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Friedrich Schiller's Ethical State

A Republic Based on Humanity

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ABSTRACT

This paper defends a republican interpretation of Friedrich Schiller's political philosophy, challenging the common view that equates his aesthetic state with the republic and regards virtue to be a prerequisite for establishing the republic. Instead, I argue that Schiller identifies the republic with the ethical state, founded not on virtue but on the capacity for humanity, which I interpret as a capacity for individual self-determination. For Schiller, forming the general will and entering the social contract are duties of a free person. Those lacking individual self-determination cannot be responsive to duty and thus cannot participate in pursuing the common good required by a republic. By emphasizing individual self-determination over virtue, Schiller's vision of republicanism proves to be distinctly modern and accommodates genuine diversity.

Keywords: Schiller, Kant, republicanism, self-determination, humanity

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Dieser Aufsatz verteidigt eine republikanische Interpretation von Friedrich Schillers politischer Philosophie und stellt die verbreitete Auffassung in Frage, die seinen ästhetischen Staat mit der Republik gleichsetzt und Tugend als Voraussetzung für deren Errichtung betrachtet. Stattdessen vertrete ich die These, dass Schiller die Republik mit dem ethischen Staat identifiziert, der nicht auf Tugend, sondern auf der Fähigkeit zur Menschlichkeit gründet – eine Fähigkeit, die ich als die Fähigkeit zur individuellen Selbstbestimmung interpretiere. Für Schiller sind die Bildung des Gemeinwillens und der Eintritt in den Gesellschaftsvertrag Pflichten freier Menschen. Wer keine individuelle Selbstbestimmung besitzt, kann der Pflicht nicht entsprechen und somit nicht an der Verwirklichung des Gemeinwohls mitwirken, das eine Republik erfordert. Indem Schiller die individuelle Selbstbestimmung über die Tugend stellt, erweist sich seine republikanische Vision als dezidiert modern und offen für echte Vielfalt.

Stichwörter: Schiller, Kant, Republikanismus, Selbstbestimmung, Menschlichkeit

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1. Introduction[1]

Kant's political thought has profoundly influenced modern republicanism, particularly in its emphasis on freedom as non-domination and self-legislation.[2] Post-Kantian republicanism, broadly understood, extends and revises these ideas in diverse ways, reflecting both enthusiasm for and critiques of Kant's rationalist approach to politics. Thinkers such as Fichte and Hegel transformed Kant's abstract principles into more institutional and social models, while later republican theorists have debated the balance between individual autonomy, democratic participation, and the determining structures of the state.[3] Within this broader post-Kantian discourse, Friedrich Schiller occupies a unique intermediary position. Deeply influenced by Kant's philosophy, especially by the third *Critique*,[4] Schiller was critical of Kant's dualisms and sought to bridge the gap between reason and feeling, law and freedom – all while staying within the Kantian framework and emphasizing self-determination.

This paper aims to show that Schiller's republicanism is not merely a historical curiosity but offers a novel way to conceptualize the republic in conditions of diversity and individual liberty. I argue that Schiller's republicanism is distinctly modern, compatible with commercial society, and does not demand that citizens be fully virtuous, but rather that they possess an uncompromised capacity for individual self-determination or, in Schiller's terms, the *capacity for humanity* (*Vermögen zur Menschheit*) (Schiller 20: 378, AL 78).[5]

While there is a growing consensus among scholars that Schiller's political views, as well as the political implications of his artistic and philosophical writings, should be interpreted as republican,[6] the debate remains

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[2] On Kant's republicanism, see e.g. Riley 1983; Ripstein 2009; Kleingeld 2012.

[3] On Fichte's republicanism, see James 2015; on Hegel's republicanism, see Westphal 2019.

[4] On Kant's influence on Schiller, see Kuno Fischer (1868), Eva Schaper (1964), Leslie Scharpe (1991), Rüdiger Safranski (2004), Frederick C. Beiser (2005).

[5] Following Immanuel Kant, Schiller associates humanity with the capacity to set one's own ends, that is, the capacity to choose freely and rationally. The term *capacity for humanity* underscores that in such choices, individuals have access to a fulfilled infinity (*erfüllte Unendlichkeit*) of possibilities for realizing their humanity (Schiller 20: 377, AL 76).

[6] Different versions of the republican reading of Schiller's political philosophy are proposed by Safranski (2004), Beiser (2005, 2008), Douglas Moggach (2007, 2008),

active regarding how we should characterize Schiller's republicanism. To better understand the positions of different authors, I focus on three crucial points. First, proponents of the republican interpretation generally agree that a defining feature of republicanism is the active participation of citizens in public life and the pursuit of the common good; I will refer to this as *engagement.* Second, they agree that engagement cannot be taken for granted – there must be something that ensures it; I will call this the *engagement condition.* Third, they consider whether the engagement condition is compatible with modern commercial society; I will call this the *compatibility problem.*[7]

The engagement condition of a republic can be understood purely in institutional terms, as political liberty secured by the constitution. More commonly, however, it involves certain requirements for citizens, particularly virtue, sometimes also described in terms of patriotism or love for one's country (Beiser 2005: 163–164, Schmidt 2009: 291–292). This raises the question: how compatible is such patriotic virtue with a society that not only tolerates but is based on the pursuit of private interest? The response to this question roughly divides republicanism into classical and modern. Classical republicanism condemns luxury, excessive wealth, and inequality as causes of moral decay, leading citizens to prioritize private interests over the common good. Modern republican thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment, especially Adam Ferguson, offer a more optimistic view: the engagement condition can and should coexist with a commercial society (Ferguson 1995: 235–241).

Two central questions emerge in the debate on Schiller's republicanism. The first concerns his awareness of the compatibility problem. Schiller was familiar with the Scottish discussion on the compatibility of virtue with

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Alexander Schmidt (2009), Jeffrey Church (2014), and Samantha Matherne and Nick Riggle (2020, 2021). I also fully agree with the anonymous reviewer that, despite the recent growth of a republican consensus, there are other important approaches to Schiller's political philosophy. Thus, for example, Schiller has been identified as an explicit liberal by Friedrich Hayek (1966), David Kaiser (1999), Terence Holmes (1980), and Beiser in his early work (1992). Other authors, such as Herbert Marcuse (1955), Jacques Rancière (2004), and María del Rosario Acosta López (2018), have demonstrated how Schiller can be read as a proto-leftist thinker. All these approaches are fully justified, as Schiller wrote extensively on the importance of personal freedom and autonomy and was both an early theorist of alienation and a critic of modern commercial society.

