

# **Schiller's "On Grace and Dignity" in Its Cultural Context**

Essays and a New Translation



**Edited by  
Jane V. Curran and Christophe Fricker**

*Schiller's "On Grace and Dignity" in Its  
Cultural Context*

*Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture*

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CAMDEN HOUSE

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## Notes on References and List of Abbreviations

ENGLISH VERSIONS OF quotations from “On Grace and Dignity” are taken from the translation in this volume. In all other cases they are by the author of the respective chapter if a source for the translation is not explicitly stated.

All italics in quotations are original.

- AEM* Schiller, Friedrich, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters*, ed. and trans. with an introduction, commentary, and glossary of terms by Elizabeth M. Wilkinson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967).
- DVjs* *Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift*
- GY* *Goethe Yearbook*
- JbDSG* *Jahrbuch der Deutschen Schiller-Gesellschaft*
- JWGV* *Jahrbuch des Wiener Goethe-Vereins*
- LJb* *Literaturwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch*
- NA* *Nationalausgabe der Werke Schillers*  
Volume 20, *Philosophische Schriften Tl. 1*, unter Mitw. von Helmut Koopmann, ed. by Benno von Wiese (Weimar: Böhlau, 1962), includes “Ueber Anmuth und Würde” (251–308). We have modernized the title in the essays.
- SHb* *Schiller-Handbuch*. Edited by Helmut Koopmann (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1998).
- WGS* Christoph Martin Wieland, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin: Akademie, 1909–76).
- ZphF* *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung*

# Introduction

*Jane V. Curran and Christophe Fricker*

PYGMALION CREATES STATUES marked by a certain majesty but lacking grace. Only when the goddess of beauty appears to the artist in a dream is he capable of making statues so perfect that he wishes them to come alive. This eventually happens, and the figure moves gracefully. This version of the myth of Pygmalion with its notable opposition of two characteristics comes from the French Enlightenment author André-François Boureau-Deslandes.<sup>1</sup> It speaks to us even today: we still talk about dignity of bearing and about grace if we are attracted to a person because of a special air about him or her. At first glance, the concepts seem to be complementary.

For millennia, philosophers and poets have tried to define grace. The discussion usually starts by referring to grace as a gift granted by a divine being for a limited time. This gift becomes visible in the posture and movements of a person. It has thus to be interpreted primarily from an aesthetic viewpoint. The connection with a transcendental sphere changes its meaning in the eighteenth century; it loses its religious dimension but remains important as a reference point. The transcendental becomes the vanishing point for concepts unable to come to terms with undeniable and attractive appearances. This inadequacy of definitions, this *je ne sais quoi*, is ever present. Grace, in an Enlightenment context, becomes a “kulturphilosophische Heilskategorie”<sup>2</sup> (a cultural and philosophical road to salvation). It thus fulfills the function of an educational standard in a time when bourgeois society is trying to define itself. The concrete relevance of grace for society reaches its intellectual peak with Schiller’s essay “Über Anmut und Würde” (1793). Gerd Kleiner calls it the “elaboriertesten philosophischen Entwurf des Zeitalters”<sup>3</sup> (the most elaborate philosophical essay of its era).

In his exposition of grace, Schiller uses the myth of Venus as a starting point. He does not introduce the discussion of dignity with a myth but

asserts that it is acceptable to have recourse to the physical when presenting this concept to the understanding: “Streng genommen ist die moralische Kraft im Menschen keiner Darstellung fähig, da das Übersinnliche nie versinnlicht werden kann. Aber mittelbar kann sie durch sinnliche Zeichen dem Verstande vorgestellt werden” (*NA* 20:294; strictly speaking, moral strength in humans is not capable of being represented, because the suprasensuous can never be made sensuous. But it can be presented to the understanding in an indirect way through sensuous signs). A Greek myth, however, will not do, since dignity, a complex consisting of free will, inclination, duty, moral strength, and natural impulse does not sit comfortably with the eighteenth-century view of the Greek world. A quintessentially modern mythical figure, Don Juan, would make a better choice. If Schiller had been in a position to act on this recommendation, the thematic link to Pygmalion would have been provided by the statue that comes alive. This time, the statue (of the Commendatore, who is offended and roused to life and action by Don Juan’s treatment of women and his insolence) represents the commanding moral force that keeps ephemeral impulses in check.

