

## “Only a Matter of Style”: A Controversial Issue Between Schiller and Fichte. Regarding Schiller’s “On the Necessary Limitations in the Use of Beautiful Forms”

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Philosophy is the poem of reason. Without philosophy, incomplete poet; without poetry, incomplete thinker.  
 Novalis. *Logological Fragments*.

### 1. Reciprocal action [*Wechselwirkung*] between image and concept: more than a matter of style

In 1975, Fichte received a letter from Schiller, editor of *Die Horen* journal, in which he was informed that his paper: “Concerning the Spirit and the Letter within Philosophy in a Series of Letters” [Über Geist und Buchstabe in der Philosophie in einer Reihe von Briefen]<sup>1</sup> would not

<sup>1</sup> This is the first version Fichte would write of this work. It was written in the epistolary genre and was composed of three letters (cf. J.G. Fichte (1962) *Gesamtausgabe der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, Stuttgart. From now on GA followed by the volume, issue and pages. In this case: cf. GA I/6: 333-361).

be published. At the time Fichte was not in the least unknown, he was even a member of the journal’s editorial committee, along with important personalities such as Wilhelm von Humboldt, and Goethe and Herder later on. Schiller’s reasons for refusing to publish this paper were never clear to Fichte and, despite his increasingly offended statements, the paper was never published in the journal.

Sincerely expressing the reasons for his decision, Schiller’s first letter stated:

I looked forward to enrich the journal’s philosophical section with your article, your subject of choice lead me to expect an intelligible and interesting piece of work that could reach out to everyone. What have I received and what do you want me to submit to the public? The worn out subject, in the worn out epistolary style, and all this pursuant to a rather eccentric plan that makes it impossible to gather together each of the parts of your article. I regret to say this but be it as it may, I am not satisfied either with its form [or “clothing”: *Einkleidung*] nor with its content, the article is lacking precision and clarity, two qualities that usually characterize your work.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Letter from Schiller to Fichte, June 24, 1795, GA III: 334: „Durch Ihren Aufsatz hoffte ich den philosophischen Theil des Journals zu bereichern, und der Gegenstand, den Sie wählten, ließ mich eine allgemein verständliche und allgemein interessierende Untersuchung erwarten. Was erhalte ich nun, und was muthen Sie mir zu, dem Publikum vorzulegen? Die alte von mir noch nicht einmal ganz geendigte

To the unwary reader, and perhaps to Fichte himself, the reasons behind this criticism might have not been entirely clear. From Fichte's perspective his work would still have been fit for publishing if the issue at stake were, for instance, a disagreement with the paper's contents. At the time it was an undeniable fact that both authors had significant philosophical differences. This, however, had not lead Schiller to deny publishing Fichte's papers in the journal. Accordingly, Fichte's first published article in *Die Horen*, "On Stimulating and Increasing the Pure Interest in Truth" [Über Belebung und Erhöhung des reinen Interesses an Wahrheit], insisted on the fact – against Schiller's position – that aesthetics should necessarily be subjugated to ethics. To Fichte, "the aesthetic drive should most certainly be subjugated, in the human being, toward the drive to truth and toward the highest drive of all: the one that seeks

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Materie, sogar in der alten schon von mir gewählten Briefform und dieß alles nach einem so eccentricen Plan, daß es unmöglich wird, die Parthieen Ihres Aufsatzes in ein ganzes zusammen zu halten. Es thut mir leid es zu sagen, aber es liege nun woran es wolle, so befriedigt mich weder die Einkleidung noch der Inhalt, und ich vermisse in diesem Aufsatz die Bestimmtheit und Klarheit, die Ihnen sonst eigen zu seyn pflegt". I could not find an English translation of Schiller and Fichte's letters. Therefore, all the quotes in this paper were translated from German into English with the help of Tania Ganitsky, to whom I also have to thank for the translation of the entire paper.

ethical goodness"<sup>3</sup>. Moreover, such subjection would subsequently be incorporated, in a systematic level, to the section dedicated to art in Fichte's 1798 *System of Ethics* [Das System der Sittenlehre]. Even though, at that time, Schiller revised the article's "style", and Fichte claimed for it to be published in its original version<sup>4</sup>, the argument did not have further consequences.

The paper Fichte was now submitting to be considered for publication in the journal ("Concerning the Difference between the Spirit and the Letter within Philosophy"), insisted on the same matter by suggesting that the idea of "raising human beings towards the dignity of freedom and, along with it, towards freedom itself by means of aesthetic education, falls into a vicious circle"<sup>5</sup>. Once again his statement was clearly criticizing, although not explicitly, Schiller's aesthetical education project. To the latter, the circle Fichte points out was not vicious at all but rather the only way to understand the possibility of truly "overcoming aesthetic duty"<sup>6</sup>: the aesthetic character or

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<sup>3</sup> Fichte GA I/3: 84. „So ist der ästhetische Trieb im Menschen allerdings dem Triebe nach Wahrheit und dem höchsten aller Triebe, dem nach sittlicher Güte, unterzuordnen“.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Fichte GA III/2: 227.

<sup>5</sup> Fichte GA I/6: 348. „[...] und die Idee, durch ästhetische Erziehung die Menschen zur Würdigkeit der Freiheit, und mit ihr zur Freiheit selbst zu erheben, führt uns in einem Kreise herum“.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. F. Schiller *Aesthetic Letters* translated by Wilkinson and Willoughby and reprinted in F. Schiller *Essays*, Walter Hinderer and Daniel Dahlstrom

stage must show itself both as means and end if its purpose is to avoid the risk of turning freedom into the submission of sensibility to reason once again<sup>7</sup>.

However, if these differences had never been an obstacle, there was no reason they should become one now. Therefore, aside from the aforementioned contents, the real problem must have been a *matter of style*; a difference regarding the principles of “exposition [Vortrag]” that were most adequate for the broad (“popular”) circulation of philosophy, which Fichte swiftly defended in the following letter:

Not for the first time do I discover today that we have very different principles concerning the popular exposition [Vortrag] of philosophy. I have already acknowledged this aspect in your own philosophical works. [...] The popular character in your expositions concerns an overflowing use of images *instead* of abstract concepts. The popular character of my exposition mainly resides in the method I subscribe to, and this has lead you to abruptly regard my first *Letters* as dull and

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(ed.) (Continuum: New York): 86-178. From now on LAE, followed by the letter’s number and then the translation’s page. For the present quote: LAE XXIII: 155. Wilkinson and Willoughby translate “übertreffen” as “transcending”, I prefer “overcoming”.

<sup>7</sup> Further on Schiller’s proposal will be examined closely. For an in depth analysis of the idea of “overcoming aesthetic duty” [eine ästhetisches Übertreffen der Pflicht], cf. M.R. Acosta “¿Una superación estética del deber? La crítica de Schiller a Kant”, *Episteme N.S.* December 2008, 28:2, 3-24.

superficial [...] To me, images do not *take the place* of concepts, they rather *precede* or *follow* them, as a simile [als Gleichniß]. [...] Unless I am mistaken, all ancient and modern writers with a well-known reputation due to their expository skills have proceeded just as I do. Your way of presenting philosophy however, is completely new [...] You tie down imagination –which can only be free– and wish to compel it to *think*. *And this it cannot do.*<sup>8</sup>

Using images *in place* of concepts, trying to *replace* the appearance of concepts through poetic images, and hence compelling imagination to *think*, something which, according to Fichte, it cannot do, are the accusations with which Fichte answers to Schiller’s critique.

