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## THE IDEA OF THE EUROPEAN UNION UNDER THE LIGHT OF KANT'S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

### Abstract

The present paper examines, in a historical and systematic manner, the fundamental principles of Kantian philosophy that have contributed and continue to inspire the idea of the European Union, with particular emphasis placed primarily on the definitive articles of *Perpetual Peace*. Kant presents his vision of creating a federalism of free states, guaranteed by republican institutions, which alludes to the current European Union. He also emphasizes the importance of hospitality through encouraging inclusive policies. Furthermore, it is important to note that by enshrining the legal protection of freedom of speech, he aims to uphold and reinforce political ties, safeguard human rights, and facilitate a free exchange of ideas. In brief, Kant argues that establishing an ideal political constitution is contingent upon resolving the issue of legal relations between states. Thus, the former cannot be successfully addressed without first resolving the latter.

Keywords: Cosmopolitanism; European Union; Freedom of Speech; Kantian Political Philosophy; Perpetual Peace

## DIE IDEE DER EUROPÄISCHEN UNION IM LICHT VON KANTS POLITISCHER PHILOSOPHIE

### Zusammenfassung

Diese Arbeit untersucht die grundlegenden Prinzipien der kantischen Philosophie, die zur Idee der Europäischen Union beigetragen haben und sie weiterhin inspirieren. Im Fokus stehen die definitiven Artikel des „Ewigen Friedens“, in denen Kant

die Vision eines Föderalismus freier Staaten skizziert, der durch republikanische Institutionen gestützt wird und die heutige Europäische Union in Erinnerung rufen könnte. Darüber hinaus betont er die Bedeutung der Gastfreundschaft und deren Förderung durch inklusive Politiken. Die rechtliche Verankerung der Meinungsfreiheit wird als zentraler Mechanismus zur Stärkung politischer Bindungen, zum Schutz der Menschenrechte und zur Förderung des freien Austauschs von Ideen analysiert. Zusammenfassend argumentiert Kant, dass die Errichtung einer idealen politischen Verfassung von der Lösung der rechtlichen Beziehungen zwischen Staaten abhängt, da die erstere nicht erfolgreich umgesetzt werden kann, ohne die letztere zuvor zu klären.

Schlüsselwörter: Kosmopolitismus; Europäische Union; Meinungsfreiheit; kantischen politische Philosophie; Ewigen Friedens

## Introduction

This paper aims to explore the concept of the European Union by examining it through the lens of Kant's political philosophy. The first two chapters will examine the concepts of freedom of speech, political liberty, and the liberal state as articulated in the Kantian corpus. The third chapter will focus on the definitive articles of *Perpetual Peace* and their contribution to the foundational principles of the European Union. In the fourth chapter, the significance of the regulatory nature of the Kantian corpus in relation to the European ideal will be discussed. Finally, I will delve into how Kantian philosophy influenced various thinkers (specifically Schiller) and the idea of the European Union.

Before addressing these issues, I will refer to a confession that Kant wrote in 1765, which he did not intend for publication. In it, he admits:

I myself am a researcher by inclination. I feel the entire thirst for cognition and the eager restlessness to proceed further in it, as well as the satisfaction at every acquisition. There was a time when I believed this alone could constitute the honor of mankind, and I despised the rabble who knows nothing. *Rousseau* has set me right. This blinding prejudice vanishes, I learn to honor human beings, and I would feel by far less useful than the common laborer if I did not believe that this consideration could impart a value to all others in order to establish the rights of humanity (Kant 2011, 20:44, p. ix).

In the announcement for the organization of his lectures during the winter semester of the 1765-66 academic year, Kant states that in his approach to ethics, he always begins with a historical and philosophical examination of

what occurs before demonstrating what ought to occur (Kant 1992, 2:311, p. 298).<sup>1</sup> In his Review of Herder's Ideas, Kant asserts that the greatest possible degree is the product of a state constitution ordered in accordance with concepts of human right (Kant 2007, 8:64, p. 141). I mention these thoughts to clarify that the issue of moral progress and the establishment of politics and law, especially in relation to human rights, preoccupied Kant from the pre-critical period and continued to do so until the end of his life.<sup>2</sup>