Don Juan himself appears as the epitome of natural impulse. He oscillates between desire’s demands and the short-lived pleasure of desire fulfilled. He also possesses pure will, that quality that raises human beings above animals. Freedom of will allows him to act in contradiction to reason and to remain, despite his freedom, in the natural realm. Some versions of Don Juan’s story are didactic and moralizing tragedies, but myth has always had an organic, metamorphic capacity that allows for endless reconstitution. Molière even feels justified in calling his celebrated stage version a comedy. His protagonist is in a constant state of contradiction; his defining obsession with sensual pleasure leads him through a series of amorous conquests, and yet Don Juan has, at some point before the play begins, embraced holy matrimony. Still, whenever he appears on stage, it is as a man whose will denies reason, law, and custom, who rejects power and allies himself with nature.

Immutable, implacable, and larger than life, the stone statue is more than a match for Don Juan, with his puny “heart of stone.” And yet it demonstrates the capacity for change that we look for in Don Juan. The statue’s monolithic force must crush Don Juan in the end, since the restoration of harmony within him is out of the question. Inclination will never align itself with duty; he will never freely choose to limit desire by the exercise of moral strength. Don Juan’s impulses constantly overpower his

will, keeping spiritual freedom within strict limits. With the intervention of the statue, moral fortitude gains the upper hand, to keep the impulses in check. Only through that encounter and the necessary control it exercises does the phenomenon of dignity emerge.

There is a long tradition of looking at grace and dignity in conjunction with one another. But there is a turning point in this tradition. Rhetoric and courtly style from Quintilian to Tasso and Castiglione postulate that both virtues can be acquired by learning, just like other norms for behavior and communication. But in the Enlightenment and especially in Schiller's essay, other aspects become more important: the appearance of grace and dignity as phenomena becomes a subject of interest, as does the basis of their connectedness.

## Schiller's Argument

Grace is defined as "*bewegliche Schönheit*" (NA 20:252, *movable beauty*) in a human being. It cannot be produced according to explicit rules and it cannot be consciously repeated. It is part of the object in which it appears. It appears before us not only in space but also in time. It is part of an object for a brief moment only and disappears as soon as reason, in amazement, tries to explain it.

What kinds of movement can be graceful? Schiller introduces the idea of a "moralischer Empfindungszustand" (NA 20:267; moral sensibility of the person) governing those parts of a voluntary movement that are not determined by intention. A person's character can be interpreted on the basis of the visibility of his or her moral attitude. His or her being becomes visible as temporal.

How is reason's interest in grace to be understood? Reason has to be receptive with regard to what it encounters, to what provokes amazement and raises questions. This underlines the links between "Vernunft" (reason) and the etymologically related verb "vernehmen" (to hear). The question arises: according to which laws can one be receptive to the appearance of grace? Reason does not use the charm influencing it as a means of controlling the effects of grace to its own ends. But how can one, through reason, approach what is perceived? If what is beautiful becomes a product of the activity of reason in the process of appearing, then reason may have had a prior concept of beauty. This idea would now enable reason to recognize

what is beautiful. In this case, thinking recognizes that one aspect of its own activity, the inquiry into what is beautiful, is not at its disposal. By acknowledging this, reason recognizes its own indeterminacy. This is how the task of being human can be fulfilled at the highest level: once the appearance of the beautiful as subject to laws has been thought, an arena for human freedom has been built.

One cannot be certain of appearance because one cannot re-enact its production. This is why it is also impossible to be sure that another onlooker responds the same way. But it seems as though beauty is universally pleasing to the senses. Each person assumes or hopes that what he finds pleasing is also pleasing to others. This universality cannot be conceptualized. Observation does not affect beauty, but the common sense of a valid sensation arises from beauty perceived. The object itself radiates the way it is to be treated: beauty, with respect. Life accommodates its environment to itself here as well. Thus recognition of the law governing beauty becomes the model for finding the way in a world accessible to the senses.

Grace becomes visible in movements that are “moralischsprechend” (NA 20:277; morally expressive). They hint at their moral origin and they are beautiful at the same time. Schiller resolves this contradiction between sensual and non-sensual origin by introducing an image of something like a playing-field: Morality sets the limits within which the sensual is permitted to appear. Thus, mind does not produce beauty or grace but makes it possible. Graceful movements are thus both unmediated expression in the sensual realm and representation to be interpreted within the moral realm. Recent scholarship has labeled this paradoxical constellation “Vermittlung von Unmittelbarkeit”<sup>4</sup> (transmitted immediacy).

