

ΣΟΦΙΑ—SOPHIA

Reflection Article

Formal and sensuous impulses, some considerations on Friedrich Schiller's aesthetic education*

Jorge Gregorio Posada Ramírez **

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**Associate Professor of the Universidad del Quindío. Member of the research group Reasons and Actions of this same university (D classification by Colciencias). E-mail gposada@uniquindio.edu.co Armenia, Quindío.

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Abstract

This text is a reflection article. It argues that aesthetic education is a promising way to promote one of the most important objectives of education: whole education. From the Letters on the aesthetic education of man, written by the philosopher and poet Friedrich Schiller, it is shown that there are two traits that can define the intellectual vocation of man: the formal impulse and the sensuous impulse. The first approaches the human need for rationality, that is, the vocation to find and build abstractions and regularities of the world, to merge into the universal; the second one, the inclination of people to seek emotions that revive their sensitivity and passions, to maintain themselves as unique beings. Describing the formal impulse and the sensuous impulse as the two qualities that holistically shape the human intellectual potentialities, it is shown that the appreciation of the beautiful, in Schiller's terms: the living Form, while both balanced cultivation of both human impetus, fosters whole education in people.

Key words: Beauty, whole formation, living form, formal impulse, sensuous impulse, Schiller.

“Over the years I have observed that beauty, like happiness, is frequent. Not a day passes when we are not, an instant, in paradise.” Jorge Luis Borges

Letters on the aesthetic education of man: an aesthetic anatomy on the human intellect

Letters on the aesthetic education of man (1795) by the philosopher, poet and historian Friedrich Schiller is one of those essays that can well be regarded as a universal good of humanity. Written with the purpose of elucidating the central issues of art and beauty, Schiller conceives a text that orders and synthesizes some of the most important ideas that during the Enlightenment and the second half of the eighteenth century crystallized to understand the place of man in the world. Against the backdrop of Immanuel Kant's philosophy, Schiller not only writes a magnificent aesthetic text, of which Goethe says: “I sucked it in one gulp” (Safranski, 2011: 138), but it distills some essential ideas to understand moral, intellectual and instinctive dispositions of human life. Less popular than Kant's essay, *What is illustration?* (1784), but just as forceful and committed to the description of the human intellectual faculties, *Letters on the aesthetic education of man*, describes with serenity, depth and an original poetic style, the recurrent tensions that occur between the faculties of reason and sensitivity, but in turn, the harmony reached by these faculties once they are amalgamated in art and appreciation of beauty.

Schiller's central thesis is that cultivation of art allows the development of the whole development of people, because reason and sensitivity, the two dominant qualities of the human being, achieve a balanced

deployment once they are directed to the production of works of art and the contemplation of the beauty of the world. The measured use of reason in its connection with sensitivity allows us to glimpse a life conforming to the highest ideal of humanity. To privilege one faculty to the detriment of the other, as it is often the case with excessively legalistic political systems or overly scientific-like academic programs, not only diverts man from his aspiration for a just social life, but also deforms and frustrates the life of each people. Schiller says in his Letters:

Now man can be opposed to himself in a twofold manner; either as a savage, when his feelings rule over his principles; or as a barbarian, when his principles destroy his feelings. The savage despises art, and acknowledges nature as his despotic ruler; the barbarian laughs at nature, and dishonors it, but he often proceeds in a more contemptible way than the savage to be the slave of his senses. (Schiller, 1795: 4).

For Schiller, the faculty of reason is advocated to establish principles, general rules, which prescribe from abstract reasoning the validity of cognitive experiences and the correction of moral actions. The innate tendency of reason to universality leads one to turn away from particular facts and the specific contexts in which they become. To strictly follow the laws of reason is to deny what is at stake in particular experiences and events. It is to be dominated by the formal impulse of reason, that is, the propensity to follow universal rules and principles as the only forms of cognition and action.

