The Politics of Non-Human Animal Pleasure in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*

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ABSTRACT: Aristotle of Stagira (384–322 BCE) originates the study of zoology and political science. But whereas his zoology identifies a continuum between human and non-human animals, in his political and ethical works he appears to view human and non-human animals as different in kind in order to illustrate the superiority of the former and justify the instrumental use of the latter. For instance, Aristotle's account of the virtue of moderation (namely that which concerns how humans experience pleasure) depicts non-human animals as predators who only view other animals as a meal and immoderate human animals as beast-like and disgraceful because they act, "not insofar as they are human beings but insofar as they are animals" (*EN* 3.10.1118b2–3). Nonetheless, Aristotle wrote another ethical treatise, the *Eudemian Ethics*, that offers discussions that parallel those in the *Nicomachean Ethics* but that eschew negative characterizations of non-human animals—as if Aristotle had excised all such negative depictions of non-human animals from the *Eudemian* text on rhetorical grounds. I argue that the reason that Aristotle treats pleasure so differently is the result of his contrast between ethics as a function of political science (as found in the *Nicomachean Ethics*) and a "non-political" ethical reflection (as found in the *Eudemian Ethics*) that is more in line with Aristotle the zoologist.

Keywords: Aristotle, animal pleasure, zoology, political science, *Nicomachean Ethics*, *Eudemian Ethics*

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INTRODUCTION

Aristotle of Stagira (384–322 BCE) stands at the starting point of two scientific traditions in western thought, namely those of zoology and political science. But whereas Aristotle's zoology tends to identify a continuum between human and non-human animals, in his political and ethical works he appears to view human and non-human animals as strictly demarcated.[1] Aristotle's ethical and political works have also generated scholarly debate over whether he views animals as having only instrumental value, rather than as beings with moral worth or ethical standing.[2] The account in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* of the virtue of moderation

[1] Texts supporting continuum: *Historia Animalium* [*HA*] 8.1.588a28–30, 8.1.589a1–3, 8.13.598a29–30, 9.1.608b4–8, 9.1.610b22, and 9.10.614b18–27; *Nicomachean Ethics* [*EN*] 6.7.1141a22–28. Texts supporting strict demarcation: *EN* 1.7.1097b33–98a4, 1.9.1099b32–1100a1, 3.2.1111b6–10, 6.2.1139a17–20, 7.3.1147b2–5, 7.6.1149b30–35, 8.11.1161b1–2, 9.9.1170a13–19, 10.8.1178b24–28; *Eudemian Ethics* [*EE*] 1.7.1217a24–29, 2.6.1222b18–29, 2.10.1226b21–25, 7.2.1236b3–11; *Politics* [*Pol*.] 1.2.1253a7–18, 1.8.1256b7–26. Scholars debate whether Aristotle embraces a strict demarcation or a gradual continuum between human and non-human animals. For instance, Sorabji (1993, 13) claims that Aristotle "allows for a sharp intellectual distinction between animal and man"; by contrast, Steiner (2005, 76) argues that Aristotle recognizes "a continuum between human beings and animals while seeking to distinguish human beings on the basis of their rational capacities." Fortenbaugh (1971), Newmyer (2017), and Dow (2021) lean towards Sorabji's emphasis on discontinuity; Osborne (2007, 63–64), Lloyd (2013, 277–93), Brill (2020), Zatta (2022, 175–214), and Nussbaum (2022) lean towards Steiner's emphasis on continuity. Lockwood (forthcoming[b]) argues for continuity with respect specifically to the nature of inter- and intra-species friendship.

[2] Newmyer (2011, 75) claims that Aristotle thought that "animals are made for man's use, a view which presupposes the absence of any moral ties between the species"; Fröding and Peterson (2011), Henry (2018), and Cagnoli Fiecconi (2021, 211–27, largely concur. By contrast, Hall (2018), Zatta (2022), and Nussbaum (2022) provide accounts of human and non-human animal interaction that undermine the claim that Aristotle denied moral ties between human and non-human animals. Torres (2022) provides a thorough refutation of Fröding and Peterson (2011) and Torres (2024) provides a comprehensive literature review of how positions within ancient philosophy relate to contemporary environmental ethics; Catana (2024) surveys the relationships between Aristotelian virtue ethics and modern environmental ethics. Lockwood (forthcoming [a] and [c]) argue that Aristotle recognizes inter-species friendships between individual human and

