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Edited by Dan-Eugen Ratiu and Connell Vaughan

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***“All grace is beautiful, but not all that is beautiful is grace.”***

***A Critical Look at Schiller’s View on Human Beauty***

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ABSTRACT. Few philosophical treatises focus on human beauty. Schiller’s “On Grace and Dignity” is one of the exceptions. Like many of Schiller’s philosophical attempts, his theory of human beauty is strongly influenced by Kant, but he still presents an autonomous theory. He defends a characterological theory of human beauty according to which human beauty is physical-expressive beauty. More precisely, he distinguishes between two kinds of human beauty. Fixed or architectonic beauty refers to the physical side of a person’s appearance; changeable beauty or grace covers its expressive side. Grace is found in sympathetic movements, that is unintentional movements accompanying willful movements. They are graceful if they express a beautiful soul, that is moral virtuousness. A person’s physical frame is architectonically beautiful if it appears as a gift of nature to her technical form. This paper asks how Schiller’s theory of human beauty can be successfully justified based on his own theoretical assumptions, and examines three possible arguments. The moral-aesthetic-harmony argument builds on Schiller’s claim that expressions of moral virtuousness have to please aesthetically because they please morally. The beauty-response argument relates to the experience evoked by human beauty, namely love. The *Kallias* argument finally tries to deduce Schiller’s view on human beauty from the objective principle of beauty formulated in the *Kallias Letters*, namely that beauty is freedom in the appearance. This paper argues that although Schiller elaborates an inspiring view on human beauty, none of these three arguments succeeds in the end.

Kant has strongly influenced Schiller in his philosophical deliberations (see, e.g., Feger 2005; Schaper 1979, chap. 5).<sup>2</sup> But Schiller does not only comment on Kant’s moral and aesthetic theories, he develops his own

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<sup>2</sup> Norton (1995, pp. 225-226) emphasizes that one should not only discuss Schiller’s philosophical writings with regard to the question how he (mis-)interprets Kant.

ideas—often based on Kantian grounds. In his essay “On Grace and Dignity”, he presents, e.g., a definition of virtue which is significantly different from Kant’s definition although it is built on Kant’s moral theory. Many philosophers show interest in this essay mainly because it contains Schiller’s virtue theory. It is, however, not primarily an essay on moral philosophy, but rather an aesthetic treatise (see Guyer 2016, sect. 8.1). Schiller’s main topic is the beauty of human beings. In the course of the endeavor to better understand personal beauty, he also writes about virtue because he defines a beautiful soul as a virtuous soul. Once again, it is easy to recognize the strong Kantian influence in what Schiller says about human beauty. Large parts of “On Grace and Dignity” read like a response to the § 17 of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. In this paragraph, Kant speaks about the ideal of beauty which turns out to be an ideal of human beauty. Despite the undeniable Kantian influence, Schiller elaborates an autonomous theory of human beauty.

As an aesthetic treatise “On Grace and Dignity” is quite unusual. Although beautiful persons are often mentioned as examples of something beautiful, few philosophical works explicitly focus on human beauty. As far as I can tell, Schiller’s essay is one of the big exceptions. Schiller does not formulate a general theory of beauty, but explicitly a theory of human beauty in “On Grace and Dignity”. Hence this essay is a must-have-read if you are interested in philosophical perspectives on human beauty. Despite this special position in philosophical aesthetics, Schiller’s theory of human beauty is not much discussed among aestheticians, especially not as an autonomous theory. What is missing in particular is an in depth discussion about how Schiller justifies and defends his theory. Therefore I raise exactly this question in this paper. I want to discuss Schiller’s theory as an theory of its own right.

To do so, I will first summarize Schiller’s theory of human beauty and will shortly compare it with Kant’s theory (section 1). Then I will scrutinize whether this theory can be justified successfully based on Schiller’s own theoretical assumptions. By concentrating on “On Grace and Dignity” and on the *Kallias Letters*, I will examine three possible justification attempts. First, the moral-aesthetic-harmony argument builds



on Schiller's claim that expressions of moral virtuousness have to please aesthetically because they please morally (section 2.1). Secondly, the beauty-response argument relates to the experience evoked by human beauty, namely love (section 2.2). Thirdly, the *Kallias* argument refers to the objective principle of beauty presented in the *Kallias Letters*, namely that beauty is freedom in the appearance, and tries to deduce Schiller's view on human beauty from this principle (section 2.3). I will argue that although Schiller presents an inspiring view on human beauty, unfortunately, none of these arguments sufficiently justify his theory.

