

# Inner Beauty — The Friendship-Hypothesis

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**ABSTRACT.** This article analyses different hypotheses about inner beauty. In a Platonic tradition, an inwardly beautiful person is considered to be a moral person. But not all moral actions and character traits are equally relevant for inner beauty. And inner beauty also depends on morally praiseworthy actions and character traits. Furthermore, morally neutral character traits like intelligence, humour, or optimism matter as well. This paper formulates and defends the friendship-hypothesis: an inwardly beautiful person behaves towards others as if they were her friends, and her personality and her character traits would make her a good friend. The friendship-hypothesis alludes to the traditionally assumed close connection between beauty and love. And it can explain why also judgements of inner beauty flicker between objectivity and subjectivity. As the friendship-hypothesis only indicates similarities between inner beauty and beauty in general, it is compatible both with a literal and a metaphorical interpretation of inner beauty.

## **I. Introduction**

Since the nineteenth and especially in the twentieth century, beauty has lost its central position in the aesthetic debate.<sup>1</sup> In recent years, beauty undergoes a small revival, which mainly focuses on the role of beauty in the arts.<sup>2</sup> But although it is disputable whether art does or should aim at beauty, beauty doubtlessly plays a prominent role in our everyday life. Many women and men wish to become or stay beautiful, and the beauty of other people fascinates. If one thinks about human beauty, sooner or later

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., Stolnitz (1961), pp. 185-204; Tatarkiewicz (1972), pp. 165-180.

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., Danto (2003); Nehamas (2007).

one stumbles across the proverb ‘True beauty comes from within.’ Two interpretations of this proverb are possible. The first interpretation links it with a virtue-centred theory of beauty, as Cooper calls it (Cooper, 2008, pp. 247-260). According to such a theory, the beauty of the outward appearance of a person depends on the visible expression of a virtuous character. Kant, for example, defends such an account on human beauty in the § 17 of his Critique of Judgement.<sup>3</sup> Following the second interpretation, the proverb distinguishes at least two kinds of beauty, outer and inner beauty, and the latter stands hierarchically above the former. This paper ties in with the second interpretation and asks what it means to attribute inner beauty to a person.

Plato introduces the idea of inner beauty by identifying ‘to kalon’ with ‘to agathon.’<sup>4</sup> In Plato’s tradition, an inwardly beautiful person is identified with a moral person.<sup>5</sup> In the eighteenth century, the idea of a beautiful soul arose: someone is inwardly beautiful if to act morally has become her second nature.<sup>6</sup> For some philosophers like Reid or more recently Gaut inner beauty is closely connected to, but is not only about moral goodness. Intelligence, humour, and optimism, for example, also contribute to inner beauty.<sup>7</sup>

In order to better understand inner beauty, this paper proceeds in two steps. Section I sharpens our intuitions and analyses different hypotheses about inner beauty. It works out typical features of an inwardly beautiful person. Section II formulates and defends the friendship-hypothesis: an inwardly beautiful person behaves towards others as if they were her friends, and her personality and her character traits would make her a good friend. This hypothesis captures the characteristics of inner beauty, worked out in section I, makes clear what binds them together, and explains why we speak about inner beauty at all.

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<sup>3</sup> See Kant (1963), § 17.

<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., Plato (1925a), 201c.

<sup>5</sup> See, e.g., Shaftesbury (2001), part III, sec. II; Hume (2006), pp. 2-7; McGinn (1997), chap. 5.

<sup>6</sup> See, e.g., III.

<sup>7</sup> See Reid (1969), p. 792; Gaut (2007), p. 122.

## 2. Inner Beauty and Moral Goodness

Inner beauty is no big, prominent topic of the current aesthetic debate, neither is human beauty, nor beauty in general.<sup>8</sup> Aestheticians, especially of the analytic tradition, mainly concentrate on art, and most of them assume that beauty plays no crucial role here.<sup>9</sup> However, as already mentioned, inner beauty has its place in the philosophical tradition. Furthermore, people speak and think about inner beauty as a research on the internet shows. Googling ‘inner beauty’ leads to various attempts to describe inner beauty and to lively debates about what makes a person inwardly beautiful.<sup>10</sup>

These debates mention one point again and again: inner beauty has to be distinguished and is independent from outer beauty. Inner beauty is not about how someone looks, not about the face, the body, or the figure of a person. Inner beauty is not physical, but rather psychological beauty, so to say. Inner beauty refers to the personality, character traits, and also modes of behaviour of a person. Inner beauty is about what kind of person someone is.

More specifically, one reads that an inwardly beautiful person cares for others, is altruistic, loyal, honest, reliable, generous, tolerant, and helpful. She is also charismatic, self-confident, authentic, and has good manners. Furthermore, an inwardly beautiful person is intelligent, humorous, and optimistic.<sup>11</sup> This list of features of an inwardly beautiful person reads like an unsystematic enumeration of some generally desirable or praiseworthy character traits and modes of behaviour. Does any systematic strand hold them together?

