

Merging philosophical traditions for a new way to research music: On the ekphrastic description of musical experience

Andrzej Krawiec[✉]

This article addresses the subject of the ekphrastic description of experiencing music. It shows the main differences between ekphrasis and commonly used analysis in music theory and musicology. In approaching the problem of ekphrasis with what is called pure music, I emphasize its ancient understanding, thus differing from Lydia Goehr (2010) and Siglind Bruhn (2000, 2001, 2019). The ekphrastic analysis of the first movement of Arnold Schoenberg's Six Little Piano Pieces Op. 19 conducted in this article uses the methodology developed by Gottfried Boehm (2014) and Georges Didi-Huberman (2005, 2015, 2017, 2018) in the discipline of art history. This article aims to delineate a new way of researching the art of music, an essential feature of which is the combination of the traditions of analytic philosophy and phenomenology.

1. Introduction

Lydia Goehr presents two ways of understanding ekphrasis: the ancient and the modernist (including the postmodern). Her article reads: ‘Modern ekphrasis focuses on *works* that bring other *works* to *aesthetic presence*; ancient ekphrasis focused on *speech acts* that brought objects, scenes, or events to *imaginary presence*’ (2010: 397). Modernist ekphrasis is the evocation of one work of art through another, so it takes place within the domain of art. On the other hand, ancient ekphrasis goes beyond the art domain and involves evoking something absent and revealing something in the imaginary or the ‘mind’s eye’. In both cases, ekphrasis is founded on the relationship between absence and presence, concealing and revealing (2010: 392–3, 405). Ancient ekphrasis was primarily a speech act and involved argumentation and persuasion, thus close to rhetoric, and had a solid educative, pedagogical aspect (Webb, 2009: 39–44; Park, 2022: 72–7). Lydia Goehr—as well as Siglind Bruhn (2000; 2001; 2019)—focuses her attention primarily on a modernist understanding of ekphrasis. Concerning Lydia Goehr’s analyses, I would like to make a few remarks to focus on the ancient understanding of ekphrasis, which is closer to the research methodology of Gottfried Boehm (2014) and Georges Didi-Huberman (2005; 2015; 2017; 2018).

Modernist ekphrasis presupposes the intermediality or transmediality of artworks. A representative example of musical ekphrasis is Modest Mussorgsky’s *Pictures at an Exhibition*

(1874), a work that makes Victor Hartmann's pictures musically present. However, if we modify the criterion of intermediality or transmediality with ekphrasis, then in principle, any musical transcription would be an ekphrasis of the original work.¹ If such an extension of the modern understanding of ekphrasis is not very objectionable, let us also note that most often, a work makes present (in the 'mind's eye') some other work by the same composer or by a different composer but belonging to the same or similar musical style.² In this type of ekphrastic and intertextual representation, where one work is presented through another, I believe there is a lack of direct and intentional connection between the works. Only closer or further associations and similarities (and differences) are present. Note that in addition to musical transcription as a musical ekphrasis, paraphrases and quotations of works in new compositions are also possible. Yet, if the listener does not recognize the reference source in the new work, the phenomenon of ekphrasis will not occur. Notational ekphrasis is also a separate issue (Goehr, 2010: 408). Although the sonic realization of a graphic score can be regarded as musical ekphrasis without much reservation, the realization of a traditional score hardly falls within the meaning of ekphrasis because such an extension of its purpose would mean that, in principle, every performance of a work would be an ekphrasis, in which case its modern understanding would come closer to the ancient one. However, it would not be a speech act.

Music is a performative art, where one work exists in multiple performances. Therefore, would we agree that Johann Sebastian Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* BWV 244—which is itself an ekphrasis of the Gospel of St. Matthew—as performed by John Eliot Gardiner in 2017 is an ekphrasis of John Eliot Gardiner's 1989 performance of this work, or that John Eliot Gardiner's 2017 performance of Johann Sebastian Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* is an ekphrasis of Paul McCreesh's 2003 interpretation? The presented expansion of the meaning of ekphrasis resembles a 'slippery slope fallacy', but then again, it shows the gradual absorption of the modernist way of understanding ekphrasis by the ancient one. I will go on to show that a more effective way of analyzing a musical work—namely, a way that tells us something substantial about the work rather than merely juxtaposing it alongside other works—is the ancient understanding of ekphrasis.

Let us examine the ancient understanding of ekphrasis and its application in contemporary aesthetic research. An ekphrasis of a work of art in the ancient sense would be

1 Of course, it is a matter of agreement whether or not the transfer of the sound matter from a piano version of *Pictures at an Exhibition* to an orchestral one exceeds the criterion of intermediality or transmediality. Note that, in addition to musical transcription, paraphrases and quotations of works in new compositions are also possible. Yet, if the listener does not recognize the reference source in the new work, the phenomenon of ekphrasis will not occur. Notational ekphrasis is also a separate issue (Goehr, 2010: 408).

2 In this sense, Frédéric Chopin's *Piano Sonata* No. 3 Op. 58 would be an ekphrasis of *Piano Sonata* No. 2 Op. 35 by Chopin, or *Piano Concerto* No. 1 Op. 15 by Ludwig van Beethoven would be an ekphrasis of, for example, the *Piano Concerto* No. 22 KV 482 by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. The separate problem is to consider the necessity—or lack—of the chronological relationship between earlier and later in an ekphrasis, and thus to consider the paradoxical possibility that Chopin's *Piano Sonata* No. 2 Op. 35 could be an ekphrasis of Chopin's *Piano Sonata* No. 3 Op. 58.

the hermeneutic linguistic act by which the absent is made present, or, in other words, the hidden is revealed. This hiddenness is understood as a potential presence only revealed by a hermeneutics of the work.³ Potency (*potentia*, ἐνέργεια) is also the dynamic (δύναμις) process of the influence and the power to command our reception of it. The aim of ekphrasis, then, is to uncover or reveal the dynamism of the aesthetic experience of a work, and we will devote the first part of the article to this crucial issue; here, let us only remark that, concerning music, it is necessary first of all to show how the ekphrastic description differs from the musicological description and other forms of theoretical analysis of a musical work.

