

WITTGENSTEIN AND MUSICAL FORMALISM: A CASE REVISITED

WITTGENSTEIN Y EL FORMALISMO MUSICAL: UN CASO RECONSIDERADO

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Abstract: This article defends a formalist interpretation of Wittgenstein's later thought on music by comparing it with Eduard Hanslick's musical formalism. In doing so, it returns to a disagreement I have had with Bela Szabados who, in his book *Wittgenstein as a Philosophical Tone-Poet*, claims that the attribution of formalism obscures the role that music played in the development of Wittgenstein's thought. The paper scrutinizes the four arguments Szabados presents to defend his claim, pertaining to alleged differences between Wittgenstein and Hanslick on their accounts of theory, beauty, rules, and the broader significance of music. I will argue that in each case the similarities between Wittgenstein's and Hanslick's respective views outshine possible differences. Ultimately, I will argue that instead of rendering music a marginal phenomenon suited for mere entertainment, formalism—as presented by Hanslick and Wittgenstein, whom I read as influenced by Kant's aesthetics—underscores music's ability to show fundamental features of reality and our relation to it. Music does this precisely as a sensuous yet structured medium that is irreducible to any conceptually determined domain.

Keywords: Wittgenstein, Hanslick, Kant, formalism, music.

Resumen: Este artículo defiende una interpretación formalista del pensamiento posterior de Wittgenstein sobre la música comparándolo con el formalismo musical de Eduard Hanslick. Con ese fin, reconsidera un desacuerdo que he tenido con Bela Szabados. Este, en su libro *Wittgenstein as a Philosophical Tone-Poet*, afirma que la atribución de formalismo oscurece el papel que la música desempeñó en el desarrollo del pensamiento de Wittgenstein. El artículo estudia en detalle los cuatro argumentos que Szabados presenta para defender su tesis, que conciernen a supuestas diferencias entre Wittgenstein y Hanslick sobre sus enfoques de la teoría, la belleza, las reglas y la importancia en general de la música. Argumentaré que en cada caso las semejanzas entre los puntos de vista de Wittgenstein y Hanslick eclipsan las posibles diferencias. En última instancia, argumentaré que en lugar de presentar la música como un fenómeno marginal adecuado para el mero entretenimiento, el formalismo—tal y como es presentado por Hanslick y Wittgenstein, a quienes entiendo bajo la influencia de la estética de Kant—subraya la habilidad de la música para mostrar características fundamentales de la realidad y de nuestra relación con ella. La música es capaz de hacer esto precisamente al ser tratada como un medio sensual pero estructurado que es irreducible a cualquier campo determinado conceptualmente.

Palabras clave: Wittgenstein, Hanslick, Kant, formalismo, música.

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1. Introduction

In 2006, Béla Szabados published an article titled “Wittgenstein and Musical Formalism”. In this article, Szabados argued that the attribution of lifelong musical formalism to Wittgenstein “obscures [...] the role that music played in the development of his philosophy of language” (Szabados, 2006: 649; see Szabados, 2014: 91). Such a mistaken view, Szabados then wrote, was put forth in my 2005 article, “Wittgenstein and the Conditions of Musical Communication”, which argued that for Wittgenstein the understanding of music is the ability to follow the rules that are constitutive of a musical system (Ahonen, 2005). In his subsequent monograph, *Wittgenstein as a Musical Tone-Poet*, Szabados takes up the case again, rehearsing and expanding his argument against the formalist interpretation of Wittgenstein’s later remarks on music, though in the book he does not mention any proponents of that interpretation.

In this paper, I revisit the debate on Wittgenstein and formalism and defend the interpretation I advocated in 2005. What I find dissatisfying in Szabados’s line of argument is the treatment it gives to Hanslick’s formalism on the one hand and Wittgenstein’s philosophy on the other. Szabados celebrates the traditional alignment of Hanslick with Wagner’s character Sixtus Beckmesser in *Die Meistersinger*, the pedantic critic obsessed by rules, and portrays Hanslick as an essentialist theorist who detaches music from its cultural surroundings. And just as much as Hanslick is depicted as a narrowminded dogmatic, the later Wittgenstein is portrayed as the champion of anti-theoretical thinking, whose legacy lies in the philosophical therapy he envisions for those trapped in the fly bottle of philosophical theories. What Hanslick really writes about music and what Wittgenstein means by his proposal to reject explanation in favor of mere description are questions that receive less scrutiny by Szabados than they merit.

In the following, I will address the four arguments that Szabados’s presents to show that Wittgenstein’s later conception of music cannot be aligned with formalism. These pertain to alleged differences between Wittgenstein’s and Hanslick’s respective views on the method of philosophy, the nature of beauty, the relevance of rules for music (and language), and the cultural significance of music. I will argue that, instead of pulling into opposite directions, Wittgenstein and Hanslick come surprisingly close in their conceptions on each point. Moreover, I will argue that, instead of controlling music, formalism aims to liberate music from the dominance of discursive thought. Precisely as an autonomous, sensuous medium that resists translation to conceptual thought music has the capacity to reveal something significant about our relation to reality as a whole.

2. Szabados’s Arguments

Szabados reads Hanslick as advocating a strong normativist theory of what counts as good music. According to him, Hanslick’s musical formalism is (i) an *essentialist theory*, hanging onto a “transcendent”, Platonist view of a unified musical structure “underneath the deceptive surface of music” (Szabados, 2014: 61, 46, 76, 90–91, 131). Formalism is (ii) committed to an essentialist *idea of beauty* as a “single property in the music that corresponds to [the] correct application” of the adjective, “musically beautiful”, and (iii) aims at “formulating or following *explicit rules*” of music (ibid.: 61, 130, added emphasis). Finally, formalism (iv) suppresses the connection between music and its cultural context by promoting the *autonomy* of music to be encountered by the listener in a disinterested manner (ibid.: 93).

Szabados grants that the early Wittgenstein may have been a formalist. This is because, according to him, “the author of the *Tractatus* was still a theorist, in particular a Platonist about meaning or beauty in music and language” (ibid.: 90). Such theoretical orientation is manifest in Wittgenstein’s early attempt to formulate an essentialist theory of language that aims at uncovering logical form beneath the conventions of everyday language. Analogously, Szabados suggests, the early Wittgenstein aims at unearthing “the structure of composition [...] from the morass of feelings and irrelevant associations that music brings in its wake” (ibid.: 49). Referring to Wittgenstein’s 1915 remark that “a tune is a kind of tautology”, Szabados claims that, for the early Wittgenstein, musical themes show the structure of music, just as tautologies show the structure of the world (NB 40; Szabados, 2014: 46).

However, in Szabados's view, the later Wittgenstein "threw overboard Hanslick's musical formalism for the reason that it isolated music from the rest of the culture and left it alone and bereft of significance" (ibid.: 95). Wittgenstein could not possibly have been a musical formalist, because (i') "musical formalism is a philosophical theory [and] holding such a theory is consistent with the philosophical orientation of the early, but not the later Wittgenstein" (Szabados, 2006: 650; Szabados, 2014: 89). (ii') By contrast to Hanslick's alleged commitment to an essentialist notion of beauty, the later Wittgenstein takes beauty to be irrelevant for aesthetics (ibid.: 61). Moreover, (iii') Wittgenstein is hostile to the formalist emphasis on the rules of music, and even rejects the attempt to capture linguistic meaning by reference to rules (ibid.: 130). Finally, (iv') by contrast to the disinterested aesthetic attitude, emphasized by formalists, Wittgenstein "encourages emotional and personal involvement" with music and stresses the "cultural resonances in a work of art" (ibid.: 80, 83).

Szabados acknowledges that in Wittgenstein's later work we find remarks that seem to support musical formalism. The statement that "music expresses itself" or a close equivalent thereof appears in Wittgenstein's writing repeatedly and we find numerous references to the rules of music (BB 166–167, 178; PI §§527, 531). Wittgenstein compares the listener who does not remember simple tunes or fails to recognize when the bass enters to an animal that simply reacts to music without aesthetic understanding (LC I: 17). At the outset, these remarks mirror Hanslick's account. After all, Hanslick argues that music expresses itself, claims that musical aesthetics ought to focus on the "theoretic-grammatical rules" of music, and compares the "pathological", i.e. empirically conditioned, mode of listening to the responses of animals (Hanslick, 2018: 3, 43–44, 109, 86). However, Szabados argues, to take these similarities at face value, as I have done and still do, "betrays an insufficient awareness of the later Wittgenstein as a dialectical thinker" (Szabados, 2006: 652–653; Szabados, 2014: 91). Hence, the task Szabados sets himself is to "disarm [such] passages ... of the impression of formalism" (Szabados, 2006: 652; Szabados, 2014: 91).

