Aesthetic Ideology

Paul de Man

Edited with an Introduction
by Andrzej Warminski

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Contents

Introduction: Allegories of Reference *Andrzej Warminski* 1

The Epistemology of Metaphor 34

Pascal's Allegory of Persuasion 51

Phenomenality and Materiality in Kant 70

Sign and Symbol in Hegel's *Aesthetics* 91

Hegel on the Sublime 105

Kant's Materialism 119

Kant and Schiller 129

The Concept of Irony 163

Reply to Raymond Geuss 185

Index 193

Kant and Schiller

I'll have some change in pace today, because this time I have not written out a lecture; it was not necessary in this case because I'm dealing with a much easier text. I wouldn't dare to improvise about Kant, but about Schiller it's a little easier to know what is going on, and so there is no need for such detailed textual analysis. So what I'll be doing will be more in the nature of an exposition than a really tight argument, more in the nature of a class than a lecture. Therefore it is better to speak it—it's a little easier to listen to when it's spoken than when it's read.

Yet the point that I try to make, or the question to which I try to address myself by thus juxtaposing Schiller, and trying to take a closer look at just exactly what happened between Kant and Schiller—what happens when Schiller comments very specifically on Kant?—that event, that encounter, and the structure of that encounter, which is, as I say, not too difficult to explain, is in itself complex, and, I suppose, to some extent, important. It has to do with two matters, one of very general historical importance, the second of very much more direct import for these lectures.

The first has to do with the general problem of the reception of Kant, the *Critique*, and specifically the reception of the *Critique of Judgment*, an immensely important book that remains exceedingly important throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and that is still steadily invoked, either directly or indirectly.

"Kant and Schiller" was transcribed by William Jewett and Thomas Pepper—and revised by the editor—from the audiotape of the fifth Messenger lecture de Man delivered at Cornell (3 March 1983). Notes were supplied by the transcribers and the editor.

You'll notice recently that when Walter Jackson Bate had something articulate to say about the humanities, the authority to which he referred first of all was Kant. And you may have noticed that when Frank Lentricchia was trying to get certain types of contemporary criticism which will remain unnamed, to give them their comeuppance, his reference again was to Kant, he went back to Kant.[1] So this is almost a joke, this "back to Kant."

But the presence of the third *Critique* within critical discourse—also in this country, and in a different way, of course, in Germany and in France, though frequently mediated by all kinds of other names, so that it is no longer Kant one gets but a whole series of names in between—that reception of Kant is very complex (the reception of the third *Critique*) and not well known. There are allusions to it right and left, but it isn't really explored. There's René Wellek's book *Kant in England*,[2] which I looked at recently and which is a remarkably tough-minded little book, from which it results that actually the English Romantics didn't get Kant right at all. But he uses the *Critique of Pure Reason* rather than the *Critique of Judgment*. In that whole field, indeed, a lot remains, of course, to be done, as usual. It's complex. But it has a pattern which I would to some extent try to evoke here.

There seems to be always a regression from the incisiveness and from the impact, from the critical impact of the original. There is an attempt—if indeed there is any truth at all in the way in which I suggested that Kant can be read to you two days ago, then Kant's statement is a very threatening one, both for the sake of philosophy and for the relationship between art and philosophy in general. So something very directly threatening is present there which one feels the need to bridge—the difficulties, the obstacles which Kant has opened up. So there is a regression, an attempt to account for, to domesticate the critical incisiveness of the original. And that leads then to texts like those of Schiller, which undertake to do just that. Out of a text like Schiller's *Letters on Aesthetic Education*, or the other texts of Schiller that relate directly to Kant, a whole tradition in Germany—in Germany and elsewhere—has been born: a way of emphasizing, of revalorizing the aesthetic, a way of setting up the aesthetic as exemplary, as an exemplary category, as a unifying category, as a model for education, as a model even for the state. And a certain tone that's characteristic of Schiller is a tone which one keeps hearing throughout the nineteenth century in Germany, which you hear first

1. See Walter Jackson Bate, "The Crisis in English Studies," *Harvard Magazine* 85:1 (September–October 1982): 46–53, and Frank Lentricchia, *After the New Criticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). Cf. de Man's remarks on Bate in "The Return to Philology," in *The Resistance to Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), and on Lentricchia in "Kant's Materialism" in this volume.

2. René Wellek, *Immanuel Kant in England 1793–1838* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1931).

in Schiller himself, but which you then hear in Schopenhauer, which you hear in early Nietzsche—*The Birth of Tragedy* is purely Schillerian in its tone, and so on—which you still hear in a certain way in Heidegger. That tone always—a certain valorization of art, a priori valorization of art, which is a frequent theme throughout that tradition—it always appears doubled, it always appears doubled with a critical approach which is closer to that of the original Kant and which goes together with this much more positively valorized approach to art. We saw what the juxtaposition between Schiller and Kleist does, and we saw the way in which Kleist takes you back in a way to certain of the more threatening Kantian insights in terms of Schiller.[3] Or you would find a play like that between Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, the way in which Nietzsche—not just the Nietzsche of *The Birth of Tragedy*, but the later Nietzsche as well—acts critically in relation to Schopenhauer and, I would say, "de-Schillerizes" and "re-Kantizes" what Schopenhauer has been saying. Or, I would even suggest, to take a name which isn't purely German, that something like that could be said to go on between Heidegger on the one hand and Derrida on the other; so that the reading that Derrida gives of Heidegger, in which Heidegger would play the role of Schiller, Derrida would then appear as being closer to Kant, in a kind of similar critical examination of a certain claim for the autonomy and the power of the aesthetic which is being asserted in the wake of Schiller, but not necessarily in the wake of Kant. This is a very complex problem to which I plan to make no contribution whatsoever, except for looking a little more closely at that original model, the relationship between Kant and Schiller. Because that sets a pattern which will recur and which would be a possible way in which to organize the question of the reception of Kant throughout the nineteenth century, at least in Germany, though you would find similar elements in England. Matthew Arnold, for instance, is very Schillerian. Who would be the equivalents, who would be the Kant of Matthew Arnold? Ruskin? I don't know. It's worth playing with—certainly not Pater—but you would find interesting elements of the same type in the other tradition as well.

Okay. The topic also has to do with the question which is closer to our concern here, to our discussion here; because it seems to be, as so often is the case, that . . . Since I have now had questions from you and since I've felt some resistances . . . You are so kind at the beginning and so hospitable and so benevolent that I have the feeling that . . . But I know this is not the case and there's always an interesting episode in a series of lectures like that, I know that from experience. One doesn't necessarily begin in as idyllic a mood as things were here. But it doesn't take you too long before you feel that you're getting under people's skin, and that there is a certain reaction which is bound to occur, certain questions that

3. See de Man's "Aesthetic Formalization: Kleist's *Über das Marionettentheater*," in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), which he delivered as the second Messenger lecture.

are bound to be asked, which is the interesting moment, where certain issues are bound to come up.

Well, the topic that has emerged and which I didn't deliberately want to—or which I didn't even know about, in a sense—has been this problem of the question of reversibility, of the reversibility in the type of models which I have been developing on the basis of texts. And this is linked to the question of reversibility, linked to the question of historicity. I find this of considerable interest and that's for me the interesting, productive thing to have come out of those lectures (except for the fact that I had to write three lectures, which I now have written out). This was not a deliberate theme. It has emerged by itself, and it has been brought out by a question, and it is therefore more interesting than any other to me.

I won't say much about this, but something at least. When I speak of irreversibility, and insist on irreversibility, this is because in all those texts and those juxtapositions of texts, we have been aware of something which one could call a progression—though it shouldn't be—a movement, from cognition, from acts of knowledge, from states of cognition, to something which is no longer a cognition but which is to some extent an *occurrence*, which has the materiality of something that actually happens, that actually occurs. And there, the thought of material occurrence, something that occurs materially, that leaves a trace on the world, that does something to the world as such—that notion of occurrence is not opposed in any sense to the notion of writing. But it is opposed to some extent to the notion of cognition. I'm reminded of a quotation in Hölderlin—if you don't quote Pascal you can always quote Hölderlin, that's about equally useful—which says: "Lang ist die Zeit, es ereignet sich aber das Wahre." Long is time, but—not truth, not *Wahrheit*, but *das Wahre*, that which is true, will occur, will take place, will eventually take place, will eventually occur.[4] And the characteristic of truth is the fact that it occurs, not the truth, but that which is true. The occurrence is true because it occurs; by the fact that it occurs it has truth, truth value, it is true.

The model for that, the linguistic model for the process I am describing, and which is irreversible, is the model of the *passage* from trope, which is a cognitive model, to the performative, for example. Not the performative in itself—because the performative in itself exists independently of tropes and exists independently of a critical examination or of an epistemological examination of tropes—but the transition, the passage from a conception of language as a system, perhaps a closed system, of tropes, that totalizes itself as a series of transformations which can be reduced to tropological systems, and then the fact that you *pass* from that conception of language to *another* conception of language in which language is no longer cognitive but in which language is performative.

4. See de Man's comments on this line (from the first version of Hölderlin's "Mnemosyne") in his Foreword to Carol Jacobs, *The Dissimulating Harmony: The Image of Interpretation in Nietzsche, Proust, Rilke and Benjamin* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. xi.

And this passage, if it is thus conceived, that is, the passage from trope to performative—and I insist on the necessity of this, so the model is not the performative, the model is the passage from trope to performative—this passage occurs always, and can only occur, by ways of an epistemological critique of trope. The trope, the epistemology of tropes, allows for a critical discourse, a transcendental critical discourse, to emerge, which will push the notion of trope to the extreme, trying to saturate your whole field of language. But then certain linguistic elements will remain which the concept of trope cannot reach, and which then can be, for example—though there are other possibilities—performative. That process, which we have encountered a certain number of times, is irreversible. That goes in that direction and you cannot get back from the one to the one before. But that does not mean—because on the other hand, then, there the model of the performative, the transition from the trope to the performative, is useful again—it doesn't mean that the performative function of language will then as such be accepted and admitted. It will always be reinscribed within a cognitive system, it will always be *recuperated*, it will relapse, so to speak, by a kind of reinscription of the performative in a tropological system of cognition again. That relapse, however, is not the same as a reversal. Because this is in its turn open to a critical discourse similar to the one that has taken one from the notion of trope to that of the performative. So it is not a return to the notion of trope and to the notion of cognition; it is equally balanced between both, and equally poised between both, and as such is not a reversal, it's a relapse. And a relapse in that sense is not the same; it has to be distinguished in a way which I am only indicating here but which would require much more refined formulation—the recuperation, the relapse, has to be distinguished from a reversal.

