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The Spectrum of Animal Rationality in Plutarch

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Abstract: Thanks to the work of Stephen Newmyer, Plutarch's importance for modern philosophical debates concerning animal rationality and rights has been brought to the forefront. But Newmyer's important scholarship overlooks Plutarch's commitment to a range of rational functions that can be ascribed to animals of various sorts throughout the *Moralia*. Through an application of the 'spectrum of animal rationality' described in the treatise *On Moral Virtue* to the dialogues where his interlocutors explore the rational capacities of non-human animals (especially *Whether Land or Sea Animals are Smarter* and *Gryllus*), this article argues that Plutarch's commitment to a broad and inclusive sense of 'reason' conditions any positive account of animal rationality. Rather, any suggestions of the rational capacities of non-human animals are deeply implicated in Plutarch's universal system of reason, which differentiates grades of rationality to animals based on natural difference – not unlike his contemporary Stoics. While modern proponents of animal rationality might find some of Plutarch's ideas unpalatable, the upshot of this study is a fuller sense of Plutarch's articulate and inclusive sense of reason, which is able to accommodate not only Platonist and Peripatetic notions, but also those of the Stoics and Epicureans, who are especially singled out in the humorous dialogue *Gryllus*. Thus, Plutarch's 'eclecticism' can be explained as a deep commitment to a universal notion of 'reason', marked by a range of functions accessible to all animals – including his philosophical enemies.

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Introduction

Over the past decade, scholarship has gradually come to recognize the significance of Plutarch of Chaeronea's arguments in favor of (non-human) animal

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rationality. Prominent in this discussion has been the work of Stephen Newmyer, whose monograph *Animals, Rights, and Reason in Plutarch and Modern Ethics* (London, 2006) sought to bridge the gap between ancient and modern debates concerning animal cognition, or, in Newmyer's words, 'to explore in depth the topic of possible continuity between ancient thought on animal issues and the arguments of philosophers of the modern animal rights movement', by reference especially to various works written by Plutarch.¹ Taking his lead from the work of Richard Sorabji² and Francesco Becchi,³ Newmyer sought to illustrate the contributions of Plutarch to modern philosophical and legal discussions concerning animal cognition and rights, whilst still maintaining the proper historical distance that is required in order to escape the charge of anachronism.⁴ According to Newmyer, 'Plutarch betrays a remarkably 'modern' sensitivity to animals as feeling and suffering creatures that distinguishes much of the literature of the contemporary animal rights movement but which is largely absent from extant ancient works on animal issues'.⁵ Newmyer goes even further, arguing that 'Plutarch's writings on animal rights provide a bridge between early speculations on the nature of animalkind and the almost unbelievably sophisticated and subtle arguments evolved by contemporary ethical philosophers who contend that the mental capacities of animals entitle them to better treatment at the hands of their human counterparts'.⁶

What is remarkable about Newmyer's assessment is his commitment to two assumptions regarding Plutarch's place in the history of the philosophy of (non-human) animal rationality: on the one hand, Plutarch develops some novel 'arguments' concerning these issues which, due to their ethical and philosophical content, are thought to be relevant to modern philosophers and theorists of animal rights; on the other, as Newmyer expressly states, 'Plutarch was neither a systematic philosopher nor an observational scientist'.⁷ In this paper, I shall take issue with this second assertion and attempt to show that it is Newmyer's *a priori* denial of the systematic nature of Plutarch's philosophical project (and I

¹ See Newmyer 2006, 3. Much of his discussion of Plutarch's animal psychology comes in Chapter 2: 'The Nature of the Beast', which builds on Newmyer 1999. Also see, more recently, Steiner 2008, 42–43 and, more persuasively, Bouffartigue 2012: xxx–xxxv.

² Sorabji 1993.

³ Especially Becchi 2000.

⁴ See Newmyer 2006, 3, where he expressly notes, 'it would be erroneous and anachronistic to maintain that any ancient philosopher held a position that could justifiably be termed "animal rightist"'.
⁵ Newmyer 2006, 3–4.

⁶ Newmyer 2006, 6.

⁷ Newmyer 2006, 8.

mean ‘project’ in the strongest sense) that leads him to misconstrue a significant portion of the evidence concerning Plutarch’s approach to animal rationality. Indeed, it is precisely because Newmyer rejects the systematicity of Plutarch’s philosophy that he is able to make concessions to modern philosophers and theorists of (non-human) animal rights, with the effect of making Plutarch appear to be more ‘relevant’ to modern philosophers than, in fact, he might actually be. Or, another way to put it, by denying Plutarch the status of being a ‘systematic’ philosopher, Newmyer passes over particular commitments of Plutarch’s which might strike modern philosophers of mind as absurd, or, worse, compromise the project of animal ethics.⁸ In the process of seeking ‘relevance’ in Plutarch’s work, so I will argue, Newmyer concurrently suppresses Plutarch’s project of developing a wide and inclusive sense of animal ‘rationality’ – we might call it a ‘spectrum of rationality’⁹ – that cannot, so I argue, be separated from its larger philosophical context, involving not only epistemology and ethics, but also psychology and metaphysics.¹⁰ In the first part of this article, I will pursue this line of inquiry by reference to a text of central importance to our understanding of Plutarch’s philosophy of mind, a philosophical dialogue entitled *Whether Land or Sea Animals are Smarter*, and a treatise which features the most systematic presentation in Plutarch’s corpus of his notion of animal mind, soul, and their functions, called *On Moral Virtue*.¹¹

8 Steiner (2008, 42–43) shows nuance by recognizing that Plutarch does not believe, as apparently Chrysippus did, that dogs are capable of syllogistic logic. But he resorts to specious biographical explanation in order to account for apparent discrepancies in Plutarch’s account of animal rationality and rights (2008, 120).

9 I use the term ‘spectrum’ because of its etymological covalence in Latin with the verb *spectare*, which indicates the *applied perceptual activity* of *contemplare* (Greek θεωρέω) to a specific range of objects, e. g., in Scipio’s dream (Cic. *Resp.* 6.20): ‘*Sentio, inquit, te sedem etiam nunc hominum ac domum contemplari; quae si tibi parva, ut est, ita videtur, haec caelestia semper spectato, illa humana contemnito*’. Numerous other examples present from across the philosophical schools of the Hellenistic and Post-Hellenistic worlds indicate the wide range of such an application in *spectare* (Cic. *Tusc.* 5.71; *Lucr.* 2.289 and 5.958; *Curt.* 8.9.33; *Vitr.* 1.4.1). For a terminological equivalence in Plutarch’s own work, see below where I discuss the λόγος θεωρῶν. On philosophical θεωρία more generally, see Nightingale 2004 and the essays collected in Bénatouil and Bonazzi 2012.

10 Scholars have more recently begun to take seriously the project of ‘unifying’ Plutarch’s corpus; see more generally the collection of essays edited by Nikolaidis (2008), and especially Castelnérac’s contribution to that volume.

11 Newmyer cites this text once in his 2006 monograph (p. 18), and only to describe human psychology. The most recent textual edition and translation of *Whether Land or Sea Animals are Smarter* is Bouffartigue 2012.

I hope to show that Plutarch's proposals are not so progressive, in part because he understands the relationship of humans to non-human animals as analogous to the relationship between rationality and irrationality, broadly construed. In the second part of this article, I will turn to a baffling text from Plutarch's *Moralia* that deals with animal rationality, Plutarch's dialogue *On the Fact that Irrational Animals Employ Logos* or, as it's more commonly known, *Gryllus*, in order to test the value of my hypothetical model of the 'spectrum of rationality' for Plutarch's work. There, we will see that Plutarch's porcine interlocutor, Gryllus, reflects an Epicurean position regarding animal rationality, and that this commitment results in an apparent conflict between Epicurean arguments against the mismanagement of human emotions and thought and Platonist axiologies of human and non-human knowledge. In the end, I will argue that Plutarch's advancement of a notion of the spectrum of rationality is sufficient to, and in fact may be required to, accommodate both the Epicurean and the Platonist positions on animal rationality that Plutarch advances, resulting in a universal comprehension of reason that makes a place in the philosophical economy not only for human and non-human animals, but also for Platonists and Epicureans, despite the flaws in the latter's reasoning.

Plutarch on Animal Cognition: The Spectrum of Rationality

Let's begin with the most elaborate version of Plutarch's theory of non-human animal rationality before turning to a more general notion of animal rationality in Plutarch's works. The elaborate version of non-human animal rationality is described at the beginning of *Whether Land or Sea Animals are Smarter*, and it is spoken by a character named Autobulus. Autobulus' speech consists of a theoretical justification for animal rationality, and it sets the foundation for the rest of the argument of the dialogue, concerning whether animals which live on land or in the sea possess more φρόνησις (the word I've translated as 'practical reasoning', or, perhaps more colloquially, 'smarts'), which will be taken over by two other otherwise unknown interlocutors, Aristotimus and Phaedimus. But the name 'Aristobulus' unfortunately presents us with a problem that is not irrelevant to our current investigation: apparently, both Plutarch's father, and one of his sons, were named Autobulus. About the former, Plutarch's father, very little is known; he appears primarily as a speaker in Plutarch's *Table-Talk* (I.2-3, III.7-9) and is rendered as something of a country

gentleman who shows authority in the ethics of symposiastic behavior.¹² One bit of evidence that has encouraged scholars to believe that the Autobulus of *Whether Land or Sea Animals are Smarter* is Plutarch's father is that, at one point in the dialogue, Autobulus refers to his 'son' as following the path of justice set out by Plato (presumably in the *Republic*).¹³ Autobulus does not, it must be noted, refer to Plutarch by name here, so we cannot be absolutely sure that the 'son' of this Autobulus was, in fact, Plutarch.¹⁴ On the other side there is Plutarch's son Autobulus, who appears as a chief interlocutor in Plutarch's *Dialogue on Love (Amatorius)* who recounts his father Plutarch's arguments concerning the nature of love, and, more importantly for our purposes, an interlocutor in two of Plutarch's questions in the eighth book of the *Table-Talk* (VIII.2, VIII.10).¹⁵ There, it becomes clear that Plutarch's son Autobulus was a philosopher in a strong sense: he reveals an impulsive commitment to dialectic, for example, by challenging arguments of Aristotle concerning dream divination (VIII.10, 735c-736d) through appeal to empirical observation,¹⁶ and a serious interest in metaphysics by developing an elaborate Pythagoreanizing explanation of how the cosmos was generated from the imposition of the limiter, as formal substance, upon the unlimited, as material substance (VIII.2, 719c-e).¹⁷ So, we are led to another difficulty in assessing the arguments of Plutarch concerning animal rationality: if his speaker in the dialogue is Plutarch's father Autobulus, a country gentleman who distinguishes himself from philosophers, then the presentation of arguments for animal rationality will be conditioned by their interlocutor's status as non-philosopher; similarly, if the speaker is Plutarch's son Autobulus, a committed philosopher, observer of nature, and dialectician, then our attention will be directed towards the philosophical aspects of the speech.