3. Theory

Szabados's main charge against the attribution of musical formalism to the later Wittgenstein is that, while Hanslick's formalism is a theory, the later Wittgenstein is an anti-theoretic thinker. As evidence, Szabados cites a conversation Wittgenstein had with Friedrich Weismann in December 1930. According to Weismann, Wittgenstein said: "What is valuable in a Beethoven sonata? [...] My answer is: Whatever one said to me, I would reject it; not indeed because the explanation is false but because it is an *explanation*" (E 15–16). This statement Szabados construes as repudiating "the very idea of a philosophical theory of music" and thus showing that "the attribution of life-long formalism to Wittgenstein is a falsetto" (Szabados, 2006: 652; Szabados, 2014: 90).

However, Szabados's construal overlooks the fact that, in the reported remark, Wittgenstein rejects the possibility of a theory of music's *value*. Moreover, the conversation with Weismann can hardly be treated as evidence of Wittgenstein's *later* views, as it took place in 1930, i.e., roughly at the time of Wittgenstein's 1929 "Lecture on Ethics". As evident from the lecture, Wittgenstein still endorsed the Tractarian view that ethical and aesthetic *value* cannot be expressed in language, because language is exclusively in the business of picturing contingent facts. Accordingly, while relative value judgments may be expressed by reference to facts, all attempts to express absolute value will lead to nonsense (TLP 6.4–6.421; E 6–7, 11).

But this just means that a rejection of a theory of musical value is precisely what is to be expected from Wittgenstein. It is to be expected, not because Wittgenstein is developing his later anti-theoretic approach, but because he is still drawing on the Tractarian view that ethics and aesthetics are inexpressible. This is not to say that the later Wittgenstein is more open to a philosophical treatment of value. Indeed, the absence of practically any remarks on ethics is one of the characteristic features of Wittgenstein later work. But it does not follow that his later view is hostile to a philosophical, i.e. grammatical, investigation of musical *meaning and understanding*. These are themes that occupy Wittgenstein from 1930s onwards both in the case of language and music.

Even so, Szabados's general argument builds on a fairly standard claim on a perceived difference between the early and the later Wittgenstein. This is the claim that the early Wittgenstein was in the business of constructing a theory, whereas the later Wittgenstein rejects all theories, arguments, and general philosophical

claims (see, e.g., Baker, 2006). Such a contrast is, to an extent, justified and acknowledged by Wittgenstein himself. However, it is too simplistic as such. This is because, in addition to important differences, there is also a deep continuity in Wittgenstein's conception of the nature of philosophy, pertaining precisely to the idea of a philosophical theory or doctrine.

It is true that, in the *Tractatus*, we may find what has traditionally been called the “picture theory of meaning”. According to this account, every meaningful proposition is a picture of a possible state of affairs. Picturing is made possible, first, by a shared pictorial form and second, by a pictorial relation established between the simple elements of the picture and the pictured (TLP 2.15–2.17). The pictorial form of language is logical form, which language shares with reality. This form crystallizes in the general form of a proposition, “This is how things stand”, to which every meaningful proposition must conform (TLP 4.5). Moreover, Wittgenstein explicitly states that the general propositional form gives us the “essence of all description, and thus the essence of the world” (TLP 5.472).

Another feature of Wittgenstein's early view that seems to commit him to an essentialist theory is that the *Tractatus* aims at uncovering the hidden form of language. While Wittgenstein grants that the “propositions of everyday language, just as they stand, are in perfect logical order”, the surface features of propositions nonetheless disguise their logical form (TLP 5.5562, 4.002). It is the task of analysis to uncover this form, i.e., to reveal the simple elements of propositions in their immediate combinations and how they are correlated with the simple elements of the depicted state of affairs (TLP 3.201, 3.25, 4.221). These simple elements, i.e., objects, Wittgenstein calls the “substance of the world” (TLP 2.021). But given that Wittgenstein famously gives no examples of such analysed propositions, the Tractarian idea of analysis remains a mere theoretical promise (TLP 5.55).

However, in my view, it is a mistake to treat Wittgenstein's early account as a form of Platonism or as committed to a “transcendent point of view”, as Szabados claims (Szabados, 2014: 76). Szabados's reading overlooks the distinction between the transcendent and the transcendental, using the terms interchangeably (cf. Szabados, 2014: 76, 91, 131). In the Kantian tradition where the distinction originates, the “transcendent” indicates the noumenal realm beyond knowledge. The “transcendental”, in turn, refers to the necessary *a priori* conditions for the possibility of knowledge (CPR A 56/B86; A 296/B352). In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein does not use the term transcendence.¹ However, he does characterize logic, ethics, and aesthetics as *transcendental* (TLP 6.13, 6.421). As argued already by Erik Stenius, the relevant passages and indeed the project of the *Tractatus* may be read as reflecting the Kantian tradition of philosophy that aims at determining the necessary conditions for the possibility knowledge, which correspond to the limits of knowledge (Stenius 1960, ch. 11). In the *Tractatus*, the limits of language are not drawn from an independent, transcendent viewpoint, but from within language: “It will therefore only be in language that the limit can be drawn, and what lies on the other side of the limit will simply be nonsense” (TLP, p. 3). (Incidentally, this is the way in which Wittgenstein understood Kant's philosophical method. See LWL, 73–74.) Logic as well as ethics and aesthetics (which Wittgenstein claims to be one) are concerned with the *a priori* conditions for the possibility of thought (in the case of logic) and evaluative judgments (in the case of ethics and aesthetics). By contrast to Plato, then, whose “essences” were “transcendent”, objective ideas, independent of the subject, Wittgenstein's early view may be read (and has been read) as a variant of transcendental idealism with the important qualification that any doctrine of the transcendent is eliminated (see Moore, 2013; Appelqvist, 2013, 2016).

The main target of Wittgenstein's later criticism of the *Tractatus* is the idea of a general propositional form. Accordingly, a great bulk of the *Philosophical Investigations* is dedicated to undermining the Tractarian views that to have meaning a word must correspond to a simple object and that the primary task of propositions is to picture states of affairs (see PI §§46–48, 66–67, 95, 108, 114, 134–136). There are different kinds of words and sentences that should not be assimilated into one general propositional form (PI §22). Nor do reference and picturing have such a central role in language as the *Tractatus* assumes (PI §§23, 27). Instead of aiming at uncovering the hidden essence of language, the task of the philosopher is to describe the ways

¹ Wittgenstein uses the term “transcendent” exactly once in the *Notebooks 1914–1916*. There, he writes that “ethics is transcendent” (NB 79). However, in the final text of the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein has replaced the term by “transcendental” (TLP 6.421).

in which words and sentences are actually used, as “philosophy may in no way interfere with the actual use of language” (PI §124; see §§122, 126–133).

As mentioned, these obvious differences between Wittgenstein’s early and later accounts should not hide a deeper affinity between the two positions. In his lectures in the beginning of the 1930s, Wittgenstein notes that the idea of logical analysis of language was a digression into thinking along the lines of natural science, as it confused “logical analysis, with chemical analysis” (M 7: 39; cf. PI §521). However, he acknowledges that this digression was, in an important sense, a digression against his own early commitment, according to which logic must be independent of empirical facts (TLP 2.012, 2.0121, 5.43, 5.473). This commitment lies at the very core of Wittgenstein’s early conception of the nature of philosophy. According to him, “philosophy is not one of the natural sciences”, which is to say that “philosophy is not a body of doctrine but an activity” (TLP 4.111, 4.112). And *this* is a conception that Wittgenstein never gives up.

