

Marx Hardy Machiavelli Joyce Austen
Defoe Abbot Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo
Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm
Garnett Engels Byron Schiller
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka
Cotton Dostoyevsky Hall
Baum Henry Kipling Doyle Willis
Leslie Dumas Flaubert Nietzsche Turgenev Balzac
Stockton Vatsyayana Crane
Burroughs Verne
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch
Homer Tolstoy Whitman
Darwin Thoreau Twain
Potter Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato Scott
Kant Freud Jowett Stevenson Andersen Burton Harte
London Descartes Cervantes Wells Hesse
Poe Aristotle Wells Voltaire Cooke
Hale James Hastings Shakespeare Chambers Irving
Bunner Richter Chekhov da Shaw Wodehouse
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Beethoven, the Man and the Artist, as Revealed in His Own Words

Ludwig van Beethoven

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BEETHOVEN
THE MAN AND THE ARTIST,
AS REVEALED IN HIS OWN WORDS

by
Ludwig van Beethoven

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BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) is widely considered to be one of the pre-eminent classical music figures of the Western world. This German musical genius created numerous works that are firmly entrenched in the repertoire. Except for a weakness in composing vocal and operatic music (to which he himself admitted, notwithstanding a few vocal works like the opera "Fidelio" and the song "Adelaide,"), Beethoven had complete mastery of the artform. He left his stamp in 9 symphonies, 5 piano concertos, 10 violin sonatas, 32 piano sonatas, numerous string quartets and dozens of other key works. Many of his works are ingeniously imaginative and innovative, such as his 3rd symphony (the "Eroica"), his 9th Violin Sonata (the "Kreutzer"), his "Waldstein" piano sonata, his 4th and 5th piano concertos, or his "Grosse Fugue" for string quartet. (Of course, each of Beethoven's works adds its own unique detail to Beethoven's grand musical paradigm.)

It is difficult to sum up briefly what his musical works represent or symbolize, since taken together they encompass a vast system of thought. Generally, however, those who apprehend his music sense that it reflects their own personal yearnings and sufferings. It egoistically, and always intelligently, "discusses" with its listener his or her feelings in the wake of personal failure and personal triumph, from the lowest depths of despair to the highest heights of happy or triumphant fulfillment. In his music, he represents the feelings felt by those attempting to achieve their goals within their societies, whether they are competing for love, status, money, power, mates and/or any other things individuals feel naturally inclined to attempt to acquire.

In a thematic sense, Beethoven does not promote anarchist ideas. The listener cannot, in listening to Beethoven's music, apprehend ideas which, if applied, would compromise the welfare of his society. The music is thus "civically responsible," as is the music of Bach or Mozart. For Beethoven, the society exists as a bulwark with which the individual must function in harmony, or at least not function such as to harm or destroy it. And, should the society marginalize or hurt the individual, as it often does, the individual must, ac-

according to Beethoven, humbly accept this, never considering the alternative act of attempting to harm or destroy the society in the wake of his or her personal frustrations. But, thanks to Beethoven, such an individual is provided with the means to sooth his or her misery in the wake of feeling "hurt" at the hands of society. The means is this music and the euphoric pleasure that it can provide to minds possessing the psycho-intellectual "wiring" needed to apprehend it.

Some post-World-War-II composers, such as the late, LSD-using John Cage, reject the music of Beethoven because of its predominant reliance on "beauty" as way of communicating idealized concepts. Also, since the music intimately reflects the cravings and thought-processes of the natural human mind, which in numerous ways is emotionally and intellectually irrational, the music may itself be consequently irrational.

