Why Friends Shouldn't Let Friends Be Eaten: An Argument for Vegetarianism

The case for vegetarianism is usually erected upon one of three foundations: religious convictions, prudential considerations, or philosophical contentions. Among the latter, utilitarian arguments, rights-based arguments, and sociopolitical arguments are the kinds generally found.[1]

In what follows I formulate and defend a new argument in support of vegetarianism, which, although deontological in kind, will be neither rights-based nor contractarian in detail. Indeed, because the argument requires only a minimal revision of commonsense beliefs—it neither entails nor presupposes that animals possess moral rights or enjoy any sort of moral equivalence with humans, or that sentience is morally significant, or that meat-eating is part of patriarchy—it enjoys a pragmatic advantage over other arguments in support of vegetarianism. The key concept of the argument is friendship. Employing the widely accepted idea that one can befriend certain animals, conjoined with a plausible moral principle, vegetarianism follows. While there may be other sufficient reasons for adopting vegetarianism, I contend in what follows that if this new argument is sound, then vegetarianism is morally mandated.

The Argument Formulated

That humans can befriend certain animals is so widely accepted that the idea generates little, if any, controversy. This fact provides a foundation

[1]The classic utilitarian argument pro vegetarianism is Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation* (New York: Avon Books, 1977). See also his "Utilitarianism and Vegetarianism," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 9 (1980): 325-37. The classic contractarian argument (or rights-based argument) pro vegetarianism is Tom Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983). See also his "The Moral Basis of Vegetarianism," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 5 (1975): 181-214. For a sociopolitical argument, see, for instance, Carol J. Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (New York: Continuum, 1990). For a useful survey of arguments employed pro vegetarianism, see William O. Stephens, "Five Arguments for Vegetarianism," *Philosophy in the Contemporary World* 1 (1994): 25-39.

upon which we can erect a new argument in support of vegetarianism:

1. For all X and Y, if X can befriend Y, then Y is not a morally permissible normal food-stuff for X, nor is eating a morally sufficient reason for X to kill Y under normal circumstances. (premise) So,
2. For any animal-kind K, such that that members of K are possible friends of humans, no member of K is a morally permissible normal human food-stuff, nor is eating a morally sufficient reason to kill a member of K under normal circumstances. (from 1) And,
3. Many of the kinds of animals commonly used as human foodstuff have members which are possible friends of humans. (premise) So,
4. Many of the kinds of animals commonly used as human foodstuff are not a morally permissible normal foodstuff for humans, nor is eating a morally sufficient reason for a human to kill those kinds of animals under normal circumstances. (from 1, 2, 3) And,
5. A diet free from the meat of any animal-kind whose members are possible friends of humans is vegetarianism.

Therefore,

6. One should (morally speaking) adhere to vegetarianism. (from 4 & 5)

The first premise implies that anyone who could befriend Y is thereby morally prohibited from eating Y under normal circumstances and from killing Y or having Y killed for food under normal circumstances. Hereafter, for simplicity, (1) is expressed as:

1. For all X and Y, if X can befriend Y, then Y is not a permissible normal foodstuff for X.

This shortened version of (1), and various variants of it, though, should be understood as including the prohibition against killing.

Premise (1) is not about it being morally inappropriate, or less than morally optimal, or a bad value to eat one's friends. Premise (1), if true, asserts that it is wrong to eat a being one could befriend. Moreover, it is important to keep in mind that (1) concerns *possible* friends, rather than actual friends. Or, to put the matter another way, it is kind-membership that is relevant in (1): if one can befriend X and X is a member of a kind K, then any member of K is a possible friend. Of course, since every animal is a member, for instance, of the kind called *living thing*, we will stipulate that the sense of *kind* relevant here is *species*.

Premise (1) does not imply that eating possible friends is never morally permissible; it is just never permissible in the absence of extraordinary conditions. Importantly, even if it is true that there are various kinds

of friendship, the use of *friend* in (1) is intended to be generic—(1) is meant to be true no matter which kind of friendship one has in mind. If something is a possible friend—no matter the kind of friendship involved—it is not a morally permissible foodstuff.