Hence, while rejecting a number of key assumptions of the *Tractatus*, such as the general propositional form, an unalterable substance grounding logical form, and the logical independence of elementary propositions, the later Wittgenstein still claims that logical or grammatical inquiry must be independent of empirical research (PI §§90, 232, 392). In his view, natural science is an enterprise of testing and forming hypotheses and explaining phenomena by reference to causal, reductionist, mechanistic models. Philosophy, by contrast, does not aim at uncovering new facts about the world or formulating hypotheses, but aims at organizing what we already know in such a way that dissolves philosophical confusions (PI §§92, 122–129; see LWL 72–79). That he believed that he got this much right even in the *Tractatus* is evident from his remark:

It was true to say that our considerations could not be scientific ones. It was not of any possible interest to us to find out empirically ‘that contrary to our preconceived ideas, it is possible to think such-and-such’ – whatever that may mean. (The conception of thought as a gaseous medium.) And we may not advance any kind of theory. There must not be anything hypothetical in our considerations. We must do away with all *explanation*, and description alone must take its place. And description gets its light, that is to say its purpose, from the philosophical problems. These are, of course, not empirical problems [...]. (PI §109)

In short, the contrast between Wittgenstein’s early and the later views on the method of philosophy is not a contrast between a full-blown theory and anti-theory, as Szabados claims. It is rather a contrast between Wittgenstein early commitment to a universal and unalterable logical form to be uncovered underneath the conventions of everyday language and his later view that the grammatical rules of language do not stand in need of a universal, immutable foundation. In Wittgenstein’s later view, rules of grammar “may be called ‘arbitrary’, if that is to mean that the *purpose* of the grammar is nothing but that of language” (PI §497). The rules of grammar are autonomous in the sense that they cannot be justified by reference to anything outside of language. Hence, the task of the philosopher is to describe what “lies open to view” (PI §126).

My final objection to Szabados’s claim about a principled difference between Hanslick and Wittgenstein on theory concerns his interpretation of Hanslick’s essay as putting forth a Platonist, “transcendentalist” theory of what counts as good music. This is a surprising allegation, given that the main target of Hanslick’s essay is the Platonist view of an “uppermost metaphysical principle of a general aesthetics” to which all fields of art must conform (Hanslick, 2018: 2). In the aesthetics of music, the main candidate for such a principle is the view that the primary function of music is the expression, arousal, or representation of feelings. In Hanslick’s view, these different versions of the emotivist account of music are flawed, first, because they presuppose that all forms of art must be *about* something and subsume music under this general principle. Second, by identifying emotions as that which music (somehow) is *about*, the emotivist account assimilates different musical works and styles into the service of one goal, namely, the communication of emotions. In my reading, the general shape of this negative argument is not unlike Wittgenstein’s later rejection of picturing as the only function of propositions.

Hanslick’s positive proposal is equally in accord with Wittgenstein’s later view, namely, that the description of language-games will help us eliminate philosophical confusions resulting from our tendency to overlook differences between the concrete ways in which language is used (PI §§108, 126). For Hanslick argues that instead of subsuming music under a general principle of aesthetics common to all fields of art, and instead of assigning a single function for music, musical aesthetics should focus on the “theoretic-grammatical rules”

of music itself. This is because “every art must be known on its own technical terms, grasped in and of itself” (Hanslick, 2018: 2).

Hanslick’s approach is not committed to a “transcendent viewpoint” either, if by “transcendent” we mean a domain that transcends the sensuously given appearances of music. Referring to the received emotivist account of music, Hanslick writes: “Our view on the seat of intellect and feeling of a composition relates to the common opinion [...] as the concept of *immanence* relates to *transcendence*” (Hanslick, 2018: 46). The very point of his essay is to direct musical aesthetics away from the feelings of composers standing behind the composition and the feelings music arouses in the listeners. These versions of the emotivist account treat music either as a secondary effect or as a stimulus. In this respect, they seek to *explain* music’s content by reference to something over and above music, and do so by appealing to a causal model. Hanslick’s own proposal prioritizes the musical rules that are constitutive of musical works and performances. These are not hidden in some transcendent realm, but available to anyone who is willing to listen to music without subsuming it under extramusical conceptual or psychological principles (*ibid.*: 3–13).

Again, Hanslick’s characterization of music’s content as an immanent phenomenon, constituted by specifically musical rules, may be seen as a musical variant of Wittgenstein’s later conception of language as a family of different language games, each constituted by its respective sets of rules (PI §§23, 199). Like Wittgenstein, whose grammatical method aims at disarming the seductive ideal of a general propositional form, Hanslick’s argument aims at directing the listener to the concrete phenomenon of music by denying that all music is expressive of emotions. If we want to grasp the content of music without falling back on technical or metaphorical descriptions, we will have to play the theme itself: “the content of a musical work can be grasped only musically, never graphically: i.e. as that which is actually sounding in each piece” (Hanslick, 2018: 113). Wittgenstein’s approval of this approach is evident in his remark: “But in most cases if someone asked me How do you think this melody should be played, I will, as an answer, just whistle it in a particular way, and nothing will have been present in my mind but the tune actually whistled (not an image of that)” (BB 166).

As suggested by the subtitle of Hanslick’s essay –“A Contribution to the Revision of the Aesthetics of Music”– the formalist view has important consequences for aesthetics and art criticism. If music’s content is constituted by the autonomous, specifically musical rules that govern the use of musical expressions, and if it is impossible to adequately express that content in any other medium besides music itself, then the traditional roles of the aesthete and the critic as *theoretical* authorities who determine the content of a given work is undermined. If one wants to grasp the meaning of a simple musical element, phrase, or a theme, then one must personally *listen* to how it is used in the context of music. The guiding principle arising from the formalist position, then, is to “look and see”, or rather, “listen and hear”, as the content of music cannot be captured conceptually. As far as I can see, this methodological view is as close as it gets to a musical version of Wittgenstein’s later descriptive method of philosophy.

4. Beauty

Szabados’s second contrast between Wittgenstein and Hanslick relates to the role and relevance of beauty in their respective treatments of music. According to him, Hanslick “lumps all good music together under the rubric of the ‘musically beautiful’”, “construes it as an adjective, and then looks for a single property in the music that corresponds to its correct application”, whereas “according to Wittgenstein such a move is a ground-floor mistake” (Szabados, 2014: 61). It is true that in his lectures on aesthetics Wittgenstein rejects the idea of a single property labeled “the beautiful”. In 1933, he criticizes the view for assuming the beautiful to be “an ingredient in beautiful things: & could be sort of caught in a bottle by itself, like an essence” (M 9: 10). In 1938, he states: “The subject (Aesthetics) is very big and entirely misunderstood as far as I can see. The use of such words as beautiful is even more apt to be misunderstood if you look at the linguistic form of sentences in which it occurs than most other words. Beautiful is an adjective, so you are inclined to say: This has a certain quality, that of being beautiful.” (LC I: 1; cf. M 9: 19.) In accordance with his later method of philosophy, Wittgenstein recommends looking at how people actually use the term “beautiful” instead (LC I: 8; cf. M 9: 12–13).

However, Hanslick does not, *pace* Szabados, advocate a single property called the “musically beautiful”. According to him, we should not think of musical forms as empty bottles that may or may not be filled with the champagne of intellectual content, for “musical champagne has the characteristic of growing *with* the bottle” (Hanslick, 2018: 46–47). In fact, the mistake Wittgenstein attributes to aesthetics in general, Hanslick attributes to musical aesthetics. According to him, aesthetics of poetry, literature, and visual arts have “discarded the delusion that the aesthetics of a particular art could be achieved by merely adapting the general, metaphysical concept of beauty” (Hanslick, 2018: 2). The aesthetics of music ought to take the same route, and do so by focusing on the concrete, sonically moved, audible forms. As Geoffrey Payzant has argued, for Hanslick, “the musically beautiful” is simply an equivalent of “sonically moved forms” (Payzant, in Hanslick, 1986: 93–94). It is just another expression for the autonomous content of music in all its variety –not a uniform property that some musical works have and others do not. Hanslick’s term the “musically beautiful” is not an evaluative term either. He writes:

The entire course of the present investigation does not declare any *Should Be* but rather considers only what *Is*. No particular musical ideal may be deduced from that standpoint as authentic beauty; rather, it may merely be demonstrated what beauty is in every style in the same way, even in the most opposed ones. (Hanslick, 2018: 54–55)

Accordingly, Hanslick’s recommended approach of “considering only what *Is*” accords perfectly with Wittgenstein’s later remark that “Philosophy just puts everything before us, and neither explains nor deduces anything” (PI §126). It also accords with Wittgenstein’s view on what theses in philosophy would look like, namely, that “it would never be possible to debate them, because everybody would agree with them” (PI §128). For what would it mean to deny that the music consists of “sonically moved forms”? To state as much is simply to state a truism.

