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Schiller's *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*: The Origins of the Postmodern Sublime in the Ethical Evaluation of the Aesthetic

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Schiller's treatise *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* was largely ignored after the initial reactions to its publication. Up to the middle of the nineteenth century the letters were discussed mainly in terms of their political implications. One of the reasons for the sparse critical attention the letters received was that the public's familiarity with Schiller's poetic and dramatic works tended to obscure his aesthetic and philosophical writings. The work was seen as Schiller's failed attempt to "combine Kantian principles with his own terminology, poetic language, and rhetoric."^[1] In the 1820s, in his lectures on aesthetics at the University of Berlin, Hegel sought to free Schiller's discourse from the Kantian context in which his work had so far been discussed and compared unfavorably. Hegel went as far as to insist that Schiller had surmounted the limitations inherent in Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, the most important one being the conception of the aesthetic as performing a merely regulative function in the union of nature and reason. In Hegel's mind, Schiller had overcome Kantian dualism by getting rid of the Kantian "as if": the idea that we are to approach nature *as if* it had a purposiveness of its own,

even though in reality that purposiveness is 'borrowed' from, or imagined on analogy with, the purposiveness of our own reason.

Hegel was not the only one to attempt to disengage Schiller's work from its Kantian context. Around the same time, Wilhelm von Humboldt became the first commentator to argue that Schiller's ideas are not merely reworkings of Kant but originate in Schiller's own work from the 1780s.^[2] More recently, critics have sought to demonstrate the continuity between Schiller and pre-Kantian German philosophy. Thus, Ernst Cassirer has traced Schiller's notion of 'ideal beauty' back to Leibniz's *Theosophie des Julius*, in which Leibniz considers art and nature as analogs of each other.^[3] Others ascribe a greater importance to Schiller's friendship with Goethe than to his readings of Kant. According to this interpretation, Schiller was deeply affected by the consequences of the French Revolution and accepted Goethe's belief that the poet ought to remain a stranger to his age, that art need not fulfill a moral function. Not everyone subscribed to Hegel's opinion of Schiller. Hölderlin, among others, refused to credit Schiller with overcoming Kant's notion of the aesthetic as a regulative idea. Schiller, he believed, failed to acknowledge the ontological or metaphysical status of the aesthetic i.e., he did not remove Kant's "as if" clause in his interpretation of aesthetic judgment. By stressing the idea of freedom, Schiller subordinated the aesthetic to the moral (like Kant before him) instead of understanding the aesthetic as a means to knowing being itself.

These two views—Schiller the moralist, writing in the shadow of Kant, and, on the other hand, Schiller the aesthete, the last artist of the *Sturm und Drang*, the descendent of Spinoza, Leibniz, Lessing, and Herder, rather than Kant—have dominated Schiller scholarship since the

publication of *AEM*, privileging Schiller's relationship to Kant as the focal point of debate. Whatever the degree to which Schiller was influenced by Kant, it is very likely that the inconsistencies and contradictions in *AEM*, and especially Schiller's failure to provide a coherent analysis of the relationship between the beautiful and the sublime, can be attributed to his ambivalent relationship to Kant. The point on which there has been most disagreement is the extent to which Schiller merely repeated the Kantian gesture of subsuming the aesthetic under the moral (conceiving the aesthetic merely as a means to a higher end, the moral state) or he actually gave the aesthetic its due (regarding aesthetic education as an end in itself). The idea of the moral as the higher end of the development of aesthetic intuition was by no means new at the end of the eighteenth century. The notion of moral sensibility was prevalent in eighteenth century Germany as part of the more general concept of Sentiment ("Empfindsamkeit"), according to which "properly cultivated emotions are our most reliable moral guides."^[4] The source of Schiller's concept of nature as ideal should be sought namely in the rise of the sentimental attitude. The ambiguities in Schiller's treatment of the aesthetic both as an end in itself and as a means to a higher moral end have been attributed to the social structure of eighteenth century Germany, particularly to the process of bourgeois emancipation: "The willingness to assume a guise of equality with the middle class on the part of the nobility was matched by a parallel tendency on the part of the Bürger to aspire to the ethical and cultural ideals of the courtier."^[5] Thus the mixture of progressive and reactionary tendencies in Schiller's aesthetic should be ascribed to the paradox that while the letters were addressed to a representative of the nobility (whose name was eventually suppressed upon the letters' publication in *Die Horen*), and as liberal-minded as their addressee was, what Schiller was trying to do in the

letters was precisely to transcend class distinctions in the public sphere.

[6] The ambiguity of the aesthetic is, therefore, at least partly due to the diplomatic strategy adopted by Schiller, a strategy “which walks a narrow line between the presentation of democratic ideals and the need to assure Augustenburg that he [Schiller] is not interested in inciting the public to revolutionary action.”[7]

As early as 1892, in his survey of Weimar Classicism entitled *Die klassische Ästhetik der Deutschen: Würdigung der kunsttheoretischen Arbeiten Schiller's Goethe's und ihrer Freunde*, Otto Harnack argues that the most important and fascinating aspect of *AEM* is Schiller's failure to integrate the beautiful and the sublime. Harnack's argument prefigures the current debate around the relationship between the aesthetic and the ethical, a debate that foregrounds the sublime as precisely the obstacle to formulating a unified aesthetic theory. In his 1957 article “Beauty and Freedom: Schiller's Struggle with Kant's Aesthetics,” Dieter Heinrich points to the continuity between Schiller's treatment of the sublime and postmodern aesthetic theory by arguing that moral freedom cannot be symbolized by the beautiful since freedom resists sensibility while the beautiful requires harmony. More recently, Rolf-Peter Janz has drawn attention to the relevance of Schiller's aesthetics to the postmodern debate around the unrepresentable, arguing that Schiller's attempt to synthesize the beautiful and the sublime might be construed as an attempt to reduce (or disguise) the violence of the sublime. Finally, in his article “Rethinking the Aesthetic: Kant, Schiller, and Hegel” Stephen Boos summarizes the importance of Schiller's aesthetic writings to contemporary debates: “The attempt to rethink the relationship between the ethical and the aesthetic requires a return to Kant, Schiller, and Hegel, since it is largely through their efforts that the modern notion

of the aesthetic as the reconciling unity of spirit and nature, duty and inclination, and reason and feeling was first invented.”^[8] Boos observes, however, that if Schiller and Hegel were concerned with finding a way to reconcile spirit and nature, the universal and the particular, “[i]t is no longer so obvious that it is the task of art to seek reconciliation. ... Indeed, it would appear that art has ceased to believe in its ability to provide such absolute reconciliations but instead now devotes its energies to exposing the paradoxes and contradictions in the attempt of philosophy to provide such absolute syntheses. In this sense, art may have attained a self-consciousness that philosophy still lacks.”^[9] Thus, the debate over the relationship between the ethical and the aesthetic has been moved to a higher, self-referential plane: *postmodern aesthetics is no longer concerned with reconciling the ethical and the aesthetic but with judging the ethical character of such a reconciliation in the first place*. Yet it is precisely in this attempt to present the task of art as exposing the conflicts between reason and nature and the ideological nature of reconciliation, in this self-referential gesture of judging itself from an ethical point of view, in the attainment of self-consciousness Boos praises, that art has gradually allowed itself to be determined by, and finally subordinated to, ethics.

This shift has been carried out through an implicit doubling of the category of the ethical: the ethical now functions as, at one and the same time, *the object of the debate* (the other object being the aesthetic) and *the criterion determining the outcome of the debate* (since it is namely the ethical nature of the debate that is put into question). This increasing self-referentiality or self-awareness of the aesthetic is at the heart of Lyotard's reading of the proto-ethical (ontological) aspect of the postmodern sublime. It is precisely the

contradictions the sublime generates in the attempt of eighteenth century thinkers to establish a unified aesthetic theory that provoke the increasing concern in postmodern aesthetics with the ethical evaluation of the aesthetic reconciliation of reason and nature.

Schiller offers us *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*^[10] as an aesthetic object and, with that, places his work in a strange position. Being an aesthetic object by virtue of its effect on the reader-it invokes feelings and leaves the reader free-it is also a superfluous object. To claim that it could have any sort of emancipatory or pedagogical function would contradict its aesthetic nature since the aesthetic object is not supposed to fulfill a purpose or be useful in any way. The work is, thus, a treaty on aesthetic education without being itself educational. Yet, as much as Schiller would like us to perceive his work as an aesthetic object, we wouldn't be justified in doing so. In the very last letter, Schiller undermines his own argument about the 'innocence' of the aesthetic object, reducing the aesthetic to notions of refinement and decorum thereby disclosing the illusory freedom it offers: "taste throws *a veil of decorum* over [naked] physical desires...and, by *a delightful illusion of freedom, conceals from us* our degrading kinship with matter"(219 italics added). This rather cynical passage exposes the ambivalent nature of the idealistic tone of the letters, and points to Schiller's failure to distinguish the aesthetic from any interpretations of it as a veil, as a concealment of and a threat to Truth.

The work's unstable status is a reflection of an instability pervading Schiller's thought. The question whether the work is a philosophical treaty or an aesthetic object^[11] opens up the old feud between art and philosophy; it is also a manifestation of the central dichotomy in

Schiller's writing, that of nature and reason, sense and form, feeling and thinking, limit and infinity, necessity and freedom. All these oppositions appear in the double vision of psychological material raised to the status of a transcendental ground. Schiller is intent on a rigorous transcendental derivation of beauty, which will pass through a psychological territory and thus bring closer Idea and Reality, although not in the sense of showing reality fulfill the idea but in the sense of defending the *Idea* of the union of Reality and Idea.^[12] The goal of this idealistic program is to unify the sensual and the rational part of human nature, the former governed by the principle of unity, the latter by the principle of separation. A real union must sublimate the differences between the two entities without privileging either. However, in the union of nature (unity) and reason (separation), the principle of nature will be unduly valorized.^[13] Schiller is aware of this danger, and, throughout the letters, we see him elaborating the relationship between nature and reason over and over again, reformulating it through various substitute terms^[14] (matter/spirit, content/form etc.), trying to keep the two sides of the dichotomy equal. What he accomplishes instead is a not very craftily disguised valorization of reason--in all its manifestations--over nature. Trying to make the distinctions clear, he falls into inconsistencies, which concern not only the relationship between nature and reason but the very status of the aesthetic as a category i.e., its relationship to philosophy and, ultimately, to Truth. By the end of *AEM*, it is no longer certain that Schiller has managed to rescue the aesthetic as an entity absolutely independent of Truth, as a non-philosophical category,^[15] or that he ever intended to do so. Indeed, with his identification of the aesthetic with the essentially human, Schiller does what he sets out to avoid: he ontologizes the aesthetic.^[16] The question

of the aesthetic becomes the question of the being of man, being, which, Schiller argues, is never fully attained.

