Hanslick, Kant, and the Origins of Vom Musikalisch-Schönen

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Abstract

Recent scholarship on musical aesthetics, notably in analytical philosophy of music, commonly identifies the main ideas of Eduard Hanslick’s *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* (“On the Musically Beautiful”, 1854) with Kant’s *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (“Critique of the Power of Judgment”, 1790), due to an ostensibly equivalent concept of ‘strict’ aesthetic formalism. Hanslick’s aesthetics is regarded as historically dependent on Kant’s theory and is further viewed as a concrete musical application of Kant’s more abstract formalism. This historical assumption, however, is mostly based on conceptual similarities between both texts that are regarded as ‘proof’ for immediate philosophical influences without carefully reflecting on contextual circumstances. Thus, my paper thoroughly examines the historical setting of mid-19th-century Vienna by taking into account the problematic reception of Kant’s works in Habsburg territories, the positivistic, anti-idealist orientation of Austrian science politics, as well as likely ‘local’ sources of Hanslick’s argument. Based on these observations concerning the historical contexts of *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen*, I analyze the palpable overlaps between Hanslick and Kant, but also show certain equally striking disparities between their aesthetic approaches. Ultimately, I conclude that their particular concepts of aesthetics, musical beauty, and music itself, as well as their philosophical methodologies are incompatible, even though Hanslick’s treatise implies an elementary familiarity with Kantian aesthetics, probably mediated by contemporary philosophers such as Bernard Bolzano, Johann Friedrich Herbart, and Robert Zimmermann.
Introduction

Questions regarding the intellectual foundations of Eduard Hanslick’s aesthetics represent a prevalent subject matter of Hanslick research. Who influenced Hanslick’s aesthetic outlook, who was the chief target of his partially polemical argument, and which philosophical movement stimulated the main ideas of his ‘strict’ aesthetic formalism? Different historical stages of Hanslick research have given very different answers to these complex questions, which will form the topic of my paper. Aesthetic scholars of the 19th century focused mainly on the ‘native’ Austrian contexts of Hanslick’s monograph, thereby locating it in the historical tradition of Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776–1841). German-language scholarship in the middle of the 20th century, on the other hand, integrated Hanslick’s formalism into German discourse, consequently recognizing Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831)—the most prominent counterpart to Herbartian aesthetics in 19th-century philosophy—as the most significant predecessor to Hanslick’s approach. Recently, anglophone scholarship, particularly in analytical philosophy of music, has identified another source as the intellectual background of Hanslick’s treatise: Kant’s *Kritik der Urteilskraft*. However, all these sources share a common problem: they rely solely on conceptual similarities between *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* and the authors named above. Scholars assume that Hanslick’s erudition warrants his exemplary knowledge of Herbart, Hegel, Kant, and other reputed sources of his text, without taking Hanslick’s Austrian contexts, his academic education, or his personal relations into serious account. My paper takes a different approach to Hanslick’s intellectual background, particularly concerning the widely held view of his dependence on Kant’s *Kritik der Urteilskraft*. I outline the scope of historical research on the various authors who are usually thought to be the primary sources of *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen*, I analyze Hanslick’s Austrian contexts in some detail, focusing primarily on the decisive factors in regard to Hanslick’s knowledge of Kant’s theory. I will show how Kant’s works were actively censored by Habsburg authorities, how Austrian science policies fostered positivistic procedures, opposing idealistic ‘speculation’, and how Herbartian thinking was declared the quasi-official philosophy at Habsburg universities. These contextual conditions render Hanslick’s first-hand knowledge of Kant’s system thoroughly problematic, making other authors—Herbart, Bernard Bolzano (1781–1848), Robert Zimmermann (1824–98)—more likely sources for certain features of Hanslick’s aesthetics. I will conclude by analyzing the presumed conceptual similarities between *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* and Kant’s *Kritik der Urteilskraft*. In challenging the widespread evaluation of Kant’s ‘rigorous’ formalism, I will show that some conceptual similarities between him and Hanslick emerged initially not with Kant’s theory but with earlier authors, and how specific terminological congruencies do not hold up under scrutiny. A concluding investigation of the most important differences between Hanslick and Kant—focusing primarily on Hanslick’s concept of a specifically musical aesthetics and his objectivist approach—will reach the result that Kant’s *Kritik der Urteilskraft* cannot be viewed as a crucial source of Hanslick’s argument. Kantian elements, although markedly present in *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen*, are far more likely to stem from Kantian discourse of 19th-century Germany and from native Austrian writers such as Herbart and Bolzano, who, despite attitudes generally opposed to German idealism, adopted several central features of Kant’s theory.
Historical Research on Hanslick’s Philosophical Background—A Brief Outline

What theorists informed Eduard Hanslick’s aesthetic treatise *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* ("On the Musically Beautiful", Leipzig: Weigel, 1854)?

Questions related to Hanslick’s source material are as old as the book itself: ever since the original printing of the treatise, research regarding the intellectual influences on his approach to aesthetics has constituted a major topic in German-language Hanslick scholarship. Numerous candidates have been identified as the most significant predecessor to Hanslick’s formalism, ranging from German idealism—Kant, Hegel, Friedrich Wilhelm Schelling (1775–1854), Friedrich Theodor Vischer (1807–87), etc.—and German poetry—Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–81), Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832), Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805), or the German literary romantics—to the Austrian contexts of Hanslick’s aesthetics (Herbart, Bolzano, Zimmermann, Gutt).

Various writers of the 19th and early 20th century regarded Hanslick’s treatise as an immediate successor to the strictly ahistorical formalism of Johann Friedrich Herbart, who famously asserted that aesthetic judgment based on measurable relationships between the objective elements of any given object results in an identical appraisal, regardless of the historical perspective of the perceiving individual:

"The complete perception of a specific relationship will—like cause and effect—lead to the same judgment. This will happen for all time, irrespective of accompanying circumstances, conjunctions, or integrations." Herbart’s successor and foremost spokesperson in all matters aesthetic, Zimmermann, who was one of Hanslick’s closest friends and one of the most influential academics in 19th-century Austria, puts this point even more bluntly: the primary objective of aesthetic analysis is to definitively determine what makes any given object beautiful “for all time and all places,” since beauty relies solely on “constant relationships” ("sich gleich bleibenden Verhältnissen") between aesthetic properties.

Given these strongly formalistic attitudes, it is not particularly surprising that early scholarship on Hanslick’s intellectual background agreed upon the Herbartian orientation of *VMS*. Eduard von Hartmann (1842–1906), for example, criticized Hanslick’s formalism—which ostensibly disavows “any deep ideal content of music” ("jeden tieferen idealen Gehalt der Musik")—by simply stating that Hanslick attempted to develop Herbart’s original approach in greater detail (without success, of course).

Similarly, Johannes Volkelt (1848–1930) regarded Hanslick’s approach as a more restrained continuation of Herbartian formalism, and Guido Bagier (1888–1967) equally viewed Hanslick’s treatise as the “first extensive analysis based on Herbartian principles.”

Heinrich Ehrlich (1822–99), Charles Lalo (1877–1953), or Richard Wallaschek (1860–1917) similarly classified Hanslick’s aesthetics as a concrete musical application of Herbartian formalism and individually conceived of the aesthetic approaches by Herbart, Hanslick, and Zimmermann as members of the same class—a verdict shared by Olga Stieglitz, who sweepingly proclaimed: “In his book *On the Musically Beautiful*, Eduard Hanslick transferred Herbart’s doctrines to music.”

Even as late as Paul Moos (1863–1952), whom Geoffrey Payzant judged to be “one of the earliest historians of musical aesthetics,” Herbart’s writings were considered the initial basis for all formalistic inclinations in musical contexts, and Hanslick’s most famous student, Guido Adler (1855–1941), equally declared his teacher’s treatise a primary example of “Herbartian orientation” ("Herbartsche Richtung"). Thus, early research into Hanslick’s textual sources was oriented towards the historical Austrian contexts of his book and the contemporary philosophical discussions regarding aesthetic problems, summed up by Lothar Schneider as an alternative between Herbartianism (Zimmermann) and Hegelianism (Friedrich Theodor...
Vischer). As soon as Herbart’s relevance for German-language philosophy declined in the late 19th and early 20th century, his eminent influence on Hanslick’s treatise rapidly faded into historical obscurity. As Christoph Khittl rightly states: “Even though Hanslick alludes to Herbart’s influence himself and contemporary criticism of the 19th century classes Hanslick as ‘Herbartian’, the philosopher Johann Friedrich Herbart is constantly excluded from research literature” on Hanslick’s intellectual background.

Figure 1: Robert von Zimmermann (1824-98)
By courtesy of Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Bildarchiv Austria

[2] Herbart’s position as the most significant predecessor of Hanslick’s aesthetic formalism was swiftly replaced by numerous candidates located in German discourse. German musical scholars of the 20th century rarely took notice of the indigenous historical contexts of VMS and worked towards Hanslick’s integration in the history of German aesthetics. This declining importance attached to his Austrian contexts, as well as the fact that Hanslick’s library and his private records were lost during the Second World War, led to free-floating speculation on what could be legitimately considered the one and only school of thought to which Hanslick belongs. As Christoph Landerer correctly observes, up to the late 1980s, German scholars largely ignored that the intellectual foundation of Hanslick’s approach was not laid in Berlin, Göttingen, or Heidelberg but in Prague, Klagenfurt, and Vienna. Thus, on the sole basis of conceptual similarities with various German writers, Hanslick’s treatise was thoroughly re-located and directly linked to the authors named above. Paul Bruchhagen’s “Hanslick und die spekulative Ästhetik” is an early example of the unsound method of simply relating specific passages of
Hanslick’s argument with specific passages of—in this case—Hegel and Vischer, ultimately resulting in the problematic judgment that Eduard Hanslick has to be regarded as an idealistic philosopher. This dubious method was, however, routinely applied in some of the most frequently consulted literature ever written on Hanslick’s intellectual background, particularly Dorothea Glatt’s Zur geschichtlichen Bedeutung der Musikästhetik Eduard Hanslicks, Werner Abegg’s Musikästhetik und Musikkritik bei Eduard Hanslick, and Carl Dahlhaus’s Die Idee der absoluten Musik (for Abegg’s inquiry, see part two).

Glatt, for example, who locates Hanslick’s argument in the immediate tradition of German romanticism, recognizes this problematic historical approach: “The question whether and to what extent Hanslick directly absorbed romantic theorems cannot be definitely answered in detail.” Her accurate observation, which should make one wary of directly linking Hanslick to such ideas, does not lead to a more circumspect examination of Hanslick’s historical contexts or the general reception of romantic literature in 1854 Vienna. On the contrary, Glatt’s admission that the exact scope of Hanslick’s learning cannot be verified in any meaningful way led her to state that “given his level of education and his remarkable erudition, one can safely assume that he was acquainted with romantic theories of art.” Thus, Johann Gottfried Herder’s (1744–1803) repudiation of Kant’s subjectivist orientation (see part three) and his emphasis on the “aesthetic analysis of objects” (“aesthetische Gegenstandsanalyse”) are apparently sufficient to declare him “Hanslick’s predecessor” (“Vorläufer”). This straightforward connection is established by conceptual similarities such as Hanslick’s comparable statement that “the primary object of aesthetical investigation is the beautiful object, not the feelings of the subject [recte: the perceiving subject]” (OMB, 2; VMS, 22). With these critical remarks on Glatt’s thesis I do not want to deny that Hanslick’s idea of autonomous musical art, which is strictly detached from worldly affairs and cannot be grasped in conceptual language (OMB, 30; VMS, 78), does indeed suggest a romantic heritage. Nevertheless, Glatt’s specific ascription of Hanslick’s ideas, which were extremely common in his time and place, to his unverified knowledge of Herder’s aesthetic writings is completely speculative, yet nonetheless paradigmatic for a notable segment of Hanslick scholarship.

