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## An Aesthetics of Freedom: Schiller and the Living Gestalt

### I. Introduction: Schiller's Breakthrough

WE ARE ACCUSTOMED TO think about freedom primarily in terms of possibility: freedom is the *power* to choose and act, the *ability* to attain certain ends. While possibility is undeniably an essential part of the meaning of freedom, if we make it the whole, we separate freedom at one stroke from the real world. Freedom, then, gets threatened by any particular, definite realization, and, conversely, everything actual comes to be seen as “freedom-less,” as simply “there” without any depth, anything new to offer, anything worthy of wonder. One of the surest signs of a loss of a sense for what Gabriel Marcel referred to as the “ontological mystery” is a “subjectivizing” of freedom.

Hegel, as is well known, took Kant to be a representative of the “subjectification” of freedom, and he pointed to Friedrich Schiller as the one who first managed to break open a path beyond this subjectivism to the possibility of a new understanding of spirit.<sup>1</sup> Though Hegel does not elaborate in much detail *how* Schiller achieved this, he links it to Schiller's interpretation of *beauty*. As Hegel sees it, the aim of beauty in Schiller's

1. On Schiller's place in the development of German Idealism, see Lindner, “Zur philosophischen Leistung Friedrich Schillers,” 831. Cf., Kroner, *Von Kant bis Hegel*, vol. 2, 45–47; Cassirer, *Idee und Gestalt*, 344–345; Safranski, *Schiller*.

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understanding is “to form inclination, sensuality, drive and temperament [*Gemüt*] in such a way that they become rational in themselves, and therefore so that reason, freedom, and the reality of spirit [*Geistigkeit*] emerge from their abstraction and take on flesh and blood in union with the natural side that has thus become rational. The beautiful is thus the unification [*Ineinsbildung*, literally, the *form*-ing into one] of the rational and sensual, and this unification is expressed as the truly real.”<sup>2</sup> Hegel was indeed correct that beauty represented for Schiller, not a mere “aesthetic” phenomenon, but a reality with ontological significance. Indeed, the philosopher-poet presented his theory to Goethe in a letter as a “metaphysics of beauty.”<sup>3</sup> Schiller was driven his life long to reconcile in a non-reductivistic way the ideal and real, spirit and matter, the absolute demands of the spirit and the limited condition of the realm of the body, and the notion he developed of beauty was the culmination of these efforts.<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, the notion of beauty was, for Schiller, indissolubly wed to that of freedom. Schiller calls freedom the *sole ground* of beauty,<sup>5</sup> he defines beauty as “freedom in appearance” (which may better be translated as “manifest freedom”),<sup>6</sup> he claims that only the genuine experience of genuine beauty can bestow freedom,<sup>7</sup> and says that what offers a true formation in freedom is nothing other than an *aesthetic* education. Our aim in the present chapter is to work out an understanding of Schiller’s notion of freedom, in the light of Hegel’s claims, through an interpretation of the notion in the so-called *Kalliasbriefe*, where the famous definition of beauty first appears, and then of the *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*, Schiller’s main philosophical work. The study of the *Kalliasbriefe* will provide us with an understanding of *form* and *nature*, two notions essentially related to freedom in Schiller’s thinking, which will then provide a helpful way into the AEM. We will see, in the end, that freedom is connected, not principally with possibility alone, for Schiller, but in the first place with *human wholeness*, which is an actuality full of potential. Such a

2. Hegel, *Lectures on Aesthetics* (JA.12.96f.).

3. See the letter dated 7 January, 1795: “I certainly do not have to assure you that I am quite anxious to know what you think of my metaphysics of beauty. Just as beauty itself is drawn from the whole of man, so is my analysis of it drawn from the whole of my humanity, and it cannot but concern me greatly to know how it corresponds to yours.”

4. See Wilcox, *Die Dialektik der menschlichen Vollendung*, 129.

5. 23 Feb, 1793, 168 (SW.8.658).

6. 8 Feb, 1793, 152 (SW.8.638).

7. AEM, II, 9 (SW.8.309).

view of freedom is a key one for the project of the present book in general; it sets the stage for our further studies of Schelling and Hegel, who developed their own views of freedom in the wake of Schiller's "breakthrough."

## II. The Analogy of Form

The name "*Kalliasbriefe*" refers to a series of letters that Schiller wrote to his most constant correspondent, Christian Gottfried Körner, from January to March 1793, in which Schiller sought among other things to clarify for himself insights he had into the nature of beauty that struck him in his study of Kant's *Critique of Judgment*.<sup>8</sup> It was also a time in which Schiller lectured on aesthetics at the university in Jena and had gathered and sorted through a variety of materials to this end.<sup>9</sup> The series of letters to Augustenburg, which would eventually be revised as the famous AEM, were announced in February of this year, even if they were not begun in earnest until July.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the beginning of the AEM overlap with the end of Schiller's first sketch,<sup>11</sup> and they indeed make use of the concept Schiller developed in the earlier letters, namely, the account of beauty as the manifestation of freedom.<sup>12</sup> Though he was inspired by Kant in a decisive

8. Schiller had written to Körner on December 21 of the previous year about his desire to write a dialogue on beauty that he would call "Kallias." (Körner incidentally responded on December 27 that Schiller was just the person to write this important work specifically because of his dramatic talent.) Schiller never carried out this project, but because he expounded his aesthetic theory to Körner in letters that began to acquire the form of a treatise, the letters he wrote to Körner during these months were published in 1847, and repeatedly since, as an independent, though incomplete, work and given the name *Kalliasbriefe*. This was never a name, however, that Schiller himself gave to them. We use it nonetheless for the sake of convenience.

9. Schiller lectured on aesthetics in the winter semester 92/93, and presented in these lectures his theory of beauty as "Freiheit in der Erscheinung," in relation to other proposals being made in the eighteenth century. See SW.8.622.

10. For a thorough presentation of the history of the two series and their relation to one another, see WW, 334–37, and especially SW.8.880–93.

11. See Muehleck-Müller, *Schönheit und Freiheit*, 125.

12. Because the AEM do not elaborate the same theory as the *Kalliasbriefe* in the same detail, some believe that Schiller considered that earlier attempt a failure and so abandoned it. But in fact the letters mention the theory in passing as a more or less established fact. The passage from the footnote to XXIII, 167fn (SW.8.383fn): "Schönheit aber ist der einzig mögliche Ausdruck der Freiheit in der Erscheinung," is not only a direct citation of this theory but a confident emphasis of his discovery. The reason he does not elaborate this theory in the AEM is simply because they represent a further development of this theory in a new sphere, rather than a retracing of the same ground.

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way, one of the things that prompted his writing of these letters was a conviction that he had discovered something that Kant had missed, namely, the objective ground of beauty, a ground that would both enable a more philosophically systematic account and also do more justice to the phenomenon in its richness.<sup>13</sup>

Let us begin our analysis of Schiller's interpretation simply by laying out some of his affirmations regarding form, nature, freedom, and beauty next to one another, and then endeavor to unfold what they mean in their interconnection. As we shall see, the discussion of "free style" in the previous chapter offers an indispensable perspective for interpreting these

13. See his letter to Johann Heinrich Ramberg, 7 March, 1793: "A great deal of light has gone on for me regarding the nature of beauty, so that I believe I will win you over to my theory. I believe I have discovered the objective concept of beauty, which also qualifies *eo ipso* as an objective principle of taste, which is a possibility Kant had doubted." Many scholars believe that the *Kalliasbriefe* represent a *failure* to find such an objective ground. Beiser, for example, points to Schiller's apparent confession of his difficulties in another letter to Körner in October of 1794, and thus later than this letter to Ramberg (*Schiller*, 75). It should be noted, however, that Schiller persists even in this later letter in calling the concept *objective*, and simply states that it cannot be *proven empirically*. But this is precisely how he describes the situation to Körner in his very first letter in the series, 25 January, 1793, which means the later letter does not represent a change in view. Beiser's judgment ultimately rests on a claim we intend to dispute, namely, that Schiller held an ultimately Kantian view of nature as determined from first to last by external causes. Though there is some ambiguity on this point in the *Kalliasbriefe*, even here Schiller is clearly moving in a different direction. Beiser's claim would hold only if Schiller became a more convinced Kantian on this point the further he moved from Kant's influence and the closer to Goethe's, which is not plausible. The direction Schiller takes is evident in the major philosophical essay Schiller wrote that Beiser did not discuss in his book, namely, *On Naive and Sentimental Poetry*, in which he observes in the opening pages: the things of nature "act serenely on their own, being there according to their own laws; we cherish that inner necessity, that eternal oneness with themselves," *ibid.*, 180 (SW.8.434). Even here, Schiller tries to move Kant himself in a Goethean direction, as it were (see his footnote on this same page).

There are others who affirm the success of Schiller's attempt to discover an objective concept of beauty, and see the AEM as a fulfillment of his theory; in fact, this was the first position taken in print (see Danzel, *Schillers Briefwechsel mit Körner*, 1–25) and even more strongly argued by Berger, *Die Entwicklung von Schillers Ästhetik*. For more recent arguments for the success of the *Kalliasbriefe*, see Römpp, "Schönheit als Erfahrung der Freiheit," 428–45, and a more qualified expression in Wilcox, *Dialektik der menschlichen Vollendung*, 36. Although we cannot enter into the dispute surrounding that question, our own position is that the matter would have to remain for Schiller ambiguous, insofar as the locus of beauty, namely, *appearance*, is necessarily both subjective and objective at once. Nevertheless, we take the aesthetic theory articulated here to be a successful one in principle, even if it eludes the attempt to deduce it transcendently or demonstrate it empirically.

complex notions. According to Schiller, beauty is freedom in appearance, which is another way of saying that freedom is the ground of beauty. Schiller also defines beauty as the form of perfection, or the form of form,<sup>14</sup> and claims that we perceive something as beautiful when the *mass* of that thing is “completely dominated by form.”<sup>15</sup> Freedom, for its part, is defined as *autonomy*,<sup>16</sup> which Schiller explains as a thing’s determining itself from within itself.<sup>17</sup> This latter affirmation is explained further as a thing’s existing “out of pure form,”<sup>18</sup> and acting solely on the basis of its nature.<sup>19</sup> Schiller defines nature here as “the inner principle of the existence of a thing, which can be at the same time seen as the ground of its form: *the inner necessity of form*.”<sup>20</sup> Schiller then goes on to specify *aesthetic* autonomy as *heautonomy*.<sup>21</sup> And finally he elaborates freedom in a broader sense as the coordination of parts within a whole, a coordination that both gives rise to genuine unity and at the same time preserves the irreducible uniqueness of all the parts.<sup>22</sup> It is clear, here, that to understand freedom we need to understand the role that form plays as a constitutive ontological principle in Schiller’s thought, the connection it therefore has with nature, and then, finally, the implication of this view of form for the part-whole relationship. How do the various affirmations Schiller makes here fit together?

