In The Idea of Freedom
ed. Alan Ryan
OUP 1979

PATRICK GARDINER

Freedom as an Aesthetic Idea

Schiller's *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* is a complex and intricate work which can be interpreted in many ways and in which various themes are to be found interwoven and combined. Though rich in content and fluent in exposition, it does not follow the pattern of a rigorous or firmly structured argument, but rather pursues an open and serpentine course; ideas taken up at one point are allowed to recede into the background at others, only to be brought forward again – often in a transfigured form – at later stages of the discussion. At the same time, it can be said to reflect a host of different preoccupations, some deriving from the period of political and ideological crisis during which it was composed, and some from stresses in the author's own temperament and the problems that confronted him as a highly self-conscious and self-critical artist; while these contribute to the vitality and suggestiveness of the book, the multiplicity of issues to which they give rise does not always make for easy understanding. None the less, two concerns may be picked out as central to Schiller's project, both primarily philosophical in character, and both drawing inspiration from doctrines recently advanced by Kant. The first involved the concept of human freedom, the second the distinctive nature of aesthetic judgement and experience. Whereas, however, Kant had been largely content to consider these topics in relative independence and as raising quite separate questions, it was one of Schiller's prime objects in the *Aesthetic Letters* to relate them and to exhibit them as intimately connected.

At first sight this might seem a strange, even quixotic, enterprise. Freedom, it might be claimed, essentially has to do with action and the will and with the relation in which men stand to other human beings; as such, it can only properly be discussed and examined in a moral or social context where practical decisions and the possibility of implementing these are in question. What conceivable relevance can it have to the sphere of aesthetics, the realm of taste and feeling and of private enjoyment of beauty? Does not the latter, of its very essence, fall outside the domain of the practical?

Schiller himself was fully alive to such objections, as indeed he had good reason to be. For some of them could be said to follow directly from a consideration of Kant's own theory of freedom, in which the idea of will was given priority of place and to which the conception of man as a being capable of determining his conduct in certain morally desirable ways was fundamental. Human freedom was portrayed by Kant as involving a capacity to act independently of the promptings of desire or inclination. It was, moreover, closely tied to morality through the notion of autonomy: Kant implied that it was only in so far as a man chose to make his actions conform to principles which he himself prescribed as binding upon all rational beings that what he did could properly and in the full sense be described as free. Thus an account had been offered which seemed, not merely to treat freedom as a precondition of morally praiseworthy action, but to identify the former with the conception of an autonomous rationality that altogether transcended the sphere of natural feeling and desire: 'what else', Kant rhetorically asked at one point, '. . . can freedom of will be but autonomy – that is, the property which will has of being a law to itself?'[1] The outcome was an ethic never perhaps surpassed in the uncompromising austerity of its demands, often giving the impression that the manifestation of any kind of spontaneous sentiment or sympathetic feeling necessarily detracted from the moral worth of behaviour. And the doctrine of freedom which it embodied as an integral part appeared to be hardly less severe in its ultimate implications. For it apparently involved the claim that freedom could only be truly or 'positively' achieved by overcoming the 'sensuous' elements that characterised man as a causally governed creature of nature, and by conforming instead to the self-imposed laws of pure reason. From this it was natural to conclude that its attainment entailed a continual inner struggle: Kant spoke with approval of the 'compulsion' (*Zwang*) exercised by the moral law and of the way in which, through its opposition to 'subjective inclinations', it struck down and humbled our 'self-conceit'. Such metaphors were revealing. For in a general way the picture Kant drew of moral experience was imbued with the ideas of conflict and division, man's sensuous passions and proclivities being presented as forces which it was incumbent upon him to master and subdue if he was to realise himself as a rational being.