A similar method was employed by Carl Dahlhaus, who—in contrast to Glatt’s thesis about Hanslick’s romanticist background—aligns Hanslick’s treatise with Hegel’s and Heinrich Gustav Hotho’s (1802–73) Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik (“Lectures on Aesthetics”, 1835–38): “Hanslick, the easily comprehensible writer, must be seen relative to Hegel, the difficult-to-understand philosopher, if one wishes to comprehend seriously what Hanslick actually meant, and wherein the problem he sought to solve consisted.” Dahlhaus supports his historical assumption—which was generally endorsed in the 1970s and 1980s—by stressing the “historical context of ca. 1850,” which apparently confirms that “Hanslick’s doctrine implies an exposure to Hegelianism, the reigning philosophy of the 1830s and 1840s.” Even though Dahlhaus specifies instantly that Hanslick’s familiarity with Hegel’s aesthetic theories may not have been acquired first-hand but may rather stem from a watered-down Hegelianism, which became “common parlance of intellectuals” (“Umgangssprache der Intellektuellen”), he entertains opposing views in an earlier article on Hanslick’s idea of form. In “Eduard Hanslick und der musikalische Formbegriff,” he refers to Hanslick’s statement that the term ‘idea’ always “points to the pure, self-sufficient concept given in its actuality” (OMB, 11; VMS, 47), thereby ‘proving’ that Hanslick read Hegel’s Logik (“Logic”, 1812–16). Dahlhaus’s confident assertion is particularly remarkable because Eduard Hanslick gives the source of this idea in the very same footnote of VMS: Friedrich Theodor Vischer. Although Vischer’s position has to be clearly regarded as part of Hegelian tradition,
Dahlhaus’s immediate reference to Hegel’s *Logik* is an example of the common practice of regarding conceptual similarities as ‘proof’ of direct intellectual influences without carefully reflecting on contextual circumstances. This problematic methodology, particularly concerning Hanslick’s familiarity with Hegel’s system—which does not take into account the important distinction between Hegel’s *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik* and the historical heritage of different versions of Hegelianism—has even been rightly called the “Dahlhaus School” (“Dahlhaus-Schule”) of Hanslick scholarship.

Although I cannot discuss the issue of Hanslick’s Hegelian borrowings at great length, research on Hanslick’s Hegelian origins has sufficiently demonstrated that he is much more likely to have taken up certain ideas by his confirmable acquaintance with Vischer’s aesthetics. As Dahlhaus rightly notes in later works, Hanslick’s Hegelianism is of a vague quality that cannot be regarded as an unreserved acceptance of Hegel’s system: Hanslick rather “uses Hegelian means against Hegel.” Likewise, Geoffrey Payzant correctly observes that Hanslick’s definition of “tönend bewegte Formen” (“tonally moving forms”) as “mind giving external shape to itself from within” is probably situated in a general setting of Hegelian reasoning. However, “the meanings of Geist and its derivatives as used by Hegel are far from clear even to Hegelians, and Hanslick was no Hegelian.” Indeed, as various scholars overlook, Hanslick did not receive any formal training in philosophy, which makes all the more probable Payzant’s assessment that Hanslick’s knowledge of Hegelian aesthetics stemmed from more recent sources such as August Kahlert (1807–64), Eduard Krüger (1807–85), or Friedrich Theodor Vischer. The latter, with whom Hanslick was personally acquainted and who is quoted directly on numerous occasions, represents the most likely source for his Hegelian leanings. As Barbara Titus, on the basis of contextual investigation and biographical observation, has meticulously demonstrated, Vischer’s influence is particularly noticeable in Hanslick’s hypothesis concerning the gradual historical development of musical material—and thus, by reasonable extension, of the ‘Musically-Beautiful’ itself—the core of which refers back to Vischer’s similar position.

**Hanslick, Kant, and Austrian Science Politics—A Contextual Perspective**

[3] Rather than being located in the confined tradition of any specific author or any philosophical movement, Hanslick’s approach to musical aesthetics is highly original and was developed by means of a multifaceted engagement with numerous contemporary discourses and important contextual factors. Given the diverse influences mentioned above and several additional intellectual sources of Hanslick’s argument—which cannot be discussed in the present context—it is all the more curious to see how modern Anglo-American scholarship often tends to restrict Hanslick’s position to a highly specific Kantian heritage. In this view, the reasoning is premised on an historical narrative regarding the successive development of musical formalism: Hanslick’s treatise is typically considered the “classical definition of formalistic aesthetics in music,” the “first and most influential theory of absolute music and musical formalism,” and the “inaugural text in the founding of musical formalism as a position in the philosophy of art.” Accordingly, Kant’s *Kritik der Urteilskraft* is commonly regarded as the founding document of aesthetic formalism per se: David Whewell, for instance, mentions Kant’s “powerfully formalistic theory,” Peter Kivy calls Kant’s system the “cradle of musical
formalism, and Marcia Muelder Eaton simply equates “Kantians” and “formalists.” Consequently, it seems entirely plausible to assume an immediate historical connection between the two texts, thereby reading Hanslick’s argument as a concrete musical application of the more universal formalism of Kant’s theory. This idea, which has become virtually canonical in current research, will now be illustrated by a select number of relevant examples regarding the prevalence of this view in recent papers on the history of musical aesthetics.

Andrew Edgar, for example, traces musical analysis and its formalist grounding back to “Kant and Herbart, through their influence on the critic Hanslick”; David Huron similarly proclaims that in “music, Kant’s ideas were developed and extended by the famed Austrian music critic Eduard Hanslick”; Lee Rothfarb carefully surmises that “the foundations, if not the details, of Hanslick’s formalist viewpoint” originate from Kant’s theory; and, finally, Stephen Davies declares: “Hanslick’s formalism echoes the medieval equation of beauty with balance, proportion, and unity, as well as Kantian aesthetic formalism.” Few of the assertions quoted above—Rothfarb being a notable exception—are based on careful research into Hanslick’s intellectual background, his historical contexts, or an in-depth analysis of both texts. Rather, they rely on seemingly ‘obvious’ similarities in the aesthetic approaches of Hanslick and Kant and are typically confined to general remarks on their shared formalism. For that very reason, one may think that these ‘casual’ remarks do no harm: they simply paint a broad picture, made ‘evident’ by analogies between the two texts. In my view, this conciliating assessment is mistaken for two reasons. First, reading Hanslick’s treatise through a Kantian lens does not do justice to Hanslick’s argument and inadvertently contributes to a misdirected interpretation of VMS. Second, the recurrent assertion of Hanslick’s reliance on Kant’s *Kritik der Urteilskraft* leads to simplistic narrative constructions of philosophical dependencies, which—despite a clear lack of detailed research—swiftly develop into ‘common knowledge’, becoming intensely ingrained in musical discourse. The persistent perception of Hanslick’s visceral hatred of Richard Wagner’s (1813–83) music, for example, continues to prosper without reserve, in spite of recent studies that have shown how Hanslick’s evaluation of Wagner’s operas was much more nuanced than is usually assumed. This example illustrates how untested, ‘soft’ facts concerning philosophical dependencies can sometimes transform into generally accepted narratives, which severely influence our grasp of historical settings.

Admittedly, a premature blending of Hanslick’s aesthetics and Kant’s theory has been similarly proposed by German scholars. Thus, the anglophone discussion regarding Hanslick’s Kantian origins is not any kind of peculiar ‘invention’ of English-speaking scholars. Rather, it finds an historical antecedent in a similar German debate on Kant’s aesthetic formalism, chiefly situated in musicological publications of the early 20th century. This older German debate, however, arrived at patently different results and thus paints a more complex picture yet also entails a similar version of the historical narrative described above. Thus, Hermann Kretzschmar (1848–1924) claims: “On multiple occasions, Hanslick simply converts Kant’s theory into universally comprehensible, witty, pointed German writing style, captivating due to dialectics and examples. He even adopts comparisons and particularities from the Königsberg philosopher.” In 2012, Peter Rohs established an analogical assessment: “Kant is regarded as the actual founder of formalism in aesthetics that—for musical purposes—was elaborated most effectively by Hanslick.” Other scholars, however, take a more nuanced approach and consider Kant’s
Kritik der Urteilskraft to be the decisive starting point for a diversified development of opposing aesthetic methods. Paul Moos, for example, judges Kant’s theory to be fundamentally inconsistent, evincing idealistic, formalistic, naturalistic, as well as sensualistic characteristics: an opinion shared by the musicologist Arnold Schering (1877–1941). The most common reading of Kant’s theory of fine art at that time was two-pronged: Kant was classified as “Begründer der Formalästhetik” (founder of aesthetic formalism) as well as “Vertreter der Inhaltsästhetik” (exponent of the aesthetics of content). Consequently, Hanslick’s argument was deemed to be a one-dimensional elaboration of Kant’s Kritik der Urteilskraft, which holds the first seed of strict aesthetic formalism, enriched by other aspects named below (see part three). Hence, a more or less direct impact of Kant on Hanslick has also been claimed in German-language discourse, yet the extent of this tangible stimulus was portrayed with more caution than various modern scholars have considered necessary.

As previously mentioned, Abegg’s Musikästhetik und Musikkritik bei Eduard Hanslick (1974) is similar to the already discussed surveys by Glatt and Dahlhaus in its swift philosophical categorization of Hanslick’s treatise on the sole basis of conceptual similarities. In his case, Vom Musikalisch-Schönen depends not so much on Herder or Hegel as on the author in question: Kant. Since Eduard Hanslick deems a passive listening response ‘pathological’ and consequently aesthetically irrelevant (OMB, 58; VMS, 127) and Kant similarly separates universal beauty from the completely subjective ‘agreeable’ (see part three), which is exclusively dominated by “charm and emotion” (“Reiz und Rührung”; CPJ, 107; KdU, 223), Hanslick’s knowledge of Kant’s theory should be assumed to be plausible. Anticipating the question whether Hanslick’s first-hand familiarity with Kant’s system can really be proven, Abegg replies: “Hanslick is likely to have become acquainted with Kant’s Kritik der Urteilskraft in the course of his philosophical elementary studies at the University of Prague, at least in passing.” Contrary to Abegg’s assurance, this does not seem likely at all, given the available historical information on Kant’s reception in 19th-century Austria. Habsburg authorities categorized Kant’s system—deemed the pivotal catalyst for the French Revolution—as politically dangerous. Peter Miotti and Viennese Nuncio Severoli railed against Kant’s “perverted principles” (" perverse Grundsätze") and irreverent ‘materialism’, which led his work to be referred to popularly as “murderous philosophy” ("Mordphilosophie"), thus causing rigorous restrictions on the public teaching of Kant’s works. Dreading revolutionary movements in Austrian territories, Emperor Franz II (1768–1835) initiated the so-called Studien-Revisions-Kommission (commission for education reform) in 1795, led by Heinrich von Rottenhan (1738–1809), in order to “compensate for the damage inflicted on the minds of the Austrian populace by the Enlightenment.” Its principal intention was that university education should serve solely to support the universal restoration endeavors by methodically eradicating all ostensibly subversive academic traditions and by restricting university studies to purely propaedeutic instructions compatible with Catholic dogmas and state norms. Rottenhan made the intended outcome plainly clear: “The study of mathematics and physics as well as of positive sciences [should] outweigh the so-called rational or speculative sciences in order to contain the skepticism of political and philosophical ‘free-thinking’.”

