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Schiller Revisited: "Beauty is Freedom in Appearance" - Aesthetics as a Challenge to the Modern Way of Thinking

Wolfgang Iser

Abstract

This essay re-evaluates Schiller's idea of beauty as "freedom in appearance," as brought forward in his *Kallias or On Beauty* (1793), against the backdrop of early modern and modern thinking that based itself on a fundamental split between nature and freedom, world and man. Schiller's claim that natural beauty results from freedom in nature bridges this gap. His suggestion is confirmed by modern science.

Schiller's view is recommended and defended as a way of escaping modern bigotry.

Key words

beauty, *Critique of Judgment*, dualism, ethics of respect, freedom, Goethe, Hegel, *Kallias or on Beauty*, Kant, *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*, modernity, nature, objectivity, Schiller, self-organization, subjectivism

1. Introductory considerations

a. An implicit suggestion of aesthetics in the modern era: world connectedness, not unworldliness of man

In the first half of the 1770s, Kant wrote a very interesting phrase: "Beautiful things indicate that man fits into the world."^[1] If this statement is true, then aesthetics has a chance to gain high importance for modern thought. For aesthetics, then, has the potential to treat and even overcome the fundamental error on which the modern and contemporary way of thinking is based, namely the assumption that there exists an unbridgable gap between humans and the world because they represent completely different orders: *res extensa* on the part of the world; *res cogitans* on the part of the human.

This was indeed the fundamental novelty that developed with early modern thought: that the world is in no way tinted by spirit but radically mindless and determined only by extension, matter, and purely mechanical laws, while humans were still considered to be characterized by rationality and thinking.

This resulted in an allegedly fundamental gap between humans and the world, the notorious human-world dualism.

In the face of an intrinsically spiritless world, the human, as an intrinsically spiritual being, could only be an unworldly being.

Due to this putative heterogeneity between humans and the world, humans were supposed to only be able to produce a world according to their imagination and in no way to recognize the real world. The human relationship to the world had to be constructivist on principle, not realistic; just think of Kant's theoretical philosophy. Since that time, modern thought pursued a fundamental subjectivism regardless of

whether it had a transcendental or historicist or social face. In its standard agenda, modern philosophy acted out its subjectivist birthmark from the time of Kant through contemporary analytic philosophy.

The subterranean agenda of modern philosophy, however, consisted in overcoming this dualism and in developing, instead of a dichotomy between humans and the world, a new grasp of the worldliness of humans. But for a long time all attempts to achieve this were doomed to failure. Perhaps the transition succeeds only in our day.^[2]

Aesthetics, this apparently random discipline of philosophy, operates, if the Kantian statement quoted at the beginning is true, in its own way on this implicit and also extremely important task of demonstrating that humans fit into the world. This is what I want to make clear in the following by looking at Schiller.

b. The task of aesthetics according to Kant and how Kant failed to fulfill it because of his subjectivist attitude

But let us first look at Kant one more time. As I said, pre-critical Kant had understood beauty as a phenomenon that, in contrast to the standard view of duality, provides evidence of our congruence with the world.

The critical Kant, however, began elaborating the logic of dualism. In his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), he showed that the physical world represents a strictly lawful nexus of appearances following the principles of the pure understanding. In his *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788), he then explained how, for humans as moral beings, not this physical order but the very different order of freedom is crucial. From this arose the big question of how these two orders can go together, and how, in particular, acts of freedom are possible in a deterministic world.

In this problem, it is obvious that the dualism of modern thought appears in concise form. Kant tried to provide a solution in his *Critique of Judgment* (1790) and therefore designated this third critique as "mediating the connection of the two parts of philosophy to a whole."^[3] The phenomenon of beauty, on the one hand, and that of the organic, on the other hand, should make possible "a transition [...] from the domain of the concepts of nature to the domain of the concept of freedom"^[4] and thus testify that we are entitled to assume a congruence between our rational expectations and the structure of the world. In this way, we should be assured that we humans are not, as the standard assumption of modern thought stated, fundamental strangers to the world, but, as Kant had written twenty years earlier, readily "fit into the world."

