Molto vivace* in three-four time, may be compared in style to the first movement of the Symphony in C minor. Here too we have a very short theme, only one measure, only three notes in an octave interval, more rhythmical than melodious. From this develops a tempestuous *Scherzo*. In place of the trio there comes a sharply contrasted *presto alla breve* in D major. The Coda is audaciously dramatic, a regular hunt; but we are familiar with this style from earlier experience.

The third movement is not only inexpressibly beautiful but it is also remarkable for a particularly delightful lucidity. There are two parts, an *Adagio molto e cantabile* B flat in common time and an *Andante moderato* in D in three-four time. If the director can trust his orchestra to take the first part very broadly, then in spite of the prescribed acceleration of the tempo the second will conform throughout to the unity of the movement. The two parts alternate, then are played with variations and completed. A counter theme like a fanfare comes in between. The whole thing is wonderful but not in the least unclear or hard to understand. Up to this point we have a symphony in proper form.

Now I would like to ask what auditor, not knowing what comes next, would expect anything different from the usual finale? Suppose Beethoven had made the fourth movement of this symphony also purely instrumental and only for the orchestra, who would have taken offence? After these first three movements would any one have had the feeling that now a vocal finale must follow? Honestly, are not even connoisseurs surprised at it over and over

again every time they hear it? At every performance of the Ninth Symphony do they not feel that the conclusion is doubtful? Let us not criticise it yet, but it seems certain that the climax is not a natural one. Let us see how it is brought about.

The D minor sixth resounds *fortissimo* with a sustained B flat passing to A, a piercing dissonance which seems all the harsher because we are entirely unprepared for it. It is like an agonizing outcry of the whole orchestra, the strongest conceivable contrast to the heavenly transfiguration of the preceding movement. And if this beginning is bewildering the following *unisono* of the basses is not less so, bearing the indication "In the character of a recitative, but in *tempo*." Here Beethoven dramatizes the single groups of his orchestra for a musical treatment whose course can hardly be described in words, much less interpreted. The outcry is reiterated with increased power and a second recitative of the basses replies. Like a memory from the remote past sounds the motive of the first movement, after a vehement recitative the theme of the second, and after an inquiring recitative the melody of the third. One more recitative of the basses of an almost threatening energy is followed by an entirely new idea rendered by the oboes, the motto for the finale. The basses interrupt this with a recitative which later on we shall hear again, and now for the first time the D major melody is played clear through, first by the bass softly and mysteriously, then taken up by the orchestra with increasing fulness and grandeur until it is completed in brilliant splendor.

Let us pause a moment. What does all this mean? It is like a controversy of the instruments one with another. Can we guess its import? Kretzschmar describes it delightfully. He says it is like a chaos from which the orchestra is seeking its way out. Thus Beethoven permits us to live through with him the creation of the finale, the birth of his theme, his tonal process of becoming.

The subject of the symphony is joy. It begins with the expression of joylessness in the first movement, in a plaintive and sorrowful discernment of it. This naturally impels one to free himself from such a condition; but in this he is not to succeed, for although the second movement is filled with demoniac humor and the third breathes a divine transfiguration, yet both remain far removed from joy. Hence the outbreak of despair at the beginning of the fourth movement, and hence the convulsive efforts of the orchestra to find the way of salvation.

There is something to be said for such a program. It is musical; it is an emotional program, not an objective one. The hearer is not

conscious of it from the beginning. He has no premonition that the first three movements have such a meaning.

Suddenly at the finale there is a change; the orchestra falls back into despair. The outcry is repeated, but much more passionately in a horrible chord which gives forth all seven tones of the harmonic D minor scale at once, the diminished seventh, C sharp-E-G-B, on top of the sixth, F-A-D. Now comes the determining change. The basses do not answer in recitative, but a baritone voice sings, "O friends, not these noises! but let us strike up a pleasanter and more joyous song!" These words are Beethoven's own. Their melody is almost exactly the same as that of the last recitative of the basses in the introduction. Here as there follows the redeeming D major melody, but now it is not played by the orchestra but is sung by the soloists and chorus: *Freude, schöner Götterfunken*, "Sing then, of the heav'n descended."

