

Symphilosophie

International Journal of Philosophical Romanticism

Justice, Attunement, and the Ethics of Friendship A Principle from Schiller and Aristotle

Gerad Gentry*

ABSTRACT

Aristotle argues that when persons are truly friends, they have no need of justice, whereas when they are merely just, they still need friendship. This suggests that friendship of a certain kind does not merely accompany justice but, in some sense, contains and surpasses it. It surpasses or rather *fulfills* it in virtue of the actualization of the very ends toward which justice aims. Of particular note is Aristotle's account of a state [*hexis*] of complete friendship as the condition in which *symphilosophia*, a certain kind of activity of such friends is possible. This features of Aristotle's notion of friendship was taken up and modified in the thought of a sub-set of moderns in the Enlightenment era: the German Romantics. I take up Friedrich Schiller's account of this distinctive activity in what he calls the "aesthetic state" [*ästhetischer Staat*], wherein a certain activity of mutual-attunement in a certain kind of friendship that includes both sense and thought embodies a kind of loving, reflective comportment. I argue Schiller's unique modification of this Aristotelian idea lays out a certain normative principle internal to friendship, which, there is reason to think, is inseparable from an adequate conception of justice and the social good.

Keywords: normativity, friendship, justice, reflective attunement, Schiller & Aristotle

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Aristoteles argumentiert, dass wahre Freunde der Gerechtigkeit nicht bedürfen, während gerechte Menschen weiterhin Freundschaft benötigen. Dies legt nahe, dass Freundschaft in einer bestimmten Form die Gerechtigkeit nicht nur begleitet, sondern sie in gewisser Weise umfasst und übersteigt. Sie übertrifft oder vielmehr *erfüllt* sie durch die Verwirklichung jener Ziele, die die Gerechtigkeit anstrebt. Besonders hervorzuheben ist Aristoteles' Beschreibung eines Zustands [*hexis*] vollkommener Freundschaft als Bedingung, unter der *symphilosophia*, eine bestimmte Tätigkeit solcher Freunde, möglich ist. Diese Aspekte von Aristoteles' Freundschaftsbegriff wurden von einer Gruppe moderner Denker der Aufklärung, den deutschen Romantikern, aufgegriffen und weiterentwickelt. Ich beziehe mich auf Friedrich Schillers Darstellung dieser besonderen Tätigkeit im sogenannten „ästhetischen Staat“, in dem eine bestimmte Tätigkeit gegenseitiger Einstimmung in einer besonderen Art von Freundschaft, die Sinnlichkeit und Denken einschließt, ein liebevolles, reflektierendes Verhalten verkörpert. Ich behaupte, dass Schillers einzigartige Modifikation dieser aristotelischen Idee ein bestimmtes normatives Prinzip darlegt, das der Freundschaft innewohnt und das, so ist anzunehmen, untrennbar mit einer angemessenen Konzeption von Gerechtigkeit und dem gesellschaftlichen Wohl verbunden ist.

Stichwörter: Normativität, Freundschaft, Gerechtigkeit, reflektierende Einstimmung, Schiller und Aristoteles

* Assistant Professor in Philosophy, Baylor University, Waco, Texas 76798, USA – Gerad_Gentry@baylor.edu

Aristotle argues that when persons are truly friends, they have no need of justice, whereas when they are merely just, they still need friendship. This suggests that friendship of a certain kind does not merely accompany justice but, in some sense, contains and surpasses it. It surpasses or rather *fulfills* it in virtue of the actualization of the very ends toward which justice aims. Of particular note is Aristotle's account of a state [*hexis*] of complete friendship as the condition in which *symphilosophia*, a certain kind of activity of such friends is possible. This features of Aristotle's notion of friendship was taken up and modified in the thought of a sub-set of moderns in the Enlightenment era: the German Romantics. This idea becomes central to the romantics. In this article, I take up Friedrich Schiller's account of this distinctive activity in what he calls the "aesthetic state" [*ästhetischer Staat*], wherein a certain activity of mutual-attunement in a certain kind of friendship that includes both sense and thought embodies a kind of loving, reflective comportment called *symphilosophie*. I argue Schiller's unique modification of this Aristotelian idea lays out a certain normative principle internal to friendship, which, there is reason to think, is inseparable from an adequate conception of justice and the social good.

The idea of *Symphilosophie* shaped the thought of the German Romantics. As Schlegel writes, "*Symphilosophie* is the essence and principle of friendship [*Symphilosophie ist das Wesen und Princip der Freundschaft*]" (F. Schlegel PhL, XVIII, 142, 242).¹ It is an idea drawn from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. There Aristotle describes *symphilosophia* as a specific kind of activity between friends who have a specific kind of friendship (*NE* IX.9.1170b10–14). Aristotle is quite precise in the context of the *Nicomachean Ethics* about the nature of this shared contemplation between persons in complete friendship. It seems to me that Aristotle's notion of *symphilosophia* is broadly compatible with the variation that it inspires in the thought of Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis. But what exactly counts, or fails to count, as *Symphilosophie*, and of what philosophical or ethical relevance is it? Such a notion will likely strike many as a mystical averment with little philosophical substance. I would like to resist this intuitive response and ask: what might it mean for *such an* essential principle of friendship to itself be a normative feature of that end (for the sake of which) justice (in laws, institutions, and relationships) is sought and by which approximations are held to account and reformed.

¹ I take this idea in Schlegel to stem from the influence of Goethe and Schiller on his thought; see for example, Behler 1998, p. 264 and Frischmann 2024, p. 21; and Gentry 2024, at the very least, it is compatible with Schiller's for reasons we will see.

In the first part, I show how Aristotle situates friendship not at the margins of his ethics, but at its center, as an excellence that both grounds and exceeds justice. I will explore the unique context in which Aristotle articulates this notion of friendship.² I am not interested in the tired debate about whether Aristotle's account of friendship accurately picks out the friendships that define our experience: I think such a descriptive and non-normative reading of Aristotle is a mistake. Instead—and here I will simply take it as a presupposition for the sake of efficiently pursuing the primary thesis—Aristotle's account of complete friendship is a normative account of those qualities that are constitutive of flourishing individuals in a flourishing relationship. If such norms of the flourishing life can be identified, then the question of how far we may fall short of a flourishing life does not change whether it is normative for how we ought to live in relation to others and the kinds of person we ought to strive to be. There is a similarly norm-governed relation between justice and friendship. My interest here is not in defending Aristotle's broader account, but merely in picking out that central feature that is taken up by the Romantics, particularly by Schiller, as an insight that may serve as a useful ground for shaping not only norms in communities, but laws, and concepts of justice as well. Due to space constraints, I will focus on the way in which friendship contains and supersedes justice, since this is what makes it central to the good of the nation state in Aristotle's view.

In the second part, developing from Matherne and Riggle's recent reconstruction of Schiller on aesthetic value and freedom, I turn to Schiller's account of the "aesthetic state," where such a "state" is a necessary condition and actualization of more adequate reflective community and action that resists a reductive notion of justice or flourishing. I submit that Schiller's notion can be illuminated as a helpful variation of this Aristotelian relation whereby *sympphilosophie* between such friends is understood as an embodied normative principle. Schiller's notion of loving attunement and aesthetic education as constitutive features of this aesthetic condition to such friendship, I suggest, gives unique philosophical expression to the kind of reciprocal goodwill, empathy, and shared reflective activity that Aristotle identifies as characteristic of complete friendship (both virtues of character and of intellect). In the end, I argue that, for Schiller, this principle of aesthetically conditioned friendship is not merely an ideal for private life but functions as

² I use the term "state" throughout to mean a certain kind of dispositional activity and way of being since this aligns with both Schiller's account of the aesthetic state and Aristotle's state [*hexis*]. By contrast, in those instances where I use "state" to pick out a nation state or a political state, I specify this with those modifiers.

a normative orientation for the reform of laws, institutions, and political communities.

