

## ABSTRACT

### An Aristotelian Perspective on Canine Friendship

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As "man's best friend" dogs have taken an important role by the side of humans. Dogs are different from other animals in that humans have adopted these four legged followers for help in daily tasks and even companionship. People took notice of the dog's faithful nature and work ethic, breeding for physical and mental traits that allow dogs to fit better into human society. We brought dogs into our lives and, with this, assumed responsibility for their well-being. Many dogs are treated kindly by humans, in a way that one would treat a friend. This thesis argues that "man's best friend" is not simply an idiomatic expression, but possesses meaning that some people truly identify with in their relationships with dogs. In his *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle outlines types of friendships and what kind of reciprocity should be expected out of each kind of friendship. I use Aristotle's model of friendship to explain how dogs and humans can be considered friends through a philosophical framework. Thinking of dogs as potential friends provides a different perspective to how we might treat dogs in a variety of social and ethical situations, such as pet ownership and animal experimentation.

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AN ARISTOTELIAN PERSPECTIVE ON CANINE FRIENDSHIP

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments . . . . .	iii
Introduction . . . . .	1
Chapter One: Aristotle on Friendship . . . . .	4
Chapter Two: Dogs Make Good Candidates for Friendship . . . . .	16
Chapter Three: Dogs as Friends in the Aristotelian Framework . . . . .	29
Chapter Four: The Effect of Friendship on Animal Ethics . . . . .	42
Conclusion . . . . .	55
Bibliography . . . . .	57

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## INTRODUCTION

For a long time philosophers have discussed what separates humans from nonhuman animals, but prior to our philosophies in elevating humans above all other animals, we accepted living alongside animals. At some point in history we chose the dog to walk beside us and be our companion. Our human ancestors began adopting the curious wolves that followed humans. The journey of domesticating wolves into dogs created a phenomenal interspecies bond between dogs and humans. Our relationship with dogs is unmatched by any other species. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, our curiosity for understanding the inner workings of this relationship pushed us to explore how dogs understand and work with humans. We have discovered social and cognitive capabilities of dogs that distinguish them from other species in their relationships with humans. These unique capabilities account for our vast appreciation of dogs. They allow us to easily train dogs to do sophisticated tricks and even become working and service dogs. We have invited dogs into every aspect of our lives because they express a noteworthy dependency on humans that seems akin to friendship.

When discussing friendship we often turn to the guidance of Aristotle. Normally the philosophical focus is on his three types of friendships and, more particularly, aiming to achieve virtuous friendships. However, for this argument of interspecies friendship it is important to highlight the nature of his other division: equal and unequal friendships. Although these categories are relatively undiscussed compared to his popular three types of friendships, they are still relevant. Aristotle outlines unequal friendships because some relationships, just by their nature, can only achieve that unequal level of friendship. Still,

these unequal friendships are important for providing a good quality of life to those involved. If dogs could be considered in any of these friendships, it would be as unequal friends. Unequal friendships provide a way into the Aristotelian framework for considering dogs as friends. Even though typical discussion of these friendships stresses achieving equal friendships of virtue, it is important to note that we choose to have relationships with dogs and in doing so already limit the possible status of friendship to that of the unequal kind. Depending on the kinds of individuals involved, like a parent and child, it is perfectly acceptable to aim for an unequal friendship, as friends enhance life quality.

But before dogs can be accepted into these categories of friendships, we must first tackle the fact that Aristotle excludes animals from his friendships. While reading the chapters on friendship in *Nicomachean Ethics* we notice that Aristotle's examples have not kept up with the social changes that occurred through the modern era – social changes that have freed slaves, given rights to women, and now focus on animal welfare. Our studies of dogs have provided new insight into their social and cognitive capacities, changing how we had previously viewed them. Though inferior to humans in many ways, dogs seem to be capable of partaking in Aristotle's core components of friendship like reciprocity and community. With these new findings in mind it appears that dogs might possibly be considered as friends. Even though his examples are outdated, Aristotle's theory of friendship remains very applicable to relationships in the modern world. Just as we have included women and people of different races as worthy of having friendships, we might be able to extend some of Aristotle's friendships to encompass the relationship between dogs and humans. Dogs are often referred to as "man's best friend," and many

would agree that this idiomatic expression could not hold more truth. We cherish them and based on our new understandings of them it seems that dogs can be considered as friends.

This argument considers how we might use the Aristotelian framework of friendship for our relationships with dogs and this perspective's probable impact on decisions in ethical deliberation. Chapter one examines Aristotle's theory of friendship. It explains the importance of having friends and the components of friendship. It then focuses on the separation between Aristotle's equal and unequal friendships and his examples in each. I conclude that Aristotle's theory is good and applicable to the modern era, but his examples are outdated. Chapter two explores the unique relationship between dogs and humans. It begins with domestication, and then highlights our appreciation of the dog throughout history, before discussing specific relationships between dogs and humans. I find that the social and cognitive capacities of dogs make them good candidates for establishing friendships with humans. Chapter three examines how dogs fit into Aristotle's theory on friendship and what one might expect from a healthy, interspecies relationship. In chapter four, I consider the new perspective that canine friendship brings to the discussion of animal ethics. Hopefully, this view of canine friendship will improve our understanding and treatment of dogs whether in pet ownership or animal experimentation.

## CHAPTER 1

### Aristotle on Friendship

Friends create a socially and emotionally enriching environment that composes a central part of a good life. In discussing friends, it is common to follow Aristotle's three types of friendships: friendships of virtue, of pleasure, and of usefulness. However, another distinction in Aristotle's framework, the separation between equal and unequal friends, remains relatively undiscussed. Some qualities of being friends are rooted in all of these friendships, but others are specific to only certain friendships. Aristotle provides examples, but most of them are outdated given the social changes that have occurred since his time period, and do not serve to strengthen his framework. Still, his theory on friendship is good and flexible enough to extend to modern relationships.

#### *1.1 Friendship*

Friendship defines relationships in which people show preference towards each other. Being friends involves a mutual caring for each other in all circumstances. Friends provide support and happiness. They do things and share with each other. Without friends one becomes quite isolated in his ability to share and be happy. Maintaining friendship requires work and deliberation, but it has selfless qualities and many other virtues that make being friends worthwhile.

When discussing friendship it is difficult not to mention Aristotle. In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle conveys his ideas of friendship. He provides insight into the nature of friendships, distinguishes among the types of friendships, and gives a few

examples for each categorization of friendship. Aristotle is historically significant because people keep going back to his works. His theory is popular and applicable, encompassing ideas that still influence the relationships of people in the modern era.

According to Aristotle, friendship is a bond between people who have something in common. Whether through collaboration on a mutual end goal, interactions in an already existent relationship like family, or simply respect and admiration for each other's good qualities, friends have common attributes that attract one another.

### *1.2 Components of Friendship*

Aristotle held in high regard the importance of a complete, good life. Goals like health and wealth are “sought because they promote well-being, not because they are what well-being consists in” (Kraut). He figured that “What we need, in order to live well, is a proper appreciation of the way in which such goods as friendship, pleasure, virtue, honor and wealth fit together as a whole” (Kraut). His *Nicomachean Ethics* discusses elements that contribute to Eudaimonia, meaning “happiness”. One of these elements is friendship.

In *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle puts forward a number of views about achieving a good life. Friends are such a core component that two out of the ten chapters in *Nicomachean Ethics* are on the topic of friendship. For Aristotle, friendship is “the greatest of external goods,” that is goods that relate to the outer world (NE 175). Moreover, friendship helps to develop internal goods like virtue. These external and internal goods have great importance in fostering Eudaimonia. People need friendship for building character and, therefore, nurturing happiness.

According to Aristotle, friends benefit each other. A major benefit of friends is that they are helpful. They fulfill certain roles: provide support, give gifts, loan material things, help process moments of question, and a number of other things. Friends help, support, encourage, and cheer for each other in times of need and in times of success.

Friends are not only helpful by the way of doing favors, but also through reason. Two people together “are more capable of thinking and acting” (NE 144) than a single person. This meaning that there are more ideas to pull from when more people contribute their thoughts. People in a friendship fuel each other to become better people. There may be friendly competition, but the end result is two people who better one another by sharing how they think and act. They learn from each other. In this sense, one person cannot effectively better himself, for there is less on which to gauge the rightness of his actions. Two people provide perspective for each other in how they behave and approach situations. Being around more people and having more friends means more experiences from which to learn.

Though friends are helpful, Aristotle clarifies that friends do not simply fill a void. A misconception about friends is that their purpose is to fill whatever a person is lacking, “for people say there is no need of friends for those who are blessed and self-sufficient, since good things belong to them already; so since they are sufficient to themselves they lack nothing, while a friend, who is another self, supplies what someone is incapable of supplying by himself” (NE 174). Some relationships are made to gain access to a resource, but not in the case of true friendship. True friends do not complete one another, but rather complement each other. They add to and amplify the good character of a person.