Now, *history* is thought of here—and when it was asked the other day whether I thought of history as a priori in any sense, I had to say yes to that. Then, not knowing quite into which trap I'd fallen, or what or whether I had fallen into a trap, or what's still behind it—I still do not know. History, the sense of the notion of history as the historicity a priori of this type of textual model which I have been suggesting here, there history is not thought of as a progression or a regression, but is thought of as an event, as an occurrence. There is history from the moment that words such as "power" and "battle" and so on emerge on the scene. At that moment things *happen*, there is *occurrence*, there is *event*. History is therefore not a temporal notion, it has nothing to do with temporality, but it is the emergence of a language of power out of a language of cognition. An emergence which is, however, not itself either a dialectical movement or any kind of continuum, any kind of continuum that would be accessible to a cognition, however much it may be conceived of, as would be the case in a Hegelian dialectic, as a negation. The performative is not a negation of the tropological. Between the tropological and the performative there is a separation which allows for no mediation whatsoever. But there is a single-directed movement that goes from the one to the other and which

is not susceptible of being represented as a temporal process. That is historical, and it doesn't allow for any reinscription of history into any kind of cognition. The apparent regression which we talked about, the apparent regression of which we will see an example today, the regression from the event, from the materiality of the inscribed signifier in Kant, or from any of those several other disruptions which we have more or less precisely identified within the cognitive discourse of trope—this regression is no longer historical, because that regression takes place in a temporal mode and it is as such not history. One could say, for example, that in the reception of Kant, in the way Kant has been read, since the third *Critique*—and that was an occurrence, something happened there, something occurred—that in the whole reception of Kant from then until now, nothing has happened, only regression, nothing has happened at all. Which is another way of saying there is no history, which is another way of saying—which would delight my friend Jauss—that reception is not historical, that between reception and history there is an absolute separation, and that to take reception as a model for historical event is in error, is a mistake.[5] I should not use those terms interchangeably—let's call it . . . an error. I wouldn't think of Jauss as ever being in anything mistaken. One thing, however, is certain. The event, the occurrence, is resisted by reinscribing it in the cognition of tropes, and that is itself a tropological, cognitive, and not a historical move.

Now, we see one instance of this by looking at the way in which Schiller reinscribes Kant in the tropological system of aesthetics, which, as we saw, Kant had in a sense disarticulated, Kant had taken apart. I don't know what expression to use—you cannot say "go beyond"—he had interrupted, disrupted, disarticulated the project of articulation which the aesthetic—which he had undertaken and which he found himself by the rigor of his own discourse to break down under the power of his own critical epistemological discourse. A terrifying moment, in a sense—terrifying for Kant, since the entire enterprise of philosophy is involved in it, and was in that way threatened. Kant didn't notice at that moment . . . I don't think that Kant, when he wrote about the heavens and the sea there, that he was shuddering in mind. Any literalism there would not be called for. It is terrifying in a way which we don't know. What do we know about the nightmares of Immanuel Kant? I'm sure they were . . . very interesting . . . Königsberg there in the winter—I shudder to think.

Now, Schiller takes that on, takes on the concept of the sublime, specifically, in a relatively early essay which is called "Vom Erhabenen" (which is to be distinguished from a later essay which is called "Über das Erhabene"), "Of the Sublime," to which he gives as a subtitle "weitere Ausführung einiger Kantischen

5. See de Man's Introduction to Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception,* trans. Timothy Bahti (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), now reprinted as "Reading and History," in de Man, *The Resistance to Theory.*

Ideen," "further development of a few Kantian ideas."[6] And it is one of the few Schiller texts where he is really closely reading Kant and quoting Kant. And what he quotes and what he reads is paragraph 29 of the third *Critique*, the passage on the sublime which we talked about two days ago.[7]

Now, a first observation in terms of tropological system, is that, unlike Kant's style, Schiller's style is tropological—it's trope throughout, from beginning to end, and one specific trope, and a very important one, a very characteristic one, namely, chiasmus. There is not a single sentence in—Schiller invites parody, he invites schematization, and invites parody, because he cannot write two sentences which are not symmetrically bound around a chiasmic crossing. We'll see that any sentence I'm going to quote—I will certainly not be pointing it out to you all the time—would be thus organized, thus structured. What do I mean when I say these are chiastically structured? It is quite simple. For example, Schiller works emphatically, as you will have noticed if you have read only one paragraph, and I assigned a little bit at random whatever I assigned and asked you to read. Wherever you read Schiller, it's pretty much the same. At least as far as the particular stylistic and tropological structure is concerned—that will always be the same. You get a polarity, you get a variety of polarities, sharply marked, strictly opposed to each other; for example, a polarity like Nature and Reason. In the section on the sublime, it has to do with Terror, with being scared, with the agitation of Terror—and with the opposite of Terror, which is Tranquillity. The correct term in Schiller is *Gemütsfreiheit*, the word for free mind, so that you are "free," and tranquil therefore. Now in those scenes in the sublime, Nature is shown as dangerous, it is threatening, with its mountains and so on. So Nature is associated with Terror, whereas Reason, on the other hand, which is the free exercise of *Vernunft*, is associated with a specific kind of tranquillity. So you have always—and you can schematize this throughout—you have a polarity, and then another set of polarities there, opposing what I quoted, which is paired with the first as an attribute of the first:

Nature ——————— Terror
Reason ——————— Tranquillity

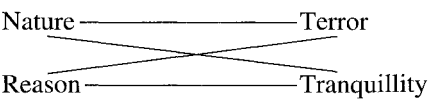
It is an attribute of Nature that it can be terrifying; it's an attribute of Reason that it is tranquil. Nature isn't always terrifying, but of sublime nature it's an attribute, a

6. References to Schiller's "Vom Erhabenen" and, later in the lecture, to his "Über die notwendigen Grenzen beim Gebrauch schöner Formen," are to the *Nationalausgabe* of Schiller's *Werke* (Weimar: Hermann Bohlaus Nachfolger, 1963) and are given by volume and page number. "Vom Erhabenen" is translated into English as "On the Sublime (Toward the Further Development of Some Kantian Ideas)" by Daniel O. Dahlstrom in Friedrich Schiller, *Essays,* ed. Walter Hinderer (New York: Continuum, 1993), pp. 22–44.

7. A reference to "Phenomenality and Materiality in Kant" (included in this volume), which de Man delivered as the fourth Messenger lecture at Cornell.

necessary attribute, we'll say. And Schiller makes a point of it, an argument, that sublime nature has to be terrifying. It has to be an element of the sublime nature of Nature, as it were. Whereas reason, sublime Reason, Reason on the level of the sublime, has to maintain a certain freedom of contemplation, which he calls *Gemütsfreiheit*, and which is tranquil. Normally, Nature he calls Terror and Reason he calls Tranquil, and that's the system from which you start out.

Schiller then starts to argue, to say that the sublime is not Nature acting on Terror, which means something quite simple, namely, the following: that, faced with the terrifying nature, faced with an abyss, for example, a sharp abyss, you can do something about it. You can remedy it by natural means; you can put up a fence, and then you will no longer be terrified. That, he says, is Nature working on Terror—because it's still working with a natural thing. A fence is a natural thing, even if you make it yourself it is still within the realm of the natural—natural objects, natural entities, wood, tools, and so on and so forth. That, says Schiller, is not sublime. There is nothing sublime about this. You may admire the cleverness of man who is able to do this, but it is not a sublime thing, not a sublime move at all. What will be sublime, what will be called sublime, is the action of Reason on Terror. Reason can act on Terror, not by preventing it, by making whatever is happening less dangerous, but by creating a detachment, by creating a liberty of the mind, which in certain conditions is possible. And where the mind will see that whereas by separating mind from body—for example, will see that whereas the body is threatened, the mind remains extremely free—which is fortunately true in the case. If one is ill, for example, one finds that one's mind gets terribly free and terribly active. In that case, Reason is acting on Terror, and you get the change in the pairs. There is a substitution of the attribute, because Terror, which is normally associated with Nature, will now be associated with Reason. And when that happens—those systems are always totalizing—there will be a symmetrical reversal—that's a reversibility for you. And the chiasmus is a reversible structure, a symmetrical and reversible structure. If Reason can act on Terror, if Reason can take on the attribute of Terror, then Nature will be able to take on the attribute of tranquillity, and you will be able to enjoy tranquilly, with a certain tranquillity, the sublime violence of Nature. The sublime is enjoyed to the extent that Nature can be enjoyed with a certain tranquillity.



You see, I just want to put this pattern before you, not for its intrinsic merit—whether this is true or false I have not the slightest idea and not the slightest interest. It's true enough on some level of psychological verisimilitude. But it has a very specific structure, and it will be developed, it will be established by means of that structure. And that structure can be schematized in that trope of chiasmus,

which is obsessionally recurrent throughout Schiller's discourse. You'll get it everywhere.

How does it work in relationship to Kant's theory of the sublime, which, as I remind you, was based in Kant on a passage, on a transition from something called the mathematical to the dynamic sublime? Schiller is going to change that explicitly and deliberately, and with good reasons of his own. He first of all is going to polarize Kant, because, as we saw in Kant, the difference, or the distinction, or the transition from the mathematical to the dynamic sublime is by no means a polarity. The dynamic sublime is not symmetrically opposed to the mathematical sublime. The relationship is not antithetical, it is something much more complex. We saw—as a matter of fact, we had a great deal of trouble—we did not succeed in identifying the nature of that relationship. Why does Kant need the dynamic sublime at all? There are various explanations that one can give. Finally, we had to resort to a linguistic model, a linguistic model of precisely the passage from trope to performative, in order, not to account for, but to explain why this juxtaposition, why this succession, this apparent sequence occurs in Kant. It is certainly not an opposition. One thinks of the dynamic sublime as a kind of residue after the tropological discourse has tried to saturate the field. One thinks of it as a passage from trope to performative, as a passage from cognition to power. But none of those—trope and performative are not antithetical to each other, they are . . . different, and that's it. In the same way that cognition and power are not antithetical with each other. There is a power of cognition, cognition has a power of its own. There are powers which are not dictated by cognition, and so on, so they are not antitheses; one does not exclude the other at all. Their relationship is a much more complex one, a much finer one—as Wordsworth, somewhere in the "Essay upon Epitaphs," speaks of a much finer relationship between entities than one of sheer opposition, and this is the case. Well, and the relationship between them, between the mathematical and the dynamic, is a discontinuity. It is not a dialectic, it is not a progression or a regression, but it is a transformation of trope into power, which is not itself a tropological movement, and which cannot be accounted for by means of a tropological model. You cannot account for the change from trope into performative, you cannot account for the change from the mathematical to the dynamic sublime in Kant—I argued at least—you cannot account for it according to a tropological model.

