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Letters on the Aesthetic Deformation of Man

Katya Mandoki

Abstract

Friedrich Schiller wrote *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* hoping to elevate human potential through the arts for the development of free citizens of the Republic, and also in reaction to the decline of the French Revolution into a Reign of Terror. Nowadays, with the prominent role social networks have acquired in human relations, aesthetics is an invaluable tool for capturing attention in marketing and political propaganda, no less than in recruitment and indoctrination by terrorist organizations. Adopting a pragmatics approach, we will examine Schiller's relevance today regarding uses and abuses of aesthetics related to terrorism, focusing on the context and effects upon subjects' sensibilities.

Key Words

aesthetics; categorical imperative; education; indoctrination; jihad; Kant; political artist; pragmatics; radical evil; Schiller; terrorism; weaponization of children

1. Introduction

Art and, particularly, aesthetics have been considered a means to develop human sensibility and enhance creativity, good taste, and talent, among other desirable human qualities. Schiller wrote *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* hoping to increase human potential through the arts and as a reaction to his own disappointment at the decline of the French Revolution into the Reign of Terror. Opposed to Kant's central concept of aesthetic disinterest in the *Critique of Judgment* published five years earlier, Schiller claimed that "the most perfect of all works of art is the establishment and structure of a true political

freedom.”[1] It is ironic that precisely those *Letters* were written while lacking political freedom, as he dedicated them to Frederick Christian, Duke of Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Augustenburg, from whom he received a yearly pension of 1000 thaler.

Today, a different kind of terror from *La Terreur* (1793-4) has spread worldwide. According to *Global Terrorism Index 2015-2017*, terror-related deaths increased by 80% in 2014, surging nearly ten-fold, and continued to rise in 2017.[2] When various Western countries are struggling to achieve an education for freedom to all citizens from different cultures, many of those emigrating from societies unfamiliar with the Western concept of freedom, others escaping precisely such freedom to join terrorist organizations, and some returning after participating in terrorist wars, this problem is even more pressing.

The question we will address in this paper is what aesthetic theory can contribute, despite its traditional theoretical aloofness, to the understanding of contemporary terrorism and its impact upon society? Aesthetic education was, for Schiller, a means of preparing free citizens for the Republic. Could it equally be used to subjugate its citizens? What is the relation between freedom and aesthetics?

Taking a pragmatics approach to aesthetics (parallel to Charles Morris’ approach to semiotics), which focuses on the context and effect upon the subjects involved, we will explore the variety of uses and abuses of aesthetics in relation to terrorism.[3] We will not examine terrorist acts from a semantic or syntactic approach as objects of aesthetic or artistic appreciation, as other authors have, but center on subjectivity as a source of aesthesis or sensibility and on the conditions that deform its natural tendency to well-being. One would think that humans spontaneously aspire to Aristotelian *eudaemonia* and are basically good-natured were it not for the overwhelming amount of exceptions that challenge this view. Such exceptions lead us to ask what it is that Kant saw in his comfortable Königsberg life that made him claim, instead, that human nature is radically evil:

It is an element in the radical evil of human nature, which messes up one’s capacity to make moral judgments about what a man should be taken for, and makes our attributions of responsibility—ours or those of others—wholly uncertain. It’s a foul stain on our species; as long as we don’t clean it out, it prevents the seed of goodness from developing as it otherwise would.[4]

Kant was hopeful that such a natural stain could be cleaned, since he believed we possess both radical evil and a “seed for

goodness.” Along this spectrum, when social formations reproduce cultural elements that fertilize radical evil, our responsibility resides in detecting them and halting their replication. In the case of terrorism, our topic here, the question is how we can unequivocally determine what those deleterious cultural elements are so that we can eradicate them. One wonders whether it is Kantian radical evil and its free reign of murderous instincts that attract individuals to terrorism, or the seduction of its political and religious narratives and promises, the appeal of a narcissistic heroic image or perhaps the aesthetic experience of sheer destruction. Whatever the case, aesthetics is deeply involved.

2. Schiller and the “political artist”

In *Letters*, Schiller proposed the dangerous idea of the “political artist” who, rather than designing artworks, is given no less than the power to design humans as his raw material.

