Musicologica Austriaca

Eduard Hanslick’s “On the Musically Beautiful”: A New Translation

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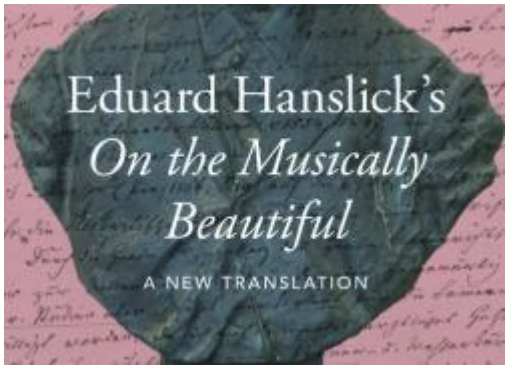
Nicole Grimes wishes to acknowledge that she contributed to the blurb on the back cover of this translation which reads:

> “This superlative new translation of Eduard Hanslick’s *On the Musically Beautiful* captures the stylistic brilliance of Hanslick’s original while also illuminating his arguments and penetrating to the very heart of his aesthetic theory. Of particular interest is the collection of essays that precedes the translation. These situate Hanslick’s treatise in a broad philosophical and cultural context, elucidate his concepts with incisive clarity, and trace a fascinating history of the translation of the book. Thoroughly researched and deeply engaging, this will quickly become the definitive English version of Hanslick’s text.”

What follows is an objective review of the book that fleshes out the reasons for the endorsement outlined above.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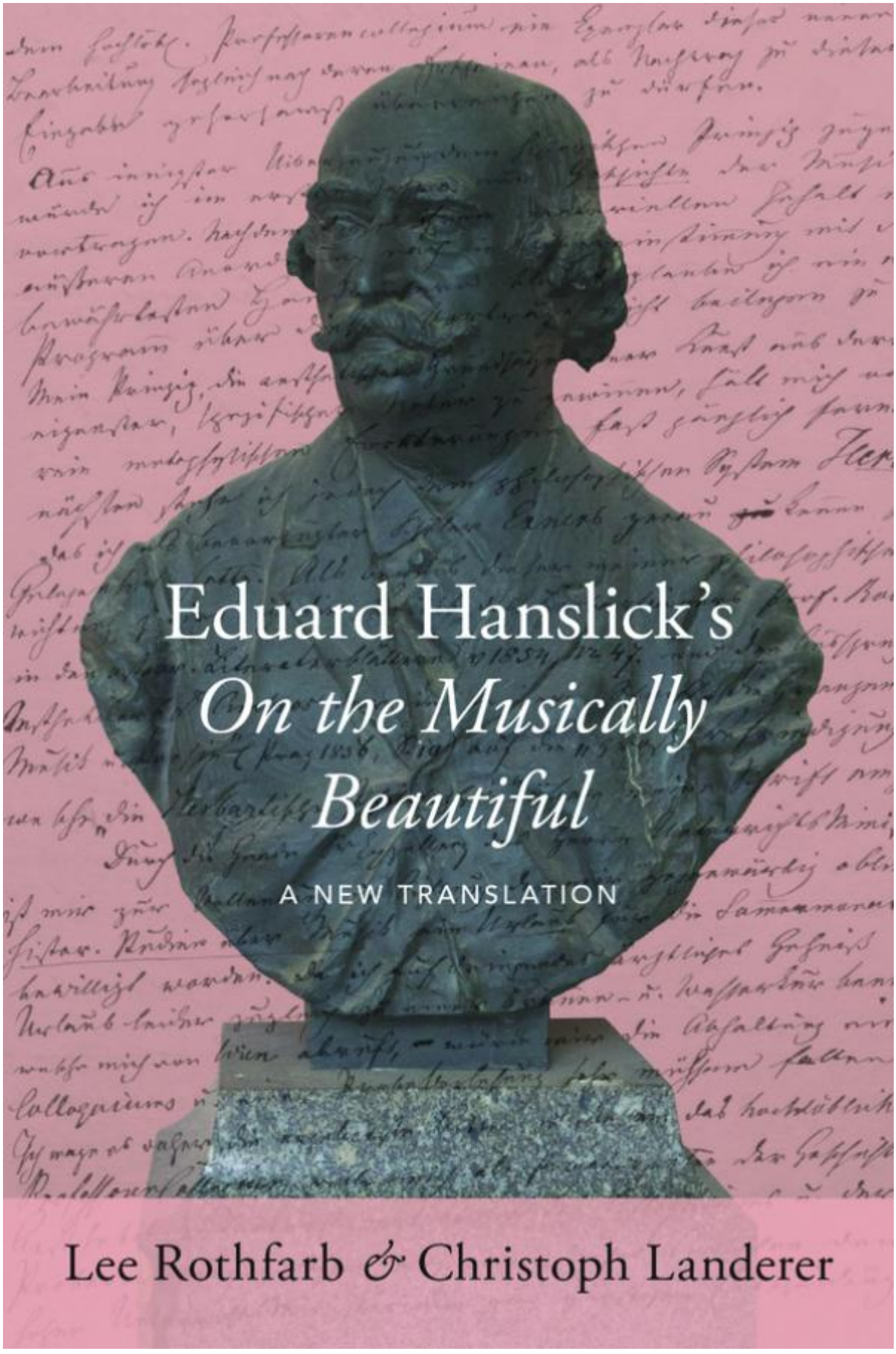

Eduard Hanslick's "On the Musically Beautiful":

A New Translation
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[1] Eduard Hanslick's treatise, *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen: Ein Beitrag zur Revision der Ästhetik der Tonkunst* (1854) has twice been translated into English in its entirety. The first translation was by Gustav Cohen, *The Beautiful in Music: A Contribution to the Revisal of Musical Aesthetics* in 1891, the second by Geoffrey Payzant, *On the Musically Beautiful: A Contribution Towards the Revision of the Aesthetics of Music* in 1986.[1] Both translations have been widely used and cited, with a tendency for scholars to express a strong preference for one or the other because, despite the merits of each, there is a sense that not all of the nuances of Hanslick's argument have yet been captured. The recent translation by Lee Rothfarb and Christoph Landerer, therefore, makes a significant contribution to Hanslick studies. The translation of Hanslick's text is handsomely augmented by the inclusion of three substantial introductory essays authored by the translators, with Alexander Wilfing also contributing to the first of the three.

