



Fall 2015

# Our Liberation and the Liberation of Our Images: Friedrich Schiller and the Politics of the Image

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Rosenberger, Peter W., "Our Liberation and the Liberation of Our Images: Friedrich Schiller and the Politics of the Image" (2015).  
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# Our Liberation and the Liberation of Our Images: Friedrich Schiller and the Politics of the Image

## **Abstract**

In this paper, I will compare the aesthetic philosophies put forward in Friedrich Schiller's *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* and Plato's *Republic*. Using Schiller's more robust aesthetic philosophy and its political import, I will argue that the government of Plato's *Republic* would not create freedom for its citizens. Then, I will carry Schiller's aesthetics and politics forward to argue, using Freud and a number of thinkers who champion Freud's work, that economic interests can also limit the freedoms of a nation's citizens. Finally, I will argue that Schiller's aesthetic philosophy can deliver a political freedom free from the state control depicted in *Republic* and the economic control of modern consumer culture.

## **Keywords**

Friedrich Schiller, political art, political philosophy, aesthetic philosophy, political image

## **Disciplines**

Classical Literature and Philology | Comparative Philosophy | Continental Philosophy | Philosophy

## **Comments**

Written as a Senior Thesis in Philosophy.

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PHIL 400

19 December 2015

Our Liberation and the Liberation of Our Images:

Friedrich Schiller and the Politics of the Image

First, this paper will discuss Plato's *Republic* and Friedrich Schiller's *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*. It will adopt Schiller's aesthetic philosophy and give an account of how *Republic* fails to align with Schiller's picture of aesthetics. Second, it will move through an in-depth discussion of the modern aesthetic landscape, how it is so dramatically influenced by economic drives, and how that impacts the political life of the citizens. This analysis will finish with an eye toward Freud and a number of thinkers who champion Freud's work. Finally, we will return to Schiller and some contemporary employments of Schiller to further flesh out how his aesthetic utopia offers respite from the dangerous ills of our consumer culture.

## I.

Tied up in its construction of the ideal state, Plato's *Republic* puts forward one of the earliest philosophies of art. There is some incongruity between the words of Socrates in the dialogue and the *Republic* as a text, but these possible incongruities only amplify the position this section of the paper eventually takes. A modern text, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* by Friedrich Schiller, is read alongside the *Republic* and provides an alternative picture of aesthetics. A discussion of the relationship between politics and aesthetics in the *Republic* will be framed within the aesthetic sphere created by Schiller. Ultimately, the comparison of these

two texts and their treatment of art in society will reveal some of the dangers of political institutions where the few rule over the many.

When assessing how Socrates characterizes art, it is important to start with the simple position that art is impactful. The *Republic* would not be discussed in the context of aesthetics if this was not the case, so this is somewhat obvious, but the ability art has to affect the minds of the people that consume it is a very important part of what Socrates says in Plato's dialogues, and it lays the foundation for what Socrates says about the censorship of art.

The state that Socrates constructs in the *Republic* relies on particular groups of people fulfilling particular roles. In Book III, Socrates delivers a lot of rules for how the guardian class should be educated. The guardians, or warriors, have an extremely important role in the city, and the stakes are very high when it comes to making sure they fulfill their role. Socrates and Adeimantus agree about some specific criteria for the guardians: they shouldn't fear death, or fear death for those close to them; they shouldn't indulge in humor; they shouldn't be able to be bribed (Plato 60-66).

In all of these things, art has an impact. Most of the conversation in Book III is about what sections of the stories about gods and heroes should be removed. No indication can be given that fearing death (for you or for others), laughing a lot, or receiving gifts to win favor are behaviors to be admired and duplicated. Censoring the texts that include these passages is necessary for the structural maintenance of the state. The passages that show, or even gesture toward, these "bad" behaviors must be removed. There is not a conversation about teaching the guardians to flesh out what should and should not be done in the midst of examples of both. The message is clear: do not show what should not be done.

