

Schopenhauerian Musical Formalism: Meaningfulness without Meaning

CHENYU BU

Abstract: I develop *Schopenhauerian musical formalism*. First, I present a Schopenhauerian account of music with a background of his metaphysical framework. Then, I define *meaningfulness* as an analog to a Kantian notion of *purposiveness* and argue that, in light of Schopenhauer, music is meaningful as a direct manifestation of the universal will. Given the ineffable nature of what music points to, its form lacks any representation of meaning. Music is therefore *the mere form of meaningfulness*, and it is precisely this mere form that gives rise to the infinite possibilities to ascribe it with a variety of musical meaning.

Keywords: philosophy of music, musical formalism, Schopenhauer, aesthetics, Kant

I. Introduction

Music has been arguably the most philosophically curious and theoretically laden among the Arts. It has a sense of meaningfulness that seems to be illuminated by a quasi-logical and quasi-syntactical structure, yet what it means is often found to be evanescent and ineffable. There were several converging trends in nineteenth-century aesthetics to marry the meaningfulness of music to variations on formalism.¹ A point of consummation was witnessed in the seminal work of the Viennese music critic Eduard Hanslick, *Vom Musikalisch Schönen* (“*On the Musically Beautiful*”; abbreviated as “VMS” hereafter), which went through ten editions from 1854 to the author’s death in 1904. Hanslick’s declaration “The content of music is tonally moving form (*tönend bewegte Formen*)” (29) almost became the motto of musical formalism ever since.² Indeed, contemporary views of music are considerably indebted to Hanslick’s formalist approach to music.³ However, musical formalism as such—on which music is construed as sonic architecture with its intrinsic formal properties⁴—casts a shadow over musical meaning. For strictly speaking, “tonally moving forms” on their own, powerfully dynamic and remarkably articulate as they may be, are devoid of any “extramusical” reference. The focus on musical form seems to overlook the *affective* aspect of music, that is, the ways in which music is found to be connected with the world and whereby it can afford us musical experience that is full of emotions, expressions, imaginations, and so on. According to Kivy, what is needed is an “intellectually respectable description of music that is not remote from the humanistic understanding to which music itself has traditionally appealed” (*Sound Sentiment* 10–11).⁵ A challenge to the formalist approach to music, then, is to give an account of musical form that makes room for—ideally, explains the very possibility of—musical meaning.

This paper is set out to offer such an account with inspirations drawn from Schopenhauer, whose thoughts about music not only had considerable influence on philosophers (especially in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries) but also on a surprising number of musicians and music theorists.⁶ Although Schopenhauer himself was quite frank about the limited extent to which aesthetic theorizing can take us in the case of music,⁷ I think there is a clear line of argument to be teased out from his musical remarks which is in the spirit of the classic formalist approach to music. Moreover,

the general framework of Schopenhauer's metaphysics provides important insights into how the musical form may give rise to musical meaning. Therefore, in this paper I will develop what I call *Schopenhauerian musical formalism* and show that the formalist account of music does not impose constraints on the possibility or even on the range of musical meaning. Rather, by defining music as the *mere form of meaningfulness*, I will argue that musical meaning has its ground precisely in musical form as such.

Here is an overview of the paper. Section II presents a Schopenhauerian account of music within his background framework of metaphysics. Section III extrapolates the notion of *meaningfulness*. The general strategy may be thought of as analogous to how Kant derives the notion of *purposiveness* in the case of beauty. I will argue that music is both *purposive* as a form of art and *meaningful* as an immediate manifestation of the universal will,⁸ and furthermore, that music is the *mere form* of meaningfulness. That is, music is conceived of as meaningful, though there is no particular meaning to be found in music itself. Section IV further explicates the relation between musical form and musical meaning. The absence of meaning in music itself is due to the equally unrepresentable nature of what music points to, i.e., the universal will itself, but it is precisely its mere form of meaningfulness that retains its infinite potential to be ascribed with a variety of musical meaning.

