ÆSTHETICS AND CIVILIZATION[1]

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The precise relationship of Schiller to Kant has given rise to a great deal of discussion, due partly to doubt concerning the meaning of Kant and partly perhaps to the terminology of Schiller, which is further complicated by the development of Schiller's thought from an earlier position to a fuller understanding of Kantism. Among others, it is a moot question whether Schiller actually realized his avowed intention of securing an objective principle of taste other than that of Kant. Berger, Kuno Fischer, Engel, Sommer, Walzel, Gneisse, Hettner, Tomaschek, Windelband, and Ueberweg, all consider that he did, or that he went beyond Kant in turning attention toward an objective principle. Kühnemann, in the beginning, denies that there is any real advance beyond Kant; later he maintains that Schiller, in the *Kallias*, does go beyond Kant by paving the way for a transition to the æsthetic objects. Opposed to these important authorities are Hermann Cohen, Otto Harnack, Geyer, and Rosalewski, who deny that Schiller goes in principle beyond Kant.[2] Rosalewski asserts that any such advance as that contemplated by Schiller would amount to an abandonment of the whole Kantian position. This seems to me to be correct.

Objectivity of æsthetic judgment means for Kant *eine erweiterte Denkart*[3] that transcends individuality while leaving the judgment subjective in the humanistic sense. The synthetic, nonempirical character of the judgment rests on the *a priori* universality of pleasure, which is attested in fact by every attempt of an inconsistent pluralism to communicate. The æsthetic objects in the spatial-temporal field are primarily materials which have been transformed and humanized by creative genius, so that they express or have the appearance of freedom and law in union.[4] Æsthetic interest in such objects

[1]Concluding section of the Presidential Address read before the annual meeting of the Southern Society for Philosophy and Psychology, March 30, 1923.

[2]This on the authority of Rosalewski (*Schillers Æsthetik im Verhältnis zur Kantischen*, S. 43ff). I have verified his statements for Berger, Walzel, Hettner, Tomaschek, Ueberweg, Cohen, Harnack, and for the earlier position of Kühnemann, but have not yet been able to obtain the works of the others mentioned here.

[3]*Critik der Urteilskraft*, 34, 40.

[4]As when the freedom of the artist and the law of gravity are found united in a beautiful building.

is restricted to this personal or human aspect—namely, the form—and primarily only the distinctively human is beautiful. If we say their conception of the interrelationship of values. For Kant morality is absolute subjection to the moral law, so that when, as happens empirically, inclination enters into the performance of an act, it is to that such externalizations are characterized by a high degree of unity in variety, by monarchical subordination, symmetry, proportion, etc., it seems we have only other general terms for the same fact. Unity, strictly taken, is nothing objective, and unity in variety must not be taken statically. We can mean only conative continuity, an organic coöperation of elements, such as expresses a free spirit, or, as both Kant and Schiller say, the ideal of humanity. Analysis will never reveal the ground of the beautiful object, the synthetic principle itself; for analysis this is a limit-notion, and in the world of phenomena, taken abstractly, freedom surely passeth all understanding. "Free" is not an analytic predicate; beauty is regulative, imperative, and metempirical. When Schiller, then, calls beauty the phenomenal presentation of freedom, he must mean such a constitution of the phenomenon or arrangement of its elements that during its contemplation an experience of spontaneity or freedom occurs in the subject;[5] and this seems to be precisely the meaning of Kant.

Beginning in the *Critik of Pure Reason* under Platonic influences, Kant moves (both in the schematism of *Pure Reason* and in his third great work) toward the position of the later Plato and Aristotle, showing, moreover, through his emphasis on the immanent aspect of the problem of knowledge, a certain leaning in the direction taken immediately by thought in panæsthetic, panlogism, and panthelism. The development in Schiller is similar. In constant intercourse with Fichte, Goethe, Wilhelm von Humboldt, and Koerner (and chiefly under the influence of Fichte), he overcomes the dualistic tendencies of Kant[6] until he comes to stand at times on the verge of absolute pantheism.[7] The very fact that he announced at various times the discovery of an objective principle other than that of Kant, and promised an analysis of beauty which was not forthcoming, indicates an originally pronounced dualism that lurks inertly here and there in his terminology after it has been in fact overcome. In contrast with the pantheistic, pagan attitude of Goethe, Schiller has been called a "Christian;" and in his conception of ethical development through the presentation of the ideal of humanity in æsthetic experience, together with his declaration that "Christianity is the only æsthetic reli-

[5]Schiller: *Briefe* (an Körner, October 25, 1794).
[6]Hegel: *Werke*, Bd. 10, S. 78.
[7]*Æsthetische Briefe*, Br. 11.

gion,"[8] we get definite suggestions of the close affiliation. On the whole, he may be called a "personal idealist," attempting to mediate between Kant and his friend, Goethe.

