

## Questioning the formalist facet of Kant's approach to music - an application to Mussorgsky, a comparison with Hanslick and a response to Samantha Matherne

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**Abstract.** In this article I explore the formalist facet of Kant's theory of music and how this facet can be reconciled with sensory gratification and emotional expression. I argue that 1) Kant does not give us an adequate notion of musical form, 2) the status that Kant gives to sensations in music is not plausible, and 3) the presence of an emotionally expressive component introduces inconsistencies within Kant's text. Remarks about the status that Kant assigns to sensations in music are illustrated by analyzing a work by Mussorgsky later orchestrated by Ravel. Kant's formalist facet is problematized through a comparison with Eduard Hanslick's musical formalism. I conclude by examining Samantha Matherne's (2014) proposal to reconcile the aforementioned dimensions. I argue that Matherne's "expressive formalism" does not resolve all the inconsistencies and implausibilities it tries to resolve.

**Keywords:** Kant; Music; formalism; Hanslick; expression

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### I. Introduction

It has been a persistent endeavor of commentators on Kant's *Critique of the Power Judgment* to try to reconcile the various dimensions and characteristics that Kant attributes to the judgment of taste (i.e. of beauty) in a coherent and plausible way. Particularly, when we focus on Kant's approach to music, several tensions emerge as authentic interpretative challenges. Samantha Matherne highlights two of them:

First, there appears to be a conflict between his formalistic and expressive commitments. Second (and even worse), Kant defends seemingly contradictory claims about music being beautiful and merely agreeable, that is, not beautiful (Matherne, 2014, p. 129).

To further this interpretative effort and conciliate these tensions, in this article I try to deepen the formalist facet of Kant's theory about music and how this facet can be compatible with sensory gratification and emotional expression. I will argue throughout the text that 1) Kant does not give us an adequate notion of musical form, that 2) the status that Kant gives to sensations in music is not plausible and that 3) the presence of an emotionally expressive component introduces seemingly insoluble inconsistencies within the text.

To substantiate these ideas, I resorted to two argumentative auxiliaries. Remarks about the status that Kant assigns to sensations in music are illustrated by analyzing a work by Mussorgsky later orchestrated by Ravel. Kant's formalist facet is problematized through a comparison with Eduard Hanslick's musical formalism.

In the final part of the article, I examine Matherne's attempt to resolve the aforementioned tensions. Matherne argues that, through a perspective that she called "expressive formalism", it is possible to harmonize all the dimensions at stake in the Kantian judgment of musical taste. I argue that Matherne's "expressive formalism" does not resolve all the inconsistencies and implausibilities it attempts to resolve.

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## II. The formal dimension of Kant's theory of music

### The judgment of taste between subjectivity and universality

Kant tells us that the judgment of beauty has a subjective character, insofar as it is based on a feeling of pleasure and not on any subsumption of the object to a concept that would allow us to grasp some objective characteristic that this object possessed (this would constitute a logical or empirical judgment). However, Kant also believes that a judgment of taste, when properly produced and experienced, inherently carries with it the claim of universal assent to the pleasure on which it is based. Thus, one of the main questions that Kant poses will be to know how judgments of beauty, based on a subjective feeling of pleasure, can claim universal shareability. How can this be at the same time subjective (like the judgment about the agreeable) and aspire to universality (like the empirical judgement)?

The strategy for solving this problem is to ask whether a judgment of beauty is based on a mental condition shared by all of us, a condition that could give the judgment such universality. Kant tells us that this condition corresponds to the mechanism involved in the production of empirical judgments. The cognitive faculties responsible for our ability to operate and attribute concepts that, in turn, allow us to obtain knowledge about the world, are the faculties that should *also be* mobilized in the judgment of taste. These faculties are the understanding and the imagination.

However, unlike empirical judgments, judgments of taste do not aim at obtaining knowledge. Such faculties must operate in a different way. According to Kant, the judgment of taste results from a peculiar interaction between these two mental faculties: they engage in an "harmonious free play". While in the empirical or logical judgment the imagination is organized according to the restrictions imposed by the understanding, in the judgment of beauty, the imagination is *free* and at least as sovereign as the understanding. Following the interpretation of Hannah Ginsborg (2022), during free play, the imagination works in a generically governed way at a conceptual level, but without allowing itself to be governed by, or subject to, a particular concept or rule.

Kant believes that this peculiar way of functioning of the faculties gives pleasure to the one whose cognitive faculties are in such activity. This pleasure – because it is based on cognitive faculties common to every human being – will be a pleasure felt universally or in a potentially universal manner. This is so if, it should be emphasized, this pleasure results *only* from the free play of these two cognitive faculties and not from any other bodily or sensorial stimulus, or from the satisfaction of a desire of any kind.

### Form and disinterest

Now, how can we guarantee that only these faculties come into play in this judgment? What kind of perception is at stake here and on which aspects of the object should we orient this perception? In fact, we can derive several types of pleasure when perceiving a given object, depending on how it affects us or how we let ourselves be affected by it. Among the many types of pleasure that we are able to feel, it is important to highlight the one that is based *solely* on this free play of faculties.

What kind of perception can activate this play? The key to the answer lies in two central notions in Kant's theory: *disinterest* and *form*.

Let us consider the first notion. For Kant, the purpose of the judgment of taste is not knowledge, moral correction, or the excitement of a merely individual pleasant sensation. This judgment is conceived as *disinterested* to the point of being independent of the very existence of the object, or rather, of the desire that the contemplated object does even exist. For Kant, a mirage, a dream or a hallucination of the appreciated object would be equally suitable for the production of the judgment of taste, since this judgment is based on the pleasure resulting from the pure reflective contemplation of the perceptive form of the object - without any cognitive, moral, affective or utilitarian interests.

Kant tells us that when we reduce our perception of the object to the pure form of its perceptual appearance, or, more exactly as we shall see below, for a specific aspect of this appearance (the structure of spatial and temporal relations discernible in it) – what we can simply designate as "form" – then such perception is no longer associated with anything personal or idiosyncratic. No difference in our biography, in our physical constitution or personal experience will be relevant in the moment of contemplation of beauty when the perception of the object is directed only to its form.

When we reach such a state of, say, *de-personalization*, it is then reasonable to expect that anyone else who is in that state will be able to feel the same as we do, because, as in us, nothing personal or idiosyncratic interferes with their perception and appreciation. If we are capable of feeling pleasure, then that pleasure will be felt by everyone who contemplates the object under those same conditions.

As mentioned, in the pure judgment of taste, we must maintain a complete indifference to the very *existence* of the object.