II. A Schopenhauerian Account of Music

Nearly every instance of Schopenhauer's musical remarks could be regarded as one or another branch springing from the central trunk of a single idea:

Thus music is as *immediate* an objectification and copy of the whole *will* as the world itself is, indeed as the Ideas are, the multiplied phenomenon of which constitutes the world of individual things. Therefore music is by no means like the other arts, namely a copy of the Ideas, but a *copy of the will itself*, the objectivity of which are the Ideas. For this reason the effect of music is so very much more powerful and penetrating than is that of the other arts, for these others speak only of the shadow, but music of the essence. (*The World as Will and Representation* 257; emphasis in original)⁹

This passage contains a number of Schopenhauerian terminology (e.g., will, Ideas, objectification), each of which needs to be unpacked.

Schopenhauer describes the phenomenal world as the world of *representation*. The objects as they appear to us are merely appearances, which are necessarily in accordance with and conditioned by what he calls the *principium individuationis*, i.e., space and time, and the *Principle of Sufficient Reason*. In ordinary experience, we as cognizing subjects only perceive the representations of objects with certain obligatory relations, rather than things as they are in themselves. For Schopenhauer, there is only one thing-in-itself, namely, the *will*. Every representation, every individual being is an objectification of the universal will:

But only the will is *thing-in-itself*; as such it is not representation at all, but *toto genere* different therefrom. It is that of which all representation, all object, is the phenomenon, the visibility, the objectivity. It is the innermost essence, the kernel, of every particular thing and also of the whole. (*WWR* 110)

The term "will (*Wille*)" is used by Schopenhauer in two distinct ways: There is the will as the essence of the world, the endless striving and eternal becoming,¹⁰ and there is also the will manifested in individuals, understood as the *objectifications* of the universal will as the particular acts of willing. I will refer to the first as the *universal will* and refer to instances of the second as *individuated wills*. Schopenhauer claims that the universal will manifests in "every blindly acting force of nature" as well as every "deliberate conduct of man" (*WWR* 110). Those individuated wills (in nature and in human beings) differ with respect only to their *degrees* of manifestation but not to the essence of what is manifested.

In art, the universal will manifests in the form of *Ideas*. Schopenhauer defines an Idea as an adequate objectification of the universal will in a determinate and fixed level.¹¹ On the one hand, Ideas

are distinguished from particular objects, in that Ideas are “the eternal form of things, not themselves entering into time and space” and “remain fixed, subject to no change, always being, never having become,” while particular objects “arise and pass away” and are “always becoming and never are” (*WWR* 129). On the other hand, Ideas are also distinguished from the universal will, in that Ideas exist in multiplicity. There exist infinitely many degrees of manifestation, whereas the universal will is *unique*, the only thing-in-itself. Thus, an Idea may be understood as something which stands in between a particular object, e.g., an artwork, in which it is objectified, and the universal will itself: the Idea is an individuated manifestation of the universal will, yet it does not enter into to the world of representations and remains in it eternal, unchanging form.

For Schopenhauer, art is where Ideas come to be cognized. An aesthetic experience originates in the cognition of the Ideas, and the only goal of an artwork is the communication of this cognition.¹² When the subject grasps the Ideas through her aesthetic contemplation, she transcends her ordinary individual as a willing being and becomes a “pure subject of knowing” (*WWR* 179). What she cognizes in such an experience is the eternal Idea that is objectified in the artwork. The aesthetic contemplation thus bring the subject beyond the representation of the artwork as a mere object.

Manifestations of the universal will in Ideas come with degrees as well. Different forms of art objectify Ideas which manifest the universal will in various degrees. Schopenhauer introduces a hierarchy of the fine arts:

We began with architecture, whose aim as such is to elucidate the objectification of the will at the lowest grade of its visibility, where it shows itself as the dumb striving of the mass, devoid of knowledge and conforming to law... Our observations ended with tragedy, which presents to us in terrible magnitude and distinctness at the highest grade of the will's objectification that very conflict of the will with itself. (*WWR* 255)

Music is ranked at the top of this hierarchy. The other arts are imitations or repetitions of Ideas, but music is directly a copy of the universal will. That is, there is no Ideas in music but only the thing-in-itself. Music manifests the universal will without mediating through the Ideas and is thereby regarded as a universal expression to the highest degree.¹³ Thus, we may say that the world just *is* embodied music, in as much as it is the embodied universal will.