So why does Hanslick choose the “musically beautiful” as the key phrase of his view, if he does not subscribe to the idea of a property of beauty common to all musical works? In my reading, the reason for this choice lies in the historical background of Hanslick’s argument, specifically in his allegiance to a Kantian framework of aesthetics (see Appelqvist, 2011). In Kant’s account, beauty is not a property we ascribe to objects by subsuming them under a determinate concept (CPJ § 1). Rather, the beautiful is a type of aesthetic judgment that ought to be distinguished from pathologically conditioned judgments of the agreeable. While judgments of the agreeableness of food and wine are based on the subject’s empirically conditioned reactions to objects, the judgment of the beautiful arises out of a disinterested contemplation of the form of the sensuously given representation of the object (CPJ §§ 3, 5). Given that judgments of the agreeable reflect empirical laws of nature, i.e., follow the pattern of stimulus and response, we cannot attribute universal validity to them but treat them as contingent preferences. However, judgments of beauty are presented as universally valid. When I judge something to be beautiful, I claim that the relation between the form of the object and my pleasure is necessary despite the fact that I cannot conceptually justify my judgment (CPJ §§ 7–8, 18).

Hanslick’s account of the musically beautiful follows Kant in the above respects. For Hanslick, the musically beautiful cannot be conceptually explained; it is “independent and not in need of external content, something that resides solely in the tones and their artistic connection” (Hanslick, 2018: 40). This view corresponds to Kant’s general emphasis on the *form* of the representation as the proper object of aesthetic contemplation, independent of subjective charms and emotions. It also corresponds to Kant’s specific dictum of the *composition* as that which is properly judged to be beautiful in music. (CPJ §§ 14, 16). In accordance with Kant’s crucial distinction between the agreeable and the beautiful, Hanslick draws a distinction between two approaches to music. The first, “pathological” approach is only concerned with the subjective and contingent effects of music and thereby aligns music with mere “products of nature”, like “the sweet fragrance of an acacia” (Hanslick, 2018: 83; see also *ibid.*: 6). The term “pathological” is here used in Kant’s sense, namely, as an empirically conditioned response to a stimulus, characteristic of judgments of the agreeable that influence animals as well (CPJ § 5). By contrast, the listener who approaches music in the second, “aesthetic” manner, listens to a piece of music “*for its own sake*”, not allowing music to “sink to the level of sensuous natural stimuli” (Hanslick, 2018: 91, 60).

Strikingly, Wittgenstein's longest sustained discussion on the beautiful, given in his lectures in 1933, follows the above Kantian line of thought. He replaces the property-based approach in aesthetics by describing aesthetic *judgments* made of such phenomena as music, architecture, and even the choosing of a wallpaper – an example we find in Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* as well (M 9: 16, 9: 29; cf. CPJ § 16). Moreover, he repeatedly stresses that there is an important distinction between the agreeable and the beautiful, using the former term in the Kantian sense, to refer to feelings causally induced by smells or tastes of food (M 9: 14, 9: 20, 9: 26; see LC II: 2–4; CV 65). Finally, Wittgenstein identifies the normative force of judgments of beauty as the key difference between the agreeable and the beautiful. The agreeable is a matter of causal, contingent connections between the object and the subject, but the beautiful is not: “But if we meant by ‘beautiful’ ‘giving me stomach-ache /pleasure/’, then it would be merely a symptom: experience would tell us whether it does or not” (M 9: 18). Hence, in accordance with his early *and* late insistence that logic/grammar is not an experimental matter, Wittgenstein assigns a non-experimental status for aesthetics as well. Psychology is not relevantly related to aesthetics, because psychological explanations are given by reference to causes, whereas aesthetic explanation (like philosophical explanations) aim at giving reasons by showing new connections within an aesthetic system (see LC II, LC III: 7–12; M 9: 26–41). Accordingly, “aesthetics is ‘descriptive’” just like philosophy in general (M 9: 23).

Like Hanslick, Wittgenstein draws a distinction between the merely pleasure-seeking and aesthetic ways of listening to music, connecting the latter to musical *understanding*. He states: “We use the phrase ‘A man is musical’ not so as to call a man musical if he says ‘Ah!’ when a piece of music is played, any more than we call a dog musical if it wags its tail when music is played” (LC I: 17). The dog – just like the elephant, bear, and horse, Hanslick mentions as examples of animals affected by music – reacts to music mechanically, based on natural, physical and neurological, laws. In Wittgenstein's view, we do not apply the notion of understanding to the dog, just like we do not say that dogs lie or talk to themselves (PI §§ 250, 357, 650). The notions of understanding, lying, and talking to oneself are phenomena that become meaningful only within a grammatical system that grounds the possibility of giving reasons. Hence, “If I ask, ‘Why do you like this tune’ & answer is ‘Because it reminds me of my grandmother’, this doesn't interest me” (M 9: 40). It does not interest Wittgenstein, nor any other formalist, because the association with one's grandmother is only contingently related to the tune. Aesthetic reasons, by contrast, are more like observations of the aesthetic system itself (M 9: 40).

According to Szabados, the later Wittgenstein rejects “cold” disinterestedness as an essential feature of aesthetic judgment and “encourages emotional and personal involvement” with music instead (Szabados, 2014: 80). But neither Kant nor Hanslick – main proponents of the disinterested aesthetic attitude – denies that judgments of beauty are grounded in personal responses to something particular. Their requirement of the non-conceptuality of judgments of beauty actually *entails* that the sensibly given forms must be perceived by the subject, as we cannot make aesthetic judgments by applying conceptual rules or by imitating others (cf. CPJ § 17). What disinterestedness requires is rather that contingent charms and emotions and empirically conditioned feelings of agreeableness are abstracted away from the judgment. Beauty ought to be contemplated for its own sake, as “beauty has no purpose at all [...] beyond itself” (Hanslick, 1986: 3; cf. CPJ § 11). Wittgenstein follows suit. He grants that “perhaps the most important thing in aesthetics is what may be called aesthetic reactions, e.g. discontent, disgust, discomfort” (LC II: 10). Yet, he warns against assimilating such reactions to merely subjective feelings: “Suppose you find a bass too heavy – that it moves too much; you aren't saying: If it moves less, it will be more agreeable to me. That it should be quieter is an end in itself, not a means to an end” (M 9: 20).

In my reading, Wittgenstein's reason for emphasizing the distinction between the agreeable and the beautiful echoes Kant's view that judgments of beauty require a transcendental, rather than an experimental ground. In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein called aesthetics “transcendental” (TLP 6.421). However, in his later philosophy, Wittgenstein does not employ the term, most likely because it carries the problematic connotation of universality. However, Wittgenstein does not give up the general point that aesthetic judgments cannot be explained by reference to empirical facts. If aesthetics were about contingent likes or dislikes, then psychology could provide an exhaustive story about aesthetics. But when we make aesthetic judgments, we are saying more: “When I say ‘This bass moves too much’ I don't mean merely ‘It gives me such & such impression’,

because if I did I should have to be content with the answer ‘It does not give me that impression’” (M 9: 28; cf. M 9: 26–27).

That Wittgenstein takes aesthetic judgments to have normative force distinct from empirical statements is evident from his own examples: “One example of an aesthetic question is question about harmony. In a book on harmony you find no trace of psychology. It says: you mustn’t make this transition, etc.” (9: 14). We are not looking for a single property, but say that a certain choice in an aesthetic system is “correct”, “right”, “wrong”, or even “necessary”; that “the bass is too loud”, that it “moves too much, should be quieter” (M 9: 19, 9: 23). These are normative judgments in the sense that they evoke what Wittgenstein calls an “aesthetic ideal” of how specific features of the object ought to be arranged for them to “click” (LC III: 1). Hence, what looking at real aesthetic discussions reveals is that “The sort of explanation one is looking for when one is puzzled by an aesthetic impression is not a causal explanation, not one corroborated by experience or by statistics as to how people react” (LC III: 11). This brings us to the third alleged difference between Hanslick and Wittgenstein, namely, the role and relevance of rules in musical practices.