Schiller’s use of the term “Form” or “Gestalt” reflects much of the ambiguity it has within the Platonic and Aristotelian traditions. While some commentators discern two different meanings in the term,<sup>23</sup> there seem

14. 25 Jan, 1793, 147 (SW.8.632).

15. 23 Feb, 1793, 164 (SW.8.653).

16. 8 Feb, 1793, 151 (SW.8.637).

17. 18 Feb, 1793, 153 (SW.8.640).

18. Ibid.

19. 23 Feb, 1793, 163 (SW.8.652).

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.

22. See *ibid.*, 171–72 (SW.8.662).

23. See von Wiese, *Friedrich Schiller*, 491, who distinguishes between a rational and an aesthetic sense of form. Cf., Taminiiaux, *La nostalgie de la Grèce*, 80–81, who focuses on the tension between nature and subjectivity in German Idealism which he claims comes to expression in Schiller’s thought. Taminiiaux discerns two conceptions of form in Schiller, one that emerges from the existence of a thing (nature) and one that the understanding imposes on it (subjectivity). Wilkinson and Willoughby distinguish essentially between rational form and the *Gestalt* that represents the concretely existing thing, though they mention in passing the “non-technical” sense of *Gestalt* as “outward appearance” (WW, 308–10). Admittedly, they are focusing primarily on the AEM, where these two senses are arguably the most important. They, and von

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in fact to be four, which we can express as a pair of polarities. First, form can be the intelligible aspect of a thing in contrast to its matter, the aspect to which the logical concept we form of things refers (compare Plato's use of *eidōs*). Secondly, form can mean the concretely and individually existing thing itself, as for example we would in English speak of a "lifeform" (compare Aristotle's use of *morphē*). In Schiller's AEM, this latter usage is often taken over by the native word *Gestalt*—which we may attribute, at least in part, to Goethe's influence, since the term, which plays such a fundamental role in the final version, scarcely appears in the extant letters from 1793. Nevertheless, the word "form" includes within its semantic scope what is contained in *Gestalt*, even if the reverse is not always true: Form can always be used in place of *Gestalt*, but not vice versa.<sup>24</sup> Third, within a formed whole, form can be the internal organizing principle of the thing that makes it in fact *be* a whole (once again, *morphē*). Finally, form can mean the outward appearance of a thing, the structure that gives it the character that identifies it as what it is: *eidōs* similarly is cognate with both "to know" and "to see," and means not only the "idea" of a thing, but also the "look" that it has.

The great richness of the term implies a certain ambiguity, but this ambiguity in Schiller's vocabulary ought not to be taken as a sign of philosophical amateurishness—unless we would wish to call Aristotle, for example, an amateur. Instead, the previous chapter has instructed us to see ambiguity as an important dimension of the complex phenomenon Schiller wishes to elucidate; problems arise in our interpretation if we reduce it. There is a great tension in the term, to be sure, insofar as form, for example, can identify precisely what is *abstracted* from the whole, and at the same time stand for the whole precisely in its concreteness. Moreover, form can be the "inner principle" of the thing, and at the same time the outward appearance of it. But it is important to see how the various meanings do not conflict in principle, but in a certain sense depend on one another. It is presumably this inner richness of the term that has always made it difficult to limit to any single definition. What *identifies* a thing, and so allows us to form a logical concept of it, is the same "thing" that organizes it into what it is. The principle of its organization is, in turn, what makes an independently existing whole, a structured entity. And it is likewise

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Wiese, miss however the "internal principle" that Taminioux sees, while for his part Taminioux forces Schiller into an over-simplified dualism precisely, as we shall see, because he misses the aesthetic meaning of form that mediates between the objectivity of nature and the subjectivity of the human cognitive faculties.

24. WW, 308–9.

what gives a thing the particular *look* that it has. The outward appearance, then, though in one respect clearly and importantly *different* from its inner being, nonetheless reflects or manifests nothing *other than* that internal being, so that we would fail to see the outward appearance if we saw it as something else, or indeed as an independently existing “thing” in its own right—that is, if we were to “reify” appearance. To interpret Schiller properly requires us *both* to recognize the distinction of meanings *and* to hold them at the same time together in a reciprocally illuminating unity.

In other words, it requires us to read Schiller “dramatically,” in the sense argued for in chapter 1. A dramatic reading would formulate the analogy of form, not just by affirming one aspect “and also” the other in the polarity, but by grasping the *whole*, which means the one, the other, and the movement between them. Fischer wrote that, in Schiller, if beauty is veiled truth,<sup>25</sup> the poet is the veiled philosopher;<sup>26</sup> to grasp the whole phenomenon in Schiller, however, we would have to say that this veil must be both *kept in place* and in a certain respect *lifted*. The whole form, similarly, is the embrace of the partial meaning by the more comprehensive one. More specifically, we could say that form in the concrete sense *contains* form as abstraction, without eliminating its relative autonomy, and form as appearance *contains* the inner principle, while allowing it to remain internal. The key to this “analogicity” of form is the point we discovered in the previous chapter, indicating its capital importance for understanding everything else in Schiller’s philosophical work: the inner completion of the concept is what allows it, as it were, the freedom to be wholly present in the expression, so that form is simultaneously inner principle and external appearance, and it is so without compromising the difference between these aspects.

### III. Form Overcoming Form

With this complex unity as a guiding background, we can explore the work the term does for Schiller in the *Kalliasbriefe*. In the letter of January 25, Schiller compares his aesthetic interpretation of form to Kant’s. Kant insisted on a *separation* of beautiful form from logical concept, according to Schiller, for the good reason that we can experience something

25. He is no doubt making allusion to Schiller’s poem, *Das verschleierte Bild zu Sais*.

26. See Fischer, *Schiller als Philosoph*, 37.

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as beautiful without understanding what it is.<sup>27</sup> This separation has two immediate implications, however, that Schiller finds problematic. In the first place, it removes the beautiful from the sphere of objectivity, and so renders it impossible to discover an objective principle of taste. Second, it leads to the formalism that would rank the abstract pattern of an arabesque a higher beauty than that of a perfect human form, which represents for Schiller (as for the Greeks he admired) the “highest beauty.” At the same time, however, he finds the motivation for the separation compelling. How does Schiller account for the experience without being forced to follow Kant in making the separation? He makes a distinction, as it were, *within* form, which allows beautiful form to be distinct from the logical concept without being separated from it, and this entails a “dramatic” view of the matter: “beauty presents itself in its greatest splendor only once it has overcome the *logical* nature of its object, and how can this be done if there is no resistance?”<sup>28</sup> Beauty, he goes on to say, is the “form of form,” or the “form of perfection.”

In one respect, then, form represents the perfection of a thing, which means its adequation to its concept, and yet form remains *more* than this: it is the expression of the thing’s not being reducible to the mere concept. This “more” is what will turn out to be the thing’s self-manifestation or revelation. We ought to notice, here, that form in the aesthetic sense is not simply different from form in a logical sense—which would return us to the Kantian implications we just mentioned—but it *includes* the logical sense within itself even while it surpasses that particular sense. This makes the logical form, as it were, *implicit within* the aesthetic form: the phrase “form of form” ought to be understood as a subjective genitive. The “both/and” character of form, as Schiller presents it, offers an important insight for the field of aesthetics proper. It allows us both to affirm the experience of recognizing beauty prior to understanding a thing, and at the same time allows us to say that our appreciation of the beauty of a thing can in fact *deepen* with our progressive understanding of it, something that a Kantian view would not permit. This is no small gain for aesthetics.

What does Schiller mean by the curious verb he uses here, “overcome” (*überwinden*)? He strikes a similar note in the letter of February 23, writing that we experience a thing as beautiful when we see mass

27. Cf., Kant, CJ, §16, Ak 229–31 (Pluhar: 76–79), in which Kant distinguishes between “free” beauty (*pulchritudo vaga*) and “adherent” beauty (*pulchritudo adhaerens*), calling the judgments concerning the form *pure* judgments of taste.

28. 25 Jan, 1793, 147 (SW.8.632).

“completely dominated by form.”<sup>29</sup> He is speaking in this case of a physical thing in art (artifact) or nature (organism), but it is not difficult to see how his explanation would apply analogously through all the levels of being, from abstract mathematical objects to human deeds.<sup>30</sup> As in the previous case, he makes here a distinction between two essentially different but inseparable senses of form: the *general* form—i.e., that which makes it a “thing” and gives it mass—and the specific form, which is what makes it be the thing it is, what establishes it according to its “particular” nature.<sup>31</sup> The nature of an animal, he says, includes both its being subject to natural laws (mass) and the principle that determines its proper essence (for example, horse). There is an analogy, here, between the distinction Schiller is making and the scholastic distinction between quantitative form designating “signate matter” and the quiditative form that establishes the nature of a thing;<sup>32</sup> and perhaps a more distant analogy to Aristotle’s distinction in living things between first and second actuality. In any event, none of these represent numerically distinct forms, which are as it were “aggregated” into the one being, but rather distinct aspects within form itself. Judged aesthetically, the beauty of an animal depends on the extent to which the former, the mass, is subordinate to the latter, the inner nature, which differs in different types of animals and within a species. The formed matter (in scholastic terms, the “signate matter”) of a horse makes it a physical body, subject to the laws of nature. A horse is heavy, which means that gravity pulls it to the earth. But a beautiful horse is one that shows that this pull does not strain it, which means that the necessity imposed on it does not burden it as a foreign power, as something that disrupts, as it were, its attempt to be what it is, i.e., to realize and express its “horseness.” Quite to the contrary, a beautiful horse takes the necessity imposed on it precisely as a means of self-expression, as an opportunity to show itself for what it is. In doing so, the external imposition is transformed; it appears as a function of the inner principle of the horse’s own being. This transformation, of course, admits of degrees; a thing will be more or less

29. 23 Feb, 1793, 164 (SW.8.653).

30. And, indeed, Schiller shows this analogy by illustrating his discussion in terms of both human deeds (18 Feb, 1793; 157–58; SW.8.644–46) and geometrical figures (23 Feb, 1793, 172–73 [SW.8.664]).

31. Because of the “analogical” character of form, the claim that matter must be dominated by form does *not* necessarily entail a collapse back into Kantian formalism, as Taminioux suggests: *La nostalgie de la Grèce*, 113.

32. See Thomas Aquinas, *De ente et essentia*, chapter 2.

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successful in “internalizing” the foreign necessity, but the ideal of beauty is the “complete domination” of mass.