This definition of the human in terms of privation (man does not exist, only the idea of man does), rather than in terms of perfectibility, is what gives Schiller's aesthetic a curious postmodern twist, aligning him with certain trends in twentieth century aesthetic, particularly Jean-Francois Lyotard's and Barnett Newman's aesthetic of the sublime. This brings us to the question we have been meaning to ask from the beginning: why is the sublime absent from *AEM*, or is it really absent?^[17] Does not the problem of the union of nature and reason, in all its versions, as well as Schiller's persistent interest in the ontological significance of the aesthetic, lead us back to another separation, or rather an exclusion, one that precedes, and perhaps explains, the separation of nature from reason? Are not the difficulties Schiller faces as he tries to balance nature and reason so as to create the *impression* of a real reciprocity between them, a reflection of the one-sidedness of his method, a method limiting the aesthetic education of man to the beautiful? Is not the ontologizing of the aesthetic the form, in which the excluded sublime reasserts itself, claiming the place it has been denied in Schiller's ambitious program as a corrective for the Enlightenment philosophical project? Schiller cannot exile the sublime; the latter keeps reappearing in the text, often at the very moment when Schiller is supposedly defining and exemplifying the beautiful. The sublime reasserts itself either directly, in the cases when Schiller intends to give an example of the beautiful and instead gives an example of the sublime,^[18] and indirectly, as the reason for the inconsistencies and slippages in Schiller's analysis of the relation between nature and reason,^[19] in his preoccupation with the question of freedom (the standard-bearer of the

sublime), and in the ontologizing of the aesthetic, which places Schiller right at the heart of avant-garde aesthetics.

Although Schiller claims that semblance is independent from truth and does not threaten it, he fails to dissociate the two completely. To begin with, the very ideal which Schiller sets as both the origin of humanity and the end of aesthetic education^[20]—the Greeks—provides a philosophical conception of the aesthetic, relating the latter to truth. For the Greeks, poetry and speculation (philosophy) “could, when need arose, exchange functions, since each in its own fashion paid honor to truth”(31). Greek art is not praised for what, supposedly, will be the role of the aesthetic in Schiller’s project—*independence from truth*. If Greek art was capable of preserving its autonomy *regardless of* the fact that it did *not* “stop short of truth,” while art in Schiller’s time *must* “stop short of truth” if it is to be pure semblance, then the relationship of the aesthetic to truth is not in itself inadmissible or impossible but rather that relationship has deteriorated to such an extent that the only way the aesthetic can be preserved is to separate it completely from the truth it can no longer express. Thus, although Schiller would like us to believe that his only motive for making the aesthetic autonomous is to reveal its transcendental ground, we might ask whether his real motive might not be a certain disappointment or even pessimism, a pessimism that can be withstood only by a radical gesture such as that, by which art renounces any claims to truth. This attempt at self-justification, masked as a triumphant assertion of art’s autonomy, reappears in the ontological analysis of man in the anxiety underlying Schiller’s notion of man as pure semblance. The same gesture is repeated here—just as art is declared autonomous because it can no longer express truth as it once did (the Greeks), and this is then disguised as art’s transcendental ground rather

than as its failure, man is declared free because he can imagine himself free, because, as the example of the statesman-artist shows, he can recognize a dissimulation of freedom when he sees one, and this fictional freedom is then disguised as a transcendental ground of freedom. The artist is openly described as a manipulator who creates the appearance of freedom: "For the material he is handling he has not a whit more respect than has the artisan; but the eye which would seek to protect the freedom of the material he will endeavor to deceive by a show of yielding to the latter"(19). The artist does not make his material appear as if for the first time (as it is, for example, in Heidegger) but pretends to be an extension of the material's freedom. The artist acts *as if* his material were free when it is he who is free to use the material and free to pretend that he is not free. Things get even more complicated with the comparison between the artist and the statesman-artist. For the latter "Man is at once the material on which he works and the goal towards which he strives"(19). Man, we know by now, is man as Idea. Hence, to avoid the absurdity of having as a goal what has already been achieved (Man as material), we must assume that Schiller here makes a distinction between Man as potential and Man as a goal, as a manifestation or actualization of that potential or archetype. But such a distinction is impossible in Schiller the idealist, since an ideal split into potentiality and actualization is a contradiction in terms.

The impossibility of ever attaining the ideal necessitates the identification of potential or medium and goal, which means nothing less than their mutual cancellation: unrealizable potential is not, strictly speaking, a potential, and a goal that does not stand at the end of a way is not, strictly speaking, a goal. The goal of the statesman-artist is to ennoble the nature of man. While the statesman-artist's responsibility is

to make man responsive to beauty, he does not himself create objects of beauty. On one hand, then, aesthetic education will set man free but, on the other hand, man will attain this freedom by making aesthetic judgments about works of art that only give the *appearance* of freedom. [21] Presumably, by looking at the material of the artist and finding it free, man, becoming aware of himself as material in the hands of the statesman-artist will also find himself free. However, Schiller admits that the artist's material is not free. To avoid the disturbing implication that man will also only *appear* to be free, Schiller must assume that the aesthetically ennobled man—like Schiller himself—will be aware of the artist's dissimulation. *Man will feel free not because he identifies with the artist's material but because he identifies with the artist's freedom to simulate unfreedom.* Rather than a positive, active force, this freedom is a mere self-defense against the threat of unfreedom. Its inessential character is hinted at in a footnote to letter twenty, where Schiller admits that “aesthetic freedom is distinguishable from logical necessity in thinking, or moral necessity in willing, only by the fact that the laws according to which the psyche then behaves *do not become apparent as such*, and since they encounter no resistance, *never appear as a constraint*”(143 italics added). The freedom Schiller envisions as a result of the reciprocal action of the two drives is not transcendental freedom but a secondary, derivative freedom. This is not the “freedom that necessarily appertains to man considered as intelligent being, and which can neither be given unto him nor taken from him, but only that freedom which is founded upon his mixed nature. By acting rationally at all man displays freedom of the first order; by acting rationally within the limits of matter, and materially under the laws of reason, he displays freedom of the second order” (137).[22]

In the context of the preceding discussion, Schiller's motives for insisting on pure semblance as man's real nature become an interesting issue. In letter nineteen he argues that negation by itself cannot produce reality (129) but there must be something positive given *a priori*, which can then fall straightway to negation. One wonders what could Schiller's reason be for defining the human in terms of privation, as a lack or as something that is yet to come, but never actually does. Since this view of humanity is a negation of the common view, which takes man for granted, one has to look at the particular historical reality that has supported such a view and find what in that reality makes the negation of the common view of man desirable. Schiller describes that reality in letter six, revealing what seems to be an unbridgeable gap between a technologically progressive civilization and a regressive, fragmented human nature. Schiller's task in defining anew human nature is to restore man's dignity while preserving the belief that, despite its adverse effects, modern civilization is not a throwback into a savage past. The illusion of a progressive movement must be kept. If the present is to be preserved, not cancelled out as an error but incorporated into a necessary development governed by reason, and if, at the same time, human nature is to be 'excused' from the inessentiality this same present reveals, humanity must be redefined in a radically different way. The surest way to escape the undesirable implications of the fragmentation and inessentiality of modern man is to renounce essence itself and define man as what is forever becoming. On one hand, this new notion of humanity remains within the anthropocentrism of the Enlightenment project as it turns man into an infinite potential, an openness to the future, a progressive and praiseworthy movement toward an ideal. On the other hand, however, man's identification with semblance and his proclaimed independence from essence/truth is tainted by something like bad faith. Once man is

no longer conceived as essence, it becomes easy to invent apologies for him as semblance. It will be objected that the split between truth and semblance precludes semblance from being judged and found apologetic insofar as apology depends on a standard, a truth. However, since this split is never final, Schiller's notion of the human can be described as *apologetic*. The apologetic aspect (man is semblance *because he cannot be essence*) is not the only discomforting aspect of Schiller's notion of humanity. The ideal of the fully human demands an absolute balance, an equipoise, an "equal tempering" of all individual human functions to produce "happy and complete human beings"(43). This state of equipoise could be easily confused with a state of apathy or lethargy,^[23] and the image of "happy and complete" man involuntarily calls to mind the image of a sedate or brainwashed man deprived of any desires and needs.^[24] As a state of infinite determinability, the aesthetic state is extremely vulnerable. There is no guarantee that its freedom will not be abused, will not be determined by something other than moral laws, unless the assumption is made (and it *is* made) that freedom is always *already rational freedom*.

Although Schiller has been appointed as something of a champion of art for art's sake, his attempt to establish semblance's independence from truth/essence is repeatedly undermined by his desire to straddle the line separating the transcendental from the empirical. In letter eight, he tries to *energize* reason^[25] by positing two drives. Although in the opening letters he has argued vehemently against philosophy and its insistence on truth, and has, supposedly, adopted a non-philosophical approach, now he openly talks about Truth and its struggle with the lower elements of human nature, a struggle from which Truth is to emerge victorious: "If Truth is to be victorious in her conflict with forces, she

must herself become a force and appoint some drive to be her champion in the realm of phenomena”(51). Truth appoints art or semblance and ‘equips’ it with “divine weapons.” Through this representative her own “conquering power” is displayed and reasserted. One does not get the impression that truth is in any way compromised or replaced. The appointment of semblance to act on behalf of truth is simply the most effective strategy given that transcendental Reason cannot ‘fight’ in the phenomenal world except through a mediator, an empirical analog of reason. However, Schiller cannot argue that Reason merely finds a drive and predicates to it the appropriate moral motivation, since that would put man’s freedom in question. Therefore, he must assume that such a drive already exists and Reason only appoints it. Yet that reason can appoint a drive for a specific purpose suggests that the drive did not originally have its own object but was undetermined as a motive force—a rather strange conception of a drive.

In any event, Schiller’s relationship to truth is ambivalent at best: just when he wishes to withdraw the aesthetic from truth/essence, truth looms in the background as the real power, in whose name all the battles are fought.^[26] What Schiller wants to overcome is not truth as such but that “which stands in the way of the acceptance of truth”(51), overcome it or replace it with something more easily palatable, semblance. Semblance will never be anything more than the sugar cube that makes the bitter pill go down easily.^[27] Accordingly, Schiller’s advice to the artist urges him to be something of a trickster, to catch his audience at the moment when they are most vulnerable, when their usual defenses (skepticism, fear of the law) are down. The ontologizing of semblance,

the insistence on its autonomy from truth, has only one aim--the creation of the illusion of choice.