A classical starting-point to answer this question is the following hypothesis:

HI. *A person is inwardly beautiful iff she is a moral person.*

According to HI, ‘inner beauty’ is just a different expression for ‘moral goodness.’ Plato seems to defend this idea. In the *Symposium*, for exam-

<sup>8</sup> Exceptions prove the rule, see, e.g., Sircello (1975); Mothersil (1984); Zangwill (2001a); Nehamas (2007).

<sup>9</sup> See, e.g., Nehamas (2007), chap. 1.

<sup>10</sup> See, e.g., ‘roseannetangrs (2013); Uk.answers.yahoo.com (2013).

<sup>11</sup> See, e.g., Uk.answers.yahoo.com (2013).

ple, Sokrates asks Agathon: “[...] you hold, do you not, that good things are beautiful?”<sup>12</sup> Agathon immediately affirms this question. But it is not as clear as it seems that Plato would have actually defended H<sub>I</sub>. It is controversial whether ‘the beautiful’ is *the* correct translation of ‘to kalon.’ Alternative translations are ‘the suitable,’ ‘the fine,’ or ‘the fair.’ Translating ‘to kalon’ is always an interpretative task. If one translates, for example, ‘to kalon’ with ‘the beautiful,’ *Hippias Major* becomes a treatise on the beautiful.<sup>13</sup> Some of its passages, however, sound odd if one chooses this translation. For example, how can the funeral of someone’s parents be beautiful?<sup>14</sup> Therefore, Woodruff has decided to translate ‘to kalon’ with ‘the fine’ in his translation of *Hippias Major* from 1982.<sup>15</sup> This article cannot sufficiently discuss whether this is an appropriate choice. Another point is important: ‘the beautiful’ is not always a perfect translation of ‘to kalon.’ Theoretically, ‘the beautiful’ might never be an appropriate translation whenever Plato connects ‘to agathon’ with ‘to kalon.’<sup>16</sup>

No matter whether Plato would have approved H<sub>I</sub>, it has some intuitive appeal. The philosophical debate reflects this. Some philosophers like, for example, Hume or more recently McGinn explicitly speak about moral beauty.<sup>17</sup> But is H<sub>I</sub> a completely persuasive characterization of inner beauty?

A moral person acts morally. Thus, according to H<sub>I</sub>, an inwardly beautiful person also acts morally. According to consequentialism, whether an action is morally good depends on its consequences, and not on the motivation behind it. For attributing inner beauty, however, motivation is crucial. If mere egoistic reasons motivate Peter not to cheat, one would not call him inwardly beautiful in that respect, I assume.

In his moral theory, Kant emphasises that the motivation behind an action is important.<sup>18</sup> So, inner beauty might be more compatible with a Kantian moral theory. This leads to a modified hypothesis:

<sup>12</sup> Plato (1925a), 201c.

<sup>13</sup> See Plato (1925b), 287d.

<sup>14</sup> See *ibid.* 291d.

<sup>15</sup> See Plato (1982).

<sup>16</sup> See Kosman (2010).

<sup>17</sup> See, e.g., Hume (2006), p. 5; McGinn (1997), chap. 5.

<sup>18</sup> See Kant (1961), AA IV 397 (quoted after academy edition).

H2. *A Person is inwardly beautiful iff she acts dutifully and out of respect for the moral law.*

H2 faces two problems: first, whether people often act out of respect for the moral law is quite controversial, as Kant himself admits.<sup>19</sup> And it is difficult to say whether someone has actually acted only out of respect for the moral law, even for the agent herself. This gives reason to expect that inner beauty is attributed very hesitantly and rarely. But this is not the case.

Secondly and more importantly, I doubt that one would call a person inwardly beautiful if she acted *only* out of respect for the moral law. Think of Kant's misanthrope.<sup>20</sup> She acts according to the categorical imperative. But she feels no inclination to act accordingly. She truly acts only out of respect for the moral law. In terms of Kant's moral theory, she has to be praised. But Kant's misanthrope does not deserve to be called inwardly beautiful, I assume.<sup>21</sup> She feels no inclination that draws her in the morally desired direction. Assumedly, she has to suppress her misanthropic inclinations. This requires some effort. But an inwardly beautiful person does not permanently struggle to act morally, one might say. This leads to a new hypothesis:

H3. *A person is inwardly beautiful iff she effortlessly does what is morally required.*

H3 reminds us of Schiller's account on the beautiful soul. In his essay 'On Grace and Dignity,' he writes about a beautiful soul: "We can call it a beautiful soul, when moral sentiment has assured itself of all emotions of a person ultimately to that degree, that it may abandon the guidance of the will to emotions, and never run danger of being in contradiction with its own decisions. [...] It is thus in a beautiful soul, that sensuousness and reason, duty and inclination harmonize, [...]"<sup>22</sup> A person has a beautiful soul, according to Schiller, if to act morally has become her second nature, in other words, if duty and inclination are in harmony. This harmony secures

<sup>19</sup> See *ibid.* AA IV 407.

<sup>20</sup> See *ibid.* AA IV 398.