There are two related things to notice about this domination. In the first place, we see that this transformation is the overcoming of form *from within* rather than the substitution of a new form for the old one. Being a horse does not make it any less a physical thing in the world, but makes its thingness beautiful, that is, makes whatever is outwardly “there” expressive of an internal meaning.<sup>33</sup> It is precisely for this reason that the overcoming allows the difference to be one of analogy rather than one of equivocity. As abstract as this point may seem, we will come to see that it is crucial for the whole of Schiller’s aesthetics. Second, the domination of matter that Schiller describes here—again, because of the principle coming from the inside—does not mean the “suppression” of the matter: indeed, there is an undeniable sense in which a beautiful horse is more *physically present*, more imposing in its concrete reality, than a clumsy horse that has never achieved mastery of its movements.<sup>34</sup> The point here is not elimination but integration: a beautiful horse “has it together,” which means that the multiplicity of the diverse aspects of its being does not stand outside of its unity. To the contrary, these aspects are expressive of that very interior principle. In this, Schiller is recovering the fundamental feature of Neo-Platonic aesthetics, the very feature that makes that tradition of aesthetics *ontological*, namely, the identity of beauty and unity.<sup>35</sup> But Schiller improves upon this tradition in a decisive respect: whereas the Neo-Platonic tradition insists relentlessly on the ultimate reduction of multiplicity to unity,<sup>36</sup> Schiller

33. Schiller speaks at the end of Letter XXIII in the AEM of outward form making manifest inner life: AEM, 169 (SW.8.384). This is an expression of the same idea articulated here in the *Kalliasbriefe*.

34. This affirmation requires a qualification that Schiller himself never gives. The examples Schiller uses encourage what could be called a “triumphalistic” aesthetics, even though his principles allow for an even more radically “dramatic” aesthetics than he himself offers, namely, the free submission of a figure to absolute necessity in tragedy. Strangely, Schiller doesn’t exploit what seems to be the full potential of his own principles in his theory of tragedy. See Schiller’s essay “On the Art of Tragedy,” and Beiser’s illuminating account of his theory and its historical development: *Schiller*, 238–62.

35. See *Ennead* I.6.2: “We hold that all the loveliness of this world comes by communion in Ideal-Form. . . . But where the Ideal-Form has entered, it has grasped and coordinated what from a diversity of parts was to become a unity: it has rallied confusion into co-operation: it has made the sum one harmonious coherence: for the Idea is a unity and what it moulds must come to unity as far as multiplicity may” (McKenna translation). On the presence of Neo-Platonic themes in Schiller, see Koch, *Schillers philosophische Schriften und Plotin*, and Pugh, *The Dialectic of Love*.

36. A more thorough demonstration of this point is necessary than we can give in

insists on the dramatic phenomenon of an asymmetrical reciprocity. Thus, while the Neo-Platonic tradition would say only that beauty increases the more diversity reveals an inner unity, Schiller can affirm this and at the same time claim something that makes no Neo-Platonic sense: beauty also increases the more unity reveals itself to be diversified. This is yet another gain for aesthetics.

This interpretation of form's "dominating" mass, or indeed aesthetic form's "overcoming" logical form, opens up in turn the meaning of two of the best known phrases from the *Kalliasbriefe*, namely, that moral beauty exists when "duty becomes . . . nature"<sup>37</sup> and, as we will see in the next section, the specific definition of beauty as "freedom in appearance." To do something "naturally"—or, as Schiller puts it, "with the ease of someone acting out of mere instinct"—means to do it without the addition of deliberately willed effort. Such acts would include not only the desires that spring from the necessities of one's bodily nature, but also the events that make up one's affective life. When one hears one's child cry, one responds to it immediately and without thinking: care for one's children is a perfectly natural reality. But not all instinctive responses are beautiful. They acquire aesthetic form only if the action represents a duty, which means only if it is something that would have been commanded by reason, with all of the absoluteness and universality that such commandments imply. In other words, with respect to human action, form becomes aesthetic only if it contains *within* itself the rational form that corresponds to moral duty, according to the analogy we presented above. An action is morally beautiful, then, *if* on the one hand it is the fulfillment of a duty that is "imposed," so to speak, as an absolute necessity, and, on the other hand, it occurs *as if* it springs directly from the inner being of the agent as a wholly spontaneous act. That is to say, it comes simultaneously *from without* and *from within*.

To illustrate his point to Körner, Schiller tells a version of the "Good Samaritan" story from the Gospels, which is meant to set in relief the distinctions between merely instinctive action, merely pragmatic action, the mere carrying out of one's duty, the mere triumph over self-interest (without feeling), and finally a genuinely noble deed. We could call it the story of the "Beautiful Samaritan." The point, in any event, is that the last mentioned deed is the most fully human because it *contains* within itself all the partial aspects of the others. It is not, in this respect, simply another

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the present context. See Schindler, "What's the Difference?," 583–618.

37. 19 Feb, 1793, 159 (SW.8.647).

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example to be juxtaposed to all the others. The wholeness of beautiful action is, of course, the theme of Schiller's first major philosophical essay, *On Grace and Dignity*, which we cannot discuss here, though it is worthwhile making two observations in relation to our particular question. First, because of this comprehensiveness, Schiller is able to affirm all of the unconditionality of Kant's deontological ethics, even though he places this at the same time within a larger context that transforms it. We will come back to this point at the end of the chapter. Second, we have to be careful to avoid reading the "as if" Schiller presents here in a *merely* phenomenal sense. When we speak of someone doing something *as if* it were second nature, we are attributing a real quality, not just a "mere appearance," to the action, even though we don't mean the person was born playing tennis, or would have shown his ability to do so without lessons. He has learned to play, and so it is something introduced to him from the outside, but at the same time it has entered so deeply into him that it springs "naturally" from his being. Similarly, for Schiller, a beautiful moral action is one in which duty has been so thoroughly internalized that it *really does* spring from one's inner being. Schiller in fact says that "duty *has become* its nature." If he elsewhere speaks in a more conditional sense, it indicates only that the duty was not there, as it were, from the beginning. It is precisely this point, according to Otfried Höffe, that distinguishes Schiller's ethics from those of Kant, who would make the strain of moral effort paradigmatic of virtue.<sup>38</sup> Once again, it is a point on which Schiller stands closer to Aristotle than to Kant. The important thing in this context, in any event, is that we have here the "overcoming" of moral form, once again, by aesthetic form, which means we have the appropriation of an external imposition to an internal principle.

### IV. Manifest Freedom in Nature

How, in light of this, are we to understand the definition of beauty as "freedom in appearance"? From a Kantian perspective, the definition is oxymoronic: freedom is something noumenal in the strictest sense; the phenomenal realm is from first to last subject to a contingency and

38. Höffe, "Gerne dien ich den Freunden," 17.

necessity that excludes freedom.<sup>39</sup> While Schiller agrees with this in principle,<sup>40</sup> the central aim of the *Kalliasbriefe* is to overcome this separation by locating a real analogy to freedom in the realm of nature. To see the analogy, we must first ask what Schiller means by freedom here, and then how he understands nature. Schiller's definition of freedom is easy to state, but requires some analysis to interpret it properly. He takes over with great enthusiasm Kant's definition, namely, that freedom is self-determination, or *autonomy* as opposed to *heteronomy*: "It is certain that *no* mortal has spoken a greater word than this Kantian word, which also encapsulates his whole philosophy: determine yourself from within yourself."<sup>41</sup> Later, he affirms that "It is the same thing to be free and to be determined from within yourself."<sup>42</sup> Despite affirming the same definition of freedom, Schiller's difference from Kant comes to light the moment we ask after the "*auton*," as it were, of the *autonomy*. For Kant, reason alone is capable of the spontaneity of self-determination. For Schiller, by contrast, the fullest meaning of "self"—as he makes especially clear in the AEM—is the body-soul composite, the unity of reason and nature. It seems to be the case that Schiller was unaware of how different his view was from Kant's, in the end, which is why he always insisted that the spirit of Kant's philosophy embraced this larger view even if the letter denied it.<sup>43</sup> For his own part, Schiller never saw Kant's affirmation as posing any difficulty to integration within his own understanding.

One of the most immediate implications of this broader view of the "self" in self-determination is that it is precisely what opens up the possibility of analogy to freedom in nature, which in turn implies a significantly different conception of nature more generally. Schiller indicates

39. See Kant's solution to the third antinomy of reason: CPR A532–58 B560–86 (Kemp Smith: 464–79). Cf., the critical elucidation of the analytic of pure practical reason in CPrP, 92–110; CJ, §61, Ak 359–61 (Pluhar: 235–37).

40. See 8 Feb, 1793, 151 (SW.8.637) and 19 Feb, 1793, 159 (SW.8.647).

41. 18 Feb, 1793, 151 (SW.8.637).

42. 23 Feb, 1793, 161 (SW.8.649).

43. See AEM XIII, 87fn (SW.8.344fn); cf., *Naive and Sentimental Poetry*, 180fn (SW.8.434fn). Of course, Kant *also* insisted that human reason is finite, which means embodied within particular conditions: this is why he rejects intellectual intuition for human beings, affirming it only for God. Nevertheless, when he explains the meaning of autonomy, he is clear that the "conditionedness" of finitude must be left out of account; and that self-determination is therefore *reason's* determination of itself, or, if you would prefer, the body-soul composite's determination of itself *according to the demands of reason alone*. On this, see the discussion between Anne Margaret Baxley and Frederick Beiser: *Inquiry* 51:1 (2008): 1–15; 63–78.

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the analogy thus: “When a rational being acts, it must act on the basis of *pure reason* if it is to show self-determination. If a mere natural being acts, it must act from *pure nature* if it is to show self-determination; for the self of the rational being is reason, while the self of the natural being is nature.”<sup>44</sup> We need to keep in mind that, for Schiller, the whole human being is neither “pure reason” nor “pure nature” but a complex whole derived from the asymmetrical reciprocity of both. If we thus see a natural being acting on the basis of its nature, we will ascribe to it “*similarity to freedom* [*Freiheitsähnlichkeit*] or just *freedom*.”<sup>45</sup> A being is free because it is constituted by an active, determining principle, an *archē*, which is what enables it to be a “self” in the sense Schiller uses the term here; it is what gives the being an “interior” reality, which is, of course, the precondition for its being able to determine itself *from within* itself. But natural beings, for Schiller, likewise bear such an interiority, they likewise have a self. In fact, Schiller goes so far as to ascribe something like *personhood* to things in nature.<sup>46</sup> Personhood, as Schiller explains in the AEM, is the irreducibly unique identity of a thing; that which sets it apart from all other things or that by which it transcends whatever might happen to be at any given moment the conditions in which it exists.<sup>47</sup> It is often observed, quite casually, that Schiller emphasizes the “apparentness” of freedom in nature because he never thinks for a minute that nature in *reality* is anything other than subject from first to last to the laws that govern all things physical.<sup>48</sup> While there are passages throughout the series that do indeed give the impression that Schiller follows Kant without much qualification on this point, there are not only very strong passages that point in the other direction, but this is also undeniably the “drift” of the aesthetic theory as a whole.<sup>49</sup>

44. 8 Feb, 1793, 151 (SW.8.635).

45. Ibid.

46. 23 Feb, 1793, 163 (SW.8.652): “Es ist gleichsam die Person des Dings.” Robert Spaemann has along similar lines argued on behalf of such an “anthropomorphism” in our approach to the natural world: see his essay, “Wirklichkeit als Anthropomorphismus,” 13–34.

