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Los Angeles

Justice Purity Piety:

A Reading of Porphyry's *On Abstinence from Ensouled Beings*

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Abstract:

Presenting a range of arguments against meat-eating, many strikingly familiar, Porphyry's *On Abstinence from Ensouled Beings* (Greek Περὶ ἀποχῆς ἐμψύχων, Latin *De abstinence ab esu animalium*) offers a sweeping view of the ancient debate concerning animals and their treatment. At the same time, because of its advocacy of an asceticism informed by its author's Neoplatonism, *Abstinence* is often taken to be concerned primarily with the health of the human soul. By approaching *Abstinence* as a work of moral suasion and a work of literature, whose intra- and intertextual resonances yield something more than a collection of propositions or an invitation to *Quellenforschung*, I aim to push beyond interpretations that bracket the arguments regarding animals as merely dialectical; cast the text's other-directed principle of justice as wholly

subordinated to a self-directed principle of purity; or accept as decisive Porphyry's exclusion of craftsmen, athletes, soldiers, sailors, and orators from his call to vegetarianism. In Porphyry's treatise, a discourse of "more and less" with respect to animal reason is consistent with the "more and less" of abstinence itself among the work's priestly and philosophical exempla and the results, "more and less" successful, of assimilating oneself to god "as much as possible." Whether fully or partly abstinent, Porphyry's models, part of a pervasive discourse of imitation and possibility, point to a life characterized by radical self-control, free of the bad mixture, impurity, and harmfulness that meat-eating entails. Reading the text as an integral whole rather than as a collection of sources deployed without commitment, I seek to foreground its suggestions of other-directedness and inclusiveness, not just in its extensive treatment of justice toward animals but also in its abiding concern for purity and piety.

The dissertation of Alexander Press is approved

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Abbreviations

Avezzù = *Alcidamas: Orazioni e frammenti*, edited by Guido Avezzù

Bruns = *Alexandri Aphrodisiensis praeter Commentaria Scripta Minora*, edited by Ivo
Bruns

Busse = *Porphyrii Isagoge et in Aristotelis Categorias Commentarium*, edited by Adolfus
Busse

Diels = *Doxographi Graeci*, edited by Hermann Diels

DK = *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, edited by Hermann Diels and Walther Kranz

Henry = Photius, *Bibliothèque*, edited by René Henry

Kannicht = *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*, vol. 5, edited by Richard Kannicht

LS = Long and Sedley (see bibliography: A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley 1987)

LSJ = *Greek-English Lexicon*, edited by Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, and Henry
Stuart Jones

Montanari = *The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek*, edited by Franco Montanari

Morani = *Nemesii Emeseni De Natura Hominis*, edited by Moreno Morani

Nauck = *Porphyrii Philosophi Platonici Opuscula Selecta*, edited by August Nauck

OLD = *Oxford Latin Dictionary*

Sandbach = *Plutarchi Moralia*, vol. 7, edited by F. H. Sandbach

Smith = *Porphyrii Philosophi Fragmenta* (see bibliography: Andrew Smith 1993)

Sodano = *Porphyrii in Platonis Timaeum Commentariorum Fragmenta*, edited by Angelo
Raffaele Sodano

Stählin = *Clemens Alexandrinus*, edited by Otto Stählin, Ludwig Früchtel, and Ursula
Treu

SVF = Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta, edited by Hans von Arnim

TLG = Thesaurus Linguae Graecae

Wachsmuth = *Stobaeus: Anthologium*, edited by Curt Wachsmuth and Otto Hense

Wehrli = *Die Schule des Aristoteles*, vol. 5, edited by Fritz Wehrli

Wimmer = *Theophrasti Eresii Opera Quae Supersunt Omnia*, edited by Friedrich

Wimmer

Wisniewski = *Karneades Fragmente: Text und Kommentar*, edited by Bohdan

Wisniewski

Author	Author Abbrev.	Latin Title	English Title	Title Abbrev.
Alexander of Aphrodisias	Al.	<i>De mixtione</i>	<i>On Mixture and Increase</i>	<i>Mixt.</i>
Ammonius	Ammon.	<i>In Aristotelis de interpretatione commentarius</i>	<i>On Aristotle's On Interpretation</i>	<i>in Int.</i>
Aratus		<i>Phaenomena</i>		<i>Phaen.</i>
Aristophanes	Ar.	<i>Thesmophoriazusae</i>	<i>Women at the Thesmophoria</i>	<i>Th.</i>
Aristotle	Arist.	<i>De anima</i>	<i>On the Soul</i>	<i>De an.</i>
		<i>De generatione animalium</i>	<i>Generation of Animals</i>	<i>GA</i>
		<i>De interpretatione</i>	<i>On Interpretation</i>	<i>Int.</i>
		<i>De memoria</i>	<i>On Memory</i>	<i>Mem.</i>
		<i>De partibus animalium</i>	<i>Parts of Animals</i>	<i>PA</i>
		<i>Ethica Nicomachea</i>	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>	<i>EN</i>
		<i>Historia animalium</i>	<i>History of Animals</i>	<i>HA</i>
		<i>Metaphysica</i>	<i>Metaphysics</i>	<i>Metaph.</i>

		<i>Politica</i>	<i>Politics</i>	<i>Pol.</i>
		<i>Rhetorica</i>	<i>Rhetoric</i>	<i>Rh.</i>
Arrian	Arr.	<i>Epicteti dissertationes</i>	<i>Discourses of Epictetus</i>	<i>Epict.</i>
Augustine	August.	<i>De civitate Dei</i>	<i>City of God</i>	<i>C.D.</i>
		<i>De moribus ecclesiae Catholicae et de moribus Manicheorum</i>	<i>On the Catholic and Manichaeae Ways of Life</i>	<i>Mor.</i>
Cicero	Cic.	<i>Academica</i>		<i>Acad.</i>
		<i>De finibus bonorum et malorum</i>	<i>On the Ends of Good and Evil</i>	<i>Fin.</i>
		<i>De legibus</i>	<i>On the Laws</i>	<i>Leg.</i>
		<i>De natura deorum</i>	<i>On the Nature of the Gods</i>	<i>N.D.</i>
		<i>De officiis</i>	<i>On Duties</i>	<i>Off.</i>
Clement	Clem.	<i>Stromata</i>	<i>Miscellanies</i>	<i>Strom.</i>
Diogenes Laertius	D.L.			
Empedocles	Emp.			
Epicurus	Epicur.	<i>Sententiae</i>	<i>Principle Doctrines</i>	<i>Sent.</i>

Hesiod	Hes.	<i>Opera et dies</i>	<i>Works and Days</i>	<i>Op.</i>
Hippocrates		<i>De vetere medicina</i>	<i>On Ancient Medicine</i>	<i>VM</i>
Homer	Hom.	<i>Ilias</i>	<i>Iliad</i>	<i>Il.</i>
Iamblichus	Iambl.	<i>De anima</i>	<i>On the Soul</i>	<i>De anima</i>
		<i>De vita</i>	<i>On the</i>	<i>VP</i>
		<i>Pythagorica</i>	<i>Pythagorean Way of Life</i>	
Jerome		<i>Adversus</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>Adv.</i>
		<i>Jovinianum</i>	<i>Jovinianus</i>	<i>Jovinian.</i>
Josephus	Joseph.	<i>Contra Apionem</i>	<i>Against Apion</i>	<i>Ap.</i>
		<i>Bellum Judaicum</i>	<i>The Jewish War</i>	<i>BJ</i>
Lucretius	Lucr.	<i>De rerum natura</i>	<i>On the Nature of Things</i>	
Matthew	Matt.			
Nemesius	Nem.	<i>De natura hominis</i>	<i>On the Nature of Man</i>	
Origen		<i>Contra Celsum</i>	<i>Against Celsus</i>	<i>Cels.</i>
Ovid	Ov.	<i>Fasti</i>		<i>Fast.</i>
		<i>Metamorphoses</i>		<i>Met.</i>
Philo		<i>De animalibus</i>	<i>On Animals</i>	<i>De animal.</i>
		<i>Quod deus sit immutabilis</i>	<i>On the Unchangeableness of God</i>	<i>Deus</i>

Photius		<i>Bibliotheca</i>	<i>Library</i>	<i>Bibl.</i>
Philostratus	Philostr.	<i>Vita Apollonii</i>	<i>The Life of Apollonius of Tyana</i>	<i>VA</i>
Plato	Pl.		<i>Crito</i>	<i>Cri.</i>
		<i>Leges</i>	<i>Laws</i>	<i>Lg.</i>
			<i>Phaedo</i>	<i>Phd.</i>
			<i>Phaedrus</i>	<i>Phdr.</i>
		<i>Politicus</i>	<i>Statesman</i>	<i>Plt.</i>
			<i>Protagoras</i>	<i>Prt.</i>
			<i>Republic</i>	<i>Rep.</i>
			<i>Sophist</i>	<i>Soph.</i>
			<i>Theaetetus</i>	<i>Tht.</i>
			<i>Timaeus</i>	<i>Ti.</i>
Plotinus	Plot.	<i>Enneades</i>	<i>Enneads</i>	<i>Enn.</i>
Plutarch	Plut.	<i>Bruta animalia</i>	<i>Gryllus</i>	<i>Gryllus</i>
		<i>ratione uti</i>		
		<i>Cato Maior</i>	<i>Lives: Marcus Cato</i>	<i>Cat. Ma.</i>
		<i>Consolatio ad Apollonium</i>	<i>A Letter of Condolence to Apollonius</i>	<i>Cons. Apoll.</i>

		<i>Convivium septem sapientium</i>	<i>The Dinner of the Seven Wise Men</i>	<i>Conv.</i>
		<i>De esu carniū</i>	<i>On Flesh Eating</i>	<i>Esu</i>
		<i>De fortuna</i>	<i>On Chance</i>	<i>De fortuna</i>
		<i>De sollertia animalium</i>	<i>On the Cleverness of Animals</i>	<i>Soll.</i>
		<i>De Stoicorum repugnantiiis</i>	<i>On Stoic Self-Contradictions</i>	<i>St. rep.</i>
		<i>De tranquillitate animi</i>	<i>On Tranquillity of Mind</i>	<i>Tranq.</i>
		<i>De tuenda sanitate</i>	<i>Advice about Keeping Well</i>	<i>Sanit.</i>
		<i>Quaestiones convivales</i>	<i>Table-Talk</i>	<i>Quaest. conv.</i>
Porphyry	Porph.	<i>Ad Gaurum</i> (under Pseudo-Galen in TLG)	<i>To Gaurus</i>	<i>Gaur.</i>
		<i>Ad Marcellam</i>	<i>To Marcella</i>	<i>Marc.</i>
		<i>De abstinētia</i>	<i>On Abstinence from Ensouled Beings</i>	<i>Abst.</i>