In a nutshell, a Schopenhauerian account of music begins with the metaphysical contrast between representations and the thing-in-itself:

[i] Objects as they appear are mere representations, and the only thing-in-itself is the universal will, which is the sole essence of the world.

In ordinary experience, we cognize objects only as they appear, conditioned by relations obligatory to representations in the same way we ourselves are as individual subjects. In aesthetic experience, however, the universal will is revealed to us in the form of Ideas through our aesthetic contemplation, in which we become the pure subject of knowledge.

[ii] Art makes the universal will cognizable (in a subject's aesthetic experience) by means of objectifying Ideas, which are the eternal forms manifesting the universal wills at some particular levels.

Music stands apart from the other arts in that it passes over Ideas. Rather,

[iii] Music is a direct manifestation of the universal will itself.

Thus, the notion of music on this account is twofold. On the one hand, music points to a true and profound knowledge of the world, i.e., the universal will. On the other hand, in contemplating music as such in our aesthetic experience, we also come to appreciate the fact that we ourselves—as individual human beings subject to the universal will—share the very same essence with music and thus with the whole world. By revealing the world's inner nature to be also the source of our own willing and feeling, music reveals the essential tension between and the mutual involvement of our knowledge of the world and of the entire endeavor of humankind.

With the Schopenhauerian account of music situated within his more general metaphysical framework, in the next two sections I shall turn to the task of developing the formalist view that music is meaningful in virtue of its form, that is, music *means* in a way that is abstract, universal, and essential, without involving representations. Section III refines the notion of music as the *mere form of meaningfulness*, and then section IV demonstrates the explanatory power of this notion for the possibility and the range of musical meaning.

III. Music as the Mere Form of Meaningfulness

In this section, I will first formulate the notion of *meaningfulness* by extrapolating Kant's formulation of *purposiveness* in his discussion of beauty.¹⁴ Then, I will explain why music may be regarded as the form of meaningfulness in light of Schopenhauer.

The term "purposiveness" is philosophically loaded mainly owing to Kant's *Critique of Judgment*. In the Third Moment of the Analytic of the Beautiful, Kant offers the following gloss of the term:

[K1] Purposiveness (*forma finalis*) is the causality of a concept with regard to its object. (5:220)¹⁵

An object is said to be purposive when it is possible to think of the object in terms of a concept that is regarded as the purpose of the object's form or existence. The thinking of the concept is a determining ground for and prior to the causal connection thus established between the object and its purpose, viz. a representation of its purposiveness. For instance, when we think of a hammer as purposive, we regard it as a tool used for hammering, in which case the concept of hammering is a determining ground for and is acquired prior to our representation of the hammer as having a purpose.

Importantly, grasping an object's purposiveness can be independent from representing it with any *particular* purpose. As Kant points out, if we think of an object not with respect to any determinate concept but merely due to the possibility of conceiving the object as having a purpose, then the object in question is said to embody the form of purposiveness without the representation of a purpose. In Kant's words,

[K2] Purposiveness can exist without representation of a purpose, insofar as its form is derived not from a determinate concept, but only from the *possibility* of conceiving the object as purposive. (5:220)

Kant's paradigm example to illustrate [K2] is *beauty*. He claims that when we consider an object to be beautiful, we are conceiving of it as purposive in virtue of its having a certain kind of formal structure which makes possible a "free play of the imagination and understanding" (5:218). Unlike in the case of hammer, where we are able to pin down a determinate concept as the hammer's purpose, in thinking of an object of beauty to be purposive, there is no *particular* purpose whatsoever with which we can associate the object determinately. Rather, the purposiveness of beauty inheres solely in the object's form, which grounds the subject's judgement that the object is beautiful while leaving the concepts undetermined. Thus, grasping the purposiveness of beauty relies on nothing more than grasping a sense in which it is possible for the object to have a purpose, though there is no particular purpose to be found (thus enabling the mind's "free play"). Cognizing a determinate concept as the purpose of the object in question is not a necessary requirement for conceiving the object as purposive.

