

**BEAUTY AND MORALITY**  
**in**  
**SCHILLER'S AESTHETIC EDUCATION AND BEYOND**

*A Study of the Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*

*Ariella Saperstein*

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First Reader: Aryeh Kosman  
Second Reader: Robert Dostal

## I. INTRODUCTION

It is easy to think of aesthetic and moral principles as distinct, the one governed by personal taste, the other ruled by rational laws, whether explicitly laid out or instinctively understood. One might see a fundamental difference between beauty and morality, citing the individual uniqueness of aesthetic experience in contrast to the necessary repetition and universality of moral action. While aesthetic experience is not easily replicated and is, arguably by its very definition, purely original, moral theory depends on our consistent ability to act in certain ways in particular situations.

Aesthetic and moral ideas, however, are not necessarily disparate notions, and may be brought into an important relationship with one another. As the philosophers discussed in this paper will argue, beauty can fundamentally affect both the human mind and soul. It has transformative and educative power when seriously contemplated, leading us toward freedom and fostering a moral disposition. It is, this paper will assert, a concept inherently linked to beauty, arising from shared principles and the idea that aesthetic appreciation is essential to understanding and becoming a moral being.

At the center of my essay, Friedrich Schiller's 1795 treatise *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters* presents a theory of education based on beauty and aesthetic experience, directed toward unifying the different aspects of man's character and developing his moral sensibility. Although Schiller's first goal is the reformation of the individual, his larger vision is that of a morally

improved, aesthetically conscious society. Using Schiller's *Letters* as its central text, this paper will investigate the relationship between beauty and morality in Schiller's notion of aesthetic education. By first looking back to Kant's ideas on the subject which influenced and inspired Schiller's own theories, we will see that Schiller's appreciation of Kant was also the cause of great struggles for him. I will argue that, far from wholeheartedly accepting Kant's distinctions between beauty and morality or his insistence on the centrality of dutiful action to the moral life, Schiller departs from Kant in complex and philosophically important directions.

Friedrich Schiller wrote his *Letters* under the clear influence of Kant's moral and especially aesthetic philosophy. While he undeniably owes many of his ideas on beauty and aesthetic experience to Kant, he makes substantial revisions to the earlier philosopher's theories along the way. Schiller does adopt, for example, Kant's notion that we must look at a beautiful object without considering the concept or purpose behind it. It is only through such contemplation that the object becomes autonomous and we become free ourselves, unhindered by conventional understanding or personal interest in the subject. We are free to feel this way through the interplay of our cognitive and sensitive faculties. Kant describes such an activity as "free play" between imagination and understanding, while Schiller identifies it as a similar interaction between sense and reason.<sup>1</sup> Taking what he sees to be a necessary opposition set up by Kant between man's two sides, Schiller attempts to go further with Kant's idea of free play by asserting that in the act of play, man becomes fully human. Schiller uses Kant's theories as a stepping-stone to his more practical ideas concerning aesthetic education, a program that encourages play and the balance of sense and reason that results. Such an experience, Schiller argues, will not only make man whole but will also develop his moral character and restore the freedom he has lost in Enlightenment society. Indeed, though moral issues are not absent from Kant's work, they are a greater and more serious part of Schiller's philosophy than of Kant's. Schiller believes that his theory of aesthetic education will foster the

human condition necessary for the moral acts with which Kant is concerned. Aesthetic education will lead man to freedom, for it is not until he is both physically and spiritually free that he can be truly moral. Through harmonizing the struggle between man's faculties, aesthetic education cultivates man so that he will ultimately yearn to be rational and moral.

The last part of my paper will consider what Schiller's aesthetic education might look were it framed as a practical proposal. No lasting attempts to develop his theories into a practical curriculum were made during Schiller's own lifetime, and indeed, it was not until the early twentieth century when Rudolf Steiner began the Waldorf School in Germany that any system of education based on aesthetics was attempted. Through readings of Steiner's lectures on education, I will demonstrate Steiner's reliance on several of Schiller's most fundamental theories regarding the human being and his moral development. Steiner might be considered an architect more than a theorist of education, sharing many of Schiller's philosophical concerns but grounding them more solidly in the world and the practical constraints of an actual curriculum. Though not explicitly modeled on Schiller's ideas, Waldorf education shares his aesthetic and moral concerns, and I contend that the debt it owes to Schiller's work will clarify the profundity of Schiller's own disagreements with and departures from Kant. Independent of the demands of an actual educational program, Schiller's theories must remain on the page. The work of Steiner, however, reveals the underlying potential of Schiller's philosophy to unify and morally transform the individual and, ultimately, society itself.

## **II. A LOOK BACK TO KANT**

Before we can understand the influence that Kant's ideas had on Schiller's philosophy, we must consider several of the main tenets of Kant's *Analytic of the Beautiful* (contained within his Third Critique, the *Critique of Judgment*) which would later play a role in the *Aesthetic Education of Man*.

Kant's first two Critiques discuss the nature of reason and desire, yet he was clearly not satisfied with these accounts of man alone, convinced that there was more to the human being. His last Critique therefore deals with feeling and aesthetic judgment, the third "mode of consciousness" man possesses.<sup>ii</sup> We will see later that Schiller, too, recognizes these different modes of cognition and the distinctions between them. He maintains, however, that aesthetic sensibility, though unnoticed by many, is a faculty equal in power and importance to sense and reason. Both Kant and Schiller contrast aesthetic judgment with purely empirical judgment or judgments of understanding. While the latter is concerned primarily with the properties of objects ("this pillow is soft"), aesthetic judgment concerns itself with feeling and man's personal response to beautiful objects or experiences.

In his discussion of beauty, Kant places great emphasis on the freedom of aesthetic experience. He asserts that we must contemplate beauty without regard for an object's purpose, rules, or external ends (whether physical or moral). In aesthetic judgment, he writes, "the feeling of the subject, and not a concept of the Object, is its determining ground."<sup>iii</sup> A judgment of beauty is free of concern with the object's purpose, for to judge with an interest in its purpose is to bring concepts into play. In contrast to logical judgments, aesthetic judgments involve no concepts; they are based purely in feeling and our response to the formal properties of an object rather than the ideas behind it. Under these conditions, a beautiful object is wholly autonomous and we are free to appreciate it, unconstrained by traditional conceptions or our own desires. Such judgment therefore rests on a certain kind of pleasure, which we will later see is derived from Kant's idea of free play. This pleasure, though not entirely relativistic, is distinctly subjective, according to Kant. It arises from feeling and is primarily reflective, but it is not completely sensual, for it has a cognitive aspect as well. One cannot categorize an object as beautiful, however, by asserting that "it is beautiful to me;" many objects can please us with their charm, but not all these objects may necessarily be

judged beautiful. It is better to think of beauty “as if it were a property of things,” a quality which either is or is not always there and should ideally be recognized by everyone when it is present.<sup>iv</sup> At this point only do we have the grounding to make a judgment of beauty at all.

Because we can have no sense of ownership towards a beautiful object, we have nothing at stake in an aesthetic judgment and the judgment therefore leads to “a disinterested and *free* satisfaction.”<sup>v</sup> We feel pleasure based on personal feeling alone and without consideration of our own ego or the utility of the beautiful object, for “the beautiful...pleases *apart from any interest.*”<sup>vi</sup> It is through such an experience, Kant believes, that we gain autonomy, for we are liberated from physical and moral interests as well as from sensuous desires and overly intellectual thought.

To better understand the pleasure we feel in response to beauty, Kant presents his theory of the free play of the faculties. Linked with judgment, free play is similarly subjective and individual but not intellectual. Unconstrained by concepts, play produces pleasure and understanding but not through traditional modes of cognition. It is a process of bringing into accord man’s higher and lower faculties, reason and sensuousness, understanding and imagination. These powers are inherently opposed to each other, Kant claims, yet they must be brought more closely together for the good of the human being, and it is play which can achieve this move toward harmonization. Free play produces pleasure because it is unrestricted by interest or desire; it is a balancing of man’s two sides. Because we are all in such a state of tension and share the same faculties, everyone has the capacity to experience play under the same circumstances, and should therefore agree on judgments of beauty. Kant justifies the demand for universal agreement regarding aesthetic judgment with his notion of “common sense,” a quality “resulting from the free play of our cognitive powers[.] It is only under this presupposition...that the judgment of taste can be laid down.”<sup>vii</sup> Though subjective, an aesthetic judgment is universally valid. When man makes an aesthetic judgment, “he judges not merely for himself, but for every one...The judgment of taste

carries with it an *aesthetical quality* of universality, i.e. of validity for every one.”<sup>viii</sup> Common sense, however, “does not say that every one *will* agree with my judgment, but that he *ought*.”<sup>ix</sup> Here, as elsewhere in his work, Kant’s theory implies a shared humanity that exists among men. We possess the same faculties and undergo the same states of alternating imbalance and free play. Such a commonality defines us as distinctly human creatures (an idea that Schiller will pursue much farther than Kant does).