Humans are innately social beings and even the self-sufficient need friends. Even though a person may be rich in material or knowledge there is little purpose to all of it unless it is shared willingly, “For what benefit would there be from such abundance if one were deprived of the opportunity to do favors, which arises most of all and in the most praiseworthy way toward friends?” (NE 144). Doing favors involves giving to and sharing with people. Aristotle believes that doing favors is like satisfying an itch. For most people it feels good to help out, especially when the favor is done for a friend. The self-sufficient need friends with which to share their wealth. When a friend asks for a favor this provides an opportunity to return goodwill in a friendship. It allows giving back to a friend, a type of currency in the relationship that makes one feel accomplished.

Giving provides one of the most fulfilling attributes for a person’s character. People also “praise those who love their friends” (NE 144). The bond in a friendship communicates positive energy that others want to emulate. It elicits an action of giving that is rarely provoked willingly by anything else. Giving is also an act that can be experienced by all witnessing: the person giving, the person receiving, and even those who are not directly in the friendship. Friendships better one’s self both internally and in the eyes of others. Having “Friendship is not only necessary but also beautiful, for... an abundance of friends seems to be one of the beautiful things” (NE 144) in which everyone wants to partake. By affecting not only the nature of an individual in a friendship, but also the publicly observable world, friendship becomes a fully developed virtue.

Aristotle states that friends must have commonalities, which builds community and creates an advantage. “And the proverb ‘the things of friends are common’ is right,

since friendships consist in community” (NE 154). Friendships require some sort of community and the community stems from when “people come together for some advantage, and to provide for something that contributes to life, and the political community seems to gather together from the beginning, and to remain together, for the sake of what is advantageous” (NE 155). Again, Aristotle suggests the act of giving, and not necessarily receiving, is a key component of friendship. Here he states that the bond creating friendship first begins by having something in common. These commonalities create community from which friendships blossom by way of some sort of advantage. Advantages may range from something as physical as increasing the wealth of the group and individual to something a little more virtuous like taking part in increasing the goodness of a person and, therefore, the goodness within one’s self. It seems that sharing a common goal is what this theme revolves around.

According to Aristotle, people need other people to have friendship. It is a culmination of not just one’s own experiences but many shared through others. All people cherish the relationships and experiences they share with their good friends. There are advantages to friendship that add to the already worthwhile nature of such relationships. Aristotle further discusses the natures and general types of friendship within his theory.

Aristotle’s threefold types of friendship receive much attention. He outlines friendships of utility, pleasure, and virtue. However, another important dichotomy exists among his friendships. In each of Aristotle’s friendships there are two main divisions. There are the “three kinds of friendship... and in each kind there are some who are

friends in equality and others in accord with superiority” (NE 159). Each type of friendship has an equal form and an unequal form.

### *1.3 Equal Friendships*

Among what Aristotle calls equal friendships, friends can be based on utility, pleasure, or virtue. “So there are three species of friendship, equal in number to the kinds of things that are loved” (NE 146). Utility and pleasure are the incidental kinds of friendships among these since they are made based on circumstances and not made based on the other person’s inherent nature. Incidental friendships are easily dissolvable (NE 146) because it is not really love for a person but love for circumstance, which easily changes. “The complete sort of friendship is that between people who are good and are alike in virtue” since they each wish for reciprocal goodwill in the other person, not reciprocal utility or pleasure (NE 147). Friendships of virtue are long lasting and Aristotle considers them the greatest of all friendships.

Important components of equal friendship are giving and reciprocity. “The virtue belonging to friends seems to be loving” (NE 153). Aristotle specifies the act of loving, not being loved, suggesting that the benefit is being able to give to someone worthy of giving to. Equal and unequal friendships require reciprocity. In equal friendships it seems that equal reciprocity is needed to maintain the friendship and its equality. Unequal friendships are classified as unequal for reasons that include the concept that the reciprocity is incapable of being equal between the two counterparts of the friendship. The ability to give in a friendship demonstrates one’s own worthiness and acceptance within the friendship. If one does not accept the love given then the friendship does not exist because there is no reciprocity whatsoever. The act of giving is what makes unequal

friendships work. The focus cannot be on receiving because in an unequal friendship the lesser one receives more than the superior. If the superior expected to receive the same that he gave then he would be greatly disappointed, so he should instead focus on appreciating that the lesser counterpart of the friendship is giving all that it is capable of giving even if that, in sum, is less than what it received.

These three equal types of friendships receive a lot of attention from contemporary writers, with the result that leaves Aristotle's other division of friendship undiscussed.

#### *1.4 Unequal friendships*

Just as friendships of utility, pleasure, and virtue can consist in equality, these friendships may also consist of relationships based on superiority. Aristotle categorizes such friendships of the latter as those of unequal. Equal friendships have equal reciprocity or good will, whereas unequal friendships have different amounts of benefits given and love received. Such amounts are "proportional to the superiority" (NE 159). Aristotle illustrates this thought with the relationship between parent and child (NE 152). The more benefits provided, the more love the other counterpart must try to give in order for the relationship to continue.

Unequal friendships consist of superiority and worthiness, and his examples are sometimes rooted in what he considers males' innate superiority. Aristotle is a bit out of date when it comes to the issues of gender. He says that "man rules as a result of worthiness" and that "sometimes wives rule... but their rule does not come from virtue, but from wealth and power" (NE 156-157). The point is that worthiness is an important trait when considering friendships based on superiority. A king is good to his people so

that they can do well and succeed (NE 157), which supports the worthiness of the king. In such a relationship, there is an unequal balance between giving and receiving between the two counterparts of the friendship “with the greater good going to the better person” (NE 157). In this case, the king would receive more love from his people rather than love given, since he has the superiority in worthiness and in what he can do that is advantageous for his peoples’ lives and their own virtue. The king receives honor, while his people may receive materials; both receive more of what they desire even though they are not the same kinds of things.

On the theory that the lesser should love the greater component more in an unequal friendship, Aristotle puts forth an example that seems counterintuitive for such a relationship. His example of the friendship between mother and child suggests that mothers “love [their children] even if the children, in their ignorance, give back nothing of what is due to the mother” (NE 153). This expresses more of the actual kind of loving between mother and child. However, it seems opposite from Aristotle’s theory that a relationship of superiority and unequal friendship requires a child to love its mother more than the mother would love the child.

Thus brings forth another component of unequal friendships: capability. Aristotle believes this is “the way one ought to associate with unequals: the one who is given the benefit of money or virtue ought to give honor in return, giving back what he is capable of giving” (NE 162). The key word here is “capable.” In unequal friendship the inferior being is always in debt to the superior. These kinds of friendships seek “after what is possible, not what is deserved, since... no one could ever give back what they deserve... [for] there is nothing a son can do that is worthy of the things that have already been done

for him” (NE 162). The lesser counterpart of the relationship must love and give back all he is capable of to the superior. However, “in their ignorance, [children may] give back nothing of what is due to the mother” (NE 153). This seems contradictory to Aristotle’s ideal situation that the inferior child should love the superior mother more than the mother would love her child. Again, it is important to point out the capability of the child. In this case children are ignorant and do not have much capability for loving and giving. Therefore, what the children are capable of giving may be very little, but as the child grows it will learn and be capable of giving more.

Unequal friendships are not the complete friendship of equality and virtue that are usually lifted up as ideal according to the Aristotelian standard. Still, Aristotle finds unequal friendships important for explaining the good relationships between people without the same values. Though they are not the ideal friendship, unequal friendships can even more appropriately define many relationships, like that between a parent and child, a king and his people, and possibly even a person and his dog.

### *1.5 Aristotle’s Theory versus His Examples*

Even though Aristotle’s examples reflect the ideas of his day and modern social categories have changed significantly since then, this does not entail complete rejection of his philosophy on friendship. Aristotle’s theory is good, but his examples are problematic because they are outdated. This is relevant because his theory can be reapplied to other examples of relationships. His core ideas of friendship are flexible enough to adapt to the modern world.

Aristotle illustrates his theory on friendship with a number of examples, which may strike current readers as strange and bizarre. To describe certain unequal type

friendships Aristotle commonly uses a husband-wife relationship. As mentioned earlier, in the relationship of a husband and a wife “the man rules as a result of worthiness... Sometimes wives rule, when they are heiresses, but their rule does not come from virtue, but from wealth and power” (NE 157). He assumed a man as worthy and a woman as not. To create boundaries for friendship he uses slaves for “There is no friendship toward things without souls... nor toward a slave as a slave... though there is insofar as he is a human being... so there is friendship too, to the extent he is a human being” (NE 158). This kind of thinking was widespread in Aristotle’s time period, but in this era such social consideration is essentially obsolete.

Readers should not completely disregard Aristotle’s examples, but understand that most of them are not in sync with modern day sociology. Aristotle’s examples help to grasp understanding of the type of relationship involved between two people, but they do not make his theory. Aristotle’s philosophy of friendship can apply to other examples of relationships.

Aristotle is not quite up to date on the social dynamics of the modern world. His examples are outdated because they hold little weight amongst the social changes that have occurred since Aristotle. Fortunately, these examples are not essential to his theory. Today, in many societies, men and women are seen as equals, slaves are in fact human beings and thus not an “ensouled tool” (NE 158). Another new facet of modernity is that people have taken more comfort in the company of animals than previously seemed plausible. To varying degrees the statuses of many beings and things previously regarded as soulless or machine-like, and incapable of pain, have recently been elevated. From the freeing of slaves and development of civil rights to the defending of the ‘plants have

feelings too' argument, there have been a number of revolutions in thinking about human relationships with other humans and with other species.