As we have already said, ancient ekphrasis had a broader scope than that, limited only to the fine arts and the work-to-work relation—that of one artwork to another work. This broader meaningful scope of ekphrasis may be helpful in relation to what is called pure music, especially if we wish to demonstrate the close relationship between ‘pure tonal forms’ and emotion.⁴ In the second part of this article, we will examine to what extent this is an effective method of description in practice—namely, whether this ekphrastic description deepens our understanding and experience of a musical work. Since atonal works are considered the most abstract, we shall choose an abstract work *par excellence* for our analysis: the first movement of Arnold Schoenberg’s *Six Little Piano Pieces* Op. 19.

The ekphrasis of a work of art, as the making present of the absent, requires only two things: the originary experience of a work of art and a language that manages to describe this originary experience faithfully, following the artistic and aesthetic properties of the work. An ekphrastic description should be characterized by clarity, intelligible argumentation, and persuasiveness to qualify as convincing. This description should speak about more than the subjective impressions of the perceiver; however, it should demonstrate the close relationship between the work as an acoustic artefact and the experienced aesthetic object. In the third part of the article, I propose to consider whether analytic philosophy

3 This understanding of ekphrasis is close to—although not the same as—the category of anamorphosis in Jean-Luc Marion’s phenomenology of givenness (2002: 123–125).

4 The literature on whether the nature or meaning of music is emotion or ‘pure tonal forms’ is vast and would be difficult even to list here. Arguments on both sides of the debate are based on solid justifications. However, the question remains whether it is possible to remove the fundamental bone of contention between phenomenological and analytical perspectives in the philosophy of music. Are aesthetic properties autonomous, or is their nature emotion or, perhaps, expressiveness? The discussion of whether music expresses feelings or is ‘pure tonal forms’ is somewhat reminiscent, in my opinion, of the distinction between interest and disinterest in Kant’s aesthetics. Instead, let us recall what Stephen Davies has already noted—namely that both dependent beauty and free beauty can integrate (Davies, 2007: 96). It is impossible to deny that at least one of the functions of music is to evoke emotions, but by this alone, can we also claim that the only content of aesthetic qualities are emotions, *ergo* music expresses only emotions? (Davies, 2005: 134–145) The composer or the performer may indeed aim to evoke specific affects or emotions by shaping the sound material of the work accordingly, but do the sounds themselves possess affective or emotional meaning (Henry, 2009: 70–79, 111–125)? Sounds, it seems, are merely an ‘intermediary’ between the intentions of the composer and performer, and the listener’s emotive response to the work and its performance (Young, 2014: 35–86). In this context, new readings of Eduard Hanslick’s treatise *On the Musically Beautiful* (2018) are also instructive (see Guetzalski, 2022).

and phenomenology might not be able to fulfil this task to the fullest. The combination of these two most important philosophical traditions of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries could benefit the discourse on music (and other fields of art) and the development of future philosophy on the distant horizon.

The structure of the article is, therefore, as follows. In Section 2, we shall analyze the differences between different models of the description of a musical work and the ekphrasis of musical experience. In Section 3, we shall examine the capacities of the ekphrastic description concerning so-called pure music using the example of the first movement of Arnold Schoenberg's *Six Little Piano Pieces* Op. 19. In Section 4, we shall examine the possibilities of effectively combining two research perspectives with music, analytic philosophy, and phenomenology. In conclusion, I will point out the benefits of applying ekphrastic description to the art of music and suggest further research perspectives.

2. Description of a Musical Work and Ekphrasis of a Musical Experience

Describing the experience evoked by specific musical works is one of the critical problems of aesthetics. In the tradition of music research, several methodologies have been developed to understand a work. Musicology examines the sources of a work and its context (historical, stylistic, and cultural). Music theory, with its formal analysis, focuses on the detailed study of the structural elements. Philosophical reflection considers the musical work's ontological, epistemological, and axiological aspects. Many theories of the structure and interpretation of a musical work have been developed on these aesthetic-philosophical studies. The differences between the different philosophical research perspectives on the musical work (pragmatism, psychoanalysis, formalism, emotionalism, cognitivism) are, at the same time, a reaction to the transformations within art as specific artistic activities, revealed both in the works themselves and in the views (statements, theoretical works, or artistic manifestos) of their creators. As mentioned above, different methodologies and specific research tools characterize how a musical work is analyzed. All these different methodologies and research perspectives have one thing in common—they use language. So, which language brings us the closest to understanding a musical work? What do these different linguistic descriptions tell us? Moreover, why do we attempt to describe a musical work and its experience linguistically?

Let us recall the words of Felix Mendelssohn:

People often complain that music is too ambiguous, that what they should think when they hear it is so unclear, whereas everyone understands words. With me, it is exactly the opposite, and not only with regard to an entire speech but also with individual words. These, too, seem to me so ambiguous, so vague, so easily misunderstood in comparison to genuine music, which fills the soul with a thousand things better than words. The thoughts which are expressed to me by music that I love are not too indefinite to be put into words, but on the contrary, too definite.

(Mendelssohn, 1945: 313–14)

Music speaks a language of its own, which verbal language (as well as other languages, for example, numerical, symbolic, or the artistic language of some other field of art—painting, dance, architecture) cannot precisely reach. We are not content with merely experiencing musical works, we also want to know why we experience them this way rather than otherwise. We want to see if we experience them adequately and how others experience them. Language allows one to move from a private experience to intersubjective communicability. Language makes it possible to confront not only the different reception perspectives of a musical work but also the different aspects of the musical work itself (although we do not fully know what this ‘work itself’ is). It is a tool through which we can point to what appears in or through the work, or at least point to our aesthetic and emotive response to the work.

