

Schiller's Approach to the Problem of Evil

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X The assumption would mean that aspects of evil in Räuber - though the earliest dramatic treatment of it - will be characteristic one way or another for later works. You can't well make this point & see the relationship to the later
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The purpose of this paper is to examine Schiller's approach to the problem of evil. ^{although Schiller's} While his entire dramatic output ^{the phenomenon of evil} relates in one way or another to this problem, it can best be considered in a provisional way by looking at Die Räuber and ^{some} a couple of Schiller's philosophical essays. It will be seen that for Schiller, the phenomenon of evil has not only moral significance but also aesthetic possibilities. Just how this is argued ~~for~~ in the philosophical essays, and rendered in the play, will be the particular focus of this paper. In what follows, I shall ^{try to sharpen the distinction between the aesthetic and moral dimensions} distinguish the aesthetic dimension of the ~~phenomenon of evil~~ ^{from its moral dimension}, and consider in turn each dimension as it manifests itself in ^a the relevant essay and in Die Räuber. For Schiller, these two dimensions of the problem of evil are closely intertwined; I shall separate them only for purposes of analysis and clarification.

I.

It is well known that the presentation of acts of villainy, violence, and other phenomena of evil on the stage, in literature, and, today, on the screen gives us pleasure. That at least some of this pleasure may indicate genuine aesthetic satisfaction is one of the main arguments of Schiller's essay, Über das Pathetische. While the presentation of villains and criminals is not the only possible source of aesthetic satisfaction, they are particularly well suited to play the leading roles in vehicles that can ~~morally instruct~~

aesthetically please

as well as ^{morally instruct} ~~aesthetically please~~ us. How is this so?

In Über das Pathetische, Schiller explores what could be called the metaphysical foundations of art in general and of tragic drama in particular. The primary function of all art, Schiller says, is to present the supersensuous, the ideal, or the metaphysical in man to perception. Tragic art in particular reveals the moral freedom of man in its resistance to suffering, strong passions, or violent feelings. The successful presentation of this resistance to suffering produces the pathetic affect which alone satisfies our aesthetic judgment. The pathetic affect depends on the sublimity of the power of freedom to resist the force of the passions. The manifested power of freedom is in turn dependent on the manifested power of the passions resisted. In no case does the aesthetic judgment, the pathetic affect, or the presentation of the sublime require that the character act ^{in a morally right manner.} ~~morally~~. Only the manifestation of the capacity (das Vermögen) to do so, of the moral freedom to resist the force of the passions, regardless of the good or evil nature of the action or the character, is needed to satisfy our taste. In addition, in so far as the taste of the viewer or the reader is satisfied, he becomes aware of his own moral freedom. Hence, the ^{in an indirect way,} aesthetically effective presentation of villains and criminals can also be morally instructive.

My summary of Schiller's argument in Über das Pathetische needs to be fleshed out in detail, before I turn to the way

in which ^{this} he employs the aesthetic dimension of the phenomenon of evil in Die Räuber. Schiller concisely sums up the nature of tragic art in two principles:

Das erste Gesetz der tragischen Kunst war Darstellung der leidenden Natur. Das zweite ist Darstellung des moralischen Widerstandes gegen das Leiden.¹

The tragic artist must first present man as a sensitive, suffering, natural being. Schiller criticizes the French drama of the Enlightenment for covering over man's affective life with rank and convention, with (Anstand ^{und} ~~and~~ Dezenz). The Ancient Greeks, by contrast, offer a model, in their art, for presenting nature "with her clothes off," or an affective life worthy of moral resistance. But the presentation of suffering nature should ^{also} avoid the merely painful. On the presentation of violence for violence's sake, Schiller remarks:

Die Pflicht des Dichters war also in dieser Hinsicht bloß negative, nämlich die Darstellung der leidenden Natur nicht so weit zu treiben, daß aller Ausdruck der Menschheit oder des moralischen Widerstandes dabei verlorenging, weil sonst Unwille und Abscheu unausbleiblich erfolgen müssten.²

No less than the merely painful, the merely agreeable (schmelzende Affekte), as experienced in listening to sermons or music, ^{also} appeals only to the senses, fails to reach our humanity, and at worst turns men into animals.

