

Sexual Desire and Its Transformation in Schiller's Theory of Aesthetic Value:

An Exploration of Aesthetic Freedom

"Released from its dark bondage, the eye, less troubled now by passion, can apprehend the form of the beloved; soul looks deep into soul, and out of a selfish exchange of lust there grows a generous interchange of affection."

Schiller¹

The relationship between sexual desire and Schiller's theory of aesthetic value remains conspicuously unexamined within Schiller's *"Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man."* Although Schiller briefly alludes to sexual desire in letters three and twenty-seven, these references remain cursory and lack in-depth exploration. In the former, he touches upon the imperative of elevating the raw nature of physical necessity inherent in sexual love through the infusion of beauty. In the latter, he discusses transforming sexual desire into affection as the senses gradually quell their tumultuous passions. Nevertheless, Schiller's remarks notwithstanding, the letters do not furnish a comprehensive theoretical foundation for elucidating the process by which sexual desire can be elevated through the infusion of beauty and subsequently evolve into affection. This critical omission leaves a substantive gap in Schiller's discourse on the intricate interplay between human desires and the aesthetics of human experience.

In this paper, I seek to establish a cogent connection between Schiller's perspective on sexual desire and his broader theory of aesthetic value. I argue that the infusion of beauty into sexual desire leads to its ennoblement when individuals rationally recognize that they did not consciously choose to exist in a state exclusively dominated by sexual desire. By embracing this state of aesthetic freedom, sexual desire undergoes a transformative process, evolving into affection and facilitating the experience of individual freedom. This thesis results from the synthesis between Samantha Matherne and Nick Riggle's insightful reconstruction of Schiller's

¹ Schiller, *Essays*, 175

theory of aesthetic value as presented in *Schiller on Freedom and Aesthetic Value* and my interpretation of Schiller's implicit connection between sexual desire and his aesthetic theory.

In the subsequent sections, this paper will (1) elucidate Matherne and Riggle's reconstruction of Schiller's theory, (2) extract the critical arguments about sexual desire from Schiller's writings in letters three and twenty-seven, (3) synthesize these primary arguments into Schiller's unarticulated but plausible position on the elevation of sexual desire through beauty, (4) establish the relevance of this central argument to Schiller's broader theory of aesthetic value, and (5) offer concluding insights on the subject.

(1) Matherne and Riggle's Reconstruction of Schiller's Theory of Aesthetic Value

In their work titled *Schiller on Freedom and Aesthetic Value*, Matherne and Riggle compellingly elucidate Schiller's theory of aesthetic value, which culminates in the assertion that beauty constitutes the pivotal and exclusive route to individual freedom.² A set of fundamental premises underpins this conclusion. Firstly, it hinges upon the concept that aesthetic value, or beauty, epitomizes the capacity to immerse oneself in the play drive, thereby situating individuals within a realm of volitional openness, denoted as aesthetic freedom. This intrinsic quality of beauty leads to the imperative second premise, wherein it is posited that beauty is indispensable for attaining human freedom, given its intrinsic role in engendering this volitionally open state. Consequently, the third premise underscores the notion that beauty, by its essentiality, is the solitary conduit to human freedom. In essence, the argument asserts that as aesthetic value signifies the ability to partake in the play drive, thereby engendering a state of aesthetic freedom, it becomes the exclusive means to emancipate oneself.

It is imperative to establish a foundational network to grasp the intricacies of this tightly woven argument. According to Matherne and Riggle, Schiller's conception of aesthetic value, what he delineates as the aesthetic Schein of x , essentially embodies the stylistic essence of x in a

² Matherne & Riggle, *Schiller*, 9

manner that empowers x to immerse us in a state of play.³ This state entails a profound capacity for deliberate openness concerning x . This condition arises through the reciprocal interplay of our sensuous and rational faculties in response to the stylistic essence of x and its impact upon us. In this state of intentional openness, one liberates oneself from the customary constraints that typically govern one's interaction with x .

