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Laura Anna Macor

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ARTICLES

- Laura Anna Macor*
Introducing the New Schiller 3
- Jeffrey L. High*
Rede über die Frage: Gehört allzuviel Güte, Leutseeligkeit und grosse Freygebigkeit im engsten Verstande zur Tugend? Socrates as Secular Jesus in Schiller's First Karlsschule Speech 7
- Cordula Burtscher*
Schiller, Hume und die Religionspsychologie. Zu dem Gedicht *Resignation* und dem Bücherbestand der Karlsschule zu Schillers Schulzeit 50
- Katerina Deligiorgi*
Schiller's *Philosophical Letters*: Naturalising Spirit to Moralise Nature 63
- Lucía Bodas Fernández*
La cuestión de la división del trabajo en *Algo sobre la primera sociedad humana según el hilo conductor de los escritos de Moisés* 79
- Giovanna Pinna*
L'individualità universale. Soggettività e poesia in Schiller a partire dalla *Bürger-* e dalla *Matthisson-Rezension* 103
- Wolfgang Riedel*
Philosophie des Schönen als politische Anthropologie. Schillers Augustenburger Briefe und die *Briefe über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen* 118
- María del Rosario Acosta López*
"Only a Matter of Style": A Controversial Issue between Schiller and Fichte. Regarding Schiller's *On the Necessary Limitations in the Use of Beautiful Forms* 172
- Ritchie Robertson*
On the Sublime and Schiller's Theory of Tragedy 194
- Norbert Oellers*
Poesie als Spiel. Der Klassiker Schiller (*Wallenstein* und *Die Braut von Messina*) 213

REVIEWS

- Emiliano Acosta, *Schiller versus Fichte. Schillers Begriff der Person in der Zeit und Fichtes Kategorie der Wechselbestimmung im Widerstreit* (Amsterdam-New York: Rodopi, 2011) (E. Magri); Jörg Robert, *Vor der Klassik. Die Ästhetik Schillers zwischen Karlsschule und Kant-Rezeption* (Berlin-Boston: de Gruyter, 2011) (J. Driscoll Colosimo); Yvonne Nilges, *Schiller und das Recht* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2012) (L. A. Macor) 223

ABSTRACTS AND INDEXING

232



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Introducing the New Schiller

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A decisive shift has occurred in Schiller-scholarship over the past decade: from being passed off as a dilettante and amateur in the field of philosophy, Schiller has now emerged as a key-player. Notwithstanding all the customary allegations of inconsistency, lack of method, and wholesale inaccuracy, Schiller appears to have carved himself a new niche in the philosophical firmament owing to a slow but accelerating process of general reassessment.

Following the valuable but by now distant attempts by the Neo-Kantians,¹ the first steps in this direction were made in the Eighties by scholars of German literature: Hans-Jürgen Schings (1982, 1996),² Dieter

¹ Kuno Fischer, *Schiller als Philosoph* (Frankfurt/M.: Hermann Verlag, 1858), 17–31; Friedrich Ueberweg, *Schiller als Historiker und Philosoph* (Leipzig: Reißner, 1884).

² Hans-Jürgen Schings, “Schillers ‘Räuber’. Ein Experiment des Universalhasses”, in: *Friedrich Schiller. Kunst, Humanität und Politik in der späten Aufklärung*, ed. by Wolfgang Wittkowski (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1982), 1–25; Hans-Jürgen Schings, *Die Brüder des Marquis Posa. Schiller und der Geheimbund der Illuminaten* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1996).

Borchmeyer (1987, 1989),³ and Wolfgang Riedel (1985, 1995)⁴ set research on a crucial new footing, the fruits of which are only now becoming apparent. Indeed, it is only in the last decade that a programmatic process of reinterpretation and requalification has been undertaken. Frederick Beiser (2005) has the merit of having diagnosed and partially delivered Schiller-scholarship from the malady that afflicted it, first by highlighting the complete absence of philosophical studies on Schiller’s writings and thought, then proposing a solution of his own.⁵

³ Dieter Borchmeyer, “Die Tragödie vom verlorenen Vater. Der Dramatiker Schiller und die Aufklärung – Das Beispiel der ‘Räuber’”, in: *Friedrich Schiller. Angebot und Diskurs*, ed. by Helmut Brandt (Berlin – Weimar: Aufbau Verlag, 1987), 160–184; Dieter Borchmeyer, “Kritik der Aufklärung im Geiste der Aufklärung: Friedrich Schiller”, in: *Aufklärung und Gegenklärung in der europäischen Literatur, Philosophie und Geschichte von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. by Jochen Schmidt (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1989), 361–376.