Might it be possible for non-human animals, such as dogs, to achieve some level of friendship with humans? Many species have passed through the domestication process whether to become working animals, production animals, or companion animals. Dogs have evolved with humans for thousands of years and share much history that is less widespread in other species. But dogs could not achieve the status of *equal* friendship with humans. They simply do not have the fundamental characteristics of virtue required in such relationships; however, they may be capable of reaching an unequal friendship of pleasure and utility. Though people should also strive for complete, equal friendships of virtue among one another, just the concept of thinking of a human-dog relationship as a friendship in light of Aristotle is an achievement on its own. This will highlight the strength of the bond between owners and their dogs and may bring new insight into how dogs, as well as other animals, are treated.

Like in human relationships, there are many reasons to form a relationship. Some are made purely to gain access to a resource. In some cases, people want to own a dog in order to better fit into a new community or as a decorative pet. It also seems that some dogs see humans solely as a source of food and shelter. However, like many human-human friendships there exist additional reasons for wanting the best in a friendship. In such friendships the two better each other. As mentioned before, true friends do not complete one another, but rather complement each other. People are complete beings on their own. Good dogs complement their owners by bringing out good character.

Not all humans and dogs will become such friends. It takes work and, like human-human friendships, it will hopefully be worthwhile. In the end, what one can hope for is a relationship that is “Lasting and decent” (NE 152).

## CHAPTER TWO

### Dogs Make Good Candidates for Friendship

The previous chapter argued that Aristotle's theory of friendship could be applied to human relationships with nonhuman animals by taking into account modern social changes. Dogs distinguish themselves from other nonhuman animals. They have social and cognitive capabilities that make them very different from other animals. Their interest and willingness to work with humans made them ideal candidates for domestication. Humans bred a line of canine that quickly separated itself from the wolf both biologically and temperamentally, becoming the perfect animal to live with humans. People took notice of the dog's nature, highlighting their faithfulness in art and literature, even creating an assortment of shapes and sizes so that anyone could have a dog that fit best with their lifestyle. Dogs have a variety of relationships with people, from working to service dogs, to being companions as pets. Dogs have so successfully been incorporated into the human community, not only because of their faithful nature, but also by their ability to communicate with humans. Dogs are able to understand humans as well as express their own desires, making for excellent animals to build friendships with humans.

#### *2.1 Theories on Domestication*

Through domestication wolves became dogs. Intentional care and breeding for certain traits and characteristics of wolves cultivated the dog. Though both canines are closely related, dogs and wolves differ significantly from each other behaviorally and physically. These differences make dogs much more adapted to living with humans.

There is much speculation about exactly when wolves were domesticated into the dog. Some believe “dog domestication was catalysed by the dawn of agriculture around 10,000 years ago in the Middle East, as wolves began to loiter around human settlements and rubbish heaps” (Callaway 282). With agriculture, human communities turned from nomadic wanderers to stable settlements. Rather than only picking up four legged stragglers while trekking through wolf territory, humans would settle in one place, remaining in the territory of a single wolf pack. Living permanently in near proximity, humans and wolves began to show greater curiosity for each other.

Others argue for an earlier date of domestication. Though dogs evolutionarily came from wolves, the two species have distinct anatomy and physiology. Discovered “bones that look similar to those of domestic dogs predate the Neolithic revolution by at least several thousand years” (Callaway 282). This suggests that not only did wolves become a part of human life long before humans developed agriculture and stable settlements, but that they also were “adopted” into human society with enough time to be domesticated into dogs. Certain wolves had specific characteristics that humans bred into successive generations, resulting in a type of canine that was adapted, both anatomically and physiologically, to living with humans.

A compromise for both of these claims may be simply the occurrence of different waves of domestication. A new, international genome study led by Ya-Ping Zhang and Peter Savolainen revealed “two phases of dog domestication: An initial phase that began in China around 33,000 years ago, and a second phase 18,000 years later in which the dog spread around the world and cemented its place as one of humanity’s best friends” (Arnold). Research from this study suggests that dogs were originally domesticated in

Southeast Asia. Some of these dogs eventually made their way to the Middle East where they became part of a second wave of domestication. From there they spread to Europe where most of the diverse breeds still around today originated.

The important concept from these theories of domestication is that the dog's wild ancestors had an innate ability to bond with humans, thus beginning a transformative journey for both canines and humans. Wild canines rarely wandered far from man (Mery 25) and through getting to know each other in such proximity the relationship between dog and man was "no longer those of fear but of friendship" (Mery 25). At some point it seems that curious naïve wolves and curious naïve humans realized that coexisting together was better physically and mentally for the two species. Canines provided help on the hunt, warmth on cold nights, and possibly an emotionally basket into which people could unload their feelings and concerns. In return for their physical and emotional support, these canines received food and shelter and even a nice scratch on the rump.

Humans selectively bred for certain temperaments. "Along with genetic and morphological changes, substantial behavioral modifications were produced over the course of domestication" that turned wolves into dogs (Pennisi). Wolves, in general, are not easy to tame and show little comfort in being around humans (Gorman). Only the more docile wolves that had interests in human life lived together near humans together. These more tame wolves reproduced with each other, creating even tamer wolves that would interact with humans. Several generations later, the descendants of the wolves produced dogs born and bred for life with humans.

Modern dogs show a distinct interest in humans. Ancestors of the modern dog went from following humans around, to protecting and working for people and becoming

integrated into people's lives. It can be agreed that "Man and dog adopted each other through their association and alliance" (Mery 25). Whether this "association and alliance" was due to merely proximity, or of some usefulness or pleasure they received from each other, dogs have shown their willingness to be around and work for humans. And by domesticating dogs and breeding them to the extent we have, humans have shown an appreciation for the nature of the dog.

## *2.2 Dogs in Culture*

Dogs have always served a purpose in human society. The company of dogs has long been valued. They are documented in art and literature extending back to the days of Homer, and even becoming a symbol for certain characteristics, like faithfulness. At first, humans depicted their appreciation of dogs through illustration and writing, but then a breeding frenzy during the Victorian Era allowed the dog itself to become the medium of artistic representation. Dogs were bred to fit into almost every kind of human lifestyle. People want dogs to be in their lives as much as dogs are dependent on people.

### *2.2.1 Literature and Art*

The dog's presence in human society has been documented through various media from ancient stories and sculpture, to paintings, to photos and movies. In each of these media the artists portray the dog with emphasis on the symbolic nature of the dog, often its faithfulness. Much emphasis on the dog's appearance and actions in art and literature is given to convey the degree of faithfulness and to whom the faithfulness is directed. All of this documentation signifies a strong and enduring relationship between the two species and man's respect for the four legged follower.

Even in Greek antiquity, dogs had enough importance in human relationships to make it into Homer's *Odyssey*. Homer introduces Argos as "long-enduring Odysseus' dog" (Homer 363). Despite the improbability of this interaction, given the unlikelihood of a twenty plus year old dog, "the moment he [Argos] sensed Odysseus standing by he thumped his tail" (Homer 364). Though Argos lacks the energy to get up and walk to meet his master he greets Odysseus with classic "happy dog" body language. Argos is happy to be in the presence of his master and can see past the weight and consequences of Odysseus' actions and judgement. Despite Odysseus' disguise, his dog senses his true identity and character. Argos signifies one of the only characters who remains steadfast in his relationship with Odysseus.

The use of dogs as symbols for faithfulness continued to grow throughout the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Artists depicted dogs next to people and in scenes not for purposes of realism, but as symbols. In Hans Memling's *St Ursula Shrine*, the martyrdom panel shows a dog casually lying on the ground in the midst of St Ursula being attacked. Though there is much going on and many people in the painting, the dog directs the viewer to St Ursula. The dog, in looking directly at St Ursula, shows that only she is staying true to herself and especially to God, while everyone else is in the wrong. Dogs not only signify the faithfulness to oneself or home, but also to God. Their faithfulness to humans is recognized as an important strength to a healthy relationship.

Even language itself has borrowed words and generalized them to characterize the dog species. There is a reason we colloquially refer to dogs as "Fido". They represent faithfulness and fidelity, with "Fido" coming from the Latin word for faithfulness. Dogs have become this symbol because they have demonstrated themselves as the epitome of

true support and love. We appreciate these characteristics enough to give them permanence within our arts and language.

### *2.2.2 Breeding*

Throughout history dogs have been portrayed in art to convey deeper, specific meaning like that of faithfulness. Then, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, dogs were not just placed in art, but in some sense became art. Humans molded dogs into a variety of shapes with even more kinds of behaviors and looks. The dog itself became a medium of human artifice.