To make truth appear less intimidating, less overbearing, it is necessary to invent and place alongside it another realm (semblance) so that truth will appear (but not actually be) less authoritarian under the created conditions of relativity. The Platonic light of truth continues to shine in Schiller's text despite all his protestations to the contrary, and "the rays of truth [continue to] put to flight the fond delusions of [man's] dreams"(51). Art and Truth never part ways and what is said of one holds true of the other, as for example in letter nine, where Schiller talks of Truth that will prevail as an analog to Art that cannot be falsified. Art is conceived in agreement with the Platonic model, as a copy of truth, though a copy powerful enough to serve as a legitimate substitute for truth: "Truth lives on in *the illusion of Art*, and it is from this *copy*, or *after-image*, that the original image will once again be restored"(57 italics added). On one hand, art is the preparation for truth: it goes before nature "preparing the shape of things to come"(57). This is not merely a preparatory role for it is suggested that art might be the very possibility of "things to come," of truth. On the other hand, art's merely preparatory mission suddenly acquires a special aura as Schiller argues that it is in this preparatory realm of art, *before* truth is reached, that the essentially human reveals itself: " Even before Truth's triumphant light can penetrate the recesses of the human heart, the poet's imagination will intercept its rays and the peaks of humanity will be radiant while the dews of night still linger in the valley"(57). Schiller does not bother reconciling these two opposite claims: first, that truth can and must be restored from its copy (art), and, second, that the fully human emerges in the copy of truth, in the aesthetic. The aesthetic is

thus alternatively conceived as a means to an end and as an end in itself, depending on whether Schiller's major concern is truth or humanity. Letter nine tries to fuse these two in an almost mystic image of glorious reason, from whose point of view everything is a tautology, and all has already been accomplished: "In the eyes of a Reason which knows no limits, the Direction is at once a Destination, and the way is completed from the moment it is trodden"(59). Even Schiller's language betrays a valorization of philosophy, truth, the good, the form drive. Schiller speaks of "the *divine* principle to form" and advises the young artist to "[i]mpart to the world...a Direction towards *the good*," "to rear [in his heart] *victorious truth* and project it out of [himself] in the form of beauty"(61 italics added). On the other hand, he implies that nothing is lost in this externalization of truth, *the appearance of truth* (beauty) being equivalent to the truth that has been thus left concealed. Schiller's task -"to apprehend the necessary conditions of man's existence"(71)- requires a "firm basis...which nothing shall shake"(71). As much as he does not want to admit openly that only philosophy can provide such a firm basis, he cannot hide the fact that aesthetic education aims for "the prize of truth"(71), for a transcendental grounding of the aesthetic. Only philosophy can show that art is independent from philosophy. Only by ontologizing semblance-and thus compromising it-can Schiller show pure semblance to be independent from truth. Art must become a truth in its own right in order not to be identified with truth.

The speculative spirit of Schiller's aesthetic project comes to the forefront in letter six with Schiller's criticism of "the spirit of speculation" and "the practical spirit." The spirit of speculation is criticized for exalting the subjective conditions of its own perceptual and conceptual faculty into laws constitutive of the existence of things"(39).

However, Schiller is guilty of the same error. In his desire to familiarize the transcendental, he psychologizes it^[28], turning Form and Matter/Reality into psychological drives, and, as he busies himself with a detailed analysis of the birth of consciousness and the act of perception, he implies that these psychological drives are themselves responsible for the construction of reality. With this, he repeats the speculative gesture of deriving the objective world from the subject's subjective "perceptual and conceptual faculty." Thus, although Schiller wishes to distinguish himself from philosophers, who, in reflecting on beauty, are guided by feeling, fearing that they might otherwise "destroy the dynamic of beauty," as well as from philosophers, who are guided by their intellect, fearing that otherwise they will the destroy "the logic of beauty," beauty as concept (125), his method repeats the 'mistake' of the second class of philosophers. Despite the fact that he focuses his work around the central distinction between the two aspects of beauty—the dynamic and the logic of beauty—Schiller only makes this distinction to define better the *concept* of beauty, the *concept* of semblance. He is more concerned with the origin of beauty than with its effects on man, even though the nature of his project—an educational project—ought to have made him more concerned with effects rather than origins. Ultimately, the letters deal with *the truth of beauty*, rather than with *the work of beauty*.

Although the truth of beauty is Schiller's real concern, he declares the goal of the aesthetic letters to be the overcoming of the inability of "supreme intelligence" to "stop short of truth"(193). Beauty must not be reduced to an object of the understanding; its mystery must be preserved. The discomfort Schiller feels with respect to the understanding is the same discomfort Plato feels with respect to mimesis. Just as Plato considers mimesis removed from truth and yet

powerful enough to threaten it, Schiller claims that the understanding cannot account for the aesthetic (it is powerless) at the same time fearing the real power of the understanding to destroy the very essence of the aesthetic, to which it, supposedly, has no access. The understanding has the power of “dissolving the essential amalgam of [Beauty’s] elements [thus dissolving] its very being”(5). The essence of Beauty is both beyond the understanding and a potential victim of it. The question of the intellect’s relationship to beauty opens up a series of problems that Schiller does not really take into account. First, if the intellect is criticized for its inability to “stop short of truth” and, accordingly, Schiller’s method tries to avoid this error by not taking the topic of the letters out of the reach of the senses, does this mean that whatever conclusions Schiller comes to in his analysis of the aesthetic state should not be considered truthful? Second, in letter twenty-six, Schiller makes the point that while “supreme stupidity” and ‘supreme intelligence’ “seek only the real and are completely insensitive to mere semblance”(193), free human nature delights in pure semblance. However, Schiller makes a distinction between the idea of Beauty and its phenomenal instances. A strange reversal takes place: insofar as phenomenal instances of beauty are not ideal beauty, they are semblances of the idea of Beauty, which, in turn, becomes ‘true’ Beauty. It could be objected that these are merely logical semblances rather than pure semblance. However, since Schiller insists that noumenal beauty is absolutely unattainable, the phenomenal manifestations of the noumenal cannot really be seen as a threat to the latter. Thus, to the extent that phenomenal beauty cannot make any claims for being ideal and cannot be a threat to ideal beauty, it becomes autonomous. The relationship of pure semblance (the idea of beauty) to truth is thus replicated in the relationship, *within* beauty, between phenomenal and noumenal beauty.

In the latter relationship an odd displacement takes place: Beauty takes the place of Truth and phenomenal beauty takes the place of Beauty. As a result, phenomenal beauty becomes pure semblance and all the marvelous qualities that have been predicated to Beauty are now transferred to beauty, which means that now phenomenal beauty is identified with play, whereas Beauty tends toward the burdensome earnestness typically associated with Truth.^[29] The more Beauty draws back from phenomenal beauty, the more the latter pushes the former in the direction of earnestness and Truth. This becomes evident in Schiller's comparison of the artist to the statesman-artist. While the aesthetic object is allowed to remain "an illusion for the senses"(21), aesthetic man must not merely *seem* aesthetic: he will be free to delight in semblance but he himself must not merely *appear as semblance*. If he plays he must *really* play. Schiller makes a very subtle distinction here between the aesthetic object as semblance and humanity as semblance or, rather, between aesthetic man's play (the objects of play) and aesthetic man as play.^[30] Semblance splits into 'authentic' semblance and another kind of semblance, a semblance that would be, like the aesthetic object, "an illusion for the sense" (something like playing in bad faith). Man's delight in semblance must itself be *earnest*. In making semblance earnest, Schiller goes as far as to define man's delight in it as a "sovereign *human right*"(197 italics added), an "undisputed *right of ownership*"(195 italics added) over that which is his work only. From the question of sovereign human rights it is just one step to the question of freedom, and with that, to the impossibility of 'innocent' or 'natural' play.

If Schiller is consistent in at least one respect in his discussion of the relationship between nature and reason, it is in his inconsistency. Often,

having defined one of his two basic terms, he makes a sudden turn and redefines it in exactly the terms he used to define the other basic term. In letter four, for instance, *nature* is associated with *variety* (hence, the distortion resulting from the domination of nature over reason is characterized as “confusion”), whereas *reason* is associated with *unity* (hence, the distortion resulting from reason’s domination is characterized as “uniformity”)(23). Accordingly, form is defined as a balance between unity and variety. In letter six, however, speaking of the Greek ideal, Schiller associates *nature* with *unity* and *reason* with *separation*: “[...]it was from all-unifying Nature [that the Greek], and from all-dividing Intellect that [modern man] received their respective forms”(33). Another instance, in which nature is associated with unity, is when nature is juxtaposed with truth and identified with art. In this sense, nature is said to remain faithful to the thing in itself whereas, by extension, truth betrays the object. When the poetic faculty is praised for being “faithful to the object” (as opposed to pure intellect) it is Nature who sets the limits to philosophy (43). This is not the debased “mere nature” that must be transcended but nature as unity, the unity of the perceiving mind with the object of perception, a unity not reducible to mere truth. Thus, when nature occupies the place of the Ideal, it represents the principle of unity, but when it occupies the place of mere nature or the state of nature, it represents sheer multiplicity and variety. Similarly, when reason is associated with the Ideal, with the “triumph of form”(23), it represents the principle of unity, but when it is associated merely with man’s thinking abilities, it represents the principle of separation. It is clear that Schiller is not particularly systematic in his use of terms: in the last example, for instance, he does not bother to justify his confusion of Reason with the Intellect, principles or laws of thinking with thinking itself. Slippages like this one are quickly brushed aside, sacrificed to the

general impulse toward maintaining the symmetrical relationship of reason and nature at all cost.

In passages where nature is not associated with unity, it is represented by the development of individual faculties at the expense of others, and man is called upon to perform a necessary “sacrifice” of nature’s tendency to “sacrifice...wholeness”(43). So, whenever Schiller thinks nature as that which is outside man (for example, in man’s pre-cognitive relationship to the object which remains faithful to its reality), nature is exalted as a principle of harmony and unity, but whenever he speaks of nature specifically as *human* nature, nature is identified and criticized as a principle of multiplicity, variety, individuality, on which form must be imposed. These two faces of nature can be shown to correspond to the two drives. The first side of nature that Schiller distinguishes—nature as that which is outside man—is linked to the sense drive insofar as this drive aims at the externalization of subjectivity. From this point of view, what is outside man is what he has externalized. However, this ‘good’ nature which must be preserved (as opposed to the other side of nature which must be transcended) as a principle of unity with what is not man but supposedly outside him, this ‘good’ nature which is best exemplified by the poet’s faithfulness to the thing in itself “innocent from preconceptions”(43), this ‘good’ nature is nothing other than man’s identity as a coincidence with himself. This unity is a tautology, the mere correspondence between inside and outside, the success rate of the process of externalization of subjectivity. Although the sense drive appears to establish a relationship between man and reality, and not just any relationship but a relationship of unity, this is in fact a relationship of man to himself. The poet can remain faithful to the object because the object is just an aspect of his externalized subjectivity. On one hand,

then, nature tends towards diversity, and thus, supposedly, toward the “sacrifice of wholeness.” On the other hand, Schiller talks of this natural diversity as a split, as a wound that needs to be healed: “the split within man [must be] healed, and his nature so restored to wholeness”(45). The implication is that there was a state, prior to the natural state, which is a state of being split or wounded, a state of wholeness that can and must be restored. But since it would be absurd to claim that there is a state more natural than the natural state, the only state, to which man can be restored is an ideal state, or rather, since the ideal state can never be attained and has never existed in reality, *it is not man that must be restored to wholeness, but the ideal of wholeness must be restored to man*. A rhetorical gesture. Man will not be restored to freedom but the idea of freedom will be restored to him--he will learn to *believe* in the idea of freedom. Man could not have been whole in the natural state since then he was merely existing (this is inevitable: to postulate a natural state is precisely to externalize, alienate matter, feeling), but neither could he have been whole once he had emerged from the natural state to society. The Greeks are an exception, of course, but then again Schiller never really explains how the transition was made from the natural state to the ‘good’ organic Greek polis.[31]

