

Schiller's *Philosophical Letters*: Naturalising Spirit to Moralise Nature

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1. Introduction

The *Philosophical Letters* is a short piece that Schiller composed in the early eighties and published in the *Thalia* in 1786.¹ Unlike his letters *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* or the *Kallias* correspondence, which address real interlocutors, this work is effectively a philosophical dialogue conducted between two fictional characters, Julius, a student, and Raphael, his teacher, who are introduced as 'two young men of different characters' (L 108) and a passion for philosophy.²

¹ According to Safranski, the composition of the 'Theosophy of Julius', which forms the main part of the Letters, dates from 1780. This is also the year when he presents his third dissertation 'On the Strong Connection Between the Animal and the Spiritual Nature in Man' (Safranski 2004, 530).

² References to the *Letters* (L) and to the *Dissertation* (D) are given to the page numbers of the German edition of *Schillers Werke Nationalausgabe* volume 20, with the addition in the case of the *Dissertation* of the paragraph number. The final letter from Raphael to Julius, which was written in 1788 by Körner, is quoted as L K and is in the volume 21 of the *Nationalausgabe*. The English translation con-

Despite their title, the *Philosophical Letters* (henceforth *Letters*) have received little attention from philosophers. It seems that there are good reasons for this neglect. An important exception to this rule, Frederick Beiser discusses quite sympathetically the 'Theosophy of Julius', the part that contains the positive philosophical doctrine of the *Letters*, and argues that Schiller's poetic exposition of concepts such as 'Idea', 'Love', 'Sacrifice' and 'God' in the 'Theosophy' is best viewed as representing a position that Schiller had already abandoned by the time of publication.³ As we shall see presently, the way the correspondence between Julius and Raphael is presented together with its internal dialectic give plenty of support to this view. It appears then that there is little for the philosopher to do apart from identifying the organicist and vitalist motifs of the piece, perhaps as background for philosophical ideas developed more systematically and fully in later works. For the more historically minded, of course, the 'Theosophy' is a treasure trove full of ideas from different sources, and a lot of important work has already been done tracing influences of sentimentalist doctrines mixed here with mystical ideas about cosmic love.⁴ But if we are interested in philosophical argument, it

sulted and often used is Schiller 1910, in which no translator is credited.

³ Beiser 2005, 35. See too Safranski 2004, 97 and 222-4; and Macor 2011, 111-2.

⁴ See Riedel 1985 and Martinson 1996.

seems that we are better off turning to the more familiar and well-discussed mature writings.

The guidance offered to the reader of the *Letters* about how she should take the doctrines contained in them reinforces this impression. Julius's 'confession of faith' (L 126) is placed in context by Schiller's prefatory remarks that appear to distance him, as author, from the views expressed in the body of the correspondence. Schiller declares *both* Julius and Raphael to be interesting only as examples of extreme positions, 'certain excesses of enquiring reason', that illustrate 'epochs of thought' and opinions that 'can only be true or false relatively' (L 108). Further, Julius himself appears to suffer a crisis of commitment to the ideas he presents, as he is unable to respond to Raphael's demand for a defence of his beliefs. The internal dialectic of the *Letters* then indicates that we should not put too much weight on Julius's claims given his frank admission of failure to provide adequate argument for them. His 'Theosophy' appears as a last, almost desperate, attempt to answer his own doubts, which are left unresolved. It is therefore reasonable to concur with received opinion that the *Letters* represent a phase of Schiller's development and views which he came to regard with some ambivalence at the very least.

A final reason that may well explain scarcity of philosophical interest in the piece is the emotive rhetoric of the 'Theosophy' which does not make for easy

reading and is unlikely to find favour with a contemporary philosophical audience.

Why then read the *Letters* philosophically at all? First the absence of a central concern of later works with aesthetic experience leaves more scope for the development of a direct connection between experience as such and morality. Second because the picture of human experience and so of the relation of human beings to their world that is presented here is claimed to be mandatory for moral reasons, something one ought to accept and something that ought to be the case, if morality is possible. The philosophy done in the *Letters* is not done in order to address philosophical problems, but rather to subordinate philosophy to morality. Whilst I am not the first to identify the moral motivation in Schiller's early work, the remarkable feature of this piece is the way it implicates philosophy with a certain distortion of moral priorities.⁵ Even while the prefatory remarks caution against one-sided approaches and advise that the head must guide the heart, the work itself shows the philosophical limitations of Julius (who is unable to defend his position, and can only state it) and of Raphael (who may be more able to provide a philosophical criticism of Julius but does not seem to have a substantive position to defend).