The political and educating artist follows a very different course, while making man at once his material and his end. . . .The political artist has to treat his material man with a very different kind of respect from that shown by the artist of fine art to his work. He must spare man’s peculiarity and personality, not to produce a deceptive effect on the senses, but objectively and out of consideration for his inner being.[5]

What if such “inner being” is, as Kant claimed, radically evil? This political artist designing humanity according to the interests of his or her “inner being” can be traced in every twentieth-century despotism, from Hitler’s Third Reich and his purported plan to design the *übermensch* to Maoist China’s and Pol Pot’s enslaved workers and Stalin’s Soviet-exploited proletariat, all heroized by the official arts. The idea of humans as material to be shaped by instances of power, as Foucault’s concept of biopolitics demonstrated, became particularly evident after the industrial and communist revolutions molded citizens as producers for mass industrialization, and especially after post-industrial capitalism turned them into consumers.[6] Today’s networked globalization provokes cultural/technological shocks to previously isolated individuals and communities whose confusion and frustration are utilized as combustible material by power-thirsty groups, molding susceptible members into murderers by any means available, among them aesthetics.

Schiller deplored that art was degraded to a mere utility while simultaneously proposing the politicization of aesthetics as a political utensil. “The eyes of the philosopher as well as of the man of the world are anxiously turned to the theater of political events, where it is presumed the great destiny of man is to be played out.” For the sake of this utopian theater of “the great

destiny of man," he offered beauty as a tool for political freedom, since "to arrive at a solution even in the political problem, the road of aesthetics must be pursued, because it is through beauty that we arrive at freedom." [7]

Apart from the various meanings that "great destiny of man" can acquire, this "beauty-begets-freedom" formula seems innocuous until we examine it further. Beauty cannot be established as an objective and universal value, despite Kant's effort to ground it in the universality of *sensus communis*, a concept that ironically already relativizes beauty by making it depend on specific interpretative communities. Consequently, deriving freedom from a culturally relative and artificial notion of beauty entails dangers such as depriving others of their freedom by imposing upon them one particular idea of beauty. By establishing beauty as a path to freedom, Schiller inverted Kant's conception that it is through freedom that we arrive at beauty, since aesthetic freedom, for Kant, resides in our faculties at play, a freedom of sensibility opening itself to the world through the interplay of imagination and understanding. [8] Freedom is a condition for, and not the result of, appreciating beauty.

Stemming from the heart of bourgeois ideology, Schiller, especially as artist and philosopher, could not deny the importance of the individual and of difference, stating that ". . . a political administration will always be very imperfect when it is only able to bring about unity by suppressing variety." [9] Precisely because of his freedom, he enjoyed the privilege to create beauty in poetry and theater. Yet this freedom, for Schiller, was effective only insofar as the individual did not hinder the State, since

. . . if the subjective man is in conflict with the objective and contradicts him in the character of the people, so that only the oppression of the former can give the victory to the latter, then the state will take up the severe aspect of the law against the citizen, and in order not to fall a sacrifice, it will have to crush under foot such a hostile individuality, without any compromise. [10]

The seeds of totalitarianism emerge in Schiller if the individual does not comply with the interests of the State. By contrast, in "Of The Cause Of The Pleasure We Derive From Tragic Objects," written earlier and with greater freedom, Schiller was aware of the danger of moralizing art, stating: "If it is the aim that is moral, art loses all that by which it is powerful—I mean its freedom, and that which gives it so much influence over us—the charm of pleasure." Notice that here, free from the Duke's tutelage, Schiller understands that art "can only produce the aesthetic effect in its highest degree in fully exercising its liberty." [11]

3. Romanticizing terrorism, reframing art

Acts of terrorism have been romanticized, aestheticized, and glamorized by Western intellectuals, seemingly due to the adventure and thrill they evoke that their own comfortable and bourgeois lifestyles do not provide. Surprisingly, there is no internationally agreed upon definition of terrorism, but the following seems accurate enough: "The intentional use of or threat to use violence against civilians or against civilian targets, in order to attain political aims." [12] Terrorist attacks against random non-combatants and innocent civilians necessarily affect sensibility by traumatizing victims and witnesses, but also by altering everyday life for all members of society, who suddenly have second thoughts about going to mosques and markets in Pakistan and Afghanistan, churches in Egypt, synagogues in Jerusalem and Pittsburgh, theaters in Moscow and Paris, and schools in Beslan. Many have to endure routine bag-checking at checkpoints and public buildings; endless lines at airport scanning machines; bombs and sirens wailing night after night; and explosive balloons burning agricultural fields over Israeli civilians near Gaza border. This is precisely the goal of terrorism: its psychological repercussions, to inspire terror among civilians.