The difference between Schiller and Kant is seen fundamentally in that extent lacking in morality. Human beings may be virtuous, but never perfectly moral—that is, holy. For him morality is the supreme value. Schiller insists that Kant undervalues the sensibility; he opposes this rigorous, stoical Christianity with a conception of morality in which inclination and law are harmonized. Instead of making ethics supreme, he seems to waver between the subordination of ethics to æsthetics and a position that makes æsthetics ancillary.[9]

So far as the problem involved concerns us here, it is noteworthy that philosophers have either unified values in some scheme of subordination to a dominant interest or have coördinated them. Thus, Heraclitus, Socrates, Aristotle, Spinoza, Hegel, Comte, and Herbart subordinate all values to intellect. In the thought of Herbart (influenced by Schiller), ethics is subordinated to æsthetics; and Aristotle tends in the same direction. Scholasticism, Schleiermacher in his earlier period, Fichte and Schlegel in their later periods, and Hamann make religion the central value, to which morality, beauty, and truth are subordinated. Kant, Fichte in his earlier period, Lotze, Wundt, and Theodor Lipps (perhaps the foremost recent authority in æsthetics), all claim for ethics the subordinating function. Those who make æsthetic supreme are Schelling, Schlegel in his earlier period, Novalis, and Richard Wagner. Schleiermacher in his maturity, Herder, Krause, Muensterberg, and Johannes Volkelt are among those who regard these values as coördinate; but Volkelt, furthermore, subordinates all of them to love, taken in a broad way that recalls the divine Eros of Plato, and mentions Schiller as an exponent of the same point of view.

The maturest and noblest morality displays itself, according to Vol-

[8] Cf. "Hält man sich an den eigentümlichen Charakterzug des Christentums, der es von allen monotheistischen Religionen unterscheidet, so liegt er in nichts anderm als in der *Aufhebung des Gesetzes* oder des Kantischen Imperativs, an dessen Stelle das Christentum eine freie Neigung gesetzt haben will. Es ist also in seiner reinen Form Darstellung *schöner* Sittlichkeit oder der Menschwerdung des Heiligen, und in diesem Sinn die einzige *ästhetische;* daher ich es mir auch erkläre, warum diese Religion bei der weiblichen Natur so viel Glück macht, und nur in Weibern noch in einer gewissen erträglichen Form angetroffen wird." Briefwechsel zwischen Schiller und Goethe, Stuttgart, 1881, p. 67, Letter 86, Jena, August 17, 1795.

[9] Since neither *aversion* nor *inclination* enters into morality in the Kantian sense, Schiller's oft-quoted joke in the famous distich, as Kuno Fischer says, fails in a way to reach its mark. Perhaps, as some insist, Schiller means that ultimate morality—which is for empirical humanity only a far-off goal—is æsthetic, while æsthetic experience serves indirectly to bring about some approximation of the ideal.

kelt, where good will has its source in love for the good. Æsthetic enjoyment is loving self-surrender to a natural object, to a work of art and to the artist. The creative activity of the artist himself is a loving cultivation and fostering development of his creations; and not merely the artist, but also every serious observer, is thrilled with the love of beauty. The most exalted sense of religious unity is love of God, while in the province of knowledge the ideal is realized only through devotion, or where, as he puts it, "the heart of the investigator is filled with a sacred love of truth."

"In view of these circumstances," he continues, "reflection may bring the insight that absolute value has a content intimately related to love, or, rather, analogous to love. Pursuing this line of thought further, we should come to the assumption that the significance of all reality consists in the disclosure and realization by absolute mind of a content analogous to that which manifests itself in the finite as love. The essence of absolute mind would be found in an infinite striving toward the realization of love, and we should come down ultimately to a metaphysics of love. In such event we should find ourselves in close contact with the later philosophy of Fichte, and might also be reminded of the ideals of the youthful Schiller[10] and of Jean Paul. Above all, it is clear that a metaphysics which should take this general direction, dimly aware of its goal, would find itself in harmony with the central thought of Christianity."[11]

Fortunately, it is not necessary to settle this difficult question in order to accept in the main Schiller's contention for the paramount importance of æsthetic in education and life. Many who have not accorded æsthetics the central position of Schiller have insisted almost as strongly on its educational significance. Thus, Wundt, from a different point of view, says: "Art is not the preliminary stage to science, but its necessary complement, since the two activities mutually affect each other. Just as every true artist is a thinker, so no genuine thinker can dispense with imagination. The object of art is not reality as it appears, but ideal reality; so that we must say, contrary to the doctrine of Plato, that art, because of its concreteness, is infinitely nearer to reality than either science or philosophy. In so far as art brings this fuller expression of reality, it reacts upon life to make it nobler. The highest end of art is to create in the beholder a lasting æsthetic mood, which accompanies all his activity, having the tendency to make his own life, for him and for others, a work of art.[12]

[10]Cf. the poems: "Die Liebe," "Laura am Klavier," and "Die Künstler."

