

Hanslick's Deleted Ending

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Mark Evan Bonds' impressive book on absolute music, or rather on the idea of it, is much to be welcomed. It is officially an excursion in the history of ideas, though some degree of vindication of the idea is probably part of its tacit agenda.¹ There are many aspects of this book that invite comment and discussion. Here we restrict ourselves to commenting on a core argument of the core chapter, which is on Hanslick's 1854 work *On the Musically Beautiful* (henceforth, 'OMB'²). In that chapter, Bonds analyses and diagnoses the removal by Hanslick of the original flowery ending of the first edition. Bonds thinks that he finds a Pythagorean residue in this passage—an aspect of the theoretical framework of "Naturphilosophie" (natural philosophy in the German tradition), which Hanslick embraced at one time. Bonds claims that, because of this, the passage is strategically 'amputated', and brushed under the carpet, even though Pythagorean/natural-philosophical thinking in fact informs the idea of absolute music as it is manifest in Hanslick's book (Bonds 2014: 185). This is important in the overall plan of Bonds' book since it is this idea that underpins Bonds' long-scope history of the idea of absolute music, which reaches from ancient Greece, through Hanslick's OMB, to the Twentieth- and Twenty-first Centuries, rather than a short-scope history restricted to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It is also important because it implies that the idea of absolute music is not what it seems (Bonds 2014: 187).

The following is the passage from the very end of the first edition of OMB that was partly deleted in the second edition (up to the words "great and beautiful ideas"), and then wholly deleted in the third edition. Hanslick wrote:

In the psyche [Gemüth] of the listener, furthermore, this intellectual-spiritual substance³ unites the beautiful in music with all other great and beautiful ideas. It is not merely and absolutely through its own intrinsic beauty that music affects the listener, but rather at the same time as a sounding image of the great motions of the cosmos. Through profound and secret connections to nature, the meaning of tones elevates itself high above the tones themselves, allowing us to feel at the same time the infinite in the work of human talent. Just as the elements of music—sound, tone, rhythm, loudness, softness—are to be found throughout the entire universe, so does one find anew in music the entire universe.

Much depends on the interpretation of these few sentences. Bonds' claim is that Hanslick is here drawing on a tradition according to which music connects the listener, in some way, to the universe or infinity. For his long-, rather than short-scope, history of the idea of Absolute Music, Bonds needs the passage to be saying something close to that.⁴

Bonds writes:

¹ See further Christoph Landerer and Nick Zangwill, "Contemplating Musical Essence", *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 141, 2016.

² All references will be to the Payzant translation, *On the Musically Beautiful*, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1986.

³ 'This' refers to the content of music that is arrived at by subtracting all non-musical content.

⁴ Since the Twentieth Century, of course, we disassociate these two ideas since the universe is believed to be finite.

“Hanslick was determined to ground the laws of beauty in the immutable laws of nature...” (206).

and

“The idea of beauty as the manifestation of some kind of universal law was central to Hanslick’s thought...” (207).

Is Bonds right to think that Hanslick harbours unresolved Pythagorean tendencies that he reveals in this paragraph (p. 126), which he then conceals by deleting it, but which nevertheless remains a subterranean presence in the book? We doubt it.

1. Pythagoreanism, *Naturphilosophie* and the Deleted Ending

1.1 If we look carefully at the deleted passage, it does not directly connect music or musical beauty (as realized in tones) with motions of the universe or with the infinite. Instead it essentially invokes the *mind or soul [Gemüth] of the listener* who is confronted with musical beauty, and it invokes the *creative talent* that is responsible for musical beauty. What is connected to the universe and the infinite is either the *Gemüth* of the listener or the music considered as something that manifests human talent, which goes beyond the musical beauty of tones. It is not simply musical beauty in itself that is connected to the universe and the infinite. Hanslick is not saying that tones by themselves point to something weird and wonderful; rather, this passage says that what intimates something greater is either the *Gemüth* of *human beings* who create and listen to music, or the musical beauty of tones that manifest such *Gemüth*. Thus Bonds’ emphasis in his interpretation of the paragraph seems not to be quite in the right place. (187-188 commits him to a pure tone interpretation.) The suggested link is not just between the tones of music alone, and the universe and infinity, but essentially involves *Gemüth*.