Apart from the political, emotional, moral, and economic effects of terrorism, aesthetic reactions have been particularly vehement at the 9/11 World Trade Center attack. Just as scholars in the humanities and social sciences exhibit a kind of "physics envy" for physics' mathematical precision, artists like Karlheinz Stockhausen and Damien Hirst have displayed a kind of "terrorism envy" for its spectacularity and its allegedly artistic aspects. For Stockhausen, 9/11 terrorism was

. . . the greatest work of art ever: that characters can bring about in one act what we in music cannot dream of, that people practice madly for ten years, completely, fanatically, for a concert and then die. That is the greatest work of art for the whole cosmos. I could not do that. Against that, we, composers, are nothing. [13]

Hirst, if less eloquent, is also enormously impressed: ". . . it's kind of like an artwork in its own right. It was wicked, but it was devised in this way for this kind of impact. It was devised visually. . . . So on one level they kind of need congratulating, which a lot of people shy away from, which is a very dangerous thing." [14] In a somehow *schadenfreude* stance, Baudrillard was also vehement in describing the event: "The moral condemnation and the holy alliance against terrorism are on the same scale as the prodigious jubilation at seeing this global superpower destroyed, better, at seeing it, in a sense destroying itself, committing suicide in a blaze of glory." [15]

In the same context, Å½iÅ¾ek asks a basic question: “Why should the World Trade Center catastrophe be in any way privileged over, say, the mass slaughter of Hutus by Tutsis [sic] in Rwanda in 1994? Or the mass bombing and gas-poisoning of Kurds in the north of Iraq in the early 1990s?”[16] The reason is simple: location, location, and spectacularization, namely aestheticization. As Å½iÅ¾ek acutely points out, Jihad and McWorld are the two sides of the same coin, Jihad being already McJihad, as proven by the aestheticization of Jihadist terrorism now triumphing in Netflix ratings, from the Homeland series to endless documentaries and films. Not only is the entertainment industry reaping profits from romanticizing terrorism but universities are too. The most modish terrorist chic promoted in universities today is “McIntifada” and annual “apartheid week,” harnessing support for groups like Hamas, PLO, Hezbollah, and Islamic Jihad selling Arafat kefiyyehs, pins, and Palestine-replacing-Israel map T-shirts.[17]

That terrorism has an aesthetic impact needs no further demonstration because violence always aims at sensibility, both physical and psychological. Moreover, that aesthetics not only elevates the soul but can also plunge it is unequivocally emphasized by Arnold Berleant, who discusses dark, negative, aesthetic experiences that

can produce not only aesthetic pain but moral suffering, both of which are, at times, inseparable. Its capability of identifying negative aesthetic values gives the aesthetic the possibility of becoming an incisive force in social criticism, a largely untried region of aesthetic activity but a potentially powerful one. Thus aesthetic theory and experience are intimately bound up with the moral, negatively as well as positively. Recognizing the dark side of aesthetic experience is another reason for exceeding traditional constraints.[18]

“What is absolutely immoral is to not acknowledge the indispensability of the aesthetic dimension when representing terrorism,” as Emmanouil Aretoulakis clearly points out.[19] This means that, as Berleant’s quote above shows, the term ‘aesthetic’ should not necessarily imply acclaim, contrary to Hume’s example of the implicit value associated with a word itself: “The word *virtue*, with its equivalent in every tongue, implies praise; as that of *vice* does blame.”[20] ‘Aesthetics’ implies beauty, yet aestheticizing evil in such a positive sense is as problematic as banalizing it, as Arendt did in her famous assessment of Eichmann’s trial. He was not merely “receiving orders,” as he argued, but passionate about his extermination task with radical evil burning in his heart.[21] Acknowledging an aesthetic dimension to terrorism simply means that sensibility is deeply involved in it, not that it can be qualified as beautiful or even sublime.[22]