Now, in Schiller, we start instead from a sharp polarity, from a sharp, antithetical opposition between what he calls two "drives," *Triebe*. That word recurs constantly in Schiller—*Triebe*, a word that you know from Freud—a word that is not frequent in Kant, who speaks of laws, of *Gesetze*, but very rarely of the *Triebe*. The two drives which Schiller opposes to each other are the drive to know, the drive to represent (and, he says, the drive to change the world, to change nature), and another, a drive to maintain, to preserve, and to leave things unaltered by change. The example of the second, the drive to maintain, would be the desire

for self-preservation. One doesn't want to die—one protects oneself by self-preservation, one wants things to remain as they are. On the other hand, the drive to know is a drive that is involved with change.

Nature can be an obstacle to either of those drives, but Schiller distinguishes between them and proposes a terminology which he says is preferable to Kant's terminology. Whereas Kant spoke of the mathematical and the dynamic sublime, he, Schiller, will oppose to each other what he calls the theoretical and the practical sublime. And let me quote to you, in an improvised and inadequate translation, the passage which I have in mind. And you will see—as I say, I will not keep pointing this out—how all those passages are set up as antithetical, chiastic, symmetrical sentences which correspond to each other syntactically entirely except for some substitutions of words which correspond to each other because they are antithetical. Here is the quotation: "In the theoretical sublime, Nature, as an object of cognition, stands in opposition with the desire to acquire representations, with the desire to know [*Vorstellungstrieb*]." That's what happens in the theoretical sublime. "In the practical sublime, nature, as an object of emotion, stands in opposition to our desire for self-preservation" (*Werke*, 20:174–75). See, the two sentences are the same, right? In the theoretical/in the practical sublime, nature/nature, object of cognition/object of emotion, stand in opposition to desires. On the one hand, desire to acquire representation; on the other hand, desire for self-preservation. Perfect symmetry: the one sentence has exactly the same syntactical structure as the other, and the changes that are made between them are always polar opposites: theoretical/practical, cognition/emotion, representation and desire for self-preservation, those are the polarities. "In the first case," that is, the theoretical sublime, "nature is considered only as an entity that should extend, that should expand our knowledge. In the second, it is represented as a power [*Macht*] that can determine our own predicament, our own situation." "Kant," says Schiller, "therefore calls the practical sublime the sublime of power or the dynamic sublime, in opposition to the mathematical sublime. Because it is impossible," says Schiller, "to decide whether the field of the sublime is fully covered by the concepts of mathematical and the dynamic sublime, I prefer,"—I, Schiller—"prefer to substitute the subdivision practical/theoretical sublime to that of mathematical/dynamic sublime."

It's a curious argument, though it does make sense, in a sense. He says—he feels, he doesn't make it explicit—that to the extent that mathematical and dynamic are not polar opposites, to the extent that they encroach upon each other, that it is difficult to distinguish between them, you cannot say that they cover the full field of the sublime. Whereas if you have really polar opposites, black and white, you can cover the entire field and establish your totalization much more easily. It is also curious that he would say, "Kant therefore calls the practical sublime the sublime of power." That's not what happens, it's he who calls the dynamic sublime the practical. The word "practical" does not occur at that point in

Kant, nor should it at that moment. So the mathematical sublime, or the theoretical sublime, is characterized in Schiller by a failure of representation—and that is correct in Kantian terms since we saw that the mathematical sublime is the inability to grasp magnitude by means of models of extension, by means of spatial models, so it is a correct interpretation. For Kant, the mathematical sublime is characterized by the failure of representation, whereas what Schiller calls the practical sublime is characterized by the physical inferiority of the body when it is in danger. Since the purpose of the practical sublime is self-preservation, it is characterized by the fact that Nature can threaten us because it is practically, empirically, stronger, can be stronger than we are, in a storm or in a fire or whatever you want to call it.

Now this notion of physical danger, of a threatening physical Nature, in an empirical sense—highly empirical, we are threatened concretely by fire, or by a tempest—you will find no trace of that whatsoever in Kant. There would be no mention of that in Kant's treatment of the sublime. The notion of danger occurs in Kant, and there is the example of a violent nature at times brought in as an example for a different reason. But the notion of danger occurs in Kant not as the direct threat of a natural force to our physical well-being, but, first of all, as you remember, in the shock of surprise, of *Verwunderung*, which we experience when confronted with something of extreme magnitude. We feel that our faculties, including the imagination, are unable to grasp the totality of what they encounter. It occurs, the danger occurs in Kant as a failure of representation, and it has to do, and will be explained, accounted for—it has to do with the structure of the imagination. Therefore it is of interest to Kant because it tells us something about the structure of the imagination. It tells us nothing about self-preservation. It tells us nothing about how to achieve self-preservation, about how to protect ourselves from tempests, or how to protect ourselves, so to speak, psychologically, from danger. Not by putting up a fence but by developing a kind of mental activity which allows us to separate ourselves from the danger. Here is Schiller, I quote Schiller: "The practical sublime is distinguished from the theoretical sublime in that it stands in opposition to the demands of our existence, whereas the theoretical stands in opposition only to the demands of our knowledge." Existence opposed to knowledge. "An entity or an object is theoretically sublime if it implies the representation of the infinite, which the imagination feels itself unable to grasp. An entity is practically sublime if it implies the representation of a danger which one's physical strength feels unable to overpower. We are defeated by the attempt to represent in the first form of the sublime; we are defeated by the attempt to oppose in the second case. An example of the first is that of the ocean at peace, an example of the second is that of the ocean in a tempest."

You see there is some distant echo here. Certainly he remembers to some extent the passage in Kant, where Kant was speaking of the sea and of the heavens, and where Kant spoke of a tranquil sea and of an ocean in movement. There is a

distant memory of that, but it is entirely different in its function. It bears no relationship whatsoever to the function of those two stages, those two states, as they were described and used by Kant. The entire passage, again with his stress on practicality, on the pragmatic—rather than on the philosophical problem which concerned Kant, namely, the structure of the imagination—the whole impact of the passage is entirely different. The passage is exceedingly clear. We understand this perfectly well. Perhaps the translation is a little awkward, or I haven't read it right, but if you read it you will understand it. Anybody will understand it right away in this opposition.

Schiller goes on to valorize. And he will valorize the practical over the theoretical. The practical sublime, which is the only one he will keep talking about in the rest of the essay, is valorized completely at the expense of the theoretical sublime, where he got Kant right. So he adds something to Kant which is not in Kant, and then he valorizes what he has added as being more important than what really was in Kant. This valorization occurs in several stages. I quote him for you: "The theoretical sublime contradicts the desire for representation, for knowledge, the practical sublime contradicts the desire for self-preservation. In the first case, one single manifestation of our cognitive powers is being contested. In the second, however, it's the ultimate ground of all its manifestations, namely, existence itself, that is under attack." So the practical sublime has much more at stake, since our entire existence is being threatened, whereas the only thing that was threatened by the theoretical sublime was just our ability to represent, our ability to know. Who cares about knowing when the tempest is beating at his door? That's not the moment that you want to know; you want to be self-preserved, and you want to survive, psychologically, the assault to which you are subjected. Much more is at stake, your whole existence; whereas a little loss of knowledge can always be made up the next day, hmm? It is much more extensive and therefore it causes real terror, whereas the loss of knowledge, or a certain threat to knowledge, causes at most a displeasure.

Schiller continues in this valorization: "Our sensibility is therefore much more directly involved with the terrifying than with the infinite entity"—infinite was the theoretical sublime—"for the desire for self-preservation speaks with a louder voice than the drive for knowledge. For this very reason, because the object of terror aggresses our sensory existence with much more violence than the object of infinity, the distance between the sensory and the supersensory power in us is experienced much more vividly, and the superiority of reason and of inner freedom becomes all the more manifest. And since the essence of the sublime rests in the consciousness of this rational freedom, and since all pleasure associated with the sublime is founded on this consciousness, so it follows, and this is also confirmed by experience, that terror must move us more vividly and more pleasantly in an aesthetic representation than the infinite, and that therefore the practical sub-

lime has a considerable advantage over the theoretical sublime in terms of emotional power" (*Werke*, 20: 174–75).