Schiller calls barbarians those who without regard to circumstances follow the principles emanating from pure reason. Barbarians are alienated by the formal impulse. The savages are those to whom the primitive passions govern their lives. Unable to contain the emotions and sensations provoked by the excitations of the world, the savages do not have the strength to follow the rules built from reason. Schiller calls a sensuous impulse to the necessary human eagerness to be *sensorially* affected by material reality. The demand for varied experiences, emotions not compressed and regulated by habit or reason, is one of the manifestations of the sensuous impulse. The savages are the ones who are fully stolen by the sensuous impulse.

Although Schiller does not classify all people as necessarily barbaric or savage, from here we can see the extreme sides that shape the intellectual life of people: reason and sensitivity: formal impulse, sensuous impulse, and in their wild and vicious uses: Barbarism and savagery. The moderation and harmonious use of the two faculties are postulated by Schiller in art, understood both as an ability to produce beautiful works, and to appreciate and be affected by beauty.

Before describing how Schiller links reason and sensibility in art and beauty and how aesthetic education could be postulated as a human impeller of rational rules and moderate passions, it is pertinent to show a case, built from literature, from someone who allows himself to be carried in one moment of his life by an energetic use of reason and in another moment by pure sensibility. Gustav von Aschenbach, the central character in Thomas Mann's novel *Death in Venice* (1983) exemplifies the mastery of laborious reason and fuzzy sensibility, to which Schiller refers as a fundamental part of human nature. Without being a barbarian or a savage, Aschenbach is a possible archetype of these two forces that define the whole life of the human intellect: the formal impulse and the sensuous impulse.

Gustav von Aschenbach: laborious reason and enlivened sensibility

In the opening pages of Thomas Mann's masterful novel, *Death in Venice* (1983), he depicts what could be the ideal of the virtuous man, to whom the education projected by the state aspires. The protagonist of the novel, Gustav von Aschenbach, is a man who has deserved the recognition of people for his honest and laborious work as a writer. He has the capacity to control and direct adequately the impulsive human

desires in those of his generation, of selfishness, frivolity and brutality that has defined those of its time. In his works, product not of the natural and spontaneous talent, but of the worked discipline turned into habit, there are highlighted personages that embody moral values necessary for the correct formation of the new generations. His books, without being moralist, are included in schools as part of the training texts that students should read. The certainty that constant work and mastery of passions is the way to achieve a justified life, is summarized by Aschenbach when Mann writes in one of his books:

Almost all the great things that exist are great because they have been created against something, in spite of something: despite pains and tribulations, of poverty and abandonment; in spite of the body weakness, vice and passion. (Mann, 1983: 20).

As a formula, not only for his work as a writer but also for facing life itself, in the opening pages of *Death in Venice*, Thomas Mann creates a character that can well serve to model the capacity of education in the formation of citizens: An honest professional who knows his job in depth, executing it for the good of others. But Aschenbach, once he decides to go on vacation to air his work routine, is faced with the vision of beauty, which is for him its purest and highest form. Aschenbach sees in a hotel of Venice a young Polish of a so overwhelming beauty that he does not hesitate to assume it like the Platonic ideal of the beautiful thing. Tadzio, a young man aged fourteen, makes Aschenbach to take a new path in his life, that of the intellectual sensibility that is stimulated by the perception of the beautiful. There is not a hint of lasciviousness in Aschenbach's merely contemplative relationship to Tadzio. His beauty seems so superior that he cannot overcome shyness to cross a few words with him. He judges him as the highest spiritual good that humans can aspire to through sensory perception. In reference to Socrates and thinking in the beauty of Tadzio, Aschenbach affirms:

Because beauty, Phaedo, notice well, only beauty is both divine and perceptible. That is why it is the path of the sensible, the path that leads the artist to the spirit. But do you believe, my beloved, that only for whom the path that leads to the spirit passes through the senses will ever reach wisdom and true human dignity? Or do you believe rather (I leave the decision at your discretion) that this is a dangerous road, a road of sin and perdition, which necessarily leads to get lost? (Mann, 1983: 136).