In order to get a fresh look at this material, I propose to read it in light of Schiller's third dissertation, 'On the Strong Connec-

⁵ See Macor 2011.

tion Between the Animal and the Spiritual Nature in Man' (henceforth *Dissertation*), which was published in 1780 and which contains a systematic treatment of some of the ideas Julius defends poetically in the *Letters*, in particular an 'interactionist' view of mind and body (Martinson 2005, 214).⁶ Starting from the aporetic perspective of the *Letters*, I will look backwards to the *Dissertation* to formulate the arguments that can be brought to support Julius's position with a view to understanding its philosophical substance and motivation, and also its weak points, which contribute to Julius's vulnerability to Raphael's strictures. I hope to show that if we read the *Letters* with the *Dissertation* in view, we can get a more rounded perspective on the ideas presented here and in particular the moral motivation

⁶ The early English edition of the *Philosophical Letters* is prefaced with an extract from Henry Maudsley's 1870 lecture on 'Body and Mind' and also from T. H. Huxley's article of the same year on Descartes. The Maudsley piece, published as *Body and Mind: An Inquiry into their Connection and Mutual Influence especially in reference to Mental Disorders* (London: MacMillan & Co 1870), was delivered as the Gulston Lectures for admission to the Royal College of Physicians in 1870. The Huxley piece appears to be 'On Descartes' "Discourse Touching the Method of Using One's Reason Rightly and of Seeking Scientific Truth", 1870. There is a further insertion towards the end of an extract from Elizabeth Barrett-Browning's 'Aurora Leigh'. This somewhat intrusive editing is perhaps an attempt to emphasise Schiller's scientific and modern credentials to a late nineteenth century audience.

for Schiller's interactionism in these early works.

2. Reading the *Letters* with the *Dissertation* in View

In the 'Preface' to the *Letters*, Schiller, or at least the third person who presents to the readers the correspondence between Julius and Raphael, argues that 'one-sided ... philosophy' contributes to moral degeneration and that 'an enlightened understanding ennobles the feelings [*Gesinnungen*], the head must shape the heart' (L 107). The idea presumably is that mere sympathy or moral feelings are insufficient for moral behaviour, it is unclear what the contribution of the 'head' might be. In fact, moral concerns are not very prominent or explicit in what follows, nor is it entirely clear how we should interpret the problem of 'one-sidedness' in the correspondence itself. Given the relation between one-sidedness and the moral concern raised at the outset, it is important to settle what exactly the problem is. One option is to see Julius as the 'heart' and Raphael as the 'head' or, as Julius puts it, 'cold-blooded wisdom' (L 110).⁷ The problem of one-sidedness could then be that each side fails properly to acknowledge the other (thus *remaining* 'one-sided'). So we have an emotive defence of 'theosophy' without much argument, and a critical stance of 'scepticism and freethinking' (L

⁷ Julius also uses: 'mournful wisdom' (L 110).

108) without much by way of positive doctrine. This interpretation fits but only partly. This is because in the body of the *Letters* it is clear that Julius acknowledges the weakness of his position and presents it almost apologetically and as a felt need (see: ‘My heart sought a philosophy’ L 115) and on Raphael’s side we have a promise at least of a substantive attainment once certain habits of thought are let go (L 111). A further possibility is that ‘one-sidedness’ refers to philosophical views that commit themselves to either a form of idealism or a form of materialism. We are encouraged to see Julius as the idealist, after all his theosophy has a section called ‘Idea’ and professes that his system was destroyed by a ‘sharp attack of materialism’ (L 115). This would make Raphael a materialist. Yet, these identifications do not fit that well either. The substance of Julius’s doctrine is about the intimate and strong connection of ideas and physical nature, or of mentality and materiality. Raphael, on the other hand, is rather a sceptical interlocutor stressing the limits of human understanding (see: ‘You have not yet arrived at that state of mind when humiliating truths on the limits of human knowledge can have any interest for you’ L K 158). I think the better option is that we view the criticisms of one-sidedness as criticisms of philosophies that fail to acknowledge the need for *interconnection* of the mental and the material. On this reading, Julius’s position appears in a more interesting light as an attempt at mediation between one-sided phi-

losophies rather than as an illustration of one or another side. In particular, Julius argues that ideas (or spirit or mind) should be considered together with physical nature, without attempting to reduce one to the other (hence creating a ‘one-sided’ system) but without also considering them as ontologically distinct (commitment to substance dualism is not a solution to ‘one-sidedness’). Of course if we are to follow this path, we need not just a clearer view of Julius’s positive doctrine but also of the motivation for it, that is, some account of the problems with either substance dualism or reductive monisms. To do this we need to take his views seriously. Doing so, however, presents problems.