Just before the deleted passage, Hanslick writes: “Music is a spark of the divine fire”. But that is not necessarily to find something divine in music. For a fire and the spark that issues from it are distinct. Similarly a bank note might be issued by the Bank of England, but they are distinct existences (one can have one in one’s pocket but not the other). And creative talent and its musical product are distinct existences with different properties even though one has its origin in the other. It is not the tones by themselves that Hanslick thinks links us to the universe and infinity, but either the *Gemüth* that produces those tones, or the tones considered as the embodiment of *Gemüth*.

We suggest that Hanslick thinks that we listen to music, not just as a beautiful sound structure, which nature might have thrown up by accident, although it is also that, but also as a human creation. This makes sense of the fact that Hanslick says that music may become dated (OMB: 35, 40). This statement has surprised and confused some commentators, but it should not do, for music is an artifact, and in part we appreciate it as such. It is an immanent artifact not a transcendent artifact. However, all human cultural artifacts are mind-dependent in that they originate in the mind.

1.2 If we now look at the context of the deleted passage, we find that Hanslick is reacting to a problem posed in the previous, undeleted, passage. There, Hanslick returns to the problem of music’s content, which he locates in what he calls *Geist*. But *Geist* is contrasted with the competing concept of feeling (*Gefühl*) throughout the book. *Geist*, one of the key concepts of the treatise, is a tricky term, and difficult to translate. *Geist*, in German, can mean a variety of things, all connected to the intellectual sphere in some way: intellect, mind, spirit, wit and so on. But Hanslick has a more definite conception of *Geist*, one in which its core meaning is *intellect*. Music created by a composer is derived from an intellectual operation that employs the combinations of tones that the diatonic system offers. Understood in that way, music has a “spiritual-intellectual meaning”, as

Bonds translates *geistige Bedeutung*, which can only be “derived from the specific configuration of tones as a free creation of *Geist* using [nonconceptual] materials capable of incorporating *Geist*.”⁵ From edition three onwards, this sentence became the concluding passage of the book.

Bonds’ translation “spiritual-intellectual” is slightly problematic, since the “spiritual” component could be understood as hinting at a “higher meaning” that is not present in Hanslick’s concept of *Geist*. With this in mind, it is easier to see why the deleted passage is indeed a misfit, as Zimmermann insisted: “To be beautiful, the musical idea does not need to mirror laws of nature [*Weltgesetze*], it has nothing to do with metaphysics.”⁶ If Hanslick had in mind a cognitively serious reading of the deleted sentences, then the idea would have to be that music actually puts us in touch with these greater realities, either as in the Pythagorean tradition, or in the *Naturphilosophie* tradition, or as in Arthur Schopenhauer’s writings on music. (Compare the above quotations from Bonds.) If so, then our contact with these realities had better be *cognitive*, a matter of knowledge that music gives us. However, the relation described by Hanslick is obviously *not* a matter of knowledge or cognition, for he uses *fühlen* (“feeling”) in this passage. But “feeling” is consistently devalued as a source of meaningful knowledge about music throughout Hanslick’s treatise. This is also consistent with his choice of vocabulary in the deleted passage. Note that the central term is not *Geist*, as usual, understood in its cognitive dimension, but *Gemüth*, a term that avoids any clear focus on cognitive relations and refers to a psychic disposition in its broadest sense.

There is another potentially Pythagorean passage in chapter 3, which Hanslick changed, just before the *tönend bewegte Formen* phrase. Zimmermann also criticizes this passage just before his claim that the musical idea “has nothing to do with metaphysics”. As Bonds (p. 185ff.) reports, in chapter 3, Hanslick cuts the phrase: “a high degree of symbolic significance in its reflection of the great laws of the universe, which is something we find in all artistic beauty.” One can see why Zimmermann was worried. But note that Hanslick’s talk of “symbolic significance” (*symbolische Bedeutsamkeit*) is not cognitive. A dove may symbolize and make us think of peace; but it does not necessarily give us knowledge of peace. So we should be careful about attributing “higher meanings” to music in the earlier editions of OMB.

