

UNRAVELING KANT'S PHILOSOPHY IN INTERNATIONAL MUSIC EDUCATION: FACT VS. FICTION

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ABSTRACT

Some philosophers are crucial sources of reference in the worldwide philosophy of music instruction. German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) is one of them. Despite the complexity of his theory, a simplistic interpretation of it made him the "bad guy" in worldwide music education philosophy because, for example, he supported art for its own sake. His presumptive theories are regarded as the cornerstone of aesthetic education, in contrast to theories of music education that encourage practice and social transformation. Kant's prominence raises the following questions: Is it fair to hold a philosopher from the eighteenth century accountable for the alleged aberrations in twentieth-century music education concepts? What exactly did Kant say, too? This dissertation aims to revise various discourses around Kant's original thought and the function his presumed ideas play in worldwide music education philosophy by addressing these and related concerns. Moreover, using Kant as an example might prompt broader questions about the role of philosophy in music education theory.

Keywords: music education, philosophy, aesthetic, music for its own sake, Kant

I. INTRODUCTION

PHILOSOPHY OF MUSIC EDUCATION?

In international (or Anglo-American) philosophy of music education,¹ there are at least two philosophers who have been significant points of reference in recent years: Aristotle (384–322 B.C.) and Immanuel Kant (1724–1804). They seem to represent two distinct ways of thinking: the first one being

concerned with praxis and ethics, the second one being focused on beauty and taste. In international music education, Kant is often regarded as the "bad guy," supposedly supporting music for its own sake and the aesthetic, thus being a popular target of critique. This fact, however, leads to some questions: Can an eighteenth-century philosopher be blamed for twentieth (or twenty-first) century music education concepts and their supposed aberrations? And what did Kant really say?

Maybe, instead of utilizing philosophers' ideas to support our own argumentations, from time to time, we need to go back to the roots, to the original concept. This is, however, not without risk because philosophies are complex and it is not easy to capture their main points adequately. Thus, this paper tries to offer new perspectives on Kant's aesthetics, as outlined in the Critique of the Power Judgement and the role his assumed ideas play in international music education discourse. Furthermore, this paper intends to start a general discussion about what we do with philosophies in music education: how diligently we read them and if we are only looking for ideas supporting our own argumentation or applications.

By using the critical-hermeneutic method as one traditional philosophical method for analyzing texts, this paper intends to offer fresh perspectives on some of Kant's ideas and their use in selected writings in international music education. It starts with a brief look at Kant's philosophy and aesthetics before moving on to examples of Kant's ideas in music education research. Final thoughts about the role of philosophy in music education philosophy conclude the paper.²

KANT'S PHILOSOPHY IN A NUTSHELL

As an eighteenth-century philosopher, Kant was a child of his time, the Enlightenment, believing in the power of reason and rationality. But he also further develops and transcends the paradigms of his time, famously bridging Rationalism and Empiricism, thus uniting trust in the intellect with the power of experience. In his time, his philosophy challenged established paradigms of thinking and could also do this today, particularly in relation to specific fields such as music education. But to better understand what his ideas could mean in respective areas of research, it is important to take a closer look at his original philosophy.

A Copernican Revolution. While many philosophers have focused on examining the world around us and our role in it, Kant shifts the focus to how we see the world and which mental processes shape our perception. This is crucial for him since we do not have access to the world as it really is, only to what our mind presents to us, shaped by our mental faculties. This new perspective, Kant's Copernican Revolution, is the foundation of his entire philosophy.

Thus, in his transcendental idealism, he distinguishes between phenomena and noumena, between appearances shaped by our mental faculties (phenomena) and the reality outside of our mind, the things-in-themselves (noumena). Since all of our perceptions are shaped by our mind, we have no access to the world as it really is, and we thus only have knowledge of the phenomena, even though noumena exist. This theory leads epistemologically to challenges, for instance, regarding the issue of universal truth. But for Kant, our mental faculties organize our perceptions according to certain categories which are universal elements of human experience and thus let us see such things as

causality in the world around us. Since all of us have the same mental faculties, our perceptions regarding aspects such as causality are similar. Understanding this Copernican Revolution might be the most important point of Kant's philosophy and the precondition for discussing his aesthetics.

