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Animal Ethics Based on Friendship

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This article discusses some aspects of animal ethics from an Aristotelian virtue ethics point of view. Because the notion of friendship (philia) is central to Aristotle's ethical theory, the focus of the article is whether humans and animals can be friends. It is argued that new empirical findings in cognitive ethology indicate that animals actually do fulfill the Aristotelian condition for friendship based on mutual advantage. The practical ethical implications of these findings are discussed, and it is argued that eating meat from free-living animals is more morally acceptable than eating cattle because hunters (unlike farmers) do not befriend their prey.

KEY WORDS: Aristotle, virtue, ethology, friendship

INTRODUCTION

The debate over animal welfare has been heavily influenced by Peter Singer's (1975) utilitarian analysis and Tom Regan's (1983) rights-based theory of ethics. This article seeks to make a contribution to the field by exploring the ethical obligations humans have toward animals from a fundamentally different ethical perspective—that of virtue ethics. Our main conclusion is that the basic ideals of virtue ethics give us strong reasons to take animal welfare seriously and to treat animals as our friends.¹

A fundamental idea in Aristotle's ethics is that a person's moral obligations toward friends differ from those she has toward people in general. Friends have a special moral status, and as a result they are, and sometimes should be, favored over strangers. Therefore, it is of great interest to explore whether humans can be friends with animals. As has been pointed out by his critics, Aristotle himself thought that animals were inferior to humans and that their souls were radically different:

Take for example the relation of craftsman to tool, and soul to body. The latter in each pair is benefitted by its user, but there is neither friendship nor justice towards soulless things. Nor is there any towards an ox, or even a slave, in so far as he is a slave; for master and slave have nothing in common, since a slave is a tool with a soul, while a tool is a slave without one. (NE, 1161b1–b4)²

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This article seeks to challenge Aristotle's claim that we cannot befriend animals. We do this by summarizing some recent empirical findings from cognitive ethology, indicating that animals in fact have the capacities that would qualify them for certain types of friendship. We also argue that a revised opinion about the possibility of befriending animals has significant ethical implications for issues related to animal welfare, some of which are more nuanced than the rather blunt views put forward by Singer and Regan.

Take, for instance, the question of whether it is morally permissible to eat meat. Singer and Regan famously claim that this is wrong. Singer (1975) bases his argument on a utilitarian calculus of what would produce the greatest amount of preference satisfaction, whereas Regan (1983) argues that we should ascribe inviolable rights to animals. However, if friends are sometimes of greater moral importance than non-friends, and animals could be our friends, a different view seems to present itself. Because farmers are, or ought to be, friends with their cattle, it is morally worse to produce beef than to hunt free-living animals.³ This is because the hunter is not standing in any friendship-relation with his prey. The upshot of this is, thus, that if we accept Aristotle's basic premise that our moral obligations toward friends differ from those toward strangers, it can be claimed that it is less morally wrong, or even morally acceptable, to eat meat from free-living animals.

The remainder of this article is divided into four sections. The first two sections outline the role of friendship in Aristotle's ethical theory. In the third section it is argued that humans can befriend (nonhuman) animals and that animals can befriend each other. Finally, in the fourth section, we outline the ethical implications of our claim about human-animal friendship. We argue that a virtue ethics approach to the discussion over animal welfare supports the claim that it is morally worse to eat animals from farms than to eat hunted free-living animals.