In this context, also Bonds’ translation “meaning of tones” (*Bedeutung der Töne*) in the deleted ending could be seen as slightly problematic, since the term “meaning” might suggest a semantic – perhaps hidden dimension. Geoffrey Payzant, in an unpublished version of the first edition of OMB, translated *Bedeutung* as “significance”, thus avoiding semantic connotations.⁷

1.3 The foregoing points about the specific wording in the two deleted passages where the universe is invoked need to be set alongside the fact that there is vanishingly little positive reason to think that Hanslick embraces a Pythagorean view of music in passages other than these two.⁸ In particular, his skepticism about the musical significance of mathematics, remains unchanged in all editions of OMB, which counts against the attempt to see Pythagorean thought as a core element of his aesthetics.⁹ This lack of commitment to anything like Pythagoreanism in passages other than the

⁵ Bonds’ translation. The somehow superfluous word “conconceptual” only appeared in editions one and two.

⁶ “Vom Musikalisch-Schönen”, in Robert Zimmermann, *Zur Aesthetik. Studien und Kritiken*. (Vienna 1870), pp. 239-253, p. 247f.

⁷ We are grateful to Mary Lou Payzant for making this unpublished text available to us.

⁸ A problem passage might be this: “All musical elements have mysterious bonds and affinities among themselves, determined by natural laws. These, imperceptibly regulating rhythm, melody, and harmony, require obedience from human music, and they stamp as caprice and ugliness every noncompliant relationship (OMB: 31). But these laws are merely the supposed natural laws relating tonal elements to each other. Nothing Pythagorean there. .

⁹ Hanslick writes: “Mathematics merely puts in order the rudimentary material for artistic treatment and operates secretly in the simplest relations” (OMB: 41). Note that Hanslick only allows for these “simplest relations” to be governed by mathematical laws.

deleted ones means that even if Bonds were completely right about the truncated ending, it would not show much—merely that an intellectual with firm virtues had very occasional lapses, got muddled and went transcendental. Perhaps it was something he ate?! But as we saw, even the two deleted passages are very far from being unequivocally Pythagorean.

1.4 If there is no compelling evidence for Bonds' Pythagorean reading of the offending ending of the first edition and the deleted passage of chapter 3, and much evidence pointing the other way, that removes the rationale for Bonds' long-scope historical approach to the idea of Absolute Music, which he thinks stretches from Hanslick's book all the way back to Pythagoras.

It is not that there is nothing in ancient Greek thought about *musike* that is remotely parallel to the issues that concerned nineteenth century music theorists.¹⁰ But seeing a straight line of influence is highly unlikely on this topic, or in any other area of thought.¹¹

Bonds thinks of idea absolute music as a kind of Phoenix, which pops up every now and then in human history; and Hanslick is one manifestation of that Phoenix. But Hanslick is his own man. One cannot deny that in Hanslick there is something of Kant, something of Herbart, perhaps even something of Hegel, and so on for other authors. But Hanslick puts it together in his distinctive way. Hanslick is nobody's Phoenix.

2. Idealist Tendencies?

2.1 Although there is no Pythagorean tendency, it has to be admitted that there are very occasional relics of Hanslick's earlier Hegelian past in OMB. The question is: how much weight should be given to these relics in interpreting OMB? How much of Hanslick's previous Hegelian enthusiasm remains by the time he wrote OMB?

There are two questions: first, to what extent is there *some* remaining tendency to idealism in OMB? And second, is what remains of any significance for the rest? That is, is it somehow revealing? We believe, as did Zimmermann, that these few idealist relics are not constitutive for the aesthetic theory that Hanslick presents in OMB. As Zimmermann observes, some are a mere matter of terminology, others can well be considered theoretical "misfits" that he corrected in the second edition.