One only wants to know whether the mere representation of the object is accompanied with satisfaction in me, however indifferent I might be with regard to the existence of the object of this representation (KU, §2, AA 05: 205).<sup>2</sup>

If an object gives me pleasure because of some utility that I recognize in it, then obviously I will be interested in the fact that the object, first of all, actually *exists*. Conversely, if the pleasure I derive from the object results solely from perceiving the form of its perceptual presentation (its pure appearance), then it makes no difference whether I find this perception to be a hallucination or a dream or a mirage.

If what matters is the perceptive form of the object's appearance, does it mean that the merely sensorial aspects – the color, the taste, the timbre – are part of this form? Kant tells us that it is not so. These sensorial aspects function as elements that can “attract” us (hence Kant designates them as “charm”), or as perceptive ways of accessing the form without actually being part of it.

We must keep in mind that form is the dimension of the object that will be able to engage the free play of the *cognitive faculties* – hence the formal aspects of the object must be those that are cognitively discernible. Let us analyze this point, starting by relating sensations to the notion of disinterest.

### Disinterest and sensation

According to the reading of Douglas Burnham (2000, p. 52), sensations appear in Kant as basic criteria for the effective presence of a given object. This interpretation stems from the idea that we tend to resort to sensations to confirm the existence of things around us – we try to touch them, smell them, see them to ensure that they are real. Sensations serve as an interface between my inner self and the outer world. Hence, the pleasure associated with sensations would always be somehow associated with the desire, even if tacit, for the real existence of the object that is located outside my experience. I will proceed to critique this line of reasoning below. However, should we choose to accept it, the logical consequence would be that the quality of the object that escapes this call for contact with external reality will be just the *spatio-temporal structure* of its perceptive appearance - its “drawing”, its “contour line”. Such a drawing constitutes, finally, the *form* itself. Therefore, all sensory content that could embellish or fill the form must be discarded in the judgment of taste. It is the delicacy of the tulip's outline, not its color, that is to be appreciated. In music, it should be the melodic line, or the structural arrangement of the sequencing of tones, and not the timbre of each one of them, that will contribute to the beauty of the musical work.

Now, one might ask whether Kant's argument, based on his particular notion of disinterest, is convincing. In other words: is the pleasure that comes from a sensation or set of sensations always interested?

We have seen that Kant, as interpreted by Douglas Burnham, defends that sensations are linked to a desire that the sensed object really exists. However, from the fact that sensations usually serve as a criterion for confirming the existence of objects, it does not follow that when we derive pleasure from sensations, we desire the object to exist<sup>3</sup>. Let us imagine that someone arrives at a friend's house and smells the delicate aroma of incense that lightly fills the living room. In this case, there does not seem to be any desire for any object to actually exist. What kind of relationship is there between the smell of incense and the outside world? The aroma of incense does not seem to be appreciated in relation to the object from which that aroma emanates, nor in relation to the odorous substances capable of provoking the olfactory perception. It seems to be a self-contained pleasure in experience, perfectly indifferent to the existence of these objects.

Something similar can be said about the sensations provoked by music inherent in the timbre of sounds. Why does the pleasantness of a prolonged cello note, or the sensation provoked by an augmented seventh chord played on a guitar evoke any appeal to the existence of the object that produces it, in this case the cello or the guitar? The experience of “acousmatic listening” that Roger Scruton proposes (1997), in which we hear musical sounds disassociating them from their causal sources, does not seem to be reduced to the rhythmic-tonal structure of music, but can perfectly include the sensations associated with the timbre or the combination of sounds that can be experienced during auditory appreciation.

The argument that justifies the interested character of the timbre of musical sounds by its supposed connection with the external objects that cause them is not convincing.

Having said that, we can understand the exclusion of sensations from the judgment of taste by resorting more directly to the pretense of universal validity of this judgment. Kant states:

[...] the quality of the sensations themselves cannot be assumed to be in accord in all subjects, and it cannot easily be assumed that the agreeableness of one color in preference to another or of the tone of one musical instrument preference to another will be judged in the same way by everyone (KU, §14, AA 05: 224).

<sup>2</sup> Quotations from the Critique of the Power of Judgment follow the translation by Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (2000 [1790]).

<sup>3</sup> I am grateful to an anonymous referee for helping to clarify this point.

Unlike our cognitive ability to operate with concepts which allows us to produce empirical judgments that aspire to universal agreement – we have no reason to attribute universality to judgments based merely on sensations. Sensations are modes of personal reaction, and there is no justification for expecting that my sense of smell, color, or timbre will be the same as someone else’s sense of smell, color, or timbre. I have no reason to expect that the red I see when I look at a rose corresponds to the visual sensation of someone looking at that rose. This, according to Kant, is because I cannot *cognitively* apprehend or represent color – as I can cognitively apprehend the spatial structure of the design of a rose.

Kant believed that it is this spatial structure of the form of representation of a given object that in fact should be able to be discerned and cognitively apprehended through the faculties of imagination and understanding by everyone who appreciates that object.

### The Kantian musical form

We can now see how the same argument can be applied to music in Kant’s theory. The form of music should consist solely of what can be cognitively discerned and apprehended, constituting itself as an object of contemplative reflection. The timbre of a single note is not a good candidate because it is perceived like color: through its immediate sensory effect. The characteristic of music that will be able to integrate the free play between imagination and understanding is its structural arrangement: cognitively apprehensible tonal and rhythmic variations.

The tonal and temporal structure of the melody can be thought of as the equivalent of the “drawing” of the figures on the visual plane. That is, what matters for the musical form are not the tones considered in isolation, nor the timbre quality of each one of the notes – all that matters is the sequence of rhythmic-tonal relations that occur throughout the sound movement. Hence, in principle, a melody could be represented in a completely abstract and mathematical formula, replacing each note and each rhythmic element by a number that would indicate its position relative to a base note or a reference beat – without any indication of the instruments, tonality or pulsation.

In this way, the form of the music must exclusively refer to a kind of Platonic entity that corresponds to this abstract structure of rhythmic-tonal relations. Certainly, this abstract structure, to be appreciated, must be instantiated through the choice of a specific instrumentation, a specific tonality and a specific pulsation. But this instantiation, according to this logic, serves only as a means of accessing the structure that will lead us to the contemplation of beauty – not being part of it.

Let’s imagine the following example. If a math teacher draws a circle on a blackboard with orange chalk, students should imagine the circle through what the teacher drew. Given that the circumference (properly said as a geometric figure) does not have any thickness or color, students should be able to discard, in this process of interpreting the drawing, the thickness and color (in this case orange) of the stroke of chalk. The circumference corresponds to a perfectly abstract line, with *zero thickness and no color*, which can only be apprehended intellectually, abstracting the geometric figure from the chalk drawing. One cannot *observe* – in the literal sense of perceiving visually – a line without thickness.