Aesthetic Theory: The Basics. Kant's aesthetic theory is mainly presented in his Critique of the Power of Judgement (1790).³ At the core of his argumentation is an analysis of our mental faculties which shape what we perceive as beautiful. For Kant, encountering the beautiful is most naturally connected with judgement and taste because without it, we could not identify the beautiful. Elisabeth Schellekens underlines that for Kant, "aesthetic judgement . . . is to be understood in terms of a highly structured and sophisticated inquiry into a certain kind of perception, contemplation, and assessment."⁴ This means that aesthetic judgement is for Kant not so much about praising something as beautiful while condemning other things, possibly following a bourgeois ideology of good taste. Rather, aesthetic judgement is a basic cognitive process to realize the beautiful when encountering it, following different rules than cognitive judgements. This fact shows one problem in Kant's philosophy, as of many other philosophies: it is to a certain degree timebound which particularly certain terminology such as taste (Geschmack) indicates. In its original meaning, taste is not related to a bourgeois ideology⁵ since a bourgeois ideology did not exist in the way we understand it today.⁶ "Taste" is a notion simply connected with recognizing the beautiful. Another important, but also controversial term in Kant's theory is "aesthetic." Its meaning is related to the original Greek word aisthesis in terms of sensorial perception, connected with the Enlightenment tradition and philosopher Alexander Baumgarten (1714–1762) who claimed that sensorial perception offers a specific kind of insight which nothing else

could provide. But likewise, Kant is part of a development revising the meaning of the aesthetic and aesthetics toward a relation with the beautiful, eventually coining aesthetics as the philosophy of art.

While Kant's aesthetic theory is complex, covering not only the beautiful, but also the sublime, it is focused on basic arguments which are deeply connected with his epistemology. The first foundation of his aesthetics is the freedom of the mental faculties in terms of how our mind reacts when encountering the beautiful. In contrast to cognitive judgements or sensorial perceptions—such as seeing a thing with four wheels and identifying it as a car, thus connecting our sensorial perceptions with the notion of car—there is no clear concept of what the beautiful is. Because our mental faculties cannot refer to a category of what it is to recognize it, they are focused on beauty itself. By experiencing it, our mental faculties enter a harmonious state of free play between understanding and imagination which creates pleasure. Kant writes about this process: “we do not relate the representation by means of understanding to the object for cognition, but rather relate it by means of the imagination . . . to the subject and its feeling of pleasure or displeasure.”⁷ This means for aesthetic judgement that it is “not a cognitive judgement, hence not a logical one, but is rather aesthetic by which is understood one whose determining ground cannot be other than subjective.”⁸ This statement indicates that aesthetic judgement is foremost concerned with identifying the beautiful. Likewise, it underlines that beauty is subjective because there are “no rules in accordance with which someone could be compelled to acknowledge something as beautiful.”⁹

A second aspect of Kant's aesthetics is the validity of aesthetic judgements regarding universality and necessity. Even though aesthetic judgements are subjective, they entail a claim to be universal because the beautiful is seen as “the object of a necessary

satisfaction.”¹⁰ This means that even though aesthetic judgements are subjective, they imply universality and are thus to a certain degree normative. Kant claims that “to say that ‘Everyone has his special taste’” would be to dismiss the very possibility of aesthetic taste, and to deny that there could be aesthetic judgements “that could make a rightful claim to validity for everyone.”¹¹ Kant's solution to the problem of individuality and universality is to state that there is some kind of *sensus communis* (communal sense). All human beings have the same mental faculties, shaping our experiences in a similar way. The *sensus communis* is something which all human beings possess, even though there still are individual dimensions in experiencing the beautiful. Thus, the beautiful generates in all human beings a similar free play of imagination and understanding which results in pleasure, even though there are no universal rules for beauty. This paradoxical nature of the aesthetic judgement as being subjective and objective, individual while at the same time universal and to a certain degree normative, is based on the fact that “aesthetic normativity is rooted in examples of beautiful things and our common experience of them.”¹² Experiencing pleasure is for Kant the most important indicator that something is beautiful.