What do the different linguistic descriptions tell us? The language of music theory talks primarily about the elements of a musical piece and how a work is structured, and thus refers to it as an artefact. Musicology investigates the sources and contexts of a music piece, locates the ‘place’ of a composition with the past and present (as well as the future), and is, therefore, essentially a historical perspective using heuristic tools.⁵ Philosophy, on the other hand, primarily examines the nature of aesthetic experience, both the creative processes of composers and the receptive processes of listeners. Furthermore, it poses fundamental, yet seemingly obvious, questions such as, ‘what is art?’ or, ‘what is a work of art?’. However, it does not analyze musical works with the level of detail that music theory does.⁶ These three distinct research approaches do not always remain in isolation from one another. Thus, the hermeneutic character of philosophical research is sometimes met with a musicological perspective, creating—especially within analytic philosophy—a vivid and contemporary leading current of philosophical musicology. Phenomenology, conversely, at least as is usually thought, ‘brackets’ (*epoché*) the ontic dimension of the work of art, reducing the field of research to the aesthetic properties of the work itself as a phenomenon, making it difficult for it to come into contact with musicology. On the other hand, the methodology is closer to formal analyses within music theory, but with the fundamental difference that it analyses the aesthetic properties of the phenomenon rather than the artistic (ontic) properties of the work.

Do we learn anything significant about the expressiveness of specific musical works through these analyses within the various scientific disciplines? One can doubt this because, just as biology, psychology, or neuroscience do not reach the inner, spiritual life of the individual (or do so only superficially), theoretical analyses of a musical work do not convey what is specifically musical in it. From where can we derive knowledge about the expressiveness of the work? Is it from the creators, performers, and audiences of musical

5 The historical and stylistic context also includes the issue of performance practice (Kivy, 1995).

6 This difference in the depth of the analysis is well illustrated in visual arts by two works by Vasily Kandinsky—namely *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (2008) and *Point and Line to Plane* (2012). Let us note here that Arnold Schoenberg’s *Theory of Harmony* (1978), written in the same year as *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (i.e. 1912), combines both a philosophical reflection on music (otherwise related to Kandinsky’s views on painting and art in general) and an analytical character similar to *Point and Line to Plane*.

works themselves? Certainly, but let us note that composers (and performers) often do not need precise verbal language to create (or perform) works. If, for example, we look at a master class, the performers primarily ‘communicate’ with musical language, and verbal language only ‘oscillates’, more or less successfully, around the musical matter and its expressiveness.⁷ Historical facts and a music piece’s formal analysis play, at most, a secondary role as a rationalization or objectivization of aesthetic phenomena. Then again, when it comes to the experience of the audience, who are often either music lovers or dilettantes—in both cases non-professionals, although in the former case they may be competent experts—we hesitate to give their opinions authoritative weight. Let us also note that statements about the actual expressiveness of a piece are usually characterized by metaphorical, affective, sometimes poetic, imprecise, extremely subjective language, which offends our desire for rationality and objectivity, and thus undermines our conviction as to whether one can trust such descriptions.

We now ask whether this disparity between the objectivity of the theoretical sciences and the subjectivity of aesthetic experience can be remedied—at least partly—by an ekphrastic description. First, let us note that interest in the invisible dimension of art—inspired mainly by phenomenological research in the second half of the twentieth century—had already made its mark in philosophically practised art history, the most notable examples being the work of Georges Didi-Huberman and Gottfried Boehm.⁸ In his treatise *Confronting Images*, Didi-Huberman (2005) spoke of the symptomatic emergence of the visual (*visualité*) from the visible (*visuel*) and invoked fishing as an expressive metaphor. When the academic art historian pulls out his net, the fish (the figures and details of the artworks) are inside, ‘but the sea that makes them possible has kept its mystery, present only in the damp glow of a few algae stuck to the edges’ (2005: 170). Nevertheless, the work of visuality, Didi-Huberman argues, is an evident and radiant sparkle. At the same time, its experience remains dark, mysterious, and challenging to analyze semantically. It is a paradoxical experience, similar to the experience of the mysterious, in that, on the one hand, it appears impossible to question; on the other hand, it remains epistemically vague and unclear. Visuality is a hidden structure in a work, which can effectively be revealed by ekphrastic description.⁹ Gottfried Boehm follows Didi-Huberman’s analyses in

7 This also makes the argument that music—and its ‘meaning’—is not identical to a language model.

8 Gottfried Boehm and Georges Didi-Huberman are closely connected with phenomenology, or, to be more precise, to hermeneutic phenomenology. Let us add that features of ekphrastic description can also be seen in literary studies by George Steiner (2013a, 2013b; see also Heffernan, 1993). In music, this research track is followed in the article ‘*The Art of Fugue* by Johann Sebastian Bach as an artistic expression of the juncture of being in Martin Heidegger’s philosophy’ (Krawiec, 2022).