ARISTOTLE ON FRIENDSHIP

Aristotle argued that the best life for any individual is a *eudaimon* life and, further to that point, that friendship (*philia*) is an essential part of *eudaimonia*. He explained that for any agent to lead a happy life, she must have friends and other people close to her (NE, 1169b10–15). With the possible exception of *theoria* (contemplation, study), the shared life is always superior—it is better to engage in practical activities with a friend than to do them on one's own. Aristotle writes,

Surely it is also odd to make the blessed person solitary, since no one would choose to have all good things and yet be by himself. For a human is a social being and his nature is to live in the company of others. (NE, 1169b18–20)

The paradigm case of friendship for Aristotle is a relationship that is mutually recognized and is taking place between two adult humans of equal standing. What they admire and love about each other are the virtues they can see in one another. As discussed later in this article, however, Aristotle's positions can be taken to concede that relationships

between the not fully virtuous may also be called friendship, but a lesser kind. The most important aspect of friendship is spending time together, preferably engaging in *theoria*—this is the *signum* of the good friendship (NE, 1157b19–24). Complete friendship helps us grow as humans, and having virtuous beings as our friends inspires and helps us. Both parties gain self-knowledge, and “we are better able to contemplate our neighbors than ourselves, and their actions than our own” (NE, 1169b34–35). By watching our friend—our other self and a mirror, as it were—we discover ourselves. This is an ongoing process; we change while going through life, and therefore, we must maintain our friendships so as not to lose track of ourselves. As Sherman (1989) succinctly puts it, “friendship creates a context or arena for the expression of virtue and ultimately for happiness” (p. 128).

Seeing what weight Aristotle places on having friends, it does not come as a surprise that we feel we have special moral obligations to our near and dear. To treat friends better than others is not only permissible but is in many situations actually expected of the virtuous agent. Aristotle writes that we have a moral obligation to help our friends before we help strangers (NE, 1160b1–10). Indeed, it is difficult to see how we would be able to create and maintain the type of very close relationships encouraged by Aristotle if we were compelled to neutrality.

Aristotle explicitly claims that you may favor your friends both in everyday situations and in instances when helping a friend is especially fine or necessary (NE, 1164b23–1165a2). Although reluctant to dictate universal rules, he offers some examples of situations where partiality would be morally obligatory. One such case is the ransoming of one’s father if he is captured (even before paying one’s own ransom). We should give priority to our parents when it comes to offering support because our debt to them is greater than that we might have to others (NE, 1165a23–25). That said, Aristotle does not provide for or excuse rampant nepotism. It would *not* be acceptable to favor someone close who is not virtuous over a good man.

Aristotle argues that there are three main virtuous qualities that qualify someone as a friend: excellence, pleasantness, and usefulness. He then moves on to saying that these translate into three types of friendships (which can, of course, overlap; NE, 1156a6–8):

1. friendship based on mutual admiration
2. friendship based on mutual pleasure
3. friendship based on mutual advantage

Aristotle argues that the first kind of friendship is superior to the other two because it is based on excellence, and as such, it is a relationship that is good without qualifications. It deals with the inner qualities of a person; in these situations, we love our friend for intrinsic reasons, and the relationship is not solely a matter of pleasure and utility. However, this does not mean that the two other forms of friendship lack ethical significance. In our discussion of friendship with animals here, we argue that humans and animals are friends in the third sense—that is, their friendship is based on mutual advantage.

THE POSSIBILITY OF LESSER FRIENDSHIPS

Let us then briefly address the issue of what support there might be for the idea that a friendship not based on mutual admiration indeed still could be ethically significant. Let us turn to Book VIII of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Here, Aristotle concludes that the lesser forms could still be called friendship:

So presumably we ought also to say that such people [those whose motive is utility] are friends, but that there are several kinds of friendship. Friendship in the primary and real sense will be the friendship of good people in so far as they are good, while the rest will be friendships by being like it; it is in virtue of something good, and something like what is found in true friendship that they are friends, because what is pleasant is good to lovers of pleasure. (NE, 1157a31–34)

Evidently, this can be read as saying that even the lesser friendships include an element of genuine love and goodwill. On our reading, Aristotle maintains that relationships based on usefulness or pleasure still count as friendships because even though the lesser forms of friendship do not contain *all* the right elements, they contain *enough* elements to make them count. This is a contested conclusion, however. In the contemporary literature it has been questioned whether the lesser forms of friendship should actually count as (ethically relevant forms of) friendship. The positions range from blatant rejection of the lesser forms to inclusive views where the friendships of utility and pleasure are subject to various forms of qualification.⁴

