

A PIG CONVICTS ITSELF OF UNREASON: THE IMPLICIT ARGUMENT OF PLUTARCH'S *GRYLLUS*

Plutarch's *Gryllus*, also known by the paradoxical title, Περὶ τοῦ τὰ ἄλογα λόγῳ χρῆσθαι or *On the Fact that Unreasoning Creatures Employ Reason*, is a dialogue between Odysseus and a Greek who has been metamorphosed by Circe into a pig.¹ Odysseus has gained Circe's consent to convert the men back to human form, on the condition that they really desire this. To determine their preference, Circe provides them with consciousness and speech (συνιέντας αὐτοὺς καὶ διαλεγόμενους, 986 B), or rather, just one of them, who will, she says, do the give and take in the argument on behalf of all (διδούς καὶ λαμβάνων ὑπὲρ πάντων λόγον).² It is easy to see the problem, and the possibilities of irony. The pigs are not rational in their porcine state: they have to be provided with the capacity to speak, that is, to comprehend an argument or λόγος, and this is just what it is to employ reason (again, λόγος). Plutarch is obviously playing on the double sense of λόγος as rationality and speech.³ So Gryllus, which is how Circe instructs

¹ This pig is not one of Odysseus' men, since he liberated them from their porcine condition before he left Circe's island to make the voyage to Hades. The episode recounted here presumably took place upon Odysseus' return to Circe's island in Book 12, ca. v. 141; see A. Casanova, "Il Grillo di Plutarco e Omero", in J. Boulogne (ed.), *Les grecs de l'antiquité et les animaux: Le cas remarquable de Plutarque* (Lille 2005) 97–109. For the text, see G. Indelli (ed.), *Plutarco: Le bestie sono esseri razionali* (Naples 1995).

² For speech or voice as a theme of the dialogue, see A. Billaut, "Le modèle animal dans le traité de Plutarque Περὶ τοῦ τὰ ἄλογα λόγῳ χρῆσθαι", in J. Boulogne (n. 1) 34–35.

³ The connection between speech and reason runs deep in ancient Greek thought; thus, that human beings uniquely have the power of speech is a sign that they alone are rational. For the role of speech in defining humanity in early Greek literature, see J. Heath, *The Talking Greeks: Speech, Animals, and the Other in Homer, Aeschylus, and Plato* (Cambridge 2005), who begins his study with the statement: "The thesis of this book is embarrassingly unsophisticated: humans speak; other animals don't" (p. 1); I believe that the boundary between human beings and other animals is sharper than Heath suggests, even in Homer. The capacity to speak, moreover, pertains to the human form, or at least the shape of the head: this is why animal-headed creatures are excluded from the Greek pantheon, in contrast to the theriocephalic Egyptian deities. See D. Konstan, "What is Greek About Greek Mythology?", *Kernos* 4 (1991) 11–30. It may be in reference to this idea that Gryllus addresses Odysseus as "King of the

Odysseus to address the pig in question, is already no longer an irrational or ἄλογον creature when he enters into conversation with Odysseus, and it is hard to judge to what extent he can accurately represent the viewpoint of his still mute companions, or his own porcine self.

Part of the fun depends on the fact that Gryllus is either pure pig, as he apparently is before Circe endows him with speech and reason, or else effectively a human being in the shape of a pig: there is no middle ground. This polarized conception is not, I think, an accident, something Plutarch has invented for the occasion, but a feature of Greek thinking in general concerning animal metamorphoses. We may see better the nature of the missing middle ground by way of a modern case, namely that of Larry Talbot. Those of you who are fans of horror movies will recognize at once the reference to the werewolf or “wolfman” played by Lon Chaney Jr. in the original 1941 film produced by Universal Studios: the movie was directed by George Waggner and had an all-star cast including Claude Rains, Ralph Bellamy, and Béla Lugosi (Chaney performed the same role in four sequels; a remake with a substantially altered plot was issued in 2010). The creature that Larry Talbot becomes when the moon is full is a hybrid: it is not strictly speaking a wolf, but neither is it Larry Talbot in wolf’s clothing. The Wikipedia entry on “The Wolf Man (1941 film)” puts it well, though without documentation: “Unlike the werewolves of legend, which resemble true wolves, the Universal Wolf Man was an extension of those in *Werewolf of London* (an earlier Universal film produced in 1935), a hybrid creature unlike the traditional interpretation. The Wolf Man stood erect like a human, but had the fur, teeth and claws and savage impulses attributed to wolves in folklore.” My claim, then, is that a metamorphosis of the “wolfman” type was unknown in classical antiquity. Either a human being became an animal, pure and simple, the way Lycaeon is turned into a wolf in the first book of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, or else she or he fully retains a human identity, despite the physical transformation: Io is a case in point, again in Book 1 of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, where she is even able to write by scratching her name in the ground, or again Lucius in Apuleius’ *Golden Ass*. Although I obviously cannot back up this assertion here with a full review of ancient examples, I have so far not found any instance in which a person, as the result of such a transmutation, ends up partaking of both human and animal consciousness.

Cephalenians” (βασιλεῦ τῶν Κεφαλλήνων, 986 E), playing the sense of κεφαλή or ‘head’. Cf. the comic poet Nicostratus *incertae fabulae* fr. 28 Kassel-Austin: “If chattering (λαλεῖν) continually and much were a sign of intelligence (τὸ φρονεῖν), nightingales would be said to be much more temperate (σώφρονες) than we [human beings] are”; Demosthenes 25. 47, where he comments on the animal-like noises of Aristogeiton.

