

On (Musical) Taste and Fashion

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The word “taste” is an expression that is frequently used in general conversation; however it also assumes the role of a professional term in the fields of aesthetics, psychology and social sciences, even though this position is of a consistently more problematic nature.¹

The definition of the word “taste” can roughly be described as a more or less cognizant set of selection criteria either in favor of something (preference of something) or, conversely, the refusal of something.² We often hear such statements as “XY has good taste” or “XY has bad taste” (the expressions “to have taste” and “to not have taste” have the same significance). Just as often we relate the word “taste” (as well as the opposite expression of “bad taste”) with some object (or possibly action) and say that something is either tasteful (in good taste) or tasteless (in bad taste).

The concept of taste is of an axiological nature, i.e., it relates to values and evaluation, and this nature has two levels. Taste is the evaluation of something that is external to a person; the form of the judgment is often banal (as well as basal!) – “I like it vs. I don’t like it”. At the same time this taste, or the bearer of this taste, is evaluated by others (also bearers of taste) and in short is characterized as either having or not having taste (a person with good or bad taste).³ It can be stated that the area of taste judgments greatly surpasses the area of art as was already well noted by Kant: this relates to behavior as well as lifestyle in the widest scope of its definition. Let us also note that in speaking of taste, tastefulness, etc., the expressions are used only in relation to realities created by a person – expres-

¹ I discussed some aspects of this problem in my study “K problému hudebního vkusu” [“On The Problem Of Musical Taste”] (*Hudební věda* 2 [1972]: 99–116) and in the entry “Taste” in my book “Stručný slovník hudební psychologie” [“A Concise Encyclopedia of Music Psychology”] (Prague, 1984). and even this text, which understandably focuses more on the aesthetical rather than on the psychological and sociological elements, is partially based on the concept. This text which understandably focuses more on the aesthetical rather than on the psychological and sociological approach is actually the first version of one of the chapters of the publication being prepared on music aesthetics.

² In foreign language dictionaries the French word “goût” (note the relationship with the Latin word “gusto”) has as its primary meanings flavor, preference, favor, tendency, taste, and smell.

³ The expression “taste” (and especially “tasteless” and “tastelessness”) is often used in wider circumstances, for example behavioral circumstance not only of a social nature but of a moral nature as well.

sions of the type “tasteless” are not used in relation to nature whether the object at hand is extremely beautiful or extremely ugly. We would certainly not say that a mountain or river is “tasteful;” it is possible to speak of tastefulness in relation to a garden or a park, but then the evaluation is of something that was created by a person.

Every educated person probably knows the adage of “De gustibus non est disputandum” – “There is no disputing about taste.” It is said that people are simply different and they either like or dislike various things. Based on the aforementioned adage, taste is a personal matter that is nontransferable and difficult to explain. This opinion thus represents one of the most extreme concepts of taste, whereas the concept of taste at the other extreme of the spectrum can be briefly characterized as the adoption, acceptance, and respect of the ruling norm that is the current determining factor for taste and tastefulness. As a result, both good taste and bad taste exist; the latter represents either ignorance of the norm or ignoring the norm. Of course there are numerous positions in between these two marginal concepts and this is one of the reasons why the concept of “taste” is inconsistent. The concept has also changed over time and thus now we should observe its evolutionary paths.

The possibilities for expressing one’s individuality through taste judgments were not very numerous at first and thus it is no coincidence that the problem of taste in early thinking on beauty and the arts was not truly stressed. Every individual was guided by the superiority of myths, gods, and supreme orders – the existence and general validity of intersubjective standards and values was accepted as being definite. Thinking along these lines continued through the Middle Ages and in a certain manner into the Modern Age as well; see, for example, the English aesthetics of sensuality during the 18th century and the German idealistic aesthetics during the 18th and 19th centuries. Within these ideological circles, the concept of “taste” was handled in relation to ethics and thoughts on society in general. The hermeneutic philosopher Gadamer⁴ believes that the key moment in the transformation of the concept of “taste” into a scientific term was its incorporation into the wider concept defined by the expression/concept of “Bildung.” In the aforementioned German philosophy, “Bildung” does not represent solely a narrow view of education but rather a concept of the creation and formation of human nature that is permeated by a wider and philosophically more significant new age humanism. This includes not only the formation of spirit (Geist – ingenio) but also the formation of taste (Geschmack – gusto). An intellectual then has the freedom to disassociate from the matter at hand, the freedom to cognitively and deliberately differentiate and select,⁵ to select but on the basis of recognition and “voluntary” association with the opinions