The noble lie serves a similar purpose, but it impacts the state more broadly. The noble lie is an ideal, a highly impactful, false story that Socrates somewhat sheepishly reveals to Adeimantus at the end of Book III. According to Socrates, having the guardians and the auxiliaries believe that “the upbringing and the education we gave them, and the experiences that went with them, were a sort of dream, that in fact they themselves, their weapons, and the other craftsmen’s tools were at that time really being fashioned and nurtured inside the earth, and that when the work was complete, the earth, who is their mother, delivered all of them up into the world” (Plato 91). This also leads to the myth of metals, where Socrates says that people should be taught that the nature of their souls determines their place in the state.

This is an extremely sly maneuver by Socrates. According to Socrates, we should educate with censored materials that show only images of what to strive for, and then, we should convince those we have educated that we did not educate them. The final, idealized, step is to tell the guardians and auxiliaries a story—the story about coming from the earth—that makes them believe their position in society is determined by nature, not by the educators. Place the source of the social structure in an external, mystifying supernatural source; deem it essentially unquestionable, and you have “closed the loop.” The purpose of the censorship and the noble lie is to reinforce societal positions and make the societal positioning incontestable.

Possibly the most difficult task that comes with studying the *Republic* is discerning where the work falls compared to the positions held by the characters inside the dialogue. All of what has been fleshed out above has been purposefully tied to the ideas and positions of Socrates. Figuring out the ideas and positions of Plato, on the other hand, is a difficult task. The *Republic*, as a text, breaks the rules that Socrates lays out in his conversations with Adeimantus and Glaucon. When it comes to censorship and the noble lie, the guardians and the auxiliaries should

not read the *Republic* because it contains images of behavior that should not be imitated, which is clearly not acceptable, according to the characters within the dialogue.

There are two different, albeit connected, questions that arise from this situation. What is the relationship between politics and aesthetics *within* the *Republic*? And what should we see as the proper relationship between politics and aesthetics as readers of the *Republic*? The first question is about Socrates's vision of the state, and the second is about Plato's vision of the state.

The first vision of this relationship, as discussed above, is a relationship where politics holds dominion over aesthetics. Showing beautiful things and making beautiful art is only to be done when it does not interfere with educating the masses to successfully fill their roles in society. Legislators can use art to educate the masses, as long as they use it carefully and keep a watchful eye on what messages it sends. That is how Socrates sees the relationship between politics and aesthetics. The position of the text is not necessarily different than Socrates's position, but, as mentioned earlier, there is some uncertainty.

One way of doing the meta-analysis of the *Republic* maintains congruity between what Socrates says and what Plato wants readers to take away from the text. The *Republic* can be seen as a text only for the ruling few. Just because the guardians and the auxiliaries should not read it, does not mean it should not exist. In Socrates's version of the state, a text like the *Republic* should be kept from the masses and given only to those who have proven themselves to be in the enlightened minority.

The more complicated, and essentially impossible to prove, interpretation is that Plato wanted to shed light on systems where manipulated masses are fed a lie that perpetuates the social structure of the state. It seems unlikely that this was the specific aim of the *Republic*, but interpreting the text as satirical commentary is not unmanageable. Furthering this interpretation,

and casting the *Republic* as the sort of artful creation that can make clear the manipulation of a ruling class, art can be seen as an emancipatory force.

For me, especially with my modern cultural vantage point, the emancipatory power of art is undeniable. Art can be used to deliver social commentary, and it can be used to keep the state in check. The fear that Socrates feels about the impact of art eventually leads him, in Book X, to suggest banishing the poets from the state. The noble lie is the ideal, but, according to Socrates in Book X, managing the messages of the poets is a great risk. It's clear from Book III that Socrates can imagine a state where the ruler successfully manages the society's artistic culture, but his skepticism—about the practical side of things—shines through in Book X. This move is understandable considering the stance Socrates takes toward art and poetics in the earlier sections of the *Republic*.