[11]Volkelt: *System der Æsthetik*, Bd. 3, S. 535. Ueberweg (*Geschichte der Philosophie*, Bd. IV, p. 480) calls attention to the similar attitude of Robert Browning.

[12]Wundt: *System der Philosophie*, S. 654ff.

Schiller's doctrine of æsthetic education, though developed from the platform of Kant, in which it is given only less explicitly, is not in conflict with any theory of life which recognizes æsthetic value; and while experimental verification of many of the points at issue would be interesting, it seems plain that such verification as is possible could be furnished only by a thorough trial. The whole matter of æsthetic education, like education in general, would seem, after all, to be largely a matter of experiment and faith. In Germany itself, however, faith in the tradition of Plato, Aristotle, Kant, and Schiller has persisted, influencing in particular the pedagogy of Herbart;[13] and it was still strong enough at the beginning of the present century to give birth to an elaborate program of democratic, cultural education, supported by several special publications and fostered by leading authorities in philosophy and psychology. This movement is by no means a haphazard, light-hearted adventure designed to produce genius and art according to rule, as may have been the thought of similar experiments; nor does it rest to-day on a merely speculative foundation. It is a sober, scientific effort, which brings to the solution of its problem all the resources of psychology, experimental pedagogy, anthropology, history of art, etc.—a systematic effort to help to its realization a tendency for rendering all phases of life æsthetic that may be observed in sporadic, unsystematic forms even among the most primitive peoples.

Among other things stressed by this movement is the development of a tolerable æsthetic environment, particularly for the young; and some approximation to such an end has actually been attained through genuine coöperation with manufacturers and publishers, so that ugly art-products, inferior music, inferior literature, etc., have been largely replaced by inexpensive copies of genuine works of earlier art and by artistic modern originals. Since experimentation has established that the child's interest in art-works at first is almost completely logical and unæsthetic, being directed almost exclusively to the content, he is taught what to look for by having his attention directed to the formal elements of a given work in the relative order of difficulty for him. He is introduced, for example, in painting, first of all to color problems, then to the ways of presenting life and movement, then to linear and aërial perspective, to the embodiment of moods, etc. Moreover, since it is not enough merely to call the attention passively to these elements, such teaching as this is reinforced by emphasis, both in and out of school, on beautiful writing, drawing,

[13]Seen, for example, in Herbart's insistence on the value of Greek culture for various stages of education, in which he is in agreement with Kant also; cf. Herbart: *Pädagogische Schriften*, Bd. 2, S. 7, 184-200, 214-217, 260, 373, 381, 399-400.

modeling, painting, music, manual-art products, etc. The purpose here is not merely to establish desirable practical coördination, but mainly, as in the Swedish Sloyd, to develop a more exact knowledge of forms and to teach the eye and ear, respectively, to attend to finer differentiations of color, modeling, tone, harmony, rhythm, etc., necessary to appreciation.[14]

Likewise, as a basis for the thorough appreciation possible only to those active to such a degree in a given field that they are familiar with the artist's problems and the legitimate possibilities of a given material, an effort has been made to develop a popular art; while for the general improvement of taste in all fields especial significance is attached to the popular writing of poetry, to the presentation of drama by clubs of amateurs, and to the development of industrial art. The aim in the last case is to stimulate the creation of a native art tradition, like that of Japan, by encouraging careful, artistic handiwork and by discouraging emphatically haste and the ugly *imitation* of Turkish carpets, Chinese embroideries, bronzes, and furniture of other periods and other countries. Hand in hand with all this and other suggestive details too numerous to mention, there has gone systematic agitation, in the spirit of William Morris, for tasteful interior decoration in the homes of all classes—a determined attempt to eradicate the current notion that cheap things *must* be ugly, and in any case to replace the quantitative standards of a diseased industrialism with qualitative ones. These ideas, disseminated and popularized systematically through courses of lectures by experts and by large assemblies of artists, scientists, and laymen, constitute a thoroughgoing plan of auxiliary education that has passed beyond the trial stage. I have even been told by one competent observer (formerly a professor in Harvard) of lectures on Bach thoroughly appreciated by factory workingmen in their recreation hour.