The first prefatory essay "Origins, Publication, and Translation History of the Treatise" traces the origins of Hanslick's text back to two articles published ahead of his treatise. The first, "On the Subjective Impression of Music and Its Position in Aesthetics" of 1853 was reworked as Chapters 4 and 5 of *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen*.[2] A public talk that Hanslick gave in Klagenfurt on music's subjective impression, and the relationship between music and nature was published as an article in three installments in 1854 as "Music in Its Relations to Nature." This would later form the basis of Chapter 6 of *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen*.[3] The authors also provide a detailed overview of where and when Hanslick's volume was first made available in English. Further to the well-known translations by Cohen (1891) and Payzant (1986), they draw attention to William Pole's *Philosophy of Music* (1879) which contained extended excerpts from *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* in English translation,[4] and Eustace Breakspeare's paper "Musical Aesthetics" of 1880, which contextualized Hanslick's treatise in relation to the French translation.[5]

This essay also offers a critique of the structure of Hanslick's book which is immensely valuable to those approaching the text for the first time. The authors propose a number of alternative routes through the book, with a central focus on Chapter 3, "The Musically Beautiful" which contains "the quintessentials of the treatise," and espouses Hanslick's "positive thesis that the purpose of music is the presentation of intrinsically musical ideas in beautiful tone forms." (lxxiii) Their second proposed route focuses strategically on two chapters of the book (Chapters 3 and 7, the latter of which is further concerned with notions of content and form in music; route three focuses again on Chapters 3 and 7, as well as Chapters 1 and 2 (the negative thesis that the purpose of music is neither "the arousal nor the representation of feelings," lxxiii). For those who wish to read the book in its entirety, route four proposes an alternative order for the chapters to maximize the comprehensibility of *On the Musically Beautiful* according to the "logic of their unfolding arguments" and the "probable chronology in which they were written" (lxxiv): Chapters

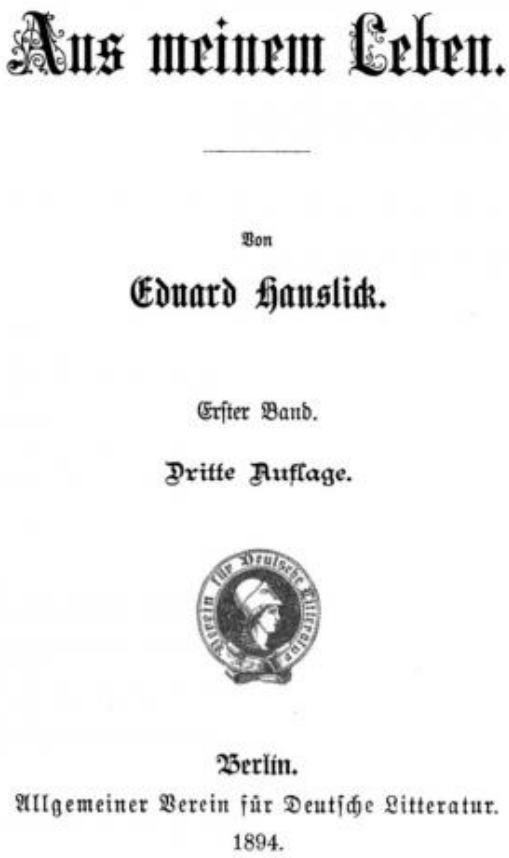
6, 4, 5 (the three chapters that appeared as Hanslick's early articles); followed by Chapters 1 and 2 (the negative thesis); then the centrally important Chapter 3; and finally, Chapter 7.

1. The Aesthetics of Feeling	Negative thesis
2. The "Representation of Feelings" Is Not the Content of Music	
3. The Musically Beautiful	Positive thesis
4. Analysis of the Subjective Perception of Music	Further development of material already published in 1853/1954
5. Aesthetic Compared to Pathological Perception of Music	
6. The Relation of Music to Nature	
7. The Concepts Content and Form in Music	Consolidation of ideas from Chapter 3

Table 1: Overview of Eduard Hanslick's Chapters in *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen*

The "Introduction to Hanslick's Central Concepts" found as the second prefatory essay is vitally important in a project that translates such a controversial little book, the aims and motivations of which at times risk obscuring its content. Hanslick's *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* was directed against the aesthetics of feeling, its aim being to "clear away the rubble of obsolete prejudices and presuppositions, then mark out the foundations upon which a new theory might be built," as Geoffrey Payzant earlier argued.[6] For Rothfarb and Landerer, Hanslick's inquiry is concerned with "the nature of musical meaning" (liii). In this introduction, the authors systematically analyze a number of Hanslick's main concepts including "aesthetics," "beauty," "tone," "tönend bewegte Formen," and "Geist." Their clear elucidations make this book eminently accessible to readers who are new to Hanslick's thinking, and they provide the means to clarify misconceptions and misreadings that abound in the discourse on Hanslick in the English-speaking world.

In their discussion of beauty, Rothfarb and Landerer focus on Hanslick's plea for autonomous beauty, his wish to focus on specifically musical beauty, with an emphasis on "the properties or relations that inhere in the work of art itself" (xxxiii). "It is not beauty per se that interests Hanslick," they argue, "but rather beautiful musical objects and their specific properties and relations" (xxxvi). They might have gone further in this introduction and given equal consideration to the array of terms that Hanslick employs to address musical properties by indicating content or substance of some kind. Such terms are used in multifarious ways throughout Hanslick's text. They include "geistige Gehalt" ("spiritual content" or "intellectual content"), "Gegenstand" ("substance" or "subject matter"), "Inhalt" ("content") and, its all-important negative imprint, "inhaltlos" ("contentless").[7]


Aus meinem Leben.

Von

Eduard Hanslick.

Erſter Band.

Dritte Auflage.

Berlin.
Allgemeiner Verein für Deutſche Litteratur.
1894.