7 Discussions of the compatibility problem are part of a broader debate, also connected with republicanism, concerning the critique of commercial society. An important predecessor of Schiller here is Rousseau, with whom Schiller enters into a dialogue. For more on Rousseau's critique of commercial society, and Adam Smith's response to it, see Dennis Rasmussen (2008) and, especially, Istvan Hont (2015).

commercial society,[8] yet Fania Oz-Salzberger (1995, 2005) argues that he overlooked the nuances of this debate and was not fully aware of the compatibility problem. Oz-Salzberger's position is convincingly challenged by Schmidt (2009) and Moggach (2007, 2008), who point out that although Schiller does not explicitly discuss commerce, his analysis addresses the growing division of labor and over-specialization in commercial society – a subject also explored by Ferguson. Schiller seeks a way to engage citizens in political life without forcibly eliminating their differences. As he writes, "the constitution of a state will be very imperfect if it can bring about unity only through the abolition of diversity" (Schiller 20: 317, AL 11).[9] The very idea of preserving diversity in the republic, as Moggach (2007, 2008) and Schmidt (2009) argue, demonstrates that Schiller was acutely aware of the challenges modernity poses to republicanism.

The second question is whether Schiller addresses the compatibility problem as a classical or modern Republican. His concern with preserving diversity in unity strongly suggests the latter: Schiller believes that the engagement condition can be compatible with commercial society. But how exactly does he conceptualize the engagement condition? Schiller's solution to the compatibility problem aligns with Republican ideals, as he argues that proper education for citizens is essential. What is novel in his thesis is that this education should be *aesthetic*, focused on the cultivation of the *capacity of humanity*, rather than virtue or patriotism. This point is somewhat overlooked in recent literature on Schiller's republicanism.[10] For instance, Beiser (2005, 2008) and Schmidt (2009) insist that the engagement condition in Schiller's republicanism is virtue.

In *On Grace and Dignity*, Schiller defines virtue as the ideal of perfected humanity (*das Ideal vollkommener Menschheit*) (Schiller 20: 298, GD 161), that is, virtue is not merely patriotism, courage, or adherence to principles, but rather the highest possible degree of harmony between reason and sensibility. If we understand virtue, following Schiller, as the culmination of human spiritual development – a quality peculiar only to the most morally and aesthetically developed *beautiful souls* – then I disagree with Beiser and Schmidt's positions. That said, I concur that virtue is a condition of what

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8 On Schiller's study of Ferguson at the Karlschule, see, e.g., Beiser (2005: 19, 92, 125), David Pugh (1997: 173-80), Scharpe (1991: 58-9).

9 Almost all citations from Schiller are given in my translation; however, I consulted the English translations listed in the bibliography.

10 As an anonymous reviewer rightly noted, the importance of humanity for political participation in Schiller had already been discussed earlier, for example by Marcuse (1955: 164-179). One of the aims of the present article is to reintroduce this focus on humanity specifically into contemporary debates on Schiller's republicanism.

Schiller calls the *aesthetic state.* However, the aesthetic state is not, as I will show, Schiller's term for a republic but for an exceptionally demanding ideal polity.

This brings me to an important point: the debates outlined earlier can be clarified by paying closer attention to Schiller's ternary division of the dynamic, ethical, and aesthetic states from his *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* (henceforth *Aesthetic Letters*). Schiller bases this classification not on differences in the content of laws or the essence of institutions and society, but on the distinct procedures by which society, laws, and institutions are formed. This classification structures the paper in the following manner: in the next three sections, I will examine each of the three types of state distinguished by Schiller and explicate the necessary conditions for each.

2. The Dynamic State of Rights

In this section, I analyze the first element of Schiller's ternary division – the dynamic state of rights or, as Schiller also calls it, the natural state (*Naturstaat*).[11] The dynamic state is the first and the most primitive form of statehood. Schiller defines it "as any political body which originally **derives its institution from forces**, not from laws [*von Kräften, nicht von Gesetzen*]" (Schiller 20: 314, AL 8, my emphasis). Despite the contrast between the dynamic state and lawfulness, we should not conclude that Schiller equates the dynamic state with a state of nature characterized by anarchy or a Hobbesian war of all against all. Schiller makes it clear that the role of the dynamic state is precisely to restrain the destructive impulses of the natural man and prevent a lapse into anarchy. Furthermore, he describes the very idea of the state of nature as an artificial fiction, unsupported by experience and created to temporarily justify the present dynamic statehood as a product of free will. That is, the idea of the state of nature serves as a necessary premise for the idea of the social contract, which, in turn, is less a description of past events and more a moral justification for the future transformation of the state (Schiller 20: 313–4, AL 7–8).

When Schiller denies the dynamic state's lawfulness, this should be understood only as referring to objectively valid laws. Any positive law, unless it (i) is adopted through a proper procedure, embodying the ideal of self-legislation, and (ii) has objective validity, would not, in Schiller's terminology, be considered a law. Instead, Schiller uses the term right (*Recht*) to refer to arbitrary positive laws that are neither derived from self-legislation nor

[11] Schiller also uses the term the *state of necessity* (*Nothstaat*) in the *Aesthetic Letters* (Schiller 20: 313, AL 7).

necessarily objectively valid. Still, Schiller emphasizes that even in a dynamic state, some form of legislation exists, though its *Recht* does not merit being called laws.

It is crucial to emphasize that Schiller's classification of a state as dynamic does not depend on the specific content of its laws or institutions but solely on the fact that they are formed dynamically through the interaction of various forces.[12] This means there can be countless variations of dynamic states, differing based on the outcomes of these interactions. The only necessary condition for the emergence and existence of a dynamic state is the "taming of nature through nature" (Schiller 20: 410, AL 110) or the "balance of evil" (Schiller 20: 321, AL 16; 26: 264, LtP 125).

Dynamic states may fulfill the requirements of a natural human being, protecting it and providing conditions for satisfying its needs. However, under favorable circumstances, a moral person emerges within the natural human being, yearning for something that the dynamic state cannot provide. The moral person is capable of thinking for herself and following self-prescribed laws. The dynamic state lacks the authority that her reason can recognize, and the rationale for this lies in the dynamic mechanism of rights formation itself: "The work of blind forces has no authority to which freedom had to bow" (Schiller 20: 314 AL 8).

Let us assume for the sake of argument that the dynamic interaction of forces has given rise to laws that, in their content, a moral person could call just. Even that would not be sufficient. In this case, only condition (ii) for genuine lawfulness is fulfilled: the right has objective validity. Condition (i), however, remains unmet: the right has not been adopted through a proper procedure. For the moral person, rights that *accidentally* happen to be just still fail to meet her rational requirements. This applies not only to the arbitrary content of rights in a dynamic state but also to the state's very existence, which is itself arbitrary. Dynamic states arise from the interaction of blind forces, not from the intentional establishment by individuals:

> even the sparse fragmentary connection [*Antheil*], which still ties the individual members to the whole, does not depend on forms, which they give themselves, (for how could one trust their freedom in such an artificial and light-shy clockwork?) (Schiller 20: 323-4, AL 19).