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<sup>8</sup> Letter from Fichte to Schiller, June 27, 1795, GA III/2: 338-339 (some of the italics are mine). „Daß wir über den populären philosophischen Vortrag sehr verschiedene Grundsätze haben, erfahre ich nicht erst seit heute; ich habe es schon aus Ihren eignen philosophischen Schriften gesehen. [...] Sie setzen die Popularität in Ihren unermeßlichen Vorrath von Bildern, die Sie fast allenthalben Statt des abstrakten Begriffs setzen. Ich setze die Popularität vorzüglich in den Gang, den ich nehme –das hat Sie verleitet meine ersten Briefe zu schnell für seicht, und oberflächlich zu halten–. [...] Bei mir steht das Bild nicht an der Stelle des Begriffs, sondern vor oder nach dem Begriffe, als Gleichniß. [...] Wo ich nicht irrte, haben alle alte, und neuere Schriftsteller, die in dem Ruhme des guten Vortrags stehen, er so gehalten, wie ich es zu halten strebe. Ihre Art aber ist völlig neu. [...] Sie feßeln die Einbildungskraft, welche nur frei seyn kann, und wollen dieselbe zwingen, zu denken. Dass kann sie nicht“.

Therefore, it is worthwhile to go back to Schiller's first letter in order to understand what Fichte strongly responded to:

We must have entirely different concepts of what makes a presentation appropriate; I confess I am not the least content with yours throughout these letters. In a good presentation I require, above all, parity of tone and, if it must have aesthetic value, *reciprocal action* [Wechselwirkung] between image [Bild] and concept, and not an alternation [Abwechslung] between both, as frequently happens in your letters.<sup>9</sup>

*Reciprocal action* instead of alternation. The issue at hand is not to completely replace the image with the concept, as Fichte seems to suggest in his reply, but rather – as Schiller will clarify in the next letter – to “also show imagination [by means of an image]” what has already been “presented [by means of a concept] to the understanding” and is “very strongly related, however, with it [with the concept]”<sup>10</sup>. The type

<sup>9</sup> Letter from Schiller to Fichte, June 24, 1795, GA III/2: 334–335 (italics are mine). „Wir müßen aber ganz verschiedene Begriffe von einer zweckmäßigen Darstellung haben, denn ich gestehe, daß ich mit der Ihrigen in diesen Briefen gar nicht zufrieden bin. Von einer guten Darstellung fordre ich vor allen Dingen Gleichheit des Tons, und wenn Sie aesthetischen Werth haben soll, eine Wechselwirkung zwischen Bild und Begriff keine Abwechslung zwischen beyden, wie in Ihren Briefen häufig der Fall ist“.

<sup>10</sup> Letter from Schiller to Fichte, August 3, 1795, GA III/2: 361. „so liebe ich es und beobachte es zugleich aus Wahl, eben das was ich dem Verstande

of relationship taking place here can be better understood if we refer to these words' context. Perhaps proceeding this way will clarify the reason this discussion, which only *seems* to reflect on the most adequate “style” [Manier] for a valuable “philosophical exposition”<sup>11</sup>, actually reveals a much deeper disagreement<sup>12</sup>.

One must keep in mind, in the first place, that Schiller's argument purposely makes use of his opponent's weapons: the concept of *reciprocal action* [Wechselwirkung]. In the second part of his 1794 *Foundation of the entire doctrine of Scientific Knowledge* [Grundlage der gesammten Wissenschaftslehre] (a work Schiller knows and quotes explicitly in the *Aesthetic*

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vorlegte auch der Phantasie (doch in strengster Verbindung mit jenem) vorzuhalten“.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Letter from Schiller to Fichte, August 3, 1795, GA III/2: 360.

<sup>12</sup> A rigorous approach to Schiller's and Fichte's argument on this matter, the translation of their correspondence, and an in-depth analysis of Fichte's posture, have been published in Spanish by Manuel Ramos and Faustino Oncina, in J.G. *Filosofía y estética. La polémica con F. Schiller* ((1998) Valencia: Universidad de Valencia). Oncina and Ramos extensively include the grounds of this argument in an introduction to what would be Fichte's aesthetic proposals. However, even though this study has been very useful to me, and it is the starting point of this paper, I do not entirely agree with its interpretation of Schiller's posture. There are important subtleties in Schiller's proposal that Fichte did not distinguish and that Oncina and Ramos –perhaps for the same reasons– do not point out in their study. I will thus dedicate the present article to focus on this problem.

*Letters*<sup>13</sup>), Fichte had introduced this term to describe the specific relationship that takes place between human beings' two main drives, the drives to sensibility and reason: when understood as a training stage for humanity to completely develop within us, the drive to sensibility may help reason recognize its own limits. Consequently, even though in this stage sensibility is still subjugated to reason, reason is also subjected to sensibility; hence, a form of "reciprocity" is instituted between both human drives<sup>14</sup>. However, to Fichte this is only an "intermediate" and training stage that must be permanently overcome by a superior stage in which both drives are reduced and subjected to a unique and essential concept of humanity: the drive to self-activity. That is, a drive exclusively determined by rational precepts that works rather like the Kantian notion of autonomy does. "The highest good", states Fichte in his "Lectures Concerning the Scholar's Vocation" [Einige Vorlesungen über die Bestimmung des Gelehrten], also from 1794, "is the complete harmony [Übereinstimmung] of a rational being with

himself"<sup>15</sup>. "Man's final end", he clearly points out beforehand, "is to subordinate to himself all that is irrational, to master it freely and according to his own laws"<sup>16</sup>. Thus, reason must most definitively overcome sensibility if the concept of human perfection is to be fulfilled.

The concept of aesthetic education in the *Aesthetic Letters* is mainly based on Schiller's discomfort with the need for the triumph of reason, whose most perfect stage leaves sensibility out; this need is present in both Kant's and Fichte's reflections. Thus, Schiller takes up Fichte's concept of reciprocal action exclusively to retrieve the possibilities it brings along in order to consider, not only an intermediate stage, but rather the best possible stage for mankind:

Once you postulate a primary, and therefore necessary, antagonism between these two drives, there is of course no other means of maintaining unity in man than by unconditionally *subordinating* the sensuous drive to the rational. From this, however, only uniformity can result, never harmony, and man goes forever being divided. Subordination there must of course be; but it must be reciprocal. [...] Both principles are therefore at once subordinated to each other and coordinated with each other, that is to say, they stand in reciprocal relation to one another [Wechselwirkung]: without form no matter, without matter no form.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Schiller, LAE XIII: 121.

<sup>14</sup> Cf., for example, the second part of *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* (Grundlage des theoretischen Wissens), at the end of the "Deduction der Vorstellung", in J. G. Fichte. *Sämmtliche Werke*, I.H. Fichte (ed.) (Berlin: Veit & Comp 1845/1846): I 239.