On July 4, 1798, the Studien-Revisions-Kommission finally decided on the fate of Kant’s theory at Habsburg teaching facilities: in the course of the philosophical elementary education referred to by Werner Abegg—a three-year course that was mandatory for all prospective university attendees of each general faculty (philosophy, medicine, and law), encompassing mathematics, philosophy, theology, physics, world history, classical studies, Austrian history,
Greek studies, etc.—any utterance of Kant’s name was forbidden in principle. Regarding the philosophical doctoral program, however, which Eduard Hanslick did not attend, Kant’s theory could be partially discussed, albeit solely in polemical fashion. Even though scholars differ on the exact date of the ‘ban’ of Kant’s works from Habsburg teaching facilities, Kant’s name was excluded from the regular university curriculum in the years around 1800, and the ‘ban’ was additionally reinforced through the indexing of Kant’s Kritik der reinen Vernunft (“Critique of Pure Reason”, 1781) in the Vatican register of banned books in 1827. Until 1849, academic discourse in Austria continued to be dominated by rationalistic philosophy in the revered tradition of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716) and Christian Wolff (1679–1754), and largely skipped German idealism in favor of decidedly ‘scientific’ and positivistic approaches, such as those of Bernard Bolzano or Johann Friedrich Herbart. Despite another school reform in 1849 that superficially guaranteed the freedom of learning and teaching, the state-run ‘embargo’ on Kant’s works lasted until 1860, when Minister of Education Leopold Graf von Thun und Hohenstein (1811–88), who had previously enforced his anti-idealist standpoint by appointing anti-idealist professors to university positions, resigned from his post. In the case of Hanslick, who in his university training went through these elementary philosophy courses from 1840 to 1843, the political rejection of Kant’s system was unabatedly reinforced, if in a more sporadic fashion than around 1800. After an early period of extensive reception of Kant’s works in the 1780s and 1790s, Rottenhan’s regulations caused various sackings of Kantian lecturers such as Johann Nepomuk Delling (1764–1838) or Anton Kreil (1757–1833), who were forcibly retired in 1795 for the simple reason that “lecturing critical [i.e., Kantian] philosophy leads to atheism.” Although the overall situation had changed by the 1820s and 1830s, when Hegelian idealism became the prime target of political indignation, the ‘ban’ on Kant’s works was still largely upheld, especially at the central educational institutions of Habsburg Austria: Vienna and Prague. The actual results of Habsburg censorship on Kant’s works at that time, especially regarding the individual conditions of specific academic disciplines and the particular reception history of each of Kant’s books, are still largely unknown and merit further research. However, Bernard Bolzano was forcibly retired due to his ‘Kantian leanings’ as late as 1819, Leopold Rembold (1785–1844) was likewise suspended because of Kantian concepts present in his lectures (1824), and Josef Calasanz Likawetz (1773–1850) had to vacate his chair by virtue of his public support of Kant’s theory of autonomous moral action (1836). Thus, the broad picture of Kant’s declining reception in 19th-century Austria verifies vividly how Kantian thinking as well as German idealism were actively censored by Habsburg officials, although this intended anathema might have been executed randomly, without systematic monitoring of every lecture hall at every teaching facility. In the slightly exaggerated formulation of Otto Neurath: “Austria avoided the Kantian episode.” Generally speaking, all key figures of Austrian positivistic philosophy (Herbart, Bolzano, Zimmermann, etc.) were directly opposed to German idealism, even though their critical attitudes differed in regard to certain topics (epistemology, aesthetics, ethics, logic, law, etc.).

[5] A private reading of Kant’s theory would of course still have been possible, and various Austrian writers such as Franz Seraphicus Grillparzer (1791–1872) and Joseph Schreyvogel (1768–1832) were profoundly influenced by transcendental philosophy. However, Kant’s works did not form an essential component of academic education at Habsburg universities at the time of Hanslick’s juridical education, as some scholars assume given Kant’s undeniable importance for present-day philosophy curriculums. Therefore, one cannot simply presume, as Werner Abegg does, that Hanslick had first-hand knowledge of Kant’s theory but must further verify this assumption separately: a task that has not yet been undertaken in serious fashion. Even a cursory review of Hanslick’s historical contexts—focused on temporal as well as geographical
circumstances—shows that Kant’s system and German idealism were purposefully marginalized by Habsburg authorities and that the indigenous background of Hanslick’s argument accounts for various features of his aesthetic approach. Hanslick’s rejection of idealistic theories on the essence of every single art (OMB, 2; VMS, 22–23), or his strong appeal to natural science as the operational benchmark for musical aesthetics (OMB, 1; VMS, 24), for instance, can be directly deduced from the general positivistic orientation of Austrian education strategies. As Christoph Landerer correctly remarks, these specific features “in the attuned meaning of ‘exact’, logical-formal research that operates inductively and is oriented towards facts, characterize Austrian humanities up to the 20th century.” Similarly, Hanslick’s substantial distinction between aesthetics and music history, his key contention that “historical comprehension” (“historisches Begreifen”) and “aesthetic judgment” (“ästhetische[s] Beurtheilen”) are entirely different issues (OMB, 40; VMS, 94), opposing Hegel’s historicist aesthetics, was also held by his close friend Zimmermann, who argued against a “conversion of aesthetics into art history” (“Verwandlung der Aesthetik in Kunstgeschichte”), which ultimately identifies the “history of the work’s genesis” (“Geschichte der Entstehung eines Werkes”) with “aesthetic judgment” (“ästhetische[] Beurtheilung”).

Zimmermann’s attitude towards aesthetic matters was profoundly influenced by two ‘Austrian’ thinkers that also clearly shaped Hanslick’s treatise: Johann Friedrich Herbart and Bernard Bolzano. The work of Herbart, who was professor of philosophy at Königsberg University from 1809 until 1833, has been correctly declared the “quasi-official state philosophy” (“quasi offizielle Staatsphilosophie”) of 19th-century Austria. Herbart’s ‘realism’ blended perfectly with the restorative movement of Emperor Franz’s politics whilst posing a tenable, up-to-date alternative to German idealism. Reviving Leibniz’s Monadologie (“Monadology”, 1714) and glaringly insisting upon a strict separation between philosophy, science, and politics, Herbart’s writings embodied philosophy according to the liking of Habsburg officials. As Rudolf Eitelberger (1817–85), founder of the Vienna School of Art History, tellingly declared in a letter to Leo Thun (November 26, 1854), Herbart’s theories “nowhere came into conflict with established confessions or political systems,” thereby making Herbart’s modern writings, which declared natural science to be the guiding principle, especially attractive to education politics. All major figures of the general education reform of 1849—Count Thun, Hermann Bonitz (1814–88), Hanslick’s former teacher Franz Exner (1802–53), or his old friend Joseph von Helfert (1820–1910)—closely adhered to some form of Herbartian philosophy, consequently implementing Herbartianism as major force of academic discourse: a steady process set into motion in the early 1820s and ultimately completed by Zimmermann’s appointment to the University of Vienna (1861). The ultimate outcome of this historical situation is correctly outlined by Geoffrey Payzant: “if one sought a teaching position in Austria, philosophical or otherwise, one had to be, or profess to be, a Herbartian.” Regarding Hanslick’s argument, Herbartian teachings were particularly important for his concept of objective aesthetics, formalistic aesthetics, and autonomous instrumental music, for his critical attitude towards emotivist aesthetics, for his emphasis on the most elemental components of a given piece and their mutual relations, and for his appreciation of technical musical aspects. Although Herbart’s name does not appear before the third edition of VMS (see note 17), it is difficult to imagine that he did not have at least rudimentary knowledge of Herbart’s works prior to the initial edition of 1854. In contrast to Kant’s Kritik der Urteilskraft, my cautious assertion is supported by the Austrian contexts of Hanslick’s aesthetics, his strong desire for an academic profession, stated as early as 1851, and his personal affiliation with the most significant Herbartian philosopher of his time and place: Zimmermann.
The Prague priest and philosopher Bernard Bolzano, on the other hand, who probably affected Hanslick’s aesthetics even more strongly than Johann Friedrich Herbart, is not referred to in VMS. Again, this fact can be clarified by analyzing the political contexts of Habsburg Austria. In 1819, Bolzano was forcibly retired due to an unfounded accusation of ‘dangerous’ Kantianism—a convenient explanation employed to obscure the more tenacious allegation of political sedition. Bolzano’s removal from the faculty of theology had hardly anything to do with Kantian leanings on his part but was rather caused by his ‘heretical’ attempts to unify Catholic dogma (the Fall of Man, the Holy Trinity, Immaculate Conception, etc.) with rational thinking, on the basis of his strong faith in human reason. Accordingly, any mention of Bolzano in an aesthetic monograph intended to initiate an academic career would have been extremely ill-advised. The general precepts of Bolzano’s philosophy, however, continued to flourish in Habsburg territories by way of his dearest student and scientific ‘successor’: once again, Zimmermann. Characterizing Zimmermann as a Bolzanist and as a Herbartian at the same time is only superficially contradictory. As Christoph Landerer accurately determines, Zimmermann’s allegiance to Herbartian philosophy, also heavily driven by careerist concerns, dates from 1853 to 1855. Prior to this time, he had primarily operated as “the principal trustee” of Bernard Bolzano’s “scientific estate” (“der hauptsächliche wissenschaftliche Nachlaßverwalter”), by copying Bolzanist
Principles in his *Philosophische Propaedeutik* ("Philosophical Propaedeutic", 1852), the standard textbook at Habsburg teaching facilities for several decades.\[95\] Furthermore, Bolzano’s Leibnizian philosophy and Herbart’s ‘realism’ were similar in various respects, leading to a widespread incorporation of Bolzanist doctrines into Herbartianism, labelled a virtual “thought amalgam” ("Gedankenamalgam") by Kurt Blaukopf.\[96\]

Furthermore, Bolzano's Leibnizian philosophy and Herbart's 'realism' were similar in various respects, leading to a widespread incorporation of Bolzanist doctrines into Herbartianism, labelled a virtual “thought amalgam” ("Gedankenamalgam") by Kurt Blaukopf.\[96\]

A detailed account of Bolzano's influence on Hanslick's aesthetic approach—which has been very well explored—cannot be included in my basic sketch of Hanslick's Austrian contexts.\[99\] Given Bolzano's position as an extremely significant predecessor of Hanslick’s argument, however, several paradigmatic examples seem in order. Bolzano published his aesthetic thoughts in two brief books: *Über den Begriff des Schönen* ("On the Notion of Beauty", 1843) and *Über die Eintheilung der schönen Künste* ("On the Classification of the Fine Arts", 1849).\[98\] In similar fashion to Hanslick, Bolzano defined aesthetic perception as disinterested contemplation, described musical listening as active tracking of compositional development,\[99\] ardently rejected emotivist models whilst decisively insisting on specialized aesthetics for every single art, and largely focused his philosophical considerations on the artistic object, on “Kunst in objektiver Bedeutung” ("Art in Objective Perspective"), as he wrote to Franz Exner.\[100\] Whereas Herbart established aesthetics dependent on psychological considerations, actually asserting that "beauty does not exist beyond a mental image, but rather requires at least one possible spectator,\[101\] Bolzano designed a concept of beauty isolated entirely from psychological explanations, thereby proving decisive for Hanslick's argument.\[102\] Bolzano's principal publication, his *Wissenschaftslehre* ("Theory of Science", 1837),\[103\] primarily represents a modern adaption of Leibnizian rationalism but also displays distinct Platonic features. One of these Platonic features is Bolzano's premise of “Sätze an sich” ("sentences as such") and “Wahrheiten an sich” ("truths as such"). Bolzano defines a sentence as such as “any statement that something is or is not, no matter whether this statement is true or false, no matter whether it has been formulated or not, or even if it has been thought or not by any mind."\[104\] Likewise, a truth as such—a subclass of sentences as such—is specified as any sentence that “states something is as it is, although I do not determine if this sentence has been actually thought or uttered by somebody or not."\[105\] Paraphrasing Bolzano's graphic example: the number of leaves carried by a given tree at a given time does not rely on psychological considerations and is not at all dependent on somebody who counts the leaves—it is a truth as such even if this specific number has not been "actually thought or uttered by somebody." The radically objective nature of Hanslick’s concept of musical beauty matches Bolzano’s Platonic mindset: "Beauty is and remains beauty even if no feelings are aroused and even if it be neither perceived nor thought; [hence only for the delight of a perceiving subject, yet not caused by it]" (OMB, 3).\[106\] It is extremely improbable that Eduard Hanslick, who did not receive any formal training in philosophy, knew Bolzano's intricate logical theory first-hand, but in view of Bolzano’s ongoing influence on Herbartian intellectuals, crucial features of Bolzano’s writings could have been privately imparted to Hanslick by way of Bolzano’s favorite student and Hanslick’s close friend, Zimmermann.\[107\]
Hanslick and Kant—Aesthetic Parallels and Philosophical Discrepancies

My lengthy survey of Hanslick’s Austrian contexts, the declining reception of Kant’s works at Habsburg universities, and the positivistic orientation of Count Thun’s reform provide the necessary background for a more careful analysis of Hanslick’s Kantianism. The question to be explored in the ensuing sections, however, is not about Hanslick’s treatise being situated in some sort of ‘broad’ Kantian framework. As far as I can see, the rather vague notion of framework is uninteresting and unilluminating for the very same reason: every post-Kantian aesthetic analysis is somehow embedded in a Kantian framework, either by adopting or by opposing Kantian doctrines in a direct or indirect manner. The same goes for Hegel’s, Theodor W. Adorno’s (1903–69), or Arthur C. Danto’s (1924–2013) aesthetic positions: as long as there is cultural transfer, the vague notion of an overarching framework directly applies and any treatise written...
after these authors is somehow connected to their works. Furthermore, Kant was not the originator of numerous questions he explores in the *Kritik der Urteilskraft*. Consequently, he himself is situated in a Baumgartian, Cartesian, Burkeian, Lockeian, or Wolffian aesthetic discourse, permeated by complex problems of philosophical inspirations. Going down the road of ‘philosophical frameworks’ eventually engenders Alfred North Whitehead’s (1861–1947) prominent statement that all of “European philosophical tradition ... consists of a series of footnotes to Plato.” Hence, by way of aesthetic tradition from classical antiquity to 1854, *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* would be located in an Aristotelic, Platonic, Augustinian, or Thomasian framework as well as in a Kantian setting. Thus, the precise question I wish to deal with refers solely to the thesis stated above: is Kant one of the predominant influences on if not the major source of Hanslick’s argument? I will examine several problems: the question whether their generally accepted similarity (see notes 56 and 62) holds up under scrutiny and the likely extent of their consensus regarding formalistic aesthetics. The eventual outcome of my ensuing analysis will affirm several palpable theoretical similarities, but it will also show certain equally striking disparities between the two authors.