<sup>21</sup> See Schiller (1971), p. 29.

<sup>22</sup> See Schiller (1992), p. 368.

morality because it silences the constant battle between reason and emotion.<sup>23</sup> A beautiful soul is an ideal. That means that a person either has a beautiful soul, or has not. Analogically, a person either is inwardly beautiful, or is not. But speaking of inner beauty normally allows of degrees. A small modification can capture this intuition:

H<sub>3</sub>\*. *A person is insofar inwardly beautiful as she effortlessly does what is morally required.*

But does inner beauty really depend on how effortlessly someone fulfils moral requirements? First, imagine Julie, sitting in the Tube besides a woman with an open handbag. Although it would be easy for Julie to steal the woman's purse, she does not even think about it. She effortlessly obeys the moral rule not to steal. According to H<sub>3</sub>\*, Julie is insofar inwardly beautiful. One might think that this overstretches the concept of inner beauty. But if Julie had stolen the woman's purse, this surly would have damaged her inner beauty. That she has not even thought about it can be seen as contributing to her inner beauty, at least a little bit. Here it is important to understand the 'insofar as'-formulation correctly: in order to deserve being called an inwardly beautiful person, the inner beauty of a person has to overstep a certain (vague) threshold. Being inwardly beautiful in one respect might not be enough.

But what happens if someone really has to make an effort to fulfil a moral requirement, but keeps trying because she loves or cares for another person? Assumedly, making a person, you love or who is close to you, happy is morally desirable, at least as long it does not involve doing something morally prohibited. But sometimes it is not easy to make a person you love happy. Tom is a messy person, but his girlfriend Gina likes it very tidy. To tidy always up requires a big effort from Tom. Nevertheless, he keeps trying because he loves Gina and wants to make her happy.<sup>24</sup> And this makes him at least partly inwardly beautiful, one might say, although he struggles to act morally. This idea can be integrated into H<sub>3</sub>\* by formulating a new hypothesis:

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<sup>23</sup> See Schiller (1971), p. 32.

<sup>24</sup> I owe this objection to Annelies Monseré.

H4. *A person is insofar inwardly beautiful as she effortlessly or out of love and affection does what is morally required.*

H4 only speaks about moral requirements. This is too restrictive. Moral required actions can be distinguished from morally praiseworthy actions. If an action is morally required, a moral duty to act accordingly exists. In the case of a morally praiseworthy action, no such duty exists, but the action is still morally desirable. A morally praiseworthy action is a supererogative action.<sup>25</sup> If Claire, for example, donates most of her income to an aid organization and spends her spare time as a volunteer at a doss house, she does something morally praiseworthy, which is not strictly morally required. But does Claire's example not show that inner beauty is not only about what is morally required? Would we not want to call Claire inwardly beautiful? Following this intuition, H4 has to be broadened into:

H5. *A person is insofar inwardly beautiful as she effortlessly or out of love and affection does what is morally required or praiseworthy.*

According to H5, all morally required and praiseworthy actions are equally relevant for the ascription of inner beauty. But compare Julie with John. Both act morally. Julie always pays her taxes and separates her waste. John looks after his sick, elderly neighbour and abstains from assaulting Anna, although she has assaulted him badly. Assumedly, one would rather call John inwardly beautiful than Julie. So, not all moral actions are equally important for inner beauty. A hypothesis about inner beauty should explain what the difference is.

Perhaps the whole starting point of this analysis was ill-chosen. So far, the focus has laid on the actions (and motivations) of a person. But being asked what makes a person inwardly beautiful, one presumably also refers to character traits, and not only to actions. Concentrating on character traits and defending the intuitive appeal of H1 leads to another hypothesis:

H6. *A person is insofar inwardly beautiful as she has moral character traits.*

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<sup>25</sup> I assume that it makes sense to speak about supererogative actions in difference to morally required actions, although this is disputable, see, e.g., Heyd (2012).

Examples of moral character traits are honesty, responsibility, trustworthiness, or respect for other people.<sup>26</sup> Thus honesty should make a person inwardly beautiful, according to H6. Barney, for example, is a very honest person. He always and under all circumstances tells the truth. He would never use a white lie. He would never soften the truth to protect another person's feelings. I assume that one would hesitate to call Barney inwardly beautiful.

But Barney is not simply honest, he is mercilessly honest, one might object. The problem with Barney is not that he is honest. He can be called inwardly beautiful due to his honesty. The problem is that Barney misses other character traits that an inwardly beautiful person should have. Barney is insensitive and lacks compassion and empathy.<sup>27</sup> These 'defects' of his personality interfere with inner beauty.