Matherne and Riggle highlight the formidable challenge inherent in realizing Schiller's most elevated conception of human excellence, primarily because individuals' inherent drives are inherently at odds with each other.⁴ In his explanation, Schiller characterizes a drive as a compelling force in an individual's life that catalyzes the pursuit of their objectives.⁵ In this intricate interplay of drives, the sensuous drive is irresistibly drawn towards the alluring attractions and pleasures in the world. In contrast, the rational drive bestows upon the individual the ability to comprehend their desires and engage them through thoughtful contemplation.⁶ Consequently, each drive propels one towards divergent objectives, perpetuating an inherent tension and discord within the individual.

In a more specific context, Matherne and Riggle expound on how the sensuous drive exerts a continuous impetus, compelling individuals to immerse themselves in a perpetual state of flux by encouraging the enjoyment of life and the realization of their full potential for enjoyment.⁷ Conversely, the rational drive advocates for the harmonious integration of one's desires with one's cognitive faculties, necessitating a relentless pursuit of unity in interpreting various phenomena. In other words, while the sensuous drive endorses surrendering oneself to the allure of sensory-induced desires, the rational drive champions preserving one's individuality and selfhood across the ever-changing landscape of life's conditions.⁸

³ 28

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The conflict between these two drives generates an inherent tension within individuals, manifesting as a cyclical dominance of one drive over another. In this oscillating struggle, the sensuous drive may sometimes prevail, distancing one from reason.⁹ In contrast, in other instances, the rational drive takes precedence, leading to a disconnect from one's inherent desires. To address and resolve this alienation, Schiller posits the necessity of cultivating a comprehensive and integrated character, wherein individuals actively strive to embody their ultimate vision for humanity: harmonizing both drives. This entails immersing oneself in a state of aesthetic value characterized by beautiful engagement in a play drive. Specifically, the two drives must coexist and actively reinforce each other: the sensuous drive must align with and endorse one's rational commitments. Contrastingly, the rational drive must support one's desires, fostering integration into a more fundamental play drive. Both drives attain their highest and most authentic expression through this symbiotic relationship.¹⁰ Thus, beauty emerges as the sole pathway to individual freedom as the focal point of the play drive—a state of volitional openness in which beauty harmonizes both drives.

(2) Main Arguments about Sexual Desire from Letters Three and Twenty-Seven

(2.1) Letter Three

In a particular section of letter three, Schiller illustrates a sexual desire to advocate the imperative of harnessing one's rational drive to exert control over one's sexual impulses. Schiller articulates the need to elevate “physical necessity into moral necessity”¹¹ as the guiding principle behind this assertion. Implicit in Schiller's argument is the contention that as long as one remains devoid of genuine freedom, the forces of nature will continue to exert influence upon them, compelling them to act following their inherent nature. Schiller's thesis relies upon a series of foundational premises. On the one hand, Schiller contends that individuals find themselves

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¹¹ Schiller, *Essays*, 90

discontented in their natural state, where they are subject to the dominance of their sensuous drive. On the other hand, this discomfort prompts the development of the rational faculty, enabling individuals to comprehend the extent to which nature has thus far dictated their actions. Acting upon this newfound rational capacity, individuals realize that they can redirect the compelling force of their sensuous drive through introspection and thoughtful deliberation. In essence, when individuals contemplate the commanding influence of their sensuous desires, they embark upon a path of rational agency, thereby elevating themselves from a state of subjugation to their sensuous drive to a position of mastery over it. Thus, transcending one's natural condition, wherein sexual desire exerts dominion, entails a deliberate ascent through reflective engagement, ultimately subjugating one's sexual desires through the moral authority of one's rational faculties.