As could be expected, the paradox illustrates that a system of philosophical devices has limits. The commentator has to acknowledge paradox as the final outcome. But one also has to acknowledge that some object of interest still lies behind these boundaries. One needs to be cautious when labeling grace itself as paradoxical.<sup>5</sup> This would entail claiming that the inadequacies of one’s concepts and ways of reasoning are in fact inherent in the object. Grace itself is not paradoxical. But a way of thinking that assumes it can completely explain grace will lead to paradox.

Dignity appears as sublimity when the balance between the sensual and the moral, endangered by the force of emotions, collapses. In the second part of his essay, Schiller now contrasts grace and dignity. This passage

is central to his argument and is also characteristic of the author's style. Hence we will quote it at some length:

Anmuth liegt also in der *Freyheit der willkürlichen Bewegungen*; Würde in der *Beherrschung der unwillkührlichen*. Die Anmuth läßt der Natur da, wo sie die Befehle des Geistes ausrichtet, einen Schein von Freywilligkeit; die Würde hingegen unterwirft sie da, wo sie herrschen will, dem Geist. Ueberall, wo der Trieb anfängt zu handeln, und sich herausnimmt, in das Amt des Willen zu greifen, da darf der Wille keine *Indulgenz*, sondern muß durch den ausdrücklichsten Widerstand seine Selbstständigkeit (Avtonomie) beweisen. Wo hingegen der Wille *anfängt*, und die Sinnlichkeit ihm *folgt*, da darf er keine Strenge, sondern muß Indulgenz beweisen. Dieß ist mit wenigen Worten das Gesetz für das Verhältniß beyder Naturen im Menschen, so wie es in der Erscheinung sich darstellt. (NA 20:297)

[Grace, then, lies in the freedom of *intentional movements*, dignity in the mastery of *instinctive ones*. Grace leaves nature with the appearance of free will where she carries out the commands of the mind; dignity, by contrast, subjugates her where she wants to be in command, to the mind. Whenever instinct begins to act and takes the liberty of encroaching on the offices of the will, the will may not allow indulgence, but must demonstrate its independence (autonomy) through the most insistent opposition. If, on the other hand, the will begins, and the sensuous follows it, then it should not show severity; it must show indulgence. This, in brief, is the law for the relationship between the two natures in humans, as represented in appearance.]

Schiller reaches conclusions to this argument only in the fifteenth of his letters “Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen” (On the Aesthetic Education of Man, 1795). With reference to the statue known as Juno Ludovisi, he explains that the statue's extraordinary effect is based on the fact that neither grace nor dignity can be found in her “herrlichen Antlitz” (glorious face), but “beydes zugleich” (NA 20:359; both at the same time). This raises the question concerning a basis for the connection between grace and dignity. Dignity is a necessary corrective whenever emotions threaten to overcome the authority of the moral. But when dignity appears as the force re-establishing this authority, a new area in which grace can appear opens up.<sup>6</sup> This interpretation of dignity is very close to the text of “Über Anmut und Würde,” but it does not take the temporal character of grace itself into account. Schiller's first statement is that grace

is bestowed by the goddess of beauty for a limited time. It is thus impossible to think of grace without considering time. Its disappearance is a part of its essence. Thus, the balance between the sensual and the moral is not conceivable as anything other than temporal. This becomes clearer when one looks at the other specifications Schiller makes about the proper constitution of humanity, which is to occur through the union of grace and dignity.

In the fourteenth Aesthetic Letter he speaks of annulling time in time — “*Zeit in der Zeit aufzuheben*” (NA 20:353). This occurs when the sensuous impulse and the impulse to form are united and constitute the play impulse. The force that brings about sensations in time and binds one to the material is what Schiller calls the sensuous impulse. It unfolds human characteristics, whereas the impulse to form brings them to fulfillment. The timeless spirit of a human being asserts personhood. The key here again lies in the various dispositions of the two impulses to time: “Der sinnliche Trieb will, daß Veränderung sey, daß die Zeit einen Inhalt habe; der Formtrieb will, daß die Zeit aufgehoben, daß keine Veränderung sey” (AEM 97; The sense-drive demands that there shall be change and that time shall have a content; the form-drive demands that time shall be annulled and that there shall be no change). What is needed in order for the two to be united, for time to be annulled in time, and for grace and dignity to become simultaneous and lasting, is not primarily a corrective to sensuousness but the superior powers of history. This is the point where we need to look at dignity.