I suggest that this notion of this unique kind of activity is inseparable from an adequate concept of justice, which in turn implicitly grounds the authority of laws (whether we have in view a positivist or non-positivist concept of law). It functions as normative principle that both orients and anchors justice, and to that extent may be thought of as the principle and essence of the social good, or in less Aristotelian terms, as constitutive of an actually just society. I will gesture throughout toward the rich normative implications for metaethics and jurisprudence.³ Whereas contemporary ethical and political theory tends to treat friendship as socially valuable but philosophically peripheral to the hard questions of justice, law, and the normative authority of political institutions, Schiller's variation on an Aristotelian concept of the constitutive nature of justice in a specific kind of friendship is both philosophically insightful and timely.⁴

1. Justice and Aristotelian Friendship

a) Justice

Aristotle argues that justice is the highest virtue in a nation state and the most complete virtue "in relation to others" (*NE* V.1.1129b27–28). By this most complete social virtue, Aristotle has in view a "state" [*hexis*] in which persons are "disposed to do what is just and makes them act justly and wish for what is just; and similarly by injustice that state which makes them act unjustly and wish for what is unjust" (*NE* V.1.1129a9–12). Justice so defined, then, is the excellence of persons who not only are disposed to just acts, but also desire justice and act justly even when circumstances make it difficult or unappealing. Justice then is both an *end* that should be cultivated, since it is a rightful state of persons in mutual relation forming society, and is constitutive of a flourishing state; and it is an *activity* of treating others rightly, equally, and as they deserve. Thus, Aristotle writes:

³ Particularly how something like the aesthetic condition of ethics, laws, and relations might helpfully shift the model from a constructivist notion of principles and their normative relation to human beings (e.g. Korsgaard 1996, Rawls 1980) toward a more dynamic, organic model while still being "lawful" (in a Kantian sense, which I take Schiller to retain).

⁴ Although the influence of Kant's account of freedom and autonomy of reason on Schiller is palpable, in this article, I will not take up this connection. My aim is not to deny or downplay such relations, but I am interested here in the unique insights which are otherwise easy to gloss over but are particularly pertinent to contemporary questions in ethics; See, e.g., Leontiev 2023, 560, and Noller 2023, 2021.

This form of justice, then is complete excellence—not absolutely, but in relation to others. And therefore justice is often thought to be the greatest of excellences and “neither evening nor morning star” is so wonderful; and proverbially “in justice is every excellence comprehended.” And it is complete excellence in its fullest sense, because it is the actual exercise of complete excellence. (*NE* V.1.1129b27–31)

What makes justice complete is that such an excellence depends on a principle of unity of disparate persons, ends, and activities under a system of right. This unifying form for the state is the function of the law. Aristotle writes: “For justice exists only between persons whose mutual relations are governed by law; and law exists for persons between whom there is injustice” (*NE* V.6.1134a29–32). Therefore, if there were no injustice there would be no need for law, since if everyone were just, then the end of the just law would be achieved in their very activity as just persons.

However, there is no person whose activities throughout life contain no injustice, much less a collective of persons without injustice; thus, for everyone and for every state, the law is required. Accordingly, Aristotle writes: “This is why we do not allow a person to rule, but rather law, because a person behaves thus in their own interests and becomes a tyrant. [Whereas the guardian of the law is] the guardian of justice, and, if of justice, then of equality also” (*NE* V.6.1134a25, 1134b1–3). Thus, the authority at the heart of a flourishing state is the law, and the law is good only insofar as it serves the proper function of the law, namely securing the norms of a just state. The proper function of the law is therefore securing justice. Justice is the most complete unity of persons and ends in relation to each other, and the end of the just law is complete justice.

But to say that the function of the law is to establish complete justice means that education, social formation, and trade are normatively governed by the law and the excellence of justice. This will mean that central issues of justice, including freedom and equality, reach all the way down to include the particularity of disparate features of educational methods, opportunity, and formation. Thus, Aristotle continues:

The things that tend to produce excellence taken as a whole are those of the acts prescribed by the law which have been prescribed with a view to education for the common good. But with regard to the education of the individual as such, which makes one without qualification a good person, we must determine later whether this is the function of the political art or of another; for perhaps it is not the same in every case to be a good person and a good citizen. (*NE* V.2.1130b25–29)

b) Friendship

Interestingly, while justice is the most complete social virtue and the excellence of a good citizen, there is, on Aristotle's account, a virtue that is higher than justice yet contains complete justice within it, namely the love of friends in a particular kind of friendship. Notably, of the ten books that make up the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle dedicates two to friendship. He writes:

Friendship seems too to hold states together, and lawgivers to care more for it than for justice. For unanimity seems to be something like friendship, and this they aim at most of all, and expel faction as their worst enemy; and when persons are friends they have no need of justice, while when they are just they need friendship as well, and the truest form of justice is thought to be a quality of friendship (*NE* VIII.1.1155a21–28).

True justice is a quality of friendship; yet true friendship transcends the limits of justice in the form of the mutual goodwill or love of that friendship. A true friendship that contains complete justice within it and transcends it is of course rare, since it requires not only complete justice, but also the other virtues of human excellences whereby goodwill can be enacted and reciprocated. Adding to the conditions of complete friendship, and the reason why it is rare, Aristotle argues that it depends on the mutual love of persons who are themselves capable of acting, and that this love is reciprocated at the right action, at the right time, in the right way. Friendship is not a state of merely desiring the good, but embodying it: “A wish for friendship may arise quickly, but friendship does not” (*NE* VIII.4.1156b32).

Further, this mutual good will, or love of friends complete in virtue, necessitates the finely tuned and richly responsive recognition of the particularity of the other and of the self. It is for this reason that Aristotle writes that such complete friendship “is an excellence or implies excellence, and is besides most necessary with a view to living” (*NE* VIII.1.1155a3–4) and that “to be friends, then, they must be mutually recognized as bearing goodwill and wishing well to each other for one of the aforesaid reasons” (*NE* VIII.2.1156a3–5).