⁴ Wolfgang Riedel, *Die Anthropologie des jungen Schiller. Zur Ideengeschichte der medizinischen Schriften und der ‘Philosophischen Briefe’* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1985); Wolfgang Riedel, *Jakob Friedrich Abel. Eine Quellenedition zum Philosophieunterricht an der Stuttgarter Karlschule (1773–1782). Mit Einleitung, Übersetzung, Kommentar und Bibliographie* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1995).

⁵ Frederick Beiser, “A Lament” (2005), in: *Friedrich Schiller. Playwright, Poet, Philosopher, Historian*, ed. by Paul E. Kerry (Bern: Peter Lang, 2007), 233–250; Frederick Beiser, *Schiller as Philosopher. A Re-Examination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

Interdisciplinary collaboration and methodological cross-fertilization between Philosophy and German Studies increased sharply in subsequent years with the result that publications on Schiller have emerged from both sides. Whether as collections of essays or monographs, publication in this area has intensified, and, more importantly, has expanded geographically: alongside the more traditional German and English, Italian, French, and Spanish have also become important languages, with significant contributions being published in each of them. In terms of the innovative character of contributions over the past years, even the titles of some of the more insightful works may serve to convey a first impression: *Schillers Rebellionskonzept und die Französische Revolution*,⁶ *L'âme suspecte. L'anthropologie littéraire dans les premiers œuvres de Schiller*,⁷ *La tragedia como conjuro. El problema de lo sublime en Friedrich Schiller*,⁸ *Friedrich Schiller. Der unterschätzte Theoretiker*,⁹ *Il giro fangoso dell'umana destinazione. Friedrich Schiller*

⁶ Jeffrey L. High, *Schillers Rebellionskonzept und die Französische Revolution* (Lewiston – Queenston – Lampeter: Mellen, 2004).

⁷ Gilles Darras, *L'âme suspecte. L'anthropologie littéraire dans les premiers œuvres de Schiller* (Paris: Editions Connaissances et Savoirs, 2005).

⁸ María del Rosario Acosta López, *La tragedia como conjuro. El problema de lo sublime en Friedrich Schiller* (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia/Universidad de los Andes, 2008).

⁹ *Friedrich Schiller. Der unterschätzte Theoretiker*, ed. by Georg Bollenbeck and Lothar Ehrlich (Köln: Böhlau, 2007).

dall'illuminismo al criticismo (Der morastige Zirkel der menschlichen Bestimmung. Friedrich Schillers Weg von der Aufklärung zu Kant),¹⁰ *El pensamiento filosófico de Friedrich Schiller*,¹¹ *La actualidad de Friedrich Schiller. Para una crítica cultural al inicio del siglo XXI*,¹² *Schiller im philosophischen Kontext*,¹³ *Vor der Klassik. Die Ästhetik Schillers zwischen Karlsschule und Kant-Rezeption*,¹⁴ *Schillers Revolution*,¹⁵ *Schiller und das Recht*.¹⁶

They are for the most part very intriguing titles which display an intention to convey a specific hermeneutic message. To begin with, no more the Schiller who is

¹⁰ Laura Anna Macor, *Il giro fangoso dell'umana destinazione. Friedrich Schiller dall'illuminismo al criticismo* (Pisa: ETS, 2008); Laura Anna Macor, *Der morastige Zirkel der menschlichen Bestimmung. Friedrich Schillers Weg von der Aufklärung zu Kant*, von der Verfasserin aus dem Italienischen übersetzt, auf den neuesten Stand gebracht und erweitert (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2010).

¹¹ *El pensamiento filosófico de Friedrich Schiller*, ed. by Brigitte Jirku and Julio Rodríguez (Valencia: Universidad de Valencia, 2009).

¹² *La actualidad de Friedrich Schiller. Para una crítica cultural al inicio del siglo XXI*, ed. by Horst Nitschack and Reinhard Babel (Santiago, Chile: LOM, 2010).