Both the ‘Preface’, as we just saw, and the body of the correspondence contain a number of distancing or qualifying statements. So for example, Julius presents himself throughout as the grateful student – ‘I was a prisoner: you have led me out into the daylight’ (L 111) – whose instruction is ongoing. Raphael advises him, ‘You must arrive at a higher freedom of mind, where you no longer require support’ (L K 156) and rather devastatingly after reading Julius’s theosophy, he writes ‘You must not be surprised to find that a system such as yours cannot resist the searching of a severe criticism’ (L K 156). Then on Julius’s side, we find expressions of self-doubt, he describes his position as ‘dream’ or ‘invention’ something that exists only in his brain (L 126). Finally, it is difficult to identify the portions of Julius’s writings

that are intended to be steps in an argument and those that relate autobiographically the train of thought that led him to consider the things he does. Nonetheless we may not simply dismiss Julius's position as a youthful mistake, nor is it presented as such, rather, more subtly, we are led to think, by the very fact that Julius still considers his 'old essay' worth sharing, that Raphael's criticisms have failed to address the concerns to which Julius's theosophy seeks to deal with however imperfectly. The manner in which the 'Theosophy' is introduced as an old document Julius decides to share now with his teacher can be seen as a way of Schiller himself looking back on his own intellectual trajectory, in which case that he deems them worthy of presentation to the reading public of the *Thalia*, just as Julius deems them worthy of presentation to Raphael, suggests a continuing attachment to these views.

The problem with the *Letters* is not just that there are argumentative gaps in Julius's position, of which we are warned from the outset. More seriously for our purpose, which is to understand the philosophical motivation of the position, the problems to which it is intended to be a solution are not clearly spelt out. This is where we may usefully turn to the *Dissertation*, which develops in great detail a very similar position that argues for a 'strong' (*große*) connection between the mental and the physical. So in what follows I will be seeking to find out whether the interactionist arguments in the *Dissertation* can

help illuminate Julius's position, but also whether light can be shed on the problems that the theosophy seeks to address. I will argue that individually neither work offers enough by way of philosophical argument, but together they present interaction between the mental and the physical as a moral necessity, something that ought to be the case for the good moral order of human life.

3. Julius's 'Theosophy' as Interactionist Monism

Julius presents his views as following from disillusionment with an original attachment to what sounds like a subjectivist idealism: 'All things in heaven and earth have no value, no estimation, except that which my reason grants them' (L 112). The first-personal 'my' can also be interpreted not as a statement of subjectivism, but as a subjective appropriation of a more general thesis that 'reason' or possibly 'human reason' is the source of value. Whether the former or the latter better represent Julius's original stance, this is superseded by the realisation that 'reason', and more generally 'spirit', the word Schiller uses for the category of mentality, is really rather weak: 'this free and soaring spirit is woven together with the rigid, immovable clockwork of a mortal body, mixed up with its little necessities, and yoked to its fate--this god is banished into a world of worms' (L 112). Following this expression of an almost existential anxiety

we have the first statement of Julius's 'theosophy' which is presented as answering directly the dualism or free spirit/ clock-work body: 'All in me and out of me is only the hieroglyph of a power which is similar to me [*eine Kraft, die mir ähnlich ist*]' (L 116).

The notion of 'hieroglyph'—and later of 'cypher'⁸—is very puzzling, as it suggests that both ideas and physical nature are signs of something, 'a power', but then this something is also 'similar to me'. So if we think of the basic ontological commitments of the position we have the power (or force) to which individuals resemble in some way (they are alike, share a likeness) and then what we usually think of as the external world is not different from what is in me but are both symbols or signs of this basic power. In short we have three levels let us say, the power, the likeness to the power, and the signs of the power. This is admittedly very obscure.⁹ However, what

⁸ See: 'The laws of nature are the cyphers which the thinking being adds on to make itself intelligible to [another] thinking being--the alphabet by means of which all spirits communicate with the most perfect spirit and with one another' (L 116).