Are sensitivity, compassion, and empathy moral character traits? At least in a strict sense of morality, they are not. Sircello speaks of 'good character traits.' He also mentions kindness, generosity, helpfulness, and concern for others as further examples of good character traits.<sup>28</sup> But 'good' is too unspecific. Character traits can be good in many respects. The just mentioned character traits are good in respect to social life, in respect to interpersonal relationships. They are socially desirable. Analogically to the difference between morally required and praiseworthy actions, they can be called morally praiseworthy character traits. Such character traits also seem to matter for inner beauty, as well as morally praiseworthy actions matter.<sup>29</sup>

But including morally praiseworthy character traits is not the end of the story about inner beauty. Inner beauty also depends on some morally neutral character traits. Think, for example, of intelligence, humour, esprit, or eloquence. Such character traits are signs of higher intellectual level of a person, broadly speaking. They can be called intellectually desirable character traits. And they contribute to the inner beauty of a person.<sup>30</sup> Compare, for example, a witty, intelligent person with a dull, hu-

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<sup>26</sup> See Sircello (1975), p. 85.

<sup>27</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 86-89.

<sup>28</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 85.

<sup>29</sup> See, e.g., Burke (2008), p. 100; Reid (1969), p. 792.

<sup>30</sup> See, e.g., Reid (1969), p. 792; Gaut (2007), p. 120.

mourless person. Which one would you rather call inwardly beautiful? Assumedly, it is the more intelligent and witty person.

A fourth kind of character traits seems to be typical for an inwardly beautiful person. If someone is self-confident, charismatic, authentic, or happy with herself, this makes her at least partly inwardly beautiful, one might say.<sup>31</sup> Such character traits are signs that a person knows herself, accepts her personality, and is ready to show who she is. Thereby, she tends to have a positive impression on other people.

Summarising, four kinds of character traits are typical for inner beauty: moral, morally praiseworthy, intellectually desirable character traits, and those showing a positive self-image. This classification is neither meant to be selective, nor unambiguous. But it delivers a more systematic description of typical character traits associated with inner beauty. The question what connects these character traits, however, is still unanswered. Here a hypothesis inspired by Aristotle's virtue ethics might help:

*H7. A person is insofar inwardly beautiful as she is an — in an Aristotelian sense — virtuous person.*

H7 captures most of the so far mentioned characteristics of inner beauty. It explains the close connection between inner beauty and morality. Aristotelian virtues include moral virtues like, for example, temperance, generosity, or courage.<sup>32</sup> H7 also gives an explanation why characterizations of inwardly beautiful persons mention moral character traits as well as actions and motivations. For Aristotle, a moral virtue is a habit of a person which manifests itself in the action of the person.<sup>33</sup> As a truly virtuous person simply acts virtuously without struggling to do so, H7 does also justice to the intuition that an inwardly beautiful person effortlessly fulfils moral requirements.<sup>34</sup> And as being virtuous means to find the right person- and situation-sensitive middle between two extremes, a virtuous person would never be so mercilessly honest like Barney.<sup>35</sup> Another advantage of H7 is that Aristotelian virtues also include intellectual virtues.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>31</sup> See, e.g., Roseannetangrs (2013); Uk.answers.yahoo.com (2013).

<sup>32</sup> See Aristotle (1985), book III & IV.

<sup>33</sup> See *ibid.*, 1103b 23-25.

<sup>34</sup> See *ibid.*, 1105a 27-1105b 1.

<sup>35</sup> See *ibid.*, 1106b 36-1107a 3.

<sup>36</sup> See *ibid.*, book VI.

This can explain why inner beauty is not only about morality. This advantage, however, can turn into a disadvantage. Intellectual virtues are art ('*techne*'), knowledge ('*episteme*'), prudence ('*phronesis*'), reason ('*nous*'), and wisdom ('*sohpie*'). They are important if one wants to live a good life, to find '*eudaimonia*' or happiness, which is Aristotle's main theme.<sup>37</sup> However, they are not equally important for inner beauty. Think, for example, of what Aristotle says about wisdom: "[...] for there are other things much more divine in their nature even than man, e.g., most conspicuously, the bodies of which the heavens are framed. From what has been said it is plain, then, that philosophic wisdom is scientific knowledge, combined with intuitive reason, of the things that are highest by nature."<sup>38</sup> Following this description, a wise person possesses the knowledge of mathematical or astronomic truths. Surely, this presupposes a certain degree of intelligence. But still I doubt that such a wise person would be called inwardly beautiful due to her wisdom. So, H7 captures most features of inner beauty, but it is no perfect match.

But even if H7 matched all the characteristics of inner beauty, something would still be missing. H7 would still have to explain why a virtuous person is called inwardly beautiful. Where is the internal connection between being virtuous and inner beauty? Without such an internal connection, one might think that inner beauty is kind of superfluous. An analysis can of course come to this conclusion, but it should not rush into it. If two hypotheses both explain the characteristics of inner beauty, but only one of them can explain why we speak about inner beauty, the latter has an advantage over the former. The latter does justice to our common manner of speaking about inner beauty.

### **3. The Friendship-Hypothesis**

In order to find a hypothesis, which meets this demand, the so far chosen strategy has to be modified. So far, I have not mentioned any general theory of beauty, but have simply worked with our intuitions. I still do not want to formulate any general theory of beauty. Nevertheless, I highlight

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<sup>37</sup> See *ibid.*, 1097b 21-22.