Since (2) is just a special case of (1), it will be true if (1) is true. Step (3) asserts that many of the animals used as foodstuff—think of cows and sheep and pigs, for instance—are possible friends of humans, whether there are any actual cases or not. The *possibility* involved here is not as broad as logical possibility; it is, roughly, what a normal adult human is in fact capable of.

While there is no effective method for determining if animals of a certain kind are possible friends, it is reasonable to consider apparent cases: if someone takes himself to be friends with a particular animal, then that is a good, even if defeasible, reason to hold that animals of that kind are possible friends. Since this method is defeasible, there may be hard cases—cases whose moral status is not obvious and about which reasonable people could disagree. Still, even if there are hard cases, it does not follow that there are no clear cases. It is clear enough that cows, pigs, and sheep are all cases of possible friends.

Just as a utilitarian case for vegetarianism, or an animal-rights approach, does not cover every kind of animal,[2] the argument (1)-(6) does not cover every animal-kind. Are crabs, for instance, possible friends? Probably not. And if not, then (1) would not range over crabs.[3] One might object that vegetarianism is a diet free from the flesh of all animal-kinds. If one finds this objection cogent, then one should feel free to replace *vegetarianism* with *limited-vegetarianism* throughout the argument. In what follows I will refer to the argument, (1)-(6), as the *Friendship Argument.*

Kinds of Friendship

While it is not necessary for the Friendship Argument to specify the kind of friendship possible between humans and animals, it is a matter of some interest. There is perhaps no better place to begin a discussion of the kinds of friendship than Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and *Nicomachean Ethics*. In Book II of the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle characterizes *friendship* thus:

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[2]See, for instance, Regan, "Moral Basis of Vegetarianism," pp. 212-13.

[3]Are chickens and turkeys possible friends? I suspect not. Both probably lack a requisite feature of friendship: an emotional life rich enough to generate affection. See the discussion of companion-friends in the section "Kinds of Friends."

We may describe friendly feelings towards any one as 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. A friend is one who feels thus and excites these feelings in return: those who think they feel thus towards each other think themselves friends. This being assumed, it follows that your friend is the sort of man who shares your pleasure in what is good and your pain in what is unpleasant, for your sake and for no other reason. This pleasure and pain of his will be the token of his good wishes for you, since we all feel glad at getting what we wish for, and pained at getting what we do not.[4]

The idea here is that one is a friend only if one wishes the other well. One desires that things go well for one's friend and this is not for one's own sake, but for the sake of the friend. So, even if one receives no benefit from the friend's flourishing, one nonetheless wishes it so. One will have, if Aristotle is right, an other-regarding attitude and not a self-regarding attitude toward one's friends. Moreover, not only will one wish well for one's friend, but, Aristotle says, one will try to bring it about that one's friend will do well, insofar as one can. And, finally, this other-regarding attitude and inclination to act must be reciprocated. In sum, X is a friend with Y, Aristotle tells us, if and only if X has an other-regarding preference for things to go well for Y; and X is inclined to bring it about, so far as she can, that things do go well for Y; and Y has similar feelings and inclinations regarding X.

There can be little doubt that in the *Rhetoric* Aristotle has characterized one kind of friendship, but it would be a mistake to think that Aristotle has provided us with a sufficient analysis of friendship in general. The account in the *Rhetoric,* for one thing, is too sophisticated in its requirements to describe the kind of friendship found between young children. A four year-old will probably not have an other-regarding attitude toward his playmate, even though he is friends with the playmate. Another problem with the *Rhetoric* account is the reciprocity requirement. Although unusual, there are occasions in which it makes sense to say something like "I am her friend, but she is not mine." One may be ignorant of the attitudes and actions of another on her behalf and, as a consequence, would not reciprocate those attitudes or actions. Even so, it would not be odd or incorrect to describe the benefactor as a friend. Ignorance does not preclude friendship.