**Kant’s Theory of Fine Art: Free Beauty, Dependent Beauty, and Moral Ideas**

[7] Before addressing the presumed consensus between Hanslick and Kant in any greater detail, we must deal with some prevalent assumptions regarding Kant’s aesthetic formalism. The following discussion cannot be viewed as a general treatment of Kant's broad system but will instead be limited to those topics directly related to the subject of my paper and will thus mainly—but not solely—concern Kant’s theory of fine art. First, we must briefly ponder on Kant’s important distinction between dependent beauty and free beauty: while free beauty “presupposes no concept of what the object ought to be,” its counterpart does “presuppose such a concept and the perfection of the object in accordance with it” (*CPJ*, 114; *KdU*, 229). Kant provides several telling examples: as it has a practical function, a building is dependently beautiful and is evaluated accordingly. Flowers, designs à la grecque and “music without a text” (“Musik ohne Text”) are instances of free beauty: they portray nothing definite, have no intrinsic meaning and are therefore evaluated by the pure judgment of taste “according to mere form” (“der bloßen Form nach”), as Kant puts it (*CPJ*, 114; *KdU*, 229). This wording clarifies why some might take Kant to be the historical originator of rigorous aesthetic formalism, but at the same time it also shows that Kant is presently concerned with just one side of the coin: the pure aesthetic judgment, not the beautiful artefact. As Robert Stecker aptly states: “to focus exclusively on Kant’s general account of pure judgments of taste entails ignoring a good deal of the complexity of Kant’s aesthetic theory.” Given the fact that (in Kant’s view) free beauty is mainly located in natural objects, not in aesthetic artefacts, one could argue that fine art is necessarily dependently beautiful and cannot be judged in a purely aesthetic fashion. In order to accurately appreciate art as art, one has to know what the perceived artefact presents, which at least logically requires the general concept of ‘art’. In this regard, Kant indeed says that “if the object is given as a product of art, and is as such supposed to be declared to be beautiful, then, since art always presupposes an end in the cause (and its causality), a concept must first be the ground of what the thing is supposed to be” (*CPJ*, 190; *KdU*, 311).

Thus, Kant obviously indicates that the ‘mere form’ of a given object does not suffice for this item to be deemed an example of fine art. In his words, fine art is “a kind of representation that is purposive in itself and, though without an end, nevertheless promotes the cultivation of the
mental powers for sociable communication” (CPJ, 185; KdU, 306). Whenever a given object fails to achieve this purpose, it may still be deemed art, although not fine art: it is an example of agreeable art, art that aims at subjective enjoyment, “only intended as momentary entertainment, not as some enduring material for later reflection or discussion” (CPJ, 184; KdU, 305). To effectively transcend the completely agreeable, fine art—besides its formal structure that is subjectively sufficient for a pure aesthetic judgment—has to objectively represent aesthetic ideas, concisely defined as that “representation of the imagination that occasions much thinking though without it being possible for any determinate thought, i.e., concept, to be adequate to it” (CPJ, 192; KdU, 313–14). Whereas natural beauty is interpreted as embodying aesthetic ideas, fine art has the necessary condition to provide aesthetic contemplation with such ideas. Thus, fine art has two essential premises: it must have a formal structure that puts into motion the free play of the cognitive faculties of “imagination” and “understanding” (“Einstellungskraft” and “Verstand”; CPJ, 102; KdU, 217), and it has to occasion aesthetic ideas.

Peter Kivy puts this substantial requirement in a remarkably insightful manner: “Contrary to what some people may think, Kant was not a formalist in his philosophy of art … . On the contrary, he believed that works of art, being representational, have a ‘content’ or ‘meaning’ and that this content or meaning is an essential part of their nature.”

This two-pronged conception of beautiful artefacts as fine art has considerable consequences for ‘pure’ music and its aesthetic assessment. As soon as Kant ultimately determines that music, being merely a “play of sensations” (“Spiel der Empfindungen”), can indeed be called fine art due to the fact that it rests on the mathematical characteristics of tones—i.e., on perceptible and assessable form (CPJ, 202; KdU, 324–25)—he ranks the fine arts in regard to their value. Unsurprisingly, poetry takes the first place, but (much more surprisingly) music comes in second, as long as “charm and movement of the mind” (“Reiz und Bewegung des Gemüths”) are the deciding features (CPJ, 205; KdU, 328). This claim, however, directly threatens music’s status as fine art, since Kant has previously concluded that “charm and emotion” are never related to artistic value. Rather, they deprive the aesthetic artefact of any lasting impact and bring it closer to subjective enjoyment (CPJ, 107–8; KdU, 223). For Kant, ‘pure’ music is the “language of the affects” (“Sprache der Affecten”; CPJ, 206; KdU, 328), and its capability to present content is precisely limited to those aesthetic ideas that are “naturally combined” (“natürlicher Weise verbunden”) with affect (CPJ, 206; KdU, 328). Thus, music is located between the agreeable—the completely subjective—and actual beauty, which has a claim to subjective yet interpersonal universality (CPJ, 121; KdU, 237). In Kant’s view, ‘pure’ music has no semantic content: it speaks by means of auditory sensations without concepts, and it is far too elusive to leave behind any rational content for intellectual recollection. Music, he ultimately concludes, is “more enjoyment than culture … and it has, judged by reason, less value than any other of the beautiful arts” (CPJ, 205; KdU, 328). Hence, one could argue that Kant’s notion of music is indeed basically formalistic. But Kant’s formalistic conception hardly makes him an aesthetic formalist in regard to fine art. It is precisely the lacking semantic ‘content’ of ‘pure’ music that leads to its aesthetic devaluation, instigating the ultimately unresolved question whether ‘pure’ music is fine art at all (CPJ, 202; KdU, 324).

[8] My second concern in regard to Kant’s Kritik der Urteilskraft as an immediate inspiration to Hanslick’s argument is the tight link Kant establishes between morality and the fine arts. This link is commonly overlooked because the four well-known moments of aesthetic judgment are often taken to be the whole story of Kant’s concept, thus strongly suggesting a formalistic conception of his theory of fine art. Viewing Kant as a staunch advocate of aesthetic autonomy, however, is
extremely problematic given his strong belief that each kind of beauty is a “symbol of morality” (CPJ, 225; KdU, 351). Peter le Huray, for example, outlines the significant implications of this mainly ethical view: “Although Kant was so careful to distinguish between pleasures that were sensual, ethical and aesthetic, he could not ultimately avoid the time-honored conclusion that the highest forms of art were those which contribute to ethical ends.”[123] As we have seen before, aesthetic judgment is based on the free play of two cognitive faculties: understanding and imagination. However, the additional presentation of a rational moral idea—via the so-called aesthetic idea—ultimately harmonizes these cognitive faculties with reason itself, thereby fostering all mental powers and eventually ensuring an item’s status as truly fine art. In this context, Martin Weatherston rightly notes that “while a pure and free judgement of taste merely assesses the harmony of the imagination and the understanding, judgement upon adherent beauty furthers the culture of the mental powers.” In contrast to a common reading of Kant’s Kritik der Urteilskraft, dependent beauty thus must not be assessed inferior to free beauty: “Indeed, the advantage of adherent beauty lies in having been fixed through a concept of purpose. By bringing a concept of reason into harmony with taste, our faculty of the representative power gains.”[124]

Kant proposes this additional connection between morality and art in a frequently overlooked paragraph: “[If the beautiful arts are not combined, whether closely or at a distance, with moral ideas, which alone carry with them a self-sufficient satisfaction, then the latter [i.e., subjective enjoyment] is their ultimate fate” (CPJ, 203; KdU, 326).[125] For Kant, this impending devaluation is pressing primarily in the case of ‘pure’ music, which—as he says in Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht (“Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View”, 1798)—“is a beautiful (not merely pleasant) art only because it serves poetry as a vehicle.”[126] The fine arts are, Kant categorically emphasizes, the “visible expression of moral ideas” (“der sichtbare Ausdruck sittlicher Ideen”; CPJ, 120; KdU, 235), and taste the “faculty for the judging of the sensible rendering of moral ideas” (“ein Beurtheilungsvermögen der Versinnlichung sittlicher Ideen”; CPJ, 230; KdU, 356). In contrast to common readings of Kant’s theory, Kant does not view free beauty as having higher value than its dependent counterpart, as it is not tied to any rational concept and thus does not entirely engage the cognitive faculties. Accordingly, dependent beauty seems much more suitable for the aesthetic appraisal of most fine art. In this context, Paul Guyer correctly observes that Kant did not “assume, let alone argue, that objects of pure judgments of taste are in any way more valuable than objects of impure judgments,” thereby calling assertions regarding Kant’s rigorous formalism into serious question.[127] Thus, ‘pure’ music, the ultimate example of free beauty in the realm of art, is fine art in a peculiar fashion, constantly bordering on sensory pleasure, and perpetually oscillating between a “beautiful play of sensations” (“schönes Spiel von Empfindungen”) and a mere play of “agreeable sensations” (“angenehme Empfindungen”; CPJ, 202; KdU, 324). [128]

