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Art and Leisure in Liquid Modernity. Reflections on the Realization of Aesthetics.¹

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In the years following 1789, the political cataclysm taking place in France was the major matter of interest throughout Europe. The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, the abolition of the old privileges or the founding of a democratic regime provoked a wave of optimism in the European learned elites. The application of the enlightened principles to politics seemed to leave utopia within reach. But only a few years after the storming of the Bastille, there were also several reasons for disappointment: Robespierre, at the head of the Committee of Public Safety, had already shown the Terror that revolutionary intolerance can lead to.

Friedrich Schiller published his *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* in 1795. The starting point of the *Letters* is indeed a critique of their historical context, although from a peculiar position: Schiller is not a nostalgic of the *Ancient Règime*, but he criticizes the results of the Enlightenment, maintaining the faith in its ideals and proposing a new way for its accomplishment. Schiller reflects on the modern fragmentation of man and society, and proposes an original solution that takes advantage of the possibilities opened by Kant in the *Critique of Judgment*. So, his project leads the Enlightenment beyond itself or, even, against itself. A whole tradition of thinkers and artists, critical towards modernity, is based on his work: from some aestheticism of the endings of the XIX century to the utopian thought of Herbert Marcuse. In this paper we will try to follow this line of thought, looking for its relation with the present meaning of leisure.

Critique to the Enlightenment

The *Letters* begin describing the dissolution symptoms shown by the society of their time, which was shaken by the ideal of Revolution. Schiller celebrates that the Tribunal of Reason has been able to reveal the true foundation of the absolutist state: the law of the strongest. This, nevertheless, does not imply that a regenerated and moral State² is within reach, as Jacobins think. This vain conviction has worked, indeed, in the opposite sense.

The Enlightenment has denied all ideological justifications of the *Ancient Règime* and has tried immediately to found a State built according to the laws of reason. This urgency, nevertheless, has been fatal. The old order is demolished before any other can prevail, which sets the forces of social disintegration free. The low classes seem to sink into savagery, while the privileged classes maintain a perversely unnatural way of life.

So sieht man den Geist der Zeit zwischen Verkehrtheit und Rohigkeit, zwischen Unnatur und bloßer Natur, zwischen Superstition und moralischem Unglauben schwanken, und es ist bloß das Gleichgewicht des Schlimmen, was ihm zuweilen noch Grenzen setzt.³

After describing the symptoms of the sick society that surrounds him, Schiller undertakes the formulation of the diagnosis. He looks for the origin of the social disease of his time in the central characteristics of the modern way of life, and finds it in the dynamics of differentiation. In his words:

Die Kultur selbst war es, welche der neuern Menschheit diese Wunde schlug. Sobald auf der einen Seite die erweiterte Erfahrung und das bestimmtere Denken eine schärfere Scheidung der Wissenschaften, auf der andern das verwickeltere Uhrwerk der Staaten eine strengere Absonderung der Stände und Geschäfte nothwendig machte, so zerriß auch der innere Bund der menschlichen Natur, und ein verderblicher Streit entzweyete ihre harmonischen Kräfte.⁴

The founding of several separated and confronting fields, in theory and in practice, splits both the human being in his interior and his social life, which generates conflict, unhappiness and violence. In the level of theory, the main separation is the one between imagination and understanding. There where one of these faculties prevails, the other one degenerates almost till its disappearance. Only this theoretical split is already enough to deprive many individuals of a whole part of their nature, as they are forced to develop their aptitudes in one or another direction. Nevertheless, when this split culture of modernity is realized in practice, the whole society breaks up:

Diese Zerrüttung, welche Kunst und Gelerhsamkeit in dem innern Menschen anfangen, machte der neue Geist der Regierung vollkommen und allgemein. (...) Jene Polypennatur der griechischen Staaten, wo jedes Individuum eines unabhängigen Lebens genoß, und wenn es Noth that, zum Ganzen werden konnte, machte jetzt einem kunstreichen Uhrwerke Platz, wo aus der Zusammenstückelung unendlich vieler, aber lebloser, Theile ein mechanisches Leben im Ganzen sich bildet. Auseinandergerissen wurden jetzt der Staat und die Kirche, die Gesetze und die Sitten; der Genuß wurde von der Arbeit, das Mittel vom Zweck, die Anstrengung von der Belohnung geschieden. (...) Aber selbst der karge fragmentarische Antheil, der die einzelnen Glieder noch an das Ganze knüpft, hängt nicht von Formen ab, die sie sich selbstthätig geben, (...) sondern wird ihnen mit skrupulöser Strenge durch ein Formular vorgeschoben, in welchem man ihre freye Einsicht gebunden hält.⁵