Of complete friendship, Aristotle writes:

Perfect friendship is the friendship of persons who are good, and alike in excellence; for these wish well alike to each other *qua* good, and they are good in themselves. Now those who wish well to their friends for their sake are most truly friends; for they do this by reason of their own nature and not incidentally; therefore their friendship lasts as long as they are good—and excellence is an enduring thing. And each is good without qualification and to his friend, for the good are both good

without qualification and useful to each other. So too they are pleasant; for the good are pleasant both without qualification and to each other, since to each his own activities and others like them are pleasurable, and the actions of the good are the same or like. (*NE* VIII.3.1156b7–17)

Aristotle differentiates (i) friendliness between citizens and neighbors and (ii) utility or pleasure transactions that define commerce, trade, and communities from (iii) friendship. Friendship is different from these in that it is constituted by reciprocal good will. Within friendship he further distinguishes between three kinds of friendship, from the least self-sufficient to the most self-sufficient: friendship of reciprocal good will where the friendship is formed through shared utility; friendship of reciprocal good will or love where the friendship is formed through shared passion; and reciprocal good will or love where the friendship is formed through shared virtue. Of the last one, which he calls complete or truest friendship, he writes:

The truest friendship, then, is that of the good, as we have frequently said; for that which is without qualification good or pleasant seems to be lovable and desirable, and for each person that which is good or pleasant to them; and the good man is lovable and desirable to the good person for both these reasons. Now it looks as if love were a passion, friendship a state; for love may be felt just as much towards lifeless things, but mutual love involves choice and choice springs from a state; and persons wish well to those whom they love, for their sake, not as a result of passion but as a result of a state. And in loving a friend people love what is good for themselves; for the good person in becoming a friend becomes a good to their friend. Each, then, both loves what is good for themselves, and makes an equal return in goodwill and in pleasantness; for friendship is said to be equality, and both of these are found most in the friendship of the good. (*NE* VIII.5.1157b25–34 – 1158a1–2)

If friendship is reciprocal good will, where good will takes the person as an end to be the end of one's own actions in that reciprocity, then "friendship and justice seem ... to be concerned with the same objects and exhibited between the same persons" (*NE* VIII.9.1159b25–26). Thus, love, which is reciprocal goodwill, "seems ... to be a beginning of friendship" (*NE* IX.5.1167a4), seems to share the same object as justice (*NE* VIII.9.1159b25–26), and instantiates the flourishing state most fully. Complete friendship is "made up of persons who are good and alike in virtue; for each alike wishes well to each other.... They are good in themselves" (*NE* VIII.1156b 7–9).

However, if complete friendship is possible only if the persons engaged in reciprocal goodwill are themselves virtuous persons and so act for the good

of the other in just the right way and the right time and for the right reasons, and they do so not once or sometimes but consistently from firm and unchanging dispositions toward what is good, then such friendship is necessarily rare, if it can exist at all. Thus, Aristotle writes: “But it is natural that such friendships should be infrequent; for such persons are rare” (*NE* VIII 1156b24–25). Although rare, complete friendship is not a mere theoretical ideal of an unattainable social good. Degrees of friendship not only are attainable, but, he argues, are reflected to some degree in their political environment, and specifically in the form of government and the good of the state itself.

Of the forms of government, Aristotle writes: “Each of the constitutions may be seen to involve friendship just in so far as it involves justice” (*NE* VIII.11.1161a10–11); “Therefore while in tyrannies friendship and justice hardly exist, in democracies they exist more fully; for where the citizens are equal they have much in common” (*NE* VIII.11.1161b9–10). This suggests that while complete friendship is exceedingly rare, it is not all or nothing; rather, complete friendship is the flourishing end that is displayed by degrees of approximation in more common friendships. These more common friendships instantiate justice more fully (at least, in some ways and at sometimes) than relationships governed only by law. To that degree, such friendships serve as higher forms of justice, or what justice was in rough approximation only, in a fuller constitution the flourishing of a state. This is the case even if we think that the society is exceptionally just and the laws excellent, but more so when justice is not fully instantiated or where the laws themselves are not fully just and so in need of reform. Indeed, insight into the nature of the needed reform ought to come from an analysis of those necessary conditions of justice for such richer form of flourishing friendship.

If we now take such a view of friendship and the approximation of a higher form of excellence that includes justice within it, the questions becomes: what does this entail for the cultivation of the activities and disposition of such persons? Aristotle writes that a person striving for complete friendship and striving to be a person capable of complete friendship “needs ... to be conscious of the existence of his friend as well, and this will be realized in their living together and sharing in discussion and thought; for this is what living together would seem to mean in the case of persons, and not, as in the case of cattle, feeding in the same place” (*NE* IX.9.1170b10–14). Naturally, “living together” may look different in the technological age than it did in ancient Greece, where a week on foot would have been needed just to get from Athens to neighboring Sparta, and where space for conversation outside the home was more rare (fewer possibilities), yet possibly more

focused and richer. The rarity and particularity of the goodwill of complete friendship is significant.

So for friends too there is a fixed number—perhaps the largest number with whom one can live together (for that, we found, is thought to be most characteristic of friendship); and that one cannot live with many people and divide oneself among them is plain.... It is found difficult, too, to rejoice and to grieve in an intimate way with many people, for it may likely happen that one has at once to be merry with one friend and to mourn with another. (*NE IX.10.1171a1–8*)

In defending friendship as a necessary method of character formation in society, Kristján Kristjánsson draws an insight from Alexander Nehamas (2016, 76), who takes up an insight of C.S. Lewis on the love of friends in *The Four Loves* (1960), writing that it is common to depict a difference between good friends in fine art, in distinction from romantic love, in which “friends tend both to look ahead, whereas lovers stare into each other’s eyes, may be seen to represent this commitment to a common moral vision which is not only subjective, and not even relational in a dyadic sense, but lies beyond personal selfhood” (Kristjánsson 2020a, 359).⁵ While interesting, I think this view of good friendship misses a deeper insight at work in both Aristotle and Lewis and which is certainly in play in Schiller’s dynamic incorporation of the aesthetic conditions of symphilosophie. On Aristotle’s account, *sympphilosophia* as a shared, reflective dialectic between good friends is a love for what is good for each other’s sake, even when the object of investigation is the very point of debate. That is, the friendship is not based on agreement over a moral vision, but rather is constitutive of the nature of the dialectic of *sympphilosophia* that ensues; through such activities both are enriched, quite apart from whether they agree on the matter at hand. It is thus a relationship that is open-ended in its outward movement, but is constituted from within by the highest principle and essence: active love between friends who are themselves of deep character. As Aristotle writes: “The friendship of good persons is good, being augmented by their companionship; and they are thought to become better too by their activities and by improving each other; for from each other they take the mould of the characteristics they approve” (*NE IX.12.1172a10–14*). This rarefied notion of friendship, as well as what it entails for the characteristic activities of the flourishing life, for formation, mutual education, and the dynamic “sharing in discussion and thought” is particularly well reflected in Novalis’s

⁵ See also Kristjánsson 2022; 2020b, 197.

articulation of *symphilosophie* as the defining activity of good friends and Schlegel's assertion that "Symphilosophie ist das Wesen und Princip der Freundschaft [*Symphilosophie* is the essence and principle of friendship]" (F. Schlegel PhL, XVIII, 142, 242).

However, as I will now argue, it also serves as a particularly helpful way of understanding Schiller's notion of the aesthetic state. Moreover, his notion of the aesthetic state, understood through the lens of this feature of friendship, sheds light on a possible way of understanding the underlying Aristotelian notion as a pertinent and poignant principle of modern ethical life, even if it is underappreciated.⁶ Although I have given an interpretation of Aristotle on *symphilosophia* and friendship that I take to be both true of Aristotle and the variation that Schiller is taking up. There are accounts of Aristotle on this form of friendship who take an "egoistic" reading (Bradford Jean-Hyuk Kim 2021, 222). If Kim is right about Aristotle, then Schiller is not inheriting Kim's view of Aristotle on friendship. So, due to space constraints, I will let my account of Aristotle on friendship stand without addressing alternative readings, since it is this version that I take Schiller to inherit and modify in insightful ways through his account of the aesthetic conditions of ethical life.