Although Aschenbach renounces the controlled and calm life that he had to continue to feel the aesthetic and intellectual pleasure that generates the vision of Tadzio, his figure represents the two essential components that condition the intellectual life of people: the formal impulse and the sensuous impulse, in Schiller's terms. The determination to conduct oneself following rational precepts, and in turn, the inclination to consume sensuous experiences is the central motif of the novel. Reason and sensibility are the two faculties that shape the mental life of people, and those presented in the main character of *Death in Venice* by Thomas Mann. Initially Aschenbach embodies the vent, though not vicious, of the formal impulse. The appetites that commonly affect men and make them go beyond their own desires for control are reduced by him to: "Correct proportions by reason and by self-control, acquired by exercise." (Mann, 1983: 11). But once he sees the beautiful Tadzio and recognizes in him a powerful source of sensory emotions, Aschenbach is kidnapped from his rational temperance and lost in the uncontrollable torrent of the sensuous impulse. Thomas Mann describes the perceptions of Aschenbach when he narrates:

The vision of that living figure, so delicate and so manly at the same time, with its moist and beautiful curls like those of a young god, who, escaping from the depths of the sky and the sea, escaping from the power of the current, produced him mystical evocations, it was like a stanza of a primitive poem that spoke of the original time, the beginning of the form and birth of the gods. (Mann, 1983: 63-64).

So far we have that since Schiller, two are the fundamental faculties to understand the intellectual life of man: reason and sensitivity, and with them, two forces that impel to their respective uses: the formal impulse and the sensuous impulse. The harmonious convergence of these is the aspiration for a whole human education. For when one of the faculties is privileged, one of these impulses, to the detriment of the other, it is castrated a natural condition of the human being, embracing him to barbarity, if only reason is potentiated, or savagery if only sensuous impulses are attended to. Gustav von Aschenbach, the main character in Thomas Mann's novel *Death in Venice*, was described as a representative case of a man who embodies the intellectual disposition of these two faculties. At the beginning of the novel, Aschenbach appears as a man conditioned by the formal impulse, and in the end, and once stimulated by the vision of beauty, he is alienated by the sensuous impulse.

In what follows, Schiller's distinction of intellectual faculties will be broadened. From his direct philosophical source: Immanuel Kant, the activity of reason and sensitivity will be analyzed. It will be shown how an excessive reverence for the development of reason seems to mark the interest of formation on the part of the educational institutions. Finally, and returning to Schiller, it will be argued how the aesthetic formation: the capacity to appreciate beauty, is a promising way to form a harmonic and whole character, because in the capacity to be affected by the genuine beauty, it is given an adequate balance between the formal impulse and the sensuous impulse.

Formal impulse and sensuous impulse

The desire to understand the mechanisms that constitute and move human intellectual life found its moment of greatest growth and development in modern philosophy. The two great modern philosophical currents: rationalism and empiricism, offer attractive and influential answers to the questions of how the human intellect is constituted and what is its way of apprehending and having knowledge of the world. The French philosopher Rene Descartes, the most popular of the rationalists, claims that it is in the rational and formal processes as the faculty of the intellect unfolds, obtaining the knowledge of things (2010). The Scottish philosopher David Hume, the most congruent of the empiricists, shows that it is through the information of the senses how there are determined the momentum and the reaches of the whole human intellectual life (2008). But it was Immanuel Kant who offered the most complete and influential answer on the limits and faculties of the human intellect. After Descartes and Hume, Kant synthesized in a coherent system the less controversial ideas of rationalism and modern empiricism. His explanation of the limits and capacities of the human intellect is set out in the work *Critique of Pure Reason*, which without doubt is one of the most outstanding works of Western philosophy. In it, and without remaining in the mere integration of rationalism and empiricism, Kant manages to reveal the essential elements and principles of the human intellect.