Hanslick and Kant I: Apparent Analogies and Conceptual Similarities

Having discussed these various features of Kant’s Kritik der Urteilskraft, we can now turn to Vom Musikalisch-Schönen in greater detail in order to clarify the pending question of Kant’s impact on Hanslick’s aesthetics. I will analyze Hanslick’s treatise against the theoretical background of Kant’s model and will primarily scrutinize their reputed conceptual similarities. To be sure, there are several palpable overlaps between the two texts. Peter Kivy’s claim that there cannot be “any doubt that Hanslick was greatly influenced by Kant’s philosophy of beauty,”[129] however, is extremely problematic in view of my previous portrayal of Hanslick’s contexts and Habsburg
education strategies. Kivy’s thesis as well as various related assertions are not grounded on any thorough analysis of Hanslick’s immediate dependence on Kant’s system. On the contrary, they are usually invoked as a generic truism in the complex history of musical aesthetics that clearly merits further research. As I have previously established, it is entirely unclear whether Hanslick ever read Kant. He is briefly named in Hanslick’s treatise as one of those “eminent people” (“gewichtige Stimmen”) who—alongside Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–78), Herbart, Hegel, and others—have rationally advocated “the contentlessness of music” (“Inhaltslosigkeit der Musik”), yet he is never quoted or referred to on any other occasion (OMB, 77; VMS, 160). This fact, however, is to be expected in light of the politically precarious nature of Kant’s theory and the practical purpose of Hanslick’s treatise, aimed at attaining an academic position in 1854 Vienna. Hegel’s system, however, assessed even more disapprovingly by Habsburg officials in the 1850s, is alluded to on numerous occasions without restraint. In the case of Hanslick’s memoirs, Aus meinem Leben (1894), the virtually complete absence of Kant’s theory has to be accounted for differently. Again, Kant is referred to only once in a passing comment on Johann Heinrich Dambeck (1774–1820), a professor of philosophy partially inclined towards Kant’s works, whose Vorlesungen über Aesthetik (“Lectures on Aesthetics”, 1822–23) have been edited by Josef Adolf Hanslik, Eduard’s father. In this context, Hanslick affirms that this book was highly valued as long as “Kantian philosophy was cultivated” (“so lange die Kantsche Philosophie noch Pflege fand”). Apart from this brief remark, Kant’s name is not mentioned throughout Hanslick’s memoirs, a fact that cannot be justified by political concerns. By 1894, hardly anyone would have seriously objected to an appeal to Kant’s theory on political grounds, but Hanslick did not use this convenient opportunity to reveal any deep-seated obligation to the Königsberg philosopher despite modified historical circumstances and his unchallenged academic position. These textual factors, however, do not show that Hanslick has been entirely ignorant of Kant’s works, as he seldom invokes his intellectual background in great detail. Nonetheless, Geoffrey Payzant rightly advises against prematurely establishing an affinity between Hanslick’s argument and Kant’s Kritik der Urteilskraft. He does point to several obvious overlaps but rightly asserts that “we have neither internal nor collateral evidence upon which to make a positive claim for an influence from the one to the other” (OMB, XVI). The collateral evidence, in terms of historical conditions and Habsburg science policies, is indeed very slim. How about internal evidence?
The most noticeable similarity between Hanslick and Kant is their respective definition of aesthetic intuition and their general concept of beauty. Kant’s decisive moments of beauty, which follow from his meticulous distinction between the logical, the moral, and the aesthetic, are disinterestedness (CPJ, 96; KdU, 211), conceptlessness (CPJ, 104; KdU, 219), purposiveness without purpose (CPJ, 120; KdU, 236), and subjective universality (CPJ, 124; KdU, 240).

Disregarding this cautious partition of the reflective judgment—the fourth aspect of subjective universality is entirely absent from VMS—Hanslick defines beauty in similar fashion: “Beauty has no purpose at all. For it is mere form, which … can be applied to the most diverse purposes without having any purpose of its own beyond itself.” Aesthetic perception is modelled accordingly: “It is not by means of feeling that we become aware of beauty, but by means of the imagination as the activity of pure contemplation.” This aesthetic reflection is further detached from intellectual deliberation and passive emotional indulgence, therefore mirroring Kant’s essential distinction between reflective judgment and determinant judgment: “In pure contemplation the hearer takes in nothing but the piece of music being played; every material
interest must be set aside. ... Exclusive preoccupation of mind through beauty operates logically instead of aesthetically; a predominant effect upon feeling would be more questionable, would indeed be pathological” (OMB, 3–5; VMS, 26–29). For various scholars, these conceptual similarities seem completely sufficient to consider Hanslick’s treatise a Kantian inquiry, heavily relying on the “Analytik des Schönen” (“Analytic of the Beautiful”), thereby locating VMS in a Kantian setting. Thus, Patricia Carpenter uses these rather vague general parallels in order to state that Hanslick’s “general aesthetic stems from Kant’s Critique.”

As it is generally recognized by historians of philosophy, however, many of the aesthetic concepts named above did not initially emerge with Kant’s Kritik der Urteilskraft. The idea of aesthetic disinterest, for example, is the pivotal product of a longstanding philosophical tradition that probably originated with Anthony Ashley Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury (1671–1713) and Francis Hutcheson (1694–1747). Jerome Stolnitz clarifies this significant observation particularly graphically: Shaftsbury “sets into motion the idea which—more than any other—marks off modern from traditional aesthetics and around which a great deal of the dialectic of modern thought has revolved, viz. the concept of ‘aesthetic disinterestedness’.”

Throughout the 18th century, this idea is a prevalent aesthetic position, one that has continued to dominate aesthetic discourse down to our own day. This equally applies to Hanslick’s statement that beauty does not have “a purpose of its own beyond itself,” which might seem to derive directly from Kant’s notion of purposiveness without purpose, as Hanne Appelqvist correctly discerns. Indeed, Hanslick does not omit any argument in favor of this contentious proposition but simply asserts it as a ‘hard fact’, which, given current thinking, is undoubtedly problematic. In aesthetic discourse of the 19th century, however, this idea was generally accepted without allusion of any kind to Kant.

In 1841, for example, Ferdinand Gotthelf Hand (1786-1851), whose Aesthetik der Tonkunst (“Aesthetics of Musical Art”, 1837–41) Hanslick was definitely acquainted with (OMB, 70–72; VMS, 149–52), provides a similar account: “The work of art is an end unto itself; it aims everywhere to be, and should be, only beautiful.” The same goes for Ludwig Tieck (1773–1853), who deeply shaped the idea of ‘pure’ music via his creative edition of Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder’s (1773–98) Phantasien über die Kunst für Freunde der Kunst (“Fantasies about Art for Friends of Art”, 1799). ‘Pure’ music, Tieck writes, “creates effortlessly and without purpose, and yet it fulfils and achieves the highest purpose.”

Hence, Kant’s claim is itself clearly situated in a Moritzian framework, thereby shifting Hanslick to a Moritzian tradition by default and thus pushing back the subject of immediate influences further
and further. A more promising connection that cannot be reduced to the tides of scholarly zeitgeist is the Kantian elevation of cognitive participation in aesthetic judgment, therefore effectively superseding the widely held view of music as a purely physical stimulus.¹⁴⁰ Hanslick could also have derived this idea from Christian Friedrich Michaelis (1770–1834), who equally proposed that musical beauty relies solely on its “composition, hence its form, namely melody and harmony.”¹⁴² Michaelis, however, located his treatise *Ueber den Geist der Tonkunst* (“On the Spirit of Music”, 1795–1800) in immediate succession to Kant’s theory, markedly indicated by the telling subtitle *Mit Rücksicht auf Kant’s Kritik der ästhetischen Urteilskraft* (“With Respect to Kant’s Critique of Aesthetic Judgment”), therefore suggesting a mediated Kantian influence on Hanslick’s argument.¹⁴³ Ascribing musical beauty to its formal structure strongly elevates the cognitive component of ‘pure’ music, which now has to be positively constructed, not merely passively perceived in the process of listening. But Kant did not grasp the idea of musical structure on a broad level: he considered instead individual tones to be formally organized and thereby ignored a unique musical ‘logic’ that rivals linguistic rationality and saves music from being merely agreeable amusement.¹⁴⁴ Kant’s theory retains the traditional framework of form versus content,¹⁴⁵ thus, Kant gave hints of musical formalism, but his entire theory of fine art is firmly rooted in the inherited discourse that tied art to moral precepts and the mimetic tradition.¹⁴⁶ As Paul Guyer rightly states:

Kant’s conception of the autonomy of the aesthetic by no means suggests that in the realm of taste unlike anywhere else we can enjoy total liberty from the constraints of morality; although perhaps later and indeed contemporary aesthetes may fancy such an idea, that is not a view we could reasonably expect to find in a philosopher whose deepest conviction is the primacy of practical reason.¹⁴⁷

¹⁰ In a different context, Peter Kivy tries to show that Hanslick’s aesthetic formalism is a specified expansion of Kant’s notion of formal beauty. In Kivy’s view, Hanslick refined Kant’s concept of formal beauty apart from its—essentially inseparable—correlation to the idea and the moral realm, thereby defining ‘pure’ music as ‘logical grammar’ or as ‘syntactical structure’. In Kivy’s words: “This was a tremendous insight, and gave to musical formalism the backbone it needed to do real justice to the deep musical experience … . What Hanslick realized was that, without having a meaning, absolute music, at its best, has a ‘logic’.⁴¹⁴⁸ Kivy had already stressed a similar point by referring to Hanslick’s application of the “Kant-like” term “arabesque”—a term that (contrary to common opinion) Kant did not use in his *Kritik der Urteilskraft*.¹⁴⁹ However, this term still points to another relevant influence on Hanslick’s treatise, namely Hans Georg Nägeli’s (1773–1836) *Vorlesungen über Musik mit Berücksichtigung der Dilettanten* (“Lectures on Music Having Regard to Dilatants”, 1826), where the musical arabesque alongside Kant’s notion of free play is prominently introduced to musical discourse, resulting in the following description of ‘pure’ music: music “solely consists of forms, the arranged composition of tones and their relations in a unified whole.”¹⁴⁵⁰ Thus, even Kivy’s moderate historical hypothesis in regard to Kant’s direct impact on Hanslick’s argument—primarily construed in terms of Hanslick’s negative response to Kant’s dilemma of ‘pure’ music, which might also have been directed against Hegel’s similar concerns—hardly proves Hanslick’s reliance on Kant’s theory.¹⁵¹ It completely evaporates when it is carefully considered in light of their respective definition of ‘form’.
Whereas Kant cannot grasp artistic form in the absence of what he held to be its absolutely necessary counterpart, i.e., semantic content, Hanslick defines musical form as the content of ‘pure’ music and therefore logically identifies content with form: “In music there is no content as opposed to form, because music has no form other than the content” (OMB, 80; VMS, 165). His famous ‘mantra’ “the content of music is tonally moving forms” (OMB, 29; VMS, 75) stresses Hanslick’s crucial insight that directly subverts Kant’s traditional distinction. By forms (plural!), Hanslick does not mean to indicate technical musical ‘forms’ of music theory (concerto, sonata, rondo, etc.) but rather denotes the most elemental components of a given piece, for example musical ideas and their structural conjunction: “A musical idea brought into complete manifestation in appearance is already self-subsistent beauty; it is an end in itself, and it is in no way primarily a medium or material for the representation of feelings or conceptions” (OMB, 28; VMS, 75).

As Kivy correctly observes, this idea of musical ‘forms’ elevates musical thinking to the same level of intellectual stimulation as rational reasoning, thus utterly evading the Kantian and/or Hegelian dilemma of music’s lacking content. Given Kant’s and Hanslick’s radically different concepts of form(s) itself—‘form’ as the opposite to content and matter (Kant), ‘forms’ as essential building blocks of musical structure (Hanslick)—however, the obvious parallels in their respective vocabulary fade away and no longer support the common reading of Hanslick’s argument as historically dependent on Kant’s theory. As Carl Dahlhaus rightly states: “Kant’s conception of form is so different from Eduard Hanslick’s that referring to both in the same breath is misleading.”

Hanslick and Kant II: Methodical Objectivism and Specialized Aesthetics

The foregoing paragraphs largely account for the most explicit overlaps between Hanslick and Kant. Of course, one could explore several other minor topics, such as the skeptical attitude both authors take towards mathematical ‘calculation’ and its impact on the aesthetic evaluation and the formal makeup of music. For Kant, mathematics are the conditio sine qua non of music’s subjective universality, thereby allowing for the general validity of the judgment ‘beautiful’, but they have “not the least share in the charm and the movement of the mind that music produces” (CPJ, 224; KdU, 329). Similarly, Hanslick discards the idea that a piece of music may in any way be mathematically constructed: “Mathematics merely puts in order the rudimentary material for artistic treatment and operates secretly in the simplest relations. Musical thought comes to light without it, however” (OMB, 41; VMS, 97).

However, Hanslick and Kant are treating different problems once more: Kant, as Piero Giordanetti has correctly observed, writes about the emotive impact of ‘pure’ music, whereas Hanslick rather refers to the structural composition of a given piece. I will omit minor issues like this in favor of a concluding investigation of the most glaring disparities between the two authors. Again, one can instantly diagnose some obvious dissent, such as Kant’s lifelong assertion that ‘pure’ music is the “language of the affects” (“Sprache der Affecten”; CPJ, 206; KdU, 328)—an idea that Hanslick vigorously criticized—or the fact that Kant’s system is, in regard to the pure aesthetic judgment, more or less a theory of natural beauty. Apart from his exceedingly progressive conviction that music has no basis in nature beyond its most ‘simple’ features (the triad, the harmonic series; OMB, 70; VMS, 148) and is a cultural artefact, constantly undergoing historical progression (OMB, 35, 71; VMS, 86, 149; see note 40), natural beauty was of no deeper concern to Hanslick’s argument. Indeed, Hanslick’s consciously historical conception of musical beauty—probably inspired by Friedrich Theodor Vischer’s Hegelian point of view—is totally absent from Kant’s theory, which establishes aesthetics according to transcendental methodology. In general, however, there seem to be
two major issues that get to the very root of Kant’s model and that show most clearly how his and Hanslick’s aesthetics are ultimately incompatible.