<sup>15</sup> J.G. Fichte in D. Breazeale (tr. and ed.) *Early Philosophical Writings* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988): 152.

<sup>16</sup> J.G. Fichte, *Ibid*: 151.

<sup>17</sup> F. Schiller, LAE XIII: 121.

Consequently, Schiller retrieves the concept of *Wechselwirkung* not only to pay tribute to Fichte –which, be it as it may, he does–, but also and especially to make it the starting point from which where he will definitively step aside from the Fichtean concepts of freedom and culture. Therefore, Schiller seems to consider that the concept’s great possibilities slipped through Fichte’s fingers:

To watch over these, and secure for each of these two drives its proper frontiers, is the task of culture, which is, therefore, in duty bound to do justice to both drives equally: not simply to maintain the rational against the sensuous, but the sensuous against the rational too. Hence, its business is two-fold: first, to preserve the life of sense against the encroachments of freedom, and second, to secure the personality against the forces of sensation.<sup>18</sup>

These affirmations both approach and distance themselves from ideas about culture expressed by Fichte in some of his writings. For example, in his “Lectures Concerning the Scholar’s Vocation”, Fichte affirms that culture must aim to satisfy all human beings’ needs and drives, but only in order to finally achieve freedom or emancipation from nature.<sup>19</sup>

The reference to *reciprocal action* made by Schiller in his letter to Fichte in June of 1795 is therefore better understood within the context of this debate. Thus, in a dispute that apparently seems to focus on

style, Schiller suggests and introduces a philosophical (anthropological) debate deeply related to a difference of thought regarding the ultimate goal and process of the ideal for humanity. For both, the issue at stake here is the fulfillment of freedom, but in Fichte’s case this is still, as it is in Kant’s case, an exclusively rational moral freedom, whereas to Schiller the issue is related to a freedom he calls, in his *Aesthetic Letters*, “aesthetic freedom”<sup>20</sup>.

Schiller had already begun to develop his critique to the Kantian –and, as so, to Fichte’s– concept of freedom as autonomy in his 1793 essay *On Grace and Dignity* [Über Anmuth und Würde]:

By the fact that nature has made of him a being both at once rational and sensuous, that is to say, a man, it has prescribed to him the obligation not to separate that which she has united; not to sacrifice in him the sensuous being, were it in the most pure manifestations of the divine part; and never to found the triumph of one over the oppression and the ruin of the other. It is only when he gathers, so to speak, his entire humanity together, and his way of thinking in morals becomes the result of the united action of the two principles, when morality has become to him a second nature, it is then only that it is secure; for, as far as the mind and the duty are obliged

<sup>18</sup> F. Schiller, LAE XIII: 121-122.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. J. G. Fichte, *Early Philosophical Writings*: 171ff.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. F. Schiller, LAE XX: 146.

to employ violence, it is necessary that the instinct shall have force to resist them.<sup>21</sup>

To Schiller, freedom—and, along with it, the ultimate expression of humanity—can only be fulfilled as a reciprocal action between both aspects of human nature, between both drives (which cannot be reduced to one another, as Fichte claims). He would later clarify this point in his *Aesthetic Letters*: “the activity of the one [drive] both gives rise to, and sets limits to, the activity of the other” in such a way that

each in itself achieves its highest manifestation precisely by reason of the other being active. Such reciprocal relation between the two drives is, admittedly [...] a problem that man is only capable of resolving completely in the perfect consummation of its existence.<sup>22</sup>

The issue at stake here is not to replace the scissions with a concept of absolute harmony. Nor is it to believe that Schiller aims at a “naïve” position that would seek to do away with the differences between both drives, and, therefore, between what his discussion with Fichte represents as the twofold relationship of matter and form: both at the level of an anthropological idea

<sup>21</sup> F. Schiller “On Grace and Dignity”, in *The Aesthetic Essays* (Project Gutenberg, 2006), although the translation has been slightly modified from the German edition: Cf. *Schillers Werke. Nationalausgabe*. Helmut Koopman y Benno von Wiese (eds.). (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau, 1962). From now on NA followed by the volume. In this case: NA XX: 284.

<sup>22</sup> F. Schiller, LAE XIV: 125.

of human perfection (of the “highest good” for humanity) and in the context of a “valuable philosophical exposition”. If any kind of reference points at the possibility of unity or reconciliation it is always meant, in Schiller’s case, to take place within the conflict itself. No suppression or overcoming of a dual anthropological notion is suggested here, but rather a different means to assume this duality: a means that does not require violence but rather a tense relationship (one might also say that only because of this tension can violence be avoided), and that aims to replace the idea of definitive supremacy and subjugation with the idea of “fragile balance”, which Schiller considers “the condition of all humanity”<sup>23</sup>.

The odd thing here is that both in his *Aesthetic Letters* and in *On Grace and Dignity*, Schiller seems to closely relate this philosophical debate regarding the Kantian and Fichtean positions on freedom to a particular “philosophical style”:

Like the analytical chemist, the philosopher can only discover how things are combined by analyzing them, only lay bare the workings of spontaneous nature by subjecting them to the torment of his own techniques. In order to lay hold of the fleeting phenomenon, he must first bind it in the fetters of rule, tear its fair body to pieces by reducing it to concepts, and pre-

<sup>23</sup> F. Schiller, LAE XXVI: 166.

serve its living spirit in a sorry skeleton of words.<sup>24</sup>

This is why “in the account of the analytical thinker”, “natural feeling cannot find itself again in such an image” and “truth should appear as paradox”<sup>25</sup>. Because of this, Schiller insists it is necessary to remember “human nature forms a whole more united in reality than it is permitted to the philosopher, who can only analyze, to allow it to appear”<sup>26</sup>. Therefore, the reciprocal action between image and concept Schiller writes about in his letter to Fichte is closely related to his perspective on freedom; and both “style” and “philosophy” thus seem to go hand in hand in Schiller’s thought. In these passages Schiller suggests that style leads to or ends up condemning a particular view of the world and, along with it, a particular idea of humanity: one which might be more emancipated (more “aesthetic”) or one which is chained down and determined by the separations that characterize the analysis which the understanding works with. Schiller seems to warn us of the fact that the analytical procedure used in certain philosophy is condemned to “forget” the fact that what the analysis is forced to separate is not separated in reality. How we talk about the world, the way we designate it, also determines how we think, un-

<sup>24</sup> F. Schiller, LAE I: 87-88.

<sup>25</sup> F. Schiller, LAE I: 88.

<sup>26</sup> F. Schiller “On Grace and Dignity”; cf. NA XX: 286.

derstand and finally appropriate it. Consequently, to think about style is not of minor importance in philosophical discussions.

Perhaps the close relationship between image and concept that Schiller refers to while he reflects on the *style* of a good-quality exposition is now clearer: there is no matter without form, there is no form without matter, as he wrote in his *Aesthetic Letters*. Similarly and most importantly, but exactly for the same reasons, plain alternation [Abwechslung] between image and concept, as he tells Fichte insistently, will not do. The idea that the first should replace the latter, as Fichte’s response suggested, is also far from the point. The relationship between image and concept must rather be given through *reciprocal action*, a mirror image of “complete” philosophical spirit and of the idea of a “complete” humanity.