Schiller states that despite the technicality of Kantian philosophy, humanity has always been in agreement with Kant's ideas, because: "If they are released from their technical form, they appear as very ancient sentences of common reason and as facts of that moral instinct that wise nature gives man as a tutor" (Schiller, 1795: 1). From Kant and the influence that rationalism and empiricism gives to his philosophy, it can be understood

with greater clarity those called by Schiller's the formal impulse and sensuous impulse of the intellect. As it is to be presumed from the rationalism, it can be considered the formal impulse from the reason; and the sensuous impulse from the empiricism. For Kant, understanding and sensitivity are the two faculties of the intellect that decide the limits of all knowledge and possible experience. In the understanding: the capacity of reason is concentrated to order the world into abstractions and laws; in sensibility: the disposition of the intellect to let itself be affected by the objects of the world.

In *The Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant states about understanding:

If principles exist anywhere, this is due only to pure understanding. This is not only the faculty of the rules concerning what happens, but it is the same source of the principles by virtue of which everything, when it presents to us only as an object, is necessarily subjected to rules (Kant, 2006: 197).

For Kant the human experience passes by ordering conceptually the vortex of sensations that daily assault the senses. The profusion of sensations that are received by the perceptual system is so chaotic that only by abstracting and ordering this confused influence in common forms, it is possible to recognize or think something. The understanding is the one in charge of imposing concepts and schemes to that stream of sensory information, in order to be able to delimit a thinkable experience. Thus, the understanding is the human faculty that allows the conceptual knowledge and the understanding of sensations, since it orders them in rules and schemes. This faculty structures the sensory data in the forms that necessarily enable thought.

On the other hand, sensitivity is for Kant the faculty that allows objects to affect or stimulate the psyche of humans. People can feel the flow of the external world, they can be impressed by the things that surround them, thanks to the faculty of sensibility. Kant understands it as a receptive faculty, inasmuch as its main function is to receive and present, in the form of sensations, the objects and facts. The initial way in which the world manifests itself to people is through sensory perceptions, all of them mastery of the faculty of sensibility. In Kant, the way in which the human mind is affected by reality passes initially through the sensibility, which defines as: "The capacity (receptive) to receive representations, being affected by objects is called sensitivity. Objects are given to us by means of sensibility, and it is the only object that gives us intuitions. "(2006: 65)

For Kant space and time are the basic forms of sensitivity. Every object that impresses sensibility must necessarily be subject to the determinations of space and time. Thus, the faculty of sensibility drives human intellectual activity once it picks up the material of sensations given in space and time. In this way, it is the faculty that grants the material of which the understanding is used to exercise its activity of synthesis and order. It receives and in turn gives the content that is conceptualized and structured in the understanding. In relation to the latter, sensitivity is a passive faculty, since it receives and transfers sensations to the understanding, while the latter is active, since it shapes the data supplied by sensibility in rules and forms. In essence, the highest work of the human species: to think, consists in ordering in concepts (understanding) what our senses receive from objects (sensitivity). Hence Kant's sentence: "Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind" (2006: 93).

Some of the structural ideas of the *Letters on the aesthetic education of man* reveal a great influence of the philosophy of Kant. Without making a copy of the Kantian theses, Schiller manages to show how Kant's system gives depth and universality, not only to an aesthetic theory, but to a proposal of human formation. In explaining the limits and capacities of the human intellect, Kant suggests which mental fields must be fertilized and controlled, in order to enhance the noblest capacity of people: thought. Schiller refers to Kant as the greatest philosopher of his time (2011), and so is he for Schiller's theory, since the formal impulse and the sensuous impulse are the lively and dynamic interpretation of the understanding and sensitivity of Kant.

The necessary human capacity to collect and unify the common features of objects in order to gain their understanding is an inclination that goes beyond the mere mental existence of each individual. The disposition of the understanding to abstraction is carried to public and political life through the ideals that the State traces for the social life of people. Just as in the "chair" concept, understanding unifies a variety of objects in the world without taking their colors, textures, forms and matter, the State unites in guiding ideas the modes of action of people. For Schiller this is possible because in man, there is a disposition to universality, that is, to immerse himself in ideas that dilute the uniqueness of his life, which rob him of his spatial and temporal determinations. For Schiller this is the ideal man. He says:

To this pure man, who becomes more or less clearly known in every subject, he is represented by the State, which is the objective and, so to say, canonical form, in which the multiplicity of subjects try to unite themselves. (Schiller, 1795: 4).