It must be admitted that Kant's account of freedom was not without a certain ambiguity, having two aspects which he did not always sufficiently distinguish. It was one thing to argue that it was always within a man's power not to follow his natural impulses and inclinations and to act instead according to principles prescribed by his reason alone. It was another to claim that it was only when he so chose that his actions could legitimately be dignified as free. Yet, on Kant's own showing, it was presumably entirely possible for him to decide otherwise. Furthermore, if he took such a course, he could be described as having chosen to give free expression to his natural desires in a manner that would have been denied to them if he had opted for moral autonomy in Kant's sense: from this point of view (it might be contended) to reserve for the latter the title of 'true freedom' was tantamount to giving priority to one sort of freedom at the expense of another. Kant himself sometimes recognised the distinction in question through the contrast he drew between *Willkür* (free or 'arbitrary' will) and *Wille* (autonomous practical reason); he did not, however, always do so, and in any case it was the sense in which freedom was equated with rational self-determination that he tended to stress. Nevertheless the difference remains and is important, not least for its bearing upon Schiller's reaction to the Kantian theory.

[1] *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, trans. H. J. Paton (New York, 1964), p. 114.

Along with many of his contemporaries, Schiller was from the first profoundly impressed by Kant's conception of the human will as a 'vital power' capable of rising above the realm of natural necessitation, and it was one that continued to haunt him. As he wrote in an essay published towards the end of his life, when he was discussing the concept of the sublime: 'We are ravished by the terrifying because we are able to will that which our sensuous impulses are appalled by, and can reject what they desire . . . We gladly subordinate our well-being and our existence to physical necessity, for we are reminded thereby that it cannot command our principles. Man is in its hands, but man's will is in his own hands.'[2] Further, as some of Schiller's earlier essays on dramatic criticism make clear, this notion played a crucial role in his interpretation of tragedy. The tragic hero, he suggested, was most effectively represented by one who withstood or overcame the forces of nature, whether these took the form of powerful inner urges or whether they manifested themselves externally in the shape of seductive or threatening circumstances. The dramatist could thereby exhibit in the clearest light the capacity of human beings to assert their independence of the 'blind necessity' that governed the natural order, the suffering en-

[2] *Two Essays by Friedrich von Schiller: Naive and Sentimental Poetry and On the Sublime*, trans. J. A. Elias (New York, 1966), p. 199.

tailed thereby only serving to underline the sense of wonder appropriate to a vindication of the 'supersensible' element in man on which Kant had laid such stress. An example which Schiller considered particularly apposite from this point of view was Corneille's *Le Cid*; and he was correspondingly less enthusiastic about plays, such as *King Lear*, in which the misfortunes that befell the central figure were attributable to his own weaknesses and faults of character.[3]

Yet, while Schiller's regard for Kant as affording a fresh perspective upon problems relating to dramatic art was deep and lasting, it did not prevent him from adopting a markedly more sceptical attitude towards some of the wider implications of the Kantian doctrine of moral freedom. In so doing he was, moreover, also aware that at the hands of Kant's self-proclaimed follower, Fichte, his ideas were being developed in a fashion which had already had the effect of greatly extending the claims made on behalf of practical reason and which was eventually to lead to an inflation of the ethical and volitional aspects of the human personality so extreme as apparently to leave little room for any others. Schiller's doubts on this score achieved their most eloquent and forthright expression in the *Aesthetic Letters*; it was there, above all, that he was concerned to emphasise the dangers inherent in a too narrow and circumscribed identification of freedom with rationality.