9 Basil Dufallo notes that the ekphrastic revelation is well suited to the metaphor of ‘staging’, which bears clear signs of performativity (2013: 15). It is worth emphasizing this because indeed ekphrasis is performative, not merely descriptive. A description acts as a medium through which an unseen aesthetic experience of a phenomenon should be revealed in ekphrasis—that is, in going beyond the description itself and transcending it. The creation of a performative ekphrastic description is an active process of reproducing the invisible aesthetic experience—one that was originally formed on the basis of perceiving a given phenomenon—and is not reduced to listing elements that overtly appear in perception.

succour and devotes considerable attention to ekphrasis, a hermeneutic description that should make a work come alive before the perceiver and appear to them in their ‘mind’s eye’. The ekphrastic description as a hermeneutic exegesis of a work of art should highlight the invisible dimension of aesthetic experience. Gottfried Boehm also asks about the limits of aesthetic reflection, which moves within the debate between the factuality of a work and its impact. He notes that, within this dialectic, art challenges the rational science that is aesthetics. Although the rational claims of aesthetics remain valid, they are, Boehm argues, limited in the face of art and are not entitled to cognitive universality (1993: 45–6). Therefore, an essential feature of aesthetic reflection and the ekphrastic description of a work of art is to bring to light what ‘is’ in the work and how it ‘works’. In *Bildbeschreibung*, we read: ‘Without consideration of the factual side, the overt content of the image would be impoverished; without consideration of the processual side, the latencies, the iconic gesture of pointing, would be obliterated’ (Boehm, 2014: 14). As we should also emphasize, phenomenology itself emphatically shows that the act of pointing opens up perspectives, and enhances and positions the phenomenon in intentional forms of intuition, and thus the pointing gesture itself shares in what *enargeia* (ἐνάργεια) is as the supreme maxim of ekphrasis—clarity, distinctness, and intuition (Boehm, 2014: 25–35; see also Goehr, 2010: 395). Lydia Goehr, therefore, rightly states:

Taking ekphrasis seriously in the arts, we are finally led back to consider the impact that description has for a philosophical theory that does more than mention an artwork to exemplify a premise but actually describes it to reveal a truth that lies beyond what is directly seen, sung, or said.
(Goehr, 2010: 410)

So, let us examine what the ekphrastic description can tell us about the actual expressiveness of a musical work during its sonic absence.

3. Ekphrastic Description of Musical Experience—Analysis of the First Movement of Arnold Schoenberg’s *Six Little Piano Pieces*, Op. 19

It seems that in the case of musical art, we are dealing with three fundamental dimensions of the work:

1. the ontic dimension and the artistic properties of the work as an artefact;
2. the phenomenal dimension and the manifest aesthetic properties of the work as a phenomenon; and,
3. the emotional or expressive dimension as a subjective response to the manifest aesthetic properties whose primary substrate is the artistic properties of the work.

Another proposal for the definition of aesthetic reception would be that our response to manifest aesthetic properties is a purely aesthetic experience analogous to an emotional experience. Thus, explaining pure aesthetic properties through emotionality would be an effective tool for the explication of the content of a musical work. Such a definition of the ‘emotional’ reception of music would certainly better satisfy philosophers of phenomenological provenance. Jerrold Levinson also stated:

In any event, the phenomenological account presumably gains in convincingness the more light we can throw on exactly what an overall phenomenal impression—the suggested core of an aesthetic attribution—might involve. Although I have until now stressed the perceptual character of such impressions, we need not deny that such impressions might be partly affective as well.

(Levinson, 2006: 323)

Recall that the phenomenological perspective defines the reception of a musical work as the concretization of an intentional aesthetic object. However, in this perspective, it is not the phenomenon that is investigated but rather how it is phenomenalized and how it affects and imparts itself to us. Husserl's postulate in *Logical Investigations*—‘we must go back to the “things themselves”’(2008: 168)—thus needs to be clarified. The study of the phenomenon as something itself involves a reductive phenomenological method, which is expressed by ‘the principle of all principles’: ‘*everything originarily* (so to speak, in its “personal” actuality) offered to us in “intuition” *is to be accepted simply as what it is presented as being, but also only within the limits in which it is presented there*’ (Husserl, 1983: 44).

According to this principle, the reception of a musical work is limited to the originary perception of an aesthetic phenomenon, and the task of phenomenology is to make a faithful description of this experience. The listener then plays the role of witness to the manifestation of the phenomenon (see Marion, 2002: 216–19), but this does not change the fact that it is the listener who ultimately determines the senses (*Sinngebung*) of the perceived phenomenon. A description of the phenomenalization of a phenomenon thus does not consist merely of listing the elements of the work in detail but in giving an account of how the phenomenon itself affects us. Simultaneously, a faithful description need not exclude reference to something extra-musical a priori if this ‘beyond’ is realized in the work in its way. Therefore, ‘the principle of all principles’ says that phenomenological description must be maintained within the source of the work as a phenomenon. At the same time, denying that the work itself qua phenomenon may appear differently is impossible. Moreover, its descriptions will also differ. It is also impossible to deny that a specific work of art enters into numerous contextual associations with other works. Finally, there is no denying that the cultural resources of the recipient influence the reception of the work itself too. All this makes the phenomenological description of a work of art a hermeneutic interpretation as it remains within the limits of the originary experience of ‘personal’ actuality (*leibhaftigen Wirklichkeit*) of the manifestation or phenomenalization of the phenomenon. In a similar vein—that is, with an emphasis on the work itself—Theodor Adorno also commented:

Aesthetic experience becomes living experience only by way of its object, in that instant in which artworks themselves become animate under its gaze. ... Through contemplative immersion the immanent processual quality of the work is set free. By speaking, it becomes something that moves in itself.