Influenced by Kant to a considerable extent,¹⁶ Schopenhauer discusses the purposiveness of an object in two aspects.¹⁷ First, an object has the *inner purposiveness* which shows an agreement among all of its parts, and second, it has the *external purposiveness* which shows an organic relation between its individual parts and nature as a whole.¹⁸ There is a consensus between Schopenhauer's notion of purposiveness and [K1], namely, that the causality which defines purposiveness concerns the concept of a relation which the object bears, either a part-to-part relation obtained within the object (as for inner purposiveness), or a part-to-whole relation obtained between the object and nature (as for external purposiveness).¹⁹

[K2] applies to Schopenhauer's notion of purposiveness as well. That is, an object's being purposive can be independent of being represented with respect to a determinate concept regarded as its purpose. This is evident in the case of art. Since it is the *one* universal will that is objectified in the form of Ideas manifested in artworks, the objects as they are cognized through aesthetic contemplation are necessarily coordinated with each other in virtue of their unified nature, that is, manifesting the universal will. Thus, artworks can be regarded as purposive in that they embody the universal will, but since there is no representation of the universal will itself, grasping such purposiveness does not involve representing the object with a particular purpose.

Now, I take *meaningfulness* to be a special species of purposiveness: An object is meaningful if the concept in the causality of its purposiveness is conceived of as the *meaning* of the object. An example might be helpful: When I see a sign which says "Keep Quiet"—say, in a recital hall—I know that it is telling me to keep quiet, or to avoid making noises, within a reasonable range of space where the sign is placed. The sign is thus conceived of as having purpose, namely, to advise (or to urge, depending on how obliged one feels to obey the sign) people to avoid making noises, in just the same way in which a hammer is conceived of as having a purpose of hammering. What can distinguish the sign from the hammer is that the purpose of the sign can additionally be regarded as its meaning. I may consider the sign to be meaningful, if I take it to be a cause of the presence of the concept "keep quiet"²⁰ in my cognitive state upon looking at the sign. That is, there is a causal connection between the sign and my representation of it with the concept "keep quiet." As an analog of [K1], meaningfulness may be given the following definition:

[M1] Meaningfulness is the causality of a concept as a meaning with regard to its object.

An object is said to be meaningful when it is possible to think of the object in terms of some concept (or concepts) regarded as the meaning of the object. A meaningful object is said to have a *form of meaningfulness*. For example, the form of meaningfulness of a sign might inhere in one's thinking of it in terms of the concepts which it evokes. But just like purposiveness, it is not a necessary requirement for the subject to represent the object with a meaning *in particular* in order to conceive of the object as meaningful. Rather, her thinking of the object as meaningful can rest solely on a sheer possibility of conceiving the object as having a meaning, in which case the object's being meaningful is independent from its being represented with any specified meaning. Put concisely:

[M2] Meaningfulness can exist without representation of a meaning, insofar as its form is derived not from a determinate concept, but only from the possibility of conceiving the object as meaningful.

For Schopenhauer, a (non-musical) artwork may be said to have a form of meaningfulness insofar as there is the causality of meaning grasped by the subject, and moreover, the form of meaningfulness of a (non-musical) artwork *may or may not* involve a representation of meaning. If the subject conceives of the artwork as meaningful because she associates it with a determinate concept, then the form of meaningfulness, cognized as such, is grounded in the representation of its meaning as determined; but if, by contrast, her conceiving of the artwork as meaningful is based solely on the strength of grasping the Idea—which is distinct from any representation—manifested in it, then the form of meaningfulness, cognized as such, is devoid of representations and thus is the *mere form* of meaningfulness.