The second requirement of tragic art requires the presentation

of moral resistance to suffering or violent passions. The tragic character may not merely suffer, as common (gemeine) souls do, or avoid suffering, as conventional (anständige) souls do, but must reveal a purely human, metaphysically free dimension by resisting or willing suffering, as noble (edle) souls do:

Ein guter Geschmack~~er~~ also, sage ich, gestattet keine, wenngleich noch so kraftvolle Darstellung des Affekts, die bloß physisches Leiden und physischen Widerstand ausdrückt, ohne zugleich die höhere Menschheit, die Gegenwart eines übersinnlichen Vermögens sichtbar zu machen³

Only in the struggle with the affect, qua affect, of the passions is man's metaphysical dimension recognizable.

⁵Intinctive reactions and instrumental efforts to modify the external causes of the passions reveal nothing about what is properly human. While the common soul remains bound by suffering, the noble soul uses suffering as a catalyst for spiritual power, and produces the sublime out of the dreadful. Schiller sums up the aesthetic relationships among suffering, the moral strength of resistance, the sublime, and the pathetic in the following striking passage:

Der bloß tierische Teil des Menschen folgt dem Naturgesetz und darf daher von der Gewalt des Affekts unterdrückt erscheinen. An diesem Teil also offenbart sich die ganze Stärke des Leidens und dient gleichsam zum Maß, nach welchem der Widerstand geschätzt werden kann; dann man kann die Stärke des Widerstandes oder die moralische Macht in dem Menschen nur nach der

Stärke des Angriffs beurteilen. Je entscheidender und gewaltsamer nun der Affekt in dem Gebiet der Tierheit sich äussert, ohne doch im Gebiet der Menschheit dieselbe Macht behaupten zu können, desto mehr wird diese letztere kenntlich, desto glorreicher offenbart sich die moralische Selbständigkeit des Menschen, desto pathetischer ist die Darstellung und desto erhabener das Pathos.⁴

In so far as his will shows itself to be absolutely independent of his passions and desires, the tragic hero or noble soul satisfies our aesthetic judgment. The judgment of taste rests on the interest of the imagination, which can be satisfied only if it can regard its object as free from the laws that bind natural beings. The moral judgment, however, rests on the interest of reason, which requires that a will free from the laws of natural beings be at the same time constrained by the moral law. Moral evaluation judges each individual will by the standard of duty and respectfulness for law. Aesthetic evaluation, by contrast, abstracts from the relation of an individual will to the moral law and considers the human will in general, as a power of the species over against the whole power of nature. The moral judgment is concerned with the direction or actual use of the will, with the lawfulness of free actions, while the aesthetic judgment is concerned only with the power of the will, with the capacity of moral freedom:

Selbst von der Äusserungen der erhabensten Tugend

kann der Dichter nichts für seine Absichten brauchen, als was an denselben der Kraft gehört. Um die Richtung der Kraft bekümmert er sich nichts. Der Dichter, auch wenn er die vollkommensten sittlichen Muster vor unsre Augen stellt, hat keinen andern Zweck und darf keinen andern haben, als durch Betrachtung derselben zu ergötzen.⁵

Surely this bears directly on the subject of the power of the tragic artist.
A powerful will directed towards evil may be tragically presented just as effectively as, and perhaps more easily than, a powerful will directed towards the good:

Für sein Interesse ist es eins, aus welcher Klasse von Charakteren, der schlimmen oder guten, er seine Helden nehmen will, da das nämliche Maß von Kraft, welches zum Guten nötig ist, sehr oft zur Konsequenz im Bösen erfordert werden kann.⁶