## **1. Schiller's Characterological Theory of Human Beauty**

Schiller defends what I call a characterological theory of human beauty.<sup>3</sup> Such a theory builds on the assumption that whether someone is (judged to be) beautiful depends on her sense-perceptible appearance. This means that a person's beauty at least partly depends on how she looks like or how her voice sounds like (perhaps also on how she smells like or how it feels like to touch her). With this assumption, a characterological theory rejects the Platonic idea that a person's character, mind, or soul can be literally beautiful and that inner beauty is one kind of human beauty (see, e.g., Plato 1958, 402d; 444e; 2006, 216d; 218d). In the *Kallias Letters*, Schiller explicitly claims that speaking about inner, moral beauty should only be understood as an indirect, metaphorical way of speaking because beauty belongs to the sensory realm (see Schiller 1971, p. 28). By saying that a person's beauty adheres to her appearance, a characterological theory assumes that whether someone is beautiful depends on her bodily frame. Thereby it does not defend the thesis, however, that it only depends on physical features, that is that human beauty and physical beauty are identical. Its core idea is rather that human beauty is physical-expressive beauty. A human being as a person has a will and has feelings. Both find their expressions in gestures and facial expressions (see Schiller 1971, p. 82). Schiller even believes that they can manifest in permanent facial

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<sup>3</sup> I owe this terminology to Jerrold Levinson.

features and bodily postures over time (see Schiller 1971, pp. 84-85). If so, a person's appearance is partly determined by her will and feelings. Therefore, a person's sense-perceptible appearance is not a mere physical, but rather a physical-expressive appearance. That is why a characterological theory claims that human beauty depends partly on physical features and partly on expressive features and is thus physical-expressive beauty.

This basic structure of a characterological theory helps to understand why Schiller presents a two-part view on human beauty according to which human beauty consists in fixed beauty supplemented with changeable beauty (see Schiller 1971, p. 70; p. 84). Fixed or architectonic beauty refers to the physical side of a person's appearance, changeable beauty to the expressive side.

Architectonic beauty is the beauty of the human frame (see Schiller 1971, p. 74). Nature determines this kind of beauty (see Schiller 1971, p. 74; p. 82). Schiller further describes it as "the gift of nature to her technical form" (Schiller 1992, p. 360). This statement is quite vague. Fortunately, Schiller also becomes more specific and draws the following image of an architectonically beautiful person: "A fortunate proportionality of limbs, flowing contours, a pleasing complexion, tender skin, a fine and free growth, a well-sounding voice, etc., [...]" (Schiller 1992, p. 342).

Changeable beauty is the beauty of movements (see Schiller 1971, 71). Schiller calls it also grace (see Schiller 1971, p. 70). Whereas nature determines architectonic beauty, each human subject can produce grace by willfully changing her appearance (see Schiller 1971, 74). As each subject is the source of grace, grace can only be found in willful movements (see Schiller 1971, pp. 72-73). If the wind moves your hair, e.g., this movement cannot be graceful. Also a reflex movement like a knee-jerk is precluded from grace.

Schiller continues to argue that although grace is an attribute of a willful movement, a willful movement is graceful due to the unintentional movements accompanying it (see Schiller 1971, p. 86). Schiller calls them sympathetic or speaking movements (see Schiller 1971, p. 86; pp. 92-93). He restricts grace to these unintentional movements because he assumes that grace has to be determined by nature or at least it should appear to be

determined by nature. It has at least to appear to be unintentional (see Schiller 1971, p. 90). This is true of speaking movements because they are induced by emotions (see Schiller 1971, p. 86). As we cannot (fully) control our emotions and how they express themselves in gestures and facial expressions, sympathetic movements cannot be faked (see Schiller 1971, pp. 88-92). They reveal how a person actually feels about an action that she has decided to perform. Our fine-grained facial expressions reveal, e.g., whether we like what we intend to do, whether we have to overcome any psychological barriers, whether we are hesitant about it, etc., etc.. So, unintentional movements induced by emotions unveil a person's true character. Schiller thus defends a transparency thesis: certain bodily, expressive movements, namely sympathetic or speaking movements, allow to reliably deduce a person's true character.

To actually be graceful, a sympathetic movement has to be expressive of a beautiful soul (see Schiller 1971, p. 113). At this point, as already mentioned, Schiller starts to speak about virtue. Someone has a beautiful soul if she is a morally virtuous person (see Schiller 1971, pp. 110-111). And someone is morally virtuous according to Schiller if she possesses the stable disposition to act morally out of inclination for the moral law (see Schiller 1971, p. 106). If so, "sensuousness and reason, duty and inclination harmonize" (Schiller 1992, p. 368) and acting morally has become her second nature (see Schiller 1971, p. 32).