## 1. The Role of Politics in Moral Progress

In the second part of "The Conflict of the Faculties", Kant addresses the question, "Is the human race continually progressing toward the better?" He identifies law as the guiding thread of moral progress: not an ever-growing quantity of morality with regard to intention, but an increase of the products of legality in dutiful actions whatever their motives (Kant 1996, 7:91, p. 307). Kant does not ignore any of psychological and social factors that contribute to subject formation.<sup>3</sup> Law is not directed towards a society of angels but towards human beings, who are finite creatures subject to

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<sup>1</sup> Parenthetical references within the text refer to the edition of Kant's Collected Works published by the German Akademie-Ausgabe. The first number indicates the volume of the Academy edition, while the number following the colon refers to the page. As an exception, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, references are made to the first edition of 1781 (A) and the second edition of 1787 (B). Furthermore, the page number of the English translation is provided (I follow the translations in The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant) along with its year of publication; to find full titles, the reader should refer directly to the year of publication in the references.

<sup>2</sup> Below, I will paraphrase a phrase from Rawls, which I believe is particularly fitting for this context: One must not lose sight of the full scope of his view and take the previous and the later works into consideration. Unfortunately, there is no commentary on Kant's political theory as a whole; perhaps it would prove impossible to write (Rawls 1971, p. 221). In addition to major works from the critical period, minor works from the pre-critical period can also be considered, as they offer valuable insights into the philosopher's intellectual trajectory, particularly within the socio-historical context of his era, and the factors that influenced his subsequent work. (see Skalidakis 2025, pp. 188–189)

<sup>3</sup> The empirical factors determining rational subjects pertain to the non-rational (or impure) aspect of ethics. In order to clarify the term "non-rational", it is important to emphasize that the present study does not imply that the subjects in question are irrational or non-rational, but rather that they are not entirely clear or a priori, as they include empirical elements. For a more comprehensive analysis of this issue (see Loudon 2000). The areas of impure ethics developed in Kant's work can be found in the next footnote.

inclinations and personal reasons. It is founded on the equality and autonomy of the person, regulating only external behavior. When Kant compares humans to “crooked wood” (Kant 2007, 8:23, p. 113; Kant 1996, 6:100, p. 135), this occurs from the perspective of a “pragmatic anthropology”. From this perspective, Kant approaches humans not according to what they have done and continuously do, but according to what they can do as free agents (Henckmann 2004, p. 779).

How can moral progress be achieved?<sup>4</sup> When examining the reasoning presented by Kant in *Perpetual Peace* regarding the nation of devils, it becomes evident that even self-centered individuals can experience moral progress and refinement. How is this accomplished? When two devils agree to follow the law, acknowledging that they both gain advantages from their collaboration, they develop a strong desire to stick to it (Voutsakis 2022). Hence, we expect that a well-governed society will foster the ethical development of its citizens (Kant 1996, 8:366, p. 335). Nevertheless, Kant asserts that the greatest problem faced by the human species is the achievement of a civil society that uniformly upholds the principles of justice. This problem is at the same time the most difficult and the latest to be solved by the human species (Kant 2007, 8:22-24, pp. 112-114).

## 2. The Freedom of Speech as a Touchstone

Kant argued that the purpose of his philosophy is to serve the restoration of human rights. The human being, as a subject of law who possesses rights, should not be treated as a means but as an end-in-itself. In his final work, the *Opus Postumum*, Kant repeatedly emphasizes that the human being is a person, meaning a being who has rights that can be acknowledged (Kant 1995, 21:38, p. 239; 22:57, p. 215, etc.). However, I wonder: How, then,

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<sup>4</sup> The question of moral progress is one of the most significant challenges faced by scholars of Kantian philosophy, as it pertains to various domains such as law, politics, anthropology, psychology, education, and the philosophy of history. In addressing the political implications of Kant’s philosophy, I have presented a paper at the International Conference “Immanuel Kant in Research and Educational Space” held at the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn. The title of my presentation was “The Issue of Moral Progress in Kant’s Political Philosophy”. Additionally, I have explored the role of Kantian philosophy in a regulatory capacity, a subject that is pertinent to these issues. This article was published under the same title in the journal *Humanities and Natural Sciences* 31 (2025), pp. 187–207.

can these rights be claimed? Not only against others but also against state sovereignty.

According to Kant,

his age is the age of criticism, to which everything must submit. Legislation through its majesty commonly seek to exempt itself from it. But in this way, it excites a just suspicion against itself, and cannot lay claim to that unfeigned respect that reason grants only to that which has been able to withstand its free and public examination. (Kant 1998, A XI, pp. 100-101).