In the case of music, the object being cognized is first and foremost an object of art and thus has a form of purposiveness. The "purpose" of music is, loosely speaking, to "reveal" the universal will to a subject through her aesthetic contemplation. However, it should be stressed that conceiving of music as purposive (in a Schopenhauerian sense) does not involve the representation of such a purpose, since the universal will that music embodies is metaphysically distinct from representations and unrepresentable with any determinate concepts.²¹ The aesthetic judgment that music is "purposive", therefore, is merely grounded in a sense in which there is *something* to be regarded as its purpose, although one could never translate that *something* into any specifiable content without

losing its essence. That is, music in one's aesthetic contemplation is experienced *as if* it has a purpose, and such experience is in virtue of the fact that music has the *mere form* of purposiveness, just as beauty does in a Kantian sense.

Furthermore, music has a form of *meaningfulness* as well. As suggested in [M1], meaningfulness is a special kind of purposiveness, in that the concept involved in the causality of a form of purposiveness can be conceived of as the meaning of the object in question. Music is meaningful, for it is an (unmediated) manifestation of the universal will, the cognition of which via a subject's aesthetic contemplation points to the true knowledge of the world. However, since there is no particular concept with which such meaning can be represented—as the universal will is inexpressible in any other form—the meaningfulness of music is a *mere form*. That is, music is meaningful only in the sense that it is an expression of the universal will, where no representation can be specified. When we conceive of music as meaningful, it is only on the strength of a sheer possibility that the form of meaningfulness through which it is given to us means *something*, though we can never put its meaning into words (or any other form of expression). Music itself *means* nothing but the universal will, and the absence of representations of meaning in music is due to the equally inexpressible nature of what music points to. There cannot be a more explicit illustration of the universal will than how it is manifested in music, for music is the only unmediated expression, a “direct copy,” of the entire will.

IV. What the Musical Form Could Mean

I have argued, in light of a Schopenhauerian account of music, that music can be conceived of as the mere form of meaningfulness without representations of any determinate concept as its meaning. What remains is to show how this approach to music follows the spirit of the classic musical formalism sprung from Hanslick's VMS on the one hand, and on the other, how it can account for the possibility as well as the variety of musical meaning, to which I shall turn in this final section.

To be sure, music must be given to us through some form of representation—perhaps in most cases, through a series of sounds—such that we have the kind of aesthetic experience as we do in listening to music. Moreover, what we may conclude from the Schopenhauerian account of music that I've sketched in the previous two sections is that we conceive of music as meaningful in virtue of the fact that its meaningfulness grasped in our aesthetic experience inheres in nothing but a *consciously perceivable structure*. Now I take it that the kind of structure which gives rise to our conceiving of music as meaningful *just is* what a musical formalist would call the “tonally moving form,” broadly construed.²² After all, the central idea of the formalist approach to music is to focus on the properties that are *intrinsic* to music.²³ Crucially, what is intrinsic to music needs to be distinguished from any of the “extramusical” references (e.g., worldly representations, expressions of feelings and emotions) that are only contingently associated with music depending on the audience's own subjective response.²⁴ Once the contingencies of our aesthetic experience of music are stripped away, we would be left with music perceived (or cognized) in its pure form of meaningfulness. Just as Schopenhauer describes Ideas in a Platonic sense as “the original unchanging forms and properties of all natural bodies” (*WWR* 169), musical formalists also have a general Platonist conviction that our cognitive perception of music is rooted in perceiving its form, which is constituted in the internal relations of a musical structure.²⁵ The reason we find music to be meaningful in our aesthetic experience is that there is the consciously perceivable structure in music that makes possible our conceiving of it as a form of meaningfulness—and indeed, as the *mere form*.