(namely that virtue which concerns how humans experience pleasure) is one such text since it depicts both non-human animals as predators who only view other animals as a meal and immoderate human animals as beast-like and justly disgraceful, "because it characterizes us not insofar as we are human beings but insofar as we are animals" (*EN* 3.10.1118b3–4).[3] Indeed, according to the account of the contemplative life that concludes the *Nicomachean Ethics*, human animals should turn away from their finite and mortal humanity and instead "we should as far as possible immortalize and do everything to live in accord with the element in us that is most excellent" (*EN* 10.7.1177b33–34), namely the mind or intellect (νοῦς) within each human that is akin to the god.[4]

Although Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (*EN*) is a part of his political science, he wrote another ethical treatise, the *Eudemian Ethics* (*EE*), that often includes parallel discussions of the same ethical subjectσ.[5] So, for instance, both the *Eudemian* and *Nicomachean* treatises identify moderation as an ethical virtue concerned with pleasure from eating, drinking, and sexual

non-human animals and that non-human animals are categorically benefited by their domestication.

[3] In the ethical treatises, Aristotle uses the terms ζῷον and θηρίον (and their cognates) interchangeably to describe non-human animals. He does recognize a category of blameworthy character called θηριότης which is commonly translated as "bestiality" (*EN* 7.1.1145a17–33, 7.5.1148b19 ff.), but it is incorrect to claim that by θηρίον he means something like "lower animal" (see, for instance, *EN* 3.8.1118b2–4, 6.2.1139a19–20; cf. *EN* 1.7.1098a1–3). Indeed, almost all his examples of "bestiality" in *EN* 7.5 come from human rather than non-human animals. Aristotle ascribeσ greater and lesser degrees of intelligence and other human-like qualities to non-human animals, but the terms ζῷον and θηρίον do not serve as markers of those differences. See further Natali (2009) and Anton (2022).

[4] See further EN 10.7.1177a12–18, 1177b26–1178a1, 10.8.1178b7–32.

[5] Scholars debate the relationship between the two ethical treatises; see further Bobonich (2006), Jost (2014), Frede (2019), and Di Basilio (2022, 1–16).

activity.[6] But although the discussion of moderation in the *Eudemian Ethics* uses many of the same arguments as the *Nicomachean* version, it eschews any negative characterizations of non-human animals—as if Aristotle had excised all such negative depictions of non-human animals from the *Eudemian* text on rhetorical grounds. Consider, for instance, the following three texts about non-human animal pleasure:

T1: Animal perception, pleasure, and the virtue of moderation[7]

T1A: All animals have at least one sort of perception, namely, touch; but for what has aesthetic perception there is also pleasure and pain and the pleasant as well as the painful; and where these are, there is also appetite, since it is a desire for the pleasant. (*DA* 2.3.414b1–6)	**T1B:** Moderation is concerned with the only two kinds of perceptible object that the other animals too happen to be sensitive to and take pleasure and pain in, namely those of taste and touch. (*EE* 3.2.1230b36–38)	**T1C:** Moderation and immoderation are concerned with the sorts of pleasures that the rest of the animals share in as well (which is why they appear slavish and beast-like), namely, touch and taste. Animals appear, though, to make little or no use even of taste. (*EN* 3.10.1118a23–27)

T1A is an account of the functional capacities (or δυνάμεις) of perception in Aristotle's natural scientific account of the soul, namely his treatise *De Anima*. Although the treatise deals with human perception, *De Anima* concerns the functional capacities of all animate beings, including plants and non-human animals; its rhetorical tone is thus scientific or zoologically descriptive and explanatory. **T1B** and **T1C** both assert that the human virtue of moderation concerns primarily

[6] See *EN* 3.10.1118b29–32, *EE* 3.2.1230b25–27, 32–33.

[7] "Moderation" translates Aristotle's σωφροσύνη; "immoderation" translates ἀκολασία, although there are linguistic advantages to the Inwood/Woolf (2013) rendering as "indiscipline" (which is a compound of the word for "punishment" [κόλασις] and an alpha privative). I use the translations of Inwood/Woolf (2013) for *EE* and Reeve (2014) for *EN*, albeit often with emendation based on the Greek text of Bywater (1894) and Walzer and Mingay (1991). I highlight texts in block quotes to indicate that they are found only in *EN* but are conspicuously absent in *EE*.

the pleasures of touch which is also the source of animal pleasures. But although the *Eudemian* text (**T1B**) asserts that point without further comment, the *Nicomachean* text (**T1C**) adds (in the highlighted text) that such pleasures are "slavish and beastlike" (ἀνδραποδώδεις καὶ θηριώδεις [*EN* 3.10.1118a25]). Although the addition seems like a small one, the rhetoric of the *Nicomachean* passage (**T1C**) clearly disparages the pleasures in question through the denigration of non-human animals.