		<i>In Aristotelis categorias commentarium</i>	<i>On Aristotle's Categories</i>	<i>in Cat.</i>
		<i>Introductio sive quinque voces</i>	<i>Isagoge or Introduction to the Categories of Aristotle</i>	<i>Isag.</i>
		<i>Sententiae</i>		<i>Sent.</i>
		<i>Vita Plotini</i>	<i>Life of Plotinus</i>	<i>Plot.</i>
		<i>Vita Pythagorae</i>	<i>Life of Pythagoras</i>	<i>VP</i>
Seneca	Sen.	<i>De ira</i>	<i>On Anger</i>	<i>De ira</i>
		<i>Epistulae</i>	<i>Epistles</i>	<i>Ep.</i>
Sextus Empiricus	Sext.	<i>Adversus mathematicos</i>	<i>Against the Mathematicians</i>	<i>M.</i>
			<i>Outlines of Pyrrhonism</i>	<i>P.</i>
Stobaeus	Stob.			
Tertullian	Tert.	<i>De ieiunio adversus psychicos</i>	<i>On Fasting, Against the Carnal Believers</i>	<i>De ieiun.</i>
Theophrastus	Theophr.	<i>De causis plantarum</i>		<i>CP</i>

		<i>De sensibus/</i>	<i>On the Senses</i>	<i>Sens.</i>
		<i>De sensu</i>		
		<i>Historia plantarum</i>	<i>Enquiry into</i>	<i>HP</i>
			<i>Plants</i>	
Varro		<i>De lingua Latina</i>	<i>On the Latin</i>	<i>Ling.</i>
			<i>Language</i>	
Xenophon	Xen.	<i>Cyropaedia</i>		<i>Cyr.</i>
		<i>Memorabilia</i>		<i>Mem.</i>

Note on Text and Translations

Although all translations of Greek and Latin in this dissertation are my own, I owe a debt to Gillian Clark for her elegant rendering of *On Abstinence*, as well as to Angelo Raffaele Sodano and the Budé editors Jean Bouffartigue, Michel Patillon, and Alain Segonds, whose edition also provides the Greek text that I used. I have tried to be a bit more literal and have generally deferred to dictionary definitions of words, as seen in LSJ and Montanari, except in cases where a clear contextual meaning had no lexicographical counterpart. For the reader's convenience, I have translated all quotations of modern scholarship in French (Bouffartigue, Patillon, and Segonds 1977-95, Labarrière 1997, and Larue 2015), German (Dierauer 1977 and Martins 2018), and Italian (Girgenti and Sodano 2005). I have also transliterated certain Greek terms whose technical sense or multivalence would make single-word translations reductive (*daemones*, *logos*, *nous*, *oikeiosis*, *phantasia*, *pneuma*, etc.).

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Introduction

I. Porphyry and *Abstinence*

Presenting a range of arguments against meat-eating, many strikingly familiar, Porphyry's *On Abstinence from Ensouled Beings* offers a sweeping view of the ancient debate concerning animals and their treatment. At the same time, because of its advocacy of an asceticism informed by its author's Neoplatonism, *Abstinence* is often taken to be concerned primarily with the health of the human soul. In such a reading, the other-directed principle ("justice") is subordinated to or swallowed up by the self-directed principle ("purity"). Although the two principles are emphasized in different sections of the text and arise from different philosophical sources, I aim to understand *Abstinence* by examining how they sustain each other. I will argue that the case presented for reason and justice toward animals is not merely dialectical—lacking the quality of conviction and removed from Porphyry's discursive through line—but an essential part of what is, despite a broad reliance on earlier texts, a unified and coherent treatise. I will have more to say in this introduction about purity and justice, as well as my strategy for reading *Abstinence*, but I will begin with some basic information on Porphyry and the treatise itself.

A pivotal philosopher active in the latter half of the third century CE, Porphyry wrote dozens of works, only a few of which are largely extant. In addition to *Abstinence*, the longest of his surviving works, which is thought to have been composed sometime between the end of the 260s and the beginning of the 270s CE,¹ these include *To*

¹ Bouffartigue and Patillon 1977, 1:xviii-xix. Clark (2000a, 7) says, "The favoured (but still unprovable) dating is soon after Plotinus's terminal illness and death in 268-70, while Porphyry was still in Sicily."

Marcella, a collection of spiritual and ethical advice ostensibly written for his wife; biographies of his teacher Plotinus and of Pythagoras; *Sententiae*, an exposition of Plotinus's metaphysics; *Isagoge*, an introduction to Aristotelian logic; and, most likely, *To Gaurus*, as well as several others. The rest exist, if at all, as fragments. *Abstinence* itself represents the “swan song,” as Larue puts it,² of a tradition of ethical attention to animals and diet that, from its murky origins in Orphism and Pythagoreanism, finds expression in some of the writings of Empedocles (c. 495-35 BCE), Theophrastus (c. 370-287 BCE), and Plutarch (c. 45-125 CE).³ With renewed favor toward animal sacrifice Porphyry's successor, Iamblichus (c. 245-325 CE), “brings to a halt the possible extension of vegetarianism into Neoplatonism.”⁴ Of the surviving philosophical condemnations of meat, notable examples include Plutarch's *On Flesh Eating* and, a generation earlier, Musonius Rufus's discussion in *Discourses* 18a. There was also a genre of anti-vegetarian treatises, none of which survive, though Porphyry draws extensively from one by Clodius the Neapolitan, mentioned at *Abst.* 1.3.3, in setting up the arguments he will refute.⁵ One could say that both vegetarianism and anti-

² Larue 2015, 77.

³ I say “some of the writings” because I do not wish to impute to each philosopher a single, fixed view of animals.

⁴ The quotation is from Bouffartigue and Patillon (1977, 1:lxvi), who present a version of this narrative based on Haussleiter's lengthy treatment of vegetarianism in antiquity (1935).

⁵ Martins (2018) presents *Abst.* 1.13-1.26 as Clodius's hypothetical treatise *Against the Vegetarians*, which he notes is itself largely borrowed from a lost work by Heraclides Ponticus (c. 388-10 BCE), a student of Plato and Aristotle. Martins also analyzes what he sees as the work's dialogue with Theophrastus's *On Piety*, which provides much of *Abstinence* book 2. (On this dialogue, see, e.g., 2018, 133.) According to Martins (2018, 20), Clodius was active in the first century CE or BCE.

vegetarianism find their fullest expression in *Abstinence*, which approaches the issue comprehensively with respect to both justice and purity.

If we consider the Greek title of Porphyry’s work—Περὶ ἀποχῆς ἐμψύχων (*On Abstinence from Ensouled Beings*)—in terms of its parts and resonances, it is possible to see how it encompasses both the justice and purity principles.⁶ From the perspective of purity, the word ἀποχή (“abstinence”), which appears frequently in the text, relates to the thematics of separation, of withdrawal, not just from meat but from that which hinders spiritual progress. It is used to cover abstinence “from those sensations that stir up passions,” including those that “arise from food” (1.32.2), and for abstinence “from contact with pleasures and actions through the body” (1.45.1). In the title, we could say, the ἀπο- prefix encapsulates not just the voluntary separation connoted by ἀποχή and its semantic relatives but also the obverse: involuntary separation in the unjust “taking away” of an animal’s life, as we see in Porphyry’s frequent use of ἀφαιρέω.⁷ The ψυχή

⁶ As I mean to convey with the subtitle of this dissertation—“A Reading of Porphyry’s *On Abstinence from Ensouled Beings*,” my approach is literary in the sense that I sometimes go beyond a surface reading, taking account of the ways that words (and even parts of words) in different portions of the text generate meaning intratextually. The present paragraph is an example of this literary orientation, which I discuss below in section III.

⁷ See, e.g., the last sentence of book 3, which refers to “taking away (ἀφαιρούμενος) with violence (βίβα) what belongs to others (τὰ ἀλλότρια)” (3.27.11). Porphyry uses ἀφαιρέω not just for “taking away” the lives or souls of animals (1.14.1, 2.12.4, 4.20.1), but also for “taking away” their reason and constituent mental faculties (3.2.2 and 4; 3.8.2, 7, and 8; 3.9.1; 3.11.2; 3.21.7; 3.22.8) and, consequently, their connection with humans (3.13.1). (See chapter 2, section IVa.) For involuntary separation, see also ἀποτεμνόντων (1.18). For voluntary separation in the interest of purity, see also ἀποδυτέον (1.13.3);

(“soul” or “life”) within the ἐμψύχων of the title (“animals” or, more fundamentally, “ensouled beings”) also reflects the pervasive concerns of the text—we might say, both the lives of animals (a matter of justice) and the souls of Porphyry’s audience (a matter of purity).⁸ The Greek title of Plutarch’s work, Περὶ σαρκοφαγίας, by contrast, focuses on flesh. Though in that text Plutarch clearly expresses a concern for animals as embodied beings, as does Porphyry, the ἐμψύχων in Porphyry’s title has the effect of emphasizing animals as beings that have souls, as humans do, with all that entails. The reference to ensouled beings (ἐμψύχων) orients readers differently from σαρκοφαγία. We are invited, at the outset, to think of animals not merely as “flesh”—though their fleshiness, their embodiment, also connects them with humans—but as creatures with mobility, agency, perceptions, a measure of reason, and, above all, an ability to be harmed when that soul is taken away by force.

In *Abstinence*, Porphyry promises to present his “own opinion” (τὸ οἰκεῖον) while “gather[ing] together (συναγαγεῖν) and undo[ing] (λῦσαι)” the arguments of opponents (1.3.2)—ostensibly for the benefit of Firmus Castricius, a follower of Plotinus and an apostate from vegetarianism. The anti-vegetarian polemics—attributed to Peripatetics and Stoics; Epicureans; Clodius the Neapolitan; Heraclides Ponticus; and “the multitude”⁹—

ἀποθέσει (4.20.2) and ἀποθέσθαι (1.30.4); ἀποστατέον (1.31.5), ἀποστῆναι (4.20.13), and ἀφίστασθαι (2.52.2); and ἀφεκτικῶ (3.26.9), ἀφέξει (4.20.2), and ἀφεξόμενος (2.31.3).

⁸ Notwithstanding the presence of *anima* (“soul”) in “*animal*,” the conventional Latin title—*De abstinentia ab esu animalium* (*On Abstinence from Eating Animals*)—is perhaps not as immediately evocative of souls as the Greek title is.

