

Daemonic freedom: On the missing sublime in Schiller's *Aesthetic Letters*

Brown University, May 2011

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In 1791, the thirty-one year old German poet and playwright Friedrich Schiller, then professor of history at the University of Jena, received a personal invitation from the Danish prince Friedrich Christian, Duke of Augustenburg, to join his court. Yet he could not accept. Earlier that year, in the spring, a bout with tuberculosis – the disease which, in 1805, would end his life – had left him incapacitated, and certainly made impossible any such relocation. It seems that exaggerated rumors of Schiller's illness spread quickly, for before his reply could reach Friedrich Christian, the latter received word of the poet's death. Upon finally receiving his reply, though in the negative, the young prince (just six years his junior) was overjoyed – for Schiller was alive! Wishing to ensure his full recovery, he awarded Schiller, starting in 1793, an annual stipend for three years, under the sole stipulation that he take every step to regain his health¹. The award, it seems, could not have come at a better time for Schiller, for it enabled him to pay his debts, put on hold his work at the University, and devote his attention entirely to a personal project he had for several years wished to undertake: namely a close study of Kant's philosophy. In those three years between 1793 and 1796, Schiller would produce six philosophical works, including a series of letters to the prince. These would become known as his 'aesthetic essays'.

Two concerns would form the substance of these essays. The first was Kant's philosophy itself. Schiller first read Kant in 1787, following an encounter with the latter's enthusiastic disciple, Karl Leonhard Reinhold, on a visit to Jena². The second edition of Kant's first *Critique* had just been published (1st ed. 1781), and would be followed soon after by his second and third, in 1788 and 1790 respectively. These *Critiques* Schiller, the poet, found intimidating. For though he desired to study Kant, largely due to his sense that the latter could help him overcome certain aporiae into which his own occasional philosophical efforts had persistently fallen throughout the

¹ Snell, 'Introduction' in Schiller (2004), p. 2.

² Beiser (2005), p. 38

1780s³, he doubted whether he had the means to understand Kant's epistemology. Though having dabbled in Kant's essays for several years, it was only upon reading the third *Critique* – the *Critique of Judgment* – that Schiller found the confidence to undertake his study in earnest. As he wrote to his friend Gottfried Körner in March of 1791:

You will not easily guess what I am now reading and studying? Nothing worse than – Kant. His *Critique of Judgment* ... excites me with its new illuminating and rich contents, and it has created in me the greatest desire to gradually work my way into his philosophy. ... I now feel that Kant will not be such an insurmountable obstacle and I will certainly now work more exactly on him⁴.

Yet Schiller's work in this period would also be motivated by events in France. His first play, *The Robbers* (1782), had won him honorary French citizenship, and like so many intellectuals in Germany he was initially a supporter of the Revolution. Yet in 1793 when the Revolution turned to Terror, so too turned his sentiments. For how could a project built so squarely upon reason fall so quickly and completely into its opposite, savage passion? How could such a fall be prevented? To answer these questions by engaging with Kant's philosophy would become the primary aim of Schiller's essays.

What follows here is an effort to understand and hold together two peculiar features of this collection of essays. First that, although in the most extensive and best known of them – his *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1795), composed for his patron – Schiller explicitly promises to offer a discussion of the sublime⁵ (which he calls 'energizing beauty'), he never does so. Second that, alongside these *Letters* we find *two* separate essays on the sublime, quite different in character: one composed just before the Terror ('On the Sublime', [OS] published in 1793), which puts little emphasis on the reality of the sublime object, and focuses mainly on the production of a sublime effect; and another composed some time after it ('Concerning the Sublime', [CS] 1794-6?, published in 1801), which considers 'world history' itself as a sublime object, and focuses on our capacity – our 'daemonic freedom' – to resist and combat the violence of history's often egregious spectacles.

³ On this see Beiser (2005), pp. 13-46.

⁴ Beiser (2005), p. 39

⁵ The sublime is a notion not much in currency these days, outside of certain postmodern circles (see n. 14 below) and those working in aesthetics of the history of ideas. Though I am here unable to provide much background on the notion outside of Kant's engagement with it, I would refer the reader to Philip Shaw's book *The Sublime* (London: Routledge, 2005), which provides an admirably concise history of the concept from its origin in Longinus to present engagements with it in the work of Lyotard, Lacan and Žižek. On Kant, see Chapter 4 (pp. 72-89).

My claim shall be the following: that although the theory of the sublime outlined in the first of these essays (OS) *could* have fit into Schiller's larger project in the *Letters*, the new theory outlined the second (CS) could not, or could not so easily. Unable or unwilling to reconcile his new, post-Terror theory with his program of aesthetic education⁶, it seems, Schiller opted to publish the *Letters* without his promised account of the sublime, to suppress the first essay (OS), and then years later (in 1801) finally to publish the second (CS) – the common dating of which to 1794-6, as I argue in conclusion, is perhaps subject to question. Such is, of course, speculation, yet I aim to demonstrate its plausibility. I pursue this aim, first, by offering a brief exposition of Kant's discussions of the beautiful and the sublime in his third *Critique* as important background for what follows. Next, I examine Schiller's *Letters*, both to outline the structure of their argument and highlight the absence within them of Schiller's promised discussion of the sublime. Then I examine Schiller's two essays on the sublime, and highlight two major differences between them. In conclusion, I defend the exegetical claim stated above.

The Kantian background

Kant's third *Critique* is divided into two broad parts, the first dealing with aesthetics and the second with teleology. The portions relevant to our purpose here are contained in the first section of the work's first part, in two 'books' entitled respectively 'Analytic of the Beautiful' and 'Analytic of the Sublime'. After examining each of these in turn, I offer some more general comments on Kant's project in the third *Critique* relevant to Schiller's engagement with these materials in his *Letters*⁷.

Kant begins his Analytic of the Beautiful, appropriately, by stating perhaps the central and most distinctive feature of his aesthetics: namely that, in deciding whether something is beautiful (*or*, one might add, sublime), we do *not* relate our representation of that thing to the *object* of

⁶ Throughout these pages I refer to Schiller's 'program' of aesthetic education, though to my knowledge Schiller himself does not use this language. Aside from this characterization's frequent use in Schiller scholarship, a recent work by Constantin Behler, *Nostalgic Teleology: Friedrich Schiller and the Schemata of Aesthetic Humanism* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1995), offers a compelling case for thinking of aesthetic education as a 'program' similar in its structure and aims to Foucault's notion of a 'technology of self-formation'. Behler's book is indeed a useful introduction to Schiller's thought, and despite its critical conclusions offers a constructive and charitable engagement with his work.