(Adorno, 2002: 175–6)

While we analyze the first movement of *Six Little Piano Pieces* Op. 19, let us recall Arnold Schoenberg's important statement: ‘The material of music is the tone; what it affects

first, the ear. The sensory perception releases associations and connects tone, ear, and the world of feeling. On the cooperation of these three factors depends everything in music that is felt to be art' (1978: 19).¹⁰ Hearing makes it possible to perceive sounds; at the same time, the sound is an inalienable condition for listening, and listening to sounds, in turn, stirs feelings within us. Nevertheless, how does this transition from sounds to feelings occur in music—not only in atonal music but in virtually every variety (see Henry, 2009: 126–32)? In particular, towards which aesthetic properties do the artistic properties of Arnold Schoenberg's *Six Little Piano Pieces* Op. 19 lead?¹¹

The aphoristic style of the miniatures in this cycle demands extremely attentive listening so as not to miss any precious detail from the delicate fabric of the work, and the belonging of this work to the expressionist style demands the deepest respect for every nuance. Therefore, we are confronted with an artistic statement whose expression we want to know intuitively so we can communicate it in words without falsifying its 'personal' actuality. The piece begins with a four-note phrase in *ppp* dynamics in the middle register, and a light and soft (*leicht, zart*) melody of considerable amplitude (an augmented sixth *F–D#*) moving in a zigzag pattern with slow and even rhythmic values. This melody is accompanied by a short, ascending, and quickly breaking motif of four fast rhythmic values in the lower voice, creating an impression—in contrast to the calm and cantabile melody—of a nervous and uncontrollable tic. This contrast between the tranquil beginning of the melody and the nervous motif of thirty-two notes immediately arouses anxiety. The direct source of this anxiety is the phenomenalization of the artistic (sonic) material, which always serves as the basis for a specific aesthetic experience in 'personal' actuality. It fixes one's attention on it, but this is not a simple compositional ploy intended only to focus the listener's attention but is constitutive of the motivating elements of the entire first movement, *Six Little Piano Pieces* Op. 19. In bar 2, during the duration of the second phrase—in which the melody has a softer shape than a moment before—the 'nervousness' of thirty-two notes appears once more, but already in a descending motion, which in addition calms down, passing into the rhythm of sixteenth notes. From bar 1, the melody of this piece gives the impression of speech-singing (*Sprechgesang*)—thus

10 The terminology needs to be clarified here. The 'tone' in Schoenberg's sense corresponds to what Scruton calls 'sound', and the 'tone' in Scruton's sense corresponds to Schoenberg's 'world of feeling' and Kandinsky's 'Klang' as 'inner meaning' (Scruton, 1999: 19–20; Kandinsky, 2008: 66).

11 In my analyses, I will use the 1968 edition of *Six Little Piano Pieces* Op. 19 Universal Edition (Vienna). In analyzing this work, I have referred primarily—but not exclusively—to Maurizio Pollini's 2001 CD recording. This ekphrastic description refers to an aesthetic experience arising from a particular performance of the piece, and referring to the composition's score primarily serves to accurately locate the material (ontic) origin of certain aesthetic properties, and secondarily also to evoke the composer's intentions as conveyed in the score. It is therefore first and foremost an analysis of aesthetic experience, rather than of the score, and it would make sense to conduct further in-depth comparative studies that would include a more extensive number of performances of the piece. Indeed, as Eric Clarke rightly pointed out, 'whether listeners believe they are listening to performance or to "the work itself," there is no escaping the reality that it is a performance (or recording) that they hear' (Clarke, 2002: 194), which also implies that we come to know a musical work through its particular sonic performances, rather than solely on the basis of reading its notation in the score.

anticipating, *nota bene*, the not much later work *Pierrot Lunaire* Op. 21—which makes its expressiveness close to the power and persuasiveness of Baroque music rhetoric. This recitative and delicate singing (maintained in a slow rhythm and dynamics between *ppp* and *piano*), somewhat hesitant and hesitating (*etwas zögernd*), lasts until bar 3. In the third bar, an ethereal motif (*flüchtig*) appears for the first time in a high register. Like a *leitmotif*, it will continue to haunt the melody later on as its mysterious *quasi-commentary*. In bar 4, the structure of the piece begins to thicken, and we can already distinguish four voices, each with a distinct dynamic. Initially, the most prominent voices are the soprano and tenor. Still, after a while (in bar 5), a motif in the bass and alto also makes its expressive presence felt. The entire passage (bars 4–6) exudes a heightened expressiveness, which not only is apparent from the very term *espressivo* in the score (in bar 4) but is also indicated by the numerous interpretative marks placed next to the notes—dynamic markings (in bar 5 alone there are as many as eleven graphic *crescendo* and *diminuendo* marks), *marcato* marks, overlapping phrase arcs, and co-occurring motif arcs. Simultaneously, the passage still gives the impression of hesitation and indecision. It is as if an attempt is being made to utter something important, but after a short while (after only a few notes), the utterance withdraws, hides and conceals itself. Bar 7 introduces a marked revival through a restless punctuated rhythm (maintained in *pianissimo* dynamics) in a stepwise chromatic melody in the lower voice (a melody reminiscent of Bach’s musical autograph B-A-C-H). This motif is accompanied by two short (sixteenth notes) *arpeggio* chords in the upper voice, seemingly adding nothing significant to this bar. Even so, after a while (in the following bar 8), an airy (*flüchtig*) motif of fast rhythmic values in the high register appears (for the second time in this piece). These broken *arpeggio* chords in bar 7 anticipate and prepare for the return of the motif, which, with its fleetingness, again stigmatizes the piece with its ephemerality. Suddenly, in bar 8, a *tremolo* appears in the middle register, marked with an accent but immediately withdrawn (*fp* dynamics, and already by the second thirty-two note, a *diminuendo* mark has been placed). The *tremolo* in *pianissimo* dynamics in bar 9 evoke strong anxiety, perhaps even fear. Still, a melody soothes this mood in the lower voice based on two descending notes in the soft interval of a major second.¹² The *tremolo* ceases, transforming into a standing chord, and once again—the third and final time—an airy and fleeting motif of demisemiquavers in the high register resounds (bar 10). After the quieting of these strong emotions, we hear, in bar 11, a singing motif of four rising and falling eighth notes in the low voice, accompanied by the *crescendo* and *diminuendo* dynamics most natural to the expression of this motif, as well as *ritenuto* agogics topped by the *fermata* articulation mark. This tranquil motif reaches its final resolution in bar 12, where it takes the form of a *quasi-consonance* in harmonic juxtaposition with a resounding chord, a remnant of the *tremolo* effect—for the melody of this theme crowned with the *E* resolves the dissonant *E♭* in the tremolo chord and leads to a gentle harmonic