This new kind of breeding was not with the same reasons that motivated original domestication. The initial domestication and breeding of dogs most likely aimed to achieve certain temperaments and behaviors rather than a look. These dogs may have had a multitude of personalities ranging from calm and friendly to protective and guarding, but without variety in physical appearance to match. Thus, the tendency to the medium size and lupine look quickly changed into a massive assortment of shapes, sizes, and looks. Biologist Greger Larson noted that during the 19<sup>th</sup> century a “Victorian dog-breeding frenzy” produced most of the dog breeds still around today (Gorman).

Breeding had mentally and physically shaped the dog into a multitude of specialized breeds. Terriers were bred small and stocky to better fit into burrows and tight spaces in factories. They have a hard mouth meant to kill vermin, whereas a retriever breed has a soft mouth meant to cradle and not damage the shot bird. All guard dogs have protective natures, but may demonstrate it in different ways. To better communicate the kind of guarding, dogs that neutralize an intruder are bred larger and stockier than breeds meant to act as alarm systems, which tend towards small yet loud. To an extent, all of

these temperaments existed in initial breeds, but then they were amplified and given physical characteristics to match.

This “breeding frenzy” in the Victorian era pushed the dog into a new level of appreciation by humans. At first this may seem counterintuitive, as some may see such breeding as degrading the integrity of the dog rather than showing an appreciation. But the reasons behind such intense breeding may have been for the idea and desire to achieve a closer connection to the dog. Through breeding we helped the dog species adapt to human lifestyles, and basically increased, as a whole, the species’ capacity for accepting human love.

During the Victorian era, we loved the nature of the dog and what the dog represents so much that we made the species extremely variable in order to fit very kind of lifestyle. Breeding essentially produced a dog for a major functional role in every person’s life. With the amount of variety in dog size, shape, and behavior, a person can more easily find a dog to which he will bond closely.

### *2.3 Relationships between Dogs and Humans*

#### *2.3.1 Hunting dogs*

People use dogs in many kinds of hunting. From large game to small vermin, from flushing out prey to retrieving downed animals, there is a breed of dog specialized for each. Like their wolf ancestors, dogs have an innate prey drive and they work for the good of the pack. Dogs readily adopt humans into their packs. While hunting, humans and dogs work as a team, with each member bringing their own skillset to dominate the prey. Hunters greatly appreciate the work that hunting dogs perform. And dogs clearly

prove themselves as assets for certain kinds of hunting, otherwise there would not be such prevalence or variety of hunting breeds. With the help of humans, some wolves began a line of canine that proved its usefulness to humans. Hunting further solidifies recognition in the utility and especially cooperation that dogs have with humans.

### *2.3.2 Service and Therapy Dogs*

Further down the spectrum of interspecies dependency there lies a niche in which people seem to be more dependent on dogs than the dogs are on the people. Service and therapy dogs provide much needed physical and mental help for those who are disabled. In a sense, they are “employed” by the human. Some work to find people under large heaps of rubble, others can alert their “person” to oncoming seizures, or assist those with post-traumatic stress disorder, and some are simply, but still very importantly, companions present in the rough patches of life. Those even in the day of Florence Nightingale noticed something special between a sick person and their dog. She believed that a “pet animal is often an excellent companion for the sick, for long chronic cases especially” (Nightingale 103). Dogs seem to understand without judgment the limitations and capabilities of the sick and disabled in a way that fellow humans cannot. They provide a special kind of support and ask for nothing more than their task of easing the difficulties in these people’s lives. The work ethic of these dogs suggests that they have an internal obligation to serve humans, not because they will get a treat or praise, but because they appreciate humans and have a desire to help humans.

### 2.3.3 *Pets*

Pets are domesticated animals kept for companionship and treated with affection. A recently coined term, the idea of a “pet” only took form in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. After all, the notion of keeping a dog without a purpose, like that of hunting game or guarding property, might seem excessive and unnecessary. Pet dogs are not necessarily absent of purpose, they simply have a different kind of purpose in the way of companionship. A hunting dog can also be a pet. It is the way we treat pets that distinguishes them as such. If a hunting dog is cared for with affection and treated as a companion rather than as merely a means the hunter uses to retrieve fallen ducks, then the hunting dog may be a pet. Good pet-owner relationships find pleasure in the time spent with each other. Dogs as pets provide companionship and, in return for their pleasant presence, they are cared for and treated with affection.

The concept of pets encompasses a wide assortment of animals and it is important to understand what should be expected of a dog as a pet. Though any pet will make for a good conversation starter, some animals are kept purely for that notion: a conversational or decorative piece. Exotic species, fish and birds are prime examples. Although these species may not be in the ideal situation, they are significantly more independent of human interaction than are dogs. As discussed previously, dogs are different from other animals and have a stronger understanding and dependency on humans than do other species. Those who mistake dogs for being this kind of decorative pet perform a disservice to the dog, creating a disrespectful relationship. Both dog and human will neglect each other. These kinds of dog-owner relationships suffer from their poor quality and the human’s lack of understanding for the needs of the dog.

## *2.4 Communication and Cognition*

Communication leads near the top as one of the most obviously disparate qualities between dogs and humans. We have no clear verbal language with each other. However, dogs are observant and expressive creatures. They have a desire to understand the human and people have picked up on this, inviting dogs to be with humans. Dogs have bonded with humans in a way other animals have not. They have a “language” with people, an ability to communicate with humans. Dogs pick up physical and auditory cues from humans and humans pick up the same from dogs. Dogs and humans have developed a significant ability to understand each other. Communication exists, just on a more subtle level than that between humans and humans.

There are many theories as to why dogs have such communication with humans. One study suggests that domestication played a key role for social cognition in dogs to human cues (Hare). In this case, domestication selected for certain tame wolves that connected better to the human way of life. Canines with an interest in figuring out what humans said and made an effort to “read” people created more mutually interested interactions between man and dog. Dog ancestors that could read people and better express themselves to people were those that began the species of dogs. After generations of integration into the human lifestyle, dogs may have developed different connections in the brain that distinguish them from wolves and other animals in their relationships with humans.

Exactly how dogs developed this unique skill of communication is a minor detail to this argument. But one thing is for certain, as molecular biologist Peter Savolainen points out: “to be able to live with humans, it [was] evolutionarily beneficial to be able to

read humans” (Pennisi). Whether or not domestication, specifically, cued in on an already existing phenomenon, it is widely accepted that dogs, as a species, have an inherent ability to work with humans. The extent to which dogs pick up communication from humans is currently being explored in research and experimental setups.

Modern dogs are born with an interest in working with humans. Julia Riedel and her team found that the ability to follow human cues is present in young puppies and increases with age. This study sets up scenarios in which pointing gestures and marker cues are presented to dogs and puppies that have to determine which cup, among several, hides a treat. The human in the experiment knows which cup contains the treat and points to it. Some trials are set up with the cups near the human and some with the cups near the dog to ensure that the dog understood the meaning of “pointing” rather than merely following the physicality of a hand on a cup. In each experimental setup dogs used human cues successfully. Puppies, though with slightly less success, also looked to humans for guidance and, overall, understood the benefits of following the pointing gesture.

Even understanding the action of pointing, a skill that seems fairly basic, is actually quite sophisticated and rare in the animal kingdom. In a related study, it was found that dogs and puppies have the ability to follow human cues when it comes to pointing, but that this communication skill is lacking in chimps and wolves (Pennisi). In other studies even the very intelligent chimpanzees “can’t figure out the food’s location if the researcher points to or taps on the container with the food” (Pennisi). Despite being closely related, dogs and wolves are inherently different in their ability to communicate with humans. Such experiments have also shown that wolves and wolf puppies struggle

with this form of human communication even in such cases where the wolf grew up with humans. This suggests that the dog species looks to humans, reads humans, and understands humans. Unlike chimps and wolves, dogs show an inherent trust and dependence on humans.

Pointing indicates a very curious thought process in dogs. They seem to understand that the human knows more than the dog. And rather than looking under every cup for the treat as wolves and chimps do, dogs read and listen to humans. Dogs accept human guidance, even searching it out.

Evolution has favored dogs that show interests for understanding humans. This is suggested by the dog's ability to track the direction of human attention (Berns 173). Even in controlled experiments where there are no actual distractions, if the human looks away from the dog as if something to the left grabbed his attention, then the dog will also look in the same direction. As the human holds his attention to the left or continues to glance in that direction, the dog's quick double-takes in the same direction progress to longer looks as if trying to make out exactly what is captivating the human.

Dogs seem to show interest in seeing things from a human point of view. They are not just interested in what, but also why humans do things. It has even been suggested that "they have a theory of mind" (Berns 173). This, in the most basic sense, is the ability to imagine what another might be thinking. It is the reason why dogs always want whatever you are eating. Even if they do not particularly like that food, they are still curious and may even force themselves to chew on it just to make sure they are not missing out on anything. These animals want to understand us.