In summary, the theory of the dynamic state is Schiller's attempt to provide a conceptual explanation of how a stable state initially comes into being and

[12] Schiller's reference to the right of the strong (*das Recht des Stärkern*) in his letter to Prince Frederick Christian II von Augustenburg (July 13, 1793) (Schiller 26: 260, LtP 123) is quite telling.

why it takes different forms. Schiller rejects social contract theory[13] and shows how the state could have emerged simply as a result of the interaction of various forces. However, two fundamental problems make dynamic states unsatisfactory for a moral person. First, they are established without her participation, and second, she has no meaningful input into their legislation. Because dynamic states do not involve their citizens in their establishment or perpetuation, they fail to embody political self-determination and are thus unworthy of the moral person. What kind of state is worthy of her? Could it be an aesthetic state?

3. The Aesthetic State of Semblances

The aesthetic state is commonly invoked in literature as Schiller's republican response to the mechanistic nature of the dynamic state.[14] In this section, I demonstrate that Schiller explicitly distinguishes the aesthetic state from a republic. Furthermore, I argue that the demands of the aesthetic state far exceed those typically expected of a republic. In doing so, I will, on the one hand, support the thesis that virtue is a condition for the aesthetic state, while on the other hand, I will challenge the thesis that the aesthetic state is Schiller's term for a republic.

Unlike the concept of the ethical state, Schiller's aesthetic state has been widely discussed in the literature.[15] Nearly every scholar engaging with Schiller's philosophy addresses it to some extent. However, its distinction from the ethical state remains underexplored. Although authors rarely write about the latter, they often ascribe its features to the former. I intend to focus only on those features of the aesthetic state that belong to it and make it unique. The distinction hinges on this criterion: the ethical state is grounded solely in the requirements of reason – that is, moral and legal obligations – whereas the aesthetic state integrates the demands of an ennobled nature, that is, aesthetic obligations in addition to the merely moral and legal ones.[16]

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[13] It should be noted that Schiller rejects social contract theory specifically as a correct descriptive account of the origin of the state. At the same time, in the fourth section of the article I show that Schiller regards social contract theory as a necessary illusion which justifies the existing state and provides a general direction of how the state ought to be reformed.

[14] Schiller's political position is defined specifically as aesthetic republicanism e.g. by Moggach (2007, 2008), Schmidt (2009), and Church (2014).

[15] For an overview of the history of the concept of the aesthetic state, see Josef Chytry (1989).

[16] Although this is not the focus of the article, I would like to note that I regard Schiller's aesthetic state as something that complements rather than replaces the ethical state. For

It should be noted, however, that Schiller regards aesthetic obligations as rational as well, since they are endorsed by reason, even though their ultimate source is nature – albeit an ennobled one. A key difference lies in external enforceability: aesthetic obligations cannot be imposed externally.[17] While the ethical state governs external actions through laws, the aesthetic state relies on beauty and sociable character (*geselliger Charakter*) (Schiller 20: 410, AL 110). Aesthetic obligations also differ from moral obligations, as they do not involve moral self-necessitation but are free expressions of the play drive (*Spieltrieb*).

Schiller develops the concept of the play drive by drawing on Kant's theory of the free play of the faculties. According to Kant, our aesthetic judgments involve the interaction of the same cognitive faculties as theoretical judgments: understanding and imagination. The crucial difference lies in the mode of their interaction. In aesthetic judgments this interaction is not mediated by determinate concepts but occurs as a free play evoked by the representation of the aesthetic object (Kant 5:217, CPJ 102). When reflecting on the representation of a beautiful object, we discover in this representation a form of purposiveness, and this discovery is pleasurable for us. The purposiveness in this case is not objective, that is, it is not directed toward a specific purpose, but subjective, meaning that the representation of the object is purposive for the free interaction of our mental faculties. Independence from any specific purpose, whether the satisfaction of an inclination or the acquisition of knowledge, renders aesthetic pleasure genuinely free.

The freedom realized in Schiller's aesthetic state likewise presupposes the free play of our capacities, but Schiller presents it in anthropological terms as the reciprocal interaction (*Wechselwirkung*) of two basic drives: the formal drive (*Formtrieb*) and the material drive (*Stofftrieb*), which can be roughly correlated with what Kantian philosophy calls reason and sensibility,

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a similar position, see, for example, Stadter (2023: 364); for an alternative reading, see Mehigan (2023: 243).

[17] According to Kant, not all moral obligations are coercively enforceable either. In particular, the duties of virtue are unenforceable by others and necessitated through the respect for the moral law. Moreover, as Onora O'Neill shows, some Kantian duties of right, such as "the duty to enter a civil condition and duties of equity, are not in principle enforceable" (O'Neill 2016: 111) as well. Of course, at the time of writing the *Aesthetic Letters*, Schiller could not have known about Kant's distinction between duties of virtue and duties of right. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that in emphasizing the aesthetic character of virtue, Schiller anticipates Kant's distinction. However, it should also be pointed out that aesthetic obligations do not imply any form of necessitation, neither through external legal coercion nor through internal respect for the law. They arise from the very nature of the virtuous person, and, strictly speaking, we can refer to them as obligations only in a metaphorical sense.

respectively. As Beiser aptly summarizes, the task of the former "is to formalize matter, or to internalize what is external," and the task of the latter "is to externalize what is internal" (Beiser 2005: 139). The formal drive is associated with activity, rationality, principles, concepts, reasons, normativity, morality, timelessness, absoluteness, and personality. The material drive is associated with passivity, inclinations, instincts, sensual desires, feelings, self-preservation, happiness, and the particular conditions of personality. When the two basic drives are equally strong and reciprocally strained, their respective claims suppress each other's compulsion (Schiller 20:367–8, AL 64–5). As a result of the active and reciprocal interaction between these two drives, a complex third drive, the play drive, emerges, and the person finds herself in a condition of active determinability, which allows her, through reflective distance, to examine the claims of both drives, choose in favor of one of them, and act accordingly.

It is crucial to note that Schiller distinguishes between the possibility of the reciprocal interaction of the two basic drives and the ideal realization of such interaction. In speaking of the former, he uses the term the *capacity for humanity* (Schiller 20:378, AL 78). In speaking of the latter, he uses the term the *ideal of perfected humanity* (Schiller 20:298, GD 161). Although Schiller primarily discusses the ideal of perfected humanity within the framework of his theory of virtue presented in *On Grace and Dignity*, I maintain that the aesthetic state is the political manifestation of the same ideal. As Matherne and Riggle (2021: 3–4) observe, the claims of humanity within and without are inextricably linked. Society, institutions, and laws in the aesthetic state are formed through free play, as if it were a dance in which each dancer anticipates the other's step:

> Everything has been arranged such that the first has already made room for the second before he arrives, everything comes together so skilfully and yet so artlessly that both seem merely to be following their own mind and still never get in the way of the other. This is the most fitting picture of maintained personal freedom and the spared freedom of the other (Schiller 26: 216, K 174).[18]

The aesthetic state does not need to enforce aesthetic obligations because it presupposes ennobled citizens for whom such obligations are already fully internalized and are expressions of their genuine sociability. In Schiller's terms, the aesthetic state presupposes beautiful souls, that is, individuals who

[18] Stephen Houlgate (2008) provides a thorough account of Schiller's political metaphor of dance.

have realized the ideal of perfected humanity and thereby become fully virtuous (Schiller 20: 298, GD 161).