As comparing Schiller to Kant is so common when one writes about Schiller's philosophical thoughts, allow me to point out some salient similarities and also dissimilarities between their approaches to human beauty. Both authors defend characterological theories (see also Schmalzried 2014; 2015<sup>b</sup>). Both assume that beauty has to depend (at least) partly on sense-perceptible features (see Kant 1963, §14), and thus both assume that human beauty has to depend on a person's appearance. As they also agree that a person's appearance is not only determined by physical features, but is also expressive of her character and mind, they think of a person's appearance in terms of a physical-expressive appearance.

Also the two-fold structure of Schiller's beauty theory has its roots in Kant's thoughts. In § 17 of his third Critique, Kant sketches the ideal of

beauty. He describes an ideal as an representation of an individual being adequate to an idea of reason (see Kant 1963, AA 5:232). That is why an ideal of beauty can only be an ideal of dependent beauty (see Kant 1963, AA 5:232). Unlike a judgment of free beauty, a judgment of dependent beauty presupposes a concept of the object judged to be beautiful and an idea of what this object is supposed to be (see Kant 1963, AA 5:229). Human beauty is one paradigmatic example of dependent beauty (see Kant 1963, AA 5:230). As only with respect to human beings we know *a priori* what they are supposed to be because only they are ends in themselves, the ideal of beauty can only be an ideal of human beauty (see Kant 1963, AA 5:233). In order to count as an ideal of beauty, a person's appearance first has to conform to the aesthetic normal idea, that is the image of a standard human appearance (see Kant 1963, AA 5:233). As the aesthetic normal idea only determines the average physical appearance of human beings (see Kant 1963, AA 5:234-235), Schiller's architectonic beauty parallels with it. In order to count as the ideal of beauty, a person's appearance additionally has to be expressive of moral ideas (Kant 1963, AA 5:235). Formulated differently, gestures and facial expressions have to be expressive of a moral character, that is a good will. Someone has a good will if she fulfills her moral duty out of respect for the moral law (see Kant 1961<sup>a</sup>). If someone possesses the stable disposition to act in this way, she is a virtuous person according to Kant (see Kant 1961<sup>b</sup>, AA 5:84; 1983, AA 7:147; 1986, AA 6:394-395). So although Kant and Schiller disagree about how to define virtue, both agree that bodily expressions of moral virtuousness contribute to a person's beauty. Schiller goes one step further and identifies inner beauty with moral virtuousness, whereas Kant does not draw such a connection.

Another similarity between Kant's and Schiller's view on human beauty can be found. Kant assumes that a person's appearance can conform to the aesthetic normal idea without being expressive of moral ideas, and *vice versa* (see Kant 1963, AA 5:235; 1983, AA 7:299). In order to count as an ideal of beauty, both aspects have to come together, however. Schiller agrees. Right at the beginning of his essay when he speaks about the myth of Juno, the Greek goddess of beauty and her belt of grace, it becomes clear

that fixed and changeable beauty are independent from each other (see Schiller 1971, pp. 69-74). One person can be merely architectonically beautiful, and another can only be graceful. But Juno, the symbol of perfect beauty, has both, is architectonically beautiful and graceful at the same time.

## **2. Three Justification Attempts of Schiller's Characterological Theory**

After having recapitulated Schiller's theory of human beauty, the question arises how he justifies his theory. This question can aim at two different levels: first, one might wonder why one should defend a characterological theory of human beauty, and secondly why one should defend Schiller's version of a characterological theory and not, e.g., Kant's or Burke's version (see Kant 1963, § 17; Burke 2008, p. 107). In what follows I want to concentrate on the second question. I will ask whether and how one can justify Schiller's theory drawing on his own theoretical assumptions that he makes in "On Grace and Dignity" and in the *Kallias Letters*.

But before I discuss the second question, allow me to shortly address the first one. The justification for a characterological theory of human beauty rests on two assumptions. First, one has to defend what I call the sensory-dependence-thesis. According to this thesis, genuine, literal beauty has to depend at least partly on sense-perceptible properties. Schiller expresses his agreement with this thesis in "On Grace and Dignity" as well as in his *Kallias Letters* (see, e.g., Schiller 1971, p. 25; p. 28; p. 100). Unfortunately, however, he only affirms it, but does not argue for it. As I have shown elsewhere, many philosophers accept (or reject) this thesis without much argument (see Schmalzried 2015<sup>a</sup>). As since the 18<sup>th</sup> century most aestheticians favor the sensory-dependence-thesis, it might have become an aesthetic axiom. Without going further into detail, let us say that Schiller is good company supporting this thesis (see, e.g., Beardsley 1962, p. 624; Burke 2008, p. 83, pp. 101-102; Danto 2003, p. 92; Home, 2005, p. 105; Kant 1963, § 14; Nehamas 2007, p. 63; Zangwill 2001, p.122, p.127). If one accepts the sensory-dependence-thesis, the beauty of a person has to depend on her appearance.