He also points out that

Reason must subject itself to critique in all its undertakings and cannot restrict the freedom of critique through any prohibition without damaging itself and drawing upon itself a disadvantageous suspicion. Now there is nothing so important because of its utility, nothing so holy, that it may be exempted from this searching review and inspection, which knows no respect for persons. The very existence of reason depends upon this freedom, which has no dictatorial authority, but whose claim is never anything more than the agreement of free citizens (Kant 1998, A 738/B 767-A 739/B 768, p. 643).

As Kant suggests, no one should deny the people the freedom of the pen (Kant 1996, 8:304 p. 302). While freedom of speech or writing may be taken by superior force, the freedom of thought can never be taken away. Therefore, it is reasonable to question whether, and with what justification, it is possible to think if we do not think collectively with others, to whom we communicate our thoughts and who, in turn, share theirs with us (Kant 1996, 8:144, p. 16). One of the most significant topics addressed by philosophy during the Enlightenment period pertains to freedom of the press and political tolerance. In his renowned essay, "Of the Liberty of the Press", Hume played a pivotal role in shaping Kantian thought by extolling the virtues of freedom of the press, asserting that it is "Nothing so effectual as the liberty of the press, by which all the learning, wit, and genius of the nation may be employed on the side of freedom, and everyone be animated to its defence" (Hume 1987, p. 30). In this passage, Hume also pays special attention to the United Provinces of the Netherlands, which, he argues, provide an example of the coexistence of tolerance, freedom, and good governance.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> The role played by the United Provinces of the Netherlands, also known as the Republic of Letters, is significant not only from a philosophical perspective but also within the broader context of European politics. It is worth mentioning both the example of Spinoza (particularly the 20th chapter of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*: "It is

Hence, what is the concept of political freedom? “Sapere aude!” (Kant 1996, 8:35, p. 17) is a call to action during the Enlightenment era, urging individuals to have the courage to think independently and rely on their own reasoning abilities. The cosmopolitan notion of Kantian philosophy can be achieved by employing public use of speech. Reason requires the presence of external freedom to guarantee the process of cultivation. Reason must be communicated for we need a *criterium veritatis externum* (Koukouzelis 2012, p. 111). The concept of “Sapere aude!” represents a social process, as progress and cultivation can only be achieved when we communicate our thoughts with others as equal members of a commonwealth. Any actions related to the rights of others, whose guiding principles are not compatible with publicity, are unjust. This is because all principles that require publicity to achieve their purpose must align with both justice and politics (Kant 1996, 8:386, p. 351). The public use of reason means using one’s own reason freely to express one’s personal belief about the truth of a matter. Kant recognizes the right to dissent as fundamental, as it represents the negative way of testing the maxims of the Categorical Imperative (Koukouzelis 2012, p. 111-112). The touchstone of whatever can be decided upon as law for a people lies in the question: whether a people could impose such a law upon itself (Kant 1996, 8:39 p. 20). A question arises: why does the form of government concern us on an individual level? The answer to this question can be found below, where it will be demonstrated that the government of a country must be a democratic polity in order to be able to participate in a federalism of free states, such as the European Union.

### 3. The Definitive Articles of *Perpetual Peace* and the European Union

The three definitive articles for perpetual peace among states are analyzed both in *Perpetual Peace* and in the *Metaphysics of Morals* and form the foundation of Kantian political philosophy at both the level of state governance and in international relations between countries.

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shown that in a free commonwealth every man may think as he pleases, and say what he thinks”) and of Locke, who was active in the Netherlands (see Colie 1960). Below, we will see that Kant himself praises the federation formed by the United Provinces, expressing the hope that it will extend across the entire European continent. Furthermore, for the significance of freedom of speech and public discourse (see Kant, *An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?*).

As previously mentioned, an essential condition for a country to join a federalism of free states is the democratic polity; therefore, the first article states: The civil constitution in every state shall be republican (Kant 1996, 8:349, p. 322). Republicanism is the modern form of parliamentary republic as presented by Kant. Parliamentary republic is the system of government in most European Union countries. The EU's commitment to democratic values and human rights reflects Kant's belief that peace is more likely to prevail in societies governed by republican principles (Simpson 2018). A necessary condition is the concept of the citizen as free and equal; through subjects who publicly use their own reason, even on legislative matters, Kant believes that improvements in state constitutions and reforms for better political institutions can be achieved (Kant 1996, 8:41, p. 21). Kant argues that external freedom is defined as follows: it is the authorization to obey no laws other than those to which one has been able to give one's consent (Kant, 1996, 8:350, p. 323). What does Kant consider to be the perfect constitution? The Republican constitution guarantees a) external freedom, b) common legislation for all subjects, and c) legal equality for citizens.