4. The vulgarity of terrorism

By a pragmatics approach we can trace two basic levels relative to the context of terrorism. The first level is that of the leaders for whom terrorism is driven by greed. Yasser Arafat had \$1.7 billion in European banks, while Mahmoud Abbas is worth \$13,000,000, a 4,700 m² castle, a guest palace and two helipads, plus an opulent private airplane, at the same time that Arabs in his Palestinian-controlled territories are kept in refugee camps as political hostages despite massive international help. [23] PLO terrorism engineers are paid eight times the amount given to the dead attackers' families. Hamas tycoon Khaled Mashaal owns \$2.5 billion in Egyptian and Gulf countries banks, plus numerous real estates.[24] In Pakistan, mid-level managers of Harakat ul Mujahidin (HUM) maintain luxurious lifestyles they proclaim to detest, and Hezbollah fundraising USA operators drive luxury cars, live in upper middle-class neighborhoods, and travel in private planes.[25]

Terrorism as a very profitable corporation is typified by ISIS' big business astuteness in extortion and onerous taxation, antiquities' looting, drug trafficking, human smuggling and trafficking, plus the oil business. Schori Liang claimed that "ISIL is effective because it runs its criminal/terrorist enterprise with a business acumen that has no historical precedent. . . . To emphasize its transparency and professionalism, it publishes an annual report which sets out its business strategy of terror and destruction, including specific investments, down to the cost of each suicide mission." [26]

The second level is that of real fanatics pursuing imaginary, aestheticized identities and erotic rewards created by the first level, the leaders, for the latter's pecuniary gain.

5. Aesthetic identities, baits, and rewards

Advertisement industries exploit the usefulness of aesthetics as bait and reward for marketing commodities. Whether commercial, religious, or political, aesthetics capture, ensnare, and promote the fantasies of the targeted population, offering the illusion of the desired in exchange for the required, that is, money, supporters, votes. To convince someone to put in money, pay attention, vote for someone, or even sacrifice one's life for others' interests, the reward must always be aesthetic, even if the narrative, excuse, or ideal is presented as moral; a good narrative of moral virtue certainly has aesthetic appeal. A political candidate offers hope, change, and happiness to her or his voters; Coca Cola offers popularity and fun to its drinkers; jihad offers a sexual paradise of 72 virgins to its sexually repressed fanatics; and Armani offers youth, class, success, and somebody else's beauty.

Aesthetic and semiotic processes play a crucial role in the confection and presentation of identities in a world of anonymity. The 2015 Global Terrorism Index recorded four basic factors that motivated individuals to join Al-Qaeda: identity seeking 40%; revenge seeking/anger 30%; status seeking 25%; and thrill seeking 5%.[27] Such motivations largely coincide with ex-Islamist recruiter Maajid Nawaz's assessment of the four conditions for enlisting jihadist candidates: a sense of grievance; an identity crisis; of desire of belonging provided by charismatic recruiters; and an ideological narrative.[28] Similar motivations can be equally linked with right-wing neo-Nazis, who, before radicalizing themselves, experienced alienation, lack of identity, loneliness, and frustration.[29]

Ex-white supremacist Christian Picciolini describes how he joined the neo-Nazi skinheads searching for belonging, meaning, and status, significantly attracted by their supremacist aesthetic style:

We set about Chicago to find shiny, steel-toed Doc Martens boots in peculiar Goth boutiques like 99th Floor and Wax Trax. We wore braces, the thin suspenders. . . . I rolled the cuffs of my Levis like I'd seen the others do in the alley behind Camine's, and over a plain black T-shirt I sported a military surplus black nylon bomber jacket. . . . I adorned it with symbolic patches like Celtic crosses and Confederate flags, which I believed were standard issue for any skinhead worth his salt.[30]

Picciolini describes with great detail the outfits and settings, the colorful Mohawks, combat boots, and ratty clothes riddled with safety pins for the dramaturgical display of skinhead identity. Concerts and lyrics by Skrewdriver and Naked Raygun fueled the sense of grievance, anger, and power that consolidated such identity: "Boots and braces, shaven-headed hoards" as the song goes.