⁴ Hans-Georg Gadamer: “Wahrheit und Methode. Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik” [“Truth and Method: Fundamentals of a Philosophical Hermeneutic”] (Tübingen, 1965).

⁵ There is however often a reduction of taste to the level of sensory satisfaction – refer to Gadamer’s references to the concepts presented by Baumgarten (gustus = iudicium sensitivum – *gusto* = *sensory judgment*), Tetens (Iudicium ohne Reflexion – *judgment without reflection*), and Kant (who writes of the sensory judgment of perfection); we also find reference to this concentration on the moment of sensual recognition in the work of Susanne K. Langer (*Feeling and Form* [New York, 1953], 14), which describes taste as a pleasant or unpleasant reaction to a sensory stimulus.

and judgments of competent authorities. Gadamer also mentioned the belief that there is a relationship between the start of a “Bildungsideal” and the disintegration of society based on class privileges and the creation of a “new” (bourgeois) society that is connected by shared ideals and lifestyles. “Good society” is then directly represented by a society of individuals with good taste.

This is thus in conflict with the concept that declares the subjectivity and arbitrariness of taste (refer to the relatively skeptical adage of “De gustibus non est disputandum”) and emphatically and knowingly declares taste to be the acceptance of social norms to which an individual’s tendencies and preferences can be and must be subjected and adapted.⁶

Taste is therefore something that can be personally acquired but at the same time is something external, something that does not always express an individual’s true nature. Within this concept taste is defined primarily as the act of accepting or refusing and does not recognize any fluctuations; taste thus does not always know its reasons and does not take any different positions on taste into consideration. The existential characteristics of taste as perceived by this philosophically aesthetic concept are thus security (primarily given by agreement with “general” taste) and then also negativity (taste develops primarily as a result of abhorrence of the distasteful).⁷ Taste and taste judgments are also included within a wider sociological perspective by numerous other philosophically aesthetic schools of thought including of course Marxism.⁸

Even though the adage of “De gustibus non est disputandum” is very old, individual taste, as has already been indicated, is something that mankind attains through personal development. It is a difficult and gradual process to reach the point at which personal subjectivity is comprehended and can be developed; an individual very gradually confirms personal individuality through the freedom to accept or to refuse. As it was previously a necessity to “identify with,” it is now possible to be different. And it is specifically this area of lifestyle and the area of art within its framework that provided an environment appropriate for the application of personal differences and individuality. There was no threat of a direct conflict with the authorities, represented mainly by the church and the state, as was the situation in the area of religious beliefs, and sometimes even science, gradual expansion, new worlds and experiences, new schools of art and new personalities expanded the range of choices. Individual (but also confrontational group) taste is therefore possible on the increasing level of the complexity of social structure and its

⁶ With consideration to the normative nature of taste, Kant allowed for the possibility of its cultivation: perfect taste would include all of the works created by geniuses.

⁷ For example, Jean Jacques Rousseau declared that he felt taste but never explained that differences in taste do exist or the basic agreement of “good tastes” (refer to the definition of “Goût” in the “Encyclopédie de la musique II” [“Dictionary of Music: Part II”] [Paris, 1959]).