What is striking in those passages, which are quite convincing and which are psychologically and empirically entirely reasonable—they are also reasonable if you think of them in terms of Schiller's own concerns as a playwright, if you don't ask the philosophical question, "What is the structure of the faculty of the imagination?" but if you ask the practical question, "How am I going to write successful plays?" which was partly and legitimately Schiller's concern—you will provoke a lot more effect on an audience by using terror or using scenes of terror, also using scenes in which Nature is directly threatening, than by using abstractions, such as infinity, which are not easily represented on the stage. So there is a total lack, an amazing, naive, childish lack of transcendental concern in Schiller, an amazing lack of philosophical concern. He has no interest in it whatsoever. It doesn't bother him in the least that knowledge would be impossible, as long as he can fill his theater. I don't want to put it in contemptuous terms, but that's practical and that's necessary, whereas the other can wait. In Kant, however, the entire terror which is there, the unrest, arises from the incapacity of the faculties of reason and of imagination, and this is the only, and his only, and deeply philosophical, concern. Schiller seems much more practically concerned, he seems concerned—well, I put it derisively, with his own success as a playwright—but he's also more concerned, more legitimately, with the psychology of terror: How am I going to fight off terror, how am I going to resist terror?—by means of a psychological device, which emphasizes reason and the ability to maintain reason in the face of terror. That's a way to live through terror, even if you're physically annihilated by it. Curiously, this emphasis on the practical, this emphasis on the psychological, on the empirical, leads to a greater stress on the abstract powers, as is clear from the quotation where it is said that the distance between reason and nature is augmented by this, and the abstraction of those powers, in their abstraction, separates them more than before from the natural, the concrete, despite and because of the emphasis on the practical and on the pragmatic. The stress on the dichotomy between the practical and the theoretical results, as we will see soon enough, in the idealization of the practical, on the one hand—that we'll see—and, on the other hand, in a certain banalization, a certain psychologization of the theoretical. Whereas the theoretical, the issue of the theoretical, in general, in the mathematical and in the dynamic sublime, was Kant's overriding and only concern, and although this led to very difficult writing and to passages in Kant which are very difficult to interpret and to understand, we find nothing of this difficulty in Schiller, because here we are speaking of a psychological verisimilitude which all of us can understand, and in which all of us can participate, precisely to the extent that they are pragmatic, everyday, banal experiences. We all know that, confronted with danger, it's sort of nice to think of something else, and to be concerned with the movement of your own mind and with your reason. This is the

way we cope with danger, this is the way we cope with pain, and so on and so forth, constantly, by this becoming conscious of it and therefore indulging in the play of the mind rather than in the actual physical threat. You can even do that, if you get skilled at it, in the very process of being in danger. You know that from your own experience if you have ever been in immediate danger. There is a kind of exhilaration of the mind—if you are given the time—at watching yourself being in that state of danger, and you find great solace in that possibility. It maintains the autonomy, the integrity of the mind—this is a correct psychological observation that Schiller is making. But it is not a philosophical observation, and it is certainly not the problem that concerns Kant. The important thing is that this apparent realism, this apparent practicality, this concern with the practical, will result in a total loss of contact with reality, in a total idealism.

Before you either contest this, or before you not contest but agree with it and hold it against Schiller, or think that it is something we are now far beyond and that we would never in our enlightened days do—you would never make this naive confusion between the practical and the pragmatic on the one hand and the philosophical Kantian enterprise on the other—before you decide that, don't decide too soon that you are beyond Schiller in any sense. I don't think any of us can lay this claim. Whatever writing we do, whatever way we have of talking about art, whatever way we have of teaching, whatever justification we give ourselves for teaching, whatever the standards are and the values by means of which we teach, they are more than ever and profoundly Schillerian. They come from Schiller, and not from Kant. And if you ever try to do something in the other direction and you touch on it you'll see what will happen to you. Better be very sure, wherever you are, that your tenure is very well established, and that the institution for which you work has a very well-established reputation. Then you can take some risks without really taking many risks.

In Kant this led—we say the main concern was a theory of the imagination. Schiller also comes to a theory of the imagination—the point hardly needs to be labored, but I still want to document it—which will be essentially and entirely different from Kant's. The imagination enters Schiller's vocabulary in relation to those considerations on terror. Terror, he says, has to be genuinely terrifying. It has to be, as we already said, beyond the reach of domestication by technological means. But, he adds, it should not be immediately threatening. Because if it is immediately threatening, you really don't have time to get your faculties going. You could imagine that you would, but it certainly, it would be better if you are not immediately threatened. It's better not to be on the boat that's being tossed up and down, it's better to stand on the shore and see the boat being tossed up and down, if you want to have a sublime experience. And that seems sensible enough, and we can agree with that. "We are dealing," he says, "we are dealing only with the case where the object of terror actually displays its power, but without aiming it in our direction, where we know ourselves, in a condition where we know ourselves to

be in safety." And Kant had insisted on that too, in a certain way, and you can quote Kant to that effect. Though the status of safety in Kant, which has to do with tranquillity, with the affect of tranquillity, is entirely different from the status that we have here, because here Schiller is talking about a very practical, concrete thing, which is not at all what Kant was doing. Well, where we know ourselves to be in safety. "We only imagine this"—imagination—"we only imagine that we would be in the situation in which this power could reach us, and in which any resistance would be in vain." So we are exquisitely imagining how terrifying it would be to be on the boat, where we could not resist the onslaught of the waves. "Terror exists, then, only in the imagination, as the representation of a danger. But even the imaginary representation of danger, if it is at all vivid, suffices to awaken our sense of self-preservation, and it produces something analogous to what the real experience would produce." Analogous is an important word. "We start to shudder; a feeling of fear invades us; our senses are up in arms. Without this first onset of genuine suffering, without this actual"—the German word is *ernstlich*, serious, taken seriously—"without this actual attack on our existence, we would only be playing with the object of terror. It must be a serious threat [*es muß Ernst seyn*], or at least be sensed to be one, if reason is to find solace in the idea of its freedom. Moreover, the consciousness of our inner freedom can only have value and make a true claim if it is taken seriously. And it cannot be taken seriously if we only playfully engage with the representation of danger" (*Werke*, 20:181).

Now, if you compare this to the passage on the imagination in Kant, which we read last time—the sacrifice of the imagination, this devious economy between the imagination and reason, and so on and so forth—how intelligible and how convincing does this seem compared with the bizarre argument about reason and imagination, sacrifice, and so on which we found in Kant! This is obviously right, and highly intelligible. The reason for the oddity in the case of Kant's passage is that Kant was dealing with a strictly philosophical concern, with a strictly philosophical, epistemological problem, which he chose to state for reasons of his own in interpersonal, dramatic terms, thus telling dramatically and interpersonally something which was purely epistemological and which had nothing to do with the pragmata of the relationship between human beings. Here, in Schiller's case, the explanation is entirely empirical, psychological, without any concern for epistemological implications. And for that reason, Schiller can then claim that in this negotiation, in this arrangement, where the analogy of danger is substituted for the real danger, where the imagination of danger is substituted for the experience of danger, that by this substitution, this tropological substitution, that the sublime succeeds, that the sublime works out, that the sublime achieves itself, and brings together a new kind of synthesis. We would have a similar model to what we had here [indicating diagram we had earlier], with different elements. What now stand in relationship to each other are knowledge, *Erkenntnis*, which is like representation, which is like imagination; whereas self-preservation would be like reality.

And knowledge opposes self-preservation—as we've seen, *Erkenntnis*, theoretical knowledge, opposes to the practicality of the self-preservation—in the same way, in the same relationship, as that in which representation opposes reality. Knowledge is representation, fantasy, an imaginary thing, whereas self-preservation is a concrete physical thing and therefore of the order of the real. And that is the starting position in the polar opposition, in the play of antithesis here. Well, what happens in the development, in the so-called argument—though it's really purely structural, a structural model, a purely structural code of tropological exchange, symmetrical, like all tropes, and as such masterable—is that this self-preservation, as we saw in the analysis which he gives, acts by ways of the representation. We achieve self-preservation by substituting for the reality the imagined situation. So self-preservation becomes imagined instead of being really real, and therefore self-preservation now relates to representation. As a result the chiasmus is fulfilled, and knowledge will now relate to reality, which is another way of saying, as he says, that now our knowledge is real, it is *Ernst*, it is not purely imaginary, but is a real experience, genuine, some genuine terror in there, not pure play.

Knowledge ——————— Representation
Self-Preservation ——————— Reality

He set up the simple polarity of *Ernst* and *Spiel*, that which is serious as opposed to that which is playful, and you'll remember what Kleist, in the story of the bear, did with that opposition and with that simple polarity, which he didn't allow to remain unchallenged. Because the notions of seriousness and of playfulness are now no longer pure—it is serious but only by analogy, it is not an actual fear but it is the trope of fear—one plays at danger as in a fiction or as in a play, but one is sheltered by the figurative status of the danger. It is the fact that the danger is made into a figure that shelters you from the immediacy of the danger. The tropological figuration here, this passage to the imagination, is what allows you to cope with the danger. Again, the figuration appears as a defense by means of which we cope with danger, by replacing the danger by the figure, by the analogon, by the metaphor, if you want, of danger. Again, the empirical moment of coping with danger, this empirical moment is nowhere present in Kant. And the appearance of figural language in Kant, in those passages of the third *Critique*, has to do, as we saw, with completely different scenes, the scenes of understanding and the juxtaposition of apprehension and comprehension, or the scene of the imagination sacrificing itself to reason and then recovering in the process, and so on and so forth. In no moment was there as psychologically simple a process going on as what we had there, and therefore whatever was told in Kant was not psychologically understandable or comprehensible. One could not understand Kant by transposing it to some kind of pragmatic, psychological, empirical experience. It's the difference between a philosopher and Schiller, who is not a philosopher. The type of

understanding needed for Schiller is common understanding. The kind of understanding you need for philosophers is common understanding too, perhaps, but it is of a different nature. It is not of a personal and psychological nature.

The same theory of the imagination then moves on to what one could call—and it is an example in Schiller of a consistent dialectical development, and it is rare—a dialectics of danger and safety, in which danger then more explicitly names itself as death, and within which there is the notion of the moral, so important in Kant and so important in Schiller too. And Schiller takes on Kant, the notion that morality is freedom, but then the way in which he conceives morality and the way in which he conceives freedom are entirely un-Kantian. At any rate, here we go at it from a distinction between physical and moral safety. And Schiller suggests that there is such a thing as moral safety, which comes into being when, and only when, the danger is physically overwhelming. As long as it can be opposed physically it isn't serious, but when it is really physically overwhelming something else can come into play called "moral safety." He says the following: "We consider terror without fear, because we feel we can overcome the power it has over us as natural beings, either by the awareness of our innocence, or by the invulnerability, the immortality of our being. It follows that the feeling of moral security implies religious ideas. For only religion and not morality establishes safety, grounds for our sensory being" (*Werke*, 20:181). In relation to the specific threat now named in its generality of death, the moral safety which one can achieve in front of death would be, first, the idea of immortality, the religious idea of immortality. But Schiller, to his credit, doesn't pause there, doesn't remain, he complicates it dialectically. Because to the extent that the notion of immortality would always be interpreted by us in a physical, besides an intellectual, sense—sort of the notion, as in Rilke, that even after death you would still be able to eat grapes.[8] That has always struck me as a very reassuring thought about immortality, but it is not a very serious religious conviction, I am afraid. But to the extent therefore that it has, besides intellectual, physical implications, Schiller says also that the thought of immortality in itself is not sublime. More sublime, more capable of the sublime, is the notion of innocence, which is based on a notion of divine justice and personal innocence. As long as we are innocent and as long as God is just, nothing can really happen to us. Thus postulating a kind of interrelationship between the divine and the human, precisely the kind of relationship between the sacred and the human, between the sacred and the discourse of humanity, which was contested in Hegel. Here this exchange takes place, and perhaps curiously, it leads to a sharp separation between our material and our intellectual being. "For," says Schiller, "for the representation of the sacred to be practically sublime, our feeling of security must not relate to our existence, but to our principles,

8. Cf. de Man's citation of Rilke's "Quai du rosaire" in *Allegories of Reading* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 42.