Nawaz describes how, at age 15 he was attracted by the look of hip-hop B-boys and their music, like *Fuck tha Police* and *Fear of a Black Planet*. "I'm in a click suit, baggy corduroys with pin tucks at the bottom, rocking Adidas trainers. My hair's a grade zero up to the top—when not in a red bandana it stands up in a box-cut, with a mad design trimmed up the back. My crew all wear the same clothes, blast the same tunes. I'd wear what we called Click or 'Extreme' suits: named after brands . . . all of this music, the clothes, the hairstyles, the graffiti, the dancing, the clubbing, the MC-ing the lifestyle that was hip hop meant that none of us had problems with girls." [31] Years later he replaced the hip-hop style with that of Islamism, seduced by jihadist aesthetics and narratives, and became a recruiter himself.

Aesthetic accessories provide not only materials for identity-signaling to extremists of various tints (Stormfront, ISIS, Al

Qaeda, PLO, Antifa, Jobbik, Blood & honor, Sumka, Golden Dawn, The League) but the glue for group cohesion and a feeling of superiority by standing for “the cause.” The aesthetics of covering one’s face with a rag or the Guy Fawkes mask from the comic and movie *V for Vendetta* is the system’s product for anti-system posing, whether anarchists, pro-Hamas and Mcintifadists, or Hogar Social Madrid’s neo-Nazis, all ironically enriching capitalistic Time Warner, who owns the license.

The aestheticizing role that Leni Riefenstahl, Albert Speer, and Josef Goebbels played in the expansion of Nazism by glamorizing their narrative and legitimizing war’s massive expenditure, was no less crucial than the military. Contemporary terrorism occurs along the spectrum from right to left and can be religiously, racially, psychologically, or politically motivated. Here we focus mainly upon Islamist terrorism, not only because of its systematicity—being government-sponsored by Iran, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Sudan using immense resources on a global scale—but because Islamist aesthetic imaginaries are infinitely more tangible, organized, and sensorial than Neo-Nazi fantasies of white supremacy.[32] The appeal of jihadism as something heroic and of the Islamic paradise (janna) is eminently aesthetic: A bright blue sky, white fluffy clouds, verdant trees, lush foliage, flowers, rain drops, waterfalls, aromatic plants, ripe fruits and above all, beautiful black-eyed virgins.

As his last testimony clearly attests, Muhammad Atta, the 9/11 attack leader, was very much concerned with aesthetic issues and rewards when preparing himself to cash in on Allah’s promises for shahids. “Shave excess hair from the body and wear cologne. Shower. . . . Read al-Tawba and Anfal [war chapters from the Qur’an] and reflect on their meanings and remember all of the things God has promised for the martyrs. You should feel complete tranquility, because the time between you and your marriage [in heaven] is very short. Afterwards begins the happy life, where God is satisfied with you, and eternal bliss.” This transaction of a massive slaughter in exchange for eternal personal bliss reveals the sensibility behind this act. Not quite a sacrifice for an ideal, political or social, but for the personal pleasures that await the slaughterer. “It will be the day, God willing, you spend with the women of paradise. Know that the gardens of paradise are waiting for you in all their beauty, and the women of paradise are waiting, calling out, ‘Come hither, friend of God.’ They have dressed in their most beautiful clothing.” The terrorist displays acute sensibility for the clothing of imaginary women but none for the absolute agony of real women.[33]

It is difficult to understand how an educated engineer, who learned the basic laws of physics, could believe literally in the

fantasies of the Islamic paradise to the extreme of sacrificing his life. As with all fanatics, a numb sensibility and moral blindness were required to execute such an attack. From Schiller's viewpoint, Atta would be pursuing the beauty of the Islamic paradise to obtain freedom, when, in fact, he grabbed that freedom from thousands of victims in exchange for his fantasy of paradisiacal beauty.

The role of aesthetics in suicide attacks is unquestionable. Wafa al Bass, stigmatized for her burns from a boiler's explosion in Gaza, attempted to achieve the imaginary beauty of a shahida by blowing herself up in the Israeli hospital where she was being treated for her burns, thus killing her doctors, nurses, and other patients. Having an aesthetic flaw, that is, she was yearning for the aestheticized identity of a martyr and the money for her family, following the example of Wafa Idris, the first female suicide bomber at the Jerusalem market, forcefully divorced and stigmatized for being sterile, and later glamorized post-mortem as a shahida.[34] The Chechen shahidas Khava Barayeva and Zareta Bayroкова, and many others, were equally ensnared by aestheticizing narratives and used as explosives for the Islamist cause.[35] Those selling the aesthetics of self-sacrifice create the imaginary narratives, inculcate belief in them, design the martyr's outfit, and set the stage for martyrdom, in order to serve their own purposes.