## 2. Three Types of Philosophical Exposition: the Limitations and Possibilities of Imagination in Discourse

To Schiller, a specific relationship between images and concepts is necessarily related to the experience that whoever writes wishes to arouse in the reader. To appeal to reciprocal action is not, in this sense, entirely detached from the relationship between drives or faculties that even a philosophical exposition should provoke in its reader:



Regarding the investigation itself, I constantly tend to focus on the whole of emotional forces and on influencing all of them at once. Consequently, I do not solely wish to clarify my thoughts to others, but rather, at the same time, to share my entire soul and influence both their sensible and spiritual forces.<sup>27</sup>

The issue here is not a simple exposition of abstract concepts aimed exclusively at the faculty of understanding, and directed to a reader who would only be interested in a strictly logical presentation of an argument. A writer whose concerns are exclusively centered on this issue would be but a “philosopher of the letter”, or what Schiller calls in his previous works an “employed wise man” in opposition to a true “philosophical mind”:

In the same cautious way in which the employed wise man [der Brotgelehrte] separates his science from the rest, the philosophical minded man makes an effort to broaden his field of work in order to relate it to others. While an employed wise man separates, a philosophical spirit unites. Soon the latter is convinced that in the field of understanding, as in the world of senses, everything is interrelated, and his instinct –eagerly seeking concordance– will not be satisfied with fragments [...]. The philoso-

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Letter from Schiller to Fichte, August 3, 1795, GA III/2: 360: „Meine beständige Tendenz ist, neben der Untersuchung selbst, das Ensemble der Gemüthskräfte zu beschäftigen, und soviel möglich auf alle zugleich zu wirken. Ich will also nicht bloß meine Gedanken dem andern deutlich machen, sondern ihm zugleich meine ganze Seele übergeben, und auf seine sinnlichen Kräfte wie auf seine geistigen wirken“.

phical spirit reaches higher instances by means of its always new and more beautiful intellectual forms, while the employed wise man (within the eternal inactivity of spirit) protects the sterile uniqueness of his scholastic concepts.<sup>28</sup>

Hence, a work aiming to express such philosophical spirit cannot solely involve a detailed, systematic, and merely logical analysis of concepts. Schiller points out a true philosophical spirit “loves truth more than his own philosophical system”<sup>29</sup>, and will therefore never be satisfied with a “merely scientific” analysis. A true philosophical spirit can reach even higher instances by encountering increasingly beautiful “intellectual forms” through an exposition that enriches truth and gives way for it to achieve its greatest and most appropriate expression. Thus, beauty is not a simple “beautiful appearance” that leaves contents untouched.

This is also why Schiller’s first letter to Fichte insists on the importance of the

<sup>28</sup> Cf. F. Schiller, “Was heißt und zu welchem Ende studiert man Universalgeschichte” (München: Carl Hansen Verlag): 11-12: „Wo der Brotgelehrte trennt, vereinigt der philosophische Geist. Frühe hat er sich überzeugt, dass im Gebiete des Verstandes, wie in der Sinnenwelt, alles ineinander greife, und sein reger Trieb nach Übereinstimmung kann sich mit Bruchstücken nicht begnügen [...] Durch immer neue und immer schönere Gedankenformen schreitet der philosophische Geist zu höherer Vortrefflichkeit fort, wenn der Brotgelehrte in ewigen Geistesstillstand das unfruchtbare Einerlei seiner Schulbegriffe hütet“.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. F. Schiller, “Was heißt und zu welchem Ende ...”: 11.

“aesthetic value” of philosophical presentations<sup>30</sup>. The issue is not for contents to be adapted or even sacrificed to “beautiful forms”; it is neither, as Fichte accuses Schiller of in the next letter, to replace the philosophical exposition of concepts by a poetical exposition of images. The issue is rather to find a “graceful clothing”, a “truly beautiful way of writing” in which thought and intuition, content and images, understanding and imagination, appear in need of each other as they mutually strengthen and stimulate one another. When images are the “graceful clothing” of concepts, they give the spirit form and are made up by this spirit themselves.

Schiller will thoroughly explain this in his “On the Necessary Limitations in the Use of Beautiful Forms” [Über die notwendigen Grenzen beim Gebrauch schöner Formen],<sup>31</sup> a work written in response to the controversial argument between him and Fichte. In it, the above-mentioned “employed wise man” is cited once again, personified by different figures throughout the work’s entirety. All of these figures, however, seem to make a clear and yet

tacit reference to Fichte. He is therefore described as the kind of narrow-minded dogmatic who can only “understand by differentiating”<sup>32</sup>. Thus, as a reader, he can only be an “ordinary judge or critic” [ein gemeiner Beurtheiler], incapable of appreciating “the triumph of presentation [Darstellung]”. This is, Schiller continues, the capacity to produce a “harmonious unity where the parts are blended in a pure entirety”<sup>33</sup> by means of philosophical writing and exposition. Only this allows discourse to successfully “address the harmonized entirety of man”<sup>34</sup>.

The essay begins by introducing what Schiller designates the three common types of philosophical exposition: the *merely* scientific one, the popular one, and the sensuous or aesthetic presentation<sup>35</sup>. The first one seeks to exclusively show understand-

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Letter from Schiller to Fichte, June 24, 1795, GA III/2: 334: „aesthetischen Werth“.

<sup>31</sup> The English version I am using of “Über die notwendigen Grenzen beim Gebrauch schöner Formen” (NA XXI: 9-27) can be found in *The Aesthetical Essays* (Project Gutenberg, 2006): “On the Necessary Limitations in the Use of Beautiful Forms”. Since the translation will be occasionally modified according to the German version, the German reference in NA will always follow the English one.

<sup>32</sup> F. Schiller “On the Necessary Limitations...”; NA XXI: 14 [„er nur zu unterscheiden versteht“].

<sup>33</sup> F. Schiller “On the Necessary Limitations...”; NA XXI: 14 [„die vollkommene Auflösung der Theile in einem reinen Ganzen“].

<sup>34</sup> F. Schiller “On the Necessary Limitations...”; NA XXI: 14 [„dem harmonierenden Ganzen des Menschen“].

<sup>35</sup> Schiller occasionally refers to the “merely scientific” exposition as the “philosophical exposition”, and calls the “sensuous presentation” “beautiful”. However, in order to clarify these classifications I will exclusively use the word “beautiful” to designate what Schiller will further on call a “*truly* beautiful presentation”. Regarding the philosophical exposition, these are all different types of philosophical exposition, as it is clarified further on in Schiller’s work as well as in this paper.

ing the strict necessity that governs the logical chain of concepts, thereby subjugating imagination (even violently if necessary) to the understanding's needs:

The [merely scientific] exposition must be so fashioned as to overthrow [niederzuschlagen] this effort of the imagination by the exclusion of all that is individual and sensuous. The poetic impulse of imagination must be thus curbed by distinctness of expression, and its capricious tendency to combine must be limited by a strictly legitimate course of procedure.<sup>36</sup>

In this sense, the merely scientific exposition appears as "mechanical work": it is deprived of life due to the restrictions forced upon imagination. This type of exposition can only "impart an artificial life to the whole" through exclusively causal and systematic connections<sup>37</sup>.