The implications of the difference between the ancient and the modern treatments of metamorphosis – supposing that I am right – are considerable. First of all, it suggests that the self, in classical antiquity, may have been conceived as being more consistent or coherent than we suppose today. Of course, the soul was presumed to be composed of parts, rational and non-rational, or, if partless in the strict sense, to be structured in a way that allowed for such a differentiation.⁴ The appetites or ἐπιθυμῖαι, for example, were generally thought of as pertaining to the non-rational part, though they were subject to control by reason.⁵ In a tug of war between the appetites and reason, one or the other might gain the ascendancy. What was missing, I am arguing, was a split within the rational function itself, which would take the form of a double identity.⁶ The paradigmatic instance of this kind of internal division is Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, where both personalities are fully rational but are opposites morally. Again, this is a construct that is not to be found, if I am not mistaken, in classical literature. The “wolfman” model presupposes such a schism, in which the vicious self, identified with animal nature but more like a psychopathic version of the human mind, emerges in the metamorphosed creature; when the wolfman returns to human form, he is filled with disgust and remorse at his earlier behavior.

This kind of transformation is commonplace these days. To cite only a couple of examples: in the 1958 movie entitled “The Fly”, distributed by 20th-Century Fox and starring Vincent Price (it was based on a short story of the same name by George Langelaan), a man accidentally acquires the head and arm of an insect and is gradually infected with its physical and psychological characteristics; again, the movie “Hulk” (2003; new version issued in 2008) was based on the Marvel Comics character created by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby (see “The Incredible Hulk #1”, published in May 1962); the title character “is cast as the emotional and impulsive alter ego of the withdrawn and reserved physicist Dr. Bruce Banner” (from the Wikipedia article, “Hulk (comics)”). After he is accidentally exposed to radiation, Banner “will involuntarily transform into the Hulk, depicted as a giant, raging, humanoid monster, leading to extreme complications in Banner’s life” (as one can well imagine). Lee is quoted as saying that his

⁴ On this kind of structure in Epicurean and Stoic conceptions of the soul, see C. Gill, *The Structured Self in Hellenistic and Roman Thought* (Oxford 2006); for a partly critical review, see D. Konstan, “La idea del ‘yo’ en la filosofía clásica: comentario sobre un libro reciente de Christopher Gill”, *Literatura: Teoría, Historia, Crítica* 11 (2009) 399–407.

⁵ Cf. Arist. *Pol.* 3. 1287 a 30, who describes ἐπιθυμῖαι as pertaining to the bestial element in human beings.

⁶ But see D. Konstan, “Of Two Minds: Philo *On Cultivation*”, *The Studia Philonica Annual* 22 (2010) 131–138, for the idea that Philo introduces in this essay a novel conception of the dual nature of the human mind.

inspiration for the Hulk was a combination of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde and Frankenstein.

Secondly, that classical metamorphoses do not take the form of a blend of the animal and human suggests that the two natures are conceived of as distinct and in principle incompatible: you are one or the other, not both at once. This is what one would expect, given that, on the classical view, *λόγος* was understood to be specific to human beings, and indeed constituted the differentiating feature between humans and other animals. All living creatures share the vegetative function; animals and humans are distinguished from plants by the possession of *αἴσθησις* or perception; but humans alone have reason in the full sense of the term, whereas other animals are *ἄλογα*. It follows that if you are transformed into another animal, you become a creature without *λόγος*; if, on the contrary, you retain your *λόγος*, then you remain a human being, whatever your outward shape (Zeus in the form of a bull or a swan is still Zeus). All the philosophical schools are in agreement on this point, and it is reflected in popular language in the use of the term *ἄλογον* to mean “animal”, which, as we have seen, is the basis of the witty conundrum in the alternative title to Plutarch’s essay. For a pig to speak and employ reason is to be a human being in a different body. There is no room for a hybrid identity.⁷

There is a passage in the *Gryllus* itself that might seem to contradict my claim that animal and human natures are polarized in classical thought, thereby excluding the kind of mixed creature represented by the “Wolfman”. When Gryllus first declares that he would rather be a pig than a human being, which he describes as the most miserable of creatures, Odysseus replies: “For my part, Gryllus, I think that not just your shape but your intellect too was spoiled by that potion, and that you have become stuffed with altogether absurd and disgraceful beliefs; or is it that some pleasure of your porcinity has enchanted you into this body?” (Ἐμοὶ σύ, Γρύλλε, δοκεῖς οὐ τὴν μορφήν μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ τὴν διάνοιαν ὑπὸ τοῦ πόματος ἐκείνου διεφθάρθαι καὶ γεγονέναι μεστὸς ἀτόπων καὶ διαλελωβημένων παντάπασι δοξῶν ἢ σέ τις αἶ συνηΐας [mss. συνηθείας] ἡδονὴ πρὸς τὸδε τὸ σῶμα καταγεροῖτεσκεν; 986 E).⁸ Odysseus’ statement may give

⁷ On hybridization in antiquity generally, see P. Li Causi, *Generare in comune. Teorie e rappresentazioni dell’ibrido nella zoologia dei Greci e dei Romani* (Palermo 2008); idem, “Generare in comune: L’ibrido e la costruzione dell’uomo nel mondo greco”, in A. Alexandridis, M. Wild, L. Winkler-Horacek (eds.), *Mensch und Tier in der Antike: Grenzziehung und Grenzüberschreitung* (Wiesbaden 2009) 441–464, available on-line at www.pietrolicausi.it/public/p.licausi-mensch&tier.pdf.