Thus, as both the State and individuals are driven by the need for abstraction, they are led to follow universal ideas, general rules that homogenize much of their lives. The impulse of abstraction, as it was shown in terms of Kant, is the willingness of the understanding to organize into diversity concepts and schemes, is described by Schiller not only as part of the human intellect, but as the State's method of organizing individuals. It can be said that political institutions are possible since each individual bears an ideal man, and thanks to the impulse of abstraction that allows people to build and follow universal rules from which the ideal man is satisfied. The adherence of people to a political party, a religion, an ideology are representative cases of the existence of the so-called by Schiller ideal man, and its attainment through the formal impulse.

The intellect also demands variety. For Schiller, next to the ideal man lies what it could be called the temporal man. Unlike the other, this one picks up the human need of singularity. The demands imposed by the faculty of the sensation of having emotions and passions, of being stimulated by objects, prompts man to immerse himself in the specific places and times in which events occur. Thus, a necessary condition of the sensibility is to inhabit and to follow the calls of a specific space and time, disregarding the desire of universality. In fact, and as shown from Kant, the abstraction proper to understanding is only possible as long as the sensibility picks up the variety of impressions caused by objects. These, as determined in space and time, subjugate man to cohabit in the space and specific time in which they are. The temporal man is for Schiller the way of being of people who are conditioned by the sensuous impulse, it is the desire to feel and to live in the space and present time, to be a singular subject, not generalizable.

From a holistic point of view, for Schiller the man is an ideal being and a temporal being, an individual who seeks universality, and in turn, singularity. Through formal impulse, he builds rules and ideas that satisfy his vocation to abstraction; from the sensuous impulse, he allows to be stimulated by the events of his space and specific time, attending to his desire of singularity. Schiller says: "Sensuous impulse demands that there be variation, that time has a content; the formal impulse seeks the suppression of time, that there is

no variation." (Schiller, 1795: 21). The intellectual vocation of man requires satisfying both impulses. Rather than suggesting two modes of being separate and exclusive, they show their strength of complementarity. Form and content are the categories that constitute the fundamental basis of Schiller's proposal. There will only be form as long as matter is configured, and there will only be content as long as it belongs to a form.

The formal impulse over the sensuous impulse: a latent imbalance

Neither of these two types of impetus, which constitute the mental life of people, must overlap the other. But Schiller draws attention to the overvaluation of formal impulse in man's civil and intellectual education. The need of the State to universalize the existence of people, in order to try to make collective life a whole, has made it a privilege of universal life forms, to the detriment of individualities. The ideal man, in his desire for abstraction and generality, easily follows the ideas constructed from the State or from the institutions that have the power to *massificate* (make massive) ideas. If the State or institutions ideas are promising for the whole life of the people, man's desire for abstraction is rightly satisfied. But if these ideas, as Schiller shows, deny the harmonic unfolding of the sensible life of people, the result is frustration and existential chaos of individuals and society. In essence, an upset character is the result of an imbalance in one of the human intellectual impulses. For Schiller, the disturbed character can be seen in both the individuals and the society. So it is urgent to understand where the imbalance of intellectual impulses lies.