Since a formalist light has been cast upon the Schopenhauerian account of music developed in this paper, it would be remiss of me not to address an expressivist challenge against musical formalism: How could it be the case, given the picture that music in its pure form admits of no representation whatsoever, that we often find music to be *expressive*? Indeed, one of the main concerns for musical formalists has been to explain how the formal properties of music alone may account for its expressive properties.²⁶

In fact, Schopenhauer himself anticipates the challenge. However ineffable the universal will or music is in its pure form, there has to be *some* relation between music as such and the series of sounds, say, present in our musical experience in which we grasp music's form of meaningfulness. According to Schopenhauer, the relation that music bears to the worldly representations which we might form of it is "abstract" and "essentially impossible to demonstrate" (*WWR* 257). Attempting to describe the relation directly would be to presuppose the possibility to represent music with determinate concepts, which is immediately defeated by the metaphysical nature of the universal will. Instead, Schopenhauer proceeds by drawing analogies between certain musical features and human acts of willing and feeling. The harmonic structure of music, for instance, reflects the gradation of Ideas. The "ground-bass", or the lower bound in a harmony, represents the lowest level of objectification of the will; the intervals between pitches are parallel to the particular levels of the objectification. The melody resembles the act of willing: the constant departure from and return to the tonic reflects the endless striving of human beings—from desire to satisfaction, and to the formation of yet another desire. Sprightly melodies with brief deviations reveal the rapid transition from desire to satisfaction, whereas slow melodies, where the dissonances take longer time to resolve, are analogous to the delayed and hard-won satisfaction.²⁷

However, as Schopenhauer warns us, such analogies can show at best an *indirect* relation between music and representations. Those particular emotions and feelings which might be present in our musical experience are not inherent in music, and our use of emotional terms in describing music is entirely contingent. These analogies concern the *form* of meaningfulness in music, as opposed to some specifiable content as *the* musical meaning. In Schopenhauer's words:

Therefore music does not express this or that particular and definite pleasure, this or that affliction, pain, sorrow, horror, gaiety, merriment, or peace of mind, but joy, pain, sorrow, horror, gaiety, merriment, peace of mind *themselves*, to a certain extent in the abstract, their essential nature, without any accessories, and so also without the motives for them. Nevertheless, we understand them perfectly in this extracted quintessence (*WWR* 261; emphasis in the original).

That is, music is *structurally* analogous to our emotional states, but the perceivable similarities pertain only to certain musical patterns and the general ways in which we *will*,²⁸ but not to any of our particular emotions or feelings.²⁹ Music *means*, yet it means abstractly, essentially, and universally.

Although music as such has no musical meaning *in particular*, it is precisely the structural analogy between the musical form and our emotional states that explains why music is often found to have an expressive quality, i.e., that which motivates the expressionist theories of music.³⁰ The expressiveness of music is given by the possibility of ascribing music with meaningful content, which we might take it to "express," and such possibility is grounded in its form of meaningfulness that retains a structure homologous to the specific expressions.

Moreover, the mere form of meaningfulness, which music essentially is, accounts for not just the *possibility* but also the *varieties* of musical meaning ascribable to it. Recall that the nature of music is twofold: It is both the true and profound knowledge of world and a universal expression of our own acts of willing. Schopenhauer's analogies demonstrate the fact that we can perceive certain resemblances between musical patterns and our subjective states of willing and feeling and whereby we might associate music with those subjective content. Such resemblances are revealed to us by the form of meaningfulness in music through our aesthetic contemplation of it. Music embodies in its form those patterns that are structurally analogous to our desire, frustration, and fulfillment. On the other hand, as a direct manifestation of the universal will, music also reveals to us the essence of the world as well as of the entire endeavor of humankind. Therefore, in appreciating music as the mere form of meaningfulness, we are conceiving of the shared essence—between music and us as well as between music and the entire world—which makes the varieties of musical meaning possible.³¹

V. Conclusion

In this paper, I have developed what I take to be *Schopenhauerian musical formalism* and proposed a notion of music as *the mere form of meaningfulness*. I have first presented Schopenhauer's account of music within his more general metaphysical framework. After explicating the notion of meaningfulness with inspirations drawn from a Kantian formulation of purposiveness, I have shown that, in light of Schopenhauer, music is purposive as an art and meaningful as a direct manifestation of the universal will. Given the unrepresentable nature of the will, I have further argued that music is construed as the mere form of meaningfulness without a representation of meaning. Nevertheless, as I have demonstrated in the final section, it is precisely music's mere form of meaningfulness which gives rise to its infinite potential to be ascribed with a variety of musical meaning.