However, the way that Kant spelled out this role of the beautiful was unfortunate. He emphasized far too much the subjectivity of the judgment of taste. Stressing subjectivity is generally the flaw of his philosophical conceptions, especially of his theory of knowledge, where all claims to objectivity are reduced to the fulfillment of subjective demands. Correspondingly, the aesthetic joy of beauty, according to

Kant, should also result solely from the fulfillment of our general cognitive intention, which is to achieve a harmony of sensibility and understanding.^[5] But arguing in this way, Kant obviously lost the trait which, according to his earlier thinking, should be decisive for beauty, that is, the experience of a congruence with the world. Beauty when construed in merely subjectivist terms only allows for experiencing the congruence of powers of the subject, not for experiencing a congruence with the world.

What Kant generally lacks, in epistemology as in aesthetics, is a look at the origins of our cognitive patterns. Where did we get them from? Why are they the way they are? The answer is not difficult. These patterns developed in the course of evolution in alignment with the world. Therefore the world is already inscribed in them. Consequently, there exists a fit between these patterns and the structure of the world, and this is the reason why beauty, being based on such patterns, lets us experience that we "fit into the world."

Not being aware of this, Kant was unable to present the beautiful as a phenomenon that demonstrates that we fit into the world. Therefore, in its execution, the *Critique of Judgment* just does not achieve what it was intended to do: exhibit the correspondence of the human and the world.

As I have said, subjectivism is the crux of Kantian philosophy. His successors, however, have initially seen subjectivism mainly as an achievement and not as a problem and have even increased that perspective, especially Fichte and the early Romantics.

Only a few opposed this tendency and considered subjectivism as a half truth at most. Paradigmatically, so did Hegel. He scolded the subjective idealism initiated by Kant as a "flat," "silly," even "philistine" idealism.^[6] Hegel's whole effort was to get beyond this "bad idealism of modern times."^[7]

Goethe, too, lamented in his later years: "My whole time departed from me, for it was completely engaged in a subjective direction, whereas I, with my objective quest, was at a disadvantage and stood completely alone."^[8]

2. Schiller: beauty and freedom

Let us now turn to Schiller. He, too, shared the discomfort with Kantian subjectivism; he insisted on beauty's objectivity. Particularly interesting is the way that Schiller tried to demonstrate this objectivity. He did so by connecting beauty to freedom. Beauty, according to Schiller, is "freedom in appearance." If this formula holds water, then one can say in advance that the problem of the *Critique of Judgment* dissolves, for a nature that produces beauty does itself already contain traits of freedom. Hence the realization of human freedom amidst nature is no problem at all; rather, freedom represents a continuous factor between the world and humans. Consequently, aesthetics can help to overcome the dead end of modern dualism.

Let us now see in detail how Schiller made this plausible. I am referring to letters he wrote to his friend Gottfried Körner in 1793, letters which he gave the title *Kallias or on Beauty*.^[9] In my opinion, the concept developed in these letters (which

unfortunately were published only much later, in 1847) is of utmost importance, much more than the view uttered in the more famous *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* published in 1795.

a. Regularity, freedom and beauty

First, Schiller states that we experience those natural things as beautiful whose formation is based on a rule. When we regard a leaf, we immediately get the impression that the manifold parts of the leaf achieved their artful arrangement by following a rule.^[10] If this orderliness were to disappear, we would no longer judge the leaf as beautiful. So, first, the experience of beauty is based on the impression of regularity.

Second, this rule must not be imposed on the object from the outside but stem from the object itself.^[11] One has to have the impression that the rule and the corresponding formation "had flown freely from the thing itself."^[12] In this case, the object appears as self-determined, as self-regulated, as free.^[13]

If both conditions are fulfilled, that is, if we perceive the object as following a rule imposed by itself, then we experience the object as beautiful. Therefore the experience of beauty registers freedom. Beauty is a cryptogram of freedom.^[14]

Schiller's formula for this reads, "Beauty is freedom in appearance."^[15] This formula does not have a restrictive meaning. Schiller does not want to say that, in the case of beauty, freedom occurs only in the improper form of a phenomenon (whereas, in its essence, freedom is something intelligible) but that, in an absolutely positive sense, freedom is actually appearing, is coming to the fore, manifesting itself, becoming evident. Beauty is real experience of freedom via perception.^[16]

b. Objectivity

It is important for Schiller that his explanation of the perception of beauty as freedom guarantees, contrary to Kant, the objectivity of beauty. This is because the regularity that is the testimony of freedom and simultaneously the reason of beauty is an objective trait of the object itself, belonging to it regardless of whether we perceive it or not.^[17] Hence it is a subject-independent, a truly objective trait.

c. Freedom everywhere, or "In the aesthetic world each natural being is a free citizen"

Schiller, then, makes two moves. First, he unmasks the experience of beauty as an experience of freedom. We call those objects beautiful that show freedom. Second, he transfers the character of freedom from the human sphere into the natural world; he sees that it already occurs there. So the experience of beauty leads us beyond anthropic strettos; freedom is by no means just a human but already a natural phenomenon. Schiller develops a general ontology of freedom that comprises not only the sphere of human action but also the realm of things, of natural as well as of cultural entities.