In Book VIII of the *Nicomachean Ethics,* Aristotle suggests that there are three basic kinds of friendship, sometimes termed *virtue-friendship*, *pleasure-friendship*, and *utility-friendship*, with the first as the central kind of friendship and the latter two as derivative in nature. The names

[4]Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, Bk. II, chap. 4, 1380b36-1381a, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. J. Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

are derived from the three things that bind persons into friendships: human excellence, pleasure, and advantage. Virtue-friendship is, arguably, the kind of friendship characterized in the *Rhetoric*.[5] Interestingly, Aristotle here recognizes that one may be mistaken about the qualities one's prospective friend might have, since he adds, "perhaps we should add: 'provided that we are aware of the good will'."[6]

Utility-friendships, Aristotle suggests, are associations based on the benefit or usefulness each receives from the other. Once the benefit vanishes, so does the friendship. Utility does not generate a permanent bond. A pleasure-friendship is one in which the other is valued not for what she is, but for providing something pleasant. Again, this sort of friendship is easily dissolved, "for if the one party is no longer pleasant or useful the other ceases to love him."[7] While pleasure is a benefit, pleasure-friendships are not a sub-class of utility-friendships. By *utility*, *benefit*, and *advantage* are meant goods other than pleasure.

One wishes the other well, in a utility-friendship or in a pleasure-friendship, primarily because without well-being, the advantage or the pleasure one receives is less likely to continue. So, unlike a virtue-friendship, utility-friendships and pleasure-friendships include a self-regarding attitude. But, even though one has a utility-friendship with another because of some advantage to be had from that association, utility-friendships are not mutual exploitation associations. Those involved in utility-friendships do have, Aristotle holds, in addition to their self-regarding attitude, an other-regarding attitude toward each other.[8] Self-regarding and other-regarding attitudes are compossible (both possible at the same time), according to Aristotle, although the former constrains the latter. The other-regarding attitude found in a utility-friendship is more restricted than that found in a virtue-friendship, since one wishes a utility-friend well, for her own sake, only to a degree compatible with the advantage continuing. The other-regarding attitude, wishing well for the friend, is not restricted in a virtue-friendship. Moreover, virtue-friendships are purer relationships than utility or pleasure-friendships, since only an other-regarding attitude is found in them. Utility and pleasure-friendships contain an admixture of self-regarding and other-regarding attitudes.

Aristotle considers virtue-friendship significant, since it is based on

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[5]See *Nicomachean Ethics (EN)*, Bk. IX, chap. 4, 1166a5-9.

[6]*EN*, Bk. VIII, chap. 2, 1155b34.

[7]*EN*, Bk. VIII, chap. 3, 1156a20-2.

[8]See John Cooper, "Aristotle on Friendship," in A. Rorty (ed.), *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), pp. 301-17.

the nature of the persons involved. Virtue-friends will remain so as long as they are virtuous. Thus Aristotle holds that virtue-friendship is permanent and not incidental. The idea is something like this: the other two kinds of friendship are based on incidental or accidental features of the individuals involved, so they will change as circumstances change. But virtue-friendship is permanent, based on the immutable properties of the individuals involved. And since, in Aristotle's view, permanence trumps transience, virtue-friendship is the central kind of friendship.

Are Aristotle's three types exhaustive of the kinds of friendship? It will do as long as the three kinds are not seen as mutually exclusive; that is, as long as the Aristotelian allows that there are sub-kinds among the three. There are at least two possible sub-kinds, or permutations, of the basic three. For instance, if asked why you are friends with B, you might respond that it is because of the enjoyment of associating with B, and because of the benefits derived from that association. And B, when asked the same thing, may well respond the same way: it is because of both the pleasure and the advantages to be had. Neither the enjoyment nor the utility is conceptually or causally prior to the other. They stand on an equal footing in support of the friendship. This permutation is an overlapping of utility-friendship and pleasure-friendship. But with a friendship in which one is friends with another because of the other's virtuous nature, that feature would take conceptual priority over any benefit or pleasure one received from that friendship. Or again, think of someone, call her C, who establishes a friendship with a co-worker D. C might establish this relationship because of the aid in doing her job that flows from the friendship with D. Yet, C's reasons for the friendship do not preclude the possibility that D is involved because she simply enjoys the company of C. One might associate with another because of the utility of doing so, while the other party does so because of the pleasantness involved. This would be a hybrid of utility-friendship and pleasure-friendship. I will call this hybrid *companion-friendship*. More precisely, let's say that X and Y are companion-friends just in case (i) there are times when each prefers the company of the other, and (ii) X receives pleasure from the association with Y, while Y receives benefit from the association with X, and (iii) there are times when X behaves toward Y in an other-regarding way, and there are times when Y behaves toward X in an other-regarding way.