In the teleological perspective of Schiller’s philosophy of history, grace hints at a future state where the highest possibilities of man are realized. We would like to replace the term “Vermittlung” (transmission) by describing grace as meaningful immediacy. It carries meaning because it opens up a perspective that allows us to see the sensual and the moral united in the future. But it is still immediate because its appearance cannot be inferred from an interpretation of the conditions of the present. If Schiller regards the simultaneity of grace and dignity as human perfection, then dignity has to be seen as a means of protection against emotions, protection needed because emotions would mean an incursion on the part of time. Dignity is the expression of resistance against impulse and revolution. Wilcox rightly argues that dignity is present in grace as the mechanism by which the impetus of the sensual has been adjusted. Simultaneity of grace and dignity always implies the simultaneity of different conceptions of

time: historical time, constructed and understood by reason, and that other concept of time that is essentially mythical and aesthetically interpretable. It is not because of a particularly challenging political, social, or intellectual situation that dignity is needed<sup>7</sup> but because of the temporal nature of human existence. By illuminating this through the question of grace, one can see the role of dignity more clearly.

## Creative Reception

Schiller shows that grace and dignity form part of a person for a limited time and will then dominate the overall impression of the person. Generations of poets have been influenced by this notion of grace and dignity as inextricably intertwined. Even a brief glance at writings from the past two centuries reveals a great number of illustrations. They do not form a consistent tradition; it would be wrong to infer one on the basis of shared terminology alone. But the following three quotations might serve as an index to the phenomenon.

In *Des Meeres und der Liebe Wellen* (1831), Franz Grillparzer's dramatic rendering of the love story of Hero und Leander, Leander's friend Naukleros describes the impression that the two have of Hero:

Der Anmut holder Zögling und der Hoheit,  
Des Adlers Aug', der Taube süßes Girren,  
Die Stirn so ernst, der Mund ein holdes Lächeln,  
Fast anzuschauen wie ein fürstlich Kind,  
Dem man die Krone aufgesetzt noch in der Wiege.  
(verses 626–30)

[The noble child of grace and majesty, / Eye of the eagle, the dove's sweet coo, / Her brow so grave, her mouth a noble smile, / Almost looking like a royal child, / Whose crown is laid already in the cradle.]<sup>8</sup>

The close connection between the two central ideas is underlined by the fact that their attributes are named in reverse order: In verse 626, grace is named before majesty, whereas in the following line the eagle is mentioned first and only then the pigeon. Majesty is thus illustrated before grace. The two friends gain a deep insight into a personality through its momentary appearance.

A poem by Friedrich Hebbel (1813–63) exemplifies the temporal dimension of grace and dignity. Hebbel occupies himself with the image that also formed the concluding image in Schiller's argument.

JUNO LUDOVISI

Du lässest uns die Blüte alles Schönen  
 Und seines Werdens holdes Wunder sehen;  
 Die Stirn' ist streng, man sieht's in ihr entstehen,  
 Wo es noch ringen muß mit herben Tönen.

Die Wange will sich schon mit Anmut krönen,  
 Doch darf sie noch im Lächeln nicht zergehen,  
 Der Mund jedoch zerschmilzt in süßen Wehen,  
 Daß Ernst und Milde sich im Reiz versöhnen.

Erst keusches Leben, wurzelhaft gebunden,  
 Dann scheuer Vortraum von sich selbst, der leise  
 Hinüberführt zur wirklichen Entfaltung;

Und nun ist auch der Werdekampf verwunden,  
 Man sieht nicht Anfang mehr, noch Schluß im Kreise,  
 Und dieses ist der Gipfel der Gestaltung.<sup>9</sup>

[You let us see all the blossoms of beauty / And the wonders of its growing; / The brow is severe; one sees in it the sign / Of struggles to come against the bitter sounds. // Her cheek is pleased to crown itself with grace, / But may not yet dissolve into a smile, / Her mouth, however, melts in sweet travail, / Thus gravity and mildness join in charm. // First, life is shy, and bound by roots, / Then modest dreams of self lead softly / Onward to the point of true unfolding; // And now the need to strive is over, / The circle has no start, it has no end, / This is now the peak of all formation.]

Verses 2 and 3 speak of beauty as something that needs to unfold. This only happens as a struggle against opposing forces. The traces of this struggle appear as harshness. These first signs of beauty and the fact that they are seen together with the opposing forces is appealing. The image is ambiguous: grace itself must not “zergehen” (dissolve) but needs a certain kind of resistance. This is how grace as a prelude to beauty is anchored in time. Grace is beauty's “scheuer Vortraum von sich selbst” (modest dreams of self) and will eventually lead to the transcendence of beginning and end.