With that question in mind, let's have a look at how the theoretical argument for animal rationality develops in the dialogue. The topic of today's

12 Also II.8, not related to symposiastic behaviour.

13 Plut. *Soll. an.* 7, 964e.

14 We hear that Autobulus' son is also 'the ἐταῖρος of Soclarus', but such a designation need not refer to Plutarch as such. Indeed, Soclarus is an advocate for Plutarch's sons (including Autobulus) at *Table-Talk* VIII.6, 726a.

15 Bouffartigue (2012: xiv-xv) assumes that Plutarch's son is the speaker, without considering the possibility of his father.

16 That he was prone to disputation is also suggested by VIII.2, 719c.

17 Compare, in *Whether Land or Sea Animals are Smarter* (959f), Autobulus' citation of the 'Pythagoreans' as people who treated animals gently 'with an eye to humaneness and pity' (πρὸς τὸ φιλόανθρωπον καὶ φιλοϊκτιρμον).

discussion, whether land or sea animals are superior in ‘sagacity’ (σύνεσις)¹⁸ is introduced, initially, by a reiteration of ‘yesterday’s’ discussion at a symposium (959c),¹⁹ which concerned the extent to which all animals partake of or share in higher-order forms of reasoning:

By expressing the view yesterday, as you know, that all animals, in one way or another, share in thinking and reasoning (μετέχειν ἀμωσγέπως πάντα τὰ ζῷα διανοίας καὶ λογισμοῦ), we provided our young hunters a pleasant and delightful subject for debate, namely that of the sagacity (σύνεσις) of land-dwelling versus sea-dwelling creatures. It seems that we shall decide the issue if the adherents of Aristotimus and Phaedimus stand by their challenges. The former offered to be the advocate for the position that the land engenders animals that excel in practical reasoning (διαφέροντα τῷ φρονεῖν), the latter that the sea does so.

(Plutarch, *Whether Land or Sea Animals are Smarter* 2, 960a-b, trans. after Newmyer 2011, pp. 17–18)²⁰

Autobulus sets the agenda for the first and second parts of the dialogue: in the first part, we see Autobulus summarize ‘yesterday’s’ arguments, which focus on demonstrating that all animals share (μετέχειν) in a qualified way (ἀμωσγέπως)²¹ in two cognitive processes, ‘thinking’ (διανοία) and ‘reasoning’ (λογισμός), both of which are understood to contribute to animal ‘sagacity’ (σύνεσις). And the debate to come in today’s dialogue focuses on which animals surpass others in practical reasoning (τῷ φρονεῖν). Let me deal with translation of the terms λογισμός, διανοία, and φρονεῖν here, before turning to σύνεσις later in this paper. Now

18 Democritus, in particular (DK 68 B 183), associates ξύνεσις with practical reasoning (φρονεῖν) and (B 77) with the obtaining of secure possessions (ἀσφαλέα κτήματα). Also compare Aristotle’s account in his *History of Animals* (VIII.1, 588a23-29), where he speaks of non-human animals not as having capacities that are the same (but to a lesser degree) as those of humans, but ‘analogous’ (ὡς...οὕτως), including ‘knowledge, wisdom, and sagacity’ (τέχνη καὶ σοφία καὶ σύνεσις).

19 References to ‘yesterday’s’ dialogue need not refer to a lost work of Plutarch’s, as we know of at least one dialogue, Philo’s *On the Reason which even Brute Animals Possess* or *Alexander* (written perhaps a half-a-century prior to Plutarch’s works, and only preserved in Armenian translation), in which Philo’s nephew Tiberius Julius Alexander presented arguments similar to those described in Autobulus’ summary of ‘yesterday’s’ discussion. Hence, it may be that Plutarch assumes dialogues such as that of Philo which have been lost to us. See the editions and translations of Abraham Terian (into English, 1981; and into French, 1988).

20 All translations from Greek or Latin are mine, except where noted.

21 This relatively unusual word occurs, among philosophical contexts, in the context of human beings sharing in (μετέχειν) justice in Protagoras’ speech (Pl. *Prt.* 323c2), but its use by Epicurus is also marked by the second century CE grammarian Apollonius Dyscolus (F 607 Usener), where it is said to mean κατά τινα τρόπον.

Newmyer translates *διανοία* generally as ‘thought’, and *λογισμός* as ‘reason’; and he translates *φρονεῖν* as ‘intelligence’.²² I would push Newmyer here on all three of these translations: in my opinion, Newmyer has reduced to abstract concepts certain cognitive activities or functions (‘thinking’ to ‘thought’, ‘reasoning’ to ‘reason’). Indeed, as we see in Plato’s *Republic* (511b2-e5 and especially 533d6-534a8) and *Sophist* (263e3-5), *διανοία* indicates (within Platonist epistemology)²³ *discursive activity* that occurs prior (in time)²⁴ to grasping the truth – an interpretation that is adjusted to the activity of *judgment* in Plutarch’s treatise *On Moral Virtue*, which lays out his most explicit thoughts on epistemology and moral psychology.²⁵ Similarly, in the same treatise, Plutarch explains more carefully what he thinks *λογισμός* is, explaining that it is what inclines towards truth and expels falsehood once it is presented with the truth; it is, then, the faculty and activity of (correct) judgment.²⁶ Interestingly, Plutarch there also mentions that *λογισμός* in most animals, i. e. those who are not able to control their emotions (especially harmful emotions such as pleasure, fear, pain, and desire), is suppressed (literally ‘checked and confused’) in their presence.²⁷ As a consequence, so Plutarch says, sense perception (*αἴσθησις*), which is the contact point between reason and emotion, becomes the judge (*κριτήριον*) in various sorts of epistemic deliberations.²⁸ So, when Plutarch speaks of all animals sharing of *διανοία* and *λογισμός* he means that they have the capacity to make reasoned judgments in

22 Bouffartigue (2012, 4) does not commit to specific cognitive operations, translating into, respectively, ‘pensée’, ‘raisonnement’, and ‘entendement’.

23 See especially Alcín. *Didask.* 155.13-32. By attributing *διανοία* to all animals, Autobulus appears to be presenting what was, in Plutarch’s time, a traditional Platonist view, as represented by Philo’s nephew Alexander in the former’s *de Animalibus* 17, only preserved in Armenian.

24 It is of course ontologically posterior to pure intellection (*νόησις*).

25 Plut. *De virtute morali* 7,448b: οὐ γέγονε κρίσις ἀλλ’ ἀπορία, στάσις οὔσα καὶ μονὴ διανοίας ὑπ’ ἐναντίων πιθανῶν. Note that Plutarch here is correcting the insufficient Stoic account of the soul’s intellectual action, which he has earlier characterized as equivocating *διανοία* with the ἡγεμονικόν (3, 441c = *SVF* III.459). Generally, on Plutarch’s moral psychology in *De Virtute Morali* and its Platonic antecedents, see Opsomer 2012, 321–326.

26 Plut. *De virtute morali* 7,448a-c: ‘Hence, reasoning, whenever the truth is manifest, dismissing what is false gladly inclines towards it.’ As an intellectual activity, *λογισμός* is divine (10, 450e).

27 Similarly in *Animine an corporis affectiones sint peiores* 2, 500e, Plutarch argues that *λογισμός*, ‘when sound, perceives the diseases that affect the body; but when it is itself afflicted with the diseases of the soul, it can form no judgment in the midst of the things that it is suffering, for its suffering occurs in the part by which it makes judgments.’

28 Compare Plut. *De virtute morali* 6, 446a. Note that this view is similar to one that Cicero’s metaphysician, Varro, criticizes in his *Academica* (1.30-32), on which see Boys-Stones 2012, 221–228. Is Plutarch adapting and appropriating a Stoic view on the *kriterion*?

very specific circumstances – in the presence of truth, and when they are in control of their emotions.

The second issue is figuring out what Autobulus means when he refers to all animals, sea or land, having some faculty for φρονεῖν, which I've translated 'practical reasoning'. Here, again, we need to appeal to Plutarch's *On Moral Virtue*, where he expressly differentiates several functions of 'reason' (λόγος):

But inasmuch as they [sc. Stoics] do not make virtue as a whole a mean nor apply it to the term 'ethical', we must discuss the difference, starting from the first principles above. Now, there are two kinds of things, those which exist absolutely, and others which are somehow relative to us (τὰ μὲν ἀπλῶς ἔχοντα τὰ δὲ πῶς ἔχοντα πρὸς ἡμᾶς). Among those that are absolute, there are earth, heaven, stars, sea; among those that are relative to us, good and bad, things to be desired and things to be avoided, what is pleasurable and what is painful. Now reason contemplates (τοῦ λόγου θεωροῦντος)²⁹ both; when it is contemplating those that are absolute, it is scientific and contemplative; when it is contemplating those that are somehow relative to us, it is deliberative and practical. The virtue of the latter [mode of reason] is 'practical wisdom' (φρόνησις), and of the former 'wisdom' (σοφία). And 'practical wisdom' differs from 'wisdom' in that when the contemplative mode is attendant to and arranged towards the practical and emotive, 'practical wisdom' comes to subsist in accordance with reason. Therefore, 'practical wisdom' has need of chance (τύχη), but 'wisdom' has no need of it, nor yet of deliberation, to attain its proper end. For 'wisdom' concerns the things that subsist eternally as such...

And, a bit later on,

But it is necessary for 'practical wisdom' (φρόνησις), when it has descended (καθεῖσα) into things that are full of error and confusion, to intermingle with things that are often subject to chance; to employ the deliberative mode in the case of things that are not very clear; and, by reducing the deliberative to the practical mode, finally to activate it in judgments in which the irrational is attendant and has influence.