A moral person, however, is not necessarily a beautiful soul. She possesses the capacity for humanity and is therefore capable of self-legislation and of following it, but she will not necessarily do so. She is merely capable of moral action, whereas for beautiful souls moral and aesthetic behavior is habitual. They are naturally attuned to the claims of humanity. Hence, while the aesthetic state can be said to be worthy of a moral person, the moral person is not good enough for the aesthetic state. Only beautiful souls can coexist with each other in the aesthetic state, where, instead of law, relationships are regulated through sociable character. Thus, for Schiller, perfect virtue – being a defining characteristic of a beautiful soul – is indeed the condition of the aesthetic state, while the aesthetic state itself is the condition for perfecting virtue.

That said, I argue that the aesthetic state is not the concept in which we should search for Schiller's understanding of the republic. To begin with, Schiller says of the aesthetic state that "as a matter of fact it could be found, like the pure church and the pure **republic**, only in a few select circles" (Schiller 20: 412, AL 112fn, my emphasis). Schiller implies that only particularly refined individuals can form an aesthetic state and – what is more important for this section – he explicitly distinguishes the aesthetic state from the church and the republic. The aesthetic state and the pure republic are not the same thing, even if both are to be found only in a few select circles.

Another reason I believe it is incorrect to view the aesthetic state as Schiller's concept of a republic is that its demands go far beyond those of the republic. Specifically, the aesthetic state entails radical inclusivity: "In the aesthetic state, everything – even the serving tool [*dienende Werkzeug*] – is a free citizen who has equal rights with the noblest" (Schiller 20: 412, AL 112). Kant's formula of humanity extends there to all natural objects: "Beauty, or rather taste, regards all things as ends in themselves and absolutely does not tolerate that one serves the other as a means or bears the yoke" (Schiller 26: 212, K 170). Citizens of the aesthetic state are tasked with "making everything else around them, including the inanimate, free" (Schiller 20: 386fn, AL 87fn). This radical inclusivity is still understudied and holds significant potential for the development of broadly Kantian animal and environmental ethics on aesthetic principles. Nevertheless, it would be too demanding to expect such inclusivity from a republic. What is even more important, Schiller himself denies the full attainability of the aesthetic state: "the ideal of equality, which a fanatic [*Schwärmer*] would so gladly like to see

realized in its essence, is fulfilled [only] in the realm of aesthetic semblances" (Schiller 20:412, AL 112).

Beneath the semblance of the aesthetic state there always lies the ethical state as its foundation. The unattainability of the aesthetic state in essence, however, does not mean that it is, as e.g. Pugh (1997: 155) claims, merely a fiction that distracts us from the non-ideality of the world. The space limits do not allow me to devote more attention to this question, but I agree with Beiser (2005: 111) that the aesthetic state and the beautiful soul should be regarded as regulative ideals that we both can and aesthetically ought to approximate, thereby bringing about ever greater harmony among all natural beings. If even an approximation were impossible, Schiller would not have said that the aesthetic state "as a matter of fact <…> could be found <…> in a few select circles" (Schiller 20: 412, AL 112fn). We become fanatics only if we forget that this ideal is never fully attainable, especially in a revolutionary, here-and-now format.

To summarize this section: the aesthetic state is a regulative ideal that blurs the distinctions between animate and inanimate, rational and non-rational, and Schiller explicitly distinguishes this ideal from a republic. The aesthetic state's laws, and institutions are formed through free play, and it requires its citizens to be beautiful souls, that is, to embody the ideal of perfected humanity. In the next section, I show that Schiller's ethical state aligns more closely with traditional conceptions of the republic.

4. The Ethical State of Duty

Schiller's ethical state has surprisingly received little attention in the literature. Beiser, in his otherwise excellent book on Schiller, for instance, mentions the term in only two pages. He argues that we should understand Schiller's ethical state as Kant's *kingdom of ends* (Beiser 2005: 162), i.e., "a systematic union of different rational beings under common laws" (Kant 4: 433, GMM 83). Schmidt, on the contrary, considers the ethical state, which he views as synonymous with the state of reason (*Vernunftstaat*), to be the enlightened, egalitarian moral state envisioned by revolutionaries (Schmidt 2009: 307-9).[19] To my knowledge, none of the Anglophone authors attempted a detailed analysis of this concept, and addressing this gap is the goal of this section. First, I show that the ethical state is a republic. Then I

[19] Pugh's position seems somewhat similar to Schmidt's, but he makes the further point that ultimately the rational state remains a product of the imagination, in lieu of which Schiller ends up offering "an acceptance of an authoritarian state with a compensating aesthetic dimension" (Pugh 1997: 406).

discuss the engagement condition of the ethical state and argue that it is not virtue but an uncompromised capacity for individual self-determination. Finally, I show that Schiller's republicanism is modern rather than classical and briefly discuss the role of diversity within it.

a) The Ethical State is a Republic

As I have already mentioned, Schiller's classification is based on the principle through which a state is organized and its institutions are shaped. In the dynamic state, this principle is the dynamic interaction of different forces, whereas in the aesthetic state, it is free play. As for the ethical state, it "can make it [society] (morally) necessary only by subjecting the individual will to the general will [*allgemeiner Wille*]" (Schiller 20: 410, AL 110). Schiller appeals to Rousseau's concept of the general will. Very roughly, according to Rousseau, a state can be legitimate only if it is guided by the general will of its members. The general will acts as the source of all laws, which are willed by all citizens. Thus, by obeying these laws, a citizen "obeys only himself and remains as free as before" (Rousseau 1994: 138).

From Schiller's brief discussions, we learn that the ethical state is characterized by the rule of law, that genuine freedom is the foundation of political association within it, that political legislation is governed by reason, and that every person (though not every natural being, as in the aesthetic state) is treated as an end in itself (see Schiller 20: 319, AL 14; and 26: 262, AL 123). In other words, Schiller associates the general will not with simple majority rule but with Kantian autonomous self-legislation as the source of universal practical principles. Unfortunately, Schiller does not delve into the details of the procedure through which such self-legislation should be carried out at the state level. The implication, however, is that the procedure can take different forms, which aligns well with Schiller's conviction that "if reason brings its moral unity into physical society, it must not violate the diversity of nature" (Schiller 20: 318, AL 13).