⁷ What I'm calling here neatly Schiller's 'engagement with Kant' is of course one of most commented upon philosophical relationships of the period. For closer studies of this relationship, relevant to the subject of these pages, see Jeffrey Barnouw's 'The Morality of the Sublime: Kant and Schiller' (*Studies in Romanticism*, Vol. 19, No. 4, pp. 497-514) and Zvi Tauber's 'Aesthetic Education for Morality: Schiller and Kant' (*Journal of Aesthetic Education*, Vol. 40, No. 3, pp. 22-47).

cognition (i.e., the thing itself) by means of the understanding, but rather relate our representation of it to ourselves, the *subject* (i.e., to our subjective feeling of pleasure or displeasure), by means of the imagination (§1). Such decisions, or ‘pure judgments of taste’, are, Kant emphasizes, necessarily disinterested (§2), and differ from judgments about an object’s agreeableness (§3) or moral goodness (§4) insofar as these latter generate some form of interest. Building upon this claim, Kant proceeds to argue that such judgments, though bearing no relation to the universal concepts of the understanding, nonetheless are *universal* (§6): if we judge a painting to be beautiful, for example, our judgment entails not only that *we* judge it to be so, but that we expect all *others* to share our judgment (§7). Kant’s claim, then, is that judgments of taste have ‘subjectively universal validity’ – they are valid, say, ‘for us’, for all humanity, and not just ‘for me’ – yet fall shy of the ‘objectively universal validity’ of cognitive (synthetic *a priori*) or logical (analytic) judgments; judgments of taste are not, so to say, valid ‘in themselves’ (§8). The pleasure we derive from our perception of beautiful objects arises, Kant continues, from ‘a free play of the faculties of cognition with a representation through which an object is given’ – i.e., a ‘free play’, that is, between *imagination*, which composes the manifold of our sensible intuitions into representations, and *understanding*, which unifies these representations under various concepts (§9). And, in addition to this play of our faculties, beautiful objects give us pleasure because we perceive in them a ‘form of purposiveness’; that is, *because* such objects enable this play of our faculties, it seems to us *as if* – not by charm or emotion, but due to its form – the object had been designed for us (§11).

Next Kant considers the sublime, basing his presentation on a distinction between what he calls the ‘mathematically sublime’ and the ‘dynamically sublime’ (§24). We experience the mathematically sublime when we encounter an object absolutely large in magnitude – something ‘in comparison which everything else is small’, and indeed something so large as to be ‘formless’ (§25). When we encounter such objects, our *apprehension* of them continues to advance without end, yet our *comprehension* ‘soon reaches its maximum, namely the aesthetically greatest basic measure for the estimation of magnitude’ (§26). As thus we strike against the limits of comprehension – the limits of understanding – we are made to recognize that our very effort to press beyond these indicates the presence within us of a faculty ‘that surpasses every measure of the sense’; a faculty greater than the understanding, namely reason. Thus while an experience of the beautiful produces in us an unalloyed pleasure – i.e. we simply find that certain objects set

lose a free play of our faculties, making us feel at home in the world – an experience of the sublime, here the mathematically sublime, produces a more mixed response: first *displeasure*, ‘from the inadequacy of the imagination in the aesthetic estimation of magnitude’, then also, with surety, *pleasure*, ‘aroused at the same time from the correspondence of this very judgment of inadequacy ... with ideas of reason, insofar as striving for them is nevertheless a law for us’. This mixture of inadequacy with striving for the law Kant likens to the moral feeling of respect (§27).

Kant’s next discussion, of the dynamically sublime, parallels his first. As also in our experience of the mathematically sublime, here we encounter something absolutely great, yet great now not in magnitude but in *power* – specifically, in natural power – compared with which our own physical strength is as naught. Facing a towering cliff, thundering clouds, or lightning, we are, sensibly, brought to our knees (§28). Yet just as the mathematically sublime made us aware of the *ideas of reason* within us – ideas which reach beyond every possible expanse or magnitude to conceive the whole – here the dynamically sublime makes us aware of our *practical reason* and our *will*, which no power of nature can snatch from us and which enable us to rise above every natural circumstance by willing the moral law. All this, that is, just insofar as we ‘see ourselves as safe’ – the danger must not be ‘serious’, and must not *actually* have ‘dominion over us’, lest it be mere terror. Granted these conditions, again we experience a mixture of displeasure (awareness of physical incapacity) and pleasure (awareness of the will’s infinite capacity); a combination which seems linked more closely to the moral feeling of respect even than did that associated with the mathematically sublime. And indeed Kant suggests that it is: for unlike the mathematically sublime, or indeed any form of beauty, our ability to judge an object to be dynamically sublime calls for ‘a far greater culture, not merely of the aesthetic power of judgment, but also of the cognitive faculties on which that is based’. Such judgments require, that is, ‘the development of moral ideas’, for lacking this – for ‘the unrefined person’ – the dynamically sublime ‘will appear merely repellent ... He will see in ... the dominion of nature ... only the distress, danger, and need that would surround the person who was banished thereto’ (§29), and fail to recognize the moral law within him.

In sum, we find outlined in these portions of the *Critique of Judgment* Kant’s account of *one* kind of judgment – of aesthetic judgments, or judgments of taste, as distinct from cognitive or logical judgments. Such judgments are disinterested and subjectively universal in their validity. Some objects, judged in this way, we find beautiful; namely those whose form pleases us by

setting loose a free play of our faculties of imagination and understanding. Other objects so judged we find sublime; either mathematically, such that the judgment calls to mind our reason, or dynamically, such that it calls to mind our relation to the moral law. In both cases, such sublime objects appear as formless – beyond our capacity to comprehend or physically resist them – and though they please us by calling forth our higher faculties, also they displease us in their perhaps violent dominion over, respectively, our understanding and our intuition.

Sublime judgments, as we've seen, seem to bear some relation to morality. The mixture of pleasure and displeasure which accompanies every judgment of the sublime resembles the 'moral feeling of respect', and even may depend upon our having cultivated certain 'moral ideas'. In §59 – the concluding section of the first, aesthetic part of Kant's work – Kant makes clear that judgments of the beautiful, too, bear such a relation, and perhaps even a more intimate one: 'the beautiful', he writes there, 'is a symbol of the morally good', for when we encounter beautiful objects we experience a freedom of the imagination 'analogous' to moral freedom. Both are immediate, disinterested, and, in their way, universal. And so Kant concludes the first part of his *Critique* with the following claim:

Taste as it were makes possible the transition from sensible charm to the habitual moral interest without too violent a leap by representing the imagination even in its freedom as purposively determinable for the understanding and teaching us to find a free satisfaction in the objects of the senses even without any sensible charm (§59).