2.2 In the revolutionary year of 1848, young Hanslick was clearly in the Hegelian camp when he wrote, for example, that

"contemporary art does not (mainly thanks to Hegel's efforts) consider art a mere tool for sensual enjoyment anymore."¹²

Bonds cites the following passage where Hanslick states that

"the works of the great tone-poets are more than music: they are mirror-images of the philosophical, religious, and political worldviews of their time."¹³

However, in OMB, six years later, this position is reversed:

¹⁰ On the ancient Greek tradition see See Andrew Barker's edited work *Greek Musical Writings*, Cambridge University Press, 1990.

¹¹ See Harold Bloom's famous *The Anxiety of Influence*, Oxford University Press, 1973.

¹² „Censur und Kunst-Kritik.“ *Wiener Zeitung*, 24 March 1848

¹³ *Ibid.* P. 154.

“The historian, interpreting an artistic phenomenon in its wider context, might see in Spontini the expression of the French Empire period, in Rossini the political restoration. The aesthete, however, has to limit himself exclusively to the works of these men, to inquire and inquire what in these works is beautiful and why.” (OMB: 39).

The intellectual component is now seen as something internal to music, not as a means of connecting with an extra-musical world. Thus, also parallels between music and the composer’s contemporary culture are irrelevant from an aesthetic point of view. This is a major reversal.

2.3 But are there other passages that lean towards Hegelianism? Let us look at some of these relics. Even if they are not indicative of the whole, how much of a real commitment to these ideas is there in these relics?

The deleted ending of the first edition of OMB poses the question of the theoretical nature of the tendencies it harboured. They seem most obviously Pythagorean. But perhaps they are also Schopenhauerian? Idealist? German *Naturphilosophie*? But the few sentences in one single paragraph are too meagre a resource to decide this question. To be sure, all these tendencies, or philosophical points of view, are not neatly separated in mid-19th century German writings on music. But when considered in the light of the *other* passages that Zimmermann criticized, which also lead to amputations in the second edition, it does lend some credence to claiming an idealist *tendency* in that paragraph. Even so the question remains: how exactly is idealism, or its traces, figuring in this paragraph?

Let us look back at two other deleted passages, one in chapter 2, the other one in chapter 3. Zimmermann dismissed the passage just before the *tönend bewegte Formen* as metaphysical, and he criticized the passage in chapter 2 where Hanslick uses the phrase “intimation of the absolute”. Zimmermann’s objections seem strong: if musical ideas please in themselves, as Hanslick holds, there is no point claiming any extra-musical significance for these “pure tone-relations”, including an “intimation of the absolute”. Zimmermann writes:

“The absolute is not a tone-relationship and therefore also not musical”.¹⁴

Zimmermann also criticized some of Hanslick’s vocabulary, namely *Anschauung* (contemplation) and *Phantasie* (imagination), both rooted—as Hanslick readily admits—in the writings of Friedrich Theodor Vischer, then a well-known idealist philosopher. Zimmermann warns that the use of Vischerian terminology is “dangerous” since beautiful form, for Vischer, always has to have a specific content, namely “the infinite, the absolute, the idea.” In Zimmermann’s view, these claims are “contradictory”.¹⁵

Hanslick acted on Zimmermann’s criticisms. It is true that Hanslick had careerist reasons to be concerned. By the time the second edition appeared, he had already succeeded in having OMB accepted as a habilitation thesis. But it was still a long way to the salaried position he aspired. As a well-known follower of Johann Friedrich Herbart, whose philosophical ideas were fostered by Austrian authorities, particularly in the 1850s and 1860s, Zimmermann’s voice had weight. Philosophical thinking in the Hegelian tradition, on the other hand, was apt to raise many eyebrows, some of which Hanslick needed for his academic career. (This is one of Bonds’ suggested reasons for the deletion, at p. 183, which Bonds he does not take seriously.) Whatever his underlying motives, in the second edition, Hanslick not only deleted or altered the passages that Zimmermann dismisses. Hanslick also cut several references to Vischer. Vischer is now not named any more as a

¹⁴ “Das Absolute ist kein Tonverhältnis und also, dünkt uns, auch nicht musikalisch”. (‘Vom Musikalisch-Schönen’, p. 243).