Figure 5: Eduard Hanslick (1825–1904)
By courtesy of Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Bildarchiv Austria

[11] First, Kant’s *Kritik der Urteilskraft* is an excellent illustration of an abstract approach commonly designated as “Systemästhetik” (“system aesthetics”). This phrase usually denotes an aesthetic approach that is firmly rooted in an overarching philosophical framework. Kant’s *Kritik der Urteilskraft* thereby bridges the gap between the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (“Critique of Pure Reason”, 1781) and the *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* (“Critique of Practical Reason”, 1788) and thus must satisfy certain ethical and epistemic principles. While Kant explicitly repudiates the idea that a rational concept of beauty could ever be established effectively, *any* work of art still has to fulfil specific pre-set criteria in order to be classified as beautiful, regardless of the specific artistic medium. Thus, Kant identifies universal conditions of artistic beauty that are equally binding for a poem, a tragedy, a painting, a sculpture, or a piece of music. For Hanslick, this
system-bound approach, relying on the determination of preconceptions of general beauty, was completely misguided. He is concerned exclusively with musical beauty, the ‘Musically-Beautiful’, so that it is even hard to see how his notion of specific musical beauty is related to other forms of beauty or beauty in general, as Mark Evan Bonds has lucidly noticed.\[160]\] Hanslick regarded it as a severe delusion that the “aesthetics of any particular art may be derived through mere conformity to a general concept of beauty. … System-building is giving way to research firmly based on the axiom that the laws of beauty proper to each particular art are inseparable from the distinctive characteristics of its material and its technique” (OMB, 2; VMS, 22–23).\[162]\] Kant’s theory does fail to satisfy Hanslick’s crucial condition, which is at the very heart of Hanslick’s aesthetics. Thus, from Hanslick’s perspective, Kant’s system has to be ultimately dismissed as speculative philosophy altogether. Accordingly, Payzant’s translation of Vom Musikalisch-Schönen as On the Musically Beautiful is much more accurate than Gustav Cohen’s The Beautiful in Music, but still omits the uniting hyphen: the ‘Musically-Beautiful’ is an intentionally constructed compound noun in its own right. In three chapters printed prior to the book’s initial edition,\[162]\] Hanslick still uses the term “musical beauty” (“musikalische Schönheit”) in an adjective-substantive-relationship,\[163]\] reworking precisely these passages for the definite wording of VMS, consequently substituting “musical beauty” with “Musically-Beautiful” (VMS, 109, 140, 152).\[164]\] Thus, Cohen’s rendition suggests an aesthetic method that is exactly contrary to Hanslick’s intention: he did not propose an abstract principle of beauty, retroactively applicable to ‘pure’ music, but was concerned exclusively with the Musically-Beautiful, beauty solely and explicitly manifest in the ‘art of tones’. As Payzant commented sarcastically in regard to Cohen’s version: “As a translation of the somewhat eccentric German, this formulation is quite acceptable, provided one ignores the argument of the book” (OMB, 93–94).\[165]\]

The second substantial difference also concerns method, i.e., core issues. Eduard Hanslick’s objectivist approach repudiates an essential principle of Kantian aesthetics: its transcendental philosophical reasoning, the pivotal advance within Kant’s whole system. His Kritik der reinen Vernunft establishes the condition of the possibility of knowledge, just as his Kritik der praktischen Vernunft establishes the condition of the possibility of morality and ethical action. In similar fashion, Kant’s Kritik der Urteilskraft establishes the condition of the possibility of another human faculty: judgment and its a priori premises. Thus, Kant’s theory is principally concerned not with art and its scientific analysis; rather, it studies the transcendental preconditions of teleological and aesthetic judgment, basically unrelated to the objective properties of the assessed artworks, as he plainly states in the opening paragraph: “The judgment of taste is therefore not a cognitive judgment, hence not a logical one, but is rather aesthetic, by which is understood one whose determining ground cannot be other than subjective.” It refers solely, “by means of the imagination,” to the “subject and its feeling of pleasure or displeasure” (CPJ, 89; KdU, 203).\[166]\] Hence, Kant’s aesthetic principle originates exclusively from a subjective perspective: beauty is necessarily constituted by aesthetic judgment; not a subjective judgment, absolutely dependent on the intellectual disposition of the perceiving individual, but a judgment nonetheless, even if it holds the potential of universal necessity. This method, strongly opposed by Hanslick, is the crucial premise of Kant’s entire theory. For Hanslick, musical aesthetics, conceived as a scientific discipline that should ultimately approximate the “method of the natural sciences,” must entirely abandon “a method which takes subjective feeling as its starting point” (OMB, 1; VMS, 22).\[167]\] As Mark Evan Bonds rightly stresses: “Hanslick objected to any epistemology that emphasized the constitutive role of the subject in aesthetic contemplation: he wanted to create an aesthetics of music in which beauty was a fixed and unchanging quality in the work itself, not a construct of the listener. … Beauty, to Hanslick’s mind, is an intrinsic quality
of objects and has nothing to do with perception.™ In Hanslick’s view, as I previously explained in part two, beauty is an objective property of the musical artwork: “Beauty is and remains beauty even if no feelings are aroused and even if it be neither perceived nor thought” (OMB, 3; VMS, 26).™ Thus, a sensible aesthetic theory of ‘pure’ music, Hanslick continues, must truly abide by “the principle that the primary object of aesthetical investigation is the beautiful object, not the feelings of the subject” (OMB, 2; VMS, 24).™ As he states in the very first paragraph of the initial edition of VMS:

The time of aesthetic systems in which the beautiful is considered only in regard to the ‘sensations’ it has aroused has passed. The desire for an objective understanding of things, insofar as such is granted to human inquiry, had to topple a method that takes subjective sensation as its point of departure, one that strolls around the periphery of the phenomenon being investigated in order to come full circle back to sensation. No path leads into the center of things, even though every one of them should point in that direction. The fortitude and capacity to close in on things themselves, to investigate that which is permanent, objective, and unchangingly valid quite apart from the multiple thousands of impressions they make on humans: these characterize modern knowledge in all its various branches (VMS, 21).™

[12] The quote above may still read like Hanslick’s ordinary objection to emotivist aesthetics based on subjective feelings, incapable of scientific objectivity. In this case, however, Payzant’s rendition of the phrase “feeling of the subject” is patently inaccurate. Hanslick did not refer to “feelings of the subject” (Gefühle des Subjekts). He wrote about something completely different: the “perceiving subject” (empfindende Subjekt), as Gustav Cohen correctly translates.™ Hanslick was fully aware of the terminological differentiation between “sensation” (“Empfindung”) and “feeling” (“Gefühl”), as is evident from a related passage in chapter one of his aesthetic analysis: “Sensation is the perception of a specific sense quality: this particular tone, that particular colour. Feeling is becoming aware of our mental state with regard to its furtherance or inhibition, thus of well-being or distress” (OMB, 3; VMS, 27).™ Hanslick therefore challenges the crucial premise of Kant’s entire theory: the primary analysis of aesthetic perception and of the a priori conditions of aesthetic judgment. Thus, he did not take part in the “Copernican Revolution” of Kant’s system, the undeniable centerpiece of transcendental methodology. In this context, Lothar Schmidt makes a similar remark: “The central category of Hanslick’s aesthetics—the objective aesthetic artefact that has to be detached from the subjective disposition of the listener—is at odds with Kant’s basis of aesthetic judgment that must still be understood as essentially directed towards aesthetic impression, or at least as oriented towards the subject.”™ Thus, there are two major issues that decidedly undermine the proposed historical hypothesis regarding a direct impact of Kant’s Kritik der Urteilskraft on Hanslick’s treatise.

First, Kant’s theory of the fine arts involves several attributes that clearly conflict with Hanslick’s concepts of aesthetic autonomy and ‘pure’ music. For Kant, fine art is at least partially dependent on moral ideas and rational concepts:™ a crucial premise that ‘pure’ music is not able to fulfil in
Kant’s model. Second, and even more gravely, Hanslick defines musical aesthetics as a distinct scientific discipline, arguing for the specific analysis of musical beauty, focused primarily on the aesthetic artefact, not the perceiving individual. To be sure, chapters four and five are principally concerned with the “Analyse des subjectiven Eindrucks der Musik” (“Analysis of the Subjective Impression of Music”) and two deviating approaches to musical perception (aesthetical/pathological). But both parts rather point out how musical perception does not form part of objective aesthetic science: the listener, even the artistic listener, has no constitutive function for musical beauty that (again) “remains beauty even ... if it be neither perceived nor thought” (OMB, 3; VMS, 26). Consequently, Hanslick’s assertion regarding the disparity between essence and effect, a line drawn by Mark Evan Bonds, continues to apply fully: “The understanding of an object and its direct effect upon our subjectivity are worlds apart from each other; indeed, one has to twist oneself free from the latter in order to approach the former” (VMS, 34). These crucial notions manifestly contradict the very core of Kant’s *Kritik der Urteilskraft* and its subjectivist orientation. Thus, the idea that Eduard Hanslick developed his objectivist aesthetics in the ‘formal’ tradition of Kant’s theory clearly misses several of the most significant cornerstones of VMS, critically opposing its ostensible predecessor. In my view, the widely claimed impact of Kant’s theory on Hanslick’s argument as well as the specific nature of this supposed influence are frequently overstated. Hanslick’s reliance on Kant’s theory seems to be a problematic conflation of two aesthetic thinkers whose fundamental methodology is highly divergent.

Conclusion—Hanslick’s Aesthetic Treatise as an Anti-Kantian Manifesto?

Does this result mean that Hanslick’s aesthetics is directly opposed to Kant’s theory and that Kantian elements are totally absent from *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen*? The obvious answer is: ‘no’. As previously demonstrated, Hanslick’s treatise contains various features of Kantian aesthetics that are thoroughly familiarized via Kantian discourse of 19th-century Germany. Nevertheless, there is no need to trace these Kantian elements back to Hanslick’s unclear reading of Kant’s *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, made particularly problematic by Habsburg science policies and the quasi-official censorship of Kant’s works. Again, many issues posed by Kant’s theory that clearly shaped Hanslick’s approach had been stated prior to the *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (Moritz, Shaftsbury, Hutcheson) or were effectively integrated into musical discourse by authors with whom Hanslick was certainly familiar (Michaelis, Nägeli, Tieck). For the most part, various writers of Hanslick’s Austrian contexts have also proposed comparable arguments. As I have shown above (see part two), Johann Friedrich Herbart is a much more likely source as the direct basis for Hanslick’s formalist viewpoint and his critical stances towards emotivist aesthetics, just as Bernard Bolzano likely served as an immediate inspiration for Hanslick’s definition of aesthetic perception as disinterested contemplation. Thus, specific concepts discussed in Kant’s theory could have found their way into Hanslick’s treatise without any decisive reliance on Kant’s *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, his transcendental philosophical methodology, or his overall system. In general, Hanslick cannot be regarded as an aesthetic theorist primarily dependent on Kant’s theory. However, does this mean that Hanslick has to be considered a Hegelian, Vischerian, Herbartian, or Bolzanist philosopher? Which school of thought did he actually belong to? Again, the answer is fairly simple: Eduard Hanslick did not belong to any particular philosophical movement. Hanslick’s argument oscillates
between different, occasionally heterogeneous philosophical discourses, prudently intertwined in VMS to support his aesthetic reasoning. On the one hand, Hanslick’s eclectic attitude towards numerous aesthetic theories undoubtedly contributed to the remarkable longevity of his own aesthetic approach, one not bound by the rise and fall of isolated academic traditions. As Bojan Bujić assesses correctly: “As he was not a professional philosopher his advantage was precisely in that he was free from the limitations of dogma or an established school.” On the other hand, the historical diversity of Hanslick’s argument decidedly complicates the apparent problem of Hanslick’s intellectual background. This paper was intended as one more step towards a comprehensive understanding of the numerous discourses integrated into Hanslick’s treatise, which still forms an elemental component of current aesthetic debates.