To someone who wants to create a carefully positioned, undisputable social structure, kicking out the poets is completely just. The maintenance of the state is the vehicle for protecting and supporting the wellbeing of the masses, and art can get in the way of that. Carefully positioned and undisputable is not necessarily a bad thing. That being said, in practice—in human history—there have been times when carefully positioned and undisputable political systems have been profoundly devastating. Mixing in a modicum of historicism can reveal art's ability to affect the state and moderate social psyche. Looking through this lens, Socrates's treatment of the poets is quite unjust.

In *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, Friedrich Schiller delivers an intricate, sophisticated relationship between politics and aesthetics. Didactic art, like art that would purposefully reveal injustices in the apparatuses of the state, is not what Schiller advocates for,

but the conventional view of the *Republic*, one in line with what Socrates says in the dialogue, would dismay Schiller.

The basis of Schiller's aesthetics is formed around a distinction between two impulses that, when unbalanced, can lead people astray. Sensuous drives are the impulses for empirical experience. These are experiences of the senses and people desire them based off of feeling. Schiller's picture of the state of nature is founded on the basis of people acting on these sensuous impulses. Reason pries humans from the state of nature, and the second type of impulse is introduced: the formal drive. Reason is the instrument of the formal drive.

For Schiller, an existence ruled too strongly by sensuous drives is an animalistic existence, and one ruled too strongly by reason is an existence of barbarism. In the Fourteenth Letter, Schiller delivers his concept of the play drive. The play drive gives way to an aesthetic sphere where balance between the other drives results in humanity's faculty for appreciation of the beautiful and, in turn, for freedom.

In the Fifteenth Letter, Schiller writes,

The object of the sense impulse ... may be called *life* in the widest sense of the word; a concept which expresses all material being and all that is immediately present in the senses. The object of the form impulse ... may be called *shape*, both in the figurative sense and the literal sense; a concept which includes all formal qualities of things and all their relations to the intellectual faculties. The object of the play impulse ... can therefore be called *living shape*, a concept which serves to denote all aesthetic qualities of phenomena and ... *Beauty* (Schiller 76).



Here we get Schiller's exact definitions of the sensuous and formal drives and also the clearest picture of the play drive. The aim of the play drive is to reveal beauty. As the *Aesthetic Education* continues, Schiller describes his aesthetic utopia and how it would manifest the play drive.

In the Twenty-sixth Letter, Schiller talks about how a person searching for humanity only outside of herself will move nomadically and miss out on "communing" with herself. But a person searching for humanity only inside of herself will miss out on the necessary communication that allows for common sense to be developed (Schiller 124-131). Neither of these options yields freedom. The goal of "finding humanity" matters here because that search unfolds in the aesthetic sphere where imagination unhinged from reality can exist. The balance between inward and outward communication is the crux of his aesthetic utopia. The end result is a common sense, one founded on inter-subjectivity, where aesthetics transform reality, not by representation nor didacticism.

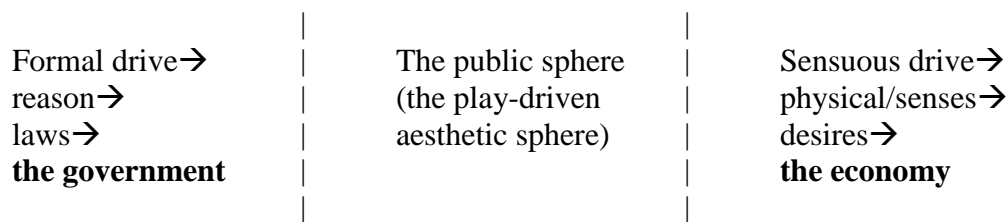
Based off of this characterization of the public aesthetic sphere, it is easy to see why Schiller would be dismayed by the noble lie and the myth of Er in the *Republic*. Censorship of art is patently contrary to Schiller's view of aesthetics. Common sense—literal common sense—is formulated in the aesthetic, play-driven public sphere and reveals the ideal trajectory of a group. A force like the government, external and motivated not by common will, must not interfere with aesthetics. Forces that interfere with the inter-subjective balance of sensuous and formal drives taint the aesthetic process. Governmental force, or the force of the ruling few, is one of many forces that could taint Schiller's system.