This leads to a third important point of Kant's aesthetics, the question of what kind of aesthetic pleasure we experience when encountering the beautiful. It is certainly different from sensorial gratification (for example, enjoying our favorite food) or the kind of satisfaction we experience when we have done something morally good (for example, helping someone in need). The kind of pleasure the aesthetic causes in us is disinterested in terms of not being concentrated on the function of an object (for example, not being hungry anymore after eating), but existing for its own sake. This makes the aesthetic judgement “indifferent with regard to the existence of an object”¹³ since it is not about a purpose an object might

serve, it is about the object itself. Thus, what differentiates the aesthetic judgement from any other judgement is disinterested pleasure.¹⁴

A fourth important aspect of Kant's aesthetics is the notion of purposiveness without purpose. This means that the beautiful has no definite purpose in terms of fulfilling a function or accomplishing something. Rather, it is about being free of this kind of utility, while at the same time still fulfilling a purpose regarding being the beautiful, thus causing a harmonious state of our mental faculties and arousing pleasure in us. "Purposiveness without purpose" also means that it is not the content which makes the actual impression on the senses, but rather the form. The form is the reason for the universality of aesthetic judgements, causing our faculties to be in free play.

However, for Kant, an artwork should not only have a beautiful form. It also "animates the soul."¹⁵ Thus, artists create in artworks a specific aesthetic idea or "representation of the imagination that occasions much thinking though without it being possible for . . . language [to] fully attain or make it intelligible."¹⁶ Only the genius is, for Kant, able to create a work of art which entails aesthetic ideas. The genius has "a talent for producing that for which no definite rule can be given . . . [and] consequently that originality must be its primary property."¹⁷ A genius is able to be original in expressing aesthetic ideas in works of art, thereby engaging our imagination and understanding in a harmonious state.¹⁸ Beautiful forms thus lead to a kind of aesthetic contemplation which is pleasurable for us as well as being the sign of a genius.¹⁹

Kant further differentiates for instance judgements of free or dependent beauty. Dependent beauty is seen as "ascribed to objects that stand under the concept of a particular end,"²⁰ for example, churches, and the purpose of the object plays a role in aesthetic judgements. Free beauty is only

concerned with itself, and no kind of additional purpose is involved. Likewise, Kant differentiates between the beautiful and the sublime and respective judgements. Both are different particularly in two dimensions: first, the sublime is concerned with ideas of reason (for instance exemplifying morality much more than aesthetic ideas); second, the sublime is not focused on the form of finality exemplified in works of art, but on phenomena which are bigger than us and make us feel small, but at the same time elevate us.²¹ The sublime mediates something which is exceptional such as the pyramids of Egypt,²² "the dark and raging sea"²³ and "the starry heavens."²⁴ The sublime shows us that there is something greater than we are and wants to inspire us to live a morally good life, according to for instance a divine order, as exemplified in the sublime.

Kant's Contribution and Problems. The considerations above indicate that Kant's aesthetic ideas are complex. While they are certainly the product of eighteenth century thinking, they also go beyond the philosophical framework of this time. Kant clearly helped further developing the meaning of the aesthetic from sensorial perception toward the beautiful and the philosophy of art. Additionally, he separates the morally good and the beautiful, but in terms of rearranging their relationship. There is a loose connection of aesthetic ideas and the sublime to religious and moral dimensions but not in an obvious way regarding the beautiful serving the promotion of ethical intentions.²⁵

According to Schellekens, the contribution of Kant's ideas to the history of aesthetics concerns particularly three dimensions: the notion of aesthetic pleasure and the distinction of aesthetic and cognitive judgements, but likewise the normative force of aesthetic judgements and the ambition to be universal.²⁶ Finally, one of Kant's significant contributions concerns the aesthetic perception as foundation for proper aesthetic judgements and disinterested pleasure regarding aesthetic

experience as a particular “way of engaging with the world and grasping its full character.”