References

1. *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* will be referenced according to Geoffrey Payzant’s translation, based on the eighth edition of Hanslick’s treatise (1891): *On the Musically Beautiful: A Contribution towards the Revision of the Aesthetics of Music* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1986). A different translation, based on the seventh edition of VMS (1885), is available online: Gustav Cohen, *The Beautiful in Music: A Contribution to the Revival of Musical Aesthetics* (London: Novello, 1891). The original wording will be referenced according to the critical edition by Dietmar Strauß, which contains all ten editions published during Hanslick’s lifetime (1854 to 1902), clarifying Hanslick’s alterations: *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen: Ein Beitrag zur Revision der Ästhetik in [sic] der Tonkunst; Teil 1: Historisch-kritische Ausgabe* (Mainz: Schott, 1990). A German online version, acutely aware of the textual problems posed by the different editions of Hanslick’s treatise, is provided by Wolfgang Lempfrid. In my paper, *OMB* (Payzant) and VMS (Strauß) will be used to refer to the text. Given the topical question of Hanslick’s intellectual background, I will focus chiefly on the first edition of Hanslick’s treatise (1854). I will thus indicate relevant alterations up to the eighth edition, translated by Geoffrey Payzant. ↑

2. This list, although extensive, is nowhere near complete: German-language Hanslick research mentions several other more or less relevant sources of Hanslick’s approach such as Novalis (1772–1801), Johann Heinrich Dambeck (1774–1820), Jacob Grimm (1785–1863), Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767–1835), Christian Friedrich Michaelis (1770–1834), or Hans Georg Nägeli (1773–1836). A detailed analysis of their impact on Hanslick’s treatise, apart from noticing superficial conceptual similarities, has hardly ever been undertaken. Therefore, Christoph Landerer’s diagnosis regarding “a total lack of scholarly consensus” (“das völlige Fehlen eines allgemeinen Forschungskonsenses”) on the intellectual background of Hanslick’s formalism remains accurate: “Eduard Hanslicks Musikästhetik und ihr österreichisches Nachleben: Ein ‘Wiener Denkstil’?”,* Musicologica Austriaca* 20 (2001): 91. In contrast to Klaus Mehner, who called the “pursuit of a specific philosophical foundation” of Hanslick’s treatise a “hopeless endeavor” (“scheint die Suche nach einem bestimmenden philosophischen Fundament fast ein hoffnungsloses Unterfangen zu sein”), I consider historical research on the specific contexts of Hanslick’s aesthetics as a promising possibility for gradually untangling the various discourses integrated into VMS: Eduard Hanslick, *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen: Aufsätze, Musikkritiken*, ed. Klaus Mehner (Leipzig: Philipp Reclam jun., 1982), 12. ↑


13. Payzant, Sixteen Lectures, 42. Payzant’s judgment is more than generous: Moos is polemically propagating his own aesthetic viewpoint, strictly based on Hartmann’s philosophy. ↑


30. Dahlhaus, Idea of Music, 110, or Idee der Musik, 111. ↑


35. Hanslick’s father sent him the earliest volumes of Vischer’s Aesthetik oder Wissenschaft des Schönen (Stuttgart: Mäcken, 1846-57) prior to the initial edition of VMS. Cf.: Titus, “Quest for Form,” 75. Vischer’s volume on musical aesthetics, however, was published several years after Hanslick’s treatise (1857). Therefore, Rudolf Schäfke reversed the prevalent hypothesis of Vischer’s influence on Hanslick’s treatise


37. Original wording: “Die Formen, welche sich aus Tönen bilden, sind nicht leere, sondern erfüllte, nicht bloße Linienbegrenzung eines Vacuums, sondern sich von innen heraus gestaltender Geist.” ↑


39. Ibid., 112. Kahlert’s *System der Aesthetik* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1846), which favors Hegel’s system, as well as Krüger’s *Beiträge für Leben und Wissenschaft der Tonkunst* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1847), which opposes Hegel’s *Lectures* yet outlines his stances at length in the course of thorough criticism, are quoted directly in the seventh chapter of Hanslick’s treatise (*OMB*, 77–79; *VMS*, 160–63). Hegel, on the other hand, is quoted only once in the context of Hanslick’s definition of “imagination” (“Phantasie”; *OMB*, 4; *VMS*, 28). Otherwise, he is merely alluded to in a largely negative fashion (*OMB*, 29, 39, 77–78, 83, 115; *VMS*, 77, 93, 160, 162, 170). ↑

40. I am particularly referring to the following passages: “There is no art which wears out so many forms so quickly as music. Modulations, cadences, intervallic and harmonic progressions all in this manner go stale in fifty, nay, thirty years, so that the gifted composer can no longer make use of them … . Without inaccuracy we may say, of many compositions which were outstanding in their own day, that once upon a time they were [!] beautiful. … From this process [of the historical development of musical material] it follows that our tonal system also will undergo extension and alteration in the course of time. … If, for example, the extension consisted in ‘the emancipation of the quarter tone’, … then theory, the teaching of composition, and musical aesthetics would change completely” (*OMB*, 35, 71). Original wording: “Es gibt keine Kunst, welche so bald und so viele Formen verbraucht, wie die Musik. Modulationen, Cadenzen, Intervalfortschreitungen, Harmonien folgen sich in 50, ja 30 Jahren dergestalt ab, daß der geistvolle Componist sich deren nicht mehr bedienen kann … . Man kann von einer Menge Compositionen, die hoch über dem Alltagsstand ihrer Zeit stehen, ohne Unrichtigkeit sagen, daß sie einmal schön waren. … Aus diesem Proceß ergibt sich, daß auch unser Tonsystem im Zeitverlauf neue Bereicherungen und Veränderungen erfahren wird. … Bestände z.B. diese Bereicherung in der ‘Emancipation der Vierteltöne’ … , so würde Theorie, Compositionslehre und Aesthetik der Musik eine total andere” (*VMS*, 86, 149). ↑


complete translation, including Kant’s theory of teleology, was provided by J. H. Bernard, *Kant’s Critique of Judgement*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1914). The German original will be referenced according to the standardized *Akademieausgabe*. Thus, *CPJ* (Guyer/Matthews) and *KdU* (Akademieausgabe) will be used to quote Kant’s text. ↑


47. Peter Kivy, *The Fine Art of Repetition: Essays in the Philosophy of Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 257. Kivy’s view will be discussed thoroughly in part three of this paper. ↑


53. Hannah Ginsborg, “Kant,” in Gracyk and Kania, *Companion to Philosophy*, 334. For an excellent overview of several initial issues in regard to a possible connection between Hanslick and Kant, see Hanne Appelqvist, “Form and Freedom: The Kantian Ethos of Musical Formalism,” *The Nordic Journal of Aesthetics* 40–41 (2010–11): 75–88, who is concerned primarily with their respective conception of intrinsic musical ‘rules’, which—as opposed to external musical ‘laws’—are culturally dependent and historically contingent. However, as Christoph Landerer has convincingly demonstrated, there is a closer source for Hanslick’s “Regelästhetik” (“aesthetics of rules”), namely Bernard Bolzano (see the two concluding paragraphs of this part), who opened aesthetic inquiry towards historical concerns by his similar notion of artistic ‘rules’: “Eduard Hanslicks Ästhetikprogramm und die österreichische Philosophie der Jahrhundertmitte,” *Österreichische Musikzeitschrift* 54, no. 9 (1999): 17. ↑

54. An obvious example is their often equated usage of the term “arabesque” (“Arabeske”; *OMB*, 29; *VMS*, 75) or—in Kant’s case—“designs à la grecque, foliage for borders or on wallpaper” (“Zeichnungen a la grecque, das Laubwerk zu Einfassungen oder auf Papiertapeten”; *CPJ*, 114; *KdU*, 229). Whereas Kant uses these terms to vividly denote objects of free beauty such as “music without a text,” which “signify nothing by themselves” (see part three), Hanslick employs the term arabesque to demonstrate how “music is able to produce beautiful forms without a specific feeling as its content” (“in welcher Weise uns die Musik schöne Formen ohne den Inhalt eines bestimmten Affectes bringen kann”). Thus, Kant categorizes different kinds of beauty—foliage for borders and ‘pure’ music are free beauties—whereas Hanslick’s analogy functions as an example for something much more specific: the possibility of the absence of feeling content in beautiful structures. ↑


59. Moos, Kant bis Hartmann, 18–19; Arnold Schering, „Zur Musikästhetik Kant’s,” Zeitschrift der internationalen Musikgesellschaft 11, no. 6 (1910): 169–75. ↑


61. Kathi Meyer (1892–1977), who viewed Kant’s remarks on music as an example “of so-called Affektenlehre” (“Anhänger der sogenannten Affektenlehre”) due to his familiar surmise that ‘pure’ music is the “language of the affects” (“Sprache der Affecten”; CPJ, 206; KdU, 328), presents a particularly dissenting opinion, which clearly displays the historical complexity of this issue: “Kants Stellung zur Musikästhetik,” Zeitschrift für Musikwissenschaft 3, no. 8 (1920–21): 470. For two more recent studies that arrive at comparable conclusions, see: Jens Kulenkampff, „Musik bei Kant und Hegel,” Hegel-Studien


As Hanne Appelqvist (“Musical Formalism,” 84) has similarly observed, there are obvious affinities between Kant’s notion of the completely agreeable and Hanslick’s opposition to passive pathological listening. Both authors find that if a person is mainly focused on the effects of an object, they are not concerned primarily with the object itself. The given artistic artefact could be comfortably substituted by any other object that elicits the same effect: a “fine cigar” (“feine Cigarre”), a “warm bath” (“laues Bad”) or, in Kant’s words, “sparkling wine from the Canaries” (“Canariensect”). Cf.: OMB, 59; VMS, 129; CPJ, 97; KdU, 212. This idea, extremely prevalent in current aesthetic literature, has been called the ‘heresy of the separable experience’. Cf.: Malcolm Budd, Music and the Emotions: The Philosophical Theories, International Library of Philosophy (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), 125, 143, 152. ↑

Abegg, Eduard Hanslick, 20. Original wording: “Kants Kritik der Urteilskraft wird er im philosophischen Grundstudium an der Prager Universität wenigstens flüchtig kennengelernt haben.” Abegg’s surmise was shared by Robert Michael Anderson, “Polemics or Philosophy? Music Pathology in Eduard Hanslick’s Vom Musikalisch-Schönen,” The Musical Times 154 (2013): 74. Indeed, although Abegg does not cite this intriguing observation, Kant even uses the same term, ‘pathological’: CPJ, 94; KdU, 209. ↑


For a concise overview regarding the Austrian reception of Kant’s system, see my “The Early Kant Reception in Austria: From Joseph II to Francis II,” and “State Censorship of Kant: From Francis II to Count Thun,” in Detours: Approaches to Immanuel Kant in Vienna, in Austria, and in Eastern Europe, ed. Violetta L. Waibel (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 26-32 and 32-39, or “Eduard Hanslick zwischen Deutschem Idealismus und Österreichischem Realismus: Eine Fallstudie zur österreichischen Kant-Rezeption,” in Ausgehend von Kant: Wegmarken der Klassischen Deutschen Philosophie, ed.


70. Sauer, “‘Kritik’,” 35. For a detailed account of the proceedings of the Studien-Revisions-Kommission, see: Sepp Domandl, Wiederholte Spiegelungen: Von Kant und Goethe zu Stifter; Ein Beitrag zur österreichischen Geistesgeschichte, Schriftenreihe des Adalbert-Stifter-Institutes 32 (Linz: ÖÖL, 1982).


75. On the positive reception of Kant’s theory in 18th-century Austria, primarily compare: Sauer, Österreichische Philosophie, 107–54, or my “Joseph II to Francis II”.