The second type, the popular address [der populäre Unterricht], chooses to use specific cases and examples over concepts. For this reason it demands more of imagination and works much more with it, yet only in a *reproductive* and not in a *productive* stage: here, writes Schiller, imagination intervenes "only to reproduce, to renew previously received representations, and not to produce, to express its own self-creating power [ihre selbstbildende

Kraft]"<sup>38</sup>. Therefore, through this type of exposition, imagination –focused specifically on a "pedagogical" function and, as such, on a supplementary one– ends up tied down once again to the understanding's necessities. Consequently, imagination is not allowed "ever to forget that it only acts in the service of the understanding" and thus the possibilities for it to actually and actively take part of the sensible aspect of discourse are excluded<sup>39</sup>.

The significance of the sensible comes along with the third type of exposition, sensuous presentation [sinnliche Darstellung], "when it conceals the general in the particular, and when the fancy produces the living image [das lebendige Bild]"<sup>40</sup>. Schiller points out that this exposition's advantage is that it offers "a complete picture, an entirety of conditions, an individual"<sup>41</sup> precisely where there could only be abstract determinations. However, as it enriches and clears way for imagination, thus allowing it to fulfill this unity, it reduces and curtails the understanding since "it only confines to a single individual and a

<sup>36</sup> F. Schiller "On the Necessary Limitations..."; NA XXI: 6.

<sup>37</sup> F. Schiller "On the Necessary Limitations..."; NA XXI: 9.

<sup>38</sup> F. Schiller "On the Necessary Limitations..."; NA XXI: 7.

<sup>39</sup> F. Schiller "On the Necessary Limitations..."; NA XXI: 9.

<sup>40</sup> F. Schiller "On the Necessary Limitations..."; NA XXI: 8.

<sup>41</sup> F. Schiller "On the Necessary Limitations..."; NA XXI: 8.

single case what ought to be understood of a whole sphere”<sup>42</sup>.

This essay is clearly meant to respond to Fichte, or at least the ideas in it are entirely inspired on the discussion and disagreements between him and Schiller. What Schiller at first describes as a “merely scientific” exposition is later related, tacitly referring to Fichte’s terms, to the role of the “instructor” [der Lehrer], of a person solely interested in indoctrinating and who consequently produces, at the most, a “solid dogmatic address [gründlicher dogmatischer Vortrag]”<sup>43</sup>. Such an instructor, Schiller goes on, “has only in view in his lecture the object of which he is treating”<sup>44</sup>, and is not in the least concerned about his listener’s state of mind, nor, in this sense, about using a *form* of discourse that may correspond to or evoke a state of mind: he is entitled to do so, Schiller continues, since he may previously assume that his listeners are eagerly disposed to listen and that they have a patient ability to apprehend through fragments what will later have to be united as a systematic whole. The instructor, Schiller explains, “gives us a tree with its roots, though with

the condition that we wait patiently for it to blossom and bear fruit”<sup>45</sup>.

However, one must not be led to believe, as some critics are inclined to<sup>46</sup>, that Schiller confronts this tendency — exclusively concerned with the contents of discourse as it subjugates and puts *form* at the contents service— with the idea of a sensuous presentation and a “beautiful diction [schöner Ausdruck]” (the third above-

<sup>45</sup> F. Schiller “On the Necessary Limitations...”; NA XXI: 11.

<sup>46</sup> Without having to name a list of secondary references I will simply point at Kerry’s classic interpretation ((1961) *Schiller’s Writings on Aesthetics*. Manchester: Manchester U.P.), Paul de Man’s suggestions (“Kant y Schiller” in (1998) *La ideología estética*. Madrid: Cátedra), Constantin Behler’s *Nostalgic Teleology: Friedrich Schiller and the Schemata of Aesthetic Humanism*. (Berna: Peter Lang), and the above-mentioned interpretation developed by Oncina and Ramos (cf. Introducción to *Filosofía y estética*). In this matter I am much closer to Beiser’s reading (cf. Appendix 1 in (2005) *Schiller as Philosopher*. Oxford: Oxford U.P.). Beiser seems to suggest, however, that Schiller finally chooses philosophical or scientific exposition: I would rather like to propose that even though Schiller never renounced to philosophical exposition, it completely coincides with the one he describes as “truly beautiful”. Thus, his essay introduces a difference similar (and parallel) to the distinctions he makes in the aesthetic essays between mere sensible beauty and a more ideal beauty that is capable of making the beautiful and the sublime coincide. For an in depth discussion on the subject cf. M.R., *La tragedia como conjuro: el problema de lo sublime en Friedrich Schiller* ((2008) Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia): Cap. IV.

<sup>42</sup> F. Schiller “On the Necessary Limitations...”; NA XXI: 8.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. F. Schiller “On the Necessary Limitations...”; NA XXI: 11-12.

<sup>44</sup> F. Schiller “On the Necessary Limitations...”; NA XXI: 12.

mentioned alternative)<sup>47</sup>. The latter does suggest an active participation of the sensible, an element which, be it as it may, is present in Schiller's critiques of both Kant and Fichte. If this were the issue, the way Fichte describes Schiller's exposition would be correct: an exposition in which concepts serve images and are replaced by them in favor of the exposition's harmony.

"Beautiful diction", Schiller recalls, seems precisely contrary to the instructor's exposition. The latter's main concern is "to make his knowledge practical [die Kenntnisse praktisch zu machen]"<sup>48</sup>; this can be guaranteed if the discourse is directed at the senses and if the presentation is offered as a whole instead of being exclusively concerned with fragments. Unlike the instructor's address, beautiful diction "is satisfied with gathering its flowers and fruits, but the tree that bore them does not become our property, and when once the flowers are faded and the fruit is consumed our riches depart"<sup>49</sup>.

Thus, Schiller is clearly not at ease with the characteristics of "beautiful diction" either. But this is not a good enough reason to believe that his philosophical works cast off this second alternative. Some Schillerian studies (I am thinking especially on De Man's, Behler's, and even Fichte's own

criticisms) are not focused on understanding what he might have tried to achieve through his "style", but rather on what he would have finally obtained through it: they suggest, thus, that through his writings Schiller would have accomplished an indoctrination of reason through the senses. As De Man and Behler even put it, Schiller would have sought to (even dangerously) reunite what reason (the understanding) cautiously and for practical reasons would have tried to keep separated. Does Schiller ultimately aim, as De Mans suggests, to "resolve" dialectically, to "close" and consequently to also "aesthetize" what Kant very cautiously aimed at leaving irremediably opened and unresolved?

Certainly none of these questions could actually be resolved by what Schiller *says* in his works: one would have to examine rigorously their form of exposition and how it corresponds to the purposes the author clarifies specifically in each of them. Thus, many of the contemporary Schillerian critiques echo Fichte's original accusations; and they especially focus on an aspect of Schiller's thought that cannot be set easily aside. This is the case since, as Schiller himself is aware of and acknowledges in his letters to Fichte, the issue at stake is not "only a matter of style": it is rather related to the core of Schiller's philosophical project. As presented in the previous section, thinking on the relationship between form and content involves a way of understanding philosophy's practical purposes, which

<sup>47</sup> F. Schiller "On the Necessary Limitations..."; NA XXI: 11.