For the completion of the Enlightenment, Kantian philosophy emphasizes the importance of educating citizens in the law. The ultimate goal of the human race is moral perfection. How should we seek this perfection, and where should we hope to find it? Kant's answer is through education. However, the educational process should be adapted to the entire civil society and would be more effective if it were organized so that talents develop alongside the formation of character in a moral manner. Only if all members of the state receive similar education will we achieve the necessary stability. Can we hope for this? Once human nature attains the highest possible perfection, justice and equality will prevail over the power of authority. This is the highest moral perfection to which humanity can hope to achieve (Kant 1997, 27:471, p. 218; Kant 2007, 9:452, p. 437).

In order to comprehend the significance that Kant attributes to education, it is necessary to consider the commendations he offers for the cosmopolitan nature of Basedow's institution. He asserts that the Dessau Educational Institute (Philanthropinum) is dedicated to the well-being of humanity and, as such, is relevant to every citizen of the world. Furthermore, he emphasizes that it should be disseminated across all nations to reap the benefits of education, through which we can witness the true moral progress of humankind. Besides, he points out that this educational institution must arouse Europe's interest and motivate its active involvement in its

educational programmes (Kant 2007, 2:448, p. 101). Consequently, it can be concluded that Kant's perspective on educational institutions is oriented towards a European perspective and collaboration. Besides, he believes that the Abbé de St Pierre's proposal for a general senate of nations would, if carried out, be the moment at which humanity would take a great step towards perfection (Kant 1997, 27:470, p. 221).

Therefore, according to the second article, the rights of nations should be grounded in a federalism of free states. This league does not look to acquiring any power of a state but only to preserving and securing the freedom of a state itself and of other states in league with it, but without there being any need for them to subject themselves to public laws and coercion under them (Kant 1996, 8:354, pp. 325-326). In brief, Kant argues that establishing an ideal political constitution is conditional to resolving the issue of legal relations between states. Thus, the former cannot be successfully addressed without first resolving the latter. Kant presents his vision of creating a federalism of free states, guaranteed by republican institutions which alludes to the current European Union. In his *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant praises the assembly of States General at the Hague, where ministers of most of the courts of Europe and even of the smallest republics, were represented. This gathering exemplified their vision of Europe as a single confederated state (Kant 1996, 6:350 p. 488).

The third article is strictly connected to Kant's upbringing in Königsberg, which was a vibrant commercial hub, an important port, and a cosmopolitan university town, played a significant role in shaping his intellectual development.<sup>6</sup> Cosmopolitan right shall be limited to conditions of universal hospitality, which provides citizens with the opportunity to present themselves through free communication and free trade (Kant 1996, 8:357-360,

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<sup>6</sup> For more on the contribution of Kant's birthplace to his intellectual development, see the biography of the philosopher (Kuehn 2001, pp. 55-60) in the following chapter: Königsberg: "A Fit Place for Acquiring ... Knowledge of the World"? and (Rohlf 2024). In addition, the footnote in the *Anthropology* is also significant: "A large city such as Königsberg on the river Pregel, which, is the center of a kingdom, in which the provincial councils of the government are located, which has a university (for cultivation of the sciences) and which has also the right location for maritime commerce - a city which, by way of rivers, has the advantages of commerce both with the interior of the country and with neighboring and distant lands of different languages and customs, can well be taken as an appropriate place for broadening one's knowledge of human beings as well as of the world, where this knowledge can be acquired without even traveling" (Kant 2007, 7:121-122, p. 232).

pp. 328-330). The right to present oneself for society, belongs to all human beings; Kantian philosophy is based on a conception of reason that requires a cosmopolitan social framework to be realized (Koukouzelis 2019). The principles of tolerance and cosmopolitan citizenship, as outlined by Kant, could contribute to the embracing of diversity, concerning the guarantee of perpetual peace.