The rhetoric of non-human animal denigration is not limited to the *Nicomachean* versions of **T1**; rather, throughout the *Nicomachean* account of moderation Aristotle castigates unvirtuous human animals by likening them to non-human animals. Of course, we are sadly familiar with the contemporary political rhetoric of depicting marginalized groups of humans as if they were "like animals" or needed to be "put in cages."[8] But what is more remarkable is that the *Eudemian Ethics*, in its parallel discussions entirely refrains from the rhetoric of non-human animal denigration. Rather, the *Eudemian* text **T1B** makes use of the zoological or descriptive language of **T1A** several times in its parallel account of moderation. Indeed, more generally the *Eudemian Ethics* includes a number of substantive discussions about how non-human animals share in goods, including the discussions of the virtues of courage, animal foresight, friendship, and how non-human animals share in unconditional goods.[9] The rhetoric of non-human animal

[8] One quotation about migrants from an April 2024 speech by former President Donald Trump will suffice: "The Democrats say, 'Please don't call [migrants] animals. They're humans.' I said, 'No, they're not humans, they're not humans, they're animals'" (Layne et al., 2024).

[9] The *Eudemian Ethics* includes a number of substantive discussions about how non-human animals share in goods, including pleasure (*EE* 6.8.1148b15–24 and 6.13.1153b25–54a7), ethical virtues (*EE* 3.9.1230b36–1231a17 and 3.1.1230a23–33), animal foresight (*EE* 4.7.1141a22–28),

denigration in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, I will argue in this chapter, is a function of the polis-centered or "political" orientation of the treatise, an outlook or orientation that the *Eudemian Ethics* does not share. To support such a claim, the first part of my chapter examines how the *Nicomachean* and *Eudemian Ethics* differ with respect to their political or polis-centric orientations. The second part of my chapter adduces additional evidence of the distinctively *Nicomachean* account of moderation. Finally, in the conclusion of the chapter I consider the possibility that Aristotle's *Eudemian Ethics* provides us with an alternative Aristotelian ethic that is more aligned with Aristotle the zoologist than Aristotle the political scientist. Such a contrast suggests alternative ways of understanding the relationship between human and non-human animals within the Aristotelian ethical and political tradition.

POLIS-CENTERISM IN THE *NICOMACHEAN ETHICS*

Both the *Nicomachean* and *Eudemian* treatises recognize politics (πολιτική) as the master or most architectonic science, namely one to which other practical sciences such as household management and generalship are subordinate.[10] Both treatises recognize that the politician (πολιτικός) is one who can make citizens good and obedient to the laws.[11] And both

friendship (*EE* 7.1.1235a29–35 and 7.2.1236b6–10), and unconditional goods (*EE* 7.2.1235b30–1236a5).

[10] See *EN* 1.2.1094a26–b11, 1.9.1099b25–32; *EE* 1.5.1216b18–25, 1.8.1218b8–17. Aristotle uses the term πολιτική to indicate either an architectonic constitutional science or the political science concerned with running government, both of which I translate as "politics"; he uses the term πολιτικός to indicate an individual who possesses such knowledge, which I will translate as "politician."

[11] See *EE* 7.2.1236b33–1237a9; *EN* 1.13.1102a5–26, 2.1.1103b33–7, 3.1.1109b30–35, 10.9.1180a6–14.

treatises recognize that the "political life" (ὁ πολιτικὸς βίος) is a contestant in the contest for the best and most happy way of life.[12] But although the two treatises share a familiarity with the concepts of a politics, they part ways because the *Nicomachean Ethics* explicitly claims to be an instance of politics.[13] It says that

> **T2:** even if the good is the same for an individual and for a city, that of a city is evidently a greater and, at any rate, a more complete good to acquire and preserve. For while it should content us to acquire and preserve this for an individual alone, it is nobler and more divine to do so for a nation and cities. And so our method of inquiry seeks the good of these things, since it is a sort of politics (πολιτική τις οὖσα). (1.2.1094b7–11)

