

*On Abstinence from Animal Food**

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The Rationality of Animals

In the two preceding books, O Firmus Castricius, we have demonstrated that animal food does not contribute either to temperance and frugality, or to the piety which especially gives completion to the theoretic life, but is rather hostile to it. Since, however, the most beautiful part of justice consists in piety to the Gods, and this is principally acquired through abstinence, there is no occasion to fear that we shall violate justice towards men, while we preserve piety towards the Gods. Socrates therefore says, in opposition to those who contend that pleasure is the supreme good, that though all swine and goats should accord in this opinion, yet he should never be persuaded that our felicity was placed in the enjoyment of corporeal delight, as long as intellect has dominion over all things. And we also say, that though all wolves and vultures should praise the eating of flesh, we should not admit that they spoke justly, as long as man is by nature innoxious, and ought to abstain from procuring pleasure for himself by injuring others. We shall pass on, therefore, to the discussion of justice; and since our opponents say that this ought only to be extended to those of similar species, and on this account deny that irrational animals can be injured by men, let us exhibit the true, and at the same time Pythagoric opinion, and demonstrate that every soul which participates of sense and memory is rational. For this being demonstrated, we may extend, as our opponents will also admit, justice to every animal. . . .

Since, however, with respect to reason, one kind, according to the doctrine of the Stoics, is internal, but the other external, and again, one kind being right, but the other erroneous, it is requisite to explain of which of these two, animals, according to them, are deprived. Are they therefore deprived of right reason alone? Or are they entirely destitute both of internal and externally proceeding reason? They appear, indeed, to ascribe to brutes an entire privation of reason, and not a privation of right reason alone. For if they merely denied that brutes possess right reason, animals would not be irrational, but rational beings, in the same manner as nearly all men are according to them. For, according to their opinion, one or two wise men may be found in whom alone right reason prevails, but all the rest of mankind are depraved; though some of these make a certain proficiency, but others are profoundly depraved, and yet, at the same time, all of them are similarly rational. . . . If, however, it be requisite to speak the truth, not only reason may plainly be perceived in all animals, but in many of them it is so great as to approximate to perfection.

Since, therefore, reason is twofold, one kind consisting in external speech, but the other in the disposition of the soul, we shall begin from that which is external, and which is arranged according to the voice. But if external reason is voice, which through the tongue is significant of the internal passions of the soul. . .—if this be the case, in what pertaining to this are such animals as have a voice deficient? Do they not discursively perceive the manner in which they are inwardly affected, before it is vocally enunciated by them? By a discursive perception, however, I mean the perception produced by the silent discourse which takes place in the soul. Since, therefore, that which is vocally expressed by the tongue *is* reason, in whatever manner it may be expressed, whether in a barbarous or a Grecian, a canine or a bovine mode, other animals also participate of it that are vocal; men, indeed, speaking conformably to the human laws, but other animals conformably to the laws which they received from the Gods and nature. But if we do not understand what they say, what is this to the purpose? For the Greeks do not understand what is said by the Indians, nor those who are educated in Attica the language of the Scythians, or Thracians, or Syrians; but the sound of the one falls on the ears of the other like the clangor of cranes, though by others their vocal sounds can be written and

* Translated by Thomas Taylor.

articulated, in the same manner as ours can by us. ... The like also takes place in the vocal sounds of other animals. For the several species of these understand the language which is adapted to them, but we only hear a sound, of the signification of which we are ignorant, because no one who has learnt our language is able to teach us through ours the meaning of what is said by brutes. . . .

But it is now requisite to show that brutes have internal reason. The difference, indeed, between our reason and theirs, appears to consist, as Aristotle somewhere says, not in essence, but in the more and the less; just as many are of opinion, that the difference between the Gods and us is not essential, but consists in this, that in them there is a greater, and in us a less accuracy, of the reasoning power. And, indeed, so far as pertains to sense and the remaining organization, according to the sensoria and the flesh, every one nearly will grant that these are similarly disposed in us, as they are in brutes. For they not only similarly participate with us of natural passions, and the motions produced through these, but we may also survey in them such affections as are preternatural and morbid. No one, however, of a sound mind, will say that brutes are unreceptive of the reasoning power, on account of the difference between their habit of body and ours, when he sees that there is a great variety of habit in man, according to their race, and the nations to which they belong and yet, at the same time, it is granted that all of them are rational. . . .