In an article of his, Brown rightly argues that the relationship between Kant and the European Union has not been extensively researched, with which I fully agree. At this point, however, I would disagree with the argument presented in his article; he points out that we can only trace connections between Kantian philosophy and the European Union in the first two articles of *Perpetual Peace* (Brown 2014).

In my opinion, Kant's vision on trade can be seen in European Union policies: a common monetary policy, and a common currency, the euro. A single currency offers many advantages: it makes it easier for companies to conduct cross-border trade, the economy becomes more stable, and consumers have more choice and opportunities. The significance of free trade is particularly emphasized in eighth proposition of «Idea» (Kant 2007, 8:29, p. 117). Moreover, this article stipulates that a foreigner should find hospitality when visiting the union of nations. EU members can travel freely and work wherever they want within the Union Countries (Vampa 2016, p. 28). Through Schengen, the European border-free zone, EU citizens can stay in another EU country as a tourist for up to three months, fulfilling the Kantian cosmopolitan right of hospitality.

At this point I would like to emphasise that Kant limits himself to the right of visitation. Derrida believes that we need to revise and broaden the Kantian perspective so that through the inclusion of migrants, refugees and other social groups, they are given the opportunity to be recognised as equal members of the respective state (Derrida 1997). European policy has extended the right of hospitality, so that EU citizens can live in another member state for work, with the right to be treated in the same way as nationals of that country.<sup>7</sup> Entrepreneurs benefit from freedom of establishment and

<sup>7</sup> According to data provided on the website of the European Parliament, closing internal EU borders again would impose heavy costs and impede cross-border commuting for 1.7 million people. On the contrary, the Schengen agreement allows millions of people to travel across an internal EU border every day. Free movement may in practice entail different rights for different categories of people, from tourists to families. [Accessed: 2025-01-06]. Available at: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/topics/en/article/20190612STO54307/schengen-a-guide-to-the-european-border-free-zone>

students have the right to study anywhere in the EU. The EU's approach to hospitality and the treatment of refugees can be seen as inconsistent with Kant's ideals of universal hospitality and moral obligation to assist those in need. This highlights the complexities of applying Kantian philosophy to modern political structures, where ideals may clash with practical realities (Gani 2017). The EU's commitment to fostering a sense of European identity and solidarity among its citizens aligns with Kant's cosmopolitan vision, promoting understanding and cooperation across national boundaries (Caranti 2018).

In my view, the question that naturally arises is not whether Kantian cosmopolitanism is confined to the EU, but rather whether cosmopolitanism can escape Eurocentric teleology. This would ultimately require inverting the relationship between unity and diversity in the Kantian worldview (Nicolaidis 2020, pp. 1318-1319). Besides, Kant points out that the union of nations would be the ideal of the right of nations as the completion of society in view of outer relationships (Kant 2010, 19:99, p. 419).

#### 4. Teleology and the Regulative Nature of Kantian Philosophy

Kant points out that no theory allows us to demonstrate that the world is evolving for the better. There is no objective reality from a theoretical standpoint; this is based on the fact that we do not have access to our motives, as "the depths of the human heart are unfathomable" (Kant 1996, 6:447, p. 567). Furthermore, even moral progress remains perpetually incomplete because, in the concepts of the relationship between cause and effect, we are limited to temporal terms (Kant 1996, 6:67, p. 109).

Kant does not approach the progress of the human species as a fact that can be scientifically known, but rather as a regulative ideal, a matter of faith and hope (Kant 2002, 20:307, p. 394). The regulative character of Kant's historical-philosophical writings is evident in works such as "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim", "On the Common Say: That May be Correct in Theory, But It Is of No Use in Practice", "The End of All Things", and others. Practical reason posits moral progress as a hypothesis or possibility that can be conceived. A philosophical endeavor to process universal history according to a plan of nature, aiming at the perfect political union within the species, should be considered both feasible and beneficial for this purpose of nature (Kant 2007, 8:29, p. 118).

If political philosophy cannot assume that the human species is progressing, then the entire transcendental philosophy risks remaining a wonderful but impractical idea. Kant believes that if we focus solely on the polity and its laws, we will observe that there always remains a seed of enlightenment that becomes more developed after each revolution, preparing us for a higher level of improvement. However, until perpetual peace is achieved, if it is indeed possible, we can ensure through politics the protection of freedom of speech, human rights, and the free exchange of ideas. Even if it is not feasible to become a good person, at least we can ensure that one remains a good citizen (Kant 1996, 8:366, p. 335).