The University of Texas at Austin, USA

Notes

- ¹ See Rothfarb 167–220 for a helpful survey of different paths of the formalist approaches to music, beginning with the influence from Kant in the 1790s and ending with Volkelt in the early 1900s.
- ² According to Alpers, VMS is so influential to contemporary philosophical discussions of music that the formalism Hanslick sketched there may be regarded as a template with which other views of music can be compared and contrasted (“Formalism and Beyond” 257).
- ³ See Alpers 254–275 for an insightful analysis of this trend. Also see Sreckovic 113–134 for a critical discussion of how Hanslick's musical formalism should be interpreted.
- ⁴ A more literal translation of Hanslick's phrase “Tönend bewegte Formen” would be “soundingly moving forms” (see Rothfarb 169), which is more evocative of the connection between music's form and its sonic properties. Also see Scruton 353, where it is translated as “forms moved through sounding.”
- ⁵ Kivy moves to what he calls the “enhanced formalism,” due to the narrowness of Hanslick's original approach. See Alpers “What Should One Expect from a Philosophy of Music Education?” (215–242) for an explication of enhanced formalism as well as other versions of the view.
- ⁶ Schopenhauer's ideas was “exploited by enthusiastic admirers and fanatical converts.” (See Mann 374) Also see Franklin *The Idea of Music: Schoenberg and Others* for an investigation of Schopenhauer's influence on Richard Strauss, Mahler, and Schoenberg.
- ⁷ Schopenhauer's remarks on music take up surprising little space in his otherwise lengthy corpus. See Goehr 200–228 for an insightful discussion of the limits of Schopenhauer's philosophy of music.
- ⁸ The notion of the universal will shall be made explicit in section II.
- ⁹ References of Schopenhauer in this paper are to *The World as Will and Representation*, Vols. I and II, translated by E. F. J. Payne, New York: Dover Publications (1969). The original work was published in 1818 (dated 1819). Abbreviated as “*WWR*” hereafter.
- ¹⁰ Cf. Schopenhauer *WWR* 164–165.
- ¹¹ See Schopenhauer *WWR* 257. Cf. Schopenhauer *WWR* 195–212.
- ¹² Cf. Schopenhauer *WWR* 195–200, 212–213.
- ¹³ Cf. Schopenhauer *WWR* 255–257.
- ¹⁴ Disclosure: I don't mean to offer a substantial reading of Kant's views about aesthetics; rather, my main focus here is on how he derives the notion of purposiveness and uses it in a way to characterize what beauty is. My formulation of meaningfulness in the case of music may be thought of as an analog: music relates to the notion of meaningfulness just as beauty relates to the notion of purposiveness.
- ¹⁵ References are to Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, edited by Paul Guyer, translated by Eric Matthews, Cambridge University Press (2000) with the indicated Academy edition pagination.
- ¹⁶ Though there is the appendix to the first volume of *The World as Will and Representation* entitled “Criticism of the Kantian Philosophy,” Schopenhauer himself has stated that his philosophy is the natural continuation and completion of Kant's. See Schopenhauer *WWR* vi. Also, Schopenhauer holds Kant's aesthetic theory

for high praise, claiming that “The *Transcendental Aesthetic* is a work of such merit that it alone would be sufficient to immortalize the name of Kant” (Schopenhauer *WWR* 437).

¹⁷ Payne translates the term as “suitability” or “appropriateness,” though in the Cambridge edition (eds. Judith Norman, Alistair Welchman, and Christopher Janaway), it is translated as “purposiveness” in agreement with Guyer’s edition of Kant’s *Critique*. I will stick to “purposiveness” for clarity.

¹⁸ Cf. Schopenhauer *WWR* 153–158.