Cooper (1977) puts forward a rather optimistic view, claiming that Aristotle saw genuine goodwill and elements of unselfishness and concern for the other in all three forms of friendship.⁵ The basis of this interpretation is the definition of love and friendship found in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* (especially in 2.4; Cope, 1877/1980). The general idea is that loving your friend is "wishing for him what you believe to be good things, not for your own sake but for his, and being inclined, so far as you can, to bring these things about" (*Rhetoric*, 1380b36–1381a1; see also book 8.2 of the NE). According to Cooper, Aristotle held that not even the lesser friendships are entirely self-centered, that there is genuine concern for the other for his own sake, and that on that basis even these relationships merit to be called friendships.

Other scholars, including Price (1989), have criticized Cooper's view, emphasizing that Aristotle had many different formulations in the *Rhetoric*, the *Eudemian Ethics*, and the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Sometimes Aristotle appears to support the idea that there is goodwill in all friendships, and on other occasions he seems to reject it. Further to that point, Price says that what Cooper views as goodwill in the lesser friendships is in fact merely the much weaker feeling of well-wishing. That is the impersonal, non-committing, unspecified benign attitude we might well feel towards the whole human race.

Cooper might then respond by pointing out that Aristotle recognizes that there clearly is a difference between lesser friends and those who just happen to have a joint interest, and it is between those two groups that the division lies. Cooper (1977) writes,

A businessman is no friend of *all* his regular customers, and when a personal relationship is more or less purely exploitative it would be taken for irony to describe the persons in question as friends. (p. 316)

It appears that Cooper is saying that there are three levels, two of which qualify as friendships and then the rest.⁶ Cooper concludes that the “perfect friendship” as described by Aristotle is just a paradigm case—that is, not the only kind of friendship. Even though most of us might have to settle for the lesser forms, all is not lost; those forms also contain genuine well-wishing and goodwill for the sake of the other. We find this a very plausible interpretation. Anyone seeking to make constructive use of Aristotle’s ideas would find it helpful to adopt the position that he created paradigm cases in the interest of clarity and not because he believed that the only thing that counts are the perfect instances. Presumably, Aristotle thought both pure friendship and the fullness of virtue very rare. Although that does not make those states less beautiful or less admirable, it does mean that perfection is not the only way; we can still have friendship in a lesser way.

Of course, accepting that lesser friendship is indeed a qualified form of friendship is not to deny that it still requires a certain degree of mutuality. Both parties have to be aware of the relationship, and they must both harbor similar attitudes toward each other (NE, 1155b26–1156a5). This point is important in the following two sections, in which we discuss the possibility of forming friendships with animals.

FRIENDSHIP WITH ANIMALS

The analysis of nonhuman friendship can be broken down into two separate questions. The first is whether humans can be friends with (some) animals, and the second is whether (some) animals can be friends with other animals. For reasons that will become clear shortly, we analyze both questions in parallel, although they might very well prompt different answers.

Aristotle does not discuss friendship with animals in great detail. Nevertheless, it is quite clear that he considered it impossible for humans to be friends with animals. His argument runs as follows.

Between man and wife friendship seems to exist by nature; for man is naturally inclined to form couples even more than to form cities, inasmuch as the household is earlier and more necessary than the city, and reproduction is more common to man with the animals. *With the other animals the union extends only to this point, but human beings live together not only for the sake of reproduction but also for the various purposes of life*; for from the start the functions are divided, and those of man and woman are different; so they help each other by throwing their peculiar gifts into the common stock. (NE, 1162a17–a23; emphasis added)

The main point of the argument appears to be that friendship among animals is impossible because animals merely meet up to reproduce but do not live together for “the

various purposes of life.” Humans, on the other hand, do indeed “live together” for “the various purposes of life.”