Supposedly, the dual vision of nature proceeds from Schiller's desire to strengthen man's connection to nature, to make him more responsive. However, both aspects of nature exist only as proofs of man's complete self-control, and of his control over what is not he. What seems like an attempt at a romantic communion with nature is actually another solipsistic system in the tradition of Kant.[32] In letter seven Schiller argues that man must “on one hand, emancipate [himself] from the blind forces of Nature; on the other, return to her simplicity, truth and

fullness”(47). But how does one distinguish between nature’s blind forces and her “simplicity, truth and fullness”? To do that, man must be able to determine what in nature bounds him and what leaves him free. He must be able to understand or predict the ways, in which nature will affect him. But if he can do that he can also manipulate nature’s effects on him. He will be the one to determine if in one of its particular effects on him nature is not a force of blind necessity but only simplicity. Once he emancipates himself from Nature as a blind force, the only way he can return to nature as simplicity is *to realize* that what has seemed to him, as necessity in nature is not really a necessity. Nature will appear simple to him now that he is no longer bound by her. Nature itself will not change, only his attitude toward her. Thus, aesthetic education has the structure of a self-fulfilling prophecy. Man becomes aware of a purpose and *then* searches for a state such that this purpose can be predicated to it and simultaneously projected into the future: “[he] attributes to himself in this idealized natural state a purpose of which in his actual natural state he was entirely ignorant”(11). This double function of nature as both an origin and a means to an end unmasks the essentially tautological nature of the transition from a natural to a moral state. Reason must overcome the natural state but insofar as Reason itself produced the natural state (as a fiction), aesthetic education is merely a matter of substituting one hypothesis (what man must have been: natural man) with another hypothesis (what man ought to be: moral man), a purely tautological movement.[\[33\]](#)

Schiller’s aim is to distinguish the legitimate territory of nature from that of reason and to prevent any infringement of one on the other. However, such preventive strategies are possible only through a displacement or rather a mutual exchange of roles and territories, which in itself would

be meaningless since it would be absurd for feeling to become thought (and vice versa) and still continue to be called feeling. Because such an exchange is absurd, and because the concept of union itself is meaningful only insofar as it preserves the original distinction and does not sublimate it completely, there always remains the danger of one of the terms dominating the other. This threat is intensified by Schiller's preoccupation with questions of history (hence of origins and ends), which leads him to consider the nature-reason relationship in teleological^[34] or narrative terms. The generally unstable status of the origin destabilizes further this relationship making nature oscillate between an *effect* of man's Personality and an *origin* that man cannot account for. In the fifth letter, for instance, nature is thought only as that, which affects us but not as that, from which our ability to be affected proceeds: "We disown nature in her rightful sphere only to submit to her tyranny in the moral; and while resisting the *impact* she makes upon our senses are content to take over her *principles*" (27 italics added). Nature has two faces and it is, supposedly, within man's power to distinguish between them, indeed to categorize them as effects and principles. In the fourth letter, Schiller claims that if man is to attain the state of reason and still preserve his freedom, "this can be brought about through both these motive forces, inclination and duty, *producing completely identical results in the world of phenomena; through the content of his volition remaining the same whatever the difference in form*; that is to say, through impulse being sufficiently in harmony with reason to qualify as universal legislator" (17 italics added). There is no talk here of changing the nature of man but merely of achieving an identity in terms of concrete *results*, not changing the absolute or ideal nature of man but only its phenomenal, visible, measurable manifestations. The possibility remains of leaving the original division

between inclination and duty intact and merely disguising it better. It appears that for Schiller the difference between inclination and duty, between sense and reason, is merely formal. To say that the content of volition must stay the same whatever its form is to suggest that inclination and duty are merely different forms of volition with the same content, that the will does not change except externally, in its appearance. The problem is further complicated by a strange reversal of the matter/form dichotomy because now it appears that form is the manifestation of content, that inclination (nature) and duty (reason) are manifestations—or forms—of one and the same content, whereas in some of the later letters Schiller will try to define the relationship between matter and form in precisely the opposite way, assigning to matter the role of a manifesting agency and to form the role of potential to be manifested. What is unique about Schiller's notions of matter and form (and of the two drives) is that, contrary to common sense, which thinks content as that which is to be expressed, and form as the particular manner of expression—i.e. content is the potential awaiting form to make it manifest—Schiller thinks form as the potential and matter as its manifestation.

This reversal is just one example of a general tendency in Schiller to move disparate or completely conflicting elements toward union by making each term take the place of the other. Because the fusion of nature and reason will be a victory of the principle of nature (union), the aesthetic is always in danger of being merely a hypostatization of nature and the moral merely a cosmetic surgery performed on inclination's not sufficiently presentable form. But if we remind ourselves that for Schiller form is the invisible and content the manifestation of form, it turns out that the difference between form and content that has to be

transcended is the difference between their phenomenal manifestations, which implies that their form is already, *a priori*, identical. What needs to be changed is just their contingent objects in the world. Inclination and duty are one will, which happens to be split into sensuous and moral *objects*. All that is needed to overthrow the illusion that they are, as it were, two separate wills, is to regard the objects of inclination as objects of duty and vice versa: “The most frivolous theme must be so treated that it leaves us ready to proceed directly from it to some matter of the utmost import; the most serious material must be so treated that we remain capable of exchanging it forthwith for the lightest play” (157). With this, the privileging of nature over reason is offset by an equally well-disguised privileging of the principle of form over that of content^[35]: in positing *a priori* the unity of inclination and duty, Schiller privileges the principle of form inasmuch as this unity exists as a potential, hence as form, that only needs to be restored or unconcealed. The valorization of form is, in fact, necessitated by the project of aesthetic education. Since the goal of the project is to make the law more human, Schiller must move upward rather than downward. Rather than bringing the law down to nature—which is in itself inadmissible since the law must remain the law, its transcendental ground must not be compromised—Schiller has to raise nature, find the law as already given, as potential, in nature itself. The transcendental must be psychologized only to prove that the psychic is transcendental.

The only way to overcome the opposition of the sense to the form drive is to create the illusion^[36] of the two drives exchanging their respective functions: “The play-drive...will endeavour to receive *as if* it had itself brought forth, and so to bring forth as the intuitive sense aspires to receive”(97 italics added). The question is if, as Schiller says, the two

drives are “not by nature opposed” (85) and have different objects, how could they be in need of reconciliation? If that reconciliation takes the form of mutually agreed upon *exchange of territories*—in the aesthetic state one *senses Being* and *reflects* on his *perception* (though the former is clearly privileged by Schiller)—then the problem beauty is called upon to fix is *not a territorial struggle* but the undue intensification of either of the two drives. Thus, the basic separation of nature from reason is never seriously questioned. The problem becomes one of proportions or limits only: it is a question of limiting nature with respect to what she does, and not with respect to reason, and limiting reason with respect to what it does, and not with respect to nature. The final balance between nature and reason is achieved through the ‘normalization’ of reason and nature *within their respective territories*. It is precisely because the split between nature and reason is not seriously challenged that the domination of the form-drive is so difficult to conceal. The valorization of the form drive is evident in the distinction Schiller draws between two orders of freedom. Freedom of the first order is defined as man’s ability to act rationally at all, while freedom of the second order is based on the limitation by either reason or the senses. The form drive thus operates on two levels—noumenal and phenomenal—whereas the sense drive is limited to the phenomenal realm.

The position from which Schiller thinks thought and sensation reveals his formalism. In letter nineteen he identifies the work of the senses as a work of exclusion or negation (in contrast to the more common identification of thought with negation). The senses perform a negating function insofar as they make the infinite finite, establishing limits and thus creating reality. But, says Schiller, “mere exclusion would never...produce reality...unless something existed from which to

exclude”(129). This positive entity, through the negation of which reality is constructed, is form. In place of the usual argument that thinking annuls the reality of its objects while the senses remain faithful to that reality, Schiller proposes that the senses are a negation of form as infinity, a negation which is itself a proof of something existing prior to that negation (form). We recognize the Kantian gesture here. Just as in the Kantian sublime the failure of the imagination to provide a sensible representation of the object only points to man's supersensible vocation (Reason), so in Schiller's account the limits imposed by the senses only point to infinity (form) as their very possibility. Schiller follows Kant in his description of beauty (rather, sublimity) as a negative representation: “in its actual manifestation [the absolute faculty, Reason] is so little dependent upon the senses that...*it makes itself felt only when it is at odds with them*”(131 italics added).

Nowhere does the valorization of the form-drive become so obvious as in Schiller's account of perception[37]. In letter eleven he acknowledges that the “material of activity...man has first to receive...by way of perception, as something existing outside of him in space, and as something changing within him in time”(75). But in passing through the phase of receptiveness (perception) man is already exercising his impulse to form inasmuch as in the act of perception man distinguishes himself as an intentional consciousness and thus *creates the material of his perception*. Through perception difference comes into the world and, through difference, self-consciousness becomes possible. Even if there is an element of receptiveness in perception, it is easily cancelled since as soon as difference comes into play, pure perceptiveness is no longer possible. Thus the “twofold task” Schiller talks about—the task “of giving reality to the necessity within, and subjecting to the law of necessity the

reality without”(79)—is the single task of making the externalization of internal necessity equally necessary, revealing the law of necessity already given in form rather than inventing the law, pretending that something exists outside us. Schiller does not try to hide his belief that, indeed, the second reality is only an extension of the first and defines the knowledge of an object as “attributing objective validity to a condition of our subject”(81), echoing Kant’s definition of a reflexive judgment. Once Schiller reaches the point where the impulse to form is already strong and active, he never goes back to the receptive-passive aspect of the aesthetic. He talks sparingly about the aesthetic state as a contemplative one and he remains highly suspicious of the “melting power of beauty”(69).