⁹ See too: 'Just as in the prism a white ray of light is split up into seven darker shades of colour, so the divine personality or Ego has been broken into countless susceptible substances' (L 124). Later Schiller also says: 'The bodily form of nature passes through the attraction of the elements so that the attraction of spirits, varied and developed to the infinite would finally lead to the overcoming of all separation or... would produce God' (L 124). The 'elements' here become also 'spirits' presumably be-

is clear is what is *not* being said here and this is important: what is not being said is that the relation between inner and outer should be characterised in terms of these 'hieroglyphs'. Julius does not, in other words, subscribe to some exotic version of the doctrine of ideas, namely that the perceiving and knowing subject has direct access to ideas in the mind from which the existence and, more problematically, features of the external world are inferred.¹⁰ If we press further to find what is this power that is 'like me' and is capable of creating or generating these hieroglyphs we get a position that sounds very much like Berkleyan idealism 'The universe is a thought of God' (L 115). But towards the end of this passage this is transformed into some sort of hylozoism: 'To me there is no solitude in nature. Wherever I see a body I anticipate a spirit. Wherever I trace movement I infer thought' (L 116-7). What sets Julius's position apart from both idealism and hylozoism, and justifies the characterisation of it as 'interactionist monism', is the way he spells out the mind/nature relation. It is a monism insofar as there seems to be one substance only, what he calls power or God. But both the relation of individuals to the power and to its signs suggest a more complex structure to this tentative ontol-

cause elements have not just bodily form but also spiritual being.

¹⁰ See also: 'Our purest ideas are by no means images of things, but only their signs or symbols determined by necessity, and co-existing with them' (L 126)

ogy that allows for relations *between* aspects of the power that fit the interactionist model. In other words, the monism does not preclude a quite definite differentiation between two *sorts* of things, mental and physical. So rather than having one thing that simply presents itself under two aspects, we are encouraged to consider how the two differentiated things, *a* and *b*, interact with one another even though they are fundamentally parts or elements or manifestations of a single substance. The difference is that rather than a modification in *a*, being ipso facto a modification in *b*, or *a* and *b* peacefully coexisting alongside one another, Julius has a more complex story to tell about the interaction of mental and physical. This positive doctrine of interactionism can be described -and Julius describes it- without reliance on the terminology of ciphers and powers. It is a doctrine about the relation between inner and outer, and so between what is traditionally designated as the world of ideas and the world of physical nature. Clearly, given monism, these are not literally two worlds, but what is important and interesting about the position is that monism does not magically solve the interaction issue, the interaction is between two genuine aspects of the whole and is described in some detail (it is the metaphysical side that remains vague). So we can still make inroads in understanding Julius's position, if we keep firmly in view what is cited as the motivation for it, namely overcome the original dualism of free spirit/clockwork body. We

can discern two theses that carry the weight of this task: the first we may call the 'contagion thesis', the second the 'expression thesis.'

The contagion thesis can be found in statements such as the following:

(1) Harmony, truth, order, beauty, excellence, give me joy, because they transport me into the active state of their author, of their possessor, because they betray the presence of a rationally feeling being [*vernünftig empfindendes Wesen*], and let me perceive my relationship with that being (L 116).

(2) When the beautiful, the true, and the excellent are once seen, they are immediately grasped at. A condition once perceived by us, we enter into it immediately (L 117, see too 118, 125).

(3) The happiness which I represent to myself becomes my happiness; accordingly I am interested in awakening these representations, to realize them, to exalt them (L 119).

The idea Julius seeks to convey seems to be that there is a large part of our experiences including experiences of values that we 'enter into' immediately. We may distinguish three elements to the contagion thesis. First, there is a psychological element, which many of Julius's examples illustrate, that we share in and react directly to other people's feelings, we are capable of

strong sympathetic reactions. This is more in evidence in (3) and partly in (1). Second there is a further element, clearly stated in (2), that we are capable of immediate perception of values in the specific contexts in which we encounter them. This value-theoretical element states that we just get what is beautiful, true or excellent without mediation by thinking and deliberation, we are simply sensitive to such things. What justifies the ‘contagion’ label is the stronger claim in both (1) and (2), that we somehow *become* what we see and that this is a kind of sympathetic involvement with what is a ‘rationally feeling being’. I think that this sympathetic involvement is supposed to spell out the similarity relation between individuals and the basic power of Julius’s ontology, which is why he calls this the ‘basis [*Grund*]’ (L 117) of his position. There is a way of understanding this as a description of how things stand with us, a sort of phenomenological element that is at the same time a corrective to self-alienating dualisms. The basis of the position would then be something like this: as embodied creatures we react to our environment by picking up facts that are not inert but apt to be described in terms of ‘feeling rationally’ or better of reasoning by being attentive and receptive to our world. Going back to the talk of hieroglyphs and ciphers we can now interpret it as saying that the world is readable in exactly the same way that we are readable to ourselves and to others, which is to say that we do not impose our ideas to the world (as per the subjectivist

idealist position discarded at the outset) but rather that ideas are the form of uptake we have as worldly creatures.