⁸ Συνηΐας ἡδονή is Hartman’s emendation (*De Plutarcho scriptore et philosopho* [Leiden 1916] 577), adopted by W. C. Helmboldt in the Loeb edition (vol. 12, 1957), of the mss. συνηθείας ἡδονή, “*pleasure of your customary behavior*”, which would suggest that Gryllus was already marked by pig-like desires as a human being, and that this

the impression that Gryllus has acquired not just the body but the mind of a pig, or that his own mind has become contaminated by that of the lower animal, in the way that the Wolfman is a cross between two kinds of consciousness, human and bestial. But this, I think, would be to read the wrong idea into it, projecting our modern notion of hybrid metamorphosis onto Plutarch's text. Odysseus means that, in addition to his porcine form, Gryllus has acquired wrong opinions or beliefs: since only a human being can have beliefs, whether correct or erroneous, Gryllus' mental apparatus remains strictly human. Odysseus offers as an alternative explanation of Gryllus' view a disposition to pleasure that he had in his human state, which has found expression in his new condition. This is a familiar idea in classical accounts of metamorphoses: thus Lycaeon, to take him once again as an instance, becomes a wolf because in life he was savagely violent, as his name too indicates. Plutarch himself (fr. 200 Sandbach), in a Platonizing passage, affirms that the transformations that Circe performs are based precisely on moral merit or character.⁹ Animals can, of course, experience pleasure and pain, which are sensations or ἀίσθήσεις rather than beliefs. Gryllus' defense of the porcine life suggests to Odysseus that a penchant for mere physical pleasure conditioned his thinking even when he was human: he would have defended such a life when he was a man, and though he now wears the shape of a pig, his argument is no different – and no less human. I suppose one could say that, if pigs could speak, they'd speak this way. But the point is that Gryllus is piglike in his thinking, just as he was before his transformation; he is not part pig and part human being, any more than the animals who populate Aesop's fables are truly hybrid creatures.

The issue goes to the heart of Plutarch's dialogue. For Gryllus undertakes to demonstrate not that pigs have more pleasure than human beings, which might or might not be the case but is at least subject to debate, but that pigs lead a better life – that is, that they are more virtuous than humans.¹⁰ By

is responsible for the nature of his metamorphosis. Indelli (op. cit.) retains συνηθείας, which he renders as “un piacere derivante dalla consuetudine” (p. 63), defending the reading on pp. 118–119 n. 33 with reference to Plutarch fr. 200 Sandbach; it is accepted also by D. Russell, *Plutarch: Selected Essays and Dialogues* (Oxford 1993), and others (I confess that I find the grammar of the phrase difficult to construe).

⁹ See A. Foka, *Gods, Humans and Beasts: Relations of Power and the Other in Greek Comedy* (ph. d. dissertation, University of Liverpool 2009) 103–106. For the attribution of this fragment to Plutarch (our text of Stobaeus ascribes it to Porphyry), see C. Helmig, “Plutarch of Chaeronea and Porphyry on Transmigration – Who is the Author of Stobaeus I 445. 14 – 448. 3 (W. H.)?”, *CQ* 58 (2008) 250–255. For the doctrine, cf. Plat. *Phaedo* 81 E, and C. Bréchet, “La philosophie de *Gryllos*”, in Boulogne (n. 1) 55.

¹⁰ Cf. Billaut (n. 2) 39: “C'est une supériorité morale”. Were it a matter of pleasure alone, one might retort with John Stuart Mill (*Utilitarianism* [1861], ch. 2): “It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied”.

taking this line, he is implicitly allowing that a happy life depends on the use of reason, insofar as virtue presupposes λόγος, and that creatures that are strictly speaking ἄλογα cannot, accordingly, be said to be better off than human beings. Thus, he must show that pigs do in fact possess reason – not just pigs who have been granted the capacity to speak, that is, the use of λόγος, like himself at this moment, but real pigs, like his comrades and himself as soon as Circe withdraws her exemption. His argument will depend on an equivocation between two distinct categories: on the one hand, there are natural behaviors, which are instinctive, not learned (though to some extent they can be instilled by brute training), are automatic in the sense that they do not depend on judgment or the weighing of options, and are unvarying across any given species; on the other hand, there are virtues in the proper sense of the term, which are acquired through education and practice rather than being innate (though there may be inherited differences of temperament), involve cognition, calculation and choice, and vary from one individual to another, so that some people achieve perfect virtue whereas others manifest the basest kind of vice. Gryllus can exploit the confusion because there was no conventional or systematic terminology in ancient Greek to discriminate the two kinds of disposition, any more than there is in modern English. Nevertheless, the difference was clear and distinct, and is the basis of Plutarch's sustained conceit in the essay.¹¹ Apart from the humor produced by Gryllus' clever manipulation of the ambiguity, the dialogue is of philosophical interest because it helps us to see how this difference was articulated. Indeed, it would behoove us, I think, to develop a suitable vocabulary for differentiating the two types of behavior.