The rhetorical nature of aesthetic education[38] is unavoidable given that this is the education of already self-conscious man[39]. The factor of self-consciousness makes Schiller’s definition of the aesthetic state as one of infinite determinability problematic. Schiller argues that before the mind is determined by sense impressions, it is in a state of “unlimited determinability”(129). In this originary state nothing “has yet been posited, and consequently nothing yet excluded either”(129). This plenitude or rather this lack of selectivity resembles too close Schiller’s notion of the “exactitude of beauty” as an “absolute inclusion of all realities”(125). Schiller fails to draw a convincing distinction between the state of empty infinity and the aesthetic state, both of which are described as an infinity uninterrupted by any determination or selection. The only difference is that the inclusiveness of the aesthetic is not infinite but determined, conscious. Through perception “reality [comes] into being but infinity [is] lost”(129). Man becomes a subject through the loss of form as infinity and his mission is to recuperate that loss through

the conscious creation of infinity. Since Schiller's project is aimed at the aesthetic education of his contemporaries—the civilized “barbarians”—and not of man in the natural state, the famous “step backward” must be taken from the civilized state, not from the natural one. Yet Schiller wants to argue that the step is taken from the natural state, which is why he must distinguish between empty infinity (the state *preceding* man's determination by the senses) and “infinity filled with content”(145), the state man attains as a result of *having stepped back to empty infinity through this determination by the senses*, the state acquiring reality precisely because it has gone through the territory of the senses. Thus, limit (sense determination) is used to restore (or create) infinity.^[40] A lack of independence (sense determination) is turned into freedom (the aesthetic state). However, only thought can turn determination into infinite determinability; only the self-conscious man can make use of his determination and turn it into the ground of his freedom. The sheer rhetoric of the reciprocity of the two drives is unmasked in the violence in Schiller's description of the original work of art, in which the material is consumed, not merely sublimated, by the form (157). The violence^[41] is also explicit in Schiller's explanation of why the step from the aesthetic to the moral is easier than that from the natural to the aesthetic. The former step is described as man “merely taking from himself, not giving to himself, *fragmenting his nature*, not enlarging it”(163 italics added). ‘Man is free’ means man is free to be his own tyrant, to fragment his own nature and suppress a part of it. The movement Schiller has followed so far now seems absurd: matter has been ‘liberated’ from form and set alongside it only to be suppressed again. The objectification of humanity demands a scapegoat so that the tautological nature of the process of objectification (its rhetorical nature, its violence) can be disguised. Humanity is first enlarged (matter,

which has been subsumed under form, is set apart from it), then fragmented (matter is suppressed again), and, finally, this fragmentation is supposed to enlarge man to a representative of the species. Form is purified of content and offered as the ground for universally valid judgments.

Although at the end of letter sixteen Schiller promises to examine both melting and energizing beauty, he examines only the former and excludes the sublime (energizing beauty). The exclusion becomes explicit when Schiller points out the role melting beauty fulfills for natural and for civilized moral man. The former she “leads from sensation to thought”, the latter she leads from “concept back to intuition, and [from] law back to feeling”(121). What melting beauty does, she does for a fictional man insofar as both natural man and the moral man are fictions. Melting beauty—beauty in general, as opposed to the sublime (energizing beauty)—deals with the normalization of deviations. Thus, she can only deal with the reduction or increase of feeling or thinking. Beauty does the ‘manual’ work, so to speak: stabilizing, normalizing, refining, and polishing the rough edges. Something else will be necessary to create in man a sense of Being and that something is energizing beauty, which Schiller is reluctant to call by its real name, the sublime. Schiller’s modernity lies precisely in this preoccupation with Being and its relationship to art. At the end of letter fifteen Schiller gives the feeling of the Greeks for their gods as an example of play, defining play as “the freest, most *sublime* state of being”(109 italics added). Schiller’s other example, Juno Ludovisi, is supposed to be an example of beauty, but Schiller’s description here is clearly one of a sublime experience. There is the Kantian attraction to and repulsion from the sublime object—“we abandon ourselves in *ecstasy* to her heavenly *grace*, her celestial self-

sufficiency makes us recoil in *terror*"(109 italics added)—there is the solitude of the sublime object—"a creation completely self-contained"—there are Heidegger's and Maurice Blanchot's analogous notions of the nothing, the obscure, the neuter as that, which calls without imposing any demands on us, that which calls precisely by not calling—"neither yielding, nor resisting"—there is Barnett Newman's notion of the *happening* of time—"no frailty where temporality might break in"—and, finally, the Kantian motif of the quickening of the spirit—"[a] wondrous stirring of the heart." This is a state of mind, "for which mind has no concept nor speech any name"(109). This *ecstatic* abandonment of oneself,^[42] this mixture of "utter repose and supreme agitation"(109) have nothing to do with the quiet, peaceful contemplation the beautiful object evokes. The experience of "lofty equanimity and freedom of the spirit"(153), as a state which is *not itself contemplative*, but offering a choice between abstract thought and direct contemplation"(153) is clearly a sublime experience.

Schiller's focus on freedom in his definition of the aesthetic already hints at the tendency of his aesthetic to slip into the sublime insofar as freedom is typically associated with the sublime rather than with the beautiful object. Despite Schiller's claims that play is never earnest, the association of play with freedom necessarily adds weight to what Schiller wants to present as something of "little weight" and of "small account"(105). The concept of freedom is inseparable from dignity and earnestness. By insisting that "freedom is itself an effect of Nature...and not the work of Man"(139), Schiller affirms the dignified image of freedom (an, by extension, play) as he suggests that man did not have to work for his freedom, but found it already within him. But the fact that he did not have to toil for his freedom makes it even more dignified. The

master is more dignified than the slave precisely because he already is who he is and does not need to work to become something else. What is given *a priori* is always more 'respectful' than what must be worked for. On the other hand, however, Schiller's definition of reason, which affirms the idea that Freedom is not an accomplishment for which man ought to be given credit, brings reason down to the level of sensation. Schiller's definition of reason is narrow so as to establish common ground with feeling and to bring closer together the transcendental and the empirical realms. Reason is defined as the mere consistency of consciousness, consciousness being the basic common denominator, what all people share. The life of sensation is involuntary but so is the original manifestation of Personality or our coming to self-awareness. This undermines the transcendental derivation of reason since it cannot account for the original awakening of self-awareness, which, Schiller admits, is not something man ought to be given credit for (135). Man cannot claim as his accomplishment the emergence of self-consciousness, and by extension, of reason: "Thus sensation and self-consciousness both arise entirely without any effort on our part"(137). Provided that both reason and sensation arise involuntarily and that it is not possible to argue for a transcendental ground of reason only, Schiller has no other choice but to make both sensation and reason transcendental.

Schiller's triad^[43] (nature—*aesthetic nature*—*moral nature*), in which the *aesthetic* is a bridge to the *moral*, keeps sliding into a different configuration where the *aesthetic* is defined as an unlimited determinability preceding mere nature (which is already a state of determination itself). But if the natural state is just a fiction, the necessary step backward, of which Schiller speaks, does not even have to be made in reality. Once man is in the natural state—once he conceives

of it—he is self-conscious; the natural state exists only as the object of consciousness. From this point he cannot go back to a state of pure determinability since that would require him to forget his self-consciousness, an act that can only be conscious and thus suspect. All that he needs to do then, all that he *can* do, under these circumstances, to achieve the aesthetic state of infinite determinability is to conceive of such a state just as he conceived of the natural state. *The step backward can only be a rhetorical figure because the step man takes as he conceives of a natural state can only be parallel to that he takes as he conceives of an aesthetic state.* Self-conscious man—the only real man in the letters—thinks analogically, and if he thinks chronologically the histories he conceives are concealed analogues, metaphors of historicity. Schiller's thought itself provides a clear example of analogical thinking with its proliferation of comparisons and contrasts. The authenticity of the aesthetic state (or of any state for that matter) and of the freedom it is supposed to guarantee depends not upon whether it can be proven to be originary—transcendental—but simply upon man's power to imagine such a state well or at least as well as other states. He will be free if he imagines himself free.

Schiller slips from a description of the beautiful to one of the sublime when he tries to exemplify the state of pure disinterestedness, in which the beautiful, supposedly, leaves us. He argues that since a pure aesthetic experience is impossible, a beautiful work of art is bound to leave us “in a particular mood and with some definite bias”(153). Yet “the more general the mood and the more limited the bias produced in us by any particular art...the nobler that art”(153). The nobler the art, the more intense will be the shock we feel if, after our aesthetic experience, someone tries to distract us to some other activity.

Interestingly enough, the examples Schiller chooses to illustrate that shock are experiences of sublimity (153). The implication is that sublime objects represent higher approximations to the ideal aesthetic experience than beautiful objects. Freedom is sublimated to a lesser degree in the experience of the sublime. Art is at its highest when it manages to overcome the limitations its own material (medium) imposes on it, when music becomes “sheer form,” when the plastic arts “move us by the immediacy of their sensuous presence”(155) i.e., when art is sublime. With this Schiller comes close to Newman’s idea that what is at stake in art is art itself. The aesthetic (sublime) object for Schiller transcends “the specific limitations of the art in question”(155) and becomes “ever more like [the other arts] in [its] effect upon the psyche”(155). Schiller’s formalism comes to the surface in his description of the original work of art: “In a truly successful work of art the contents should effect nothing.... Subject-matter...always has a limiting effect upon the spirit, and it is only from form that true aesthetic freedom can be looked for”(155). Subject-matter or the actualization of form affects only parts of man while form affects the whole of man. The sense drive for Schiller remains an outgrowth of the form drive; its recognition is just a matter of recognizing the structure of the form drive, which is still assumed to constitute the whole of man.

The task of sublime modern art, as theorized by Barnett Newman and Jean-Francois Lyotard, is to make man *be*. For this purpose, man has to be made passable to the unthought or to what Lyotard, after Heidegger, calls *the event*. Schiller’s concept of the aesthetic state as a state, in which man senses his own being^[44] suggests the proximity of Schillerian aesthetic to the typically modern preoccupation with the sublime, although in Schiller’s text that interest is consciously disguised because of

its traditional (Kantian) 'guilty' associations with a human nature dominated by reason. There is a certain continuity between Schiller's notion of the human as semblance, as something never really attaining essence, on one hand, and Lyotard's notion of the sublime, developed in *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*,^[45] as the *Is it happening?* The difference is that while for Schiller the aesthetic (what he calls the beautiful but what cannot really exclude the sublime) is a bridge closing the gap between one state of inhumanity and another (where states of inhumanity are marked by the arbitrary domination of either one of the two drives), for Lyotard the sublime is the inhuman itself. It is important, however, to distinguish between Lyotard's two types of the inhuman. He defines humanity as a horizon, a coming into being, a lack. That which makes man's insufficiency makes him human insofar as it is an openness to the event of being. Humanity is not a given (essence) but waits to give itself (semblance). The first inhuman Lyotard distinguishes is man's belief in his own emancipation as a finite process yielding a final *Resultat*. One could easily see the continuity between Schiller's pessimistic analysis of modern civilization (in letter six) and Lyotard's analysis, in *The Inhuman*, of the dehumanization the *megalopolis* inflicts upon the *domus*. The second inhuman, of which Lyotard speaks is a resistance to the first inhuman; it is our debt to humanity that "needs no finality" (7). The second inhuman, which is what makes us human, echoes Schiller's criticism of the maniacal inability of intelligence to stop short of truth. Just as Schiller tries to preserve humanity's independence from truth, Lyotard warns against the danger of man's slavery to determinate thought with its devotion to truth, effectiveness, and productiveness.