Ein Lasterhafter fängt an, uns zu interessieren, sobald er Glück und Leben wagen muß, um seinen schlimmen Willen durchzusetzen.⁷

Thus, the tragic artist can morally educate us, not directly by addressing our moral judgment, but indirectly by satisfying our aesthetic sensibility. By appealing to our imagination, the tragic presentation of evil as well as good characters prepares us for moral freedom:

Daß er seine Pflicht wirklich erfüllt, beruht auf einem zufälligen Gebrauche, den er von seiner Freiheit macht und der eben darum für uns nichts beweisen kann. Es ist bloß das Vermögen zu einer ähnlichen Pflichtmäßigkeit, was wir mit ihm teilen, und indem wir seinem Vermögen auch das unsrige wahrnehmen, fühlen wir unsere geistige Kraft erhöht.⁸

** Clearly though it's successful performances
+ the text shows the practical (stage) formulation of a "natural" dramatist!* Lambert - 7

While Schiller claims that, because of its realistic portrayal of evil, Die Räuber is not intended to be performed on the stage, the play remains a "dramatische Geschichte" that takes advantage of the dramatic method.⁹ Therefore, we can expect to find all of the elements constituting the pathetic affect as Schiller has described them in Über das Pathetische. We have seen that this affect can be produced by a strong-willed character, even though he pursues evil aims. But while Karl Moor and Franz Moor both pursue evil aims in Die Räuber, only Karl qualifies as a pathetic character and thus as a tragic hero. Why is this so?

** It's true too that only the above-average character is capable of occasioning the tragic conflict.*
Both characters seem to rise above the conventional or the common, and thus qualify in a negative way for the position of moral freedom necessary for the pathetic affect. Karl is a worshipper of the power of liberty over against the law:

Ich soll meinen Leib pressen in eine Schnürbrust und
meinen Willen schnüren in Gesetze. Das Gesetz hat
zum Schneckengang verdorben, was Adlerflug geworden
wäre. Das Gesetz hat noch keinen großen Mann gebildet,
aber die Freiheit brütet Kolosse und Extremitäten aus.¹⁰

Karl lends his will to the purposes of others who also reject the conventional in the name of freedom, but he is unaware at first, despite his good intentions, that moral freedom can be used for evil as well as good. Franz, in his quest for tyranny, also aims at moral freedom from conventions, but has no illusions about the direction that his freedom will take:

Weg dann mit dieser lästigen Larve von Sanftmut und Tugend! Nun sollt ihr den nackten Franz sehen, und euch entsetzen! ... Meine Augenbraunen sollen über euch herhangen wie Gewitterwolken, mein herrischer Name schweben wie ein drohender Komet über diesen Gebirgen, meine Stirne soll euer Wetterglas sein!¹¹

But though Karl and Franz share this drive that elevates them beyond the conventional, only Karl has the strength of will to "carry it through to the end," and thus to qualify as a pathetic character. Having lost everything in the world that matters to him - lover, father, and country - and having finally realized the horrible consequences of his leadership of the robber-band, Karl is not overcome, but wills on:

Und soll ich für Furcht eines qualvollen Lebens sterben? - Soll ich dem Elend den Sieg über mich einräumen? - Nein! ich wills dulden! (er wirft die Pistole weg) Die Qual erlahme an meinem Stolz! ich wills vollenden.¹²

Karl, as a legitimately suffering being, can come to terms with feeling as feeling in a genuinely pathetic way. Franz, by contrast, uses his reason as an instrument for circumventing or avoiding his feelings:

Es löst in Franz all die verworrenen Schauer des Gewissens in ohnmächtige Abstraktionen auf, skeletisiert die richtende Empfindung und scherzt die ernsthafte Stimme der Religion hinweg.¹³

Because Franz never permits his passions to affect him, we cannot believe that he has a strong will. In Act V, Scene 1,

his rationalizations begin to break down, and he is confronted by the full force of guilt about what he has done and of fear about God's punishment for it. Franz then breaks down completely and kills himself. Our doubts about his strength of will, his moral freedom, and his ability to be a pathetic character are well founded. Only in the case of Karl Moor does a villain satisfy our aesthetic judgment in Die Rauber.