The expectation of accord is further connected with morality, for “the demand for universal agreement on the beautiful gives it moral value.”<sup>x</sup> Kant connects his aesthetic philosophy with morality by asserting that “the Beautiful is a symbol of the morally Good.”<sup>xi</sup> As one commentator on Kant, the philosopher Herbert Marcuse helps to illuminate this relationship, remarking that if “the aesthetic dimension occupies the central position between sensuousness and morality – the two poles of human existence....then the aesthetic dimension must contain principles valid for both realms.”<sup>xii</sup> Kant seeks to demonstrate a proximity between aesthetics and morality while simultaneously keeping them independent of each other. This indirect relationship is in contrast to Schiller’s work, which will attempt to unite beauty and morality without qualification. Aesthetic and moral judgments are linked but always distinct in Kant’s philosophy, for judgments of beauty are incontrovertibly free of moral interest and external constraints. It is true, however, that he does not entirely exclude a potential association between aesthetic experience and moral being, and it is this possibility that Schiller will pursue.

Kant sees a fundamental opposition between freedom and nature (or desire), a dualism which becomes central to his moral theory. While desire for Kant is natural, nature is deterministic and therefore at odds with the freedom of moral law. Duty and desire are thus often in conflict, for morality occupies a realm distinct from natural instincts and desires. Though the two worlds do come together with beauty as a symbol of morality, they are two domains which can never fully meet

according to Kant's conception of the world. Schiller, however, will argue that Kant's essential dualism can be overcome, and beauty and morality meet crucially in a truly balanced, harmonious human being.

Without going as far as Schiller will, Kant does acknowledge that aesthetic and moral judgments share several qualities; they are, for example, both pleasing to us in and of themselves without being directed at external ends. Similarly, both are disinterested, for moral judgments are independent of personal motive, and aesthetic judgments are free of individual interest. They are therefore analogously linked with freedom, the freedom of imagination in judgments of beauty, and freedom of will in moral judgments.

Indeed, morality, in Kant's eyes, is connected with the will almost as closely as it is linked with beauty. As Ted Cohen writes in his essay "Why Beauty is a Symbol of Morality," "if beauty is a symbol of morality, then there must be some striking way in which a beautiful object is like a good will."<sup>xiii</sup> Kant links the will with reason and action in his *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*; his notion of morality is inherently based on reason but dependent on action, our treatment of others, and the way we conduct ourselves. We must resist our inclination to behave in potentially harmful ways, acting instead out of our sense of duty (ruled by the categorical imperative). "The will characteristically acts in pursuit of external ends," Cohen continues. "It seeks to effect some purpose outside itself, seeks to realize some effect in the world. The goodness of the will is then a function of the goodness of these ends."<sup>xiv</sup> Again, we see that because it is concerned with ends or a purpose, Kantian morality can only be indirectly linked with aesthetic judgment (which has no such interests). Schiller will differ significantly in his moral understanding, for his conception of morality is not based on action to the same extent that Kant's is, finding its foundation instead in our very being. Schiller seeks to educate man so that he becomes an inwardly moral being who *wants* to act morally and no longer has to struggle against desires which tempt him to do otherwise. Kant,

however, draws a connection between a good will and a beautiful object, and it is due to this comparison that he can make beauty a symbol of morality. Cohen elucidates the theory best, explaining that

a good will is a will acting out of respect for the moral law. A will acting under the moral law is a free will. But the notion of freedom is not a concept but an idea....An idea, which has application to no possible object, has no genuine *instance*, and so it can only be presented indirectly. An object which can effect this presentation is called a *symbol* of the idea...It follows that a beautiful object is an indirect presentation of the idea of a good (free) will.<sup>xv</sup>

It may seem puzzling upon a first reading of Kant that the philosopher can believe in freedom while at the same time insisting on the importance of acting from duty, a concept essential to his moral philosophy. While it is not impossible to understand the necessity of freedom to acting morally, it appears more difficult to reconcile freedom with Kant's specific idea of duty, a concept which seems governed by standard rules or precepts rather than personal liberty. Indeed, to act out of a sense of what is required by duty would seem to necessitate the very subordination of freedom. Yet upon closer examination, the apparent contradiction can be resolved when we remember that autonomy is of central concern for Kant, and the categorical imperative discussed in the *Grounding* is presented as a law we must write for ourselves. We are, quite literally, self-legislating beings, and the act of proscribing laws to ourselves must be understood as an act of freedom.

Finally, though Kant believes human knowledge is inherently limited, he asserts in the *Analytic of the Beautiful* that art and beauty can give us no knowledge of things at all. Knowledge, in Kant's view, is based on a correspondence between concept and experience; because aesthetic judgment is entirely free of concept, it cannot educate us in any conventional way. It can, however, enhance our sensory understanding of abstract concepts such as God and love. Such comprehension is possible through the enlivening of the imagination achieved through free play. In the process of bringing rationality and sense, nature and freedom together, it becomes feasible, and

indeed pleasurable, for us to grasp certain concepts that cannot be fully understood through purely intellectual activity. The idea that beauty cannot teach us anything, however, is a troubling one for Schiller (and later Steiner), who argues that it is through aesthetic experience that man is improved and gains awareness of higher concepts, both beautiful and moral. The limits of Kant's understanding of beauty and the human being become starkly apparent in Schiller's philosophy, as he will seek to overcome his predecessor's inherently dualistic perception of man and the world.

### **III. SCHILLER: A REACTION TO KANT AND A REVISED UNDERSTANDING OF THE HUMAN BEING**

Friedrich Schiller's *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters* highlights what he sees as the failings of Kantian dualism, proposing subtle yet radical changes to the way we understand freedom, aesthetic experience, and (perhaps most importantly) morality. Alternately embracing and grappling with Kant's notions of the human being and its capacity to experience beauty and attain moral insight, Schiller demonstrates the inner potential of the individual to bring together both moral and aesthetic principles. If the significance of Schiller's Kantian rethinking is not immediately evident, its impact on Rudolf Steiner's educational system in the 20<sup>th</sup> century will illustrate the depth of its implications even further.

Schiller's own edition of Kant's *Third Critique* is heavily underlined and notated in the margins. Throughout the work, Schiller boldly underlines "play," "pleasure," and "imagination," three concepts he pursues in his aesthetic writings.<sup>xvi</sup> In his notes, Schiller relates these words to motion and change, and indeed, he is deeply interested in transforming first the individual and eventually society through his notion of education.<sup>xvii</sup> Man is in need of change because he has fallen in modern times; his very nature has deteriorated. Schiller therefore sees the necessity not only for individual but also for social reformation, believing that since antiquity and especially through the

Enlightenment, increasing specialization has fractured man's unified character and adversely affected the community as a whole.

The ancient Greeks had a natural humanity, Schiller argues, which man has since lost. They lived in a time during which art, religion, and science were unified and understood by virtue of their interconnectedness. While the Greeks possessed a kind of divine unity between imagination and reason, Schiller contends, our soul has become fragmented and different sides of our nature are now at odds with each other. As Deric Regin puts it, "the inward coherence of human nature was torn apart, strife disrupted harmonic unity and intuitive and speculative reasoning were divided."<sup>xxviii</sup> Schiller realizes that the reformation of society must begin with its individual citizens, and he takes his aesthetic goal as the reintegration of opposing aspects of our being.

Such a feat, he claims, can be accomplished only through art, the "instrument for ennobling our character."<sup>xxix</sup> Art succeeds in changing us because it is independent of politics and the state itself.<sup>xx</sup> It is "atemporal" and "transcendent," beyond the mere physical and occupying the higher realm of Truth and Beauty.<sup>xxi</sup> The formal elements of art are eternal, for though "the theme of [the artist's] work may be degraded by vagaries of the public mood...its form, inviolate, will remain immune from such vicissitudes."<sup>xxii</sup> Art, in Schiller's philosophy, has an educative power that is significantly absent from Kant's work. Stimulating more than the imagination, art has the capacity to harmonize not only the human being but also society as a whole. Far from being an abstract theory for Schiller, aesthetic education is necessary for the cultivation of good citizens. Though it is not an education designed in the traditional sense with instructors and a curriculum of study, Schiller's notion of education purports to have an equally enlightening effect on humanity. It may not teach scientific concepts, but it cultivates the individual's sensibility toward understanding these and other ideas more deeply and with a more balanced awareness. Men are transformed sensibly and morally, the collective effect of which is both social and political. Lesley Sharpe explains, "the

effect of the work of art or of the cultivation of the aesthetic modulation of the psyche is to turn the individual outwards toward the world, to free him for his role in society.<sup>xxxiii</sup> For a rational, moral state to come into being, its individual constituents must undergo a certain kind of aesthetic experience, and “beauty...[must] be shown to be a necessary condition of the human being.”<sup>xxxiv</sup> In his theory of aesthetic education, Schiller therefore seeks to define beauty as essential to our very humanity, pointing to its potentially redemptive power to unify our being and ultimately rebuild the social and political community.