5. Rules

Treating Wagner’s caricaturish character Beckmesser as the prototype of a formalist, Szabados claims that formalism “attempts to create or capture musical meaning *via* formulating or following explicit rules” (Szabados, 2014: 130). Such “obsessive preoccupation with rules not only fails to do justice to the musical tradition but leads to lifeless, mechanical repetition” (ibid.: 130). According to Szabados, Wittgenstein rejects a rule-based “formalist approach” even in his later philosophy of language, because the attempt to capture the meaning of words and propositions “through a rule” only leads to a regress of interpretations (ibid.: 130; see PI §201). Similarly, Szabados argues, Wittgenstein abandons his early view that “tunes and themes *show* the structure of music” in favor of a more inclusive position that allows “allusion, reference, [and] representation”, as well as “composer’s intentions, as well as cultural, biographical and social context to play a role in critical inquiry” of music (Szabados, 2014: 46, 105, 151).

If formalism advocated “explicit rules” as the key to the understanding of music or language, then Szabados’s criticism would be to the point with respect to both musical formalism and Wittgenstein’s later philosophy of language. But again, this interpretation is misguided on both accounts. When Hanslick writes about musical rules, he is not referring to a manual of explicit and strict rules that Wagner’s Beckmesser cites to repudiate Walther von Stolzing’s original contest song. The rules he has in mind are basic structuring principles of the Western tonal system. Moreover, as suggested by his famous slogan according to which the content of music is “Tönend bewegte Formen”, the musical forms are in dynamic movement that happens sonically. Accordingly, the rules of music are given in the sounding reality of music, in musical performances. Similarly, when the later Wittgenstein writes about the rules of language (as well as music), he is not interested in explicit and fixed rules. In 1938, Wittgenstein states:

What I call a rule of grammar is not what would be found in grammar books [...] Ordinary grammar rules are about the order of words, gender, etc. No one could learn the use of language from such a grammar. It only gives a tiny bit of rules about the use of language. It is chiefly designed to make you avoid mistakes. (WCL, 62–63)

While Wittgenstein’s later grammatical method of philosophy is (undeniably) formulated by reference to “grammar”, “rules”, and “rule-following”, these notions should not be read as indicating such “explicit and fixed” rules we find in ordinary grammar books. Rather, the rules have life in practice: they are given in concrete instances of their application and learned via examples and training. (PI §§71, 75, 208)

In the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein distinguishes between a rule-formulation and a rule. The former is an explicitly formulated expression of a rule, whereas the latter is given in the rule’s concrete applications. If the rules were regulative rules governing an otherwise independent activity of language, then the philosopher could indeed “police the borders” between sense and nonsense, pointing out mistakes of language use (cf. Morris in Baker, 2006: 1). However, as the rules are constitutive of the linguistic practices, the

philosopher can only point to connections within a language-game by describing the ways in which words and sentences are actually employed. This is to say that the philosopher's task is to describe, not explain or justify, the use of language (cf. PI §124).

Moreover, the infinite regress to which Szabados refers occurs only if we hope to find a rule-formulation that will fix, once and for all, the correct application of a rule. Wittgenstein writes about the paradox of rule-following, arising out of the attempt to fix the application of a rule by interpretation, as follows:

That there is a misunderstanding here is shown by the mere fact that in this chain of reasoning we place one interpretation behind another, as if each one contended us at least for a moment, until we thought of yet another lying behind it. For what we thereby show is that there is a way of grasping a rule which is *not* an *interpretation*, but which, from case to case of application, is exhibited in what we call “following the rule” and “going against it”. (PI §201)

Here, “interpretation” refers to an explicit rule-formulation, as Wittgenstein explicitly states: “one should speak of ‘interpretation’ only when one expression of a rule is substituted for another” (PI §201). The regress of interpretations of a rule follows if we equate understanding with the ability to formulate the rule, for any formulation calls for yet another rule-formulation to determine how the new formulation ought to be applied. But it does not follow that, for Wittgenstein, there is no such thing as “grasping a rule”, “following a rule”, or “going against it”. The misunderstanding is rather the illusion that any given rule-formulation could unambiguously capture the actual rule exhibited in practice. This is to say that, instead of abandoning the notion of a rule *tout court*, Wittgenstein refines the concept of rule-following, which is intended to serve as a model of understanding (PI §§143–148, 155).

The gist of the formalist position is this: music and its rules –just like language and its rules– are not independent of one another. Instead, the relation between the two is internal, constitutive, or grammatical. A given musical rule –for example, that in tonal music the dominant is followed by the tonic that functions as a resolution to the tension built up by the dominant– is primarily given in actual musical works or performances thereof. And the constitutive relation goes in the other direction too: musical works themselves are made possible by the rules they exemplify. The composer could not compose anything without using some musical rules, any more than we could express conceptual thoughts without using language: “It is only in a language that I can mean something by something” (PI 22).

When Hanslick states that “the content of music is sonically moved forms”, one way to understand his point is by reference to the constitutive relation between music and its rules (Hanslick, 2018: 41). If the musical forms and their movement were subject to external criteria drawn from a political agenda, a poem to which the music is composed, or an attempt to musically resemble the psychological dynamic of human emotions, then the resulting music would be heteronomous in the sense of following laws or principles external to itself. By contrast, the view advocated by Hanslick is that the very possibility of music and the relevant criteria for the understanding and appreciation of music reside in the musical system itself. We find the same general point in Wittgenstein's later thought:

Disputes do not break out (among mathematicians, say) over whether a rule has been obeyed or not. People do not come to blows over it, for example. This is part of the framework on which the working of our language is based (for example, in giving descriptions). (PI §240)

Szabados correctly points out that, in Wittgenstein's view, such musical forms as string quartet, symphony, and oratorio, most likely cease to play a significant role in the future (Szabados, 2014: 88). Instead of relying on grand musical forms, Wittgenstein focuses on melodies and treats them in accordance with the context principle, central for his later thought. According to Szabados, this indicates Wittgenstein's “turn away from musical formalism” (Szabados, 2006: 655). Maybe so, but in that case the view Szabados calls “formalism” has little to do with Hanslick's position. For Hanslick does not prioritize grand musical forms that characterize the overall structure of the entire musical work in his essay. He is more interested in the basic elements out of which those grand forms are composed, namely, chords, cadences, simple melodic motifs, and most importantly, melodies. Indeed, according to Hanslick, “in every composition, the independent unit of musical thought, aesthetically not capable of further division, is the *theme*” (Hanslick, 2018: 112).

Now, Wittgenstein's recurring analogy between a musical theme and a sentence serves as an example of what it means for a word or a sentence to have a meaning as use in a context. This is because a given musical expression, such as a chord or a cadence, acquires meaning, not by referring to something beyond itself, but by having a function or a role within a system. The contextuality of musical elements is not unfamiliar to Hanslick either. There are several passages in Hanslick's essay, where he discusses explicitly the contextuality of musical elements, for example: "the composer places the theme into the most diverse contexts and environments, into the most varying outcomes and mood" (Hanslick, 2018: 113–114). Moreover, Hanslick and Wittgenstein alike emphasize the historical and cultural contingency of the musical forms that we encounter in our current tonal system. It is not only that one should not assume that music is always expressive of emotions; one should also "beware of the confusion as though *this* (present) *tone system itself* necessarily exists in nature" (ibid.: 97). Hanslick writes:

It follows from this [...] that our tonal system, too, will undergo enrichments and modifications in the course of time. Yet such manifold and expansive developments are still possible within the current laws that a change in the *nature* of the system may seem very remote. (Hanslick, 2018: 98)

We find the same observation in Wittgenstein's lectures: "You can say that every composer changed the rules, but the variation was very slight; not all the rules were changed" (LC I: 16). This also means that music must be learned. In this respect, music resembles language, Hanslick suggests, thus appealing to an analogy that keeps recurring in Wittgenstein's writings throughout his philosophical work (Hanslick: 2018, 98). Similarly, Wittgenstein claims that people are trained and develop in the arts and, along the way, learn to make more and more refined judgments. In music this means, among other things, that "you are drilled in harmony and counterpoint" (LC I: 15).