There is quite simply no *Eudemian* passage that asserts anything like *EN* 1.2;[14] nor is there a chapter in the *Eudemian* treatise that corresponds to *Nicomachean Ethics* 10.9, which outlines the nature and sources of legislative science that explicitly links the *Nicomachean Ethics* to Aristotle's *Politics*.[15]

T2 also furnishes a way to characterize the distinction between political and apolitical works: A political work is oriented to the collective good of a polis community. An apolitical work lacks such an orientation. Although the *Eudemian Ethics* is familiar with politics, I believe the work is best characterized as apolitical. By contrast, the *Nicomachean Ethics* clearly identifies itself as

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[12] See *EE* 1.4.1215a33–5, 1.5.1216a19–27, 1.5.1216a28–b2; *EN* 1.5.1095b15–1096a4. See further Lockwood (2014).

[13] Schofield (2006, 305) notes that Aristotle's characterization of the *Nicomachean Ethics* as a political work is a "startling truth that is generally downplayed (if not totally ignored) in many presentations" of the work. See further Vander Waerdt (1985) and (1991), Bodéüs (1993), and more recently Jagannathan (2025) and Lockwood (forthcoming [a]).

[14] Natali (2022, 28–29) notes that the *Nicomachean* preamble seeks to show "how important the theory he is about to articulate is for the life of the *Athenian citizen*" (emphasis added); the *Eudemian* preamble is fundamentally different.

[15] See *EN* 10.9.1180b23–81a12, 10.9.1181b12–23.

a political treatise and in numerous places it shows its political orientation. For instance, whereas the *Nicomachean* account of what is voluntary and involuntary is identified as a topic relevant to the rewards and punishments used by legislators, the *Eudemian* account of the same material makes no reference to legislation.[16] Whereas the soul-division in *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.13 is explicitly addressed to the concerns of the politician who wishes to make citizens good and obey the laws, the soul-division in the *Eudemian Ethics* makes no such claim.[17] Whereas the *Nicomachean* account of courage identifies the virtue with respect to the fear of death in battle, fighting for one's polis, the *Eudemian* account makes no reference to martial fears.[18] Whereas the *Nicomachean* account of magnificence provides examples of civic liturgies (such as sponsoring a trireme or equipping a chorus for the public presentation of a tragedy), the *Eudemian* account focuses on the example of paying for a family wedding.[19] Whereas the *Nicomachean* account of wittiness defines the limits of the virtue by means of civic laws concerning vilification (λοιδορία), the *Eudemian* account prescribes the limits of wittiness with

[16] Compare *EN* 3.1.1109b30–35 with *EE* 2.6.1223a10–20. The *Eudemian* account recognizes the relevance of the voluntary for assigning praise and blame, but that is far more narrow than the *Nicomachean* claim that both individual actions and the character traits of the good and bad person are voluntary (*EN* 3.5.1114b30–1115a3). See further Carron (2019).
[17] See *EN* 1.13.1102a5–26; cf. *EE* 2.1.1219b26–1220a3.
[18] Compare *EN* 3.3.1115a33–36 with *EE* 3.1.1228a23–1229a11. Both *EE* and *EN* discuss varieties of courage that approximate true courage (including "political courage"), but the *Eudemian* analysis of true courage makes no mention of polis-related fears or dangers.
[19] Compare *EN* 4.2.1122b19–23 with *EE* 3.6.1233b1–11. Note that whereas *EN* claims that the goal of liberality is primarily giving money to others (rather than its acquisition [*EN* 4.1.1119b25–26, 1120a8–16]), *EE* claims that liberality is a virtue concerned primarily with wealth acquisition (*EE* 3.4.1231b28–38).

respect to the displeasure of the butt of the joke.[20] If the *Nicomachean* and *Eudemian* ethical treatises differ in their treatment of non-human animals, it seems plausible—indeed likely—that such a difference may relate to their political and apolitical orientations. Let me illustrate the difference by examining how the two ethical treatises approach the subject of pleasure and non-human animals.

NON-HUMAN ANIMALS PLEASURE IN THE *NICOMACHEAN* AND *EUDEMIAN* TREATISES

Both ethical treatises consider the relationship between pleasure and non-human animals because they concur that the virtue of moderation concerns those pleasures experienced by both human and non-human animals.[21] But although *EE* 3.2 and *EN* 3.10 agree that moderation and immoderation are concerned with the pleasures of taste and touch, the *Nicomachean* text repeatedly stigmatizes the pleasures of touch with adjectives such as beast-like (θηριῶδης), slavish (ἀνδραποδώδης), and disgraceful (ἐπονείδιστος), characterizations

[20] Compare *EN* 4.8.1128a30–33 with *EE* 3.7.1324a21–23. The *Nicomachean* version, after referring to civil law restrictions against vilification, claims that the witty person is οἷον νόμος ὢν ἑαυτῷ (1128a31–32). Even if the virtuous person is a sort of law unto himself (cf. *EN* 3.5.1113a29–34), he still is orientated towards a polis-centric or legal model of right behavior.