Schiller borrows much from Kant in forming his ideas on aesthetics, framing his argument with the Kantian terminology of understanding, reason, and imagination. Yet he also noticeably modifies many of Kant’s theories to fit with his ultimate goal of aesthetic education. In the development of such a program, Schiller attempts to adapt some of Kant’s abstract and theoretical notions by making them more practical. He connects the beautiful more closely with life than Kant does, regarding Kant’s definition of beauty as too abstract, too distant from our experience as human beings. According to Schiller, beauty must touch us by involving itself in our very existence, for it can only bring harmony and order by implicating itself in imbalance and disorder. Schiller borrows Kant’s abolition of concept in the contemplation of beauty, for he appreciates, too, the freedom and autonomy this gives the object. The object must be an end in itself, and we should enjoy its beauty independent of anything external to it. Understanding beauty in this way, Schiller suggests further agreement with Kant’s notion of beauty as an inherent quality of the object under consideration. Schiller demonstrates much concern for what he calls the “appearance” of an object.<sup>xxv</sup> He does not mean, however, that we must look only at its formal physical properties, but, rather, that we must consider the aesthetic nature of appearance “only insofar as it is *candid* (expressly renouncing all claim to reality), and insofar as it is *self-dependent* (dispensing with all assistance from reality).<sup>xxxvi</sup> We consider appearance in appreciating an object’s beauty for its own

sake. Schiller obviously owes an unspoken debt to Kant's theory of disinterestedness, an idea which remains in the background of Schiller's discussion on beauty. Yet Schiller's understanding of aesthetic autonomy departs importantly from Kant's with the former's insistence upon the unity between beauty and morality. While Kant argues for the necessary differences that keep aesthetic and moral judgments distinct, Schiller firmly unites them, an amendment that will be discussed in greater detail later in the paper.

Schiller takes issue with the subjectivity by which Kant defines aesthetic judgment in contrast with other modes of judgment. Though Kant does believe that both appropriate and inappropriate judgments of beauty are possible, Schiller does not consider this concession enough to qualify his definition of aesthetic judgment. As Lesley Sharpe points out, "if art [is] to be made the means of change and progress [as Schiller wants it to be], then judgments of beauty ha[ve] to be raised above the vagaries of individual opinion and the prevailing opinion."<sup>xxvii</sup> Kant does not, as Sharpe puts it, allow aesthetic judgment to be governed by the mere "vagaries of individual opinion" any more than Schiller does, yet Schiller cannot concur with Kant's assertion that there is no objectivity in aesthetic judgment. Schiller is by no means an absolutist in his understanding of beauty and acknowledges its relation to individual feeling, yet in his view, Kant over-compartmentalizes the mind, thus making aesthetic judgment too abstract and theoretical, however personal. Kant's understanding also allows and indeed almost necessitates a self-consciousness in the judging process which troubles Schiller. In contrast to Kant, Schiller writes of the transportive power of beauty, an experience in which we are not acutely conscious of our own thinking but rather immersed in the realm of the aesthetic. Yet beauty, Schiller asserts, must be humanly understandable, a requirement that demands a greater standard than common sense to govern our conceptions of it. His understanding of beauty is therefore not merely subjective but governed in part by certain expectations regarding its power and effects. This is not to say that beauty must be

defined by a fixed standard, for the experience of beauty is also a sensible one. Indeed, it seems to have a greater spiritual component for Schiller than it ever had in Kant's philosophy. It has the potential to create harmony within mankind and thereby make us fully human. Beauty is autonomous and free, yet subject to self-imposed laws that arise from its inner nature rather than from external sources.

#### **IV. SCHILLER'S CONCEPT OF PLAY: RESTORING HUMANITY**

Like Kant, Schiller links the autonomy of beauty with the concept of play, though he develops the notion more deeply than Kant ever did. Indeed, play is a much richer idea in Schiller's work than in his predecessor's, taking on an integral role in the process of human development. Schiller's understanding of play is similarly concerned with the unnatural conflict between the two sides of our being. Unlike Kant, however, Schiller insists that the original state of our being is a unified one, free of opposition between sense and rationality. Indeed, Schiller tries to overcome what he sees as the Kantian dualism between sense (associated with nature) and reason (the aspect of our mind that raises us above nature with considerations of freedom and morality). Schiller conspicuously uses a Kantian framework here to illustrate the failings of the older philosopher's insistent dualism. He describes our sensuous and rational sides as two drives or "impulses," sense and form respectively.<sup>xxviii</sup> The sense drive Schiller relates to the physical, material life. This drive is concerned with particular changeable, earthly things. One might compare it to Plato's idea of the world of Becoming, for it deals with the content of concrete objects we experience in everyday life. The form drive, however, is linked with the general and the universal. It is rational, engaging with eternal ideas and rising above the physical world. Interested in form rather than content, it is comparable to the Platonic world of Being. Schiller sees a fundamental tension between these two sides of our being which has worsened in modern times and is in dire need of reconciliation. He is

convinced, however, that a reunion is possible between sense and reason, and he therefore pushes beyond Kant's vision of play, which was limited by a necessarily eternal conflict between the two competing aspects of man's character.

Although a simple method of resolving the conflict might subordinate one side of our character to the other, Schiller does not advocate this idea. Echoing Kant, he writes instead that the two sides must be brought together in the contemplation of beauty. It is in this state that we are happy and feel the pleasure Kant describes. The goal of Schiller's play, like Kant's, is to bring these impulses together, for when they are opposed, the human being is necessarily imbalanced. Indeed,

the predominance of the analytical faculty must necessarily deprive the fancy of its strength and its fire, and a restricted sphere of objects must diminish its wealth. Hence the abstract thinker very often has a *cold* heart, since he analyzes the impressions which really affect the soul only as a whole; the man of business has very often a *narrow* heart, because his imagination, confined within the monotonous circle of his profession, cannot expand to unfamiliar modes of representation.<sup>xxix</sup>

Though he is obviously inspired by Kant's idea of free play, Schiller places greater emphasis on the necessary harmonizing power of the process. Beauty is the intermediary through which the sense and form drives come together in Schiller's philosophy, for it is the "common object of both impulses, that is to say of the play impulse."<sup>xxx</sup> Schiller associates the sense impulse with life and the form impulse with shape, thereby defining beauty as a "*living shape*, a concept which serves to denote all aesthetic qualities of phenomena."<sup>xxxi</sup> Beauty brings together sense and reason, the physical and the spiritual, engaging us in play. It

transport[s] us into this intermediate condition...Beauty combines the two opposite conditions of perceiving and thinking, and yet there is no possible mean between the two of them...Beauty, it is said, links together two conditions which are *opposed to each other* and can never become one. It is from this opposition that we must start...Secondly, it is said that Beauty *combines* these two opposite conditions and thus removes the opposition.<sup>xxxii</sup>

In a certain way, Schiller elevates the sensuous side from its past historical identity as a lower faculty, making it a part of our character equal to rationality. According to Schiller, however, our sensuous

impulse is more passive and open than our rational side, which is more active and dominating. Balancing the two aspects of our being is therefore a process by which our sensuous side must be heightened while our intellect is mitigated. To reduce the antagonism between them that Kant expressed, each must subordinate the other. The subordination “must be reciprocal,” for while “it may be that feeling should decide nothing in the realm of reason, it is equally necessary that reason should not presume to decide anything in the realm of feeling.”<sup>xxxiii</sup> It is only in this way that the two sides of our nature can become one, the final step Kant was never able to take. Schiller’s insistence that beauty “removes the opposition” between sense and reason is a major departure from Kant, exemplifying a new understanding of the human being and its capabilities.

Play is therefore far more central to Schiller’s philosophy than it is to Kant’s. According to Schiller, it is absolutely imperative to our very humanity (a claim Kant never makes), for it is necessary to heal the fragmentation we have experienced since antiquity. Play is the route to reuniting our divided nature. Schiller writes of “the possibility of a nature that is both sensuous and rational,” and aesthetic education seeks to realize this potential by completing our very being.<sup>xxxiv</sup> Feeling and the interplay of sense and reason we experience in response to beauty make us human, for

it is precisely play, and play alone, that makes man complete and displays at once his twofold nature...Man is only serious with the agreeable, the good, and the perfect; but with Beauty he plays...Man plays only when he is in the full sense of the word a man, and *he is only wholly a Man when he is playing.*<sup>xxxv</sup>

Man has been fragmented by society, but play restores our wholeness and defines us as human beings. As Schiller writes, play might even be considered “our second creator” after God, for it “makes humanity possible for us.”<sup>xxxvi</sup> Without beauty and aesthetic experience, we are no better than animals, ruled entirely by desire, or automatons, capable only of intellectualizing. In his aptly named book *Harmonious Tensions*, Steven Martinson explains Schiller’s conception of play

eloquently: it is not “a fusion of opposites, but...the tense, harmonious interplay of two competing, yet cooperating forces.”<sup>xxxvii</sup> Indeed, Schiller is clear that nature and reason “should subsist in complete independence, yet in complete accord with one another.”<sup>xxxviii</sup> With these words, Schiller almost paradoxically explains the nature of play, an activity in which both sides of our character can be distinct yet completely harmonized at the same time. It is an activity that is valuable in and of itself; we are not playing “with” anything. Rather, we are undergoing an almost unconscious balancing process. Schiller implies that we hardly notice the method by which our faculties come into harmony, for “as soon as [man] begins to enjoy with the eye, and seeing acquires an absolute value for him, he is already aesthetically free also, and the play impulse has developed.”<sup>xxxix</sup> Schiller’s language in this passage suggests that play should be so natural that we become unaware of its effects until it has already transformed us.