In the work of the poet Stefan George (1868–1933), grace and dignity are mentioned at a turning point: in the first stanza of “Zeitgedicht” (Time Poem). This is the opening poem of the collection *Der siebente Ring* (The Seventh Ring, 1907) and marks the beginning of the second half of George’s oeuvre. George himself designs the poem as strategically important. He starts with a look back at comments made about him. Many believed him a

[ . . . ] salbentrunknen prinzen  
 Der sanft geschaukelt seine takte zählte  
 In schlanker anmut oder kühler würde  
 In blasser erdenferner festlichkeit.

(verses 5–8)

[ . . . prince drenched in salves / Who counted his measures, softly swayed, / In graceful slimness or grew cooler. / In pale remote festivity.]<sup>10</sup>

Apparently, both these characteristics were used in a derogatory sense. He was seen as a dreamer detached from ordinary life. Now that he goes back to the people as a prophet of change in society and as a teacher, he seems to undergo a profound change. But he assures the readers: “Ihr sehet wechsel · doch ich tat das gleiche” (verse 28; You see change, but I still did the same). He does not refute the attributes formerly ascribed to him but indicates that they are relevant for him regardless of his views on art and its role in life.<sup>11</sup> He also fulfills his new role by keeping grace and dignity as his ideals. This might seem a very limiting view of George, but it is confirmed by the fact that he uses the twin concepts several times in works published after the *Siebente Ring* and each time they are clearly used both as a point of orientation and an example.<sup>12</sup>

## Scholarly Reception

Four questions have gained particular attention among those who have written commentaries on Schiller’s essay:<sup>13</sup> Is the work’s argument consistent, and if not is it still valid? How does Schiller employ traditional rhetorical techniques, and what role do they play? What is the influence of Kant and of other philosophers? And, finally, does Schiller intend the essay to have an effect on society?

The philosophical rigor of the work has been called into doubt many times. Käte Hamburger's essay is the prime example of this. She questions Schiller's many syntheses: first, she doubts the legitimacy of the ambition to find an expression of a person's moral attitudes on the basis of outward appearance; she holds strong views against any attempts to reconcile anthropology and aesthetics.<sup>14</sup> This attempt is related to Herder's concept of *kalokagathia*, which designates the unity of moral goodness and aesthetic beauty as appearance.<sup>15</sup> She identifies the character of Schiller's anthropology as a demand linked to the idea of *kalokagathia* and as the reason for his logical and theoretical failure. Second, she relates the alleged contradictions in his argument back to the discrepancies among Schiller's models. Third, she accuses him of failing to distinguish between metaphorical and analytical language.

This position has been weakened mainly by the findings of rhetorical approaches. Elizabeth M. Wilkinson has shown that tensions between individual terms can be resolved by seeing them as parts of underlying schemes of argumentation (which she visualizes in diagrams).<sup>16</sup> She argues that Schiller is not greatly concerned with a discussion along the lines of clearly defined concepts; instead, he tries to reassess certain experiences with the help of language. Because of the very nature of the reassessment as an exercise carried out in language, this approach facilitates changes in one's way of living. The way of arguing, in her view, is itself aesthetic education. Wilkinson repeatedly exemplifies how poetic and philosophical language overlap.<sup>17</sup> Numerous commentators, however, find this supposedly unclear language irritating, an "indigestible brew of literary philosophizing."<sup>18</sup> Klaus L. Berghahn even declares the whole enterprise of defining beauty a failure. He is led to this conclusion not by looking at Schiller's main result, namely the definition of beauty as freedom in appearance, or perceptible freedom, but by denying the validity of Schiller's development of the thought process.<sup>19</sup>

Much has been made of Schiller's apparent dependence on Kant, and it is certain that exposure to the philosopher's Critiques had a tremendous impact on him. A letter he wrote in 1791 testifies to this fact: "Seine Kritik der Urteilskraft reißt mich hin durch ihren neuen, lichtvollen, geistreichen Inhalt und hat mir das größte Verlangen beigebracht, mich nach und nach in seine Philosophie hineinzuarbeiten" (*NA* 26:77; His Critique of Judgment fascinates me, with its new, enlightening, and profound content, and it has led me to long to immerse myself in his philosophy). In "On Grace

and Dignity,” Schiller veers off and establishes his own direction, and at one point explicitly mentions what he finds inadequate about Kant’s position. For his part, Kant is capable of expressing admiration for “On Grace and Dignity” and for its author, while pointing out their differences — not irreconcilable, according to Kant — on the question of morality. Fritz Heuer’s study on Kant and Schiller has set the framework for further discussions.<sup>20</sup> It has recently been challenged by Frank-Peter Hansen,<sup>21</sup> who claims an even wider Kantian influence than Heuer had shown.<sup>22</sup>