Grundsätze, to the principles of our being. We must be indifferent to our fate as natural creatures, as long as we feel intellectually dependent on the effects of its power" (*Werke*, 20:182). This independence of the intellect—in order for it to be truly free—must consist, it turns out, of a similarity or even an identity between the divine will and the laws of our own reason, so that the link between the divine and reason is constantly maintained. It leads, more clearly now, to the complete severance of our intellectual and moral being on the one hand, from our natural existence on the other. "We call," says Schiller, "practically sublime any entity which makes us aware of our weakness as a natural creature, but which at the same time awakens an entirely different kind of resistance in us, resistance to the terror. This counterforce in no way rescues us from the physical existence of the danger, but, what is infinitely more, it isolates our physical existence from our personality. It is therefore not a particular and individual material security, but an ideal security, which extends to all possible and imaginable situations, and of which we have to become conscious in the aesthetic contemplation of the sublime. It learns to consider the sensory part of our being, the only part of us that can be in danger, as an exterior natural object that is of no concern to our person, to our moral self" (*Werke*, 20:185).

That is idealism. If you want to know what the model of an idealistic statement is—not in the sense that we speak of German Idealist philosophy but in the sense that we speak of idealism as an ideology—this is a specifically ideological idealist statement. Because it posits pure intellect: it goes much too far in the direction of establishing its belief in the intellect, because it posits the possibility of a pure intellect entirely separated from the material world, entirely separated from the sensory experience, which was precisely what was unreachable for Kant. You'll remember the Kant passage where Kant accounts for the necessity of the imagination because, he says, we are not pure intellect and can never be it. As fallen beings—and it is a theological concept—we are incapable of pure intellect. Here is held up the possibility of pure intellect. So it posits pure intellect, which was unreachable in Kant, because in Kant the imagination was the very symptom of this incapacity, of the incapacity of achieving pure intellect rather than its cause—or than the agent of its remedy—in Schiller, pure intellect comes in, as imagination comes in, to remedy our incapacity, whereas in Kant it is the failure of the imagination that leads to aesthetic contemplation. The two discourses are completely disjoint from each other at this point, and this idealization is precisely what does not take place in Kant. In Schiller, the aesthetic, at this point—and he changed on that to some extent, as we shall see—in Schiller the aesthetic is transcended by a pure intellect, which in Kant is theologically and philosophically inconceivable. This transcendence of the aesthetic in Schiller differs entirely from the disruption of the aesthetic as return to the materiality of the inscription, to the letter, that we found in Kant.

So, that's the apparent paradox which I want you to develop. This stress on

the practical, this stress on the psychological, on the verisimilitude, all that makes Schiller intelligible, all that awakens our assent and that is persuasive, leads to a radical separation between mind and body, to an idealism which is untenable in Schiller's own terms. So that both the starting point in this essay—the starting point in the pragmatic opposition between practical and theoretical sublime which substitute for Kant's categories of the mathematical and the dynamic sublime, the starting point—and also the end point, namely, the idealistic transcendence of the aesthetic by pure intellect, because at this point we grow beyond the aesthetic to a level of pure intellect—what we have in Schiller there is entirely, at the beginning and at the end, entirely un-Kantian. The idealism of Schiller contrasts with the transcendental-critical language of Kant. Schiller appears as the ideology of Kant's critical philosophy.

The tropological system in Kant, the system of trope in Kant, when it occurs, is a purely formal principle, a purely linguistic structure which was shown to function as such, whereas in Schiller it is the *use* made of tropes, of chiasmus as the *teleology*, as the aim of an ideological desire, namely, the desire to overcome terror—it is in such a way that tropology is made to serve a *Trieb*, to serve as device. It is no longer a structure, it is enlisted in the services of a specific desire. It acquires therefore an empirical and a pragmatic content, which it didn't have in Kant, at the very moment that it asserts its separation from all reality. There is therefore a curious mixture in this early essay of Schiller between a claim of practical, empirical, psychological effectiveness, combined with, on the other hand, a total ideality.

Now this is early Schiller, and although I will go a little fast in this, Schiller modified to some extent some of those notions, especially the superiority of the mind over body, so to speak. He refined and modified some of those notions in what appears to be a self-critique of his early idealism and its replacement by a more balanced principle. And the main text in which this occurs is the later *Letters on Aesthetic Education*, about which I will say only a few things and then leave the floor free for some questions.

In the *Letters on Aesthetic Education*, we also start out from a polarity, but that polarity is much more complex and much richer, especially in its temporal aspects, than the simple opposition between practical and theoretical. It is still a polarity which is stated in terms of *Triebe*, in terms of pulsions, in terms of drives. But the two drives which Schiller here names are, on the one hand, what he calls the *sinnlicher Trieb*, sensory desire, and, on the other hand, what he calls *Formtrieb*, desire for form. That seems banal enough, but the way in which those two are characterized, developed, is of interest. Because he mostly does it in terms of an opposition between two temporal modes, which is suggestive. The sensory drive, which is the giving in to an immediate appeal of the moment, therefore has the singularity of the moment that excludes everything else from it; whereas the desire for form, the drive for form, which aspires to a generality or to an absolute,

to a law, has a temporal structure which wants to encompass as large an area as possible.

Therefore those two drives would appear to be totally incompatible. The one wants everything at one moment, the other wants to spread out things over as long—the one is totally particular and individual, the other is totally general and absolute. The subtlety, the refinement here—Schiller admits this, he says they would be totally incompatible and that man would therefore be hopelessly divided, if it weren't for the fact that they do not encounter each other, that the two elements in the opposition do not meet. They would be incompatible, he says, and they must therefore be prevented from entering into a dialectical relationship in which one would negate the other. This is not a quotation, this is my paraphrase; but it is a paraphrase of a quotation which is quite clear. What one should observe is that those two incompatible tendencies do not occur in the same object, and that what does not meet each other, what doesn't encounter each other, can also not oppose each other: "Was nicht aufeinander trifft, kann nicht gegeneinander stoßen" (Letter XIII, pp. 84–85).[9] So there can be no struggle between them as long as you keep them from encountering each other. As long as the *Formtrieb*, the desire for form, and the *sinnlicher Trieb*, the desire for immediate gratification—pleasure now—do not meet, they will leave us relatively in peace. They would be incompatible, he says, and they must therefore—no he doesn't say it, I say it—and they must therefore be prevented from entering into a dialectical relationship in which the one would negate the other.

The way to do this—in order to keep them from thus entering into a dialectical relationship with each other—is by preserving perfect reversibility between them. This is where the notion of reversibility comes in. If between form and what he calls sensory *Trieb*—if they are perfectly reversible, if they are absolutely symmetrical, then they will never encounter each other. This is an example of the use of reversibility as a way to avoid the dialectic, let alone the more radical disruption of the inscription or of the letter or any other form of such a disruption which we have encountered in various forms. Here is the quote from Schiller, and it also, curiously, lines him up, or he lines himself up, with certain philosophical names at that moment. The quotation is from a footnote but it's a crucial passage in the *Letters*: "As soon as one assumes an originary and therefore necessary antagonism of the two drives, no other way exists by which to maintain the unity of humanity than to submit the sensory to the intellectual. This, however"—which is more or less what he did, himself, in the first essay—"this, however, can only produce

9. References are to Schiller's *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, ed. and trans. Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L. A. Willoughby (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), and are given by letter number and page number. As de Man notes later in the lecture, the text to which he actually refers is a German edition of this book, and his translations of Schiller thus do not correspond exactly to those of the editors in their English version.

monotony, *Einförmigkeit*, and not harmony, and humanity would remain forever divided. The hierarchy, the pattern of domination and submission, has to take place, but it must be alternating instead of being simultaneous. For although it is true that limits can never determine the absolute, and that freedom can never be dependent on time, it is equally true that the absolute does not have the power to determine limits, that the situation in time cannot be made to depend on freedom."

That's again an example. Those sentences are absolute; I can keep going that way, I can write fifty more sentences which keep going that way, it will always make sense. The situation in time cannot be made dependent on freedom. "Both principles are therefore mutually dependent on each other, yet mutually coordinate. They stand to each other in a relation of reversible reciprocity," the German word is *Wechselwirkung*, exchange. "There is no matter without form, and there is no form without matter." At that point, Schiller attributes the possibility of such exchanges to Fichte. There's a gesture toward Fichte in opposition to Kant. And the name of Fichte is exceedingly important in this entire development. I'm not going to go into that. Suffice it to say that, as far as I can see, this is a gross misrepresentation of what in Fichte is a real dialectical movement. Fichte is, as much as Hegel, a real dialectical mind, and to substitute simple reversibility for dialectical negation in Fichte is to misrepresent Fichte. "In a transcendental philosophy," Schiller continues, "where everything aspires to free form from content, and to cleanse necessity from all chance and random elements, one gets quickly accustomed to considering anything material as an obstacle, and to represent the sensory, which functions in this case as an impediment, in a necessary contradiction with reason. Such an approach is certainly not in the spirit of the Kantian system, but it could well be attributed to the letter of this system."