The second assumption upon which a characterological theory rests is that human beauty is physical-expressive beauty, that is that it depends on physical as well as expressive features. To argue for this assumption, Schiller hints at what I call the inseparability phenomenon (see Schiller 1971, p. 77). It describes the psychological difficulty to abstract from expressive features of a person's appearance if we see her as a person. The reason is that if we see someone as a person, we are aware that she has a will and has feelings and that they express themselves in her outward appearance. Therefore we immediately look for expressive features as clues to what kind of person someone is. If so, we always perceive expressive features along with physical features. If seeing someone as a person implies that we perceive her physical-expressive appearance and a person's beauty depends on her appearance, it thus depends on physical as well as expressive features.

These two assumptions build the background to defend a characterological theory. They do not yet provide any information about how a physical-expressive appearance of a beautiful person should look like. Arguing for Schiller's characterological theory thus needs to be supplemented with further arguments. In what follows, I try to justify Schiller's characterological theory in three different ways by sketching and discussing the moral-aesthetic-harmony argument, the beauty-response argument, and the *Kallias* argument.

### ***2.1. The Moral-Aesthetic-Harmony Argument***

One core claim of Schiller's characterological theory is that sympathetic movements revealing a beautiful soul, that is a moral virtuous character, are graceful and thus determine the expressive side of a person's beauty. To defend this thesis, he says that expressions of moral virtuousness have to please aesthetically because "where moral sentiment finds satisfaction, the aesthetical does not want to be cut short [...]" (Schiller 1992, p. 359). This justification builds on the above mentioned transparency thesis: sympathetic movements reliably reveal a person's character. If so, I have to be morally pleased if I see expressive signs of a morally virtuous character. And if there

is a harmony between moral and aesthetic satisfaction, I have to be aesthetically pleased as well. Therefore, grace depends on bodily expressions of moral virtuousness. This is the basic idea of what I call the moral-aesthetic-harmony argument.

To discuss this argument, one might first wonder whether the transparency thesis is actually true. But even if it would turn out that sympathetic movements do not (always) reliably show a person's true character, it is enough if we tend to interpret them as reliable character expressions. I believe that we often interpret them in this way. If so, we are morally pleased if we see bodily signs that we associate with a morally virtuous character. Even if our satisfaction was erroneous insofar as the person in question looks like she is morally virtuous without being actually morally virtuous, our satisfaction would still count as a moral satisfaction.

The crunch-point of the argument is not the transparency thesis, but the claim that moral and aesthetic satisfaction have to harmonize. Schiller tries to support this harmony claim by saying:

However sternly reason may demand an expression of morality, just as persistently will the eye require beauty. Since both these demands befall the same object, albeit from diverse standpoints of judgment, then satisfaction for both must be provided by one and the same cause. (Schiller 1992, p. 359)

This argument is a clear *non sequitur*, however. Even if we approach an object from two different, but equally important standpoints of judgment, the cause which leads to a positive judgment from one standpoint does not also have to lead to a positive judgment from the other standpoint. If these are two different and separate standpoints, their judgments can fall apart. We might wish that they were in harmony, but still they might not be. So, if one does not equate the moral with the aesthetic standpoint, and Schiller obviously wants to keep them distinct, the question is still open why moral and aesthetic satisfaction have to harmonize. If one continues reading, it becomes more and more clear that Schiller does not actually argue for the harmony claim, but rather stipulates it. That we experience bodily

expressions of moral virtuousness as beautiful is a free effect of nature (see Schiller 1971, p. 100). Schiller sees it as “a favor which morality grants to sensuousness” (Schiller 1992, p. 360).

Let us accept for a moment the harmony claim for the sake of the argument. Even so, the beaut-response argument is not yet successful. One might wonder why expressions of moral virtuousness in Schiller's sense rather than in Kant's sense aesthetically please. As pointed out in the previous section, Kant defends the idea that a person's appearance has to be expressive of moral virtuousness in his sense in order to amount to the ideal of beauty.

Some fear that Schiller only circularly answers this question by arguing that expressions of moral virtuousness in his sense are beautiful because such virtuousness makes a soul beautiful, and *vice versa* (see Hamburger 1956, pp. 388-390; Norton 1995, p. 240). It is true that some passages of his essay read as if Schiller had this circular argument in mind. But he also hints at a non-circular answer: in everyday life, we rather experience expressions of a beautiful soul as graceful than expressions of virtuousness in Kant's sense (see Schiller 1971, p. 102). Being virtuous in Kant's sense implies that one defeats one's inclinations and only acts out of respect for the moral law. Assumedly, being morally virtuous in Kant's sense requires a lot of effort. Bodily expressions of such a state of mind are not experienced as beautiful according to Schiller because: “Already the general opinion of mankind makes ease the chief characteristic of grace, and whatever requires effort can never manifest ease” (Schiller 1992, p. 361). I read this as an empirical observation. One can agree with Schiller that we rather judge expressions of virtuousness in his sense than expressions in Kant's sense as graceful. But still one can wonder whether only expressions of virtuousness in Schiller's sense please aesthetically. Bodily expressions of additional, non-moral character traits or even cognitive abilities might be experienced as beautiful in everyday life. It might be that also expressions of wit and humor, intelligence, or talent, to mention some examples, count in favor of a person's beauty (see, e.g., Burke 2008, p. 107). Schiller does not address and rule out this possibility.