In addition to the general will, Schiller references another concept extensively used by Rousseau: the social contract. Schiller observes that the present dynamic state is justified in our imagination by the fiction that we have, by our *willful decision*, exchanged the state of independence (*Stand der Unabhängigkeit*) for the state of contracts (*Stand der Verträge*) (Schiller 20: 313, AL 8).[20] Why does he think this is fiction? Such a decision presupposes that people conceive of the state of contracts as a purpose and possess the capacity to make a free choice in its favor. Schiller argues that in this imagined past,

[20] The word *state* in this case has no political meaning; it is *Stand*, not *Staat*.

humans had neither a proper understanding of the purpose nor a functioning capacity for choice. In other words, the idea of the social contract implies the existence of a rational free agent, which humans of that time were not. Furthermore, while Schiller acknowledges that humans, through a rich theoretical culture, have developed a sense of proper purpose, they still lack an uncompromised capacity for individual self-determination – or, in Schiller's terms, a capacity for humanity.

This is the central problem that Schiller seeks to address in his *Aesthetic Letters*. It seems that all the conditions for the establishment of the ethical state are ripe, yet the most important condition is missing: "The moral possibility (*moralische Möglichkeit*) is lacking, and the generous moment finds an unreceptive generation" (Schiller 20: 319, AL 14). I want to draw attention to his choice of terminology. Schiller does not speak of moral perfection, that is, virtue, nor does he mention moral actuality; for the ethical state, only moral possibility is required. This is further confirmed by Schiller's brief discussion that seeking support (*Stütze*) for the ethical state is equally pointless in both the natural character driven only by selfish impulses and the moral character, which is yet to be cultivated within the process of becoming a beautiful soul. What is needed is "to create a **third character**, which, while related to the other two, paves the way for a transition from the rule of mere forces to the rule of laws" (Schiller 20: 378, AL 78, my emphasis).

Schiller's reliance on Rousseau's republican concepts, along with his discussion of why the transition to the state of contracts is not feasible, allows us to situate him within the republican tradition. To briefly recap, in the introduction, I identified three aspects central to the debate on Schiller's republicanism: (1) the active participation of people in the political life of their country (engagement), (2) the conditions that make such participation possible (the engagement condition), and (3) whether the engagement condition is compatible with modern commercial society (the compatibility problem). The first two aspects determine whether the doctrine in question is republican, while the third clarifies whether it is classical or modern republicanism. For now, I will focus on the first two.

For a moral person, the problem with the dynamic state is its lack of engagement: she does not participate either in the establishment of the dynamic state or in its legislation. The dynamic state arose through the interaction of forces, and its rights were shaped in the same manner. Finding no confirmation in the experience of the past, the notion of the state of contracts becomes reinterpreted as an ethical and aesthetic obligation to reestablish the state so that there be genuine engagement among its citizens.

The ethical state for which the moral person strives implies participation in its establishment through the social contract and in legislation through the formation of the general will. Engagement is, therefore, central to the ethical state. By pointing out humanity's current unreadiness for such engagement, Schiller highlights the engagement condition, which has yet to be met. Thus, Schiller's concept of the ethical state explicitly addresses the problem of engagement and does so by appealing to the republican concepts of Rousseau. From this, I conclude that Schiller's ethical state is a republic. In the next section, I compare Schiller's views on establishing a republic with those of his great influence, Kant, to further clarify Schiller's position on the engagement condition.

b) The Difference Between the Positions of Schiller and Kant

Kant's influence on Schiller is well recognized. Although not dogmatic, Schiller was a meticulous Kantian. This makes it worth considering the differences in their positions. Schiller believes that the natural man cannot establish a republic because doing so requires a free choice, while the natural man "behaves in a purely passive manner <…> as a natural force [*Naturkraft*] (that is, a force which acts only in accordance with what it undergoes)" (Schiller 20: 386, AL 86). This does not mean that the natural man is devoid of instrumental rationality or unable to choose suitable means to achieve existing ends. The natural man is capable of this; in Kantian terms, we might say the natural man can follow hypothetical imperatives. However, what is not yet fully available to him is the ability to set his own ends. According to Schiller, the establishment of an ethical state or a republic is precisely such an end, one that must be freely set.

This implies, in particular, that the ethical state cannot be established for any instrumental purpose. For example, it cannot be created merely to better protect property or to pursue interests more efficiently. The ethical state must be established not through a hypothetical imperative but through a categorical imperative – that is, it must be established because it is an ethical state. The same principle applies to the formation of the general will: it is not formed to solve personal, social, or political problems more effectively. For Schiller, the establishment of an ethical state and the formation of the general will are duties. They are to be done for their own sake, out of respect for the moral law. Thus, they cannot be motivated by instrumental considerations but only by an awareness of, and respect for, the moral law. The determination to act solely out of respect for the moral law is possible only for those who possess the capacity for individual self-determination, or in Schiller's terminology, the capacity for humanity.

Kant, on the other hand, argues that the problem of organizing a republican state depends not on freedom or choice but solely on the proper arrangement of nature's mechanisms.[21] This means that the problem can be solved even by a nation of devils, provided they have understanding (*Verstand*) (Kant 8: 366, *PP* 335). All that is required is an organization in which the selfish inclinations of these devils collide in such a way as to neutralize their destructive effects – essentially, a system of checks and balances. As Reidar Maliks notes, Kant's argument about devils implicitly refers to his concept of unsocial sociability and illustrates how a republic can arise in the first place (Maliks 2014: 64–65). Nature, in a sense, "wants" a republic to exist, and it achieves this not through duty (which arises only from freedom) but through the direct collision of opposing forces: "[N]ature itself does it, whether we will it or not" (Kant 8: 366, *PP* 335).

In Schiller's terms, we might say that Kant believes the dynamic state can become a republic on its own if it is provided with a proper constitution. Schiller disagrees, asserting that even a properly organized state will not become a republic if its citizens possess only instrumental rationality. That is, Schiller insists that an engagement condition of a republic is more than a proper constitution.

c) An Engagement Condition of the Ethical State

What exactly is required, beyond a proper constitution, for the establishment and maintenance of an ethical state – Schiller's version of a republic? In addressing this question, I disagree with almost all the scholars writing on Schiller's republicanism (Beiser 2005, 2008; Moggach 2007, 2008; Schmidt 2009). The consensus position – henceforth referred to as the *virtue reading* – holds that the engagement condition for Schiller's republic is virtue, sometimes described in terms of patriotism.

The virtue reading can be divided into two versions: a strong and a weak one.[22] According to the *strong virtue reading*, citizens must, through aesthetic education, cultivate their virtue and become *beautiful souls*,[23] such that the

[21] Kant's political views have changed and refined considerably over time. For a detailed discussion on this topic, see Kleingeld 2012. I reconstruct Kant's views as of 1795 based on two works: *On the common saying: That may be correct in theory, but it is of no use in practice* (1793) and *Toward perpetual peace* (1795).

[22] The distinction is mine; other authors do not make it. While I am unsure how best to characterize their positions, I assume, following the principle of charity, that their interpretations align more closely with the *weak virtue reading*, as I find it more convincing.