Arguably, the kind of friendship that might be applicable here is the third type previously listed, that is, friendship based on mutual advantage. Although not as valuable as friendship based on mutual admiration (the first category), this should still be recognized as a form of friendship, as previously argued. Now, for the sake of the argument, we shall grant Aristotle the claim that his empirical observation about the behavior of animals, if true, is ethically relevant. Friendship based on mutual advantage requires, among other things, interaction and communication, given that this is required for sharing “the various purposes of life.” However, as indicated earlier, Aristotle’s argument comprises two parts, an ethical part as well as an empirical one. So far, we have considered only the ethical part, and we must now turn to the empirical part. We believe that one may coherently accept Aristotle’s ethical claim about the ethical significance of communication and interaction *and* deny his empirical claim that animals actually lack these capacities. In other words, although we find the ethical part of the argument reasonable, it does not follow that its empirical part is true. In fact, modern biology has shown Aristotle’s biological claims to be false. Today we know that he greatly underestimated the degree to which some animals live together for “the various purposes of life.” Lions, zebras, reindeers, and many other species live together in herds for long periods of time, and some birds live in lifelong relationships. We also know that many animals, such as dolphins and chimpanzees, are able to communicate with each other and transfer information from one individual to another.

Further to this point, an entirely new branch of ethology known as cognitive ethology has gained considerable ground in recent years. In their 2002 book *The Cognitive Animal: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives on Animal Cognition*, Bekoff, Allen, and Burghardt have put together 57 articles written by leading experts on animal cognition. The authors show that the empirical evidence for animal cognition and communication is massive. In one of the articles, “Exploring the Cognitive World of the Bottlenosed Dolphin,” Herman (2002) reports what we currently know about the cognitive capacities of these mammals. He points out that the brain of the adult bottlenose dolphin is about 25% heavier than the average adult human brain. Moreover, according to Herman, “recent work has demonstrated that the cerebellum is involved in cognitive processing in addition to its role in motor control” (p. 275). For example, Herman mentions that “our studies of language understanding have revealed dolphin capabilities for processing both semantic and syntactic information” (p. 278) and that “our studies have shown that immediate memory for things seen . . . and for sounds heard . . . are each of high fidelity and endurance.” Further to the first of these two points, Herman puts great emphasis on the language skills of dolphins:

The primary syntactic device used in our language studies has been word order. The dolphin is capable of understanding that word order changes meaning. It can respond appropriately, for instance, to such semantic contrasts as *surfboard person fetch* (take

the person to the surfboard) and *person surfboard fetch* (take the surfboard to the person). In these language studies, the dolphin demonstrated an implicit representation and understanding of the grammatical structure of the language. For example, the language-trained dolphin *Akeakamai* was able to understand logical extensions of a syntactic rule spontaneously . . . and was able to extract a semantically and syntactically correct sequence from a longer anomalous sequence of language gestures given by the human. (p. 276)

In another article in the same volume by Bekoff et al. (2002), titled “Gestural Communication in Olive Baboons and Domestic Dogs,” Smuts shows that baboons as well as dogs communicate through gestures and that such gestures play an important role in the social interaction that can be observed in dogs and baboons. In another article, “Field Studies of Social Cognition in Spotted Hyenas,” Holekamp and Engh report empirical findings on the social cognition of hyenas. Although some social cognition is reported, it appears that hyenas—unlike monkeys—cannot recognize third-party social relationships. The authors also discuss the hypothesis that hyenas might be able to count (“how many puppies should be moved to the new den?”) but conclude that the observed behavior is more readily explained by assuming that hyenas use less sophisticated rules of thumb rather than arithmetic for keeping track of their puppies. A fourth example is Slobodchikoff’s article, “Cognition and Communication in Prairie Dogs,” which summarizes our knowledge of the cognitive and communicative abilities of prairie dogs.