(Plutarch, *On Moral Virtue* 5, 443d-444a)

Several interesting aspects of Autobulus' approach to animal rationality are illuminated by comparison with Plutarch's *On Moral Virtue*. First of all, it is clear that Plutarch is extremely attentive to the many modalities of 'reason' that could fall under the term 'animal rationality', specifically attributing to 'all animals' the capacity for, on the one hand, making reasoned judgments

²⁹ Accepting Hembold's correction for mss. ἀμφοῖν δὲ τοῦ λόγου θεωρητικοῦ ὄντος, which cannot make sense given the subsequent division of the genus 'contemplative' into the species 'contemplative' and 'practical' (as noted by Bernardakis; Becchi surprisingly does not acknowledge this problem in his edition). Interestingly, Philo too, in his *De animalibus*, divides λόγος by its two applications: λόγος προφορικός and λόγος ἐνδιάθετος (on which see Terian 1988, 60–62). Elsewhere, Plutarch refers to this as the κοινὸς λόγος (see the next note).

concerning what is true as long as their emotions are in a correct state, and on the other, deliberating and acting pragmatically in cases involving things that are ‘relative to us’, including those things that are subject to chance and, sometimes, things tainted by what is irrational. Secondly, these modalities appear to each be functions that λόγος, or ‘reason’, obtains in reference to diverse objects of its application, whether they are absolutes (τὰ μὲν ἀπλῶς ἔχοντα), or relatives (τὰ δὲ πῶς ἔχοντα πρὸς ἡμᾶς).³⁰ Hence, ‘reason’s’ signature activity is contemplation, but the contemplation of absolutes is understood to be ‘wisdom’ (σοφία), whereas the contemplation of relatives is understood to be ‘practical wisdom’ (φρόνησις).³¹ ‘Reason’, or λόγος, thus has many applications, and can be used not simply for contemplation of absolutes, but also for practical and deliberative activities which, as we will see, fall to non-human animals.³² From this perspective, ‘reason’ has very wide applications indeed, and at both ends of the so-called spectrum.³³ Finally, through a process that seems to

30 Compare Plutarch’s account of the world-soul’s faculties (*De an. procr.* 26, 1025e, trans. Cherniss): ‘Now, as the soul is at once contemplative and practical, and contemplates the universals but acts upon the particulars, and apparently cognizes the former but perceives the latter, the reason common to both (ὁ κοινὸς λόγος), as it is continually coming upon the difference in sameness and upon sameness in difference, tries with definitions and divisions to separate the one and the many, that is the indivisible and the divisible, but cannot arrive at either exclusively, because the very principles have been intermixed with each other.’ On the Platonist bicategorical division of absolute from relative, see inter alia Krämer 1972, 75–96.

31 Plutarch adopts a differentiation between σοφία and φρόνησις that is thought ultimately to trace back to the sixth book of Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* (*EN* VI.12-13, 1143b18-1145a11; for one comprehensive analysis, see Engberg-Pederson 1983, 96–104). I do not wish to engage in the debate about the peculiarities of Aristotle’s differentiation, but would point the reader to some questions raised by Long 2011, 103–105. It is notable, and often overlooked, that the Early Platonist Xenocrates, whose influence over Plutarch is implied in his treatment of him (see Karamanolis 2006, 103–105), differentiated these terms quite clearly, according to Clement of Alexandria (2.5 = F 177 IP²): ‘Xenocrates, too, in his work *On Phronesis*, says that wisdom (σοφία) is the knowledge of the primary causes and of the intelligible being, whereas he believes that φρόνησις, which is, in fact, a human sort of wisdom, is bifurcated into the practical and theoretical. Therefore wisdom is φρόνησις, although not all φρόνησις is wisdom.’ As we will see later in this paper, the description of φρόνησις offered by Plutarch here is an elaboration of an Epicurean definition.

32 Compare Poseidonus’ general description of the end as ‘to live contemplating the truth and order of all things together and helping in promoting it as far as possible, in no way being led by the irrational part of the soul’ (Clem. *Stromat.* II.21 = F 186 Edelstein-Kidd; trans. Kidd).

33 Compare Iamblichus’ analysis (*Protr.* IV, pp. 20.15-21.13 Pistelli) of pseudo-Archytas’ treatise *On Wisdom* (on which, see Horky 2016, 29–31): “‘The human has been born and constituted for the purpose of contemplating the reason of the nature of the universe; and, therefore, it is the function of wisdom to <obtain> and contemplate the intelligence of the things that are (F 3 = p. 44.17-20 Thesleff).’”... In the same way, [Archytas] tries to urge us on to both practical

involve adjusting the deliberative function of reason to its practical end, φρόνησις engages in judgments that are directed towards things that are irrational, or at least those are under the influence of irrationality. He does not explain what those things are here. Generally, then, φρόνησις, for Plutarch, simply *does not* involve the highest function of reasoning, as does σοφία, or ‘wisdom’.

If φρόνησις is the kind of reason that deals with the irrational, what, we might ask, does Plutarch mean by referring to those things that are influenced by irrationality?³⁴ Here, remarkably, we can return to Autobulus’ arguments in *Whether Land or Sea Animals are Smarter*. Autobulus’ interlocutor Soclarus takes Autobulus’ arguments to refer to something like a spectrum of rationality, i. e. a notion that rationality extends throughout the entire universe, in various grades or modes.³⁵ At any rate, Soclarus raises a pertinent objection to Autobulus’ ‘spectrum of rationality’, one that he claims to have heard from the Stoics – an argument from opposites: ‘just as what is immortal is opposite to mortal, and imperishable to perishable, and incorporeal to corporeal; so too, if reasoning is subsistent, is it not the case that the irrational must be opposite and subsist as its contrary, and moreover that this alone [sc. reasoning] among so many pairings must not be left incomplete and mutilated?’³⁶ Another way to put it:

and theoretical philosophy. For the acquisition of intelligence of something productive is a function too of practical virtue, the end of which is not simply beholding how it is, but apprehending it through its activities.’

34 Plutarch understands that the world-soul has *in itself* its affective cause (*De an. procr.* 27, 1026e; also see 28, 1027a), whereas the human soul obtains its irrational emotions from the body it is mixed with (*De virtute morali* 11, 451a-b). Hence, there is not a simple equivocation between cosmic and human psychology (as assumed by Karamanolis 2014). Better is Opsomer’s attempts to detect analogies in these relationships (1994, 159; 1998, 159 n. 149; and especially 2012, 313–315), although I’m not quite sure that I can agree that the world-soul and human soul, *qua* animal, are exactly ‘isomorphic’ (1998, 205 n. 370); also see Baltes 2000, 265–266.

35 Compare the mysterious voice that spoke to Timarchus (according to Simmias) in Plutarch’s *On the Daimonion of Socrates* (591d-e): ‘Every soul partakes of intellect, and none is irrational and unintelligent, but to the extent to which it mixes with flesh and affections, it, in its pleasures and pains, is turned into something irrational through alteration. But not every soul mixes in the same way: some sink entirely into a body, and, becoming disrupted throughout, are in their life completely distracted by affections; but others mingle [only] in some way, but in another way leave outside what is purest [sc. the daemon]... thus, Timarchus, understand that when you look upon the stars that seem to be extinguished, you are seeing souls that sink entirely into the body, and that when you look upon the stars that are lighted again, as it were, and become apparent again from below, you are seeing souls that float back from bodies after death, shaking off a sort of dimness and darkness as one might shake off mud.’

36 Plut. *Soll. an.* 2, 960b-c.

if reasoning is to be complete, how could it subsist without its opposite, irrationality?

Autobulus' response, I suggest, helps us to understand how φρόνησις works, and how all animals share of discursive thinking and reasoning in the process of employing practical wisdom. In particular, so Autobulus says, what is 'irrational' is simply what is not endowed with soul; the implication is that animals, when they employ φρόνησις, do so in their interactions with inanimate objects, which are subject to 'chance' according to Plutarch in *On Moral Virtue*. This occurs, so Autobulus says, within the broader context of 'nature' (φύσις). With regard to the nature of the soul itself, however, things might be more complicated. As Autobulus notes, in an extended argument,

If someone were to maintain that nature is not incomplete, but that the nature that is animate must possess, on the one hand, the rational, and on the other the irrational, another person might maintain that the nature that is animate must possess the imaginative, and the non-imaginative; and the sentient, and non-sentient; [they would be saying this] so that nature has these, as it were, counterbalanced correlatives and opposite states and privations about this genus. But if he who seeks that, of the animate, there be both the sentient and the non-sentient, as well as the imaginative and the non-imaginative, is absurd – because every animate thing is straightaway when born both sentient and imaginative – he will unreasonably demand of the animate that there be the rational and the irrational, since he is arguing against people who believe that nothing shares of sensation (αἰσθήσεως μετέχειν) that does not also have a share of sagacity (σύνεσις), and that there is no animal unto which some opinion (δόξα) and reasoning (λογισμός) are present, just as sensation (αἴσθησις) and impulse (ὄρμη) are present to it. For nature, which they [sc. the Peripatetic and Platonist philosophers] say correctly does everything for the sake of something (ἔνεκά του) and relative to something (πρός τι), did not make the animal sentient for the purpose of simply sensing something that it suffers; but since there are many things that are proper (οἰκεία) to it, and many that are alien (ἄλλοτρία), it would not survive for a moment if it had not learned to protect itself from the latter, and associate with the former. To be sure, it is sensation that offers to each animal recognition (γνώσις)³⁷ equally in both cases; but, in animals born not for reckoning, judging, remembering, and attending to something, there could be no [other] mechanism for the acts of seizure or pursuit that follow upon the sensation of beneficial things, nor for the avoiding and fleeing from things that are destructive or painful. Those animals which you deprive of anticipation, memory, design, and preparation – and of the activities of hoping, fearing, desiring, and grieving – they would have no benefit of the presence of their eyes, nor of their ears...