[21] Although *EN* ascribes pleasures that are unique to each non-human animal species, such pleasure does not rise to the level of happiness or well-being and appears limited to the sensation of touch (see *EN* 10.5.1176a3–9, *EN* 3.10.1118a16–b8, and *EE* 3.2.1230b36–1231a17; cf. *EN* 7.11.1152b19–20, *EN* 7.12.1153a28–31, and *Pol*. 3.9.1280a30–34). Osborne (2007) claims that with respect to well-being Aristotle has a "non-hierarchical hierarchy" (127), viz. a *scala naturae* with respect to different species pleasures and well-being that does not admit of trans-species evaluation; she also argues against scholars who claim that Aristotle has an anthropocentric hierarchy which elevates human reason above all other forms of happiness (2007, 102–109).

entirely absent from the *Eudemian* text.[22] How do we explain such a difference? An anecdote in the *Nicomachean* account of ethical virtue, I think, helps to explain its different treatment. It notes that

> **T3:** it is more difficult to fight against pleasure than to fight against spirit, just as Heraclitus says, and both craft and virtue are always concerned with what is more difficult, since to do well what is more difficult is in fact a better thing. *So that is also why our entire work, both as a contribution to virtue and as a contribution to politics* (πᾶσα ἡ πραγματεία καὶ τῇ ἀρετῇ καὶ τῇ πολιτικῇ), must be concerned with pleasures and pains, since someone who uses these well will be good and someone who uses them badly will be bad. (*EN* 2.3.1105a7–13, emphasis added)

The *Nicomachean Ethics*, as a specific genre or kind of work (πραγματεία), is intended to have a salutary effect upon its audience "as a contribution to virtue."[23] Understanding and discussing pain and pleasure "politically" is a different task than discussing it within the framework of the theoretical structure of ethical virtue.[24] The rhetorical stance of the *Nicomachean* discussion exhorts moderation and condemns immoderation through the denigration of non-human animals; moral exhortation in the *Eudemian* discussion of moderation seems on purpose to avoid the sort of rhetorical language of the *Nicomachean* discussion, even though both the *Nicomachean* and the *Eudemian* discussions concern non-human animal pleasure. Let me

[22] *EN* 3.10.1118a25, 1118b2, 1118b4. *EE* 3.2 notes that excessive indulgence in the pleasures of sight, hearing, and smell are criticized but not disgraceful (ἄνευ ὀνείδους [*EE* 3.2.1231a23–24])

[23] Although the *Nicomachean Ethics* presupposes an audience of ethically educated persons who know *that*, e.g., pursuit of bodily pleasures immoderately is wrong, I think that is consistent with the claim that the *Ethics* often offers the explanation for *why* such a pursuit is wrong (*EN* 1.4.1095b4–13; cf. 1.3.1095a1–3). To say that the immoderate pursuit of bodily pleasure erodes the distinction between human and non-human animals explains (at least hypothetically) why such immoderate pursuit is wrong. For recent discussions of the process of becoming good, see Jimenez (2020) and Hampson (2022).

[24] Aristotle makes similar claims in his definition of pleasure and the discussion of legislation (*EN* 10.9.1179b4–18, 7.11.1152b1).

examine three sets of parallel passages of the *Eudemian* and *Nicomachean* treatises in order to characterize the rhetorical polemic (or lack thereof) of the two different works, namely the discussions of incidental pleasures, an anecdote about wishing for a crane's throat, and the character of a free man's pleasure.