⁸ For example, Sáva Šabouk in his book *Jazyk umění* (Prague, 1968) defined the wider structure of which taste is a component, as an “aesthetic ‘I’ perspective”. Within this perspective, he incorporated the ability to perceive forms, the relatively static grouping of aesthetic standards of “good taste,” the degree of agreement between personal value systems with current overall human valid positive values, and, at the same time, the openness of the structure, i.e., the ability to change the status quo (specifically art that interferes with the canons of “good taste”).

dynamics. The historical trend of emphasizing options and expressing individual taste does however have its limits, both social as well as psychological: the tendency to create and respect aesthetic standards continues even in the most modern era although it does have continuously newer and newer forms.

In order to briefly summarize this more or less historical excursion into the dual interpretation of the concept of “taste”, we must state that both interpretations exist in the form of a somewhat dialectical relationship of mutual incompatibility yet at the same time a state of mutual interconnectivity and influenced by their temporary victories and defeats.

Although the opinion that taste is arbitrary is quite common, it cannot be supported even by standard “common sense”: the relationship between ethnic, social, and other environmental factors, as well as education and age on the one hand and taste on the other, is all too apparent. If animals are determined by their biological structure, humans are determined primarily by social factors, i.e., belonging to a certain culture as represented by a wide and culturally specific system of norms; there is a specific interaction between each individual and his or her specific cultural environment. Even though the biological and psychological characteristics of humans have significant impact (uniting and at the same time individualizing), culture holds a superior position as individuality is determined primarily by upbringing and both the life and psyche of members of various cultures are guided by characteristic cultural patterns. These cultural patterns lie not only above and external to an individual but are directly within individual as well – they become apparent through the individual’s experiences and activities. Cultural determination is actualized within several spheres: within the significant social structures, in specific historically political situations within a society, and in microstructures. The higher level of structures forms an abstract “set of all options” but it is primarily the microstructures that have a specific influence over an individual, i.e., mainly family and various informal groups whose significant role in shaping opinions and attitudes, and thus taste as well, is extremely high.

As we seem to have entered the sphere of psycho-sociological problematics as connected with the concept of “taste,” let us incorporate several important thoughts from the psycho-sociological field in our discussion on aesthetics as well. Taste is one of the properties of personality (the French classicist Boileau-Despréaux even coined the famous phrase “style – that is the person”); it is also possible to state that taste is a personal manner of viewing reality, the expression of a person’s internal state through their selection. A person’s taste is dependent on his motivational structures, on his attitudes, and on his preferences (taste is a certain form of preference – it represents preference within the area of aesthetic phenomena). It is possible to differentiate authentic taste from aspirational taste. Authentic taste originates from an individual’s needs – it expresses individuality; aspirational taste is driven by a diversely motivated effort to conform to the ruling norm (this norm is generally set by the majority, but sometimes by the elite). When evaluating taste and taste judgments, there are often mentioned the consistency or, conversely inconsistency of taste (good taste in one area is not always accompanied by good taste in other areas; a certain level of consistency is naturally not only desired but actually occurs quite

often), the rigidity of taste or, the flexibility of taste (rigid refers to taste that is limited and cannot be developed, but the optimal situation is a certain measure of flexibility, or elasticity, i.e., the ability to react adequately to even unfamiliar stimuli and to be able to embody them in an new taste norm, etc.), taste suggestibility (it has been proven that taste judgments are often made under the influence of “opinion leaders,” i.e., strong individuals from the surrounding environment; quite often they are directed and even manipulated by criticism, marketing strategies on the cultural property market and today, primarily as the consequence of mass media).