According to Szabados, the formalist emphasis on rules makes music "lifeless" and "mechanical" (Szabados, 2018: 130). In my view, the motivation is the exact opposite. In the Kantian tradition, to which both Hanslick and Wittgenstein in my reading belong, the distinction between mechanic and artistic corresponds to the distinction between empirically conditioned and free, between pathological and aesthetic (CPI §§70-71). In Wittgenstein's later philosophy, the distinction plays a central role. Wittgenstein's emphasis on the arbitrary, conventional rules of language reflects his conviction that the meaning and the understanding of language are not mechanistic phenomena, explicable by reference to mental states, such as dispositions, or laws of nature (PI §§148-150, 199, 220, 355). Rather than being a mere fact of nature, understanding is a normative phenomenon: it makes sense to talk about understanding only against the possibility of misunderstanding. And in order to distinguish between the two, we appeal to rules as criteria of correctness.

Wittgenstein's appeal to rules as criteria of understanding is exceptionally clear in his lectures on aesthetics, where he is arguing against the assimilation of aesthetic judgments to empirically conditioned judgments. In 1938, he states: "Are aesthetic adjectives used in a musical criticism? You say: 'Look at this transition', or 'The passage here is incoherent'. [...] The words you use are more akin to 'right' and 'correct' (as these words are used in ordinary speech) than to 'beautiful' and 'lovely'" (LC I: 8). The words "right" and "correct" mark a connection to rules that serve as the criteria of understanding. As pointed out above, a mere admiration of a musical work does not yet count as a sign of understanding. Instead, one's ability to give reasons for one's aesthetic judgments by appealing to the rules of music shows that one understands: "'Does this harmonize? No. The bass is not quite loud enough. Here I want something different...' This is what we call an appreciation" (LC I: 19). The possibility of appreciating music rests on the ability to follow music in the first place, just as the ability to admire English poetry requires that one knows English (LC I: 17). "If I hadn't learnt the rules, I wouldn't be able to make an aesthetic judgment" (LC I: 15). And *only after* one has been "drilled in harmony and counterpoint", can one start to "develop a feeling" for the rules. This will, in turn, make possible to claim that, while this tune *does* follow the rules I have originally learned, I personally do not find it beautiful (LC I: 15).

In Wittgenstein's view, communication by means of language requires "agreement in definitions, but also (queer as this may sound) in judgments" (PI §242). Similarly, the possibility of meaning something by musical phrases and understanding them rests on the shared rules of music. This does not make musical composition or understanding mechanical. The whole point of describing music by reference to arbitrary,

historically changing rules that are constitutive of music is to liberate music from the dominance of natural laws, regularities of human psychology, and conceptual thought. That music follows its *own* rules makes it capable of rising above the mechanistic laws of nature, whether physical or psychological.

6. Music and Reality

The classical objection to musical formalism is this: if music does not have any content other than its own form, then music is mere play of sounds with no meaning, significance, or relevance other than providing entertainment for the listener. This is also the rationale behind Szabados's fourth argument against the attribution of formalism to Wittgenstein. Szabados notices that a dominant theme in Wittgenstein's remarks on music is the propositionally inexpressible character of musical themes (Szabados, 2014: 129). However, he fails to acknowledge that, in the history of aesthetics, the major advocates of the non-conceptual character of aesthetic judgments are Kant and Hanslick and assumes that Wittgenstein adopted the notion from Wagner. In Szabados's view, Wittgenstein rejected formalism, because he saw a deep "connectedness between understanding music and other aspects of culture it is embedded in" (ibid.: 93). According to Szabados, formalism is incapable of sustaining such a connection, because "a strict formalist insistence on [music's] radical autonomy suggests" that music is "alone and isolated from culture" (ibid.: 93). But is that really the case? The operative assumption here is that if music is *mere form*, then it is incapable of showing anything about reality and our place in it. As I see it, both Hanslick and Wittgenstein reject this very assumption. They both argue—granted, in their distinctive ways—that precisely as mere form, resisting translation into any other medium, music reveals something significant.

Szabados's statement according to which "It is crucial to understand that music for the later Wittgenstein was not merely, if at all, a pleasing pattern of sounds; for him, music connects with the ways we speak and with human forms of life" is indicative of his understanding of formalism (Szabados, 2014: 92–93). As argued in section 4, formalism does not treat musical forms as "pleasing patterns of sounds". The Kantian distinction between the agreeable and the beautiful that we find in Hanslick and Wittgenstein—and the corresponding distinction between pathological and aesthetic listeners—underscores that musical beauty is qualitatively different from the subjective, pleasing effects of smoking, drinking, taking drugs, a warm bath, or smelling a flower (Hanslick, 2018: 8, 83, 85). These examples from Hanslick may be complemented by Wittgenstein's examples of tasting vanilla ice cream, coffee, or roast beef, and by Kant's example of enjoying sparkling wine from the Canaries (LC II: 2–4; M 9: 20–21; CPJ §7; cf. BB 178). For all three, the appeal to such examples serves to make the same point: while responses to such pleasing stimuli are determined by laws of nature, the disinterested contemplation of the sounding forms of music grounds the possibility of free judgments of beauty.

Szabados further assumes that the primary way in which music can acquire broader significance is by having a direct connection to human emotions. He writes: "Hanslick was (or at least has been read as) a narrow or traditional formalist: he not only asserted that the essence of music lies exclusively in its formal structure, but also denied that music can be properly described in terms of feelings and emotions" (Szabados, 2006: 621; cf. Szabados, 2014: 96). The proviso "or at least has been read" is to the point. For it is indeed true that formalism is often represented as a view that rejects all but technical descriptions of music. Szabados continues this line of criticism by claiming that, while Wittgenstein would allow emotive characterizations of music, for Hanslick claims such as "this adagio is sad" are nonsense (Szabados, 2006: 653). But this is simply untrue, as Hanslick's text shows:

To characterize this musical expression of a theme we often choose terms from our *psychic life*, like "proud, disgruntled, tender, valiant, yearning". But we can also take the descriptions from other domains of life and call music "fragrant, spring-fresh, hazy, chilly". For the description of musical character, feelings are thus just *phenomena* like others that offer similarities for description. We may use epithets of that sort with awareness of their figurative imagery, indeed we cannot do without them. But we must beware of saying, this music *portrays* pride, and so forth. (Hanslick, 2018: 47)

Hanslick thus grants that, as a matter of fact, we often use emotive terminology in describing music. He even concedes that we cannot do without such characterizations. Trouble arises only when we read such descriptions literally, for music does not speak “*through* tones, it speaks *only* tones” (ibid.: 109). Hence, Hanslick concludes, the heuristic contribution of emotions and other phenomena we evoke to describe music is that they offer us “*similarities for description*” (ibid.: 47).

Wittgenstein treats extramusical characterizations of music in a like manner. A central way of providing aesthetic reasons in music is by giving comparisons between a musical tune and something else (see, e.g., M 9: 31, 9: 39, 9: 41; LC III: 9). In the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein provides an example of such a comparison:

Why is just this the pattern of variation in loudness and tempo? One would like to say “Because I know what it’s all about.” But what is it about? I should not be able to say. In order to ‘explain’ I could only compare it with something else which has the same rhythm (I mean the same pattern [*Linie*]). (PI § 527)

Given that “I should not be able to say” what the musical theme is *about*, all I can do to grasp the content of the theme is to pay attention to its rhythm, pattern, or form. Again, as it is impossible to *say*, i.e., discursively express, the content of the theme, I can only *compare* the theme with something else that manifests the same pattern to convey my grasp to another. Importantly, that something else should not be treated as the content of the theme, as the role of the comparison is simply to direct attention to the form that is already manifest in the musical theme itself. Nor can I force another to accept my comparison:

I give someone an explanation, say to him: “It is as though...”; then he says “Yes now I understand it” or “Yes now I know how it is to be played”. It is not after all as though I had given him compelling reasons for comparing this passage with this & that. I did not explain to him that remarks made by the composer show that this passage is supposed to represent this & that. (CV 79)

Failing to see the point of any given comparison does not necessarily entail failure in the understanding of music, for comparisons are only loosely connected to music’s content. Yet, as the comparisons may succeed in drawing attention to a specific feature of the music, the effort to find concrete analogies for abstract musical structures is often worthwhile for the purposes of teaching, listening, or performing music. Most importantly, given the unavailability of any intersubjective grounds to determine which comparison should be preferred over others, we should not treat such comparisons as literal descriptions of music’s content. Instead, we should say, as Wittgenstein does: “Music conveys to us itself!” (BB 178).