My first set of parallel texts concerns the nature of "incidental" or "non-essential" (κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς) pleasures in the case of perceptual capacities such as hearing and smelling. What Aristotle has in mind is the experience of a pleasure indirectly or by association through memory or apperception, rather than through an actual experience of a pleasant sensory stimulus.[25] The *Eudemian* version of the phenomenon (**T4A**) makes use of a human gustatory

T4: Incidental (κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς) pleasures

T4A On the contrary, even in the case of odors the ones they enjoy are those that please them not for their intrinsic qualities, but for their incidental associations (κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς). By "non-intrinsic" I mean the odors we enjoy in anticipation or remembrance of, for example, gourmet food and drink (for the pleasure due to enjoying these, namely, eating and drinking, is a distinct one); the intrinsic ones are, for example, those of flowers. (*EE* 3.2.1231a6–11)	**T4B** Nor in the case of the other animals is pleasure taken in these perceptual capacities, except coincidentally (κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς). For what the dogs enjoy is not the smell of a hare but to eat it up, although the smell is what made them perceive it. Nor is the lowing of an ox what a lion enjoys but its meat. The fact that the ox was nearby is something that the lion perceived because of the sound, and thus the lion appears to enjoy the sound itself. Similarly, what he enjoys is not seeing a deer or a wild goat but making a meal of it. (*EN* 3.10.1118a16–23)

experience: although the odor of a flower is directly pleasing, the odor of a bakery may bring to mind an anticipatory pleasure of the croissant that one plans to taste (i.e., eat) for dinner, which is an experience of a specific pleasure based upon the sensation of touch. By contrast, the *Nicomachean* version (**T4B**) illustrates exactly the same experience of anticipatory pleasures, but

[25] For the nature of taste and touch, see *DA* 2.2.413b4–5, 3.12.434b18–24.

instead it appeals to several Tennysonian examples of "Nature, red in tooth and claw."[26] Non-human animals are depicted as blood-thirsty predators who love to smell hares, hear the lowing of an ox, or see a wild goat but only because of the meal those sensory experiences anticipate. When non-human animals take pleasure in smell, sight, and hearing, they do so solely as predators anticipating the kill. Although the *Eudemian* account of moderation makes exactly the same point, namely that moderation does not concern olfactory, visual, or auditory pleasures, it makes no reference to non-human animals like in **T4B** (*EE* 3.2.1230b26–35).

My second contrast concerns the claim that non-human animals experience pleasure primarily as a function of touch rather than taste, a claim that both treatises illustrate by

T5: The pleasure of touch and the crane's throat

5A Even with the pleasures of taste animals do not get excited by all of them, and not by those that are perceived by the tip of the tongue, but with the throat, an experience more akin to touch than to taste. That is why gourmands pray, as Philoxenus the son of Eryxis did, not to have a longer tongue but the throat of a crane. (*EE* 3.2.1231a13–16)	**5B** Animals appear to make little or no use even of taste. For the use of taste is to discern flavors, as people do when testing wines, or chefs when preparing gourmet dishes. But discerning such things is scarcely what people enjoy—at any rate, immoderate ones don't. On the contrary, what they enjoy is indulging in them—which enjoyment, whether in eating and drinking or in the so-called pleasures of Aphrodite, comes about wholly through touch. That is why a certain gourmand prayed for his neck to become longer than a crane's, showing that it was the touching that gave him pleasure. Immoderation, then, is related to the most widely shared of the perceptual capacities and so would justly seem to be disgraceful, because it characterizes us not insofar as we are human beings but insofar as we are animals (EN 3.10.1118a24–b3)

[26] Tennyson (1850, 80–81).

reporting an anecdote about gourmands who desire a throat that is as long as that of a crane. **T5** makes explicit Aristotle's strategy: immoderation (the vice of excess in contrast to the mean-state of moderation) concerns overindulgence in the pleasures of eating, drinking, and sexual activity in which humans abandon any discernment of taste and instead, like the gourmand Philoxenus, are only concerned with tactile quantity rather than qualitative taste.[27] Whereas humans possess taste (a perceptual capacity of the tongue, capable of discernment and refinement) and touch (the perceptual capacity of the surface of the throat which on this account is the source of pleasure), non-human animals possess only touch. Thus, immoderation is "disgraceful" because it involves a human who wishes he were a long-throated bird, namely a human who seeks out excess "not insofar as we are human beings but insofar as we are animals" (ὅτι οὐχ ᾗ ἄνθρωποί ἐσμεν ὑπάρχει, ἀλλ' ᾗ ζῷα [*EN* 3.10.1118b2–3]). Although both *Eudemian* and *Nicomachean* versions point out the buffoonery of Philoxenus, the *Nicomachean* version explicitly stigmatizes the shameful nature of such a person who longs to transgress the human/non-human animal divide. Such moralizing claims grounded in the purported inferiority of non-human animals are simply absent from the *Eudemian* account of non-human animal