Unlike Aristotle's three basic kinds, in which the characteristic relation of each is symmetrical—each friend received the same sort of thing from the other—the characteristic relation of companion-friendship is asymmetrical. In a companion-friendship the connecting bonds between the friends are composed of different material: one association is formed

from advantage, while the other is formed from pleasure. Of course, one friend may receive both pleasure and utility, while the other receives only pleasure, for instance. But what is important is the dominant cause of the friendship for a given person: the effective reason why X is friends with Y.

The idea of companion-friendship requires that the parties possess preferences, and are capable of other-regarding behavior. The third condition does not require realizing that one is inclined to act in an other-regarding way, nor that one always acts in an other-regarding way, nor does it require dramatic acts of other-regarding behavior. Condition (iii) simply requires that some of one's actions are describable as other-regarding. One way an animal might plausibly satisfy (iii) is by expressing affection for a human. Since companion-friendship is a hybrid between utility- and pleasure-friendship, it is compatible with one's actions being overdetermined in their motivations: one may have both an other-regarding attitude and a self-regarding attitude toward one's friend. Condition (iii) requires merely that one sometimes act in an other-regarding way. Notice that the account of companion-friendship requires no reciprocity between humans and things that are possible friends. You can consider yourself friends with X, even if X does not (or even cannot) think of himself as friends with you.

Given this account of companion-friendship, is there any reason to think that a companion-friendship could not hold between humans and some animals? Probably not. Considering one's dog a friend, for example, is not thought of as odd or peculiar. Think how odd it sounds if one said "we are going to Dallas," and responded when asked who was going, "my truck and I."[9] On the other hand, a response of "my dog and I" sounds no more startling than "my child and I." Is there some morally relevant difference, an in-principle difference, between dogs and the kinds of animals commonly used as foodstuff such that only the former deserve the status of possible friends? I know of none. Premise (3) seems, as a consequent, plausible.

Why Not Eat Our Friends?

While it is true that a human and, say, a dog cannot be friends in the same way that one is friends with another human, nothing of interest follows from this for the argument, since, even though there are various

[9]I take this illustration from Daniel Dennett, *Kinds of Minds* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), pp. 4-5.

kinds of friendship, there is an important fact true of any kind of friendship: to consider another a friend in any sense presupposes that the other is a member of the moral community. The idea of *being a member of the moral community* is explainable by employing perhaps the most fundamental distinction in morality, that between person and thing. To say that X is merely a thing is to say, in Kantian language, that it is morally permissible to use X merely as a means. Mere things do not morally count, or at least, do not count much. On the other hand, if X is a person, then X can be used as a means only up to the point at which the personhood of X is threatened. Although it is controversial whether there can be persons that are not human, it is clear enough that the distinction between person and thing is, as it stands, too coarse.[10] Even if something falls outside the domain of personhood, it does not follow that it can be treated in just any way at all.[11] Let's stipulate that X is a member of the moral community just in case X is a being and it is morally impermissible to treat X in just any way at all. And, for the moment, let's say that something is a mere thing just in case it is morally permissible to treat it in just any way at all. Clearly enough, being a member of the moral community is but a minimal status and, until more detail is supplied, vague in its import.[12] Still, if X considers Y a friend, then it follows that,

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[10]See, e.g., Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (New York: Basic Books, 1974), pp. 39-40; Jane English, "Abortion and the Concept of a Person," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 5 (1975): 233-43, p. 240; David DeGrazia, "Great Apes, Dolphins, and the Concept of Personhood," *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 35 (1997): 301-20.

[11]We could do away with the cumbersome concept of *being a member of the moral community* and retain the duality of person/thing if we revise the latter concepts so that they mark off a distinction of degree as well as a qualitative one. Think of two reasonable beliefs, B1 and B2. Although both B1 and B2 are reasonable to hold, it does not follow that their degree of reasonableness is equal. Or again, think of transfinite cardinals. While it is true that every transfinite cardinal is infinite and that infinity is a threshold term (a cardinal number either is or is not infinite), it does not follow that every transfinite cardinal has the same cardinality, since there are varying orders of transfinite magnitude. Although the details cannot be developed here, it is plausible to think that something similar is true of personhood: there are varying degrees or levels of moral personhood. So, if personhood is a threshold term, it would not follow that a being that is a moral person is a full-fledged moral person. Perhaps, certain kinds of animals are moral persons, although with a degree of personhood lower than humans. A similar degree approach could be done with things: although both a rock and a Sequoia are mere things and not persons, it does not follow that they should be treated the same.