"Man is reflected in his deeds; and what a spectacle the drama of our time offers us" (Schiller, 1795: 5). With this statement, Schiller condemns the current state, not only of his time, but of every moment of history in which one of the two intellectual impulses deforms the whole life of man. Indifference, apathy, *massification* of ideas, insensitivity to the pain of others, frivolity, overvaluation to any kind of ideas: religious, political, racial rather than people, are the sign of the chaotic character of the time. The interest of the State and the political and economic institutions to dominate people has exacerbated the formal impulse of the time. Following universal precepts without reflecting on their genuine convenience is the sign of these days. The sensibility of individuals surrenders to ideas alien to their true wants. The great denunciation of Schiller to his time, which can partly be replicated to our days, is the excessive rational control by external agents

of people's lives. And this control is not necessarily punitive, it obeys the unreflective need to follow ideas, abstractions that deny the individual being, the temporary man in each of the subjects. Schiller writes:

If the community makes of public function the measure of man, if they appreciate one of its citizens only for his memory, another for his tabular intelligence, and a third one only for his mechanical ability; if in a given case, regardless of character, it insists only on knowledge, and on the other hand, it accepts even its less lucid intelligence as far as it is a spirit of order and conducted according to the law; if it pretends at the same time that these individual abilities be developed so intensely as minimal is the extent to which the individual himself is permitted, would we be surprised that the remaining spiritual faculties be neglected in order to devote all attention to the only one that provides social consideration and that is advantageous? (Schiller, 1795: 7).

The specialization of lives, on account of the State's interest in ordering a totality of individuals, is for Schiller one of the forms of frustration and imbalance of people. The social structure seen as a great mechanism requires each subject to perform specific tasks. By assuming life only in function of the maintenance of the collective totality, the individual is denied and his sensuous impulse is distorted, that which allows him to recognize himself as belonging to a specific place and time and to feel himself as a being endowed with singularity. The temporary man, and with him, the sensuous impulse is cut off by the man being dragged to follow ideas and values imposed by his time. More than a sign of this age, the dependence of society to the specialization of individuals is an incontrovertible fact. Having to submerge man into a single compartment within the social totality, his being is fragmented and his ability to recognize and choose his own desires and passions. Even the use of leisure is manipulated by the abstractive force of the institutions that decide the guiding ideas of the subjects. For Schiller, only a state that can read the singular tendencies of its citizens, and build from them the general precepts that guide them as a people, can harmoniously address the sensuous impulse and the formal impulse.

Schiller does not believe that the harmony between the ideal man and the temporal man be a utopian idea, since, being inhabitants of the same epoch, the modes of sensibility of individuals are not necessarily immeasurable. In addition, the character of people, especially their formal impulse, can be properly

educated. On the basis that there are universal forms, abstract structures not decided by the discretion of the rulers or institutions of the day, a path can be drawn which predisposes subjects to abstractions that do not rival sensibility. For Schiller, no matter how muddled may the epochs of human history be, two guiding ideas always impose themselves: beauty and truth. They do not depend on the subjects, in the sense that they are not created at the mercy of the interests or whims of people. They are universal ideas that show in their constitution the formal element and its content, formal impulse and sensuous impulse. For Schiller, truth and beauty are part of universal goods, of the ahistorical notions that allow humanity to be united in a single lineage. The titanic force of truth and beauty is not threatened by the frivolity and apathy of the times, and it is in them, especially in the beauty, which is form and content, from where you can educate the character of people. Schiller states:

For centuries, both philosophers and artists have tried to bring truth and beauty to the lower classes of humanity: they failed in their attempt, but truth and beauty made their way victoriously thanks to their own vital force indestructible. (Schiller, 1795: 12).

The universality of the forms and contents of beauty is supported by Schiller when he affirms that sensitivity towards beautiful forms is not the property of a few, since by being constituted by the formal impulse and the sensuous impulse, and for being both impulses natural dispositions, the appreciation for beautiful forms is universal. It can be argued, then that since Schiller, there is a promising path in beauty for balanced education between the ideal man and the temporal man. This is because beauty is the incontrovertible harmony between content and form, sensitivity and understanding, uniqueness and universality. Schiller calls living being to a third form of impulse present in human life. This is configured when there is a natural and spontaneous agreement between the formal impulse and the sensuous impulse. From the living form that objectively manifests in beautiful artworks or the beautiful qualities of things, Schiller proposes the balanced formation of the human character.