[27] Commentators speculate whether Philoxenus the son of Eryxis (literally, "Mr. Hospitality, son of Belch") is an historical person or a character from new comedy. Given the similarity between a long throat and a long penis with respect to tactile pleasure, one can't help but wonder if the example of Philoxenus is meant to be a euphemistic example for one who has an immoderate desire of a long penis that increases the tactile pleasure of sexual activity. It is standard in Classical Age ceramics to depict the penis of heroic nudes as small to imply the moderation of those depicted; the depiction of large penises (for instance, in the case of satyrs), is a sign of their immoderation. See further Robson (2013, 130–37).

pleasure. By contrast, the *Nicomachean* version "weaponizes," as it were, the human/non-human animal distinction for the purpose of moral exhortation.

In the case of my third and final text, we have a *Nicomachean* passage for which there is no *Eudemian* parallel. But absence can speak rhetorically too. The *Nicomachean* discussion of non-human animal pleasure concludes with the claim that

> **T6:** To enjoy such things, then, and to like them most, is beast-like (θηριῶδες). For the pleasures of touch that are most appropriate to free people must in fact be excluded, such as the ones produced in gyms by massaging and heating, since the touching that is characteristic of the intemperate person does not concern the body generally but only certain parts of it. (*EN* 3.10.1118b3–8)

T6 recognizes a tactile pleasure that is not "beast-like," namely "the one produced in gyms by messaging and heating." Plato's *Laches* (182ab) suggests that the "free person's" physical pleasures that Aristotle has in mind here are likely the result of physical and military training, which is followed by physical recuperation (i.e., massaging and heat treatment of muscles).[28] If that is correct, Aristotle's discussion of moderation seems to be stigmatizing erotic pleasure in favor of martial virtue. In the context of his critique of Sparta, Aristotle claims that the famous coupling of Ares and Aphrodite in Homer's *Odyssey* (*Od*. 8.266–366) shows that

> **T7**: all warlike men seem prone to being possessed by sexual relations between men or women. That is why this happened to the Spartans, and in the days of their hegemonic rule, many things were managed by women. And yet what difference is there between women rulers and rulers ruled by women. (*Pol* 2.9.1269b26–32).

Just like personifications of sexual attraction and martial lust appear to go hand-in-hand, so too are war-loving Spartiates beholden to their wives because of their immoderate disposition

[28] I owe this insight to Heather Reid.

towards bodily pleasure. The *Nicomachean* account of moderation—which vilifies sexual pleasure but justifies the pleasures that come from the recuperation after military training—seems to present an alternative to Spartan immoderation. **T6** also provides further evidence of the polis-centracism of the Nicomachean account. The passage's omission from the *Eudemian* discussion reiterates the apolitical orientation of the *Eudemian Ethics*.

I submit that the *Nicomachean* account of moderation articulates a strict demarcation between human and non-human animals in order to exhort virtue and denigrate individual vice, especially sexual indulgence that threatens military prowess. The *Eudemian* account, by contrast, studiously avoids the exhortation of virtue through negative depictions of non-human animals. Whereas the *Eudemian Ethics* largely refrains from disparaging non-human animals, the *Nicomachean Ethics* uses characterizations like "bestial" and "cattle-like" for political purposes, namely to stigmatize certain human activities by describing them as "bestial." But the result of such weaponization of non-human animals is the reification of human exceptionalism at the cost of undermining gradualism between human and non-human animals.[29] It is remarkable that the *Eudemian Ethics* refrains from such disparagement of non-human animals; I submit that it is a function of the work's apolitical orientation.

Conclusion

[29] The *Nicomachean Ethics* also "weaponizes" non-human animals in its characterization of the life of pleasure as a "life for cattle" (βοσκημάτων βίος [*EN* 1.5.1095b19–21, 9.9.1170b10–13]). The parallel passages in the *Eudemian Ethics* fail to stigmatize animals (*EE* 1.5.1215b31–1216a10, 7.12.1245a11–16). Indeed, the *Eudemian Ethics* points out that in Egypt the ox is worshipped as the god Apis (although I do not see that Aristotle endorses such a belief about the divinity).