In *Perpetual Peace*, Kant attempts to explain how humanity is progressively moving toward a cosmopolitan ideal, and that nature itself guarantees the eventual predominance of justice and peace. Given that humanity is advancing towards improvement, he hopes that war will be abolished, and a polity based on principles of law will be established.

In his essay “On the Common Say: That May be Correct in Theory, But It Is of No Use in Practice”, he argues that the European Union is not a mere chimera but a feasible idea. As Kant critically observes, many regard

the *balance of power in Europe* as nothing more than a fantasy, like Swift’s house that the builder had constructed in such perfect accord with all the laws of equilibrium that it collapsed as soon as a sparrow alighted upon it.<sup>8</sup> But, it will be said, states will never submit to coercive laws of this kind; and a proposal for a universal state of nations to whose power all individual states should voluntarily accommodate themselves so as to obey its laws - however good it may sound in the theory of an Abbé St. Pierre or of a Rousseau - still does not hold in practice; and so it has always been ridiculed by great statesmen, and still more by heads of state, as an academic and childish idea emerging from the schools (Kant 1996, 8:313, p. 309).<sup>9</sup>

However, Kant argues that we must assume it as a regulative ideal. Although no teleology can compensate for the absence of theory, where we cannot rely on theoretical principles, we must begin with a teleological principle (Kant 2007, 8:157, p. 195) to reconstruct and ground our idea

<sup>8</sup> Jonathan Swift (1667 – 1745) was an Irish satirist, essayist, political pamphleteer, poet, and cleric at St. Patrick’s Cathedral in Dublin. This anecdote is often linked to Swift and is used as a metaphor to suggest that the house was already poorly constructed—so much so that the slightest additional weight, even something as light as a bird, caused its collapse. The house wasn’t destroyed by the sparrow itself; rather, the foundation or structure had been so weak for a long time that it couldn’t bear even a minor load.

<sup>9</sup> Reference to Abbé St. Pierre and Rousseau (see Kant 2007, 8:24, p. 114).

through the lens of practical reason. But are not these ideas (such as Plato's idea of a republic, for example) all mere figments of the brain? By no means. For I can set up this or that case so as to accord with my idea. Thus a ruler, for example, can set up his state to accord with the idea of the most perfect republic, in order to bring his state nearer to perfection (Kant 1996, 28:993, p. 341). Even in the educational process, Kant argues that a plan for a theory of education is a sublime ideal, and there is no harm in not being able to fully realise it. However, the foundation of this plan must be established cosmopolitically (Kant 2007, 9:445, p. 440).

## 5. Kantian and Schillerian Philosophy: Their Contribution to the European Union<sup>10</sup>

Kant was influenced by Abbé de Saint Pierre<sup>11</sup> and especially by Jean Jacques Rousseau<sup>12</sup>. However, *Perpetual Peace*, this small work on ethics, philosophy of history, philosophy of religion, and political philosophy, did shape many thinkers.

John Rawls, in his work *Law of Peoples*, adheres to Kantian principles of perpetual peace (Rawls 1993, p. 46). Derrida's cosmopolitanism draws on this Kantian cosmopolitan ideal (Derrida 1997). In relation to the European Union and freedom of speech, these ideas have profoundly shaped Habermas' philosophy.<sup>13</sup> Arendt detects elements of political philosophy even within Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (Arendt 1992), while

<sup>10</sup> This chapter has been published in a more extensive form as a standalone article entitled "Art of Politics Under the Light of Kant's and Schiller's Writings" in the journal *Studia Philosophica Kantiana*.

<sup>11</sup> A Project for Setting an Everlasting Peace in Europe [Le Projet pour rendre la paix perpétuelle en Europe] work by Saint-Pierre and (Thomson 1994, p. 44).

<sup>12</sup> Rousseau briefly develops his ideas on the creation of a free federal union among states primarily in *The Social Contract*. In the ninth and final chapter (which consists of a single paragraph and is titled "Conclusion"), he systematically refers to his next literary endeavor, which falls within the scope of his political philosophy: After laying down the principles of political right and attempting to found the State on this basis, it still remains for us to strengthen it in its foreign relations; which would include the law of nations, commerce, the right of war and conquests, public law, alliances, negotiations, treaties, etc. (Rousseau 2002, p. 254). We can conclude that Kant followed Rousseau's political philosophy; he first considered the internal politics of each respective state as a prerequisite for international relations.