Figure 1: Eduard Hanslick, *Aus meinem Leben*, cover

In Hanslick's autobiography *Aus meinem Leben* written in 1894, we find him, forty years after the first publication of *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen*, reflecting on what he refers to as his "much quoted and much abused little book" ("vielzitierten und vielgeschmähten Büchleins").[8] It was clear to him, he claims, that the text in its original form amounted to only a sketch or foundation, and he was aware that its negative, polemic aspects towered above its positive, systematic ones, both in extent and severity. However, he considered a complete, systematic *Ästhetik der Musik* to be an undertaking which demanded an undivided capacity for work, and complete concentration of thought.[9] Moreover, Hanslick was aware of the weaknesses of his 1854 text stating that he recognized, as did most of his adversaries, that it was misleading to speak of a "lack of content" ("Inhaltlosigkeit") of instrumental music. The difficulty he was trying to overcome, he asserts, was how "beseelte Form" was to be differentiated philosophically from "leere Form."[10]

[2] I draw attention to Hanslick's autobiography because, in addition to illuminating his earlier writings, precisely this fundamental question that he posed here continues to occupy a central place more broadly in Hanslick studies, as is amply demonstrated by the key choices made by the translators of this version of *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen*. The term "Beseelte Form" found in Hanslick's autobiography might well be translated as "form in music imbued with spirit." But this translation carries the weight of metaphysics and German idealism. If one wished to avoid such connotations, they might perhaps render it as "animated form." The second of Hanslick's binary terms in his autobiography, "leere Form" is more easily translated as "empty form." Hanslick's musings late in life, then, open a window onto a tension that is inherent in his treatise in 1854, and which continues to confound those who attempt to translate that text. Returning, then, to *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen*, a comparative reading of Payzant's, and Rothfarb's and Landerer's

translations provides us with two profoundly different approaches to this question. Payzant situates Hanslick squarely in relation to the German idealist tradition. With much contextual, historical, and philosophical groundwork, Rothfarb and Landerer distance him from that position.

Payzant translated *geistige Gehalt*, a term that Hanslick introduces in Chapter 3 and that he also uses as a correlative of form, as "spiritual content" or "ideal content." Payzant considers *Inhalt* to be "content in the sense that the literary and visual arts have content but music has not." This content can be reduced to concepts, which can be represented in words, colors, or abstract feelings, and can be understood as being external to the particular means by which art shapes its contents. Payzant considers *Gehalt*, on the other hand, to be content in a sense particular to musical themes. He uses the English word "substantiality" for *Gehalt* and *geistige Gehalt.* He claims that "substantiality gives to a theme its individuality and its spontaneity, these being the properties par excellence of *Geist.* They are reflected in the structure of the musical artwork as a whole."[11] It is in this sense that Hanslick uses *geistige Gehalt* as a correlative of form. Hence, "music has its content *as* its form, or, what is the same thing, its form *as* its content."[12] In other words, for Payzant, *Gehalt* is replete with the particular characteristics, spiritual depth, and individuality of the composer (*OMB* 82, note 9).

Hanslick uses the word *Gegenstand* in a number of contexts, and both Payzant, and Rothfarb and Landerer tend to translate it as "subject matter" or "matter." Most often the term is bound up with the negative thesis that the content of music is not to represent feelings. Regarding the specificity of feelings, Hanslick claims that the strength or weakness, and the fluctuations of inner activity can be similar with different feelings, while the same feeling can differ from person to person. He argues fervently against the generally accepted misnomer that music "can in no way signify the *object* [*Gegenstand*] of a feeling, but surely the feeling itself, cannot signify the object of a particular love, for example, but surely 'love'." (Rothfarb and Landerer, 18) By way of opposing this view, he takes the fact that no one can ascribe a particular feeling to any of J. S. Bach's Preludes and Fugues from the *Well-Tempered Clavier* as proof that "music *need* not awaken feelings and have them as its subject [*Gegenstand*]."[13] Thus, for Hanslick, music cannot represent the content of feelings.

Turning to Hanslick's positive thesis, music has one ingredient in common with emotional states—motion. For Payzant, this motion can be understood as being intrinsic to the diatonic system in which there is a perceptible striving of individual notes and chords towards and away from one another, and a motion embodied in harmonic progressions that is temporal but not spatial—that is, nothing physically moves. That is to say, the only movement of the ideas of feelings that music knows how to seize effectively is "motion," an important concept that Hanslick considers to have been neglected.[14] Further clarifying what he considers to be a fundamental misunderstanding of the purpose of music, Hanslick refers to a common analogy between motion in space and motion in time. Thus, he concedes, "[W]e can in fact musically paint an object [*Gegenstand*]. But wanting to depict the 'feeling' in tones that falling snow, the crowing rooster, the flash of lightening evoke in us is simply ridiculous" (30).[15]

Drawing the strands of Hanslick's positive thesis together, his use of "Gegenstand" occurs in the most frequently cited sentence from the treatise, to which the concept of motion in music is integral. In the first three editions this reads: "Tönend bewegte Formen sind einzig und allein Inhalt und Gegenstand der Musik." Thereafter it reads "Der Inhalt der Musik sind tönend bewegte Formen" (*VMS* 75).[16] For Gustav Cohen in 1891, "the essence of music is *sound and motion*."[17] For Geoffrey Payzant in 1986, "the content of music is tonally moving forms," the operative word

being “tonally” (*OMB* 29). For Mark Evan Bonds in 2012, *tönend bewegte Formen* are “forms set in motion through tones.”[18]

Perhaps the most brilliant insight of their new translation of *On the Musically Beautiful* is the translation of this sentence (41). Unlike Payzant, Rothfarb and Landerer do not associate this motion with tonality. Instead, they clarify that “tönend” is the present participle of the verb “tönen”—“to sound by means of tones” (xli). The authors extricate all three strands of this complex phrase to render a translation that, despite seeming to be cumbersome, is elegant in its clarity: “sonically moved forms” (41). The three component strands of this phrase, which, they convincingly argue, must be considered both individually and collectively, include:

1. Beautiful form;
2. The trait of motion, of temporal development;
3. The acoustic, the sonic—that which is sounded by means of tones.

[3] Acknowledging the complexity of translating this phrase, they suggest that both Cohen and Payzant came close, but neither of them managed to fully elucidate the concept. Cohen’s “sound and motion” took no account of the “form” that is integral to Hanslick’s idea, while Payzant’s “tonally moving forms” privileged the tonal system whilst overlooking the significance of the acoustic, sounding properties of music. On Payzant’s reading, the strict formalism found in Hanslick’s phrase resonates with Herbart’s suggestion that the tones “should merely be heard, or even … merely read” (“sollen nur gehört, ja wohl gar … nur gelesen werden”).[19] This anticipates the concept of “structural listening” that would take hold of music studies throughout the twentieth century, a concept which allows for the silent enjoyment of music as a purely intellectual activity.[20] Such silent listening would have been anathema to Hanslick, however, central to whose concept, as Rothfarb and Landerer lucidly demonstrate, is the *sounding* of the acoustic material. Highlighting the distinction between Payzant’s “tonally moving forms”—the sounding element of which seems to be optional—and their own “sonically moved forms” —that which is sounded by means of tones—they rescue Hanslick’s concept from the heady realm of idealism, and instead bring it to the realm of animate sound. This has broader implications for the question Hanslick posed in his autobiography of how “beseelte Form” is to be differentiated philosophically from “leere Form,” and has a bearing on the fundamental question of how (or to what degree) Hanslick’s treatise can be understood in relation to German idealism.