⁹ Signposts of attribution appear after the arguments of Stoics and Peripatetics at 1.6.3 and of Hermarchus the Epicurean at 1.12.7, and, again, at 1.13.1, before Porphyry turns to the arguments of “the average,

fall into several categories of argument that are presented or answered in each of the four books, respectively: (1) practical necessity: we need to use animals to sustain civilized human life, so we cannot treat them with *justice*; (2) religious necessity: we need to sacrifice animals to demonstrate *piety* toward the gods; (3) psychological difference: animals lack reason, so we cannot or should not treat them with *justice*; and (4) custom: “no human society has ever been vegetarian.”¹⁰ Midway through book 1 (chapter 27), Porphyry turns from a synoptic view of anti-vegetarian arguments toward the vegetarian position that he will maintain throughout the rest of the treatise.

In my discussion of the vegetarian arguments of *Abstinence*, I use “justice” and “purity” as a shorthand for two distinct sets of concerns—the treatment of animals and the care of the self—that are, respectively, other-directed and self-directed. “Purity” in this broad sense is emphasized in books 1 and 4, and “justice” in book 3, with piety as the focus of book 2,¹¹ though, as we will see, these alignments are complicated, on the one hand, by the Platonic notion of justice as a correct ordering of the soul (self-directed) and, on the other, by the aim of extending purity, or salvation, to others. This schema of justice and purity, of other-directed and self-directed concerns, corresponds in a limited

common person” (ὁ πολὺς καὶ δημόδης ἄνθρωπος). This last group of arguments appears to have been provided by Clodius and Heraclides, as suggested by the apparently reverse-order summation at 1.26.4. Porphyry’s declaration, at 1.26.4, that he “intend[s] to dispute” all these arguments “and the conceptions of the multitude (τῶν πολλῶν)” suggests he will go on to address additional common-man arguments.

¹⁰ I have adapted this analysis, including the language in item four, from Clark’s summary (2011a, x).

¹¹ Cf. Hornum (2002, 20), who finds that the four books correspond, respectively, to the themes of “purity and moderation, piety, justice, and cultural acceptance,” and that Porphyry “attempts to convince Firmus that a philosopher’s purity, piety and justice require...adoption of a vegetarian diet.”

way to Bouffartigue and Patillon’s division between “external” and “internal” reasons for vegetarianism. For them, the first two books present “internal reasons” relating to the incompatibility of meat-eating with health or salvation (“*salut*”), while books 3 and 4 present “external reasons”: “respect for the life and soul of animals and emulation of different models of the perfect life.”¹² Since, however, book 4 is where Porphyry theorizes purity in the narrower sense of avoidance of pollution and offers his non-Greek models as ascetic exempla, I take its emphasis to be self-directed. Conversely, since Porphyry observes that “justice possesses its greatest beauty in piety toward the gods” (3.1.2), I conceptualize book 2, on piety, as, in a sense, other-directed—the others, in this case, being gods. This division is, however, for convenience, as I aim in this dissertation to demonstrate the underlying unity in *Abstinence* between self- and other-directed reasons for vegetarianism—or, again in the terminology I have chosen, between purity and justice.

Unity, it is true, may not be the first thing that comes to mind in a reading of *Abstinence*, a patchwork of extended quotations from various sources that can easily turn into an exercise in *Quellenforschung*. In book 1, the arguments against justice for animals are drawn from Plutarch’s *On the Cleverness of Animals* (1.4.4-1.6.1) and works by Hermarchus the Epicurean (1.7-1.12) and Clodius the Neapolitan (1.13-1.26.3), whose own source was Heraclides Ponticus. In book 2, the aetiologies of animal sacrifice and arguments against it in chapters 5 to 32 are largely from Theophrastus’s *On Piety*. In

¹² Bouffartigue and Patillon 1977, 1:xxv and xxxi n1. Girgenti and Sodano (2005, 26) conceptualize Porphyry’s reasons for vegetarianism as “objective” (“not to kill animals, who [are] endowed with sensibility and with a minimal form of rationality”) and “subjective” (“assuming a sober and temperate manner of living that favors detachment from the body and the passions”).

book 3, the arguments for reason in animals come, respectively, from an unknown source, ultimately Academic (3.2.1-3.18.2);¹³ an unidentified work by Plutarch (3.18.3-3.20.6); and, again, *Cleverness* (3.20.7-3.24.5).¹⁴ Bouffartigue and Patillon observe that in book 3 only chapters 1, 26, and 27 “certainly come from Porphyry’s pen,” and even within those sections they exclude 3.26.8-9 and 3.27.9-10, citing extracts from Plutarch’s *The Dinner of the Seven Wise Men* (16)¹⁵—though the extracts are altered in significant ways, as we will see in chapter 1. *On Piety* returns in a key passage in chapter 25. Book 4 draws from Dicaearchus, Plutarch again (*Life of Lycurgus*), Chaeremon the Stoic, Josephus, and others.

¹³ Bouffartigue and Patillon (1979, 2:138) attribute this portion of book 3 to an unnamed Academic text that would also have provided material for Philo’s *On Animals* and Sextus Empiricus’s *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* 1.62-77; Clark (2000a, 163n382) argues against such a text in favor of “a common body of argument and example.” Although Clark later says that 3.2.1-3.18.2 “may also derive from Plutarch’s lost works on animals,” she offers that merely as a possibility (2000a, 172n459). Porphyry introduces the section with “We will say the things in the ancients [i.e., in their texts], abridging them concisely” (ἐροῦμεν δὲ τὰ παρὰ τοῖς παλαιοῖς συντόμως ἐπιτέμνοντες 3.1.5).

¹⁴ Regarding reason in and justice toward animals, both supporting arguments (*Abst.* 3.20.7-3.24.5) and opposing arguments attributed to Stoics and Peripatetics (*Abst.* 1.4-6) are taken from Plutarch’s *Cleverness*, voiced respectively by Autobulus (*Soll.* 959e-63f) and Soclarus (964a-c)—who however seems to come around to the side of animals in the end (985a). Although neither Plutarch nor Porphyry distinguishes the Stoic from the Peripatetic arguments, Bouffartigue and Patillon (1977, 1:13-14) make a case for *Abst.* 1.4 as Stoic and 1.5-6 as Peripatetic in orientation. In the case of Autobulus’s discourse, Bouffartigue and Patillon (1979, 2:146) see Plutarch using two earlier writings: one “without doubt by a philosopher of the Academy, perhaps in the first century CE”; the other, a Stoic work that “responded to the attacks of Carneades and his school.”

¹⁵ Bouffartigue and Patillon 1979, 2:138.

Where they can be documented, Porphyry's alterations of his sources range from the trivial to the significant. In the case of Theophrastus's *On Piety* and Plutarch's *Cleverness*, he simply eliminates the dialogue form.¹⁶ According to Smith, Porphyry, as "a polymath...takes a more particular interest in recording accurately or even verbatim the views of other thinkers" than, for example, Plotinus does.¹⁷ When Porphyry does make documentable changes, however, they can be revealing, whether they involve subtle adjustments of language or tendentious omissions.¹⁸ While such changes invite heightened interpretive scrutiny—as do the passages that "certainly come from the pen of Porphyry"¹⁹—all the passages borrowed by Porphyry are, in one way or another, put to the use of his overarching argument for vegetarianism, including the anti-vegetarian arguments of Clodius and those attributed to Stoics and Peripatetics. The original contextual purposes of the many borrowed passages are wide-ranging (encompassing, for example, Plutarch's account of Spartan society and Josephus's account of the Roman siege of Masada), and while such purposes may appear to be sympathetic to animals—at least in the case of Plutarch and Theophrastus—for the most part, they do not concern the

¹⁶ For Theophrastus, see Bouffartigue and Patillon 1979, 2:147n1, citing Pötscher 1964, 5-15. For Plut. *Soll.* 959e-63f as employed in *Abst.* 3.20.7-3.24.5, see Clark 2000a 174n478.

¹⁷ Smith 2007, 9.

¹⁸ For the latter, see, e.g., Porphyry's use of Plutarch's *Life of Lycurgus* at *Abst.* 4.5.2, discussed in chapter 3.

¹⁹ Bouffartigue and Patillon 1979, 2:138. Note Martins's programmatic focus on *Abst.* 3.1 and 3.26-27 (2018, 176-96).

advancement of vegetarianism as such.²⁰ In addition, where the quoted passages are not extant beyond Porphyry's quotation—as with *On Piety*—we cannot be certain of what is original and what is added or altered.²¹ These are the reasons that I usually employ formulations like “Porphyry says” rather than “Plutarch says,” even if Plutarch is the source of the passage.²² My premise is that in using the source to make his argument, Porphyry is claiming at least partial ownership of it. Accordingly, though I will occasionally refer to an original context as a point of contrast—as a means of drawing out an effect of intentionality—my focus remains on *Abstinence* rather than the source.

²⁰ After the initial exchange between Autobulus and Soclarus, Plutarch's *Cleverness* is structured as a debate over whether land animals (965e-75c) or sea animals (975c-85c) are more clever. The underlying assumptions that animals *are* clever and that the differences in cleverness among them are a matter of degree are of course congenial to Porphyry's project in book 3, even if the examples are cataloged by characters aligned with hunters and fishermen (965b-c; see also 975d, 976c-e, and the rest of the discourse). Generally taken to be sympathetic to animals (see, e.g., Sorabji 1993, 175-77, and Bouffartigue and Patillon 1979, 2:20 with n3), Theophrastus's *On Piety* does strive at times to persuade its readers not to eat sacrificial animals. However, someone looking for specifically vegetarian source texts in *Abstinence* can point only to echoes, not quotations, of Plutarch's *Flesh Eating* (996e-97a) in *Abst.* 4.10 and of Musonius Rufus's *Discourses* 18a in *Abst.* 1.45-55.

²¹ This uncertainty leads to speculation based either on philological analysis or assumptions about what an author can or must have believed. For the latter, see, e.g., Dierauer's argument (1977, 172) that an ostensibly Theophrastean sentence at *Abst.* 3.25.3 cannot have been written by Theophrastus because it attributes reason to animal souls, a position that, by Dierauer's reckoning, Theophrastus could not have held. For more on Dierauer's argument, see note 61, in chapter 1, section III. While taking note of questions concerning sources, I do not pursue these questions myself.

²² Phrases like “Plutarchan passage” and “Theophrastean passage” are meant to situate the particular argument within the overall treatise, not to divide Porphyry from his sources.