Without regarding such a project as a panacea for the evils of industrialism, and also without harboring illusions concerning quick returns here or elsewhere in education, it seems that this general matter of æsthetic development is worthy of much more serious consideration than it has ever received in American educational plans. It seems worthy of attention in view of a traditional low level of taste with us and because of its probable bearing on initiative, which is supposed to be the pre-condition of any real democracy; but it seems increasingly important in the presence of actual and imminent social conditions which apparently represent for the whole modern world a much-aggravated 1795.

[14] Aristotle (*Rhet.* 1366) had already considered drawing as of value in education in so far as it trained the eye to perceive beauty.

The dangers of extreme differentiation of social function, which, in lieu of corresponding integration, tends to isolate men—the fact emphasized by Schiller and alluded to only recently by William James in connection with his moral substitute for war—are doubtless far more serious to-day than they were in 1795; but the differentiation is unavoidable, and the present emphasis on individual difference in education will, of course, carry us farther in the same direction. The daily life of many individuals, however, particularly of the laboring class, has become in this evolution singularly empty of value; for joy in labor depends not so much on ability to do a certain thing—in being a round peg in a round hole—as from the faith that what is done is worth doing apart from any material reward. The laborer now works, and he *can* work, only for his wages—that is, he puts in his time reluctantly and "breaks the decalogue," as Carlyle said, "with every stroke of his hammer." His only resource seems to be an abstract, mechanically organized, blind socialism, which stands opposed by an equally abstract, traditional individualism, whose acutest problem everywhere is coöperation and organization. In contrast with the civilization of Greece, where even the artisan was a genuine artist, our inferiority is manifest, in spite of apparent intellectual and material advance; and there is evidence enough to suggest that industrialism, with its eyes on training rather than on education, may become the Frankenstein of Western culture.

Reverence for genius, respect for position as such, and responsibility of leadership seem to have vanished, as the living forms of a previous age have been gradually rationalized into insignificance; and, as in the eighteenth century, there are no longer any mysteries or any gods. In the eighteenth century, with opposition to form rampant and with rationalism everywhere in the ascendant, it is remarkable that rationalists themselves resorted wholesale to the mysterious ceremonies of numerous secret orders for æsthetic satisfaction no longer vouchsafed them by the traditional sources of institutional life;[15] and, amid the isolation and unrest of the present, it is interesting to note similar evidence to show that the æsthetic nature driven out with a tool ever comes running back.

In Schiller's day, and not long ago in many parts of Europe, it was still possible for the artisan to have the æsthetic and social satisfaction that goes with the construction of a whole shoe; but now he spends his existence in the uninspiring drudgery of perhaps punching eyeholes for the shoestring. He is chained to a machine of which he has become a mechanical part, just as his master is often chained to a Wall-Street ticker; and the life of neither, as Professor Fullerton,

[15] Cf. Cohn: *Allgemeine Æsthetik*, S. 242, 247; and Rodin: *L'Art*, p. 285.

in his *Handbook of Ethical Theory*, notes, is essentially different from that of the savage, who also has neither leisure nor inclination for culture. Henry George, who knew the life of the laborer at first hand, claims, indeed, that the life of the Hottentot is preferable; and Stevenson fled from another stratum of Philistinism to a refuge in Samoa. For men engaged in special research, the situation is, in many cases, such as to justify the scathing denunciation of Nietzsche, who, at any rate, has put a searching finger on some very sore spots in modern civilization.[16]

Here in America we are facing the future world crisis with a startling world record for major crimes, addiction to opium, etc., and with methods of social control weak or in a state of collapse. We are moving toward it with a system of higher education that has frankly ceased to be cultural and that has been declared by a recent symposium of experts to be in a chaotic condition; with sectarianism that is surprisingly intolerant and, for various causes, largely nonfunctioning; with latent racial and class antagonisms; and with manifold other phenomena that in their cumulative effect suggest serious disintegration. Doubtless it would be easy to attach undue importance to many of these that are temporary or which owe their appearance to greater publicity rather than to demoralization. One does not need to be hysterical, however, to perceive that unless genuine, enduring community spirit can somehow be engendered, nationally and internationally, political chaos, communism, and the ruin of what we have called "Western culture" are inevitable. The logic of history may, indeed, hold the course indicated by Spengler in a brilliant book.[17]