Besides all this, the moral-aesthetic-harmony argument only



concentrates on grace as the expression of a beautiful soul and does not speak about architectonic beauty. If one is looking for a justification of Schiller's characterological theory as a whole, one should also speak about architectonic beauty. So, even if the moral-aesthetic-harmony argument was successful—which it is not—, it would only partially justify Schiller's characterological theory.

## ***2.2. The Beauty-Response Argument***

Broadly speaking, one can theoretically approach beauty in two different ways. One can focus either on the objects judged to be beautiful or on the subjects and their beauty experience. One can try to analyze either what makes an object beautiful or what is distinctive about a beauty experience. At the beginning of "On Grace and Dignity", Schiller states that changeable beauty belongs to the object (see Schiller 1971, p. 71). Assumedly, the same is true of fixed beauty. This is in accordance with his claim of the *Kallias Letters* that he is looking for a sensual-objective account of beauty (see Schiller 1971, p. 6). That is why he mainly pursues the first approach. This does not mean, however, that Schiller says nothing about how we experience human beauty. In the second part of "On Grace and Dignity", he shortly describes the experience of beauty as one of love, and defines it as a kind of pleasure which relaxes the senses and animates the mind and leads to an attraction of the sensuous object (see Schiller 1971, p. 128). He adds that love is "an emotion which is inseparable from grace and beauty" (Schiller 1992, p. 381).

This remark inspires what I call the beauty-response argument.<sup>4</sup> It rests on two assumptions. It first assumes that the beauty experience is an experience of love and secondly that we experience love if and only if a person is architectonically beautiful and graceful. It tries to justify Schiller's object-related characterological theory in an subject-related way, that is by drawing on the beauty experience.

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<sup>4</sup> To avoid any misunderstandings, I do not claim that Schiller himself had urged this argument. The idea is rather that based on what he says about the beauty experience it might be possible to build an argument in support of his general theory.

So, the first premise of the beauty-response argument is that the beauty experience is one of love. It is important to keep Schiller's exact definition of love in mind. Otherwise it is easy to overemphasize the difference between Kant and Schiller. Other than Schiller, Kant analyses *en detail* how we experience beauty. He famously distinguishes the pleasure in the beautiful from the pleasure in the agreeable and the pleasure in the good by saying that only the former is disinterested (see Kant 1963, §§ 2-5). This means that we are indifferent to its actual existence. The mere representation pleases in the case of beauty (see Kant 1963, § 2). Schiller agrees with Kant that our experience of beauty is a pleasurable one. He also agrees that it is different from mere sensuous pleasure, that is lust (see Schiller 1971, p. 129). If we feel lust, our mind is relaxed and our senses are animated. It is the other way around with love. Here, he takes up another of Kant's ideas. Kant stresses that beauty animates our cognitive faculties (see Kant 1963, AA 5:219). But Schiller also departs from Kant. He claims that in the case of beauty "an attraction of the sensuous object must follow" (Schiller 1992, p. 381). Due to this attraction he calls the experience of beauty love (see Schiller 1971, p. 128). Kant on the other hand explicitly denies a connection between the pleasure in the beautiful and an attraction to the object. According to Kant's thesis of disinterestedness, the pleasure in the beautiful neither rests on an interest nor does it produce an interest in the existence of an object (see Kant 1963, AA 5:205). According to Kant, neither our sensuous nor our rational side is attracted to the sensuous object, whereas Schiller assumes that our rational side is indeed attracted to it.

This leads to the question why one should agree with Schiller that the experience of beauty is best described as one of love. Guyer points out that Kant's strong claim that a beauty experience cannot ground an interest in the existence of an object is highly contra-intuitive and is independent from his more plausible weaker claim that it is not grounded on such an interest (see Guyer 1978, p. 449). Kant's strong claim becomes even more problematic if one keeps in mind that we are speaking about the experience of human beauty at the moment. There seems to be a close connection between human beauty and attraction (see, e.g., Burke 2008; Nehamas 2007, Platon 2006). It is quite difficult to think of a situation in which one has

experienced a person to be beautiful and still was completely indifferent to her actual existence. We tend to feel attracted (although not necessarily sexually attracted) to beautiful persons. So, Schiller's characterization of an experience of human beauty as one of love is not far-fetched. This might not suffice for an actual defense of the first premise. Still, let us assume for the moment that it is.