Gryllus leads off by asserting: “One must begin with the virtues (ἀρεταί), upon which we see that you [humans] pride yourselves as being far superior to wild animals (θηρία) in justice, good sense (φρόνησις), courage, and the other virtues” (986 F). He proceeds to make a general argument in favor of animals' native disposition to virtue, and then takes up the virtues in turn, beginning with the easiest case, namely courage (Aristotle too starts with this virtue in the *Nicomachean Ethics*), and then moving on to σωφροσύνη or temperance and (interrupted by a lacuna) φρόνησις, with which the dialogue ends rather abruptly. I concur with those who maintain that the conclusion has been lost, and that Gryllus will have discussed justice as well,

¹¹ For the distinction between φιλία or love, and “natural philia” (φιλία φυσική or φύσει), see D. Konstan, “Between Appetite and Emotion, or Why Can't Animals Have Erôs?”, in Ed. Sanders et al. (eds.), *Erôs in Ancient Greece* (Oxford forthcoming). Porphyry (*Abstin.* 3. 12) remarks that τὸ δίκαιον or justice is “innate” (ἔμφυτον) in some irrational creatures, for example dogs and cattle and other animals that depend on human beings, and is implanted in them by nature (φύσις); cf. Plut. *Cat. M.* 5. 2, who indicates that, even if we do not owe animals justice, we at least extend to those that are domesticated a certain kind of decent treatment and gratitude (εὐεργεσία καὶ χάριτες).

and perhaps before this – given that Odysseus seems to shift the argument to belief in the gods just before the treatise breaks off (992 D) – the virtue of piety or *δσιότης*, which Plato (*Euthyphro*) and others sometimes added as fifth to the canonical list of four. In any case, Gryllus’ general argument is that the souls of animals are more naturally disposed (*εὐφρέστερα*) to virtue because it arises in them untaught, the way the earth in the golden age yielded its crops without cultivation; Gryllus’ example of such uncoerced fertility is the land of the Cyclopes, which bears the hallmarks of the age of Cronus:¹² such terrain, Gryllus affirms, is superior to the rocky soil of Ithaca (987 B). Plutarch’s readers would have recognized at once that such inborn reactions are not virtues: virtues do not spring up untended, but must be cultivated; this is precisely one of the characteristics that distinguishes them from reflexes, whether in animals or in people. Virtues are deserving of praise just because they are not spontaneous.

Turning now to courage in particular, Gryllus offers in evidence of the bravery of animals the fact that they do not resort to tricks or deceit when they fight. What is more, they refuse to surrender and hold out (*ἐγκαρτερέω*) to the very end, not because they are compelled by law or the fear of being charged with desertion, but naturally or *φύσει* (387 D). There is no begging for mercy, no consent to servitude as the price of defeat, and indeed wild animals that are caught by traps often die in captivity rather than submit to subjugation.¹³ The opposite, Gryllus claims, is true of human beings, for whom bearing up or perseverance (*καρτέρησις*) is contrary to their nature (*παρὰ φύσιν*, 987 F). The behavior that Gryllus ascribes to animals, however, in not *ἀνδρεία*; indeed, on his own showing, though he does not realize it, he is making a case for human courage. The words *φύσει* and *παρὰ φύσιν* are a tip-off. Virtue does not arise by nature: it depends rather on choice or commitment, or what Aristotle calls *προαίρεσις*.¹⁴ As Aristotle puts it, “the courageous man stands fast and performs deeds in accord with courage for the sake of what is noble (*καλόν*)”. This is not fearlessness, for “a person would be mad or insensible to pain if he feared nothing, whether earthquakes or waves, as they say is the case with the Celts; a person who goes to excess in confidence (*τῷ θάρρειν ὑπερβάλλων*) in regard to frightening things is rash (*θρασύς*)”, Aristotle adds, and such a person is a mere “pretender to courage” (*EN* 3. 7, 1123 b 19–30). Now, Aristotle allows that passion or *θυμός* assists (*συνεργέω*) the courageous,

¹² See P. Nieto Hernández, “Back in the Cave of the Cyclops”, *AJPh* 121 (2000) 345–366.

¹³ On animals shamed by defeat or a failure of valor, cf. Stat. *Silv.* 2. 5. 14–17 (lions); Plin. *NH* 8. 5. 12 (elephants); but these are fairly clear cases of the projection onto animals of a properly human sentiment.

¹⁴ On choice as essential to virtue, cf. Bréchet (n. 9) 59.

even as they act on account of what is noble; in animals, however, it responds rather to pain; for “creatures driven by pain and θυμός to encounter danger are not courageous, since they do not foresee anything terrible”; were it otherwise, he adds, donkeys would be courageous, since if they are hungry they do not leave off pasturing even when they are beaten (*EN* 3. 8, 1116 b 30–35). Aristotle concludes that “‘courage’ as a result of θυμός seems to be a most natural thing, and when it adds choice and purpose it is [sc. genuine] courage” (*EN* 3. 8, 1117 a 4–5: φυσικωτάτη δ’ ἔοικεν ἢ διὰ τὸν θυμὸν εἶναι, καὶ προσλαβοῦσα προαίρεσιν καὶ τὸ οὐ ἔνεκα ἀνδρεία εἶναι).

Aristotle is unambiguous about the difference between animal impulsiveness and human courage; and yet, an odd lapse in the sentence just quoted points to the deficiency in vocabulary I mentioned earlier. What is the noun to be supplied with the article ἡ or ‘the’ in the phrase, “the ... as a result of θυμός” (ἢ διὰ τὸν θυμὸν εἶναι)? I have supplied ‘courage’ in quotation marks, to indicate that it is not true courage, and again, in my translation, I have inserted the word ‘genuine’ to modify human courage. Things would have been clearer if Aristotle, or we, had a term for the trait that animals exhibit when they endure pain by their very natures. But, as Aristotle says in this very passage when he speaks of a deficiency of fear, “many things lack a name” (πολλά ἐστὶν ἀνόνομα, 1115 b 25–26). The point is that the natural behaviors of animals do not constitute virtues – and Plutarch knows it, whatever Gryllus might think.