This is the moment when the symphony becomes a cantata. The orchestra has not proved equal to its task. It cannot banish joylessness; it cannot capture joy. Singing must come to its aid. This means nothing more nor less than that absolute instrumental music and the symphonic form are not sufficient. Beethoven must call other means of expression to his aid; and these he finds in song, the union of word and sound.

Now the question is, if this is what Beethoven meant to say, did he succeed in convincing us? I think the honest answer of every auditor must be, No, not in convincing. The immediate impression at every performance, even on those who are well acquainted with it, is one of surprise. Spirited, magnificent, bold and new though we may call it, there is nothing compelling in it, nothing positively overwhelming as Beethoven always is in his other work. It is an experiment and acts as such upon every one whose sensibility is not dulled by familiarity and whose judgment is not in principle obscured by prejudice. The fact is that Beethoven originally wished to set the "Hymn to Joy" to music and then conceived the idea of uniting it with a symphony. This he did, and now we have it before us as he intended it, but we perceive this intention and so it seems to us to be intentional caprice. He must himself have felt that the combination of instrumental and vocal music, of symphony and cantata, of musical poetry and poetry in word and sound meant a break in style. Therefore he attempted to make it plausible, but instead of concealing the gap or bridging it over in the least he shows it to us the more distinctly in all its boldness.

But when we have reached the summit without falling into the

yawning chasm, then a world opens up before us of such splendor and beauty as only Beethoven could reveal. It is remarkable that in the first three movements we had not the remotest idea of any approaching vocal music, but now we hardly give a thought to the orchestra. The cantata triumphs over the symphony. The way this joyous hymn develops is truly wonderful. As early as in the passage, *Und der Cherub steht vor Gott*, "And the Seraph dwells with God," we are given a glimpse into the sacred depths of emotion. The *Adagio non troppo ma divoto*:

<i>Ihr stürzt nieder, Millionen?</i>	"O ye millions, kneel before Him,
<i>Ahnest du den Schöpfer, Welt?</i>	Tremble, Earth, before thy Lord,"

is a veritable prayer. Here Beethoven leads us before his God, and this God is so exalted that it is bliss merely to divine him. But at the same time he is a "loving father" to us all, and therefore our adoring veneration must at the same time be the embrace of all humanity.

<i>Seid umschlungen, Millionen,</i>	"O ye millions, I embrace you,
<i>Diesen Kuss der ganzen Welt,</i>	Here's a joyful kiss for all!"

is sung in an *Andante maestoso* in a theme of fascinating power. Now Beethoven's idealism is disclosed as we have heard it in the *Fidelio*:

<i>Alle Menschen werden Brüder</i>	"Brothers all who joy delighteth
<i>Wo dein sanfter Flügel weilt,</i>	Reconciler sweet of hearts!"

All outward sundering must yield; new magic joins what was torn apart. The realm of joy is the realm of brotherhood; only love can bestow it upon us. Thus at last in one grand torrent Beethoven unites the two main themes, the melodies of joy and of the kiss of brotherhood. Here is a typical example of the combined poetical and musical effect and the significance of counterpoint. When the soprano sings, *Freude, schöner Götterfunken*, "Sing, then, of the heav'n descended," and the bass at the same time, *Seid umschlungen, Millionen*, "O ye millions, I embrace you," we have hardly a chance to notice how artistically the effect has been produced. It harmonizes as if it had been determined and constructed for this purpose from the beginning; we perceive it not only as possible, interesting and full of genius, but rather indeed as plausible, as even necessary. Here the master convinces us, but he cannot in the least satisfy himself. As in the *Missa solemnis*, incredible things are expected of the vocalists. It is hardly possible to produce everything as Beethoven heard it in his mind and

exacted of the performers without regard to practicability. He composed for an ideal chorus, for ideal soloists, and the best that can be done is to come as near to this ideal as possible. The staggering *Prestissimo* in which this work ends is particularly venturesome.