Schiller's reservations stemmed from a comprehensive view of the human subject which recognised and sought to do justice to its 'mixed' nature, and his own conception of freedom as it finally emerged can only be understood in terms of this. Any alternative ideal, whose realisation depended upon blocking the growth of some of our capacities in the interest of others, was in the last analysis inadequate; while to accord exclusive priority to the development of a single aspect of the human character was necessarily inimical to its health and fulfilment as a whole. A rigid and inflexible insistence upon the demands of moral autonomy represented just such a threat to our possibilities as human beings; the requirements imposed by a strict conformity to the edicts of self-legislative reason would, if allowed unrestricted sway, be as destructive of the life and functioning of the individual as the pressures of unfettered instinct, and equally divisive in their effects upon his personality. As Schiller remarked in one place, it would be a case of our giving ourselves 'a master within, who not infrequently ends by suppressing the rest of

[3] For an illuminating account of Schiller's treatment of tragedy in this context, see R. D. Miller, *Schiller and the Ideal of Freedom* (Oxford, 1970), chapters 2 and 3.

our potentialities'.[4] Amongst other things, such a position reflected a failure to recognise the legitimacy of our sensuous propensities, and it was a cardinal though common error to suppose that these could be mutilated and abused without damaging the overall integrity of a person, his status as a unitary whole. Certainly it was important and salutary to draw the attention of a 'degraded century' to the sublimity of the moral law and to man's capacity as a rational being to realise it in his behaviour; it was quite another matter, however, to treat it as comprising all that was truly valuable in human life, elevating it to a position of supremacy from which it was entitled to invade and dominate every other domain of human activity and experience. Kant himself might not have altogether intended his words to carry a message of the latter kind, but Schiller suggested that it was scarcely surprising if some of his followers had extracted it from what he had written.

In any event, the consequences of such an approach could only be spiritual impoverishment and a sense of deprivation: the 'inner unity of human nature' would be broken. Schiller was ready enough to admit that a complete surrender to instinctual or emotional urges would entail, quite literally, the loss or 'suspension' of the individual's reality as a 'person'. For the very notion of personality implied a degree of continuity and organisation, a capacity for self-direction and control, that was incompatible with an exclusive preoccupation with sensory satisfaction and the gratification of transitory appetites; ordinary language partly reflected this point when it described people under the influence of violent passions and impulses as being 'beside themselves'.[5] But while that was so, it was also true that counterbalancing dangers, no less serious, lurked on the other side. For if man was not a purely sensuous being, wholly subject to the vicissitudes of feeling, neither was he a purely rational one whose true nature could be exhaustively characterised in terms of his capacity for abstract thought and active will. Both elements were integral to his constitution as a human individual, and it followed that to accord to rationality predominance at the cost of feeling was ultimately as ruinous as to allow feeling to overwhelm rationality. There was an 'egotism of reason' that matched the 'egotism of the senses', and alongside the 'savage', in whom 'feeling predominates over principle', Schiller set the 'barbarian', in whom 'principle destroys feeling'. The mentality of the latter was marked

[4] *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, trans. E. M. Wilkinson and L. A. Willoughby (Oxford, 1967), p. 89.

[5] ibid., p. 79.

by a contraction of the heart and a blunting of natural sensibility; at the same time, because of the narrowness and stringency of the requirements reason imposed, it was constantly liable to lapse into hypocrisy and self-deception – 'the barbarian derides and dishonours nature, but, more contemptible than the savage, as often as not continues to be the slave of his slave'.[6] It was, indeed, typical of one who belonged to this category that he should be 'at odds with himself', engaged in a conflict that he could not hope to win, and paying lip-service to ideals which his own behaviour continually belied.

Although he was partly concerned, in the name of a more generous conception of the human mind, to criticise specific philosophical doctrines of freedom, Schiller at the same time regarded his strictures as having a far wider bearing and significance. For he believed (in a manner that often recalls Herder) that such theoretical attempts to isolate and give precedence to certain functions of the psyche at the cost of others no less worthy of respect were symptomatic of tendencies that prevailed at the level of actual political and social existence. 'The various faculties', he wrote, '. . . appear as separate in practice as they are distinguished by the psychologist in theory, and we see not merely individuals, but whole classes of men, developing but one part of their potentialities, while of the rest, as in stunted growths, only vestigial traces remain.'[7] This had not always been the case. In common with others of his period Schiller looked back nostalgically to the era of classical Greece, when man was not 'at odds with himself' and when no dissension between the intellect and the senses had as yet provoked them into 'hostile partition' and mutual antagonism. It was the process of modern civilisation that had been responsible for inflicting 'this wound', through the proliferation of specialised intellectual disciplines and the parallel rise of increasingly bureaucratic political structures. Schiller had no wish to deny the advances that had been made or the material benefits that had ensued; none the less, the price had been a high one. Modern governments, in pursuing their overall objectives, were prone to treat their subjects from a point of view exclusively determined by the contributions they made to these aims; they thereby helped to reinforce and institutionalise trends that had arisen independently under the pressure of economic and technical developments. 'When the community makes his office the measure