12 It may be of interest to some research perspectives that the entire first movement of Schoenberg’s *Six Little Piano Pieces* Op. 19 is 17 bars long, so bars 8–9 are the central moment of this miniature.

major–minor ending.¹³ From bar 13 onward, there is an epilogue that begins with a more decisive dynamic. Though *mf* is the highest dynamic level in the piece, here we have the additional compositional suggestion of ‘*mit Ton*,’ which corresponds to the more commonly used Italian term *sonore*. This is paired with a regular rhythm, characterized by four eighth notes of the melody over two quarter note chords. Furthermore, the melody reaches its longest phrase in the piece, continuing until the beginning of bar 15. The tempo of the eighth notes in bar 14 slows down noticeably (*molto rit.*), and the harmonic structure becomes increasingly lean. The melody no longer flows in a series of eighth notes. Still, it stops twice on quarter notes until finally, the last eighth note of the melody in bar 14 sounds lonely because it has been completely abandoned by the support of the chords, which in bar 13 sounded clear (*mit Ton*) and were strong support for it, but have discreetly withdrawn, fading away. We perceive this withdrawal of the chords in bar 14 with some disbelief, for it becomes strange, uncomfortable, and restless without them. The melody (in this bar, its amplitude is a tritone interval) on the last solitary note seems to recognize that it has been left alone and looks out for possibilities as to which way to go next. Eventually, the melody decides to jump a major seventh upwards. From the beginning of bar 15, it continues at this pitch (the *Bb*) almost to the very end of the piece, for in the last two eighth notes in bar 17, it still moves chromatically in a descending motif of the notes *B–Bb*. This upward leap of the melody by a major seventh is accompanied by a bright and penetrating chord in the high register (marked in the score with an accent, although it is an accent within the *ppp* dynamic), which harmonically resembles the earlier airy thirty-two note motives. This chord fuses closely with the melody as it accompanies it in the final chromatic motif of descending two eighth notes (*B–Bb*). This static melodic–harmonic continuation is complemented in bar 15 by a lower voice, which ascends two sixteenth notes to a dotted quarter note connected to a quarter note (also reaching the interval of a major seventh) and stops in a long continuation before descending in a calmer rhythm in the next bar as if reconciling itself to the decision to ascend taken a moment ago by the melody in the middle register. Significantly, the ending of the melody in the lower voice is a descending interval of a minor second (*F#–F*), so it is the same motif as the last

13 The major–minor chord here consists of the notes *E, D, G, B*, so its harmonic ambivalence is due to two possible interpretations of this consonance: an *E* minor triad with a minor seventh or a *G* major triad with a major sixth. In the *tremolo* chord, we still had a dissonant *Eb*, which—as we would say in traditional functional harmonics—resolves to an *E* in the last note of the melody. In this case, it would perhaps be better to say that the *Eb* loses its dissonant meaning in favour of the ‘consonant’ meaning of the *E* in the lower voice. I mention this because the appearance of a chord with a tonal character in an atonal piece is an atypical moment and probably also not without significant musical meaning, as this chord—alluding to the tradition of the major–minor system—affects us as something familiar, accustomed, native, and as something in which we feel safe. We also note that the harmony of the chord in bar 12 can be seen in the score. Still, in practice, the chord, which, in the middle of bar 10, goes from *tremolo* to standing notes in *pianissimo* dynamics, often (although not in every performance) loses its sound completely or almost entirely so that the last note of the melody in bar 12 sounds alone—that is, without the harmonic colouring of the resounding chord.

two chords in the piece and the melody in the middle register, again accompanied by the notation *molto rit.*, and the last consonance is marked by the fermata.¹⁴

As I have tried to show, the entire first movement of Arnold Schoenberg's *Six Little Piano Pieces* Op. 19 evokes impressions of unease, uncertainty, amazement, fear, nervousness, mystery, ephemerality, delicacy, gentleness, and, at the same time, heightened expressivity. All these feelings are related to the aesthetic qualities concretized sonically by the performance of Maurizio Pollini (2001). Together, all these aesthetic properties result directly from the organization of the artistic properties and, let us emphasize, its purist performance.

I want to make one more general remark relevant to *Six Little Piano Pieces* Op. 19 and many other works by Arnold Schoenberg. We said earlier that the melody of this piece is maintained in the style of speech-singing (*Sprechgesang*), making it similar to Baroque musical rhetoric. Let us now add that this is one of many similarities to the Baroque style since the multi-plan thematic structure of this piece creates free polyphony. Adorno's words are appropriate for this piece:

Schoenberg proved to be an exponent of music's most secret tendencies by deriving a polyphonic organization from the material itself, no longer imposing it on the material from the outside. This alone placed him among the greatest composers. Not only did he develop a purity of style—the coequal of the stylistic models that formerly unconsciously determined composition—but he also cast doubt on the legitimacy of style as an ideal. But a pure musical phrase once again exists. Twelve-tone technique taught how to conceive simultaneously of a multiplicity of independent voices and how to organize them as a unity without the crutch of the chord.
(Adorno, 2006: 71–2)

Additionally, the free atonality in Schoenberg's analyzed work is organized as if it were subject to the 'principle of the inner need' repeatedly discussed by Kandinsky in a strict (although not dodecaphonic) manner (see Schoenberg, 1978: 18; see also Kandinsky, 2008: 63–96).