In another section of letter three, Schiller expounds upon the earlier argument with greater detail, asserting that the rational drive must first mitigate the influence of sexual desire, only to subsequently emphasize the necessity of ennobling it with the infusion of beauty. Schiller elucidates this process as addressing the "crude character imposed by physical need upon sexual love."¹² The foundation of his conclusion rests upon the following pivotal premises: Schiller posits that individuals find themselves in a natural condition, not of their choosing, wherein the sensuous drive exerts dominance. Within this realization, individuals discern that they inhabit a realm governed by natural laws before moral laws, a realization that leaves them dissatisfied with their circumstances. Their immediate response is to seek liberation from the sole dominion of the sensuous drive. In this pursuit of freedom from sensuous domination, individuals employ rational faculties to disentangle the crude character imposed upon sexual love by the sensuous drive. Recognizing their ability to achieve this transformation, individuals ascend to a higher level

¹² 90

of awareness: the awareness that they possess the capacity to elevate sexual love through the aesthetic quality of beauty. However, the means to achieve this elevation remain uncharted.

(2.2) Letter Twenty-Seven

In a specific section of letter twenty-seven, Schiller illuminates the process of elevating the physical imperative imposed upon sexual love by the sensuous drive, albeit primarily in kind rather than in the realm of beauty, which is a notion he has yet to explore fully. In Schiller's exposition, he underscores how a contemplative engagement with the outward appearance of the motivations behind one's sexual desire transcends mere augmentation of the scope and intensity of pleasure.¹³ Instead, it bestows upon this pleasure a nobler quality, elevating it to a higher plane of significance. This transformation signifies a departure from being solely driven by the superficial allure of a physical body and denotes a connection established on a more profound and exalted level. Schiller's thesis builds upon the foundation of his analysis within letter three and rests upon a series of interconnected premises. Initially, Schiller posits that individuals do not find contentment solely in that which satiates their immediate sensuous impulses. Hence, they embark on a quest for material possessions, aiming to shield the sensuous drive from the awareness of its inherent limitations. This endeavor involves placating the sensuous drive by ensuring its sustained anticipation of pleasures beyond immediate necessity. In doing so, individuals incorporate the rational drive into their overarching plan for gratification. Thus, the argument posits that individuals, not content with mere gratification of their sensuous drive, seek an opulence of material possessions to satisfy this drive, ultimately uniting the rational drive with their overarching design for enjoyment.

Schiller now introduces a concise objection to the preceding argument and provides an even more succinct response to this objection. He contends that accumulating material objects for future enjoyment may lead to transcending the constraints of the present moment. However,

¹³ 172

it does not constitute a complete transcendence of the drive itself. Schiller's perspective acknowledges that, by assuring the sensuous drive of future material pleasures, one has, in a rational manner, deferred its immediate cravings, thereby resolving the tension within the sensuous drive, albeit temporarily.¹⁴ In seeking an abundance of material possessions to satiate the sensuous drive, one places it in a state of eager anticipation but no longer in a state of tension. Schiller's assertion that this does not constitute a total transcendence signifies that, although each drive's internal conflict has been momentarily harmonized, the overarching tension between the drives remains unresolved. Schiller addresses his objection by emphasizing that, within the present moment, wherein one has refined the external appearance of the sensuous drive that ignites one's sexual desire, the most that can be achieved is the ennoblement of the sensuous drive, primarily in kind. Once again, this signifies a shift away from being solely driven by the superficial allure of a physical body, leading to a connection established on a deeper, nobler, yet still somewhat elusive level.

In another section of letter twenty-seven, Schiller delves into the dynamics of compulsions related to scarcity and excess arising from internal and external sources. Schiller's usage of the term "compulsion" remains somewhat ambiguous in its specific connotation. However, for this interpretation, I will understand it as an unfulfilled requirement that exerts pressure on an individual's sensuous and rational faculties. This interpretation is substantiated by Schiller's elaboration, wherein he characterizes the compulsion of want as "physical earnestness" and the compulsion of superfluity as "physical play."¹⁵ In essence, the compulsion of wants signifies an individual's imperative to satisfy a sensuous need, while the compulsion of superfluity denotes an abundance of sensuous objects available for enjoyment. Schiller posits that nature initiates a transformative journey by guiding individuals from the initial compulsion of want through the realm of the compulsion of superfluity, ultimately culminating in a more