<sup>38</sup> Aristotle (1908), book VI, sec. 7.

one commonly noticed aspect of beauty. Beauty has a close connection to love (and pleasure): may it be that we call beautiful what we love (or what pleases us) or that beauty evokes love (or pleasure).<sup>39</sup> Seeing a connection between beauty and love especially persuades in the case of human beauty, without saying that this is the whole story one can tell about human beauty.

Burke explicitly links beauty with love. He distinguishes the beautiful from the sublime. The sublime causes admiration and fear, the beautiful love.<sup>40</sup> Accordingly, Burke distinguishes two kinds of virtues, those causing admiration and those causing love. Hence, love provoking character traits are connected with inner beauty:<sup>41</sup> “Those virtues which cause admiration, and are of the sublime kind, produce terror rather than love. Such as fortitude, justice, wisdom, and the like. [...] Those which engage our hearts, which impress us with a sense of loveliness, are the softer virtues, easiness of temper, compassion, kindness and liberality; [...]”<sup>42</sup>

This proposal can be an inspiration for a new hypothesis about inner beauty. This hypothesis, however, does speak about love, but about friendship. Love and friendship are closely related, but are not identical. We tend to love our friends or be friends with the persons we love. But sometimes we love someone who is not our friend, and perhaps we not even want her to be our friend. This can be the case with one of our relatives, for example.<sup>43</sup> Love and friendship both sometimes simply happen, but still we can rather decide who should be our friend than who we love.<sup>44</sup> This decision depends (at least partly) on character traits or modes of behaviour of a person which speak for or against a friendship with her. Friendship is a more deliberated matter than love. This helps if one looks for an account on inner beauty matching the above worked out characteristics. Furthermore, attraction plays a role both in love and friendship. We want to spent time with our beloveds and friends and to get to know them. But if we love someone, we often are sexually attracted to her. Friendship

<sup>39</sup> See, e.g., Plato (1925a), 204b; Aquinas (1894), p. 211; Burke (2008), p. 39, p. 49; Hutcheson (2008), p. 25; Nehamas (2007), pp. 53-63.

<sup>40</sup> See Burke (2008), p. 47.

<sup>41</sup> For a similar idea, see Hume (2006), pp. 2-7; Reid (1969), p. 792.

<sup>42</sup> Burke (2008), p. 100.

<sup>43</sup> See, e.g., Montaigne (1842), para. 4.

<sup>44</sup> See, e.g., Montaigne (1842), para. 4; Thomas (1987), p. 217.

is more neutral on the question of sexual attraction.<sup>45</sup> This is more apt for inner beauty because we call persons inwardly beautiful to whom we are not sexually attracted. So a new hypothesis about inner beauty can be formulated, the friendship-hypothesis:

H8. *A person is insofar inwardly beautiful as she behaves towards other persons as if they were her friends and as her personality and her character traits would make her a good friend.*

The friendship-hypothesis can explain the above worked out characteristics of inner beauty, beginning with its close connection to morality. If I treat someone like a friend, I do not cheat on her, do not lie to her, do not hurt, or harm her, rather I protect, support, care for, and defend her. These are examples of moral actions. So behaving towards others as if they were friends implies that one treats them morally.

It is important to emphasise that the friendship-hypothesis demands that an inwardly beautiful person treats *everybody* like a friend. This prevents that an inwardly beautiful picks out a small group of people, which she treats like friends, and treats everybody else in an immoral way. An inwardly beautiful person is a philanthropist, so to say.

The friendship-hypothesis also elucidates why inner beauty is not only about what is morally required, but also about what is morally praiseworthy. If someone is my friend, I expect more than that she only fulfils her moral duty. I expect, for example, that a good friend helps me although I would not expect the same amount of help from a total stranger. This does not mean that special moral requirements between friends actually exist.<sup>46</sup> But a good friend acts *as if* such special moral requirements existed. So if an inwardly beautiful person behaves towards other persons as if they were her friends, she acts also morally praiseworthy.

Thirdly, the friendship-hypothesis helps to understand why not all moral and morally praiseworthy actions are equally important for the attribution of inner beauty. Most people do not criticize their friends if they pay their taxes. But if you have to choose between someone who pays her

<sup>45</sup> See, e.g., Thomas (1987), p. 221.

<sup>46</sup> For a discussion of this point see, e.g., Thomas (1987), pp. 231-237; Badhwar (1993), part II.

taxes and someone who helps you, I am sure that you would choose the latter as your friend. Moral and morally praiseworthy actions directly affecting interpersonal interaction are especially important for friendship and so for inner beauty.

Fourthly, speaking about friendship also makes clear why the motivation behind an action matters for inner beauty. An inwardly beautiful person effortlessly or out of love and affection acts morally, the same holds for a friend. A friend should neither be emotionally disinterested in the fate of her friends, nor only act morally because she thinks she has to.<sup>47</sup> Rather if someone is my friend, I love and care for her.<sup>48</sup> This should make it easy for me to treat her in a morally correct way. And even if I have to make an effort to act morally, I keep trying. So treating someone as a friend means that friendship is the motivating factor.