Now, when applied to the judgment of taste, this idea may seem rather strange. Kant begins by saying that all that matters for beauty is the *sensitive appearance* of the object – what we can perceive of it with our senses: the visual appearance of the flower, the sounds of music. However, strictly speaking, what the object has of beauty cannot be seen or heard. Although the judgment of taste is directed towards the object’s appearance, only one facet of that appearance will be relevant to the appreciation of beauty. The beauty is exclusively in the *spatial outline* of the flower’s appearance and in *the temporal and tonal structure of relationships* of the sounds of the music. These qualities are not sensory or perceptual qualities of objects – again, they are cognitively discernible abstract qualities through understanding and imagination.

It should be added that the form of a musical work does not consist of the totality of rhythmic-tonal relationships potentially exhibited by that piece. Such a totality is virtually infinite because we will always be able to find relationships of all kinds throughout the work (from the closest to the most distant) between tones and rhythmic elements. The musical form should constitute itself as a specific *subclass* of this totality – the rhythmic-tonal configuration that will be at the service of what is really relevant to the work’s beauty. We will see below that, according to Samantha Matherne, the regulative principle of musical form will be the expression of a dominant affect associated with an aesthetic idea.

For this very reason, the musical form does not *by itself constitute* a sufficient element of proper appreciation in the musical experience. The theory of “aesthetic ideas” introduces a component to appreciation – the expression of affections – which should be combined with the formal component. It will be, in fact, this expressive component that prevents the inclusion of Kant’s theory of taste in the set of formalist theories so properly designated.

In any case, and regardless of the extra-formal expressive element of the aesthetic ideas that will be analyzed in a later section, the primacy given by Kant to the spatial-temporal configuration will make our philosopher, in a very controversial way, argue that the color of a painting or the timbre of a piece of music are secondary or

even irrelevant to the beauty of that painting or the beauty of that piece of music. Let us look at some passages from the third Critique that demonstrate this claim.

### **The irrelevance of sound sensations and timbre - some quotes**

Kant tells us how we perceive color in a painting or the sound of a single note in a piece of music:

If one considers the rapidity of the vibrations of the light, or, in the second case, of the air, which probably far exceeds all our capacity for judging immediately in perception the proportion of the division of time, then one would have to believe that it is only the effect of these vibrations on the elastic parts of our body that is sensed, but that the division of time by means of them is not noticed and drawn into the judging, hence that in the case of colors and tones there is associated only agreeableness, not beauty of their composition (KU, §51, AA 05: 325).

Thus, when we perceive the color of a painting or the sound of a note in a piece of music, we only feel its immediate sensory effect. In the case of the musical note, the speed of oscillations of sound waves in air are so fast that they are not cognitively discernible. Therefore, although they can be agreeable, they cannot be beautiful. In an earlier part, Kant had already stated:

The charm of colors or of the agreeable tones of instruments can be added, but drawing in the former and composition in the latter constitute the proper object of the pure judgment of taste; and that the purity of colors as well as of tones as well as their multiplicity and their contrast seem to contribute to beauty does not mean that they as it were supply a supplement of the same rank to the satisfaction in the form because they are agreeable by themselves, but rather they do so because they merely make the latter more precisely, more determinately, and more completely intuitable, and also enliven the representation through their charm, thereby awakening and sustaining attention to the object itself (KU, §14, AA 05: 226).

This is one of the passages where the formalist side of Kant's theory of taste becomes most evident. For Kant, the role that color and timbre can play, respectively, in a painting or in a piece of music will be to highlight the beautiful form – and not to add beauty. That is, a drawing will not gain beauty with a certain color and a musical work will not gain beauty with the choice of another instrumentation. At best, the beauty that already exists will become more noticeable, will stand out with another glow. The judgment of taste, however, must remain solely and exclusively restricted and faithful to the form thus evidenced by the color or timbre, without allowing itself to be contaminated – without allowing itself to be seduced, one might say – by the “charm” of that color or timbre.

### **Kant versus Hanslick**

Peter Kivy says to have no doubt that Kant “was the major source of formalism in philosophy of art (Kivy, 2009, p. 30)”. However, he also asserts that it is false that Kant himself was a “pure” formalist. In fact, although some commentators consider Kant to be one of the founding fathers of musical formalism (e.g. Dahlhaus, 1967; Eaton, 2004; Schueller, 1955), the idea that Kant is not a musical formalist in a proper and robust sense, despite some (really or apparently) formalist aspects of his theory, has recently been defended by authors such as Young (2020) or Mulherin (2016).

In any case, directly or indirectly, the formalist aspects of Kant's theory of taste – such as his treatment of the category of disinterest and the centrality of the notion of form in the characterization of the beautiful object – certainly had an influence on the development of musical formalism. Eduard Hanslick (1825 – 1904) appears in this scenario as the pioneer and central figure of this current.

Hanslick, in his seminal treatise *On the Musically Beautiful* (1854), proposes a negative and a positive thesis about music. The negative thesis consists in the rejection that musical beauty is determined by its power to express or arouse emotions or to represent extramusical realities. The positive one consists in the assertion that musical beauty depends, exclusively, on the way in which the sound material is formally organized. Thus, Hanslick argues in favor of the aesthetic autonomy of music, attributing a central role to form.

The negative theses of the various formalisms, and notably the Hanslickian musical formalism, descend from the various developments around the concept of disinterest already analyzed earlier. Indeed, this concept was introduced by the third Earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713). If Shaftesbury introduced this notion in his investigations into aesthetics, this notion would come to be decisive for the development of the concept of taste by thinkers such as Hutcheson, Burke, Alison or Kant (cf. Dickie, 1997, p. 13). As we saw, the idea of disinterest is central to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*.

It is interesting to note that, if we only take into account the first section of the Third Critique, the “Analytic of the Beautiful”, we see, under the sign of disinterest, a clear disconnection of this judgment from all sensory and emotional gratification:

A judgment of taste on which charm and emotion have no influence (even though these may be combined with the satisfaction in the beautiful), which thus has for its determining ground merely the purposiveness of the form, is a pure judgment of taste (KU, §13, AA 05: 223).

If for the moment we suspend what Kant in a later part said in relation to the fine arts and music, and if, by hypothesis, we apply the previous citation directly to music, this disinterested appreciative prescription, which requires exclusive attention to form, comes close to Hanslick’s distinction between “pathological” and “aesthetic” appreciation:

But the more powerfully an effect from a work of art overwhelms us physically (and hence is pathological), the more negligible is its aesthetical component (Hanslick, 1986 [1854], p. 57).

And further on, Hanslick adds:

According to our view, all such pathological ways of being affected by a piece of music are opposed to the deliberate pure contemplation of it. This contemplative hearing is the only artistic, true form (idem, 63).