It seems that this suggestion, more than other in the third *Critique*, would structure and indeed motivate Schiller's engagement with Kant's aesthetics. Yet already here, perhaps, the tension which shall occupy us is apparent: for if the *beautiful* is a symbol of morality, what of the sublime? How do their respective relations to the moral fit together, or can they? Schiller seems to have struggled with precisely this question.

Schiller's *Aesthetic Letters*: The missing sublime⁸

Schiller's twenty-seven *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* together represent his single most important philosophical work and the culmination of his effort to appropriate and rework Kant's philosophy in such a way as to address the pressing political question of his time

⁸ Parenthetical citations in this and the following sections, i.e. of both Schiller's *Letters* and his two essays on the sublime, refer to Schiller (2005).

– namely, as I’ve said, why did the French Revolution turn to Terror, and what can prevent such a turn? Schiller’s text is beautiful – indeed itself a kind of aesthetic object – yet often hard to comprehend. So much so that, despite its considerable influence on later aesthetic and cultural theory in and outside of Germany⁹, many, most often philosophers, have called its argument incoherent; the philosophical dabbling of a playwright. Yet the intention of these *Letters*, understood in their historical context and despite whatever logical inconsistencies they may exhibit, seems clear: they present themselves, I submit, as a kind of extended commentary on Kant’s suggestion in §59 of the third *Critique* that beauty – or as Schiller would like it, the aesthetic more broadly – ‘makes possible the transition from sensible charm to the habitual moral interest without too violent a leap’¹⁰. In France, the leap had been too violent. Too quickly had the revolutionaries sought to replace the sensible with the intelligible, inclination with duty. Only through aesthetic education, Schiller maintains throughout the *Letters* – only through the cultivation of imaginative freedom – can the sensible and the intelligible, inclination and duty, be held together in harmony as two aspects of the same human person, who is a single ‘moral being’. In this, intentional sense, it seems, Schiller’s *Letters* are both unified and coherent.

My claim in these pages is that the program of aesthetic education Schiller outlines in his *Letters* – his political program, in effect – *could* have accommodated his first, earlier account of the sublime (in OS), but could *not* so easily accommodate his later account (in CS). Such a claim demands, of course, an understanding of Schiller’s project in the *Letters*, so first I turn to this. Following Frederick Beiser’s treatment of the *Letters* in his recent book *Schiller as Philosopher*, I present Schiller’s work as unfolding in five broad movements, alternating between what Beiser calls ‘empirical’ and ‘transcendental’ perspectives. These perspectives, Beiser maintains,

⁹ Lesley Sharpe’s remarkable study *Schiller’s Aesthetic Essays: Two Centuries of Criticism* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1995) offers a thorough and even readable account of the reception of Schiller’s *Letters* – indeed of all his aesthetic essays – from the time of their publication to the present. See especially Chapter 4, ‘The Postwar Boom’, pp. 58-115.

¹⁰ Not all have seen this ‘habitual moral interest’ as benign. Terry Eagleton, in his *Ideology of the Aesthetic* (London: Blackwell, 1990) has argued that where Kant developed a suitable ideology to enable the self-governance of a newly emergent bourgeoisie, it was Schiller – by seamlessly uniting duty and inclination – made this ideology, in Gramsci’s sense, hegemonic. Schiller gets a tough but perhaps fair shake in Chapter 4 of Eagleton’s book (pp. 102-119). The notion of aesthetic ideology was first coined by Paul De Man, who offers an influential reading of Schiller’s project in his lecture, ‘Kant and Schiller’, reproduced in his *Aesthetic Ideology* (Minneapolis, MN: U of Minnesota P, 1996, pp. 129-62).

correspond to what he calls the text's 'two questions': respectively, 'What *effect* does beauty have upon us?', and 'Does human perfection *consist* in beauty?'¹¹.

Letters I through X form what I'm calling the first movement of Schiller's work, and the most important. It is clearly empirical in Beiser's sense. After stating his admiration for the practical principles of Kant's philosophy – which, he writes, 'divested of their technical form ... stand revealed as the immemorial pronouncements of common reason' (87) – and after offering an initial *apologia* for his apparent choice to 'put beauty before freedom' (89) in a time of such political upheaval, Schiller arrives in Letter III at the proper beginning of his enquiry:

Out of the long slumber of the senses [man] awakens to consciousness and knows himself for a human being; he looks about him, and finds himself – in the state (90).

By 'state', here, Schiller means the 'natural state', or as he puts it, 'any political body whose organization derives originally from forces and not from laws' (91). Man as a moral being cannot and, Schiller says, ought not 'rest content' in such a state (90). Yet if reason is allowed simply to 'do away with' this state – i.e., to render nature wholly subordinate to itself – then 'she [reason] jeopardizes the physical man' (91), without which the newly emergent moral man, as mere idea, can hardly hope to exist. And so the problem arises which shall occupy Schiller throughout his *Letters*:

[P]hysical society in time must never for a moment cease to exist while moral society as idea is in the process of being formed ... When the craftsman has a timepiece to repair, he can let its wheels run down; but the living clockwork of the state must be repaired while it is still striking ... For this reason a support must be looked for that will ensure the continuance of society, and make it independent of the natural state that is to be abolished (92).

This 'support', Schiller continues, must speak to some 'third character' of man, alongside our natural and moral characters, for only by such a third can our transition from natural to moral – from inclination to duty – be effected without violence; only such a third can make it 'safe'. He returns to a discussion of this support after some further diagnosis of our modern situation.

¹¹ Beiser (2005), p. 136. Though I adopt this distinction from Beiser, the reading of the *Letters* I provide here is my own. Beiser's aim is different, namely to recuperate Schiller's reputation in English-language scholarship as a serious philosophical thinker. For some responses to Beiser's Schiller book, see the symposium in the February 2008 issue of *Inquiry* (Vol. 51, No. 1).

The primary danger in a modern society, as Schiller sees it, is that ‘ideal man’ – namely the ‘archetype’ of man ‘represented by the state’ – should be allowed wholly to *annul* ‘man in time’, resulting in ‘a one-sided moral point of view’ (such as one might find, it may be added, in the ‘technical form’ of Kant’s moral philosophy). We need, rather, a ‘complete anthropological point of view’; one in which ‘content counts no less than form, and living feeling too has a voice’ (93). A true ‘political artist’ (or ‘statesman-artist’) will be sensitive to this balance (94), Schiller suggests, and prevent society from tipping into either ‘savagery’ (feeling over principle) or ‘barbarism’ (principle over feeling). For such were indeed, in Schiller’s view, the respective conditions of the ‘lower’ and ‘cultivated’ classes of his time (96) – a time, he wrote, ‘wavering between perversity and brutality, between unnaturalness and mere nature’, still sometimes kept within bounds ‘only through an equilibrium of evils’ (97).