While I read *Abstinence* as a unified work rather than an assemblage of sources, any effort to map out its arguments runs up against the fact they are presented in a manner that appears more sporadic than linear or systematic. To locate these arguments, to find the continuity within what is fundamentally a discontinuous text, one is constrained to read non-sequentially.²³ In *Abstinence*, ideas emerge here and there. Whether the point concerns necessity and pleasure, justice and “just war,” reason as a matter of more and less, or any number of other themes, Porphyry’s treatment develops through conclusory statements and a process of accumulation. To some extent, the effects of repetition and non-linearity are products of the source texts—whether from Plutarch, Theophrastus, or Clodius the Neapolitan.²⁴ At the same time, the continuity of themes and language serves to unify the four books of the treatise. This effect of unity through thematic continuity, I argue, weighs against the dialectical reading of book 3—a reading that comes at the expense of a full consideration of the other books.

II. Justice and Purity

Having noted how justice and purity structure *Abstinence*, I now turn to an apparent tension that emerges between these principles. The justice arguments of book 3 would seem to require vegetarianism of everybody who is not forced to eat meat by material

²³ However, for the sequence of arguments, such as it is, see the detailed summary in the Appendix.

²⁴ Though the comment appears in a portion of Plutarch’s *Cleverness* that is not quoted by Porphyry, Aristotimus, in his discourse on land animals, pauses to express concern that his listeners will consider his examples τὶ ποικίλον—“rather a hodge-podge,” as Helmbold renders it (*Soll.* 970e). Indeed, the text, which has the feel of an unstructured catalog, repeatedly circles back to animals already discussed, such as dogs and elephants.

necessity (such as a climate or land that does not support agriculture). If killing harmless animals is inherently unjust, as book 3 argues, it would seem to follow that nobody should kill and eat them unless the alternative is malnourishment or even starvation. Yet Porphyry programmatically limits his audience in a way that is generally taken as evidence that his true concern is the purity of an elite cohort of philosophers.

In a work that makes a prolonged appeal for including animals within the circle of justice, one does find a peculiar tendency to exclude various people from moral consciousness and responsibility. In book 1, Porphyry declares that his treatise “will not bring its exhortation to every livelihood of humans”: not to “those who pursue handicrafts,” “bodily athletes,”²⁵ soldiers, sailors, orators, or “those who have undertaken the political (πραγματικὸν) life (βίον)” (1.27.1)—all aligned with “the one who sleeps,” for whom “one must advise drunkenness and intoxication and repletion” (1.27.2-3). Porphyry will rather save his exhortation for “the person who has taken account of who he is, where he has come from, and where he ought to hasten” and who “assumes things about food and other proper functions (καθήκουσιν) that are removed from those in accordance with other livelihoods” (1.27.1).²⁶ Similarly, in book 2, Porphyry declares, “Abstinence (ἀποχή) from ensouled beings (ἐμψύχων)...is prescribed (παραγγέλλεται) not simply (οὐχ ἀπλῶς) for all human beings (πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις), but for philosophers,” and among them, “much more...for those attaching their happiness (εὐδαιμονίαν) to god and the imitation (μιμήσεως) of god” (2.3.1). A bit later, Porphyry says, “Theophrastus appropriately (εἰκότως) forbids (ἀπαγορεύει) those wishing to be truly pious (τῷ ὄντι

²⁵ As opposed to those would participate in “the Olympics of the soul” (τὰ τῆς ψυχῆς Ὀλύμπια 1.31.3).

²⁶ “Proper functions” is how Long and Sedley render the Stoic technical term (1987, 1:359).

εὐσεβεῖν) from sacrificing ensouled beings (ἔμψυχα)” (2.11.3). Porphyry, one imagines, would wish for all people to be “truly pious” and for no one to succumb to “drunkenness and intoxication and repletion.” Yet the picture is complicated by his rhetoric of exclusion or formulations like “whatever [diet] has been conceded to the many (τοῖς πολλοῖς), one would not concede it also to the best” (4.18.8).

Juxtaposed with the claim that killing animals for food violates justice, the suggestion that Porphyry’s work will “bring its exhortation” only to a small class of philosophers has drawn much attention. Martins observes the “paradox” of casting vegetarianism as “conceived for the philosopher,” while “the ethics that are behind it” would seem to “demand a certain attitude from all people.”²⁷ Sorabji says that “if [Porphyry’s] arguments are sound, they ought to affect the ordinary man.”²⁸ For Steiner, “the prerogatives of the many” to continue eating meat “stand in an irreconcilable tension with the obligations toward animals for which Porphyry builds a case.”²⁹ As Edwards puts it, “The worry is that, if Porphyry believes that it is unjust for humans to kill animals for food because...there is something *about the animals* that makes eating them morally wrong[,] then he ought to think it necessary for *all human beings* to be vegetarian.”³⁰ Edwards herself suggests we can “lay to rest [this] worry” by “realising that, for [Porphyry] it is not the nature of the animals being eaten, but the soul state of the agent doing the eating, that makes eating meat unjust.”³¹ In other words, if we shift our

²⁷ Martins 2015, 96.

²⁸ Sorabji 1993, 182.

²⁹ Steiner 2005, 105.

³⁰ Edwards 2016, 271.

³¹ Edwards 2016, 271-72.

attention from the other-directed principle of concern for animals to the inner-directed principle of concern for one's own soul, we find an escape from a binding universal prohibition against meat-eating. Taking a different tack, a few people have interpreted the restriction of vegetarianism in *Abstinence* to philosophers as less than absolute. Girgenti sees vegetarianism in *Abstinence* as a "recommendation" for laypeople, albeit not "a moral duty," as it is for philosophers and priests.³² Martins similarly observes that "[the] personal effort to do no harm to other living beings is an important part of the philosopher's career in purifying the soul, but at the same time it offers a general ethical premise that can be used by non-philosophers."³³

What is striking in all this is that however strictly or loosely scholars have read the ostensible limitation of vegetarianism to philosophers, the idea that Porphyry privileges purity of the soul over justice for animals has remained an interpretive constant. Dierauer finds that while Porphyry "emphasizes the injustice against animals that is necessarily connected with the enjoyment of flesh," he "rejects flesh eating above all from ascetic-spiritual considerations." Dierauer distinguishes two forms of vegetarianism corresponding, respectively, to justice and purity, one aiming at "the protection of animals"; the other, at "physical, mental, and spiritual well-being."³⁴

Discussing Dierauer's findings, Bouffartigue and Patillon say that despite the "plea for animals" in book 3, Porphyry, "fundamentally belongs to the second group."³⁵ Similarly,

³² Girgenti and Sodano 2005, 41. See also Dombroski (1984, 126), who says that "Porphyry and...perhaps also Plutarch...imply that vegetarianism is a duty for philosophers, but supererogatory for the multitude."

³³ Martins 2018, 97.

³⁴ Dierauer 1977, 286-87.

³⁵ Bouffartigue and Patillon 1979, 2:20n4.

while finding that Porphyrean harmlessness (*ablabeia*) “can provide an argument for moral consideration of nonhumans (and humans as well)” and that “Porphyry does show consideration for the nature of nonhumans and their suffering,” Hornum says that “these concerns are subordinate to the pursuit of human perfection.”³⁶ For Newmyer, “Porphyry’s central objection to a meat diet is the damage it does...to the welfare of the human soul.”³⁷ Going further, Osborne says that this care “for the intellectual well-being of the soul” represents “the predominant argument for vegetarianism in antiquity”—in contrast to “the ethical arguments against cruelty beloved of late-twentieth-century sentiments.”³⁸ Edwards herself concludes that “Plutarch and Porphyry are vegetarians not so much out of concern for the welfare of animals as out of concern for the welfare of human beings—and, in particular, ourselves.”³⁹

³⁶ Hornum 2002, 21 and 27.

³⁷ Newmyer 2006, 98. See also Meredith 1976, 319.

³⁸ Osborne 2007, 226n3.

³⁹ Edwards 2018, 55. As she also puts it, “It is wrong to suppose...that these Platonists are particularly sympathetic toward the animals themselves” (28), and “worries about the animals that are being eaten seem very far from Porphyry’s mind” (51). The idea that Plutarch is sympathetic to animals derives from several works, including *Cleverness* and *On Flesh Eating*. The latter work is often seen as being nuanced or even recanted by other texts of his (*The Dinner of Seven Wise Men* and *Advice on Keeping Well* are discussed in chapter 2, section IVB. Less often mentioned, Plutarch’s *On Chance* [*De fortuna*] encompasses a full-throated celebration of human dominance over animals [98b-f].) A third Plutarchan work in the grouping construed as sympathetic to animals is *Gryllus*, a theriophilic discourse presented in the voice of one of Odysseus’s crew members transformed into a pig by Circe. (“Theriophily” refers to the topos of casting animals as morally superior to humans by virtue of their ostensible closeness to nature.)

The apparent limits placed on Porphyry’s audience raise the further question of whether there is an indifference not just toward animals but to the souls of ordinary people. Some indeed have located a class-based elitism in Porphyry’s treatise and vegetarianism in general. According to Clark, “The pagan ascetic, leading a deliberately simple life, was, like his role models, a member of a social, intellectual, and spiritual elite.”⁴⁰ Johnson says that *Abstinence* “resounds with claims to superiority over the masses” and evinces a “disregard and complete lack of concern for [their] morality and rationality.”⁴¹ Indeed, though Porphyry presents vegetarianism as a matter of simple living, it has been cast in recent times as the province of the affluent.⁴² Porphyry and Plutarch, we can say, do address people who enjoy the “luxury” of refusing some foods—though the cases of those without such a choice are presented as exceptional.⁴³

However, while the demographic exclusions in *Abstinence* have made it possible for many scholars to see justice toward animals as subordinated to personal purity—and moreover to the personal purity of a few—the treatise has strong (and underexamined) countervailing tendencies.⁴⁴ Toward the end of book 3, for example, raising an anti-vegetarian objection (“If everyone should be persuaded by these things, what will happen to us?”), Porphyry responds, “It is clear that we will be happy (εὐδαιμονήσομεν) with injustice (ἀδικίας) banished from human beings and with justice (δικαιοσύνης) being a citizen (πολιτευομένης) among us, just as it is in the heavens” (3.27.8). In a further

⁴⁰ Clark 2000c, 47.

⁴¹ Johnson 2013, 179.

⁴² See, e.g., Osborne 2007, 237-38.

⁴³ See, e.g., *Abst.* 4.21.6.