Of equal importance to the enterprise of translating *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* is an adequate rendering in English of the term “Geist,” a word that seems to defy translation. Rothfarb and Landerer avoid the more common “ideal” or “spirit” and instead opt for “intellect,” thereby, once again, relieving Hanslick of the burden of German idealist baggage, and providing a less philosophically-weighty interpretation of Hanslick’s text. In contrast to Payzant’s reading, they make the case that Hanslick is not concerned with “music’s ‘ideal’ or ‘spiritual’ content in any way,” but instead with “a skilled and gifted mind creating for other cultured minds” (xlv).

Thus, while music is “inhaltlos” (“contentless”) according to Hanslick, it is not without substance, or worth. But how a reader of this treatise in English understands this content is very much dependent on which translation they read. Central to Hanslick’s aesthetic theory as Payzant sees it is the notion that musical content is a manifestation of the spiritual, or the ideal. This is evidenced in chapter 3:

> In no way is the specifically musical beauty to be understood as mere acoustical beauty or as symmetry of proportion … in order to make our case for musical beauty, we have not excluded ideal content [*geistigen Gehalt*] but, on the contrary, have insisted on it. For we acknowledge no beauty without its full share of ideality. (*OMB* 30)[21]

In Rothfarb and Landerer, the translation of this same passage has an entirely different meaning:

> The "specifically musical" is in no way to be understood as merely acoustical beauty or proportional symmetry—branches that it includes as subordinate … In insisting on musical beauty, we have not excluded intellectual content but rather in fact have required it. For we recognize no beauty without any share of intellectuality. (43)

These two broad positions—one concerned with ideals, the other concerned with intellect—persist throughout these two respective translations. Thus, for Payzant, Hanslick's assertion that "as the creation of a thinking and feeling mind, a musical composition has in high degree the capability to be itself full of ideality and feeling" (*OMB* 31),[22] has a far less lofty complexion as rendered by Rothfarb and Landerer: "as the creation of a thinking and feeling intellect, a musical work has to a high degree the ability to be itself intellectually stimulating and soulful [*gefühlvoll*]" (45–46).

A further example is found in the translations of the phrase "hineingegossene Seele." For Payzant:

> Nothing could be more misguided and prevalent than the view which distinguishes between beautiful music which possesses ideal content [*geistige Gehalt*] and beautiful music which does not. This view has a much too narrow conception of the beautiful in music, representing both the elaborately constructed form and the ideal content [*hineingegossene Seele*] with which the form is filled as self-subsistent. Consequently this view divides all compositions into two categories, the full and the empty, like champagne bottles. Musical champagne, however, has the peculiarity that it grows along with the bottle. (*OMB* 32)[23]

For Rothfarb and Landerer:

> Nothing could be more fallacious and more prevalent than the view that differentiates between "beautiful music" with and without intellectual content [*geistige Gehalt*]. It construes the concept of beauty in music much too narrowly and conceives the artfully compounded form as something existing unto itself, conceives the mind poured in [*hineingegossene Seele*] likewise as something self-sufficient, and then systematically divides compositions into full and empty champagne bottles. However, musical champagne has the characteristic of growing *with* the bottle. (46–47)

The "ideal content" found in Payzant's translation seems to aspire to the metaphysical realm. The "mind poured in" that is found in Rothfarb and Landerer overtly calls attention to the workings of the human mind.

In chapter 7, Hanslick draws all of these terms together in a passage that makes explicit his position on the content of music, although, as we will see, this passage also leaves much room for interpretation in how it is translated. In Payzant this passage reads:

> Regarding the question of the *content* [*Inhalt*] of music, we must take particular care not to use the word in its laudatory sense. From the fact that music has no content [*Gegenstand*] in the sense of "subject matter," it does not follow that music lacks *substance* [*Gehalt*]. Clearly "spiritual substance" [*geistige Gehalt*] is what those people have in mind who fight with sectarian ardour for the "content" [*Inhalt*] of music. (*OMB* 82)[24]

In Rothfarb and Landerer this reads:

> With the issue of the *content* of music, we must be particularly careful of taking the word in a laudatory sense. It does not follow from the fact that music has no content [*Inhalt*] (subject matter [*Gegenstand*]) that it is devoid of substance [*Gehalt*]. Those who campaign with partisan zeal for the "content" of music apparently mean "intellectual substance." (114)

[4] Each of these translations provides compelling, and yet contrasting evidence for how we address Hanslick's central question: how "beseelte Form" in music is to be differentiated philosophically from "leere Form." In addressing this central issue, there is consensus amongst Payzant, and Rothfarb and Landerer that Hanslick wished to discourage listeners from engaging in an emotional, passive reception of music, in other words, a subjective approach that prioritizes the listener and their emotional state, above the music itself. Hanslick strongly encouraged the engagement of the imagination (*Phantasie*) of the listener. The larger issues raised by this new translation, however, go beyond this point of agreement. Depending on how one interprets Hanslick's central concepts—either in German or in English—and/or depending on which translation one reads, their *Phantasie* will be engaged in a rather different way.

Music imbued with spirit, as Payzant's Hanslick understands it, is music that can be understood as a manifestation of the ideal or "absolute" in music. It is music that is evocative of the metaphysical or the ineffable, an issue that is confronted in the following passage, which also explicitly situates the "geistige Gehalt" of music in relation to the tonal system:

> Regarding the accusation of contentlessness, music has content [*Inhalt*], but musical content, which is a not inconsiderable spark of the divine flame, like the beauty of any other art. But only by firmly denying any other kind of "content" [*Inhalt*] to music can we preserve music's substance [*Gehalt*]. This is because from indefinite feelings, to which at best such a content [*Inhalt*] is attributable, no spiritual content [*geistige Bedeutung*] derives; rather, in each composition, the content derives from its particular tonal structure as the spontaneous creation of mind out of material compatible with mind [*der freien Schöpfung des Geistes aus geistfähigem Material*]. (*OMB* 83)[25]

Yet, the idealist undertones of this reading are entirely called into question in Rothfarb and Landerer's translation where this passage attains an entirely different meaning:

> Countering the *charge* of lack of content, therefore, music does have a content [*Inhalt*], but musical content, which is no less a spark of divine fire than the beautiful in every other art. However, only by unrelentingly denying every other kind of "content" [*Inhalt*] for music can we rescue its "substance" [*Gehalt*]. For an intellectual significance [*geistige Bedeutung*] for music cannot be derived from indefinite feeling, to which that content [*Inhalt*] can, at best, be traced, but can very well be derived from the definite beautiful tone configuration as the spontaneous creation of the intellect out of material of intellectual capacity [*geistfähigem Material*]. (116)

It is a testament to the integrity of this new translation of *On the Musically Beautiful* that it forces us to radically rethink a number of aspects of Hanslick's treatise with which many in Hanslick studies had thought they were intimately familiar. In the third and final prefatory essay, Rothfarb and Landerer consider Hanslick's book in relation to his place in the history of ideas. This historical exploration and the issues it raises greatly enrich our understanding of the broader contexts of the treatise. The authors emphasize that Hanslick was not trained as a philosopher, and argue that *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* is not a work in the Kantian tradition in any strict sense. Instead, they make the case that that which has been understood to be "Kantian" in Hanslick's

writings can just as easily be attributed to broader characteristics of German Romanticism or the English Enlightenment (lvi). They draw a distinction between Kant's subject-centered "Copernican Revolution" and Hanslick's object-centered consideration of musical beauty by way of indicating the much stronger influence of Herbart, to whom we will turn below.[26]

Central to the question of Hanslick's philosophical antecedents is the question of how we conceive of the word "Geist" which has its roots, for Hanslick, in his Hegelian background. He was profoundly influenced by Hegelian idealism in the *Vormärz* era, as were most artists and intellectuals of his age.[27] This was not a direct influence from the philosophy of Hegel himself. Rather, Hanslick subscribed to the views of the Hegelian left, a position he had in common with, among others, David Strauss, and Franz Brendel. The Hegelian left radically criticized Hegel's retrospective recognition of history and conservative attitude towards politics. They were pro-active in that they channeled Hegel's idealistic views into more practical directions. In the *Vormärz* years Hanslick believed that art should make some positive contribution to social and political reforms. As Hiroshi Yoshida observes, his critical writing at the time of the Vienna Revolution was at its most politically acute, carrying the banner of social reformation based on Hegelian idealist philosophy.[28] At this time, Hanslick sought to interpret musical works as an expression of *Weltanschauung.*

Figure 2: Wiener Oktoberaufstand 1848, Dachbrand der Hofbibliothek und der Augustinerkirche am Josefsplatz, Kolorierte Lithografie, 1848
By courtesy of Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Bildarchiv Austria

Rothfarb and Landerer also consider the political landscape of 1848 to be pivotal in Hanslick's move away from idealism and the metaphysical realm, providing a fascinating exploration of the change of outlook that Hanslick experienced as a result of this political upheaval. Revolution in Vienna went too far for Hanslick's political view: in his autobiography he recalls with horror the violence of the revolution, and of witnessing the brutal hanging of the Secretary of War by a mob in the street for his collusion with anti-revolutionary elements. He was also traumatized by

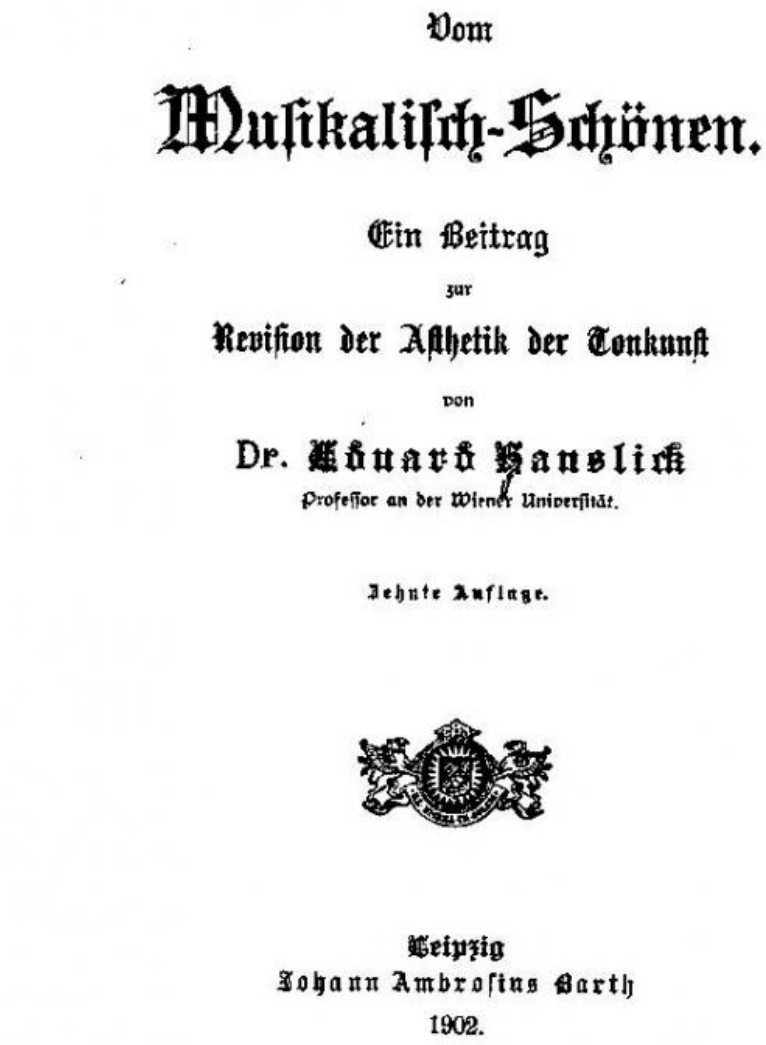
witnessing the execution of a fellow music critic Alfred Julius Becher in 1848 (lxiii).[29] Hanslick cites this as the moment he turned his back on the radical elements of proletarian revolution.[30] The failure of the revolution put an end to hopes for social reform based on Hegelian idealist philosophy.

[5] Following the failed revolutions, there were a number of attempts across Germany, as Sanna Pederson has noted, to "re-conceptualise music at the most basic level of perception in order to disavow Romantic affiliation."[31] She cites a series of articles by Julius Schäffer that sought to counter Hegel's claim that music cannot convey clearly defined ideas by demonstrating the primacy of thought over mere feeling in music. Mark Burford endorses Pederson's position that this was a precursor to the arguments in Hanslick's *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen,* but suggests that she goes too far in claiming that "Hanslick parted with Schäffer in renouncing the central Hegelian metaphysical premise of the Idea."[32] It is precisely this tension between those who advocate for Hanslick as a German idealist and those who veer away from such a reading that is revisited in Rothfarb and Landerer's new translation.