This is a remarkable misinterpretation of Kant as a dualism. It takes off not from Kant but from Schiller's own misreading in "Of the Sublime," in which a dualism between sensory and ideal is postulated as being in Kant, which then is said not to occur in Fichte, and as such it seems to me entirely to misrepresent the Kant-Fichte relationship as well. Suffice it to say, since I don't want to go into the details of that, that no such polarities, that no such sharp antinomies and such sharp polarities exist in Kant. They never do, in those terms. If there are triadic movements in Kant, they are not very strong, simple polarities. Whereas in Fichte, where there are such oppositions, they always enter into dialectical substitutions which involve a considerable power of negation. In Schiller we have no dialectics, no exchange on the level of the drives. But, he says, an exchange takes place, because we cannot just stay there with those two drives existing next to each other and not engaging each other. In order to get out of that, he says the exchange takes place not on the level of existence, but on the level of principles and of ideas. There the exchange between form and sensory experience, formal and sensory experience, can occur. "From the alternation of two opposed drives, and out of the synthesis, the *Verbindung*, of two opposed principles, we have seen how the beau-

tiful originates, whose highest ideal therefore consists in the most perfect conceivable equilibrium between reality and form."

How this synthesis is made possible, on the level of principles, is of interest. The plea for the possibility and the necessity of this synthesis is made in the name of an empirical concept, which is that of humanity, of the human, which is used then as a principle of closure. The human, the needs of the human, the necessities of the human are absolute and are not open to critical attack. Because the category of the human is absolute, and because the human would be divided, or would be reduced to nothing if this encounter between the two drives that make it up is not allowed to take place, for that reason a synthesis has to be found. It is dictated, it is forced upon us, by the concept of the human itself. We are back to a pragmatic, empirical concept. And humanity functions in the *Letters on Aesthetic Education* in the same way that self-preservation functions in the case of the early essay. Both are pragmatic principles of closure which are not open to any critical discourse.

Humanity, which then has to be itself the composite of those two drives, is then equated with a balanced relationship between necessity and freedom, which Schiller calls free play, *Spieltrieb*, and which then becomes the determining principle of the human. The human is determined by this possibility of free play—"I play, therefore I am," or something of the sort (see Letter XV, pp. 106–7). Hence the need, which follows, for a free and humanistic—because the notion of free and humanity go together—education, which is called an aesthetic education, and which is still the basis of our liberal system of humanistic education. Also the basis of concepts such as "culture," and the thought that it is possible to move from individual works of art to a collective, massive notion of art, which would be, for example, one of national characteristics, and which would be like the culture of a nation, of a general, social dimension called "cultural." And hence, as a logical conclusion of that, the concept in Schiller of an aesthetic state, which is the political order that would follow, as a result of that education, and which would be the political institution resulting from such a conception.

Schiller has been much praised for this enlightened humanism. And often he has been praised for it in opposition to Kant. For example, here is a passage from his excellent translators and editors, Wilkinson and Willoughby: "Whereas Kant leaves us with the impression that an order decreed from above acts upon us, an order which suddenly appears in full regalia, capable of at once issuing stern orders which it receives from a reason originating in a noumenal realm, Schiller expressly asserts that he is concerned with the gradual development of an order that originates from below, that is to say, from the phenomenological assumptions of the mind and the will."[10]

10. Wilkinson and Willoughby, "Introduction," *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, p. xcii.

That sounds a little odd, and it's because it's not a quotation of the original English. I translate this from a German translation of Wilkinson and Willoughby, which is the only thing I had available, I'm sorry. But it is clear enough what is being said. In opposition to Kant, who is tyrannical, because he works transcendentally from above, Schiller is human and psychologically valid, and what's called "phenomenological" here really means empirical and psychological. The use of "phenomenological" here is striking as highly dubious, because Schiller is not phenomenological, he is empirical; he is psychological in an empirical sense. Schiller is praised for this, and rightly so. The concept of play is a highly civilized concept, and the civilizing cultural impact of Schiller is associated with the notion of play.

Something remains to be said about this notion of play and its various meanings in the *Letters on Aesthetic Education* in Schiller, and that will be the end. Play means, first of all, *Spielraum*, the play, the space that you need in order to prevent the dialectical encounter from taking place. You need a little play between those two things. You need a little distance between them to keep them from colliding with each other. And as such, play has that pleasant and reassuring and suggestive function.

Play also means in Schiller equilibrium, harmony, on the level of principles, between, on the one hand, necessity, rule, *Gesetz*, and, on the other hand, chance, what is arbitrary. Play, games are a good example of that. They have laws—you have to play soccer according to very specific laws—at least they try, though at Cornell we dismally fail—on the one hand, and, on the other hand, there is something deeply arbitrary about those laws, because who says that the penalty has to be shot from ten yards or something—why not eleven yards and why not nine yards? It's an absolutely arbitrary decision, but which taken within itself is the principle of law, and which functions as a law. That is how the human is defined also. The human is defined as a certain principle of closure which is no longer accessible to rational critical analysis. And we know from Kleist how this notion of balance between the human and what is not human can get out of hand. And how, for example, the appearance of a transcendental principle of signification in language comes to upset the human. To say that the human is a principle of closure, and that the ultimate word, the last word, belongs to man, to the human, is to assume a continuity between language and man, is to assume a control of man over language, which in all kinds of ways is exceedingly problematic. We'll see an example of somebody who states this problematic nature of language tomorrow, by talking about Benjamin.[11] No suggestion is made, there is entirely ignored the possibility of a language that would not be definable in human terms, and that would not be accessible to the human will at all—none—of a language that would

11. See "Conclusions: Walter Benjamin's 'The Task of the Translator,'" in de Man, *The Resistance to Theory,* which was delivered as the sixth Messenger lecture.

to some extent not be—in a very radical sense, not be human. So that we would at least have a complication, an initial complication, in which the principle of closure is not the human—because language can always undo that principle of closure—and is not language either, because language is not a firm concept, is not a concept of an entity which allows itself to be conceptualized and reified in any way.

Play in the third place is defined—first as *Spielraum*, [second] as equilibrium—is then also defined as *Schein*, as in *Trauerspiel* or in *Lustspiel*, where play indicates theatrical representation, appearance, theatricality. And Schiller gives us a very eloquent praise of *Schein*, of the ability to dwell with the appearance—which, he says, in sort of a sketch of an anthropology, characterizes primitive societies as well as advanced societies. Societies come into being when there is an interest for, he says, *Putz und Schein*, for ornament and for appearance. At that moment the aesthetic is present and it works as a powerful, defining, social force. Art is praised, like *Schein*, as a principle of irreality, because a strict opposition is maintained between reality and appearance, with art being entirely on the side of appearance. Only people who are very stupid, says Schiller, or people who are extraordinarily smart, too smart, have no use for *Schein*, have no use for appearance. Those who are entirely stupid don't need appearance, they are unable to conceive it; those who are entirely rational don't have to resort to it (Letter XXVI, pp. 190–93). In that you could substitute—one who would be entirely stupid in those terms would be Kant, for example, when he describes the world as being completely devoid of teleological impact, as having no appearance but only reality. And one of those who are much too smart, who are smart through and through and can saturate the entire world with intellect, would be, for example, Hegel, who would not, according to this assumption, need *Schein* anymore.

Well, when Kant and Hegel use *Schein*, they mean something very different. In Kant, we spoke of *Augenschein* and saw what that was, which was certainly not in opposition to reality, but which was precisely what we see, and as such more real than anything else, though it is a reality which exists on the level of vision. And when Hegel speaks of *das sinnliche Scheinen der Idee*, and defines beauty as the sensory appearance of the idea, then he has at the very least—and perhaps more than that—but he has at the very least in mind *Erscheinung* as phenomenalization, as the appearance of the object in the light of its own phenomenality. And in both cases, in the case of both Kant and of Hegel, as we saw, there is a road that goes from this notion of *Schein* to the notion of materiality. Such a road cannot be found in Schiller, and that is why for Schiller the concept of art, which at that moment is mentioned and is stressed, will always and without any reservation be a concept of art as imitation, as *nachahmende Kunst*. And praise of imitation, the joy of imitation, which is very real, is accounted for entirely in the fact that art is appearance of the reality as such, an imitation of reality: "gleich sowie der Spieltrieb sich regt, der abscheidige Pfaden findet, wird ihm auch der nachah-

mende Bildungstrieb folgen." "Precisely as the play comes into being, because it takes pleasure in appearance, the imitation, the mimesis, the desire for imitation will occur in art." So that is play as *Schein*.

Finally, not so much in the *Letters on Aesthetic Education* but in a little essay that is complementary to it and which is called "On the Necessary Borderlines in the Use of Beautiful Forms" ("Über die notwendigen Grenzen beim Gebrauch schöner Formen"), it becomes clear that play also functions in Schiller as a concept of figure, as a concept of figuration. One form in which play is achieved is as figure. It is done again by a polarity. "Discourse," he says, "must have an organic, sensory element, which is chaotic but which is concrete"—which is like the sensory drive which we spoke of, which is of the moment but which is immediately seductive but which is not organized, which is not strictly organized, on the one hand—"on the other hand, a discourse must have a unified meaning"—this sensory, this what he calls organic, sensory element, doesn't really have meaning, they're just discrete moments, and no continuity—"But on the other hand, discourse must have a unified meaning, a totality, an abstract but unified total meaning which stands in opposition to those concrete moments." You see that it is another version of the opposition between *Formtrieb* and *Erkenntnistrieb*. "Intelligence," he says, "is pleased by order, *Gesetzmäßigkeit*, but fantasy, imagination is flattered by this anarchy" (*Werke*, 21:9). There will then be, as you can expect, a chiasmic exchange of attributes between both, by means of *Spiel*, and intellect will acquire certain of the attributes of freedom and arbitrariness, whereas, on the other hand, the imagination, fantasy, will acquire some of the elements of order and of system that are necessary for a definition of language as meaning.