⁴⁴ I take note of just two salient examples here. For others, see the following chapters.

response to the universalizing objection, in book 4, Porphyry reiterates the desirability, if not the likelihood, of universal abstinence:

No one who came forth, either among [the Samaneans] or among the others spoken of, a sophist “such as mortals now are” among the Greeks, pretended to be puzzled, saying, “If all imitate (μιμήσονται) you, what will happen to us?”... Pythagoras...[said] that if all people become kings, life will be hard to get through, but kingly dominion should not in fact be fled. And with all people being virtuous (σπουδαίων), it is not possible for them to find a pathway to governance in which they reserve merit for virtue (σπουδαιότητι); but no one in fact would be so mad as not to believe it is incumbent on all people to strive to be virtuous (καὶ οὐ δήπου τοσοῦτον ἄν τις μανείη, ὡς μὴ πᾶσιν ἐπιβάλλειν ἡγεῖσθαι σπουδαίοις εἶναι προθυμεῖσθαι). (4.18.4-6)

It would be indeed be madness, Porphyry says, not to aspire to universal virtue—even if its prospects among people “such as [they] now are” appear distant.

Behind Porphyry’s exclusions, one can perceive a rhetorical strategy (again, underexamined). Along with exempla to imitate, there are negative exempla to shun—foremost, “the sleeper.” The claim that a work is not for the intellectually or morally lazy has its own hortatory coloration. It does not presuppose that readers, self-identifying as indolent, will read no further. Though Edwards dismisses as an “unattractive move” the suggestion “that Porphyry is simply not serious about restricting this diet to philosophers,”⁴⁵ she and others do not take account of the way that negative and positive exempla consistently structure Porphyry’s argument, not just in book 3 but throughout

⁴⁵ Edwards 2016, 271n68.

the treatise. In *Abstinence*, the excluded groups—the ordinary, worldly, non-philosophic “many”—serve as negative exempla; the abstinent and partly abstinent philosopher-priests of book 4, as positive ones.⁴⁶ However, neither constitutes an ontological category. All people have the same true self, the realization of which—as with reason in ensouled beings—is a matter of degree, not of kind. Not everyone will achieve Porphyry’s gold standard of full vegetarianism (the standard of the Golden Age)—a necessary step toward that self-realization—but, as he makes clear in multiple ways, including praise even for the partly abstinent, “it is incumbent on all people” to make the effort.

III. Porphyry’s Perspective, and Ours

For most of book 3, Porphyry presents an other-directed argument, not for the benefit of the human soul but for the protection of harmless animals against humans who wish to kill them for food. To read individual purity as Porphyry’s overriding concern has the effect of attenuating these ethical arguments. The same effect emerges from reading them as merely dialectical or otherwise lacking in authority or conviction. The dialectical reading has emerged in part because the largest portion of book 3, which is borrowed from Plutarch and possibly earlier Academic source material, catalogs a variety of arguments for justice toward animals that are formulated in response to objections from Stoics and others.⁴⁷ The relationship between this material and the notion of justice presented programmatically at 3.26.9 as something that “consists in...non-harming” and

⁴⁶ For more on the use of exempla and the rhetoric of imitation in *Abstinence*, see esp. chapter 3.

⁴⁷ See notes 13-14 above and chapter 2, note 75.

“extends (διατείνειν) as far as ensouled beings (ἄχρι τῶν ἐμψύχων),”⁴⁸ then, requires clarification. Although, as we will see, a distinction can be made between different modes of argument, there is a strong basis for viewing the animal-protecting perspective as something the work as a whole supports.

The idea that Porphyry’s arguments in book 3 for reason in animals and, by extension, justice toward them are merely dialectical has been championed most forcefully by G. Fay Edwards. In her view, what she calls “the consensus interpretation” of this material holds that, for Porphyry, “animals are rational and that it is, therefore, unjust to kill them for food.”⁴⁹ Edwards sharply rejects this interpretation—despite acknowledging that it is “well-supported by the text”⁵⁰—because “elsewhere in his corpus Porphyry claims that the nonhuman animals are *irrational*.”⁵¹ As Edwards puts it, “Book 3 does not reflect Porphyry’s own commitments” but rather “constitutes a dialectical attack on the Stoic position” aimed at showing “that the *Stoics* ought to believe” both “that animals are rational, given their theory of rationality” and “that it is unjust for humans to eat animals, given their theory of justice.”⁵² Although Edwards does concede that “Porphyry himself believes that it is unjust for philosophers to eat meat,” she says that he holds this position “without believing that animals are rational.”⁵³ The

⁴⁸ Variants of this formulation are discussed in chapter 1.

⁴⁹ Edwards 2014, 22.

⁵⁰ Edwards 2016, 265.

⁵¹ Edwards 2014, 22. A key exhibit for Edwards in making this argument is *Isagoge*, on which see below.

⁵² Edwards 2016, 263.

⁵³ Edwards 2016, 263.

injustice she speaks of here, moreover, concerns the inner state of the eater's soul.⁵⁴ As we have seen, she maintains that Porphyry's vegetarianism is not based on concern for animals.⁵⁵ The outcome is that even while she separates herself from what she labels "the consensus position," Edwards aligns herself ultimately with a different consensus—the one finding that Porphyry places purity over justice, the self-directed principle over the other-directed principle. In other words, her argument that Porphyry does not believe in the rationality of animals ultimately brings her to the same interpretive destination as earlier scholars: a diminishment or bracketing of the justice argument.

There are a number of general objections one could raise to Edwards's interpretation of *Abstinence* that relate to the text itself, starting with the question of why, if animals are to be taken as irrational, Porphyry never says so in *Abstinence*—aside from the occasional use of a stock phrase.⁵⁶ Nor does Edwards explain why committing the Stoics to a position on animals and diet to which "Porphyry is not himself...committed"⁵⁷ would be a more urgent priority in a treatise on vegetarianism than making a substantive ethical argument. We might consider a contrast drawn by Labarrière regarding a set of arguments used against Stoics first by Academic skeptics and later by Plutarch and

⁵⁴ While observing that "being just, for Porphyry, requires not harming harmless *animate* beings," Edwards quickly clarifies that for Porphyry "the justice of an action is determined by reference to the *internal psychic state of the agent*—and not...by reference to the psychological facts about the patient" (2016, 270-71).

⁵⁵ Edwards 2016, 263.

⁵⁶ On Porphyry's use of the phrase "irrational animals," see note 62 below.

⁵⁷ Edwards 2016, 288.

others.⁵⁸ Although “the animal cause...could be reinforced” through such arguments, as Labarrière says, that cause “probably was not the Skeptics’ own, since they professed no doctrine.” However, in the case of Plutarch, Labarrière says, “it would be reductive to read his treatises on animals as mere anti-Stoic treatises.”⁵⁹ It would perhaps be even more reductive of the discourse in *Abstinence* book 3 to cast it simply as an attempt to “trap the Stoics.”⁶⁰ While focusing on book 3, Edwards has little to say about the other books of the treatise. These books, however, in their thematic patterns and repeated defenses of animals, connect with what Porphyry says in book 3.

While Edwards’s argument depends on certain assumptions about Porphyry’s philosophical commitments as a Platonist, I look to the structure of ideas presented by the text itself, a structure whose contours I believe can be found in a discourse of truth that starts with Porphyry’s assimilation of his own position to “truth” (τὸ ἀληθές) (1.3.2). By “discourse of truth,” then, I mean a complex of “truth” expressions such as words with the root ἀληθ- and variants of τῷ ὄντι and ὄντως, as in the phrase “true justice” (ὄντως...δικαιοσύνη 3.27.1). Porphyry uses such “truth” expressions for metaphysical

⁵⁸ The others, as previously noted, include Porphyry, Sextus Empiricus, and Philo. See, again, notes 13-14 above and chapter 2, note 75.

⁵⁹ Labarrière 1997, 266-67. Plutarch does take aim at Stoics in *On Flesh Eating* within the second half of the extant text (implicitly in 997e-98a; explicitly in 999a, where the text breaks off), but otherwise leaves them unmentioned. The Stoics also figure in *Cleverness*, e.g., in Soclarus’s discourse and the final sentence of the work.

⁶⁰ According to Edwards (2014, 41), “Porphyry’s argument in book 3...is intended to trap the Stoics into admitting that justice requires vegetarianism *according to their very own conception of justice* by offering evidence for animal rationality.”

ideas—true existence (1.29.2-3, 1.53.2, 2.43.3), the true self (1.29.4, 3.27.6), “the things that truly belong to us” (1.30.4), the true parent (4.20.16), true salvation (1.56.2, 2.35.2), and true wealth (3.27.5)—as well as for the true philosopher (2.49.2), true philosophy (4.8.5), and a life directed toward or governed by truth (1.1.3, 1.31.2, 4.13.9). He also speaks of “the truth” concerning animals” (3.2.4, 3.6.7, 3.24.5) and says that nonviolent sacrificial practices have been “preserved like traces of the truth” (2.21.4). Most strikingly, near the beginning of book 3, he declares to be true (ἀληθῆ) and also Pythagorean” the opinion (δόξαν) “that every soul (ψυχὴν) in which there is a share (μέτεστιν) of perception (αἰσθήσεως) and memory (μνήμης) is rational (λογικὴν)” (3.1.4)—that is, every animal is rational.⁶¹

At the same time, because this discourse of truth is sometimes woven together with the sort of language that invites Edwards’s dialectical reading, it is important to consider how the two modes of rhetorical framing may demarcate different registers of Porphyry’s argument. For example, in the passage just cited, Porphyry hints at both the separation and overlap that characterize his use of the borrowed material—Plutarchan or otherwise—that constitutes most of book 3:

Since our opponents have said that [justice] ought to extend (παρατείνειν) to (πρὸς) similar beings (ὅμοια) alone and on account of this they cross off animals

⁶¹ The adjective ὀρθός (“correct,” “true”) also contributes to the discourse of truth. In *Abstinence*, Porphyry uses it to refer to correct or true ideas about gods and the divine (2.40.2, 2.45.4, 2.58.3, 2.60.4) and the “correct path” of the philosopher (2.61.6). Cf., e.g., “lovers (ἐραστάς) of the true (ἀληθινῆς) wisdom (σοφίας)” and “the correct (ὀρθῆς) philosophy” in *Marc.* 1 and “possession of the things that are truly (ὄντως) good” in *Marc.* 5.

that are “without reason” (τὰ ἄλογα...τῶν ζώων),⁶² come let us present the opinion (δόξαν) that is true (ἀληθῆ) and also Pythagorean, showing that every soul (ψυχὴν) in which there is a share (μέτεστιν) of perception (αἰσθήσεως) and memory (μνήμης) is rational (λογικὴν). With that proven (ἀποδειχθέντος), we will appropriately (εἰκότως), even according to them, extend (παρατενοῦμεν) justice (δίκαιον) to (πρὸς) every animal (ζῷον). (3.1.4)