¹⁹ I use the term “causality” with regard to Schopenhauer’s *Principle of Sufficient Reason*. Schopenhauer argues that the principle is derived from four different ground–consequent relations—what he calls the four ‘roots’ of the principle—with respect to four classes of representations: empirical objects, abstract concepts, pure intuitions (i.e. space and time), and the subject of willing. (See *Schopenhauer: On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason and Other Writings*). Rather than just denoting the law of cause and effect as applied only to the first class of representations, the term “causality” used in this paper refers to the general relationship of any representation to what grounds it. The causality in the definition of purposiveness, for example, concerns the ground–consequent relation of an object to an abstract concept regarded as its purpose or end.

²⁰ Grasping the sign ‘Keep Quiet’ might involve several concepts, e.g., “quietness” “keeping” (presumably some characterization of behavior), but this does not affect the main arguments that such concepts involved are (or at least could be) determinate.

²¹ Cf. Schopenhauer *WWR* 255–257. In fact, Schopenhauer denies that concept could be undetermined at all (this is in contrast with Kant; see, e.g., Kant 5:341) and claims that concepts are “entirely exhausted by their definitions” (Schopenhauer *WWR* 260). He also refers to concepts as “representations of representations,” since they are abstracted from the first class of representations, i.e., the empirical objects (cf. *Schopenhauer: On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason and Other Writings* §27).

²² What I intend by saying “broadly construed” is to suggest that formalists may understand musical form to refer to not only those “tone-related” features of music, such as harmonies and melodies, but other musical features as well, including but not limited to musical frameworks (aria, cantata, sonata, etc.), musical shape (the contour of melody, the degree of fluctuation and intensity of dynamic elements, etc.), and musical design (the organization of musical elements such as harmony, melody, rhythm, timbre, etc.). See e.g., Smith (20–38) and Kamp, *Formalism and Expressivism in the Aesthetics of Music*, for helpful surveys of a wide range of musical formalist views.

²³ Given our Schopenhauerian framework, a more precise formulation would be to say that the focus of musical formalism is given to properties that are *intrinsic to the (presumably sonic) representations which we formed of music*.

²⁴ See, e.g., Smith: “a musical formalist must say, at a bare minimum, that “musical form” is whatever is in music itself as distinct from whatever is only causally or contingently associated with music” (22), and Kivy, whose (enhanced) musical formalism is intended to explain the core meaningfulness of “music alone,” without prejudice to other music-associated kinds of meaningfulness (see his *Music Alone*).

²⁵ The point is made explicitly by Smith: “Without the form of X, there can be no cognitive awareness of X as X” (22).

²⁶ Detailed discussion of this topic can be found in, e.g., Kivy (*Sound Sentiment and Music Alone*), Alperson (“The Philosophy of Music: Formalism and Beyond,” 254–275), Smith (“How to Expand Musical Formalism,” 22–28), and Kamp (*Formalism and Expressivism in the Aesthetics of Music*).

²⁷ Cf. Schopenhauer *WWR* 257–261.

²⁸ I use the verb “will” in a Schopenhauerian sense, in that human beings are always subject to the endless force of the universal will and are always in the cycle of wanting, desiring, fulfilling, and frustrating.

²⁹ Langer articulates a similar point in her *Philosophy in a New Key*, arguing that music has its emotional significance only *symbolically*: “Music is not the cause or the cure of feelings, but their *logical expression*...” (176).

³⁰ See Kamp 45–74 for a helpful survey of expressivist theories of music.

³¹ There seems to be a similar idea embedded in Hanslick’s original formalist thoughts about music. In a discussion of the final paragraph of Hanslick’s *VMS* (which got deleted after the third edition), Sousa provides the following, what he takes to be an “internally consistent,” reading: “music evokes the sentiment of union with infinity, partly because we can (figuratively) hear the cosmos mirrored in the music, and such representational power is itself a result of a set of universal principles that underlie ‘musical discourse’” (215), though he argues that this paragraph is inconsistent with the rest of Hanslick’s argument. See Sousa 211–229.

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