Thus, Schiller finds the modern dynamics of differentiation and relates it to the symptoms of social illness that he observes around him. This dynamics shapes the whole human life in a perverse way, first in theory and then in practice. Let us see now some of the main consequences of the differentiation process.

The first consequence mentioned by Schiller is the insertion of individuals in a mechanism that chains an infinite number of elements, with no life in them. Modern society does not appear here as a form of organization of individuals, but as a mechanism that annihilates them. That is what Schiller says about the State: "Und so wird denn allmählig das einzelne konkrete Leben vertilgt, damit das Abstrakt des Ganzen sein dürftiges Daseyn friste".⁶

Individuals cannot freely choose what will be their function inside society, but must behave according to some clearly defined guidelines. As Schiller says, the relation between the individuals and the whole modern society "does not depend on forms they give to themselves", but on "a regulation that paralyzes the activity of their free intelligence". Finally, the discipline and the force obtained by a methodical community of individuals would be squandered without a clear aim. For that reason, it becomes necessary to delay gratification for the sake of a distant purpose. The aim of the perfect society instils the spirit of sacrifice in modern experience and inserts it in the dynamic macrostructure of progress. In the previous quote, Schiller expresses this with amazing

clarity: "pleasure was separated from labour, the means from its purpose, the effort from its reward".

In short, Schiller denounces a form of experience that annuls freedom, delays gratification and inserts the individual in a functional mechanism that finally annihilates his or her humanity. The social structure of solid modernity is denounced here. Zygmunt Bauman refers with this expression to that first stage of modernity in which the whole life of the individual was shaped according to the demands of industrial work.⁷ Thus, the labour paradigm, prevailing in the former stage of modernity, is considered by Schiller to be dehumanizing. Next we will expose the conception of humanity that justifies such a severe judgement.

The Theory of Impulses

Schiller considers the Enlightenment has trusted reason too much or, better saying, the force it can dominate the conscience of men with. Enlightened intellectuals try to found the ideal State by directly promulgating the moral laws of reason. They forget that the natural impulses of man oppose these laws: trying to impose them without any mediation can only lead to principles destroying feelings (as it happens with the learned elites) or to feelings dominating principles (which happens with the uneducated mass).

The only way to avoid these two undesirable results is trying to approach the sensuous impulses of human nature to the moral laws of reason. Political utopia will only be possible on the base of a sensitivity that has been ennobled by means of the aesthetic education. The sensuous impulse of man will reject any project of construction of the ideal State, as long as this education of sensitivity by means of art is not carried out.⁸

In the project of Schiller, as it appears at the beginning of the *Letters*, the education of sensitivity is a bridge between the natural and the moral State. Nevertheless, the aesthetic state grows in importance throughout the *Letters*, until it becomes an end in itself and not a mere means to reach the moral State. This ambiguity about the condition of end or means of the aesthetic state is an inevitable inheritance of some theoretical insecurities of Kant's *Critique of Judgment*. In any case, his theory of impulses forces Schiller to reject the initial subordination of the aesthetic state to the rational laws of morality. The final result is opposed to the letter of the Kantian system, but remains faithful to the spirit introduced by the *Critique of Judgment*.

Schiller understands human nature as characterized by a constituent tension between the sensuous and the formal impulse. The first one "geht aus von dem physischen Daseyn des Menschen oder von seiner sinnlichen Natur"⁹; in the field of knowledge, it refers to the reality of things and aspires, in the field of action, to conserve life. The second impulse "geht aus von dem absoluten Daseyn des Menschen oder von seiner vernünftigen Natur, und ist bestrebt, ihn in Freyheit zu setzen"¹⁰; it refers to the necessity of things and aspires to preserve dignity. This characterization of both fundamental impulses of the human nature perfectly agrees with the content of Kant's prologue to the *Critique of Judgment*.

