



COLECCIÓN CONOCIMIENTO CONTEMPORÁNEO

Cruce de caminos: visiones interdisciplinarias en las ciencias sociales y humanidades

Coords.

Gisella Policastro Ponce
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2024

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THE PHILOSOPHY OF PLAY IN FRIEDRICH SCHILLER'S *LETTERS* ON THE AESTHETIC EDUCATION OF MAN AND ITS VALUE FOR CONTEMPORARY AESTHETICS OF PLAY

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the eleventh chapter of *Homo Ludens*, Johann Huizinga commented on the importance of Romanticism to foster playfulness in the taste of modern European societies. If the “romantic current” was “the more powerful” in bringing about “an unparalleled rise in aesthetic enjoyment” (Huizinga, 1938/1980, p. 202) and the Romantic sensibility did indeed spread during the 1800s across Europe and overseas, Huizinga was likely considering the fate of the German strand. It was, after all, his neighbor country, and the region where the Romantics produced key works in the decades of 1790 and 1800, more specifically between 1797 and 1802, in a period known as *Frühromantik* (Beiser, 2003, p. 45). It is surprising that the Dutch Anthropologist only mentions once the name of Friedrich Schiller (1759 - 1805) a decisive inspirer of early German Romanticism and the earnest thinker of play during the decade of 1790. His concept of the “play drive” (*Spieltrieb*) tackled the cultural and political challenges urged by the Enlightenment project.

In this, article, I read Schiller's philosophy of play as a mixture between a formalist and an action-oriented theory. I have two objectives: 1) to evaluate the historical value of Schiller as a precursor of contemporary thinking on play; 2) to extract from his reflections useful insights for current discussions about the design of playful experiences. In the first section, I analyze the *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1795).

Here, Schiller connects play with beauty and preserves its autonomy in an ideal state. At the same time, the German poet states that play is an anthropological impulse of the human being and that the playful mood that arises when somebody is exposed to works of art is a driving force for social and political change. In the second part, I focus on the topic of the emergence of play in non-ludic contexts and explain why the philosophy of Schiller presents interesting contributions.

2. SCHILLER AS A PRECURSOR OF CONTEMPORARY THEORIES OF PLAY

2.1. THE FRAGMENTATION OF THE HUMAN BEING AS AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL PROBLEM

Friedrich Schiller is usually regarded as a famous poet and playwright (perhaps a historian during a brief period of his life) that occasionally ventured into editorial projects and sketched out philosophical considerations. Much like his close friend Goethe, he was not a core philosopher but an intellectual force with an eclectic range of interests. This may have downplayed his philosophical significance until very recently (Beiser, 2005). However, throughout the decade of 1790 Schiller develops a comprehensive aesthetic theory that addressed the concerning issues of the emerging discipline. His aesthetic thinking is not located in a single treatise but appears scattered in a number of pieces like *On Grace and Dignity* (1793), *Naïve and Sentimental Poetry* (1795) and the *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*. Schiller wrote the later in 1795 to the Prince Friedrich Christian of Augustenborg, his Danish benefactor, to whom he explains his idea of an “aesthetic state” (Schiller, 1795/2004, XXVII, ¶ 11) in which a wholly educated human acts entirely free and contributes to building the republican ideal.

The historical background of the *Letters* was the unfulfilled expectations of the French Revolution. An event firstly regarded with enthusiasm by the advocates of Enlightenment turned into a regime of repression, violence, and executions with a culminating point in the Terror of 1793. The failure of the Revolution, the fate of *Aufklärung* and the means to materialize it intensified the debate about the application of

pure rationalism to politics, which translated into a philosophical dispute about the relations between theory and practice (Beiser, 1992, pp. 38-44). Schiller expressed his view on this topic in his *Letters*. He feared that, by transforming such a serious political issue into a matter of aesthetic education, the readers would regard his approach as frivolous (Schiller, 1795/2004, II, ¶ 1). However, he will argue that art is precisely a very much needed piece to bring about political progress in modern society.

According to Schiller, the mistake of political theorists lies in the attempt of imposing a politic based solely on the principles of abstract rationality without preparing its citizens to observe and freely endorse them. The human being is not yet the kind of moral subject that acts following his duty without the need for external compulsion. Quite the contrary, only “the physical man is *actual*, and the moral man only problematical” (Schiller, 1795/2004, III, ¶ 3). The neglect of the natural, sensuous dimension of the individual is at the root of its inadequate reception of the ideal, and characterless people that follow their passions blindly are capable of atrocious actions if they feel entitled by reason. Thus, “the path of the aesthetic” (Schiller, 1795/2004, II, ¶ 6) is the way that takes to individual freedom, which is the ground for political freedom (Matherne & Riggie, 2020, 2021).