<sup>48</sup> F. Schiller "On the Necessary Limitations..."; NA XXI: 12.

<sup>49</sup> F. Schiller "On the Necessary Limitations..."; NA XXI: 11.

goes beyond and yet relates to the reflection on style. Thus, what is at stake here is a reflection on how to understand philosophy's ethico-political responsibilities, and the way in which language also determines a relationship with and a conception of truth. Consequently, Fichte's accusation also inaugurates a reading of Schiller that ultimately leads to the accusation of an "aesthetization" of truth and, lastly, an "aesthetization" of politics. Such criticism should not be taken lightly, especially under the light of 20<sup>th</sup> century history and events; where philosophy, unfortunately, has played a significant role<sup>50</sup>.

Without completely dismissing the problem as to resolve a long tradition of secondary criticism on Schillerian thought, it would be useful to focus on the nuances of Schiller's response in: "On the Necessary Limitations in the Use of Beautiful Forms". Perhaps this might help clarify the fact that some of these critiques, especially the ones related directly to Fichte's accusations, presuppose a series of dichotomies, polarities, and concepts that Schiller himself is, on the contrary, trying to dislocate and question

<sup>50</sup> For an in-depth analysis of contemporary criticism regarding the "dangers" involved in Schillerian philosophy", as well as a possible answer to them on behalf of Schiller's aesthetical-political proposal, cf. M.R. Acosta, "Making other people's feelings our own: From the Aesthetic to the Political in Schiller's Aesthetic Letters", en: High, J., Martin, N. y Oellers, N. (eds.) *Who is this Schiller now?* ((2011) London/New York: Camden House): 187-203.

—not only through theory but especially through the exercise of another kind of writing.

### 3. "Compelling Imagination to Think": *der darstellende Schriftsteller*

It is true, as Beiser<sup>51</sup> points out, that Schiller never explicitly stated which of these three alternatives was best fitted for his style; therefore, his readers must draw their own conclusions single-handedly. However, the reason for this might be that the "writing style" Schiller was interested in proposing could not be classified in any of these three alternatives<sup>52</sup>. Hence, the essay does not end there, it continues and describes a more complex form of exposition. Schiller relates it to what he calls "the truly beautiful", which he opposes to both "a vulgar or more common fashion of beauty" [das Schöne gemeiner Art], and "a vulgar or more common way of perceiving beauty" [die gemeine Art, das Schöne zu empfin-

<sup>51</sup> Cf. F. Beiser, *Schiller as philosopher*: 265.

<sup>52</sup> As I pointed out before, this is where my interpretation slightly steps away from Beiser's suggestions; still, the consequences of what this means are not very different from the ones he proposes. After all, Beiser's work is just a brief Appendix that questions the importance of Schiller's argument with Fichte in order to understand the Schillerian proposal. In this sense, it is rather an invitation to think deeper on this problem: an invitation the present paper responds to.

den]<sup>53</sup>. When it comes to the truly beautiful, Schiller goes on (following Kant's *Critique of Judgment*), "the most perfect conformity to law" is required, "but it must appear as natural"<sup>54</sup>. This type of exposition "does not take the understanding apart to address it exclusively", but rather, without sacrificing necessity in the exposition, it manages to address his listener's "harmonized whole" in "pure unity"<sup>55</sup>.

This is the art of the writer who is as close as possible to the "highest level of presentation [Darstellung]", and who Schiller describes as *der darstellende Schriftsteller*<sup>56</sup>. To this writer writing is not only a *means* to expose content; he is capable of turning writing itself into a place in which contents are given their most appropriate form in order to come forward in their highest possibilities. In this sense, *der darstellende Schriftsteller's* writing seeks to "present", "exhibit", and "stage" (the meaning of these words relate to what

"Darstellung" means to Schiller<sup>57</sup>) a *complete image* of a concept. The complete image is the goal that guides this possibly ever-lasting search, although Schiller acknowledges that such an expression would also be the most complete form of the concept itself, inseparable and completely interdependent on the form that gives it meaning. At the beginning of his work, Schiller stated that "something sensuous always lies at the ground of our thought"<sup>58</sup>; the type of writing proper to *der darstellende Schriftsteller* allows us to grasp the complete meaning of such an affirmation.

A writer who manages to use this type of exposition, Schiller goes on, is not "confined to communicate *dead ideas* [as it happens with mechanical, abstract and strictly logical expositions]; he grasps the living object with a living energy, and seizes at once on the entire man—his understanding, his heart, and his will"<sup>59</sup>. Conse-

<sup>53</sup> F. Schiller "On the Necessary Limitations..."; NA XXI: 13.

<sup>54</sup> F. Schiller "On the Necessary Limitations..."; NA XXI: 13: „Die höchste Gesetzmäßigkeit muss da sein, aber sie muss als Natur erscheinen“.

<sup>55</sup> F. Schiller "On the Necessary Limitations..."; NA XXI: 13-14: „spricht als reine Einheit zu dem harmonierenden Ganzen des Menschen“. It is also important to keep in mind that the expression "harmonierendes Ganzes" makes reference to the fact that beautiful exposition can at the same time address all of the listeners' faculties, and make them all concur with each other.

<sup>56</sup> F. Schiller "On the Necessary Limitations..."; NA XXI: 14.

<sup>57</sup> For a more in depth discussion on the importance of Schiller's notion of "Darstellung", cf. M.R. Acosta, *La tragedia como conjuro...: 191-198*, and the detailed study of F. Heuer, *Darstellung der Freiheit. Schillers Transzendente Frage nach der Kunst* ((1970) Köln: Böhlau Verlag).

<sup>58</sup> F. Schiller "On the Necessary Limitations..."; NA XXI: 8. „so ist doch immer zuletzt etwas sinnliches, was unserm Denken zum Grund liegt“.

<sup>59</sup> F. Schiller "On the Necessary Limitations..."; NA XXI: 15: „Dafür schränkt sich aber seine Wirkung auch nicht darauf ein, bloß todte Begriffe mitzuteilen, er ergreift mit lebendiger Energie das Lebendige und bemächtigt sich des ganzen Menschen, seines Verstandes, seines Gefühls, seines Willens zugleich“.

quently, as one might have been led to believe, this writer does not renounce to a rigorous philosophical exposition. In the same way Schiller's previous discussion with Kantian practical philosophy does not seek to "lessen" the Kantian duty but rather to go beyond duty itself in order for reason and the sensible to concur (what he describes himself as the "overcoming of aesthetic duty"<sup>60</sup>), here Schiller proposes an equally aesthetic overcoming of the merely scientific form: a type of writing as rigorous as the logical-scientific expression that, nonetheless, has no violent effect on imagination:

It is certain that it is necessary to be quite the master of a truth to abandon without danger the form in which it has originally been found; a great strength of understanding is required not to lose sight of your object while giving free play to the imagination. [...] he who *besides* [transmitting his knowledge under a scholastic form] is in a condition to communicate it to me in a beautiful form shows [...] that he has assimilated it and that he is able to make its image pass into his productions and into his acts.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>60</sup> F. Schiller, LAE XXIII: 155. Again, for an in depth discussion about this concept, cf. M.R. Acosta, "¿Una superación estética del deber?: 11-17.