It does not follow, if we have more intelligence than other animals, that on this account they are to be deprived of intelligence; as neither must it be said, that partridges do not fly, because hawks fly higher. . . . Some one, therefore, may admit that the soul is copassive with the body, and that the former suffers something from the latter . . .

It must be demonstrated, therefore, that there is a rational power in animals, and that they are not deprived of prudence. And in the first place, indeed, each of them knows whether it is imbecile or strong, and, in consequence of this, it defends some parts of itself, but attacks with others. Thus the panther uses its teeth, the lion its nails and teeth, the horse its hoofs, the ox its horns, the cock its spurs, and the scorpion its sting; but the serpents in Egypt use their spittle (whence also they are called *ptuades*, i.e. spitters), and with this they blind the eyes of those that approach them: and thus a different animal uses a different part of itself for attack, in order to save itself. . . . They likewise change their places of abode at certain times, and know every thing which contributes to their advantage. In a similar manner, in fishes and in birds, a reasoning energy of this kind may be perceived. . . .

But he who says that these things are naturally present with animals is ignorant in asserting this, that they are by nature rational; or, if this is not admitted, neither does reason subsist in us naturally, nor with the perfection of it receive an increase, so far as we -are naturally adapted to receive it. A divine nature, indeed, does not become rational through learning, for there never was a time in which he was irrational; but rationality is consubsistent with his existence, and he is not prevented from being rational, because he did not receive reason through discipline: though, with respect to other animals, in the same manner as with respect to men, many things are taught them by nature, and some things are imparted by discipline. Brutes, however, learn some things from each other, but are taught others ... by men. They also have memory, which is a most principal thing in the resumption of reasoning and prudence. They likewise have vices, and are envious; though their bad qualities are not so widely extended as in men: for their vices are of a lighter nature than those of men. This, indeed, is evident; for the builder of a house will never be able to lay the foundation of it, unless he is sober; nor can a shipwright properly place the keel of a ship, unless he is in health; nor a husbandman plant a vine, unless he applies his mind to it; yet nearly all men, when they are intoxicated, can beget children. This, however, is not the case with other animals; for they propagate for the sake of offspring, and for the most part, when the males have made the female pregnant, they no longer attempt to be connected with her; nor, if they should attempt it, would the female permit them. But the magnitude of the lascivious insolence and

intemperance of men in these things, is evident. . . .

Who likewise is ignorant how much gregarious animals preserve justice towards each other? For this is preserved by ants, by bees, and by other animals of the like kind. And who is ignorant of the chastity of female ring-doves towards the males with whom they associate? For they destroy those who are found by them to have committed adultery. Or who has not heard of the justice of storks towards their parents? For in the several species of animals, a peculiar virtue is eminent, to which all species is naturally adapted; nor because this virtue is natural and stable, is it fit to deny that they are rational? For it might be requisite to deprive them of rationality, if their works were not the proper effects of virtue and rational sagacity; but if we do not understand how these works are effected, because we are unable to penetrate into the reasoning which they use, we are not on this account to accuse them of irrationality; for neither is anyone able to penetrate into the intellect of that divinity the sun, but from his works we assent to those who demonstrate him to be an intellectual and rational essence.

But someone may very properly wonder at those who admit that justice derives its subsistence from the rational part, and who call those animals that have no association with men, savage and unjust, and yet do not extend justice as far as to those that do associate with us; and which, in the same manner as men, would be deprived of life, if they were deprived of human society. Birds, therefore, and dogs, and many quadrupeds, such as goats, horses, sheep, asses, and mules, would perish, if deprived of an association with mankind. Nature, also, the fabricator of their frame, constituted them so as to be in want of men, and fashioned men so as to require their assistance; thus producing an innate justice in them towards us, and in us towards them. But it is not at all wonderful, if some of them are savage towards men; for what Aristotle says is true, that if all animals had an abundance of nutriment, they would not act ferociously, either towards each other, or towards men. For on account of food, though necessary and slender, enmities and friendships are produced among animals, and also on account of the places which they occupy; but if men were reduced to such straits as brutes are, how much more savage would they become than those animals that appear to be wild. War and famine are indications of the truth of this; for then men do not abstain from eating each other; and even without war and famine, they eat animals that are nurtured with them, and are perfectly tame. . . .