So we leave this work with a spirit of thankfulness to and admiration for its creator, if not with the unrestricted unquestioned satisfaction which his other works afford. It seems to me that it is no wonder that the Ninth Symphony continued long and often to be misunderstood and unappreciated. On the contrary it is a wonder that it could finally be performed at all. And the greatest wonder of all is that it is so popular to-day, so often performed and so universally applauded. The conspicuous success of this particular work tends to make us reflect. Have we really advanced so far that we can comprehend it easily and positively? Have we solved its riddles? Do we understand all of it without exception, or have we at last ceased to be conscious that it is so very extraordinary? Has custom so dulled our perception or its problematic grandeur? I am much afraid that there is prevalent, to say the least, a very general false modesty in the affair. People are ashamed to confess what they will hardly admit to themselves. They would be thought greatly behind the times and this they are loath to appear. "Was it maybe some vanity?" as Pogner asks in the "Meistersinger." Oh yes, that too plays a part. Let us drop them both. Only the man who is honorable enough to confess that he is a doubter and inquirer will attain true understanding. And if any one believes it is not very important how we interpret the Ninth Symphony, let his attention be directed to the deductions which may be drawn, and which rightly or wrongly have actually been drawn from it.

To those who agree with the outline of the Ninth Symphony as I have sketched it many beautiful things remain to be said about the emotional content of the separate movements. No one has explained them more poetically than Richard Wagner who tries to guide the hearer to their comprehension through selected passages from Goethe's *Faust*. Indeed we may designate the moods in the Ninth Symphony as Faustian. Still it is noteworthy that Wagner expressly declares that Goethe's verses have not the slightest direct connection with Beethoven's composition. The nature of the more elevated instrumental music consists in giving expression in tones to what is inexpressible in words. He therefore makes use of the poet's words only by comparison, only as a very general indication,

and probably does not expect to accomplish by them a thorough understanding so much as merely to produce a sympathetic emotion. In this sense we may welcome his program. He was fitted to interpret the Ninth Symphony as hardly any one else has been. Everything that he writes about it is instructive and worthy of attention even to the smallest technical details.

For this reason we are all the more curious to discover how he will solve the critical question of the last movement. He writes in so many words: "The progress of the musical composition demands a crisis, a crisis which can only be pronounced in human speech." And he admires the way in which the master by the convulsive recitative of the bass instruments prepares for the approach of speech and human voices as a necessity to be expected. But this only indicates the problem correctly; it does not explain it. We ask, "Why is not instrumental music sufficient here? Why is it not adequate just for joy when it has proved so for heroism (in the *Eroica*)?" Why must "the last attempt to express by instrumental music alone a positive, clearly defined and untroubled joyous happiness" fail so abruptly? Were not Beethoven's dramatics of the soul sufficient for the perfection of his ideas in other instances? We have observed again and again how the language of his orchestra rises to such definiteness that we might feel that it must blossom into words. We have at the same time however convinced ourselves that no one could find such words. Now Beethoven himself adds them, and we must say that he leads music to the edge of the comprehensible definiteness of musical expression. When we are to think of joy only words can teach it to us. Music alone can certainly make us feel it but in this case we are to do more, and this cannot be provided by the absolute, or instrumental, music.

Now we are moving in a circle again. I might ask why the first three movements were sufficient with instruments alone? Are we supposed to feel joylessness and the effort at liberation there in a less definite degree? We would have to explain it thus: It is the experiment of the fourth movement that first opens our eyes. Now for the first time we know under what limitations we have previously suffered. But we have the same feeling with overwhelming force also, for instance, in the *C Minor* symphony just because we cannot grasp it in words.