77. Peter Stachel, “Leibniz, Bolzano und die Folgen: Zum Denkstil der österreichischen Philosophie, Geistes-


86. On the political alignment of the Vienna School, compare primarily: Matthew Rampley, The Vienna School of Art History: Empire and the Politics of Scholarship, 1847–1918 (University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 2013). ↑


90. Hanslick, ever since the sixth edition of *VMS* (1881), declares Herbart to be the first writer to have argued against “aesthetics of feeling” (*OMB*, 85; *VMS*, 37). On Herbart’s aesthetics, see note 3. On Herbart’s influence on Hanslick’s aesthetics, primarily see the extensive summary in Grimm, *Prager Zeit*, 146–52, and Bonds, *Absolute Music*, 160–62. ↑

91. On May 15, 1851, Hanslick wrote a letter to the influential composer Vesque von Püttingen, founder of the new conservatory of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde, indicating his intended resignation from civil service to “fully dedicate myself to musical aesthetics” (“mich ganz dem musikalisch-wissenschaftlichen Fach zu widmen”) in order to become a full-time university lecturer (“Dozent“): Wienbibliothek im Rathaus, Handschriftensammlung I, HIN 31031. ↑


99. For Hanslick, musical pleasure is based mainly on a “mental satisfaction which the listener finds in continuously following and anticipating the composer’s designs, here to be confirmed in his
expectations, there to be agreeably led astray” (OMB, 64). Original wording: “Es ist die geistige Befriedigung, die der Hörer darin findet, den Absichten des Componisten fortwährend zu folgen und voran zu eilen, sich in seinen Vermuthungen hier bestätigt, dort angenehm getäuscht zu finden” (VMS, 138). In Über den Begriff des Schönen, 24, Bolzano offers a similar solution: the source of aesthetic pleasure, entirely detached from the object’s practical utility, is linked to “the activity afforded to our mental powers, directed towards cognition.” The beautiful artefact has to stimulate these mental powers in the right manner by making developmental anticipations possible without being too transparent and thus too dull for aesthetic contemplation. A refined version of this idea is still held by Leonard B. Meyer, Emotion and Meaning in Music (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), or Peter Kivy, Music Alone: Philosophical Reflections on the Purely Musical Experience (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), and Introduction to a Philosophy of Music (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), who calls this idea ‘cherchez le thème’ or ‘game of hide and seek’. ↑


105. Hanslick’s passage, heavily reworked for the second edition (1858), was only partially included in Payzant’s translation. He omitted the last part (square brackets) by stating that it seemed “vestigial” (OMB, 105). Cf.: Bonds, Absolute Music, 189, who gives a slightly different translation: “Beauty is thus only for the pleasure of a perceiving subject, not generated through that subject.” Original wording: “Das Schöne ist und bleibt schön, auch wenn es keine Gefühle erzeugt, ja wenn es weder geschaut noch betrachtet wird; also zwar nur für das Wohlgefallen eines anschauenden Subjects, aber nicht durch dasselbe” (VMS, 26). ↑


109. I have two related reasons for this seemingly arbitrary selection: first, the general outline of Kant’s system, famously including the four moments of the reflective judgment, is far better known than his theory of fine art. This fact, I argue below, has contributed decisively to the classification of Kant as an aesthetic formalist. Second, given Hanslick’s juridical education, his practical musical training with the composer Václav Tomášek (1774–1850), and the lack of any specialized qualification in philosophy, it is not at all clear that he ever read parts of Kant’s Kritik der Urteilskraft, let alone the entire treatise. The part he would have been most interested in and the part most frequently discussed in musical literature—today and back then—is the “Deduction of Pure Aesthetic Judgments” (esp. §43–53), containing Kant’s conception of art, taste, genius, and the division of the fine arts. ↑


112. However, this does not mean that “Kant holds a formalist theory of Natural Beauty and an expressionist theory of Fine Art,” as D. W. Gotshalk assumes (“Form and Expression in Kant’s Aesthetics,” British Journal of Aesthetics 7, no. 3 (1967): 260), because the general features of beauty remain the same in both cases (CPJ, 197; KdU, 320). Cf.: Paul Guyer, “Formalism and the Theory of Expression in Kant’s Aesthetics,” Kant-Studien 68, no. 1 (1977): 46–70. ↑


114. Original wording: “Wenn aber der Gegenstand für ein Product der Kunst gegeben ist und als solches für schön erklärt werden soll: so muß, weil Kunst immer einen Zweck in der Ursache (und deren Causalität) voraussetzt, zuerst ein Begriff von dem zum Grunde gelegt werden, was das Ding sein soll.” ↑

115. Original wording: “Schöne Kunst dagegen ist eine Vorstellungsart, die für sich selbst zweckmäßig ist und, obgleich ohne Zweck, dennoch die Cultur der Gemüthskräfte zur geselligen Mittheilung befördert.” ↑

116. Original wording: “nur auf die augenblickliche Unterhaltung, nicht auf einen bleibenden Stoff zum Nachdenken oder Nachsagen angelegt ist.” ↑

117. Original wording: “diejenige Vorstellung der Einbildungskraft, die viel zu denken veranlaßt, ohne daß ihr doch irgend ein bestimmter Gedanke, d. i. Begriff, adäquat sein kann.” ↑


I use this term without normative, ontological, or metaphysical implications in order to refer to instrumental compositions without a program, literary title, or text. Kant’s stance on vocal music will be clarified below. ↑

Original wording: “mehr Genuß als Cultur ... und hat, durch Vernunft beurtheilt, weniger Werth als jede andere der schönen Künste.” ↑


123. Original wording: “Wenn die schönen Künste nicht nahe oder fern mit moralischen Ideen in Verbindung gebracht werden, die allein ein selbstständiges Wohlgefallen bei sich führen, so ist das letztere ihr endliches Schicksal.” ↑


132. Appelqvist, “Musical Formalism,” 76. ↑

133. After defining “imagination as the activity of pure contemplation,” Hanslick directly quotes Vischer’s treatise (§384). Some of Hanslick’s passages do not appear in the initial version of *VMS*, whose opening section was heavily reworked for the second edition (1858). Original wording: “Das Schöne hat überhaupt keinen Zweck, den es ist bloße Form, welche … zu den verschiedensten Zwecken verwandt werden kann, aber selbst keinen andern hat, als sich selbst. … Das Organ, womit das Schöne aufgenommen wird, ist nicht das Gefühl, sondern die Phantasie, als die Thätigkeit des reinen Schauens. … In reiner Anschauung genießt der Hörer das erklingende Tonstück, jedes Interesse muß ihm fern liegen. … Ausschließliche Bethätigung des Verstandes durch das Schöne verhält sich logisch anstatt ästhetisch, eine vorherrschende Wirkung auf das Gefühl ist noch bedenklicher, nämlich geradezu pathologisch.” ↑


Aesthetics and Sociology of Music 9, no. 2 (1978): 279–94, ascribes this analogy to their common pietistic background, ultimately resulting in an analogous mentality. ↑

141. For the stimulus model, strongly associated with Cartesian rationalism, see Kivy, Music Alone, 30–41. ↑


149. Kivy, Music Alone, 101. Kant speaks of “designs à la grecque, foliage for borders or on wallpaper, etc.” (“Zeichnungen a la grecque, das Laubwerk zu Einfassungen oder auf Papiertapeten”; CPJ, 114; KdU, 229), but does not use the highly peculiar and historically momentous wording arabesque, which has led to a stand-alone term in German-language discourse (“Arabesken-Ästhetik”). I have already discussed the essential difference between Hanslick’s “arabesque” (OMB, 29; VMS, 75) and Kant’s “designs à la grecque” in a previous footnote (see note 54). ↑


151. Hegel’s Lectures on Aesthetics directly reflect the Kantian dilemma of ‘pure’ music: among the arts, music “has the highest chance to rid itself not just from any real text but also from the expression of any particular content” (“unter allen Künsten die meiste Möglichkeit ... sich nicht nur von jedem wirklichen Text sondern auch von dem Ausdruck irgendeines bestimmten Inhalts zu befreien”). However, in achieving this sort of liberation, music is without “content” (“Inhalt”) and “expression” (“Ausdruck”), it is “empty, meaningless” (“leer, bedeutungslos”) and must not be counted among the fine arts. The “sensory element of tones” (“sinnliche[er] Element der Töne”) must express “intellect” (“Geistiges”); only then does music rise “to the rank of true art” (“erhebt sich auch die Musik zur wahren Kunst”). Hegel

152. Original wording: “Bei der Tonkunst giebt es keinen Inhalt gegenüber der Form, weil sie keine Form hat außerhalb dem Inhalt.”

153. Original wording: “Der Inhalt der Musik sind tönend bewegte Formen.” Prior to the third edition of Hanslick’s treatise (1865), this proverbial statement read: “Tonally moving forms are the sole and the only content and subject of music.”


156. Original wording: “Aber an dem Reize und der Gemüthsbewegung, welche die Musik hervorbringt, hat die Mathematik sicherlich nicht den mindesten Antheil.”


159. In order to avoid any confusion: for Hanslick, musical beauty and aesthetic judgment are historically conditioned, not aesthetic sciences that have to be as objective as possible. Christoph Landerer (“Ästhetikprogramm,” 16) has eloquently summarized this important distinction: “The beautiful is a historic subject matter, aesthetics an ahistorical enterprise.”

160. “This is where Hanslick paints himself into a corner. … Even if we accept his definition of music as ‘tonally animated forms’, how does music then relate to the broader idea of beauty? In a way, Hanslick had made his case too well, isolating music not only from all other arts but from the concept of beauty in general, insisting that specifically musical beauty is its own separate category.”

161. Original wording: “es könne die Aesthetik einer bestimmten Kunst durch bloßes Anpassen des allgemeinen, metaphysischen Schönheitsbegriffs ... gewonnen werden. ... Das ‘System’ macht allfällig der ‘Forschung’ Platz und diese hält fest an dem Grundsatz, daß die Schönheitsgesetze jeder Kunst untrennbar sind von den Eigenthümlichkeiten ihres Materials, ihrer Technik.”

162. Hanslick’s article “On the Subjective Impression of Music and its Position in Aesthetics” was eventually transformed into chap. 4–5 of the finalized manuscript, whereas “Music in its Relations to Nature” turned
into chap. 6, running through hardly any significant alterations. Cf.: Eduard Hanslick, “Ueber den subjektiven Eindruck der Musik und seine Stellung in der Aesthetik,” and “Die Tonkunst in ihren Beziehungen zur Natur,” Oesterreichische Blätter für Literatur und Kunst 30 (1853): 177–78; 31 (1853): 181–82; 33 (1853): 193–95; 11 (1854): 78–80. Also see my “Hanslick’s Schriften,” 161–62, where I discuss whether these parts have to be seen as an extract taken from the finished treatise, or if they form its first traces, which seems much more likely. ↑

163. See the reprinted version of these texts in Strauß, Hanslicks Schrift, 235, 254, 308. ↑


166. Original wording: “Das Geschmacksurtheil ist also kein Erkenntnißurtheil, mithin nicht logisch, sondern ästhetisch, worunter man dasjenige versteht, dessen Bestimmungsgrund nicht anders als subjectiv sein kann.” ↑

167. Original wording: “Diese wird ihm nur dadurch genügen können, daß sie mit einer Methode bricht, welche vom subjectiven Gefühl ausgeht.” ↑

168. Bonds, Absolute Music, 188–89. Bonds states this point in order to highlight Hanslick’s opposition to Kant’s ‘subjectivist’ methodology. ↑


170. Original wording: “daß in ästhetischen Untersuchungen vorerst das schöne Object und nicht das empfindende Subject zu erforschen ist.” ↑


verstehender Grundlegung des ästhetischen Urteils.”


177. Original wording: “Die Erkenntnis eines Gegenstandes und dessen unmittelbare Wirkung auf unsre Subjektivität sind himmelweit verschiedenen Dinge, ja man muß der letzteren in eben dem Maße sich zu entwinden wissen, als man der ersteren nahe kommen will.” Hanslick’s sentence, immediately following the prominent statement that “the real nature of wine” cannot be settled “by getting drunk” (*OMB*, 6) was cut from the fourth edition onwards (1874). Thus, it cannot be found in Payzant’s translation.