Although we may be nearly unconscious of participating in play, it is very much an active experience, involving multiple faculties. As has been discussed, play works to unify our being, and we must participate fully in it to experience this evolution. Schiller writes that “beauty is indeed form, because we contemplate it; but it is at the same time life, because we feel it...[I]t is at once a state of our being and *an activity we perform*” (my italics).<sup>xl</sup> As the object of play, beauty actively engages our inner being, improving and unifying it. If this idea sounds more sublime than physically practical, it is not a misreading of Schiller’s words, for a certain spirituality underlies much of his writing. The very idea of a union between two opposed sides of our being is more a spiritual marriage than a physical one, an event defined in part by the notion that it cannot be explained or understood in a fully rational manner.

## **V. SCHILLER ON FREEDOM: THE STEPPING STONE FROM AESTHETIC TO MORAL EXPERIENCE**

The process of harmonization achieved through play also directs us toward freedom. Schiller possesses an almost Rousseauian idea that man's freedom has been sacrificed at the expense of the specialization and socio-economic circumstances brought on by the Enlightenment. Beauty as the object of free play is therefore a route to momentary freedom from the physical restraints of nature as well as the moral constraints of reason. Play allows us to transcend these limits briefly, experiencing true freedom as we are transported to a higher realm. While there is generally a tension between our yearning to be completely free beings and the natural limitations of our physical capacity to be so, play temporarily dissolves this conflict and allows us a taste of absolute freedom. Beauty is the necessary basis for this experience, for "it is through Beauty that we arrive at Freedom, and "Freedom consists solely in the cooperation of both [of man's] natures."<sup>xi</sup> This idea is not far from Kant's, yet Schiller goes further with it. Such a state of play, he writes, is never permanent, but through experiencing it only momentarily, we are inspired to live human, moral lives of our own free will. Art thus has great liberating power according to Schiller, yet the freedom it creates is distinctly different from the kind Kant describes. It is a freedom based on the balance and harmony of two opposing aspects of our character rather than a freedom grounded in choice. One could argue that Schiller's conception of freedom is a necessary prior condition to Kant's notion of morality. Only when we have learned to play and achieved the equilibrium between sense and reason can we align Kant's duty and inclination and follow the law naturally rather than laboring to do so. Kant's struggle with the conflict between nature and freedom is no longer an issue in Schiller's philosophy. Schiller understands freedom as both natural and moral; once we are internally free, we can be morally free as well, and the tension between our desires and our sense of moral rightness is dissolved.

Indeed, through the role of play in aesthetic education, Schiller's philosophical work seems to bridge the gap Kant sets up between duty and inclination. The contradiction between sense and

reason in Schiller might be likened to the antagonism Kant sets up between inclination and duty. Both pairs of oppositions must be healed and brought into alignment; such is Schiller's goal. He seeks to integrate sense and reason so that each faculty not only subordinates, but more importantly, also serves the other. When this state is realized, duty and inclination may become similarly synchronized, for we experience freedom, and our sensuous inclinations will cease to fight against our rational duty. Art thus has an almost redemptive power; it restores our wholeness by shaping our nature in a way that makes harmony between the faculties is possible.

It is easy to underestimate what a significant move Schiller is making away from Kant with these assertions, yet Schiller's insistence on the potential of unity between man's sensuous and reasoning sides is in clear conflict with Kant's insistence that such a complete union is impossible. While for Kant the rational and the sensual are brought into temporary harmony during the free play of aesthetic experience, Schiller goes much further, understanding the process as a healing one which realizes our true humanity. Under Schiller, we are experiencing a major internal change, returning to the Greek vision of man's natural state. Play is not, as Kant believes, a momentary overcoming of the permanent dualism inherent in mankind; rather, it is a process of fundamental restoration, reversing the damage modern times have wrought to our being. This is not to say that Schiller's idea of play is a permanent experience, for it is perhaps as fleeting as Kant's, yet the transformation it achieves should be everlasting, leading us to both freedom and harmony. Play, for Schiller, is powerfully restorative of man's true being, and will ultimately affect both the individual and society, while for Kant it is only a temporary harmonizing we experience during the contemplation of beauty.

## **VI. SCHILLER'S MORALITY: A FURTHER BREAK WITH KANT**

Schiller's theory of aesthetic education, which makes the renewal of our humanity possible, assumes that our hearts and emotions can be trained. "The way to the head must lie through the heart," Schiller writes, and it is this kind of education, the harmonious communication between spirit and mind, that he is advocating, not an intellectual one.<sup>xliii</sup> The possibility of such coordination brings the moral component into Schiller's work. In Schiller's view, "every individual man... carries in disposition and determination a pure ideal man within himself, with whose unalterable unity it is the great task of his existence, throughout all his vicissitudes, to harmonize."<sup>xliiii</sup> The goal of aesthetic education is to achieve such harmony and nurture the seed of potential perfection and unity within every human being. It "ennobl[es]" man's character, for everyone has the capacity to learn to experience play and become whole.<sup>xliv</sup> These ideas of ennoblement and the seed of perfection within man suggest that we are inherently moral beings. Though man is always capable of performing immoral deeds and becoming corrupt, he possesses a basic moral sensibility that grows and flourishes when his nature is integrated effectively. Aesthetic education provides the practical encouragement necessary for this growth.<sup>xlv</sup>

Most fundamental to Schiller's philosophy, being human means being an essentially moral individual. It is therefore the duty of aesthetic education to develop our character so that we have control over ourselves in the moral and physical world. With its central role in aesthetic education, beauty again provides a basis for moral understanding. Its moralizing influence comes from art's ability to reach higher truths and transport us to a transcendent state in which we can momentarily understand them. This faith in art's ability to reveal truth is another major departure from Kant, and a move which Rudolf Steiner eagerly takes up in his understanding of aesthetics and education. Kant insists that art can give us no knowledge of things since knowledge relates concepts with experiences and art must be considered independent of concepts. Schiller and Steiner, however, bestow a greater power on art and its creators. According to Schiller, true artists aid us in the

journey toward truth and a better understanding of ourselves and the world in which we live, for artists are themselves somewhat detached from the physical world and in touch with a realm beyond it. They possess an elevated understanding of truth and beauty beyond most men's conceptions of such ideas. Through the experience of beauty and play, we are therefore capable of experiencing the artist's world and becoming truly moral beings.

Yet we must learn to approach life through play so that moral activity is pleasurable rather than forced or driven by sense or intellect. The reconciliation between reason and sense – aesthetic play – thus provides the very ground for morality. Here, Schiller redefines play by bestowing on it a power which Kant never fully accepted. Admittedly, both philosophers do agree that the contemplation of beauty facilitates the transition in man from nature to morality. Kant writes that “taste makes possible the transition...from Sense to habitual moral interest” while Schiller refers to a similar “transition from [the physical condition to] the aesthetic condition to the logical and moral.”<sup>xlvi</sup> For Schiller, however, this is clearly a more fundamental change than it is for Kant. Schiller understands the very human condition to be transformed by play; our inner being is developed in new ways, acquiring a moral sensibility we will continue to hold within us. We become inwardly moral, and morality is no longer simply a matter of external action but one of being as well.

Indeed, morality plays an integral part in Schiller's discussion of aesthetic education. As noted earlier, Schiller sees a unity between nature and morality while Kant stubbornly maintains that the two will always remain independent and self-sufficient. Though the realms of nature and morality remain importantly distinct and never converge in Kant's philosophy, they meet and become one in Schiller's. With aesthetics as his center, Schiller brings together beauty, nature and morality. For Schiller, “the aesthetic condition is not only the means of passing from a natural condition to a moral one, but also the means for incorporating morality within nature, in other words, for the effective execution of moral ideals in nature.”<sup>xlvii</sup> By shaping our nature through the

education of feeling and sentiment, Schiller's aesthetic education encourages us to want to be rational, moral beings. It nurtures our capacity to take pleasure in beauty for its own sake, and compels us to pursue the play that will lead us toward freedom and moral sensitivity. Aesthetic education does not make us only momentarily free, nor does it merely create a state of freedom conducive to pleasure as in Kant's notion of play; rather, it inspires us to be morally autonomous human beings. We will forever retain the powerful memory of aesthetic experience and its transformative effects, continually reminded of the worth of moral action and being. Aesthetic freedom for Schiller is thus symbolic of moral freedom; freedom underlies morality, and it is only through aesthetic experience that we become truly and morally free. Together, freedom and morality complete our humanity.

Kant maintains a clear separation between aesthetic and moral judgments, and in so doing, distinguishes the good and the beautiful from the moral. Schiller, in contrast, repairs this detachment, reuniting goodness with morality and relating moral concepts to his understanding of beauty. His conception of morality is therefore connected as much with being and attitude as with action. Schiller disagrees with Kant over what makes a moral person, for while Kant insists that doing one's moral duty out of will is enough, Schiller argues that something more is necessary. Man's sensibility must be shaped, his faculties harmonized. It is only at this point that he can willfully act in the moral way Kant describes, for then "the will of man stands completely free between duty and inclination, and no physical compulsion can or may encroach upon this sovereign right of his personality."<sup>xlvi</sup> It is not a coincidence that Schiller uses the Kantian terms of duty and inclination in this passage, yet he points to their convergence only under certain conditions of balance and freedom. In such a situation, moral action becomes beautiful because it arises as though from instinct. The contemplation of beauty through play transforms us from sensuous to moral beings, fostering such a sense of ethical duty that it becomes part of our nature to act morally.