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 241. “Beides vereint widerspricht sich.”

source of Hanslick's concept of *Phantasie* as an "activity of pure contemplation" in chapter 1. In the 3rd edition of 1865, when Hanslick "amputated" the remaining passage of the deleted ending, he even replaced Vischer with Herbart at the beginning of chapter 7.

It is not unlikely that it was Vischer and his idealist views that account for Hanslick's ideas about the infinite and the universe in the deleted ending. In Vischer's *Ästhetik*, a book that Hanslick mentions several times in OMB and in a passage that also Bonds cites¹⁶, Vischer declares music to be "an intimation of the laws that structure the cosmos".¹⁷

Although Vischer is certainly an important source of inspiration for some ideas that Hanslick expressed in OMB—particularly Hanslick's dynamic view of the material aspect of art and the way in which this material aspect is shaped by history—this does not extend to idealism in general or Hegelianism in particular. Hanslick mentions Hegel several times in the treatise, mostly critically. Payzant is surely right when he states that there is „no point of doctrine, to which we can confidently point and declare that it is of Hegelian origin.“¹⁸

2.4 What then of the reference to the „absolute“? In chapter 2, Hanslick talks about the "intimation of the absolute". This is changed to "intimation of everlasting bliss in the world beyond" in the second edition (after Zimmermann's criticism of Hanslick using the term "absolute"). But again, even in the first edition, Hanslick's term is "intimation"; and an intimation is not a cognitive relation. The word "intimation" is rather weak. (In German: "*Ahnung*") It implies merely that the music makes one think of something, in some way. It does not imply cognition or knowledge, or that there is truth in what one thinks. So again, there is nothing here to encourage a proper commitment to anything idealist, rather than a vague relic that is not clearly endorsed.

Bonds has a point (p. 208) when he suggests that Hanslick could have been concerned about the "amputated" final passage sounding too Schopenhauerian. The same applies to the deleted passage in the 3rd chapter. In OMB, "musical idea" usually refers to melody, and Schopenhauer does indeed propose an apparently similar mysticism about melody in his *World as Will and Representation*. Any such association with Schopenhauer would have sounded odd, as Hanslick's feeling theory (his opposition to any theory of abstract feelings without definite cognitive content) was implicitly directed against Schopenhauer (without mentioning the name, but the hint is clear).

4.5 It is not impossible that Hanslick did harbor some thoughts, or at least inclinations, which did not perfectly fit with the rest of the treatise. This was Zimmermann's complaint in his review. But, as we saw above, by the *first* edition, he had second thought about these ideas and—perhaps not entirely consciously—settled for a midway solution where he would write "*fühlen*" and "*Ahnung*" and so on. But this was unsatisfactory, as Zimmermann pointed out, and so Hanslick decided to "amputate" the passages completely.

There are some relics of his earlier views in OMB, but they usually don't connect with the core of his arguments, and they are equivocally stated. The deleted ending is a good example of that, and so is the passage where he writes "intimation of the Absolute".

Suppose, to err on the generous side, that 1% of Hanslick's intention when writing OMB was not the immanent view that made the work controversial, that many celebrate and many revile. It is true that there are a very few relics of his earlier phrase when he was in his early 20s. There is no reason to think, as Bonds does, that this 1% is somehow the core of his mature theory, and somehow the

¹⁶ P. 126.

¹⁷ Bonds' translation ("eine Ahnung weltbauender Gesetze").

¹⁸ Geoffrey Payzant, „Translator's Preface“, in: *Edurd Hanslick, On the Musically Beautiful*. Indiana 1986, p. XVI.

key to it. Not at all. Furthermore, even in those relic passages, the way he states them is crafted so that he is not fully committed to them. Even in the first edition, any Pythagorean, Hegelian or Schopenhauerian traces are phrased so that they are not taken fully seriously. So although there is that 1%, it is not revealing. The 1% does not infect the rest. It is not a key to the rest. It is a mere relic. And it is at odds with the main thrust of the first edition of OMB.