Finally, while denying that music is expressive of human emotions or other conceptual contents, formalism does not disconnect music from reality. Hanslick writes:

[M]usic is [...] in fact an *image*, but one whose subject we cannot formulate in words and subordinate to our concepts. In music there is sense and logic, but *musical* sense and logic. It is a language that we speak and understand, but are unable to translate. (Hanslick, 2018: 43–44)

One way to put Hanslick’s point is to say that sense and logic are notions that are not limited to the realm of discursive thought, when discursive thought is understood according to the model of cognition as the subsumption of particulars under general concepts. Such a view of cognition we find, for example, in Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* that treats cognitive judgments as instances of determining sensible intuitions by subsuming them under concepts. Instead of conforming to this pattern of conceptually grounded discursive cognition, the sense of music arises out of the inner coherence of the musical system itself.

Hanslick’s statement about music following its own musical logic and sense serves to show that he does not take the conceptual perspective on the world to be exclusive. Instead of approaching music from a conceptual or emotional perspective, the musician and the aesthetic listener approach it by contemplating the musical forms themselves. This conception resonates with the view that Alexander Baumgarten attributed to ancient philosophers and church fathers, namely, that in addition to logic that deals with objects of conceptual knowledge there is a distinct domain of sensibility that is the proper object of aesthetics (Baumgarten, 1954:

§116). Kant famously endorsed Baumgarten's view and gave it a key role in his philosophical system. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, he started by distinguishing between transcendental aesthetic and transcendental logic and argued that cognition requires both. In his *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, he argued further that, in addition to conceptually grounded cognitive judgments, there is a class of judgments that are universally valid independently of concepts. Kant called these judgments pure judgments of taste and treated the judgment of as the primary example of such a judgment. While lacking concepts, judgments of beauty makes a justified claim to universal validity and even necessity, because the judgments are based on the mere purposiveness of the form of the representation (CPJ §11). The judgments of taste show their object –not *mechanistically* as a cognitive judgment would by merely subsuming the object under a determinate concept, but *artistically*, as an internally purposive whole, as if some will had arranged the object in accordance with a rule that cannot be conceptually explained (CPJ §10). In the case of works of art that will belongs to the artist, whose imagination has given a sensible shape to an aesthetic, sensible idea (CPJ 20: 217; §§70–71).

Echoing Kant, Hanslick argues that when the composer works on musical materials, he is occupying a domain of thought independent of the domain of conceptual thought:

Composing is an operation of the intellect in material of intellectual capacity. [...] More intellectual and more subtle in nature than the material of any other art, the tones readily assimilate each and every idea of the composer [*Künstler*]. Because tone combinations, in whose relationships musical beauty resides, are not achieved through a *mechanical* stringing together but rather through the *free* creativity of the imagination, the intellectual power and individuality of that particular imagination imprint themselves on the product as *character*. (Hanslick, 2018: 45, added emphasis.)

While the goal of all art is to externalize ideas emerging in the artist's imagination, in the case of music the relevant idea “consists of *tones*, not concepts, which would first have to be translated into tones” (ibid.: 46). Once a theme or a motif has emerged in his mind, the composer presents that idea in those relationships that the musical system provides. The musical beauty of the idea is, in turn, given to us in immediate aesthetic awareness of its form that, Hanslick writes, “allows no explanation other than the inner purposiveness [*innere Zweckmäßigkeit*] of the phenomenon, the harmony of its parts, without reference to an external third factor” (ibid.: 46, translation altered²).

Even though the musical idea –a theme or a motif– resists a translation or a conceptual explanation of its content, its autonomous form is not mere play of sensations. For precisely as mere form, the musical theme reveals something. It reveals, first, the *thought* of the composer, which after all, was a musical thought to begin with, arising from the active imagination of the composer. Second, the musical theme reveals the *individuality* of the composer, his character, given that the musical idea arises from his own imagination. The composer's individuality is not revealed by the music being a translation of his conceptual thoughts or feelings, but rather his individuality *shows itself* in the specific way in which he has put the shared musical rules to work in his music. These are not mere images, pictures, or representations of something not music. Rather, the process of shaping musical forms out of the materials of melody, harmony, and rhythm takes place in the very same medium of music that we encounter when listening to the performances of the composer's works.

Third, the musical theme reveals its own purposiveness, its own internal harmony. In Kant's account, we must assume such purposiveness in order to make sense of our system of discursive knowledge: insofar as we are to see nature, not as a mere mechanistic aggregate of facts, but as a unified system, we must approach it from the perspective of an aesthetic judgment (cf. CPJ 20: 217). And sure enough, in accordance with this view, in the first edition of his essay, removed from the later editions, Hanslick makes a claim even more grandiose. After reminding the reader of his claim about the individuality of the composer leaving its mark on music, he writes:

In the psyche of the listener, furthermore, this intellectual substance unites the beautiful in music with all other grand and beautiful ideas. Music affects the psyche not merely and absolutely by means of its own particular beauty, but rather

² Payzant (1986) translates *Zweckmäßigkeit* as “appropriateness”; Rothfarb and Landerer (2018) translate it as “functionality”. I have used the latter translation with the exception that I have used “purposiveness” as the translation of *Zweckmäßigkeit*. This is the standard translation of the term as it appears in Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, where the term actually originates (CPJ §10).

simultaneously as a sounding reflection of the great motions of the cosmos. Through profound and covert relationships to nature, the significance of tones increases far above themselves, and allows us at the same time to feel the infinite in the work of human talent. Because the elements of music –sound, tone, rhythm, forcefulness, gentleness– exist in the entire universe, so does man discover the entire universe in music. (Hanslick, 2018: 120)

My proposal is that, for Hanslick, the purposiveness of musical form is a sounding image of the formal features of the universe when approached *aesthetically*, i.e., not conceptually. If read in light of Kant’s view, this way of perceiving reality is qualitatively different from, yet on a par with, the conceptual, mechanical way of cognizing the facts of the world.

Recall Szabados’s concession that the early Wittgenstein may have been a formalist, who thought that “logic shows the structure of the world, while tunes and themes show the structure of music” (Szabados, 2014: 46). I want to conclude this article by suggesting that, for Wittgenstein, music shows more than that. As explained in section 3, for the early Wittgenstein, logical form is the necessary condition for the possibility of facts – both linguistic and non-linguistic. Logical form is not just the form of thought but the form of reality as well. Indeed, Wittgenstein claims it to be the form of every imaginable world (TLP 2.022). However, while being the necessary condition for the possibility of meaningful language, logical form itself cannot be expressed in language: it cannot be *said*, but only “shows itself” (TLP 4.121). Wittgenstein writes: “Propositions can represent the whole of reality, but cannot represent what they must have in common with reality in order to be able to represent it – logical form.” (TLP 4.12) This is to say that logical form cannot be explained or expressed in any medium external to itself. In this respect, logical form resembles the form of music as understood by formalism. What makes the case intriguing is the fact that, in the course of making this very argument, Wittgenstein appeals repeatedly to music.

When discussing the form of reality in the beginning of the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein claims that complex states of affairs and ultimately the entire reality is composed of simple elements, namely, objects. Objects are the unalterable substance of the world, which he characterizes as “form and content” (TLP 2.023, 2.014, 2.025). Interestingly, while refusing to give any concrete examples of objects, Wittgenstein refers to notes in his explanation of the objects’ formal essence. Like the simple objects, whose forms make it possible for them to combine into states of affairs, so too notes “must have some pitch” that allow them to form musical themes (TLP 2.0131). Moreover, in explaining his central idea that also propositions are structured facts, Wittgenstein writes: “A proposition is not a blend of words. [...] A proposition is articulate. – (Just as a theme in music is not a blend of notes.)” (TLP 3.141). In elaborating the core idea of the picture theory of language, namely, that a meaningful “proposition is a picture of reality”, Wittgenstein refers to the essential connection between language and the world, brought about by logical form shared by the two (TLP 4.03). And again, Wittgenstein’s example of such an essential connection is from the realm of music:

A gramophone record, the musical idea, the written notes, and the soundwaves, all stand to one another in the same internal relation of depicting that holds between language and the world. (TLP 4.014).