But there certainly is also critique of Kant’s aesthetics. His ideas are not only difficult to understand, but some concepts are not completely clear (such as, purposiveness without purpose or form of finality) and there are also inconsistencies (for example, dependent beauty) or doubtful implications, (for example, that negative aesthetic judgements are not possible).²⁸ There also have been many misunderstandings of his aesthetics, sometimes instrumentalizing it in one way or another, as can be seen in music education research utilizing Kant’s supposed ideas.

II. LOVING HATING KANT IN INTERNATIONAL MUSIC EDUCATION

Kant is an important point of reference in international, particularly AngloAmerican, music education philosophy. However, it is still surprising that he receives so much attention. In the indexes of many music education publications in recent years, there are various entries in relation to Kant aside from explicit chapters about him.²⁹ His name is mentioned for instance in relation to the aesthetic and the aesthetization of music,³⁰ the work concept,³¹ formalist positions,³² classical music,³³ taste,³⁴ considerations about ethics and values,³⁵ pleasure,³⁶ the universality of aesthetic judgements,³⁷ dependent and free beauty,³⁸ the sublime,³⁹ purposiveness without purpose,⁴⁰ or the bourgeois⁴¹ and social privilege.⁴² Particularly in praxial music education, Kant seems to be very popular as an opponent of music as social practice. While there are certainly investigations presenting Kant’s ideas in a way closer to the original,⁴³ much research oversimplifies his philosophy or only refers to the interpretations of other researchers who often follow their own agenda in explaining Kant, seeing him for instance as

the starting point of music for its own sake or a bourgeois ideology of music.⁴⁴

When taking a closer look at what Kant stands for, particularly in praxial music education, it is above all the aesthetic. Thomas Regelski even speaks of an “aesthetic ideology” which was started with Kant.⁴⁵ The notion of the aesthetic is connected to art for its own sake, the work concept, the bourgeois, and a separation of ethics and aesthetics. Even though Kant was supposedly not the only one responsible for a certain development, since according to David Elliott and Marissa Silverman, “a small group of German and British intellectuals . . . among them Immanuel Kant . . . formulated the theoretical foundations of the work concept and the aesthetic ideals that ground it,”⁴⁶ he still seems to be the “poster boy” and main point of reference. This entire development started allegedly with bringing to an end the renaissance of the Greek notion of aisthesis in terms of sensorial perception as brought into the discussion by German philosopher Alexander Baumgarten.⁴⁷ The frequent reference to the Greek origins of the term “aesthetic” and philosophers such as Kant recoinning it by relating it to art, beauty, and taste is a significant part of this argumentation in terms of “the Greek concept of aisthesis was hijacked in the mid-18th century by the lingering Age of Reason.”⁴⁸ Idealizations of ancient Greece and Aristotle are often invoked to present an alternative to Kant’s ideas.⁴⁹ His notion of disinterested pleasure is “the criterion responsible, then, for the rejection of the idea that has existed since ancient Greece of the arts as central to daily practical life and sociality.”⁵⁰

Clearly, Kant’s ideas are part of this development but it was a necessary step in the professionalization of music as art and musicians as independent artists, not always being bound to composing music serving certain functions, like table music. Furthermore, this development does not mean that music was no longer a part of daily life.

People in the eighteenth century continued to sing and dance, accompanying their daily routines or special occasions. Certainly, the result of this development in terms of the emerging dichotomies between music as art or music as part of everyday life, likewise between musicians and non-musicians, in its ideological and discriminating dimensions, might be problematic, as many authors explain.⁵¹ But blaming Kant for a development which has started long before him and went on afterwards, being significant for the further development of music and the music profession, while at the same time, certain kinds of music were still part of daily life, is an oversimplification. Ancient Greece was certainly not a paradise, as has been shown regarding artistic citizenship.⁵² There are many examples in the writings of Elliott and Silverman for this opposition of ancient Greece and the Enlightenment.⁵³ According to Elliott and Silverman, this is part of the “basic package of eighteenth-century beliefs,”⁵⁴ including the composer as genius, art for its own sake, or the development of “good taste.” And of course, Kant is part of this debate:

Establishing criteria for the proper apprehension of aesthetic objects by socially privileged male connoisseurs (as an example Kant) was a major preoccupation of the Enlightenment-Romantic eras. The theory-practice cult of aesthetic appreciation fostered an ‘us-them,’ ‘listener-work’ separation that privileged an abstract and disembodied relationship with musical syntax, rather than a concrete, embodied, sensual . . . participatory relationship with musical-social sounds.⁵⁵

This statement reducing the entire music culture to art music in the eighteenth and nineteenth century is an oversimplification. By criticizing dichotomies, it creates new dichotomies, including the question of whether Kant was indeed a “socially privileged male connoisseur” since even Regelski correctly mentions that Kant did not like music very much. Music served for him much more as an exercise for thinking.⁵⁶ Referring to a

“participatory relationship” is furthermore a kind of anachronistic perspective, using today’s concept for criticizing eighteenth-century ideas. However, the main intention of this argumentation is not so much discussing Kant’s ideas than a rhetorical one: to establish music as social practice as opposed to a concept of music as work and for its own sake. Thus, Kant’s ideas serve a rhetorical function: it might not be so important what he really said.

Another significant aspect of Kant’s philosophy which has often been discussed in international research is the aesthetic attitude of disinterestedness. It is about the need to dissociate oneself from one’s own personal situation regarding musical experiences. Disinterested pleasure is thought to be “responsible for claims that ‘fine art’ evokes a distinctly aesthetic experiential mental state. . . .”⁵⁷ But Kant’s statements about disinterestedness have always to be seen in the context of his epistemology and entire aesthetic concept, and not limited to aesthetic judgement as taste as a bourgeois feature.⁵⁸ Rather, it is above all about recognizing something as beautiful and being touched (or transformed) by it. It might

not be correct to simply state that “for Kant, and many after him, ‘good taste’ was equated with the ‘beautiful’ and the ‘sublime.’”⁵⁹ It is not about the bourgeoisie or elite, about some people having good taste and others not. Rather, aesthetic judgment concerns a basic activity of our mind. It is a complicated and highly structured process of which a disinterested attitude is one precondition, guaranteeing the freedom of the mental faculties to enter a harmonious state, caused by beauty and thus indicating beauty. Only without any purpose in terms of a specific function or interest—with a certain kind of contemplative attitude—is it possible for Kant to make valid aesthetic judgements. The freedom of the mind which is not bound by a concept such as music serving a certain

function and therefore being considered beautiful is important for him.

This likewise gives the sublime a special meaning, for instance, as it might be found in nature, because it is different from the beautiful. Regelski characterizes it as “a related aesthetic condition for experiencing art stems from Kant’s perspective on nature: the attractions of nature have no ultimate purpose beyond human interests: they are just beautiful.”⁶⁰ He continues that “carried into art by subsequent aestheticians, then, is the principle that art exhibits ‘purposiveness without purpose.’ . . . The presumptions that art does have a purpose-but only of being art!”⁶¹ For Kant, the sublime represents ideas of reason and exemplifies morality. When encountering the grandness of the sublime in nature, for example, human beings feel small, but also elevated, recognizing that there might be something which goes beyond themselves such as god and might demand a moral life to be in accordance with it and human beings’ true nature. Regelski also refers, with the same intention, to Kant’s concept of free beauty and respective judgements as “supposedly purified of worldly and personal concerns and concepts, transcended individual differences and thus provided a . . . sensus communis of shared judgement where all could (or should) agree on what was beautiful.”⁶² Certainly, the sensus communis is a contested concept, but it is connected to what it means to be human and to be part of a community of all beings. We seem to have some kind of inner compass; at least Kant would say this with his Enlightenment perspective and his trust in reason and human nature. This indicates that the supposedly strict separation of ethics/morality and aesthetics which Kant is often accused of, might not be completely correct. The connection between ethics and aesthetics is much more complex so that the distinction Kant makes does only concern one level of relation—maybe the obvious one proclaiming a complete identity between the good and the beautiful. For Kant, the beautiful