Aesthetics is necessary due to the corruption of the State, which renders it unfit to educate people. Art is the key to the improvement of individuals for two reasons: it is eternal and manifests freedom in concrete works that we experience with our senses. Its eternal nature is explained in the ninth letter in a platonic fashion: in its form, it participates from ideal models “beyond all time, from the absolute unchangeable unity of his being” (Schiller, 1795/2004, IX, ¶ 4). Schiller argues that art, even if it is impregnated by the peculiarities of its time, is not determined by social conventions and its content of truth cannot be proscribed by corrupt legislators. Regarding the links between art and freedom, beauty for Schiller, unlike Kant (1790/2000, pp. 166-67) is not only a subjective matter (Welsch, 2014, pp. 24-26). In his *Kallias* letters to his friend Christian Körner, the German poet applies the Kantian practical reason, which exercises the autonomy of freedom (Kant, 1788/2015, p. 26) to

the aesthetic judgement of sensible objects (Beiser, 2005, 60) allowing him to formulate beauty as “freedom in appearance” (Schiller, 1793/2003, pp. 160–163). This is achieved when the artist sculpts carefully on the matter of his work avoiding any constraint of its nature yet, at the same time, allowing the ideal to find accommodation. In sum, by reflecting immortal beauty in their works, the artists are those who can escape the vicious circle created by uneducated people living in corrupted states.

The same freedom that lies in the works of art will be expected for the citizen in an ideal aesthetic state, the utopian community formed by free people where taste rules inside each human and acts as a general principle for society (Schiller, 1795/2004, XXVII). Although a political fiction, Schiller notes that it is worth striving toward that goal. Progress requires the reconciliation of the powers of the human because they are in conflict. In the sixth letter, Schiller identifies the working of modern fragmentation on two levels. One is political and reflects the lack of union between individuals and the State, which appears to them as an alienating force of oppression. The other level is psychological and affects the relationship between the inner faculties of the subject:

With us, one might almost be tempted to assert, the mental faculties shew themselves detached in operation as psychology separates them in idea, and we see not merely individual persons but whole classes of human beings developing only a part of their capacities (Schiller, 1795/2004, VI, ¶ 3).

If the republic of free people is ever going to take place, it is through the repair of the latter to solve the division of the former. This is where the German poet introduces his theory of play.

2.2. THE PLAY IMPULSE BETWEEN THE IDEAL AND THE ACTUAL

Schiller develops his theory of the human impulses in the letters 12th to 15th¹⁵. Following the traditional epistemology of Western

¹⁵ Schiller uses the German word “Trieb” to compose a triad of concepts that will explain the essential and conflictive inclinations of the human being. Reginald Snells translates this term as “impulse”, and Eduardo Gil Beras’ Spanish translation uses the word “impulso”, which is the direct equivalent of “impulse”. The English literature on Schiller’s Aesthetics uses the term

Philosophy, he draws on the schematic division between the senses and the intellect and identifies two conflicting drives in every individual. One is the sensuous impulse (*Stofftrieb*), which is directed towards the external world of sensible matter (Schiller, 1795/2004, XII, ¶¶ 1–3). This is the force that places us in the realm of the temporal experience in which every finite instant happens and, putting it in an Aristotelian way, the things exist in act. The other power is the formal (*Formtrieb*) impulse and comprehends the rational faculty of the human being (Schiller, 1795/2004, XII, ¶¶ 4–6). As such, its sphere is that of the universal and attempts to render the transience of the particular into an absolute shape. Although the two drives are responsible for different parts of experience, they are in mutual dependency. The sensuous impulse alone would imprison humans in an irrational state, away from any possibility of knowledge or morality. On the other hand, relying solely on rationality brushes away the necessary bonds of humanity with their natural condition. It is important to note that they are not in open contradiction because each of them tends to distinct objects, and for that reason, there is a chance to harmonize them (Schiller, 1795/2004, XIII, ¶ 2).