The expression thesis can be found in passages such as:

(1) In whatever beauty, excellence, or enjoyment I produce outside myself, I produce myself (L 119).

(2) When I hate, I take something from myself; when I love, I become richer by what I love. To pardon is to recover a property that has been lost. Misanthropy is a protracted suicide; egotism is the supremest poverty of a created being (L 120).

(3) Every exercise of thinking, every fine product of the understanding is a small step to the perfection of the whole and every perfection belongs to the fuller sense of the world (L 128).

There are different elements in the expression thesis. (1) is a philosophical psychological thesis that the results of one’s actions are expressions of who one is, and conversely who one is may not to be found elsewhere but in these productions (‘I produce myself’). In (2) the idea that the individual subject’s relations to others, as displayed or expressed in his actions, are modifications of the self is given a moral dimension so that actions that display misanthropy or egoism are expressions of lack in the self who expresses himself in this manner. If we think this in conjunction

with the contagion thesis there is a feedback loop so that the lack is then returned back to the self, since what is externalised is now become part of the self's environment. Finally in (3) we have one implication of the expression thesis that actions, understood broadly to include exercises of thought and products of the understanding, are part of an enlarged conception of the world, so 'world' is something that is ongoing and to which individuals participate. Earlier Julius says: 'Our brain [*Gehirn*] belongs to this planet; accordingly, also, the idioms of our concepts, which are treasured up in it' (L 127). If we read this again together with the contagion thesis we get the idea that the nature of our thoughts depends on the nature of the world but also that the world is not an inert thing but rather that in which our agency finds expression.

What we called 'contagion' and 'expression' are but two sides of the interactionist monism we attributed to Julius. As we said before, Julius just describes his views he does not argue for them, though he draws occasionally on examples from life, including shared experiences with Raphael, and from literature. The *Dissertation* by contrast is presented as an objective investigation into the connection of the spiritual and animal in man, and its findings are given in two 'laws', which sum up the interactionist doctrine of the work, which is hedged with Raphaelian provisos about the limitations of human understanding and the current

state of knowledge.¹¹ The presentation of the two laws follows a carefully constructed discussion that starts with a brief description of the basic operations of organic nature, the human body, and animal life. The laws in a way then summarise and formalise the previous discussion emphasising the connection between the mental side and the physical side of our constitution. However, the nature of the relation they assert between the mental and the physical is not clear: it is presented as a necessary relation the necessity of which Schiller confesses he 'cannot understand' (D 41, §1). So we may not look for proofs in the *Dissertation*. At the same time, it is not clear how there are ways of life that are exceptions to those laws, for example, ways of life modelled on Cato or Seneca whom Schiller mentions as admirable but also as misleading when it comes to formulating our moral ideals and more generally our views of how the mental and the physical relate (D 40, §1). Further more

¹¹ Professions of limitation of knowledge and of understanding, open and conclude the *Dissertation*: 'the action of the human soul is--from a necessity which I do not understand--bound fast to the action of matter' D 42, §2; 'We lay many a book aside which we do not understand, but perhaps in a few years we shall understand it better' D 75, § 27. The difference is perhaps that Raphael appears to present a thesis about metaphysical ignorance not about contingent limitations of the current state of scientific knowledge. But then what is presented as a scientific dissertation is effectively also a metaphysical treatise. So it is not clear that Schiller makes a clear distinction between the two.

general exceptions are noted after each law, which suggests that perhaps Schiller is merely noting regularities here.¹² One way to hold onto the idea of necessity is that of a deontic necessity, of how things ought to be, rather than how things in fact are. We shall return to this in later on. Let us first look at the laws in question.