The following book consists of brief biographical commentaries about Beethoven, each followed by sections of quotations attributed to the muse. In these quotes, Beethoven demonstrates his intense preoccupation (or obsession) with thinking artistically and intelligently, and with helping to alleviate man's suffering by providing man with musical artworks that could enlighten him, so as to become educated enough to pull himself out of his misery. He felt immediate, strong disdain at any artistic statement that was not truly intelligent and artistic, such as, in his view, the music of Rossini. Although not prudish, he had high standards when it came to marriage, and was morally against "reproductory pleasure" for its own sake, or any form of adultery. He never married. Interestingly, experimental psychologists have discovered that people who have an intense love of humanity or are preoccupied with working to serve humanity tend to have difficulty forming intimate bonds with people on a personal level.

PREFACE

This little book came into existence as if it were by chance. The author had devoted himself for a long time to the study of Beethoven and carefully scrutinized all manner of books, publications, manuscripts, etc., in order to derive the greatest possible information about the hero. He can say confidently that he conned every existing publication of value. His notes made during his readings grew voluminous, and also his amazement at the wealth of Beethoven's observations comparatively unknown to his admirers because hidden away, like concealed violets, in books which have been long out of print and for whose reproduction there is no urgent call. These observations are of the utmost importance for the understanding of Beethoven, in whom man and artist are inseparably united. Within the pages of this little book are included all of them which seemed to possess value, either as expressions of universal truths or as evidence of the character of Beethoven or his compositions. Beethoven is brought more directly before our knowledge by these his own words than by the diffuse books which have been written about him. For this reason the compiler has added only the necessary explanatory notes, and (on the advice of professional friends) the remarks introductory to the various subdivisions of the book. He dispensed with a biographical introduction; there are plenty of succinct biographies, which set forth the circumstances of the master's life easily to be had. Those who wish to penetrate farther into the subject would do well to read the great work by Thayer, the foundation of all Beethoven biography (in the new revision now making by Deiters), or the critical biography by Marx, as revised by Behncke. In sifting the material it was found that it fell naturally into thirteen subdivisions. In arranging the succession of utterances care was had to group related subjects. By this means unnecessary interruptions in the train of thought were avoided and interesting comparisons made possible. To this end it was important that time, place and circumstances of every word should be conscientiously set down.

Concerning the selection of material let it be said that in all cases of doubt the authenticity of every utterance was proved; Beethoven is easily recognizable in the form and contents of his sayings. Atten-

tion must be directed to two matters in particular: after considerable reflection the compiler decided to include in the collection a few quotations which Beethoven copied from books which he read. From the fact that he took the trouble to write them down, we may assume that they had a fascination for him, and were greeted with lively emotion as being admirable expressions of thoughts which had moved him. They are very few, and the fact that they are quotations is plainly indicated. By copying them into his note-books Beethoven as much as stored them away in the thesaurus of his thoughts, and so they may well have a place here. A word touching the use of the three famous letters to Bettina von Arnim, the peculiarities of which differentiate them from the entire mass of Beethoven's correspondence and compel an inquiry into their genuineness: As a correspondent Bettina von Arnim has a poor reputation since the discovery of her pretty forgery, "Goethes Briefwechsel mit einem Kinde" (Goethe's Correspondence with a Child). In this alleged "Correspondence" she made use of fragmentary material which was genuine, pieced it out with her own inventions, and even went so far as to turn into letters poems written by Goethe to her and other women. The genuineness of a poem by Beethoven to Bettina is indubitable; it will be found in the chapter entitled "Concerning Texts." Doubt was thrown on the letters immediately on their appearance in 1839.

Bettina could have dissipated all suspicion had she produced the originals and remained silent. One letter, however, that dated February 10, 1811, afterward came to light. Bettina had given it to Philipp von Nathusius. It had always been thought the most likely one, of the set to be authentic; the compiler has therefore, used it without hesitation. From the other letters, in which a mixture of the genuine and the fictitious must be assumed so long as the originals are not produced, passages have been taken which might have been thus constructed by Beethoven. On the contrary, the voluminous communications of Bettina to Goethe, in which she relates her conversations with Beethoven, were scarcely used. It is significant, so far as these are concerned, that, according to Bettina's own statement, when she read the letter to him before sending it off, Beethoven cried out, "Did I really say that? If so I must have had a raptus."