<sup>13</sup> Of particular interest is the article signed by the two philosophers (see Habermas and Derrida 2003).

Saner and O'Neill explore these themes in his central epistemological work, *Critique of Pure Reason* (see Saner 1973; O'Neill 1990).

However, I will focus primarily on Schiller's philosophy. In *Aesthetic Education*, he asserts that most of his arguments are grounded in Kantian principles (Schiller 2004, First Letter). In the *Kallias letters*, he contends that "it is certain that no mortal has spoken a greater word than this Kantian word, which also encapsulates his whole philosophy: determine yourself from within yourself, which forms the basis of his entire philosophical framework" (Schiller 2002, p. 153). In a letter to Goethe, he expresses his belief in Kant's philosophy and commends the open-ended approach of his research methodology, which is rooted in the exploration of public sphere (Schiller 1943, NA 27:74). In addition, Schiller's aesthetic theory was based on the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, which greatly impacted him.<sup>14</sup> But Kant himself also mentions that he agrees with Schiller on the most important principles. (Kant 1996, 6:23, p. 72).<sup>15</sup> In his "Second Letter" of *Aesthetic Education*, Schiller uses Kantian terminology to portray individuals as

<sup>14</sup> Schiller was deeply influenced by Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* and, in consequence, interpreted freedom as beauty in phenomenal appearance. He was most concerned with the influence of art and beauty on rational life throughout history. Schiller argued that to the extent that the sensuous will comes to recognize the true nature of beauty, the soul is transformed into beauty itself. In this state, the moral and rational wills cease to conflict and begin to enter into harmonious accord (Dieter 2003, p. 75).

<sup>15</sup> Regarding Schiller's critique of Kantian philosophy, I have presented a paper titled "Art of Politics Under the Light of Kant's and Schiller's Writings" at the International Conference "After Kant: What Do Art and Literature Owe to Kant?" organized by Charles University in Prague. Specifically, Schiller mentions that "the rigidity of Kantian moral philosophy in which the idea of duty is portrayed with severity which frightens all the Graces away. According to Schiller, individuals must integrate both pleasure and duty. He should willingly adhere to his rational principle. Kant is known as the Draco of his era. However, what is the appropriate methodology? Schiller identifies himself with the lawgiver Solon, whom he compares himself to. This identification is not coincidental; Solon, besides being a philosopher and legislator, was also a poet (see Wilm 1906, p. 285; Schiller 1992, p. 366). In contrast to the rigidity of Kantian ethics, Schiller presents the concept of the beautiful soul, which combines aestheticism and reason, as well as vocation and duty. Schiller argues that individuals with a weak reason might easily attempt to seek moral perfection on the path of a gloomy and monkish asceticism (Schiller 1992, p. 365). Nevertheless, he contends that Kant's subjective view was a result of the prevailing intellectualism. When examining the *Xenions* passage, which was written together by the author and Goethe, we can observe the author's subtle critique of the rigidity of Kantian ethics: the author expresses a willingness to assist their friends, but laments that their actions are driven by personal emotions, leading to concerns about their own virtue (Goethe and Schiller 1915, p. 122). However, in this particular study, my aim is to

human beings and citizens of the world, urging active participation in the political arena where the destiny of humanity is being determined (Schiller 2004, Second Letter). If we are to solve that political problem in practice, we should follow the path of aesthetics, since it is through Beauty that we arrive at Freedom.

Schiller argues that the ultimate goal of humanity is progress, which can be achieved by means of the state. Civilization must free men. The objective of *Die Horen*<sup>16</sup> magazine's announcement is to bring together the politically fragmented world by promoting the ideals of truth and beauty (Schiller 1974, pp. 1000-1001). According to Schiller, the most perfect of all works of art, is the building up of true political freedom within a liberal state. He underscores the pivotal role of intellectual freedom in fostering moral progress. To enlighten individuals, the adoption of the maxim "Sapere aude!" (dare to be wise) is urged (Schiller 2004, Eighth Letter).