In general, dogs clearly want to be a part of human lives and do their best to convey that. In his book *How Dogs Love Us* Gregory Berns recalls a brief epiphany after a time of working with his dog Callie: “Callie had been communicating with me the whole time. I had been the one who was blind to it. But now that we were staring at each other for minutes on end, there was no ignoring it. Subtleties of expression – how she held her eyebrows, the tension in her ears, the drape of her lips, and, of course, where she directed her eyes – spoke volumes” (Berns 172-173). Dogs not only accept communication from humans, but also reply, and may even initiate by bringing a ball to you while you are lounging on the couch. Berns realized that Callie had always communicated her levels of comfort and trust with subtle changes in body language. Though some dogs are more expressive than others, the species itself is one that best communicates to humans. And though some people are less perceptive to that communication, many make an effort to understand dogs.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Dogs as Friends in the Aristotelian Framework

Based upon their social and cognitive abilities, dogs have the capability to form friendships with humans. “Man’s best friend” is not simply an idiomatic expression, but a concept supported by observation. Humans value dogs and many people treat dogs in the way one would treat a friend. This chapter concludes that dogs can be considered unequal friends of pleasure or utility by appropriating what we know about dogs to Aristotle’s theory on friendship. As the superior being in this unequal friendship, it is important that humans know what reciprocity to expect from dogs. Understanding what could be expected from dogs is key to creating a healthy friendship between species.

#### *3.1 Dogs Can Be Unequal Friends*

Recall in *Nicomachean Ethics* that Aristotle’s theory of friendship does not require equality. There are three kinds of friendships and “in each kind there are some who are friends in equality and other in accord with superiority” (NE 159). Unequal friendships have a superior being and an inferior being that exchange unequal reciprocity: they give to each other different kinds of things and in different amounts, unlike in equal friendships. Unequal friendship means that unequal things can be friends with each other. As already discussed, Aristotle’s examples do not account for the historical changes in social boundaries among races, gender, and other factors. If we update his examples we would recognize that dogs have qualities that could make them excellent friends of the unequal kind.

In this human dominated world, dogs are naturally inferior to humans in many ways. As the chosen creature of God, humans have morals and ethics, cognitive abilities, and language among other things, inherently unique to us and that make us superior to other animals. Despite its inferiority, humans have chosen the dog as the creature to walk beside us. We have honed its abilities to bond with humans from ancient wolves into the modern domestic dog and continue forward with that today. We have teamed up with the dog, training it for hunting, searching, racing, therapy and many other tasks and services. Dogs have jobs and purpose that transcend the basic necessity to survive. They do things for humans that no other animal would or could. And though we have chosen them to follow us and work for us, that is as far as the relationship has developed.

Though dogs are in many ways inferior, they have a natural affinity to people. Dogs are partly a human creation with a dependency and bond unmatched by any other nonhuman animal. Generally speaking, dogs want to be with humans. Unlike in America, where pet dogs are common and there is a great communal effort to humanely take dogs off the streets and find homes for them, the majority of dogs in many other countries live on the streets and rarely have kind, if any, interactions with the human population. If humans show disgust towards dogs and ignore them, then dogs will remain nearby but also ignore humans. In such countries, life for stray dogs “is difficult and, used to neglect and abuse, they grow timid and frightened” (Genova). However, when given the chance to be cared for and respected by humans, dogs usually opt for life with humans. In Bangladesh, orphaned children form “families” with stray dogs (Genova). These children barely find enough food for themselves; they have nothing of material to give to these dogs. Through treating these four legged wanderers with “kindness and compassion,” the

Bangladeshi orphans gained warmth, protection, and “unconditional love... from their dog companions” (Genova). Humans and dogs, when shown respect and appreciation for the other, have an understanding that can lead to a quality relationship. Dogs find comfort in human company and will seek out that companionship.

### *3.2 Reciprocity from Dogs*

Aristotle highlights the importance of reciprocity in friendship. All types of his friendships deal in the currency of reciprocity. The reciprocity in unequal friendship is different from those expected in equal friendships. Aristotle clarifies that, in unequal friendships, “Those who are unequal ought to give what is proportional to the superiority” (NE 159). Equal friendships have equal reciprocity, while unequal friendships work with unequal reciprocity. In unequal friendships, the reciprocity may deal in varying kinds of things reciprocated. For instance, the inferior who might be in a state of poverty should receive more in material goods, while the superior who is wealthy in material things should receive more in love and honor (NE 161). They both give and receive, but in different kinds of things and in different amounts that are proportional to their superiority.

It is clear that people appreciate their dogs; however, to have friendship, it is important to determine what dogs reciprocate to humans in return for the appreciation, food, and shelter that humans supply. Contemporary scientists have been studying the dog’s appreciation for humans. In his book *How Dogs Love Us*, neuroscientist Gregory Berns details his thoughts and experiences that brought to life the Dog Project in which he uses neuroimaging to study and analyze the reward system in the brains of fully awake dogs. Berns was first intrigued in this idea of the Dog Project when reflecting on the

relationships his own dogs had with himself, his family, each other, and strangers of both dog and human. Berns echoes the importance of Aristotle's core component of friendship. According to Berns, "It all comes down to reciprocity. If the dog-human relationship is predominantly one-sided, with humans projecting their thoughts onto the dog vacuously staring up at his master in the hopes of receiving a doggie treat, then the dog is not much better than a big teddy bear – a warm, soft, comforting object" (Berns 19). Though some humans treat dogs in this way it is important to remember that dogs are not inanimate objects. Dogs are more than a decorative toy that make one feel comforted and happy. Even though inanimate objects can make one feel good, they cannot build relationships. A favorite blanket or vintage car may make one feel good, but those feelings come from a person and cannot be received by any of those objects. Neither can a person receive from such objects. Since they are inanimate the objects have nothing to give and thus give nothing. Dogs have the capabilities to reciprocate. We know that people have the requirements to participate in friendship; the question is how dogs participate in the friendship.

Dogs have demonstrated their awareness and ability to express themselves and understand humans. Dogs have a sense of their surroundings and are not only "sensitive to where humans' attention is directed, but dogs are also sensitive to the social context... they have theory of mind" (Berns 173). From his understanding of dogs and neuroscience, Berns interpreted from the data that dogs basically have the ability to imagine what another person might be thinking. Even a rudimentary Theory of Mind "would mean dogs are not just Pavlovian stimulus-response machines. It would mean that dogs might have about the same level of consciousness as a young child" (Berns 174).

Dogs are not machines like Descartes would say, but are aware of their interactions with humans. They adjust their behavior with social atmosphere. Dogs can react and even initiate with the human. In being conscious of their relations with humans, dogs reciprocate in the relationship.

With their dependency, dogs have a basic understanding of humans, allowing them to give and receive from humans. Berns went to great lengths to suggest, through MRI technology, that dogs, like in humans, have the ability to “love” humans on a physiological, psychological level. He found that dogs have mental characteristics that cater towards companionship between humans and dogs: they understand social context, they pay attention to us and care about human intentions. Thus, in their unequal friendship, dogs and humans can partake in basic reciprocity.

### *3.3 Capabilities*

Especially when regarding unequal friendships it is important to understand what the inferior friend is capable of contributing and what can be expected from each other. Unlike the superior being in the friendship, the inferior has limitations, making what he gives in return never equivalent to what he receives from the superior. In his section over unequal friendships Aristotle stresses the significance of capability in unequal friendships. The inferior participates in “giving back what he is capable of giving” (NE 162). Seeing how the inferior is always in debt to the superior, the inferior must give and be friends to the best of his own ability. Regardless of what the superior actually receives, in an unequal friendship he deserves to receive the best of what the inferior can offer. For unequal friendships to work the superior must also be understanding of the inferior’s needs and more importantly capabilities.

Even in human friendships we respect that different people have different capabilities. Aristotle points out that even in unequal friendships both the inferior and the superior reciprocate and give things to each other. Although in unequal friendships the things given are “not more of the same thing, but to the superior more honor and to the one in need more gain, since honor is the reward of virtue and of doing good for others, but gain is what is helpful for one in need” (NE 161). The financially wealthy superior friend should not expect material things and money from the inferior because the inferior friend does not have anything material that the superior wants. Nothing material that the inferior friend handed over would be of value to the superior. Now the superior may facetiously say “it’s the thought that counts,” but he should expect something of actual value to himself that the inferior friend has the capability to provide, like qualities of respect and honor. There is an understanding of what the other needs and values, but also a balance in what they can expect to ask and receive from the other. We do not ask our shortest friend to grab a book off a tall shelf or a stage four cancer patient to be our jogging partner, and then get upset when they cannot do it. In the same way, we should not feel resentment towards our dogs for not being able to go into the grocery store. Friendships vary based on the capabilities of the individuals. Inherent limitations and social boundaries should be respected when considering the capabilities of the other in an unequal friendship.

To have friendship with dogs it is important for people to realize what should and should not be expected from dogs. For instance, dogs cannot provide care for their owners in the same way that a son can for his future elderly parents. Despite a certain amount of annoyance and maybe wrong-doing by their child, parents will still care for

him with the hope that the son may help them in their old age (NE 244). These are the kinds of things one can expect from a human. One should not expect this from a dog because it is not in the species' capability to financially support humans. Humans are allowed to expect other things from dogs, like obedience, unconditional support and attention, and sometimes physical services; all of which are within a dog's ability to provide. Those kinds of characteristics are valued by humans. In return for the food, shelter, and affection people give dogs, we should expect things like obedience and make it clear that obedience is expected from the dog. Otherwise, the dog may end up sending a gift in the form of a dead rabbit at the doorstep. People value certain characteristics and, in being friends with the dog, should make clear those expectations while respecting the dog's own capabilities.