In conclusion the compiler directs attention to the fact that in a few cases utterances which have been transmitted to us only in an indirect form have been altered to present them in a direct form, in as much as their contents seemed too valuable to omit simply because their production involved a trifling change in form.

—Elberfeld, October, 1904. Fr. K.

CONCERNING ART

Beethoven's relation to art might almost be described as personal. Art was his goddess to whom he made petition, to whom he rendered thanks, whom he defended. He praised her as his savior in times of despair; by his own confession it was only the prospect of her comforts that prevented him from laying violent hands on himself. Read his words and you shall find that it was his art that was his companion in his wanderings through field and forest, the sharer of the solitude to which his deafness condemned him. The concepts Nature and Art were intimately bound up in his mind. His lofty and idealistic conception of art led him to proclaim the purity of his goddess with the hot zeal of a priestly fanatic. Every form of pseudo or bastard art stirred him with hatred to the bottom of his soul; hence his furious onslaughts on mere virtuosity and all efforts from influential sources to utilize art for other than purely artistic purposes. And his art rewarded his devotion richly; she made his sorrowful life worth living with gifts of purest joy:

"To Beethoven music was not only a manifestation of the beautiful, an art, it was akin to religion. He felt himself to be a prophet, a seer. All the misanthropy engendered by his unhappy relations with mankind, could not shake his devotion to this ideal which had sprung in to Beethoven from truest artistic apprehension and been nurtured by enforced introspection and philosophic reflection."

("Music and Manners," page 237. H. E. K.)

1. "'Tis said, that art is long, and life but fleeting:—Nay; life is long, and brief the span of art; If e're her breath vouchsafes with gods a meeting, A moment's favor 'tis of which we've had a part."

(Conversation-book, March, 1820. Probably a quotation.)

2. "The world is a king, and, like a king, desires flattery in return for favor; but true art is selfish and perverse—it will not submit to the mould of flattery."

(Conversation-book, March, 1820. When Baron van Braun expressed the opinion that the opera "Fidelio" would eventually win the enthusiasm of the upper tiers, Beethoven said, "I do not write for the galleries!" He never permitted himself to be persuaded to make concessions to the taste of the masses.)

3. "Continue to translate yourself to the heaven of art; there is no more undisturbed, unmixed, purer happiness than may thus be attained."

(August 19, 1817, to Xavier Schnyder, who vainly sought instruction from Beethoven in 1811, though he was pleasantly received.)

4. "Go on; do not practice art alone but penetrate to her heart; she deserves it, for art and science only can raise man to godhood."

(Teplitz, July 17, 1812, to his ten years' old admirer, Emilie M. in H.)

5. "True art is imperishable and the true artist finds profound delight in grand productions of genius."

(March 15, 1823, to Cherubini, to whom he also wrote, "I prize your works more than all others written for the stage." The letter asked Cherubini to interest himself in obtaining a subscription from King Louis XVIII for the Solemn Mass in D).

[Cherubini declared that he had never received the letter. That it was not only the hope of obtaining a favor which prompted Beethoven to express so high an admiration for Cherubini, is plain from a remark made by the English musician Cipriani Potter to A. W. Thayer in 1861. I found it in Thayer's note-books which were placed in my hands for examination after his death.

One day Potter asked, "Who is the greatest living composer, yourself excepted?" Beethoven seemed puzzled for a moment, and then exclaimed, "Cherubini." H. E. K.]

6. "Truth exists for the wise; beauty for the susceptible heart. They belong together— are complementary."

(Written in the autograph book of his friend, Lenz von Breuning, in 1797.)

7. "When I open my eyes, a sigh involuntarily escapes me, for all that I see runs counter to my religion; perforce I despise the world which does not intuitively feel that music is a higher revelation than all wisdom and philosophy."