[6] ibid., p. 21. The character of Angelo in Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* seems perfectly to illustrate what Schiller had in mind.

[7] ibid., p. 33.

of the man; when in one of its citizens it prizes nothing but memory, in another a mere tabularising intelligence, in a third only mechanical skill . . . can we wonder', Schiller asks, 'that the remaining aptitudes of the psyche are neglected in order to give undivided attention to the one which will bring honour and profit?'[8]

It was Schiller's contention that the full extent of such 'fragmentary specialisation' had not as yet been realised or its consequences properly appraised. The restriction and coordination of human activities in ways appropriate to the most effective attainment of social goals might be a prerequisite for the creation of a civilised order, but it remained at best no more than a necessary instrument, a means to an end. Whatever its historical significance, it was not a permanent condition of social existence, nor should it be allowed finally to obscure, in the name of some utilitarian standard of mechanical efficiency, the vision of a society to which each man would belong as a 'complete' individual, able to enjoy the unconstrained and frictionless fulfilment of his various powers. These were fertile notions. By suggesting that the problems confronting his age were primarily ones of cleavage and estrangement, by treating the tensions involved as from one standpoint representing the price that had to be paid in the interests of social progress and from another as being conditions that must be overcome in the pursuit of a healing all-embracing harmony, Schiller had touched on a theme that was to recur in German thought for more than fifty years after he wrote. Unlike some of his more metaphysically-minded successors, however, he interpreted the issues in purely human terms, seeking a solution based upon an appeal to the aesthetic consciousness and to the possibilities of liberation that it offered. In his own words, 'it must be open to us to restore by means of a higher Art the totality of our nature which the arts themselves have destroyed'.[9]

The sentence quoted may contain an allusion to Rousseau, and particularly to his *Discourse on the Moral Effects of the Arts and Sciences*, in which the deleterious influence of artistic activities upon the human character had been delineated with a vehemence almost unequalled since Plato. In any event, Schiller was certainly acquainted with this line of argument, and in the tenth of his *Letters* he makes various references to Rousseau's points and historical examples. Yet the question of whether art could justifiably be viewed as a source of corruption clearly depended upon a correct conception of its nature and of the role it played in our mental life; and for a

[8] ibid., p. 31.

[9] ibid., p. 43.

more fruitful account, suggestive of the ways in which an understanding of aesthetic experiences might be relevant to the matters that concerned him, Schiller turned, not to Rousseau, but once more to Kant.

In some respects Kant's *Critique of Judgement* can be seen as an attempt to soften the sharp contrast drawn in his two previous Critiques between the spheres of theoretical and practical thinking, qualifying his earlier claim that in the investigation of nature the only admissible modes of explanation were of a causal or 'mechanistic' kind. Thus, in the second part of the book, he embarks upon an extended analysis of purposive notions, arguing that it is with reference to these, rather than to mechanical ideas, that we find it possible to come to terms with the workings of living organisms. Some of the references to nature in Schiller's own writings echo this altered emphasis; even so, it was not Kant's treatment of natural teleology that chiefly impressed him, but rather the detailed discussion of aesthetic appreciation which occupied the first part of the work. And here the most significant points of contrast seemed to be, not with what Kant had written previously about the nature of scientific understanding, but with what he had said about freedom in the setting of his moral philosophy.