47. AEM XI, 73–77 (SW.8.337–39). See our discussion of this matter below. Thomas Buchheim has recently argued that the “life expressions” analogous to human freedom in nature depend on the possibility of positing a transcendently-identical “subject” (which he insists is “horizontally” rather than “vertically” transcendent, in order to avoid a Cartesian sort of dualism) as that to which the expressions are ascribed: see Buchheim, *Unser Verlangen nach Freiheit*, 41–42.

48. See, for example, J. M. Bernstein, “Introduction,” xx–xxii; cf., Beiser, *Schiller*, 26–27.

49. Taminioux makes a similar judgment: although Schiller does fall into a Kantian privileging of subjectivity at times, Taminioux says, on the whole he gives priority to

Indeed, the most explicit definition of “nature” that Schiller gives is far closer to that of Aristotle than that of Kant.<sup>50</sup> “What would nature be in this sense? The inner principle of the existence of a thing, which can be at the same time seen as the ground of its form: *the inner necessity of form*.”<sup>51</sup> To have a nature, from this perspective, is to have an active, determining principle—an *archē*—that gathers up the multiplicity of a thing and establishes it as what it is in distinction from all that it is not, a principle that is not simply *one* of the many features of a thing, but that by which it, as a relatively independently existing thing, possesses whatever features it does in fact have. It is what makes it a unique self: “When I say: *the nature of a thing; the thing follows its nature, it determines itself through its nature*, I am contrasting nature with all that is different from the object, what is regarded as merely coincidental and can be abstracted without negating its essence.”<sup>52</sup> This use of the term “nature” has a surprising implication: not only does it make nature no longer simply the “opposite” of freedom, as it is for so many late medieval, enlightenment, and modern thinkers, the analogy allows Schiller in fact to use the word “nature” *in the place of freedom* in certain contexts: “I prefer the term *nature* to that of *freedom* because it connotes both the realm of the senses, to which beauty is limited, and the concept of *freedom* as well as its intimation in its sphere in the sense-world.”<sup>53</sup>

What Schiller is affirming here regarding nature is subtly but quite significantly different from what Kant means by speaking of “teleological” judgments regarding nature. Kant distinguishes teleological from mechanistic causality. Nature is taken to be mechanistic when we judge it as operating blindly according to chance and necessity; by contrast, we judge a being in nature as teleological when we see it as “*An organized product of nature . . . in which everything is a purpose and reciprocally also a means*.”

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nature: *La nostalgie de la Grèce*, 125.

50. According to Lesley Sharpe in her survey of the secondary literature on Schiller’s philosophical thought, Carl Engel long ago fruitfully compared Schiller to Aristotle—though primarily in terms of the Stoff-Form and Person-Condition distinction rather than the view of nature as an internal principle of change: *Schiller als Denker* (1908), and she concludes that this is “an area of inquiry which has still to be fully explored” (*Two Centuries*, 34).

51. 23 Feb, 1793, 166 (SW.8.656). Cf., Aristotle, *Physics*, book II.1 and book III, in which Aristotle identifies form with the inner principle of a thing’s activities, and indeed with its final purpose. This, as we shall see, is just what constitutes a thing as a “*lebende Gestalt*” in Schiller’s thought.

52. 23 Feb, 1793, 162–63 (SW.8.652).

53. *Ibid.*, 162–63 (SW.8.651).

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In such a product, nothing is gratuitous, purposeless, or to be attributed to a blind natural mechanism.”<sup>54</sup> Interestingly, this view introduces a tension into the claim that Kant makes about the relationship between art and nature in aesthetics. For Kant, the judgment of beauty is that of purposiveness *without* a purpose, that is, the experience of a thing as meaningful without our being able to articulate any particular meaning, without our being able to subsume it under a determinate concept. This is what separates beauty from notions of perfection, which assume such a logical concept, as we discussed above. But to see nature as teleological is to see it as full of purpose, or better, as being *governed* by purpose, which means to view it as serving some concept, whether it be external or internal.<sup>55</sup> Oddly, then, to view a natural being as an organized whole would mean to cease to see it as beautiful, because we would be reducing it to a logical concept. This is why Kant explains that he must divide the third *Critique* into two separate parts:

This is the basis for dividing the critique of judgment into that of *aesthetic* and that of *teleological* judgment. By the first I mean the power to judge formal purposiveness (sometimes also called subjective purposiveness) by the feeling of pleasure or displeasure; by the second I mean the power to judge the real (objective) purposiveness of nature by understanding and reason.<sup>56</sup>

Counter to our intuition in this matter, and indeed our experience of it, according to Kant’s principles the organization of nature represents a hindrance to its beauty, so that we would have to overlook that organization in order to perceive its beauty. But for Schiller, to speak of the *nature* of a thing is to make reference to its internal organizing principle, that

54. Kant, CJ, §66, Ak 255 (Pluhar, 376).

55. Kant makes an important distinction between a thing that serves an extrinsic purpose (*bonum utile*) and a thing that serves an intrinsic purpose (*bonum honestum*). See CJ §15, Ak 226–29 (Pluhar, 73–75). This distinction would seem to hold some significance for his discussion of teleological judgments of nature, but Kant does not put it to use in that context.

56. Kant, CJ, Introduction VIII, Ak 193 (Pluhar, 33). This division seems to be in tension with Kant’s later claim, which Schiller found extremely fruitful, that we find art beautiful when it looks like nature *and vice versa* (see §45, Ak 306–7; Pluhar, 173–74). There are two points to make here: first, *nature* in this context means what is non-intentional, i.e., without purpose, which for Kant means that it is non-organized. So he is appealing in nature *precisely* to its non-teleological aspect when making this comparison to art. Second, Schiller is right to say that his own theory, which affirms an *objective* criterion for beauty, is alone capable of explaining what Kant here affirms without support from his own suppositions.

which is responsible for making it the whole that it is. But it is this very same principle that makes the natural thing (analogously) free, which is to say that it is the very same thing that causes its beauty.<sup>57</sup> He can claim this, and still insist that beauty and perfection are distinct, because organization, far from reducing all the aspects of the organized thing in one respect to a means, i.e., far from making every aspect “purposive,” is precisely what lifts a thing, as it were, outside of the continuous chain of cause and effect and therefore outside of conceptual articulation. This is why Schiller, like Goethe, objects to a “teleological” approach to nature.<sup>58</sup> To have an internal principle, that is, to have a “self” that forms the basis of all that one is, is to be, in oneself, an “endpoint” of explanation, or, in other words, not to require reference to something outside of oneself in order to be intelligible. If to explain something is to show what purpose it serves, then a truly natural thing, for Schiller, is ultimately inexplicable, or perhaps better: *is itself* its own explanation; “A form is beautiful if it explains itself . . . if it *demands no explanation*, or if it *explains itself without a concept*.”<sup>59</sup> While to see nature as non-mechanistic is, for Kant, to affirm that there

57. This is the point that Goethe admired in Schiller’s *Kalliasbriefe*, and which provokes his own reflections and elaborations, which he sent to Schiller bearing the title, “The Extent to Which the Idea ‘Beauty is Perfection in Combination with Freedom’ May Be Applied to Living Organisms,” around August 1794.

58. See AEM XIII, 89fn (SW.8.346fn); the complaint that “modern philosophy” was inclining observers to *anticipate* nature through the imposition of simple causal schemata was a regular one in Goethe. It is often claimed that Goethe taught Schiller the significance of nature; we can see, however, that Goethe only liberated elements already there for Schiller: a non-mechanistic view of nature was already present in Schiller here in the *Kalliasbriefe* and thus before his decisive encounter with Goethe (Safranski is correct to observe that Schiller already had a robust notion of nature before meeting Goethe: see Safranski, *Schiller*, 371–72). It should be noted that the term “teleology” is an ambiguous one; typically, it is contrasted to mechanism (as it is in Kant). In fact, however, teleology can be conceived mechanistically if one thinks of nature as serving an extrinsic purpose, which would make nature a mere instrument. See Robert Spaemann, *Natürliche Ziele*. Also see, for example, Iris Murdoch who seeks to reject teleology precisely *in order* to affirm the inherent goodness of nature (*Sovereignty of Good*, 79). The most decisive question to be raised in determining the presence of teleology in nature would seem to be, not the controversy about *design*, but in the first place the question of the existence of an *internal principle* of order in nature. We will discuss this and related themes at length in the third chapter on Schelling.

59. 18 Feb, 1793, 155 (SW.8.642). Cf., Goethe, *Selections from Maxims and Reflections*, 307: “The ultimate goal would be: to grasp that everything in the realm of fact is already theory. The blue of the sky shows us the basic law of chromatics. Let us not seek for something behind the phenomena—they themselves are the theory.” The difference between Schiller and Goethe here is that Goethe carries over Schiller’s *aesthetic* observation into the realm of science proper.

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is nothing gratuitous or without purpose in nature, for Schiller, a non-mechanistic view of nature is that in which all is *ultimately* gratuitous, to see that nature “is free and purposeless [*absichtlos*] and comes from itself.”<sup>60</sup> What distinguishes the two seems in the end to be that Schiller affirms an *internal determining principle* as the decisive feature of nature here, whereas Kant identifies nature only with what appears, i.e., with the phenomenal realm. In other words, the key to understanding Schiller’s aesthetics in the *Kalliasbriefe* is to read him not, in the first place, as a Kantian but as an Aristotelian, and thus to see that what he is offering is a *metaphysical* interpretation of nature.<sup>61</sup> For Schiller, the world can exhibit freedom *because freedom is in some basic sense natural*. This is just what Hegel appreciated in him.

It is, moreover, specifically the “internal” character of nature that accounts for the curious, and difficult to discern, distinction that Schiller draws between “autonomy” and “heautonomy.” Etymologically speaking, the words are not essentially different: they both simply mean “self-determination,” though the second word sets into greater relief the reflexive character of this determination insofar as *heautos* is simply the reflexive form of the pronoun, and “autonomy” is, in any event, normally understood in a reflexive sense, which would make the additional emphasis rather redundant. Schiller himself uses the terms but does not explicitly articulate their difference. The English translator of the *Kalliasbriefe* interprets the distinction on the basis of Kant’s own use of the word in the third Critique,<sup>62</sup> stating: “heautonomy refers to a necessary self-determination of the power of judgment in its relation to nature which is nonetheless merely subjective since it is not legislative for nature.”<sup>63</sup> This interpretation is not uncommon,<sup>64</sup> presumably because of the tendency to read Schiller along Kantian lines. But it is hard to explain how to justify this interpretation given Schiller’s claim in the very next paragraph that “nature and

60. 23 Feb, 1793, 170 (SW.8.660).

61. Here we see the importance of Cassirer’s observation regarding the significance of Leibniz as the conceptual background for Schiller’s thinking about nature: see Cassirer, *Freiheit und Form*, 296–97. If it is true that Schiller moves away from Kant and toward a *metaphysical* view of freedom, as Bertha Mugdan observed many decades ago (1911) (see Sharpe, *Two Centuries*, 33), it is because he also moved toward a metaphysical view of nature.