As can be seen, if we focus on the *Analytic of the Beautiful*, the similarities in terms of aesthetic prescriptions between Kant and Hanslick are notorious. Even more curious, in this part Kant appears as an even more radical formalist than Hanslick since we do not find in Hanslick such a definitive rejection of the sensorial component of music. Incidentally, Hanslick tells us that one of the basic elements of musical composition is precisely the *pleasant sound* (Hanslick, 1986 [1854], p. 28). Furthermore, Hanslick does not engage in any rejection of timbre as a legitimate formal characteristic of music. In the characterization of musical beauty, timbre - which is defined as the distinctive sensory of notes - is considered relevant, albeit secondary in comparison to rhythm, melody, and harmony (idem).

We may include the following excerpt that bears striking resemblance to §16 of Kant’s Third Critique, where, as we saw, Kant situates music as a free beauty. Similarly, Hanslick draws a parallel between music and ornamental and natural beauties.

The beauty of a self-subsistent, simple theme makes itself known in aesthetical awareness with an immediacy which permits no other explanation than the inner appropriateness of the phenomenon, the harmony of its parts, without reference to any external third factor. It pleases us in itself, like the arabesque, the ornamental column, or like products of natural beauty such as leaves and flowers (idem, 32).

We must insist that this comparison would result if we stop at the first section of Kant, which seems to be devoted to the most general characteristics of beauty. However, things change in the part that Kant dedicates to the arts. In that part (§§43–54), Kant departs from Hanslick’s formalism in light of his acceptance of the ‘doctrine of the affects’.

The expressive power that Kant recognizes in music plays an important role in musical appreciation, even though, as we will see, this expression lacks the cognitive richness that, according to the philosopher, gives art its special value. As we have observed, Hanslick argues that musical beauty is not dependent on the expression of emotions. He does acknowledge that music can portray the general dynamic quality of emotions, but this view does not align him with the doctrine of affects. According to Hanslick, the dynamic aspect alone is insufficient to fully represent an emotion, as it only captures its superficial phenomenology without its cognitive content, which is necessary for specifying it (idem, 20). Additionally, Hanslick does not claim that such a minimal representation of emotional dynamics contributes to musical beauty. In contrast, Kant maintains that the expression of emotions plays a pivotal role in activating the aesthetic ideas of musical works, as we will explore further.

### **An example: Pictures at an Exhibition, by Mussorgsky, and the orchestration by Ravel**

I now propose that we consider a famous example from the history of Western music that illustrates the dilemma in which Kant’s thesis could place us. Modest Mussorgsky’s *Pictures at an Exhibition*, originally written for piano in 1874, was rewritten by Maurice Ravel in 1922. What did Ravel do? He transformed Mussorgsky’s solo piano piece into a monumental orchestral work. The work reorchestrated in this way gained a timbral richness completely different from the original piece, becoming since then one of the canonical works of the symphonic repertoire, perhaps played as much or more than the piece that gave rise to it.

Now, since the formal structure of the original work remained practically unchanged in this reorchestration, according to Kant, the judgment of taste made about Mussorgsky's solo piano piece should be identical to the judgment of taste made about Ravel's orchestral work. That is, all the orchestral magnificence in Ravel's work means nothing in terms of an increase in beauty itself. All that Ravel finally achieved was, if we follow Kant, to make Mussorgsky's beauty more appealing and salient. If anything, Ravel made Mussorgsky's play more "agreeable".

Would it be possible that Kant's perspective withstands these types of cases? I think our intuitions falter. It is undeniable that the essential musical content of Ravel's orchestral work is found in the piano piece. However, it does not seem plausible that Ravel's orchestral effect has no bearing on how we assess the beauty of his reorchestration. It's not just about highlighting the base melody, making it more clear or evident. In music, the act of accentuation itself has musical significance. The sound clash of the brass, the softness of the woodwinds, the envelopment of the harps, the martiality of the percussion, the very weight of the orchestral mass, all these compositional options give Ravel's work a different character, which certainly demands a substantially different appreciation. With this I do not want to suggest any kind of superiority of Ravel's reinvention in relation to the original piece, but I think it is reasonable to recognize that Ravel managed to offer us a work that, to a certain extent, contains *another* beauty.

### III. The expressive dimension and its articulation with the formal dimension

#### The aesthetic ideas

As we have observed, while there may be some similarities between Kant's views on music and those of formalist accounts, such as Hanslick's, it is crucial to emphasize, as argued by authors such as James O. Young (2022), that Kant's approach to art cannot be properly classified as formalist. Indeed, Kant believed that one of the characteristics of the "fine arts" is that they exhibit what he called "aesthetic ideas". If music has something beautiful by virtue of its form (as well as its markedly pleasant character resulting from the play of sensations that it is able to provide through the "charm" of the immediate sound effect), we will now have to find out if it corresponds to this criterion for genuinely being considered "fine art". What is an "aesthetic idea"? Kant explains the concept as follows:

One says of certain products, of which it is expected that they ought, at least in part, to reveal themselves as beautiful art, that they are without spirit, even though one finds nothing in them to criticize as far as taste is concerned. [...] What is it then that is meant here by "spirit"? [...] Now I maintain that this principle [the spirit] is nothing other than the faculty for the presentation of aesthetic ideas; by an aesthetic idea [...] I mean that representation of the imagination that occasions much thinking though without it being possible for any determinate thought, ie, concept, to be adequate to it, which, consequently, no language fully attains or can make intelligible (KU, §49, AA 05: 314).

When Kant tells us that there are examples of art that "one finds nothing in them to criticize as far as taste is concerned" but which are devoid of "spirit", is introducing a difference between what we can designate as (simply) beautiful and what, in addition to being beautiful, has a genuinely artistic character, in a higher sense. Presumably, there may be a minimum level of beauty that will be given by attention to form itself. But if that object also has "spirit" then it must convey a special type of *content*: the "aesthetic ideas" that vivify the mind "that occasions much thinking though without it being possible for any determinate thought, ie, concept, to be adequate to it."

Peter Kivy (2009, p. 55), providing an explanation of Kant's perspective, suggests a distinction between "manifest content" and "ideational content". Manifest content is content that can be paraphrased - the kind of content that works of art may contain, but which can be equally translated into other forms of expression without any relevant information being lost in translation. It will be the least interesting type of content because, at least on this dimension, it doesn't make artworks especially valuable. However, as Kivy points out, we have the intuition that works of art display another type of content, an "ideational content" that is ineffable, untranslatable. The content that a work of art conveys is incapable of expression through another work or any other form of non-artistic expression. If we want to say what the work of art says, we will have no choice but to resort to that same work to say it. This ineffable ideational content will, according to Kivy, correspond to Kantian aesthetic ideas.