A glance at “On Grace and Dignity” will also confirm the importance of the works of Rousseau, Home, and Shaftesbury. Many commentators have shown how comprehensively Schiller was acquainted with English and French Enlightenment thought. Henry Home uses the twin concepts of grace and dignity in his work *Elements of Criticism* (1762–65) and is one of the fathers of the *je ne sais quoi* attitude towards grace as a phenomenon resisting conceptual definition — an attitude Schiller courageously refutes. Home, along with Fichte, prepares the ground for Schiller’s view that human beings constitute their identity in reaction to unmediated sensuous impressions. Shaftesbury’s ideas of “moral grace,” widely believed to be a source of inspiration for the concept of the beautiful soul, were available to Schiller through Herder and conversations with Wieland. Schiller’s attempt to combine anthropology and aesthetics thus found its reference points well before he occupied himself intensively with Kant’s Critiques. In the late stages of German Enlightenment thinking, Schiller goes back to anchoring morality in the interplay between instincts and rationality rather than solely in the latter. It is here that the openness of the ever-changing nature of man becomes the basis for aesthetics. Moral education becomes almost a prerequisite for the appearance of grace.

The importance of historical context is a fourth aspect crucial to the proper understanding of Schiller’s achievement. It must be set against the backdrop of the Reign of Terror. This leads into questions about the task of Enlightenment thinking. Although “On Grace and Dignity” is a work ostensibly about aesthetics, the political flavoring is impossible to overlook. A broadly conceived historical backdrop is provided by David Pugh’s look at Schiller as a citizen of his time.<sup>23</sup> Taking Schiller’s initial interest in and ultimate reservations about the French Revolution into consideration, Pugh explores the use of political metaphor and analogy in “On Grace and Dignity.” He argues that rationality and freedom are just as important as components of the human disposition as they are in their

function as guarantors of harmony in the state. Art offers the possibility of a moral freedom in reason, one that corresponds to the harmony that constitutes the aim of the modern state.

## Translation

Commenting on a perceived inability of Schiller's to blend the poetic with the philosophical in his essays, his Danish patron, Prince Friedrich Christian of Holstein-Sonderburg-Augustenburg, remarks: "Er bedarf einen Übersetzer"<sup>24</sup> (he needs a translator). Speaking more generally, one could say that any attempt to clarify the conceptual formulation of any subject matter is a type of translation. In this case, it is especially true because the discussion is about the boundary between the operations of understanding and sensuousness, between the things one can be sure of conceptually and the things to which one has to be receptive. Understanding is conscious of what is outside it. Traditional positions permit themselves to be queried. Understanding is able to recognize the conditions for realization that pertain to pure concepts and their objects. But if reason wishes to have access to the sensuous world, it has to put into question its own receptivity, its limits. This is where the importance of imagery in presenting grace and dignity becomes clear. Helmut Pfotenhauer establishes the constitutive importance of the reference to the statue of Juno Ludovisi and calls plastic art the realm beyond reason. In the attempt to join up what is categorically separate, in epistemological terms, sensuousness and reason, the particularity and the generality of taste, the work of art becomes a transitory telos of a dynamic way of thinking that aims to combine sense impression with the constant search for concepts. Schiller's argument can only be understood as this type of constant process of synthesis, behind which the inexpressibility topos is implied. The driving force is fear of the inability to create and comprehend aesthetically.<sup>25</sup>

More than two hundred years later, the statement that Schiller needs a translator still holds true. In the controversy provoked by Schiller's refusal to publish Fichte's essay *Über Geist und Buchstab in der Philosophie*, Fichte's polemic includes the claim: "Ich muß alles von Ihnen erst übersetzen, ehe ich es verstehe"<sup>26</sup> (I have to translate everything you write before I can understand it). Fichte's bitterness notwithstanding, this principle readily applies to the act of translating Schiller's works into another language. As

one might suspect of a dialectical procedure such as translation, the principle works in two directions: at several points, statements that in the original appeared self-evident become problematic when they must be translated, and, on the other hand, occasionally, a translation can serve to elucidate a murky formulation in German.