Crucially, the point is not to argue that friendship has mere social value; I take that to be relatively uncontroversial and not particularly philosophically significant. Rather, the point is something much more fundamental to education and the moral norms governing society and rights: that the activity that is characteristic of a certain kind of friendship is central both to an excellent holistic education and to the dynamic formation of society. If this is right, then friendship is not only a normative principle that ought to govern the reformation of laws and institutions, but ought to serve as an important constitutive principle (i.e., inner purpose) in the jurisprudential reform of laws for the good of society. This kind of friendship instantiates something of that very end toward which human life is normatively directed.

2. Attunement and Schiller on the Ethical and Aesthetic State

a) Justice in the state (dynamic, ethical, and aesthetic)

Schiller introduces a notable aesthetic condition to Aristotle's notion of *symphilosophia* as an activity whose possibility necessarily already contains justice within it. In this second part, I will argue that Schiller's account offers reason to rethink the activity of such flourishing friendship relationships

⁶ Ludwig 2020.

(whether between individuals or larger collectives) to be characterized by proactive attunement.

Samantha Matherne and Nick Riggle have recently offered a compelling reconstruction of Schiller on the relationship between aesthetic value and political freedom, in which they argue that Schiller “defends a non-hedonic, action-oriented, communitarian theory of aesthetic value and a theory of freedom that makes the aesthetic not just supererogatory but fundamental for any fully autonomous life” (Matherne and Riggle 2020, 375).⁷ By “aesthetic value” they mean a dynamic, constitutive “play” between sensibility and reason that is constitutive of a more robust and holistic form of freedom.⁸ Speaking to an approximation of this dynamic play, but which is one-sided and so inadequate, they write, “The ‘earnest’ person who over-emphasizes the demands of sense or reason is constrained in a way that fails to acknowledge her full humanity as embodied in her capacity for self-determination” (2020, 401). They conclude:

If we develop such a healthy capacity to play and integrate it into the way we shape our lives through sense and reason, then our lives will have form but they will also be living. We will not be rigidly stuck in a certain way of living and the “lightness” with which we live out our commitments will shine forth in the style of our pursuits. Our lives can thus become living form or form lived. In other words, we can become beautiful. For Schiller, then, aesthetic value, play, and aesthetic freedom are not just our entry point into becoming human beings; they are a cornerstone to wholeness of character and integral parts of a fully flourishing, fully free and beautiful human life. (Matherne and Riggle 2020, 401)

In the background of Schiller’s thought is on the one hand a broadly Kantian framework, yet on the other hand a concern with what he perceives as an account of ethics that unnecessarily downplays the significance of the sensible in an account of the good. Schiller’s aesthetic state is in part an attempt at rectifying what he thinks has gone wrong in Kant’s account. As Matherne writes, “For better than a sensibility repressed by reason, Schiller claims, is a sensibility integrated with reason, which animates our moral efforts with ‘grace’” (Matherne 2024, 328). Interestingly, as Matherne points out, Kant takes up Schiller’s critique and argues that he is actually in agreement:

⁷ By “non-hedonic” they mean that the value is not “the constitutive relation it bears to pleasure” (Matherne and Riggle 2020, 376).

⁸ Matherne and Riggle 2021, 18.

Professor Schiller...disapproves of this way of representing obligation... Since we are however at one upon the most important principles, I cannot admit disagreement...,if only we can make ourselves clear to one another...And if we consider the gracious consequences that virtue would spread throughout the world, should it gain entry everywhere, then the morally oriented reason (through the imagination) calls sensibility into play. (Kant *GS* 6:23n).

While understanding Schiller's account of the aesthetic conditions of flourishing is best understood in this context of his engagement with Kant, it is also the case that he is also taking up via Goethe and Hegel a deep appreciation for Aristotle's account of flourishing and the role of friendship in that. Yet, whether in Aristotle's account of the intellectual activity of symphilosophizing among friends complete in friendship or Kant's account of the non-sensible, necessary conditions of the possibility of moral determinations, Schiller sees an omission of that robust notion of proactive *Einfühlung* (empathy) and attunement wherein the dialectic of some discourse remains always constitutive of the activity itself for the sake of the good of the friendship apart from agreement. For Schiller, I will argue, this is at the heart of what transforms this principle of friendship into the aesthetically conditioned kind that is constitutive of flourishing and which is the proper end (*telos*) of sociopolitical concepts of justice.

Matherne likewise has made the case that in Schiller's account of the proper relationship between such aesthetically constituted free persons, depends on key aesthetic / ethical modals like "loving attunement: through 'sympathy', 'compassion', 'kindness', or 'affection' (Schiller L27, 175–76; L13, nn. 123–24; L14, 127)."⁹ In this way, "only 'aesthetic culture' can set us aright, by developing our openness to the deliverances of sensibility and the possibilities of action and thought. (Matherne and Riggle 2020, 401)."¹⁰

⁹ Matherne and Riggle 2021, 21.

¹⁰ Although my account of Schiller aligns broadly with Matherne's, we differ in that Matherne does not see a significant retention or inheritance of Aristotelian notion of friendship, symphilosophia, justice, and flourishing in Schiller. So, while we are in agreement on the Kant interpretation of Schiller, we differ on the relevance of Aristotle. I think some of this may have to do with a reading of Aristotelian naturalism that has become common and which is largely incompatible with Kant's critical philosophy (which clearly is shaping Schiller's thought). In fact, I would agree that a reductive, naturalist reading of Aristotle's ethics and friendship bears little relevance or worth for Schiller (for more on this, see Kaiser 2005). However, I take the best reading of Aristotle to be (as Hegel read him) a proto-idealist (see Ferrarin 2007, Gentry 2026, 2021), who was attempting at key places to offer an account of the necessary conditions of the possibility of rational action, where what is rational (excellent) is determined by that intrinsic end already contained in the nature of the action. On such a reading, while Kant works out the inner limits on what counts as rational action, Aristotle is working out the

This notion of loving attunement echoes the kind of “loving regard” that Wellbery has argued is constitutive of dynamic knowing and flourishing for the Romantics.¹¹ Similarly, Martha Nussbaum has argued that at the heart of Aristotle’s conception of virtue and friendship is the necessary role of the moral imagination, which is made adequate through aesthetic education and formation.¹² The idea that Nussbaum develops as essentially Aristotelian is that virtue—those excellences necessitated in the character of each in a loving relationship such that they can act in the right way, and the right time, for the right reasons—requires being “finely aware and richly responsible.” As Nussbaum writes: “Our whole moral task ... is to make a fine artistic creation” to be “‘Participants by a fond attention.’ ... We actively care for their particularity and we strain to be people on whom none of their subtleties are lost, in intellect and feeling” (Nussbaum, 1985, 527). Applying this thought more broadly to literary art or fine art in general, it seems right to say that literary art “elicits” and “calls forth” our “active sense of life,” which is our moral faculty.¹³ Such literary art, and our formation through it, is needed in part because life itself is of this artistic nature. As Nussbaum writes, “the well-lived life is a work of literary art” and literary art itself, insofar as it cultivates these vital capacities is “a moral achievement” (Nussbaum 1985, 516). In fact, Schiller’s general adaptation and modification of Aristotelian thought toward such notions of attunement and aesthetically condition activity has become much more widely accepted among contemporary neo-Aristotelians. Cora Diamond likewise derives an account of such aesthetic attunement in ethics to Aristotelian necessity (Diamond 2003).