Schiller's synchronization of inclination and duty clearly distinguishes him from Kant, setting his understanding of morality in a distinctly new realm. Once more, Schiller recalls the framework of Kantian morality, while at the same time exposing its problems and going farther than Kant thought possible in his conception of man's moral self.

This final transition from the aesthetic to the moral, "from Beauty to truth and duty[,] is infinitely easier than the transition from the physical condition to the aesthetic (from mere blind life to form)...The moral condition can be developed only from the aesthetic, not from the physical condition."<sup>xix</sup> The aesthetic state is thus a pre-condition for the moral one, first leading us toward an understanding of freedom, which in turn inspires us to moral action. Indeed, a fundamental difference in understanding freedom seems to be at stake here, for Schiller's disagreement with Kant is evident in the close connection he draws between inner freedom and morality. Schiller departs importantly from Kant with this idea, for Kant argues that our free will does not direct us naturally toward moral law, and "only actions performed for the sake of moral law are truly free or autonomous," a notion which derives freedom from morality.<sup>1</sup> Freedom for Schiller, however, is a prior condition which must be established for the moral state to arise. We must autonomously choose to be moral beings, realizing the reasons for doing so while experiencing the freedom of aesthetic play. In this moment, we ideally achieve an understanding of morality and an internal condition that will lead us to ethical action. This action, however, is based on our own will rather than a notion of duty or fear of divine punishment. It is as though in the aesthetic state we create our own rules and then follow them willfully out of self-understanding and a consciousness of what it means to act morally. Our free will and moral will correspond as all tension between them is dissolved. Aesthetic education is therefore an indirect route to morality, for "it is only out of the aesthetic, not out of the physical state that the moral can develop."<sup>ii</sup> The primary goal of aesthetic education is therefore to lift man from his physical state to a more transcendental aesthetic one.

From the latter, it follows naturally that man should develop a moral understanding and the capacity to act morally in the world.

## VII. SCHILLER'S AESTHETIC EDUCATION IN RETROSPECT

Aesthetic education, as Schiller describes it, is ultimately both a means and an end. It is an end in itself, for it is education simply but crucially as moral activity. Furthermore, it exists on its own as a free experience, liberated from external constraints. Yet it simultaneously leads us toward moral freedom while working as a means to cultivating good citizens (the connection between aesthetic education and Schiller's political philosophy is not to be ignored but is beyond the scope of this paper). Through aesthetic education, we learn to live the most balanced, human life possible in a physical and moral world. Schiller's aesthetic philosophy teaches us to think, for it is a "necessary condition by which alone we can attain to a judgment and to an opinion."<sup>lii</sup> It educates man to "desire more nobly so that he may not need to will sublimely," and balances us so that we may "have a complete intuition of [our own] humanity."<sup>liii</sup>

Schiller's work reveals an undeniably Kantian influence in its development of his theories on aesthetic education and morality, both borrowing certain ideas almost without modification and using others as points of departure or disagreement. Perhaps Schiller's clearest debt to Kant is evident in his discussion of free play, yet Schiller expands Kant's idea, concentrating on its edifying nature and its ability to make us completely human and moral. Kant's ideas also underlie Schiller's understanding of beauty without regard for purpose or concept and the connection he recognizes between aesthetic judgment and freedom. Again, however, Schiller adapts Kant's notion of freedom by incorporating a strong moral element and linking it to the recovery of our humanity. The power Schiller bestows on aesthetic education may seem idealistic, and at times perhaps he is too great an optimist, yet his goal is always more practical than theoretical. He moves beyond Kant to develop a

philosophy inherently connected to our lives as human beings, for his goals of individual and social reformation are evident throughout his work. Properly understood, Schiller's aesthetic education should make us spiritually whole as well as free and disposed to act morally.

### **VIII. RUDOLF STEINER: AN INTRODUCTION TO AESTHETIC EDUCATION IN PRACTICE**

In Schiller we have seen a distinct move from beauty's crucial role in completing our humanity to its value in developing an internally moral disposition. Schiller succeeds in illuminating this transition through the concepts of play and freedom. By demonstrating more completely than Kant ever thought possible beauty's power to unite the sensuous and rational sides of our being, Schiller reveals the centrality of beauty to this process of play. It is through aesthetic experience and the contemplation of beauty that our faculties are enlivened, brought into play, and finally harmonized. This is an experience of freedom, according to Schiller, for we are momentarily unbound by the constraints of nature and rationality. The union of sense and reason leads us to a state of internal freedom in which we yearn to be moral beings. We develop a moral disposition, for the tension between our desires and moral rightness (or in Kantian terms, between inclination and duty) is dissolved and the two are aligned. Beauty is thus integral not only to our humanity but also to our moral development, for it is only through the process of appreciating and experiencing beauty that we are led to freedom and ultimate moral understanding.

The significance of Schiller's work and revisions of Kant are more clearly illustrated through the educational theory developed by Rudolf Steiner in the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Steiner emphasizes even more strongly the crucial association between art/beauty, morality, and freedom, placing greater value on the last of these ideas than Schiller ever did. Despite Schiller's practical concerns, his own theories failed to form the basis for any actual curriculum of study for over a century after he wrote the *Aesthetic Letters*. More a philosophizing architect than Schiller's theorist,

Steiner was the first to develop and successfully implement a curriculum based in part on a theory of aesthetic education. The final section of this paper will therefore be devoted to aesthetic education in practice and the adjustments necessary in moving from theory to actuality.

Though Steiner's Waldorf School, which opened in Germany in 1919, was not explicitly based upon Schiller's philosophy, many of the theories behind it reflect a Schillerian sensibility, and certain aspects of its instructional approach certainly look to his ideas. Like Schiller's, Steiner's educational philosophy is interested in modes of understanding beyond the purely rational or sensual. Schiller's idea of aesthetic sensibility therefore appeals to Steiner, who not only adopts it but uses it centrally in the development of his pedagogy.<sup>liv</sup> Steiner, however, goes beyond Schiller to offer a picture of the child's development as well as a more spiritual understanding of the human being. Much of Steiner's work is dedicated to a comprehension of man's inner nature and the changes it undergoes emotionally and spiritually from childhood to adolescence to adulthood. Steiner is similarly interested in the moralizing aspect of education, sharing Schiller's belief that moral understanding can be attained in part through the balancing of the faculties. Achieving a balance between abstract thinking and the imagination is one of the principal goals of his education, a concern which aligns with Schiller's insistence that the man who can only think abstractly has a "cold heart," while the man who cannot use his imagination often has a "narrow heart."<sup>lv</sup>

Waldorf education is designed to demonstrate a concern for the whole of the human being which cannot but echo Schiller's interest in unity. Like Schiller, Steiner looks back to the Greeks with a sense of reverence, lamenting that in our failure to see man in an integrated way, "we do not understand [him] as the Greeks understood him."<sup>lvi</sup> Steiner is interested in the essential nature of man, for, as he insists in one of his lectures on Waldorf education, "the issue is that of the universal human."<sup>lvii</sup> His curriculum therefore demonstrates a concern for the whole of the human being, designed to nurture different aspects of the child's character so that they ultimately exist together

without competition. Steiner's program is equally concerned with thinking, feeling, and doing, the spirit, soul, and body. These aspects of our being should never be at odds with each other, and if they are, we must heal the discord, for "the child must never feel a separation between spirit and body."<sup>lviii</sup> Such writings have a more overtly religious element than Schiller's, though, as discussed earlier, Schiller's vision of the unified human being has a definite spiritual component of its own. Steiner understands that everything cannot be contemplated rationally, and his program of education reflects this sensibility, seeking to avoid a "one-sided intellectualism" by equally recognizing and developing all of our faculties.<sup>lix</sup> Indeed, "if our teaching one-sidedly takes advantage of the children's intellect and abstractly acquired abilities, their willing and feeling nature will be stunted," Steiner claims.<sup>lx</sup>

Steiner goes beyond Schiller into a more spiritual realm, protesting that

Schiller was not able to recognize that life-processes can work as soul-processes...[H]e could not reach the higher stage of development, attainable through initiation, where the spiritual is experienced as a process in its own right, so that it enters as a living force into what otherwise is merely cognition.<sup>lxi</sup>

Steiner's vision of aesthetic experience pictures it not as a momentary event but one which can be ongoing, bringing us literally to a "higher stage of development" where our spirit both thrives independently and actively supplements the processes of our mind. Such an experience lifts man above the physical world, to a realm in which "we approach some deep mysteries of existence."<sup>lxii</sup> Implying that these ideas cannot be comprehended without our "study of aesthetics," Steiner conceives of art as a route to higher truths.<sup>lxiii</sup> While he echoes Schiller with this notion, the earlier philosopher dedicates little of his writing specifically to the beauty of fine art. For Steiner, however, such a discussion is central to his conception of aesthetic experience and our nature as human beings. Art which is truly beautiful (the Venus de Milo, for example) points to what is beyond this world. Since such exquisite works are created by man, he must also, in some sense, not be entirely

of this world. He is spiritually connected to something higher, possessing the ability to reveal glimpses of eternal truths through his artistic work. Even the man who can appreciate the beauty of this art demonstrates a connection to another world in his sensitivity to it. Steiner describes such appreciation explicitly:

you have to stand before [a work of art] with a soul attuned quite differently from your state of mind when you are concerned with earthly things. The work of art that has no reality will then transport you into the realm where it has reality – the elemental world. We can stand before the Venus de Milo in a way that accords with reality only if we have the power to wrest ourselves free from mere sense-perception.<sup>lxiv</sup>

These words exhibit an almost Platonic conception of the world, for Steiner suggests that truth and reality exist only beyond the physical world. His disagreement with Plato, however, is evident in his faith in art's ability (and indeed responsibility) to illuminate this higher realm.