The first law states that ‘the activities of the body correspond to the activities of the mind’ (D 57, §12). The ‘correspondence thesis’ is explained as follows:

[A]ny overstraining of a mental activity is necessarily followed by an overstraining of certain bodily actions, so that the balance or harmonious activity of the mental powers is associated with that of the bodily powers in perfect accord ... Thus, as perfection is ever accompanied by pleasure, imperfection by the absence of pleasure ... mental pleasure is invariably attended by animal pleasure, mental pain by animal pain (D 57, §12).

This is hardly a startling thesis, it appears merely to state that sentient creatures have awareness of their bodies, so pain is a mental item (feeling of pain) but also a bodily ‘action’. This does not so much resolve the mind/body problem or riddle simply re-states it as a law without saying how exactly the two interact. One suggestion is that the mental and the physical mutually influence each other – later on Schiller describes their relation as ‘transmission’ (*Übertragung*), hence not mere ‘correspon-

¹² Schiller treats exception in §16 and ‘limitations’ in §20, trying to minimise their impact on the laws propounded.

dence’ – so that physical wellbeing influences mental ‘powers’, presumably creating more than just an awareness of physical wellbeing. There is no explanation however for this ‘transmission’ or mutual influence. The second law simply re-asserts the relation on the other side, stating that ‘with the free action of the bodily organism, the sensations and ideas gain a freer flow; and learn that, with a corrupted organism, corruption of the thinking faculty and of the sensations inevitably follows’ (D 63, §18). This leads on to an assertion about good functioning: ‘the general sensation of a harmonious animal life is the fountain of mental pleasure, and that animal pain and sickness is the fountain of mental pain’ (ibid.). If we were looking for arguments in support of Julius’s interactionism, we would be disappointed. What we have here is at best a plausible empirical generalisation about the interconnection between feelings (in the sense of emotions and moods) and one’s physical state. In a way, this is to be expected: the purpose of the *Dissertation*, viewed now in the context of Schiller’s medical training, is to give an idea of the well-functioning human, not to speculate about philosophical matters. But this is not the whole story.

On the reading that emerges so far, the *Dissertation* propounds a modest interactionist doctrine, stating that the mental and the physical must somehow interact and provides ‘laws’ that spell out this interaction by describing regularities of ‘transmission’ between mental and physical. On this

reading the claims are empirical, based on Schiller's observations. No specific ontology is presented or favoured.¹³ There is another way, however, of looking at the *Dissertation* and of its relation to the *Letters*. There is a passage that echoes Julius' anxiety about the free spirit being yoked to a clockwork body and how this 'god is banished into a world of worms' (L 112):

the philosopher who unfolds the nature of the Deity, and fancies himself to have broken through the fetters of mortality, returns to himself and everyday life when the bleak north wind whistles through his crazy hut, and teaches him that he stands midway between the beast and the angel (D 47, §5).

Here it is not a theosophical insight that resolves the conflict but a lesson that the human being occupies a midway position. The question is what sort of lesson is this? Or: to what sort of problem is interactionism the solution? The seeming indifference about metaphysics in the *Dissertation* sug-

¹³ Schiller's references to our 'mixed' natures (D 57, §12) suggest possibly a dualist metaphysics, at any rate there is an absence of the 'power' monism of the 'Theosophy'. 'Mixed nature' could be just a manner of designating the two aspects of the human experience as embodied and as mental. See too: 'The changes in the world of matter must be modified and, so to speak, refined by a peculiar class of secondary power—I mean the senses—before they can produce in me any corresponding ideas; while, on the other hand, a fresh set of organic powers, the agents of voluntary movements must come into play between the inner spirit and the outward world in order to make the changes of the former tell upon the latter' D 42, §2.

gests that the question of whether there are two types of things, physical and mental substances, or one is at best of secondary interest. Nor does it seem that interactionism is a solution to the so-called problem of consciousness, that is, of locating phenomenal or mental items in a physical world. When Schiller talks about the relation between mental and physical phenomena he seems happy to accept both descriptions as perfectly good, showing no interest in reducing the one to the other (see too the discussion at the start of this section). We said earlier that the laws he proposes may best be seen as having deontic necessity, as saying that such and such *ought* to obtain. In contrast to the modest reading, that souls and bodies do in fact interact most of the time after a fashion, the deontic reading is that they ought so to do in order to function properly after some weighty conception of proper function. This fits with the emphasis placed on 'harmony' and on 'perfection'. It also places this discussion in the *Dissertation* a different context, Schiller's aim is to show not just what a healthy well-functioning human being is like, but to articulate an ideal of what it is to be a human being. Looking now back at the 'Theosophy', some of the elements of the contagion and expression theses make better sense if we think of them as guiding us to think through this ideal of the human being. For example, if individually and collectively, our being is expressed in our actions and conversely our actions and reactions to our environment shape