The second assumption of the beauty-response argument is that love is inseparable from grace and architectonic beauty. A natural way to understand this thesis is to interpret it as an empirical claim: a person whose appearance counts as architectonically beautiful and graceful according to the first part of "On Grace and Dignity" evokes love, and only such a person evokes love. The afterthought is important. If bodily expressions of character traits and cognitive abilities besides moral virtuousness or physical features not associated with architectonic beauty evoke love, Schiller will have only partially captured human beauty. To empirically prove the second premise is a challenge. Even if one thinks that it is to be expected that grace and architectonic beauty (often) evoke love, to actually show that *only* grace and architectonic beauty provoke love is another and assumedly more problematic task.

Schiller should give a hint why one should expect such a close connection between grace and architectonic beauty and love. Otherwise the second premise is a mere stipulation. As already seen, Schiller defines architectonic beauty as the gift of nature to her technical form and grace as the expression of a beautiful soul. Both definitions are object- and not experience-based. Therefore, they provide no reason to believe that features determining fixed and changeable beauty and only those evoke love. To build the bridge between the object-based definitions and the claim that we react to grace and architectonic beauty with love, an additional argumentative step is necessary. Schiller builds the bridge by giving the following explanation of why grace and architectonic beauty are inseparable from love:

In grace on the other hand, as in beauty generally, reason sees its demands fulfilled in sensuousness, and suddenly strides to meet it as

the sensuous appearance of one of its own ideas. This unexpected concord of the fortuitousness of nature with the necessity of reason, awakens an emotion of joyous approbation, good will, which is relaxing for the senses, but animating and engaging for the mind, and an attraction of the sensuous object must follow. (Schiller 1992, p. 381)

So, reason is pleased, animated and feels attracted to a sensuous object if the object's appearance makes an idea of reason sensuously accessible. This is so because reason sees its own demand sensuously fulfilled. And if this happens, the object is beautiful.

Schiller's story that and how love is evoked if reason sees one of its ideas reflected in an object's appearance is a story that can be told. In order for the beauty-response argument to succeed, this is not enough, however. One would also have to show that this is the only or at least the best way to understand how love is evoked. Schiller has not shown this (and probably has not intended to show this). The challenge is that Kant offers another and more influential explanation of how our pleasure in the beautiful is evoked. He famously claims that it rests on a free play of our cognitive faculties (see Kant 1963, § 9).

Secondly, the claim that something is beautiful if and only if reason sees one of its own ideas in its sensuous appearance reflected is not yet supported by arguments. If one assumes that grace is the sensuous expression of moral virtuousness and keeps in mind that reason demands to be morally virtuous, one can understand why Schiller claims this with respect to grace. But here two problems arise. The first one is that one has thereby not yet shown that also architectonic beauty and beauty in general can be understood in this way. The second and with respect to the beauty-response argument even more important problem is that this would lead to a circular argument. If one has already accepted that the expressive side of human beauty can be understood as grace and grace as the sensuous expression of a beautiful soul, one might argue that a graceful appearance sensuously fulfills a demand of reason. And this might lead to the assumption that it evokes love. But if so, starting from the assumption that

our beauty experience is love cannot lead to a defense of Schiller's characterological theory without begging the question.

So, even if one agrees with Schiller that the experience of human beauty can be described as an experience of love, the beauty-response argument fails due to its second premise. It lacks sufficient empirical support, and the non-empirical justification leads to a question begging argument. Although the beauty-response argument fails, discussing it was not pointless. The discussion has shown that although Schiller chooses an object-based approach to human beauty, he does not completely ignore the subjective side of beauty, and tries to explain how grace (and architectonic beauty) evoke a beauty experience best described as love.

### **2.3. *The Kallias Argument***

There might be another way to justify Schiller's characterological theory by referring to his objective principle of beauty from the *Kallias Letters*. Schiller writes these letters to his friend Gottfried Körner, and between January and February 1793 they intensely discuss aesthetic matters. Schiller doubts Kant's claim that beauty cannot be defined with reference to the object (see Schiller 1971, 5). He sets himself the task to find an objective principle of beauty, and finally formulates such the principle in the letter from the February 8, 1793: "Beauty is freedom in the appearance" (Schiller 1971, p. 18). Schiller does not apply this principle to human beauty in the *Kallias Letters*. He promises, but never writes a letter accomplishing this task (see Schiller 1971, p. 41). "On Grace and Dignity" might fulfill this promise although it does not explicitly mention the principle. Still, some passages of this essay made me think of the *Kallias* formula, e.g., when Schiller speaks about ease as one of the main characteristics of grace (see Schiller 1971, p. 102) or when—as just discussed—he claims that in the case of a beautiful appearance reason meets "the sensuous appearance of one of its own ideas" (Schiller 1992, p. 381). If one could deduce Schiller's characterological theory from his beauty principle and could give an independent justification of the principle, one would have found an elegant way to justify Schiller's view on human beauty. This is the idea behind what

I call the *Kallias* argument.