By means of conclusion, consider how the *Nicomachean Ethics* views a non-human animal such as a horse. *EN* offers a relatively straightforward depiction of such a being to illustrate the relationship between "function" and "virtue":

> **T8:** We should say, then, that every virtue, regardless of what thing it is the virtue of, both completes the good state of that thing and makes it perform its function well—as, for example, the virtue of an eye makes both the eye and its function excellent, since it is by dint of the eye's virtue that we see well. Similarly the virtue of a horse makes the horse excellent—that is, good at running, carrying its rider, and standing firm against enemies. [30] (*EN* 2.6.1106a15–21)

That a virtue perfects its possessor and allows its possessor to function well is, of course, standard Aristotelian ethics. But that a horse's "excellence" or what makes it σπουδαῖον is what makes it capable to bear a human rider or to carry that human rider into battle as a member of the cavalry looks profoundly anthropocentric.[31] But it is hard to imagine how else a political orientation views the natural world.[32] From a political or polis-centric perspective, non-human animals are ultimately the objects of household management (namely, the science of natural resource

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[30] In *Republic* 1 (352d8–e3) Socrates claims that horses have a function, but he fails to identify it (beyond saying that a function is "that which one can do only with it, or best with it"). *Pol*. 1.2.1252b31-33 identifies the horse as a being with a *telos* or end (like a human or a household).

[31] According to Aristotle, the science of horsemanship (ἱππική) is a subordinate military science (πολεμική) which ultimately falls under the science of generalship (στρατηγική [*EN* 1.1.1094a10–14]). For the place of horses in classical Greece civic and military culture, see Mayor (2014) and Neils and Dunn (2022).

[32] Hall (2018) approvingly quotes Louis MacNeice's *Autumn Journal*, canto 12:

> "Aristotle was better who watched the insect breed,
> The natural world develop,
> Stressing the function, scrapping the Form in Itself,
> Taking the horse from the shelf and letting it gallop" (9).

I think MacNeice accurately captures Aristotle the zoologist and the *Eudemian* ethical philosopher; I don't think he captures the *Nicomachean* politician.

acquisition [χρηματιστική]). It is telling that the *Politics* claims that household management is the domain not only of the household manager but also the politician.[33]

Scholars interested in the moral status of non-human animals have generally characterized Aristotle's view of the subject in terms of anthropocentricism. Although I have tried to show that the *Nicomachean* and *Eudemian* treatises express very different forms of anthropocentricism, I also suspect that the political perspective of the *Nicomachean Ethics* views such non-human animals from the architectonic framework of the human good, a perspective according to which a horse is not a member of an ecological community of plants and other animals, but rather as a being whose purpose is to serve as a domesticated conveyor of human cavalry.[34] Thus scholars who characterize Aristotle's views of nature as anthropocentric need to amend their allegation: it is Aristotle's political view of animals that is anthropocentric, not necessarily his ethical view. But I hope my chapter successfully shows that Aristotle's political view of non-human animals does not exhaust his thoughts on the matter. If I am correct, then the apolitical status of the *Eudemian Ethics* may afford a different perspective on non-human

[33] See *Pol* 1.8.1256b28–37, 1.10.1258a19–27, 1.11.1259a32–36. Aristotle describes the teleology of such natural resource management at *Pol* 1.8.1256b8–26.

[34] Lockwood (forthcoming[a]) argues that Aristotle also believes that the lives of non-human animals are benefited by their inclusion (through domestication) into a political community. *HA* characterizes "domestication" or "tameness" (ἥμερος) and "wildness" (ἄγριος) as a spectrum that includes not only non-human animals, but also human animals (see *HA* 8.1.588a21, 9.3.610b21, 9.46.630b18–21, 9.48.631a8–9; cf. *EE* 3.31231b9, *Pol*. 1.8.1256b31). *HA* also claims that tameness is a function of food shortage: based on the evidence of Egypt (where food was abundant), Aristotle predicts that were food plentiful even the most aggressive non-human animals would behave tamely towards humans and other animals (*HA* 8.1.608b26–609a3). See further Hall (2018, 174–76) and Connell (forthcoming).

animals, namely as objects of explanation, as objects of friendship, and as Hall (2018) has recently suggested, fellow members of our ecological community (171–173).[35]

[35] This chapter is part of a larger book project that includes Lockwood (forthcoming[c]), a chapter that defends the claim that the *Eudemian Ethics* envisions inter-species friendships between individual human and non-human animals. I am grateful to audiences at Durham University and the Institute for Classical Studies for spirited discussion and disagreement about my paper, especially from Elena Cagnoli, Sophia Connell, Nathan Gilbert, Edith Hall, Phillip Sidney Horky, Anthony Price, Christopher Rowe, Nathan Gilbert.

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