[23] For a detailed discussion of Schiller's usage of the concept of the beautiful soul and Schiller's theory of virtue, see Reshenin (2022).

moral law is almost entirely internalized by them and incorporated into their nature. Virtue thus understood fulfills the engagement condition in the following way: only beautiful souls can consistently concern themselves with the common good. Consequently, until most citizens have become beautiful souls, the establishment of a republic remains premature. Let us now consider a passage from the fourth *Aesthetic Letter* that seems to support the strong virtue reading:

> If then we are to count on man's moral conduct with as much certainty as we count upon *natural* events, then this conduct must *be* his nature, <...> [and] this can only be accomplished by ensuring that the effects of these two incentives [duty and inclination] in the realm of phenomena **are completely the same**, and that, despite all differences in form, the matter of man's volition remains the same (Schiller 20: 315-6, AL 10, my emphasis (bold)).

The idea that the phenomenal effects of duty and inclination must coincide plays a key role in Schiller's theory of virtue. The *beautiful soul* is characterized by its sensibility being ennobled to such an extent that, whenever the limits of humanity permit, duty and inclination act in harmony, moving the individual in the same direction.

In other passages, Schiller no longer asserts that duty and inclination must coincide in their phenomenal effects. Instead, he suggests that for moral behavior to be possible, duty must influence humans as sensual beings. This requirement is far less demanding: a person may have inclinations that conflict with duty, but her sense of duty must still be capable of manifesting as a force in the phenomenal world that overcomes opposing forces:

> Reason has done what it can by discovering the law and establishing it; it is **the courageous will** and the living feeling that must carry it out. If truth is to gain victory in the conflict with forces [*crafte*], it must first become a force itself, and set up a drive as its proxy [*Sachführer*] in the realm of phenomena; for drives are the only moving forces in the sensual world (Schiller 20: 330-1, AL 26, my emphasis).

This quote is essential to what I term the *weak virtue* reading. In this interpretation, virtue is no longer seen as the ethical and aesthetic perfection inherent in a beautiful soul but rather as a crucial element that enables duty to become

a motivating force. Like Kant,[24] clearly mentioned in the following quote, Schiller often describes this element in terms of courage:

> there must be something in the people's feelings [*Gemüter*] that stands in the way of receiving the truth, no matter how brightly it shines, and of accepting it, no matter how vividly it convinces. A wise old man has sensed this, and it lies hidden in the pregnant statement: *sapere aude*.
>
> *Dare to be wise*. It takes the energy of **courage** [*Muth*] to fight the obstacles that both the indolence of nature [*die Trägheit der Natur*] and the cowardice of the heart [*die Feigheit des Herzens*] put in the way of learning (Schiller 20: 331, AL 27, my emphasis (bold), see also Schiller 26: 298, LtP 132).

Courage is understood here as a commitment to one's principles in the face of external influences. According to the *weak virtue reading*, only by being courageous, i.e. by daring to use their own understanding and overcoming the indolence of nature and the cowardice of the heart, can citizens truly take an interest in the common good. Thus, until they acquire courage through aesthetic education, the establishment of an ethical state, that is, a republic, remains premature. In Aristotelian terms, we can say that the weak virtue reading is not about virtue, but about *enkrateia*, self-control, which enables one to remain true to their principles.

The main reason I reject the *strong virtue reading* is that it implies an anti-Kantian view of the state as an end and of humanity as a means to that end. For Schiller, a beautiful soul represents the ideal of perfected humanity. However, if the establishment of the ethical state requires that its citizens be beautiful souls, it would follow that the unconditional good (a human being in its perfection) becomes merely a means to a conditional good (the state). One might argue that Schiller is abandoning the Kantian position here, treating the state as more significant and fundamental than humanity. Yet there is ample evidence to suggest otherwise – that Schiller is in complete agreement with Kant on this point. For instance, he writes in a letter to Caroline von Beulwitz (November 27, 1788):

> The state is a creature of chance, but man is a necessary being, and by what else is a state great and venerable than by the powers of its individuals? The state is only an effect of human power, only a work of

[24] On the association between courage and virtue in Kant, see Robert B. Louden (2011). See also Anne Margaret Baxley (2010) for a recent systematic discussion of Kant's theory of virtue.

> thought, but man is the source of power himself, and the creator of thought (Schiller 27: 310).

The same point is reiterated in Schiller's historical essay *The Legislation of Lycurgus and Solon*:

> **The state itself is never an end**, it is only important as a condition under which the end of mankind can be fulfilled, and this end of mankind is no other than the development of all the powers of man, progress (Schiller 17: 423, my emphasis).

Schiller criticizes constitutions that permit human progress to be sacrificed for the sake of the state. The last quotation also reveals another problem with the *strong virtue reading*. As we see, Schiller, like Kant, regards the state as a means to promote progress and human development. However, if the state's establishment depends on the existence of fully developed, perfect individuals, it becomes unclear why the state is needed at all, as its supposed purpose would already be fulfilled.

As mentioned, Schiller states that political change requires a "capacity for humanity" (Schiller 20: 378, AL 78), a "moral possibility [*moralische Möglichkeit*]" (Schiller 20: 319, AL 14), or some "third character" that is neither natural nor moral, since moral character "must first be cultivated" (Schiller 20: 378, AL 78). Moral possibility does not represent perfect virtue but merely the potential for moral action. Similarly, the capacity for humanity is far less demanding than the ideal of perfected humanity embodied in the beautiful soul (Schiller 20: 298, GD 161). The third character Schiller associates with moral possibility is neither natural nor moral, meaning that Schiller is not referring here to virtue understood as moral and aesthetic perfection.

This criticism does not undermine the *weak virtue reading*, as it does not claim that humans must achieve moral and aesthetic perfection to establish an ethical state. However, the *weak virtue reading has another problem*: it does not fit well with what Schiller writes about the challenge of modernity in the *Aesthetic Letters*. Namely, Schiller addresses the question of why the French Revolution, despite proper constitutions, numerous writings extolling reason, and stirring speeches about liberty from the tribunes, culminated in *la Terreur*. He argues – making one of his most intriguing departures from Kantian orthodoxy – that people's capacity for humanity was compromised at the phenomenal level:

> That freedom cannot be acted upon is already evident from its mere concept; but that *freedom itself* is an effect of *nature* (this word taken in

> its broadest sense), not a work of man, and from this, it follows immediately that freedom can therefore also be promoted and inhibited by natural means (Schiller 20: 373, AL 73).

The gist of Schiller's argument is that the capacity for humanity depends on the proper connection between sensibility and reason, which he analyzes in terms of the reciprocal interaction between two basic drives: the material and the formal (Schiller 20: 348fn*, AL 45fn*). The lack of this reciprocal interaction arises because people have lived, been educated, and worked under modern conditions characterized by over-specialization and division of labor. By constantly focusing on a very limited set of capacities, modern individuals have greatly contributed to societal development. However, this progress has come at the cost of personal fragmentation.