The "manifest content", susceptible of paraphrasing, will be, let us say, the basis of the "ideational content", that is, of aesthetic ideas - these ideas can be thought of in terms of an imaginative and intellectual activity capable of putting into motion a profusion of ideas, higher order thoughts and sensations. What manifest content does music have on which aesthetic ideas are built?

Its charm [of music], which can be communicated so universally, seems to rest on this: that every expression of language has, in context, a tone that is appropriate to its sense; that this tone more or less designates an affect of the speaker and conversely also produces one in the hearer, which then in turn arouses in the latter the idea that is expressed in the language by means of such a tone; and that, just as modulation is as it were a language of sensations universally comprehensible to every human being, the art of tone puts that language into practice for itself alone, in all its force, namely as a language of the affects, and so, in accordance with the law of association, universally communicates the aesthetic ideas that are naturally combined with it (KU, §53, AA 05: 328).

In short, Kant starts from the idea that human language contains universal intonation forms of emotive expression, that is, intonation forms, present in all languages, that music is capable of imitating. In this way, our philosopher welcomes the so-called “doctrine of affections” (*Affektenlehre*) prominent in the 17th and 18th centuries, which took music as a kind of “language of emotions”.

In the first part of this section, I explained the formalist side of Kant’s theory. Despite everything I said in that part, we can now find in Kant an explicit defense of “musical antiformalism”, to take the expression used by Young in the article already mentioned. Here Kant approaches the theories of emotional expression by resemblance, which we will see developed in the recent theories of Stephen Davies, Peter Kivy or Malcolm Budd, who in turn have their ancestral origins in classical antiquity, in Plato and Aristotle in the notion of *mimesis*. Within this long historical tradition that associates music with emotions, the perspective advocated by Kant is that music expresses a given emotion because it imitates tonal variations and the typical sensations of the expressive voice of that same emotion. As Kivy points out (2009, p. 57), the perspective that speech had an underlying emotional subtext that was universal to the human species was a common idea in the Enlightenment period. Since music has the ability to express the forms of intonation that underlie all languages, it can become a universal language.

According to Kivy, the mechanism proposed by Kant in the previous citation regarding the expressive power of music, which will link manifest content (the expression of emotions) and aesthetic ideas, will work as follows: if music expresses an emotion, say (a given type of) joy, then you should imitate the tonal modulations and sensations typical of the expressive voice of joy. The perception of these modulations and sensations will evoke or empathetically provoke joy in the listener. In turn, this effect induces in the listener the concept associated with the aroused emotion – in this case, the concept of joy. This concept, in turn, starts a chain of ideas, thoughts and sensations associated with this same concept of joy. This chain, despite remaining associated with the concept that serves as its instigating base, should detach itself from it in the form of a free imaginative activity – that is, it should induce free play between imagination and understanding. This cognitive play thus stimulated goes beyond any conceptual determination (Kivy, 2009, p. 38).

One caveat needs to be made. Kivy, probably motivated by Kant’s words (specifically: “which then in turn arouses in the latter the *idea* that is expressed in the language by means of such a tone”) might have understood that the “idea” in question would be a concept that represents the expressed emotion. However, it does not seem necessary, nor even plausible, that the expression of a feeling involves the apprehension of any concept. The emotion can simply be perceived more or less immediately, much like how emotions conveyed in expressive speech are perceived - or, in any case, as the emotions that someone expresses in their daily life are usually perceived. Nonetheless, Kivy’s interpretation of the general mechanism that begins with the perception of an emotion in music and leads to the profusion of aesthetic ideas seems to me appropriate. Whether that perception is conceptually mediated or not, aesthetic ideas originate from the perception of a specific emotion - the emotion associated with a given melodic-rhythmic inflection and a particular sound sensation.

### **The functioning of aesthetic ideas in music**

Since Kant concedes that music has form (the rhythm-tonal structure) and is capable of conveying aesthetic ideas, then we would assume that Kant recognizes that music is a fine art in its own right, a genuine art of beauty.

However, apparently, contrary to what one might think from the considerations made so far, Kant expresses serious reservations regarding the artistic value of music, relegating this art to the lower place of his hierarchy (placing poetry first). Peter Kivy explains Kant’s devaluing of music by pointing out that it is not enough, according to Kant, for a work of art to initiate a set of aesthetic ideas – we need to know how these aesthetic ideas *work*. And indeed, for Kant, aesthetic ideas do not function properly in musical works (Kivy, 2009, p. 58).

We saw that the purpose of the form would be to motivate the harmonious play between the faculties of imagination and understanding. Now, the aesthetic ideas of a work of art must unite with the form at the confluence of this cognitive activity. In other words, aesthetic ideas – just like form and in conjunction with it – should instigate and join the harmonious play of these faculties.

According to Kivy's reading, Kant claims that while in literature and the visual arts aesthetic ideas are associated with the play of cognitive faculties, in music aesthetic ideas result only in a bodily sensation of well-being. Kant tells us:

In music, this play proceeds from the sensation of the body to aesthetic ideas (of the objects for affects), and then from them back again, but with united force, to the body (KU, §54, AA 05: 333).

Thus, although music expresses aesthetic ideas, these ideas fundamentally fulfill a function of reinforcing bodily well-being, and not of expanding and strengthening reflection and cognition - as happens with poetry or painting. As stated recently by Mojca Kuplen:

[...] while music can give rise to a multitude of thoughts [...] it fails to leave behind any meaningful thoughts to reflect upon (Kuplen, 2021, p. 14).

This interpretation places music in a certain limbo between the class of the beautiful arts and the class of the merely agreeable arts, presenting a somewhat ambivalent view of its nature. If, on the one hand, music is capable of appealing to our sense of abstraction, through the structural relationships of its form, it is also true that music attracts us largely because of the immediate sensorial effect that sounds can produce. It can be noticed how much music is based on sensations if we realize that the very expression of emotions, which in turn induces aesthetic ideas, is a kind of fusion between the tonal inflections of a formal order typical of intonation and the sensations that normally are associated with this expression. The expression of joy owes as much to the bouncy character of the melodic movement as to the brilliance of the chosen notes. Kuplen argues that it is precisely this ostensibly sensorial bent of music that prevents the free flight of the imagination. That is, the sensorial dimension of music prevents the imagination from contributing in a "productive" and not merely "reproductive" way to music appreciation. In the words of Kuplen, the link to sensations keeps musical appreciation "subject to empirical conditions" (p. 14) that are too restrictive.