is not identical with the good, but resembles it and refers to it, thus having a looser connection. But it is still connected. The beautiful is thus the symbol for the morally good, within the epistemological framework the Critique of Pure Reason and the Critique of Practical Reason.⁶³ Since Kant distinguishes different kinds of judgements and cognitive processes in his various Critiques, it is only logical that he differentiates between the moral and the beautiful. But the final unity of reason leads to a new connection of the beautiful and the good, with beauty symbolizing the good, but not being identical with it. So, after all, why is Kant important for authors working within praxial music education? David Lines offers the following explanation, referring to Wayne Bowman’s *Philosophical Perspectives on Music*, published in 1998, as an important point of reference:

Bowman traces this disconnect (of music teaching and learning from ethics, AK) back to the Enlightenment project which he sees as marked by Kant’s separation of the ‘ethic’ from the ‘aesthetic’ in his critique of reason. After that time (eighteenth century), an increasingly discernable separation between music and ethics became apparent in European culture, where music was seen as something purely for aesthetic pleasure and introspection, separate from ethical concerns. Music . . . became an object for contemplation and aesthetic judgement distinct from the thoughts, actions, and social situations of the musicians and listeners who performed and experienced it.⁶⁴

Lines further explains that Elliott⁶⁵ and Elliott and Silverman⁶⁶ have adopted this position “in their description of praxial music education, an ethically positioned music education that seeks to recover what people have lost through ‘aesthetic music education’ and its associated disconnect between music-making activity and human ethics. What is needed is a way of reconnecting teachers and students with the meaningful, real-life aspects of music culture

that they can feel personally and socially a part of.”⁶⁷ It seems that Kant is the “poster boy” for this approach although some researchers also point out that it was not merely him, but people reading, interpreting, and further developing his ideas.⁶⁸ It is set against aesthetic education and Bennett Reimer’s supposedly neo-Kantian theory.⁶⁹ It is likewise about the aesthetic rationale of music education:

This persistent aesthetic rationale for school music naively supposed that music exists to elicit aesthetic responses according to the ‘aesthetic theory of art’ and that students benefit aesthetically from mere contact with music in schools. In fact, however, each music discipline has its own theory of art and music based on empirical and other scientific criteria, e.g. sociology of music, ethnomusicology, music therapy, anthropology . . .⁷⁰

Relying on the aesthetic is seen as a kind of approach promoting music appreciation and bourgeois values. For praxial music education, this concept seems outdated in times when many disciplines offer an empirical approach to music, providing an evidence-based rationale for music education instead of a speculative aesthetic one: “Yet, music education has persisted in relying on a specious aesthetic philosophy of music that, if ever relevant, was suited only to the 17th–18th centuries, where it served the ‘classy’ aspirations of the rising nouveau riche merchant middle class.”⁷¹ This speculative approach—in contrast to a praxial approach proposing music as social praxis, thus being evidence-based—has supposedly created many problems, for example, regarding advocacy, because music education as a school subject was difficult to justify, due to an “outdated aesthetic theory of art.”⁷²

The purpose of this paper is neither to rescue Kant and his philosophy—there are indeed problems with it—or to fundamentally criticize praxial music education. It is an important philosophy but relying on an oversimplified

interpretation of Kant is problematic. Certainly, the claims of praxial music education regarding Kant are partly backed up by research in aesthetics.⁷³ But such notions sometimes take on a life of their own, relying on one-sided interpretations and serving much more a rhetorical function than being based on scholarly investigations. Maybe it is time to reconsider the aesthetic and to critically review the current concepts—and Kant might serve as a good point of reference for this.

III. WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Kant is an eighteenth-century philosopher and it is important to take this fact into account. There are many inconsistencies in his work, some resulting from the time he was living in, for instance regarding terminology (for example, his use of *Geschmack* or taste), a different worldview (for example, women’s rights), a different philosophical world of ideas (for example, the Enlightenment) and also the notion of art (for example, supporting its autonomy). But some of these issues also concern Aristotle although he has rarely been criticized in music education for not opposing the class society he was living in, including slaves, or the marginalization of women. It might be wise to be careful with an anachronistic critique in terms of judging philosophers from today’s perspective. Many philosophers might have been sexist or racist, according to today’s standards by simply following the common behavior of their times. But still, their philosophies can inspire us to think and act in a different way although it might not be what is written in their philosophy, but rather how we further develop their ideas. It is, however, needless to say that this is not unproblematic, and it raises the issue of what the original ideas of a philosopher are and what our applications might be. One crucial aspect is thus to go back to the roots, to read the original works of philosophers instead of only relying on summaries, interpretations, or applications. Even though philosophy might very much live

through the interpretations of various thinkers, we should always go back to the original and get in touch with the initial ideas, or at least try to. While there might be issues of translation if philosophers wrote in a language other than one we understand, historicalcritical editions, precisely documenting the publication history of a work, the choice of terminology in translations and alternatives in a different language, can be helpful. Certainly, language complicates things. But we need to move beyond a tendency for a “Disneyfication” in terms of an oversimplification of philosophies in music education. Philosophy has never been an easy endeavor. It challenges and unsettles, it might even show us the limits of our thinking. But this is the price we have to pay.

This leads to the interesting question about why we need philosophers’ ideas in philosophy of music education. Elliott argues in the only reference to Kant in the first edition of *Music Matters* for a creative application of a philosopher’s ideas with regard to practice since “the application of a philosophy to a practical situation is not a passive process of carrying out suggestions; it is an active process of asking questions about practicalities with the guidance of critically reasoned principles.”⁷⁴ Elliott wants to motivate teachers to ground their work philosophically and to use the concepts of philosophers for their own teaching philosophy and their daily work. This particularly concerns its critical potential to challenge taken-for-granted assumptions.

While Elliott’s ideas might be connected to the notion of justifying philosophy of music education as a useful field for practitioners because their teaching philosophy very much depends on philosophical concepts to guide their daily teaching practice, it might also illustrate a difference between Anglo-American and German philosophy of music education, for instance, where in the former there is a tendency to apply philosophers’ ideas to today’s problems.⁷⁵ This became obvious, for instance, when one reviewer of this

symposium commented it important in writing about Aristotle’s, Kant’s, and Augustine’s philosophical thoughts to consider the audience’s concern “with issues, such as gender, race, identity politics, vulnerability, and institutional politics, among others, that preoccupy contemporary philosophy of music education.” This kind of application cannot be the focus of using philosophers’ ideas in philosophy of music education. It is not always about applications, especially because it bears the danger of oversimplifying or reducing a complex philosophy to what is useful for a certain argumentation. While there certainly is the possibility of a free improvisation on philosophers’ ideas regarding issues such as race or women’s rights, we should take into account that these are much more our own ideas inspired by philosophers’ concepts than their original ideas. Thus, it might be useful to more clearly differentiate between what philosophers really said and what we do with their ideas, how we apply them in a theoretical and practical way and whether the focus is a philosopher’s concept or our own ideas through the lens of a philosopher. Maybe, we need to be more aware of different possibilities of using philosophers’ ideas, some closer to the original, while others are further away like an improvisation on a given theme. But it might be useful to consider these different options and to clearly state what we do.

However, as mentioned above, philosophers’ ideas also have a rhetorical function in argumentation. They might function as an opposition to promoted positions, such as Kant regarding praxial music education, or as a visionary source of authority such as Aristotle. Kant stands for a certain set of ideas which is currently widely disapproved in international music education. But it could be useful to reconsider his assumed role and to more closely investigate what he actually said and what he is accused of saying, particularly regarding the aesthetic—because we might eventually need it in our music education

discourses much more than we previously thought.