If we are to find some resolution in this historical tension, then we might well look to Mark Burford who observes that "Hanslick did not so much reject musical metaphysics as, to a certain extent, reconceptualize it by arguing that the ideal content of music is the product of a human spirit, not a transcendent one."[33] With their focus on "mind" and "intellect" as opposed to "spirit" and "ideal," Rothfarb and Landerer advocate for such a position. In their account, whereas before the March Revolutions Hanslick declared that musical compositions "mirror the philosophical, religious, and political world view of their time,"[34] following 1848 we witness the more familiar, the more tempered, and the more formalist Hanslick espousing the notion that musical beauty is strictly intramusical, and that it is the product of a gifted and cultured intellect (lviii).

Figure 3: Der Österreichische Kaiserstaat
By courtesy of Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Bildarchiv Austria

Rothfarb and Landerer provide substantial historical and contextual evidence for this shift away from the ideal. Rather than being a direct descendent of German idealism, as one might expect if Hanslick's education had taken place in Berlin, Heidelberg, or Göttingen, the authors emphasize that his intellectual world was shaped by his education in Vienna, Prague, and Klagenfurt. This is an important and very welcome distinction for, instead of viewing Hanslick's intellectual inheritance as the product of a homogenous German-speaking realm in the nineteenth-century, Rothfarb and Landerer tease out the significance of Hanslick having been taught in the Habsburg Empire where Kant did not exert a dominating influence until the late nineteenth century (lvi).[35] Hanslick was instead connected to German idealism through a number of key figures including Friedrich Theodor Vischer (1807–87), Bernard Bolzano (1781–1848), and Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776–1841). The impact that Herbartianism—the philosophical system that was to become a semiofficial Austrian "state philosophy"—had on Hanslick's writings is also given full consideration in this book. One example is Hanslick's distancing his aesthetic treatise—from the second edition onward—from a metaphysical line of argument, and from lofty idealist system-building, and instead turning to a more phenomenologically oriented analysis in which the sonic, acoustic realm was of primary importance. Providing further context for what Mark Evan Bonds in 2012 referred to as Hanslick's "Aesthetic Amputations," Rothfarb and Landerer also attribute Hanslick's removal of material in the second edition to Robert Zimmermann's review of *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen*, which "criticized traces of idealist philosophy" in Hanslick's treatise (xxii).[36] Whereas Herbart's conception of objective beauty leaves little room for the role of history, Hanslick's conception of musical beauty is historically, chronologically, and stylistically contingent (xxxviii). In contrast to Herbart, Hanslick's "aesthetic conception strongly emphasizes the element of change, of progress and historical development," in musical art works as the products of the "ever-changing mind" of the composer and listener alike (lxviii). Rothfarb and Landerer extend this philosophical legacy into the twentieth century, avoiding the more well-trodden path of outlining a Kant—Hanslick—Schoenberg trajectory,[37] (for reasons that should by now be obvious) and instead drawing a connection between Bolzano's Platonist conception of *An-Sich* and Karl Popper's theory of "objective knowledge." They argue for a commonality in the emphasis placed by Hanslick, Bolzano, and Popper on the cognitive dimension of music, noting Popper's confession in his autobiography that "my attitude towards music resembles the theories of Eduard Hanslick" (lxx).[38]


Vom

Musikalisch-Schönen.

Ein Beitrag

zur

Revision der Ästhetik der Tonkunst

von

Dr. Eduard Hanslick

Professor an der Wiener Universität.

Zehnte Auflage.

Leipzig

Johann Ambrosius Barth

1902.

Figure 4: Eduard Hanslick, *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen*, 10th edition, cover

Rothfarb and Landerer's new translation of *On the Musically Beautiful* presents Hanslick's text in an invigoratingly fresh way that will be compelling to those who read this treatise for the first time. It will illuminate the arguments afresh for those who are already familiar with Hanslick's book, either in German or in an alternative English version. This new translation is elegant and clear, all the more so for being steeped in historical and contextual research that takes full account of the textual changes to the various editions of *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* published during Hanslick's lifetime. If Hanslick has worn the label "formalist" for a long time, Rothfarb and Landerer prompt us to reopen the inquiry into what that means, and why he does so. Is it because, as has often been claimed, and as Michael Gallope recently frames it, "his text was intellectually foundational for the emergence of 'absolute music,'" a term that "has been frequently linked to conservatism, formalism, and high abstraction."[39] Or is it because, as Karol Berger observed in 2000, Hanslick "does not claim for music the power to disclose the 'absolute.' Instead, he sees the dignity of abstract music simply in its being a product of a creative mind."[40] The very issue that prompted Hanslick's musings in the winter of his life on what philosophically differentiates "beseelte Form" from "leere Form" not only continues to linger in such questions, and in this translation, but it gains a new urgency, even as it continues to be haunted by traces of the absolute. This is found not only in the deleted ending to Hanslick's first edition, included in

this volume as an appendix, but also in the tenth and last edition of Hanslick's treatise that Rothfarb and Landerer chose to translate, such as in this passage:

> The ideas that the composer represents are above all and foremost purely *musical* ones. A particular beautiful melody appears in his imagination. It should not be anything other than itself. However, just as every tangible phenomenon refers to its higher generic concept, to the idea that initially fulfills it, and so on, higher and higher, up to the absolute idea, so too with musical ideas. (17)[41]

The publication of this new translation is timely, appearing at a moment when formalist readings of music have gained renewed momentum and energy, primarily as a result of the new *Formenlehre*, the vast breadth of which has released formalist readings of music from the purported limitations of its hermetic claims, as understood by the anti-formalist New Musicology.[42] This thoughtful translation of Hanslick's *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* bodes well for an age that embraces formalist readings of music, allowing such formalism to interact freely with its supposed others, whether that is expression, hermeneutics, Marxism, or historicism, to name but a few.[43]