Steiner decries specialization and its effect on our humanity as Schiller does, asserting that “this modern civilization...has actually alienated us from the human being.”<sup>lxv</sup> Such an effect presents a grave problem for Steiner, who fears for even more dire consequences on future humanity. “It is easy to see,” he writes, “that the branch of culture which must suffer most acutely from this phenomenon is the one concerned with the development of the growing human being, with the education and instruction of the child.”<sup>lxvi</sup> His stated goal is therefore the education of “unified beings;” without such an education, he argues, the problems faced by modern humanity will only increase.<sup>lxvii</sup> He shares such a concern with Schiller, for both men see the need for a new understanding of education, one that can repair the damage wrought to our humanity by modern machines and attitudes. Indeed, Steiner worried about the mechanization of the human being in such a world, beginning the Waldorf School in the wake of World War I as a response to what he deemed a failure of the entire social, political, and economic order of Europe. Antiquated, empty, and materialistic in his eyes, the old educational system only contributed to the problems Europe faced and was in desperate need of reform. It is his firm belief, however, that society can be healed

through a new mode of education. The Waldorf School thus aims at educating the child so that as an adult, he will be truly free both spiritually and morally. As a larger consequence of such education, Steiner believes, Waldorf will “revitalize the whole of our civilization.”<sup>lxviii</sup>

Steiner clearly has a larger concern for society which, as in Schiller, plays into his understanding of education and its objectives. In his program of education, he insists that the “essential [goal] is for men and women to be wide-hearted, to be able to participate with their hearts and souls in culture and civilization as a whole.”<sup>lxix</sup> The internal and external development of the individual is of primary importance, but education must also prepare him to participate productively and morally within the community. Rather than serving merely to train our intellect or to teach us things we do not know, Waldorf education seeks to engage our entire being, both intellectually and spiritually. In order to achieve such a goal, its program is “derived from the very being of man, so that on the one hand he shall develop full manhood in body, soul, and spirit, and on the other that he shall find his place in life.”<sup>lxx</sup> Steiner acknowledges the idealistic tone of such theories, but insists that such an attitude is necessary for man’s greater role in society itself:

Idealism must be at work within the spirit of [Waldorf] pedagogy and methods, but this must be an idealism that has the power to awaken in growing human beings those forces and abilities that they will need for the rest of their lives in order to work competently for their community and contemporaries and to have a livelihood that will sustain them.<sup>lxxi</sup>

Education must cultivate us not merely to be good students but to be good citizens of the world. Indeed, Steiner’s books include *Education as a Social Problem* as well another collection of lectures entitled *Education as a Force for Social Change*. The central issues of both volumes (as well as their titles) further indicate his dedication to designing an education which prepares young people for the realm outside the classroom.

## IX. STEINER'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE HUMAN BEING AS REFLECTED IN HIS EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

Steiner's understanding of man's divided being clearly echoes Schiller's while at the same time distinguishing itself from the latter's in the specifics of its relation to the world. Steiner identifies the problem of disunity in himself personally, stating,

I must...through my own being reunite that which for me – as a result of my coming into the world – has divided itself into two parts. I gain reality by my own effort. Owing to the fact of my being born as I am into the world, that *which is really one, appears* to have branched into two parts – that given by outward perception, and the world of ideas. By living and growing and developing my being, I unite the two streams of reality; in the process of acquiring knowledge, I myself achieve reality.<sup>lxxii</sup>

Education is a process of mending the fragmentation of our nature. What was once a unity has since been divided and is in serious need of restoration, a vision which again parallels Schiller's. Yet as in his discussion of art, Steiner demonstrates a concern for “reality,” the true natural state of the human being. Education, knowledge, and experience are required to attain this ideal state, for “human knowledge is the gateway into the actual experience of reality.”<sup>lxxiii</sup> Educated properly, our perception can come together with the world of ideas, a realm very much within our own circle of experience. In discovering this world of ideas, we do not, as Kant would argue, create reality, but rather, we discover it and conceive of it in its truest state.

More specific to his educational theory, Steiner finds a route to unifying man's character by insisting upon a system of instruction that equally engages thinking and (practical) doing. The meeting of thinking and doing, however, “is only possible when knowledge...passes into practical skill, and when practical skill is at the same time permeated with the quality of thought, inner understanding of the soul, and spiritual participation.”<sup>lxxiv</sup> He describes a kind of marriage in which man's faculties are brought together and harmonized, a process clearly reminiscent of Schiller. Seeing the possibility of simultaneously educating the child both spiritually and physically, Steiner

argues that “when we educate according to the spirit and the soul, reckoning with the child’s faculty of imitation, we are at the same time educating the bodily, physical nature.”<sup>lxxv</sup> All aspects of our character are intertwined in Steiner’s view, each playing off of and affecting the others. An educational curriculum that truly understands the inner nature of man must therefore consider our faculties together rather than as separate entities. What Steiner thus proposes is “a living method of education” that “must flow out of a true knowledge of the human being.”<sup>lxxvi</sup> “Educational theory,” he writes, must “possess a real understanding of the growing human being,” and Waldorf education is based on “insight into the nature of the total human being, an insight that must be alive in each teacher.”<sup>lxxvii</sup>

Steiner’s curriculum reflects the psychological development of the child, which in turn mirrors roughly the historical progress of human consciousness. His course of study reflects the development of history from the mythology and fairy tales of early humans to a new concept of history and individuality with the rise of the Greeks and later the Renaissance. In the early grades, Waldorf education uses myths and stories to engage the children, appealing to their feeling and imaginative capabilities (which are most alive and malleable between the ages of seven and fourteen). Letters are to be taught pictorially rather than abstractly; a K for instance, might be drawn as a king with hand and foot outstretched before him, a concrete illustration of the association between sound and form that the child will easily understand and internalize.<sup>lxxviii</sup> Only later, in the fifth grade when the child’s psychological development has reached a new level and he can better comprehend more abstract ideas, does the teacher move on to history and lessons about the ancients. Steiner argues that it would be unnatural to teach such concepts earlier in a child’s life, for it would kill his imagination, forcing him to use capabilities he has not yet fully developed.

Steiner’s curriculum further echoes much of Schiller’s emphasis on the need for the integration of our humanity, and indeed, this notion appears to form the very basis of his practical

program. Such an educational philosophy is in marked contrast with more typical programs of instruction which divide courses up according to which faculties they exercise. Children therefore have separate gym, art, and mathematics classes. Though Waldorf education also teaches various subjects in different courses, it does so in a more integrated manner. A child in the younger grades might, for example, create artistic works in a French class, learning a poem first by reciting it from memory and then illustrating and rewriting it beautifully rather than analyzing it. In first grade, he learns times tables through active clapping games, while later he might help build a teepee during a lesson about Native Americans.<sup>lxxix</sup> Multiple sides of his being are thus exercised simultaneously, without the child's realizing it. Both the mind and the hands work actively in unison during such exercises, as the child becomes aware of the physical as well as the intellectual difficulties involved. Together, mind and body must address and work through such problems, thereby developing certain independent skills and also fortifying the necessary relationship between the intellectual and the physical that makes us fully human beings. As Steiner writes, "if the children learn in a way that allows the whole human being to take part in the activity, they will develop in a well-rounded way."<sup>lxxx</sup> This emphasis on engaging the different faculties is especially important in grade school, for Steiner argues that while in elementary school the child feels most strongly, his thinking faculties develop more deeply in the adolescent years. It is therefore critical in grade school that each lesson calls on the feeling, thinking, and doing abilities of the child.

According to Steiner, the teacher is an artist, for his work is like art. This is not to say that he must be an outstanding painter, but rather that he must lend an artistic feeling to the presentation of all subjects. He must design each lesson so that aspects of it appeal to the child's feeling, while others exercise his intellectual or physical faculties. There is something beautiful, Steiner would argue, about education itself. It is worth noting that his definition of a "living method of education" echoes Schiller's description of beauty as a "living form." While the linguistic aspect of their

statements may be coincidental, a shared understanding of the necessity of beauty's role in education clearly exists in both philosophers. The beauty of education must live for the child and the teacher both. Indeed, it is the responsibility of the teacher to make this so, and if he cannot, he has failed in one of his most fundamental duties.

## **X. STEINER'S EDUCATION AS A ROUTE TO MORAL DEVELOPMENT**

While it is perhaps not immediately visible in his curriculum, Steiner shares Schiller's philosophical interest in morality and the necessity of fostering man's moral sensibility, taking this idea seriously in the development of his educational program. Ethics and morality emerge from what Steiner calls "pure thinking...This pure thinking then raises itself to the direct experience of the spiritual world and derives from it the impulses to moral behavior."<sup>lxxxix</sup> More than doing the right thing or following the dictates of duty, morality's basis lies as firmly in the spiritual realm as it does in the physical. It is intrinsically connected with the powers of the human imagination, for "when the moral imagination discovers the ethical ideals as actual realities in the spiritual world, this spiritualized love becomes the power by means of which they express themselves."<sup>lxxxix</sup> Through the cultivation of the moral imagination, Steiner asserts, we learn to live honorably out of true love for our actions and a deep understanding of their spiritual and earthly significance.