Yet I think there are further facets in work in Schiller’s notion of the necessity of aesthetically constituted friendship for a more adequate form of the just state than that which is captured by Nussbaum and Diamond. To

actualization (i.e. corresponding to imperfect duties and maxims in Kant). Of course, Aristotle is pre-critical in most of his work, but arguably his method in the *Nicomachean Ethics* displays key philosophical moves that give us good reason to think that Hegel may indeed have been right to see him as a proto idealist. Notably, this kind of reading of Aristotle was shared by Goethe, Schiller’s closest friend and mentor and with whom Schiller embodies the very ideals of the aesthetic state and features of what might be called good friendship. So, it seems to me clear that Schiller’s reception of Aristotle might have been facilitated in part by a reading of Aristotle that has become less common today (though elements of it are to be found in some neo-Aristotelians like Michael Thompson (2008), Anne Jeffrey (2026), and, I would submit at least one reading of Philippa Foot (2010), but since readings of Foot differ substantially, this is not of much help.

¹¹ Wellbery 1996, ch. 9.

¹² Nussbaum 2009; 1985, 516.

¹³ For a related discussion of the relationship between aesthetics and richer sense of life, see Wilson 2009.

understand what Schiller has in view in this conception of loving attunement, we should note his distinction between three kind of state: the “dynamic state,” the “ethical state,” and the “aesthetic state.” The dynamic state corresponds to the sensible drive in which relations are governed by the “compulsion of nature [*Nötigung der Natur*]” (L14.5, L13.4n2). The dynamic state alone might include such a range of political forms as states shaped in the image of Nietzsche’s *Zarathustra* and *The Genealogy of Morality*, Hobbes’s State of Nature, or communes of the 1970s, and even most monarchies throughout Western history. Justice in a dynamic state will take on the shape of a social contract in which individuals give consent to the restriction of personal freedoms out of self-interest where their own strength is insufficient to secure those interests independently through their own freedom.

The ethical state corresponds to what Schiller calls the “form drive,” in which relations are governed by the “compulsion of reason [*Nötigung der Vernunft*]” (L14.5, L13.4n2). The ethical state might include such a range of political forms from contemporary republics (democratic and authoritarian) to ancient Athenian constitutional direct democracy or the Spartan state, wherein the constitution fixed the rule and form of government, the regulated rotation of individuals through positions of communal relation with (particularly in the Spartan case) an extraordinary precision, removing or conditioning the subjective variance introduced by preference, passion, and interest. Justice in the ethical state takes on the form of the impartiality of law as legislated by reason, in which freedom, as the power of the rational will to pursue ends consistent with a collective of wills, is not given up under the law; rather, it is made possible by the law. Only rational freedom is freedom, since the non-rational freedom of subjective interests is destructive of the very universalizable form by which freedom of will in a state is possible and coherent. In general, modern democratic republics would count as various approximations of what Schiller calls the ethical state.¹⁴

On the difference between the dynamic and the ethical state, Schiller writes:

From being a slave of nature, which they remain as long as they merely feel it, humanity becomes its lawgiver from the moment they begin to think it. That which hitherto merely dominated them as force [*als Macht beherrschte*], now stands before their eyes as object. Whatsoever is object for them has no power [*Gewalt*] over them; for in order to be object at all, it must be subjected to the power that is theirs. To the extent that humanity imparts form to matter, and for precisely as long as they

¹⁴ For more on this, see Beiser 2005, 128; Church 2014; and Moggach 2007, 524–6.

impart it, they are immune to its effects; for spirit cannot be injured by anything except that which robs it of its freedom [*Freiheit*], and human beings give evidence of their freedom precisely by giving form [*bildet*] to that which is formless. (Schiller L25.3)

In contrast to these two normative conditions (or “states”) and forms of justice, Schiller introduces the aesthetic conditions of those norms that constitute flourishing relationships. He writes,

If in the dynamic state of rights it is as force that one person encounters another, and imposes limits upon their activities; if in the ethical state of duties humanity sets itself over against human beings with all the majesty of the law, and puts a curb upon their desires: in those circles where conduct is governed by beauty, in the aesthetic state, none may appear to the other except as form, or confront the other except as an object of free play. To bestow freedom by means of freedom is the fundamental law of this kingdom. (L27.9)

The aesthetic state involves both the dynamic and the ethical, but through a specific interplay between sensibility and form in persons, and a specific exchange and relation between persons. What is noteworthy is that he describes the aesthetic state as being constituted by “those circles where conduct is governed by beauty,” and this means in part that the “other” is “confronted as an object of free play.” That is, it is conditioned by both the sense drive and the form drive. If we step back from Schiller’s unusual terms, we might reframe his thought in the following way: in this more adequate state, the “other” is recognized as embodying the freedom of humanity in the particularity of their otherness and yet simultaneously as this particular person. It is the recognition of the universality of humanity in the person, yet without reducing the significance of individuality to some universal rule or form.

Interestingly Schiller restricts the genuine application of the term “society” to only those rare circles that embody the aesthetic state, where relationships are governed by beauty, where beauty in turn contains both the possibility of sensible and the necessity of the moral, yet transcends both in a relationship of love, a specific kind of harmony of individuals in community. Schiller’s term “beauty” is, I think, is best understood as corresponding to Aristotle’s notion of “good,” or flourishing. For while it includes specifically aesthetic value, it should not be confused with a contemporary notions of aesthetic axiology or reductive aestheticizations of ethics:

The dynamic state can merely make society possible [*bloss möglich machen*], by letting one nature be curbed [*bezähnt*] by another; the ethical state can merely make it (morally) necessary, by subjecting [*unterwirft*] the individual will to the general; the aesthetic state alone can make it actual [*wirklich*], because it actualizes [*vollzieht*] the will of the whole through the nature of the individual. Though it may be their needs which drive individuals into society, and reason which implants within them the principles of social behavior, beauty [*die Schönheit*] alone can confer upon them a social character. Taste alone brings harmony into society, because it fosters harmony in the individual. (Schiller L27.10)

b) Justice and the case for friendship as a normative principle in sociopolitical reform

At the heart of Schiller's account of the aesthetic education is a notion of attunement to the other. He writes: "How can we, however laudable our precepts, how can we be just, kindly, and humane toward others, if we lack the power of receiving into ourselves, faithfully and truly, natures unlike ours, of feeling our way into the situation of others, of making other people's feelings our own?" (L13.4n3) Schiller's conception of being just here is not one of conforming to law or of applying a principle of justice to the particulars of persons and actions; it is a notion of attunement, and attuned receptivity. It is a receptivity to "natures unlike ours," of learning to "feel our way into the situation of others," even though this ongoing activity is always necessitated precisely because we are always in need of greater degrees of relevant understanding or experience. Such a reflective comportment is not the subsumption of intuitions under the proper concept to yield cognition of the other, their situation, or what it means to "be just" toward them. Instead, the idea that Schiller has in view in this attunement is the cultivation of a capacity for dynamic empathy or "Einfühlung" ("ein"–"Fühlung" = feeling–into) for receptively taking on or sharing that very nature of persons as "other." This capacity to receptively and reflectively feel one's way into the experience of another in a way that is already conditioned by the possibility of such attuned friendship is central to the thought of the German Romantics in general (Forster 2019, 175). Notably, such a principle of friendship brings a good to society even when it is embodied only partially in one person and so not actualized in a reciprocal community.