To quote a longer passage: "When indeed does one say, that a person is beautifully clothed? When neither the clothing through the body, nor the body through the clothing, suffers

anything in respect to its freedom; when the clothing looks as if it had nothing to do with the body and yet fulfills its purpose to the fullest. Beauty, or rather taste, regards all things as *ends in themselves* and by no means tolerates that one serves the other as means, or bears the yoke. In the aesthetical world, every natural being is a free citizen, who has equal rights with the most noble, and may *not even be compelled for the sake of the whole*, but rather must absolutely *consent* to everything. In the aesthetical world, which is entirely different from the most perfect Platonic republic, even the jacket, which I carry on my body, demands respect from me for its freedom, and desires from me, like an ashamed servant, that I let no one notice that it *serves* me. For that reason, however, it also promises me, reciprocally, to employ its freedom so modestly that mine suffers nothing thereby; and when both keep their word, so will the whole world say that I be beautifully dressed.”[\[18\]](#)

So Schiller suggests, as I stated earlier, an extension of freedom. He expands its occurrence beyond human morality to nature and artifacts. Aesthetically, one will discover freedom everywhere: “The taste will consider *all* [my emphasis] things as *ends in themselves*.”[\[19\]](#) The whole of nature is a realm of freedom: “Every beautiful creature of nature” is “a lucky citizen who calls out to me: Be free like I am.”[\[20\]](#)

Freedom is already a natural phenomenon before being a human phenomenon. Accordingly, each natural being is to be recognized and to be respected as a “free citizen.” The difference between human and nature is not the difference between freedom and unfreedom but both possess freedom. Everything is, strictly speaking, an instance of freedom. That freedom is not a human privilege but already a natural fact is what the aesthetic experience discovers and strongly recommends to take into account.

In this way, aesthetic experience leads to an ethics of freedom. We ought to see all things as figures of freedom and accordingly treat them with respect. Freedom is the basic character of Being. The aesthetic attitude grasps this basic character and recommends an ethics of universal respect.

Here Schiller obviously transcends occidental limitations and advocates an ethical perspective that is better known in East Asia (cf. Daoism and Buddhism). We ought to treat all beings, all our natural fellow-citizens in this world, with equal respect. Typically enough, Schiller also reverses the occidental pattern according to which freedom is, in the first place, one's own freedom (just remember Fichte's conception), and only subsequently the freedom of the other, when he states: “The first law of good manners is: *Spare others' freedom*. The second: *Show freedom yourself*.”[\[21\]](#) And Schiller comments, “The accurate fulfillment of both is an infinitely difficult problem, but good manners require it continuously, and it alone makes the accomplished man of the world.”[\[22\]](#)

d. Aesthetic illusion or actual freedom?

To conclude this interpretation of Schiller, I want to address two closely related questions. What does the philosophy of freedom developed in the *Callias Letters* look like compared to the later *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*? And does

Schiller really take freedom to be an objective property of natural things (or at least of the beautiful things in nature), or does he just want us to *regard* them as figures of freedom, although in reality they are not (for this cannot be claimed in a strict sense)?^[23] Is the "kingdom of taste"^[24] sketched in the *Callias letters* in the end just a realm of illusion, as is the case with the "aesthetic state"^[25] proclaimed in the *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*?

The difference between the two concepts is substantial. In the *Callias Letters*, Schiller does not restrict himself, as he will do in the *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*, to the human world, and much less to "only a few select circles,"^[26] but addresses freedom precisely insofar as it reaches *beyond* the human realm. And, most importantly, he understands and recommends freedom not merely as appearance or as a regulative idea or the like. He does not mean that one should just *regard* natural things as forms of freedom, though in fact they are not. Instead, he is convinced that everything *is* an instance of freedom, and that one should take this into account.

3. Assessment of Schiller's concepts

Let us now turn to a critical assessment of Schiller's position.

a. "Freedom"

A first question concerns Schiller's understanding of freedom. Schiller sees freedom in place wherever the shape of a natural object is caused by a self-imposed rule. The leaf was a case in point. Is Schiller's view appropriate and sufficient?