¹⁴ 172

¹⁵ 173

refined and appealing form of compulsion, particularly when it pertains to sexual desire. In Schiller's terminology, this transitional phase signifies a "prelude of the illimitable,"¹⁶ a state characterized by aesthetic play. This state is hallmarked by "free activity," wherein the gratification of one's sensuous and rational drives is momentarily delayed. Therefore, compulsion, as Schiller articulates it, represents an unmet or deferred need that persists, lingering in anticipation of eventual harmonization and integration through the intricate interplay of one's drives.

Now that Schiller has introduced the concept of a more refined compulsion associated with sexual desire, he proceeds to elucidate the process of elevating sexual desire through the infusion of beauty, transcending mere equivalence in kind. He expounds that one must be willing to yield to a state of aesthetic freedom, as it is within this state that one can discover the freedom conducive to harmonizing beauty with sexual desire, ultimately fostering its evolution into affection.¹⁷ Schiller's conclusion hinges upon a series of foundational premises: an earnest and profound engagement with the object of one's sensuous drive, even though initially driven primarily by the sensuous impulse, maintains a profound connection. Due to its specific purpose, Schiller designates this communion as a compulsion of a more exquisite nature to reshape one's relationship with sexual desire. It facilitates the diversion of one's senses from the confines of the sensuous drive, which ordinarily perceives its objects solely as instruments to satisfy its immediate desires.

As the senses are emancipated from the shackles of their former bondage, they gradually find themselves less tumultuously embroiled in the throes of unrestrained passion. Schiller illustrates this transformation through the example of a specific sense, namely the eye. When the eye, unburdened by the tumult of unchecked passion, attains a state of tranquility, it transcends the mere perception of the sensuous contours of the beloved and, instead, perceives the

¹⁶ 173

¹⁷ 175

beloved's more profound form. This heightened perceptual capacity, achieved by the eye, subsequently diminishes the intensity of the physical need that sexual desire typically imposes. Consequently, this attenuation of physical need provides the fertile ground upon which sexual desire can evolve into the loftier realm of affection. In essence, this process signifies the elevation of sexual desire through the transformative power of beauty, culminating in the ennoblement of this desire.

Furthermore, one has come to recognize that the sensuous drive can only be effectively engaged by the rational drive, signifying a shift from passive obedience to the sensuous drive toward a deliberate confrontation guided by rational cognition. This transformation alleviates tension within each drive, yet significant tension persists in their interplay. At this juncture, Schiller advocates the necessity of relinquishing a degree of autonomy – a willingness to harmonize the tensions within each drive and between them. This willingness to concede freedom becomes paramount because it aligns with the ultimate objective: the pursuit of individual freedom eagerly anticipated as a consequence of engaging in the play drive, where beauty harmonizes the conflicts, not merely within each drive but also between them. This alignment is predicated on the desire to please and nurture this newfound individual freedom, which, in turn, stems from the engagement in the play drive, where beauty assumes the role of reconciling the contrasting inclinations of each drive concerning sexual desire.

(3) Combining the Main Arguments from Both Letters into Schiller's Unarticulated but Plausible Argument for his Views on Sexual Desire and its Relation to his Overall Theory of Aesthetic Value

Four distinct arguments have emerged from the analysis of Schiller's views on sexual desire within his theory of aesthetic value, stemming from two sections in letter three and two sections in letter twenty-seven. The following synthesis entails consolidating both arguments presented in letter three into a singular overarching argument, followed by the amalgamation of the two arguments derived from letter twenty-seven into a corresponding main argument.

Subsequently, these pivotal main arguments will be cohesively integrated to form a comprehensive and substantive argument that illuminates Schiller's perspectives on sexual desire and its probable correlation with his theory of aesthetic value.