62. See the first introduction to the CJ, Ak 225 (Pluhar: 414).

63. Bernstein, *Classic and Romantic German Aesthetics*, 166, fn4.

64. See, for example, Röhr, “Freedom and Autonomy in Schiller,” 119–34, here: 120, and fn7.

heautonomy are objective characteristics of the objects which I have been describing, for they remain, even if they have been abstracted from by the thinking subject”<sup>65</sup> unless one has simply taken for granted a priori that Schiller is operating within a Kantian notion of nature. If we consider Schiller’s use of the term, we get a different picture. According to Schiller, “The perfect can have autonomy insofar as its form is purely determined by its concept; but heautonomy is possible only in beauty, since only its form is determined by its inner essence.”<sup>66</sup> Both terms imply a kind of self-determination, but while autonomy represents the determination *by a concept*, heautonomy is determination *by one’s inner essence*.<sup>67</sup> Another way to articulate the difference would be that autonomy represents the determination of the self generally, while heautonomy is self-determination *from within oneself*. We can illuminate this by referring once again to the “beautiful Samaritan” story: action driven by a pure sense of duty is autonomous, in the sense that there is nothing outside of duty, no interest, end, or inclination, that would adulterate its purity. But a *beautiful act* is one that does indeed fulfill duty, but does so as springing spontaneously from one’s inner being. Such an act is *more radically* free, more radically self-determining, both because it implies the conformity of the whole of oneself to the determination rather than simply the rational aspect of one’s being and also because it demands in some respect no reference outside of the agent for its explanation; it comes simply from within (which does not mean that it ceases to be his duty or that it thus does not come also, if merely implicitly, from without).

We might also distinguish the autonomy of an instrument, in which there exists nothing that does not express the concept, and the heautonomy of a work of art, in which even service of a concept springs, as it were, spontaneously from the work’s inner being:

The musical instrument a skilled craftsman makes may be purely technical but still may not lay claim to beauty. It is purely technical if everything is form, if it is everywhere the concept and not matter, or if it is a lack on the part of his art which determines the form. One might also say that this instrument has autonomy; one could say this as soon as one places the *auton* into thought, which is completely and purely law-giving and which has dominated matter. But if one places the instrument’s

65. 23 Feb, 1793, 167 (SW.8.657).

66. 23 Feb, 1793, 169 (SW.8.659).

67. Beiser makes a similar observation: see *Schiller*, 65, fn. 50. He insightfully describes heautonomy as the “intensification” of autonomy.

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*auton* into what is its nature and that through which it exists, the judgement shifts. Its technique is recognized as something foreign, independent of its *existence*, coincidental, and is thus regarded as outside violence.<sup>68</sup>

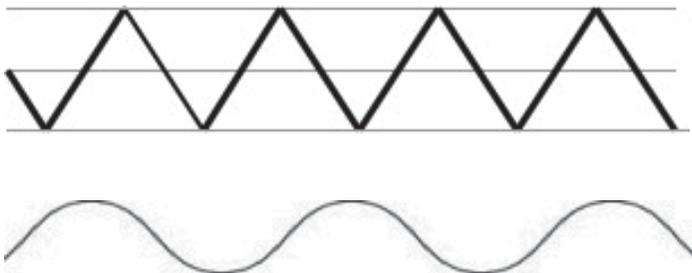
Unless we affirmed an internal principle, a kind of “personhood” in nature, there would be no basis for the distinction in the natural world—and we would be forced to find some obscure definition for heautonomy that fails to illuminate because it fails to show what is in fact different between the two terms. Notice, even autonomy represents the “domination of matter by form,” but it is not yet beautiful because of the form of this domination. In the end, beauty is identical with heautonomy insofar as they both represent the “overcoming” of logic or morality by form, which means the gathering up of a whole by virtue of an internal principle. We also see the connection between heautonomy and *nature*, as Schiller uses the term in this context: they both indicate being by virtue of oneself, or as Aristotle puts it with respect to substance (*ousia*) and Plato with respect to form (*eidos*), it exists “*kath’ auton*”—that is, *kata*, “by virtue of,” “according to,” “in reference to,” *heauton*, “itself.” Once again, the brightest light for illuminating Schiller’s theory comes from the classical metaphysical tradition.

This interpretation of heautonomy reveals the genuinely metaphysical character of Schiller’s notion of freedom. This is, as we have said above, just what enables him to elaborate an analogy between human freedom, which is of course freedom in the most proper sense, and the “self-being” of things in the realm of nature and art. If freedom concerned simply a deliberate act of will, there would be no basis for comparison. But, for Schiller, the reason the human will is free in the *proper* sense is that it is the most perfect expression of determination from within, which is another way of saying it is the paradigmatic expression of being a self. Indeed, it is only because it gives expression to this general principle of being a self, a “person,” in a complete way that it represents freedom. In this respect, there is something about human freedom that reveals a truth about being in general, which is why Schiller’s investigations into the meaning of beauty open up insights both into human morality and into the nature, so to speak, of nature, as we will see in our studies of Schelling and Hegel. Freedom, in this context, means in the first place *being in possession of oneself*, which is another way of saying, having a principle of unity capable of gathering up the various aspects of what a thing is into an integral

68. 23 Feb, 1793, 165–66 (SW.8.655).

whole—which is of course simply what it means in classical metaphysics *to be*. Schiller recovers this tradition by way of aesthetics. It is only by virtue of this metaphysical reading of freedom that we can understand how freedom can be the objective ground of beauty: it is the revelation of a thing's *inner* being; inner because the entire content of what is expressed comes to expression as emerging from the principle that makes the thing be what it is. The understanding is not referred outside of the thing to grasp it, because the light of intelligibility radiates from the thing's own center. It is also for this reason that Schiller affirms that *taste*, i.e., the organ so to speak of beauty, “regards all things as ends in themselves” (*als Selbstzwecke*).<sup>69</sup> The “heautonomous” quality of things, perceived as beautiful, makes them in a certain respect absolute, a kind of closed circle in which the principle joins with the purpose, so that the thing ceases to be simply a link in some other chain.<sup>70</sup> To be free is to be absolute in this sense, to be a thing that rests in itself. We can see, moreover, both how freedom would in this interpretation stand for a *state*, a way of being, before it described any particular act, and also how it can indeed describe discrete acts to the extent that they either actualize this possessing of oneself or give expression to it.

Let us take one of Schiller's examples in order to see the significance of the metaphysical character of this interpretation of freedom and also to lead us to our final point with respect to the *Kalliasbriefe* before moving onto the AEM. Schiller draws for his friend Körner two different lines, one, a line that cuts back and forth at a precise distance from a central axis, and another that curves gently back and forth, implying the existence of a central axis as a sort of rule, but not making this axis explicit, as in the other line. See image 1.



69. 23 Feb, 1793, 170 (SW.8.661).

70. Again, we hear an echo here of Aristotle's identification of agent, formal, and final causality in living organisms.

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Schiller offers this drawing as a kind of “proof” of his theory: he claims that there is an objective quality in the second line that makes it more beautiful than the first. What is that quality? It is the fact that the “jagged” line appears to have its form determined from outside of itself: the reason the line changes directions at regular intervals is that it reaches a point established, so to speak, a priori. The crucial thing to see, for Schiller, is that it changed direction *ex abrupto*;<sup>71</sup> this is significant because it sets into relief precisely the *extrinsic* character of the determination. From within, the line “wishes” simply to go straight; the change of direction runs simply *counter* to its internal direction, and forces therefore what we would recognize as a rather “mechanical” change. With the curved line, by contrast, the change occurs so to speak “organically,” or as Schiller puts it, it occurs almost “unnoticed.” The line itself inwardly anticipates the change, so much so that one cannot say exactly when it takes place: “a movement seems free . . . if one cannot name the particular point at which it changes its direction.”<sup>72</sup> The movement was always-already prepared for, which is another way of saying it is simply the unfolding of what already lies *within* the line itself. When, further along the line, we see it moving in a completely different direction from the one in which the line started, we therefore recognize that this new direction is in some sense a fulfillment of what went before; it is not an interruption, the intrusion of some foreign element. Of course, there is a perfect unity in both cases. But the first is a “merely” autonomous unity, the unity of a concept, while only the second is heautonomous unity. They are both formed; but only the second expresses the “formality” of form, it is more *perfectly* formed because it is more comprehensively organized according to an inner principle. It is therefore what the scholastics would have described as “*formosus*”; that is, as “beautiful.”

It is also important to see that Schiller’s use of the term “heautonomy” provides, as it were, the “specific difference” that marks his uniqueness within the tradition in which he stands, namely, that of Spinoza. But it reveals that he stands in that tradition with only one foot: Freedom springs, for Schiller, from one’s inner nature, and this implies a kind of necessity, to be sure. Such natural necessity is the basic character of Spinozist freedom.<sup>73</sup> At the same time, however, for Schiller, the root of this

71. 23 Feb, 1793, 173 (SW.8.604).

72. Ibid.

73. Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics*, part 1, no. 7, 31: “A thing is said to be free (*liber*) which exists solely from the necessity of its own nature.”

impulse lies in the unique *self* of the being. Spinoza would have no basis for the distinction between heautonomy and autonomy: freedom for him is simply *action* in accordance with nature in the sense of the “whatness” that defines a thing, or its “substance.” The distinction Hegel will make between “substance” and “subject” is of no concern to Spinoza. But this distinction makes all the difference in the world for Schiller’s conception: heautonomy is, we might say, the subjectivity of being, i.e., the internal principle of being that Schiller refers to as its “person” or its “selfhood,” which “overcomes” the substance or whatness of a being. This overcoming is what makes freedom truly spontaneous, even though it remains for Schiller a “fruit” of nature. The distinction between heautonomy and autonomy, then, becomes the “place” where the arbitrariness of choice lies in human beings.<sup>74</sup> It is not difficult to see how the act of free will represents an analogous fulfillment of this self-determination rather than the introduction of something *simply* novel. Interpreting choice from within the self-determination that defines nature in general, Schiller is able to affirm simultaneously a continuity and discontinuity between freedom and nature in human beings, as we will see in our discussion of the AEM. We may note here, as well, the connection between Schiller’s use of the term “heautonomy” and the features of the dramatic style we discussed in the last chapter, namely, the “personification” of principles, the attribution of a kind of “self-hood” to things. Again, it is a deep notion of freedom that entails Schiller’s sense of the world as essentially dramatic.

## V. Heautonomy and Heteronomy

For all of the light that a metaphysical interpretation sheds on the *Kalliasbriefe*, it presents an important problem. The notion of freedom that emerges here is *radically* self-centered: being self-centered is in fact the

74. In this regard, Beiser significantly misunderstands Schiller: he believes the notion of heautonomy is simply *contrary* to that of freedom as choice (since Schiller explains it as an action according to the inner necessity of form), and so it ends up in his mind creating confusion in Schiller’s theory of freedom, which Beiser says wants to affirm the reality of *liberum arbitrium* but ends up, he claims at one point, falling into Spinozist determinism (see Beiser, *Schiller*, 213–37, esp. 37). In another venue, however, he presents Schiller, along with Kant and Humboldt, as clearly *rejecting* this kind of determinism: see his “Response to My Critics,” 63–78, esp. 66, in which he writes that Schiller espouses an idea of freedom “utterly opposed to the Leibnizian (i.e., deterministic in the Spinozist sense) conception.” The fact of the matter is that elements of *both* can be found in Schiller, not because he is confused, but because he does not see free choice and determination as *exclusive* of one another, as Beiser does.