As far as musical taste is concerned, it is possible to establish three primary moments that share in the creation of musical taste and are incorporated within it. The first is the sphere of an individual’s musical experiences wherein the system of musical abilities represents only a limiting foundation and wherein the most important role (both positive and negative) seems to be emotionally accented musical experiences that occurred primarily during the formative period of development (more primitive and narrower taste seems to be cemented fairly early as opposed to sophisticated and flexible taste that is the result of unending evolution). The second sphere is external to music and is at the level of individual psychology. Complex interaction within this sphere includes elements such as personality characteristics (i.e. will, temperament, structure of abilities, etc.), developmental personality layers, types of motivational structures (inherent motivational dispositions, actual needs and the satisfaction of those needs, reactions to the quantity and quality of stimuli, etc.). Intelligence plays the role of an integrating element, which, in agreement with Piaget, we perceive as a structure that enforces certain forms for the contacts between a subject and objects within near or distant surroundings and its originality depends primarily on the nature of the forms that it creates for these purposes. The third sphere is cultural determination in the broadest sense of the word; it includes upbringing and education as the rational acceptance of the historical experiences of humanity. It can be surmised that it is from this third sphere that the basic outlines of the taste preferences of a specific individual are drawn (there are certain defined possibilities and limits), whereas it is in the first and second spheres (that is, within their interconnections) that the “personal index” of taste is embedded.

If we return to the more general question of the properties of taste and the use of the characteristics of taste, specifically the bearers of the taste, then we must remember that the majority of used and possible characteristics of taste are of a polar nature: good taste – bad taste, clear-cut – unclear, developed (mature) – undeveloped, selective (fine) – vulgar, certain – uncertain (this of course is not a full list of characteristics); we can observe variations in the values on a scale ranging from positive to negative. Pairs such as standard – eccentric and conservative – avant-garde, wherein valorization is not so unambiguous, are also possible.

Taste judgments are primarily applied in the area of aesthetics reception and less in the area of the creation of aesthetic values or, in the creation of art; it was Rousseau who made the fitting comment that taste chooses but genius creates. An individual applying a taste judgment reviews what has already been created and chooses from the complex

of “ready-made” values with the help of both objective as well as subjective norms and standards. On the other hand, at the moment of creation the artist stands in front of “nothing,” in front of an emptiness that he is inspired to overcome, to fill. He creates something that has never existed before and at that time norms and the application thereof are of potential and significant, yet not decisive, importance. The need for self-expression, the need to express the changing world and life (or more precisely stated: the need to express oneself to the changing world and life) necessarily leads to breaking norms and conventions and bringing forth new rules by promotion of the creation itself, but sometimes by means of explication and exegesis as well. The creation by means of its definition is not solely the result of the application of taste judgments even though the artist consistently judges his theme, its intended form, and contents during the creation process and that not only by means that are generally available but also by those which he must yet discover, try, and use. As opposed to the recipient of the creation who can view everything at a surface level, the artist concentrates on depth.

It is therefore no surprise that artists even when they are not creating and are making their own taste judgments apply taste that is more clear-cut rather than vague, or very flexible or even elastic; this applies primarily to taste within their own branch of art. Their taste judgments then reflect an affinity and declaration for “their own blood type” and often unfriendliness toward phenomena that are in opposition to their feelings and understanding of the world, their expectations about the mission of art, and their methods of working. For example, consider Spohr’s lack of understanding of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony (it’s ugly, in bad taste, and cheap), Berlioz’s opinion on Wagner (he’s insane), Rossini’s statements on Wagner (he had some good moments but some dreadful quarter-hours), Wagner’s judgment of Brahms’s chamber music (it’s boring and banal; add to that Wolff’s comment that the ability to compose without ideas found its most distinguished representative in Brahms), Stravinsky’s judgment of Richard Strauss’s operas (banality triumphs therein, etc.). Of course in some instances, competitive jealousy plays a role (let us remember Wagner’s attitude towards Meyerbeer as related to Wagner’s anti-Semitism), but more often it is an emphatic announcement of the different positions taken by the artists in question or an indirect announcement of the quality of one’s own creation. Revulsion towards a different “taste perspective” is related to the creator’s natural egocentrism which, in order to be able to submit to the torments of creation (when it comes to creating, there is always uncertainty of the results and thus risk), must always be convinced of the correctness, the necessity, the sole option of one’s own work, one’s own path.