(3.1) Main Argument from Letter Three

Combining Schiller's two arguments from letter three into a unified narrative, it becomes evident that Schiller's ultimate contention revolves around the notion that once an individual has subdued the influence of the sexual drive through the agency of the rational drive, a state of freedom is attained. However, it is crucial to discern that this state, while emblematic of freedom, does not yet represent the pinnacle state wherein beauty harmonizes both drives seamlessly. This conclusion is derived from a carefully constructed set of premises. Firstly, the premise that an individual did not actively choose to inhabit a state where sexual desire exerts dominance is fundamental to Schiller's argument. Consequently, individuals harbor a sense of discontent when merely thrust into such a state. This discontent prompts them to engage in reflective contemplation, ultimately leading to the realization of nature's influence on their condition.

As one embarks upon the path of withdrawal, a conscious commitment to align with the imperatives of the rational drive ensues, ushering in a distinct sense of liberation from the grip of unbridled sexual desire. This newfound freedom is a direct consequence of the rational drive's ascendancy. It is essential to underscore that Schiller's work is not yet complete; he must still articulate the mechanism for reconciling the inherent tension between the sensuous and rational drives, thereby creating the conditions for one to exist within the realm of aesthetic play, where beauty achieves a harmonious union of both drives.

(3.2) Integration of Schiller's Objection and Response to Objection to the Main Argument from Letter Three

Schiller's comprehensive argument in letter three encompasses not only his central thesis but also incorporates an objection and his corresponding response. This integrated main

argument unfolds as follows: Schiller's primary assertion posits that by resolving the inherent tension within each drive, one succeeds in ennobling sexual desire, yet only in a manner that corresponds to its kind, not yet attaining the realm of beauty. The ultimate achievement of harmonizing the tension that permeates both within each drive and between them necessitates the transformative agency of beauty. This conclusion emerges due to several interconnected premises shaped by Schiller's objection, his subsequent rejoinder to that objection, and the core arguments advanced in letter twenty-seven.

The foundation for this argument begins with the premise that individuals are inherently dissatisfied with the mere gratification of immediate sexual desires, prompting them to seek alternative avenues for future enjoyment. This quest entails appeasing sexual desire by ensuring its prospects for future gratification. This strategic delay in fulfilling immediate desires engenders the resolution of tension within the sensuous drive itself. However, it is vital to acknowledge that this resolution of tension remains confined to the domain of the sensuous drive without extending to the rational drive. In response to this persistent tension within the rational drive, individuals incorporate the rational drive into their blueprint for future enjoyment, reflecting a commitment to transcend the mere satisfaction of the sensuous drive. By doing so, they resolve the underlying tension within the rational drive. Consequently, this interplay between the drives becomes a pivotal element in the overall argument, reinforcing the assertion that it is not enough to gratify the sensuous drive merely; instead, it is necessary to engage in a comprehensive process of harmonizing the opposing tensions within the sensuous and rational drives. Only through the transformative agency of beauty can this ultimate reconciliation be attained, epitomizing Schiller's central thesis.

(3.3) Major Argument for Letter Twenty-Seven

The amalgamation of arguments drawn from the various sections of letter twenty-seven leads to Schiller's overarching conclusion. This conclusion posits that by immersing oneself in a state of freedom facilitated by the play drive, beauty emerges as the transformative force capable

of resolving the inherent tension between the sensuous and rational drives. A series of interconnected premises underpin this deduction. Firstly, individuals' innate dissatisfaction with the physical need imposed on sexual desire by the relentless sensuous drive compels them to seek profound communion with another. This quest for connection catalyzes the substitution of physical need with a more profound and refined emotional state: affection, characterized as a compulsion of a lovelier kind. This transition effectively diverts individuals from the bondage of unrestrained sexual desire, resolving its immediate tension and resulting in diminished inner turmoil. Crucially, this transformation is achieved by introducing reason into one's realm of pleasure, a strategic choice rooted in the acknowledgment that mere subservience to the sensuous drive is unsatisfactory. By embracing reason as an integral component of their pleasure, individuals foster the growth of sexual desire into affection. This transformation is driven by a reflective contemplation of sexual desire, a process that contributes to its partial ennoblement through the profound influence of beauty.