IV. CONCLUSION

It might indeed be time to reconsider the aesthetic, including the notion of art for its own sake, and to cleanse its meaning since in other philosophical traditions such as in Northern Europe or China, it is highly appreciated.⁷⁶ There have also been attempts at reconceptualizing the aesthetic for instance in media studies.⁷⁷ At the core of some of these concepts is the notion that young people need a free space which is outside of means-ends-relations to become self-determined individuals. This gives art for its own sake an important role:

Based upon Kant's analysis of the sublime as an expression of the Unsayable, or the truth of the sensual particularity of our experience of ourselves and nature which cannot be captured in the generalization and abstracting moves of conceptual thought and its categories, and upon later German idealist and Romantic developments out of it, it [the philosophical debate for autonomous art] argues for the necessity of autonomous aesthetic production as refusing and resisting any ultimate collapse of the individual into the social, or the particular into the general, or the sensual into the rational, and thus dialectically keeps open the possibility, if only as a utopian hope, or a viable, non-dominative community of free autonomous, rational persons.⁷

To rescue the autonomy of the arts and the aesthetic has indeed again become a topic in philosophy of music education.⁷⁹ But it might be necessary to avoid the mistakes of aesthetic education and its sole focus on musical autonomy and music appreciation, which has, as mentioned above, often been related to Kant. A more promising option might be a two-pronged approach to music education, reuniting music education's societal dimensions with the aesthetic and artistic

ones.⁸⁰ Music and music education have an impact on society but also have artistic and aesthetic dimensions. Therefore, an approach reuniting both sides would be promising in terms of politically and socially responsive music education on one hand, and aesthetic education on the other.⁸¹ Music's transformative potential as well as autonomy, offering a free space for exploration and personal growth through musical experiences, is much needed in today's world of permanent crises.⁸² This would be a way of overcoming the long-standing dichotomy of music for its own sake and for social transformation.⁸³

At the core of this revision of our understanding of music and music education might be a new interpretation of Kant's ideas, moving beyond our current assumptions and returning to one of our main missions in philosophy: questioning our taken-for-granted assumptions. Each time needs to a certain degree to find its own interpretation of a philosopher's ideas, while being true to the original. Maybe, for revising some of our concepts, in view of global crises, we should reread some philosophers such as Kant. He has a lot to say, even though his philosophy is not perfect.

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2. While it is impossible to cover all music education research dealing with Kant's ideas, examples illustrate general directions.
3. One goal of this section is also to refer to Kant's own words since most music education research concerned with Kant is not so much related to the original texts, but only summaries and interpretations.

4. Elisabeth Schellekens, “Immanuel Kant (1724–1804)” in Alessandro Giovannelli, ed., *Aesthetics: The Key Thinkers* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), 93.
5. Thomas A. Regelski, *A Brief Introduction to a Philosophy of Music and Music Education as Social Praxis* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 32.
6. Another issue is certainly the English translation which connects it with certain ideas which might not be associated with the German word for “taste.”
7. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), § 1, 5:203.
- 8 Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*.
- 9 Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, § 9, 5:216.
10. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, § 22, 5:240.
11. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, § 7, 5:213.
12. Schellekens. Kant, 98.
13. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, § 5, 5:209.
14. “But if the question is whether something is beautiful, one does not want to know whether there is anything that is or that could be at stake, for us or for someone else, in the existence of the thing, but rather how we judge it in mere contemplation . . . Everyone must admit that a judgement about beauty in which there is mixed the least interest is very partial and not a pure judgement of taste” (Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, § 2, 5:204–5).
15. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, § 49, 5:313.
16. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, § 49, 5:314.
17. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, § 46, 5: 308
18. “Genius really consists in the happy relation, which no science can teach and no diligence learn, of finding ideas for a given concept . . . and . . . hitting upon the expression for these, through which the subjective disposition of the mind that is thereby produced . . . can be communicated to others” (Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, § 49, 5: 317).
19. The term “genius” is in the eighteenth century the common term to describe successful artists. This meaning is different from what the term genius means today. See <https://www.etymonline.com/word/genius>
20. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, § 16, 5:229.