If to do were as easy as to know what were good to be done, more confidence might be placed in the merely rationalistic plans of reconstruction on which many are pinning their faith in the crisis, as they did in radical, post-Revolutionary France; but plainly something more than cold calculation, or prosaic, slavish subjection to law, or cold-blooded legislative reform, is needed to meet the present world-wide demand for a fundamental motivation and orientation of life. Not long ago an American professor of philosophy suggested that the crying need of our times is a return to the ethics of Kant; while in Germany itself, where even amid chaos a new six-volume popular inter-

[16] "I saw," he says, in a typical passage, "men who were nothing more than a large ear, or a large mouth, or a large belly. I looked at one of these, hardly believing my eyes, and said to myself: 'That is an ear, an ear as large as a man;' but when I looked more closely, I saw something pitifully small, moving underneath the ear, and, as sure as you live, the ear was on a thin, slender stalk, and that stalk was the man himself. Under the microscope I was just able to make out an envious little face and a puffed-up little soul, dangling from the stalk. The masses told me that this was not only a man, but even a great man and a genius. However, I do not trust the verdict of the masses. It was an inverted cripple." *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, Part 2, Chapter 20, Von der Erloesung.

[17] *Der Untergang des Abendlandes.*

pretation of Kant is just appearing, the slogan is: "Back to Kant and Fichte, Schiller and Goethe, the sources of our strength."[18]

In a way, however, we have already held in America to an heroic ideal like that of Kant; so that, perhaps, without losing sight of it entirely, something more adapted to the needs of empirical men should be considered. It seems rather that, just as the stoicism of Kant developed into the more humane philosophy of Schiller, with its emphasis on art as a fundamental factor in education and life, so also the Puritanical background of our national life should be frankly transformed into something more urbane and humanly possible, or it may lead to disastrous hypocrisy and cynicism. The ends of Puritanism, at least with men in the present stage of development, may be approximated, perhaps, not by laws to enforce laws until they shall perchance result in mechanical habits, but rather through a general disposition for good fellowship and human brotherhood, which seems to be as much a matter of education through refinement of taste as it is of creed, contract, and direct moral training. The question whether æsthetic value must remain caviare for the general can hardly be settled satisfactorily until at least a loyal attempt has been made to bring the masses within the reach of genuine art, instead of surrendering their alleged incapacity to commercial exploitation and stupid censorship; but meanwhile, surely, no theory of life should be allowed to dehumanize it for anybody.

We are informed by Mommsen that the extreme individualism upon which the political life of the Greeks eventually went to pieces was long held in check by the community of their æsthetic experience, so that all observable tendencies toward a national union among them are seen to depend, not upon immediate political factors at all, but only on play and art.[19] In this respect their problem—the synthesis of individualism and socialism in some form that shall take adequate account of both principles in genuine civilization—is the one still facing a civilization that has inherited their individualism minus the spiritual bond of their cultural disposition.

For Western culture in general the situation seems eminently critical, while for us Americans, because of our cultural handicap, the solution of the problem is especially difficult, in spite of many merely apparent

[18] Wilhelm Stapel: *Kants Kritik der reinen Vernunft, ins Gemeindeutsche übersetzt*, Bd. 1, S. 10.

[19] *Roemische Geschichte*, Bd. 1, S. 29. Recent writers on political science (cf. Garner, *Introduction to Political Science*, p. 45ff) call attention to literature—in the broad sense an imperfect form of art—as an important element in the concept of nationality, without, however, so far as I am aware, suggesting just how this element functions, and without mention of the comparative value of different literatures; but art (as Dunning, *History of Political Theories*, Chap. VIII, suggests) transcends nationality and may be, in the interest of true civilization, opposed to it finally.

advantages. At any rate, in the present search for instincts and tendencies to be resolved in order to produce harmony in the individual and the group, we, especially, can hardly afford to overlook, as we have in the past, the fair instinct of play which Schiller takes to be the surest foundation for fair play in the ordinary sense. To those devoted to the merely strenuous life—to the Puritan, the industrial, and the Philistine—a program of æsthetic education, even as auxiliary, will hardly fail to appear like a gospel of relaxation and self-indulgence, from which serious people must hold themselves aloof; but to those initiated into the humanity of genuine art, where, in the language of Nietzsche, "the veil of Maya is rent and the bond between man and man is firmly knitted,"[20] the value of such a project will seem almost self-evident. Finally, it is not necessary to interpret this as a substitute for education in other special senses nor for religious endeavor. It is essential merely to come to the clear insight that until the æsthetic element has permeated all socializing functions they must remain largely in a state of inefficiency.

[20] *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, Chap. 1, p. 24.