Another force capable of interfering within the aesthetic sphere is the economy. This is an especially important relationship to flesh out considering our contemporary consumer society.

Schiller would be concerned by cultures where individuals are, from birth, exposed to a barrage of schemes attempting to create brand allegiance. The agenda of the force responsible for the presentation of the products can get in the way of the human element that Schiller values so highly.

The aesthetic sphere is about interaction with humanity, both inwardly and outwardly, and when a small, self-interested group determines taste, the society will not exhibit a balance between the sensuous and formal impulses. When companies with the sole aim of selling products are the dominating force in the market, the common sense can be left profoundly distorted. Schiller could not have forecasted the nature of our consumer culture, so it is hard to say exactly how he would respond to it, but it is clear that he would be fearful of a system where a small section of the body politic used the economy to determine taste for the masses.

The societal apparatuses in question in the examples of the *Republic* and consumer culture are contained within Schiller's formal/sensuous distinction. This diagram is how I visualize Schiller's system:



The formal and sensuous drive columns must not overwhelm the public sphere, the space in between, where the drives are balanced. The aesthetic sphere is the playing field for cultural consensus to be made, and it should hold dominion over the other two impulses and the societal structures that most closely stem from the certain drives. In the *Republic*, the system malfunctions because the state is influencing the aesthetic sphere too greatly. This can be seen as a failure of the inter-subjective body politic from keeping the formal impulse in check. When

it comes to consumer culture, the system malfunctions because the economy becomes too influential. Here, the body politic fails to moderate the material desires and the general desire for pleasure.

In both of these cases, a small subset of a society's population decides how things should be for the masses. This is not an outright condemnation of systems of government where power is contained within a small section of the populace, but it shows how the few can manipulate the many. In theory, manipulating the many can be good for the many, but unfortunately, history is lousy with examples of the few manipulating the many to calamitous ends.

## II.

*The Aesthetic Education of Man* and the frameworks Schiller provides within *Aesthetic Education* allow for an important introductory conversation about the dangers of a society overpowered by economic drives. As was seen in the last paragraphs, this conversation is extrapolated from Schiller's conception of the sensuous drive. Next, we will turn to some positions more clearly formulated with the economy in mind.

The development of modern, consumer culture has thrown a complicating element into the relationship between politics and aesthetics. This paper will investigate how the relationship between politics and aesthetics changes in consumer culture and how consumer culture affects the aesthetic judgments of the individuals within it. This investigation will surround Freud's conception of the psyche and a few extensions of the Freudian conception of the psyche that come to us on terms specifically related to consumer culture. It will be important to hang onto the notion from the previous paper about the manipulation of the masses by the few for political purposes. The power of consumer culture will reveal itself to be operating in similar ways.

According to Freud's conception, the psyche has three parts—the id, the ego, and the superego. The id consists of the base instincts. Its desires are inherited biologically, and it is the seat for libido and aggression. The desires encapsulated in the id are to be fulfilled immediately, and nothing else matters—not even some overruling principle of self-preservation. The superego is the sphere of the psyche where norms and values are established. Outside forces—familial and societal—affect the individual and create those norms and values. The norms and values are internalized, and they give way to consciousness.

The ego is the arbiter of the system. Calculated thought is formed at the level of the ego. In the ego, the process of delaying desires that come from the id for the sake of self-preservation is important, and it is this process that allows for the spatial and temporal senses. Ultimately, the turning inward of desires forms the ego, and the job of the ego is to negotiate the demands of the id, the superego, and the outside world. This is also the project of psychoanalysis in general. Neuroses and psychoses result when the ego fails to successfully negotiate the demands of the id, the superego, and the outside world.