Like so many of his generation, after Winckelmann, Schiller was convinced that the ancient Greeks had made a rather better go of things than we moderns have. He presents this view in Letter VI. For in each individual Greek, Schiller writes, imagination and reason were united in ‘a glorious manifestation of humanity’ (98); ‘undoubtedly’, these Greeks had reached ‘a maximum of excellence’ (102). By comparison, we moderns are but ‘fragments’ of a social apparatus. Rather than developing the wholeness of the Greeks, we each today develop ‘but one part’ of our potential. We are, in short, cogs, performing our limited role in ‘a mechanical kind of collective life’ (99). The culprit here, Schiller concludes, is *civilization*: itself a great accomplishment, to be sure, since ‘there was no other way in which the species as a whole could have progressed’, and yet an accomplishment ‘the great instrument’ of which has been precisely the ‘antagonism of faculties and functions’ (102) which he laments. We cannot well continue to abide this modern ‘disorganization’ (99) of our humanity, yet likewise cannot well return to ancient Greece. Our only option, as Schiller sees it, is to ‘restore by means of a higher art the totality of our nature that the arts themselves have destroyed’ (104), and to do so without disrupting the living clockwork of the state, i.e. of civilization. Without such a restoration, Schiller is convinced, ‘every attempt at political reform’ – every attempt, say, to found a new, ideal society, as in France – is ‘untimely’ (*ibid.*).

In Letter IX Schiller shows his cards. The ‘support’ needed to repair our civilization’s living clockwork, he writes, is *art*; the ‘third character’ awakened in us by this support is our *aesthetic* character (108). The artist, he suggests, should live with his century, but ‘not be its creature’ (110).

Some ‘beneficent deity’ must ‘nourish [the young artist] with the milk of a better age, and suffer him to come to maturity under a distant Grecian sky. Then, when he become a man, let him return, a stranger, to his own century’ (108). Being free from the ‘futile busyness’ of modern life, the artist should be no reformer, but should rather ‘impart to the world ... a *direction* toward the good, and the quiet rhythm of time will bring it to fulfillment’ (110). Yet in Letter X Schiller’s tone is quite different: for how can mere beauty, mere ‘aesthetic culture’, heal us from the ‘coarseness’ of savagery and the ‘enervation’ of barbarity (111)? The testament of history seems to cast doubt on this prospect, as Schiller himself admits in a striking passage:

[I]ndeed it must give pause for reflection that in almost every historical epoch in which the arts flourish, and taste prevails, we find humanity at a low ebb, and cannot point to a single instance of a high degree and wide diffusion of aesthetic culture going hand in hand with political freedom and civic virtue, fine manners and good morals, refinement of conduct with truth of conduct (113).

The empirical perspective pursued thus far is not enough; the mere ‘melting power of beauty’, apparent outwardly in the products of aesthetic culture, cannot finally be the ‘support’ Schiller needs. Rather, he needs a ‘pure *rational concept* of beauty’ (114), a prize to be won (or, ‘deduced’) only ‘by a process of abstraction’; by following a ‘transcendental way [that] will lead us out of the familiar circle of phenomenal existence’ (115).

Thus begins the second, ‘transcendental’ movement of Schiller’s Letters, consisting of Letters XI to XV. In Letter XI (115-18), Schiller distinguishes between two aspects of a human being: his *person* (which endures, is free, and is absolute form) and his *condition* (which changes, is ‘in time’, and is absolute reality or ‘world’). Letter XII (118-121) presents his further distinction of two ‘drives’ within us, expressive of these two aspects: namely the *sense drive* (concerned with our inclination in particular cases) and the *form drive* (concerned with laws and specifically moral feeling). It is the task of culture, Schiller argues in Letter XIII, to reconcile these drives and prevent the subordination of one to the other. For subordinate sense wholly to form, and man ‘will never be himself’; subordinate form wholly to sense, and man ‘will never be anything else’ than what he at present (naturally) happens to be (123). Culture works this reconciliatory trick by holding these two drives in perfect balance, and when this is successful, we learn in Letter XIV, a surprising thing happens: a new, *third* drive, emerges for the first time – the *play drive* – ‘directed toward annulling time [mere nature] *within time* [within the living

clockwork of the state], reconciling becoming with absolute being and change with identity' (126). If the object of the sense drive is 'life', and the object of the form drive is 'form', then, Schiller continues in Letter XV, the object of the play drive – being the reconciliation of these two – is 'living form'; and here we have Schiller's 'pure rational concept of beauty' (128). With the objects of the sense and form drives – with 'the agreeable, the good, the perfect' – Schiller writes, 'man is *merely* in earnest; but with beauty' – and *only* with beauty – 'he plays' (130). And indeed, more than this, man '*is only fully a human being when he plays*' (131); only when he realizes within himself, so to say, this reconciliation of his disparate faculties.

Schiller's third movement, in Letters XVI to XVII, is again empirical, and crucial to our purpose here. For this perfect reconciliation spied on our 'transcendental way' is, Schiller writes, 'no more than an idea, which can never be fully realized in actuality' (132). *In* actuality, beauty is *two*. He continues:

[W]e must expect from beauty at once a releasing and a tensing effect: a *releasing* effect in order to keep both the sense drive and the form drive within proper bounds; a *tensing* effect, in order to keep both at full strength. ... Ideal beauty [therefore], though one and indivisible, exhibits under different aspects a melting as well as an energizing attribute; but in experience there actually *is* a melting and an energizing type of beauty (132, 133).

Schiller's melting beauty is clearly the Kantian beautiful. It sets off a 'free play' of our faculties (i.e. Schiller's play drive) and so, for '[t]he man who lives under the constraint of either matter or forms' (134) – either the savage of the barbarian – brings these into harmony. Notably this melting beauty alone would seem able to accomplish the *Letters*' political aims. But proceeding, we find that Schiller's energizing beauty is clearly the Kantian sublime, or something close to it. This type of beauty *cannot* 'preserve man from a certain savagery and hardness'. Its effect is

to brace [man's] nature, both physical and moral, and to increase its elasticity and power of prompt reaction. ... [In such moments] we find true grandeur of conception coupled with the gigantic and the extravagant, [and] sublimity of thought with the most frightening explosions of passion (133).