The differences partly showed themselves in Kant's characterisation of the kind of attitude we typically adopt in aesthetic contexts, an attitude he described as 'contemplative'. In situations requiring action and practical choice our approach to things was governed by 'interest': the interest in question might spring from natural inclination or, alternatively, it might be founded upon respect for the claims of morality; but, whichever was the case, it precluded a 'free judgement' of the objects concerned – the conception we formed of them, the satisfaction we took in them, were dictated by what we wanted or by what morality required. On the other hand, the aesthetic pleasure we obtained from things could be said to be a 'free delight', since here 'no interest, whether of sense or reason, extorts approval'.[10] Thus, while in his ethics Kant tended (as has been seen) to identify freedom with moral autonomy, in his aesthetics he represented both morality and natural inclination alike as being in a sense opposed to it, since each restricted our responses to the world in specific ways. This detachment from interest, typical of the aesthetic outlook, was moreover connected by Kant with further features which differentiated it from the moral point of view. In the

[10] *Critique of Judgement*, trans. J. C. Meredith (Oxford, 1952), p. 49.

case of the latter, as he never tired of repeating, the universal prescriptions of reason were liable to collide with and override the particular and variable impulses of our sensuous nature; in the appreciation of beauty, on the other hand, our intellectual and sensuous faculties were not in conflict, nor was there a subordination of one to the other of the sort that occurred when our concerns were of a cognitive or scientific nature. Instead, Kant spoke of the powers of the mind being engaged in a 'free play', a harmonious and satisfying interaction; the formative and organising understanding and the sensuously orientated imagination were affected in a fashion that 'quickened' both, while setting constraints upon neither. He also implied that this somewhat mysterious process was occasioned by what he conceived to be the distinctive characteristic of the things we call beautiful; they manifested an order, a design, which could not be captured by a determinate rule or concept and which impressed us as being in some manner internal to the material that exhibited it rather than as having been imposed upon it from without.

As we have already noticed, Kant himself – despite certain qualifications implicit in his treatment of the sublime – was generally disposed to regard ethics and aesthetics as belonging to distinct domains which should on no account be confused. To Schiller, however, it seemed that the categories of aesthetic experience were susceptible to a much broader interpretation. Ideas of the kind evolved by Kant in the setting of an inquiry into the conditions of aesthetic taste could be extended to cover aspects of man's psychological and social well-being; as such, they could be said to have a moral bearing, and furthermore one that impinged upon the assumptions underlying Kant's own ethical theory. In trying to show how this was possible, Schiller introduced the notion of *play*.

To see why Schiller attached such importance to this notion we must return to his conception of human nature as being essentially 'mixed' and to his emphasis upon the part played by both intellectual and sensuous elements in the composition of the personality. In the *Aesthetic Letters* he postulates two basic mental powers or 'drives' – one rational and legislative, the other receptive and sensory – and he writes of each as having a necessary function to perform: the first seeks to impose order and direction, the second responds to changing conditions and supplies the material 'filling' of experience. (It is noticeable that, in his references to mental activity, Schiller tended to conflate epistemological and practical concerns in a fashion of which Kant himself would hardly have approved.) The functions in question were in fact complementary to one another,

nature having placed us under an obligation 'not to divide what she had united'. It was hence only by a 'wanton transgression of nature' that they had come to be experienced and conceived in a manner that engendered inner discord and a destructive struggle for ascendancy. A remedy, however, lay to hand in the shape of a further principle, whose role was one of reconciliation and of mediating between the two extremes of rational and physical domination to which the psyche stood exposed. Of it Schiller wrote: 'To the extent that it deprives feelings and passions of their dynamic power, it will bring them into harmony with the ideas of reason; and to the extent that it deprives the laws of reason of their moral compulsion, it will reconcile them with the interests of the senses.'[11] The drive to which he assigned these commendable qualities he called the 'play-drive' (*Spieltrieb*), and he linked it explicitly with artistic expression and the appreciation of beauty.