Schiller's essay "Über Anmut und Würde" does indeed need a translator, as the Danish prince's statement, admittedly quoted out of context, suggests. Two nineteenth-century translations, one by C. J. Hempel (1861), the other unattributed (1884), stood unchallenged until 1988, when the self-styled Schiller Institute, in an effort to counteract what it perceived as a tradition of propaganda-based mistranslations of Schiller's works, published its own version. Although this version has its merits, it is marred by instances of archaism and bowdlerization. A doctoral dissertation by Leon R. Liebner, dated 1979, consists of a translation of "Über Anmut und Würde," with commentary, but this has never been published. The volume of Schiller's essays published in the series *The German Library* (1993) does not include "On Grace and Dignity," although there are a number of references to it in footnotes.<sup>27</sup>

One example will suffice to show why it is that the nineteenth-century versions of Schiller's essay are in need of replacement. Schiller writes: "Weil nun die Sittlichkeit des Weibes gewöhnlich auf Seiten der Neigung ist, so wird es sich in der Erscheinung eben so ausnehmen, als wenn die Neigung auf Seiten der Sittlichkeit wäre" (NA 20:289). The anonymous nineteenth-century translator translates as follows: "Precisely because the moral nature of woman is generally on the side of inclination, the effect becomes the same, in that which touches the sensuous expression of this moral state, as if the inclination were on the side of duty" (204–5). This is a consciously interpretative translation, complete with an added remedial phrase: "in that which touches the sensuous expression of this moral state" has no equivalent in the original German sentence. The first word, "precisely" is more emphatic than "weil nun," and it suggests a causality that is arguably absent from Schiller's opening. Notable also is the fact that the translator has rendered "Sittlichkeit" in the first instance as "moral nature" and in the second instance as "duty." Translator's license often has to permit more than one English equivalent for a German term, and this is particularly true in the case of a word such as "sittlich," partly because there does not seem to be an English equivalent that captures all the connotations present in an eighteenth-century German setting. There is also the grammatical problem

that, having chosen an English equivalent, such as “moral,” one finds that it does not support the same number of grammatical mutations as “sittlich” does. It is often necessary, then, to employ more than one English term, particularly when a German word is used in a variety of contexts. The anonymous translator, however, has used two different translations for “Sittlichkeit” within a single sentence, and much damage has been done to the delicate balance of Schiller’s rhetoric. If the translator had not been quite so determined to hammer home the moral point, he would have been able to appreciate the sentence for what it is: a masterpiece of construction, with a fine chiasmus consisting of three elements. “Sittlichkeit . . . Seiten . . . Neigung . . . Neigung . . . Seiten . . . Sittlichkeit.”

Reservations about the unpublished translation of the essay (1979) begin with the title itself. Liebner translates this as “Gracefulness and Dignity” and notes that he has suppressed “Über” as unnecessary. He adds that the choice of the word “gracefulness” in the title, rather than “grace,” which he often uses in the body of the text, was based partly on the fact that, in his judgment, the meter of the English title corresponds more closely to that of the German one. Through these two decisions, he demonstrates a radical misapprehension of the genre of the text he is translating. Schiller’s use of the word “Über” tells his readers that this is an essay, that is to say, something slightly tentative and unsystematic, even possibly inconclusive. It is not a treatise or an exhaustive exposition. To suppress the preposition is to misrepresent Schiller’s intentions. Further evidence that this choice of preposition was by no means arbitrary or empty can readily be gleaned from a survey of the titles Schiller gives to his essays: “Über naïve und sentimentalische Dichtung,” “Über den Grund des Vergnügens an tragischen Gegenständen,” “Über das Pathetische,” “Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen in einer Reihe von Briefen,” “Über die notwendigen Grenzen beim Gebrauch schöner Formen,” “Über das Erhabene.” This list is confined to those titles that begin with “über.” In other titles the preposition appears midway through, for example, in “Gedanken über den Gebrauch des Gemeinen und Niedrigen in der Kunst.”

A further lack of understanding is evident in Liebner’s defense of the word “gracefulness” on metrical grounds. While Schiller himself admitted that he could never hold his poetic and philosophical natures in strict separation from one another, it would be absurd to reason that the translation of an essay would be more faithful to its original if it captured the metrical features of the German.

The present translation is based on the text provided by the standard edition of Schiller's works, the *Nationalausgabe*. The editors of that edition based their text on the original publication of the essay in Schiller's own journal *Neue Thalia* (1793) and on a very slightly revised text that appeared in volume two of Schiller's *Kleinere prosaische Schriften* (1800). The latest scholarly edition of the text is the *Frankfurter Ausgabe*. Its editors provide an annotated text, history of publication, brief paragraphs on Schiller's sources of inspiration, and a bibliography. A small sample of reactions to the essay by contemporary writers is also included. More affordable but with a less generous apparatus is the Reclam edition, which combines our text with the correspondence between Schiller and Christian Gottfried Körner on the topic of an objective standard by which to judge beauty: "Kallias oder über die Schönheit."