3. The Deleted Ending in the Context of the Whole of the First Edition

3.1 There is an obvious deflationary explanation of the ending and its allegedly ‘truncated’ ending, which Bonds does not take seriously. This is simply that Hanslick needed something to end with. Without it, the book ends abruptly. Formally, it needs something. So Hanslick was tempted to end with a flourish—something grandiose. He wanted to round off the book. After it was cut out, the book does not end properly, or so it seems. However, Hanslick’s flourish was overly ambiguous and left open the possibility of being read as saying things contrary to his opinions. He was careless. Hanslick was not letting the cat out of the bag, revealing himself as a closet Pythagorean with secret mystical tendency or a secret transcendental idealist, as Bonds thinks (Bonds 2014: 126). Instead, Hanslick finished with colourful rhetoric that misfired. When his friend Robert Zimmermann pointed out how it could be interpreted as being in tension with the rest of the text, Hanslick deleted first most of it and then all of it.

If so, Hanslick is not engaged in a conspiracy to conceal his Pythagorean or transcendental inclinations, a mysticism that are always lurking in his mind and which bursts out, and escapes onto the page right at the end of the first edition text, and which needed to be shoved back in the closet in future editions. Hanslick does not tip his hand here. No, his approach is always vigorously and virtuously down to earth. Instead, the deleted ending was an unsuccessful attempt at formal closure.

3.2 Although Hanslick, as we think, basically agreed with Zimmermann’s criticism of OMB, this does not mean that he also adopted Zimmermann’s philosophical position. His attempt to link musical beauty with extra-musical ideas in the final paragraph of the book was unsuccessful and, in a way, does perhaps reveal a curious reluctance to accept the limits of aesthetic discourse that he so convincingly laid out throughout the book (as Bonds says at pp. 185 and 208). But why does he not settle for a different ending, one that embraces Zimmermann’s static and ahistorical view of relations as the core of musical aesthetics? Why did he not come up with a new ending? Why did he just leave the text as it was, without a formal closure? The grandiosity of Zimmermann’s approach, which claimed no less than the establishment of timeless laws of beauty based on unchanging aesthetic “relations”, would certainly have made for an equally impressive ending. Consider another change in the second edition that Hanslick made in reaction to Zimmermann’s review. Hanslick adds this passage: “The beautiful is and remains beautiful even when it arouses no emotions, indeed when it is neither perceived nor contemplated.”¹⁹ This passage is taken word for word from Zimmermann’s review.²⁰ But Hanslick did *not* adopt the following, concluding sentence from Zimmermann: “For the beautiful is based on unchanging relations”²¹. In his review, Zimmermann goes on to explain his view:

“Where certain relations occur is beauty, where opposite relations occur, ugliness, where disparate relations occur, neither beauty nor ugliness. Combinations of colours such like red and green, blue and orange, purple and yellow, will always please, combinations like red and

¹⁹ Bonds p. 189, OMB: 3. Payzant’s translation: „Beauty is and remains beauty even if no feelings are aroused and even if it be neither perceived nor thought.”

²⁰ „Vom Musikalisch-Schönen“, p. 240: „Das Schöne ist und bleibt schön, auch wenn es keine Gefühle erzeugt, ja auch, wenn es weder geschaut noch betrachtet wird.“

²¹ „Denn das Schöne beruht auf sich gleich bleibenden Verhältnissen“.

blue, yellow and orange etc. displease. Tonic and third will always represent a pleasing, tonic and second, tonic and seventh will always represent a displeasing relationship. These will be called beautiful, those will be called ugly.”²²