Here, the comparison to make with Kant is with Kant's statements about figuration, about what he calls hypotyposis, which is the difficulty of rendering, by means of sensory elements, purely intellectual concepts. And the particular necessity which philosophy has, to take its terminology not from purely intellectual concepts but from material, sensory elements, which it then uses metaphorically and frequently forgets that it does so. So that when philosophy speaks of the *ground* of being, or says that something *follows*, or that something *depends* on something else, it is really using physical terms, it is really using metaphors, and it forgets that it does so.[12] Since the "Mythologie blanche," we have all become aware of that and we would never do this nasty thing again! At any rate, hypotyposis for Kant is certainly a problem for understanding, and a very difficult problem that again threatens philosophical discourse; whereas here it is offered by Schiller as a solution, again in the form of a chiasmus, for a similar opposition. The sensory, then, unlike the hypotyposis in Kant, becomes a metaphor for reason. This extends to humanity, which, it turns out, is not entirely a principle of

12. Cf. "The Epistemology of Metaphor" in this volume.

closure, because humanity is not single—but it has a polarity, it has the polarity of male and female that inhabits it, and this is how Schiller copes with that problem. "The other sex," he says, the female sex, "can and should not share scientific knowledge with man, but by ways of its figural representation, it can share the truth with him. Men tend to sacrifice form to content. But woman cannot tolerate a neglected form, not even in the presence of the richest content. And the entire internal configuration of her being entitles her to make this stern demand. It is true, however, that in this function, she can only acquire the material of truth, and not truth itself. Therefore, the task which Nature disallows women, the other sex, this task must be doubly undertaken by man if he wishes to be the equal of woman in this important aspect, in this important aspect of his existence. He will therefore try to transpose as much as possible out of the realm of the abstract, in which he governs and is master, into the realm of the imagination and of sensibility. Taste includes or hides the natural intellectual difference between the two sexes. It nourishes and embellishes the feminine mind with the products of the masculine mind, and allows the beautiful sex to feel what it has not thought, and to enjoy what it has not produced by its labor" (*Werke*, 21:16–17). That much for women. Perhaps Schiller's humanism is showing some of its limits here. At any rate, the theoretical conclusion of this passage would be that just as the sensory becomes without tension a metaphor for reason, in Schiller, women become without oppression a metaphor for man. Because the relation of woman to man is that of the metaphor to what it indicates, or that of the sensory representation to reason.

In the same way, Schiller's considerations on education lead to a concept of art as the metaphor, as the popularization of philosophy. Philosophy, as you saw, is the domain of men, art is—basically, the beautiful is—the domain of women. The relationship is that of metaphor. And that relation is similar to a kind of knowledge which is less rigorous, less scientific, and which is more popular. So in that same way, education leads to a concept of art as the popularization of philosophy. Philosophy isn't taught in an aesthetic education, Kant is not taught. Schiller would be taught, because it is a popularization, a metaphorization of philosophy. As such, the aesthetic belongs to the masses. It belongs, as we all know—and this is a correct description of the way in which we organize those things—it belongs to culture, and as such it belongs to the state, to the aesthetic state, and it justifies the state, as in the following quotation, which is not by Schiller:

> Art is the expression of feeling. The artist is distinguished from the non-artist by the fact that he can also *express* what he feels. He can do so in a variety of forms. Some by images; others by sound; still others by marble—or also in historical forms. The statesman is an artist, too. The people are for him what stone is for the sculptor. Leader and masses are as little of a problem to each other as color is a problem for the painter. Politics are the plastic arts of the state as painting is the plastic art of color. Therefore politics without the people or against the people are nonsense. To transform

a mass into a people and a people into a state—that has always been the deepest sense of a genuine political task.[13]

It is not entirely irrelevant, not entirely indifferent, that the author of this passage is—from a novel of—Joseph Goebbels. Wilkinson and Willoughby, who quote the passage, are certainly right in pointing out that it is a grievous misreading of Schiller's aesthetic state. But the principle of this misreading does not essentially differ from the misreading which Schiller inflicted on his own predecessor—namely, Kant.

Thank you.

Discussion

M. H. ABRAMS: I didn't see anybody else raise his hand. What I want to say now is not at all in opposition to your illuminating analyses of Schiller, not even a supplement. I'd like to put it in a different perspective, which is my favorite one, namely, historical, not the perspective you call historicity, but a succession of intellectual events. What both Kant and Schiller inherited was a long tradition, of course, as you pointed out, of discussions of the sublime—I think, primarily in the English tradition, though there were Boileau and others. But primarily the English tradition. And the English tradition, in the British empirical way, was psychological, in the mode of Locke and his followers, Addison, and so on. Now, these people—there is no single instance of the sublime, or example of the sublime, or analysis of any aspect of the sublime which you can think of as psychological, either in Kant or in Schiller, which didn't exist before. This is in no way to denigrate them. Now, as I see it, what Kant did, just as he did in the aesthetic of beauty, was to take the psychological events that constitute a sublime experience, the phenomenon, the sublime as experience, and simply accept them. That is it. Just as he did with the experience of the beautiful. Now, his enterprise is to explain how such an experience is possible. And how it's possible is to be explained in terms of the faculties that the mind necessarily brings to all its experiences. Well, Kant was in a rather difficult bind there, because he hadn't begun his critiques with the intention of writing a critique of aesthetic judgment. And the faculties he posits were faculties which were posited largely to explain the possibility of judgments of truth and goodness—moral and rational judgments. Now, when he came to the third *Critique*, these were the faculties he had to work with. And I think that establishes both the limits of what he says, and also the kind of

13. Joseph Goebbels, *Michael, Ein deutsches Schicksal in Tagebuchblättern* (Munich: F. Eber, 1933), p. 21; quoted by Wilkinson and Willoughby, "Introduction," p. cxlii. The novel is translated into English by Joachim Neugroschel as *Michael* (New York: Amok Press, 1987), p. 14.

extraordinary suggestiveness there is. Because working with faculties of understanding, reason, judgment, and imagination, and being pretty well tied to what he said about the limits or the mode of operation those faculties employed, he was really in a very difficult, limited—he had a limited philosophical idiom with which to explain the possibility of the various modes of judgments of the beautiful and the experience of the sublime.

Now, Schiller was under no such limitations. He bought wholesale, as you've pointed out very well, the psychological and empirical description of the sublime. It suited his practical purposes, as a writer and a playwright, as you've said, and he was able—I think nothing he said psychologically was not precedented in the English. For example, what you dealt with at the end in describing and analyzing that early essay of his is what the British were trying to do in other terms when they pointed out that the return into ourselves from the horrible dangers of the sublime . . . exposure to this, and by establishing what later British psychologists called aesthetic distance, putting aesthetic distance between us and it. But now, the interesting thing in Schiller is his tendency to put these psychological concepts in this chiasmic relationship. I think I have learned a lot from the way you did this. This is exactly what he does.

Now there is a curious irony, because while you point out that this is not genuinely dialectical, I do think that his representing or dealing with his basically psychological, empirical materials in these terms, especially as we find it in the *Aesthetic Letters*, moves over Kant and really establishes, more than any other predecessor, more than any other precursor, for Hegel, his dialectical processes. Because this crossing over, as you call it, in his chiasmus, is very largely Kant's passing over, *übergehen*, from the concept to its apparent opposite, and then the recovery of itself in itself. And even in the *Aesthetic Education*, the term *Aufhebung*, in the critical Kantian sense, does occur. So what we get is the psychological materials, given a kind of pseudo-, quasi-dialectical shape, if you like, which Hegel was able to buy and refine, to a point that some of us might think is reductio ad absurdum, or some might think to the ultimate sublime, of that process. So you get another kind of crossing over between Kant and Schiller here. And provided the crossing over—I can't help saying that taking this kind of historical approach, I think that there's a risk of deconstructing these people, far be it from any tendency to do so you have exhibited, though you may go on to make that kind of approach a little more overt. I agree that the risk in the historical approach is always deconstructive, in some very important sense. As a defense against that, I would say that no matter what history is, the ultimate question for us, as *users* of these theories, is their profitability when applied. No matter how these people, no matter how Kant may have gotten into the bind in which he found himself by the history of his thinking, ultimately the aesthetic judgment is enormously useful for us

in dealing with aesthetic experience. And, I think, Schiller, in his own way, too, is enormously useful for us in dealing with aesthetic experience.

DE MAN: I would find little to dispute in what you have said. Your end conclusion is pragmatic. It is the use of those categories rather than their philosophical truth or falsehood value which is the bottom line, which has the final say, which is very much what Schiller said. And in that you are a true and correct reader of Schiller. But just to make one point there, where I would not agree with you. I agree with the historical perspective entirely. The place to locate that best would be, perhaps, in the way all those three texts return to Burke and define themselves in relation to Burke's essay on the sublime, about which Kant makes an implicit complaint that it is too empirical. And that is the great change in Kant, that the English empiricism is maintained, but understood. It is the moment—this is relevant to your comment—where a theory of the faculties, which is still fundamentally a psychology, would be a prolegomena, a preparation for a philosophical question, rather than being a preparation for an empirical use, whereas the faculties are, the theories of the faculties are used for psychological effectiveness, or for psychological, pragmatic ends. In Kant, where we also have a theory of the faculties, as you say very correctly, and as such a psychology. But that psychology is not for the use or for the benefit of mankind. It is used to explore certain philosophical principles, philosophical questions, philosophical tensions which are at stake.

Where I think I differ at least on one point from you is in the notion that chiasmus is dialectical, and that it is pre-Hegelian. I think the point to examine this—and I alluded to it in passing—has to do with Fichte. And at the moment Schiller says, What I am doing is like Fichte, and unlike Kant in being like Fichte. I think, at that moment, he places himself within a filiation, because there is a filiation that goes from Kant to Fichte to Hegel—that is undeniable. There is a genuine dialectical element in Kant, there is a genuine dialectical element in Fichte, and of course in Hegel it's too genuine to be true. But there is a dialectic, there is only dialectical force when there is encountered a negation; that is, the labor of the negative is absolutely essential to the concept of the dialectical. It is there in Kant, it is there in Fichte in a complicated way, it is there certainly in Hegel. It is not there in Schiller, to the extent that the harmony is not to be disturbed, to the extent that the opposites are not to meet, to the extent that the opposites are to compose with each other in a way which is not a mediation, which is not certainly a negation of the one by the other. From the moment that moment is missing, we have fallen back simply into the pragmatic, I think, simply into the empirical, in a way which even English empiricism, neither Locke nor Hume, really ever did, in that sense. So that I would agree . . . but I don't think that Schiller, in the essays, one would have to distinguish . . . and there are dialectical moments in Schiller's plays and so

on. But I don't think, in the essays, in the philosophical essays, that the dialectic occurs. They are not, in that sense, pre-Hegelian. They have the appearance of the pre-Hegelian, they have the appearance of the crossing over. But in Hegel the dialectic is not just chiasmic. Because the dialectic is not symmetrical, is not a reversibility, and it is not reducible to a formal principle of language which would be like that of a trope. There is no trope of the dialectical as such, which could cover the dialectical. That is a big difference, because at that moment the linguistic implication, the linguistic model, is different. Therefore I think that the continuity you point out is certainly there. But we do feel, also feel in historical terms, in intellectual-historical terms, throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century, a tension between, on the one hand, the Schillerian and, on the other hand, a Kantian reading of the aesthetic. I think I started out by pointing to that, and I don't think you can account for that in straightforward, positivistic, intellectual-historical terms. If you want to see a continuity from Kant to Schiller to Fichte to Hegel, and you call that continuity the dialectic, I think there is a difference there, and this difference is important, I think.