Schiller takes from Kant the idea that the dual condition of man gets reconciled in the field of art and beauty, but he adds that the tension between impulses historically degenerates into a conflicting split. This contribution of Schiller directs his thought in a sense that was already indicated, but not developed, by the *Critique of Judgment*. For

Kant, aesthetics is a bridge between the spheres of freedom and nature. But the preeminence between these two legislations belongs always to reason, whose ideal Kingdom of Ends is the final aim of history. Schiller, however, does not accept a final situation of subordination from an impulse to another one, because this would not correspond with their original relation. Once developed, his theory of impulses does not allow Schiller to consider the aesthetic state as a mere bridge between the natural and the moral State. The new culture, which must replace the Enlightenment, cannot be an intermediate step to approach the sensuous impulse to the demands of the rational one, but must act on both at the same time.¹¹

For Schiller, the cause of the conflict between the impulses is not to be found in human nature, but in history. This conviction allows him to aspire to a future stage of reconciliation, and lets him avoid the Kantian commitment to the predominance of the rational impulse. That is why he can develop the aesthetic conception of freedom that appears in the *Critique of Judgment*, without Kant's hesitation and caution. Thus R. D. Miller states:

However, if Schiller sometimes tends to equate the two freedoms, it is aesthetic rather than moral freedom which as a rule comes off best, and the process by which the ideal of aesthetic freedom, as presented in Kant's *Third Critique*, is gradually eaten away by that of moral freedom, is not repeated in Schiller.¹²

Schiller uses the concept of play-impulse to unfold the contents of the Kantian aesthetic conception of freedom. Of course, also the term "free play" is taken from the *Critique of Judgment*. There, it referred to a mutual animation of imagination and understanding; in the *Letters*, it denotes the joint operation of the sensuous and formal impulses. Only in this reciprocal subordination of both impulses finds Schiller the true freedom of man. The sensuous impulse compels by means of natural laws; the formal one, by means of rational laws; but the play-impulse is the result of a joint operation that reconciles both as they get mutually annulled.¹³ The object of the sensuous impulse is life and the object of the rational one is form. Consequently, the play-impulse has the living form as its object, that is, beauty. The man experiences the reconciled human nature only when meeting beauty. For that reason states Schiller: "der Mensch spielt nur, wo er in voller Bedeutung des Worts Mensch ist, und er ist nur da ganz Mensch, wo er spielt"¹⁴. Now we can perfectly understand Schiller's denounce of the labour paradigm. Directly imposing the demands of the formal impulse to the sensuous one does only lead to the conflict between them. As a result, man cannot experience the whole human nature in everyday life, but only the predominance of an impulse or another one or their violent struggle. Therefore, the only place where the individual can be called "fully human" is in the meeting with beauty, that is, in the art. Next we will see the proposal of social regeneration elaborated by Schiller on the base of this conception of art.

The Aesthetic State

Once the play-impulse is defined as the product of the reciprocal action of both the sensuous and the formal impulse, the aesthetic state cannot be understood as an intermediate step, but as an end in itself. According to his anthropological conception, Schiller cannot accept the predominance of one of the two impulses over the other one, because that would condemn the individual to an incomplete humanity. The only solution to the present struggle of faculties that is coherent with the theoretical development of the

Letters is the final reconciliation of the sensuous and formal impulses in the aesthetic state generated by the play-impulse.

And this is, indeed, Schiller's final proposal. In the last letter, the aesthetic state ("ästhetischer Zustand") is replaced by the aesthetic kingdom ("ästhetischer Staat" or "ästhetisches Reich"). Until this moment, Schiller has reserved the term State (Staat) for the natural or moral States, as if only these could lead to political configurations. The play-impulse could perhaps act inside the individual, but seemed unable to decisively transform the social praxis. Now, the terminological change shows that Schiller finally accepts the play-impulse having the power to shape society according to its principles. In his words:

Mitten in dem furchtbaren Reich der Kräfte und mitten in dem heiligen Reich der Gesetze baut der ästhetische Bildungstrieb unvermerkt an einem dritten fröhlichen Reiche des Spiels und des Scheins, worin er dem Menschen die Fesseln aller Verhältnisse abnimmt, und ihn von allem, was Zwang heißt, sowohl im physischen als im moralischen entbindet.¹⁵

This "third happy kingdom" is not restricted to the limits of the independent sphere of art, which is the only place where the aesthetic paradigm can be experienced in the time of the *Letters*. There is no doubt that Schiller speaks here about a utopian future, when this paradigm will exceed such limits and shape the whole human life. He does not speak about a certain field where the individual can experience, for a while, his or her reconciled nature, returning afterwards to the everyday split existence. He is pointing here to a society where the aesthetic paradigm will be realized in practice: this will be the territory of true freedom, opposed to the mere conflict of forces of the natural State and the subjection to law of the moral State.

In the last paragraph of the *Letters* Schiller asks himself if the aesthetic State already exists. He answers that it is in every harmonious soul, as a demand, but, as a reality, it can be found only in certain chosen circles that do not imitate the customs of the others, but follow their beautiful nature.¹⁶ These small circles are the vanguard of the future happy kingdom of the reconciled humanity. They have the task of impelling the aesthetic State. This can only be made by means of an aesthetic education that ennobles sensitivity and incarnates reason in the material reality. Such an action, directed in two opposite senses, can only be performed by the play-impulse, whose object is beauty. Therefore, the aesthetic education is exclusively artist's duty.

So, art is the only means to the aesthetic State. But Schiller is not talking here about something similar to socially engaged art, that is, the art understood as a channel for moral or political messages, quite the contrary. Indeed, he bases the educative effectiveness of art in its radical autonomy. If the art gets subordinated to extra-aesthetic purposes, it renounces to its ability to denounce the split reality that surrounds it and to propose an alternative.

The art shows the authentic reality because it is separated of the factual, positive reality; the art conserves the ideal of humanity because it keeps distance from the real humanity. For that reason, the *Letters* insist, again and again, on the respect to the autonomy of art, and their major advice to the artist is: "Lebe mit deinem Jahrhundert, aber sey nicht sein Geschöpf".¹⁷

The artist must educate humanity, but without leaving the aesthetic sphere. The artist can only fulfil his duty towards history by staying within the limits of the independent sphere

of art, that is, beyond the frontiers of social effectiveness. It sounds paradoxical, of course: society can only be changed if renouncing to any attempt to take part in social life. This apparent paradox is explained by the fact that Schiller is aiming at something much greater than a mere improvement of social conditions: he wants to replace the everyday praxis, governed by interest and aim-oriented, by a new one, free, joyful and disinterested. Briefly said: he tries to replace the labour paradigm, prevailing in solid modernity, by an aesthetic one. If the artist tries actively to take part in the social life, he will have to use those resources that society recognized effectiveness to. In that way, he would only strengthen what he is trying to change and would weaken the only field where it is possible to find a different experience: the aesthetic one. So an effective aesthetic education will only be possible if the limits between the sphere of art and the social praxis are scrupulously respected. Although, of course, its last aim is indeed the blast of such limits and the extension of the aesthetic paradigm to the whole social life.

This ideal of realization of aesthetics does not finish with Schiller, quite the contrary. Next we will see two moments of its later development.

Aestheticism

At the end of the XIX century, many artists begin to show their rejection of the bourgeois society leaving the social reality out of the contents of art. If the previous bourgeois art was already independent of the life praxis in its *function* -that is, it did not serve to a purpose integrated in the receiver's life, as it was the case with the religious art and the divine cult-, now this autonomy extends also to the *contents* of art, which do not try to capture anymore the human existence in bourgeois society, but, on the contrary, to avoid this matter as far as possible. Modern style, *art nouveau*, *Jugendstil* or *Sezession*... all these terms denote the moment at which the bourgeois art reaches the aestheticist state. Following Peter Bürger, this moment is the culmination of the development of the art institution in bourgeois society, when finally art becomes its own content.¹⁸

Aestheticism does not leave the utopian hope, although it radically avoids any contact with politics and social engagement. Schiller's purpose is aimed here: a complete aesthetization of praxis. Nevertheless, means are here much less clear, since it does not appear the idea of the aesthetic education. Art must conquer and colonize the whole life to redeem man and to justify existence. This return to the aesthetic utopia of Schiller, but without the anthropology that sustained it and the pedagogical project that made it effective, will be necessarily incoherent. Let us briefly examine one of the unfruitful attempts of aestheticism to realize its project in the social praxis.