(Plutarch, *Whether Land or Sea Animals are Smarter* 3, 960c-d, trans. after Newmyer 2011)

As we can see, Autobulus raises the pertinent objection, which arises out of the argument from opposites posed by Soclarus, that committing too strongly to

37 Cf. Bouffartigue (2012, 6), who translates 'reconnaître'.

such antitheses leads one to contradict nature – as it is observed empirically. He appeals to the familiar Aristotelian (and Stoic)³⁸ notion that nature does nothing in vain and always does something to some end – what Aristotle called the ‘final cause’ of something³⁹ – and is always relative to something else, a more general Platonist claim that Aristotle himself would have likely rejected.⁴⁰ This means that nature, as Autobulus construes it, deals with things that are subject to change and chance, and *not* with absolutes; and if we are going to subject the soul to the claim that it must possess both rational and irrational parts, we would need to admit both (a) that it would possess the faculties of imagination and non-imagination, as well as sentience and non-sentience, which is plainly absurd from observation of all newborn animals; and (b) that the ‘irrational’ parts the soul does possess, which would include material parts that cannot operate without it, such as bones and fingernails, would be employed to no good use in the case of, once again, newborn animals.

It should now be clear, I think, that the Autobulus of *Whether Sea or Land Animals are Smarter* must be Plutarch’s son, the young and energetic scholar steeped in Classical and Hellenistic philosophy: he understands and uses technical vocabulary derived from Platonist and Peripatetic philosophy without difficulty, demonstrating a keen capacity to summarize and critically assess arguments put forward by his predecessors and integrate them successfully into a philosophical dialectic. What is especially interesting here about young Autobulus’ refutation of Soclarus’ argument from opposites is his appeal to arguments regarding animal self-preservation made not by Platonists or Peripatetics, but by *Stoics*.⁴¹ Let’s have

38 See Alex. Aphr. *De fato* 11, p. 25.4-6 Thillet = SVF II.1140.

39 The literature is of course vast on this subject. One might, however, see the discussion of final cause as ‘that for the sake of which’ in Johnson 2005, 82–85.

40 It is difficult to find direct comparanda for Plutarch’s statement, but the division into absolutes and relatives is generally Platonist (see, e.g., Diogenes Laertius’ account of Plato’s division of beings at D.L. III. 108–109) and is attested for Hermodorus of Syracuse (in a unique format: καθ’ αὐτὰ and πρὸς ἕτερα, which is further subdivided into πρὸς ἐναντία and πρὸς τι: F 5 IP²); Xenocrates of Chalcedon and Antiochus of Ascalon (καθ’ αὐτό and πρὸς τι: F 15 IP²); Eudorus of Alexandria (T 15 Mazzarelli, where he praises Aristotle for acknowledging the division into καθ’ αὐτό and πρὸς τι, but complains that Aristotle did not discuss the former sufficiently; see Griffin 2015, 89–90); Ps-Callicratadas F 1, p. 103.11-14 Thesleff (mathematicised: ‘the odd is generated by the nature of the καθ’ αὐτό, the even is generated by the nature of the πρὸς τι’), although the evidence for ps-Archytas adopting such a bicategorialization of beings is not existent (*pace* Bonazzi 2013a, 183 and 2013b, 389–390). It should moreover be noted that there is, to my knowledge, no evidence of these figures explicitly associating *nature* with the category of relatives, as Plutarch does.

41 Cf. Bouffartigue 2012, 70, who nonetheless does not mention Seneca. Generally, on the animal soul among the Stoics, see Long 1996, 240–244.

a quick look at a portion of these arguments, which are preserved by Seneca in the first century CE, and by Hierocles the Stoic roughly a century later:

No animal comes into life without fear of death. Someone says, ‘How is it possible for an animal that has been born to possess a comprehension (*intellectum*) of things that are beneficial or destructive?’ The first thing to ask isn’t *how* it comprehends, but *whether* it comprehends. Yet it is obvious (*apparet*) that they possess comprehension from the fact that, if they were to comprehend [only after birth], they would do nothing more [than they would have done if they weren’t]. What is the reason why the hen neither flees from the peacock nor the goose, but does flee from the hawk, which is so much smaller and not even known (*notum*) to it? Why would chicks fear a cat, but not a dog? It is obvious (*apparet*) that a comprehension (*scientiam*) of their being harmed is inherent (*inesse*) in them, and not derived from experience; for they avoid something prior to their being able to experience it.

(Seneca, *Epistle* 121.18-19)

By apparently responding to philosophical discussions such as this one, Autobulus works closely within the argumentative parameters of Stoic arguments concerning animal rationality; and he even concedes a point made later on by Seneca, that the animal seeks to evade danger because it ‘senses that it is made of flesh’ (*sentit* – correlative with Greek αἴσθησις), and ‘impulses’ (*impetus* – correlative with Greek ὁρμή) towards and away from objects occur naturally, or in accordance with ‘whatever nature prescribes’ (*quidquid natura praecepit*).⁴² Hence, Autobulus is reacting to a relativist notion of ‘nature’ that pervaded Stoic physics and philosophy of mind. Consider, for example, the second-century CE Stoic Hierocles’ comments on the cognitive differences between animals and non-animals in his *Elements of Ethics*:

One must therefore understand that, from this moment [sc. birth], an animal differs from a nonanimal in two respects, that is, in sensation (αἴσθησις) and impulse (ὁρμή). For the present, we do not need to discuss the latter, but it is necessary, I believe, to speak, at least briefly, about sensation. For it contributes to a knowledge of the ‘first thing that is one’s own and familiar’ (φέρει γὰρ εἰς γνῶσιν τοῦ πρώτου οικείου), which is the subject that we in fact said would be the best starting point for the elements of ethics.

(Hierocles the Stoic, *Elements of Ethics* Col. I.30-37; trans. by Konstan, with minor alterations)⁴³

⁴² Seneca, *Epistle* 121.21. Compare the views ascribed to the Stoics by Diogenes Laertius (VII.86-87 = Posidonius F 185 Kidd) and Clement of Alexandria (*Stromat.* II.19 = SVF II.714). On the Stoic typology of impulse, see the discussion of Arius Didymus’ doxographical account (*ap. Stob.* II.9-9a, pp. 86.17-87.22 Wachsmuth) in Inwood 1985, 224–242.

⁴³ For the fragments of Hierocles, I use Ilaria Ramelli’s edition (2009), substantially based on Bastianini and Long’s edition in vol. 1.1** of the *Corpus dei papiri filosofici greci e latini* (1992), with translation of the fragments by David Konstan.

In the subsequent section, Hierocles explains that animals perceive themselves as soon as they are born, by which he means that they perceive their own parts and the particular functions.⁴⁴ And, similar to what we witnessed in Autobulus' arguments, it is an animal's nature (φύσις) that supplies it with certain capacities to defend itself with what Hierocles refers to as its unique 'inborn weapon' (σμφυῆς ὄπλον).⁴⁵ But *non-animals*, such as plants, possess such qualities as are imparted by nature, which include activities like growth and self-preservation; only *animals* (both rational and irrational) feature the so-called perceptive faculty (αἰσθητική) that is peculiar to soul (ψυχή), which is marked by sensation and impulse; and only *rational* animals, i. e. human beings, possess reason (λόγος).⁴⁶ Indeed, Hierocles goes so far as to assert that animals flee from and avoid humans 'when they perceive our superiority in respect of reason' (αἰσθόμενον τῆς περι τὸν λόγον ὑπεροχῆς).⁴⁷ In an extended digression from his treatise *On Marriage*, Hierocles elaborates further on the many ways in which a creature's nature can be thought to affect its approach to maximizing its advantage:

Nature is a just teacher (δικαία δὲ διδάσκαλος ἡ φύσις), since, by the instruction that comes from her, there necessarily occurs a harmonious choice of duties. In fact, each of the animals lives in a way that follows its own natural constitution: every plant, too, by Zeus, lives similarly in accord with what is called 'living' in their case, except that they do not make use of any reasoning or any calculation or choices based on things that are tested (πλήν οὐκ ἐκλογισμῶ καὶ ἀριθμήσει τινὶ χρώμενα καὶ ταῖς ἀπὸ τῶν βασανιζομένων ἐκλογαίς), but rather plants make use of bare nature – for they are without a share of soul – whereas animals make use both of representations that draw and of desires that drive them towards what is appropriate to them (φαντασίαις τε σπώσαις ἐπὶ τὰ οἰκεία καὶ ἐξελαυνούσαις προθυμίαις). To us, nature gave reason (ἡμῖν δὲ ἡ φύσις ἔδωκε τὸν λόγον) as well as all those other things, and along with all of them or rather in place of all of them, to see nature itself, so that, when our reason is intent on nature as on a target that is well lit and fixed, it chooses preferentially everything that is in harmony with nature and can make us live in the way one ought (καθηκόντως βιοῦντας ἡμᾶς ἀπεργάζοιτο).

(Hierocles the Stoic, *On Marriage* F 2 = Stobaeus, *Anthology* 4.67.22; trans. by Konstan)

What emerges from Hierocles' arguments concerning nature is how closely it is tied to the general Stoic principle of *oikeiōsis*: living creatures pursue what is

⁴⁴ Hierocles, *Elements of Ethics* Col. I.37-40, Cols. I.50-II.3. On the Stoic αἴσθησις and ὁρμή, see Inwood 1984, 155–156.

⁴⁵ Hierocles, *Elements of Ethics* Col. II.3-9. Cf. Ramelli 2009, 113. For plants' 'nature' (φύσις) as that which 'binds together, preserves, nourishes, and increases' them, see *Elements of Ethics* Col. VI.15-22.

⁴⁶ Hierocles, *Elements of Ethics* Cols. III.46-54 and IV.24-29.