The first step of discussing the *Kallias* argument is to try to deduce Schiller's characterological theory from his principle of beauty. For this purpose, one has to say a little bit more about the principle. Its first key term is "freedom". Schiller defines freedom as being self-determined, as being determined from within (see Schiller 1971, p. 35). The second key term is "in the appearance". As already mentioned, Schiller restricts beauty to the sensory realm. Therefore "freedom in the appearance" should be read as "freedom of the appearance". Here a problem arises, however. An appearance is part of the sensible world, and Schiller accepts Kant's claim that only something supersensible can truly be free (see Schiller 1971, p. 17). Schiller adds, however, that it only matters that an object appears to be free, not that it is actually free (see Schiller 1971, p. 17). In order to appear to be free it, it suffice if it appears to be self-determined.<sup>5</sup> It is important that one feels no need to look for any external determination or cause. The appearance should be kind of self-explanatory. Following these definitions and clarifications, "beauty is freedom in the appearance" can be translated into "beauty is appearing to be self-determined of appearances."

Let us try to apply this principle to human beings. As already argued, a person's appearance has a fixed, physical and a changeable, expressive side. That is why Schiller distinguishes between architectonic and changeable beauty. If the principle holds, the changeable, expressive side of a person's appearance has to be appear to be self-determined in order to be graceful. In "On Grace and Dignity", Schiller speaks of grace as "the beauty of the form moved by freedom" (Schiller 1992, 350) and as the "beauty of form under the influence of freedom" (Schiller 1992, 349). One might fear that these statements are at odds with the *Kallias* formula. It seems to be possible that unfree movements appear to be free, and *vice versa* (see Beiser 2005, chap. 3, sec. 8; Hamburger 1956, p. 385). No contradiction occurs, however, because grace refers to human movements. What is special about human movements is that they can actually be caused by freedom. As Schiller defends the transparency thesis, only actually free movements can

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<sup>5</sup> Hamburger (1956, p. 384) speaks about a metaphorical notion of freedom.

appear to be free. This helps to understand why Schiller restricts grace to movements expressive of moral actions as the only truly free actions (see Schiller 1971, p. 73; p. 92).

Now, one can also understand why grace is found in expressions of moral virtuousness in Schiller's and not in Kant's sense. If sympathetic movements express that one has acted morally only out of respect for the moral law, these movements cannot appear to be completely self-determined because reason as well as sensuousness belong to our self and our reason determines our sensuousness. Also if our sensuousness would determine our reason, the resulting movement would not appear to be completely self-determined. Only if inclination and duty harmonize, neither reason determines sensuousness, nor *vice versa*. Only if a movement results from this state of mind, it can appear to be truly self-determined (see Schiller 1971, pp. 102-104). So, Schiller's comments on grace well fit with his *Kallias* formula, I think.

Two passages of "On Grace and Dignity" suggest that also architectonic beauty can be deduced from the beauty principle. First, as already mentioned, Schiller characterizes architectonic beauty as the gift of nature to her technical form (see Schiller 1971, p. 100). With the *Kallias* formula in mind, architectonic beauty might be the gift of nature to her technical form because a beautiful human frame looks self-determined, that is as if it has given itself its purpose and likes to fulfill it. Secondly, Schiller describes architectonic beauty as the sensuous expression of a concept of reason (see Schiller 1971, 81). He leaves open which concept of reason he has in mind. Against the backdrop of the *Kallias Letters*, one can assume that he thinks of freedom. If so, architectonic beauty counts as the sensuous expression of freedom. If our bodily frame sensuously expresses freedom, this might mean that it appears to be free.

But although what Schiller says about architectonic beauty can be partly associated with his *Kallias* formula, applying his beauty principle to the physical side to a person's appearance is still problematic. Although the *Kallias* principle claims to be an object-related principle, one cannot deduce from it that architectonic beauty consists in a "fortunate proportionality of limbs, flowing contours, a pleasing complexion, tender skin, a fine and free

growth, a well-sounding voice, etc.” (Schiller 1992, 342). The principle is much too vaguely formulated for this.