Aesthetic tactics are present already in how the promise of reward is delivered. For a resentful individual, the Caliphate's ideal of controlling the world is offered through crude videos of ISIS beheadings, such as James Foley's and others' macabre executions. The carefully selected desert scene, the rehearsed oratory of executioner and victim, the contrasting black and orange outfits in a minimalist composition, were all aesthetically calculated and filmed in high definition to seduce avid viewers and convey a sense of power. ISIS, the Muslim Brotherhood, and Al Qaeda, aware of the importance of aesthetics in recruiting, invest generously in professional propagandists.[36]

6. Aesthetic tools for the deformation of children's sensibility

Growing up in war zones in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Gaza, Yemen, and Pakistan, or under constant violence in South Sudan, Congo, Myanmar, Philippines, Chechnya and Somalia, results in traumatic disorders and numerous physical and psychological wounds that never heal. According to the UNICEF Protocol (2005), approximately 300,000 child soldiers were involved in fighting.[37] Like Hitler- *jugend* in 1944, contemporary Iran's Fatemiyoun Division of Afghan minors, the Al-Rahman children's brigade in Syria, the child soldiers of Al-Shabaab, Hamas-PLO kids traint to stab, and children coerced

by ISIS to be executioners have been weaponized, at times with the parents' complicity.[38]

Among the most tragic recent instances of systematic child abuse are the Iranian army utilizing children for clearing minefields in the Iraq war, giving them yellow plastic keys for opening paradise when they die; Hamas sending them off as human bombs, having indoctrinated them since kindergarten to seek martyrdom by killing Christians and Jews, or using them as shields, while bombing Israeli villages, to garner sympathy over their corpses for propaganda (cf. Magdi Khalil)[39]; in addition to forcing them to execute "infidels" in ISIS propaganda videos.

We must distinguish here between two types of violence involving children: one is recruiting them as soldiers and the other is the systematic deformation of their sensibility. Child soldiers are often refugees of violence striving for survival within hostile conditions in Sudan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and so on. The second type is the systematic inculcation of hatred at an early age. I will refer only to the latter as it involves aesthetics rather than brute force. Hezbollah and Hamas-PLO's infants for martyrdom are primed with the "beauty" of jihad and shahada through a variety of aesthetic activities such as theater, songs, dance, stories, monuments, murals, cartoons, books and magazines, animations, radio and TV shows, posters, music, poems, and films.[40] In this case, and contrary to Schiller's belief, the arts, by themselves, do not seem to educate or edify the individual towards freedom but, instead, they can poison and enslave. In what follows, I apply a categorization by four registers of perception and communication developed in my previous work on the aesthetic specificity and significance of everyday activities or "prosaics." [41]

a. Jihad lexics or narratives

In this political-religious war, Quranic texts, poems exalting shahada, and elegies to warriors and martyrs configure the ideals inculcated in generations of children for whom, lacking alternative versions of reality, those ideals constitute the whole structure of their world, totally capturing and enrapturing their imagination. Islamist terrorism uses prose and poetry that replicate narratives about the perversity of infidels, the virtue of jihad, the depravity of Western civilization, the return of the Caliphate, the expansion of the Ayatollate, the demonic nature of Jews, and Islamic domination over Christianity. ISIS schoolbooks teach the alphabet by normalizing war and murder: "S is for sayf (sword), B is for Bunduqiyya (gun), D is for Dababa (tank)."[42] Ramallah streets are named after terrorists, such as the notorious Khaled Nazzal, slaughterer of 22 Israeli schoolchildren at Maalot. In verbal slogans like "Palestine is Arab from the river to the sea, we want Haifa, we want Akko," rhythm,

repetition, and energetic pronunciation only add to the fascination exerted on the children's imagination.[43] TV programs and mosque sermons use similar aesthetic versions to enforce the mentality of hatred.