References

1. Eduard Hanslick, *The Beautiful in Music: A Contribution to the Revisal of Musical Aesthetics*, trans. Gustav Cohen (London: Novello, 1891); Eduard Hanslick, *On the Musically Beautiful: A Contribution Towards the Revision of the Aesthetics of Music,* trans. Geoffrey Payzant (Indiana: Hackett, 1986), hereafter *OMB*. ↑
2. "Ueber den subjektiven Eindruck in der Musik und seine Stellung in der Aesthetik," *Oesterreichische Blätter für Literatur und Kunst* 30 (July 25, 1853), 31 (August 1, 1853), and 33 (August 15, 1853), which would become chapter four ("Analyse des subjektiven Eindruckes der Musik") and five ("Das ästhetische Aufnehmen der Musik gegenüber dem pathologischen"). See Rothfarb and Landerer, xvi–xvii, notes 4 and 5. ↑
3. "Die Tonkunst in ihren Beziehungen zur Natur", and was also published in *Oesterreichische Blätter für Literatur und Kunst* (March 13, 1854). ↑
4. William Pole, *The Philosophy of Music Being the Substance of a Course of Lectures Delivered at the Royal Institution of Great Britain, in February and March 1877* (London: Trübner, 1879). ↑
5. Eustace J. Breakspeare, "Musical Aesthetics," *Proceedings of the Musical Association* 6 (1879–80): 59–77. ↑
6. Geoffrey Payzant, translator's preface to *OMB*, xiii. ↑
7. The eminently useful glossary explains many of these terms, but it does so in English (with German translation). Also helpful is the discussion on pages xliii–xliv. The rich nuance with which Hanslick employs these words is not captured by the translations above in parentheses which I offer merely as a guide to the non-German speaking reader. ↑
8. Eduard Hanslick, *Aus meinem Leben*, ed. Peter Wapnewski (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1987), 150. ↑
9. "Ich hatte natürlich die Absicht, meine Abhandlung 'vom Musikalisch-Schönen' mit der Zeit zu einer eigentlichen Ästhetik der Tonkunst zu erweitern und auszuführen. Daß jene Schrift nur eine Art Skizze oder Unterbau bedeute, war mir ebenso klar, als daß ihr negativer polemischer Teil den positiven, systematischen an Umfang und Schärfe überrage. Aber eine vollständige, systematische Ästhetik der Musik – das ist ein Unternehmen, welches ungeteilte Arbeitskraft und unzersplitterte Konzentration des

Denkens erfordert." Hanslick, *Aus meinem Leben*, 153. ↑

10. "Das Wesen der Musik ist aber noch schwerer in philosophische Kategorien zu bannen als das der Malerei, weil die entscheidenden Begriffe 'Form' und 'Inhalt' in der Musik nicht standhalten wollen, der Trennung sich widersetzen. Will man der reinen Instrumentalmusik einen bestimmten Inhalt vindizieren, (– in der Vokalmusik liefert ihn das Gedicht und nicht die Musik –) so müßte man die kostbarsten Perlen der Tonkunst über Bord werfen, denen niemand einen von der Form trennbaren 'Inhalt' nachzuweisen oder auch nur herauszufühlen vermag. Andrerseits ist es, wie ich wohl einsehe, ein mißverständlich Ding, schlechtweg von der 'Inhaltlosigkeit' der Instrumentalmusik zu sprechen, was auch meiner Schrift die meisten Gegner erweckt hat. Wie ist in der Musik beseelte Form von leerer Form wissenschaftlich zu unterschieden?" Hanslick, *Aus meinem Leben*, 154–55. ↑

11. Geoffrey Payzant, "Hanslick's 'Immanent' Formalism," in *Hanslick on the Musically Beautiful: Sixteen Lectures on the Musical Aesthetics of Eduard Hanslick* (Christchurch: Cybereditions, 2001), 15. ↑

12. Payzant, "Hanslick's Formalism," 83. ↑

13. "Die Musik nicht Gefühle erwecken oder zum Gegenstand haben muß." *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen: Ein Beitrag zur Revision der Ästhetik in* [sic] *der Tonkunst; Historisch-kritische Ausgabe*, ed. Dietmar Strauß (Mainz: Schott, 1990), 51, hereafter *VMS*. This translation is from Rothfarb and Landerer, 23. Emphasis in the original. ↑

14. "[Die Bewegung] bildet das Element, welches die Tonkunst mit den Gefühlszuständen gemeinschaftlich hat, und das sie schöpferisch in tausend Abstufungen und Gegensätzen zu gestalten vermag." *VMS* 47. The corresponding passage is found in Rothfarb and Landerer at 19. ↑

15. "So kann man in der That einen Gegenstand musikalisch malen, – das 'Gefühl' aber in Tönen schildern zu wollen, das der fallende Schnee, der krähende Hahn, der zuckende Blitz in uns hervorbringt, ist einfach lächerlich." *VMS* 61. ↑

16. The first can be rendered in English as "tonally moving forms are the one and only content and subject matter of music," or as "sonically moved forms are solely and exclusively the content and subject of music," according to Rothfarb's and Landerer's translation (41, note 3). Payzant translates the second as "the content of music is tonally moving forms." *OMB* 29. ↑

17. Cohen, *The Beautiful in Music*, 67. ↑

18. Mark Evan Bonds, "Aesthetic Amputations: Absolute Music and the Deleted Endings of Hanslick's *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen*," *19th-Century Music* 36, no. 1 (2012): 3. ↑

19. Gustav Hartenstein, ed., *Johann Friedrich Herbart's Sämmtliche Werke*, vol. 2, *Kurze Encyklopädie der Philosophie aus praktischen Gesichtspunkten entworfen* (Leipzig: Leopold Voss, 1850), 111, here translated by Rothfarb (lxvi). ↑

20. The phrase was coined by Rose Rosengard Subotnik in relation to Schoenberg to suggest that he is less concerned with the sound of a piece than with its formal coherence, focusing on the formal relationships developed over the course of a single composition. See Rose Rosengard Subotnik, *Deconstructing Variations: Music and Reason in Western Society* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996). The notion of structural listening has come in for much criticism. See, for instance, Andrew Dell'Antonio, ed., *Beyond Structural Listening? Postmodern Modes of Hearing* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004). ↑

21. "Keineswegs ist das 'Specifisch-Musikalische' als blos akustische Schönheit, oder proportionale Symmetrie zu verstehen … Dadurch, daß wir auf musikalische Schönheit dringen, haben wir den geistigen Gehalt nicht ausgeschlossen, sondern ihn vielmehr bedingt." *VMS* 77–78. ↑

22. "Als Schöpfung eines denkenden und fühlenden Geistes hat demnach eine musikalische Composition in hohem Grade die Fähigkeit, selbst geist- und gefühlvoll zu sein." *VMS* 80. ↑