These effects, Schiller continues, are needed by '[t]he man who lives under the indulgent sway of taste' – by, it seems, precisely one whose faculties have been harmonized and reconciled – 'for [such a man] is only too ready, once he has reached a state of sophisticated refinement, to

trifle away the strength he brought with him from the state of savagery' (134). In the concluding paragraph of Letter XVI Schiller states his intention to discuss each of type of beauty in turn:

In the rest of my inquiry I shall, therefore, pursue the path that nature herself takes with man in matters aesthetic, and setting out from the two species of beauty move upwards to the generic concept of it. I shall examine the effects of melting beauty on those whom are tensed, and the effects of energizing beauty on those who are relaxed, in order finally to dissolve both these contrary modes of beauty in the unity of ideal beauty (134).

Yet this examination of energizing beauty never occurs. The two remaining movements of the *Letters* are devoted, clearly, to melting beauty. I return to the fact of this odd absence at the end of this section. First, let us pass quickly through these remaining two movements to see what Schiller does in fact provide.

The *Letters'* fourth movement, in Letters XVIII to XXII, is again transcendental – another 'brief sojourn in the sphere of speculation' (137). If by means of beauty, Schiller writes in Letter XVIII, 'sensuous man is led to form and thought ... [and] spiritual man is brought back to matter', then it would seem that beauty transports us to some '*middle* state ... midway between matter and form, passivity and activity' (ibid.). Yet here there can be 'absolutely no *middle term*', for the distance between these terms is 'infinite'. Beauty, then, does not 'mediate' between these 'diametrical' opposites, but rather makes 'both [of] these conditions totally disappear in a third without leaving any trace of division behind in the new whole that has been made' (137). But how is this new whole achieved, and what is its character? In Letter XIX, Schiller begins his complex account of this by distinguishing between passive and active determinability (139). We begin life in a state of passive, indeed *unlimited* determinability, yet soon the senses stir, perception is born, and we encounter limits. Only by interacting with these limits – i.e. by judging and thinking – do we begin to move toward a condition of *active* determinability. Yet as in our movement from nature to reason, here too we must pass through a middle 'state' (not term) of pure or 'aesthetic' determinability in which reality is 'annulled', but not lost – perhaps bracketed (145). This state of aesthetic determinability is as distinct from 'mere indetermination' (146) as the play drive is from the sense drive, or – to reverse the terms – as our 'first creatress', nature, is from our 'second', beauty (148). Schiller suggests that great works of art 'approximate' this 'ideal of aesthetic purity'. What makes a piece of music, a poem or a sculpture great is its success in transcending every limit *without* thus destroying its own

specific (material) qualities. In this sense true masters make the ‘form’ of their work *consume* the ‘matter’ (151), and so achieve a perfect unity of the two.

The *Letters’* fifth and final movement, in Letters XXIII to XXVII, is again empirical. His most recent transcendental sojourn, Schiller suggests, has demonstrated that ‘there is no way of making a sensuous man rational except by first making him aesthetic’ (152). This is good news, for if we can manage to become aesthetic, then the subsequent distance from the aesthetic to ‘the logical and moral state’ is ‘infinitely easier than was the step from the physical state to the aesthetic’ (153), for aesthetic man need only *will* to be rational or moral, and so he shall be. Indeed too, from the aesthetic state ‘one often needs no more than the challenge of a sublime situation ... to make him a hero or a sage’ (154), though, Schiller counsels significantly, one ‘must learn to desire more nobly, so that he may not need to will sublimely’ (156).

Letters XXIV to XXVII present in empirical terms the transition from nature to reason outlined in the previous, transcendental movement, highlighting three basic ‘moments or stages of development’: the physical, the aesthetic and the moral (ibid.). From a ‘state of brute nature’ (158), Schiller writes, man, on ‘the wings of fancy ... leaves the narrow confines of the present’ (159), moving from a condition wholly devoid of thought and will into, at first, mere ‘error of thought ... [and] perversion of will’ (161). Here man is ‘merely a passive recipient of the world of sense’ (ibid.), and subject to ‘infinite force’ (163). Yet soon this infinite force (this ‘empire of the Titans’) is itself made subject, as in ancient Greece, to ‘infinite form’, yielding the coveted result: namely beauty, as ‘living form’ (164). Here man enters the second, aesthetic stage, the ‘outward and visible sign’ of which is a new ‘delight in *semblance*, and a propensity to *ornamentation* and *play*’ – a sign apparent, Schiller claims, in the actual experience of ‘all races’ throughout ‘history, however far back’ (166). The crucial distinction here is that between *aesthetic semblance*, which is ‘honest’, ‘autonomous’ and wholly raised above and distinguished ‘from actuality and truth’, and *logical semblance*, or ‘mere deception’, which is often confused with these latter (167). Only aesthetic, not logical semblance has a right to exist in the moral world, Schiller writes, and ‘the poet transgresses his proper limits ... when he attributes existence to his ideal world’ (168) – i.e. when he exchanges aesthetic for logical semblance. So long as semblance remains aesthetic, we ‘need have no fear for either reality or truth’ (171).

For indeed, Schiller concludes, it is only *through* such semblance that ‘free activity’ may be achieved (173). Delighting in beauty, it is soon not enough for man to be pleased *by* beautiful

objects – soon he himself wishes to please (174). So he ‘adorns himself’, by crafting beautiful artifacts, and by dance, song, gesture, and the ‘exaltation’ of lust into ‘a generous interchange of affection’ (175). Leaving forever behind ‘the *dynamic* state of rights’ (governed by force), though not yet ready for ‘the *ethical* state of duties’ (governed by law), man passes into ‘a third joyous kingdom’: ‘the *aesthetic* state’¹² (governed by beauty), where ‘none may appear to the other except as form, or confront him except as an object of free play’. Thus ‘[t]o bestow freedom by means of freedom’ – i.e. moral freedom by means of aesthetic freedom, Schiller continues – ‘is the fundamental law of this kingdom’. Only here is society made ‘real’, for only here does man acquire ‘a *social character*’ (176). A ‘veil of decorum’ is thrown over ‘those physical desires that, in their naked form, affront the dignity of free beings’ (178), and only in this way is the ‘ideal of equality fulfilled [i.e., only in semblance] that the enthusiast’ – the revolutionary, say – ‘would fain see realized in substance’ (ibid.). Thus Schiller concludes his *Letters*.