The concept of a “play impulse” (*Spieltrieb*) appears in the 14th letter followed by a somewhat arcane description: it “would aim at the extinction of time in time and the reconciliation of becoming with absolute being, of variation with identity” (Schiller, 1795/2004, XIV, ¶ 3). Schiller explains that he is not introducing a third governing potency. The “impulse” word is only provisional and later on, it will be characterized more as a trait of humanity than an additional power. He further elaborates his idea of play in the 15th letter, which is an essential piece of the essay. It is possible to differentiate three stages of his plan: 1) a formal statement centred on the structure of play; 2) a mix of philosophical and empirical remarks to observe how play takes place in the world; 3) a sublimation of the contingencies of play to lift its content to an ideal level, because, ultimately, for Schiller “with the ideal of Beauty

‘drive’ as well, which is usually connected to Sigmund Freud’s concept of the sexual impulse and may carry some theoretical difficulties. In this article, I will mainly use term “impulse” to speak of Schiller’s theory of human Triebe. I will use the word “drive” as a secondary option.

which Reason sets up, an ideal of the play impulse is also presented which Man should have before him in all his games” (Schiller, 1795/2004, XV, ¶ 7).

1. Anticipating the anthropological approach of Homo Ludens (Huizinga, 1938/1980, pp. 28-45) Schiller firstly points that he is taking the common meaning of the word as a reference: “The term is fully warranted by the usage of speech, which is accustomed to denote by the word play everything that is neither subjectively nor objectively contingent, and yet imposes neither outward nor inward necessity” (Schiller, 1795/2004, XV, ¶ 5)¹⁶. He argues that, as with beauty, play is formally a structured event (that is what makes it non contingent) whose constraints are voluntarily respected by the participants (hence it “imposes neither outward nor inward necessity”).
2. Then, the author of the *Letters* goes one step beyond and looks at the behaviour of people during play: “We shall never be wrong in seeking a man’s ideal of Beauty along the selfsame path in which he satisfies his play impulse” (Schiller, 1795/2004, XV, ¶ 8). This is a key point because Schiller complements his formal remarks with empirical considerations to scrutinize how play would develop in particular scenarios. Here, Schiller demonstrates that he is not merely replicating Kantian formalist philosophy. Indeed, he is shaping an action-oriented aesthetic theory that needs to account for how agents act and feel in a playful mindset. As an example, he describes what *ideally* happened during Olympic games in ancient Greek and in the combats of Roman arenas. We must note that, by describing Olympic games simply as “bloodless”

¹⁶ This is an important observation because he is not the first introducer of play in aesthetic theory and needs to determine the extension of his concept. Previously, G. E. Lessing valued artists as much as they allowed “free play to the imagination” (Lessing, 1766/2005, 3, ¶ 3); and Kant (1790/2000, Ak. V:216-219, 320-325) described the coupling of the inner faculties of the subject during the aesthetic judgement as a free play of the imagination (Kirkpatrick, 2015, pp. 21-27; Kneller, 1990). Both enclosed play in the realm of the aesthetic experience, but Schiller is expanding the play impulse to the whole nature of the subject, including the ethical and the anthropological dimension (Beiser, 2005, p. 143).

(Schiller, 1795/2004, XV, ¶ 8), Schiller's description of Greek and Roman games is not ethnographic but philosophical. He is following German thinkers of his time, like Winckelmann and Lessing, to make a classicist aestheticization of ancient Greek civilization. Schiller also mentions examples of modern competitions like horse races in London, bullfights in Madrid or gondola races in Venice (Schiller, 1795/2004, note 18). This way, the German poet mixes idealized and real cases of play as a preparation to extract that which elevates players to its human condition.

3. Schiller concludes that real play, as real beauty, is polluted with banal matter and needs refinement. In contrast with the bloody brutality of Roman fights, the German poet highlights Greek sports, where rules were firmly set to ensure a fair contest between the contenders to display their agility and strength. Greek fighters would have remained in the realm of noble human competition, exhibiting their natural talents within the boundaries of a rational frame of rules. As an added value, the spectacle would delight and inspire the spectators. In contrast with the “physical play” of the Roman, they exercised an “aesthetic play” (Grossman, 1968, p. 37). That is the expression of the quintessential nature of human play and achieves the well-known Schillerian definition of beauty in the *Letters*:

Reason says: the Beautiful is not to be mere life, nor mere shape, but living shape—that is, Beauty—as it dictates to mankind the twofold law of absolute formality and absolute reality. Consequently it also pronounces the sentence: Man shall only play with Beauty, and he shall play only with Beauty (Schiller, 1795/2004, XV, ¶ 8).

