

WRITING AND ANALYSIS II

TERRY SCHENOLD / HS 112 / SPRING 2019



SCHILLER'S CONTEXT: REVOLUTIONARY TIDES

AMERICAN REVOLUTIONARY WAR
1775-1783

FRENCH REVOLUTION
1789-1799

INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTIONS
18th & 19th centuries



1. Revolt against political and religious institutions, dogmas, conventions, traditions, hierarchies
2. Assertion of Enlightenment values and humanistic concerns
3. Radical change of socio-technical environment, labor conditions, communication

SCHILLER: AESTHETIC EDUCATION, 1794

CONTEXT

French Revolution (1789-1799), “Reign of Terror” (~17k guillotined)
-Dec. of Rights of Man & Citizen (1793), Louis XVI beheaded, etc.

PROBLEM

Forming a free “moral society” *in idea* without succumbing to the violence of “physical society” (e.g. endless revolution, war, political oppression, etc.)?

What is the *GROUND* of a peaceful community or collectivity of free, creative individuals open to change?

SCHILLER'S ANSWER

Aesthetic Education / art & non-coercive development of “Man”

SEARCHING FOR A NEW GROUND

FAILED OPTIONS FOR 'TRUE POLITICAL FREEDOM'

1. philosophers/Science? ...too “cold hearted”
(philosophical argument and technical knowledge)
2. statesman/Politics? ...too “narrow hearted”
(treatises, manifestos, political rhetoric, legislation)
3. form of Government? ...cannot establish morality/humanity
(laws , institutions, protocols)
4. Reason *alone*? ...produces Enlightened barbarians
(individuals reasoning, logical analysis, etc.)

UNMENTIONED OPTIONS

- A. spiritual leaders/Religion?
(revelation, tradition, ritual, sacred texts)
- B. activists/Political Movements?
(practical activism, demonstrations, etc.)

KANT'S "AESTHETIC IDEAS"

INTUITIONS, CONCEPTS, IDEAS

1. Concepts can only be of intuitions (perceptions of things)
2. Ideas are *relational*, they do not correspond to intuitions (objects of sense)
3. Rational Ideas are thoughts that cannot be exemplified in experience or imagination (Kant: God, Freedom, Immortality of the Soul)
4. Aesthetic Ideas are "[representations] of the imagination that occasion much thinking, though without it being possible for any determinate thought, i.e., concept, to be adequate to [them]"

Ex. love, empathy, justice, democracy,.... Art

SCHILLER'S INSIGHT: AESTHETIC MEDIATION

Reason/“Moral character”

[Aesthetic Experience]

Senses/“Natural character”

“It is therefore not going far enough to say that the light of the understanding only deserves respect when it reacts on the character; to a certain extent it is from the character that this light proceeds; *for the road that terminates in the head must pass through the heart.*”

TRIADIC CHARACTER OF HUMANITY

NATURAL/PHYSICAL

1. Hobbesian, basically “selfish & violent,” tends to destroy sociality and toward self-interest/preservation
2. law of Nature; necessity, immediate needs and desires, variety

MORAL/RATIONAL

1. based in Reason and ideas, tends to unify, order
(but also mechanize, divide, etc.)
2. law of Freedom; autonomous, not visible

AESTHETIC

Art as a mediating function of our self-development / *Education* of our “sensibility”

SPIVAK: TRAINING THE *IMAGINATION*

RE-INTERPRETING THE PROBLEM

“Revolution did not last in the absence of subjects trained in the practice of freedom”

AESTHETIC EDUCATION & IMAGINATION

“*Aesthetic education is anything that trains imagination for epistemological performance - training the imagination for the construction of things to know. When you know something you construct it in a certain way. Training of the imagination for alternative epistemological performances.*”



ADORNO: "AESTHETIC THEORY," 1970

"[A]esthetics prove to be not so much obsolete as necessary. Art does not stand in need of an aesthetics that will prescribe norms where it finds itself in difficulty, but rather of an aesthetics that will provide the capacity for reflection, which art on its own is hardly able to achieve. Words such as material, form, and formation, which flow all too easily from the pens of contemporary artists, ring trite; to cure contemporary language of this is one of the art-practical functions of aesthetics. Above all, however, aesthetics is demanded by the development of artworks. If they are not timelessly self-same, but rather become what they are because their own meaning is a process of becoming, they summon forth forms of spirit - commentary and critique, for example - through which this process is fulfilled. These forms remain weak, however, so long as they do not reach the truth content of the works. They only become capable of this by being honed to aesthetics. *The truth content of an artwork requires philosophy.*"