Emine Hande Tuna adds that, in addition to this sensorial aspect, music is "not as rich a source for reflection and thereby cannot stimulate the enlargement of the cognitive faculties" for reasons related with the specificity of the aesthetic ideas conveyed in music:

In music (...) aesthetic ideas are communicated by taking advantage of existing associations, while in those art forms that Kant held in high regard (such as poetry and painting) genius not only breaks with the laws of association but additionally creates new associations (Tuna, 2018, p. 3142).

### **The nature of music, between formalism and expressionism**

In any case, it is not easy to reconcile all the dimensions that Kant intends to attribute to music when we consider the two parts of the *Critique of Aesthetic Judgment* referred to – the part dedicated to the more general aspects of beauty and the part dedicated more specifically to the arts. Still in the first part, Kant advances something about instrumental music that raises an unavoidable interpretative difficulty. In the following passage, Kant seems to take an unequivocally formalist position towards this kind of music:

Thus designs a la grecque, foliage for borders or on wallpaper, etc., mean nothing by themselves: they do not represent anything, no object under a determinate concept, and are free beauties. One can also count as belonging to the same kind what are called in music fantasies (without a theme), indeed all music without a text (KU, §16, AA 05: 230).

Kant seems to be referring here to purely instrumental music, unrelated to a text or any type of extramusical theme or element. In this quote, music is compared to decorative art. Art that does not signify or represent anything, whose beauty presumably lives from the pure play of formal relationships – art appreciable only for its *design*. Within Kant's theory, "free beauty" is distinguished from "dependent" beauty precisely because the first type of beauty is entirely independent of any concept. Well, if instrumental music, as "free beauty", is comparable to this decorative art, then it doesn't represent or mean anything either. Therefore, it should also be appreciated in its formal structure. Here we are before a markedly formalist position that could perfectly be endorsed by Hanslick.

However, once again, how can we reconcile this position with the possibility of Kant's inclusion of the aforementioned emotionally expressive content in music appreciation? After all, Kant tells us that music conveys concepts by virtue, at least in part, of its structure - the imitation of the tonal inflections of the expressive voice that evokes in the listener the concept of the imitated emotion.

One way of resolving this apparent contradiction would be to claim that when Kant tells us about the expression of feelings in music, he is referring to music with an extramusical theme. But this is not a good

solution for two reasons: first, there is no textual evidence to support this interpretation; second, Kant's idea only really makes sense if it refers to the tonal movement proper to music and to the sensations that resemble the sentimental expression of the human voice. This movement and these sensations constitute a quality of the rhythmic-tonal structure of music and its sound texture. That is, they constitute a quality of the perceptual appearance of the music itself - and not a merely associative or conventional quality.

Another way of resolving the tension between form and content in music within the Kantian perspective is to assume that Kant accepts the hypothesis that, within the class of purely instrumental musical works, there are works with a more expressive bent and others with a more abstract bent. The most radical cases of this last subclass should be conceived as pure "fantasies" (as Kant himself names them) disconnected from any concept. That being the works, after all, that Hanslick will have as paradigms of musical beauty. However, as appealing as this hypothesis seems to us, it is not compatible with a literal reading of what Kant states in the quoted passage. Kant explicitly affirms that *all* music without text is included in the class of free beauties – without exception. Therefore, this is another path that does not lead us to a plausible way of reconciling Kant's musical formalism with his expressionist perspective.

#### IV. Samantha Matherne's proposal

It seems, after all, rather difficult to reconcile all of Kant's perspectives on music into a single coherent approach. On the one hand, it should be asked how the formalist side can be reconciled with the expressionist side. On the other hand, the question is how one should understand the aesthetic status of music. As an art of the merely agreeable, or as an art of beauty? Is it possible to make music escape this limbo?

Samantha Matherne (Matherne, 2014) tries to deal with these two tensions and offers us the following solution. Regarding the tension between the pleasant character and the beautiful character of music, Matherne argues that the key to resolving this tension will be to admit that music can be appreciated in two different ways: as an art of the pleasant or as an art of the beautiful, depending on the *attitude* that we take before the music. Thus, the resolution of tension lies, according to Matherne, in the *choice* given to the appreciator, who can adopt an interested attitude (in which she lets herself be involved with the music for mere sensory gratification that results in bodily well-being) or a disinterested attitude (in which one adopts a distanced attitude, in which she is able to reflectively contemplate the compositional structure of the work that engages the free play of cognitive faculties).

The second tension – between form and expression – is resolved in an analogous way to the first. Matherne tells us that the way to reconcile the centrality given by Kant to form with the emotionally expressive component of music occurs when the listener adopts an attitude in which she is able to appreciate the way in which the compositional form (melody, harmony, rhythm) contributes to, or is at the service of, the expression of the "dominant affect" associated with the aesthetic ideas conveyed by the musical work - when "we are sensitive to the expression of emotion through musical form (Matherne, 2014, p. 129). Matherne calls this perspective "expressive formalism". The following passage, I believe, summarizes the essence of Matherne's proposal:

[...] unlike judgments of the agreeable or good that involve desire, judgments of the beautiful are contemplative and involve reflection. And it is in this space of reflection that our cognitive capacities are able to engage in the free play, which, in turn, produces sharable pleasure in us. Applying this to music, rather than claiming that music merely arouses emotions in us, Kant should say that our judgments of music involve reflection and the free play of our cognitive capacities.

Indeed, he should say that when we experience music as beautiful, we fruitfully contemplate *how* an aesthetic idea of a dominant affect is expressed through the formal properties of a piece. For example, I can listen to Chopin's so-called "Sadness" Etude in E major without feeling sad myself, but instead noticing *how* he uses the melody, harmony, rhythm, dynamics, and so on, to convey this affect (Matherne, 2014, p. 139, my italics)<sup>4</sup>.

Thus, Matherne clarifies that each musical work presents a "dominant affect" associated with an aesthetic idea, which will serve as a reference for our appreciation of the artistic beauty of the work in question. In this way, according to Matherne, the musical form should be understood as the rhythmic-tonal compositional structure, apprehensible by the faculties of imagination and understanding, susceptible of serving as an object of contemplative reflection which contributes to the expression of the dominant affect given by the aesthetic idea that characterizes the artistic beauty of the musical work.

This formulation can be seen as Matherne's specification of the notion of form analyzed in a previous section – as a way of specifying the subclass of structural relations that really constitute the form within the totality of possible relations of a musical work. It should be noted, however, that in this definition the

<sup>4</sup> I have highlighted in italics the various occurrences of "how" because it will be useful for the critique of Matherne that follows.

sensory component remains irrelevant. Hence, what we said about Ravel's orchestration of Mussorgsky's work remains essentially valid.

### Critical considerations on Matherne's proposal

Matherne's interpretation is a promising proposal for reconciling the contradictory dimensions in Kant's theory of music. However, I think it has some problems that I will enumerate.