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very definition of freedom, insofar as we understand self-centeredness to be another way of expressing the determination of oneself wholly from within oneself. But this prompts the question, how does Schiller avoid a kind of ultimate individualism with this view of freedom? Even more directly, we can ask: On what basis, given this view of freedom, is Schiller able to insist on the importance of respecting the freedom of others, or even more, what allows him to say that true freedom is, in a certain sense, *constituted* by the mutual respect for the freedom of others?<sup>75</sup> In more specifically metaphysical terms, we are asking a question that will return even more forcefully when we explore Hegel's notion of freedom, namely, what place the *other* has in self-determination, whether there is a role for heteronomy in heautonomy.

Schiller does not confront this question in any thorough and explicit sense himself, and what he says seems to leave in place a fundamental ambiguity in spite of the fact that it is quite suggestive in itself. We will face a similar ambiguity once again later in Hegel. In the first place, in classic Schillerian fashion, he affirms a basic tension here, and yet, without seeking simply to diffuse the tension, insists that an adequate response does full justice to both irreducible distinct poles: "The first law of gentility is: *have consideration for the freedom of others*. The second: *show your freedom*. The concrete fulfillment of both is an infinitely difficult problem but gentility requires it relentlessly, and it alone makes the cosmopolitan man."<sup>76</sup> The example he offers is the English dance in which complex and free movements of individuals are coordinated into a radiant whole. The tension occurs because being free means, as we have seen, being in a certain sense absolute, an end in oneself. Showing one's freedom, then, means giving expression to the fact that, at least in some respect, everything that surrounds one, and indeed everything that exists, does so relative to oneself, as a means to oneself as an end. How can this phenomenon be integrated with *anything*, much less with other claims to the same absoluteness? The best response to this problem that Schiller offers would seem to lie once again in his notion of form, which is connected to his notion of beauty.

The relevant aspect of these notions shows itself in Schiller's occasional mention in these letters of the proper relationship of parts to a whole. Consider these three passages: "[w]e call [a whole] beautiful if we do not need to be helped by the idea to see the form, if the form is free and purposeless and comes from itself, and all the parts seem to limit

75. See 23 Feb, 1793, 171–72 (SW.8.662).

76. *Ibid.*, 174 (SW.8.665).

themselves from within themselves”;<sup>77</sup> “[i]t is necessary for every great composition that the particular restrict itself to let the whole reach its effect. If this restriction by the particular is at once the effect of its freedom, that is, if it posits the whole itself, the composition is beautiful. Beauty is power limited through itself; restriction of power”;<sup>78</sup> “[b]ut what becomes of the harmony of the whole if each only looks out for itself? Freedom comes about because each restricts its inner freedom such as to allow every other to express *its* freedom.”<sup>79</sup> Notice the forcefulness of this last point: self-restriction is affirmed as a *condition* of freedom, as one of the *constitutive causes* of freedom, and not simply, say, an important or even necessary *use* that one ought to make of one’s freedom, which is understood as boundless in itself.

The notion of form, interpreted in relation to the principle of heautonomy, serves to illuminate the sense of these passages and to respond to the “problem of the other” in two respects. In the first place, it explains why *limit* would be a constitutive element of freedom, and not simply an extrinsic regulation of it. There is no form without limit, insofar as form represents determination. But this is not—contrary to what Spinoza wrote—“*omnis determinatio negatio est*,” “every determination is a negation,”<sup>80</sup> because form is “other-excluding,” i.e., that it *negates* what lies outside of itself in its expression of its own reality; instead, it is because form implies an internal principle of unity.<sup>81</sup> In this respect, determination is *positive* before it is negative. A multiplicity without limitation would be formless in the sense that the various parts would bear no relation to one another, which is another way of saying they would *have* no unity: it would not be clear where one thing ended and another began; things would flow “into” one another so completely we would not even be able to speak of a multiplicity, since that implies a “what” and therefore a determinate unity. Now, there are, of course, two different ways in which such unity can obtain: it can be imposed from the outside, in which case there is no internal connection between the form and what is formed, or it can emerge from within. In this latter case, we have a thing that *limits itself of itself*, which means that it expresses organic order. It is beautiful.

77. Ibid., 170 (SW.8.660).

78. Ibid., 171 (SW.8.662).

79. Ibid., 171–72 (SW.8.662).

80. See Spinoza’s letter to Jarigh Jelles, 2 June, 1674. Cf., Hegel’s use of the expression in his *Logic*, first book, first section, second chapter.

81. Which thus makes it an “individual” in the classic sense, i.e., of being “undivided” within itself: see Thomas Aquinas, *De veritate*, 1.1.

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Here we come to the second way in which Schiller's notion of form responds to the "problem of the other." The question that emerges from the first consideration is whether it is possible to possess form in the way described and still resist integration into a larger whole. We can imagine, for example, the beautiful horse that Schiller presented in the earlier letter remaining stubbornly "free" and wild, at the expense of everything around it. This is, indeed, the decisive question. Schiller's answer would seem to be yes and no. In reference to itself, a thing can have a form that "completely dominates its mass," and can in this respect be free. But we can see that such a freedom will remain a relative freedom, and thus a *restricted* freedom, precisely to the extent that it *resists* participation in a greater whole. To be integrated into a whole means that a thing "posits the whole itself," as he puts it, which means that the principle that gives form to the whole gets appropriated to the principle that governs the part in itself. In other words, the form of the part acquires an internal relationship to the form of the whole, which means, if form is precisely an inner principle of unity, that the form of the *part expands beyond itself*. Integration into a whole is an inner expansion of its own being—inner, once again, because the order is not imposed on it from the outside. We thus come upon two remarkable paradoxes: first, the freedom of a part becomes less precisely to the extent that it refuses to limit itself, both with respect to itself, in which case it would surrender the unity that makes it be what it is, and with respect to what is greater than itself, in which case it would define its own being against the being of the whole, and so lose the possibility of including that whole implicitly in itself. *Self-restraint*, as an expression of participation in a larger whole, *is self-transcendence*; it is the inner growth of form. Second, it turns out that heautonomy, though it is the intensification of "self-centeredness," is, ironically, more capable of being integrated into a larger whole in principle because it does not allow itself to be finally defined by the logical concept that excludes it from all that it is not. Schiller's example of noble behavior, which we will discuss at the end, makes this point clearly.

We are now in a position to articulate the central dimension of Schiller's notion of freedom, which will provide the key to our interpretation of the AEM: in a word, *to be free means to have form*. One of the great benefits of this view of freedom is that it is, from the first, positive and inclusive rather than oppositional. The notion thus does not define itself immediately negatively *against* nature (as a purely rational transcendence of the senses would) or lead us to affirm the self *against* the other (as a merely "autonomous" view of self-determination would), but embraces

both nature and the other members of the whole as part of its meaning. It can do so because of both the depth and comprehensiveness of the unifying principle. Freedom and order, far from representing competing principles as they do in the popular imagination and indeed in many of the main currents of the history of philosophy, turn out to be in a certain respect *identical*, once we interpret form aesthetically and metaphysically rather than merely logically, and we interpret order organically rather than merely mechanistically. To be without order is to lack any internal principle of being, which means that one does not possess oneself, and indeed that there is no self there either to do the possessing or to be possessed. To have a strictly mechanical order—as represented, for example, by the jagged line that Schiller drew in his *Kalliasbriefe*—is indeed to have *some* measure of freedom and therefore *some* measure of beauty precisely because there is form present, which is why Schiller can use the term “autonomy” to describe such a thing. But *true* freedom comes only with organic order, which is when form reaches, as it were, all the way down to the inside of a thing’s being. But this is, of course, simply another way of describing one of Schiller’s formulations of the concept of beauty, namely, the complete domination of matter by form.

This view of freedom allows us, moreover, to avoid what would be an easy mistake to make in reading the *Kalliasbriefe*. When Schiller describes a “free” form in contrast to a mechanical instrument, we might think that the form is free precisely to the extent that it possesses *less* order than the mechanism. Miller, for example, distinguishes between moral freedom, which he says is allied with law, and aesthetic freedom, which he describes specifically as “freedom from law.”<sup>82</sup> The curved line, from this perspective, would seem to some to be *less* restricted by limits than the jagged one. But it is not so much a question of the “amount” of order as it is *depth*: the order in the jagged line is literally “superficial,” because it is merely extrinsic. The free form is ordered *from within*, not from without. Note how the curved line represents a much more complete domination of matter by form: whereas the jagged line only runs up against form, we might say, *in extremis*, the curved line is governed at every moment by the order it has, so to speak, internalized, in the sense that it always already has anticipated each turn in its movements. This is why we can say the curved line demonstrates an intensification of order; it reveals its total domination by form precisely in being in some basic respect unpredictable. This is why we also have to understand that beauty is the transformation and

82. Miller, *Schiller and the Ideal of Freedom*, 92.

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elevation of rational form, the overcoming of it from within, rather than a destruction of it and substitution for it. It is important to see that “form” in reference to the jagged line and to the curved line is not simply equivocal; there are indeed two distinctively different uses of the term in this context, but they retain an analogy: *both* are principles of organization, it is just that one organizes from the outside and the other organizes from within.

When Schiller says that “beauty is power limited through itself,” then, because beauty is the manifestation of freedom, it means that true freedom is power limited through itself, that is, power actualized in true form. The absolutizing of freedom, thus understood, in no way implies the chaotic despotism of ego-atoms, but the flourishing of the *whole*, which is necessarily coincident with the flourishing of the members that constitute that whole;<sup>83</sup> it implies, in short, a community of ends: “In this aesthetic world,” Schiller affirms, “even the gown that I wear on my body demands respect for its freedom from me, much like a humble servant who demands that I never let on that he is *servicing* me.”<sup>84</sup> It is just this “aesthetic world” that Schiller envisions as the goal of education in the AEM, to which we now turn.

## VI. Freedom and Human Nature

The AEM is often—and, justly, if we accord weight to Schiller’s own assessment<sup>85</sup>—viewed as Schiller’s masterpiece, summing up into a unified whole Schiller’s philosophical achievement.<sup>86</sup> It is not surprising that this

83. In a speech Schiller gave for the birthday of the Countess Franziska von Hohenheim at the Karlsschule in 1780, Schiller distinguished between the “outer” effect of virtue, which makes the entire “*Geisterwelt*” more perfect and happy, and the “inner” effect of virtue, which makes the self more perfect and happy: see SW.8.34.

84. 23 Feb, 1793, 170 (SW.8.661).

85. In correspondence with his publisher Cotta, January 9, 1795, Schiller claims that the *Letters* are “the best thing that I have ever done and indeed the best that I will ever be able to produce,” believing they, more than anything else he had written, would bring him “immortality.”