William Morris (1834 - 1896) is a pioneer in this will for impregnating everyday life of beauty. His whole work is a rebellion against the alienating conditions of life in the industrial society. The work in the factories, the everyday tools and the layout of the great modern cities are shaped according to the utilitarian demands of productivity. For Morris, this imposition of the labour paradigm puts an end to the joyful work of the craftsman and to the beauty that arose unconsciously from this creative activity.¹⁹

Thus, beauty cannot survive in the industrial society: the return to the craftsmanship is the only solution. Although this will happen anyway once destroyed the current alienating relations of production in the future socialist society, Morris thinks it is also possible to fulfil this happy return of beauty in the society of his time. For that reason, he founds *Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co.* in 1861. The company is inspired by the old

unions of craftsmen and tries to produce handmade unique works, combining beauty and functionality. These have to make workers' life more pleasant and let them already enjoy the benefits of the returning joyful work. Nevertheless, Morris' rejection of industry prevents his goals being reached: his beautiful handmade products are so expensive that no worker can acquire them. His popular crafts become the bourgeois luxury he condemned and do not contribute in making life more pleasant for the workers. Morris' mistake consists in ignoring the fact that it is already impossible to return to the preindustrial society. But this is a mistake that inevitably follows his conception of art.

Morris has an aestheticist conception of art, that is, understands it as an autonomous sphere which opposes life praxis, in its function as well as in its content. Consequently, is the ornamentation what makes artistic an object: although a product works optimally, it can only be considered art if it is beautifully adorned. The craftsman embellishes his works almost unconsciously, lead by the mere pleasure of creating. On the contrary, the practical conditions of industry demand simple forms, which are able to be mass produced. These limits to ornamentation explain Morris' rejection of industry, because for him art is ornament: something without any practical purpose and whose content is indeed this lack of function. No matter how many tools and pieces of furniture he designs: what makes them become art is always its ornamentation. The industrialization of the creating process would subordinate it to technical and economic conditions, which would prevent the arising of the free ornamental creativity that Morris looks for.

So, his project fails first because of a *practical* impossibility: his rejection of industry increases prices so much that finally prevents the effective realization of art in the life praxis. But, on the other hand, this problem only shows the *theoretical* impossibility of Morris' project, since it is his conception of art itself that demands the return to the craftsmanship. Its failure reveals the paradoxical condition of the aestheticist utopia of realization of beauty. Schiller defended the separation between art and praxis so that the first one could denounce the second one and try to change it gradually by means of the aesthetic education. Aestheticism, on the contrary, tries to remove that distance immediately, impregnating with art the whole life praxis. However, the distance is only apparently annulled, since art is understood as the opposite to praxis, in function and content. That sudden and false removal of the distance between art and society cannot transform the human existence; at the most, it can adorn it. But this beautiful ornamentation of everyday life does not reach the essence of bourgeois praxis and leaves its contradictory and alienating condition untouched or, still worse, hides it under a mask of pretended harmony.

The Avant-garde

The ideal of social transformation by means of the realization of aesthetics is also to be found in the avant-gardes. As Peter Bürger states, "the purpose of the avant-gardes can be defined as the attempt to take into the practice the aesthetic experience (opposed to the life praxis) that aestheticism created. What annoys more the bourgeois society, ordered by the rationality of aims, must become the organizational principle of existence".²⁰

The avant-gardes know that the aestheticist project of realization of beauty is paradoxical. Autonomous art can, perhaps, promote the aesthetization of consciences by means of education, as Schiller wanted, but cannot transform society by directly realizing in everyday life, since this attempt will only ornament praxis without changing it. The autonomous work of art cannot be extended to the masses, if it is understood as the

unique creation of an artist who is able to capture beauty in a singular way. First, because there would be an inevitable conflict between the artistic condition of any object and its practical function. Second, because the singularity of the work of art would disappear during the process of its mechanical reproduction (as Walter Benjamin saw). Walter Gropius points to this intrinsic impossibility of the aestheticist utopia in the following quote:

All the «architecture» and the «applied arts» of the last generations... are a lie, almost without exception. There is a wrong and convulse intention of «making art» in all these products; in fact, they only prevent the development of a genuine pleasure of «building».²¹

There are only two ways for the avant-gardes to break the impasse that the attempt to realize the autonomous art leads to: either they renounce to the autonomy or they forget the dream of social realization. Historical avant-gardes characterize by their radical rejection of bourgeois praxis, which they try to replace by a new one arising from art itself. Therefore, they only have the option of fighting with all their forces against the idea of the autonomy of art, what they do by striking the form adopted by the art institution in the bourgeois society during the XIX century. The avant-garde strikes to the boundaries separating the aesthetic and the labour paradigm do not aim at the universal extension of this last one, of course. On the contrary, they try to break the dikes that contain human creativity and freedom within the sphere of art so that the content of the aesthetic experience extend to the whole society. The avant-gardes agree with Schiller's idea of art being the place where complete and reconciled humanity can be found and the only possible source of regeneration for the bourgeois sick praxis. The main difference is that Schiller wanted to strengthen the autonomy of art, whereas the avant-gardes want to destroy it, in order to realize art in life.

Perhaps, it could seem as if this avant-garde project of realization of art is identical to the aestheticist proposal, but it is not. Not at all. The aestheticist and the avant-garde conception of art are quite different. For the first one, the ornament is the central category, which summarizes its will for opposition to the bourgeois praxis. On the other hand, the avant-garde art cannot be ornamental, because it renounces to that satisfaction on the autonomy of art that characterizes aestheticism. Autonomous art turns into ornament when it becomes its own content in aestheticism; on the contrary, the content of avant-garde art is a denunciation of the autonomy of art. Only in that way can avant-garde denounce the labour paradigm, which restricts the experience of a complete and reconciled humanity to a separate and socially not effective sphere. Avant-garde tries exactly the opposite of embellishing the present praxis, which is what aestheticism finally achieves.

The attack to autonomy is carried out by the avant-gardes by different means. Neoplasticism, the Bauhaus and Russian constructivism defend the unity of art with technique or industry. Dada and surrealism try to destroy the institutional frame of art (founded on the category of the work of art) by means of happenings or ready-mades. The intention is always to blast the autonomous sphere of art, in order to extend its content (creativity and freedom) to the whole society.

What has been the result of this utopian project of the avant-gardes? It seems unquestionable that a generalized aesthetization of the western societies has taken place. Mass media have filled our everyday existence with images and the industrial design

gives everything that surrounds us a beautiful appearance. Are we witnessing, then, the definitive accomplishment of the aesthetic utopia?

The Realization of Aesthetics

Before discussing if the utopian project that accompanies aesthetics since Schiller has been fulfilled, it is necessary to precisely determine its content. To realize art does not mean to surround us with artistic objects, but to turn life into art; said in another way: to construct a social praxis that has the same features as the aesthetic experience. So, it is not helpful to focus on the omnipresence of images or design in our societies, in order to see if the aesthetic paradigm has been realized. The right question is: has a change of human praxis taken place in the sense proposed by the aesthetic paradigm? I think we can say that such a change has really happened. The ideal of the realization of art in life has fulfilled in the social conditions of the present -liquid- stage of modernity. Nevertheless, we must immediately notice that the materialization of the aesthetic paradigm differs greatly from the initial intentions of those who proclaimed it.

Bauman defines liquid modernity as "an individualized, privatized version of modernity".²² In such a world, all social structures and habits are under constant change. The features that shaped human experience in the solid stage of modernity have not only lost their importance with the passage to liquid modernity, but have been also replaced by their opposites: freedom without rules instead of coercion of method, private experience instead of collective effort, present enjoyment instead of gratification's delay, autotelism instead of aim-oriented rationality. These new characteristics constitute a new paradigm of experience that replaces the labour paradigm. If the second one proposed the industrial work as a model for the entire life, the first one extends the features of leisure to the whole human experience. These features do not differ from those proposed by the aesthetic paradigm since its foundation. They do not seem to be so new, after all.