our being, becoming aware of this may lead to the more harmonious existence described in the *Dissertation*. These ideas do not of course amount to a fully worked out ethics of worldly being. However, we have enough here to locate the concerns of these early works in the moral domain. One debate to which these pieces could be considered as contributions is that of placing normative phenomena, broadly understood, within the view of the world presented in the natural sciences. On this view what Schiller attempts is to show how certain moral ideals, of harmony and of perfection, can fit in a more generous conception of what is natural and apt to be studied by the natural sciences. This view is especially plausible if we consider that Schiller proposes his argument in the *Dissertation*, from within one of the natural sciences that is also a practical science of healing. So what Schiller attempts is to say something about the well-functioning human that is not merely about the well-functioning body of the human, but rather supports a richer conception of health, suggested by terms such as ‘harmony’ and ‘perfection’. However the scarcity of philosophical argumentation both in the *Dissertation* and in the ‘Theosophy’ suggests that this interpretation runs the risk of misrecognising Schiller’s priorities: it is a moral problem to which he seeks to harness his thought, rather than a more specifically philosophical one. So it is not that interactionist monism offers an answer to a problem about location of normative phenomena, al-

though it purports also to address this, rather interactionist monism shows the direction our thinking ought to follow if we are to address a moral problem; to restate the earlier claim interactionist monism is about not just about what we ought to believe, but also about what ought to be the case, if morality is possible. What the problem is which motivates this response is the topic of the last section.

4. The Natural Place of the Soul

We may begin by contextualising the discussion of both the *Dissertation* and the *Letters*. Clearly, the issue of how the mental and the physical connect does not appear out of a philosophical void. Interactionism is mainly associated with Descartes and is the idea that the mind and the body, despite being different substances, are through their causal interactions bound closely with one another. This view was strongly criticised by Leibniz who argued that ‘there is no way to conceive that the one has any influence on the other, and it is unreasonable simply to appeal to the extraordinary operation of the universal cause in an ordinary and particular thing’ (Leibniz 1991, 36). Interestingly, Leibniz’s chief concern is different to those developed by twentieth century critics, who focus mainly on the very possibility of interaction. Leibniz rejects Cartesian interactionism because he believes that it is not *metaphysically* possible for any set of finite substances causally to

interact with one another. This impossibility arises because the causing substance would have to have the power to create a new accident in the substance on which it exercises its causal power. But the creation of such a new accident poses a problem, for it is not clear where the accident originates, whether it belongs to the causing substance or not. If the former, it would mean that the causing substance gives up somehow one of its accidents, which is not credible, because accidents by definition lack the requisite independence for the migratory solution to succeed, and so ‘the action of one substance on another is neither the emission nor the transplanting of an entity’ (Leibniz 1989, 145). If the accident does not belong to the causing substance, then it would appear out of nothing, which is scarcely preferable. In light of this, Leibnizian objection, both Schiller’s distancing himself from Cartesian substance dualism in the *Letters* and his confession of ignorance about the ‘necessity’ of the relation in the *Dissertation*, which implies a rejection of causal interaction, suggest philosophical caution rather than poetic licence. And they also suggest a degree of sustained engagement with these ideas, which were very much live issues in eighteenth century German metaphysical debates. With this in mind we can now turn to the moral significance of Schiller’s argument.

We said earlier that in the ‘Preface’ to the *Letters*, Schiller associates ‘one-sided’ philosophy with ‘degeneracy in morals’ (L 107). We also said that the charge of one-

sidedness can be variously understood, and that Julius’s position can be seen as an alternative to both reductive monisms and to dualism, in particular to the free spirit/clockwork body dualism. What remains to be analysed is what kind of *moral* problem Schiller diagnoses as one-sidedness.