Let us also emphasize that the ekphrastic description of the first movement of *Six Little Piano Pieces* Op. 19 could have looked different, primarily if we were referring to a performance other than that of Maurizio Pollini. The different interpretive decisions of the performers significantly impact the ekphrastic description, as the different concretization of the work's artistic properties significantly affects its aesthetic concretization. In addition, the description would hit upon the aesthetic content of the phenomenon in a slightly different way, depending on who would provide an ekphrastic description (e.g. performer, listener, professional, music lover, etc.). Here, however, it was primarily a question of testing the ability of this type of description to make the actual expressiveness of the work present in its acoustic absence rather than a comparative analysis of different

14 According to the composer's note in the score, the individual Op. 19 pieces should be separated by an extensive pause and should not pass one into the other (*Nach jede Stück ausgiebige Pause; die Stücke dürfen nicht ineinander übergehen!*).

performances of the work or different ekphrastic descriptions of the same performance of a work. Moreover, it would have been worthwhile to break down all the successive movements of the *Six Little Piano Pieces* to show the integrity of the whole cycle. However, we must limit our goals to describing only the first movement because of the lack of space for a more extensive analysis.

4. Phenomenological-Analytical Research Methodology

First, as briefly as possible, let us summarize the features of an ekphrastic description of musical experience. It, quite obviously, does not aim to replace other ways of analyzing a work of music but rather to select from them what is likely to contribute to a compelling reconstruction of the originary aesthetic experience in the absence of the work itself in acoustic form. This description is inherently subjective but significant because it seeks a justification for the aesthetic content experienced in the object (the work) and not in the subject.¹⁵ At first glance, it is an aporia. Why, if we want to describe our aesthetic experience, should we analyze the work in detail? Well, precisely, to find the objective causes of the subjective experience within the work.

For this reason, too, the use of the technical language of music theory and musicology is necessary because it allows us to refer precisely to the concrete sound material (mediated by the score and its performance), which is the primary basis of our aesthetic experience. However, technical language should be balanced, as its excess would drown out ekphrasis. An ekphrastic description is, by definition, hermeneutic, so all intertextual, intermedial, transmedial references and all other motivated stylistic or cultural associations are also allowed, as long as they help to bring out the aesthetic content of the work.¹⁶ This is because everything that culturally informs an individual work of art is worthy of hermeneutical reflection; for this reason, even a cursory sketch of a work's stylistic and historical context is desirable. At the same time, the ekphrastic description should be as concise and precise as possible,¹⁷ and should form a coherent narrative whole. An unnecessary interruption of this narrative would break contact with the aesthetic content, the disclosure of which should be the constant concern of ekphrastic description.¹⁸

15 It's insufficient to merely assert that Schoenberg's compositions resemble Kandinsky's paintings or to highlight that Schoenberg also painted—a talent Kandinsky appreciated. Such generalized statements offer little insight into the nuanced aesthetic experience of individual musical pieces (Boss, 2019: 228–62).

16 However, it would not suffice to state that Schoenberg's works sound like Kandinsky's paintings or to remind us that Schoenberg was also a painter, which Kandinsky also valued as a painter. These statements are too vague and add little to the understanding of the aesthetic experience of an individual musical work.

17 Unfortunately, the requirement for precision can sometimes conflict with simplicity. However, an excellent ekphrastic description should meet both criteria in a balanced way.

18 In the ekphrastic analysis carried out in this article, the narrative flow may be disrupted by the inclusion of bar numbering in brackets. However, I have opted to include this information to ensure that the reader has clear reference points within the piece. While it might be possible to omit some of these details without sacrificing much precision, retaining them provides a more detailed narrative of the aesthetic process of the piece.

Essential criteria for ekphrastic description also include that, through it, an aesthetic experience can be brought to life in the ‘mind’s eye’ given the absence of the phenomenon itself. In the course of ekphrastic analysis, we ask ‘how’ we experience a given fragment of a work, ‘why’ precisely, and ‘whether’ we find the basis for such an experience in the artistic material of the work itself. Discovering answers to these questions contributes to a more profound understanding of and experiencing a given phenomenon. The link between the artistic and aesthetic properties of the work is necessary because by analyzing the artistic properties alone, we learn nothing about their aesthetic expressiveness. By analyzing subjective experiences alone, we fall into a solipsism that blocks intersubjective communication.

Let us raise the critical question: Why does it seem sensible to combine phenomenological and analytical perspectives? The classical methodology of phenomenology is one of ‘bracketing’ (*epoché*) the ontic material of the work and paying attention to the phenomenon itself and how it appears. Mikel Dufrenne, in his 1954 article *Intentionalité et Esthétique*, succinctly defines this methodology by saying that the apprehension of the aesthetic object is accomplished without reference to reality, and therefore without regard to the material (entity) cause of the appearance of the aesthetic object, since in the field of intentionality we do not refer to the painting as a canvas, to music as the sound of instruments, or to the dancer’s body as an organism (1954: 77–8). However, it would be a mistake to think that the aesthetic object has no relation to its material substrate, as Georges Didi-Huberman’s contemporary research in the discipline of art history perfectly demonstrates. These leading examples of aesthetic analysis in the modern humanities call for an analogous reflection in the philosophy of music. Although we are by no means prejudging this, perhaps performers and composers are predestined for this type of reflection in the first place as they are, by nature, closest to the ontic and intentional dimension of the musical work, but also the creative listener is capable of bringing out its truth in the Heideggerian sense—namely, in the phenomenological-hermeneutic sense (Heidegger, 2001: 256–73; 2002: 19–33). In doing so, let us note that hermeneutics within phenomenology also played an essential role for Hans-Georg Gadamer (2004: 245–254, 469–484) and, according to scholars, occupies a similar place in contemporary phenomenological research—for example, Jean-Luc Marion (Gschwandtner, 2014: 51–77; Mackinlay, 2010: 35–56).