Setting this difficulty aside, a more basic question arises for the *Kallias* argument, namely how Schiller justifies his objective principle of taste. He mentions two possible lines of justification in the letter from January 25, 1793: first, one can prove it from experience, and, secondly, one can legitimize it *a priori* (see Schiller 1971, 5). Schiller aims at an *a priori* legitimation. He presents his aesthetic deduction in the letter from February 8, 1793 (see Schiller 1971, pp. 13-18). The deduction starts with defining reason as the capacity of connection. Theoretical reason either connects concepts with concepts or concepts with intuitions, either forming necessary, logical or contingent, empirical judgments. Practical reason either applies the concept of freedom to actions as free events or to natural events, either forming moral judgments or—and this is the crucial step of the aesthetic deduction—aesthetic judgments. This classification follows because aesthetic judgments unlike judgments of theoretical reason are not based on concepts. As they refer to mere appearances, they are also different from moral judgments. Nonetheless they are judgments of reason. Beiser suggests that attempts to justify aesthetic judgments supports this claim (see Beiser 2005, chap. 2, sec. 4). If so, taste has to occupy the blank space of practical reason. Unclear is, however, why Schiller denies Kant's claim that judgments of taste are reflective judgments of the power of judgment. Furthermore, why should one accept Schiller's definition and classification of reason in the first place?

As the letter from February 23, 1793 shows, Schiller himself doubts the complete success of his deduction. He additionally tries to show empirically that those properties which make objects appear to be self-determined are the same that makes them beautiful. At this point, the problem of the principle's vagueness becomes fatal. If one asks which features are responsible for an object appearing to be self-determined, one cannot answer this question on a concrete, object-related level, and neither can Schiller (see also Beiser 2005, chap. 2, sec. 7; Norton 1995, p. 230). We have already seen this with respect to architectonic beauty, and the examples that Schiller mentions in the *Kallias Letters* point to the same difficulty.



Norton criticizes: "Yet he never revealed what perceptible qualities do have something to do with beauty, [...]" (Norton 1995, p. 230). In the end, the danger is that one simply stipulates that freedom in the appearance must be given if one judges an object to be beautiful, and *vice versa*. This, of course, is no satisfactory justification.

In the letter from February 23, 1793, Schiller also mentioned a subject-related way to show that beauty and freedom in the appearance are the same, namely if one could show that beautiful objects and objects appearing to be self-determined evoke the same kind of experience (see Schiller 1971, pp. 33-34). But the vagueness of the principle hinders the success of this procedure as well. To test the hypothesis that an object appearing to be self-determined evokes the same response as a beautiful object, you first have to single out objects appearing to be self-determined. But in order to do so, you need some kind of clear idea about how they look like. You cannot simply assume that they look like beautiful objects without begging the question. But due to the vagueness of the principle, you have no such idea and hence you cannot test your hypothesis.

Allow me to sum up the discussion of the *Kallias* argument. First, one can understand some aspects of Schiller's characterological theory of beauty against the backdrop of his objective principle of beauty. But one cannot completely deduce Schiller's view on human beauty from this principle due to its vagueness. Secondly and more importantly, Schiller's *a priori* and also *a posteriori* justification attempts of the principle are not successful. Even if one would have been able to completely deduce his characterological theory from his objective beauty principle, the *Kallias* argument would still fail because it misses a persuasive justification of the *Kallias* principle.

### 3. Conclusion

The aim of this paper has been to present and to discuss Schiller's theory of human beauty as a theory in its own right, and not only as a reaction to or modification of Kant's theory. I have argued that Schiller defends a characterological theory. Such a theory has the big advantage that it can

reconcile two widely held and also plausible, but seemingly incompatible assumptions about beauty. It has to deny neither that beauty is only skin-deep nor that true beauty comes from within. It can defend both claims because it first assumes that beauty depends on the sense-perceptible appearance of a person and secondly that this appearance has an expressive as well as a physical side.

Schiller further develops this characterological idea by claiming that human beauty is architectonic beauty supplemented with grace. He defines architectonic beauty as the beauty of the human frame and describes it as the gift of nature to her technical form. Grace is found in the unintentional, sympathetic movements accompanying willful movements and is given if they reveal a beautiful soul, that is moral virtuousness. In my opinion, Schiller's view on human beauty is an inspiring and *prima facie* plausible theory. Still, this does not suffice to argue that he has fully and adequately analyzed human beauty. Therefore, I have set myself the task to find a way to justify Schiller's view on human beauty based on his own theoretical assumptions. Unfortunately, neither the moral-aesthetic-harmony argument, nor the beauty-response argument, nor the *Kallias* argument has been fully convincing. At the end of this paper, Schiller's theory is thus still lacking a persuasive justification, even if the basic characterological idea is persuasive. The next step might be to look for a justification from without Schiller's theoretical framework. But this is the task of another paper.

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