Good

II.

Schiller's reflections on the moral dimension of the phenomenon of evil can best be exposed by examining a particularly pregnant passage in Uber Naive und Sentimentalische Dichtung.¹⁴ His concern in this passage is with two fundamental, though misguided, responses of men to their moral situation. The first response is an expression of the "back to nature" syndrome, in which men want to abandon moral freedom for the primal innocence of a state of nature. The second response is an expression of revolutionary sentiment, in which men interpret evil as essentially a matter of external conventional, social, economic, or institutional arrangements, which are to be destroyed and reconstructed by any available means. Schiller attacks both of these tendencies, which, by causing men to avoid or to displace the truly moral dimension of evil, leave them unable to face it and fight it in its own proper element.

In a passage resembling Rousseau's ambivalent description,

of the attractiveness of man's lost natural condition in the Discourse on the Origins of Inequality Among Men, Schiller describes the appeal of "naive nature" to men wallowing in the moral ^aquandries of civilized life:

Wir sehen alsdann in der unvernünftigen Natur nur eine glücklichere Schwester, die in dem mütterlichen Hause zurückblieb, aus welchem wir in Übermut unserer Freiheit heraus in die Fremde stürmten. Mit schmerzlichem Verlangen sehnen wir uns dahin zurück, sobald wir angefangen, die Drangsale der Kultur zu erfahren, und hören im fernen Auslande der Kunst der Mutter rührende Stimme. Solange wir bloße Naturkinde waren, waren wir glücklich und vollkommen; wir sind frei geworden und haben beides verloren.¹⁵

Like Rousseau, though, Schiller condemns all efforts of men to return to a natural state, because he believes that man's true destiny is to assume moral freedom:

Jene Natur, die du dem Vernunftlosen beneidest, ist keiner actung, keiner Sehnsucht^h wert. Sie liegt hinter dir, sie muß ewig hinter dir liegen. Verlassen von der Leiter, die dich trug, bleibt dir jetzt keine andere Wahl mehr, als mit freiem Bewußtsein und Willen das Gesetz zu ergreifen oder rettungslos in eine bodenlose Tiefe zu fallen.¹⁶

What, then, of those who, seeing the advantages of civilized life, rail against the injustices of established institutions and seek, through revolutionary action, to usher in a "golden age" of brotherhood and happiness? Schiller claims that these men are also misguided, in that they mistake the evils of

civilized life (Übeln der Kultur) for moral evil (das Böse):

Also nichts von Klagen über die Erschwerung des Lebens, über die Ungleichheit der Konditionen, über Undank, Unterdrückung, Verfolgung; allen Übeln der Kultur mußst du mit freier Resignation dich unterwerfen, mußst sie als die Naturbedingungen des einzig Guten respektieren; nur das Böse derselben mußst du, aber nicht bloß mit schlaffen Tränen, beklagen.¹⁷

The evils associated with the established conventions of civilized life are, more properly put, its inconveniences, and these are required as a necessary condition for the moral good to manifest itself. These inconveniences are not to be fought against, but tolerated as elements that make possible the higher destiny of man, his moral freedom. Moral evil, though it may be ^{partly} deposited in the external arrangements of civilized society, is encountered and can be fought primarily within each individual man. Schiller's profound, if profoundly conservative, moral insight is that the fight against social injustice is at best secondary, relative to the real struggle *against* with evil within the self. Man's higher destiny involves *not only the preservation of* ~~preserving~~ a pure and free inner self amidst the turmoil of external life, ~~so that he can combat moral evil wherever it manifests itself:~~ *but the engagement of an evil "within":*