Schiller identifies two forms of fragmentation: "Man can be at odds with himself in two ways: either as a savage [*Wilder*], his feelings ruling his principles; or as a barbarian [*Barbar*], if his principles destroy his feelings" (Schiller 20: 318, AL 12). Schiller argues that some individuals possess sufficient intellectual capacity to discern the right principles but, due to their disharmonious development, remain unresponsive to them. These modern barbarians lack the courage needed to overcome cowardice and indolence. The *weak virtue reading* accommodates the issue of modern barbarians well: they recognize just and true principles but cannot act on them because of the indolence of nature and the cowardice of the heart. Consequently, they are unable to establish or sustain an ethical state.

However, Schiller also addresses the problem of modern savages.[25] The modern savage is passively ruled by need and natural necessity, to the extent that they are entirely under "the power of the moment [*das Machtwort des Augenblicks*]." For them, the world is not an object for reflection but "mere fate" (Schiller 20: 388, AL 89). This condition stems from two causes. First, there are socio-economic factors: modern savages cannot escape the oppression of need and must devote all their time and energy to survival and the provision of basic needs. Second, like modern barbarians, modern savages are victims of the division of labor and over-specialization. Their capacities are insufficiently developed to enable them to push the world away through reflection or contemplation, which allows the will to distance itself from immediate desires, preventing them from directly determining action: "If desire seizes its object directly, contemplation shifts its object into the

[25] Schiller uses the term in a technical sense: a "modern savage" can be French, German, or a member of any other people. The important condition is that they are moved solely by the material drive, that is, moved solely by feelings, disregarding any principles.

distance" (Schiller 20: 394, AL 95). Modern savages, unable to achieve this reflective distance, remain under the power of the moment and thus cannot establish or maintain an ethical state.

Therefore, according to Schiller, the problem of establishing and maintaining an ethical state cannot be reduced solely to a lack of courage, as the *weak virtue reading* suggests. The problem is that people in the context of modernity, for various reasons, are deprived of their capacity for humanity, finding themselves incapable of individual self-determination. Schiller believes that aesthetic education can restore this capacity: "Beauty is <…> **our second creator** <…> For it gave us nothing more than the capacity for humanity, but leaves the use of this to our own determination of will" (Schiller 20: 378, AL 78, my emphasis). Notably, he does not claim that beauty predisposes individuals to any particular behavior, such as virtue, but only that it enables self-determination. He reiterates this idea elsewhere:

> The transition from the passive condition of sensation to the active one of thought and volition thus occurs no other way than through the middle condition of aesthetic freedom, and although this condition in itself decides nothing either for our insights or for our attitudes, and thus leaves our intellectual and moral value entirely **problematic** [*problematisch*], it is nevertheless the necessary condition under which alone we can attain insight and an attitude (Schiller 20: 383, AL 84, my emphasis).

In this context, 'problematic' means that the value is not yet determined and that its determination is up to a person. Schiller does not suggest that people will become more virtuous under the influence of beauty, nor that their inclinations will necessarily align with duty in their phenomenal effects. His thesis is that beauty enables people to choose and, through choice, exercise self-determination. Only such individuals can establish an ethical state, i.e., a republic. Since only unhindered capacity for humanity makes individual self-determination possible, it becomes a condition for citizens to participate in the life of the republic; in other words, it serves as an engagement condition for the ethical state. I call this interpretation of the engagement condition the *humanity reading*.

The understanding of beauty as our second creator motivates Schiller's program of aesthetic education. In the context of modernity, each individual's humanity becomes fragmented as he devotes all his time to the exercise and cultivation of a narrow set of capacities. The purpose of aesthetic education is not to bring about a temporary change in a person's condition under the influence of aesthetic experience, but to produce a lasting effect,

which is possible only through the formation of capacities or dispositions.[26] This formation can be achieved only through frequent and systematic exposure to aesthetic experiences.

In order to choose, our reactions to passive determinations must not merely be accompanied by reflection, but must be reflection-guided. In other words, our reflection should directly contribute to our favoring one course of action over another. Systematic encounters with art and naturally beautiful objects are intended to restore person's capacity for humanity, first, "by awakening, exercising, and training a power in him to move the sensual world – which otherwise <…> presses upon us as a blind power – into an objective distance" (Schiller 1803); and second, by revealing to him his spiritual vocation and cultivating his resolve (*Entschluß*), which is "needed to overcome the obstacles that the natural indolence of the mind [*Trägheit des Geistes*] and the cowardice of the heart" (Schiller 26: 298, AL 132) present. Art, on the one hand, being fiction and illusion, accustoms us to the reflective distance, thereby freeing us from unnecessary pressure; on the other hand, despite this distance, art touches us, it remains emotionally meaningful to us.[27] The true works of art that approximate the ideal of beauty successfully fulfill both functions. Thus, the *Juno Ludovisi*, as "the feminine divinity demands our reverence <…> [and] enkindles our love; yet just as we surrender ourselves, dissolved, to heavenly charm, [her] heavenly self-sufficiency drives us back" (Schiller 20: 359–60, AL 57).

Finally, I want to show how my interpretation fits with terms such as "moral possibility" and "third character," which Schiller uses in the *Aesthetic Letters* to describe what is lacking for political change. The capacity for humanity enables a person to set her own ends, making moral ends possible for her. By achieving reflective distance from her desires and the power of the moment and being courageous enough to follow her own understanding, a person becomes capable of behavior based on conscious principles, though not necessarily moral ones. I suggest that this transformation is what Schiller refers to as the formation of the third character. This character is no longer purely natural but provides the foundation for striving toward true moral

[26] I thank the anonymous reviewer for prompting me to emphasize more fully the role of aesthetic education specifically, rather than merely beauty, in the restoration of the capacity for humanity. And yet, in view of space limitations, I will postpone a full exposition of all the functions of beauty within aesthetic education to another paper which I am already working on.

[27] The first function is performed by liquefying beauty (*schmelzende Schönheit*), and the second by energetic beauty (*energische Schönheit*), which – following many authors such as Petrus (1993), Pugh (1997), and, with some qualification, Sharpe (1991) and Schmidt (2016) – I take to be Schiller's term for the sublime.

character, i.e., perfect virtue. I speculate that Schiller's concept of the third character is similar to what Kant would later call *character as a way of thinking* in his *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*:

> to have a character signifies that property of the will by which the subject binds himself to definite practical principles that he has prescribed to himself irrevocably by his own reason. **Although these principles may sometimes indeed be false and incorrect**, nevertheless the formal element of the will in general, to act according to firm principles (**not to fly off hither and yon, like a swarm of gnats**), has something precious and admirable in it; for it is also something rare (Kant 7: 292, Ant 389-90, my emphasis).