The Injustice of Carnivorism

Through these arguments, therefore . . . , it is demonstrated that brutes are rational animals, reason in most of them being indeed imperfect, of which, nevertheless, they are not entirely deprived. Since, however, justice pertains to rational beings, as our opponents say, how is it possible not to admit, that we should also act justly towards brutes? For we do not extend justice to plants, because there appears to be much in them which is unconnected with reason; though of these, we are accustomed to use the fruits, but not together with the fruits to cut off the trunks. We collect, however, corn and leguminous substances, when, being efflorescent, they have fallen on the earth, and are dead. But no one uses for food the flesh of dead animals, that of fish being excepted, ^unless they have been destroyed by violence. So that in these things there is much injustice. As Plutarch also says, it does not follow that because our nature is indigent of certain things, and we use these, we should therefore act unjustly towards all things. For we are allowed to injure other things to a certain extent, in order to procure the necessary means of subsistence (if to take any thing from plants, even while they are living, is an injury to them); but to destroy other things through luxury, and for the enjoyment of pleasure, is perfectly savage and unjust. And the abstinence from these neither diminishes our life nor our living happily. For it, indeed, the destruction of animals and the eating of flesh were as requisite as air and water, plants and fruits, without which it is impossible to live, this injustice would be necessarily connected with our nature. But if many priests of the Gods, and many kings of the barbarians, being attentive to purity, and if,

likewise, infinite species of animals never taste food of this kind, yet live, and obtain their proper end according to nature, is not he absurd who orders us, because we are compelled to wage war with certain animals, not to live peaceably with those with whom it is possible to do so, but thinks, either that we ought to live without exercising justice towards any thing, or that, by exercising it towards all things, we should not continue in existence? As, therefore, among men, he who, for the sake of his own safety, or that of his children or country, either seizes the wealth of certain persons, or oppresses some region of city, has necessity for the pretext of his injustice; but he who acts in this manner through the acquisition of wealth, or through satiety or luxurious pleasure, and for the purpose of satisfying desires which are not necessary, appears to be inhospitable, intemperate, and depraved;—thus too, divinity pardons the injuries which are done to plants, the consumption of fire and water, the shearing of sheep, the milking of cows, and the taming of oxen, and subjugating them to the yoke, for the safety and continuance in life of those that use them. But to deliver animals to be slaughtered and cooked, and thus be filled with murder, not for the sake of nutriment and satisfying the wants of nature, but making pleasure and gluttony the end of such conduct, is transcendently iniquitous and dire. For it is sufficient that we use, for laborious purposes, though they have no occasion to labor themselves, the progeny of horses, and asses, and bulls, as Aeschylus says, as our substitutes who, by being tamed and subjugated to the yoke, alleviate our toil.

[T]o compare plants, however, with animals, is doing violence to the order of things. For the latter are naturally sensitive, and adapted to feel pain, to be terrified and hurt; on which account also they may be injured. But the former are entirely destitute of sensation, and in consequence of this, nothing foreign, or evil, or hurtful, or injurious, can befall them. . . . And is it not absurd, since we see that many of our own species live from sense alone, but do not possess intellect and reason, and since we also see, that many of them surpass the most terrible of wild beasts in cruelty, anger, and rapine, being murderous of their children and their parents, and also being tyrants, and the tools of kings, to fancy that we ought to act justly towards these, but that no justice is due from us to the ox that ploughs, the dog that is fed with us, and the animals that nourish us with their milk, and adorn our bodies with their wool? Is not such an opinion most irrational and absurd?