In sum, the line of argument just traced may be stated as follows. *First*, reflecting upon the savagery and barbarity of our modern condition, Schiller finds that some ‘support’ is needed to effect a reconciliation of our natural and moral characters. This support, he says, is art, but not merely empirical aesthetic culture. We need a kind of art, rather, expressive of the ‘pure rational concept of beauty’, which, *second*, Schiller goes on to ‘deduce’. Yet in experience, Schiller claims – *third* – this pure concept is not one but two, appearing as both melting and energizing ‘types of beauty’ which he promises to discuss in turn. Starting with melting beauty, *fourth*, he traces the origin of this beauty in the human psyche through a discussion of our movement from passive to active determinability – from an unlimited condition, through an interaction with limits (and so contradiction), to the achievement of a new aesthetic ‘wholeness’ where all contradictions are, ideally, resolved – or so to say, ‘melted’. Finally, *fifth*, he returns to the terrain of experience to develop a purportedly empirical account of how this ‘psychic’ reconciliation has been manifest in history, culminating in the ‘aesthetic state’ where all contradictions, covered now in a ‘veil of decorum’, are wholly melted and resolved.

Yet where, in this picture, is energizing beauty? Where is the sublime? Finally, it is absent. To understand why, as I’ve claimed, one must consider Schiller’s two quite different

¹² On Schiller’s notion of the aesthetic state – its roots and influence on subsequent German thought – see ‘Schiller: The Theory of the Aesthetic State’ in Josef Chytrý’s monumental study *The Aesthetic State: A Quest in Modern German Thought* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1989).

accounts of the sublime, and the ways in which his arguments there are and are not compatible with his *Letters*.

Schiller's essays on the sublime

Schiller's essay *On the Sublime* (OS) was published in 1793, having been composed some time before the Terror. Schiller's tone here, one might say, is innocent. The *reality* of objects judged sublime, as I suggested above, is treated as of little account, for Schiller's main interest seems to be the production of a sublime *effect* in tragic drama and poetry. In all these respects, we shall see, this first essay differs markedly from Schiller's later effort in CS.

As in the *Letters*, Schiller's approach in OS is schematic and reliant upon a multitude of distinctions. He begins by redesignating Kant's mathematical and dynamical sublime respectively as the 'theoretical' and 'practical' sublime – the better to ensure, as he puts it, that 'the sphere of the sublime is exhausted by this division' (24). A peaceful ocean is an example of the former; it points to something seemingly infinite and appeals to our 'cognitive instinct'. A stormy ocean, in turn, exemplifies the latter, pointing to an object of fear and appealing to our 'instinct for self-preservation' (25). This latter instinct, Schiller continues, 'clamors much more loudly than the cognitive instinct does', for here we fear losing our very 'existence in the world of the senses', not just some 'single notion' (26). And so the practical sublime is more powerful than the theoretical; a point, of course, reminiscent of Kant. And indeed much of Schiller's presentation here is strikingly Kantian – the subtitle of the essay being, indeed, 'Toward the Further Development of Some Kantian Ideas'. The practical sublime, to which the remainder of the essay is devoted, must not be something we can tame or control by means of our 'inventive intellect' (say, by technology; 28); it must be frightening, but must not arouse actual fear for our security (we must be 'safe'; 30); it must lead us *physically* to succumb to whatever object it depicts, yet *rationaly* to rise above it (35).

Half-way through the essay, Schiller identifies 'three sorts of things that we distinguish in the representation of the sublime': '*first*, the power of some natural object; *second*, the relation of this power to our capacity to resist it physically; *third*, the relation of this power to the moral person within us' (35). Two types of the practical sublime, or 'the sublimity of power', are distinguished on this basis: the *contemplative sublime*, which presents only the first of these elements and leaves the other two to our imagination; and the *pathetic sublime*, which sets all three elements before us (36). The essay concludes with a consideration of each.

The contemplative sublime is neither as widespread as the pathetic (for not everyone has enough imagination to fill out the two missing elements) nor as powerful (for it is all-too easy to imagine ourselves controlling the object in question; 37). Representations of abysses, storms, volcanoes and floods are all, in themselves, contemplatively sublime; even ‘neutral’ phenomena such as quietness, emptiness, or a sudden flash of light, and ‘indeterminate’ ideas such as time, necessity and duty may all fit the bill, rightly portrayed. These ideas and images must have some basis in the real, though again we must be safe from them. Yet if we know we are safe, how can we fear these images? And how can they be sublime? Here Schiller recounts a kind of myth of human origins: ‘[f]or humanity in its infancy’, he writes, ‘everything unusual is terrifying ... [and] the preservation instinct is [almost always] at work meeting this attack’ (38). It is ‘culture’ – both ‘physical’ and ‘moral’ – which finally dispels this constant fear, though ‘not so completely that no trace of it remains in the aesthetic contemplation of nature, where people deliberately give themselves up to the play of fantasy’ (ibid.). We may exploit this ‘trace’ of chaotic times past, that is, for laudable, moral ends, even if we have, as Schiller implies, progressed almost wholly beyond them.

The effect of Schiller’s pathetic sublime broadly parallels that of the contemplative, even if the mechanics of the encounter are somewhat different. For the pathetic sublime, by portraying all three of Schiller’s sublime elements, *necessarily* engages our preservation instinct where the contemplative sublime simply makes this *possible* (41). We ‘must’ empathize with the fear, fright and anxiety we see portrayed. Yet this empathy extends only so far, for it seems that finally, as in our experience of the contemplative sublime, we remain safe within ourselves – for we *ourselves* must not suffer (ibid.). We may witness a shipwreck, say, be it on stage or in the harbor, but we are not on the ship.

The character of Schiller’s second essay, *Concerning the Sublime* (CS), is very different. In certain moments, one feels one is reading Nietzsche – almost. Though probably composed not long after OS, and certainly after the Terror (scholars have dated its composition between 1794-6, though I question this claim below), it seems to hail from a different age, and, as surely one may say, its author is no longer innocent. Schiller begins by evoking images of violence and compulsion. Man is ‘surrounded by countless forces’, he writes, ‘all superior to him and all playing the master over him’ (70-1). Yet to suffer such compulsion passively is to renounce our humanity, for *as human we are free* – and this because we are ‘the sort of entity that wills’ (71). If in even one instance man is ‘necessitated to do what he does not want to do’ – even if only in

death – then truly he is not free. Our only hope to overcome this world of compulsion and its many forces, then, including death, is to achieve a degree of moral cultivation sufficient to enable us ‘to submit to it voluntary’, and in so doing, ‘destroy’ it (72). We must learn, that is, to will sublimely; not to desire beautiful and good objects as such (mere harmony), but to desire *that* the objects presented to us *be* beautiful and good, even if in fact (as most often shall happen) they are not. Even when this desire goes unfulfilled, one possessed of a sublime disposition will feel no pain. For such a one never *expected*, in reality, that things would be good and beautiful, only *desired* that they should be (73).