Schiller was not unaware that his reference to 'play' in such a connection might be misinterpreted, encouraging once again the old complaints that art was something essentially trivial and frivolous. But this was to take a superficial view of the matter. We should not allow ourselves to be influenced by forms of play and amusement currently in vogue, but should instead seek a deeper and more extensive understanding of the phenomenon as it existed in the context of human life as a whole. Comprehended in this light, it could be seen as involving a suspension of all those practical needs and demands which normally bear down upon us with the weight of a burden; such a 'distancing' of the mind from everyday preoccupations was intrinsic to the idea of play, endowing it with a capacity to release our various powers from the limits within which they tended to be habitually constricted. The different sides of our nature could thus 'unfold' and 'expand' without danger of conflict or mutual jarring; liberated from 'the fetters of ends and purposes' in an activity that was 'at once its own end and its own means', relieved of 'the shackles of circumstance', it was possible through play to occupy a 'happy medium' between the spheres of law and physical contingency: such a 'middle disposition', Schiller affirms at one point, 'in which the psyche is subject neither to physical nor to moral constraint, and yet is active in both these ways, pre-eminently deserves to be called a free disposition'.[12] Given his high regard for the aesthetic doctrines contained in the *Critique of Judgement*, it is not unexpected to discover Schiller treating play, so conceived, as achieving consummation in

[11] op. cit. (note 4 above), p. 99.
[12] ibid., p. 141.

artistic expression and experience, or to find him speaking of beauty as the true 'object of the play-drive', affording a supreme 'union and equilibrium of reality and form'; the creations of art resemble a 'free play of nature', gratifying the senses and imagination while at the same time displaying an inner coherence that appeals to and satisfies the intellect. What, on the other hand, was distinctive of his position, sharply differentiating it from the Kantian, was his preparedness to make the capacity for aesthetic play central to his concept of a fully realised humanity, essential to the development of man as a complete being. It was on this account that he could write, in a famous passage, that 'man only plays when he is in the fullest sense of the word a human being, and he is only fully a human being when he plays';[13] it was with this in mind, too, that he looked forward to a time when each individual in society would fulfil his potentialities, the 'totality of his powers', in accordance with 'the laws of beauty', instead of existing – as was man's present plight – 'only as a fragment', a 'mere imprint of his occupation or of his specialised knowledge'.[14] In Schiller's eyes, man was not a creature to whom the capacity for aesthetic activity and enjoyment belonged as a contingent and dispensable attribute; it was, on the contrary, a necessity of his nature.

By relating art to the broader concept of play, and by presenting the latter as a universal mode of expression which permitted human powers customarily harnessed to utilitarian or practical aims a scope normally denied them, Schiller believed that he had uncovered an aspect of our condition that had been largely overlooked by the social and ethical theorists of his day. These had tended, either to accord exclusive priority to man's material wants and needs, or else (like Kant in his moral philosophy) to give an equally uncompromising prominence to man's status as a rational being, whose true worth and fulfilment were held to lie in the transcendence of his 'animal' nature. Such over-simplified portrayals of the human make-up had, moreover, been reflected in correspondingly distorted conceptions of freedom and in the political and social recommendations associated with them. It must (I think) be allowed that Schiller himself, when outlining his own positive proposals, did not always make it transparently clear where he stood. Thus there are occasions in the *Letters* when he appears to treat them as being merely intended to prepare the way for a 'rational' order, subject to the 'general will', in which the moral law would wholly prevail; and this is a position not

[13] ibid., p. 107.
[14] ibid., p. 35.