Gryllus is obliged to allow that animals raised in captivity can be tamed or domesticated (987 E), but it is clear that, in his opinion, no animal would choose to live in such a state; it is a product of conditioning, and contrary to their natures – Gryllus calls it a “feminization of their temper” (ἀπογυναικωσις τοῦ θυμοειδοῦς, 987 F). The epithet summons to his mind another argument for the superiority of animal courage, namely that males and females alike manifest it, whereas human women sit at home while the men are at war. Gryllus adduces as an example Penelope herself, who couldn’t protect her home from the suitors – and she was from Sparta! (988 B). This goes to show, once again, that “men do not naturally (φύσει) possess manliness (ἀνδρεία)” (ibid.). Once more, Gryllus’ argument backfires: it is precisely the variation in courage among human beings that qualifies it as a virtue. Were it uniform, as it is among animals, it would be natural or innate, and hence not true courage.¹⁵ That animals can be tamed might have led Gryllus to reflect that the domestication of human women

¹⁵ Cf. Lucr. 3. 741–743 on the innate aggressiveness (*violentia*) of lions and the inherited timidity (*patrius pavor*) of deer. Statius (*Theb.* 5. 168–169) goes so far as to state that a fleeing deer “believes (*credit*) that she has been caught”, but this is poetic license or “pathetic fallacy”, and hardly a commitment to the idea that deer entertain a rational appreciation of danger.

too is contrary to nature, but this would have led him down paths which Plutarch chose not to explore. Still, his observations concerning the equality of the genders among animals would seem to recall Stoic and Cynic views concerning the equal capacity of women and men for virtue:¹⁶ Gryllus is not simply a male chauvinist pig. However that may be, when he accuses men of mixing calculation (λογισμός) with passion whereas animals take it neat (988 D–E), and concludes that for mankind “courage is prudent cowardice, and boldness fear, since it involves the science of fleeing some things on account of others [sc. that are more terrible]” (388 C: ἀνδρεία δειλία φρόνιμος οὔσα, τὸ δὲ θάρσος φόβος ἐπιστήμην ἔχων τοῦ δι’ ἐτέρων ἔτερα φεύγειν), Gryllus is attributing to human beings just what courage as a virtue consists in.¹⁷

¹⁶ Cf. Mus. Ruf. *Diss.* 4. 13; Hierocles, *On Marriage*, with commentary and notes ad loc. in I. Ramelli (ed.), *Hierocles the Stoic* (Atlanta 2009).

¹⁷ Much the same kind of argument concerning the difference between human and animal qualities could be made in relation to confidence or τὸ θαρρεῖν, which Aristotle treats as an emotion in the *Rhetoric*. Aristotle takes τὸ θαρρεῖν to be the opposite of fear, and defines it as “the expectation associated with a mental picture of the nearness of what keeps us safe and the absence or remoteness of what is terrible” (2. 1383 a 16–19). Clearly it involves a considerable degree of rational calculation; as Aristotle goes on to say: “We feel it if we can take steps – many, or important, or both – to cure or prevent trouble; if we have neither wronged others nor been wronged by them; if we have either no rivals at all or no strong ones; if our rivals who are strong are our friends or have treated us well or been treated well by us; or if those whose interest is the same as ours are the more numerous party, or the stronger, or both”.

For the contrast between human beings, who possess reason, and other animals, which do not, see Aristotle *HA* 8. 588 a 23–24, who asserts that animals possess “similarities to intelligent understanding” (τῆς περὶ τὴν διάνοιαν συνέσεως ... ὁμοιότητες); cf. *Pol.* 1332 b 5–6 on human beings alone possessing reason (λόγος); 1254 b 23–24 and esp. 1253 a 9–15, where Aristotle states that “among animals, only humanity possesses reason. Voicing is a sign of what is painful and pleasant, which is why it pertains also to other animals (their nature reaches the level of having the perception [αἴσθησις] of what is painful and pleasurable and signaling it to one another), but speech (λόγος) is for manifesting what is advantageous and harmful, and so too what is just and unjust” (cf. *EN* 1098 a 3–4, *EE* 1224 a 26–27, *Met.* 980 b 26–28; *HA* 641 b 8–9; R. Sorabji, *Animal Minds and Human Morals: The Origins of the Western Debate* [London 1993] 113). Thus, only man can feel happiness (*PA* 656 a 5). See also Cic. *Tusc.* 5. 38; *Fin.* 4. 18, 28; 5. 25–26, etc.; *Off.* 1. 50: neque ulla re longius absumus a natura ferarum, in quibus inesse fortitudinem saepe dicimus, ut in equis, in leonibus, iustitiam aequitatem bonitatem non dicimus; sunt enim rationis et orationis expertes. A. R. Dyck, *A Commentary on Cicero, De Officiis* (Ann Arbor 1996) 168 observes: “It was commonly accepted in antiquity that animals could possess courage”, citing Plat. *Leg.* 963 E, Sen. *Ep.* 76. 9 (where lions and the like are said to be strong [*valet*]; contrast Plat. *Lach.* 196 e – 197 b); but what passes for courage in animals is rather something like aggressiveness.