Schiller's thesis is simple: A whole education must cultivate character in a balanced way; as character depends on the formal impulse and the sensuous impulse, the ability to recognize the harmony between these two impulses is a helpful way to whole education. Now, while beautiful works give a genuine balance between formal impulse and sensuous impulse, education to

contemplation of beautiful works is an advantageous path for the attainment of whole individuals.

Beauty as a living form

Schiller details beauty as a living form. Although this definition seems to be an ad hoc solution to make consistent his idea that it is through beauty that a balance is achieved between the formal impulse and the sensuous impulse; Schiller does not start from arbitrary notions. Influenced by the accepted theses of Kant on understanding and sensitivity, and as it was shown, validated by the experiences that a man can live when he guides his existence through the rational rules or sensuous impulses, as it is the case of Aschenbach, Schiller sees in beauty a balanced agreement between the form and the content, between understanding and sensibility.

In the expression living form, the notion of form alludes to conceptual relations ruled by the understanding, and which are implicit in the things to which apply the predicate of beautiful. A musical work, a poem, a verse, a literary work, the masterful attainment of an action like modeling a space or solving a problem, cases of this type to which the beautiful word properly apply, they necessarily reveal a form, the impulse formal. By saying that it is a beautiful musical work, a beautiful poem, a beautiful novel, a beautiful design or a beautiful solution for a problem, it is implicitly or explicitly accepted that the evaluated objects or actions contain a structure, a form in which becomes its content. The form and its harmonious relation with the content is a necessary condition of beauty. There is no beauty without form.

Beauty makes a pleasant impression. It leads to a spontaneous sensual vivacity in which it perceives it. In the expression “living form,” the term “alive” contains the necessary participation of the faculty of sensibility in the beautiful. Whether as the content of beauty or as the effect it produces, there is beauty as long as sensibility participates in the object or action evaluated as beautiful. For Schiller, the material being or the immediate sensible presence is the living thing; and in beauty it is given as properly organized content in its form.

Schiller warns about two clarifications regarding the notion of alive. First, beauty is not necessarily in the living. A marble sculpture can be beautiful even though its material is not. In the expression live form, Schiller collects the idea that matter, regardless of whether it

is alive or not alive, once it follows harmonically a structure, becomes living matter. As long as it produces in understanding as in sensibility a luminous vivacity, it will be a living form, and this happens when the content and the form find a cordial connection. A marble sculpture can be a living form and a play; even a human life, although its material is alive, will not be able to be a living form if there is no correspondence between the forms carved from understanding and its sensuous matter. The second clarification that agrees with Schiller’s theses is that the fact that someone cannot be moved by beauty does not mean that certain objects or actions are not beautiful. Sensory apathy or the illiteracy of some individuals to the recognition of beautiful forms is precisely the result of the imbalance of the two intellectual impulses. A man alienated by the mere desire to feel raw emotions and another by the excessive formalism of reason may have problems in appreciating the beautiful. The aesthetic formation seeks just this, to moderate the excessive tendency to dominate one of the two impulses.

The living form as a definition of beauty accentuates the universal and fundamental belief that in the world there are beautiful things, facts, actions, events and beings. The correct appreciation of the beautiful passes through a correct balance between form and content of what is preached as beautiful. Equilibrium is necessary because the intellect, whether of the one who contemplates the beautiful or the one who produces it, is restricted to experiencing it only when the two features that shape it, the formal impulse and the sensuous impulse, are proportionately amalgamated. A mind stolen only by sensation does not appreciate the beautiful, just as it happens when it is kidnapped only by the form.

Accepting beauty as a real fact of humanity, and its constitution as a living form, makes that its appreciation presents as a way to generate habits of harmony between the formal impulse and the sensuous impulse. A character trained to recognize the beautiful may be better disposed to decide which forms of understanding suit a certain subject, and which do not. Likewise, what sensory stimuli are advantageous and which are subjugating. Whether in the political, economic, religious or school field, the ability to properly harmonize form and content is a possible guarantee of the subjects’ comprehensiveness with themselves and with others. In addition, whether consciously or unconsciously, the appreciation of beauty pushes the consideration that human life is woven by sensations and forms, by singular moments and aspirations to the universal, because the temporal and timeless are

stranded in beauty. Schiller says: “Beauty guides the sensible man towards form and towards thought; beauty makes the spiritual man return to matter, to the sensible world.” (Schiller, 1795: 27).