The mixed emotion associated with the sublime – a mixture of ‘anguish’ and ‘happiness’ – is alone, Schiller writes, that which ‘establishes our moral self-sufficiency’ (74), by enabling us to ‘want what our instincts abhor and to spurn what they desire’ (75). Moral cultivation, to this extent, consists largely in our learning to experience this sublime emotion spontaneously, and to prefer it to the unmixed, harmonious pleasure of the beautiful. For indeed there is no harmony in the sublime; ‘[h]ere the physical and the moral sides of the human being are severed from one another in the sharpest possible way’ (ibid.). Yet only when such harmony is *absent*, it seems, can one be certain of a person’s moral character. For when a person who is sensitive only to the beautiful – say, one whose faculties are wholly ‘melted’ and reconciled – when such a person conducts himself morally, one cannot be sure whether this is not a consequence of the mere pleasure he takes in beauty. But ‘suppose’, Schiller writes, ‘this very same man suddenly suffers a great misfortune’; suppose he is robbed, defamed and taken ill. If even then, against every inclination and beset by dissonance, ‘he is the exact same man ... then, of course, no explanation on the basis of the *concept of nature* is any longer sufficient’ (76). The sublime, then, appears as ‘a point of departure from the sensuous world’ (77); it comes as a shock, never gradually, and in a single moment can tear to shreds every ‘net of sophisticated sensuousness’ – every ‘web of deception’ – and cut through even the ‘seductive dress of spiritual beauty’ (77). For beauty, Schiller writes, is merely ‘our nursemaid in childhood’; we must ‘mature’, and develop finally ‘a sensitivity to the grandeur and sublimity in things’ (78).

The most distinctive claims made in CS, however, and the ones which Schiller concludes the essay, concern the nature of world history. For here there is no sense of humanity’s having progressed beyond some initial natural state of fear. Rather, Schiller characterizes the whole of history – including the ‘murky anarchy of the moral world’ – as a spectacle of ‘audacious

disorder' and 'confusion', more akin to 'the untamed and bizarre character of physical creation' (79) than the order and harmony of 'a well-run inn' (80). By 'world history' Schiller seems to mean everything phenomenal, whether human or natural, apprehended as a single 'historical object'; in a certain sense, that is, as a *sublime* object. From such a perspective, he continues, world history 'is at bottom nothing but the conflict of natural forces among themselves and with human freedom' (81). The significance for Schiller of this new, non-progressive conception of history is, of course, moral. For by giving up our efforts to 'bring this lawless chaos of phenomena under some cognitive unity', these phenomena, thus apprehended as a single chaotic spectacle, appear as 'an all the more accurate sensuous image for pure reason' (80). For certainly we, who desire so ardently to press past every limit of imagination and understanding to arrive at reason beyond, *we* cannot finally, merely be *that* – i.e. the chaos of history. By the starkness of the contrast we are driven all the more surely into the intelligible, moral realm. By developing, *through art*, such a habit of willing sublimely – by contemplating from a safe aesthetic perch even this greatest of sublime objects, world history itself, and the many examples it contains of 'humanity *wrestling* with fate' (83) – we shall find, Schiller writes, that 'when a serious misfortune finally does arise in the midst of imagined and artificial ones, [we] are in a position to treat it *as* an artificial one and transform actual suffering into a sublime emotion – a human being can soar no higher!' (ibid.). Schiller concludes his discussion with a stunning passage; it is hard, almost, to imagine that this too was written by the author of the *Letters*:

Away, then, with the coddling that is based upon a false understanding and with the frail, pampered taste that throws a veil over the stern face of necessity and, in order to put itself in a sensuously advantageous position, *lies* about some sort of harmony between well-being and good behavior, a harmony of which there are no traces in the real world. On brow after brow cruel fate shows itself to us. There is salvation for us, not in ignorance of the dangers camped around us – for ultimately this ignorance must come to an end – but only in the *acquaintance* with those dangers. To make this acquaintance we are helped along by the terrifying and magnificent spectacle of change destroying everything and re-creating it and then destroying it once again, a spectacle of ruin at times eating slowly away at things, other times suddenly assaulting them (83)¹³.

¹³ Hayden White, in his essay 'The Politics of Historical Interpretation: Discipline and Desublimation' (In Hayden White, *The Content and the Form* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1990]) reproduces this same passage as evidence for his claim that Schiller's account of the sublime (at least in CS, but he does not specify) 'joins the notion of the historical sublime to the kind of response that would authorize a totally different kind of politics'. White's essay is not primarily concerned with Schiller, but with the emergence of history as an academic discipline in the modern period and the process of 'desublimation' – in Schiller's language, perhaps, the effort to 'bring [the] lawless chaos

And so the sublime, as a sign of the ‘daemonic freedom’ (ibid.) by which we elevate ourselves above every real misfortune and indeed the whole phenomenal order, ‘must come to the assistance of the beautiful in order to make the *aesthetic education* a complete whole ... [lest we] lose sight of our permanent vocation and our true fatherland’ (84).

At least two differences between these essays are apparent. The first has been suggested already: namely, their respective attitudes toward history. The myth of human origins in OS served to gather together all the fears arising from our natural condition, then place these decisively behind us in an imagined, pre-cultural past. Such a myth is nowhere to be found in CS. For there, the apparent phenomenal chaos from which these fears arose is treated as still reflective of our natural condition today – not as a ‘trace’ or instinctual residue, but as itself the manifest character of our experience. Sublime emotion, therefore, does not merely dredge up these primal fears from a safe and sure remove; rather, it grants us the resolve actively to face, again and again, the many ‘dangers camped around us’, willing anew in each moment to overcome them – first as semblance, and then, soon and thereafter, as realities.

A second difference concerns what one commentator has called ‘the presence of the other’¹⁴. In OS, as I’ve suggested, Schiller’s accounts of both the contemplative and the pathetic sublime seem to focus on the effect of sublime representations, almost without regard for their relation to reality. We stand on the shore as the ship founders, then consider, as it were in a detached mode, what lessons this scene might hold for us. The account in CS is different from this in two respects. First, though certainly we must maintain some distance from a sublime object if our reason is to be awakened, Schiller maintains that this object may well be history itself, or any of the innumerable and quite real historical instances of individual persons ‘wrestling with fate’. If so, then it seems we are, in some sense, *on the ship* – for this history is our own. Second, there is greater emphasis in CS on, so to say, the purpose of aesthetic education: namely that, having been educated to experience a sublime emotion in response to

of phenomena under some cognitive unity’ – which this entailed. Further work relevant to the political implications of my conclusions in these pages could well begin from this essay by White.