⁴⁷ Hierocles, *Elements of Ethics* Col. III.47-50.

appropriate to them from birth.⁴⁸ Animals perceive both the advantages that others have over them by nature, and the advantages they have over other animals, which are related to the peculiarity of their rational functions.⁴⁹ For human beings, this means the natural bestowal of reason (λόγος), which makes it possible to live an ethically fulfilled life, one marked by the proper duties (καθηκόντως) that attend human experience. Hence, according to Hierocles, reason's function is to impel them towards human interactions, which make possible the successful management of the household – a step in the direction of acting after the manner of the gods.⁵⁰

'Reason' as a natural function thus facilitates, in Hierocles' philosophy, imitation of god. In the writings of Plutarch, however, there is a different goal in mind in the attempt to articulate the differentiae between various types of reasoning that animals are capable of. Autobulus' project, I suggest, is to subsume the sort of practical wisdom that differentiates human beings from other kinds of animals under a more widely expanded notion of λόγος, which will thereby, so I suggest, make it possible to conceive of a total equivalence between the *animate* and the *rational*. Hence, Autobulus seems to commit here to the notion that the irrational part of an animal is not only the lower 'part' or 'parts' of its soul, but rather that the irrational part of an animal is also its bodily parts, where, so it seems, αἴσθησις or sensation takes place.⁵¹ As Plutarch says in *On Moral Virtue*:

Those who wonder how it is that the irrational exists, while being subservient to reason, do not seem to me to reflect upon the power of reason (ἡ δύναμις τοῦ λόγου), 'how great it is by nature, and how far it penetrates' [Eur. Fr. 898 Nauck] by way of mastering, and guiding with neither harsh nor inflexible methods (ἀντιτύποις ἀγωγαῖς), but by flexible (τυπικαῖς) ones, which are pliant and more efficacious at persuading than every sort of force and violence. For, to be sure, breath, sinews, and bones, and the other parts of the body, are irrational, but whenever an impulse comes upon them – when reasoning (λογισμός) shakes the reigns, as it were – they grow taut, are drawn together, and obey.

(Plutarch, *On Moral Virtue* 4, 442c-d)

⁴⁸ For a useful, succinct analysis of Hierocles' approach to *oikeiōsis* (with bibliography), see Ramelli 2009: xxx-xxvii.

⁴⁹ See Hierocles, *Elements of Ethics* Col. III.50-53.

⁵⁰ On why nature encourages humans to promote social bonds, see Hierocles, *On Marriage* F 7 Ramelli = Stobaeus 4.84.20, p. 664.4-12 Hense. That marriage, the primary social bond, is divine, is attested at *On Marriage* F 4 Ramelli = Stobaeus 4.67.24, p. 503.18-19 Hense.

⁵¹ Compare Plut. *De an. procr.* 1026, where the irrational part of the world-soul is described as being 'accustomed to the body from the beginning' (σώματι σύνηθες ἐξ ἀρχῆς) and subsequently as being 'dragged down' (ἐφέλκεται) through its common affection with the body (συμπαθές). Cf. Pl. *Phaedr.* 248c-d.

Plutarch's 'spectrum of rationality' thus can be understood as a more general principle along the lines of what Socrates in the *Republic* treats as the virtue of justice (433b-d): reason or λόγος, at its most basic level in all animals, is the faculty that ranges across the entirety of the composite entity and that directs the irrational parts of the composite, which are its somatic elements (bones, sinews, breath, etc.), towards the final good assigned by nature upon birth. Its tool is reasoning (λογισμός), which we earlier described as the faculty and activity of correct judgment: whenever an impulse is generated, reasoning, here understood to be sound, stirs the body into action – in this case the proper control of its parts.⁵² Reason understands that, by nature, it is fitted to rule, and when the irrational parts of an organism yield in obedience to reason's directive, they also exhibit the virtue of justice. Reason does not persuade the irrational parts through violence or force, but through flexible and persuasive means.⁵³ In the passages that follow this one in *On Moral Virtue*, it is clear that Plutarch is thinking about human temperance, but he does not fail to address non-human animals in the light of these arguments either. Indeed, in a striking rhetorical move, he appropriates an anecdote concerning the founder of Stoicism, Zeno of Citium, to justify his own conceptualization of animal rationality:

Moreover, they say that even Zeno, when he was on his way to the theater and Amoebus was singing to the kithara, said to his pupils: "Let us go and observe well what melody and sound gut and sinew, wood and bone, send forth when they share of reason, number, and order" [SVF 1.67].

But, leaving these things to the side, I would gladly learn from them [sc. Plutarch's Stoic opponents] whether, when they observe dogs, horses, and domestic birds – through habituation, rearing, and teaching – putting forward understandable sounds (φωνὰς συνετάς) and postures and movements that render obedience to reason (πρὸς λόγον ὑπηκόους κινήσεις καὶ σχέσεις ἀποδιδόντας), and engaging in activities that reflect due measure and advantage for us; and when they hear Homer saying of Achilles that

'he goaded both horses and men' [adapt. Hom. *Il.* 16.167]

⁵² At *Animine an corporis affectiones sint peiores* 3, 501d, Plutarch defines impulses as 'principles of actions' and explains that 'excessive affections arise out of impulses' (αἱ γὰρ ὄρμαι τῶν πράξεων ἀρχαί, τὰ δὲ πάθη σφοδρότητες ὀρμῶν). Generally, this passage is a rationalization of the portion of Socrates' Palinode that deals with the soul-chariot's reaction to an impulse generated by a beautiful boy (*Phaedr.* 253d-254e). Note, too, that Cleanthes, who denied that animals admit of reason (λόγος), nevertheless possess the elements of λογισμος, which is understood to be a very basic sort of exchange (SVF 1.515a-b = Plut. *Soll. an.* 967e and Ael. *Nat. an.* 6.50).

⁵³ Note that, in Socrates' Palinode (Pl. *Phaedr.* 254b-e), the charioteer, struck by the boy's beauty, is forced to use violence in order to control the hubristic horse. For Plutarch's use of this image, see Opsomer 2012, 329.

into action – [I would gladly learn from them] whether they still wonder and doubt that what is spirited in us, and what is appetitive, which experiences both pleasure and pain, by nature obeys what is intelligent, is affected by it, and dwells with it (ὕπακούειν τε τῷ φρονούντι καὶ πάσχειν ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ καὶ συνδιατίθεσθαι πέφυκεν); nor does it depart from it, nor yet is it shaped nor moulded, nor imprinted by any sorts of force or blows, from the outside, but, by nature, [what is spirited in us, and what is appetitive] depends upon [what is intelligent] and is always associating with it and cultivated together with it and is brought to completion through acquaintance with it.

(Plutarch, *On Moral Virtue* 4, 443a-c)

According to Plutarch, then, even the Stoic paterfamilias Zeno understood that the irrational parts of a composite entity – in this case, a lyre – which themselves are not only objects found in nature, but once had been parts of animals as well, are able to produce sweet melody and sound because they have been given proper tuning, according to ‘reason, number, and order’. The implication is that all absolute irrational objects, i. e. objects that do not have any soul at all, still possess the capacity to, in a certain sense, ‘sing’; similarly, so Plutarch suggests, rational animals such as horses and birds that have been trained properly through ‘habituation, rearing, and teaching’, are able to produce sounds that are comprehensible (συνετάς)⁵⁴: comprehensible *not* by virtue of obtaining ‘wisdom’, in the sense of contemplating absolutes; nor of facilitating discursive communication between human and non-human animals (it’s not like parrots and humans can conduct intelligent conversations about the form of the table); but comprehensible only insofar as they reflect the proper ordered arrangements in the universe and the perfection of nature when reason directs.⁵⁵

It may be that the Stoics were right to point out that nature teaches all animals to seek self-preservation and to recognize their inborn faculties; but for Plutarch, reason, optimally represented by the human being who seeks godlikeness, is what trains the irrational to fall in line with the total rationality of the universe.

⁵⁴ Similarly, see Philo’s own explanation of how non-human animals speak musically, but without articulation or argument, which is the power only of humans (*De animalibus* 98–99).

⁵⁵ Again, this is not a position very divergent from Seneca’s in *Epistle* 121.6 (*Mirari solemus saltandi peritos, quod in omnem significationem rerum et adfectuum parata illorum est manus, et verborum vocitatem gestus adsequitur. Quod illis ars praestat, his natura.*), except that there we see no explicit appeal to ‘reason’ in Seneca’s account. Bouffartigue (2012, xxvi) usefully compares with Origen (*Contra Celsum* IV.81): ‘selon laquelle les plus stupéfiantes performances des animaux sont l’effet direct du pouvoir de la nature commandée par Dieu et ne doivent pas plus aux mérites de la bête que la beauté de la rose à la vertu du rosier.’ On the ethics of human use of animals in Plutarch, we agree here with the conclusions of Fögen (2014, 222–223): ‘On a moral level... humans may use animals for their own purposes, but should refrain from any inconsiderate or cruel behaviour towards them.’

What is the upshot of the first part of our study? Plutarch's presentation of the soul and its rationalizing functions in his treatise *On Moral Virtue*, when brought to bear on Autobulus' arguments for animal rationality in the dialogue *Whether Land or Sea Animals are Smarter*, forces us to consider whether the notion that non-human animal 'sagacity' (σύνεσις), which we postponed discussing until this point in our argument, operates at a far lower level within the spectrum of rationality than scholars such as Newmyer are suggesting, in their attempt to rescue Plutarch's views for contemporary philosophy.⁵⁶ The attributes of reason that Plutarch assigns to non-human animals are, in all cases mentioned here, much more pragmatic and utilitarian than anything like assigning to non-human animals a level of cognition and rationality on par with humans.⁵⁷ For Plutarch, the virtue that non-human animals can obtain is *justice*, which Socrates in the *Republic* (433b-d) had hypothesized to be the notion that each part of a community should identify the activity proper to it and pursue that activity alone.⁵⁸ The general point reiterated throughout the evidence surveyed above is that non-human animals participate in reason and sagacity *in a qualified way*, one that reflects the limits of their rational capacities while at the same time secures their communion with the rationality that unites the many parts of the universe.⁵⁹ If this is a plausible reading of Plutarch's views on animal rationality and moral psychology, then our assessment of other works in Plutarch's corpus that illustrate human and non-human animal interaction would need to account for it. Hence, we turn in the second part of this article to Plutarch's *On the Fact that Irrational Animals Employ Logos* or, as it is commonly known, *Gryllus*. In the light of what we have previously argued about animal rationality and virtue in Plutarch's treatises dedicated to those

56 Plutarch suggests elsewhere (*De am. prol.* 2, 495a) that σύνεσις τοῦ λόγου is not accessible to non-human animals. My approach to animal cognition in Plutarch, then, runs parallel to that of Bouffartigue (2012, xxx-xxxiii), who seeks to differentiate those virtues that non-human animals are able to achieve from those that humans regularly display.