b. Jihad acoustics: anasheed

A favorite genre of jihadist aesthetics are anasheed, or chants, hymns, and poems sang as vocal music, sometimes a cappella, generally using parts of the Quran and, among other topics, praising martyrdom and the mujahedin or calling for war against infidels. They are usually sung by men, with a mesmerizing repetitive tune and rhythm, accompanied only by percussion, or not, as musical instruments were forbidden by the Prophet Muhammad. Anwar-al-Awlaqi, the American Al Qaeda jihadist and propagandist, composed several anasheed to inspire young Muslims to wage jihad. Virtually all recruitment videos and martyrs' homages include anasheed in their soundtrack. As Nelly Lahoud notes, "the caliber of the voices suggests professional singers trained in vocalization. The rhythms accompanying lyrics can reveal musical talent, and the quality of the productions stem not from training camps or basements but highly professional studios." [44]

Under the collection, "From music to murder," Palestinian Media Watch has compiled a great number of incitement songs, not all anasheed, repeatedly played by official PLO radio to prime infants' minds into jihad and martyrdom and also used as audio for children's plays and programs. "We are coming, Jerusalem, the time of death has arrived"; ". . . we want to arm ourselves with guns . . . and wage jihad, which makes the father proud and happy . . ."; "Israel will come to an end . . ."; "we decorated with martyrs, souls and blood . . ."; Nigerian Boko Haram propaganda also uses anasheed as musical background for videos of men shooting in all directions from pick-up trucks. This practice is now so prevalent that an originally soothing song became inevitably associated with violence at the hands of fundamentalists.[45]

c. Jihad somatics: theater, ceremonies and physical training

ISIS established training camps for the Ashbal or "[lion] cubs" using them for war in Iraq, Egypt, and Syria. As witnesses attested, minors who resisted joining ISIS had their foot and hand amputated to frighten other children. In Gaza, children are trained from kindergarten, with real weapons, for martyrdom in UNRWA schools, additionally staging theater plays with toddlers and kids in Hamas military uniforms attacking, kidnapping, or stabbing Israelis. Hopefully kids will realize that the "enemy" is exactly like their schoolmates, and they could all play together. [46]

TV characters: A cute, high-pitched Mickey-Mouse-type character called Farfour, in a kids' program entitled *Tomorrow's Pioneers*, had the role of inciting hatred of Jews, even appearing to shoot an AK47, and infusing the ideal of martyrdom, together with the just as "cute" and hate-inciting bumblebee Nahoul in official Palestinian TV.[47]

Video clips: Video-clips of armed suicide terrorists in military clothes, with the group's flag as background, reciting their credo or parts of the Quran, are publicized postmortem as models for children by Hamas, PLO, Islamic Jihad, or Al Aqsa. ISIS' highly aestheticized productions generously invested in high-definition cameras for video-clips of Janna, or paradise, filmed with time-lapse special effects over immense landscapes with a soothing repetitive anasheed music as background.[48]

d. Jihad scopics in graphics, posters and video

Visual language is no exception as a tool for the deformation of children's sensibility through the demonization of infidels, inculcation of hatred, and glamorization of jihadists and shahids through several techniques, such as murals, cartoons, school books' illustrations, posters, and videos.

Cartoons: Replicas of cartoons from *Der Stürmer*, the Nazi antisemitic tabloid, are found today in the Iranian *Hamshahri*, United Arab Emirates *Al-Bayan*, Al-Fatah *Palestine Times*, and other Arab newspapers.[49] Therein, racist stereotyped images of hook-nosed, black-dressed Jews replicate medieval and Nazi antisemitic tropes of greediness, cowardliness, world domination, and child-killer blood libels to incite the hatred necessary for jihadist radicalization. Demonization of the United States or the United Kingdom as "the great Satan" is also common.

Graphic design: For seducing girls and teens into jihadist life, several slick magazines are published, the most prominent being *Dabiq*, ISIS' glossy professional publication. *Beituki* is a lustrous women's magazine for Al Qaeda jihadists' wives and teenagers, instructing them to be a good murderer's wife, keep domestic order, and behave as a martyr's widow. Pakistani Taliban have launched the costly *Ghazwa-e-Hind* for propaganda.[50] *Inspire* is an equally high-quality magazine published since 2011, with such practical articles (no pun intended) as, "Make a Bomb in the Kitchen of Your Mom." [51] Likewise, *The Granddaughters of Al-Khansa* and *Al Shamika* are fashion magazines for suicide bombers and Islamist women.