What is the difference then between Lyotard's notion of the human as the second inhuman and Schiller's notion of the human as semblance? It would seem that Lyotard is still indebted to a certain notion of truth inasmuch as lack presupposes an essence and thus a failure or 'a fall from grace', whereas Schiller's semblance is argued to be completely independent from truth. However, as was already suggested earlier, Schillerian semblance is not completely dissociated from truth/essence. Inasmuch as it is a form of self-determination, it shares common ground with Lyotard's *Is it happening?* Both are driven by an impulse toward objectification of the highest form of subjectivity. Both Schiller's and Lyotard's definitions of the human are indebted to Kant's notion of negative representation but depart significantly from it. Kant argues that only through the failure of the imagination does man become aware of his supersensible destiny (reason) and that this is sublime. (However, Kant does not make it clear what exactly is sublime: *the realization* that we have a supersensible destiny or *reason itself*.) Schiller and Lyotard also base their notions of humanity on a certain notion of failure or insufficiency—on one hand, Schiller's semblance as insufficiency inasmuch as essence is constitutive of semblance's autonomy through an odd reversal of the logic of the supplement whereby essence becomes the supplement of semblance, and, on the other hand, Lyotard's second inhuman as a sort of 'beneficial' insufficiency or protection against final self-determination. Yet, although the Kantian structure of negative representation is preserved—a certain lack points toward the very essence or destiny of man—Schiller and Lyotard attribute a larger psychological or anthropological significance to what, for Kant, is mainly a question of the structure of the mind and the interaction between its faculties^[46]. In this sense, Schiller's aesthetic and Lyotard's sublime—and their notions of the human—appear somewhat melodramatic compared to

the Kantian sublime. One might say that they are a bit too 'literary': they remind one of the classical definition of the tragic hero as a man essentially good but doomed to fail through an inherent personal insufficiency. For Schiller and Lyotard the aesthetic is still a way of affirming man's dignity but no longer in the self-congratulatory, almost smug way in which Kant does it; instead, there is a sense, in which man is humbled and if this is not so obvious in Schiller, who is still torn between the demand of nature—the demand for contemplation—and the demand of reason—the demand for active transformation of reality—it becomes especially obvious in Lyotard's notion of passability to the event.

Although Schiller's tendency to privilege the form drive over the sense drive points to the Kantian sublime as the triumphant self-assertion of reason in man, Schiller's interest is not limited to the free self-determination of man (Kant's concern) in his independence from nature's blind forces, but extends to man's ontological justification. In this sense, Lyotard's interest in the occurrence or the event as the site of recovery of man's identity^[47] parallels Schiller's concern with semblance (the human) as a sort of passage from one state of determination to another, ^[48] a passage, in which the very being of man is at stake inasmuch as the passage represents man's free self-determination and permanence.

Schiller's view of the life of the psyche is surprisingly atomistic given the overall tendency of his thought. For Schiller, states of mind are completely isolated and autonomous and only the aesthetic manages to offset the shock of passing from one state to another. Not only is the passage difficult but also man's identity is at stake every time such a passage becomes necessary. Nothing guarantees the continuity of the

human; instead, it risks dissolving into Nought with every such passage. Each state of mind is just another danger for the human since it determines man and thus destroys his freedom. Humanity, it appears, exists only in the transition from one state to another: “True, he [man] possesses this humanity *in potentia* before every determinate condition into which he can conceivably enter. But he loses it in practice with every determinate condition into which he does enter. And if he is to pass into a condition of an opposite nature, *this humanity must be restored to him each time anew* through the life of the aesthetic”(147 italics added). Yet, later Schiller claims that the aesthetic state is not a transition but the only purely autonomous state: “Every other state into which we can enter refers us back to a preceding one, and requires for its termination a subsequent one; the aesthetic alone is a whole in itself, since it comprises within itself all the conditions of both its origin and its continuance”(151). Schiller is aware of the fragility of the human: the power of becoming human, granted us by nature, has been squandered and beauty, our “second creatress”(147) must give us a second chance. For him, it is a mistake to posit the law of Reason as “a positive origin”(179), a mistake to posit an origin of the human since the human never is but only *returns* as the link between what would have otherwise been unfreely determined states of mind.

Just as Schiller thinks man's ontological justification—reason—as the consistency of consciousness or the continuity between acts of perception, Lyotard, in *The Differend*,^[49] thinks legitimation in terms of a necessary linking of one phrase to another in a discourse without a final phrase. Whereas Kant's sublime fulfills an epistemological function—we discover that reason is our destiny—Schiller's aesthetic (inasmuch as it cannot expel the sublime) and Lyotard's sublime have an ontological

role. Kant is still concerned with determining the nature of the human, its *quid*, while Schiller and Lyotard are interested in the very possibility of the human, in its *quod*. Much more is at stake in their aesthetic than in Kant's. Man himself is at stake and the question now is: *Is man?* What makes this project difficult is that both Schiller and Lyotard intend to apply it to ennoble the already civilized (read 'already corrupted') modern man, whose intellect is already developed. Thus, when Schiller insists that modern man must "stop short of truth" and when Lyotard says that man must preserve the unthought or what he calls an "initial reception"(50), "an empirical or transcendental mode whereby the mind is affected by a 'matter' which it does not fully control"(50), we are faced with the absurd task of demanding from self-conscious modern man to be spontaneously uninterested in truth and to make himself spontaneously powerless. Just as for Lyotard man's freedom consists in his absolute surrender of control over that which affects him, for Schiller freedom is man's infinite, and *conscious*, determinability, the inclusion of all realities (as opposed to empty infinity, which, too, is a lack of selectivity in one's self-determination but a purely *unconscious* lack). Both Schiller and Lyotard run the risk of reducing their notion of freedom to a self-fulfilling prophecy: man is free because, or to the extent that, he decides that he is free. He is free since he chooses (thinks) not to be selective but open to all kinds of determination. He is free because he can decide to be free, presumably even under the most unfree circumstances. Lyotard's project of saving man from the danger of solipsism inherent in Kantian aesthetic fails like a circular argument. The formulation of the problem of passability (in Schiller's case, semblance as a passage between different states of determination) in terms of a *project* (the project of saving the honor of thinking, the honor of modern man) makes the result suspect. When Lyotard asks the mind to make

itself passable to, to make room for the remainder, he is already implying that there is no remainder but the mind must create it: the mind takes something out of itself in order to give it back to itself under the mask of the unthought. Instead of revealing being as the “donation”(Lyotard 111), the mind is asked to become its own donor, to donate the remainder, which it has extracted from itself, back to itself. The problem is whether the mind can deceive itself that what it becomes passable to is not its own creation: “[I]f what we are passable to has first been plotted conceptually how can it seize us?”(111)

Similarly, if, as Schiller suggests, the aesthetic is already given in us as a part of our nature, how can we deceive ourselves that aesthetic education is necessary, given that this education requires us to fragment our nature? After all, Schiller openly declares that the transition from the aesthetic to the moral requires man to “merely [take] from himself...*fragmenting his nature*, not enlarging it”(163 italics added). There is an inherent violence in the organic or living form that gives itself the law inasmuch as the act of giving oneself the law presupposes voluntary fragmentation: one fragments oneself in order to unify oneself. [50] The natural law requires an initial denaturalization for the sake of autonomy and unity. Both Schiller's aesthetic and Lyotard's sublime respond to a threat, the threat of not happening, of not linking onto the next phrase (Lyotard), of not passing from one state of determination to another (Schiller). In the first case, possibility itself is conceived as man's freedom; in the second case, Schiller wants to argue that it is only because man is free that he is able to be determined, but this freedom is not merely the opposite of determination: man is free insofar as he chooses to be determined.

Inasmuch as Schiller's project aims at the transcendence of nature as a way back to nature, his ideas share a lot with those of Barnett Newman. Newman talks of the transcendence of nature as a transcendence of an attitude of sensibility toward nature: "Communion with nature is confused with love of nature...a concern with nature, instead of doing what it was supposed to do—give man some insight into himself as an object of nature—accomplished the opposite and excluded man, setting him apart to make nature the object of romantic contemplation"(109). In Newman's aesthetic, nature is transcended so that man can be brought back to a communion with it. This is the meaning of 'making man present' (which is what Newman's art was supposed to do) and of the reduction of nature to its quod. The command *Be!*—or in Schiller's terms, the command *Be free!*—supposedly puts man back in the primitive state of "totemic affinity"(Newman 109)^[51] or, in Schiller's terms, in the state of complete objectification of the subject. Nature is transcended so that man can be included. Nowhere does Schiller sound as modern as he does in his discussion of form and content and his advise to the artist. Newman underscores the importance of taking the artistic medium for granted, the main question being what to do with the plastic elements (145). Similarly, Schiller's claim that the artist must renounce subject matter, letting form consume content, takes the material for granted and does no longer conceive of it as *a means of expression*. Whatever the artist accomplishes—both for Lyotard and for Schiller—is *beyond* the medium/material, not *through* it. The problem with this notion of the nature of the work of art is that the mere consumption or transcendence of matter does not by itself, automatically, result in pure form or the plasmic, to use Newman's term, which is, supposedly, the artist's only 'subject matter' (Newman 143). There is a 'limbo' between the absence of matter (its consumption) and the presence of form, between the

absence of nature and the presence of reason. Schiller tries to identify the aesthetic as precisely this limbo but, as we saw, he cannot preserve its purity and self-sufficiency and keeps overstepping the boundary that is supposed to separate it from the realm of form and reason.^[52]

Trying to defend the independence of modern American art from the classical roots of European art, Newman makes the claim that “the European artist has been continually involved in the moral struggle between notions of beauty and the desire for sublimity”(171). Schiller’s notion of semblance, as we saw, is rooted in the tension between the beautiful and the sublime. Thus, it makes sense to look at Schiller’s (European) aesthetic in the context of Newman’s. Although Schiller recognizes both the savage and the civilized barbarians as deviations from the human as pure semblance, his more immediate, practical concern lies with the latter, with his contemporaries, and thus with the task of bringing thought back to intuition and feeling. This task requires a certain privileging of the senses over reason for the sake of restoring the lost balance. From this perspective, then, what modern man needs are the effects of “melting beauty” (which privileges matter) rather than those of “energizing beauty” (which privileges form). This might explain why the sublime, disguised as “energizing beauty,” is excluded from modern man’s aesthetic education, which turns into a nostalgic glorification of Greek art. Newman rightly points out that European aesthetics has been an aesthetics of “memory, association, nostalgia, legend, myth”(173)^[53]; Schiller’s invocation of the Greeks is evidence of that. However, even though Schiller looks at art with “the nostalgic glasses of history” (Newman 173), and thus inscribes himself in the European tradition, from which Newman wants so desperately to dissociate American modern art, the goal of Schiller’s aesthetic project is

very close to that of Newman's. While Newman argues that new (American) art transcends the abstract realm to *make that realm real* (163), Schiller contends that aesthetic education transcends nature only to bring us back to nature i.e., that the task of the aesthetic is to *make Reason real*. That Schiller's nostalgia for the Greeks actually distances his notion of art from that of the Greeks, placing it closer to certain modern trends in aesthetics, becomes obvious in Schiller's own writing and thinking on the place of the Greeks in aesthetics, specifically in *On Naive and Sentimental Poetry*, where he defines the moderns' sentimental attitude toward the Greeks: "The feeling of which we here speak is therefore not that which the ancients had; it is rather identical with that which *we have for the ancients*. They felt naturally; we feel the natural"(qtd. in Behler 147). Schiller's education cannot make modern man into a Greek, who feels naturally but can only ennoble him to feeling the natural or, in more general terms, it cannot make man feel the abstract (reason, the moral law) but can only make the abstract *appear* real or natural. Whereas feeling naturally presupposes a direct relationship, an intimacy with nature, feeling the natural signifies man's relationship with himself, a relationship with one of the faculties of his mind. Insofar as Newman argues that art concerns man's relation with himself, a relation defining man's religious feeling (93), Schiller's project has a certain religious impulse behind it.^[54] After all, he aims at the absolute objectification of subjectivity, which certainly comes close to the end of the religious impulse: the sacrifice of subjectivity, particularity in the name of a higher, absolute power. On the other hand, this self-objectification in no way disparages man; on the contrary, it only underscores his dignity. Schiller is as concerned with asserting man's dignity (freedom) as Newman, for whom the defense of that dignity is the ultimate subject matter of art (105).