But Hanslick did not settle for an ending based on Zimmermann’s views of eternal laws of musical relation, simply because he did not believe in an aesthetic of ahistorical musical beauty. According to Hanslick, there is no fixed, ahistorical relation between musical beauty and the internal structure of a musical piece. Composing is also an act of free creation, limited only by the general laws of musical composition. Even the tonal system, Hanslick says, is subject to (possible) change (OMB: 71). As Geoffrey Payzant has observed, “if the very material out of which musical compositions are made is itself subject to change, then obviously it would be impossible for products made of it not to be.”²³ The musical intellect creates and stimulates, and its creations have intellectual significance. The ending that Hanslick eventually chose is in fact perfectly in line with these views as it highlights a central insight that Hanslick develops in chapter 3. Here, again, Hanslick defends the view that music’s intellectual meaning and significance is “derived from the specific, beautiful configuration of tones as a free creation of *Geist* from materials that are capable of incorporating *Geist*.” This is, in fact, in some ways a fitting ending of the treatise. Neither the original ending nor anything in line with Zimmermann’s thought would have done that job. There was just nothing more to say. It may have lacked flourish. But it said what needed to be said. Perhaps form and content can be distinguished here. Formally the ending after the deletion is unsatisfying. But as far as content goes it is a good ending.

3.3 Historicized or not, Hanslick’s view of music and its value in OMB is overwhelming an immanent and not a transcendent or transcendental view. This is a great virtue of Hanslick’s approach. The value is *there* in the “tones and their artistic combination” (OMB, p. 28). The value is neither in another world nor self-indulgently in us. By contrast, Bonds—perhaps like many in English-speaking musicology who are perhaps overly influenced by German idealism rather than the Austrian and English-speaking realist traditions of philosophy—wants Hanslick to be locating musical value in a world beyond tones (Bonds 2014: 190). So Hanslick turns out to be a good Pythagorean or German transcendentalist after all! But such a Hanslick would not be the Hanslick some of us know and love, and it would not be the Hanslick that those who transcendentalize or subjectivize music know and hate. How surprising it would be if all along Hanslick harboured a transcendental urge. Hanslick’s whole cast of mind is this-worldly celebration of a value—beauty, right there in the sounds. Music is not a wormhole to another reality. Bonds keeps trying to find that tendency in him. It is like reading Richard Dawkins to show how, deep down, he does believe in Christianity after all.

Hanslick’s down-to-earth, debunking, immanent view of musical beauty is threatening. Because of that, many writers would have an interpretation that defangs his defence of absolute music and his critique of other-worldly or subjectivist views. Hanslick is thus neutralized. But Hanslick cannot be neutralized. The force of his positive immanent vision of musical beauty as arising from tones artistically combined, and the force of his negative critique of transcendent, transcendental and subjectivizing views cannot be dulled by claiming that he did not fully believe it due to traces of the

²² „Wo gewisse Verhältnisse stattfinden, ist Schönheit, wo die entgegengesetzten, Hässlichkeit, wo disparate, weder diese noch jene vorhanden. Die Verhältnisse sind unter allen Umständen dieselben. Stets werden Farbenzusammenstellungen wie Roth und Grün, Blau und Orange, Violett und Gelb gefallen, solche dagegen, wie Roth und Blau, Gelb und Orange, u.s.w missfallen; Grundton und Terz werden immer ein gefälliges, Grundton und Secunde, Grundton und Septime ein missfälliges Verhältniss darstellen; jene schön, diese hässlich genannt werden.“ („Vom Musikalisch-Schönen“, p. 240f.)

²³ Geoffrey Payzant, ‘Hanslick on Music and Time’, in *Hanslick on the Musically Beautiful: Sixteen Lectures on the Musical Aesthetics of Eduard Hanslick* (Christchurch NZ, 2002).

very kind of views he critiques. Hanslick cannot be taken down from within. No spy-mission behind enemy lines can destroy him.

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We have focused on just one scholarly issue. It is a point that plays an important role in Bonds' book. It is an important issue about how to understand the idea of absolute music and its history. Although we have criticized Bonds on some matters, there should be no doubt that anyone interested in these issues is in Bonds' debt for his wide-ranging scholarship, his compelling narrative and his overarching interpretation.