Posters and murals: The poster boy for indoctrinating children is Muhammad Al Durrah, whose video, regardless of being staged and edited, was reproduced *ad nauseam* by Western media, becoming iconic in posters and schoolbooks.[52] Celebration

posters and murals, with terrorists' photos as martyrs, upholster public places on Hamas and PLO-Al Fatah-controlled territories in Gaza and Judea-Samaria. Their photographs follow the anasheed tropes of fertile landscapes, and images of lions, flags, and passages from the Qur'an.

Uniforms, accessories and props: Jihadist-chic promotes ISIS outfits and flags for children and McIntifada kits with Arafat keffiyehs, logo headbands, slogan t-shirts, previously purchasable at islamica-online, plus real weapons.[53] Like skinheads' Doc. Martens boots, these identity-signaling outfits normalize and glamorize, in children's and youths' minds, martyrdom and the demand to annihilate others.

7. Conclusions

Schiller had *la terreur* in mind when he wrote, *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*. We, today, have terrorism in ours, witnessing how aesthetic education has been used for the exploitation of children by several dictatorial regimes and terrorist organizations. In this paper I have argued that, contrary to Schiller's beliefs, beauty does not necessarily lead to freedom and spiritual elevation, as it can be used to incite violence. Beautiful landscape videos, slick and glossy magazines, well-rhymed poems with alluring music, and theater plays constitute, at the hands of terrorists, aesthetic vehicles for glorifying murder and destruction.

According to Kant, man, even if stained by radical evil, is still accountable because he is free. Such a stain may be removed through the universality of the categorical imperative: "Act only according to the maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law." [54] This freedom enables one to submit and act according to reason for overcoming radical evil, in addition to opening oneself to beauty in its infinite variety of forms and manifestations. While beauty is multifarious, the categorical imperative is one, the foundation for personal and public life for all.

Opposite to Schiller's view, Kantian beauty is to be discovered only in freedom by exploring the world through awe and wonder. Imposing upon the individual such politically advantageous, and economically profitable, "beauties" as shahidism or jihadism obliterates freedom, paralyzes inquisitive minds, and crushes sensibility towards others.

Freedom, as the condition for ethical conduct, is also a condition for aesthetic experience. Playing Bach was Rostropovich's celebration of freedom at the fall of the Berlin Wall, on November 1989. Kantian beauty is apprehended in the free interplay of imagination and understanding, which is the basis for the openness of sensibility. By contrast, aesthetic education,

for Schiller, consisted in teaching the arts, like painting, poetry and music, which is exactly the type of education that Hitler, Himmler, Heydrich, and Eichmann received, and which enabled them to appreciate opera and sculpture while planning the “Final Solution.” This fact is the most devastating argument against Schiller’s idea of aesthetic education and his concept of the political artist. In George Steiner’s words:

We know also . . . [that] aesthetic feeling can coexist with barbaric, politically sadistic behavior in the same individual. Men such as Hans Frank who administered the “final solution” in Eastern Europe were avid connoisseurs and, in some instances, performers of Bach and Mozart. We know of personnel in the bureaucracy of the torturers and of the ovens who cultivated a knowledge of Goethe, a love of Rilke.[55]

Art, by itself, cannot improve human beings. Sensibility to or aesthesis for others does. The politicization of aesthetics in Schiller’s *Letters*, contrary to Kant’s clear distinctions between ethics, aesthetics, politics, and epistemology, risks turning aesthetic materials into propaganda tools.

We have seen through the four letters of the last section of this essay how useful aesthetic resources can be in the formation and deformation of sensibility precisely for their fascination potential and deep emotional power. Aesthetic education should therefore begin with and emphasize the development of sensibility in the broader sense of the term: as receptivity to others, to oneself, to life and the world.

Aesthetics’ contribution to the problem of terrorism begins by detecting and denouncing both veiled and explicit elements that numb sensibility to human dignity and vulnerability, elements, in particular, connected with the terrorist politics of priming children to die or kill.[56] A generalized practice implemented by various totalitarian and terrorist regimes upon a whole generation, such a systematic damage inflicted upon children’s sensibility is the ultimate kind of abuse. Although there are organizations defending children from militarization, none exists that attends to this dangerous sensibility deformation.[57] For the sake of all, children’s inalienable right to thrive rather than hate should have universal priority, and its infringement should be considered a crime against humanity. It is not enough to defend children’s right to education; children should also be shielded from the various abuses of such an education. Aesthetics has a prime role in pointing this out.

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