ABRAMS: I don't think we disagree there. One way of putting it is to say that for Hegel and these others, death matters. Death is always involved. When there's a passing over, something dies. There's a resurrection—there's a resurrection and Schiller makes light of that, as in those passages you dealt with. So for that very essential part of the dialectic there's no fuel in Schiller. Schiller's soft there, very soft. But there, if you point to another aspect of Schiller, then I think what Schiller does in the *Aesthetic Letters* is closer to Hegel than either Fichte or Kant. And it depends on the aspect you're emphasizing.

DE MAN: Sure.

ABRAMS: The seriousness of death, I agree, is terribly important, and I don't want to minimize that aspect in Hegel. But when you look at the aspect of movement, constant motion—nothing stands still—I don't find that in Fichte. I mean there's opposition, there's thesis, antithesis, synthesis, but it's a conceptual . . .

DE MAN: It's conceptual, but it's a movement . . .

ABRAMS: . . . kind of movement, a self-movement of the Spirit in Hegel where nothing stands still, everything moves . . .

DE MAN: . . . a self-reflection . . .

ABRAMS: . . . are where you start from simplicity, simplex unity, and somehow from within itself it moves. Well, I find that motion in Schiller. So when they emphasize the mobility of the Hegelian system, and that's, he keeps insisting, his big thing—everything is a moment, nothing stands still. And by moment he means instant as well as aspect. There I think the *Aesthetic Letters* are closer

than either of the others. And Kant's antinomies, of course, are immobile; they're always there.

DE MAN: Well, I think that's a wide area of agreement. The other thing that stands between us is death.

ABRAMS: I think death is important.

DE MAN: Okay.

DOMINICK LA CAPRA: Would you apply your argument, the argument that despite appearances, Kant's transcendental philosophy, that has the most powerful inscription and is in some sense the condition of possibility of history, and which then undergoes a kind of relapse into a compromise—would you apply that argument to the relation between philosophy and nonphilosophy, or philosophy and empiricism in Kant himself? Or is that problem somewhat different? There is a problem in Kant about the relationship between philosophy and nonphilosophy. For example, in section 28 of the third *Critique*, he comes across a point where he says: my argument may perhaps seem somewhat strange or far-fetched, but in reality, if you appeal to the common man, it somehow informs the understanding of the common man, perhaps unbeknownst to him. And that's the way philosophy's leaning on empirical . . .

DE MAN: That is not a Schillerian moment in Kant, in my terms. That is not a falling back or a relapse into a loss of the . . . no. It remains the burden of the Kantian enterprise to put the common, the practical, the commonplace together with, to articulate it with the most refined critical attempts of reason. And the references in Kant to the commonplace, which take place frequently, and which take place in the curious use of very *terre à terre* examples, or in a certain kind of diction which is semipopular—you will get similar things in Hegel—there is a kind of common language in the tensions between the use of the Latin terms which he uses and the German terms which he makes up for them. All that is not at all to be interpreted, I think, as a relapse of the crucial moment in Kant. I am not at all suggesting that in Kant there is an isolation of the philosophical enterprise. To the contrary, if the notion of materiality means anything, it means that there is a necessity for such a relationship which is coercive, which is compelling. Which doesn't mean that the relationship is achieved by means of the particular mediation of the aesthetic, which is where he puts the burden of achieving this relationship. That's another matter. But the failure here, if failure there is—failure is hardly a word to do justice to what is happening at that moment, which is something much more complicated than simply a failure, and which certainly doesn't get thematized or explicitly stated as a failure. But the failure, let's say, if failure there is, is not the failure of a relapse or of a misreading of Kant, of some aspect by Kant of another aspect of it. It is the problem itself. The materiality of the problem is contained in that the difficulty of that noncompatibility, necessary compatibility and

equally necessary disruption of the two—that is a very historical moment. That is a moment of a very concrete occurrence, of a very concrete event in his own language, in his own diction, in his own letter, in his own language. So, that would not be, there are no moments in Kant after the third *Critique* of—there is no relapse in Kant that I can see. There is a relapse in the tradition of the way in which Kant has been read, yes, and Schiller is the first and prime example of that, or one of the first. Does this answer somewhat?

LA CAPRA: He also says it also problematizes the distinction between philosophy and nonphilosophy as well.

DE MAN: It certainly problematizes it, but it doesn't problematize it by putting them on two different sides. Perhaps better to speak, in this case, since nonphilosophy does not really explicitly appear in the third *Critique*, since the problem of practical reasons, which are nonphilosophy, in a sense, which have to do with the practical, and as such would appear to be nonphilosophical in a way, are not directly treated. But if you take the difference between—which is here more germane—between philosophy and art, it is not the case that in Kant philosophy and art are separated as they are separated in Schiller. Art has a very specific philosophical function, which can be considered as inscribed within the philosophical enterprise. And it is as such that art occurs for Kant. Kant is not, like Schiller, concerned to write well, or to write a novel. He is concerned with art as a philosophical problem. So the philosophization of art, the fact that art can be inscribed in the discourse of philosophy, is essential to the Kantian enterprise. That's what the third *Critique* is about. As such, art and philosophy do not separate, they are not the same thing, but they are not separate, they are not polar opposites, they are not in contradiction with each other, they have a complex and supplementary relationship to each other which is not simply dialectical, certainly not that of an antinomy or of a negation. Much more complex. A fortiori this would be true of the practical, which is even more of the nonphilosophical, of the common knowledge.

DAVID MARTYN: My question returns to irreversibility. Fichte, if I remember correctly, in the *Wissenschaftslehre*, goes to great lengths to avoid the kind of reversible relationship that you talked about—look what happens to self and nonself—and finds they are reversible in some way, and by means of the verb *meiden*, will set up a dialectic. And I can see there a distinction between irreversibility and reversibility. I wonder if the relationship which you were pointing out in Kant, or the passage which is not reversible, is in some way analogous to this, to what Fichte does?

DE MAN: Yes, it is similar. It happens in Fichte in a very different vocabulary, and in a very different mode. But the pattern of the destruction is—in Fichte this goes through the problem of self-reflection, right, which is already, which is really pre-Hegelian, but which has this similar characteristic, and where

the notion of freedom occurs, again in the Kantian sense. This is a large question. But the relationship Kant-Fichte-Hegel stands in urgent need of exploration. All we have is Hegel's own critical texts on the philosophy of Fichte. And if one does undertake that relationship, the study of that relationship, one important rule is, forget about Schelling—he messes up the works a great deal. But that's a perverse piece of advice.

You said yesterday you had a burning question . . . but it's burned out?

CHRISTOPHER FYNSK: In the context of what you said today, I'm curious about your remark concerning the Schillerian tendencies in Heidegger.

DE MAN: Oh dear . . .

FYNSK: You mentioned that Derrida is to Heidegger as Heidegger is to Kant. And I agree, I think, about the Schillerian tendencies in "The Origin of the Work of Art." You have these assertions about the autonomy of the work, its unity, and so forth. Nevertheless, with the idea of the articulation of world and earth, which is the subversion of the articulation of transcendental metaphysics, there is an effort to think a kind of appearance or *Erscheinung* which is not phenomenal in the Hegelian sense, and I wonder if it's not some kind of phenomenal materiality in the Kantian sense, because when there is this . . . traced in the figure, the only thing that can be said is *that it is*, that the word is.

DE MAN: That's a big argument, and there's a lot to be said on both sides of this, and this requires a comprehensive reading of Heidegger that is hard, you know, to do quickly. But there is certainly, there is an invitation on Heidegger's part to read him as you do. But there is a certain deviousness there.

You know, a piece in Heidegger that is exceedingly useful on this particular thing, and on the word *Schein* and on the phenomenalism of *Schein*, is an exchange with Staiger about the interpretation of a poem by Mörike, which ends with[14]—the poem is called "Auf eine Lampe." It has to do with light, *Schein*. Fine poem. In the exchange, the debate between Staiger and Heidegger, Heidegger insists on a less naive notion of appearing. He is very eloquent there in talking of *Lichtung*, and understands phenomenality in a way which would not have been accessible to Husserl, I would say. There is an extension of the notion of phenomenality, an ontologization of the notion of phenomenality which is highly suggestive, and which has held me enthralled for many years—just as an example of its power. But I think it is not material, and that if you read Heidegger with Nietzsche, or if you read Heidegger with Derrida,

14. See Martin Heidegger and Emil Staiger, "Zu einem Vers von Mörike," first published in *Trivium* 9 (1951): 1–16, and reprinted as "Ein Briefwechstel mit Martin Heidegger," in Emil Staiger, *Die Kunst der Interpretation* (Zurich: Atlantis Verlag, 1963), pp. 34–49. It is translated by Berel Lang and Christine Ebel in "A 1951 Dialogue on Interpretation: Emil Staiger, Martin Heidegger, Leo Spitzer," *PMLA* 105:3 (May 1990): 409–35.

with certain aspects of Derrida, or with Kant, for that matter—and the place to go would be the book on Kant—that one would see that the concept of the imagination there, that what happens in Heidegger's interpretation of imagination in Kant is not all that different from Schiller's pattern of the imagination. Though of course the justification is not pragmatic, but ontological—but that doesn't make it necessarily unpragmatic. There is the claim to materiality in Heidegger, but—well, I am not sure. I certainly cannot rapidly say. The question is exceedingly relevant and exceedingly important, a central question.

Thank you very much.