57 Compare Socrates' etymological definition (*Cratyl.* 412a-b) of the activity of σύνεσις as 'the soul advancing along with things' (συμπορεύεσθαι τὴν ψυχὴν τοῖς πράγμασιν). Socrates claims in the Funeral Oration in the *Menexenus* (237d) that nature selected from all the animals the human being to be 'the one who excels in comprehension over the others, and who alone reckons justice and the gods' (ὁ συνέσει τε ὑπερέχει τῶν ἄλλων καὶ δίκην καὶ θεοὺς μόνον νομίζει).

58 Compare the Platonist definition of justice (δικαιοσύνη) as 'agreement of the soul relative to itself, and good order of the parts of the soul relative to one another and in reference to one another' ([Pl.] *Def.* 411d-e).

59 On animal κοινωνία in Plutarch, see Bouffartigue 2012: xxxi.

subjects, how are we to interpret the philosophical debate staged between a talking pig named Gryllus ('Oinker'),⁶⁰ once one of Odysseus' men⁶¹ who was transformed into a pig by Circe, and Odysseus, who has returned to take his beast-men back home to Ithaca? Are we to follow Newmyer in taking seriously the claims of Gryllus, which center around the basic assumption that irrational animals, such as pigs, are superior to humans because of their proclivity to virtue in accordance with nature?⁶² Or are we to side instead with Lucas Herchenroeder and David Konstan in seeing an active element of farce or parody here?⁶³ Or is there some middle way? In order to advance upon these questions, I will first investigate the philosophical position put forward by Gryllus, which, as I will argue, is broadly Epicurean in content, and then turn to assessment of his views concerning animal rationality in the context of the philosophical polemic between Plutarch and Epicureanism.

Gryllus: A Platonist Human Debates an Epicurean Pig

Plutarch's dialogue *Gryllus* begins in medias res, with Odysseus visiting Circe and requesting the return of his men, who have been turned into non-human animals (1, 985d-e). Circe explains that Odysseus will be able to take them away if he can convince them through disputation (1, 986a). Odysseus takes this as mockery: how, he says, will it be possible for him to conduct a dispute with them 'so long as they are asses and dogs and lions' (1, 986b)? Circe promises to render them – or at least one of them (Gryllus) – 'conscious and responsive' (συνιέντας καὶ διαλεγόμενους), i. e. she will bring forward one who has some 'sagacity' (σύνεσις) and is capable of philosophical dialectic (διαλέγεσθαι) in order to represent the other animals (*ibid.*).⁶⁴ She excuses herself, and Odysseus

⁶⁰ On the name Γρύλλος, see Herchenroeder 2008, 350–359.

⁶¹ Or, possibly, another Greek who was not among his men (see Konstan 2010–11, 371 n. 1). But Odysseus calls the Greeks his *hetaireioi*, which suggests a closer relationship.

⁶² This is of course not an impossibility, since Philo (*De animalibus* 30–65) develops a Platonist argument (in the voice of his nephew Alexander) for attributing the cardinal virtues to non-human animals and arguing that, in some circumstances, non-human animals demonstrate more virtue than humans (see, e. g. *De animalibus* 61, on justice).

⁶³ Herchenroeder 2008, 362–367 and Konstan 2010–11, 382 n. 20.

⁶⁴ Or, as Konstan (2010–11, 372) describes, 'Circe provides them with consciousness and speech'. 'Consciousness' is an equally good translation of σύνεσις, but, I would argue, διαλέγεσθαι goes beyond mere 'speech' here.

begins by explaining to Gryllus that he'd like to restore to their original shape (εἰς τὸ ἀρχαῖον εἶδος)⁶⁵ any of the animals that had formerly been his men who would prefer it (2, 986c). But he is immediately interrupted by Gryllus, who charges Odysseus with arrogance and being afraid of change:

Gryllus: 'Hold on, Odysseus, don't say anything more! You see, all of us look down upon you just as you do us; you see, that talk of you as clever is empty, as is your reputation for far surpassing others in practical reasoning (τῷ φρονεῖν), you who tremble at this very thing – changing from worse to better – because you haven't investigated it. For, just as children are afraid of the drugs of doctors and avoid the suffering (τὰ παθήματα φεύγουσιν), so too you have shied away from becoming one thing from another (τὸ ἄλλος ἐξ ἄλλου γενέσθαι), and you yourself shudder (φρίττων) and cower (ὑποδευμαινῶν) in the presence of Circe, [fearing] lest she give you the slip and turn you into a pig or wolf, while also persuading us, we who live among an abundance of goods, to sail away with you – abandoning them, and along with them she who makes provision of them by becoming men once again, the most unfortunate animal of all.

(Plutarch, *On the Fact that Irrational Animals Employ Logos* 2, 986c-d)

A topical and terminological analysis of this passage confirms what David Konstan has suggested, namely that Gryllus' arguments exhibit an adherence to Epicurean concepts⁶⁶: the argument that children should overcome their fear of affections or suffering and take the drugs offered by doctors in order to become healthy is famously paralleled in Lucretius' *On the Nature of Things* (1.936-43 = 4.11-18)⁶⁷; and the fear of becoming something other than what one is – in this case, changing one's species from human to non-human animal – is a specific reflection upon a worry that contributed, for the Epicureans, to a disrupted psychological state, that is, loss of identity (which, in the most extreme case, is death). Death is nothing to us, as Lucretius notes (adapting Epicurus' *Kuria Doxa* 2), because 'we' cease to exist (3.838-42), and hence notions of the persistence of identity beyond death implied by transmigration are absurd and encourage disturbance of the mind.⁶⁸ Gryllus' language, too, is

⁶⁵ It is probable that an audience would detect contemporary philosophical notions here: is Odysseus asking Gryllus whether he'd like to be returned to his original species, or to the 'form' of man? Or is there a more general reference to returning his men back to their original character (as one finds, for example, in Philo's Stoicizing description of the souls of young men evidencing their ἀρχαῖον εἶδος at *Quod omnis probus liber sit* 15)?

⁶⁶ Konstan 2012, 5–6. For a comprehensive discussion of Epicureanism and pigs, see Warren 2002, 130–141.

⁶⁷ Also see D.L. 10.138 (=F 504 Usener), where the Epicurean position that one should choose the virtues not for their own sake, but for the sake of pleasure (i. e. the final good), is compared with the taking of medication for health.

⁶⁸ Also cf. *Sent. Vat.* 14: δις δὲ οὐκ ἔστι γενέσθαι.

distinctly Epicurean: the term φρίσσω appears to be something of a signature term in Epicurean ethics, being used in reference to the notion of ‘shuddering at death’ in Philodemus⁶⁹ and ‘shuddering at the decomposition of the body’ in Diogenes of Oenoanda.⁷⁰ It usually implies a kind of reflex reaction, sometimes indicating the (mistaken) fear of a divine benefactor.⁷¹ Similarly, Epicurus (if he is actually the author of this quotation)⁷² notes that the argument (*logos*) of a philosopher is vain (*kenos*) if it does not heal the suffering of a human being, as ‘just as there is no benefit in medicine if it does not expel the illnesses of bodies, so too there is no benefit in philosophy if it does not expel the affection of the soul’.⁷³ So, from the outset of the dialogue, we are prompted to expect from Gryllus an Epicureanizing argument for why changing from one body into another is a good thing, and for why being returned to one’s ‘original form’ is an ethically compromised wish – an ‘empty argument’ or, as Gryllus later holds in the dialogue, an ‘empty opinion’ (κενή δοξή), in a passage that differentiates, along Epicurean lines, natural from extrinsic desires:

Temperance (σωφροσύνη), then, is a kind of scantiness and ordering of the desires that eliminates those that are extraneous and superfluous, and arranges those that are necessary by proper timing and measurement.⁷⁴ You can, I suppose, observe countless differences in the desires... and the desire to eat and drink, at the same time as being natural, is necessary.⁷⁵ But the pleasures of love – the ones which nature furnishes with principles and which we are capable of not employing and even ridding ourselves of sufficiently – have been referred to as ‘natural and unnecessary’. But the kind of desires of yours that are neither natural nor necessary, but that flow in from the outside because the ignorance of

69 Phld. *Mort.* 39.7: ‘But because of an attachment to life that results from being frightened of death, not because they live pleasantly, they seem even to banish applications of the mind to it’ (trans. Henry) (ἀλλ’ εἰκόασι διὰ τὸ φιλόζωνον ἕκ τοῦ πεφρικένας τὸν θάνατον, οὐ διὰ τὸ βιοῦν ἡδέως, καὶ τὰς ἐπιβολὰς τὰς ἐπ’ αὐτὸν ἐξωθεῖν...).

70 Diogenes of Oenoanda F 73 Smith (text and tr. Smith): ‘... when you make these statements concerning death and you have persuaded me to laugh at it. For I have no fear on account of the Tityuses and Tantaluses whom some describe in Hades, nor do I shudder (οὐδὲ φρίττω) when I reflect upon the decomposition of the body, being convinced that we have no feeling, once the soul is without sensation, or anything else.’ For a comprehensive discussion of the semantics of φρίσσω, with special reference to its significance for Plutarch, see Cairns 2013 (without discussion, however, of the Epicurean notion of ‘shuddering at death’).

71 Cf. Cairns 2013, 95–98.

72 Stobaeus attributes the quotation to Pythagoras, but various parallels show that this is a misattribution (see F 221 Usener *loc. cit.*).

73 F 221 Usener.

74 Compare Cicero’s attribution (*De Officiis* 3.117 = F 514 Usener) to the Epicureans of this claim concerning temperance (*temperantia*): ‘they say that the greatness of pleasure is limited by the removal of pain’ (*dicunt enim voluptatis magnitudinem doloris detractio finiri*).

75 There are textual problems in this sentence.

what is beautiful attendant to *kenodoxia* ('empty opinion'), all but obscures all the natural desires under its multitude; it is just like an alien mob invading the demos, overpowering the native citizens.⁷⁶ But beasts have souls that are in every way impassive and unfrequented of incurring affections, and they conduct their lives far from *kenodoxia* (empty opinion) as if they dwelt far from the sea.