Being not only inferior, but also of a different species, dogs and their limited ability to communicate with humans becomes a significant concern. But of all non-human species, dogs have the best communication with humans. The extent of interspecies communication is most significant between dogs and humans. It is agreed that "dogs have been part of human history longer than cows, horses, or goats. And during that time, dogs have somehow adapted to their role as companions, developing sophisticated social skills not seen in other domesticated beasts" (Pennisi). Domestication helped develop communication between dog and human but other domesticated animals do not have that level of social skills with humans. As a species, dogs pay attention to humans; they read humans. Studies have shown that dogs have interests in human intentions and the human point of view, learning from their interactions with humans. They know that humans can know more than dogs in a given situation and, in those cases,

dogs depend on us for guidance, like when we point out the cup hiding the treat. They also understand that they can know more than humans, like service dogs with the blind, and even in such cases they remain faithful to their humans with a desire to please. Both species are able to express and understand their respect and appreciation for the other. The development of social skills shows sophistication of the dog species and their ability to form community with people, which is another one of Aristotle's core components of friendship.

### *3.4 Aristotle's Three Types of Friendships Extended to Include Dogs*

#### *3.4.1 Dogs Lack Virtue*

Along with their inferiority, dogs lack virtue and the ability to wish goodwill for others. Of the three kinds of friendships, that of virtue is not capable between dogs and humans, "for those who are friends on account of virtue are eager to do good to one another... for each of them is stretching out towards something good" for one another (NE 160). A friendship of virtue and excellence is not achievable because dogs do not have virtue. In friendships of virtue, both wish for the good of the other. Though some may wish good things for their dogs, it is not virtue. Dogs do not have a high, celestial moral standard of virtue. It is a characteristic really only developed in human adults. On the other hand, dogs probably do not know what virtue or excellence to wish upon a human. They have no concept of that goodwill and, therefore, cannot achieve friendships of virtue. The most a dog can wish for is that their basic welfare is met with food and shelter and, especially, that people spend time with them whether it is in the form of a

belly rub or a long walk. In this, they have a desire to be with and please people, but lack virtue and the ability to wish goodwill for humans.

### *3.4.2 Dogs Can Be Friends of Pleasure*

Dogs may lack a major component for friendships of virtue, but they do easily fulfill requirements for being friends of pleasure. For the most part, people enjoy spending time with their dogs, and dogs enjoy spending time with people. In friendships of pleasure, complaints do not “happen very much between those who are friends for pleasure, since what they desire comes to both at the same time if they enjoy passing the time together” (NE 160). In these friendships, the two enjoy each other as well as doing things with each other; it is about the company.

Biologically, dogs love humans and strengthen that love through social activities. Studies have found that simply looking at their person produces increased amounts of oxytocin in dogs. This “love hormone” oxytocin “plays a role in maternal bonding, trust, and altruism” (Grimm). It also works in the other direction: canines make humans produce more oxytocin. This biochemical bonding between dog and human “elicit[s] the same type of oxytocin positive feedback loop as seen between mothers and their infants” (Grimm). Mutual eye contact increases oxytocin levels in both dog and humans. Increased oxytocin strengthens the “love” each feels towards the other. In accordance with Berns, dogs love us. At least on a biological level dogs love us; they have the same biological processes and effects in being with humans that humans have in being with other humans and apparently dogs.

Dogs enjoy spending their time with people. At a shelter, dogs may spend months never leaving a five foot by five foot cage, watching humans pass by them. One would

think after all that time in a confined space that a walk would be most appreciated, but, as observed through personal experience, it is the human contact with which many of them seem most content. Dogs do not view humans as merely a walking machine; they find pleasure in simply the time spent with humans.

In spending time with humans, dogs appreciate humans and especially their own humans. Through his MRI studies with dogs, Berns set up an experiment in which scent samples of urine from dogs and humans, both familiar and strangers, were presented to dogs to see if the dog's caudate would light up in the MRI. Activation in the caudate indicated, in the most basic sense of this experiment, experiencing a pleasurable activity. Only one type of smell activated the caudate: familiar human. This meant that dogs, like Berns' own "Callie had a sense of permanence for the people in her household. She knew who her family was, and she remembered them" (Berns 204). They found that dogs distinguish their own people from human strangers and other dogs when given a scent of urine sample. Since only the familiar human scent activated the caudate, dogs do not view all humans in the same light. Essentially, "dogs knew who we were, and that they had categories for us, indicated that we humans make a lasting impression on our dogs. We are appreciated" (Berns 205). In the case of the well cared for pet dogs that Berns had sent through the MRI scanner, the scans and science suggested that the dogs associated pleasurable activities with their own humans and, in layman's terms, a seeming apathy towards other dogs and other humans.

#### *3.4.3 Dogs Can Be Friends of Usefulness*

In addition to friendships of pleasure, dogs can also substantiate friendships of usefulness. Some clear examples are hunting, guarding, and therapy dogs. Though pet

dogs probably warrant a friendship of pleasures, some dogs are fine and can even thrive on relationships of usefulness. Working dogs may appreciate their humans but mainly enjoy the work. Such dogs, like Iditarod racers, dedicate their time and energy to racing. They find great pleasure in running for hundreds of miles. Humans manage the dogs' racing and are simply a means for the dogs to run. To the musher, dogs are the means for participating the race and winning awards. In this utility, dogs and humans use each other to get what they desire. Dogs and mushers enjoy different aspects of racing. In this, they view each other as a means of getting something. In return for their obedience, work ethic, and stamina, dogs are provided with the activity of pulling a sled and running for hundreds of miles. The characteristics and desire these dogs have makes them a great match for a musher wanting an award or title. Their own "goals" line up in a mutual activity, providing each with what they want, which is standard in friendships of usefulness.

### *3.5 Aiming for a Healthy Friendship*

In much of the same way with human friendships, dog friendships require work to maintain. Determining the type of friendship that should be expected provides guidance as to what kinds of things might be reciprocated. For many reasons, it is probably best that pet owners try to maintain a friendship of pleasure with their pet dogs, and keep friendships of usefulness for working and service dogs. Friendships of usefulness require some sort of purpose that aims for a mutual goal. Such purpose does not usually exist for pet dogs, since pet dogs are appreciated most for their company. With dog friendships it is important to establish whether or not the dog is a pet. From there we can determine

what reciprocity should be expected from the dog and what we are expected to provide in order to create a healthy friendship.

Aristotle says that friendships of both pleasure and usefulness are similar in that they can be short lived; however, unlike friendships of pleasure, “friendships for use is full of complaints, since people who use one another for their benefit always want something more” (NE 169). If an Iditarod racing dog can no longer keep up with the team then that dog may be transferred to a different team and replaced by another dog that can keep up with the demand. Friendships of usefulness revolve around achieving favors for each member, not in the act of being with the other and the pleasure in a common hobby. If a member of a useful friendship does not contribute what is expected then complaints will ensue and the friendship will dissolve.

Though most dogs can form friendships with humans, like humans to fellow humans, not all dogs can achieve friendship with humans. Aristotle explains that some people are difficult to get along with and have personalities not conducive to forming friendship (NE 150). The same goes for dogs. In Aristotle’s unequal friendships there consists an important balance between the superior and inferior beings. Some dogs seem to hold strongly to their ancestral wolf instincts, refusing “to yield to this ultimate submission” to man (Mery 26). Not all need to be friends with each other. So in such cases, a mutual acknowledgment might be the extent of the relationship.

Aristotle stresses the importance of quality in our friendships. In our friendships with dogs, we will not be able to achieve the quality of virtuous friendship that Aristotle strives for in human friendships, but in understanding dogs as friends we help poor, misconstrued relationships become quality friendships. By demonstrating that dogs

actually do appreciate their owners in a similar manner by which humans appreciate their friends, neuroscientist Gregory Berns discovered similarities in not just behavior, but mental processes between humans and dogs. This new information on dogs' cognitive capacities emphasizes the similar nature by which dogs and humans form relationships, and because of this we can form friendships with each other. This categorization of friendship will hopefully provide new perspective to how humans treat dogs and what to expect from dogs, allowing us to build better relationships with them.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### The Effect of Friendship on Animal Ethics

Thinking of dogs as friends is not meant to replace humans with animals, but to view the relationship in a new light of thought. We can build better relationships with dogs that more appropriately take their well-being into consideration. The philosophies of Rene Descartes and Robert Boyle significantly influenced conceptions of animal pain, fostering a mindset for the acceptability of animal experimentation that still persists today. More recently, moral philosophies like utilitarianism, deontological ethics, and virtue ethics, provided different guidelines for decision making in ethical situations. Speculating about the ethics of friendships might contribute to the type of treatment dogs receive, whether in medical care or use in an experiment. Seeing dogs as having the potential to form friendships with humans changes how we view them in ethics. It would provoke people to think about better ways to treat our four legged friends as pets, in medicine, and in experimentation.