Although often referred to in works on aesthetic theory, the German Enlightenment or Weimar Classicism, the essay "On Grace and Dignity" remains unavailable to the English-speaking world in a reliable, reader-friendly, and scholarly form that uses contemporary idiom. Less substantial than the better-known "On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry" or "Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man," "On Grace and Dignity" is nevertheless anything but marginal in the topics it covers. Freedom, outward beauty as it relates to inner morality and the connections between body and soul in the aesthetic realm are questions that have stood at the centre of philosophical inquiry since Plato. In addition, Schiller's essay points to a way forward in aesthetic thinking after Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, a way of loosening the hold that Kant's treatise had taken on the contemporary critical mind.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> André-François Boureau-Deslandes, *Pigmalion, ou la statue animée* (London [i.e. Amsterdam?]: Samuel Harding, 1742).

<sup>2</sup> Gerd Kleiner, "Anmut/Grazie," in *Ästhetische Grundbegriffe: Historisches Wörterbuch in sieben Bänden* (Stuttgart, Weimar: Metzler, 2000–), 203.

<sup>3</sup> Kleiner, "Anmut/Grazie," 202.

<sup>4</sup> Janina Knab, *Ästhetik der Anmut: Studien zur "Schönheit der Bewegung" im 18. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1996), 16.

<sup>5</sup> Knab, *Ästhetik der Anmut*, 19.

- <sup>6</sup> Kenneth Parmelee Wilcox, *Anmut und Würde: Die Dialektik der menschlichen Vollendung bei Schiller* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1981), 125.
- <sup>7</sup> Hans Richard Brittnacher, "Über Anmut und Würde," *SHb*, 590 (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1998).
- <sup>8</sup> Franz Grillparzer, *Werke* (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1987), 3:33.
- <sup>9</sup> Friedrich Hebbel, *Werke* (Munich: Hanser, 1965), 3:114.
- <sup>10</sup> Stefan George, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 6/7 (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1986), 6.
- <sup>11</sup> Cf. Dirk von Petersdorff, "Wie viel Freiheit braucht die Dichtung? 'Das Zeitgedicht' im 'Siebenten Ring'" (*George-Jb.* 5, 2004/05), 45–62.
- <sup>12</sup> Cf. Christophe Fricker's article in this volume.
- <sup>13</sup> For a comprehensive and diligently annotated overview of the scholarship on Schiller's aesthetic essays, see Lesley Sharpe, *Schiller's Aesthetic Essays: Two Centuries of Criticism* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1995).
- <sup>14</sup> Käte Hamburger, "Schillers Fragment 'Der Menschenfeind' und die Idee der Kalokagathie," *DVjs* 30 (1956): 367–400.
- <sup>15</sup> Cf. Johann Gottfried Herder, *Werke* (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1985), 1:312–23.
- <sup>16</sup> Elizabeth M. Wilkinson, "Reflections after Translating Schiller's *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*," *Schiller: Bicentenary Lectures* (London: Intern. Univ. Booksellers, 1960), 46–82.
- <sup>17</sup> Cf. Jane V. Curran's essay in this volume.
- <sup>18</sup> Michael T. Jones, "Schiller Trouble: The Tottering Legacy of German Aesthetic Humanism," *GT* 10 (2001): 223.
- <sup>19</sup> Klaus L. Berghahn, "Nachwort," *Kallias oder über die Schönheit: Über Anmut und Würde* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1971), 166.
- <sup>20</sup> Fritz Heuer, *Darstellung der Freiheit: Schillers transzendente Frage nach der Kunst* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1970).
- <sup>21</sup> Frank-Peter Hansen, "Die Rezeption von Kants *Kritik der Urteilskraft* in Schillers Briefen *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen*," *LJb* 33 (1992): 167–88.
- <sup>22</sup> Cf. Fritz Heuer's essay in this volume.
- <sup>23</sup> Cf. the essay in this volume.
- <sup>24</sup> Quoted from Hans Schulz, *Schiller und der Herzog von Augustenburg in Briefen* (Jena: Diederichs, 1905), 153.
- <sup>25</sup> Helmut Pfotenhauer, *Um 1800: Konfigurationen der Literatur, Kunstdliteratur und Ästhetik* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1991), 171.