But, by Jupiter, the assertion of Chrysippus is considered by our opponents to be very probable, that the Gods made us for the sake of themselves, and for the sake of each other, and that they made animals for the sake of us. . . . Let him, however, to whom [this assertion appears] to possess a certain probability, and to participate in something worthy of deity, consider what he will reply to the saying of Carneades, that every thing which is produced by nature, is benefited when it obtains the end to which it is adapted, and for which it was generated. But benefit is to be understood in a more general way, as signifying what the Stoics call useful. The hog, however, [says Carneades] was produced by nature for the purpose of being slaughtered and used for food; and when it suffers this, it obtains the end for which it is adapted, and is benefited. But if God fashioned animals for the use of men, in what do we use flies, lice, bats, beetles, scorpions, and vipers? Of which some are odious to the sight, defile the touch, are intolerable to the smell, and in their voice dire and unpleasant; and others, on the contrary, are destructive to those that meet with them. . . . And if our opponents should admit that all things are not generated for us, and with a view to our advantage, in addition to the distinction which they make being very confused and obscure, we shall not avoid acting unjustly, in attacking and noxiously using those animals which were not produced for our sake. . . . I omit to mention, that if we define, by utility, things which pertain to us, we shall not be prevented from admitting, that we were generated for the sake of the most destructive animals, such as crocodiles . . . and dragons. For ' we are not in the least benefited by them; but they seize and destroy men that fall in their way, and use them for food; in so doing acting not at all more cruelly than we do, excepting that they commit this injustice through want and hunger, but we through insolent wantonness, and for the sake of luxury, frequently sporting in theatres, and in hunting slaughter the greater part of animals. And by thus acting, indeed, a murderous disposition and a brutal nature become strengthened in us, and render us insensible to pity: to which we may add, that those who first dared to do this, blunted the greatest part

of lenity, and rendered it inefficacious. The Pythagoreans, however, made lenity towards beasts to be an exercise of philanthropy and commiseration. So that, how is it possible they should not in a greater degree excite us to justice, than those who assert that, by not slaughtering animals, the justice which is usually exercised towards men will be corrupted? For custom is most powerful in increasing those passions in man which were gradually introduced into his nature. . . .

Hence, since animals are allied to us, if it should appear, according to Pythagoras, that they are allotted the same soul that we are, he may justly be considered as impious who does not abstain from acting unjustly towards his kindred. Nor because some animals are savage, is their alliance to us to be on this account absconded. For some men may be found who are no less, and even more malefic than savage animals to their neighbors, and who are impelled to injure any one they may meet with, as if they were driven by a certain blast of their own nature and depravity. Hence, also, we destroy such men; yet we do not cut them off from an alliance to animals of a mild nature. Thus, therefore, if likewise some animals are savage, these, as such, are to be destroyed, in the same manner as men that are savage; but our habitude or alliance to other and wilder animals *is* not on this account to be abandoned. But neither tame nor savage animals are to be eaten; as neither are unjust men. Now, however, we act most unjustly, destroying, indeed, and feeding on such as are tame. With respect to tame animals, however, we act with a twofold injustice, because though they are tame, we slay them, and also, because we eat them. And, in short, the death of these has a reference to the assumption of them for food.

To these, also, such arguments as the following may be added. For he who says that the man who extends the just as far *as* to brutes, corrupts the just, is ignorant that he does not himself preserve justice, but increases pleasure, which is hostile to justice. By admitting, therefore, that pleasure is the end, justice is evidently destroyed. For to whom is it not manifest that justice is increased through abstinence? For he who abstains from every thing animated, though he may abstain from such animals as do not contribute to the benefit of society, will be much more careful not to injure those of his own species. For he who loves the genus, will not hate any species of animals; and by how much the greater his love of the genus is, by so much the more will he preserve justice towards a part of the genus, and that to which he is allied. He, therefore, who admits that he is allied to all animals, will not injure any animal. But he who confines justice to man alone, is prepared, like one enclosed in a narrow space, to hurl from him the prohibition of injustice. . . . Hence, therefore, since justice consists in not injuring any thing, it must be extended as far as to every animated nature. On this account, also, the essence of justice consists in the rational ruling over the irrational, and in the irrational being obedient to the rational part. For when reason governs, and the irrational part is obedient to its mandates, it follows, by the greatest necessity, that man will be innoxious towards every thing. For the passions being restrained, and desire and anger wasting away, but reason possessing its proper empire, a similitude to a more excellent nature immediately follows. But the more excellent nature in the universe is entirely innoxious, and, through possessing a power which preserves and benefits all things, is itself not in want of any thing. . . .

Do you therefore ask, O man, what we should do? We should imitate those that lived in the golden age, we should imitate those of that period who were free. For with them modesty, Nemesis, and Justice associated, because they were satisfied with the fruits of the earth.