

Notes for Letter Nos. 9-11 of Schiller's  
*On the Aesthetic Education of Man*

Translation Used: Keith Tribe, Penguin Classics (Edition 2016)

Recorded by William Krusch

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Ninth Letter:

1. The refinement of man's character should be the impetus for political improvements.
2. Fine art is the tool by which man develops his character.
3. Both art and science are immune from human capriciousness.
4. Man is born into a particular point in space-time, but his labours must be directed towards the future. The material must be of the present era, but the form from posterity. "The artist is certainly the child of his age, but all the worse for him if he is at the same time its pupil, let alone its minion. May a benevolent divinity tear the infant from his mother's breast and nourish him with the milk of a better age, and allow him to grow into maturity under a distant Greek sky" (30).
5. "Truth survives in the shape of deception" (30). Art is inherently contrived because it must be produced, yet this act of creation is the driving impetus by which the universe is eternally creating and recreating itself.
6. Man must disdain the judgment of the present era to avoid being corrupted by it; he should look upwards to divinity and law to guide him.
7. The ideal is created by connecting the possible with the necessary; man expresses the ideal through invention, viz. by giving the sensuous formal structure, and formal structure sensuous manifestation within time – man projects this ideality into infinity.
8. Man must be alert that his desire for the ideal does not become tainted by personal pride. "But did man not ask himself whether this disorder in the moral world offends his reason, or perhaps instead pains his self-love?" (31). Man resolves this potential problem by directing his moral impulse upward towards the absolute; in doing so, time is annulled, and the future becomes the present.
9. Man must *guide* humanity towards Truth and Beauty through his own noble deeds.
10. "The edifice of delusion and capriciousness will fall, it has to fall, it has already fallen as soon as you are certain that it is tending towards this; but this tendency must be within man's inner self" (31).
11. Man should not create until he is certain that he is "at one with the ideal" (32).
12. Man must live within his century, but he avoids the guilt of his fellows by guiding them through persuasion towards the absolute; cf. Plato's Allegory of the Cave from *Republic VII*.
13. Man leads through courage, and so avoids cowardice; "your own nobility will awaken their [other people's] own, and here their unworthiness will not ruin your purpose" (32).
14. Attacking other people's principles is futile, for one is then attacking the entire foundation of their existence; instead, surround other people with inspirational forms, for they will then rise on their own accord and understanding. "Appearance conquers reality, and art nature" (32).

Commentary:

1. Christine and Luc emphasized Schiller's notion that people can only be persuaded through introducing beautiful forms during their moments of leisure.
2. Matt noted the connection between the Ninth Letter and the Socratic method, that only leading by example brings about truth and justice. Nick furthered this idea by commenting on the connections of the Ninth Letter to the *Republic* in particular.
3. Matt noted that didactic methods of instruction are not effective, and that great artists such as Rembrandt and Brueghel the Elder are so successful at conveying their ideas because they appeal to a higher universality.
4. Scott noted that all great leaders speak to their enemies calmly and with confidence (cf. Schiller's "falling" quotation on page 31). Helga was noted as an example of this exemplary leadership, along with Christ and Thomas More.

Tenth Letter:

1. Man can fall from his destiny by two ways: through lethargy, and through coarseness – Beauty leads him back.
2. Opponents to the idea that the pursuit of Beauty leads man towards moral character claim that the arts only flourish when political liberty and civic virtue have already begun to decline; however, Schiller argues that *energy of character* is the source of man's excellence. "Perhaps *experience* is no sure guide in considering a question like this [whether Beauty serves a moral function or not]" (36).
3. Beauty must be located beyond the senses, so that lower sensuous manifestations of beauty may be compared to it.
4. Beauty is a purely *rational concept* that guides one's judgment; Beauty is always an abstract idea; such a Beauty would be a necessary condition of humanity.
5. "Experience only shows us discrete conditions of individual men, but never humanity itself" (36-37).
6. The pursuit of abstract Beauty will take man beyond the physical senses, but such a transcendental leap is necessary, for "whosoever dares not to venture beyond actuality will never conquer truth" (37).