1) With regard to the conciliation between the formal character and the expressive character of music, I believe that Matherne's analysis is not able to respond to the textual problem that section §16 raises. In that section, as I pointed out above, it is explicitly said that *all* pieces without text are *free beauties* – it is not contingent upon nor does it serve the expression of any emotion, let alone the provocation of a plethora of thoughts conveyed by aesthetic ideas. Matherne's "expressive formalism" cannot be applied to these cases – which, according to this passage, constitute *all* cases of instrumental music. If Kant tells us, in a later part, that there are musical works that have an expressive content, then this constitutes a contradiction within his theory.

An additional remark is in order. As I mentioned above, Kant distinguishes two types of beauty for artistic objects. A merely formal beauty (without "spirit", but which in relation to "taste" presents no problem) and a sort of "superior beauty" (beauty with "spirit", that confers a higher artistic value upon the object) that depends on the transmission of aesthetic ideas. Kant will have to accept, in section §16, that there is a kind of instrumental music whose beauty is merely formal (completely "free"), and another kind of music whose beauty derives from the expression of aesthetic ideas. Matherne's "expressive formalism" may help us to understand the nature of the latter type, but it does not resolve Kant's contradiction if we take section §16 at face value.

2) Let us take a closer look at some implications of 'expressive formalism'. According to Matherne's interpretation, a disinterested appreciation of beauty implies contemplation of the way in which "an aesthetic idea of a dominant affect is expressed through the formal properties of a piece" - that would include notice "how he [the composer] uses the melody, harmony, rhythm, dynamics, and so on, to convey this affect." Matherne explains that in another part:

[...] it is through the formal features of a piece (for example, harmony, melody, key, rhythm) that a composer is able to communicate her aesthetic idea and its dominant affect. If the composer wants to convey a sense of joy, perhaps she will choose a major key, or if she wants to convey grief, perhaps she will choose Largo. This, in turn, means that in order for the audience to grasp the aesthetic idea of the piece, we have to be attuned to how it is expressed through musical form (Matherne, 2014, p. 134).

In a footnote, Matherne clarifies:

This being said, it is important to note that Kant does not require that we be able to explicitly identify these formal structures; as he puts it, this mathematical form need "not [be] represented by determinate concepts" (Kant, KU §53, 5:329, p. 206). So, even if you do not know what the key of B sounds like or what a rondo is, I take Kant's point to be that you will be aurally sensitive to how emotion is expressed through those forms of the piece, even if you do not or, perhaps, cannot reflectively represent these structures to yourself in a determinate fashion (for example, on a musical score, in conversation, and so on) (idem, pp. 143, n.60).

The idea that our appreciation of compositional form should be guided in some way looks, generally speaking, a plausible idea. As mentioned above, the musical form cannot be understood simply as the set of all the structural relationships of the work, but only the part of this set that contributes to the achievement of the artistic or aesthetic objective of the work. In order to appreciate the form, then, we must recognize and let ourselves be guided by this objective.

In this regard Erkki Huovinen identifies "perceptual understanding" (as opposed to "epistemic understanding") as being our ability to enjoy and follow the structural development of a work while listening to it (Huovinen, 2011, p. 124). It will be the understanding that allows the listener to make sense of every moment, to feel how the music progresses, to connect what has been with what is to come. To this end, it is necessary to "grasp the idea" of the work that allows us to build a certain guiding mental map. It is, moreover, from this orientation that musical analysis derive their value.

This guiding mental map may include a certain representation of the expressive content of the work. In this sense, it would be plausible to say that the appreciation of form is, to a certain extent, guided by the recognition of what the work expresses at an emotional level. However, the problem of Matherne's "expressive formalism" arises when it is proposed that 1) there is a dominant affect expressed by the form and, even more problematically, that 2) appreciation of this form consists of a registration, recognition or attention to *how*, the way in which, the form expresses such affection.

First, it is not obvious that a musical work (at least those of great breadth and complexity) exhibits a single recognizable dominant affect and that holds guiding primacy over all the myriad of formal and expressive aspects that the work presents during its course and unfolding.

Second, Kant's perspective (according to Matherne<sup>5</sup>) becomes very problematic if we take seriously the word "how" that I put in italics in the passages cited above. One thing is to recognize certain formal and expressive aspects of the work, trying to capture the idea and objective of its progression. Such elements can have, as mentioned, a guiding role in the assessment. It is another thing to suggest that this guidance carries with it something explanatory. Now, the "how" that Matherne tells us requires that something explanatory integrate the experience of form.

What exactly does it mean to be "aurally sensitive to *how* emotion is expressed through those forms of the piece"? The word "how" implies some kind of *understanding* of the relationship that exists between the formal aspects of the work and the emotion expressed. How does this understanding come about and what exactly does it consist of? Matherne begins by talking about the composer's creative task and then extrapolates to the contemplative act of the listener. The composer, in fact, is interested in understanding this relationship because the objective of her work is to find the appropriate chord and melody for the emotion that it will be conveyed (if it's an emotion she wants to convey) - a job that takes days, months, years. But the listener is in a radically different position. She only intends to enjoy and appreciate the musical work *disinterestedly*. As mentioned, in the act of appreciation, attention to form is essential for the experience to be adequate, and such attention may require a certain amount of formal and expressive guidance. In a very trivial sense of the term "how", it is an obvious dimension of the act of appreciation: if I hear a sequence of chords and if during this sequence I recognize an emotion, then it is only natural *to associate* this sequence with the emotion that I recognize. But associating is not the same as apprehending "how" this sequence is related to the expressed emotion. A simple association between what is heard and what is recognized is just an adventitious thought that adds nothing to the musical experience.

There are, of course, relationships between formal aspects and the expression of affection that could be quite noticeable, such as the fast and lively rhythm of a cheerful piece. But the aspects that are apprehensible in this way are minimal in the set of aspects that totalize the form of a musical piece, and manifestly insufficient to fulfill the requirements of any kind of understanding. The way in which the compositional form of a piece (in its variety, density and complexity of elements) contributes to the expression of a given affection is simply incapable of being apprehended or understood (even in a rudimentary way). As Stephen Davies points out:

It will not do to attempt to reduce music's expressiveness to a catalog of technicalities and compositional devices. (...) Musical features ground music's expressiveness, and it is interesting to discover what features those are, but identifying them is, at best, only an initial step toward an informative theory of musical expressiveness (Davies, 2003, p. 172).

It is a tough investigation in philosophy of music, psychology, acoustics and neurobiology the attempt to discover well-established and sufficiently explanatory correlations between something as abstract as the melodic, rhythmic and harmonic arrangement and the expressive properties that a given work can exhibit. If this question remains enigmatic in academic research, it will be especially so at the moment of appreciation when what is intended is pure disinterested pleasure.