Despite many modern studies designed to demonstrate the reasoning capacities of the higher mammals, a word of caution is in order; cf. M. Hauser, “The Mind”,

Gryllus turns next to *σωφροσύνη* (again following the order in Aristotle), and here I can be more brief. He begins, in the manner of philosophers of his day (he confesses to being a “sophist”, 989 B), by offering a definition: “*Σωφροσύνη*, then, is a kind of scantiness (*βραχύτης*) and ordering (*τάξις*) of the desires, which eliminates those that are extrinsic (*ἐπίσκακτος*) and superfluous and governs (*κοσμέω*) those that are necessary by timeliness and moderation” (989 B).¹⁸ Gryllus then adduces the Epicurean classification of desires as natural and necessary, natural but not necessary, and neither necessary nor natural but arising out of empty or false belief (*κενή δόξη*). Human beings, he alleges, are assaulted by the last kind – they, of course, are capable of having beliefs, and hence false as well as true ones – whereas “wild animals have souls that are wholly inaccessible to and unmixed with extrinsic passions (*πάθη*) and in their lives are remote from empty belief” (989 C).¹⁹ But if they are impervious to desires that come from without,

Scientific American 301. 3 (September 2009) 44–46: “Charles Darwin argued in his 1871 book *The Descent of Man* that the difference between human and nonhuman minds is ‘one of degree and not of kind’. Scholars have long upheld that view, pointing in recent years to genetic evidence showing that we share some 98 percent of our genes with chimpanzees. But if our shared genetic heritage can explain the evolutionary origin of the human mind, then why isn’t a chimpanzee writing this essay, or singing back up for the Rolling Stones or making a soufflé? Indeed, mounting evidence indicates that, in contrast to Darwin’s theory of a continuity of mind between humans and other species, a profound gap separates our intellect from the animal kind”.

¹⁸ Alice A. Kuzniar, in her sensitive meditation on people’s relationships with dogs entitled *Melancholia’s Dog: Reflections on our Animal Kinship* (Chicago 2006) 57, cites T. Ziolkowski, “Talking Dogs: The Caninization of Literature”, in *Varieties of Literary Thematics* (Princeton 1983) 86–122, for the view that “what uniquely characterizes this literary tradition is how the canine narrator poses as a philosopher. I would add,” she adds, “that it is most often about language and communication that the canine philosopher broods”. The philosopher-pig has not, to my knowledge, yet earned a study of its own, but apparently has wider interests.

¹⁹ Gryllus implicitly appeals to the views of Aristotle, Plato, and the Stoics (cf. Bréchet [n. 9] 50–55, for the “pêle-mêle philosophique” in the *Gryllus*), but nowhere so overtly as he does to this Epicurean classification (cf. *Epic. Ep. Men.* 127; *Sent.* 29; Bréchet, p. 53, notes that the simple opposition between necessary and non-necessary desires is present in *Plat. Resp.* 558 D – 559 C, but the primary reference in the *Gryllus* is certainly to Epicurus). This is understandable, since the Epicureans treated pleasure as the goal or *τέλος* of the good life, something to which, unlike virtue, animals can presumably aspire (though Epicurus’ view is in fact more complex than that); it is not by accident that Horace famously described himself as “a pig from the sty of Epicurus” (*Epicuri de grege porcum, Epist.* 1. 4. 16). There is also, no doubt, an allusion throughout the text to the “city of pigs” (*ὑὸν πόλις*), as Glaucus dubs the primitive or frugal state that Socrates first outlines in Plato’s *Republic* (372 D). Perhaps too there is a reminiscence of Chrysippus, who affirmed, according to *Cic. ND* 2. 160, that pigs were granted life in place of salt, so that their meat would be the better preserved.

and free of empty δόξα – as indeed they are from all δόξα, whether true or false – then they have no need of σωφροσύνη, the function of which is, on Gryllus’ own definition, to control unnatural desires. The contradiction in his position is manifest. There is a clue to his confusion, perhaps, in his use of the term βραχύτης to indicate what should mean something like the limitation or reduction of the appetites, if σωφροσύνη is to represent the virtue of self-control, in which the appetites are made to conform to the dictates of reason (cf. Arist. *EN* 1119 a 33 – b 18, who compares the role of reason to that of a παιδαγωγός or child’s tutor). But this is an odd sense of the term, which rather signifies “smallness” or “fewness”: the connotation of minimization or curtailment is not recognized in Liddell and Scott. Evidently Gryllus means to suggest that σωφροσύνη reduces unnatural desires, but strictly speaking on his definition it consists simply in having few of them – the condition of animals, to be sure, but not a sign of temperance as a virtue.

Gryllus goes on to extol pigs for using their senses of smell and taste to discriminate what is beneficial from what is harmful rather than to indulge in luxuries such as perfumes (990 A–B; here too his comments look back to Aristotle: cf. *EN* 1118 a 9–23). Nor do pigs require such embellishments to stimulate their sexual activity: they mate in season, attracted by the natural odor of their partner. Hence too homosexuality, Gryllus declares, is practically unknown among animals, nor has a wild beast ever attempted to mate with a human being, though the reverse is not unheard of – witness Minotaurs and Centaurs. All this is a consequence of φύσις or nature: the nature of animals, which is in conformity with nature itself. Even with so basic an appetite as that for food, which is necessary for sustenance, human beings go to excess, needlessly consuming meat not because, like carnivores, this is their natural diet, but out of wanton extravagance.