The central idea of Schiller's Aesthetics is the notion of the "aesthetic state". The mission is to free from the constraints of individualism and self-interest. It aims to elevate them to the level of universal Reason. Ultimately, it seeks to take them from the realm of natural necessity to the realm of morality, freedom, truth, and happiness. Another aspect of the aesthetic state is its potential social, political, and historical value. It represents a "pure democracy" or an ideal state that may not have been achieved yet. However, as a leading principle, a practical ideal, or even a utopia, it already holds credibility (Androulidakis 2008, p. 136). Habermas found in Schiller's idea of an aesthetic state a vision of a "communicative, community-building, solidarity-giving force of art" (Habermas 1985, pp. 59–64), in which art is capable of "revolutionizing the conditions of mutual understanding" (Habermas, 1985, pp. 46-49): a vision that, however problematic, he sees as a source of insight into the nature of modern politics (Moland 2021).

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focus more on the similarities between their theories and how these influenced the idea of the European Union.

<sup>16</sup> In ancient Greek mythology, they were a trio of fraternal goddesses known as the Hours. The name of the magazine he managed ("Die Horen") was derived from these mythological figures. The three sisters were named Eunomia, Dike, and Eirene. The three sisters in question were offspring of Themis, the goddess associated with law, and Zeus, the god associated with force. The three sisters welcomed Aphrodite, the goddess of beauty, in Cyprus. Schiller's view of the relationship between law and beauty is linked to this myth. Beauty is freedom in appearance. (see Skalidakis 2025, pp. 155–157)

## Conclusion

As we have seen, freedom of speech is one of the fundamental principles promoted by Kantian philosophy and serves as a prerequisite for any form of progress. However, as we have also observed, this can only be realized within the framework of a democratic system of governance. Guided by this principle, the importance of philosophizing and giving an account (*λόγον διδόναι*) has been highlighted, along with their contribution to fostering socialization and integration into civil society—particularly concerning issues that concern humanity, both at the state and international levels.

Referring to Kantian argumentation, both its timeliness and its diachronicity should be highlighted. These two characteristics manifest themselves in the verbalization of opinions on political issues that may facilitate institutional improvement, and in the safeguarding and understanding of citizens' rights in both their interpersonal relations and their relationship with State sovereignty. Additionally, these aspects are evident in the education of citizens in law and in the cosmopolitan right of hospitality.

Furthermore, we have seen that Kant's views largely align with those of Schiller. In his famous essay on Schiller, Thomas Mann asserts that Schiller's plays symbolize human freedom. Specifically, Mann argues that *Don Carlos* represents the freedom of Holland, *The Virgin of Orleans* represents the freedom of France, and *William Tell* represents the freedom of Switzerland (Mann 2002, p. 77). In his little essay "The Theatre as a Moral Institution", Schiller asserts that by obtaining a common national play, we are going to create a unified national community (Schiller 1802, pp. 190-191). Cassirer points out that with its prospect on this goal of human history, in which the idea of freedom is to find its concrete fulfillment and its empirical political actualization, Kant's philosophical activity comes to a close (Cassirer 1983, p. 407).

To conclude, Kant envisions perpetual peace through the formation of a federalism of free states. On the contrary, Schiller desires the building of a political system that values beauty and aesthetics. The establishment of the European Union might be compared to Kant's concept of a federalism of free states, guaranteed by republican institutions, representing the peak of the European Union. Kantian philosophy has demonstrated that the European Union is not a mere chimera but, on the contrary, an idea that can (and therefore must) be realized. Schiller's contribution is related to the seal of the European Union pertains to its aesthetic aspect: it represents the

selected anthem for the European Union, which is the poem “Ode to Joy” by Schiller, put to music by Beethoven.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> The melody used to symbolize the EU comes from the Ninth Symphony composed in 1823 by Ludwig Van Beethoven, when he set music to the “Ode to Joy”, Friedrich von Schiller’s lyrical verse from 1785. The anthem symbolises not only the European Union but also Europe in a wider sense. The poem “Ode to Joy” expresses Schiller’s idealistic vision of the human race becoming brothers - a vision Beethoven shared. In 1972, the Council of Europe adopted Beethoven’s “Ode to Joy” theme as its anthem. In 1985, it was adopted by EU leaders as the official anthem of the European Union. There are no words to the anthem; it consists of music only. In the universal language of music, this anthem expresses the European ideals of freedom, peace and solidarity. The European anthem is not intended to replace the national anthems of the EU countries but rather to celebrate the values they share. The anthem is played at official ceremonies involving the European Union and generally at all sorts of events with a European character. European Union, European anthem. [Accessed: 2025-01-13]. Available at: [https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/symbols/european-anthem\\_en](https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/symbols/european-anthem_en)

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