It should be added that since Kant insists that pleasure is not based on concepts, it will always be problematic, within his theory, to make intelligible the supposed mental mechanism that would allow apprehending the way in which the form contributes to the expression of emotions without resorting to concepts that allow establishing bridges and minimal associations between these two dimensions of the work. Even if we conceive that this mechanism works non-conceptually - which is not at all evident - such an appreciation based on associations seems to bring the judgment of taste closer to the empirical judgment typical of the work of the composer or researcher.

Another problem relates to the following. Matherne distinguishes between an interested appreciation, which would involve only the bodily well-being that the effect of musical sensations would provide, and a disinterested attention, characterized by attention to the way in which the form expresses a dominant affect. This distinction, made in this way, suggests that we can, on a merely sensory (not disinterested) level, register the dominant affect expressed, and, on a second (disinterested) level, relate the emotion felt with the form we contemplate. Now, our response to music when we are attentive to form will certainly be very different from our response when we are *not* attentive to form. In the latter case, our response will be reduced to a much more diffuse and nonspecific sensation ("an agreeable noise", in the words of Kant). A proper experience of beauty will imply careful attention to the form of the work. It will be this careful attention that will allow us to respond appropriately to music and properly recognize the expressed dominant affect. But it becomes problematic

<sup>5</sup> I do not question the correctness of Matherne's interpretation. Assuming that Matherne's interpretation is adequate, I argue that Kant's theory, in the respects I will mention, is implausible.

to argue that attention to form should be guided by the expression of emotion (of the dominant affect) that arises from that same attention. Explaining it further, it seems to me that Matherne is suggesting an intricately doubled attention: an attention to form that allows recognition of dominant affect, and an attention to how form contributes to that expression after that affect is recognized through attention to form.

I do not question that an attention to music of this kind might be possible. We can admit that a certain appreciative feedback effect will occur after repeated hearings of the same work and that such unfolded attention may include the reflective tendency of contemplation that engages the free play of cognitive faculties. However, to a certain degree, this type of listening is closer to a kind of inner analysis of the listening experience than to the musical experience itself, based on disinterested pleasure.

3) We saw in a previous section that Kant's distinction between the art of the agreeable and the art of the beautiful is neither clear nor peaceful in the case of music. According to Kant, the object of musical beauty should be reduced to form, understood as a cognitively discernible set of rhythmic and tonal abstract relations. The qualitative aspect of sound referring to its sensory character cannot integrate the form, as it does not contribute to this cognitive play of tonal and temporal relations. However, this perspective presents the problem of excluding timbre as an appropriate element of aesthetic contemplation. With the example of Ravel's orchestration of Mussorgsky's work, I intended to show that this is far from being a peaceful proposal, given the value we typically attribute to the instrumental and orchestral options of a composition.

Now, if what I argued in that section is plausible, we have an even deeper problem in Kant's view. If part of the cognitive content is contained in the phenomenological content of musical sensations - for example, the tension of a dissonance that anticipates its resolution - then, contrary to what Kant intends, it will not be possible to purge the entire sensorial content of sounds from musical form. It should be added that this cognitive content is an essential element of all musical harmony. Chords are not mere more or less pleasant auditory sensations: they are sensations that, due to their own texture and their degree of consonance or dissonance in a given context, play a crucial role in the structural understanding of the work. Hence, the analogy between the "composition" of a musical work (its abstract rhythm-tonal structure) and the "drawing" of a painting has serious limitations. We can, in fact, abstract drawing from the set of colors in a painting. We will be left with an abstract line, without color or thickness, but still cognitively discernible. But we cannot abstract tonal relationships from the set of sensations in a piece of music, since certain sensations are essential to these relationships. The tonal movement that is part of the formal composition arises as a result of the play of harmonic tensions.

Matherne's perspective does not completely solve this problem. We have seen that Matherne seeks to resolve the tension between the status of music as the art of the agreeable and the status of music as the art of the beautiful" appealing to the attitude we decided to adopt. If our attitude is directed towards form, then we could, according to Matherne, genuinely face music as an art of beauty. Now, it happens that even if we decide to contemplate music with an attitude that intends to be disinterested and entirely focused on the compositional form, if it is true that the compositional form inextricably integrates sensorial components, then we will never be able to escape the sensorial side of music. It will always remain open to question knowing the extent to which this inextricable sensory side compromises musical beauty and prevents music from being properly seen as an art of beauty.

## V. Concluding remarks

Although Kant reserved a relatively secondary place for music in his theory of taste, it is certain that Kant's perspective on this art is extremely multifaceted. In such a way that it remains a challenge to understand how all the dimensions that Kant attributes to the art of sounds can be harmonized.

Supposedly, the more general features of the judgment of taste presented in the first part - subjectivity, universality, disinterestedness, and formal purposiveness - should underpin elements of Kant's perspective on the arts, including music.

In this basic structure outlined in this way, we find a very marked formalist facet in Kant. If directly applied to music, this structure would make Kant a musical formalist in the word's most immediate and complete sense. All the more so since it is in this same section that Kant claims that instrumental music is a "free beauty". If we compare *this* Kant with Hanslick, the herald of musical formalism, the similarities are notorious. Even more, if we strictly follow the claims of disinterest and nonconceptualism of free beauty, we would have an even stricter formalist conception than that offered by Hanslick.

However, things get complicated when, in a later part devoted to the world of the arts, Kant introduces his doctrine of aesthetic ideas and specifies what characterizes the art of sounds. In this specification, an expressive element emerges that makes it unbearable to keep music within the limits of formalism. Kant, after all, far from being a formalist in the proper sense, is involved in an ancient tradition that gives music a special power to imitate the presumably universal tonal modulations that give human speech its emotional expressiveness.

We would then have several dimensions of music that should be explored and made compatible with each other: form, sensations and emotional expression. In all of them, we find problems of internal coherence or plausibility.

Concerning the relation between form and expression, it is simply not possible to reconcile what Kant tells us in section §16 about music as free beauty with the expressive power that he later attributes to it.

Regarding form and its relationship with sensations, it is not adequate to conceive the compositional form of a work by excluding timbre or sensations of tension and harmony. I tried to argue that the sensorial content of music – which cannot be extracted from its form – maintains the aesthetic-artistic status of music in a certain limbo: between the domain of the agreeable arts and the domain of the beautiful arts.

Finally, I argued that Samantha Matherne's proposal - despite constituting an admirable effort to reconcile the various aspects of Kant's theory - does not allow us to resolve the tension between the formalist and expressionist claims, nor the tension between the idea that music is a beautiful art and the idea of it merely being agreeable.

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