As Wittgenstein explains, continuing the above remark, “They all have a common logical construction” (TLP 4.014³).

Now, logic treats the formal properties of the states of affairs and their constituent objects. These formal properties –contrasted with the external, empirical properties of objects– are mirrored (reflected, displayed, “made manifest”) in the structural properties of propositions and thoughts (TLP 4.122-4.125, 3.13). It follows that propositions of logic are *tautologies*: they are empty of empirical content as they do not picture any empirical states of affairs. Accordingly, they do not have sense, which according to the *Tractatus* requires not only form but also empirical content. Tautologies are “sinnlos”, “directionless”. Yet, Wittgenstein emphasizes that tautologies are not nonsensical (“unsinnig”), as they still show or display their own logical form (TLP 4.46-4.462). Precisely as tautologies, abstracted away from empirical content, the propositions of logic “show the formal –logical– properties of the world”, as Wittgenstein writes (TLP 6.12, see TLP 6.124, 6.22).

³ Translation altered. The original text reads: “Ihnen allen is der logische Bau gemeinsam”.

Now consider again Wittgenstein's notebook entry from 1915, evoked by Szabados: "A tune is a kind of tautology, it is complete in itself; it satisfies itself" (NB 40). Instead of resembling a meaningful proposition that *says* something by picturing a state of affairs, the tune only *shows* its form. And by doing just that, I would like to argue, music figures as the model of logical form in its purest sense. For just like propositions of logic that do not say anything about the specific facts of the world but merely show the form necessary for the possibility of thought and reality, so too musical themes show that form. Hence, it should not be surprising that Wittgenstein states that "Knowledge of the nature of logic will [...] lead to knowledge of the nature of music" (NB 40).

In my reading, the import of these remarks is this: in the context of Wittgenstein's early philosophy, musical themes serve to make *intuitively* (i.e., sensuously⁴) available the idea of logical form showing itself independently of any empirical, "sayable" content. This is because, as suggested by Wittgenstein's remark about tunes as tautologies, the musical theme has the form of sense without any possibility of giving empirical content to that form (TLP 3.13). Yet, even without content, the form itself is shown to be *purposive*, as I would like to say, because of Wittgenstein's further remark that the "the tune is complete in itself and satisfies itself". In this way, the core idea of the *Tractatus*, i.e., the idea of logical form that cannot be expressed in language but is shown, displayed, or made manifest, is made tangible without resorting to a conceptual explanation, which has been ruled out by Wittgenstein's statement that propositions cannot represent logical form (TLP p. 3, 2.172, 2.174, 4.121, 6.22). In short, –dramatic as it may sound– that logical form, which for the early Wittgenstein is constitutive of language, thought, and reality, is shown not just in propositions of logic but also in music.

Now, Szabados may grant as much, given that he reads the early Wittgenstein as a theoretical thinker, obsessed by form. However, as argued in section 3, Szabados's interpretation overlooks the fact that both the early and the later Wittgenstein take logic or grammar to be independent of empirical facts and indeed grounding the possibility of empirical statements. In my reading, Wittgenstein's appeal to music serves the role of illustrating this autonomy of logic or grammar from empirical facts both in his early and later stages of thought.

In a manuscript dictated to his students in 1935 and later published as the *Brown Book*, Wittgenstein states:

The same strange illusion which we are under when we seem to seek something which a face expresses whereas, in reality, we are giving ourselves up to the features before us –that same illusion possesses us even more strongly if repeating a tune to ourselves and letting it make its full impression on us, we say "This tune says *something*", and it is as though I had to find *what* it says. And yet I know that it doesn't say anything such that I might express in words or pictures what it says. And if, recognizing this, I resign myself to saying "It just expresses a musical thought", this would mean no more than saying "It expresses itself". (BB 166)

Again, we find Wittgenstein agreeing with Hanslick on several points. Like Hanslick, Wittgenstein takes up a musical tune, rather than an entire work, as the phenomenon of interest. He denies that the content of the tune (whatever it is that the tune says) could be translated into words or pictures. And he concludes that, given the impossibility of translation, the content of the tune is "a musical thought", which amounts to saying that the musical tune expresses itself, because the tune and the thought stand in a constitutive relation. The punch line is that we cannot *say* what the musical tune expresses, as it only expresses or *shows* itself.

In section 527 of *Philosophical Investigations*, quoted above, Wittgenstein repeats the point that "I should not be able to say" what a musical theme is about. All I can do is to compare the theme with something else that has the same *pattern* [Linie] (PI §527). The immediate context of these remarks is Wittgenstein's alignment between the understanding of music and the understanding of language. In Wittgenstein's view, the two are more like one another than one is inclined to think. In the *Brown Book*, the same point is explained as follows:

⁴ That Kant's account of logic and aesthetics as the two necessary components of cognitive judgments was not foreign to Wittgenstein is shown in Wittgenstein's remark, dictated to G. E. Moore in 1914. Referring to his own notion of internal, formal relations, Wittgenstein states: "We might thus give sense to the assertion that logical laws are *forms* of thought and space and time are *forms* of intuition" (NB 118).

But I don't mean that understanding a musical theme is more like the picture which one tends to make oneself understanding a sentence; but rather that this picture is wrong, and that understanding a sentence is more like what happens when we understand a tune than at first sight appears. For understanding a sentence, we say, points to a reality outside the sentence. Whereas one might say "Understanding a sentence means getting hold of its content; and the content of the sentence is *in* the sentence." (BB 167)

This remark takes up the early view of a melody being complete in itself without reference to external reality, and connects it with the major theme of Wittgenstein's later account, namely, the understanding of language. The core commitment that music expresses itself is thus sustained, but now the implications are taken to apply to language in general.

As explained above, the major transition from Wittgenstein's early to his later philosophy is his later rejection of the Tractarian idea that every meaningful proposition must be a picture of a state of affairs, i.e. have empirical content, which is what the proposition "says" (TLP 4.022). But one may see a structural affinity between Wittgenstein's early and the later views on those sentences that are not straightforwardly empirical, explainable by reference to a fact, between logical and grammatical sentences, that is. In Wittgenstein's mature thought, this continuity finds expression in Wittgenstein's appeal to music as exemplifying the possibility of a sentence or a tune being comprehensible in spite of resisting a translation. Wittgenstein writes: "We speak of understanding a sentence in the sense in which it can be replaced by another which says the same; but also in the sense in which it cannot be replaced by any other. (Any more than a musical theme can be replaced by another)" (PI §531). In the latter case, what matters is "these words in these positions" (PI §531), that is, the internal, formal purposiveness of the sentence.

What I am suggesting is that the internal, formal purposiveness is not only a feature of a musical tune when approached from the aesthetic perspective. It is also the fundamental characteristic of our language, as understood by Wittgenstein. Like music, which does not yield to a mechanistic model of explanation but requires to be described as a system constituted by its autonomous rules, so too language when approached from the philosophical perspective calls to be grasped as a family of structures, each of which is a unified, purposive whole (cf. M 8: 59). This is what music, as a system constituted by its own autonomous rules, allows us to hear.

7. Concluding Remarks

The leitmotif of this entire paper has been the distinction between the empirical and the grammatical as it appears in Wittgenstein's thought. In section 3 on Theory, I argued for the importance of the distinction in Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy, claiming that the differences between Wittgenstein's early and later accounts should not conceal the deep continuity in Wittgenstein's treatment of logic and grammar. In section 4 on Beauty, I argued that the distinction surfaces in the domain of aesthetic judgments as the distinction between judgments of the agreeable and the beautiful. Just as much as philosophy in general, aesthetics deals with a phenomenon that, when described by the philosopher, is shown to be laden with normative (not merely empirical or factual) judgments. In section 5 on Rules, I argued that the appeal to rules is motivated by the attempt to show how the grammatical may in fact be distinguished from the merely empirical in both language and music. Finally, in section 6 on Music and Reality, I argued that music serves as a non-conceptually given model of the formal features of reality for both Hanslick and the early Wittgenstein. The later Wittgenstein does not draw a sharp distinction between language and reality. Still, in accordance with his younger self, who took propositions of logic to show the essence of the world, the later Wittgenstein states: "Essence is expressed by grammar" (PI §271; see TLP 5.4711, 6.22). Music serves to make this point available: it makes available the idea of our ability to grasp language and reality independently of conceptual explanation.

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