(Plutarch, *On the Fact that Irrational Animals Employ Logos* 6, 989b-d)

As Konstan has noted, Gryllus' argument for animal temperance is rooted in the Epicurean classification of emotions as natural, natural but unnecessary, and external, as evidenced in the *Kuriai Doxai*.⁷⁷ Similarly, the notion that human *kenodoxia* becomes operative in the case of unnecessary and unnatural desires is attested for Epicurean philosophy.⁷⁸ But Gryllus' argument, writ large, is derived from a more universal set of claims found in Hellenistic philosophy in support of autarchy, or the principle of ethical and political self-sufficiency.⁷⁹ We cannot lose sight of the fact that Gryllus' praise of emotional self-sufficiency is figured in geopolitical terms: the beast who is able to fend off invading external affections is like someone who lives far from the corrupting sea, whereas Odysseus is the seafarer par excellence, the paradigmatic emblem of nautical wandering who, in spite of all his cleverness, is ever in search of the peace of mind that attends the stability of the home.

If it is well established that Gryllus represents an Epicurean philosophical position, however qualified by a certain peculiar vitriol, are we to infer that Plutarch is presenting the pig as an object of simple parody? On the contrary,

⁷⁶ Usener included the material up to this point in this passage as reflecting Epicurean ethics (see F 456 Usener).

⁷⁷ Konstan 2012, 5–6. See *Kuriai Doxai* 29: 'Among the desires, some are natural and <necessary; some natural,> but not necessary; and some are neither natural nor necessary, but arise out of *kenodoxia* (empty opinion)' (τῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν αἱ μὲν εἰσι φυσικαὶ καὶ <ἀναγκαῖαι· αἱ δὲ φυσικαὶ μὲν> οὐκ ἀναγκαῖαι <δὲ> αἱ δὲ οὔτε φυσικαὶ οὔτε ἀναγκαῖαι ἀλλὰ παρὰ κενὴν δόξαν γινόμεναι). For further comparanda, see Cic. *Tusc.* 5.33 and Schol. in *Arist. Eth. Nicom.* 3.13 (= F 456 Usener).

⁷⁸ *Kuriai Doxai* 30: 'In the case of desires that are natural, but do not lead to a sense of pain (if they are not fulfilled, the straining is intense), such desires arise out of *kenodoxia*, and it is not owing to their own nature that they are not dispelled, but to the *kenodoxia* of the human being' (ἐν αἷς τῶν φυσικῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν, μὴ ἐπ' ἀλγοῦν δὲ ἐπαναγούσων, ἐὰν μὴ συντελεσθῶσιν, ὑπάρχει ἡ σπουδὴ σύντονος, παρὰ κενὴν δόξαν αὐταὶ γίνονται, καὶ οὐ παρὰ τὴν ἑαυτῶν φύσιν οὐ διαχέονται ἀλλὰ παρὰ τὴν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου κενοδοξίαν).

⁷⁹ Generally descending from Plato (concerns about psychological and political ochlocracy: *Rep.* 576c-577d and *Laws* 714a; the goal of autarchy in the primitive city-state: *Rep.* 369b-d; praise of autarchy and fear of the sea in the founding of Magnesia: *Laws* 704e-705b) and Aristotle (self-sufficiency a natural goal of the polis: *Politics* Books I-II, esp. I.2, 1252b and II.3, 1261b). For self-sufficiency in Epicureanism, see F 458 and 476 Usener.

I do believe that it is possible to overstate Plutarch's polemic against Epicureanism in the *Gryllus*. I tend instead to agree with Patricia Fitzgibbon, who has written on Plutarch's treatment of Epicureans Boethus and Cassius in the *Lives*, that Plutarch tends to represent Epicurean philosophy as a reputable, but ultimately deficient, form of philosophy, whose practitioners have something to contribute to philosophical inquiry – if and only if they can get beyond their proclivity towards ad hominem attack and pettiness, and, importantly, their delusions regarding theology.⁸⁰ Indeed, there are, as Newmyer has correctly noted, some striking similarities between the philosophical positions on animal rationality illustrated in *On Moral Virtue* and *Whether Land or Sea Animals are Smarter*, as discussed in the first part of this paper, and the arguments of Gryllus the pig.⁸¹ Let's consider Gryllus' assessment of the 'practical wisdom of beasts' (ἡ τῶν θηρίων φρόνησις). After listing many examples of how animals instinctually seek modes of self-preservation through their inborn 'art' (991d-e) not dissimilar to Seneca's claims, Gryllus explains what distinguishes 'the practical wisdom of beasts':

For if you speak the truth and say that nature is the teacher of these [arts], you are referring the practical wisdom of beasts to the most authoritative and wisest principle. If you do not think it is appropriate to refer to this as 'reason' (λόγος) or 'practical intelligence' (φρόνησις), it's high time to pursue a name for it that is fairer and more honorable (τιμώτερον),⁸² just as it doubtless confers a capacity that is better and more astonishing through its works. It is no uneducated or untrained faculty, but rather one self-taught and self-sufficient; and, not because of feebleness, but due to the strength and perfection of the virtue that exists according to nature, it gives leave to the contributions to practical reasoning through education conferred by others. At any rate, the thinking (διανοία) of such beasts as those that humans induce to education and training through rearing and play grasps what they are taught even when it is contrary to the nature of their body, thanks to the excellence of their sagacity (σύνεσις).

(Plutarch, *On the Fact that Irrational Animals Employ Logos* 9, 991e-992a)

Subsequent to this passage, Gryllus provides a litany of animals which learn to control their bodies through learning that occurs either from human masters or from their own parents (992a-c). There is a most unfortunate lacuna, before Gryllus concludes this section by saying that he marvels at the arguments of those who consider all animals irrational and unintelligent (ἄλογα καὶ ἀνόητα)

⁸⁰ Fitzgibbon 2008.

⁸¹ Newmyer 2006, 38–40.

⁸² Likely a reference to Epicurus' (controversial) claim that φρόνησις is more honourable (τιμώτερον) than φιλοσοφία (*Ep. Men.* 132).

except mankind (probably referring specifically to the Stoics here,⁸³ although possibly to some Epicurean positions as well, such as that of Epicurus' successor Hemarchus, who denied that humans could not enter into compacts of justice with animals because the latter were irrational).⁸⁴

Interestingly, with the exception of the fact that Gryllus attributes to nature the origin of animal practical intelligence⁸⁵ – a position that is perhaps most succinctly expressed in a line from Lucretius' *On the Nature of Things* (5.1033: 'For each [animal] perceives to what purpose it is able to employ its peculiar capacities') – nothing in this passage departs very far from Autobulus' and Plutarch's theories of animal psychology, as described earlier in this paper. Indeed, up to this point in the dialogue, Plutarch's Epicurean interlocutor Gryllus advances positions on animal rationality that parallel what Plutarch had said in *On Moral Virtue* and what his son Autobulus said in *Whether Land or Sea Animals are Smarter*. Gryllus has also, *pace* Newmyer, retained use of terminology from the Platonist philosophy of mind, even despite his commitment, especially in the area of ethics, to Epicurean concepts and sentiments.⁸⁶ Recall Plutarch's differentiation of the two parts of λόγος in *On Moral Virtue* 5 (443d-444a): σοφία or 'wisdom' is first philosophy or theology (in an Aristotelian sense), which for Plutarch contemplates absolutes, whereas φρόνησις or 'practical wisdom' occurs when the contemplative rational mode 'is attendant to and arranged towards the practical and emotive', with the object of its reasoning directed towards things that are contingent and subject to chance: as we saw above, φρόνησις is the kind of knowledge that deals with 'good and bad, things to be desired and things to be avoided, what is pleasurable and what is painful.'⁸⁷ This definition is an apparent elaboration of Epicurus' definition of *prudentia*/φρόνησις, according to Cicero (*On Duties* 3.118 = F 514 Usener), as 'knowledge that supplies pleasures and expels pains (*scientiam suppeditantem voluptates, depellentem dolores*), although Plutarch himself rejects the Epicurean axiom that φρόνησις is superior to first philosophy.⁸⁸ So, from this perspective, everything Gryllus is arguing is of a piece with Plutarch's descriptions elsewhere of φρόνησις, or the lower form of reasoning that obtains its significance on the spectrum of rationality with the objects of the world relative to us, those things

83 An extensive version of such claims can be found voiced by Philo himself in *De Animalibus* 98.

84 Generally, on Hemarchus, see Vander Waerdt 1988.

85 On the role of nature in the *Gryllus*, see Herchenroeder 2008, 359–361.

86 Newmyer 2006, 61. It is notable, for example, that Gryllus' Epicurean sentiments do not extend to the claim – which could certainly not be accepted by a Platonist or Stoic – that pleasure is the final good.

87 Compare, again, Epicurus' praise of φρόνησις as more honourable than φιλοσοφία (*Ep. Men.* 132).

88 *Ep. Men.* 132.

that are subject to chance, including ethics. Gryllus' arguments have some force, and they represent the nuanced articulation of the value of the lower of the two parts on the spectrum of rationality, φρόνησις, whose importance for animal life lies in its value for conducting affairs in the world down here.

If Plutarch does indeed believe that non-human animals are capable of practical wisdom, then Gryllus' arguments end up bearing out, and further explicating, an important claim made by Autobulus in *On Moral Virtue* concerning the activities nature undertakes: 'nature...does everything for the sake of something (ἔνεκά του) and relative to something (πρός τι)'.⁸⁹ Gryllus' statements boil down to arguments for philosophical action, being committed to a final cause that is located within the world of contingency around us.⁹⁰ We will, of course, recall that the Epicureans were famous throughout the Roman world for their philosophical approach to ethics, which understood proper ethical ideals, especially *ataraxia* (or the freedom from states of trouble), to be grounded in the natural world. It seems to me that philosophers of other Hellenistic and Post-Hellenistic philosophical schools, such as the Stoics, Peripatetics, Middle Platonists, and Pythagoreans, wouldn't have found much to quibble with Gryllus on this basic point; and Gryllus' discourse on the virtues, which bears many Platonic qualities as well, is not terribly heterodox within the philosophical environment of the first centuries BCE-CE, when all philosophical schools took what they wanted from Plato, Aristotle, and the scholars of the Academy and the Lyceum. What *did* separate the Stoics, Peripatetics, Middle Platonists, and Pythagoreans from their Epicurean competitors – and this is a crucial point of difference that Plutarch himself recognizes – was the former's commitment to the knowability and accessibility of god.⁹¹ Indeed, Plutarch's criticisms of Epicurean theological epistemology are borne out in his description of non-human animal rationality in his *Reply to Colotes* (30, 1125a): 'Indeed, the way of life of beasts is as it is because they have no knowledge of anything (οὐδὲν ἐπίσταται) finer than pleasure, neither knowing the justice of the gods (οὐδὲ δίκην θεῶν) nor yet paying reverence (σέβεται) to the beauty of virtue.' And,

⁸⁹ Mentioned above on pp. 11–12.