Kant, who has already been mentioned within this text, also specified that taste judgments are applied primarily in the area of fashion and that is the domain of the changing and of the unnecessary, i.e., of something that can be either one way or another: fashion embodies no other norm other than consensus (he also noted that it is better to be a fashionable lunatic than to be opposed to fashion). It is also said about fashion that it is a short-term preferred (or forced) ideal of beauty, that it varies from individual taste by its very “staidness” (it tends toward uniformity but at the same time is also an expression of being different “from those others” who do not follow fashion, or cannot reach it),

that it is at home primarily within a wide aesthetic sphere (but not necessarily in art). The aesthetics associated with an individual's appearance are primarily concerned with that which is possible to change and influence (attire, hairstyle, cosmetics, accessories, etc.), an individual's living environment (primarily interiors and their furnishings, fashion trends in design, etc.), lifestyles (such as fashionable ways of spending leisure time or fashionable vacation spots, but also fashion trends in selecting names for children, in manners of expressing oneself, etc.). Fashion (fashion trends) differ from style (or even composition) by their limited longevity (fashion items "morally age" – for example, many think that wearing "last year's fashions" means losing prestige), by the fact that changes in fashion are not dictated internally, but rather externally through social dictates, by the fact that changes in fashion are closely tied to the market and its demands, by the fact that fashion generally turns to clear-cut social groups (special fashion for the young, for white-collar classes, etc.).

Usually fashions and fashionableness are fought against but even these phenomena have positive traits. They add to the colorfulness of the scene, sometimes bring new discoveries and attention to heretofore unnoticed and unused aspects of the phenomena and in the long-term might be transformed into long-lasting trends. The phenomenon of fashion or fashionableness is reflected even within a wide sphere of art, respectively within various transitional areas to and from art. However, fashion within art does not have the same organizational and ruling function that it has within the wider arena of aesthetics phenomena. A few historical examples: in the eighteenth century Italian opera was a fashion phenomenon in Paris, elements of "Turkish music" were fashionable in the period following the Turkish wars in the Central Europe (see some compositions of Mozart), Wagner and his Bayreuth were fashionable in their time, during the twenties of the previous century, jazz and modern dancing were in fashion, etc. Today music festivals are becoming fashionable (especially some of them – for example the reincarnation of the Bayreuth Wagner Festival), as well as certain types of artistic expression (such as the wave of musicals in the Czech Republic during the 1990s), some artists (for example some of the performers of classical music who reject traditional stage performances, dress, and behavior); some composers' names, specific titles, recording, etc. can come into fashion.

The fact that fashion and fashionableness leave their mark on the image of musical life is apparent. Let us recall the way in which the work of Johann Sebastian Bach was undervalued after his death and the work of his sons acclaimed as compared to today's Bach cult, which has in some aspects the form of pure fashion or even snobbery; let us also recognize the fact that it was only recently that Vivaldi's compositions came into fashion. In today's day and age, which has audiovisual technology, mass communications media, and expert marketing studies that were previously not available, now more than ever the success or failure of style, creators, and works is not decided solely (or chiefly) by the actual quality but rather through the strategies of dramaturgists, producers, mass media owners (companies operating within the sphere of the music or film, or within even a wider scope: within the entire leisure time industry). The fact that there is an immensely

varied offering of (cultural) goods and thus opportunities for applying taste judgments is in and of itself actually ambivalent: within this overabundance our possibilities for guiding our own selection are paradoxically decreasing and the possibilities for our choices to be manipulated are conversely increasing.

The shorter the (potential) lifespan of an offered product appears to be, the more important it is for it (and its producers) to flow with the actual tide of fashion and to take advantage of its attractiveness. This conformability is to be seen mainly in the areas which are closest to industrial production, i.e., in the fields of mainstream pop songs, film or background music, etc. Nevertheless, even in these areas, there are some quality products that have real aesthetic (artistic) value and successfully avoid leaving the scene and function as “evergreens.”