It might not seem obvious at first why this conception of the psyche is important. The first thing to note is that Freud's work altered the very trajectory of human thought. He didn't just revolutionize psychology. He created a new language, which essentially invented much of what psychology deals with today. Furthermore, his ideas about the individual— notions of the conscious and the subconscious and repression—allowed for new perspectives on any question surrounding the human condition. There are almost no realms of intellectual discourse that have gone untouched by Freud's ideas.

This connects to consumer culture because the only products that sell are the products we *want*. Understanding what people want is the primary concern of those trying to sell products, so

the idea of Freud's ego matters. The ego manages "what we really want"—the desires that come from raw, libidinal forces. If there is truth to Freud's conception of the psyche, marketing a product so that people fulfill some id-desire when they buy the product will be a powerful marketing tool. That is one of the fundamental ideas behind Clotaire Rapaille's book, *The Culture Code*.

In *The Culture Code*, Rapaille, a cultural anthropologist and marketing expert, describes the process by which he has successfully marketed products all over the world. He writes, "The Culture Code is the unconscious meaning we apply to any given thing—a car, a type of food, a relationship, even a country—via the culture in which we are raised" (Rapaille 5). Rapaille argues for "cultural consciousnesses," unique to certain cultures that code the surrounding world. He discusses the "minds" of countries, and argues that within those countries, the objects in the world are coded with unconscious meaning (27).

When he markets a product, he tries to tap into this cultural consciousness. Products that sell the best are marketed most closely in line with the specific code for that thing in that certain place. For the bulk of the text, Rapaille gives accounts of different codes and how they work. These specifics are less important than the underlying psychology and philosophy behind Rapaille's work. Rapaille subscribes to a theory of brain biology formulated by renowned neuropsychologist Paul D. MacLean.

MacLean's theory of brain biology splits the brain into three separate parts. Over the course of human evolution, three distinct sections of what is now the human brain developed. MacLean writes that "the three formations constitute a hierarchy of three-brains-in-one—a triune brain" and that the three sections are "radically different in their structure and chemistry, and in an evolutionary, sense countless generations apart" (MacLean 361). The important part of this

theory for Rapaille is the simplest of the three brain structures, the reptilian complex (R-complex).

MacLeans's experimental work suggested the possibility that the R-complex has "a mind of its own" (MacLean 363). For Rapaille, this R-complex is connected to the desires of the id. The ego, as a force of authority and consciousness, and the superego, containing the forces of society are essentially trying to navigate the functions of the R-complex. Language mediation that happens at the level of the ego contributes to the formation of our cultural codes. Our deepest desires, stemming from that reptilian brain, are inaccessible to us, but our actions reveal them, and those actions, at the intersubjective level, create our cultural codes.

Another thinker who employs Freud in similar ways is Edward Bernays, Freud's nephew. Bernays's obituary called him "the father of public relations," and he wrote extensively about public relations and propaganda. One of the chief elements of Freudian psychology is the notion of repression. Repression is key for both Rapaille and Bernays. Id-desires that are forced back by the ego and the superego create an undercurrent of repressed, unconscious, unfulfilled desires. These are the desires that contribute to cultural codes—the ones Rapaille tries to get at.

For both Rapaille and Bernays, people don't mean what they say. Bernays writes, "A thing may be desired not for its intrinsic worth or usefulness, but because he has unconsciously come to see in it a symbol of something else" (Bernays 75). Rapaille would certainly agree there. Bernays continues, "This general principle, that men are very largely actuated by motives which they conceal from themselves, is as true of mass as of individual psychology" (75). Here, we see the movement to the collective that parallels Rapaille's thinking.

One of the most important parts about the work of Rapaille and Bernays is that they saw their work as emancipatory—this is also the element of their work that ties these discussions of

psychology and economics to politics. For Rapaille and Bernays, knowledge about the way my psyche works in our modern culture, gives me my freedom. “The Culture Code offers the benefit of great new freedom gained from understanding why you act the way you do,” Rapaille writes (198). The last section of *The Culture Code* is an ode to America. It sings passionately about American ideals and the how the code for America is adolescence—we see ourselves as striving forward from our current position. Upward mobility and the “America Dream” are coded into the psyche of America and Americans.