86. Of course, though common, this judgment is by no means undisputed. There are some, e.g., who stress that the AEM are incomplete, insofar as Schiller mentions two “kinds” of beauty (in fact, he actually says that the *one* beauty surprisingly fulfills two opposed functions: see AEM X, 63 [SW.8.332]), namely, “melting” and “energizing” beauty, and in fact gives a detailed account in the AEM only of the former. See, e.g., Pugh: “The *Ästhetische Briefe* as published in the *Horen* should thus be seen, not as a definitive text departing from the earlier conception because of further reflection, but rather a provisional and fragmentary text that falls short of the basic conception expressed by Schiller both before and afterwards,” (*Dialectic of Love*, 307). Typically, it

work has received the most attention of Schiller's writings on aesthetics. Rather than give a detailed account of this exceedingly rich and fruitfully provocative treatise or offer a commentary on the whole, we will focus on the significant role Schiller gives to form in these letters in the light of our discussion above, specifically with a view to how that notion, so conceived, opens up a way to respond to problems often raised regarding the consistency of Schiller's philosophy. We will first discuss the tensions in human existence and culture, and show how the freedom of play for Schiller resolves these tensions in all their complexity. This will allow us, afterwards, to discuss the charges of contradiction and sum up his remarkable insights into the meaning of freedom.

We have seen the role of form in the manifestation of freedom in objects in the world, and discovered that freedom is coincident with the domination of mass by form, that to be free essentially means to possess form. When we move into the properly human sphere, which was not central in the *Kalliasbriefe* but is arguably central in Schiller's aesthetics more generally,<sup>87</sup> the situation becomes much more complex in a couple respects. In the first place, there is a more immediate connection between nature and heautonomy in the natural world, so that this "freedom" of nature is simply *given* whereas what is given to human beings must *also* be achieved: the connection between nature and freedom, as we observed above, is mediated by choice and therefore far from automatic, which is precisely why "*Erziehung*," the deliberate formation of freedom, is necessary:

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is then said that Schiller's essay "On the Sublime," published only in the 1801 collection of his works that Schiller himself edited, but written at some (disputed) time earlier, is the missing part of the treatise, which Schiller kept separate because it was "incompatible" with the *Letters*: see, e.g., Sharpe, *Friedrich Schiller*, 167–68; 352fn40. Cf., Kaiser's rejection of this claim, *Vergötterung und Tod*, 48–49 fn16. Those who make this claim are often among the critics who say that, in any event, it is wrong-headed to try to identify a culminating philosophical work, since *restlessness* is the defining mark of Schiller's thinking, and his writings are best conceived as provisional solutions to ever-changing, and ultimately unresolved, problems (see for example, Sharpe, *Two Centuries*, xii–xiii, 5, 17). The problem here is the assumption that tension and harmony are incompatible, an assumption it was our intention in the previous chapter to subject to criticism. Our own claim is that the *opposition* between reason and the senses in no way compromises their dramatic unity, and so it does not matter *when* "On the Sublime" was written: it is not a recantation of Schiller's sense of harmony, which he emphasizes in the AEM.

87. In the *Kalliasbriefe*, Schiller observes that humanity is the "highest beauty" (25 Jan, 1793, 146 [SW.8.632]) and in *Anmut und Würde*, he observes that the Greeks included "alle Schönheit und Vollkommenheit" in "die *Menschheit* allein": Grace, 126 (SW.8.172).

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Nature deals no better with Man than with the rest of her works: she acts for him as long as he is as yet incapable of acting for himself as a free intelligence. But what makes him Man is precisely this: that he does not stop short at what Nature herself made of him, but has the power of retracing by means of Reason the steps she took on his behalf, of transforming the work of blind compulsion into a work of free choice, and of elevating physical necessity into moral necessity.<sup>88</sup>

The second, and related, complicating factor is that the constitutive principles of human nature are no longer simply those of form and matter, but now are the form-drive (*Formtrieb*) and the material-drive (*Stofftrieb*<sup>89</sup>), which actively work *against* one another as much as converge harmoniously. The question of unity, and therefore of freedom, is thus much more directly dramatic in this case. Nevertheless, as we shall see, the difference between human freedom and the heautonomy of natural beings and works of art remains, for all that, stretched out within a genuine unity.

Schiller's conviction about the radical duality of human nature goes back to his earliest writings,<sup>90</sup> and is arguably one of the central preoccupations of his thinking, the development of which can be traced as an ongoing attempt to find a satisfactory reconciliation of this native conflict—without, for all that, simply eliminating the conflict.<sup>91</sup> The problem

88. AEM III, 11 (SW.8.309–10).

89. Schiller will occasionally also use the term “*Sachtrieb*.”

90. His two theses, the “*Philosophie der Physiologie*,” which was rejected by the faculty, and the “*Versuch über den Zusammenhang der tierischen Natur mit seiner geistigen*,” both placed the dual character at the center. Though it is true that he sought to reconcile this duality in a *certain* respect, he was *equally* careful to preserve the difference. On the one hand, he lays particular emphasis on his rejection of the denigration of the body for the sake of the soul, which he considers a more common temptation than the opposite in the philosophical tradition, and he nevertheless insists on the soul's transcendence of the body: he begins with a discussion of the “physical connection” and the “philosophical connection” between the two, and ends the thesis with a section called “*Trennung des Zusammenhangs*” (see SW.8.41–76). On this theme in Schiller's early writings, see Riedel, *Die Anthropologie des jungen Schiller*, 72.

91. Under the influence of the “*systema influxus physici*,” which he learned in the Karlsschule, Schiller's first writings sought a *Mittelkraft* to mediate between the disparate elements of the human being, but the materialist bent of this resolution seems to have driven him close to a crisis that religious belief, in the fideist form he inherited, could not forestall (see his early text, *Philosophische Briefe*, for a dramatization of this problem). One of the reasons Kant made such an impression on him was the solid rational justification for his native idealism (see Beiser, *Schiller*, 42–45). Schiller correspondingly read Kant in light of his own need, which made for interesting misinterpretations (see Schaper, “*Schiller's Kant*,” 99–115). This general trajectory would seem

that the AEM seeks to address can be put in cultural or political terms, on the one hand, or in more philosophical terms, on the other. As is well-known, the immediate historical background of the AEM is what Schiller perceived to be the failure of the French Revolution, which aimed to restore human dignity but quickly degenerated into violence. As he explains in Letter V, Schiller believed that an anthropological fragmentation lay behind this political disaster; specifically, the lack of order in man's animal nature (what he refers to as "savagery") inevitably calls down on itself in reaction the imposition of order in a violent fashion, that is, as coming wholly from outside of man's natural being and thus without any organic correspondence to it (what he calls "barbarism").

In the next letter, Schiller considers this fragmentation from a wider historical perspective, comparing contemporary culture to the ancient Greeks. In the ancient world, he says, each human being contained the whole within himself; each person was a relatively independent totality. In the modern world, by contrast, precisely because of the progress of science and technology and the resultant increase in the specialization of human activities and the corresponding division of labor, each person represents only a part, and we find the whole only in adding them up: "Everlastingly chained to a single little fragment of the Whole, man himself develops into nothing but a fragment; everlastingly in his ear the monotonous sound of the wheel that he turns, he never develops the harmony of his being, and instead of putting the stamp of humanity upon his own nature, he becomes nothing more than the imprint of his occupation or of his specialized knowledge."<sup>92</sup> Modern culture, and the modern human being, he goes on to say, is becoming increasingly *mechanized*, which means, as we saw in the last chapter, that the parts do not participate as relative wholes in the life of the whole, and indeed in turn give that whole life, but fall instead outside of one another into purely extrinsic relations. The larger problems that Schiller seeks to address can be formulated, in fact, in terms of "disorganization";<sup>93</sup> that is, the breakdown of the part-whole relationship, whether that be in the individual person or in the culture at large.

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to be behind Goethe's judgment that Schiller was interested in physical freedom in his youth and later in spiritual or ideal freedom: this would mean reading "freedom" here as "integration," which is the interpretation we have been proposing.

92. AEM VI, 35 (SW.8.320). Note that the expression "putting the stamp of humanity upon his own nature" articulates precisely what Schiller means by "heautonomy."

93. The term is "*Zerrüttung*" (VI, 35 [SW.8.319]), which can also be translated as "breakdown," "destruction," "disintegration," or "shattering."

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The possibility of this disorganization occurs because of the genuine diversity of the elements that constitute human life. The human being for Schiller represents a kind of intersection of relatively opposed currents, or indeed even an intersection of two intersections. On the one hand, as he explains early on, the human being is, so to speak, a concrete universal: “Every individual human being, one may say, carries within him, potentially and prescriptively, an ideal man, the archetype of a human being, and it is his life’s task to be, through all his changing manifestations, in harmony with the unchanging unity of this ideal.”<sup>94</sup> Thus, he represents more than what he is, namely, humanity as a whole, and this representation is a constitutive dimension of his real existence. On the other hand, the human being is also the simultaneity of a transcendent identity and an immanent, and ever-changing, reality: “When abstraction rises to the highest level it can possibly attain . . . it distinguishes in man something that endures and something that constantly changes. That which endures it calls his Person, that which changes, his Condition [*Zustand*].”<sup>95</sup> The terms “Condition” and “Person” replace the more traditional terms he had used in his youthful writings—animal and spiritual natures, matter and spirit, body and soul. Presumably, Schiller adopted this new terminology, which he appears to have borrowed from Fichte, because it describes not two separate *parts* of a human being—which would then have to be mediated by some third “part,” i.e., a “*Mittelkraft*”—but two irreducibly different perspectives on the same complex whole. Schiller brings to light the “aspectual” difference-in-unity and unity-in-difference in the way he describes the necessity of both dimensions: “Only inasmuch as he changes does he *exist*; only inasmuch as he remains unchangeable does *he* exist.”<sup>96</sup>

But, as we have regularly observed, Schiller does not rest content with a “static” view of reality, which would incline us to think of the two aspects as two fixed elements within the person that thus remain forever separate from one another. Because a whole anthropology exists as a *task* to be accomplished, the different “states” in man express themselves in two different drives. The *Stofftrieb*, or “material drive,” stems from the changeable aspect of man, his “reality.” The goal of this drive is to “set man within the limits of time, and to turn him into matter.”<sup>97</sup> It seeks variety and

94. AEM IV, 17 (SW.8.313).

95. AEM XI, 73 (SW.8.337).

96. *Ibid.*, 75 (SW.8.338).