This contemplative journey enhances the sensuous drive's influence while establishing a direct link with the rational drive. At this juncture, individuals recognize the necessity of embracing a willingness to relinquish the grasp of both drives, conceding a degree of freedom, to facilitate the harmonization between them. This pivotal decision precipitates the resolution of tension within each drive, but harmonizing both drives remains a distinct and overarching goal. Central to this process is the realization that the ultimate objective is not merely to please or cater to the interests of each drive individually. Instead, the aspiration centers on pleasing freedom—a state characterized by liberation from the conventional constraints imposed by each drive. Within this framework, beauty, as the object of aesthetic freedom inherent in the play drive, emerges as the transformative agent capable of resolving the inherent conflict between both drives. By allowing individuals to exist in a state of aesthetic freedom, free from the customary constraints imposed by each drive, beauty is the catalyst that enables individuals to

align with Schiller's concept of the play drive, effectively placing themselves in a state of freedom.

(3.4) Major Argument from the Combination of the Major Arguments from Each Letter

Having meticulously delineated Schiller's principal arguments from letters three and twenty-seven, I can now coalesce these threads into a unified central argument that sheds light on Schiller's theory of aesthetic value. Schiller's overarching contention posits that it is precisely due to the absence of volition in the state wherein one is unilaterally subjected to the dominance of sexual desire that individuals willingly embrace the concession of aesthetic freedom. This concession becomes the conduit through which beauty undertakes the harmonization of the tension intrinsic to each drive and the overarching conflict between them—a holistic synthesis that neither the argument from letter three nor the argument from letter twenty-seven independently achieves.

This profound conclusion rests upon a series of interrelated premises that form the foundational pillars of Schiller's argument. Foremost among these premises is the recognition that individuals do not actively select or opt into a state characterized by the unwavering sway of sexual desire. This involuntary subjugation to the dictates of sexual desire evokes a palpable sense of discontent, prompting individuals to transcend mere acquiescence and embark upon a path of rational contemplation. Within this process of reflection, individuals gain insight into the intricate machinations of nature and its profound influence on their inherent condition.

Upon deliberate and rational reflection, an individual's inner yearning becomes palpable—a profound longing for a profound communion with the very object of their sexual desire. This intense yearning, once recognized, precipitates a critical realization: the imperative to adhere to the principles of rationality and relinquish the state of exclusive domination by sexual desire in the context of one's relationship with the desired object. As this realization takes hold, it prompts individuals to consciously withdraw from the overpowering influence of sexual desire, albeit solely concerning their connection with the desired object. This strategic withdrawal,

undertaken with purpose and intent, appeases the relentless demands of the sensuous drive. In doing so, individuals pave the way for a profound need – an aspiration for a connection of greater depth and refinement characterized by the compelling allure of a lovelier bond.

In the process of ennobling sexual desire, a remarkable transformation unfolds as one's senses gradually find respite from the tumultuous waves of passion. With this newfound serenity, the gateway is opened to welcome the presence of reason into the realm of pleasure, creating an avenue for a profound shift. This shift entails a thoughtful and transformative contemplation of the object's outward appearance that fuels one's sexual desire, ultimately culminating in the emergence of affection. Within this state of aesthetic freedom, beauty emerges as the central force capable of reconciling the tensions within each drive and the overarching conflict between them. This intricate reconciliation process is the culmination of a profound journey that is embarked upon because individuals did not actively choose to be confined within the dominion of sexual desire alone.