We find in these two sentences a shifting between two possible argumentative registers: on one hand, ostensibly answering opponents in their own terms (“since our opponents have said that [justice] ought to extend to similar beings alone”) and, on the other, taking positions (“come let us demonstrate the opinion that is true and also Pythagorean”). By identifying as “true and also Pythagorean” the opinion that “every soul in which there is a share of perception and memory is rational,” Porphyry invites us to think that the mission of much of book 3 is not *merely* a dialectical engagement with a particular line of argument against extending justice to animals. Rather, since that principle is “true and also Pythagorean,” we are led to understand it as part of the belief system presented by

⁶² The phrasing, which, through a partitive genitive, presents the irrational as constituting a portion, not the entire set, of animals, presumably nods to opponents’ construal of humans as the only rational animals. Where the stock phrase “irrational animals” (ἄλογα ζῷα) and variants appear in *Abstinence*, we can most plausibly read “irrational” as set off with scare quotes, as it needs to be here; such phrases should not in themselves be taken as aligning Porphyry with the view that animals are without reason (see Clark 2000a, 144n205). We also see nonhuman animals referred to as “the other animals” (τὰ λοιπὰ τῶν ζώων and τῶν λοιπῶν ζώων), with nine of 11 occurrences in Theophrastean passages—and, with programmatic frequency, as “ensouled beings.”

the text.⁶³ Yet by adding, “With that proven, we will appropriately, even according to them, extend justice to every animal,” Porphyry suggests that rationality per se is not necessarily the preferred basis for making this extension. It is a point he will reinforce when he refers to “those who derive (συνιστάντας) justice (δικαιοσύνην) from rationality (τοῦ λογικοῦ)” (3.12.1) and when, again, he attributes to opponents the idea that “justice (δικαιοσύνης) is for (πρὸς) rational beings (λογικὰ)” (3.18.1). Thus in one discursive register, Porphyry responds to arguments while borrowing from other sources, such as Plutarch and Theophrastus; in another, he appears to offer his own observations. In *either* register, however, we are invited to think of animals as, in some sense, rational and proper objects of justice concerns. As we read in a terse observation about the killing of animals for food—offered prior to an extended Plutarchan excerpt—“So the injustice (τὸ ἄδικον) in these things is great (πολὺ)” (3.18.2).

In our negotiation of the registers of “truth” and dialectical response, much depends on how we understand “reason.” Edwards emphasizes a distinction between what she characterizes as a Stoic notion of reason (as “a collection of perceptually acquired conceptions”) and a Platonic/Porphyrean notion of it as a faculty that is constituted by “innate knowledge of the Platonic Forms” or that amounts to “something like the possession of an intellect which is able to contemplate the Platonic Forms.”⁶⁴ For Edwards, this distinction entails a denial of reason, as Porphyry understands it, to

⁶³ See also 3.2.4: “If it is necessary to speak the truth (τάληθές), not only is *logos* observed in simply all animals, but in many of them (ἐν πολλοῖς δὲ αὐτῶν) it also holds foundations (ὑποβολὰς) for perfection (πρὸς τὸ τέλειον).”

⁶⁴ See Edwards 2014, 41-42; 2016, 287; and 2018, 44

animals.⁶⁵ In answer to Edwards’s positing of a different, higher standard for reason that Porphyry, as a Platonist, is bound to subscribe to, we could say that in *Abstinence* Porphyry *does* endorse the idea that animals have reason *as it is described in that work*. Crucially, this notion of reason is one that casts the difference (διαφορὰ) between humans and animals as lying “in the more and less (μᾶλλον καὶ ἥττον), not in complete deprivation (στερήσει), and not in absolutely having (ἔχειν), on the one hand, and not having on the other” (3.8.7).⁶⁶ I say “crucially” because the discourse of “more and less” is not limited in this text to the discussion of reason but extends to two of its core (and interconnected) concerns: abstinence and assimilation to god. Among the exempla of book 4, abstinence is noticeably a matter of “more and less” (i.e., something observed in varying degrees). And even “assimilation to god” is presented as a goal to be achieved not absolutely but “as much as possible” (ὡς ἔνι μάλιστα) (3.27.1).⁶⁷ Like the discourse

⁶⁵ In a similar vein, Martins (2018, 192) observes, “The biggest difference for Porphyry between humans and other animals is that humans live according to intellect [*nous*],” through which “they are able to make decisions that require moral insights.” Although Martins agrees with Edwards that Porphyry denies reason to animals (see, e.g., 2018, 151), he arrives at a more other-directed reading. By “analyzing the terminology of the dynamic process of extending justice to other beings” in *Abstinence* (157), and observing that a lack of reason in animals “does not mean that only humans can benefit from justice” (192), Martins, at least, moves justice out into the world beyond the bounds of the human soul.

⁶⁶ For μᾶλλον καὶ ἥττον used in reference to animal intelligence, see also Plut. *Soll.* 963a and *Esu* 992d.

⁶⁷ The contrasting perspectives on reason—Porphyry’s “more and less” versus the Stoics “having” or “not having”—could be seen as analogous to their perspectives on virtue. As Porphyry notes in his commentary *On Aristotle’s Categories*, Stoics “were of the belief” that “some states (ἔξεις) and those such as to be in accordance with them...do not admit of the more and less (τὸ μᾶλλον καὶ τὸ ἥττον), as with virtues and those such as to be in accordance with them” (*in Cat.* 137.29-138.4 Busse).

of truth, these strong thematic connections invite us to take the argument for reason in animals as more than dialectical.

We might further say that the dialectical language that Edwards focuses on could be an expression not of a refusal to grant reason to animals but rather of a resistance to making “reason” as such the criterion for ethical consideration. As the reference to the “true and also Pythagorean” opinion (3.1.4) and later discussion make clear, Porphyry casts the faculty he calls “reason” as inseparable from perception—and ultimately from the condition of having an ensouled body. In saying that “every soul in which there is a share of perception and memory is rational” rather than, for example, “every soul that is rational has perception and memory,” he arguably disrupts the conventional Aristotelian *scala naturae*.⁶⁸ Rather than presenting a hierarchy of soul elements or a division or apportionment of mental functions that separates nonhuman animals from reason and attributes it uniquely to humans, Porphyry, in *Abstinence* at least, consistently treats such functions as parts of a unified package grounded in the experience of having a body, that is, of being an animal.⁶⁹ The language that distances Porphyry from reason as a criterion

⁶⁸ In Aristotle’s conception of the soul, there are five cumulative elements: the nutritive, the only element possessed by plants; the sentient and appetitive, which all animals have; the locomotive, which some animals have; and reason, which, according to Aristotle, only humans possess. As Peck (1961, 34-35) explains, “The different ‘parts’ or ‘faculties’ of Soul can be arranged in a series in a definite order, so that the possession of any one of them implies the possession of all those which precede it in the list.” See Arist. *De an.* 414a29-15a14. For the Stoics the *scala* concerns the different ways in which the *τόνος* (“tension”) of different types of entities informs their portion of *pneuma* (“fiery breath”) and thus holds them together and makes them what they are: *ἔξις* for inanimate objects, *φύσις* for plants, *ψυχή* for animals, and *λογικὴ ψυχή* for humans (see *SVF* 2.458 = Philo *Deus* 35).

⁶⁹ For a full discussion of these points, see chapter 2.

for moral consideration may, then, reflect the premise that possession of an ensouled body offers a more fundamental criterion. Edwards’s formulation of an “ethical thesis” that she says book 3 offers only dialectically (“If and only if X is rational, it is unjust for other rational beings to kill X for food”)⁷⁰ does not capture book 3’s capacious concern for the avoidance of harm against harmless animals, a concern grounded in their possession of life and body—and only secondarily in their possession of reason. Conversely, the pregnant Platonic sense of reason as something implicated with the Forms and divorced from perception and the senses—“a high bar for what constitutes rationality,” as Edwards puts it⁷¹—is not presented in *Abstinence* as a criterion for moral consideration. Reason in this Platonic sense is relevant, of course, for humans—it is what they must use to orient themselves toward true existence, their true self, the things that truly belong to them, true salvation, and all else that is true in the metaphysical sense. But, in the schema of the text, that higher form of reason is not what is required of nonhuman animals to make killing and eating them an act of injustice.

An important basis for a dialectical reading of *Abstinence*’s discourse concerning justice, reason, and animals lies in external texts, as we see in Edwards’s use of *Isagoge*, also known as *Introduction to the Categories of Aristotle*.⁷² In that work Porphyry says:

⁷⁰ Edwards 2016, 264.

⁷¹ Edwards 2016, 287.

⁷² Latin title: *Introductio sive quinque voces*. For another argument made by virtue of an external text, see Martins (2018, 137), who points to passages in *Sent.* 12 and 43 “in which Porphyry represents the ontological distinction between humans and other living beings” by speaking of different meanings of the word ζωή (“life”) for a plant, an ensouled being (ἐμψύχου), and an intellectual being (νοεποῦ) (*Sent.* 12) and by criticizing the idea that *phantasia* in a rational animal (λογικῶ ζῴῳ) equals intellection (νόησις)

Animal (τὸ ζῷον) is divided (τέμνεται) by the *differentia* (διαφορᾷ) of the rational (λογικοῦ) and non-rational (ἄλόγου), and in turn by the *differentia* of the mortal (θνητοῦ) and immortal (ἀθανάτου). But the *differentiae* of the mortal and of the rational are productive (συστατικαί) of the human (ἄνθρώπου); those of the rational and of the immortal, of god (θεοῦ); and those of the non-rational and of the mortal, of the non-rational animals (ἄλόγων ζῴων). (10.10-14 Busse)

Here, then, is a passage in which Porphyry seems to take for granted rationality as a defining difference between human and nonhuman animals—in contrast to what he says in *Abstinence*. In his commentary on *Isagoge*, Jonathan Barnes, deferring to *Abstinence*, argues that Porphyry does, nonetheless, believe in animal reason, and, in Edwards’s account, Barnes tries to resolve this discrepancy through “the distinction between specific and non-specific predication,” a “solution” that, she says, “must ultimately be rejected.”⁷³ The prime reason for Edwards’s rejection is her reading of the passage above—the fact that it casts the non-rational and the mortal as “productive” of “the non-rational animals,” i.e., as essential and *not* accidental.⁷⁴ One could perhaps say that the conventionality of the stock phrase “irrational animals” extends here to the distinction between rational man

(*Sent.* 43.36-40). (For more on *phantasia* and other psychological faculties as they relate to reason, see chapter 2, section II.)