Like Schiller, Steiner identifies the process of harmonizing the faculties ultimately as a route to this moral understanding and action, for it is

on the basis of these principles [of bringing together the opposing sides of man's character that] a bridge may be built to moral and religious education...And because here on earth man has the opportunity of bringing about this union of thinking and willing, therefore it is that he can become a moral being.<sup>lxxxiii</sup>

Indeed, moral considerations play an integral part in the Waldorf educational program. Moral lessons are woven into history, literature, and other subjects, nurturing the moral sensibility of the

child though he is unconscious of being taught. Steiner recognizes that morality cannot be taught effectively if it is “inculcate[d]...into the child by means of catechism-precepts.”<sup>lxxxiv</sup> Rather, during childhood we must “work upon his feeling and perception through our own authority...The child must learn to delight in goodness and to abhor evil – to love the good and hate the wicked.”<sup>lxxxv</sup> The duty of education is to guide the child so that he develops into an individual capable of making autonomous moral choices. This independent decision-making begins after puberty, Steiner contends, for the child is most sensitive and impressionable before this period of life, and it is during these early years that education can have its greatest impact. “If, before puberty, we have awakened the child’s feeling for good and evil, for what is and is not divine, these feelings will arise from his own inner being afterwards,” and he will soon form moral judgments independently.<sup>lxxxvi</sup> Waldorf education in the younger grades is subsequently filled with myths, fables, Bible stories, and tales from history, for it is through these stories that the child’s moral awareness is stimulated and shaped.<sup>lxxxvii</sup> Stories are not dogmatic; they are flexible and they can grow within the child, gaining new and deeper meanings as he matures and his mode of thinking changes. Straightforward concepts or moral lessons given too early imprison the child’s thinking with a dead, finished thought. The mental pictures attained through stories, however, are more flexible, exercising the child’s imagination and allowing him to take away his own understanding of the tale, an appreciation which might vary according to the individual child. Stories, according to Steiner, teach us morality most effectively, for “our children will be brought up only to be skeptics if we present moral and religious ideals to them dogmatically; such ideals should only come to them through the life of feeling.”<sup>lxxxviii</sup> Patrick Murray defines Schiller’s goal in almost the same terms, claiming that Schiller saw a “need for a means of powerful moral education which will develop man’s capacity for feeling, and reform his sensuous life, rather than directly assail his intellect with moral precepts.”<sup>lxxxix</sup>

Steiner's belief that the child's moral sense can be "awaken[ed]" implies that the child has within himself a seed of moral understanding from birth, yet it is a seed which needs cultivation to reach fruition. He writes that "the principle of morality arises from what is already there in the self of man," an idea which voices agreement with Schiller's claim that every man has within himself an ideal man that must be realized.<sup>xc</sup> Elsewhere, Steiner maintains that "a divine heritage exists within the human soul, an original goodness that could be instinctive goodness, which makes it possible for humanity to endure until...moral principles have been discovered [independently]."<sup>xcii</sup> Both philosophers see the degradation and fragmentation of humanity, yet at the same time, both express an optimistic belief that man is essentially unified and moral. We are fundamentally good, yet our natural state needs to be recovered; it takes a certain mode of education to develop our inner potential and desire to be moral beings. With Schiller, however, this education is more metaphorical or experiential, while for Steiner it must be both literal and practical.

Steiner's sympathy with Schiller's conception of morality is uniquely explicit in his claim that "it was a great moment when morality was purged of Kant's influence and made human again through Schiller and Goethe."<sup>xcii</sup> He clearly shares Schiller's discomfort with Kant's insistence on the role of duty in morality, favoring a concept of moral action that arises out of love for the deed rather than a need to follow certain laws (even if self-imposed) in order to be ethical. Steiner believes instead in the possibility of nurturing a moral understanding that arises naturally and free of conflict with man's own thoughts and desires. He insists that knowledge is essential to our moral development, for it ultimately shapes us inwardly, and not only intellectually. Steiner's conception of "moral values" is "rooted in world reality. Naturally those who do not regard the process of knowledge as a real process are quite incapable of finding an anchorage for morality in the sense-world, and arrive at no philosophy of reality at all."<sup>xciii</sup> Implicit in Steiner's assertion is his response to Kant, which places the earlier philosopher almost contemptuously among those who cannot

understand the true connection between morality and the world. Steiner goes on to claim that “thinking...should bring to full development our being,” a process just as much moral as intellectual, spiritual, or physical.<sup>xciv</sup> When we have realized such a moral sensibility and understood it not as duty but as an internal condition, we have overcome the fundamentally dualistic nature of Kantianism, one of Steiner’s greatest goals.

Steiner’s method of education owes a clear debt to Schiller in its concern for both the spiritual and intellectual sides of the human being. Disillusioned with the social changes of their day (or lack thereof), both men saw an urgent need for a new program of education, one that would not only heal the individual but would reform society as well. Because he is interested in creating an integrated and lasting curriculum that might be used from kindergarten through the twelfth grade, Steiner understandably devotes more of his discussion to the psychological and spiritual development of the human being from infancy to adulthood. Like Schiller’s, Steiner’s notion of education is deeply rooted in aesthetics and the belief that through beauty, we are led to concerns of morality. Though Schiller’s conception of aesthetic experience is an almost transcendental one, Steiner is forced to be slightly more practical in his writings on beauty, while still acknowledging its spiritual power. Steiner is less concerned with aesthetic experience than with a process of education that enlivens all aspects of our being, bringing them into activity and eventual harmony with each other.

Morality is as central to Waldorf education as it is to Schiller’s philosophy. Steiner shares Schiller’s belief in harmonizing the faculties as a route to autonomy and moral understanding, though he, for practical purposes, insists on a slightly more direct approach to teaching morality through the imagination. Perhaps even more strongly than in Schiller’s philosophy, the connection between morality and freedom is absolutely vital to Steiner’s understanding of education. He goes so far as to call his pedagogy an education towards freedom, defining freedom as a spiritual

prerequisite to true moral being. Whether enslaved by the confines of ideology or the narrow-mindedness of intolerance, the unfree man destroys his own capacity for morality as long as he holds such views. Steiner ultimately underlines the necessity of freedom to morality, following the transition Schiller elucidates from the aesthetic state to a condition of freedom and finally to moral understanding.

## **XI. CONCLUSION**

In our move from Kant to Schiller and finally to Steiner, we find the shift in aesthetic and moral understanding to be a powerful one, colored by an evolving conception of the human being and its capabilities. While the two later philosophers acknowledge and respond to the work of their predecessors, each presents a significant, new vision of the relationship between beauty and morality. Schiller visibly borrows several of Kant's aesthetic ideas, including the notion of our sensuous and rational sides coming together in play during the contemplation of beauty. The centrality of such aesthetic experience to the transformation of the human being, however, is a vital point in Schiller's philosophy which is missing from Kant's. Moving beyond Kant, Schiller links the interplay of sense and reason to a kind of education, not in the same literal way that Steiner will, but as a mode of edifying, improving, and unifying all aspects of the human being. Through this process, man does not learn facts and scientific information about the world but gains a better understanding of beauty and, eventually, the necessity of becoming a moral being both internally and externally. Schiller's belief in the healing, restorative power of play is stronger than Kant's, for while Schiller insists on its power to bring about a lasting reformation of the individual and ultimately society, Kant's conception of aesthetic experience seems to be a mere momentary one.

Kant's continual assertion that certain aspects of our being, along with nature and morality, are fundamentally opposed and can never be brought into complete union is an obvious obstacle to

his taking the steps that Schiller takes. For Schiller, however, these conflicts can be overcome, and the aesthetic and the moral come together powerfully. It is ironically through the Kantian idea of play between the faculties that man succeeds in becoming a unified and deeply moral being, Schiller argues. More than merely following a sense of duty or moral philosophy, man, under Schiller's theories, *becomes* moral himself, his external deeds merely further evidence to his internal state. Though Kant undoubtedly hopes for more longterm effects through his conception of play, his theories cannot guarantee any extended human transformation. Schiller, in contrast, insists that man undergoes a fundamental change, while Steiner goes even further than Schiller does. The founder of Waldorf education pursues the notion of effecting a necessary change in the human being, fashioning a curriculum based on this very idea. His is an education through aesthetics and toward morality.

Schiller, of course, does not focus his philosophical discussion specifically on children, maintaining instead that aesthetic experience and play are processes available and indeed valuable to people of any age. It is never too late, he would argue, for someone to undergo the experience of unifying the faculties. He would most likely agree with Steiner, however, that it is best to work with young people so that they develop into balanced, moral beings early on. The mind and heart of a child are undoubtedly more flexible than those of an older adult and can therefore be more easily nurtured and guided through a process of natural, though directed, growth.