The friendship-hypothesis does not only speak about modes of behaviour, but also about personality and character traits. This embraces the fact that descriptions of inwardly beautiful persons also refer to character traits. At the end of section I, four types of character traits has been distinguished, which are typical for an inwardly beautiful person. The same kind of character traits come to one's mind if one thinks about which character traits would make someone a good friend. First, moral and morally praiseworthy character traits matter for friendship. We wish that our friends are honest, trustworthy, generous, helpful, loyal, and so on. Such moral and morally praiseworthy character traits are important for every interpersonal relationship, and so they are especially important for very close relationships like friendship. Secondly, character traits showing a positive self-image like, for example, being authentic, charismatic, or self-confident are also desirable for good friendship. As said above, if someone shows such character traits, she tends to have a positive impression on others. Furthermore, I assume that such character traits are signs of a stable personality. They enable a person to concentrate on and react to other persons, their problems, and interests. Friendship benefits if someone can react to her friends and cares for them. A highly depressed, insecure, or depending person might not be such a good friend. Thirdly, intellectually

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<sup>47</sup> See, e.g., Railton (1993), pp. 212-215.

<sup>48</sup> See, e.g., Telfer (1970-1971), p. 224.

desirable character traits tend to facilitate the interaction between people and make social life more interesting. From this, friendship also benefits. So, the character traits wished-for in friendship match those typical for inner beauty.

One crucial feature of friendship has not been mentioned so far. Friendship depends on reciprocity. This distinguishes it from love. You can love someone who does not love you, but you cannot be friends with someone who is not your friend.<sup>49</sup> Pursuing the idea of reciprocity, good friends mutually trust each other, are intimate, share common interest and experiences.<sup>50</sup> These reciprocal features are important for actual friendship. But the friendship-hypothesis does not speak about actual friendship. Rather it invites to a kind of thought experiment. One should wonder: what kind of personality, which character traits and actions would make someone a good friend if one knew nothing else about this person? This is important because we call people inwardly beautiful who are not, perhaps never will be our actual friends. What counts is whether they would be good friends if the friendship were reciprocal.

A worry about the friendship-hypothesis can be that it seemingly draws an impossible picture of an inwardly beautiful person. Trying to treat everyone like a friend is a huge psychological challenge. Even if someone psychologically manages this challenge, she is drawn into clashes of interests, interpersonal conflicts, and incompatible demands.<sup>51</sup> For example, it is hard to treat Andy and John both like friends. Andy loathes John. If I behave towards Andy as if he was my friend, this interferes with treating John like my friend. Friendship sometimes asks for loyalty to and partiality for the friend.

The friendship-hypothesis certainly draws an idealistic picture of an inwardly beautiful person. But it has never been said that 'perfect' inner beauty is easy to accomplish. Furthermore, an inwardly beautiful person might be able to balance clashes of interests and conflicting demands. Additionally, the friendship-hypothesis uses the 'insofar as'-formulation. This allows different degrees of inner beauty. Someone does not have to fulfil all of the so far sketched characteristics of a perfectly inwardly beau-

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<sup>49</sup> See, e.g., Aristotle (1985), 1155b 35-36.

<sup>50</sup> See, e.g., Montaigne (1842), para. 4; Thomas (1987); Telfer (1970-1971), p. 224.

<sup>51</sup> See, e.g., Kant (1999), p. 137.

tiful person and can still be inwardly beautiful. Analogically, someone can be a good friend, although she does not fulfil all the requirements that an ideally good friend would fulfil.<sup>52</sup>

One may wonder whether the friendship-hypothesis does not collapse back into H7. Aristotle speaks about good, ideal friendship and stresses that an ideal friend can only be a truly virtuous person.<sup>53</sup> Doubtlessly, the friendship-hypothesis and H7 are closely connected. This should not surprise because H7 has already captured most of the features of inner beauty. But H7 starts with the idea of a virtuous person. The friendship-hypothesis chooses friendship as a starting point. This has the advantage that it draws a more specific picture of an inwardly beautiful person that matches our intuitions about inner beauty better than H7.

The friendship-hypothesis has a second, even bigger advantage over H7. It explains why we speak about inner beauty at all. According to the friendship-hypothesis, inner beauty is closely connected to friendship. Friendship and love are related, and it is widely assumed that beauty in general and love are interrelated, as already mentioned. So the friendship-hypothesis points to one similarity between inner beauty and beauty in general. Thereby, the friendship-hypothesis is not committed to a Platonic theory of beauty. It does not imply that ‘evoking love’ or ‘being loved’ is *the defining* feature of beauty, only that it is one typical feature.

The friendship-hypothesis alludes to a second similarity between inner beauty and beauty in general.<sup>54</sup> On the one side, judgements of beauty seem to be subjective. As the well-known proverb ‘There is no accounting for taste’ states, it seems as if we cannot argue about judgements of beauty. They depend on whether something pleases us, on whether we love something. We also have a hard time trying to formulate any general rules for beauty. Beauty is somehow unexplainable. However, a fully subjective account does not convince: people tend to search for objective features of beautiful objects. They also argue with each other if they disagree on matters of beauty. If someone judges something to be beautiful, she wants to say more than that the objects simply please her. She demands from others to agree. The big challenge of every theory of beauty is to explain the

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<sup>52</sup> See, e.g., Telfer (1970-1971), p. 227.