After a lacuna, Gryllus enters upon the virtue of good sense or φρόνησις. Once again, Gryllus boasts that animals have no need of teaching or study, for their wisdom provides them with abilities that are inherited and innate (ἰθαγενεῖς καὶ συμφύτους, 991 E), and nature is their teacher (διδάσκαλον εἶναι τὴν φύσιν, 991 F; cf. 992 A); and he adds: “If you do not think that this should be called λόγος or φρόνησις, then go find some other name for it that is more noble and honorable”. Gryllus is astute enough to provide evidence that, although animals are equipped with all the knowledge that they need without instruction (their intelligence is ἀτομαθής, 992 A), they are nevertheless capable of learning, for they can be trained to prance or jump through hoops, though it is contrary to their nature.²⁰ What is more, they also teach their young, as storks instruct

²⁰ Kuzniar (n. 18) 68, cites Franz Kafka’s story, “The Researches of a Dog”, in which “the canine narrator comes across dogs dancing on their hind legs (the reader

nestlings to fly and nightingales teach (προδιδάσκουσιν) theirs to sing (992 B–C). This last argument seems to contradict Gryllus’ claim that animals possess the necessary arts untutored, though perhaps the word προδιδάσκουσιν suggests that such instruction is preliminary rather than indispensable (cf. Long. *DC* praef. 3, where he states that his work τὸν ἐρασθέντα ἀναμνήσει, τὸν οὐκ ἐρασθέντα προπαιδεύσει, that is, will provide a kind of preliminary lesson in love, prior to the real experience). Given all this, Gryllus professes to be amazed at the arguments of sophists designed to prove that “all creatures except mankind are unreasoning and unthinking (ἄλογα καὶ ἀνοητά)” (992 C).

The examples that Gryllus gives of the native skills of animals were a commonplace in contemporary Stoic literature, and go back to Aristotle and beyond. Hierocles, in *The Elements of Ethics*, offers striking illustrations of how animals are aware of both their own means of defense against other creatures and the strong points or advantages of their enemies as well: “When a lion, for example, fights with a bull, it watches its horns but disdains the other parts of the animal; in battles with the wild ass, however, it is entirely focused on kicks and is keen to avoid the hooves” (col. III. 23–26). But Hierocles attributes this ability entirely to perception or αἴσθησις, not to reason, even though they are capable of recognizing the superiority of human beings thanks precisely to their possession of λόγος (col. III. 45–50). Aristotle, however, was prepared to go further, and ascribe to animals a share in φρόνησις itself. Thus, in *GA* he writes (3. 2. 753 a 7–14): “Nature seems to wish to implant in animals a sense of care (αἴσθησις ἐπιμελητική) for their young: in the inferior

understands that these must be circus dogs”); Kafka’s dog writes: “They had truly cast off all shame, these miserable creatures were doing something that was at once most ridiculous and most obscene – they were walking upright on their hind legs. Ugh!” L. Herchenroeder, “Τί γὰρ τοῦτο πρὸς τὸν λόγον; Plutarch’s *Gryllus* and the So-Called Grylloi”, *AJPh* 129 (2008) 347–379 rightly stresses the humorous and parodic nature of the dialogue, and remarks of the present passage (p. 366): “There is an exceptional paradox here, for in Gryllus’ discussions of courage and temperance, natural abilities (whether to avoid captivity or to resist enslavement by harmful desires) are grounds for moral superiority, whereas in his treatment of intelligence, the animal is superior for developing abilities contrary to nature (παρὰ φύσιν). While intelligence is initially an explicitly natural and untaught faculty, it also shows itself in the impressive feat of receiving instruction from human masters in the process of domestication. This is a key detail. As grunting-pig-turned-sophist and parodic rival to the epic wordsmith, Gryllus brings his rhetorical masterpiece to an emphatic non sequitur: exaltation of the animal’s indomitable spirit comes back to domestication. While this contradiction is the dialogue’s main joke, other references to the subordination of animals imply Gryllus’ own domesticity as well. In fact, he ends up not too unlike captives of the Homeric Circe”. There is doubtless a point of wit here, but it is not, in my view, so central to the dialogue as Herchenroeder makes it.

animals this lasts only to the moment of giving birth; in others it continues till they are perfect; in all that are more intelligent (φρονιμώτερα), during the bringing up of the young also. In those which have the greatest portion in intelligence (τοῖς μάλιστα κοινωνοῖς φρονήσεως) we find familiarity (συνήθεια) and love (φιλία) shown also towards the young when perfected, as with men and some quadrupeds” (cf. *HA* 9. 5, on deer).²¹ Plutarch, in his essay *On the Cleverness of Animals* (961 A), cites Strato, a disciple of Aristotle, for the proposition that αἴσθησις is impossible without intelligence (τοῦ νοεῖν), a view that Plutarch apparently endorses, inasmuch as one of the interlocutors in the dialogue affirms that animals have a share in διάνοια and λογισμός (960 A).²² Just what φρόνησις signifies in these contexts, and where it is positioned between perception, which is itself a highly cognitive faculty, and reason, is difficult to say. At all events, Aristotle never affirms that animals other than human beings possess λόγος, and it is here that Gryllus crosses the line.²³ Odysseus replies: “Now, Gryllus, you are changed, and you pronounce the sheep and the ass rational (λογικός)”.

Gryllus affirms that animals indeed “are not without a share in reason (λόγος) and comprehension (σύνεσις)” (992 C), and he has one more argument up his sleeve before the text breaks off, namely that animals could not differ in their ability to learn and think (φρονεῖν) unless they did have reason and comprehension, some more and some less; and yet there is more variation among animals in thinking, reasoning, and remembering (φρονεῖν, λογίζεσθαι, μνημονεύειν) than between the brightest and the dullest of human beings (992 C–D). This is apparently inconsistent with Gryllus’ earlier demonstration that animals are more courageous than human beings because all alike fight to the death, whereas people vary in courage, and women in particular are less brave than men: there, Gryllus used uniformity as a proof that animal courage was natural and superior, whereas here he appeals to variability to make the same point about animal intelligence. The key to the discrepancy is that Gryllus is speaking here about disparities between animal species, not between individuals in a given species, as is

²¹ Further examples in Konstan (n. 11).