Ultimately, the program of aesthetic education presented in Schiller's *Letters* is difficult to put into practice in the world, for Schiller wrote it without any real intention of developing it into a usable curriculum, thereby providing no hints on how to do so. His concerns are therefore less practically based than Steiner's are. Though Steiner certainly adds deeper psychological and religious concerns to his own philosophy, his program ultimately reflects many of Schiller's profoundly held

ideas regarding the human being, adapting them to meet the demands of the kind of educational system necessary for the developing child.

Steiner's educational philosophy reveals the true significance of Schiller's conviction that a reunified nature is inherently linked to our state as moral beings within the world. Without bringing together sense and reason and exercising the various aspects of character, a balanced state can never be attained and true moral sensitivity remains outside of our grasp. Yet Steiner also goes further than Schiller does in highlighting the relationship between our inner state and our capacity for morality. While Schiller eliminates Kant's conflict between inclination and duty by demonstrating how they can be naturally and aesthetically aligned, Steiner abolishes the notion of duty altogether. Duty does not enter into Steiner's understanding of morality, for the latter concept is, as Schiller intimates, an internal condition which must be cultivated and awakened through education. Every man has the potential to realize his true moral nature, yet he needs the education Steiner proposes to fulfill this promise.

It is through Steiner that the thrust of Schiller's work is truly illuminated. Though the validity of Schiller's insistence on the transformative power of beauty is frustratingly elusive through a reading of his work alone, Steiner's ability to integrate the idea into an actual program of study brings it new viability. Similarly, Schiller's insistence that man's moral awareness is inherently connected to his experience of beauty is much more easily seen in the Waldorf method of fostering moral understanding early in a child's life through myths and fairy tales. Though Steiner weaves his own independent ideas through much of his curriculum, both his philosophy and lesson plans reflect a deep appreciation of Schiller's work, grounding it in the more easily comprehensible world of secondary education. "The perception of beauty is a moral test," Thoreau wrote in his journal, expressing a sentiment with which Schiller and Steiner would undoubtedly agree. As a pathway to

the moral, the true appreciation of beauty has the profoundest of effects on those who will allow it, leading them from discord to unity and the heightened consciousness which follows.

## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>i</sup> Immanuel Kant, trans. J. H. Bernard, *The Critique of Judgment* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2000), 64.
- <sup>ii</sup> Monroe C. Beardsley, *Aesthetics from Classical Greece to the Present* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1966), 210.
- <sup>iii</sup> Kant, 84.
- <sup>iv</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.
- <sup>v</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.
- <sup>vi</sup> *Ibid.*, 251.
- <sup>vii</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.
- <sup>viii</sup> *Ibid.*, 56-61.
- <sup>ix</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.
- <sup>x</sup> *Ibid.*, 251.
- <sup>xi</sup> *Ibid.*, 250.
- <sup>xii</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), 176.
- <sup>xiii</sup> Ted Cohen et al., *Essays in Kant's Aesthetics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 227.
- <sup>xiv</sup> *Ibid.*, 229.
- <sup>xv</sup> *Ibid.*, 233.
- <sup>xvi</sup> Steven D. Martinson, *Harmonious Tensions: The Writings of Friedrich Schiller* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1996), 146.
- <sup>xvii</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>xviii</sup> Deric Regin, *Freedom and Dignity: The Historical and Philosophical Thought of Schiller* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1965), 122.
- <sup>xix</sup> Schiller quoted in Patrick T. Murray, *The Development of German Aesthetic Theory from Kant to Schiller: A Philosophical Commentary on Schiller's Aesthetic Education of Man* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1994), 64.
- <sup>xx</sup> That art remain free from political pressures is arguably even more crucial for Rudolf Steiner. Writing in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Steiner saw state control of art in places such as Russia, and his writings, in part, might be seen as a direct response to such events. Steiner maintains, like Schiller, that art is above politics, and its power is destroyed when subjected to external manipulation and regulation.
- <sup>xxi</sup> Schiller quoted in Murray, 64.
- <sup>xxii</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.
- <sup>xxiii</sup> Lesley Sharpe, *Friedrich Schiller: Drama, Thought, and Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 167.
- <sup>xxiv</sup> Schiller quoted in Martinson, 172.
- <sup>xxv</sup> Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters*, trans. Reginald Snell (New York: Fredrick Ungar Publishing Co., 1974), 125.
- <sup>xxvi</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.
- <sup>xxvii</sup> Sharpe, 136.
- <sup>xxviii</sup> Schiller, 64.
- <sup>xxix</sup> *Ibid.*, 42-43.
- <sup>xxx</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.
- <sup>xxxi</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.
- <sup>xxxii</sup> *Ibid.*, 87-88.
- <sup>xxxiii</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.
- <sup>xxxiv</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.
- <sup>xxxv</sup> *Ibid.*, 79-80.
- <sup>xxxvi</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.
- <sup>xxxvii</sup> Martinson, 175.
- <sup>xxxviii</sup> Schiller, 119.
- <sup>xxxix</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.
- <sup>xl</sup> Schiller quoted in Martinson, 187.

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- xli Schiller, 27, 86.
- xlii Ibid., 50.
- xliii Ibid., 31.
- xliv Ibid., 50.
- xlv Again, this is an idea Steiner will pursue in his education philosophy as well. Like Schiller, Steiner understands the human being to be essentially moral. Without proper guidance, man can, of course, kill such a seed of goodness, yet Steiner's education seeks to develop the child so that he flourishes not only academically but also morally. With this foundation, he may enter the world prepared to act morally within society and further inspired to pursue moral considerations.
- xlvi Kant, 252, Schiller, 109.
- xlvii Walter Hinderer et al., Introduction to *Essays* by Friedrich Schiller, (New York: Continuum Publishing Co., 1993), xx.
- xlviii Schiller, 31.
- xlix Schiller, 109-110.
- <sup>1</sup> Sabine Roehr, "Freedom and Autonomy in Schiller," *Journal of the History of Ideas* (Vol. 64, No. 1, 2003): 123.
- li Schiller quoted in Martinson, 185.
- lii Ibid., 108.
- liii Ibid., 112, 74.
- liv Derek Cameron, "From Insult to Insight: Rudolf Steiner's Meditative Technique" *Quest Magazine* (November-December, 1999).
- lv Schiller, 42-43.
- lvi Rudolf Steiner, *A Modern Art of Education*, trans. Jesse Darrell (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1972), 75-76.
- lvii Ibid., 211.
- lviii Ibid., 199.
- lix Ibid.
- lx Rudolf Steiner, *Rudolf Steiner in the Waldorf School: Lectures and Addresses to Children, Parents, and Teachers 1919-1924*, trans. Catherine E. Creeger (Hudson: Anthroposophic Press, 1996), 6.
- lxi Rudolf Steiner, "The Sense Organs and Aesthetic Experience," *The Golden Blade* (1975), 2.
- lxii Ibid.
- lxiii Ibid.
- lxiv Ibid., 4.
- lxv Rudolf Steiner, *The Essentials of Education* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1982), 17.
- lxvi Ibid.
- lxvii Ibid., 74.
- lxviii Steiner, *A Modern Art of Education*, 74.
- lxix Ibid., 211.
- lxx Ibid., 211.
- lxxi Steiner, *Rudolf Steiner in the Waldorf School*, 2.
- lxxii Rudolf Steiner, *The Redemption of Thinking: A Study in the Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas*, trans. A.P. Shepherd and Mildred Robertson Nicoll (Spring Valley: Anthroposophic Press, 1983), 108.
- lxxiii Ibid., 109.
- lxxiv Steiner, *A Modern Art of Education*, 199.
- lxxv Steiner, *Essentials of Education*, 43.
- lxxvi Ibid., 40, 17.
- lxxvii Steiner, *Rudolf Steiner in the Waldorf School*, 3.
- lxxviii Steiner's philosophy here looks back to the historical development of writing itself and its significance to human development. Some of the earliest writing, such as hieroglyphics, was pictorial rather than phonetic. The gradual move toward abstraction signals the historical progression of human consciousness from looking at the world imaginatively to understanding it more conceptually. Steiner argues that the child makes a similar move as he grows older, and his education must consider this development, not forcing the child to think a certain way before he is ready, but nurturing his imaginative side so that it will remain strong when the child is ready to think abstractly as well.
- lxxix *Classroom and Curriculum*, The Association of Waldorf Schools of North America. Available from World Wide Web: (<http://www.awsna.org/education-class.html>).
- lxxx Steiner, *Rudolf Steiner in the Waldorf School*, 6.
- lxxxi Steiner, *The Redemption of Thinking*, 110.
- lxxxii Ibid.
- lxxxiii Steiner, *A Modern Art of Education*, 199, 92.

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lxxxiv Ibid.

lxxxv Ibid.

lxxxvi Ibid., 200.

lxxxvii [www.awsna.org](http://www.awsna.org)

lxxxviii Ibid., 201.

lxxxix Murray, 68.

xc Steiner, *The Essentials of Education*, 92; Schiller, 31.

xc1 Rudolf Steiner, *The Spiritual Foundation of Morality: Francis of Assisi and the Christ Impulse*, trans. Malcolm Ian Gardner (Hudson: Anthroposophic Press, 1995), 6.

xcii Ibid., 90.

xciii Steiner, *The Redemption of Thinking*, 110.

xciv Ibid., 111.

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