<sup>53</sup> See book IIX.

<sup>54</sup> See, e.g., Kant (1963), § 56; Hume (1909-14).

tension between subjectivity and objectivity. Either it has to explain the subjectivity in objective terms, or the objectivity in subjective terms, or it has to find a way to preserve both the subjectivity and the objectivity.

If we speak about inner beauty, we can observe a similar tension between objectivity and subjectivity, and the friendship-hypothesis helps to explain it. Friendship is a personal matter and up to a certain degree unexplainable.<sup>55</sup> Montaigne writes in his essay ‘Of Friendship:’ “If a man should importune me to give a reason why I loved him, I find it could no otherwise be expressed, than by making answer: *because it was he, because it was I.*”<sup>56</sup> But friendship is not totally unexplainable. Since the antiquity, philosophers have searched for and have formulated typical features of good friendship, thereby stressing the objectivity of friendship. If one bears in mind that the friendship-hypothesis invites to abstract from too personal and contingent factors of friendship, one understands how objectivity comes into play in the case of inner beauty.

So the friendship-hypothesis points to two similarities between inner beauty and beauty in general. This leads to the question whether it does favour either a metaphorical or a literal interpretation of inner beauty. Actually, the friendship-hypothesis is compatible with both a literal and a metaphorical interpretation. This is an asset of the friendship-hypothesis because neither common intuitions, nor the philosophical debate agrees on this question. If one adopts the second interpretation of the introductory proverb ‘True beauty comes from within,’ inner beauty is literal beauty. Otherwise it could not be true beauty. But other proverbs like ‘Beauty is only skin deep’ contradict this assumption. Philosophical discourse reflects this disagreement. Some writers treat inner beauty as a metaphor like, for example, Kant or Burke,<sup>57</sup> some as literal beauty like, for example, Plato or Gaut,<sup>58</sup> and some even as the prototype of beauty like, for example, Plotin, Reid, or Cousin.<sup>59</sup>

Is it possible to decide on a metatheoretical level whether inner beauty is literal or metaphorical beauty? For Gaut, only if something blocks a lit-

<sup>55</sup> See, e.g., Telfer (1970-1971), p. 226.

<sup>56</sup> Montaigne (1842), para. 12 (my italics).

<sup>57</sup> See, e.g., Burke (2008), pp. 101-102; Kant (1963), AA V 353.

<sup>58</sup> See, e.g., Plato (1925a); Gaut, (2007), pp. 114-127.

<sup>59</sup> See, e.g., Plotinus (2002); Reid (1969); Alision, (1981); Cousin (1848).

eral interpretation, ‘inner beauty’ should be considered to be a metaphor.<sup>60</sup> What could block a literal interpretation?

To answer this question, think of a prototype of a beautiful object without much previous consideration. I assume that the first object, which comes to your mind, is a visual or acoustical object; may it be an artwork, a human being, a landscape, or a melody. These examples might show two crucial features about beauty. First, their beauty strikes quite immediately.<sup>61</sup> We do not have to think much about whether these objects are beautiful. We simply see or hear it. This leads to the second feature: beauty depends (at least partly) on direct sensory perception, normally on visual or acoustical perception.<sup>62</sup>

These two features support a metaphorical interpretation of inner beauty. First, one needs time to get to know a person, to understand what kind of person she is, what character traits she has, and how she acts. One cannot immediately perceive the inner beauty of a person as one cannot immediately decide whether someone would be a good friend and behaves like one. And secondly, one cannot directly see or hear the personality of a person. Of course the personality of a person is reflected in her appearance. But this only gives clues to what kind of person she is. What kind of person someone is has to be deduced from what one sees or hears. So one cannot immediately and directly see (or hear) the inner beauty of a person.

Both just mentioned features of beauty are controversial. They put a formalistic constraint on true beauty, and this seems to narrow true beauty too much. Neither poems or novels, nor proofs, theorems, or ideas could be literally beautiful anymore.<sup>63</sup> Defending the immediacy and direct-sensory-dependence of beauty means to bite the bullet in this respect: yes, in these instances speaking about beauty has to be understood metaphorically.<sup>64</sup> In order to soften the harshness of this reply, one should keep in mind that we are speaking about beauty and not about aesthetic value in the sense of value of works of art qua works of art. Although beauty can

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<sup>60</sup> See Gaut (2007), p. 124.

<sup>61</sup> See, e.g., Aquinas (1894), p. 211; Hutcheson (2008), p. 25; Addison (1712).

<sup>62</sup> See, e.g., Addison, (1712); Burke (2008), p. 83; Zangwill (2001b), pp. 127-145.

<sup>63</sup> See, e.g., Gaut (2007), pp. 125-126.