23. "Nichts irriger und häufiger, als die Anschauung, welche 'schöne Musik' mit und ohne geistigen Gehalt

unterscheidet. Sie faßt den Begriff des Schönen in der Musik viel zu eng und stellt sich die kunstreich zusammengefügte Form als etwas für sich selbst Bestehendes, die hineingegossene Seele gleichfalls als etwas Selbständiges vor und theilt nun consequent die Compositionen in gefüllte und leere Champagnerflaschen. Der musikalische Champagner hat aber das Eigenthümliche: er wächst *mit* der Flasche." *VMS* 81. ↑

24. "Bei der Frage nach dem Inhalt der Tonkunst muß man sich insbesondere hüten, das Wort in lobender Bedeutung zu nehmen. Daraus, daß die Musik keinen Inhalt (Gegenstand) hat, folgt nicht, daß sie des Gehaltes entbehre. 'Geistigen Gehalt' meinen offenbar diejenigen, welche mit dem Eifer einer Partei für den 'Inhalt' der Musik fechten." *VMS* 169. ↑

25. "Gegenüber dem *Vorwurf* der Inhaltlosigkeit also hat die Musik Inhalt, allein musikalischen, welcher ein nicht geringerer Funke des göttlichen Feuers ist, als das Schöne jeder andern Kunst. Nur dadurch aber, daß man jeden andern 'Inhalt' der Tonkunst unerbittlich negirt, rettet man deren 'Gehalt.' Denn aus dem unbestimmten Gefühle, worauf sich jener Inhalt im besten Fall zurückführt, ist ihr eine geistige Bedeutung nicht abzuleiten, wohl aber aus der bestimmten schönen Tongestaltung als der freien Schöpfung des Geistes aus geistfähigem Material." *VMS* 171. ↑

26. For a general exploration of the Hanslick-Kant relationship, see also Alexander Wilfing, "Hanslick, Kant, and the Origins of *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen*," *Musicologica Austriaca* (18 June 2018). ↑

27. On Hegel's influence on Hanslick see Hiroshi Yoshida, "Eduard Hanslick and the Idea of 'Public' in Musical Culture: Towards a Socio-Political Context of Formalistic Aesthetics," *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 32, no. 2 (2001): 179–88. ↑

28. Yoshida, "Hanslick and the Idea of 'Public'," 183. See for instance Hanslick's essay "Censur und Kunst-Kritik," *Wiener Zeitung*, March 24, 1848, repr. in Eduard Hanslick, *Sämtliche Schriften: Historisch-kritische Ausgabe*, vol. I/1, *Aufsätze und Rezensionen 1844–1848*, ed. Dietmar Strauß (Vienna: Böhlau, 1993), 156–57. ↑

29. See also Geoffrey Payzant, "Eduard Hanslick and the 'geistreich' Dr. Alfred Julius Becher," *The Music Review* 44 (1983): 104–105. ↑

30. Hanslick, *Aus meinem Leben,* 86. ↑

31. Sanna Pederson, "Romantic Music Under Siege in 1848," in *Music Theory in the Age of Romanticism*, ed. Ian Bent (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 71–72. See also Mark Burford, "Hanslick's Idealist Materialism," *19th-Century Music* 30, no. 2 (2006): 171. ↑

32. Pederson, "Romantic Music Under Siege," 71–72. ↑

33. Burford, "Hanslick's Idealist Materialism," 171. In contrast to Rothfarb and Landerer, Burford claims that Hanslick's treatise "took Hegel's aesthetic system as his point of departure and clung to the metaphysical premise of the 'Idea' or 'Spirit' in music, though in a newly interpreted sense." ↑

34. "Die Werke der großen Tondichter sind mehr als Musik, sie sind Spiegelbilder der *philosophischen*, *religiösen* und *politischen* Weltanschauung ihrer Zeit." Hanslick, "Censur und Kunst-Kritik," 1. ↑

35. Kevin C. Karnes has also made this distinction in *Music, Criticism, and the Challenge of History: Shaping Modern Musical Thought in Late Nineteenth Century Vienna*, AMS Studies in Music (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). ↑

36. Robert Zimmermann, "Zur Aesthetik der Tonkunst: Vom Musikalisch-Schönen; Ein Beitrag zur Revision der Aesthetik der Tonkunst. Von Dr. Eduard Hanslick", *Österreichische Blätter für Litteratur und Kunst* 47 (1854): 313–15. ↑

37. Such a trajectory is found, for instance, in Patricia Carpenter, "Musical Form and Musical Idea: Reflections on a Theme of Schoenberg, Hanslick, and Kant," in *Music and Civilization: Essays in Honor of Paul Henry Lang*, ed. Edmond Strainchamps, Maria Rika Maniates, and Christopher Hatch (New York:

Norton, 1984), 394–427. ↑

38. Karl Popper, *Unended Quest: An Intellectual Autobiography* (London: Routledge, 1994), 249. ↑
39. Michael Gallope, *Deep Refrains: Music, Philosophy, and the Ineffable* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 27 and 31. ↑
40. Karol Berger, *A Theory of Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 143. ↑
41. "Die Ideen, welche der Componist darstellt, sind vor Allem und zuerst rein *musikalische*. Seiner Phantasie erscheint eine bestimmte schöne Melodie. Sie soll nichts Anderes sein, als sie selbst. Wie aber jeder concrete Erscheinung auf ihren höheren Gattungsbegriff, auf die sie zunächst erfüllende Idee hinaufweist, und so fort immer höher und höher bis zur absoluten Idee, so geschieht es auch mit den musikalischen Ideen." *VMS* 45–46. ↑
42. For an overview of how the New Musicology relates to Hanslick studies, see my "Introduction" to *Rethinking Hanslick*, 4–5. On the new *Formenlehre*, see, for instance, Janet Schmalfeldt, *In the Process of Becoming: Analytical and Philosophical Perspectives on Form in Early Nineteenth-Century Music*, Oxford Studies in Music Theory (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); William E. Caplin, James Hepokoski, and James Webster, *Musical Form, Forms, & Formenlehre: Three Methodological Reflections*, ed. Pieter Bergé (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2009); Stephen Rodgers, *Form, Program, and Metaphor in the Music of Berlioz* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); and Julian Horton, "Criteria for a Theory of Nineteenth-Century Sonata Form," *Music Theory and Analysis* 4, no. 2 (2017): 147–91. ↑
43. On the vexed history of musical formalism, see Patrick McCreless, "Formalism, Fair and Foul," *Nonsite* 8 (2013), accessed 9 August 2019. ↑