From a philosophical perspective, it could, of course, be questioned whether nonhuman animals really *talk* to each other and *believe* what they hear in the strictest sense of these words. Empirical data suggest that cognitive processes in nonhuman animals are more primitive than in humans. However, no expert in cognitive ethology would deny that many (nonhuman) animals do indeed communicate, although their methods are, of course, slightly different from ours. It is an indisputable empirical fact that animals transfer information between each other. Furthermore, we also know for sure that many animals live together “for the various purposes of life” in ways that are not dissimilar to the ways humans do.

Faced with these new empirical findings, some might, of course, object that although some animals do live together and communicate with their herd or partner, only humans do all these things to a sufficiently *high degree* or in *the right way*. Humans can read and write and philosophize. Animals, on the other hand, can communicate about immediate danger and fear but do not make plans for the future or philosophize about the Gettier problem. We believe the best response to this objection is to acknowledge that friendship comes in different forms. As already stressed, friendship based on mutual advantage is not as valuable as friendship based on mutual admiration. However, the former kind of friendship is nevertheless morally significant, and animals can surely communicate and interact to a sufficiently high degree to be of mutual advantage to each other. (Some animals can be of mutual advantage to each other without being able to communicate or interact, but because all forms of friendship presuppose cognitive abilities, mutual advantage does not in itself suffice for friendship.) We thus propose that when confronted with the new empirical findings in cognitive ethology, Aristotle’s categorization could be

revised by introducing two new subforms of friendship: friendship between humans and animals and friendship between animals. Both of these qualify as friendship based on mutual advantage because they share many common characteristics, but because they also differ in certain respects, they form two distinct subcategories.

We do not claim that these new subforms of friendship are exactly similar to the forms of friendship described by Aristotle, nor do we claim that these subforms of friendship are equally important as other forms of friendship. Our modest proposal is that because many animals fulfill the ethically relevant condition to some degree—that is, have cognitive capacities and are able to communicate and “live together” for “the various purposes of life” and are thus of mutual advantage to each other and to us—it ought to be acknowledged that the relationships that hold between some animals and humans and between some pairs of animals are indeed subforms of friendship and, moreover, that they are ethically significant. To be more precise, these two novel subforms of friendship are established whenever the following conditions are satisfied:

1. The relationship is of mutual advantage to both parties.
2. The mutual advantage arises out of a capacity to communicate and interact with the other individual.

THE MORAL SIGNIFICANCE OF NONHUMAN FRIENDSHIP

In our ethical analysis, we shall leave aside whether friendship between an animal and another animal is of any moral significance. The issue to be analyzed here is what follows, if anything, from the claim that some animals can be friends with humans. Because virtue ethics is a strongly context-dependent ethical theory, it does not lend itself to the creation of a great many rules. As a result, the virtue ethicist has to make a number of further assumptions about the situation at hand when seeking to find out what a virtuous person ought to do in a particular situation.

To start with, consider Joe and his dog Buster. Joe and Buster are friends and share some aspects of life. They are certainly of mutual advantage to each other—they live together and enjoy spending time together. To some extent, Joe and Buster also communicate. Buster is able to tell Joe about his needs (“hunger!”) and immediate beliefs (“danger!”), and Joe is sometimes able to instruct Buster how to behave (“sit!”). Moreover, Joe and Buster both look after each other, but in different ways. Joe ensures that Buster gets some healthy food to eat every day, as well as some fresh air and physical exercise. Buster, on the other hand, protects Joe from burglars and alleviates his boredom. However, Joe and Buster do not, of course, share everything in life, nor do they communicate about philosophy. If Joe is to lead a *eudaimon* life, he has to treat Buster well. Therefore, it would be morally wrong to neglect Buster or beat him. In most cases it would also be wrong to kill him, unless Buster’s own well-being is at risk. (Arguably, Joe would be under an obligation to kill Buster in a situation in which doing so would prevent Buster from severe suffering for the rest of his life.)