Conclusions

The praiseworthy interest of the State and of individuals in whole formation obliges us to recognize that (stuff) of what the human intellect is made of. Appealing to excessively detailed notions can overshadow the attempt of a promising path for attainment. For this reason, notions that from their generality allow the consideration of viable strategies can be well received, despite the details that remain unexplored. From the work of Friedrich Schiller, *Letters on the aesthetic education of man* (1795), we could see two great features that define the intellectual life of people: formal impulse and sensuous impulse. It was shown that although these notions contain part of Schiller’s humanistic and aesthetic doctrine, they have their antecedents in Kant’s philosophy, which far from being a dogmatic philosophical system, reveal much of the epistemological truths approved by mankind. For this reason, the work of Schiller cited in this text can be considered a valuable document to understand the intellectual life of people, with a perspective of their whole flourishing.

Schiller’s ideas are not confined to mere reflective and philosophical consideration. Taking as model a fictitious character, but at the same time representative of humanity, as literary characters are, it was shown that it is possible to bring to the world of facts the philosophical reflections of Schiller. Aschenbach, the main character in Thomas Mann’s novel, *Death in Venice* (1983), can easily be illuminated interpretively from Schiller’s notion of formal impulse and sensuous impulse. He, like all men, confines his life to these two intellectual forces; of domination of one over the other, it depends on how they deal with the world and with their inner life. It was then shown that Schiller’s proposal is valid not only for the coherence of his concepts, but also for the very experiences that people exhibit.

Appealing to Immanuel Kant’s philosophy, it was argued that the formal thrust of Schiller’s theory is influenced by the Kantian notion of understanding. If understanding in Kant is the active faculty that orders and structures the sensations in schemas, to enable thought in this way, and the formal impulse in Schiller is the human disposition to regulate through

abstract notions the variety of human perceptions, it is not forced to see the Schiller’s debt to Kant’s theses. Something similar happens with the Kantian theory of sensitivity. Understood as the receptive faculty that allows man to be affected by objects, Schiller’s thesis of the sensuous impulse owes Kant. This intellectual disposition allows the possible sensorial stimulation of people. For Schiller, the sensuous impulse configures man as a passive being, as he is affected by objects; and a temporal being, inasmuch as it is only possible the activation of this impulse as people evoke their determinations given in space and time.

From Schiller’s statement: “Man is reflected in his deeds; and what a spectacle the drama of our time offers us” (Schiller, 1795: 5). It was assumed that the sign of the time is an imbalance between the two impulses that constitute the intellectual life. The formal impulse chaotically imposes itself on the sensuous impulse. The excessive human desire to pursue ideals alien to time and the real space in which subjects become, seems to prove this. Apathy, indifference, the pursuit of generic objectives, which are more due to the *massification* by the State and power groups, which is a notorious truth that reflects the distancing from the human to its uniqueness. For this reason, an adequate harmony between the formal impulse and the sensuous impulse, between the man as abstraction and the man with his singular feelings, is a demand of the time. It was explained, from Schiller, the possibility of justifying in aesthetic formation: the ability to produce or appreciate beautiful things, a path of harmonious confluence between form and sensitivity. With the expression living form, which is the balanced agreement between form and content, between formal impulse and sensuous impulse, in terms of Schiller: beauty, it was possible to notice it in the existence of qualities of the world in which, in fact, the balance between these two impulses occurs. To take the beautiful qualities of objects, events, or actions of the world not only as an end in itself, but as a way of training the intellect in the harmony between the abstract and the singular, between understanding and sensibility, it is suggested as a promising path leading to the whole balance of human intellect.

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