Schiller sketched a theory of play whose components resemble later important work. His definition of play as “everything that is neither subjectively nor objectively contingent, and yet imposes neither outward nor inward necessity” resounds in *Homo Ludens*: “Play is a voluntary activity or occupation executed within certain fixed limits of time and place, according to rules freely accepted but absolutely

binding” (Huizinga, 1938/1980, p. 28). Following Williumsen’s typology of formalism in the study of games, we could label the Schillerian approach as “play essentialist” (Williumsen, 2018, p. 140) due to his interest on what makes play unique among human activities. Back to *Homo Ludens*, it is surprising that Huizinga only mentions Schiller once (Huizinga, 1938/1980, p. 168) because he too identifies tight bonds between beauty and play: “The profound affinity between play and order is perhaps the reason why play, as we noted in passing, seems to lie to such a large extent in the field of aesthetics. Play has a tendency to be beautiful” (Huizinga, 1938/1980, p. 10). The German poet is also present in more recent accounts: “Play is free movement within a more rigid structure” (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004, p. 304). A “romantic theory of play” like Sicart’s (2011, p. 5) could also find in Schiller a predecessor, as the German Romantics themselves did.

3. THE VALUE OF SCHILLER’S CONTRIBUTIONS FOR CONTEMPORARY AESTHETICS OF PLAY

3.1. TWO CRITIQUES TO THE SCHILLERIAN CONCEPT OF PLAY

So far, I have analysed the Schillerian aesthetics to show its historical value for the study of play. Additionally, Schiller offers valuable insights for current debates. But before diving deep into this topic, I would like to point critically to two spots that may look problematic. The first is Schiller’s narrowing of play to strongly structured events, like sports games, that would leave outside looser activities like playing with dolls. This criticism bases on the same observation that Caillois made regarding *Homo Ludens* (Caillois, 1958/2001, p. 8). The second relates to the idealism of the German poet. It seems that for Schiller not all kinds of play lead to the perfect realization of the ideal of humanity. Indeed, he states that “we must not here call to mind those games which are in vogue in actual life, and which are commonly concerned only with very material objects” (Schiller, 1795/2004, XV, ¶ 7). How come is he interested in real forms of play and how do we assess their value from his perspective?

In reply to the latter, I believe that the Schillerian aesthetic theory is ultimately idealist and it is pointless to presenting it otherwise. However, it is worth noting that the sublimation of material play takes place only at the end of his deduction of the concept, and it is expressed as an ideal that takes to an utopian aesthetic state. Schiller knows that humanity will never achieve such a goal; at least not fully. Putting it in an Enlightenment fashion, a pure state of aesthetic play performs as a demand that leads to perpetual progress. This does not mean that actual play, as actual beauty, is deprived of value. In the 22nd letter, the German poet shows a high sensibility regarding the importance of material occasions for beauty, and consequentially for the chance of playfulness. There, Schiller explains that, in the real world, artworks manifest the ideal only to a certain extent, but even the slightest degree of freedom is better than none. I will reproduce a long passage because it will allow me to address the other problematic point that I mentioned in the previous paragraph:

As in actuality no purely aesthetic effect is to be met with (for Man can never step outside the dependence of his powers), the excellence of a work of art can consist only in the closeness of its approximation to that ideal of aesthetic purity; and with all the freedom with which we may enhance it, we shall always leave it in a particular mood and with a specific tendency. The more universal the mood, and the less limited the tendency which is given to our nature by a definite type of art and by a definite product of the same, the nobler that type is and the more excellent will such a product be (Schiller, 1795/2004, XXII, ¶ 4).

Concerning the Schillerian restriction of play to firmly structured events, I argue that what is truly important for him is the state of mind that games leave on players and spectators, and not the consistency of the rules of the game. Playfulness is the disposition of play that is akin to beauty: the latter is the object and the former the “tendency” or “mood” (*Stimmung*), as the previous quote stresses. As Matherne and Riggle explain, for Schiller “play is a state of, and capacity for, being distanced from your ‘normal’ dispositions and commitments in a way that allows you to be open to a variety of ways of being” (Matherne & Riggle, 2020, p. 18). In Schiller’s theory, a playful mood reframes the urges of practical life and is helpful when play has to be put aside (Schaper, 1985, p. 167). The concept of playfulness as a mood or way

of being in the world seems a valid approach to characterize play practices. It is still applied in contemporary studies, and it appears that there is not only one playful mood, but many (Karoff, 2013). Finally, Sicart has recently presented an account on play that is also similar to Schiller's: "What is important about play is not its form, which will, after all, mutate as part of play itself, but the activity or the attitude, that is, the process of engaging with the world and oneself through play" (Sicart, 2014, p. 84).