From this entire commentary it becomes apparent that there is no firm delineation between (musical) taste and tastelessness. It is definitely not the case that tastelessness appears only in the realm of popular (functional) music. The limits of good taste can be exceeded even in classical art music, e.g., by an extreme subjectivity of expression (in the area of creation – refer to some of the critical views into Tchaikovsky’s music), the creation of images of musical “stars” or “celebrities”. Tastelessness could be seen also in the snobbish selection of repertoires (good is only what is most known and acclaimed), in the selection of interpreters (the good ones are only those that are the most well-known and thus the most expensive), in the selection of exquisite or exclusive situations and locations for performing music (gala receptions, superfestivals, private parties, groups for private music performances, etc.). Of course there are more opportunities to display tastelessness within popular (functional) music as it offers a much wider spectrum of kinds of music, satisfies many (including non-aesthetical), is the source of musical experience for the majority of the population, etc. Therefore that is why it is often in this area (though not exclusively by far!) that extreme orgies of tastelessness in attire, behavior, performance, lyrics, stage presentation, etc. come to life.⁹ It is thus apparent that the problem of tastelessness is closely related to the problematics of schlock and kitsch, which is problem that cannot be discussed here.

In conclusion we can state that the concept of “taste” (including all of its variations and antonyms) has in more modern times lost much of its strength and utility in standard communications and even more within the context of aesthetics: it is somewhat blurred and hard to identify. Many times it is possible to replace the concept of “taste” with expressions such as “preference,” “interest,” “orientation,” etc., but such changes lead

⁹ When making judgments in this area, care is most appropriately recommended as experience has shown that much of what has come across as shocking tastelessness can in time become a generally acceptable phenomenon or even a norm. Let us recall David Bowie with his extravagant costumes, cosmetics, bisexuality, and transformation into the “Ziggy Stardust” phenomenon or let us consider the transfer of poetics from comics into musical video clips. Basically, in general terms, when creating “image” today, almost any materials can be used. If the position of the “Good Boys” was occupied by the Beatles, the Rolling Stones programmatically created the opposite image for themselves, i.e., the image of the “Bad Boys” or “Rebels.” Thus for a specific purpose even schlock and kitsch can be programmatically useful...

the discourse somewhat away from aesthetics and into social psychology and sociology. So within (musical) aesthetics the concept of “taste” can and must remain – only it is necessary to handle this concept with extreme care...

O (hudebním) vkusu a módě

Resumé

Jak je patrné z názvu, východiskem zkoumání je fenomén vkusu v obecné rovině, avšak stať věnuje speciální pozornost vkusu v oblasti hudby. Jejím východiskem byly dva texty, jež autor publikoval v českém jazyce (K problému hudebního vkusu, in: Hudební věda 1972, č. 2, s. 99–116 a heslo Vkus in: kniha Stručný slovník hudební psychologie, Praha 1984). Ve srovnání s oběma připomenutými texty zde předkládaná verze akcentuje spíše přístup estetický, než přístup psychologický a sociologický.

Oblast vkusových soudů překračuje oblast umění, týká se i chování, životního způsobu v nejširším slova smyslu. Stať rozebírá oprávněnost i omezenost dvou krajních pojetí vkusu, z nichž jedno je možno charakterizovat známým rčením „De gustibus non est disputandum“, druhé pak tak, že vkusu je možno se naučit a je vlastně přijetím normy. Autor se věnuje rysům resp. charakteristikám vkusu, aby se pak zabýval třemi hlavními momenty, jež se podílejí na vytváření hudebního vkusu a vstupují do něj: jednou sférou je sféra hudebních zkušeností jedince, druhou sféra mimohudební v rovině individuální psychologie, třetí kulturní determinace v nejširším slova smyslu. Vkus se uplatňuje spíše v rovině recepce, než v rovině tvorby. Fenomén vkusu souvisí s fenoménem módy; autor poukazuje na skutečnost, že módu nelze chápat jen jako výlučně negativní jev, což je sledováno zejména na oblasti moderní populární hudby; rozhodně neplatí, že nevkus se projevuje výlučně v této oblasti, i když je zřejmé, že její sociální existence a funkce způsobují, že je k nevkusům značně náchylná.