Schiller starts the *Dissertation* by castigating the ‘wild enthusiasm [that] under-rates one part of our human nature, and desires to raise us into the order of ideal beings without at the same time relieving us of our humanity’ (D 40, §1). The ‘mistake’ he seeks to correct is to consider the body as inert, as a ‘prison of the spirit’, with ‘mental powers’ as independent of it and as aiming ideally to subordinate it (D 40, §1). He does not explain why this is a mistake, in particular, why it is morally relevant. What he does say is that his aim is to ‘bring into a clearer light the remarkable contributions made by the body to the workings of the soul, and the great and real influence of the animal system of sensations upon the spiritual’ (D 41, §1). The moralists who consider the body a ‘prison’ would accept presumably that bodies influence the soul, this is why they seek to subordinate the body to the soul. So at issue cannot be merely the possibility or actuality of the influence but rather its character, whether it is beneficial or not. Those who consider the body a prison clearly do not consider such influence beneficial. So Schiller’s aim is to show the *value* of the influence of the animal system of sensations upon the spiri-

tual without, as he says, going all the way to eudaimonism (*ibid.*).¹⁴ This value is initially described in terms of assistance: our ‘animal nature’ assists us in the attainment of ‘higher moral ends’ (*ibid.*). But reading on it becomes clear that Schiller has a moral ideal in mind that is different from that of that of the moralists who consider the body a prison house and which cannot be realised unless a different view of the mind/body relation is formulated. So the argument is not that given such and such moral ends, if we take into account the body we will have a better chance at realising them. Rather Schiller subtly moves the goal-posts suggesting that an ideal that does not have a place for the whole of the human, body and mind, is not worthy and once we have this ideal then we need to view the relation differently if we are to realise it. If we ask for greater precision on the ideal, I think what Schiller is after is a characterisation of what he calls in the *Letters* a ‘rationally feeling being’ (L 116), where rationally feeling describes a mode of being. In support of this interpretation, we can look at two themes of the *Disserta-*

¹⁴ In the ‘Preface’ to the *Letters*, Schiller emphasises the importance of the head leading the heart (L 107), presumably because the body of the correspondence is mainly about Julius’s expression of the needs of his heart as we saw. Here in the *Dissertation*, Schiller is concerned that those who despise the role of the body are in preponderance (see D 40-1, §1). However, as we said repeatedly, it is hard to pin down exactly which doctrine, or which precise theoretical division one-sidedness stands for.

tion, we have not yet discussed: reasoning and moral education.

Here is what Schiller says about reasoning:

We can form no conception without the antecedent will to form it; no will, unless by experience of a better condition thereby induced, without [some] sensation; no sensation without an antecedent idea (for along with the body we excluded bodily sensations), therefore no idea without an idea (D §8).

Experiences (‘sensation’) shape our ideas of things, and our ideas of things inform our will to change things including for the better. At the same time our experiences, cited at the start of this process, are not blind, they are informed by ideas and ideas belong with other ideas and so on. This cycle of what we might call active and passive reason (or ‘feeling reason’ perhaps), describes how human beings exist within their environment, where neither part of the relation is merely active spirit or merely inert matter. This brings us to the other side of the relation, culture and history. A significant portion of the *Dissertation* is given to a historical cultural discussion of human development placing the individual within his ‘culture’ (§7). This can, of course, be seen as just a sign of a faulty methodology that mixes up historical and developmental issues with what is proper to a study of human physiology. The opening emphasis on the moral significance of the work, however, suggests that this expansive sense of what is relevant, here the broader environment, is part of the overall argument.

The 'higher ends' Schiller mentions at the outset would not therefore be located in some realm of ideas but would be part of the individuals' environment and somehow perceivable as such. Of course the correlative of this view of the environment, what we may call naturalised spirit, is a self-conception of the human as part of the whole, a message that is powerfully conveyed in the *Letters*.

We are now in a position to get a better grasp of the moral relevance of the one-sidedness criticism; 'one-sided philosophy' is a moral problem if we see it as enforcing a certain obtuseness to our environment, making us oblivious to the values it embodies and which can speak to us directly and ought so to do if we are to achieve our higher moral aims. From the perspective opened by prioritizing the moral concerns of the *Letters*, we can see interactionist monism as a tentative articulation of a kind of moral realism, which is admittedly merely hinted at but which has as key elements the interaction of agent and her environment, and a due appreciation of physical and cultural constitution of agency. In conclusion, then it is possible to see the *Letters* as part of a sustained moral project that spans Schiller's intellectual career. Although the *Letters* and *Dissertation* do not give aesthetic experience the central role it acquires in later works, such as the *Aesthetic Letters* or *On Grace and Dignity*, there is a strong continuity in what we might call Schiller's moral vision. These later works may add detail and substance to this vision but do

not, on the evidence of the current reading, significantly alter it.

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