This capacity or form of goodwill is not present in those whose experiences are so shared that the other does not present themselves as an other, but as merely another instance of the same perspective, vision, and outlook on one's own. In other words, Schiller is not describing two individuals who merely agree or who are on the same page or in lockstep with

regard to perception and thought; rather, he is describing a disposition and character-defining relationship between the self and “natures unlike ours” as “other,” the natures of individuals which we do not share. He writes: “If humanity is ever to solve that problem of politics in practice they will have to approach it through the problem of the aesthetic, because it is only through beauty that humanity makes its way to freedom [*zu der Freiheit wandert*]” (L2.5). By the aesthetic, Schiller means a capacity for an interdeterminative, norm-governed dialectic between sense drive and form drive, between matter and form, between experiential content and concept. Goethe describes a similar idea of relational attunement or “intuitive perception,” writing:

The intuitively perceptive have already reached a creative stage, for as knowledge undergoes intensification [*sich selbst steigert*] it begins to demand intuitive perception without our noticing [*fordert ohne es zu bemerken das Anschauen*]; and it turns into intuitive perception. The seekers of knowledge may cross themselves and bless themselves against imagination as often as they wish—before they know it, they will have to call on imagination’s creative power [*die productive Einbildungskraft*] for help. (Goethe WA II:6, p. 302; Goethe 1988, P. 74). (Haag 2024, 241).¹⁵

Notably, Goethe argues that such attunement is cultivated through the creative capacity of the imagination. The imagination as a creative power to see the best possibilities, to envision just the particular necessary in a given moment, to possess the dynamic receptivity to the relevant particulars: this is what constitutes attunement.¹⁶

I am suggesting that at the heart of Schiller’s notion of the aesthetic education of persons in the aesthetic state is a nuanced and modified variation of Aristotelian notion of complete friendship, so understood that it is an embodiment of a certain kind of attunement and reciprocal goodwill¹⁷

¹⁵ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1887–1919): *Werke*. Ed. on behalf of the Grand Duchess Sophie von Sachsen. Weimar Edition. 146 vols. Weimar: Böhlau. [Reprint: vol. 144–146: Paul Raabe (Ed.). Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1990]; c.f. Gentry 2023a

¹⁶ Martha Nussbaum (2009) holds a similar conception of the moral imagination and the moral task of becoming finely aware and richly responsible through the cultivation of our creative capacity as attuned and responsive agents.

¹⁷ See Nassar 2014 on the importance of *Wechselwirkung* in the thought of the Romantics, which can be both internal reflective play of the mind, or interpersonal mutual and reciprocal determination, yet crucially *qua* indeterminate principle. It’s a fundamentally organic notion that arguably becomes important to Fichte, Schlegel, and Schiller among others because of the specific way in which Goethe receives both the notion of “free play” in Kant’s third Critique as well as his reception of Aristotle and development of this into an organic notion of form as the method by which plants grow according to an

that subsumes and transcends the forms of justice possible in a merely dynamic or ethical state.

This attunement is a central feature of what he calls the aesthetic play by which the “Ästhetischen Einheit” between “sense and moral freedom” is made into a living unity (Schiller L25.6-7, 189); such an aesthetically conditioned activity is constitutive of the kind of “social character” [*geselligen Charakter*] in which flourishing relations that contain justice within them, yet realize a higher end wherein they “bestow freedom by means of freedom [which] is the fundamental law of this kingdom [*Freiheit zu geben durch Freiheit ist das Grundgesetz dieses Reichs*]” (Schiller 27.9 215).¹⁸ At the heart of the flourishing activity of an ideal friendship is not some reductive form of either an abstract standard of moral form nor a priority of sensible relations of pleasure, utility or the like, but rather an aesthetic harmony of both just insofar as the individuals of the relationship embody this harmonious unity of the sensible and ethical. As Schiller writes, this aesthetic form of such attuned dynamic comportment, “brings harmony into society, because it fosters [*stiften*] harmony in the individual” and ideally also the collective “*als Gattung*” (Schiller L27.10 215). The point is not that this active form of attuned symphilosophie and love will replace justice in society, but that it supersedes it and is a higher end of reflection, laws, and social life. If Schiller is right, then it persists as a normative authority over reductive alternatives in the formation and reformation of institutions, laws, and social relations.

Schiller writes: “the aesthetic state alone can make [society] real, because it consummates the will of the whole through the nature of the individual” (L27.10). He continues: “In the Aesthetic State everything—even the tool which serves—is a free citizen, having equal rights with the noblest; and the mind, which would force the patient mass beneath the yoke of its purposes, must here first obtain its assent. Here, therefore, in the realm of Aesthetic Semblance, we find that ideal of equality fulfilled which the Enthusiast would fain see realized in substance” (L27.11). The two key points that I wish to note from this passage are first, the claim that it is in the aesthetic

internal principle. Michael Forster nicely develops these ideas in his account of Goethe (2012).

¹⁸ One important modification in Schiller’s account that I have not taken up here is the important role of a Kantian notion of freedom (autonomy) on which human beings are absolutely equal and so the possibility for such flourishing friendship is both real and normatively binding on each, whereas for Aristotle unequals cannot have such friendship and he seems to think that there are natural differences between some groups who are “slaves by nature” and others (such as the Hellenes) who are “noble by nature” and so must not be enslaved (Aristotle *Politics* I.6.1255a1–35). Schiller follows Kant in identifying the absolute equality of all persons in this “law of this kingdom” which is taking up Kant’s “kingdom of ends.”

state that persons actually hold equal rights, regardless of class or status; and second, that even the one who rightly appeals to the demands of reason “must here first obtain the assent [of all persons].” That is, there is a reciprocity of goodwill between equals that calls to the other and seeks assent, but which does not first set itself as law above the other. It is a discourse of reason in love, through loving attunement.

Accordingly, Schiller asks and answers the key question:

But does such a state [*Staat*] of aesthetic semblance really exist? And if so, where is it to be found? As a need [*Bedürfnis*], it exists in every finely attuned soul; as a realized fact, we are likely to find it, like the pure church and the pure republic, only in some few chosen circles, where conduct is governed, not by some soulless imitation of the manners and morals of others, but by the aesthetic nature we have made our own ... free alike of the compulsion to infringe the freedom of others in order to assert their own, as of the necessity to shed their dignity [*Würde*] in order to manifest grace [*Anmut*]. (Schiller L27.12)

Schiller’s “finely attuned soul” here corresponds roughly to Aristotle’s notion of the virtuous or flourishing person in complete friendship. So when Schiller says that the aesthetic state “exists” “as a realized fact ... only in some few chosen circles, where conduct is governed, not by some soulless imitation of the manners and moral of others, but by the aesthetic nature we have made our own” (L27.12), he is speaking of a unique kind of friendship: a friendship that is itself a state, a relation of persons in which justice is actualised along with a richer accord of the friends who are “free alike of the compulsion to infringe the freedom of the others in order to assert their own, as of the necessity to shed their dignity in order to manifest grace” (L27.12).

