
SUMMARY

FREEDOM AND UTOPIA IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF FRIEDRICH SCHILLER

The book is a monograph of the philosophical thought of Friedrich Schiller. Marek Siemek discusses Schiller's historical, aesthetical and philosophical essays, deliberately skipping his poems and dramas. Siemek assumes, that Schiller's artistic works are well known worldwide, but his philosophical thought is generally unknown (at least, outside Germany) – yet, no less interesting. This book is therefore a portrait of Schiller as a thinker, not as an artist, which is meant not as a contradictory, but as a supplementary point of view.

Chapter One *Young Schiller* presents the young writer against a background of his times – as a pupil of enlightenment's education and ideas, as a product of the Age of Reason. But Schiller is not a typical representative of his age – he sees the limitations of enlightenment's perspective and strives to exceed them. He sees not only the lights of the Age of Lights, but also its shades. Siemek points out two basic ideas of German Enlightenment, which were both points of reference and the limits to exceed for Schiller: first – Kant's idea of Enlightenment as a critical self-consciousness and critical rationalism; second – Goethe's naturalism. These most influential ideas of Schiller's times were to appear soon to be utopias – rational utopia and artistically-naturalistic utopia. Schiller is presented in this chapter as a student of Karlschule in Stuttgart, which was a modern school with antitraditional, rational, progressive programme of education, but also a very oppressive and severe institution. In this school Schiller could have experienced negative aspects of Enlightenment, which he named later „the tyranny of the Reason“. Rational, strict and abstract education leads to solitude and social alienation; lost community (family, nation) seems to be a kind of utopia. Next, Schiller is presented as an author of *The Robbers*, as one of main protagonists of Sturm und Drang („Storm and Drive“) movement. In this stage he expressed his protest against „the tyranny of the Reason“ in idea of genius, independent from any rational and social – including moral – limitations.

In Chapter Two *The History and the Present Times* Siemek discusses Schiller's historical works (written by Schiller as a professor at the University of Jena). Main themes of these historical essays are the same as the themes of Schiller's historical dramas (Dutch war of independence, Thirty Years' War), but the presentation of events and personas in these essays is much more complex than in dramas. In theatrical pieces, historical conflicts are usually veiled by the narrative scheme (a good freedom-fighter against an evil tyrant, rise and fall of a power-thirsty, ambitious military leader). In essays, the historical rations for all main actors (even those most „obscure“) are balanced. Schiller as a historian – opposite to Schiller as a playwright – has a many-sided perspective. As a manifesto of Schiller's philosophy of history Siemek points out the lecture *The Nature and Value of Universal History*. The core of Schiller's considerations on history is the idea of „world history“ or „universal history“ (*Weltgeschichte, Universalgeschichte*). This idea is the key to philosophical (general, abstract) speculations of the history and allows to apply to the historical matters other abstract notions, such as: progress, universal (*weltpürgerlich*) point of view etc. Also some traces of utopian thinking can be found in these historical essays. Namely, as a result of a disappointment with present times, the past can be considered as a „historical utopia“.

In Chapter Three *Between Kant and the Greeks* Siemek discusses Schiller's essays written in 1790s. On the one hand, Schiller joins contemporary German discussion on the Greek ideal of the art, of the beauty and – generally – of the human condition (perfect fulfilment of all human possibilities in the classical Greece). This is so called „German myth of Greece“, initiated with the works by Winckelmann and Lessing. The discussion of the meaning of classical Greece merges with other discussions: on the notions of „nature“ and „culture“ and on the „quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns“. Schiller's position in this discussion is particular: he admits that the classical Greece achieved the height of humanity, but it was based on an unreflective idea of myth; therefore it cannot be anymore an ideal for modern, rational and abstract (although simultaneously much less perfect) era. On the other hand, in the last decade of 18th century Schiller reads thoroughly the works of Immanuel Kant, particularly *Critique of Judgement*. Schiller's attitude towards Kant is complex and ambiguous. Kant's philosophy is for him an inspiration for the aesthetics and anthropology of the tragic. The most interesting and inspiring for Schiller are Kant's reflections on the ideas of the beauty and the sublime, and on the rational and moral autonomy. But he expresses also a reservation: autonomy by Kant is an abstract freedom, the freedom from empirical aspects of human being. For Schiller more important is to show human freedom *in concreto*, in particular acts of humans, which is to be shown in form of tragedy. Unacceptable for Schiller in Kant's philosophy is the idea of supremacy of the abstract reason over all human inclinations, without any regards for pleasure and distress, considered by Schiller as „natural“. Abovementioned supremacy is described as „tyranny of the Reason“. To overcome Kantian dualism of *phenomena* and *noumena*, Schiller defines beauty as „freedom

in phenomena" (*Kallias*). Aesthetics is therefore the way to conciliation of senses and pure reason – two dimensions of human existence, split into two separate spheres in Kant's philosophy. Aesthetics can also conciliate antinomy of particular and universal aspects of human life. Instead of Kantian rational and moral „autonomy“, Schiller offers therefore aesthetical „heautonomy“.

Chapter Four *Aesthetics, ethics, politics* begins with a description of Schiller's attitude towards the French Revolution. From the beginning of the revolution this attitude was cold and critical, and during the Reign of Terror it was outspokenly negative. In the revolutionary terror Schiller saw the fulfilment of the idea of „terror of the Reason“. Opposing the revolutionary ideas of political (and compulsory, i.e. violent) introduction of freedom, he formulated a programme of aesthetic education (*Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*). Siemek focuses on the interpretation of *Sixth Letter*, as the core of Schiller's philosophy of history. Deliberations on links between Schiller's criticism of revolutionary „terror of the Reason“ and his criticism of Kantian „tyranny of the Reason“ and „despotism of laws“ are probably the most important part of Siemek's book. In this text Schiller presents new form of utopia – „aesthetic state“, based not on rational and moral obligations, but on free play (or game, *Spiel*) of aesthetic impressions and experiences between „beautiful humans“. The ideal in this version of utopia is therefore „beautiful humanity“. Main rule in this free aesthetic play is creating beautiful appearances (*Schein*). According to Schiller, political utopia can be designed only as an aesthetic utopia. Free play of beautiful appearances is the only way to establish political, civil freedom. Aesthetic education is the best school of judgement – not only aesthetic judgement, but any judgement, including social and political relations.

Chapter Five *Nature, Culture, Art* is dedicated to the interpretation of Schiller's last main philosophical essay – *On Naive and Sentimental Poetry*. Naive poetry refers to ancient, Greek ideal, but also to Goethe – its inspiration comes directly from nature. Sentimental poetry means modern art, oriented to sentiments and culture. The description of these two kinds of literature is a summary of other oppositions considered formerly by Schiller. Siemek stresses (which is significant for his interpretation) Schiller's suggestion that naïve and sentimental poetry can be also translated into the opposition of labour and speculation. It can be regarded as an early formula of social division of labour and a germ of theory of social classes. Schiller doesn't place himself in any of these two kinds of poetry. His ideal lies in overcoming all the oppositions expressed in the ideas of naïve and sentimental poetry – which is another form of utopia.

Texts included in this edition are compilation of Siemek's doctoral thesis (1970), popular monography of Schiller based on this thesis (1970) and some new drafts written in 2006, when Siemek was working on a new book on Schiller.