Although Schiller begins *AEM* with the intention of discovering the nature of beauty and proposing it as a bridge to the moral state, by the end of the work his focus has shifted as he becomes increasingly concerned with the possibility of the human itself, the aesthetic turning into an end in itself. [55] As long as the aesthetic is conceived as merely a transition to another, higher state, Schiller's emphasis falls on the rehabilitation of the senses and the goal of his project is what Newman defines as the typically European preoccupation with the question "whether beauty [is] in nature or could be found without nature" (173). As soon as the aesthetic becomes an end in itself, the question of beauty is replaced by the question of the being of man, and with that, the excluded sublime claims the place that it has been denied. This tension in Schiller's thought can be viewed in terms of what Newman perceives as the main difference between European and modern American art. European art, he says, is concerned with the transcendence of objects (making the objective subjective) while American art is concerned with the reality of the transcendental experience (making the subjective objective) (164), and, we might add, with the sublime, with "absolute emotions" (173) such as the sense of Being or, in Schiller's terms, man's sense of freedom, the sense of a unified consciousness, which passes from one state to another without being destroyed. Not only does Schiller's interest in the human *as such* reveal his modernity; his ideas about art foreshadow some of the central claims Newman makes about abstract expressionism. Schiller's belief that the noblest art would be that which transcends the limitations of its own medium and tends towards a certain synesthesia, dissolving into the other arts until it is purified of any content, echoes in Newman's exaltation at the modern impulse toward precisely such a fusion of the arts and an overcoming of mimesis: "Modern painting is an

attempt to change painting into a poetic language, to make pigment expressive rather than representational.... The whole drive of poetry...and in recent times of painting and prose, has been in the direction of music, to divorce the languages of literature and painting from the confusing dichotomy inherent in their media so that they would function purely and abstractly in the manner of musical notes”(88-89). Schiller's insistence on the consumption of content by form foreshadows Newman's distinction between the plastic and the plasmic element in art. Newman points at the 'primitive' artist, for whom beauty transcends the “surface qualities of the art medium” (143) as a model for the modern artist, who, too, must not reduce his work to “the mere manipulation of the tools of the given medium”(144). The artist must give the plastic elements a plasmic function (144) and should express nothing else but the human condition (130). It might seem that in glorifying the Greeks Schiller is guilty of what Newman condemns as the error of Greek and European aesthetic, the reduction of the beautiful to perfect form: “To us today there is no doubt that Greek art is an insistence that the sense of exaltation is to be found in perfect form, that exaltation is the same as ideal sensibility”(Newman 171). Newman criticizes the Greeks for making purity as a “poetic metaphor” “the geometrical equivalent of material perfection,” thus creating “an art of self-conscious sensibility” and a notion of beauty as “the love of ideal sensations”(167). Although Schiller's examples of phenomenal beauty often border on the merely decorative (for example, in passages where he talks of refined manners as an instance of beauty), his definition of the play-drive owes nothing to the “Greek fanaticism of refinement”(Newman 167) but is much more akin to Newman's descriptions of sublimity. The play-drive, Schiller notes, annuls time within time “reconciling becoming with absolute being”(97). Newman describes his sublime experience of the Indian

mounds in the Ohio valley, a hundred and fifty years after Schiller, in strikingly similar terms: “Suddenly one realizes that the sensation is not one of space or [of] an object in space.... The sensation is one of time.... I insist on my sensations in time—not the *sense* of time but the physical *sensation* of time”(175). The sensation of time, to which Newman refers here is the happening of time, time as a quod, which is nothing but Schiller’s annulment of time within time, an absolute sensation, the sensation of Being: “Where then the form drive holds sway, and the pure objects acts within us, we experience the *greatest enlargement of being*; all limitations disappear...*we are no longer in time; time...is in us*”(Schiller 83, italics added).

A lot has been written about the social and political significance of Schiller’s aesthetic program and although scholars have not failed to point out the curious mixture of psychic and transcendental material in that program, Schiller’s aesthetic has not been, as far as I know, approached as an ontology. Perhaps the reason for this is the same reason we suggested as an explanation for the instability and inconsistency in Schiller’s thought. The exclusion of the sublime from the aesthetic education of man might have found its equivalent in the exclusion of the question of the being *as such* from Schiller scholarship. It is precisely this question, however, that makes Schiller modern inasmuch as modern man, preoccupied as he is with his self-justification, discovers the elusive sense of being in the experience of the sublime, an experience, which modern art, abstract expressionism in particular, tries to evoke. The question of being does not seem to be Schiller’s primary concern in *AEM*; yet, the final goal of aesthetic education—the creation of the moral state—hinges on the ontological justification of man as a free, self-determined subject. What makes Schiller interesting to

modern readers is the irresolvable tension between a genuinely idealistic intention—the establishment of the autonomy of art—and the difficulty or impossibility of purifying the aesthetic of its historical or philosophical content. Ultimately, Schiller's modernity lies not in the ideological (rhetorical) nature of his aesthetic—that would be a gross simplification of Schiller's thought—but rather in the aesthetic nature of that ideology, in the attempt to restore to man the *belief* in freedom (beauty) even if that freedom, like everything else, has been negated by the ideology of the aesthetic.

Notes

[1] Sharpe 7-9. See also Kooy for an explication of Schiller's diversion from Kant's method. While admitting the great influence Kant had on Schiller's aesthetic reflections, Kooy underscores Schiller's modification of "both the substance and the method of Kant"(13) by attempting a transcendental deduction of beauty with a view to finding an objective ground for the aesthetic while drawing on empirical psychology for evidence.

[2] Sharpe 12-13.

[3] Ibid., 40.

[4] Duncan 62.

[5] Kontje 125.

[6] Kontje 133. Kontje observes, however, that although Schiller suppressed the name of the original addressee, his popularist intentions were not entirely fulfilled since the readers of *Die Horen* constituted a rather small, elitist group made up of highly educated Bürger.

[7] Kontje 140.

[8] Boos 15.

[9] Ibid., 25-26.

[10] Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a Series of Letters*, ed. and trans. Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L. A. Willoughby (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1982).

[11] See David Pugh's *Dialectic of Love: Platonism in Schiller's Aesthetics* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's UP, 1996) 317-325 on the dialectical relationship between art and philosophy in *AEM*. Also see S. S. Kerry's *Schiller's Writings on Aesthetic* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1961), 140. Kerry considers Schiller's philosophical deduction of beauty a failure.

[12] See Pugh 334. Pugh makes a similar point, arguing that Schiller's paradoxical definition of beauty as a *methexis* of the transcendental and the empirical realms, which must nevertheless be validated as a *concept of Reason*, turns the synthesis of idea and nature into an idea. Kerry also draws attention to the paradoxical nature of the aesthetic state: on one hand, it is "a zero point" insofar as it is free of any particular determination but, on the other hand, it represents the fully human, "the total self"(156-57).

[13] Pugh examines in detail the duality of Schiller's thought, tracing it back to the aporias of Platonism. Schiller's dualism is examined in terms of the two opposite impulses toward *methexis* (unity or participation) and *chorismos* (separation). Pugh argues that Schiller regards nature as "the lower term of the polarity"(70) suggesting, I think, that Schiller has no other choice but to privilege reason in order to offset the privileging of nature (*methexis*) inherent in the very nature of Schiller's project.

[14] On the way, in which Schiller's analogies (what I call his mania for symmetry) *modify* his theory instead of being themselves determined by the theory, see Kerry 123-4.

[15] See Constantin Behler's *Nostalgic Teleology: Friedrich Schiller and the Schemata of Aesthetic Humanism* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1995).

[16]

See Pugh 343-52 for an explanation of Schiller's reworking of the Platonic 'theory' of Forms into a "meta-Platonic dualism." Pugh claims that Schiller replaces the Platonic realm of Intelligible Ideas with the realm of pure semblance thus elevating methexis (the synthesis of nature and reason) to the position formerly occupied by Pure Ideas.

[17]

See Pugh 304-17. Pugh compares the *Augustenburger Briefe*, Schiller's draft letters of 1793 from which *AEM* was composed in 1794-5, to show that the question of the sublime was purposefully excluded by Schiller from the final draft.

[18]

According to Pugh, Schiller's dual psycho-transcendental vision of beauty—as a 'tool' for moral self-determination and a transcendental idea—subjects beauty to the "dangers of illusion and corruption to which the purer ideas are not subject"(73). The sublime, Pugh argues, is then "invoked as a corrective to beauty"(73). Whenever Schiller leaves the world of "barren abstraction" to descend into the world of experience, thus running the risk of over-psychologizing beauty, his examples of beauty tend to be examples of sublimity. The impulse toward the psychologization of beauty is associated with "melting beauty" while the impulse toward the transcendental grounding of beauty is associated with "energizing beauty."

[19]

Pugh attributes the fragility of Schiller's ideal synthesis of nature and reason to what he calls Schiller's "residual commitment to Aristotelian notions of natural teleology and organicism"(167). By arguing that Schiller's ideal "fragments into cataphatic beauty and apophatic sublimity"(167), Pugh associates, and rightfully so, beauty with nature (methexis) and sublimity with reason (chorismos).

[20]

Behler invents a special name to describe the dual status of the Schillerian aesthetic (as both an origin and an end). He calls it "nostalgic teleology": both a "remembrance and...a prefiguration of the individual and social utopia towards which human existence and history is meant to move"(19).

[21]

See Leonard P. Wessell's *The Philosophical Background to Friedrich Schiller's Aesthetics of Living Form* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1982), 150-2 for an interpretation of the beautiful object as an analogy to man's subjective freedom.

[22]

See Pugh 154-61 for an analysis of the potential despotic implications of Schiller's aesthetic ideal. Also see 132-67 for a discussion of the role of illusion in Schiller's notion of beauty as the appearance of freedom. Pugh claims that the only way for Schiller to evoke "the appearance of an impossible internal determination [is] by an illusion that external determination is absent"(133).

[23]

Kerry also notes "the flattening effect" of Schiller's notion of aesthetic harmony, observing that it cannot account for "the diversity of genius"(126).

[24]

Behler offers a brief account of Terry Eagleton's critique of Schiller's aesthetics in *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (1990). Eagleton reads Schiller's project of sensualizing the moral law as a disguised attempt "to make power infiltrate the very texture of lived experience" and turn it into "a principle of spontaneous consensus"(qtd. in Behler 74). Eagleton goes as far as to claim that Schiller's "bourgeois aesthetic" constitutes "the very paradigm of the ideological"(qtd. in Behler 75).