<sup>61</sup> F. Schiller "On the Necessary Limitations..."; NA XXI: 15-16: „Gewiss muss man einer Wahrheit schon im hohen Grad mächtig sein, um ohne Gefahr die Form verlassen zu können, in der sie gefunden wurde; man muss einen großen Verstand besitzen, um selbst in dem freyen Spiele der Imagination sein Objekt nicht zu verlieren. Wer mir seine Kenntnisse [...] zugleich [...] in einer schönen Form mit[...]theil[t], der beweißt [...] dass er sie in seine

Through this type of exposition *der darstellende Schriftsteller* produces the effect that both a rigorous scientific exposition and a beautiful diction speaker wish to provoke: he manages to clearly and deeply communicate the truth to his audience as he tries "to make this knowledge practical"<sup>62</sup>. In order to do this he must have already received –similarly as the beautiful soul does in the case of moral principles– the guarantee provided by abstract universality that allows imagination to act freely without threatening to replace or violently relate to concepts. To let imagination loose this way he must also have the strength that comes with greatly taking in the legality of the principles of the understanding. As happens with the beautiful soul, the concepts formed by the conjunction of the understanding with the imagination are the product of a spontaneous performance that is only made possible by a "second nature" that arouses when the path from merely scientific knowledge "to the state of a living intuition"<sup>63</sup> has been traced.

Regarding this issue, and keeping in mind the argument carried out through their letters, Fichte insisted on the fact that this perspective ultimately exerts the worse kind of violence on imagination; let us recall what he wrote to Schiller on this sub-

Natur aufgenommen und in seinen Handlungen darzustellen fähig ist“.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. F. Schiller "On the Necessary Limitations..."; NA XXI: 12.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. F. Schiller "On the Necessary Limitations..."; NA XXI: 16.



ject: “Your way of presenting philosophy however, is completely new [...] You tie down [feßeln] imagination –which can only be free– and wish to compel it to *think* [zwingen zu denken]– *and this it cannot do*”<sup>64</sup>. However, Schiller addresses this critique almost directly in his essay: if only few of us are “simply capable of thinking, it is infinitely more rare to meet any who can *think with imagination* [darstellend denken]”<sup>65</sup>. This is why, he continues, sooner or later *der darstellende Schriftsteller* has to face a certain “narrow minded” critic who, unable to carry out the double task his writing requires, will have to start out

by translating it to understand it—in the same way that the pure understanding, left to itself, if it meets beauty and harmony, either in nature or in art, must begin by transferring them into its own language—and by decomposing it, by doing in fact what the pupil does who spells before reading.<sup>66</sup>

Here Schiller is also almost explicitly referring to the critiques Fichte stated in the letter at stake:

<sup>64</sup> Carta de Fichte a Schiller, Junio 27 de 1795, GA III/2: 339 (italics are mine).

<sup>65</sup> Cf. F. Schiller “On the Necessary Limitations...”; NA XXI: 14.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. F. Schiller “On the Necessary Limitations...”; NA XXI: 14: „denn ein solcher muss ihn freylich erst übersetzen, wenn er ihn verstehen will, so wie der bloße nackte Verstand, entblößt von allem Darstellungsvermögen, das Schöne und Harmonische in der Natur wie in der Kunst erst in seine Sprache umsetzen und auseinander legen, so wie der Schüler, um zu lesen, erst buchstabieren muss“.

I think this [the fact that imagination is compelled to think] explains why reading your philosophical works is exhausting for others as well as for myself. First, I have to translate everything you say in order to understand it, and the same happens to others. [...] Your philosophical works are bought and admired, but they have not been understood at all. I am not referring to your poetic and historical works [...], nor to the philosophical depth I admire in you; *I am only speaking about your style.*<sup>67</sup>

Let us now return to the heart of the problem. The peak of this argument might be that Fichte did not understand that the dilemma was not “only a matter of style” and that Schiller was not just proposing a different type of philosophical exposition. Fichte seemed convinced that his contender was only seeking a more popular and accessible style that could ultimately produce complete opposite effects on the public. Fichte insisted on this last fact and Schiller acknowledged it himself: “I admit that currently and in the future many of the objects of my writing, perhaps the greatest of them, are of a barely communicative nature –some of them cannot be communicated at all–, this is why I am delighted to admit your criticism”<sup>68</sup>.

<sup>67</sup> Letter from Fichte to Schiller, June 27, 1795, GA III/2: 339.

<sup>68</sup> Letter from Schiller to Fichte, August 3, 1795, GA III/2: 364: „Ich gebe zu, dass jetzt und künftig manches – vielleicht das beste in meinen Schriften von der Beschaffenheit ist, dass es sich schwer ja manchen gar nicht mittheilen lässt, und den Vorwurf den Sie mir dadurch machen will ich Ihnen mit Freuden zugeben“.

To Schiller, however, the argument's core was elsewhere:

If principles were the only thing standing between us –he writes Fichte– I would try with all my might to have you take my side or to take yours; but we *perceive* [empfinden] differently, we are indeed of very different types of nature, and I am unaware of any remedy against this.<sup>69</sup>

In the light of our previous considerations, the affirmation “we *perceive* differently” could also be translated as “we *think* differently”. If thinking and sensuous experience [Empfindung] don't belong to completely different spheres of discourse and if, in the light of Schillerian thought, a certain form of exposition is not only a means to transmit results that have been previously attained and defined but rather the place where thinking can unfold, to Schiller this argument evokes a much deeper issue than Fichte was willing to acknowledge himself. More than a new style, Schiller was proposing –through his criticism of Fichte, his aesthetic education project, and, consequently, also through his own way of writing– a *new way of thinking*. By insisting on the recognition of the rights of sensibility, on the introduction of imagination's activity in conceptual

thought, and on a reciprocal action between images and concepts, Schiller was suggesting a reinterpretation of how philosophy should understand itself; the activity of thinking; and thus, ultimately, the interdependent relationships between thought and language, between content and forms of expression.

Imagination –Schiller responds to Fichte– also participates productively, and not only reproductively, in the thinking process. It does not have to be suppressed nor entirely controlled by the understanding since there is a third alternative in the relationship between images and concepts: an agreement of mutual recognition and fostering between both instances. However, Schiller clearly considers that this agreement cannot exclusively or completely take place through mental activity; just as the understanding and imagination are presented as two interdependent activities and faculties, thought and discourse are also two instances or moments in one same process: thought's forms will not be complete until expressed, presented in language. Therefore, exposition is another moment in our comprehension, and not only the mere re-presentation of something that has previously been clearly understood.