Accordingly it is a question of a fundamental distinction, and Richard Wagner who never shrank from consequences did not hesitate to draw one here. We can condense it into an axiom: Beethoven's Ninth Symphony signifies the bankruptcy of absolute

or instrumental music. Beethoven himself, the master of the symphony, here shows us that the absolute musical expression of emotion is too indefinite, too general and therefore inadequate. But Wagner's views are purely subjective; nothing would be more unsafe than to adopt them offhand. At any rate he has given clear and succinct utterance to them, and many people have fallen in with his opinion. Nevertheless up to the present time opposition to this view has not yet been silenced. Equally justifiable is the standpoint that now as ever instrumental and vocal music are fundamentally different, and each is of value and significance within its own limits.

Wagner reaches the only conclusion that was logically possible for him. Generally speaking, absolute music is done for; generally speaking there is no sense in writing symphonies any longer; what could be said in instrumental music has been uttered by Beethoven's orchestra; henceforth no one can succeed in imbuing them with meaning; isolated interesting attempts simply prove the futility of their efforts. "The last symphony of Beethoven is the deliverance of music from its most peculiar elements into universal art. It is the human gospel of the art of the future. Beyond music no progress is possible because only the complete artistic production of the future can follow upon it directly—universal drama, for which Beethoven has forged the artistic key."

We should be glad to have Wagner express himself so unequivocally and without reserve. At least these are not empty phrases; for him nothing mattered but the drama, without which he could have created nothing. But we are not in duty bound for this reason to share his opinion. Perhaps he is even right in his conviction that in the symphony Beethoven has said the last word. It is possible that never again will there be a composer of symphonies to equal him. It is a fact that we measure every one who has written symphonies by Beethoven and hitherto have ranked them far below him. Of course this does not prove that the symphony as such is abolished, and least of all does it prove that it is this very Ninth Symphony that abolished it. Beethoven's experiment aspired beyond absolute music in this one particular case, but in so doing he did not put an end to the creation of symphonies. Still this is absolutely what we would have to expect. No more sonatas or symphonies after the Ninth would be conceivable from him himself if he had confirmed the bankruptcy explanation. So finally we shall have to call on him to make the decision; in the end the master is the surest witness.

He is said to have declared the Ninth Symphony to be a mistake, and even to have spoken of working it over, at least of never repeating the experiment: we need not discuss the credibility of this tradition or lay any weight upon it. On the other hand we may regret that Beethoven did not carry out the plan, which had been earlier suggested, of providing a commentary to his own works. Then we could have expected an authentic critique of the Ninth Symphony by the author himself. So we must confine ourselves to the facts. We know that he planned a tenth symphony, that death intervened to prevent its completion and that little or nothing is to be gathered from meager sketches. But instrumental compositions like the last great string quartette were produced after the Ninth Symphony, and this alone may well suffice to put to rest all misunderstanding.

At a memorable Academy meeting on May 7, 1824, three movements of the *Missa solennis* and the Ninth Symphony were produced for the first time. The master was present, stone deaf. He heard not a sound of the wonderful notes which there came to life at his bidding; he heard not a sound of the thundering applause with which the inspired audience greeted him. He stood with his back to the public until Caroline Unger, one of the soloists who took part in the production, motioned to him to turn around. Then he saw how all were applauding and nodding to him. What a moment this must have been, and how indelibly impressed upon every one present! As he stood there in the concert hall facing the crowd of people, so in his life and work he stood in relation to the world—alone and unapproachable, and yet its affectionate benefactor.

ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL.

BY A. V. C. P. HUIZINGA.

THE statement in the Declaration of Independence which asserts "All men are created equal," has been the subject of so much discussion that Jefferson himself, who drew up this American historical document, could hardly realize the full scope, or the various interpretations of this assertion. It is mostly misunderstood now, and therefore worth our while to review shortly its meaning in the light of its historical occurrence.

For a right understanding of the document, it is well to bear in mind that in the much vaunted political theories of "Natural Rights" in those days is inherent the right of revolution, an under-