Rapaille and Bernays wave their Freudian flag, but the version of freedom that we get in their systems is inadequate. In a 2011 essay on the ontology of consumer culture, Stefan Schwarzkopf investigates sovereignty in the modern, consumer sphere. The modern consumer and her relationship to the market parallels the relationship between the individual and the sovereign in liberal constitutionalism, and Schwarzkopf sets out to analyze consumer-market relations in the way a political philosopher would analyze individual-sovereign relations.

Early in the essay, Schwarzkopf characterizes a narrative that successfully captures the ideas of Bernays and Rapaille:

“This set of views, which despite their differences I tentatively call a ‘liberal narrative’ in the studies of consumer society, is necessarily based on the idea of the consumer as a ‘modern’, powerful individual agent and as a person who creates and reshapes their identity not through passive reception but through critical interaction with mass culture” (Schwarzkopf 108).

Ultimately, Schwarzkopf will argue strongly against this position. In the essay, Schwarzkopf, tapping into medieval philosophy, employs the idea of *corpus mysticum*, or mystical body, to explain how consumer-market relations have been theologized. The great medieval theologians

“used [*corpus mysticum*] to describe how mortal believers formed a sacred and immortal collective body, the church, which had the figure of Jesus Christ as its sovereign head (Schwarzkopf 110).

For Schwarzkopf, this definition of *corpus mysticum*—its form in particular—neatly parallels liberal constitutionalism and consumer-market relations. What Schwarzkopf ultimately argues is that choice might exist, but *free* choice does not exist. Schwarzkopf writes, “as consumers, we might be choosers, indulgers, identity-seekers, communicators, explorers, activists, citizens, and rebels (Gabriel and Lang, 1995). Yet to believe that the market makes us sovereigns is an illegitimate self-delusion” (122).

Some of the pushback against the “liberal narrative” Schwarzkopf describes comes with Freudian ties. A number of Freudian thinkers don’t align with Rapaille and Bernays, and they contribute to the counter-narrative opened up in our discussion of Schwarzkopf. One such thinker is Theodor Adorno, of the Frankfurt School. It is impossible to do justice to Adorno’s position in so few words, but his position drastically varies from those of Rapaille and Bernays, and it’s important to understand how Adorno employs Freud.

In an essay on the foundations of Adorno’s conception of the self, Yvonne Sherratt explains how Adorno’s position is a combination of Freud and Hegelian-Marxism. According to Sherratt, Adorno’s view of the self is derived “first, from Freud: the essential core of the self consists of psychosexual drives. Secondly, from Hegelian-Marxism, the ‘natural’ core of the self is historically determined, that is shaped and constituted by social activity over the course of time” (Sherratt 109).

Another important part of Adorno’s philosophy borrowed from Freud deals with the nature of the collective. According to Adorno, “The mechanism which transforms libido into the



bond between leader and followers, and between the followers themselves, is that of *identification*" (Adorno 139). This passage comes from an essay about the connection between Freudian psychoanalysis and fascist propaganda. "The doctrine of identification," as Adorno calls it, is inevitably tied up in the fascist mentality. It reinforces the allegiance to the in-group and the condemnation of the out-group. This line of thinking is eerily similar to the one put forward by Rapaille. What is the culture code if not a manifestation of the doctrine of identification?

In "The Herd Instinct," a chapter of *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, Freud discusses the power of identification over the collective—the herd. Freud admits that his study of identification in groups is not exhaustive, but the one standout feature is identification's "demand that equalization shall be consistently carried through" (Freud). Freud eventually makes the move away from "herd mentality" and argues instead for "horde mentality." There is equality among the individuals, but the individuals also seek to be led by a ruler. The individual is an "individual creature in a horde led by a chief," according to Freud.

Adorno understands this, and the remnants of Freud's position are clear in Adorno's position on fascism. In the chapter cited, what Freud says about the collective isn't directly tied to his conception of the psyche, but you needn't look further than Rapaille and Bernays to see how the two strands can be connected.