So, it can be stated that the aesthetic paradigm has realized in liquid modernity under the form of leisure experiences. Actually, nowadays leisure is understood as having the same characteristics the aesthetic experience has had, at least since Kant: freedom, pleasure and being an end in itself. The proposal of leisure as the model of every experience should be described more as an extension of the aesthetic paradigm than as the arising of a new one. We are not witnessing the foundation of a new discourse, but the extension to the whole society of a discourse once restricted to a specific social realm.

During the solid stage of modernity, the experiences promoted by the aesthetic discourse did not fulfil the demands that were imposed to the individuals for the sake of social reproduction. Indeed, aesthetic experiences definitely violated those demands. Therefore, they had to remain within the limits of an autonomous and socially powerless sphere, the one of art. The development of industrial capitalism, which was made possible by the spirit of sacrifice of the work ethic, generated the necessity of greater consumer markets that could absorb the production. In this scenario, the characteristics of the labour paradigm of experience were not useful anymore, since they demand the individual to deny himself, to plan and to think long-term, which prevents him of developing a consumer attitude. Gradually, the barriers that maintained free, pleasing and disinterested experiences out of the social praxis got weaker and weaker.

The passage to liquid modernity finally takes place when the social system not only stops being hostile to the experiences promoted by the aesthetic paradigm, but also begins to

need them in order to shape the individual as consumer. In that way, an economy based on consumption finds an indispensable ally in the will for realization of aesthetics. So, the aesthetic paradigm leaves the limits of art and replaces the labour paradigm, realizing in the social praxis under the form of a discourse that proposes leisure as a model of every experience.

When Schiller proclaimed his aesthetic utopia, surely he did not imagine life according to the model of leisure experiences provided by the consumer market. This distance between the intention and the materialization of the ideal, nevertheless, cannot prevent us noticing that, in fact, a great part of its content is actually realizing in our societies. Our intention when defining our way of life as the product of the realization of the aesthetic paradigm is merely descriptive: we do not try to sanction it, but to understand it better, looking for its genealogy. It is absurd to bless the present time, seeing in it the "third happy kingdom" of Schiller, but it is not less absurd to understand it as the empire of universal alienation under aesthetic appearance. Both attitudes prevent the exact comprehension of the present conditions of life and, therefore, any possible intervention on them.

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² We write "State" (with capital letter) when we mean the political institution; "state" (with small letter) is used in the sense of "state of things" or "situation". We try to express in that way the German distinction between *Staat* (first case) and *Zustand* (second case).

³ Schiller, Friedrich. *Ueber die Ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen in einer Reihe von Briefen*. Barcelona: Anthropos, 1990. V, §5, 140.

⁴ *Ibidem*, VI, §6, 146.

⁵ *Ibidem*, VI, §7, 146 – 148.

⁶ *Ibidem*, VI, §9, 150.

⁷ See Bauman, Zygmunt. *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000. 56 – 57.

⁸ See *ibidem*, VII, §1, 160.

⁹ *Ibidem*, XII, §1, 200.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, XII, §4, 204.

¹¹ See *ibidem*, XIII, §2, 210 – 212.

¹² Miller, R. D. *Schiller and the Ideal of Freedom. A Study of Schiller's Philosophical Works with Chapters on Kant*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970. 123.

¹³ See *Ibidem*, XIV, §5, 226.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, XV, §9, 240.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, XXVII, §8, 372 – 374.

¹⁶ See *ibidem*, XXVII, §12, 380.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, IX, §7, 178.

¹⁸ See Bürger, Peter. *Teoría de la vanguardia*. Barcelona: Península, 1987. 100.

¹⁹ See Morris, William. *Arte y sociedad industrial*. Valencia: Fernando Torres, 1977. 102 – 103.

²⁰ Bürger, Peter. *Op. cit.* 81.

²¹ Gropius, Walter. "La vitalidad de la idea de la Bauhaus" in Wingler, H. M. (comp.). *La Bauhaus*. Barcelona: Gustavo Gili, 1980. 69 – 70.

²² Bauman, Zygmunt. *Op. cit.*, 7-8.