The core of Schiller's perception of freedom is that the shape of the object is not simply forced by external pressure, but is due to an intrinsic activity of the object. It would surely be an exaggeration to say that the shape results *exclusively* from such activity; it goes without saying that external factors also play a role. The decisive point is that there exists an *interaction* in which the proper shape drive of the object has its part and that this is recognizable in the result. Schiller speaks of freedom where such self-formation is in the game and perceptible.

With organic entities it is certainly the case that they owe their shape to acts of self-formation. Their formation is caused not only by external but also by internal factors; in modern terminology, by the genome that presets certain growth and forming steps that are then implemented in interaction with the environment.

To be sure, the individual does not invent itself from scratch but realizes the mode of its species under given environmental conditions. But complete self-creation isn't up for debate, anyway, when we speak of freedom. (Freedom is not to be equated with arbitrariness or whateverism.) Moreover, the mode of the species itself has come about in a process that involves freedom. The finally genetically anchored rules have been developed by the species itself over time, in tune with external conditions. In summary, both the emergence of the properties of the species and the formation of the individual specimens of this species imply elements of self-formation. So

Schiller's view is quite right as far as organic beings are concerned.

b. Is everything natural beautiful?

Of course, this leads directly to a problem. Schiller's view of freedom can be applied to all organic entities, but we experience only some organic beings as beautiful. If our sense of beauty were, as Schiller suggests, generally caused by the perception of self-formation, then we would have to experience all organic entities as beautiful. But we don't. Something seems to be wrong with Schiller's conception.

The best answer to this objection seems to be the following. Schiller envisages a type of beauty (and increasingly this one alone) that is essentially an indicator of freedom. All that matters to him is to discover traits of freedom, and wherever he recognizes them he speaks of beauty. One could rate this as one-sidedness or even idiosyncrasy, but one should also keep in mind that the concept and the sense of beauty are not fixed per se but are culturally and historically variable.

Schiller, living in the epoch of freedom and initially enthusiastic about the French Revolution,^[27] simply seeks freedom everywhere and makes beauty the detector of freedom. Hence he must, in order to be consistent, regard any organic shape, if it only shows traits of self-formation, as beautiful.^[28] This is certainly a very special way of assessing beauty but also one that can be well understood. For example, many biologists, by virtue of their special knowledge, regard creatures as beautiful in each trait that the common man rather discounts as ugly.

c. Self-organization and freedom in nature

Is Schiller's proposal to see elements of freedom everywhere in nature and, therefore, to regard and treat each natural being as a free citizen, over the top? Modern science largely proves Schiller right. It points out that on many levels nature exhibits traits of freedom. This is well-known at the micro level; the quantum world is not deterministic but displays spontaneity in many aspects. The same applies at the macro level. Self-reference and self-organization, the fundamental forms of freedom to be found in the physical world, are the most basic principles according to which nature brings forth its structures of order, from galaxies via organisms to social formations. Thus freedom is a fundamental and universal principle of nature or evolution, and of cosmic as well as biotic and cultural evolution.^[29] Schiller was utterly right in stating that freedom is already at work in nature.

Furthermore, Schiller's thesis that natural freedom finds its expression in beauty is supported by contemporary science. Scientists have found out that prominent types of beauty are based on the fact that the entities in question have achieved their shape through processes of self-organization.^[30] This is the case, for example, with growth patterns following the "golden angle," the application of the golden section to a circle. Examples are the scales of pine cones or the seeds of sunflowers but also the arrangement of the eye-spots of the peacock's fan or the structure of seashells.^[31] In such cases, our sense of beauty responds to self-similarity that results from feedback processes and thus is a detector of self-

organization. So Schiller's theory is confirmed by contemporary science; beauty is a result of self-organization.^[32] In summary, Schiller is not only right in stating that freedom is at work already in nature^[33] but equally justified in his claim that aesthetics can serve as a guidepost to this fact.

d. Schiller's conception of aesthetics surpasses the modern, dualistic way of thinking

Let us finally return to the initial deliberations. Aesthetics, I said, is capable of curing the basic error of the modern way of thinking, which is the strict opposition of humans and the world resulting from an allegedly fundamental ontological disparity of the two. In the meantime, we have seen how Schiller's aesthetics, as outlined in the *Callias Letters*, does provide a resolution. It overcomes modern dualism by showing that nature is not simply deterministic but includes phenomena of freedom, and thus is not categorically opposed to the realm of human freedom but open to it.^[34]

Schiller outlines, from an aesthetic point of view, a monism of freedom instead of the modern dualism. If the world already bears dimensions of freedom, then man must not confront the world as a stranger but can, as Schiller says, welcome and respect natural things as equal citizens, as kindred instances of freedom that conversely call out to him, "Be free like I am." Then the opposition of man and world has been overcome, and we humans can move forward in alliance with our natural fellow-citizens.