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Behler draws attention to Schiller's use of physiological concepts to support his essentially idealist model, finding this problematic terminology one of the reasons for the contradictions in Schiller's thought (213).

[26]

Schiller believes that his project of aesthetic education challenges the one-sidedness of the philosophical project by considering the totality of the human psyche and not privileging the form-drive as the law governing psychic development. Glossing Schiller's *Grace and Dignity*, Behler notes that, from Schiller's point of view "[w]hat philosophy construes as a necessary and ultimately irreconcilable opposition between 'nature' and 'reason', between 'sensuality' and 'the moral law' is the result of its own conceptual and pedagogical

limitations,” “a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy”(96). Schiller does not seriously challenge the philosophical project: after all, his own project cannot escape privileging form/reason/truth as the highest ends.

[27] Reacting against a prevalent tendency in Schiller scholarship to overemphasize Schiller's abandonment of the aesthetic as a political ideal and his increasing concern with the aesthetic as an end in itself, Behler insists on the necessity “to recognize the politically overdetermined nature of [Schiller's] aesthetic theory, [as well as] the aesthetically overdetermined nature of his political ideal”(81). He claims that Schiller's “moral-pedagogical” project is already a political one i.e. “a program in Foucault's sense of the term, namely, the invention of a strategy and a technology of productive power and discipline”(86-7).

[28] Kerry explains that Schiller needs to derive the principles of Reason and Nature from the morally empirical fact of psychic unity in order to make the *historical* transition from Nature to Reason (115).

[29] Pugh identifies the central question in Schiller's aesthetics as that of the possibility of transcending “the Platonic prejudice [what I would call Platonic earnestness] against the material world”(85), implying that for Schiller the sublime belongs to the intelligible realm while the beautiful is part of the material realm. The question that Schiller faces is this: can he offer a transcendental grounding of the beautiful and still continue calling the beautiful beautiful rather than sublime? Pugh's argument shares common ground with my argument about the displacement that occurs within beauty. Pugh proposes that the role Schiller ascribes to beauty—the role of overcoming the dualism of Platonic thought—“causes beauty to incur a dualistic structure of its own; that is, it comes to comprise a synthesis of sensible and non-sensible beauty”(78). Pugh discusses Schiller's example of Juno Ludovisi as an example of this replication, within beauty, of the very dualism beauty was supposed to overcome. See 81-82.

[30] Gadamer's reading of Schiller's concept of play makes play “the mode of being of the work of art itself” (Gadamer qtd. in Behler 29), rather than man's subjective experience of the work of art. Gadamer insists on “the primacy of play over the consciousness of the player.”

[31] Behler, too, notes that the “‘organic’ character of ‘the Greek states’...remains mostly a undeveloped projection and a simple rhetorical contrast to the civilizational ills of the modern world”(143).

[32] Behler claims that for Schiller aesthetic contemplation is “‘pure’ self-referentiality”(163). Kerry, too, is aware of the tautological tendencies in Schiller. See particularly his analysis of Schiller's circular reasoning in the definitions of “Person” and “Condition.” See also 134-39 for Kerry's analysis of Schiller's argument about the relationship between Person and Condition as an argument “from linguistic form,” which is not logically supported but is a mere intuition or “a premise of faith.”

[33] Behler notes Fichte's reaction, in “On the Spirit and the Letter in Philosophy” (1795), against the circularity of Schiller's argument which results from Schiller's dual notion of the aesthetic as both a means and a goal of his project: “When, on the one hand, it is not advisable to let men be free before their aesthetic sense is developed, it is, on the other hand, impossible to develop this sense before they are free”(Fiche qtd. in Behler 84).

[34] See Pugh 101-32 for a discussion of Schiller's relationship to Kant with respect to the question of a teleology of reason i.e. of a certain inclination or interest in reason toward its own objectification (through beauty).

[35] Pugh rightly observes that in the ideal synthesis of matter and form, form—as the metaphysical concept—is always privileged (144).

[36] See Pugh 150-54 for an insightful analysis of Schiller's “dual form argument,” which concludes that Schiller's synesthesia of methexis and chorismos through beauty is merely “a conjuring trick.” The illusion of methexis is so complete, claims Pugh, that the suppression of matter cannot be detected.

[37]

See Pugh 161-64 on the nature of aesthetic contemplation as a process comprised of two steps, an initial cataphatic stage, at which the visual apprehension of freedom in the phenomenal world is a direct representation of freedom based on the principle of methexis, followed by a second stage, at which the initial image of freedom is 'corrected' by a reflection on the apophatic nature of that freedom, as a result of which freedom becomes merely the appearance of the pure idea of freedom, an indirect representation based on the principle of chorismos.

[38]

According to Behler, Schiller is able to hide the potential violence (the rhetorical nature) of his disciplinary project by masking that project as a "restoration," a return to an originally unified human nature, which philosophy has wrongfully posited as fragmented *a priori*. Schiller manages to present the division of the psyche—which must be transcended—as a product of modern civilization and thus make the claim that aesthetic education will not actually change or re-invent human nature but will merely recuperate a lost 'true nature'. Behler observes that Schiller's seemingly emancipatory project in fact "aims at a thorough submission of the senses and the body to reason"(108-109) and at "an actual refashioning of the 'drives' [*Triebe*] taking place at the unconscious level of 'desire' "(111).

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See Wessell 140 on Schillerian form as an "existential imperative" of the Person. Also see Anthony Saville's *Aesthetic Reconstructions: the Seminal Writings of Lessing, Kant and Schiller* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 200-202 on the connection of the form-drive to self-consciousness. Saville interprets Schiller's ideal of man as a maximization of self-consciousness (208). Although this might seem a little far-fetched, given Schiller's glorification of the Greeks' naive and simple humanity, it points to a real problem in Schiller's thought—the impossibility of reducing modern man's self-consciousness *naturally*.

[40]

It would be interesting to compare Schiller's notions of *Gestalt* and *Leben* to Heidegger's *world* and *earth*. Schiller's account of the determination of the infinite by the finite seems to foreshadow Heidegger's account of the Greek temple in "The Origin of the Work of Art."

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Behler juxtaposes Schiller's "productive model" of political and moral education with 'repressive models,' suggesting that this distinction might have been the reason why Schiller scholars have generally remained blind to "the disciplinary character of Schiller's aesthetics. Behler recalls Foucault's understanding of power in order to undermine the stereotypical notion of power in terms of repression only: "Power would be a fragile thing if its only power were to repress....If...power is strong it is because...it produces effects at the level of desire"(Foucault qtd. in Behler 90).

[42]

Examining Schiller's traces in Gadamer's *Truth and Method*, Behler notes that, for Gadamer, Schiller's "aesthetic abstraction" in fact (and contrary to my argument) destroys "the mode of being" of the actual "truth-event" of art. Gadamer believes that Schiller's aesthetic experience leaves man unchanged, and is not "transformative" enough. The real task of art, argues Gadamer, is to make man present. Aesthetic experience is of an "ecstatic" nature: "In distinction from the 'abstraction' of 'aesthetic consciousness,' 'being present has the character of being outside oneself'" (Behler 27). Schiller's description of Juno Ludovisi, however, is precisely the description of an ecstatic experience.

[43]

For a discussion of the three-stage schema in Schiller, see M. H. Abrams's *Natural Supernaturalism*, in which Abrams argues that one of the major contributions of the German and English Romantics, and of Schiller in particular, was the fact they shifted the location of the highest truth from the first stage (the pure origin) to the third stage (a synthesis higher than the original unity) and thus emancipated the fallen second stage (occupied by man) to an "indispensable stage in the ascent towards perfection" (Abrams qtd. in Behler 54).

[44]

Behler finds the greatest difference between Kant and Schiller in terms of "the determination of the ethical substance" (115). Whereas for Kant "the prime material of moral self-constitution is 'practical reason' (i.e. Kant is concerned with questions of moral deliberation and action only), Schiller makes desire itself the "ethical substance" (i.e. he is concerned with the very *being* of the moral subject, not just with the subject's *moral conduct*) (116).

[45] Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Cambridge: Polity P, 1988).

[46] Behler agrees with Marcuse that one of Schiller's major contributions is that he attributes an "anthropological significance" to Kant's transcendental philosophy: what Kant has analyzed only as "processes of the mind," Schiller analyzes as models of social development thus straddling the line between the transcendental and the empirical.

[47] For Gadamer the aesthetic experience is always transformative insofar as it is conceived as "an encounter with oneself" or a "recognition" of one's identity (Gadamer qtd. in Behler 32). Behler traces the similarities between Gadamer's and Schiller's notions of play as "the privileged site for the recovery of human identity" (34), arguing that the only difference between them is that, in Gadamer's case, identity is conceived in cultural-historical terms (35).

[48] Behler fails to see the high stakes in Schiller's notion of play. Rather than reading Schiller's play as the continuous questioning of the very being of man, Behler sees it as "merely a re-affirmation of a human essence that is always already present and is merely being re-awakened"(221).

[49] Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1988).

[50] For an account of de Man's analysis, in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism*, of the potentially totalitarian implications of Schiller's aesthetic, see Behler's chapter on de Man and aesthetic ideology. Behler agrees with de Man and argues that for Schiller an object will *appear* beautiful and free if it is both self-determining and self-determined, if it gives the *appearance* of a natural form.

[51] *Barnett Newman: Selected Writings and Interviews*, ed. John P. O'Neill (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990).

[52] Peter Burger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1974) approaches Schiller's work as a manifestation of "the dominant bourgeois ideology of art"(Behler 39), trying to show the similarities between, on one hand, Schiller's notion of the autonomy of art as precisely that, which guarantees its important social role and, on the other hand, the avant-garde's renunciation of the institution of art as such and their attempt to reintegrate art in "the praxis of life" (41).

[53] The nostalgic aspect of the beautiful points to a dangerous tendency within beauty, a tendency of which Marcuse, in his reading of Schiller, is well aware. Marcuse notes that the beautiful exhibits a certain dangerous tendency toward normalization and that it is less capable than the sublime to perform "a radical break with the terror of normality"(Behler 21). Unlike the sublime, the beautiful can both "recall the repressed...[only] to repress it again—'purified' "(Marcuse qtd. in Behler 21).

[54] The 'religious' impulse is always symptomatic of a certain crisis. In his discussion of Schiller's significance in Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization*, Behler calls both Marcuse's and Schiller's discourses "narratives of emancipation" or "crisis-theories of modernity." There is indeed a continuity between Schiller's critique of "the retrograde moment of the Enlightenment" (9) and Marcuse's critique of one-dimensional man in the world of advanced industrial capitalism.

[55] Behler summarizes Gadamer's critique of Schiller's project, particularly Gadamer's observation that Schiller's initial project of using the aesthetic as a bridge to the moral changes in the course of the work so that Schiller ends up justifying what Gadamer indicts as "a ruling ideology of 'aesthetic abstraction', a sterile and 'leveling' 'aesthetic consciousness' that is the fitting expression of 'the age of science' and 'technocracy'"(Gadamer qtd. in Behler 25).

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