⁷³ See Barnes 2003, 110-11 and 173, and Edwards 2014, 22, citing Barnes’s observation (2003, 162) that his cat “is eminently rational—but not specifically so.” Barnes’s idea, as Edwards (2014, 33-34) understands it, is that “the predicate rational is...*specifically* predicated of man...and *non-specifically* predicated of other animals,” i.e., rationality is “an *essential* feature of man” but “an *accidental* feature of nonhuman animals.”

⁷⁴ Edwards 2014, 36.

and non-rational animal.⁷⁵ Or one could put some distance between Porphyry and the content on the basis of its framing. As Barnes observes apropos of Porphyry's sources, "He says that he is going to set down what 'the old masters, and especially the Peripatetics among them' (1.14-16) have said...and he frequently refers to what 'they' say or think."⁷⁶ One could also say that as a sort of textbook, *Isagoge* is less revealing of Porphyry's beliefs than a work of moral persuasion such as *Abstinence*. Alternatively, one could acknowledge that, since the Categories have metaphysical import, *Isagoge* is not simply a "logical" work and that the examples of *differentiae* that Porphyry offers are connected not just with conventional language but with a sense of what actually distinguishes human and nonhuman animals.

However, while arguments that look to external texts are aimed at determining what Porphyry *believes*, my strategy is to privilege a particular text, Porphyry's *On Abstinence*. In doing so, I do not wish to claim that the perspective on animals it presents is inherently more "Porphyrean" than the one seen in *Isagoge*. Its primacy is my own construction as a reader. And while I believe one can discern, especially in book 3, an

⁷⁵ On ἄλογα ζῷα, see note 62 above. Against the idea that Porphyry in his logical treatises "simply made use of standard examples of specific differences that were familiar to his audience...without intending to commit himself to [them]," Edwards cites only a fragmentary quotation in which Porphyry "recommends using examples in introductory works which are 'known to all and agreed by all in common' [70f Smith]." More generally, Edwards (2014, 37-38) cites Chiaradonna (2008) in opposition to Ebbesen (1990, 144) and Lloyd (1990, 37) to reject the idea that "as treatises on logic, not psychology," *Isagoge* and Porphyry's *On Aristotle's Categories* "need not express Porphyry's considered psychological views."

⁷⁶ Barnes 2003, xviii-ix. See, e.g., *Isag.* 11.20-12.1 Busse: "They also outline (ὑπογράφουσι)"; "They also explain (ἀποδιδόασι)."

intention to argue for reason in and justice toward animals (rather than merely present a dialectical argument for these principles)—my claim is not so much about the *intention* behind this particular text as it is about the *effects* of reading it. My reading is intertextual to the extent that various texts by Porphyry and others illuminate or elaborate on the ideas *Abstinence* expresses. It is also literary and intratextual in its attentiveness to the multivalence of words and the resonances between them. For example, ἀκρασία is “lack of self-control” on the surface, but, by virtue of homonymy and the gravity of the theme in the work, also “bad mixture.” Likewise μίμησις (“imitation”) resonates with μῆξις (“mixture”) not because Porphyry puts the words next to each other but because the two concepts, both highly prominent in the work, can be said to exert an attraction on each other. Though intentionalist language is difficult to avoid, the Porphyrean perspective that I speak of should be taken as an expression of a point of view that one can construct from this particular text, with all its borrowings and variation. The Porphyry of this dissertation is, in other words, decisively the Porphyry of *On Abstinence*. Such an approach is called for, in my opinion, as a response to Edwards’s location of an authentic Porphyry outside the text who is indifferent to animals, and to the general tendency to diminish the work’s call for justice by stripping it of authority and conviction.

Beyond appeals to external texts, the tendency to diminish the justice content of *Abstinence* can take the form of attributing it, like Plutarch’s *On Flesh Eating*, to a less mature phase or, contrary to the work’s alleged elitism, casting a key passage as geared toward a popular audience. Gilhus, for example, says, “It is interesting...that some of the authors who wrote so eloquently in defense of animals and/or a vegetarian lifestyle...in later life gave up at least some of their earlier views.” Such, she says, “was probably the

case with Seneca as well as with Plutarch and Porphyry,” who “may in his youth have defended the position that animals had reason, a position he later abandoned.”⁷⁷ Speaking of *On Flesh Eating*, Helmbold observes that it “in spite of the exaggerated and calculated rhetoric, these fragments probably depict faithfully a foible of Plutarch’s early manhood,” of which, he says, “there is little trace...in his later life.”⁷⁸ As for Theophrastus’s *On Piety*, a major source of *Abstinence*, as we have seen, Dierauer says that it “seems to be an exoteric work,” which means, he says, that “when Theophrastus spoke of the kinship between man and animal, he did not wish to make a strictly scientific statement, but rather to appeal to feeling” in order “to stand for the purity of the sacrifice and fight the bloody animal sacrifices.”⁷⁹ In their discussion of *Abst.* 2.23-24, Bouffartigue and Patillon say that Dierauer “very correctly points out...that certain arguments invoked in [*On Piety*], intended to convince a wide public, are able to appeal to popular sentiment without doctrinally engaging their author.”⁸⁰ Indeed, in Bouffartigue and Patillon’s view, rationalism is “terrain [on which] the adversaries of vegetarianism are more at ease than its partisans.”⁸¹

⁷⁷ Gilhus 2006, 77.

⁷⁸ Helmbold 1957, 537, citing the tolerance for flesh eating in Plut. *De San.* 132a, on which see chapter 2, section IVB. See also Dalby 2003, 341. However, as Bouffartigue (2012, xxix) notes regarding “contradictions” in Plutarch’s vast corpus, “Seeking the solution in an evolution of Plutarch’s thought...appears hopeless given the difficulties...in trying to situate the writings of the *Moralia* chronologically.”

⁷⁹ Dierauer 1977, 177.

⁸⁰ Bouffartigue and Patillon 1979, 2:23-24. See also Fortenbaugh 2011, 569.

⁸¹ Bouffartigue and Patillon 1977, 1:lxviii.

The fact that arguments favoring vegetarianism and animals are taken to be merely dialectical or otherwise less philosophical, rational, or even mature than opposing arguments invites reflection. Given the incalculable investments in holding onto what is customary and deeply ingrained in us, including the sense of human supremacy and uniqueness,⁸² it is at least conceivable that a vegetarian’s perspective is not less conducive to a fair reading of *Abstinence* than an omnivore’s. When, in their discussion of 3.26.9, Bouffartigue and Patillon use as a lemma the phrase ἡ δὲ δικαιοσύνη ἐν τῷ ἀφεκτικῷ... (“Justice consists in abstaining...” in their rendering), their omission of what follows—καὶ ἀβλαβεῖ κεῖται παντὸς ὄτουοῦν τοῦ μὴ βλάπτοντος (“and in the non-harming of anyone at all who does not harm”)—appears significant. In their words, “This abstinence (ἀποχή) is the central image of the treatise, linked to the concern to safeguard purity.”⁸³ Although abstinence and purity are indeed central here, leaving out “harmlessness” has the effect, like so much commentary on this work, of attenuating or even erasing the other-directedness that is as much a part of it as the quest for purity.

In the chapters that follow, I aim to capture the fullness of Porphyry’s text, to read it sympathetically. My approach, then, is not to analyze Porphyry’s arguments for their validity and for the truth of their conclusions, though I do offer criticisms along the way. Nor do I wish to present my personal perspective on the positions conveyed in the text, whether they concern animals and vegetarianism or asceticism, celibacy, and flight from the body. I approach the text as a work of moral suasion and, in a sense, a work of

⁸² Porphyry himself suggests that the Stoic denial of rationality to animals is “driven by self-love (φιλαυτίας)” (3.2.4).

⁸³ Bouffartigue and Patillon 1979, 2:252n1.

literature, and I believe that doing so brings out a richness and a thematic unity that is otherwise missed. In Porphyry's treatise, a discourse of "more and less" regarding reason in animals is consistent with the "more and less" of abstinence itself among the work's priestly and philosophical exempla and the results, "more and less" successful, of assimilating oneself to god "as much as possible." The way the work complements necessity in its various forms with an optimistic discourse of possibility is part of a universalism that lurks behind the limitations that Porphyry places on his audience, limitations that I argue have been taken too much at face value. I will expand on these ideas and others while considering how Porphyry treats justice as a relationship and a virtue (chapter 1) consisting in harmlessness toward ensouled beings (chapter 2), and purity as a condition consisting in the "good" mixing of like with like and achievable through abstinence and asceticism (chapter 3). I will also consider how self- and other-directed principles play out in Porphyry's metaphysics and theory of the soul (chapter 4); and how his theory of piety is mapped out in his theology, demonology, and aetiology of sacrifice (chapter 5). Overall, I hope to call renewed attention to Porphyry's push to extend justice beyond the boundary of the human, an impetus that remains to this day as peculiar as it is familiar—and still, more than 17 centuries later, as likely to discomfit as it is to inspire philosopher and layperson alike.

Chapter 1: Justice as a Relationship

I. Introduction

While book 3 of *On Abstinence* is preoccupied with justice for animals based on their intrinsic qualities of mind and body, it is not until chapter 26 that Porphyry elaborates on the nature of justice. As he does so, his discourse encompasses both the other-directed and the self-directed.

ἡ δὲ δικαιοσύνη ἐν τῷ ἀφεκτικῷ καὶ ἀβλαβεῖ κεῖται παντὸς ὅτουοῦν τοῦ μὴ βλάπτοντος. καὶ οὕτω γε νοεῖται ὁ δίκαιος...ὡς διατείνειν τὴν δικαιοσύνην καὶ ἄχρι τῶν ἐμψύχων κειμένην ἐν τῷ ἀβλαβεῖ. διὸ καὶ ἡ οὐσία αὐτῆς ἐν τῷ τὸ λογιστικὸν ἄρχειν τοῦ ἀλόγου, ἔπεσθαι δὲ τὸ ἄλογον. ἄρχοντος γὰρ τούτου, τοῦ δ' ἐπομένου, πᾶσα ἀνάγκη ἀβλαβῆ εἶναι πρὸς πᾶν ὅτιοῦν ἄνθρωπον. συνεσταλμένων γὰρ τῶν παθῶν καὶ τῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν καὶ ὀργῶν μεμαρασμένων, τοῦ δὲ λογισμοῦ τὴν οἰκείαν ἔχοντος ἀρχὴν, εὐθὺς ἢ ὁμοίωσις ἔπεται ἢ πρὸς τὸ κρεῖττον. τὸ δὲ ἐν τῷ παντὶ κρεῖττον πάντως ἦν ἀβλαβές...