97. AEM XII, 79 (SW.8.340).

movement; it wants to feel, to be *in* the world.<sup>98</sup> The *Formtrieb*, by contrast, which has its roots in man's "Person," strives to attain what lasts, to give the variety of man's experiences unity, to preserve identity, to discover the formal or ideal dimension of things. One of the things that makes Schiller's thought so fruitful, and at the same time so easy to misinterpret, is his relentless insistence on the necessity of *both* dimensions for a "complete anthropology."<sup>99</sup> They are typically presented as competitors, and even pleas for a holistic sense of the human being often mean by that some essentially materialistic reduction that would read any claim for a timeless and transcendent aspect of the human being an inevitable return to traditional dualisms.<sup>100</sup> On the other side, traditional anthropologies that affirm the *whole* human being—like the Thomist view, for example—typically insist on the body's being *necessary* to the soul but without being able to show what *genuinely positive* contribution the material aspect of existence promises to make.<sup>101</sup> Whatever significance Schiller may have in the end in philosophy, it will certainly have something to do with the complex unity, the dramatic anthropology, that demanded his spiritual energies for so many years. It is difficult to find any thinker before Schiller who insisted so uncompromisingly on the positive meaning of both dimensions.

The first point that Schiller makes after describing the two dimensions is that they are, at least in one respect, incompatible: "At first sight nothing could seem more diametrically opposed than the tendencies of these two drives, the one pressing for change, the other for changelessness. And yet it is these two drives which, between them, exhaust our concept of humanity, and make a third *fundamental drive* which might possibly reconcile the two a completely unthinkable concept."<sup>102</sup> Of course, he goes on straightaway to produce precisely what is "completely unthinkable," namely, a mediating "third." It may seem to be sloppiness or inconsistency, but we should notice how clear an example this is of the dramatic style:

98. See AEM XI, 77 (SW.8.339).

99. AEM IV, 19 (SW.8.313).

100. See, for example, the line of argument presented in Varela et al., *Embodied Mind*. We will see at the end of this chapter that the same assumption lies behind David Pugh's interpretation of Schiller.

101. Aquinas does indeed argue that the unity of body and soul is not in the first place for the sake of the body, but in fact for the sake of the soul (see ST I, 76.2 ad 6), which implies that the body *does* "add something" to the soul. But there are grounds for arguing that, rather than being something genuinely positive, the body is simply necessary to the soul because of the finitude of the human soul: it is something more like a "necessary evil" than a real good.

102. AEM XIII, 85 (SW.8.343).

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he states that the difference between the two cannot be overcome, and then he proceeds to overcome it. And the very nature of the problem is the reconciliation of what remains, in some sense, forever opposed. He is thus carrying out what he is describing: form and content converge in a dramatic whole. But even granting the appropriateness of this manner of expression, we have to look more closely at the nature of the opposition he posits. He explains in the body of Letter XIII that the opposition is merely apparent since the two drives have, in fact, two different objects, which keep them distinct from one another in principle. In this case, if they come into conflict it is because they *overstep* their natural boundaries; the conflict is not an essential one: “The sensuous drive does indeed demand change; but it does not demand the extension of this to the Person and its domain, does not demand a change of principles. The formal drive insists on unity and persistence—but it does not require the Condition to be stabilized as well as the Person, does not require identity of sensation.”<sup>103</sup> We might say that one of the signs of the “disorganization” that Schiller laments is thus the result of a confusion: we make flexible what ought to be rigid and make rigid what ought to be flexible. The tension between these is not a sterile conflict, but an expression of fertile complexity. We recall here once again the beautiful style, discussed in the last chapter, which consists of a necessary inner concept expressed in a fluid variety of external appearances.

Schiller’s footnote clarifies the importance of avoiding making the conflict *natural*: “Once you posit a primary, and therefore necessary, antagonism of the two drives, there is, of course, no other means of maintaining unity in man than by unconditionally *subordinating* the sensuous drive to the rational. From this, however, only uniformity can result, never harmony, and man goes on for ever being divided.”<sup>104</sup> It seems to be the case that the two are so deeply intertwined that the conflict is *de facto* inevitable even though it does not belong to nature as such. The reason it does not is that the complexity of human nature is itself natural. In other words, it is not the case that division represents a problem and unity its resolution, but rather that a certain kind of unity can itself be problematic just as tension can have positive value. On this score, the footnote makes a decisive point: if we make *antagonism* natural, Schiller claims that we are forced to try to overcome it by eliminating nature; that is, by eliminating difference through the subordination of the sensuous drive in a

103. Ibid.

104. Ibid., 85fn (SW.8.343fn).

one-sided way to the rational drive. This approach has two results: first, it enforces a monotony, or “uniformity,” insofar as it makes unity and difference *simple* opposites, and at the same time it always fails to overcome the antagonism because the hostility remains for all that natural. We get both a false unity and a false difference. Schiller’s proposal, by contrast, is to reject a reduction *in either direction*.<sup>105</sup> It therefore remains the case that the sensual must be subordinated to the rational because the rational has an absoluteness about it that can never emerge from the mutability of the sensual. At the same time, however, precisely because of its absoluteness, the rational cannot produce the multiplicity of the sensual. This is the failing of the Platonic tradition. It is also what is lacking in the *letter* of Kantian philosophy, as he says further in the footnote to this letter, if not in its spirit.<sup>106</sup> There is a sense then in which matter necessarily represents a “more” with respect to form, and this “more” is something positive and good, something that needs to be preserved: “Both principles are . . . at once subordinated to each other and co-ordinated with each other, that is to say, they stand in reciprocal relation [*Wechselwirkung*] to one another: without form no matter, and without matter no form.”<sup>107</sup> It is not simply the case that, to avoid confusion, each needs to be kept in its own separate sphere. Instead, the two aspects are mutually dependent on one another, and indeed this mutual dependence is so profound that *both* will suffer if either is encroached upon; which means that, if one drive is absolutized in itself, that very drive will undermine itself. The drives thus have an internal relationship to one another in their distinction, so that the tension created by the *Wechselwirkung* between the two is essential for the “highest expression” of either one individually.<sup>108</sup> Thus, Schiller affirms succinctly in the thirteenth letter, “From the moment that man is merely a content of time, he ceases to exist, and *has* in consequence no content either. . . . From the moment man *is* only form, he ceases to *have* a form; the annulling of

105. Schiller offers a wonderfully dramatic presentation of the simultaneous unity and difference of unity and difference in a brief dialogue he wrote in his youth, “Der Jüngling und der Greis,” in which the youth argues that “Rest is not the destiny of our nature, a secret voice constantly calls to us and whispers of unknown dark scenes” (SW. 8.81–82) while the old man insists that the goal of even this desire is for ultimate reconciliation. Characteristically, the dialogue ends without a final victory; human nature includes the reality of both, however incompatible they may seem.

106. AEM XIII, 87fn (SW.8.344fn).

107. AEM XIII, 85fn (SW.8.343–44fn).

108. AEM XIV, 95 (SW.8.348).

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his Condition, consequently, involves that of his Person too.”<sup>109</sup> *Having* a form, as opposed to simply *being* form, implies a subject that is distinct from that form: i.e., the complex whole constituted by the *Wechselwirkung* of form and matter. The interesting implication of this point, which he makes at the close of this letter without any elaboration, is that man’s *independence* turns out to be *dependent* on there being an independent reality outside of him. We will return to this point at the end of the chapter.

This insistence on the reciprocity between form and matter would seem to take Schiller clearly outside of the position he elaborated in the *Kalliasbriefe*, which affirmed not a reciprocity but a total domination of matter by form. Closer inspection reveals, however, that he is not abandoning that position, even if he is enriching it within the human sphere. In the first place, what he refers to in the AEM as a one-sided subordination of matter to form does not correspond to the domination of matter by form in the *Kalliasbriefe* that he identified with true freedom. Instead, it expresses what he called autonomy there in distinction from free heautonomy, namely, a thing’s perfect service of its concept. In other words, the term “form” in the AEM is the logical form *rather than* the aesthetic form, which is different from, though of course analogous to, the latter.<sup>110</sup> And we must see *both* the difference and the unity if we are to understand Schiller’s general position in the end. Logical form is form understood in abstraction from a thing in its concreteness and thus in relative opposition to the matter from which it is abstracted. This is why it corresponds to the “timeless” ideal that transcends the limiting and ever-changing conditions of a person’s state. But rather than simply repeating the term “Form” to distinguish the thing taken “non-abstractly,” that is, as a concrete whole, and thus speaking again of the “form of form” as he did in the *Kalliasbriefe*, Schiller introduces a new notion that more clearly preserves the irreducible polarity that nevertheless lay implicit in the earlier notion, namely, between a thing’s matter and its form.<sup>111</sup> This new notion is that of the *lebende Gestalt*, living form, which takes the place now of the manifestation

109. AEM XIII, 91 (SW.8.346).

110. This is why Schiller is also able to make an assertion in the AEM that directly echoes the text from the *Kalliasbriefe*, namely, that the consummate artist is one who “*can make his form consume [vertilgen] his material*,” AEM XXII, 157 (SW.8.378).

111. As we pointed out earlier, the domination of mass by form did not mean the “suppression” of matter, but its liberation, insofar as the form that dominates here is an analogous “third” that includes what it integrates rather than one side of a simple binary opposition that competes with the other. We have here, to say it again, a liberating difference *within* form, understood analogously.

of freedom as the definition of beauty.<sup>112</sup> While there can be no doubt that this notion is due to the constant contact Schiller had had with the mind of Goethe during the time of redacting those letters, this should not cause us to overlook the way the term deepens his earlier insight rather than overturns it.<sup>113</sup>

We see the connection when we ask what it is that Schiller means by “life” in this context. He is quick to point out that the term is not intended in a mere biological sense: a block of marble can have life in the way he intends it here, while a human being can, in fact, be lifeless, even though he continues to breathe and move about on the earth. The best way to interpret the term “life” in this context is in reference to his use of “freedom” in the *Kalliasbriefe*: it indicates the “taking hold” of one’s being by virtue of the inner principle that represents one’s selfhood and thus animating that being with a vibrant unity. As we recall, this reading of freedom is what opens up the possibility of an analogy for things that do not possess will, but do possess a real unity that illuminates their being; a unity that is truly outwardly visible. Here too life would be the *spontaneity* of a thing’s inner being, which is why it provides satisfaction to the *Stofftrieb* that demands variety and surprise. Taken separately from a thing’s form, this dimension would reveal itself as “randomness,” as change without any continuity other than succession in time. But in union with form, it designates a particular quality of the composite being. Calling this spontaneity *life*, Schiller stresses the positive significance of the phenomenon as well as the wholeness of its subject. The term “life” adds moreover a dimension of temporality and movement that is perhaps not so obvious in the concept of the appearance of freedom. On the other hand, if freedom, from the *Kalliasbriefe*’s definition of beauty, corresponds to life, “appearance” is connected then with *Gestalt*, which means the *outward form* of a thing, but also adds both a note of independence and irreducible uniqueness and also a sense of integration. A *Gestalt*, in this respect, is not a mere “show,” but a way of talking about a complete reality as it presents itself. Thus, the new definition of beauty in the *Aesthetic Letters* follows the earlier one while enriching it with a more concrete point of reference. The two terms “life” and “*Gestalt*” are not two halves of a whole, but both express the whole from an irreducibly different perspective.

112. AEM XV, 101 (SW.8.351).

113. See our account in fn 58 above.