The doctrine of identification—and its power to influence and mobilize a group—can also be seen clearly in the idea of *corpus mysticum*. Conforming to the group identity and yielding power to a figurehead are essential in both of the systems condemned by Adorno and Schwarzkopf. In the conclusion of Schwarzkopf's essays, he delivers this final gem: "When the consumer sovereign received his crown, he was invested with the same destructive moral

absolutism that had once characterized pre-modern monarchs. Yet this emperor is without clothes: consumer sovereignty is a fiction, and a dangerous one at that since it delegitimizes more democratic and humane alternatives to current regimes of market capitalism" (Schwarzkopf 124).

It is fitting to turn to Adorno specifically because he contains both Freud and Hegelian-Marxism. Many of the alternatives to market capitalism that Schwarzkopf gestures toward are informed by the schools of thought synthesized by the Frankfurt School. That being said, the work of the thinkers taken up by the critical theorists has also influenced some of the greatest disasters in human history. Despite that, if we reject the "liberal narrative" of consumer culture and move toward a position closer to Adorno's, not only do we get a truer sense of Freud's work, but we also get another warning about hierarchical social structures where the few rule over the many.

### III.

One of the most important ideas to circle back to comes from the work done earlier to flesh out *Aesthetic Education*. I gestured toward a fear that the economic manipulation of taste could distort a society's common aesthetic sense, and that, ultimately, seems like one of the greatest hurdles that must be overcome in modern consumer cultures. Much of the discussion we had in class this semester revolved around an imagined emancipation from consumer culture, and one of the greatest struggles on that front comes automatically because we've grown and been conditioned inside of consumer culture.

From the moment we can distinguish the images around us, advertising floods our worlds. Advertising is everywhere in modern consumer culture, and we are the products of that culture. It might have been less obvious fifty years ago, but for young people today, this world

of hyper-advertising is all we've known. You don't have to accept nurture over nature as gospel. It could even just be a belief in the slightest impact of the environment. But what that creates is a reality where many of our desires, desires that seem natural, have come from these manipulative, profit-motivated images that we are bombarded with immediately and unavoidably.

The "liberal narrative" of consumer culture addressed in the section on Schwarzkopf disagrees with me here. The idea that learning "why we want the things we want" acts as an emancipation from what would otherwise be slavery to our desires, according to thinkers like Rapaille and Bernays. But I think Freud was right in his original works on group mentality. In "The Herd Instinct," Freud's picture of how the group operates doesn't seem like one that can be reclaimed merely by knowing "why we're thinking the way we're thinking."

What this line of thinking doesn't address is the concerns I laid out in the previous two paragraphs. According to that liberal narrative, it takes reading someone like Rapaille to become awakened to the nature of how our desires work. But in the time before that, in the time when we move through life in stormy seas of manipulative images, much is transmitted, and how can the impact that time has had be undone simply by learning where our desires come from?

Furthermore, as I indicated earlier, our desires have to be influenced by the images by which we are surrounded. Rapaille argues that our "real" desires are those that come from the lizard brain, but if those desires form codes that are then plastered on the walls of our culture, where is the line between real and imagined desires drawn? What's really going on is identification on a grand scale, and as Schwarzkopf and Adorno argue, the power of that identification can be collected and harnessed by a national or religious few.

Forces of identification amongst a group of people create the ways the identified group projects its images. This process being too heavily influenced by leaders is what Schwarzkopf and Adorno worried about, and it's another thing Schiller would have been dismayed by. The noble lie and the myth of Er of Socrates are easily in line with Adorno's characterization of fascist propaganda. And all of those practices by the people in power dramatically warp the common sense of the masses.

After moving through a more in-depth discussion of the modern aesthetic landscape, how it is so dramatically influenced by economic drives, and how that impacts the political life of the citizens, we return to Schiller to further flesh out how his aesthetic utopia offers respite from the many ills of our consumer culture. The two-way street between Freudian identification and the creation of an image-rich society greatly impacts our political freedom, and Schiller's work can help us in our work to regain our freedom.