¹³ *Schiller im philosophischen Kontext*, ed. by Cordula Burtscher and Markus Hien (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2011).

¹⁴ Jörg Robert, *Vor der Klassik. Die Ästhetik Schillers zwischen Karlsschule und Kant-Rezeption* (Berlin – Boston: de Gruyter, 2011).

¹⁵ Hans-Jürgen Schings, *Revolutionsetüden. Schiller – Goethe – Kleist* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2012), 13–144.

¹⁶ Yvonne Nilges, *Schiller und das Recht* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2012).

merely a reader of Kant and passive – as well as allegedly incompetent – popularizer of his theories, but a fully conscious Schiller who, in theoretical terms, is both lucid and fully present. Furthermore, no longer exclusively the mature Schiller, indebted to Kant for the initial push to start doing philosophy, but also and above all the young Schiller studying philosophy at the *Karlschule*, who, even after finishing his studies in 1780, continued to read, study and revisit themes and authors that belong officially to the philosophical canon. Therefore also no longer only the Schiller who was interested in aesthetics, but also the Schiller who was deeply engaged in moral, political, and juridical questions. No longer the Schiller who derived from the historical and cultural context of his time the drive to adopt certain arguments and positions, but a Schiller who developed well-rounded political ideas prior to the outbreak of the French Revolution, and above all before the despotic developments which accompanied the massacres of September 1792, which were eventually marked by the execution of the King Louis XVI and the annihilation of the Girondists. No longer a Schiller claiming to share Kant's rigorism without actually espousing it; no longer a Schiller totally lacking in inner consistency, but a writer with deviations, unfinished narratives, perhaps even contradictions, just like every other great Western mind.¹⁷

¹⁷ For a concrete example, I refer here to my: "Kant

Given the enormous scale of the reassessment, which is still ongoing, it is entirely legitimate to speak in terms of a full-scale "paradigm-shift within Schiller-scholarship".¹⁸

This book aims to be a part of this new trend in Schiller studies, and draws upon the combined efforts of scholars of German literature and historians of philosophy while taking into account the recent territorial expansion. The multi-lingual nature of this collection aims to capture this new geographical and cultural scope of research, as does the manner in which the essays are set out and their thematic range.

Reading Schiller takes its lead from texts by Schiller, from their "letter", with a view to showing how genuine, unprejudiced attention to Schiller's arguments can serve to break down many of the interpretational myths of the 20th century, at the same time restoring Schiller to the full theoretical stature he deserves. For this reason, all the texts may be seen as an inquiry in the form of a "spiral", starting with one or more texts and moving towards a wider context, only to return to the start with new historiographic tools. Major works are analyzed, such as *Ueber die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen*, *Über das Erhabene*, *Wallenstein*,

and Schiller on Pure Ethics: Why Philosophers Should Concern Themselves with German Literature (and vice versa)", *Estudos Kantianos*, I (2013), 125–138.

¹⁸ Valerio Rocco Lozano, "Los cambios de paradigma de la 'Schiller-Forschung'", *Daimon. Revista Internacional de Filosofía*, 46 (2009), 205–213.

and *Die Braut von Messina*, as well as early works and works usually considered marginal, such as the first *Rede* held in the *Karlschule*, the poetic work *Resignation*, the fragmentary novel *Philosophische Briefe*, and the essays from *Etwas über die erste Menschengesellschaft nach dem Leitfaden der mosaïschen Urkunde* and *Über die notwendigen Grenzen beim Gebrauch Schöner Formen* to *Bürger-Rezension* and *Matthisson-Rezension*.

The thematic scope is broad and aims to cover the extremely wide range of interests and areas of expertise of the author, from metaphysics and religion to politics, aesthetics and ethics. The reviews included at the end of the book seek to give due acknowledgement to the most important works published recently and their highly innovative character. Here, too, the international and multi-lingual nature of the research has been closely attended to, ensuring that the nationalities of reviewer and reviewed, as well as the language of the book being reviewed and its review, are different.

Overall, the selection of authors (of the essays, reviews, and reviewed books) reflects as faithfully as possible the current, state-of-the-art research on this topic, and includes high-profile, internationally renowned scholars as well as promising young researchers who are just starting their academic careers. In other words, an encouraging picture, which raises hopes that the current climate of research shall endure.