(4) Relating Schiller's Unarticulated but Plausible Argument to his Overall Theory of Aesthetic Value

At the heart of Schiller's philosophical framework lies the intricate interplay between his theory of aesthetic value and his compelling thesis regarding the imperative of ennobling sexual desire through the infusion of beauty. To unravel the profound connection between these facets, it is instructive to revisit Matherne and Riggle's cogent argument regarding the pivotal role of beauty as the exclusive path to freedom. As previously expounded, the foundational premise in their argument posits that beauty embodies the capacity to engage the play drive – a pivotal mechanism that precipitates a state of deliberate openness. This state, characterized by volitional receptivity, is the very essence of aesthetic freedom. It serves as the gateway to attaining a form of openness indispensable for realizing individual freedom – a profoundly cherished and intrinsic facet of human existence.

The meticulous construction of Schiller's likely argument, elucidating the intricate relationship between sexual desire and his overall theory of aesthetic value, unveils a compelling and nuanced thesis. Central to this thesis is the notion that individuals, not having consciously chosen to exist within the confines of a state solely dominated by sexual desire, are propelled toward a deliberate and transformative choice. This choice is emblematic of a profound willingness – an embrace of the prospect of entering the transcendent realm of aesthetic freedom. Within this hallowed realm, the defining essence of beauty assumes its role as the harmonizer. This agent diligently addresses and ultimately dissolves the tensions that have hitherto pervaded the human experience. Aesthetic freedom, as delineated by Schiller, represents this profound state of being that individuals attain upon the realization that they did not actively choose to be ensnared within the dominion of sexual desire. This state, characterized by a conscious and deliberate openness, emerges as the linchpin in Schiller's intricate philosophical framework.

Central to this journey is the intricate interplay between sexual desire, the rational moral compass that seeks to temper its ardor, and the transformative influence of beauty. Schiller contends that the ability to navigate this complex interplay is precisely the essence of aesthetic freedom. In this state, the crude and impulsive character of sexual desire is transcended, evolving into a more profound and refined sentiment: affection. Crucially, Schiller underscores that beauty is the exclusive pathway to liberate individuals from the physical exigencies imposed by the sensuous drive of sexual desire. In the symphony of human existence, beauty alone emerges as the harmonizing force – the catalyst that reconciles the often conflicting drives of desire and reason.

However, it is pertinent to address two potential objections that may be raised regarding the evaluation of Schiller's theory of aesthetic value and its intricate connection to sexual desire. Firstly, there is a contention that the explanation provided thus far does not delve deeply enough into the nuanced dynamics of how the senses, once liberated from the throes of passion, guide

individuals toward a state wherein sexual desire, having matured into profound affection, allows for that profound connection wherein “soul looks deep into the soul.”¹⁸ Secondly, a critical perspective posits that Schiller’s articulation of the relationship between sexual desire and his theory of aesthetic value may not fully align with the multifaceted and lived realities of individuals and their diverse experiences with sexual desire.

In response to the second objection, it is essential to recognize that Schiller’s philosophical framework need not necessarily align with the lived realities of individuals and their diverse experiences of sexual desire. Schiller articulates that his theory exists as an ideal – an abstract conceptualization that can be approached but never fully attained. This conceptual distinction becomes pivotal in understanding Schiller’s perspective. In other words, Schiller’s notion of sexual desire evolving into affection underscores the aspirational nature of his philosophy. Within this paradigm, ‘affection’ represents an ideal state where one’s sexual desire for another transcends the confines of mere physical need imposed by the sensuous drive and the repressive tendencies enforced by the rational drive. Importantly, this ideal state does not equate to a condition where beauty has harmonized both drives, as that would still entail a degree of indeterminacy.

Crucially, Schiller introduces the concept of indeterminacy within the context of the play drive, emphasizing that it is not synonymous with a lack of determination. Herein lies the key to comprehending Schiller’s vision: individuals must exercise their free determination following the initial indeterminate phase of the play drive. Through this act of self-determination, sexual desire can aspire to reach the lofty heights epitomized by the ideal of ‘affection.’ Consequently, Schiller’s philosophy encapsulates a journey of self-transcendence and self-realization – a pursuit of the sublime that acknowledges human desire’s inherent complexities and nuances while championing the possibility of elevating it to a higher plane of existence.