[12]Philip Devine, in "The Moral Basis of Vegetarianism," *Philosophy* 53 (1978): 481-505, suggests an "overflow principle," which grounds the moral significance of nonhuman animal suffering, mutilation, and death: "Act towards that which, while not itself a person, is closely associated with personhood in a way coherent with an attitude of respect for persons" (p. 503). Perhaps something like the overflow principle governs our treatment of those beings that are members of the moral community but are not persons.

from X's perspective, Y is not a mere thing, Y cannot be treated in just any way at all. Treatment is limited by friendship attribution, since one cannot be friends with mere things, only with members of the moral community. Friendship presupposes the morally honorific status of membership in the moral community. And, importantly, since one can be friends only with members of the moral community and not with mere things, then considering another a candidate for friendship is tantamount to issuing one an entrance ticket into the moral community.

Of the premises of the Friendship Argument, it is the first that is the most controversial. If (1) is true then being the merely possible object of human friendship suffices to rule out being used as a foodstuff. What reason do we have for thinking that (1) is true? Consider the following argument in support of (1):

7. One cannot be friends with a mere thing. So,
8. If X is a possible friend of Y, then X is not a mere thing. So,
9. Possible friends should not be treated as mere things. But,
10. To eat something is to treat it as a mere thing. Therefore,
11. If Y can befriend X, then X is not a morally permissible food-stuff for Y.

With a slight qualification, (11) is equivalent to (1). So, if (7)-(11) is sound, then (1) is well supported. There are two premises that need defending in this latest argument: (7) and (10). The other premises, given (7) and (10), are without controversy. Premise (7) asserts a conceptual claim: friendship presupposes that the parties involved are members of the moral community. What reason is there for thinking that (7) is true? To answer this, something needs to be said regarding what it is to treat something as a mere thing. Earlier we said that something is a mere thing just in case it can be treated in just any way at all. Now, let's say that X has treated Y as a mere thing if either (I) X treats Y as a tool for his purposes, or (II) X treats Y as something that is fungible; and (a) X's action does not benefit Y, nor (b) has Y consented to being treated this way, nor (c) has Y been justly compensated for having been so treated. Notice that this account provides two sufficient conditions for treating something as a mere thing: the first is (I), (a), (b), and (c); while the second is (II), (a), (b) and (c). Though neither account provides a complete analysis of what it is to treat something as a mere thing, the two provide enough for our purposes. With this understanding of treating something as a mere thing, consider the following reductio in support of (7), where T just is something that is a mere thing:

12. Suppose one can be friends with a mere thing. (supposition for reductio) And,
13. For any person X, X can treat T as a mere thing at any time. (premise) And,
14. Suppose S is friends with T. (premise) And,
15. For all X and Y, if X is friends with Y, then X has an other-regarding attitude toward Y. (premise) So,
16. S has an other-regarding attitude toward T. (from 14 and 15) But,
17. If X has an other-regarding attitude toward Y at a particular time, then X prefers the good of Y at that time. So,
18. If X has an other-regarding attitude toward Y at a particular time, then X cannot treat Y as a mere thing at that time. So,
19. There is some time at which S cannot treat T as a mere thing. (from 17 and 18) But,
20. Steps (13) and (19) are contradictory.

Therefore,

21. The reductio supposition is false: one cannot be friends with a mere thing.

Since the reductio seems straightforward enough, no more needs to be said in support of (7).[13]

What about (10)? Why think it is true? One reason is that if one can eat X and, at the same time, treat X as a member of the moral community, then there appears no principled ethical objection against cannibalism.[14] If by doing act α one treats X as a member of the moral community, then doing α does not involve treating X as a mere thing, nor, for that matter, violating X's rights or dignity, nor, presumably, any moral prohibition at all. But, then, why think that cannibalism is immoral if eating a person does not entail treating that person as a mere thing? Put succinctly, if one holds that it is morally permissible to eat one's possible friends, then cannibalism looms as a morally permissible alternative.