3.2. SCHILLER, THE MAGIC CIRCLE AND PLAYFULNESS IN ORDINARY LIFE

I mentioned at the beginning of the previous section that, in addition to its historical value, the Schillerian understanding of play is useful to explore current topics about this subject. I will focus on the presence of play in non-ludic contexts. On this matter, the magic circle has become a well-known rhetoric figure to express the delicate nature of play (MacLean et al., 2016, pp. 1-11). The original and commonly quoted description of this trope appears in *Homo Ludens*:

All play moves and has its being within a play-ground marked off beforehand either materially or ideally, deliberately or as a matter of course [...] The arena, the card-table, the magic circle, the temple, the stage, the screen, the tennis court, the court of justice, etc., are all in form and function play-grounds, i.e., forbidden spots, isolated hedged round, hallowed within which special rules obtain. All are temporary worlds within the ordinary world, dedicated to the performance of an act apart (Huizinga, 1938/1980, p. 10).

As Calleja states (2012, p. 77), the magic circle is a foundational metaphor of contemporary thinking about games and has been widely discussed. Following Calleja, it sets an apartness that places games as an ideal of organized human social structures and separates them from the ordinary world (Calleja, 2012, p. 78). The strength of the metaphor goes hand in hand with its idealization of games and play. That may explain why it has been equally endorsed (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004, pp. 95-96; Stenros, 2012) and criticized (Malaby, 2007, pp. 97-102; Taylor, 2006, pp. 151-152).

Since *Homo Ludens*, the magic circle evokes a gap amid the serious and the ludic. To name another familiar source, Bernard Suits' "lusory

attitude” is also confined to the boundaries of a game: “The attitude of the game player must be an element in game playing because there has to be an explanation of that curious state of affairs wherein one adopts rules which require one to employ worse rather than better means for reaching an end” (Suits, 1978/2005, p. 52). This hiatus raises doubts when a playful mood arises outside games: is that even possible? Achieving playfulness beyond games is, broadly speaking, the goal of gamification theories, and there is an open debate on how to bring it to bear without spoiling what is essential to play (Bogost, 2014; Escribano, 2020; Fuchs et al., 2014). Despite Huizinga himself remarked that the serious and the ludic are fluid (Huizinga, 1938/1980, p. 14, p. 45; Rodríguez, 2006) he perhaps emphasized too much the autonomy of play in order to preserve its “sanctity” beyond the realm of practical life (Lambrow, 2020, p. 2).

Schiller is less strict than Huizinga or Suits in allowing playfulness to emerge outside the boundary of games. An explanation might be that he is not trying to make a solid conceptual analysis of play; he does not even make a distinction between play and games. Instead, the German poet approaches play in a pragmatic way: he is considering play as part of his program of an aesthetic education. The experience of play and the experience of beauty are not entirely different, and that makes play valuable for Schiller. On one hand, this lack of precision diminishes the theoretical value of his philosophy of play. On the other hand, his concept of playfulness is flexible enough to apply it beyond games to aesthetic experience and education.

The Schillerian concept of a playful mood that exists beyond games has similarities with Juul’s revision of the magic circle (Juul, 2009). Juul depicts a more dynamic image of this metaphor: games are indeed activities separated from ordinary social activities, but the limits of this isolation can change. Players engage in a game with different and sometimes even conflicting goals, like beating the opponent or ensuring newcomers feel welcome; as Nguyen has argued, games are after all a matter of agency (Nguyen, 2020). For Juul, potential conflicts of interests demand the possibility of negotiating the boundaries of the game, and that requires to switch between the playful and the ordinary to check

the current state of the game, change the rules, bring new props into the game, and so on. Thus, the magic circle “is clearly not a perfect separation of a game from the rest of the world, but an imperfect separation that players negotiate and uphold” (Juul, 2009, pp. 61-62). The “separation of a game from the rest of the world” does not entirely come from the rules or the structure of games. Like Schiller, this ultimately depends on the attitude of the players that, under certain circumstances, feel that it is acceptable to take a disruptive (playful, aesthetic) look at the world to turn it into part of a game.