#### *4.1 Early Modern Perspectives on Animal Pain*

Generally speaking, we know that people have always appreciated dogs and the nature of the dog. We purposefully distinguished dogs from the rest of nonhuman animals. However, it has not always been like this. Throughout history, the ways people thought of animals have shifted based on certain philosophies that analyze the characteristics of animals and specifically their capabilities to reason. The father of

modern philosophy, Rene Descartes, and another influential early modern scientist, Robert Boyle, greatly shaped the current thinking of animals.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century Rene Descartes set out to theorize the nature of the universe. He believed that small particles composed everything physical and behaved in a mechanical fashion in that they obeyed the pushing and pulling motion of his laws of nature. He even applied his mechanistic philosophy to biology. In his mechanistic philosophy the body is “nothing but a statue or machine made of earth” (Descartes 99). Since the body is an organic machine, it responds to stimuli in a mechanical fashion. When a stick is poked into the flesh “the tiny fibres which make up the marrow of the nerves are pulled with such force that they are broken and separated... Being pulled in this way, the fibres cause a movement in the brain which gives occasion for the soul... to have the sensation of pain” (Descartes 102-103). Given a certain input, the particles in the body react to produce an output. However, Descartes’ mechanistic philosophy only accounts for things physical. The soul and the sensation of pain are far from physical in Descartes’ views.

To make sense of human consciousness and morality, Descartes clarifies that the mind and body are of different substances. The body, being an organic machine made of particles and fibers, is physical, whereas the soul is some immaterial substance. Housed in “a certain little gland situated near the middle of the substance of the brain,” the soul sits “like the fountain-keeper,” directing and controlling the stimuli into appropriate responses (Descartes 100-101). It functions as the source of reason, analyzing and interpreting stimuli. Both humans and animals are organic machines, but what separates humans from animals is the soul since only humans have one. Through his concept of

mind body dualism, Descartes explains that the mind and body are made of distinct substances and only humans possess both the physical body and the immaterial thinking substance that gives us the ability to think and feel.

Descartes significantly changed human perception of animals with the application of his new mechanistic philosophy and mind body dualism. As understood by Descartes, the soul contains the ability to produce more than just a physical response that the machine body naturally creates; it allows humans to rationalize and feel pain. Since only humans have souls, only humans feel pain. When poked with a stick, an animal may yelp, but it does not yelp in pain. Likewise, when a human is poked with a stick, he does not yell because of the pain, he yells because the poke of the stick caused movement of parts within the mechanical body to produce a yell. The noise occurred as a mechanical reaction to the poke. Since only humans have a soul, only in humans does the poke of the stick also cause the sensation of pain. And because animals have no soul, they cannot interpret certain stimuli as painful or comforting and, therefore, feel no pain or pleasure, according to Descartes.

Adopting Descartes' view of animals lends itself well to the practice of animal experimentation. In treating animals as organic machines incapable of sensing pain, people no longer needed to worry about the moral implications associated in experimentation and mistreatment. People also had no obligations to promote any sort of well-being for animals since they could not understand pleasure. Descartes' solution to animal suffering in the presences of God's "most perfect moral system" was "to strip them [animals] of any moral significance by insisting no soul of any kind" (Oster 152). It was his attempt to make sense of the moral and ethical implications of treating animals

poorly. Morality and immorality cannot be exchanged between humans and animals since animals have no morals. By setting distinct, all or nothing boundaries between man and animal, Descartes completely removes the moral and ethical dilemmas that arise in animal experimentation. In viewing animals in such a way, unable to sense and understand, it is easy to dissociate one's self when inflicting amount of suffering. The acceptance of Descartes' view on animals left them vulnerable to all kinds of experimentation.

This dichotomy between human and animal became less black and white slightly later in the 17<sup>th</sup> century with Robert Boyle's philosophy of animal and reasoning. Boyle, a progenitor of modern experimental practices in the natural sciences, performed an extensive amount of experiments on animals. During his experiments, Boyle observed that "Beasts haue as well as we a Sence of feeling" (Oster 173). Contrary to what Descartes' philosophy suggested about animals, Boyle believed that animals could feel pain and suffer, as well as experience pleasure. Boyle also theorized that some animals seem to have more rationality than others. He discovered that animals living with people as well as higher order animals, like dogs, seem to have a greater sense of reasoning "and were often treated as morally responsible" compared to undomesticated animals (Oster 165). He places all creatures, both humans and nonhuman, on a spectrum, even saying that "the moral status of children as rather closer to beasts" (Oster 160). Boyle viewed humans and animals as having degrees of sensation and degrees of reasoning. The ability to reason not only distinguishes man from animals, but also distinguishes animals from other animals.

This acknowledgment of senses and reasoning in animals by Boyle marked a turning point against Descartes' more popular view of animals. Animals are not quite as simple as Descartes says. They have basic reasoning skills and the ability to suffer. Human and nonhuman animals are not in two separate spheres, but rather on a spectrum with humans at one end and other animals scattered along the gradient. Boyle made clear that he did not think some animals like fish could feel pain based on their lack of expression, but that animals like dogs could. Boyle's view of degrees meant that man's obligation to limit suffering in animals varied depending on the animal's perceived moral status, which further fudged the originally clear cut lines of morality found in Descartes.

Since animals can reason and feel, Boyle struggles with the moral implications in animal experimentation. Some experiments produce a lot of beneficial knowledge, but at a great expense to the well-being of animals. Whereas Descartes' solution to the perfect moral system involves denying that ability of animals to suffer and reason, Boyle believes that "God had provided an ethical sanction for scientific activity of this sort which necessitated" (Oster 172). According to Boyle, it is acceptable for animals to undergo experimentation as long as it refrains from inflicting unnecessary suffering on the animal.

#### *4.2 Moral Philosophies*

A couple hundred years after Descartes and Boyle, a different topic of conversation circulated among philosophers. The focus of this discussion was not on animal reasoning, but over ethics and goodness, giving rise to several central moral philosophies. An important theory is Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill's utilitarianism. The utilitarian argument has greatly shaped ethics and especially that of

animal experimentation. The main contenders against utilitarianism are Immanuel Kant's deontological ethics and Aristotle's virtue ethics.

The core idea of utilitarianism involves the greatest good for the greatest number. The goal is to avoid pain and suffering while increasing overall happiness and pleasure. It is a main argument for animal experimentation. Some endure suffering, but hopefully their pain is justified by the good of the many.

Unlike with Descartes and Boyle's philosophies, utilitarianism focuses little on the ability to reason and more on the capacity to suffer. In fact, contemporary utilitarian Peter Singer strikes down the notion of judging animals on the basis of their abilities to reason, questioning that "If possessing a higher degree of intelligence does not entitle one human to use another for his own ends, how can it entitle humans to exploit nonhumans for the same purpose?" (Singer 7). He coined the term "speciesism" to convey this bias. Like racism and sexism, Singer contends that speciesism creates artificial boundaries. Singer believes that suffering is suffering no matter to whom it happens. Since dogs are commonly understood as being smarter than a two year old human, it makes sense to remove dogs from the list of animals that suffer through experiments. Singer actually suggests using orphaned children and mentally impaired humans since their mental status and ability to reason are not fully developed (Singer 79). He makes the point that an argument based on the rationality of animals affecting their moral standing and capacity to suffer poorly justifies animal suffering. Thus Singer's utilitarian tradition says arguments should focus on the capacity to suffer and increasing happiness.

A selling point of utilitarianism is that even an unethical person can make the right decision. One can form an almost arithmetical accounting of every situation by

keeping track of the changes in the balance of overall happiness versus suffering. It creates a universal principle to follow in any situation that can even be employed by an unethical person. However, the arithmetical nature of utilitarianism creates major limitations that do not take into account the inherent subjectivity of human nature.

Basic rights and justice override the implementation of utilitarianism. Unlike utilitarianism in which consequences of actions determined their moral rightness, in deontology the act itself carries the moral weight. Deontological ethics holds its values in the morality of the choices. In some situations “no matter how morally good their consequences, some choices are morally forbidden” (Alexander). For instance, murder is immoral, so from a deontological perspective one should never murder. Even if the surgeon can save five sickly patients in the waiting room by choosing to donate the organs of a healthy individual in the operating room, killing him, it would be wrong to do so. But from the utilitarian perspective the obvious choice is to kill the one healthy patient to improve the quality of lives of the five sickly patients because that would promote the most overall goodness. Still this choice probably feels wrong. It is not the surgeon's duty to infringe on the rights of the healthy patient as that would be immoral. Deontological ethics takes into account basic rights and justice in its universal principles of morally acceptable and unacceptable actions.

Utilitarianism also does not take into consideration the quality of relationships. The philosophy is “distinguished by impartiality and agent-neutrality [in which] Everyone's happiness counts the same” (Driver). Each person's happiness carries the same weight regardless of who the person is and how they relate to the one making the ethical decision. The happiness of friends would have the same weight as the happiness

of strangers. Utilitarianism disregards friendship and does not allow a preferential attitude for those we care about. The inherently biased nature of humans will make our choices always cater to the benefit of a friend. We could never be objective enough to make a utilitarian decision when friendship is at stake.