Analytical philosophy has contributed notably to the development of philosophical reflection on a piece of music and its performance. In doing so, it is significant that John Rink notes the need to broaden the analytical perspective to include the diversity of individual aesthetic experiences of music audiences on the one hand and the rich phenomenological tradition on the other (2017: 361). What would constitute the common ground and glue within the disparate philosophical traditions? Undoubtedly, the common ground and starting point of any study of both phenomenology and analytical philosophy with the art of music is the originary experience of the musical work in its corporeal reality, ‘personal’ actuality. What remains is to find an answer to the question: How does one analyze and depict music to remain grounded within originary experience?

A common accusation of analytic philosophers against phenomenology is conceptual vagueness and lack of solid argumentation. Conversely, phenomenologists accuse analytic philosophy of excluding everything that escapes evidentiality. On the one hand, one might think that we have intuition unsupported by argumentation and, on the other hand, a rational approach to the object under study that does not allow anything that cannot be substantively argued. Are these differences so significant that there is no way to overcome them? Is there no way phenomenology and analytic philosophy can exploit their strengths, which have individually earned them the status of being significant philosophical currents of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries? In a mutually corrective movement, would not phenomenology and analytic philosophy together achieve results that separately they may not be able to achieve? Developing a familiar path and research methodology (*metodos*, μέθοδος) is undoubtedly a process that requires not only commitment on both sides but also openness to difference. I am convinced that since phenomenology has been able to engage with the cognitive sciences, it is all the more ready for dialogue with analytic philosophy. I am also convinced that if analytic philosophy has an important voice in the philosophy of religion and theology, its voice will be all the more critical in aesthetic questions, where intuitive cognition also plays an important role. However, it can hardly be entirely rationalized. The aim of a standard research methodology for phenomenology and analytic philosophy would thus be to complement each other, making it possible to take into account research aspects such as intuition and argumentation, the originality of experience and conceptual clarity, methodical doubt, and logical thinking. The combination of these two philosophical traditions is, in my opinion, achievable without making impoverishing compromises that could negatively affect the quality of the research conducted.

Ekphrastic description makes use of the principle strengths of phenomenology and analytic philosophy. Phenomenology effectively indicates the different possibilities for understanding a given phenomenon, while analytical philosophy provides a clear argument for accepting one or more interpretations of a given musical work. Phenomenology offers the merit of an in-depth and comprehensive analysis of aesthetic experience. At the same time, analytic philosophy provides the advantage of critically considering the validity of a particular aesthetic experience in relation to its basis, which is the actual acoustic material of the work and its broad historical, cultural, and intertextual context. Combining the strengths of phenomenology and analytical philosophy in an ekphrastic descriptive method can faithfully and thoroughly reflect the aesthetic content of a work rather than just identifying its ontic structure. In addition, this type of description is inherently critical, intersubjectively accessible, and open to further hermeneutic adjustments. These qualities can significantly contribute to a better understanding of the art of music.

5. Conclusion

The ekphrastic description uses elements of traditional models of analyzing the work but sets a different goal. Ekphrasis aims to awaken a vivid aesthetic experience in the absence of a work. It grows out of a direct experience of the sound material and is, therefore, not

only a description of the phenomenal and aesthetic manifestation of the work but also an exploration of the artistic (ontic) properties. Although the ekphrastic description is inherently subjective, its only legitimacy is the objective, sound material of the work. The hermeneutical bringing to light the lived experience of the work is all the better if a direct connection between artistic and aesthetic properties can be demonstrated. Argumentation is essential in an ekphrastic description, which opens the way to further intersubjective research. For these reasons, the most appropriate research methodology is using the achievements of phenomenology and analytical philosophy in combination with detailed studies of music.

However, the first and, as it was, preliminary task would be to determine whether we are dealing with aesthetic properties or emotions (or, perhaps, both simultaneously) when perceiving a work. The relationship between aesthetic properties and emotions or expressiveness is not in serious doubt since it is difficult to imagine a non-emotional reception of aesthetic properties, just as it is challenging to think of an emotional experience without the aesthetic properties of a musical work. I believe that ‘pure tonal forms’ are artistic properties of a work that structure complex sets of aesthetic properties to which we respond aesthetically or emotionally during perception. Thus, it seems that:

1. the artistic properties correspond to the objective;
2. the aesthetic properties correspond to the phenomenal; and
3. emotions correspond to the subjective.

Awareness of these distinctions may help advance phenomenology and analytic philosophy research. However, it is still necessary to establish more precisely how expressiveness or emotions are—or can be—analogue to aesthetic properties.

The second important point is the phenomenological procedure of pointing and the analytical procedure of argumentation. Recall Aristotle’s words in *Nicomachean Ethics*:

it is a mark of an educated person to look in each area for only that degree of accuracy that the nature of the subject permits. Accepting from a mathematician claims that are mere probabilities seems rather like demanding logical proofs from a rhetorician. (Aristotle, 2000: 5 [1094b])

Requiring logical proof with art is impossible, but by considering various possibilities—not so much ‘mere’ possibilities, but motivated prospects—we are likely to understand the work in question better. The mere potential for it not to be empty requires argumentation. Moreover, suppose that this argumentation cannot have the force of logical proof. In that case, it can at least have the qualities of rhetoric so that the argumentation can convincingly (or unconvincingly) justify a person’s views or interpretive decisions. The lack of prospects for a definitive solution to all the mysteries of art should not discourage us from constantly searching for ways to explain why we experience a work of art in one way or another. Furthermore, even if we are sometimes unable to find a good argument as to why we experience a given piece of art in one way and not another, at least through the ekphrastic description, we can point out and communicate this experience to someone else—and therein lies the essential value of ekphrasis.

Andrzej Krawiec
 Faculty of Philosophy, Jagiellonian University, ul. Grodzka 52, 31-044 Kraków, Poland
krawiecandrzej@gmail.com

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