¹⁸ 175

Expanding upon the response to the second objection and in direct response to the first objection, a compelling inquiry arises concerning how the senses play a role in elevating sexual desire to a state where “one soul looks deeply into another’s soul.” This becomes particularly intriguing when I contemplate Schiller’s assertion in the twenty-second letter that “the unfailing effect of beauty is freedom from passion.”¹⁹ This statement encapsulates a profound facet of Schiller’s philosophy: while beauty can ennoble sexual desire, its ultimate and overarching influence is the liberation from the dominion of passion. To delve deeper, it is essential to recognize that Schiller’s perspective implies a temporal dimension. Even as beauty ennobles sexual desire, it achieves this elevation within the framework of the present time. In other words, it provides a fleeting respite from the immediate grasp of passion. This temporal aspect is crucial to understanding Schiller’s philosophy.

Furthermore, Schiller suggests that true and enduring transcendence, wherein one’s soul can engage deeply with another’s soul, extends beyond the momentary allure of sensuous or rational drives. It resides in a perennial state of ideal aesthetic freedom, characterized by the liberation from the perpetual sway of sexual appetite. In this timeless realm, beauty achieves its most profound impact. In this realm, the soul transcends the constraints of temporal passion, allowing for a profound and enduring connection beyond the confines of bodily desires and rational considerations. Thus, Schiller’s philosophy introduces a dynamic interplay between beauty, sexual desire, and freedom, wherein beauty serves as a catalyst for the brief emancipation from passion while hinting at the possibility of a more profound and timeless connection that beckons the soul to explore the depths of human connection in its most profound and liberated form.

¹⁹ 151

(5) Conclusion

In this paper, I have amalgamated Matherne and Riggle's meticulously crafted reconstruction of Schiller's theory of aesthetic value with an inferred but plausible elucidation of Schiller's connection between sexual desire and his overarching aesthetic theory. This endeavor has entailed a comprehensive analysis of Schiller's fleeting references to sexual desire within his letters three and twenty-seven. I have aimed to synthesize and align the central tenets of Schiller's arguments in these letters with the comprehensive framework presented by Matherne and Riggle in their reconstruction of Schiller's aesthetic philosophy.

The synthesis that emerges from this examination is apparent: Schiller posits that the ennobling of sexual desire hinges on the profound realization that one did not consciously select to exist in a state where it exerts unmitigated dominance. For Schiller, this realization signifies a pivotal step towards attaining "aesthetic freedom." This notion of aesthetic freedom lies at the core of Schiller's philosophy and underscores the importance of liberation from the exclusive dominion of sexual desire. In essence, Schiller's viewpoint can be distilled to a fundamental premise: the elevation of sexual desire to a state of greater nobility is intricately bound to the pursuit of aesthetic freedom. This synthesis of Schiller's scattered insights on sexual desire and his overarching aesthetic philosophy presents a compelling interpretation that sheds light on the profound interplay between human desires, aesthetic values, and the pursuit of true freedom as envisioned by Schiller.

Continuing research in this domain can delve into the Indian aesthetic theory of *Rasa*, mainly focusing on *Śṛṅgāra-rasa*, which meticulously explores the very terrain that Schiller has left uncharted in his epistolary discourse. This inquiry could aim to unravel the intricate processes that lead to a state where, transcending the confines of sensuous and rational drives, one soul can profoundly connect with another. By drawing parallels between Schiller's ideas and the rich tapestry of *Rasa* theory, future research endeavors can offer valuable insights into the universality of aesthetic experiences and their profound implications for human consciousness and the

perception of the infinite within the finite. Through such an exploration, Schiller's enigmatic assertion, proclaiming that "in the enjoyment of beauty, or aesthetic unity, the practicability of the infinite being realized in the finite... is thereby actually proven,"²⁰ can be comprehensively elucidated and substantiated.

²⁰ 164-165

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