It might be objected that some societies have practiced ritual cannibalism with the intent not of objectification, but of honoring the person being eaten. But this is not a reason to think that (10) is false, since, although the intent was not to objectify, it does not follow that the action was not in fact objectifying. That is, since we know that people or groups of people can have false beliefs, we have no reason to think that

[13]The reductio presupposes something like the following principle: If an agent desires x more than he desires y, and he believes himself free to bring about either x or y, then he will intentionally try to bring about x if he tries to bring about either x or y.

[14]This argument was suggested to me by Michael Rea.

those societies that intended to honor the dead by eating them were not confused.

Another objection might go like this: the threat of cannibalism looms only if one holds that it is possible to eat X and, at the same time, to treat X as a person. But cannibalism does not threaten if one merely holds that it is possible to eat X and, at the same time, to treat X as a member of the moral community. Cannibalism, in other words, has to do with the eating of persons and not with the eating of members of the moral community. Is this objection good reason to doubt (10)? Probably not. For one thing, the objection presupposes that eating a being and treating it as a member of the moral community are compossible. This assertion, however, just is the issue at hand, so the objection does no more than beg the question. Moreover, the objection is sound only if the thing eaten is not a person. Since the class of persons is a sub-class of the class of members of the moral community, then, by providing no reason to think that animals are not persons, the objection stands incomplete.

Of course, if one does not hold that cannibalism is immoral, then the first reason offered in support of (10) will seem irrelevant. Consider, then, a second reason in support of (10): absent extraordinary occurrences, when one eats something, the thing eaten is treated as something which is fungible. When one eats an apple, any other ripe apple would have sated one's hunger as well. For that matter, a ripe piece of another type of fruit probably would have served one's purpose. Foodstuff is a prime example of something that is interchangeable, whether with others of the same type, or others of some other type. So, in the absence of something receiving benefit from being eaten, or having consented to being foodstuff, or having been justly compensated for serving as foodstuff, eating something is treating it as a mere thing.

A third reason in support of (10): Consider an animal that is killed in order to be eaten. Suppose that the animal neither benefits nor consents, nor is compensated for its use as a foodstuff. Indeed, the one who eats the animal does so because of a preferred taste or his own convenience or needs. Little or no thought is given to the being that is eaten. While this briefly describes our conventional eating practices, it also exemplifies one way of treating something as a mere thing. If the description is accurate, it follows that eating something is to treat it as a mere thing.

So, why think that (1) is true? Because if one doesn't, it probably means either that one is confused about the moral status of possible friends, or that one has no good reason to hold that cannibalism is morally impermissible. Besides, just as the old saw holds that friends don't stab one another in the back, it seems clear enough that one ought not stick a fork in the back of one's friend either.

The Argument Revisited

While the steps (1)-(6) constitute the canonical version of the Friendship Argument, the basic contention of that argument can be expressed more elegantly:

22. Dogs are possible companion-friends. And,
23. There is no morally relevant difference between many of the animals commonly used as foodstuff—cows, pigs, sheep, and goats—and dogs. And,
24. For all X and Y, if X can befriend Y, then Y is not a morally permissible normal foodstuff for X.

Therefore,

25. One should (morally speaking) adhere to vegetarianism.

Objections and Replies

1. "Humans cannot be friends with dogs." *Reply*: Since one can play with a dog, emotionally connect with a dog, enjoy being with a dog, communicate with a dog, share things with a dog, do things with a dog, trust and be trusted by a dog, and take care of a dog, it certainly looks as though one can be a companion-friend with a dog. Further, there appears no obvious reason to deny that one could even establish a utility-friendship, or a pleasure-friendship, with a dog. While it is true that one cannot establish a virtue-friendship with a dog, it does not follow that one cannot be a friend in any sense with a dog.[15]