easy to square with his general condemnation of one-sided or exclusive social ideals. Nevertheless, in the main it was the emergence of what he called an 'aesthetic State', founded upon a respect for man's *gemischte Natur*, which he seems to have regarded as ultimately desirable. Freed from servitude to desires for possession and consumption and able in consequence to take satisfaction in the pure appearance of things, the members of such a community would treat 'disinterested pleasure' as amongst the necessities of existence. Not only would their modes of expression and behaviour exhibit a natural spontaneity and grace of the kind typified in works of art; the aesthetic sensibility which informed their outlook would also constitute a bond between them and hence exercise, subtly and unobtrusively, a socially cohesive force. From this point of view, Schiller implied, the type of consciousness he had in mind might be contrasted with the proprietary and competitive attitudes that motivated men in the contemporary world; unlike those, with their disastrously divisive consequences, it promoted harmony within the individual and society alike. For to the aesthetic spectator the world presented itself, not as something to be used and exploited for his personal ends, but as something to be appreciated and enjoyed in its own right; far from being a source of private anxiety and public contention, it offered a continual stimulus to the powers of perception and imagination which were the common property of all human beings. Thus, where the influence of such an outlook was pervasive, men would no longer be subject to 'the compulsion to infringe the freedom of others in order to assert their own', since each would be a willing participant in a form of life and experience that was by its very nature open to all.

The hopes and aspirations with which Schiller concludes his essay are expressed with a noble eloquence that almost disarms criticism. Even so, they are apt to produce a wide variety of reactions amongst present-day readers. To some they have seemed too vague, too obscure and inexact, to be worth taking seriously: at best, they have been felt to amount to an idealised fantasy which, whatever its charm, neglects the coarse texture of reality and comes as something of an anti-climax after the earlier sections of the *Letters*, with their shrewd and pointed insights; at worst, they have been held to be the product of 'bourgeois-humanist hopes' – 'a utopian dream of a circle comprised of an intellectual and moral élite'.[15] At the other extreme, there have been those to whom Schiller's ideal of

[15] Georg Lukács, *Goethe and his Age*, trans. R. Anchor (London, 1968), p. 135.

an aesthetic society has appeared both prescient and profound: it has been seen as anticipating Freud in recognising the extent to which traditional culture depends upon a massive renunciation of instinctual gratification and pleasure; at the same time, it has been interpreted – in a manner that might have caused its author some surprise – as looking forward to the emergence of erotically orientated 'non-repressive' social forms of a wholly new kind. Yet, however his positive proposals may be viewed, it is the diagnosis Schiller provided of the ills of his age, rather than the cure for them he somewhat tentatively offered, that is perhaps more likely to find a responsive modern echo.

Like Herder before him, who had inveighed against a condition in which men had become 'half thinkers, half feelers' and 'no single member partakes of the whole any more', Schiller portrayed the central predicament of his period as consisting in man's being divided against himself, both as an individual and in his relations to his human and natural surroundings. And he likewise implied that current ideologies, far from helping to remedy this state of affairs, had in fact accentuated it. In the last analysis the atomistic hedonism and individualism of Enlightenment social theory and the polarisation of reason and natural inclination intrinsic to Kantian moral theory mirrored different aspects of what was fundamentally the same unacceptable situation. Both operated with models of human nature that were too crude, being insensitive to the complex and finely balanced structure of our intellectual, emotional and imaginative needs; in consequence, they were incapable of taking proper account of the forms of deprivation and frustration which the development of an increasingly specialised and scientifically minded civilisation brought in its train. Dazzled by our successes in dominating and manipulating our natural environment, we were in danger of losing contact with the natural order to which from one point of view we inescapably belonged. It was with such considerations in mind that Schiller, writing in another context, compared our feeling for nature with that of 'an invalid for health'. We had become a prey to artificial wants that had no basis in our original constitution and were cramped by mental attitudes which had become so general that we no longer experienced them as constraints. The suggestion that through aesthetic education we can liberate ourselves from oppressive habits of thought and restore connections between areas of our psychical life which have been lost or severed may have its limitations; it is not, however, an empty or an untimely one.