A philosopher must consequently learn to see and communicate the world with the “poetic energy [Dichtungskraft]” that Schiller mentions in his *Aesthetic Letters*. Through his writing and abilities of expression, the philosopher, as the poet, can use

<sup>69</sup> Letter from Schiller to Fichte, August 3, 1795, GA III/2: 364 (italics are mine): „Wären wir bloß in Prinzipien getheilt, so wollte ich es herzlich versuchen, entweder Sie auf meine Seite zu ziehen, oder zu der Ihrigen zu übergehen; aber wir empfinden verschieden, wir sind ganz verschiedene Naturen und dagegen weiß ich keinen Rath“.

his imagination productively and “intercept the rays of truth’s triumphant light” even before they “can penetrate the recesses of the human heart”<sup>70</sup>. Since probably only a few can think this way (“darstellend denken”)<sup>71</sup>, the expressive philosopher, as is the case with the great poet, will always have to face and confront “vulgar criticism”, which in the absence of “the feeling for this harmony [...] only runs after details, and even in the Basilica of St. Peter attends exclusively to the pillars on which the ethereal edifice reposes”<sup>72</sup>. This is why

<sup>70</sup> Cf. F. Schiller, LAE IX: 109.

<sup>71</sup> F. Schiller “On the Necessary Limitations...”; NA XXI: 14

<sup>72</sup> Cf. F. Schiller “On the Necessary Limitations...”; NA XXI: 14. Kant also uses the example of the Basilica of St. Peter in his *Critique of Judgment* when he refers to imagination’s productive activity in the case of the experience of the sublime: when imagination is initially bedazzled by what is presented to it, and is unable to grasp in one same glance the entirety of space, it does not renounce to the experience and admit failure, but rather transforms it into an aesthetic emotion. There are some experiences that can never be represented adequately (by the understanding); and Schiller, keeping them in mind, seems to relate this inadequacy to imagination’s productive capacity to overcome this initial incapability. Similarly, when thinking about *der darstellende Schriftsteller*, Schiller seems to be thinking about a presentation capable of expressing and producing the interdependent relationship between images and concepts (probably, moreover, in connection to what Kant describes, in the *Critique of Judgment*, as “aesthetical ideas”, sensible presentations for what no representation seems adequate). The relationship between Schiller’s proposal and his reading of Kantian aesthetics cannot be thought about in

an artist, the same as a philosopher, must be able to rise above his time’s taste and judgment – “Work for your contemporaries, but create what they need, not what they praise”<sup>73</sup>–. He should leave the “sphere of the actual”<sup>74</sup> to understanding and rather aspire to make truth appear in beauty, where it comes to light in all its might since “not only thought [Gedanke] can pay it homage, but sense, too, can lay loving hold on its appearance”<sup>75</sup>.

“Philosophy”, Fichte clearly says to Schiller, “is originally wordless; it is pure spirit”<sup>76</sup>. This is why Fichte thinks that exposition is only a matter of style, and that style has no essential part in what philosophy is originally concerned with. This is also the reason why, when images are at stake, Fichte considers that they can only appear “before or after concepts, as a simile”<sup>77</sup>. Ultimately, this is perhaps why Fichte is compelled to translate Schiller’s images into concepts: because he does not understand that his concepts are already, and in a certain way, images; and thus translation, understood as an exercise of “deuration”,

depth here. To read a more complete analysis on the subject, cf. M.R. Acosta, *La tragedia como conjuro...*: 106-112.

<sup>73</sup> F. Schiller, LAE IX: 110.

<sup>74</sup> F. Schiller, LAE IX: 109.

<sup>75</sup> F. Schiller, LAE IX: 110.

<sup>76</sup> Letter from Fichte to Schiller, June 27, 1795, GA III/2: 336: “Die Philosophie hat ursprünglich gar keinen Buchstaben, sondern sie ist lauter Geist”.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. again Letter from Fichte to Schiller, June 27, 1795, GA III/2: 339: „vor oder nach dem Begriff, als Gleichnis“.

only destroys what Schiller's opposing viewpoint considers alive and in permanent movement. "An eloquent writer –says Schiller– knows how to extract the most splendid order from the very center of anarchy, and he succeeds in erecting a solid structure on a constantly moving ground, on the very torrent of imagination"<sup>78</sup>. To understand thought's movement from another perspective is, in Schiller's case, to understand that thought is always in movement. Thus, to move constantly on unsteady grounds and build over and over on what has not stopped flowing is essential to the challenge of philosophizing. If "something sensuous always lies at the ground of thought"<sup>79</sup>, then this ground is ever moving. Only such a "ground" can turn writing, the "letter" of philosophy, into something alive enough "to bring scientific knowledge back again to the state of a living intuition"<sup>80</sup>.

On this matter, in his "Concerning the Spirit and the Letter within Philosophy in a Series of Letters", Fichte wrote: "some coarse observers are tempted to accredit the driving force, that *only the spirit pos-*

*esses*, to the body's form and structure"<sup>81</sup>. On the contrary, to Schiller, a philosophical work –and, along with it, what Fichte relates exclusively to the "spirit"– looses a considerable amount of value and strength if it cannot be presented aesthetically at the same time. In other words, to Schiller, a writer must revive over and over the same dilemma that a poet has to bear: the search for appropriate, impossible, images (body) that can adequately express what is to be said, but is essential transformed as it is being said. This is how it (what is being said) gains its true strength and power.

There is no one better fit than Schiller to illustrate this everlasting search for the difficult balance between philosophy and aesthetic force, between the necessary clarity of concepts and the strength of images. The words Schiller uses in his works do not only describe the results of a previous experience or reflection: they are the experience itself, an experience that is recreated and put into movement through its own narration. The contents of his philosophical project work the same way. Schiller insists on reciprocal action between reason and sensibility, on the tense balance between both of these drives, thereby defining human action through elements of contingency, finitude, and permanent and necessary dialogue with a world that is not en-

<sup>78</sup> F. Schiller "On the Necessary Limitations..."; NA XXI: 10: „So erschafft sich der beredte Schriftsteller aus der Anarchie selbst die herrlichste Ordnung, und errichtet auf einem immer wechselnden Grunde, auf dem Strome der Imagination, der immer fortfließt, ein festes Gebäude“.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. again F. Schiller "On the Necessary Limitations..."; NA XXI: 9.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. again F. Schiller "On the Necessary Limitations..."; NA XXI: 16.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. GA I/6: 359: „und nicht sehr feine Beobachter sind daher versucht, der Gestalt und dem Baue des Körpers die bewegende Kraft zuzuschreiben, die nur der Geist hat“.

tirely in our power to control<sup>82</sup>. This relationship and its effects are also present in the discussion on philosophical style. This discussion reflects on philosophy itself and on how it understands thought. It leads to comprehending the boundaries of thought, its mobility, finitude, and, consequently, the everlasting impossibility of an absolute correspondence, a complete incarnation, and a completely adequate exposition of truth. A truth that is nothing but this permanent inadequation; a truth that is always in the process of its own creation.

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<sup>82</sup> Unfortunately, I cannot discuss in depth here the way in which Schiller’s practical proposal, being an aesthetic one, dialogues with the contingency that characterizes human praxis. This is especially clear in his essay “Concerning the Sublime” (tr. Daniel Dahlstrom, in F. Schiller, *Essays*: 70-85). For a closer look at this issue, cf. M.R. Acosta, *La tragedia como conjuro...: 327 ss*; and M.R. Acosta “Making other people’s feelings our own...”.

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