Let us contrast the first scenario with a slightly different one, in which Mary the farmer owns a cow called Rose. Mary and Rose are not as close friends as Joe and Buster because Mary has many cows, of which Rose is just one. However, Mary and Rose are certainly of mutual advantage to each other. If Rose were to die, that would spell trouble for Mary, and vice versa. Moreover, Mary and Rose adjust their behavior according to the signals received from the other. Mary cares about Rose's well-being, and this caring attitude is not merely an instrumental one. To some extent, Mary and Rose are friends, although this friendship relation is of course somewhat weaker than that between Joe and Buster. That said, we believe it would be wrong for Mary to treat Rose in a purely instrumental sense. Mary has a moral obligation to ensure that her cattle lead a good life according to the standards applicable to cows.

So is it always wrong for a farmer to kill her cattle? Apart from the type of cases considered earlier, in which the animal would face severe suffering that could not be prevented in other ways, it could be argued that farmers do indeed have a moral duty not to kill their friends prematurely. Because friends have a duty to look after each other, and virtuous farmers are friends with their cattle, farmers are under an obligation to promote the happiness of their cattle. Without speculating as to the inner lives of cows, it appears reasonable to assume that a good life for a cow would involve things such as loving care and attention, the possibility to graze outside, good quality and ample amounts of feed, interaction with other cows, and so on. Although our argument does not rule out the farmer killing the animal at some point, this is definitely an argument against, for example, the current practice of killing male dairy calves. Further to that point, it also follows that farmers ought not give their animals steroids, hormones, or other drugs that are intended to speed up growth or make the animals develop in extreme ways.

Note that our analysis places stronger moral obligations on the farmer than on the consumer because the consumer is in most cases not friends with the cattle. That said, we can extend the analysis to the consumer in the following way: Given that it is rather difficult to be virtuous in a vicious society, it might be in the interest of virtuous agents to forward virtue both in society at large and in their fellow citizens. Thus, by abstaining from eating meat—if this would involve the killing of calves for that very purpose—the virtuous might not only aid cattle farmers in their quest to become more virtuous but also aid in bringing about a virtuous society.

Naturally, not all farmers are as virtuous as Mary, and as a result, they may fail to actually be friends with their cattle. However, this is a moral deficit of these farmers, which does not alleviate them of their moral responsibility. Given that someone—in this hypothetical example, Rose the cow—is dependent on the farmer and communicates her needs on a daily basis, and the farmer is also dependent on Rose, the farmer has a moral obligation to treat Rose as a friend.⁷

Let us finally consider a third scenario, which differs in important ways from the others. Suppose that Sandy the hunter is hunting for moose. Fortunately for Sandy, a moose appears out of the woods just as Sandy has loaded his rifle. Sandy has never met this particular moose before, so the moose is by no means his friend; in fact, humans are

typically not friends with moose. This is because moose live on their own in the woods and are not dependent on humans for their survival. Humans and moose are not of *mutual* advantage to each other. Furthermore, humans and moose do not communicate, not even in a weak sense. So would it be wrong for Sandy to pull the trigger and shoot the moose? It follows from what has been said previously that the answer might very well be no. Because Sandy is not shooting a friend, and the moose will die immediately without feeling any fear or pain (the shooter we have in mind here is, of course, virtuous in the sense that he is excellent with regard to technique and judgment), it follows that there is an important moral distinction between the present case and the two previous ones.

Note that we do not claim that it is always permissible to kill animals who do not belong to your circle of friends. One might, of course, have other good reasons for not killing an animal. Virtue ethics does not permit us to totally neglect the interests of others. All we are claiming is that there is a morally significant distinction to be drawn between animals who are our friends and animals with whom we have not established any friendship relation. We have moral obligations to our friends that we do not have to strangers.