<sup>64</sup> See Zangwill (2001b), p. 142.

contribute to the value of works of art qua works of art, works of art do not have to be beautiful.

It can also be seen as an advantage that postulating immediacy and direct-sensory-dependence of beauty sets limits to true beauty. This clarifies the whole debate about beauty. Without such a restriction, the objects and entities to which we attribute beauty become confusingly diverse. Confronted with such diversity, it seems nearly impossible to explain what beauty is.<sup>65</sup> Restricting beauty to what is immediately and directly perceivable purifies the concept of beauty. Burke formulates a similar idea in regard to inner beauty: “This loose and inaccurate manner of speaking has therefore misled us both in the theory of taste and of morals [...]”<sup>66</sup>

These rather methodological remarks might not suffice to persuade an opponent. If one does not defend the immediacy and direct-sensory-dependence of beauty, the most obvious reasons speaking for a metaphorical interpretation of inner beauty vanish. So the question whether inner beauty is true or metaphorical beauty seems impossible to decide on a metatheoretical, theory-independent basis. From a given theory of beauty, one might be able to deduce that inner beauty is literal or metaphorical beauty. Arguing for a general theory of beauty, however, exceeds the scope of this paper. But this article does not have to decide whether inner beauty is literal or metaphorical beauty. The friendship-hypothesis is compatible with both a literal and a metaphorical understanding.

As a last point, an objection against the whole inner-outer-beauty distinction can be raised.<sup>67</sup> The analysis of inner beauty has started with the intuitively drawn distinction between how a person looks and what kind of person she is, between the outward appearance and the character of a person. But can and should this distinction be drawn? It seems as if seeing someone as a person makes it nearly impossible to solely concentrate on her looks. Seeing someone as a person means to be aware that she is more than her looks, that she has an ‘inner life.’ This awareness makes it so hard to only focus on the outward appearance. As soon as one looks into a person’s face, one sees the look in her eyes, her facial expression, and all this gives clues to her personality. If the person starts to move or talk, this

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<sup>65</sup> See, e.g., Reid (1969), p. 779; Scruton (2011), p. 2.

<sup>66</sup> Burke (2008), p. 102.

<sup>67</sup> See Nehamas (2007), pp. 63–71.

effect is even strengthened. Thus what one thinks about the personality of a person influences how one judges her looks. But also how someone looks influences how one judges her personality. Empirical research has shown that we tend to judge the personality of a physically attractive person more positively than the one of a less attractive person.<sup>68</sup> But if this is true, if we cannot or at least do not judge the looks and the personality of a person separately, should we not give up the whole distinction between outer and inner beauty? Should we not simply speak about *the* beauty of a person?

But it is not per se impossible to concentrate solely on the personality of a person. The better we get to know a person, the better we become in judging her personality, I assume. At some point, we can and do abstract from how she looks, and then we are in a position to judge her inner beauty. As mentioned above, inner beauty is not immediately perceivable.

The case is different with outer beauty. The better we know a person, the harder it gets to simply judge her on her looks, especially if we start to like her. The personality of a person seems to influence how one judges her outward appearance. To do justice to this influence, one should remember the first interpretation of the introductory proverb ‘True beauty comes from within.’ The virtue-centred theory of (human) beauty can explain why the personality of a person influences her beauty. A person’s personality expresses itself in the way we perceive her.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The topic of this paper has been inner beauty. Section I has analysed different hypotheses about what makes a person inwardly beautiful. Thereby, it has worked out typical features of an inwardly beautiful person. Inner beauty and morality are closely connected. Moral and morally praiseworthy actions and character traits count for inner beauty. In the case of moral actions, the motivation behind them is crucial: an inwardly beautiful person effortlessly or out of love and affection acts morally, and not only because she thinks is obliged to do so. But not all moral and morally praiseworthy actions are equally important for inner beauty, and a hypoth-

<sup>68</sup> See, e.g. Langlois et al. (2000).

esis about inner beauty should explain the differences. Additionally, some moral neutral character traits are typical for inner beauty, more precisely, some intellectual desirable and some showing a positive self-image. To explain these different characteristics of inner beauty and to explain what holds them together, section II has proposed the friendship-hypothesis: an inwardly beautiful person behaves towards others as if they were her friends and would be a good friend based on her personality and her character traits. The friendship-hypothesis clarifies why one speaks about inner beauty at all. First, it builds on the concept of friendship. Friendship is closely connected to love, and, traditionally, a close connection between love and beauty is assumed to exist. Secondly, the friendship-hypothesis secures another typical feature of beauty: beauty shifts between objective and subjective features. Subjectivity comes into play because friendship is a personal, to some extent unexplainable matter. Objectivity comes into play because the friendship-hypothesis asks to abstract from too personal, contingent considerations about friendship. The similarities between inner beauty and beauty in general support both a metaphorical and a literal interpretation of inner beauty. Section II has ended with a general defence of speaking about inner beauty. As it is not per se impossible to perceive the personality of a person and to abstract from her looks, the distinction between inner and outer beauty can be defended.

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