In a 2013 essay on art education, Richard Siegesmund writes on Schiller and two thinkers who repurposed his work in their own. His treatment of Schiller, through Jacques Rancière and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, on the way to an argument about the nature of art education, will be very useful in understanding Schiller's project and how it can help the cause of Schwarzkopf and Adorno.

Siegesmund starts by defining the play drive in his own words: "For Schiller, coming to aesthetic understanding through authentic play did not mean the strict, rule-governed play of sport, but an open and fluid imagining in which delight is a possible outcome, but can never be a goal" (303). Siegesmund goes on to say that "there is no purpose for" Schiller's play. Instead, there is "purposeless," and the "terms of engagement can freely morph, alter and reconstruct to the ephemerally emergent ends of delight" (303).

What Rancière picks up on is how Schiller's "aesthetic play skips categories" and how "it thwarts recognition and invites us to recalibrate, readjust, and reconsider" (303). He runs with this idea and arrives at his conception of "dissensus." Siegesmund writes, "For Rancière, these multiple worlds exist in states of unresolved competitive tension. There is no such thing as best practice, no hope of consensus" (303).

This might seem like it runs counter to Schiller's common sense. Isn't common sense just consensus? In reality, Schiller's idea of common sense is much closer to Rancière's dissensus than consensus in the traditional sense. Schiller's ideal is founded on "difference without fear," not the sort of conforming argued against by Rancière. The notion of dissensus in alignment with Schiller's aesthetic utopia reveals how Schiller's work can be liberating. The multiplicity and dissensus makes for an aesthetic sphere that cannot be manipulated by the few.

Siegesmund also sets his sights on capitalism by employing the work of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. According to Siegesmund, "Schiller focused on an independent, empathetic consciousness," and this "unbridled consciousness that refuses to submit to pre-existing categories and purpose" can't be toyed with by capitalists (303). Siegesmund writes, "Only in allowing individuals to play, only in allowing them an aesthetic experience of autonomous non-utility can, in Spivak's view, individuals emerge who are capable of resisting the homogenising hypnotic influence of capital" (303-4).

For Spivak and for Siegesmund, "this holds the promise of an authentic democratic society instead of our now existing neo-liberal societies that are simulacra of democracies but exist through the exercise of power and control" (304). This type of thinking has the power to truly emancipate us from the dangers described by Schwarzkopf and Adorno, and it does so on Schiller's terms.

By abandoning the micro-usefulness of art, we can unlock art's true potential. As Spivak points out, the commodification of art undermines its legitimacy to contribute to common sense and the aesthetic sphere. Furthermore, the commodification of everything else in our consumer culture manifests itself in mediums shared with art—in advertisements. This further contributes to our inability to actualize Schiller's aesthetic utopia.

In a 2001 essay on *Aesthetic Education*, Roger Kimball discusses one of the greatest challenges of aesthetics. He writes of the “tendency to invest art with unanchored religious sentiment:” “It [becomes] difficult to keep art's native satisfactions in focus. The difficulty is compounded because aesthetic delight involves a feeling of wholeness that is easy to mistake for religious exaltation. Art does offer balm for the spirit, but it is not a religious balm” (13). This problem is confounded by the ideas of identification discussed above. It's offers another version of the dangerous two-way street between identification and images.

Our neo-liberal capitalism functions in a quasi-religious fashion, and the work we do in the name of its systems to externalize life's meaning and value makes us deeply susceptible to manipulation by a small group of people. It's not that leadership by the few is fraught by definition; it's that the power of identification in combination with placing the meaning and value of life outside of ourselves creates realities in which the masses become powerless and easy to manipulate. We have yet to emancipate ourselves from these systems, but the liberation of our images is the place to start. That liberation will lead to the dissolution of those systems and might just lead to the sort of thing Schiller dreamt of in 1795.

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