Commentary:

1. Luc inquired into the second footnote (34), where Schiller refers to the expulsion of the poets from Plato's *Republic*. William cited the paradox between the artificiality of art and its veracity and the poetic dialecticism of Plato's writing; Plato's *Ion* was mentioned as a further instance of Plato criticizing poets who do not know *how* they write (i.e., they are unaware of the dialectical function of poetry, which operates through metaphor and paradox). Matt seconded the idea that poetic composition is ironic, and noted Plato's acceptance of only those poets who understood their craft. Matt and William discussed how Plato's dialogues are structured similarly to Classical plays, and Christine inquired into the relation of Sophocles' plays to Plato's dialogues.
2. Kevin asked Christine to reread the final sentence of the Tenth Letter; see "Of course, this transcendental path..." (37). The transcendental nature of Beauty was discussed by various members of the group.
3. Christine emphasized Schiller's idea that, while his opponents claim beauty must be lost in order for it to be known (via reclamation), Beauty must preexist and be a necessity for human experience.

4. Luc noted Schiller's emphasis on the notion that Beauty is found not through the senses (36).
5. Scott mentioned how fractals, like Beauty, were only discovered through abstract thought, and were only then projected onto physical existence through models.
6. Matt noted that the Platonic solids were the origins of fractals, and that the conception that Platonic solids are the structure upon which physical space is based was an idea which Kepler had argued for in his own works (see *Mysterium Cosmographicum*). The slight asymmetry of the universe is what allows for geometric patterns to continue *ad infinitum*.
7. Kevin noted the possibility and necessity of truths in Leibniz's work. Matt elaborated on this idea, citing Huxley and H.G. Wells as writers who got lost in abstraction because their assumptions about what is possible and necessary were wrong.
8. Matt noted that oligarchies use necessary truths, but they eliminate the contingent truths that were needed to arrive at the necessary truths in the first place, resulting in the destruction of the internal dialectical movements; this destruction occurred because the oligarchies did not want further discoveries to be made. To quote Matt: "Truth can't be literal for it to be truthful."
9. Scott noted the failure in contemporary mathematics to understand abstractions due to the increasing growth of empirical, inductive thinking methods. Scott continued by arguing that the alienation of mathematics from the process of the mind has led to an internal collapse in math.

#### Eleventh Letter:

1. Two ultimate concepts are reached when one rises to the highest level of abstraction: *person* and *condition*. Person refers to the self, and condition to the self's determinants. "For all constancy of person, its condition changes; for all change of conditions, the person remains constant" (38).
2. "Only in the absolute subject do all determinants remain *with* the personality, because they flow *from* personality" (38).
3. Person and condition are distinct in man because he is a finite being.
4. "We are because we are" (38). Schiller argues that man's existence (not solely in the physical act of *becoming* in space-time, but as existence *qua* existence in the meaning of the auxiliary verb "to be/*sein/être*" etc.) does not occur through feeling, thinking, or desiring; all feelings, thoughts, and desires arise because something beyond us exists. In other words, "the person is grounded in the self" (38).
5. The absolute grounded in itself is *freedom*.
6. Condition must follow from something because it is the change from one state to another; condition requires a substratum to rest upon, which is *being*.
7. "Time is the condition of all becoming" (39). The person only comes to exist conditionally (as opposed to remaining in existential, unconditional self-repose) when he enters space-time.
8. Schiller uses the example of the blooming and fading of a flower to describe the idea of being and condition. The flower is the unchanging substratum upon which condition rests.
9. "It is only in the sequence of his ideas that the persisting I itself becomes manifested to itself" (39).
10. "He [man] only *exists* by changing himself; and only by remaining unchanged does *he* exist" (39).
11. Divinity cannot *become* (that is to say, it cannot exist within the conditional temporality of space-time); hence, divinity is necessarily transcendent.
12. Man's personality is "the disposition for potentially infinite expression" (40).

13. Man's physical existence is what allows him to express his personality in space-time. "He realizes the form when he brings time into existence" (40).

14. Man faces two opposing challenges: one which is *real*, and one which is *formal*.

Commentary:

1. William noted the poetic nature of Schiller's own writing, especially in the *Aesthetical Letters*.

2. Scott noted the "cosmological sublimity" of the text as the source of its profundity.

3. Luc noted the paradoxical dialectic between plurality and unity.

4. William suggested reading *Philebus*; Matt suggested reading *Phaedo*.

5. Christine asked why Schiller did not make any scientific discoveries (like Riemann, Einstein, Leibniz, Kepler, et al). She further noted how many composers have scientific minds, and the ways they describe composition is scientific and dialectic.

6. Matt noted that all poets, scientists, and philosophers are different facets of a conceptual paradigm that is a creator. Matt also noted how many great thinkers and artists went unappreciated in their own lifetimes (e.g. Schubert).