The product of such an existent aesthetic state, the only actual existence of society, is not mere cognition, or moral action, or pleasure. The product is beauty, where beauty is defined as the more adequate form of truth and justice than that which is possible in a merely dynamic or ethical state. Schiller writes:

Beauty is, admittedly, the work of free contemplation [*freien Betrachtung*], and with it we do indeed enter upon the world of ideas—but, it should be emphasised, without therefore leaving behind the world of sense, as is the case when we proceed to knowledge of truth.... Beauty is indeed form, because we contemplate [*betrachten*] it; but it is at the same time life, because we feel it. In a word: it is at once a state of our being and an activity we perform. (Schiller L25.5)

Beauty, in such an aesthetic state of reciprocal love, is an activity of the richest kind: the kind of activity that characterizes real friendship. It is the existent aesthetic state that is rare, yet actual in the world. Schiller continues:

But since in the enjoyment of beauty, or aesthetic unity, an actual union [*wirkliche Vereinigung*] and interchange between matter and form, passivity and activity [*Tätigkeit*], momentarily takes place, the compatibility of our two natures, the practicability of the infinite being realized [*die Ausführbarkeit*] in the finite, hence the possibility of sublimest humanity, is thereby actually proven. (L25.6)

Such rare forms of friendship serve also as a normative model for the reformation of society and the education of persons toward such an end. Schiller writes: “We need, then, no longer feel at a loss for a way which might lead us from our dependence upon sense towards moral freedom [*moralischen Freiheit*], since beauty offers us an instance of the latter being perfectly compatible [*vollkommen zusammen bestehen*] with the former, an instance of man not needing to flee matter in order to manifest himself as spirit” (L25.7). He continues: “There can, in a single word, no longer be any question of how he is to pass from beauty to truth, since this latter is potentially contained in the former, but only a question of how he is to clear a way for himself from common reality to aesthetic reality [*Wirklichkeit*], from mere life-serving feelings to feelings of beauty” (L25.7).

In such friendship, in the beauty of “the realized fact” of the aesthetic state: “No privilege, no autocracy [*Alleinherrschaft*] of any kind is tolerated where taste rules, and the realm of the aesthetic semblance [*das Reich des schönen Scheins*] extends its sway” (L27.11). Here it is instructive to recall from above Aristotle’s claim that friendship is to be found most in democracies, where persons are free, and complete friendship between those alike in their love of what is good not only for the self but for the other, and that the reciprocal goodwill of friends aids each in their mutual growth. Similarly, for Schiller, the aesthetic state exists among friends whose attunement and dialogic discourse contains the particularity of material sensibility and the universality of the laws of reason, yet achieves a higher form of justice through an equality bound by love. And this attunement, this discourse of friends instantiates beauty, which contains truth and grace in love.

The very possibility of *Symphilosophie* necessitates first being individuals capable of responding with all of the nuance of attuned readers, listeners, and perceivers who can be receptive and imaginatively active in the right way, for the right reasons, at the right time, and for the right ends. Central to this form of activity, the possibility of which defines this form of friendship, even

if it does not characterize the majority of interactions in such a friendship, is a notion of the call of a friend that may go unanswered, but a call not to a void, in a context constituted by mutual recognition of that shared, inter-determinative striving of attuned, receptive, and reflective friends.¹⁹

With a nod to the special friendship that Schiller and Goethe had and which was definitive for both of them, I will simply end here with a reference to David Wellbery's analysis of Gretchen's "beckoning call" with which Goethe closes *Faust I*. It is a moment of the love of a friend, calling to the other to become a real friend. Here it is displayed between unequals. Gretchen's call to Faust is as a voice of "unconditional love" calling him by name, as a "voice from within." Wellbery writes: "This call, I want to say, has no time nor place. It fades away but remains effective" (Wellbery 2024, 33). It also serves as a literary foreshadowing the role Gretchen will play, "interceding on behalf of Faust, elevating him to his own goodness, leading him toward the Urquell" (Wellbery 2024, 34). Such is the power for growth and reform that this kind of love displays and cultivates.

It is not just an aesthetic interplay that characterizes aesthetic education or persons who have cultivated such a capacity. More than that, it is the purpose of a just state whose actuality reaches out toward a flourishing of which justice is but a part. It is a specific kind of constitutive relationship between persons. It is not less determinate than those laws that govern a just state; rather, its indeterminacy—what Schiller calls aesthetic play—includes the determinate laws, yet supersedes these in a higher activity of a flourishing society. The just society is the mere shadow realm that strives to approximate the actual life of such dynamically attuned, aesthetically conditioned relations. Recognizing the higher good toward which just laws, institutions, and practices aim and from which they receive their ultimate normative authority, is important for having a compass for reform and refinement of that for the sake of which the laws and state have their worth. For if we aim merely at justice we will not achieve such a flourishing state; whereas striving for this principle of friendship in laws, in institutions, and in relationships, we gain not only justice, but also the possibility of a higher good which contains justice within it, yet transcends it. This principle of friendship is not merely an ideal for the state; it is a constitutive principle already eminently guiding key institutions and laws and embodied in actuality, in at least some friendships. This means that it is a form of normativity that is inescapably bound to the very nature of these kinds; so even if it is not fully recognized

¹⁹ For a related argument, see Kneller 2014.

or actualized, it remains normatively binding and constitutive of what might count as flourishing.

More careful recognition and deliberate orientation toward such a principle of friendship in the political state is as great a need in our time as it was in Schiller's or Aristotle's. If this insight is right, it seems, it always will be, since it is a need that stems from the very nature of humanity. So, the state that can obtain in a particular kind of friendship is a normatively rich relation of mutual attunement and comportment that conditions the possibility of open reflection, whose guiding principle is not a determinate cognition, but the very enjoyment and enrichment of the activity of such a friendship.²⁰ Following Schiller, we might call this an aesthetic or axiological feature of good friendship. About such a self-forming activity, we might agree with Aristotle that "friendship seems too to hold [nation] states together, and lawgivers [ought] to care more for it than for justice ... [since] when persons are friends they have no need of justice, while when they are just they need friendship as well, and the truest form of justice is thought to be a quality of friendship" (*NE* VIII.1.1155a21–28).²¹

Works Cited

Ameriks, Karl. 2014. "History, Succession, and German Romanticism." In *The Relevance of Romanticism*, edited by Dalia Nassar. Oxford University Press: 47–67.

²⁰ For an excellent account of this open-ended, dynamic, dialectic among in the Romantics inheritance on Kantian notions of reason, see Ameriks (2014) and for an in-depth analysis of this open-ended form of reflecting judgment in Kant that I take to be close to how Hegel, Goethe, and Schiller were reading and inheriting Kant on the freedom of the imagination, see Matherne (2024) and Gentry (2019), Haag (2024). I differ from Ameriks in thinking that the most robust philosophical account of this open, dynamic notion of reason that remains founded on Kantian critical insights is Hegel (Gentry 2026, 2023b, 2021). Because Ameriks read Hegel in a vein more akin to Beiser (2003, 1996) and Franks (2005), and so saw him as operating outside the critical / romantic frame-work.

²¹ Leontiev (2023) critiques Schiller's account of such aesthetic conditions of a more robust state of friends or as a normative principle for society because of what he perceives as an unstable assertion of an analogy between beauty and morality. I think this kind of framing fundamentally misunderstands the nature of the aesthetic state. It is not an ideal. It is an imminent principle that is a teleologically higher form of the very thing that ethics already aims at. Schiller's point is that at the heart of this principle is a dynamic, unending aesthetic task of attunement, empathy, and the kind of productive, reflective dialectic that drives real mutual growth.