Stať je uzavřena konstatováním, že pojem vkus ztratil v novější době v běžné komunikaci i v kontextu estetiky hodně ze své nosnosti a použitelnosti: je poněkud rozplizlý, obtížně verifikovatelný atp. I když však je mnohdy možné jej nahradit pojmy „preference“, „zájmy“, „orientace“ atp., přece jenom tyto posuny vedou diskurs jaksí „ven z estetiky“ do sociální psychologie či sociologie. V (hudební) estetice pojem vkus může či musí zůstat a lze s ním při náležitě opatrnosti pracovat.

Über den (musikalischen) Geschmack und die Mode

Zusammenfassung

Wie aus der Überschrift ersichtlich ist, ist der Ausgangspunkt der Forschung das Phänomen des Geschmacks in der allgemeinen Ebene, wobei die Abhandlung eine besondere Aufmerksamkeit dem Geschmack auf dem Gebiet der Musik widmet. Ihr Ausgangspunkt waren zwei Texte, die der Autor in tschechischer Sprache veröffentlichte (*Zum Problem des musikalischen Geschmacks*, in: Musikwissenschaft 1972, Nr. 2, S. 99-116 und das Stichwort *Geschmack* im Buch: Ein kurzgefasstes Wörterbuch der musikalischen Psychologie, Prag 1984). Im Vergleich zu beiden erwähnten Texten akzentiert die hier dargebotene Version eher eine ästhetische Auffassung als eine psychologische und soziologische.

Das Gebiet der Geschmacksurteile überschreitet das Gebiet der Kunst, es betrifft auch die Verhaltens- und Lebensweise im weitesten Sinne des Wortes. Die Abhandlung analysiert die Berechtigung und Begrenztheit zweier extremer Auffassungen des Geschmacks, wobei man die eine durch die bekannte Redewendung „De gustibus non est disputandum“, charakterisieren kann, die andere dann so, dass man den Geschmack erlernen kann, dass er eigentlich eine Annahme der Norm ist. Der Autor widmet sich den Hauptzügen respektive der Charakteristik des Geschmacks, um sich dann mit drei Hauptmomenten zu befassen, die die Herausbildung des musikalischen Geschmack beeinflussen und in ihn eingehen: eine Sphäre der musikalischen Erfahrung des Einzelnen, die zweite die Sphäre außerhalb der Musik in der Ebene der individuellen Psychologie, die dritte die kulturelle Determination im weitesten Sinne des Wortes. Der Geschmack kommt eher in der Ebene der Rezeption zur Geltung, als in der schöpferischen Ebene. Das Geschmacksphänomen hängt mit dem Phänomen der Mode zusammen. Der Autor weist auf die Tatsache hin, dass man die Mode nicht ausschließlich als negative Erscheinung betrachten sollte, was man vor allem auf dem Gebiet der modernen, populären Musik verfolgen kann. Es gilt keineswegs, dass sich die Geschmacklosigkeit ausschließlich auf diesem Gebiet bemerkbar macht, auch wenn ersichtlich ist, dass ihre soziale Existenz und Funktion dazu beitragen, dass sie zur Geschmacklosigkeit ziemlich neigt.

Die Abhandlung wird mit der Feststellung abgeschlossen, dass der Begriff Geschmack in der heutigen Zeit in der üblichen Kommunikation und auch im Kontext der Ästhetik viel von seiner Tragfähigkeit und Benützbarkeit verloren hat: er ist gewissermaßen verschwommen, schwierig zu verifizieren usw. Auch wenn es oftmals möglich ist, ihn durch die Begriffe „Präferenz“, „Interessen“, „Orientierung“ u. ä zu ersetzen, führen nichtsdestoweniger diese Verschiebungen zum Diskurs irgendwie „heraus aus der Ästhetik“ in die soziale Psychologie oder Soziologie. In der (musikalischen) Ästhetik kann oder muss der Begriff Geschmack erhalten bleiben und man kann dann mit ihm bei gebührender Vorsichtigkeit arbeiten.