In an earlier article on animal welfare and friendship, Jordan (2001) argues that humans can indeed befriend certain animals. However, contrary to what we have argued, Jordan maintains that there is *no* morally relevant distinction between hunting for free-living animals and eating cattle. This is because on Jordan's account, the morally relevant feature of friendship is whether it is *possible* for humans to befriend a *kind* of animal, not whether a friendship-relation *actually* has been established with a particular animal. Therefore, because he maintains that it would be possible for a hunter to befriend, for example, a moose, he arrives at a much more extreme conclusion than ours, holding that hunting is in general wrong. Let us take a closer look at this alternative view. Jordan explicitly claims that "for any animal-kind K, such that members of K are possible friends of humans, no member of K is a morally permissible normal human food-stuff" (p. 310). Although Jordan does not mention moose, it is clear from his discussion that he believes that it is *possible* for humans to befriend a moose, although the kind of friendship he has in mind is not one of the three (symmetric) kinds discussed by Aristotle. In response to this, we would like to point out that we find *merely possible* friendship ethically irrelevant. For Aristotle, as well as for contemporary advocates of his theory, it is clear that the whole point about friendship is that one *actually* is someone's friend. Moral obligations based on friendship arise because we do actually admire, take pleasure, or benefit from each other's company, not because it would be possible to do so. This is why eating meat from free-living animals is in general morally better than eating cattle.

Finally, it is worth pointing out that the analysis sketched here can be applied to other cases as well. For example, fishermen catching fishes or lobsters do not catch their friends because there is no cognitive interaction going on between fishes and fishermen, nor are the fishermen of any advantage to the fishes. It thus seems to follow that, from the virtue ethics perspective sketched here, catching and eating fishes is morally acceptable. Another example worth thinking about is animals used in research. Even if it might be true to some extent that researchers and animals sometimes communicate, it is an indisputable

fact that these animals are not friends with the researcher. This is because the condition of mutual advantage is not fulfilled. The animals do not gain anything from being used by the researchers.

CONCLUSION

In this article we have explored whether humans can have nonhuman friends and whether nonhuman animals can be friends with each other. By approaching the issue from an Aristotelian virtue ethical point of view, we have outlined a novel argument for thinking that humans can indeed be friends with animals and that animals can be friends with each other. Moreover, we have also argued that the conclusion about human–animal friendship is of ethical significance, given that (many) humans are moral agents. From a virtue ethical point of view, it seems clear that it is in many cases wrong to kill or maltreat one's friends. This opens up a novel way of articulating a moral distinction between eating meat from cattle and eating meat from free-living animals: Because farmers are, or ought to be, friends with their cattle, whereas a hunter typically does not befriend his prey, it is morally worse to eat cattle.

Acknowledgments

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Notes

1. The following is not intended as a complete and exegetic study of Aristotelian virtue ethics, but rather as a contemporary exploration of a way to understand certain aspects of *philia*.
2. All such citations refer to the *Nicomachean Ethics* in Immanuel Bekker's translation of *Aristotelis opera edidit Academia Regia Borussica* (1831). For each citation, the first four digits refer to page, the letter refers to page column, and the digits thereafter refer to line numbers.
3. More concrete obligations that could follow from this type of friendship are further discussed in the section titled "The Moral Significance of Nonhuman Friendship."
4. See, for example, Price, Walker, and Cooper in Price (1989), Cooper (1977), and Walker (1979).
5. Again we should recall that *philia* is a much wider concept than our friendship. It is more about a shared outlook on life and the worthwhile than the intimacy that we consider central in friendship.
6. For something to count as friendship, even the lesser kind, there has to be a genuine interest in the other for his or her sake, although there is, of course, much less interest, less merging of lives, less spending of time, and so on.
7. At this point, it is also worth pointing out that the present moral analysis covers merely how humans ought to treat animals. We by no means wish to ascribe moral properties to the behavior of animals. Although some animals can surely be *friends* with humans, it is far from clear that these animals are full moral agents. Arguably, some animals might fulfill some of the conditions (whatever they are) for being a moral agent, but it seems highly questionable whether any nonhuman animal can be fully morally responsible in the sense that most humans are.

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