- Aristotle. 1995. *The Complete Works of Aristotle*. Edited by Jonathan Barnes. 2 vols. Bollingen Series 71. Princeton University Press.
- Behler, Ernst. 1988. "Die Wirkung Goethes und Schillers auf die Brüder Schlegel." In *Studien zur Romantik und zur idealistischen Philosophie*. Schöningh: 264-282.
- Beiser, Frederick C. 1996. *The Early Political Writings of the German Romantics*. Cambridge University Press.
- Beiser, Frederick C. 2003. *The Romantic Imperative: The Concept of Early German Romanticism*. Harvard University Press.
- Beiser, Frederick C. 2005. *Schiller as Philosopher: A Re-examination*. Clarendon Press.
- Church, J. 2014. "Friedrich Schiller on Republican Virtue and the Tragic Exemplar." *European Journal of Political Theory* 13:95–118.
- Diamond, Cora. 2003. "The Difficulty of Reality and the Difficulty of Philosophy." *Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas* 1, no. 2: 1–26
- Ferrarin, Alfredo. 2007. *Hegel and Aristotle*. Cambridge University Press.
- Foot, Philippa. 2010. *Natural Goodness*. Clarendon Press.
- Förster, Eckart. 2012. *The Twenty-Five Years of Philosophy: A Systematic Reconstruction*. Translated by Brady Bowman. Harvard University Press.
- Forster, Michael. 2019. *Imagination and Interpretation: Herder's Concept of Einfühlung*. The Imagination in German Idealism and Romanticism. Cambridge University Press: 175-189.
- Franks, Paul. 2005. *All or Nothing*. Harvard University Press.
- Frischmann, Bärbel. 2024. "Zur Kantrezeption Friedrich Schlegels." *SYMPHILOSOPHIE: Internationale Zeitschrift für philosophische Romantik* 6:21–38.
- Gentry, Gerad. 2026. *Hegel on Freedom and Ethical Life*. Cambridge University Press.
- Gentry, Gerad. 2024. "Artworks as Organic Wholes: A Goethean and Hegelian Concept of Art." In *Art, Nature, and Self-Formation in the Age of Goethe*, edited by Gerad Gentry, Mattias Pirholt, and Camilla Flodin. De Gruyter: 85-114.
- Gentry, Gerad. 2023a. "Goethe's Theory of Art: Rethinking Organic Wholes and Architecture." In *History of Modern Aesthetics*, edited by Colleen Coalter. Bloomsbury: 1-12.
- Gentry, Gerad. 2023b. "Hegel's End of Art and the Artwork as an Internally Purposive Whole." *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 61, no. 3: 473–498.

- Gentry, Gerad. 2021. "The Concept of Life in German Idealism and Its Aristotelian Roots." *Intellectual History Review* 31, no. 3: 379–390.
- Gentry, Gerad, and Konstantin Pollok, eds. 2019. *The Imagination in German Idealism and Romanticism*. Cambridge University Press.
- Haag, Johannes. 2024. "Intuition and Comprehension: Productive Imagination in Fichte and Goethe." In *Art, Nature, and Self-Formation in the Age of Goethe*, edited by Gerad Gentry, Mattias Pirholt, and Camilla Flodin. De Gruyter: 225–244.
- Jeffrey, Anne. 2026. *Being and Becoming Good: On the Diversity of Human Goodness and Virtue*. 1st ed. Oxford University Press.
- Kant, Immanuel. 1900. *Gesammelte Schriften*. Vol. 29. Walter De Gruyter.
- Kaiser, David. 2005. *Romanticism, Aesthetics, and Nationalism*. Cambridge University Press.
- Kim, Bradford Jean-Hyuk. 2021. "Aristotle on Friendship and the Lovable." *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 59, no. 2: 221–45.
- Kneller, Jane. 2014. "Sociability and the Conduct of Philosophy." In *The Relevance of Romanticism*, edited by Dalia Nassar. Oxford University Press: 110–126. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199976201.003.0007>.
- Korsgaard, Christine M. 1996. *Creating the Kingdom of Ends*. Cambridge University Press.
- Kristjánsson, Kristján. 2020a. "Aristotelian Character Friendship as a 'Method' of Moral Education." *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 39, no. 4: 349–64. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11217-020-09717-w>.
- Kristjánsson, Kristján. 2020b. "Grounding Deep Friendships: Reconciling the Moralized and Aestheticized Views." *Journal of Philosophical Research* 45:197–216. <https://doi.org/10.5840/jpr20201230156>.
- Kristjánsson, Kristján. 2022. *Friendship for Virtue*. Oxford University Press.
- Leontiev, Kim. 2023. "Schiller on Aesthetic Education as Radical Ethical-Political Remedy." *British Journal of Aesthetics* 63, no. 4: 553–78. <https://doi.org/10.1093/aesthj/ayad003>.
- Lewis, C. S. 1960. *The Four Loves*. G. Bles.
- Ludwig, Paul Walter. 2020. *Rediscovering Political Friendship: Aristotle's Theory and Modern Identity, Community, and Equality*. Cambridge university press.
- Matherne, Samantha. 2024. *Seeing More: Kant's Theory of Imagination*. Oxford Scholarship Online. Oxford University Press.

- Matherne, Samantha, and Nick Riggle. 2020. "Schiller on Freedom and Aesthetic Value: Part I." *British Journal of Aesthetics* 60, no. 4: 375–402. <https://doi.org/10.1093/aesthj/ayaa006>.
- Matherne, Samantha, and Nick Riggle. 2021. "Schiller on Freedom and Aesthetic Value: Part II." *British Journal of Aesthetics* 61, no. 1: 17–40.
- Moggach, Douglas. 2007. "Schiller's Aesthetic Republicanism." *History of Political Thought* 28: 520–54.
- Nassar, Dalia. 2014. *The Romantic Absolute: Being and Knowing in Early German Romantic Philosophy, 1795–1804*. University of Chicago Press.
- Noller, Jörg. 2023. "Schiller on Morals." In *The Palgrave Handbook on the Philosophy of Friedrich Schiller*, edited by Antonino Falduto and Tim Mehigan. Springer: 341–351. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-16798-0_19.
- Noller, Jörg. 2021. "Heautonomy: Schiller on Freedom of the Will." *European Journal of Philosophy* 29:339–53.
- Nussbaum, Martha C. 2009. *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature*. Oxford University Press.
- Nussbaum, Martha C. 1985. "'Finely Aware and Richly Responsible': Moral Attention and the Moral Task of Literature." *The Journal of Philosophy* 82, no. 10: 516–29.
- Rawls, John. 1980. "Kantian Constructivism in Moral Theory." *Journal of Philosophy* 77, no. 9: 515–572. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2025790>.
- Thompson, Michael. 2008. *Life and Action: Elementary Structures of Practice and Practical Thought*. Harvard University Press.
- Wellbery, David E. 2024. "Goethe on Tragedy." In *Art, Nature, and Self-Formation in the Age of Goethe*, edited by Gerad Gentry, Mattias Pirholt, and Camilla Flodin. De Gruyter: 11–36.
- Wellbery, David E. 1996. *The Specular Moment: Goethe's Early Lyric and the Beginnings of Romanticism*. Stanford University Press.
- Wilson, Ross. 2009. *The Meaning of Life in Romantic Poetry and Poetics*. Routledge.