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Endnotes

[1] "Die Schöne Dinge zeigen an, dass der Mensch in die Welt passe" (Immanuel Kant, 'Reflexionen zur Logik,' *Akademie-Ausgabe*, Berlin: Reimer, 1914, XVI, 127 [Nr. 1820 a]). According to Adickes, this reflection dates from 1771–72, or perhaps from 1773–75.

[2] Cf. my recent publications: *Blickwechsel – Neue Wege der Ästhetik* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2012), *Mensch und Welt. Eine*

evolutionäre Perspektive der Philosophie (München: Beck, 2012), *Homo mundanus – Jenseits der anthropischen Denkform der Moderne* (Weilerswist, Velbrück Wissenschaft, 2012).

[3] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment* [1790], trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987), p. 15.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 19.

[5] “[...] the way of presenting [which occurs] in a judgment of taste is to have subjective universal communicability without presupposing a determinate concept; hence this subjective universal communicability can be nothing but [that of] the mental state in which we are when imagination and understanding are in free play (insofar as they harmonize with each other as required for *cognition in general*). For we are conscious that this subjective relation suitable for cognition in general must hold just as much for everyone, and hence be just as universally communicable, as any determinate cognition, since cognition always rests on that relation as its subjective condition. “Now this merely subjective (aesthetic) judging of the object, or of the presentation by which it is given, precedes the pleasure in the object and is the basis of this pleasure, [a pleasure] in the harmony of the cognitive powers” (*ibid.*, p. 62 [B 29, § 9]).

[6] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse I* [1830], *Werke*, vol. 8 (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1986), p. 123 [§ 46]; Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie III* [Vorlesungen 1816–1832], *Werke*, vol. 20 (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1986), 385; Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion II* [Vorlesungen 1821–1831], *Werke*, vol. 17 (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1986), p. 445.

[7] Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie I* [Vorlesungen 1816–1832], *Werke*, vol. 18 (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1986), p. 405; vgl. *ibid.*, p. 440.

[8] Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke nach Epochen seines Schaffens* (Münchner Ausgabe), eds. Karl Richter et al., vol. 19: *Johann Peter Eckermann, Gespräche mit Goethe in den letzten Jahren seines Lebens*, ed. Heinz Schlaffer (Munich: Hanser, 1986), 101 [14. April 1824].

[9] For the English translation of Schiller's text, I have, where possible, with occasional corrections, used the selection by William F. Wertz, Jr. published in *Fidelio*, vol. I, no. 4, Winter 1992; otherwise it is my own translation. Credits refer to the following German edition of the text: “Kallias oder Über die Schönheit. Briefe an Gottfried Körner”, in: Friedrich Schiller, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 5, eds. Gerhard Fricke and Herbert G. Göpfert (Munich: Hanser, 1980), pp. 394–433.

[10] Cf. Friedrich Schiller, “Kallias oder Über die Schönheit. Briefe an Gottfried Körner”, l.c., 410 [Letter from February 23, 1793].

[11] It must be a rule, “which it [the natural entity] has imposed on itself” (*ibid.*, p. 417).

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 419.

[13] The impression that the formation of the object follows a self-imposed rule leads "quite necessarily to the idea of internal determination, i.e. freedom" (*ibid.*, p. 410). The object "compels" us to "be attentive to its property of not being determined from the outside" (*ibid.*, p. 409).

[14] "[...] the objective trait that enables things to appear as free is precisely what, when present, provides them with beauty and, when absent, destroys their beauty" (*ibid.*, p. 408).

[15] "So Beauty is nothing other than freedom in appearance" (*ibid.*, p. 400 [Letter from February 8, 1793]. "The reason of beauty is everywhere freedom in appearance" (*ibid.*, 411 [Letter from February 23, 1793]).

[16] By the way, Schiller too (as for Kant), it is first of all natural beauty that matters, not the beauty of art. The latter one "demands its very own chapter" (*ibid.*, p. 416).