At this point, it is noteworthy to consider again the historical context and the problem that Schiller was dealing with: the fragmentation of the human being in modern societies that favoured training specialists instead of a whole formation of character. The idea of *Bildung* as the integral education of all the capacities of a person was a common issue of debate during the years of the *Letters*. It is indeed one of the bridges that connect the Enlightenment-oriented thinking of intellectuals like Wilhelm von Humboldt with the early Romantics of Jena like Friedrich Schlegel or Novalis. Schiller’s thinking about the fragmentation of the individual paved the way for later critics of culture like Nietzsche (Saf-ranski, 2006, pp. 401-402). He is also present in Max Weber’s “disenchantment of the world” or his metaphor of the “iron cage”; and in Adorno’s concept of *Halbbildung* (Svanøe, 2019).

The analysis of this problem in the *Letters* lead Schiller to develop a mixture between a formalist and an action-oriented aesthetic theory. It was pointless to sit and wait for the aesthetic state to become a reality; modern State was already corrupted. For him, aesthetics was not confined anymore to the sphere of subjective taste. Quite the contrary, aesthetics was the missing piece of the Enlightenment project: “All intellectual enlightenment deserves our respect only insofar as it reacts upon the character; to a certain extent it proceeds from the character, since the way to the head must lie through the heart” (Schiller, 1795/2004, VIII, ¶ 7). He focused on the idea that exposure to artworks not only produces momentary feelings like pleasure but induces a longer lasting and broader psychological state (the “mood”). Art, however, is far from being a mere instrument to educate people (Schiller, 1795/2004, XXII,

¶ 5). It held the highest value in Schiller because, ultimately, it is the manifestation of freedom, and the artist must not subdue its autonomy to any other supplemental end. Some other value, whether it be pedagogical or political, is considered as long as the artwork goes after the ideal of a “living-form”. Thus, art, and the playfulness it stimulates, works at the same time as a universal ideal and the drive to gradually improve the character of individuals.

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Schiller had difficulties to make congruent his Kantian background with the demand for an aesthetic education that forms character. I believe that his intellectual struggle offers interesting insights into theories of play and their application to non-ludic environments. As I have mentioned in the previous section, certain components of his thinking are questionable for contemporary theory, like the association between play and ideal beauty or his lack of distinction between play and games, especially when gamification scholars are making efforts to distinguish the playful and the gameful (Deterding et al., 2011, p. 10; Larsen, 2015; McGonigal, 2014). There are, however, general remarks of his perspective that are worthy of reflection.

When placed in the too-material, too-complex context of practical life, “playing with beauty”, as would the German poet say, does not take place inside a magic circle (Consalvo, 2009). Whether it be analogue or digital, the design of a playful situation may encounter out of hand factors: one participant cheats and makes the rest angry; others are not in their best mood for play or are simply not too playful people; in the middle of the situation, someone asks to re-explain some rules and the flow decays. Despite disruptive events like these, Schiller would argue that there is still a possibility for a certain degree of playfulness, and that is valuable. Recalling the idea of living-form, the perfect occasion would only happen amid the “corruption” of the material world, so to speak. I think that an idea of a living-form of play would apply too to a more structured experience like that of a living-form of game.

In conclusion, I would summarize the application of Schillerian aesthetics to the design of playful experiences as follows: a formalist approach is important to determine the specificities of play, which is a broad concept, and it provides the framework to keep their particularities intact. But more than a concept, play is first and foremost a peculiar type of activity that appears in all sorts of contexts of practical life. It is, after all, a distinctive trait linked to our natural condition and, at the same time, lies at the root of the formation of culture. It is positive then to cultivate a playful form of being in the world, as Sicart would say in a Heideggerian manner (Sicart, 2014, pp. 1-18). Expecting the ideal setting to take place, however, may lead to inaction or paradoxical scenarios where play is taken so seriously that there is no more room for playfulness (Simon, 2017, p. 12). Imperfect experiences of play are still better than none because, by playing, we are in the world in an extraordinary mood. Putting it in the words of Schiller when he talks about the role of the artist,

The nature of the man who sees or hears the work must remain completely free and inviolate, it must go forth from the magic circle of the artist pure and perfect as from the Creator's hands. The most frivolous subject must be so treated that we remain disposed to pass over immediately from it to the strictest seriousness. The most serious material must so be treated that we retain the capability of exchanging it immediately for the lightest play (Schiller, 1795/2004, XXII, ¶ 5).

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