2. "While dogs may satisfy the conditions for companion-friends, cows, pigs, and sheep probably do not. In particular, it is likely that cows, pigs, and sheep lack either the intelligence or the motor skills to satisfy condition (iii), which requires behavior that is describable as other-regarding." *Reply*: Although it would be highly unusual for a human to befriend, say, a cow, this is a cultural artifact and not a conceptual fact. Moreover, it is far from clear that cows fall below the level of intelligence necessary to qualify as a possible friend. Are cows capable of behavior toward humans that is describable as other-regarding? Keep in mind that condition (iii) is compatible with the required behavior being overdetermined. Condition (iii) would be plausibly satisfied if cows are capable of expressing affection for humans. What behavior might express bovine affection? Recognition, coupled with playfulness, would

[15]For a memoir that suggests that humans can in fact befriend dogs, see George Pitcher, *The Dogs Who Came To Stay* (New York: Dutton, 1995).

suffice. And, indeed, calves raised by particular humans come to recognize and to respond playfully to those humans in a way that is plausibly described as affectionate. And, if cows are capable of satisfying condition (iii), as they seem to be, pigs and sheep probably are as well.

3. "One can morally own an animal, but one cannot morally own a friend. So animals cannot be friends with humans." *Reply*: While it is true that one can morally own, say, a dog, why think that one cannot own a friend? It is true that one cannot own a human friend (since one cannot morally own a human), but it is far from clear that one cannot own a friend.[16] The reason why humans are not ownables has to do with the sort of being that they are: capable of autonomy. Dogs are not. The fact that dogs are capable of friendship restricts the way we treat them, but there is no good reason to think that the prohibition of ownership is among these restrictions.

4. "If the argument is sound, why stop at food-revision? Wouldn't the argument require revisions in how we dress, treat, and think of animals? Such extensive revisions, however, are too costly to undertake. So we have prudential reason to consider the argument unacceptable." *Reply*: The best response to this objection is a consideration of an analogous argument. Imagine a plausible argument supporting the abolition of slavery. Consider the following objection: If the abolitionist argument is sound, then not only would we have to free the slaves, but revisions in how we treat and think of the former slaves are forced upon us. These further steps are too costly to undertake. So, we have prudential reason to consider the abolitionist argument unsound.

Just as we would find the "too-costly" objection to an abolitionist argument unacceptable, so would the objection that the Friendship Argument requires too much be unacceptable. While it is true that moral claims are not always overriding, it is also true that moral claims nearly always override prudential considerations. There is no reason, moreover, to consider the present case an exception. That is, there is no reason to think that prudential considerations override the plausibility of the Friendship Argument.

5. "It is not possible friendship that is significant, but the possession of certain traits: sentience, intelligence, emotional compatibility. Being a member of the moral community—being, that is, a fit object of moral consideration—is conceptually distinct from being a possible friend. Importantly, since both supervene upon the same cluster of properties, it is

[16]Perhaps it is relevant to note here, in support of the idea that one can own a friend, that some have contended that it is possible to buy friendship. See, e.g., N. Schofield, *Psychotherapy: The Purchase of Friendship* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1964).

not being a possible friend that ushers animals into the moral community, but possessing the relevant cluster of properties." *Reply*: Suppose that it is possession of the conjunctive property—being sentient and having sufficient intelligence and having emotional compatibility (call this property "P")—that makes one a member of the moral community. Is this a problem for the Friendship Argument? There is reason to think not: even if P is conceptually distinct from the property of being a possible friend, still the two are co-extensive. Whatever is a possible friend has P. So, even if being a possible friend does not *mean* that one is a member of the moral community, being a possible friend *entails* that one is a member of the moral community, since it reliably picks out the possessors of P. The Friendship Argument does not contend that moral status is conferred by friendship, since considering another a possible friend, in fact, presupposes a certain moral status. But friendship does play an important role, since it signals the presence of the relevant moral status. So, there is nothing in this objection that causes a problem for the Friendship Argument.

Conclusion

One sometimes hears the complaint that certain philosophical arguments are so abstract as to be practically inert; they make no real-world difference. If our navigation through the shoals of the above objections has been successful, then the complaint of making no real difference cannot be leveled against the Friendship Argument, since at least two practical consequences follow if it is sound. While it will be true that our circle of culinary possibilities will have shrunk, it will also be true that our circle of possible friends will have expanded. And that trade-off, on reflection, does not seem unpalatable after all.[17]

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[17]The idea for the argument originated after discussions with my teaching assistant, Jacqueline Brandner. She participated in the writing of the section "Objections and Replies."