[17] Schiller emphasizes that "this nature and this heautonomy are objective qualities of the objects to which I ascribe them; because they remain theirs, even if the representing subject is completely subtracted. The difference between two beings of nature, of which the one is total shape and shows a perfect domination of the living force about the mass, while the other one has been subjugated by its mass, remains, even after complete suspension of the judging subject" (*ibid.*, p. 416 f.).

[18] *Ibid.*, 420 f.. Schiller continues: "If the jacket *strains*, on the other hand, then do we both, the coat and I, lose our freedom. For this reason do all *quite tight* and *quite loose* kinds of clothing have equally little beauty; for not considering, that both limit the freedom of movements, so the body in tight clothing shows its figure only at the expense of the clothes, and with loose clothing the coat conceals the figure of the body, in that it blows itself up with its own figure and diminishes its master to its mere bearer" (*ibid.*, p. 421).

[19] *Ibid.*

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 425.

[21] *Ibid.*

[22] *Ibid.*

[23] In the wake of Kant, Schiller says though, "that no thing in the sensual world really possesses *freedom*, but only apparently does so" (*ibid.*, p. 409). But he nevertheless pleads for the objectivity of beauty, and his argument runs as follows: "[...] how can one look for an objective reason for this idea in the phenomena? This objective reason would have to consist in a quality of the phenomena that absolutely *compels* us to bring forth the idea of freedom in us and to refer it to the object" (*ibid.*). So Schiller is looking for a path towards the objectivity of beauty unimpaired by Kantian objections.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 420.

[25] Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a*

Series of Letters, trans. R. Snell (Bristol: Thoemmes, 1994), 27th Letter, p. 137.

[26] *Ibid.*, 27th Letter, p. 140.

[27] In 1792, the French National Assembly even granted Schiller the honorary citizenship.

[28] Similarly, his aesthetic account of artifacts is governed by the perspective of freedom. A jacket is, as we saw, aesthetically right, when it both possesses and grants freedom.


[29] Consider also that evolution is on principle not deterministic but a process that implies freedom. It finds or generates a response via manifold differentiations and modes of self-reference. Ultimately, even the laws of nature as we know them today might be not of universal validity but results of the evolution of our cosmos (cf. Wolfgang Welsch, *Homo mundanus*, *loc. cit.*, pp. 855–857).

[30] Cf. on the following: Wolfgang Welsch, "Zur universalen Schätzung des Schönen", in *Blickwechsel – Neue Wege der Ästhetik* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2012), pp. 292–330.

[31] Cf. Friedrich Cramer, *Chaos und Ordnung: Die komplexe Struktur des Lebendigen* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1989), pp. 195–202. Ebenso: Friedrich Cramer and Wolfgang Kaempfer, *Die Natur der Schönheit: Zur Dynamik der schönen Formen* (Frankfurt/Main: Insel, 1992), pp. 264–283.

[32] Here is a passage where Schiller makes clear that seemingly purely aesthetic categories make proper sense only as categories of natural pattern formation: "Convenience, order, proportion, perfection – qualities in which one believed to have found the beauty for so long – have absolutely nothing to do with it. Where, however, order, proportion, etc. belong to the nature of a thing, as in the case of anything organic, there they are *eo ipso* invulnerable, not for their own sake, but because they are inseparable from the nature of the thing. A gross violation of proportion is ugly, but not because perception of proportion is beautiful. Absolutely not, but because it is a violation of nature that indicates heteronomy" (Schiller, "Kallias oder Über die Schönheit", l.c., p. 419 f. [Letter from February 23, 1793]).

[33] From the Romantic period to contemporary philosopher John McDowell, it was assumed that, after the early and late modern mechanistic degradation of nature, we need a "re-enchantment of nature." Only then can spirit and nature be reunified. This re-enchantment was expected from religion, philosophy, literature, and new mythologies. But it failed to appear. Hence people currently still complain that this desideratum is unfulfilled and that we are stuck in the age-old plight. But those who talk like that must have overslept the insights of recent science. Only this can explain such an unawareness that this "re-enchantment" has long since occurred, just not by the instances one had banked on but, of all things, by the instance from which one had not expected anything good and which, therefore, one ignored: contemporary science. This one gave us, in fact, a wonderful



equivalent of "re-enchantment," namely a scientific view of nature offering everything one can wish for in order to get beyond the old mechanism and dualism. In this essay, I have tried to show how Schiller's aesthetic conception provided good means for that.

[\[34\]](#) If Kant had understood nature this way, he could have saved his third critique.