Sorge vielmehr dafür, daß du selbst unter jenen Befleckungen rein, unter jener Knechtschaft frei, unter jenen launischen Wechsel beständig, unter

jener Anarchie gesetzmäßig handelst. Fürchte dich nicht vor der Verwirrung außer dir, aber vor der Verwirrung in dir ...¹⁸

There is little doubt that the group of men whom Karl Moor forms into the robber-band in Die Rauber are typical "discontents" of civilization. Spiegelberg is the spokesman for those who find the restraints and inconveniences of conventional social arrangements intolerable:

Wollt ihr im Schuldturm stecken, und zusammenschnurren, bis man zum Jüngsten Tag posaunt? Wollt ihr euch mit der Schaufel und Haue um einen Bissen trocken Brot abquälen? Wollt ihr an der Leute Fenster mit einem Bankelsängerlied ein mageres Almosen erpressen?¹⁹

- also - as we noted in the language, & motifs associated with him - a kind of grotesque on Bachmann of "desertish" - chaotic of "The Chorus" of robbers becomes an expression of this event. The conclusion, but especially in I!

The only way to respond to these perceived injustices seems to be to overthrow all existing social arrangements, or to hasten the demise of a corrupt society, and then to construct a new golden age from the ground up:

Reichen Filzen ein Drittel ihrer Sogen vom Hals schaffen, die ihnen nur den goldenen Schlaf verschleuchen, das stockende Geld in Umlauf bringen, das Gleichgewicht der Güter wiederherstellen, mit einem Wort, das goldne Alter zurückzurufen, dem lieben Gott von manchem lästigen Kostgänger helfen, ihm Krieg, Pestilenz, teure Zeit und Dokters ersparen....²⁰

Karl agrees to lead this band of malcontents, and hopes that he can turn their "incindiarisms" (Mordbrennereien) to his own good purposes. He even brings other noblemen into

But when Karl hears of the horrible deeds that have been committed during the band's rescue of a comrade from the gallows, he reflects that his good intentions have been tainted by the means of carrying them out:

O pfui über den Kindermord! den Weibermord! - den
Krankenmord! Wie beugt mich diese Tat! Sie hat
meine schönsten Werke vergiftet ...²²

— his own monstrous guilt becomes
apparent to him.

PLEASE READ IMMEDIATELY AFTER QUOTE # 21 ON
PAGE 13.

the band, and one of these henchmen comments on the nature of Karl's designs:

Er mordet nicht um des Raubes Willens wie wir - nach dem Geld schien er nicht mehr zu fragen, sobald ers vollauf haben konnte, und selbst sein Drittel an der Beute, das ihn von Rechts wegen trifft, verschenkt er an Waisenkinde, oder lässt damit arme Jungen von Hoffnung studieren. Aber soll er dir einen Landjunker schröpfen, der seine Bauren wie das Vieh abschindet, oder einen Schurken mit goldnen Borten unter den Hammer kriegen, der die Gesetze falschmünzt, und das Auge der Gerechtigkeit übersilbert, oder sonst ein Herrchen von dem Gelichter - Kerl! da ist er dir in seinem Element, und haust teufelmäßig, als wenn jede Faser an ihm eins Furie wäre.²¹

As Karl begins to realize his true situation, namely, that he is free and has used his will for evil, he longs for the lost innocence of his youth. ^{at this point,} Here he invokes an image of the natural condition of man before the "fall" into moral freedom:

Es war eine Zeit, wo sie mir so gern flossen - o ihr Tage des Friedens! Du Schloß meines Vaters - ihr grünen, schwärmerischen Täler! - O all ihr Elysiumszenen meiner Kindheit! - Werdet ihr nimmer zurückkehren - nimmer mit köstlichen Säuseln meinen brennenden Busen kühlen? - Traure mit mir, Natur - ... Dahin! dahin! unwiederbringlich!²³

In the end, however, Karl recognizes that neither a

return to childhood innocence nor a revolutionary overthrow of existing social arrangements is a proper endeavor for realizing the human destiny. Man finds himself on the field of moral struggle with evil, and this battle is fought primarily within the self:

Sei, wie du willst, namenloses Jenseits - bleibt mir nur dieses mein Selbst getreu - Sei wie du willst, wenn ich nur mich selbst mit hinübernehme.
- Aussendinge sind nur der Anstrich des Manns -
Ich bin mein Himmel und meine Hölle.²⁴

Because Karl has honestly confronted his own moral freedom, he is "only a step away," as Schiller would say,²⁵ from converting his bad will into a good one. Franz, however, cuts himself off from this possibility by his continual rationalizing:

Bin ich doch ohnehin schon bis an die Ohren in Todsünden gewatet, daß es Unsinn wäre zurückzuschwimmen, wenn das Ufer schon so weit hinten liegt - Aus Umkehren ist doch nicht mehr zu gedenken - die Gnade selbst wurde an den Bettelstab gebracht, und die unendliche Erbarmung bankrott werden, wenn sie für meine Schulden all gutsagen wollte ...²⁶

To sum up, we have seen that Schiller reflects upon two dimensions of the phenomenon of evil - the moral and the aesthetic - in his philosophical essays. I do not think it is unreasonable to claim that there lies in Die Räuber a

concrete presentation of the moral dimension of evil, and a concrete employment of the aesthetic dimension of evil, both of which answer to Schiller's ^{theoretical} abstract treatment in the essays. "Rauber Moor" is a pathetic character, and thus is aesthetically attractive. His attempt to direct his band toward the overthrow of established social arrangements, and its inevitable failure, throws into relief the inner self as the arena of the struggle with moral evil. It could be argued that these two dimensions of the phenomenon of evil, the one employed to construct a tragic hero, and the other presented through misguided rebellion against the social order, are leading motifs in all of Schiller's plays. This worthy project, however, belongs to another time, and to a soul more decaffeinated than mine.

Very interesting & well written.

Finally, though a demonstration would be beyond the scope of this essay, I submit that these two dimensions of the phenomenon of evil - the ^{aesthetic} one employed to construct a tragic hero, and the moral one ~~also~~ presented by means of misguided rebellion against the social order - are leading interpretative keys to all of Schiller's plays.

Notes

1. Schiller, Friedrich, Sämtliche Werke, fünfter Band,
München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1959, p. 515.

2. Ibid., p. 523.

3. Ibid., p. 517.

4. Ibid., p. 521.

5. Ibid., p. 533.

6. Ibid., p. 535.

7. Ibid., p. 536.

13 ~~8~~. Ibid., p. 533.

8. Schiller, Friedrich, Die Dramen des Sturm und Drang,
München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1978, p. 10.

9 ~~10~~. Ibid., p. 29.

10 ~~11~~. Ibid., p. 58.

11 ~~12~~. Ibid., p. 110.

12 ~~13~~. Ibid., p. 11.

14. Schiller, supra note 1, pp. 707-709.

15. Ibid., pp. 707-708.

16. Ibid., p. 708.

17. Ibid., p. 708.

18. Ibid., p. 708.

19. Schiller, supra note 9, p. 35.

20. Ibid., p. 36.

21. Ibid., p. 63.

22. Ibid., p. 70.

23. Ibid., p. 83.

24. Ibid., p. 110.

25. „ ... vielleicht hat der große Bösewicht keinen so weiten Weg zum großen Rechtschaffenen als der kleine ...“
Ibid., p. 12. „Offenbar kündigen Laster, welche von Willenstärke zeugen, eine größere Anlage zur wahrhaften moralischen Freiheit an als Tugenden, die eine Stütze von der Neigung entlehnen, weil es dem konsequenten Bösewicht nur einen Sieg über sich selbst, eine einzige Umkehrung der Maximen kostet, um die ganze Konsequenz und Willensfertigkeit, die er an das Böse verschwendete, dem Guten zuzuwenden.“ Schiller, supra note 1, p. 536.

26. Schiller, supra note 9, p. 92.