⁹⁰ In *On Irrational Contempt* (Col. XXV Indelli) the Epicurean Polystratus apparently attacks some unknown opponents for not recognizing the difference between predicates that are relative and those are of a 'peculiar nature'. It's not clear how Gryllus should be thought to adapt such arguments, partially because of problems with reconstructing Polystratus' text. See Warren 2002, 146–148.

⁹¹ Especially in the dialogue *On the Fact That Epicurus makes a Pleasant Life Impossible* (21–23, 1101c–1103e). This is not the place to discuss the reliability of Plutarch's presentation of Epicurean theology and theological epistemology, but for a good recent discussion of the complexities, see Konstan 2010–11.

remarkably, this is precisely the topic to which the *Gryllus* turns in the final surviving lines of the dialogue:

ODYSSEUS: ‘Look, Gryllus, is it not terrible and violent to grant reason to those in whom there is no inherent knowledge of god (ἀπολιπεῖν λόγον οἷς οὐκ ἐγγίγνεται θεοῦ νόησις)?’

GRYLLUS: ‘Are we to deny, then, Odysseus, that so wise and remarkable (σοφὸν οὕτως ὄντα καὶ περιττόν) a man as you descended from Sisyphus?’

(Plutarch, *On the Fact that Irrational Beasts Employ Logos* 9, 992e)

As is well known, a sufficient reading of the dialogue requires us to deal with this enigmatic (apparent) conclusion. After conceding the points that Gryllus has raised regarding the capacity of non-human animals to engage in practical reasoning, Odysseus challenges the pig to state how it could be possible to assign reason (λόγος) to non-human animals if they do not know god inherently.⁹² For Middle Platonists, knowledge of god is knowledge of the highest absolute, that which in no way is contingent on, or posterior to, anything else in the universe.⁹³ Note, for example, how Plutarch has employed the term νόησις – the first and only time we have seen it used in the dialogue. Νόησις is a ‘technical term’ of sorts for Platonists, being reserved for the highest level on Plato’s own spectrum of rationality, as most famously developed in the divided line passage of the *Republic* (509d1-511e4).⁹⁴ There, the objects of its contemplation are the forms and, especially, the form of the Good, that to which all things reduce, and which all things imitate. Epistemically, νόησις is the rational activity that belongs to the intelligible realm (τὸ νοητόν), where nothing is corporeal or contingent, and everything is true.⁹⁵ In Alcinous, νόησις is marked by three activities, all of which make tenable the knowledge of higher concepts:

⁹² The Epicurean Philodemus (*On the Gods* Cols. XII and XV Diels) preserves a set of arguments contending that animals are happier because they have no knowledge of the gods; it is possible that these arguments are implied, or at least of a piece, with Gryllus’. On this text of Philodemus, see Warren 2002, 139–140.

⁹³ For Plutarch’s commitment to the *bios theoretikos*, see Bonazzi 2012, 146–149. I would emphasise, however, Plutarch’s qualified inclusivity with regard to Epicureanism – Platonism is the supreme type of philosophy, but even Epicureanism has something to contribute.

⁹⁴ See, e. g., Alcin. *Didask.*4, 155.20-28, where νόησις is defined as ‘the activity of intellect when contemplating the primary intelligibles’ (νόησις δ’ ἐστὶ νοῦ ἐνέργεια θεωροῦντος τὰ πρῶτα νοητά). Cf. Tarrant 2000, 173–174.

⁹⁵ In the divided-line passage, νόησις is finally referred to as such at R. 511d8, where it is directed ‘towards the part that is highest’ (νόησις...ἐπὶ τῷ ἀνωτάτῳ).

abstraction, analogizing, and induction.⁹⁶ Similarly, for Plutarch in the *Platonic Questions* (III, 1001e-f), νόησις occurs through abstraction of the qualities that link the various mathematical sciences described in *Republic* 525b-531d, an activity that Plutarch qualifies as the ‘lopping away of body’ (περικοπῆς σώματος).⁹⁷

Gryllus’ scathing response to Odysseus’ Platonist orthodoxy adapts a tradition which makes Odysseus the bastard child of Sisyphus (the story goes that Sisyphus impregnated Anticlea before she married Laertes),⁹⁸ and it shows once again the pig’s spiteful intentions and penchant for the dramatic in presenting his philosophical views. What is the meaning of the insult, labelling Odysseus the wise man bastard son of the wise Sisyphus? It is unclear whether the *Gryllus* ends with these words, or whether the manuscript continued on, with further discussion of the ‘natural virtue’ implied in section 9, or possibly a more elaborate discussion of justice. Be that as it may, what is clear is that the insult derives its philosophical import from the so-called Sisyphus Fragment, which was attributed in antiquity to Euripides, may have been composed by Plato’s uncle Critias, and held special value for Epicureans.⁹⁹ There, we see that Sisyphus imagines that the gods were invented by a ‘certain remarkable and wise man’ (τυκνός τις καὶ σοφός)¹⁰⁰ for the purpose of curbing lawless behavior, as a sort of ‘conscience’ that would keep an eye on people when they were planning bad deeds in secret. Sisyphus places a significant amount of emphasis on a manufactured ‘fear’ of the gods as the mechanism for social control, and the links to the natural world, especially the upper part of the sphere where meteorological phenomena such as lightning and thunder occur, are explicit; hence, it is easy to see how Epicureans might have found in the Sisyphus fragment a precursor of their own views. From this perspective, Gryllus’ response to Odysseus’ challenge is perfectly in line with his Epicureanism: how could the son of Sisyphus, who elaborates an evolutionary theory of the gods deeply compatible with that of

96 Alcin. *Didask.* 10, 165.16-34. For Middle Platonist epistemology, including a careful analysis of Alcinous’ description of νόησις, see Chapter 13 of Boys-Stones’ forthcoming source book on *Middle Platonist Philosophy*.

97 There are some textual problems in this section, and I have adopted the interpretation of Cherniss in his Loeb edition.

98 The association is comparably old and relatively common in Greek tragedy (e. g. Aeschyl. F 567 Sommerstein; Soph. *Aj.* 189, *Phil.* 417 and 1311; Eur. *IA* 524) and commented on by Hyginus (*Fab.* 201).

99 DK 88 B 25 = Sext. *Adv. Math.* IX.54. For a nuanced discussion of the authorship and the possibilities that anonymity made possible for proffering atheistic views in Athens, see Sedley 2013, 335–337.

100 Note the near-exact repetition at the end of the *Gryllus*, where Odysseus was described as ‘so wise and remarkable’ (σοφὸν οὕτως ὄντα καὶ περὶ ττὸν).

the Epicureans, speak about knowledge of god as if it were a given for human beings? The dialogue appears to end there, at precisely the moment when the discussion of animal λόγος has been brought to the fore. It concludes with an insult and an apparent impasse: Epicureans simply will not concede that the gods, as they are conceived by humans, are anything other than a (particular sort of material) fiction, and the fear of the gods is a fundamental epistemic and moral mistake, since it leads to all sorts of unhappinesses in life and confusions in understanding; and Platonists will simply not concede that the practical knowledge of which non-human animals have a share is anything more than knowledge pertinent to matters below, in the world of chance and contingency, that has no bearing on σοφία, knowledge of things like forms and other absolutes, the highest hypostasis of which is god-knowledge.

Conclusions

In order to address the apparent impasse between Platonist and Epicurean that apparently closes the *Gryllus*, I want to return to a wide and inclusive notion of ‘reason’ or λόγος in the writings of Plutarch. As Herchenroeder has noted (and emphasized in the title of his 2008 article), one of the fundamental questions of the *Gryllus* is posed near the beginning, by Circe (2, 986b): ‘what does this have to do with λόγος’ (τί γὰρ τοῦτο πρὸς τὸν λόγον)?¹⁰¹ What to do indeed. It has become clear from our analysis of Plutarch’s *Gryllus* in the context of his treatise *On Moral Virtue* that Plutarch’s porcine interlocutor both expresses Epicurean sentiments regarding the proper approach to living one’s life, in accordance with Epicurean precepts, and adopts the spectral model of animal rationality elaborated by Plutarch himself elsewhere in his treatises and other dialogues. The *Gryllus* presents positive contributions to the question of animal rationality from both traditions: the Epicureans develop an account of natural virtue in practical wisdom that can extend lower forms of reason to non-human animals, and the Platonists contribute to our understanding of wisdom as first philosophy, the study of absolute first principles that must underlie our knowledge of the reality of things in order for knowledge to be even possible. In a way – and this is the main point of my argument – Plutarch’s spectrum of rationality is (and must be,

¹⁰¹ Herchenroeder 2008, 353. Or, an alternative translation that preserves the relativity would be ‘how does this relate to reason?’ This strikingly polyvalent retort arises directly out of Odysseus’ equally potent question, regarding the genus of Gryllus, ‘what sort of human being is this?’ (ἢ τίς ἦν οὗτος ἀνθρώπων;). Even Plutarch’s jokes play on the difference between an absolute substance and a relative.

if it is to be philosophically consistent) sufficient to accommodate both the Epicurean and the Platonist positions: Epicureans have something to contribute to our understanding of virtue and its applications both among non-human and human animals, especially with regard to the appropriate management of emotions, whereas Platonists provide a sufficient framework for higher-level grasping of first principles and causation and, ultimately, the prime mover himself. Plutarch's inclusive and expansive notion of *logos* thus accommodates even competitor philosophical positions with regard to animal rationality, and the spectrum of rationality – a somewhat playful modification and expansion of Plato's image of the divided line – becomes the ultimate model for a philosophical paradigm that, properly configured, indicates the totality of λόγος across the entire universe, in all areas where λόγος can be thought to hold sway. This, I think, is what scholars really mean when they speak – usually pejoratively – about Plutarch as an 'eclectic' philosopher: Plutarch attempts to account for *all* the possible modes of wisdom that are available to us and subscribe them under a universal model of reason. Even pigs like Gryllus get it.

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