²² Cf. S. T. Newmyer, “Plutarch on Justice toward Animals: Ancient Insights on a Modern Debate”, *Scholια* 1 (1992) 38–54.

²³ For a comprehensive survey of the radical distinction in antiquity between human beings as bearers of λόγος and other animals, see R. Renehan, “The Greek Anthropocentric View of Man”, *HSCP* 85 (1981) 239–259; also G. Clark, “Animal Passions,” *G & R* 47 (2000) 88–93, on reason in animals and its relation to πάθος; on the *Gryllus*, see esp. p. 91: “It is an argument that depends on absence of reason. Animals, says Gryllos, operate by φύσις, ‘nature’. Their souls are not accessible to passion because they follow natural desires, and they are naturally temperate and courageous.”

the case with human beings.²⁴ Even Gryllus doubtless knew that different kinds of animals differ in degree of courage, though he suppressed that fact earlier in order to make his case.²⁵

I have been arguing that Gryllus' emphasis on the natural courage, moderation, and intelligence of animals reveals just why these qualities do not qualify as virtues in the accepted sense of the term among Greek thinkers, and, I would say, ordinary people as well, if they gave the matter any thought. For none of these attributes involves reason or λόγος as the Greeks understood the term, despite Gryllus' assertions to the contrary. The dialogue is meant to be funny, and it plays on the absence of common terms for the approximations to virtues that are found among animals and infant children; but these, precisely because they are natural and innate and do not involve reason, are fundamentally different from their human counterparts.²⁶ Although he has been metamorphosed into a pig, Gryllus' ability to speak and argue – to provide reasons and understand them – shows that he is really a human being in pig's clothing, thanks to Circe's dispensation. His mind is not the site of a cross between human and animal reasoning, because animals do not have λόγος. That is why Gryllus is no "Pigman", a Larry Talbot avant la lettre: the sharp distinction between human beings and animals in respect to rationality discouraged the development of such a hybridization.

Stephen T. Newmyer writes: "One might be tempted to conclude that, in his use of the term φύσις, Plutarch is speaking of a kind of unalloyed 'instinct', that sort of hard-wired, pre-programmed behavior of animals that some psychologists and ethologists with behaviorist sympathies like to posit to account for all animal actions that seem to be purposeful and

²⁴ Cf. Demosth. 25. 15 (*Against Aristogeiton*), who contrasts the rule of law, which is uniform for all, with that of nature, which is disorderly (ἄτακτον) and peculiar (ἴδιον) to the individual person. On the contrast between human and bestial life, cf. 25. 20.

²⁵ Odysseus responds to Gryllus' last claim by affirming that it is a terrible thing to ascribe λόγος to creatures who have no understanding (νόησις) of god, to which Gryllus replies by asking whether they ought then to deny that the wise Odysseus is the son of Sisyphus (992 E). Gryllus is presumably referring to Sisyphus' reputation as an atheist, but since the treatise as we have it ends here, we cannot know how Plutarch might have developed the idea.

²⁶ On the humorous character of the dialogue, see Billaut (n. 2) 38: "Le dialogue est un divertissement humoristique"; Bréchet (n. 9) 43–61, who sees the dialogue as a unique example in the œuvre of Plutarch of "un dialogue satirique, comme en fera plus tard Lucien" (p. 44). On the literary character of the dialogue, see also J. A. Fernández Delgado, "Le *Gryllus*: un éthopée parodique", in L. Van der Stockt (ed.), *Rhetorical Theory and Praxis in Plutarch: Acta of the IVth International Congress of the International Plutarch Society, Leuven, July 3–6, 1996* (Louvain 2000) 171–181; Indelli ([n. 1] 34) describes the essay as "fondamentalmente retorica" in character.

guided by some intellectual activity, yet Plutarch is careful to suggest that φύσις and λόγος work in tandem in motivating animal behaviors... Plutarch understands the ‘nature’ of animals to include a kind of innate rationality.”²⁷ He adds that just because their reasoning power is dimmer than that of human beings, animals are able “to live lives that are more naturally virtuous than are those of humans” (p. 39), and he concludes that the *Gryllus* accords with the argument in *Which are More Intelligent* (φρονιμώτερα): *Land or Sea Animals* (sometimes called *De sollertia animalium* or *On the Intelligence of Animals*) that animals’ reason “differs from that of man quantitatively rather than qualitatively, and that animals live closer to their nature and are therefore less corrupted by potential misuse of their rational faculties” (p. 40). I agree with Newmyer that something like this corresponds to Autobulus’ position in that latter dialogue, whether or not it represents Plutarch’s own position.²⁸ But in the *Gryllus* Plutarch is surely making sport of the pretensions of a man turned pig to λόγος and the virtues that depend on it, and the argumentative porker is himself the ultimate sign that it is not the pig that is speaking but the human being encased within it.

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В сочинении Плутарха *Грилл* представлен комический парадокс: свинья стремится доказать, что животные обладают разумом и даже в большей степени, чем люди. Аргументы, которые приводит Грилл, в действительности, однако, показывают, что у животных отсутствует разум – в том смысле, как это понимают греческие философы.

²⁷ *Animals, Rights and Reason in Plutarch and Modern Ethics* (London – New York 2006) 37–38.

²⁸ Plutarch is not consistent in ascribing reason to animals; contrast *On Brotherly Love* 478 E and *On Fortune* 98 B, where reason is specifically a human capacity. The different positions adopted by Plutarch correspond, no doubt, to the literary context; cf. G. Santese, “Animali e razionalità in Plutarco”, in S. Castiglione and G. Lanata (eds.), *Filosofi e animali nel mondo antico* (Pisa 1994) 139–170.