The philosophy in virtue ethics handles the faults of utilitarianism. In virtue ethics, the morally right decision is up to the interpretation of the person making the decision. It is judgment based on the person's experiences and understanding of what he thinks a virtuous person would do in a given situation (Hursthouse). Essentially, a virtuous person holds to virtues, aims to increase happiness and promote well-being, and targets the mean, avoiding excess and deficiency. In practice, one would think of people who best embody these characteristics and apply their thought processes to his decision making.

Virtue ethics does not hold to universal principles like the philosophies of utilitarianism and deontology. But like utilitarianism, virtue ethics allows for a case by case approach to each situation and consideration of the outcome. And like deontological ethics, virtue ethics also considers the moral nature of the actions. Whereas the other moral philosophies emphasize following universal principles, virtue ethics emphasizes the person making a decision and the importance of that person's interpretation of the situation, past experiences, and understanding of ethical and moral values.

Applying virtue ethics considers all aspects of a given situation into the decision making, including friendships. It is a flexible philosophy that accounts for the very gray nature of ethics. For example, a child gets bitten by a stranger's dog at the park, causing rather extensive damage to the child's forearm. The decision made by using the

philosophy in utilitarianism might force the owner to submit his dog to euthanasia. This would prevent potential future incidents of the dog biting others, calming the public and increasing overall happiness at the expense of the dog's life and the quality of life for the owner who had a very strong and good relationship with the dog. However, in looking at the situation from a perspective using virtue ethics, the owner would reflect on his strong relationship with his dog and the decision might be different. Virtue ethics would account for when the child ignorantly, but quickly, cornered the dog, making it scared and causing it to bite the child as a way of escape. In this view, the dog is not entirely at fault. Virtue ethics considers not just one aspect of the situation, but the entire situation including friendships that may influence making the right decision.

### *4.3 Ethics of Canine Friendship*

Of all animals it appears that dogs most deserve this elevated kind of treatment in friendship. As a species they have clearly exhibited their loyal behavior and ability to work well, not just for, but with humans. Neuroscientist Gregory Berns chose the dog for his study about "how dogs love us" because dogs have become significant components to the lives of man and because they are easy to be in companionship with as a product of centuries of building an innate trust. They are "our first friends" (Berns 240).

#### *4.3.1 Dog Ownership*

People should aspire to a friendship with their dogs. As potential unequal friends of usefulness and pleasure, dogs deserve to have these relationships with humans. Dogs provide so much companionship for people and they are too often pushed aside. They want strong relationships with humans and we should not deprive them of that. As

friends, we want them to live a quality life. Dogs are so dependent on people that they need not just food water and shelter, but also human attention. It would be a disservice to ourselves and to dogs if we kept them trapped in a poor quality relationship. They are not decorative pets; they are animals that thrive from human interaction. In building good friendships with dogs we give them quality lives so that they may continue to show their appreciation and respect for us.

When getting a dog, people should keep these friendships in mind. Understanding dogs as potential friends might change how people choose their pet dogs. In taking on the responsibilities of dog ownership, people must be committed to the well-being of the dog throughout its lifetime. Doing research on dog breeds and choosing responsible breeders helps to understand the many kinds of dogs available and which ones to thinking about bringing home. Some dogs have high energy that require hours of exercise and stimulation daily, and other dogs make great apartment pets. Some require hours of extensive grooming, and others never need a brush or bath. Much consideration regarding the temperament and lifestyle of dogs should be done before committing to a dog. For a healthy relationship it is important to be able to provide the care and attention the dog needs.

#### *4.3.2 Veterinary Care*

As friends, we should want the best care for our dogs. Most veterinarians do an excellent job at keeping up with the gold standards in medicine. As doctors of animals they serve to provide options of whatever treatment is best for the animal. Based on personal experiences, it seems that many dog owners do not share the same view with the doctors. A handful agree with doctors and are able to afford the best level of treatments,

and most owners try to provide the best care that they can afford, but many people do not want to deal with their dog's health concerns.

There are several organizations that recognize the importance of veterinary medicine and aim for it to have standards comparable to those of human medicine. The One Health Initiative is a movement that emphasizes collaboration among those in the fields of human medicine and animal medicine, among others. It seeks to integrate humane medicine, animal medicine, and environmental health to improve the lives of both humans and animals. Likewise, the American Animal Hospital Association or AAHA rewards veterinary clinics that demonstrate a standard of excellence similar to that of human medicine. AAHA accredited vet clinic follow and perform veterinary procedures with the same level of techniques and equipment used in human medical procedures. With an increasing amount of people showing interest in the best care for their dogs, further efforts will be made to improve the quality of veterinary care and, as a result, the quality of our dogs' lives.

We owe dogs quality lives. As a part of end of life care it is important to focus on the importance in quality of living and not quantity of years. Near the end of their lives it is important to keep track of how dogs decline physically and mentally. Mediating pain and suffering is important in maintaining a good quality of life. Some dogs die on better terms than humans because of the excellent hospice-like care they receive at the end of their lives. We should not cut their lives short, or wait until they are completely dissatisfied with living, but rather manage their symptoms until their overall quality of life dips below what the owner might think is acceptable for his four legged friend.

Having good friendships with our dogs allows us to more easily pick up subtle differences in their personality and movement that reveal degrees of their discomfort.

#### *4.3.3 Animal Experimentation*

Thinking of dogs as friends offers a new dimension to ethical deliberation. Neuroscientist Gregory Berns believes that “If today’s biomedical researchers were required to test their theories first on people they know, there would be a lot less crap making it into the scientific archives” (Berns 133). He suggests that there is an overwhelming amount of unnecessary research being performed on animals. By viewing dogs as potential friends, we substantially increase the ‘cost’ of the experiment. To make the cost versus benefits relationship of an experiment worthy, the benefits must increase as the cost increases. It is difficult to justify the kind of useful information required to be more valuable than friendship. People would think twice about the specific procedures entailed in performing experiments on their human friends, so why not dog friends. In considering dogs as friends, even if only the unequal kind, less trivial and more substantial, beneficial science would make its way into a published article. The use of dogs in experiments would be greatly restricted to more tame studies, like those of Berns as he studies "how dogs love us" using his MRI machines.

In pioneering the Dog Project Berns encountered an interesting dilemma. In order to appropriately assess a dog’s mental status Berns and his team made “a decision that elevated the rights of dogs to the same level of our human subjects” (Berns 63). He realized that “all the previous animal research treated animals as property. Elevating the rights of a dog to that of a human child made both ethical and scientific sense. It was the right thing to do and it would result in better-quality data too” (Berns 65). Since the dogs

needed to be trained to willingly enter and remain still in utterly cramped and loud MRI machines, Berns required a signed permission slip from owners for their dogs to participate in the study. He understood that people had responsibility for the well-being of their dogs. In allowing their dogs to participate in the study the owners needed to sign what mimicked a child's permission slip so that Berns and his team would not be held liable for the dog under the circumstances. In addition to that, the dogs needed to show that they were willing to participate in the MRI machine and not be forced into the loud machine. Berns respected the dogs as well as the relationship between dog and human. As the standard of human relationships with dogs increases, people might be more understanding of other people who have strong relationships with their dogs. In this dogs also might gain more respect in the world of animal experimentation.

## CONCLUSION

The kinds of things that separate humans from nonhuman animals is a thought-provoking topic, but we have become so fascinated with elevating ourselves as unique beings that we left animals, including our beloved dogs, vulnerable to inappropriate generalizations. We have misconstrued conceptions of animals that have caused an inconceivable amount of unnecessary suffering to many species. The 17th century father of modern philosophy Rene Descartes is guilty of just this. His mechanistic philosophy, still so central to the natural sciences, had the consequence that animals cannot reason or suffer. Nonhuman animals tend to get clumped into a group so diverse that no blanket statement encompasses every animal. It is even difficult to not find exceptions when trying to encompass only the human species. Although Robert Boyle's sophisticated response to Descartes' claim presents humans and animals on a spectrum of being able to reason and suffer, he still finds acceptability in the existence of animal suffering, even in lovable ones like dogs. He justifies their suffering in experimentation as God's exception to promote human well-being. An influential modern critique of this human obsession of the self with a disregard for the rest of God's creatures, came with Peter Singer's coining of the term "speciesism" in the mid-1970s. He believes it is absurd to justify animal suffering on the basis of rationality since that argument fails to account for discrepancy between the limited reasoning of children and the mentally disabled, and their lack of being test subjects. However, utilitarian Singer lacks an appropriate solution. Not all, but some animal experimentation yields a great deal of useful and beneficial science. So, for the good of many, animals are once again considered expendable. Other moral

philosophies take into account different aspects of ethical situations. Unlike utilitarianism, virtue ethics allows us to place preference for our friends in making ethical decisions.

We have acknowledged the truthful nature in calling dogs "man's best friend," suggesting that they can be unequal friends of usefulness or, if a pet, of pleasure. New findings in the social and cognitive capacities of dogs further support the suitability for how Aristotle's theory of friendships could pertain to our relationships with dogs. Viewing dogs as our friends provides an alternative perspective to the ethics in how we treat and care for dogs. The decisions made in such ethical deliberation will hopefully improve our relationships and how we treat our four legged friends.

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