¹⁴ Hinnant (2002), p. 126. Hinnant’s essay is the only other piece I know of which treats Schiller’s two essays on the sublime directly. His aim is primarily political, i.e. to demonstrate that OS and CS ‘authorize’, in White’s sense (see n. 9 above) different kinds of politics, and to link this conclusion with recent conversations in postmodernist circles about ‘the political sublime’, especially as this relates to Lyotard’s reading of Kant. He does not discuss the *Letters*. For more on the postmodern notion of the political sublime see Ned O’Gorman’s ‘The Political Sublime: An Oxymoron’ (*Millennium Journal of International Studies* [2006] No. 34, pp. 889-915)

imagined tragedies, we should be all the more ready to experience this same emotion in response to real ones – and so to rise above them. In this sense, perhaps, an education through art becomes an education *for resistance*; resistance to every natural circumstance that would compel and determine our will.

Conclusion

My claim has been that the account of the sublime in OS could have fit into Schiller's *Letters*, while the later account in CS could not, or could not so easily. Three reasons for thinking this is so present themselves. First, consider the relation between beauty and the sublime as conceived in the *Letters* and in these essays. In the *Letters*, as we saw, Schiller's recasting of this pair as in fact two 'types of beauty' – melting and energizing – seems intended to minimize the distinction by holding both together as ideally indistinguishable aspects of the single pure rational concept of beauty. The sublime of OS could well fit this picture, for the sublime objects there cited as examples are both decisively removed from reality and in many cases quite abstract – e.g., time, duty, emptiness. Their effect could indeed be 'energizing', it seems, in a relatively gentle or motivational way. The sublime of CS, however, is different. Its effect is violent; our (mere) attachment to the beautiful must be overcome no less surely than our attachment to a nursemaid. In the *Letters* Schiller calls for a 'veil of decorum' to be thrown over our 'naked' physical desires (178); in CS, he calls, in effect, for it to be cast off (83). The sublime of CS challenges the beautiful, demanding in every instance that its comforts be left behind or renegotiated. Certainly one could call this 'energizing', yet such a characterization seems too weak. For would one say that the prisoner dragged from Plato's Cave was 'energized' by the one who so violently compelled his ascent? The task of the sublime in CS seems to be, rather, the constant *disruption* of the harmony of our faculties. Such a thing as this could not well be classed as a 'type' of beauty in Schiller's sense.

Second, consider the comparison just made of these essays' conceptions of history. The first, progressive conception in OS seems to fit well with the *Letters*. For there too, in the discussion of 'passive determinability' and of our first, 'physical state', we have something like a myth of human origins, and there too we gain our freedom with the rise of 'culture'. Schiller's ideal three-stage conception of history, outlined in the *Letters*' fourth movement, is clearly progressive (leading from the physical through the aesthetic to the moral), as also is his more empirical three-part typology of 'states' outlined in the fifth (dynamical, aesthetic and ethical).

Indeed the whole spirit of the *Letters* is forward-looking, driving relentlessly as they do *through* the aesthetic *to* – as Schiller sees it, following Kant’s suggestion – the moral. As we’ve seen, the sublime of OS fits easily with this kind of forward movement, while the sublime of CS does not. This latter, later conception of the sublime would seem to speak against any ‘final’ achievement of a truly ‘ethical state’ – i.e. against any permanent reconciliation, even in the individual case – and to make such a state appear, if one may be forgiven an odd comparison, less like Kierkegaard’s ‘ethical stage’ (which one achieves and inhabits) and more like his ‘religious stage’ (into which one flashes beatifically and only occasionally). Our sublime willing of the moral law, in CS, seems always to be an achievement won in the face of encroaching danger – an heroic hoisting of the flag of truth on a chaotic battlefield – and not a ‘state’ one might finally settle into peacefully.

Third and finally, consider the fact that in CS, history itself is presented as a sublime object. I’ve suggested already that this gives rise to some ambiguity concerning the relation between historical reality and the aesthetic products (say, legends of heroism or downfall) produced on its basis. For are we in the ship or on the shore? Such ambiguity never arises in either OS, as we’ve seen, or in the *Letters*, where neither Schiller’s empirical nor certainly his transcendental perspectives seem to encompass anything like the vision of history presented in CS. Even the *Letters*’ more empirical moments are focused squarely, and merely, on the ‘effects’ of beauty, not the nature of history. Schiller’s focus in OS on the effects of the sublime could fit easily with this; his focus in CS on the real ‘confusion’ of history – even and especially *as* an aesthetic or sublime object – could not.

And so to return to the speculations with which I began: it seems that the Terror, occurring as it did between the compositions of OS and CS, worked a major effect on Schiller’s conceptions of history, of the sublime, and of the proper place of the sublime in his program of aesthetic education. The very existence of two such different treatments of the same subject, in the same decade, and with nearly identical titles – along with the fact that after 1793 OS was never republished – would seem to suggest that after 1793 Schiller no longer regarded his earlier, OS account as adequate. Yet as we’ve seen, CS fails in several key respects to fit with his *Letters* (published in 1795), despite its having allegedly been composed, according to current scholarly consensus, in the same period: between 1794 and 1796. CS was published in 1801: why, then,

have scholars argued for an earlier composition? Hinderer and Dahlstrom, in their volume of Schiller's essays, offer the following explanation:

The editors of the National Edition think it improbable, given its Kantian terms and agreement with *On the Sublime* and *On the Pathetic*, that this essay was drafted much later than these pieces. Its approximate date is accordingly set between 1794 and 1796 (70).

If my argument in these pages is correct, there are several fundamental *disagreements* between CS and OS, and despite the undoubted presence of 'Kantian terms' in CS, Schiller's reliance on Kant in this second essay is less pronounced than in first. If indeed the only evidence for dating the composition of CS to 1794-6 is, then, what Hinderer and Dahlstrom cite here, it seems that this dating should be revised. CS, it seems, was almost certainly composed *after* the *Letters* – in late 1795 or 1796 at the earliest, and perhaps later. Schiller's tone in CS, both with respect to beauty in general and his program of aesthetic education (i.e. 'the sublime must come to the assistance of the beautiful'; 84), seems almost critical of the *Letters*, and as we've seen there are several significant differences between the two works. In certain moments indeed, as I've suggested, it seems hard to believe that the same author produced both, let alone that he did so at precisely the same time. There seems to be no room in Schiller's *Letters* – and so no room in his program of aesthetic education – for the kind of 'daemonic freedom', or truly sublime willing, he portrays so vividly in CS, and one may wonder indeed whether there is room for such freedom in any liberal politics. Though that is a question for another day.

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