(Remark made to Bettina von Arnim, in 1810, concerning Viennese society. Report in a letter by Bettina to Goethe on May 28, 1810.)

8. "Art! Who comprehends her? With whom can one consult concerning this great goddess?"

(August 11, 1810, to Bettina von Arnim.)

9. "In the country I know no lovelier delight than quartet music."

(To Archduke Rudolph, in a letter addressed to Baden on July 24, 1813.)

10. "Nothing but art, cut to form like old-fashioned hoop-skirts. I never feel entirely well except when I am among scenes of unspoiled nature."

(September 24, 1826, to Breuning, while promenading with Breuning's family in the Schonbrunner Garden, after calling attention to the alleys of trees "trimmed like walls, in the French manner.")

11. "Nature knows no quiescence; and true art walks with her hand in hand; her sister—from whom heaven forefend us!—is called artificiality."

(From notes in the lesson book of Archduke Rudolph, following some remarks on the expansion of the expressive capacity of music.)

LOVE OF NATURE

Beethoven was a true son of the Rhine in his love for nature. As a boy he had taken extended trips, sometimes occupying days, with his father "through the Rhenish localities ever lastingly dear to me." In his days of physical health Nature was his instructress in art; "I may not come without my banner," he used to say when he set out upon his wanderings even in his latest years, and never without his note books. In the scenes of nature he found his marvelous motives and themes; brook, birds and tree sang to him. In a few special cases he has himself recorded the fact.

But when he was excluded more and more from communion with his fellow men because of his increasing deafness, until, finally, he could communicate only by writing with others (hence the conversation-books, which will be cited often in this little volume), he fled for refuge to nature. Out in the woods he again became naively happy; to him the woods were a Holy of Holies, a Home of the Mysteries. Forest and mountain-vale heard his sighs; there he unburdened his heavy-laden heart. When his friends need comfort he recommends a retreat to nature. Nearly every summer he leaves hot and dusty Vienna and seeks a quiet spot in the beautiful neighborhood. To call a retired and reposeful little spot his own is his burning desire.

12. On the Kahlenberg, 1812, end of September:

Almighty One In the woods I am blessed. Happy every one
In the woods. Every tree speaks Through Thee. O God! What
glory in the Woodland. On the Heights is Peace, — Peace to
serve Him —

(This poetic exclamation, accompanied by a few notes, is on a page of music paper owned by Joseph Joachim.)

13. "How happy I am to be able to wander among bushes and herbs, under trees and over rocks; no man can love the country as I love it. Woods, trees and rocks send back the echo that man desires."

(To Baroness von Drossdick.)

14. "O God! send your glance into beautiful nature and comfort your moody thoughts touching that which must be."

(To the "Immortal Beloved," July 6, in the morning.)

[Thayer has spoiled the story so long believed, and still spooking in the books of careless writers, that the "Immortal Beloved" was the Countess Giulietta Guicciardi, to whom the C-sharp minor sonata is dedicated. The real person to whom the love-letters were addressed was the Countess Brunswick to whom Beethoven was engaged to be married when he composed the fourth Symphony. H. E. K.]

15. "My miserable hearing does not trouble me here. In the country it seems as if every tree said to me: 'Holy! holy!' Who can give complete expression to the ecstasy of the woods! O, the sweet stillness of the woods!"

(July, 1814; he had gone to Baden after the benefit performance of "Fidelio.")

16. "My fatherland, the beautiful locality in which I saw the light of the world, appears before me vividly and just as beautiful as when I left you; I shall count it the happiest experience of my life when I shall again be able to see you, and greet our Father Rhine."

(Vienna, June 29, to Wegeler, in Bonn.)

[In 1825 Beethoven said to his pupil Ries, "Fare well in the Rhine country which is ever dear to me," and in 1826 wrote to Schott, the publisher in Mayence, about the "Rhine country which I so long to see again."]

17. "Bruhl, at 'The Lamb'—how lovely to see my native country again!"

(Diary, 1812-1818.)