Note that a character as a way of thinking, for Kant, is not necessarily moral or even good, but it is nonetheless admirable because it is based on conscious principles rather than unconscious impulses. These are precisely the qualities a potential citizen of an ethical state should demonstrate: the ability to take a reflective distance from their desires, to recognize relevant practical principles, and to have the courage to act in accordance with them. This enables them to freely set the end of establishing and maintaining a republic.

d) Schiller as a Modern Republican

In the final subsection, I will address the compatibility problem and show that Schiller's republicanism is modern and that it not only allows but even encourages diversity. Schiller acknowledges that progress is both desirable and unattainable without over-specialization: "the human species could not have progressed in any other way" (Schiller 20: 326, AL 21). He does "not deny the merits which the present race, considered as a whole, and on the scales of reason, may claim before the best in the previous world" (Schiller 20: 322, AL 18). At the same time, Schiller emphasizes the price individuals pay for the progress of humanity as a whole:

> Eternally bound only to a single small fragment of the whole, man forms himself only as a fragment, <...> he never develops the harmony of his being, and instead of expressing humanity in his nature, he becomes merely an imprint of his profession, of his science (Schiller 20: 323, AL 19).

While Schiller often invokes ancient Greece as a model of human wholeness, he believes that ancient solutions cannot achieve the same wholeness under modern conditions. He stresses that if the Greeks had wanted to achieve greater progress, "they too – just as we have had to – were required to

relinquish the totality of their being and pursue truth along separate paths" (Schiller 20: 327, AL 21). Schiller is particularly opposed to any solution that would hinder progress. His main criticism of Lycurgus' legislation, for instance, is that it rendered progress impossible (Schiller 17: 426–7). Thus, Schiller is simultaneously a critic and a defender of modern society. Modern commercial society is the source of antagonism, both between individuals and within each person, which brings humanity into a fragmented condition; but such antagonism – and here Schiller is clearly following Kant (cf. Kant 8:21, IUH 111) – is the only way "[t]o develop the manifold capacities in the human being" (Schiller 20:326, AL 22).

Schiller's commitment to mitigating the negative effects of progress without abolishing it clearly shows his awareness of the compatibility problem. My interpretation of the engagement condition of the ethical state as the capacity for humanity reinforces the view that Schiller's republicanism is modern. By shifting the focus from virtue to freedom of choice, Schiller envisions a different kind of republic – one that respects the freedom of citizens and their right to exercise in diverse ways. Schiller states that "the constitution of a state will be very imperfect if it can bring about unity only through the abolition of diversity" (Schiller 20: 317, AL 11).

To further illustrate this point, I would like to highlight some forms of diversity that Schiller considers unacceptable and acceptable, or even desirable. Predictably, he does not view modern savagery or barbarism as acceptable forms of diversity. Such conditions hinder individual self-determination and must be overcome through socio-political reforms and aesthetic education, which should not replace but rather complement the division of labor, thereby mitigating its negative aspects. That said, Schiller acknowledges that people may differ not only in their economic functions and private interests but also more fundamentally in their anthropological types. In *On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry*, Schiller identifies two broad groups: realists and idealists, neither of which he deems superior to the other (see Schiller 20: 491-503). Schiller uses these terms not in a narrow philosophical or metaphysical sense but to describe two distinct worldviews with differing theoretical and practical implications. In short, it is a distinction between a pragmatic, down-to-earth stance directed toward realistic expectations and prosperity (*Wohlstand*) in general and a more exalted stance grounded in principles and ideals. Schiller highlights the flaws of both groups and, though he identifies as an idealist, warns that corrupt idealism is far more dangerous than corrupt realism. While the latter may lead to stagnation, the former, Schiller argues, results in fantasizing (*Phantasterey*), leading to "an infinite fall

into a bottomless depth, and can only end in complete destruction" (Schiller 20: 503).

A detailed analysis of the differences between realists and idealists lies beyond the scope of this discussion. For now, it suffices to say that Schiller believes both groups should be represented in the ethical state, as only together can they embody the ideal of humanity:

> I remark, in order to prevent any misinterpretation, that in this division it is not at all intended to cause a choice between the two, consequently favoring one to the exclusion of the other. It is precisely this exclusion, which is found in experience, that I fight against; and the result of the present considerations will be the proof that only through the completely equal inclusion of both can the rational concept of humanity be satisfied (Schiller 20: 492-3f*)

What may appear to be a simple desire for conceptual completeness, as Schiller's discussion reveals, also has pragmatic justifications. Idealists strive for freedom and progress, while realists aim for prosperity and happiness. Realists can save the republic when idealists succumb to fantasizing and risk dragging it into the abyss; conversely, idealists will oppose the realists' tendency to settle for pros-perity without progress or freedom (Schiller 20: 497, 502–3).[28] Thus, diversity stands at the very heart of the republic, not merely as an ornament but as a vital source of checks and balances.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I reconstructed Schiller's political philosophy and his ternary typology of states, showing the necessary conditions of each. I challenged the view that Schiller equates a republic with an aesthetic state, arguing instead that the ethical state represents his vision of a republic. Schiller contends that a republic must be established and maintained for its own sake, making it a moral duty. For this reason, he regards the capacity for individual self-determination to be a necessary condition for a republic.

I critiqued the virtue reading of Schiller's republicanism. The strong virtue reading presupposes that individuals are merely a means for the state,

[28] Schiller recognizes that these two anthropological types are oversimplifications and that every individual possesses a combination of idealistic and realistic traits. As Sharpe aptly observes, even a fervent idealist like the Marquis de Posa from Schiller's *Don Carlos* exhibits a degree of realism. Posa distinguishes between "a realizable political goal, namely the protection of the Netherlands from brutal suppression" (Sharpe 1991: 90), and his idealistic vision of a future world founded on the lofty principles of freedom and dignity.

while the weak virtue reading neglects the importance of reflection alongside courage for individual self-determination.

I have proposed the humanity reading, according to which the main obstacle to building a republic is the fragmentation of humanity caused by modern society, with its division of labor and hyper-specialization, which renders people incapable of self-determination and therefore incapable of political participation in the pursuit of the common good. This incapacity manifests itself in two forms: savagery, in which citizens are too weakened and too subordinated to the power of the moment to take reflective distance from the world; and barbarism, in which the indolence of nature and the cowardice of the heart render citizens unable to act in accordance with principles. Beauty, through the program of aesthetic education, helps to resolve both problems by forming in us the paradoxical combination of detachment through reflection with motivational commitment through the awareness of our spiritual vocation and resolve, thereby restoring our capacity for humanity.

Lastly, I defended the view that Schiller's republicanism is distinctly modern, as it recognizes freedom of choice and diversity. Schiller demonstrates that, in a modern republic, diversity not only sustains but actively strengthens the common good, preventing the extremes of complacent stagnation and fanatical, destructive pursuits of progress and freedom. The role of diversity in the ethical and aesthetic states merits further exploration, which I leave for a future study.

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Kant and Schiller's works are identified in quotes by the following abbreviations:

Ant Kant, I. *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*
AL Schiller, F. *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*
GD Schiller, F. *On Grace and Dignity*
GMM Kant, I. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*
IUH Kant, I. *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose*
K Schiller, F. *Kallias or Concerning Beauty. Letters to Gottfried Korner*
LtP Schiller, F. *Letters to Prince Frederick Christian von Augustenburg*
PP Kant, I. *Toward Perpetual Peace*

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