Justice (δικαιοσύνη) consists in (ἐν...κεῖται) abstinence (τῷ ἀφεκτικῷ) and in the non-harming (ἀβλαβεῖ) of anyone at all who does not harm (βλάπτοντος). And the just man (δίκαιος) thinks this way, at least...that justice, since it consists in (κειμένην ἐν) harmlessness, extends as far as (ἄχρι) ensouled beings (ἐμψύχων). For this reason (διὸ καὶ) the essence (οὐσία) of [justice (δικαιοσύνη)] is in the rational (λογιστικὸν) governing (ἄρχειν) the irrational (ἀλόγου), and the irrational obeying. For (γὰρ) with the one governing and the other obeying, there is a complete necessity for a human being to be harmless (ἀβλαβῆ) toward anything whatsoever. For (γὰρ) with the passions restrained and desires and anger

extinguished, and the reasoning power (λογισμοῦ) holding its appropriate (οἰκείαν) sovereignty (ἀρχήν), assimilation to the Greater (ὁμοίωσις...πρὸς τὸ κρεῖττον) follows immediately. And the Greater in the universe is absolutely harmless... (3.26.9-11)

In the first part of the passage, in keeping with all that precedes it, justice is other-directed and extended toward animals, as it “consists in” abstaining from eating them and, more generally, not harming them. In the second part of the passage, however, Porphyry characterizes justice in a self-directed manner that corresponds, as Sorabji notes, to two characteristically Platonist definitions: “an inner psychological state in which each part of the soul does its own job, with reason in command, and alternatively...an assimilation of oneself to God.”¹ What is notable here, though, is not so much the turn from an other-directed to a self-directed notion of justice as the tight connection Porphyry draws between them. “Justice...consists in (ἐν...κεῖται) harmlessness,” Porphyry says, and it is for *this* reason (διὸ καὶ) that “the essence of [justice] is in the rational governing the irrational.” The two γὰρ clauses that follow conceptualize this connection. With reason in charge, “there is a complete necessity for a human being to be harmless,”² because with passions, desires, and anger restrained or extinguished, and, again, with reason in charge, there is immediate assimilation to “the Greater in the universe,” which is itself “absolutely harmless.” One could say that the

¹ Sorabji 1993, 155. For justice as the correct division of labor within the soul, see Pl. *Rep.* 441e. For the concept of assimilation to god, see Pl. *Tht.* 176b, discussed in chapter 4.

² Cf. Pl. *Rep.* 335d, quoted by Porphyry at 2.41.2: “As Plato says, ‘Cooling is not done by heat but by its opposite’ and similarly ‘harm is not done by the just man.’”

notion of “assimilation to god” (here rendered as “assimilation to the Greater”)³ epitomizes the joining of self- and other-directed principles, a joining of purity and justice. The work on one’s self that puts reason in charge makes one internally just and assimilates one to the Greater, which is “absolutely harmless” (3.26.11), but a harmless stance in itself also contributes to the soul state necessary to make that assimilation happen.⁴

I will have more to say about assimilation to god through virtue and contemplation in chapter 4, but for now I will focus, as book 3 does, on justice as an other-directed principle. First, considering it as a relationship—a being-toward (πρὸς) another, as it were—I will explore the implications of inclusion in and exclusion from that relationship and how Porphyry negotiates the concept of “use.” Turning to foundational ideas of justice, I will examine how Porphyry strives to push moral concern beyond the human in response to Stoic *oikeiosis*, Epicurean contractarianism and utility, natural law, and several other notions of justice. I end by turning back to the inner state of the moral agent, considering justice as a virtue. Here too we will see the inseparability of harmlessness and inner justice—and the necessity of the former for the latter.

³ In addition to ὁμοίωσις πρὸς θεὸν (“assimilation to god” 3.26.13) and ὁμοίωσις πρὸς τὸ κρεῖττον (“assimilation to the Greater” 3.26.10), variants include οἰκειώσις πρὸς τὸ θεῖον (“appropriation to the divine” 2.45.2, 4.9.1), θεῶ...τινί...οἰκειοῦσθαι (“appropriation to a god” 1.57.2), and μίμησις τοῦ θεοῦ (“imitation of god” 2.3.1).

⁴ As Martins (2018, 97) observes, “By cultivating an attitude that is nonviolent toward other beings, one has the possibility of ‘becoming more like God’..., and this is precisely what links the relationship to other living beings with personal spiritual ascension.”

II. Justice and Its Absence

In an early passage of *Abstinence* Porphyry summarizes one of the lines of argument against extending justice to animals and, in so doing, maps out the nature of the justice relationship:

Our opponents say that justice (δικαιοσύνην) is mixed up (συγχεῖσθαι) and motionless things are moved if we extend (τείνωμεν) justice (δίκαιον) not to (πρὸς) the rational (λογικὸν) alone but also to the irrational (ἄλογον), and if we do not only consider humans and gods as “belonging” (προσῆκοντας) but also have an inclusive attitude (οἰκείως...ἔχοντες) toward (πρὸς) the other beasts (ἄλλα θηρία), which do not at all belong (μηδὲν...προσῆκοντα) with us,⁵ and if we do not use (χρῶμενοι) some for labor and some for food while considering them alien (ἔκφυλα), deprived of the rights (ἄτιμα) of community (κοινωνίας) just as they are of the rights of citizenship (πολιτείας). For the person treating (χρῶμενος) even them just like humans, sparing (φειδόμενος) and not harming (βλάπτων) them, attaching to justice (δικαιοσύνη) that which it cannot bear, both destroys its power and ruins the appropriate (οἰκεῖον) by means of the alien (ἄλλοτριῶ). For either injustice (ἀδικεῖν) becomes necessary for us if we do not spare them (ἀφειδοῦσιν)—or, if we do not use them (χρωμένοις), living becomes

⁵ Regarding ἄλλα θηρία (“other beasts”), θηρία, referring to wild animals, is more pejorative than ζῷα. As Clark (2000a, 124n18) notes, Nauck emends ἄλλα as ἄλογα (“irrational”)—assuming perhaps that humans do not belong in the category of θηρία.

impossible (ἀδύνατον) and resourceless (ἄπορον), and we will, in a way, live the life (βίον) of beasts (θηρίων) by giving up the use (χρείας) of beasts. (1.4.1-4)⁶

Porphyrus's opponents' anxiety about the consequences of, as they put it, “extend[ing] justice (δίκαιον)...to (πρὸς) the irrational (ἄλογον)” points to the idea of justice as a relationship with a particular reach, valid within a circle of inclusion. The frequent occurrence of τείνω and compounds in *Abstinence* creates a sense of this spatial dimension of justice.⁷ The combination of δίκαιον and πρὸς, in turn, goes back to Aristotle, who writes in *Nicomachean Ethics* (1161a36-38), “There is no friendship (φιλία) toward (πρὸς) the unensouled (ἄψυχα) and no justice (δίκαιον), but neither [are there such things] toward (πρὸς) a horse or cow, or toward (πρὸς) a slave as a slave.” The phrase “no justice toward” came to be associated with the Stoics,⁸ who, along with the

⁶ A verbatim quotation from Plut. *Soll.* 964a begins with “For either injustice (ἀδικεῖν) becomes necessary...”

⁷ In a section of his monograph on *Abstinence*, entitled “The Scope and Limits of Justice: Spatial Terminology and Ethics,” Martins (2018, 165-76) charts the use of these verbs, including τείνω (1.4.1), διατείνω (3.26.9), ἐκτείνω (3.12.1), ἐπιτείνω (1.12.5), παρατείνω (3.1.4, 3.18.2, 3.27.2), and παρεκτείνω (3.26.5). He also draws attention to “line” words, such as περιγράφω at 3.26.7 (2018, 181), which generates an image, unfavorably described by Porphyry, of justice circumscribed within the circle of humankind. According to Martins (2018, 175), “Porphyry is the only author in Greek literature who used the metaphor of extending justice to other beings in a coherent terminology.”

⁸ See Plut. *Esu* 999a-b and *Soll.* 969b and D.L. 7.129: “It is the opinion of [the Stoics] that there is no justice (μηδὲν...δίκαιον) toward (πρὸς) the other animals (ἄλλα ζῷα) because of the dissimilarity (ἀνομοιότητα).” For similar phrasing, cf. Sext. *M.* 9.130 and Cic. *Fin.* 3.20.67. Augustine uses Jesus's treatment of the Gadarene swine as evidence that there is “no relationship of justice” (*nullam...societatem iuris*) toward animals—or trees, for that matter (*Mor.* 2.17.54).

Epicureans defended this exclusion, as Sorabji observes, “by making...animals’ supposed lack of rationality the ground.”⁹ Whether denied or granted, δίκαιον in this formulation is construed as the substance of a relationship, as in most of the nearly 150 instances of δίκαιον and related words appearing in *Abstinence*,¹⁰ often accompanied by πρὸς—a preposition that, in its own right, conveys the idea of extension.¹¹

Just as “justice” is contained in its negation (opponents speak of οὐδὲν or μηδὲν δίκαιον), the passage as a whole, an argument for the denial of justice toward animals, reveals what justice entails for those who are included as well as what its absence means for those who are not. In the first case, individuals are respected,¹² spared, thought of as belonging or appropriate (προσῆκοντας, οἰκεῖον); in the second, they are used, harmed,

⁹ Sorabji 1996, 327.

¹⁰ Here I mean δικ- and ἀδικ- words. Although both δικαιοσύνη and δίκαιον are translated as “justice” in the passage above (*Abst.* 1.4.1-4), the former tends to capture a virtue (understood as an internal disposition), the latter a relationship, albeit with a certain amount of overlap. See “Justice as a Virtue” below.

¹¹ Variant prepositions include ἄχρι and μέχρι.

¹² I derive the notion of respect (εὐλάβεια) toward one’s fellows from a similar passage (1.5.2): “What sort of work remains for us...on land, what sort on the sea, what productive craft, what order in our way of living, if we are disposed harmlessly (ἀβλαβῶς) to animals as we are to those of the same species (ὁμόφυλα) and we deal with them (προσφερόμεθα) with respect (εὐλαβείας)?” Cf. *Abst.* 1.1.1, where Porphyry refers to the “respect” (εὐλαβείας), or perhaps “reverence,” he and Firmus had “practiced toward those ancient and godfearing (θεοφόβους) men who taught these things,” i.e., abstinence. (On the apparent reference to Pythagoras and Empedocles, see Clark 2000a, 121n2.) In *Abstinence*, εὐλάβεια and related words (εὐλαβέομαι, εὐλαβής, εὐλαβητέον) are generally informed by a sense of caution, sometimes religious caution, often shading into fear. See, e.g., 2.9.2, 2.9.3, 2.43.1, and 2.44.3.

and thought of as “alien” (ἔκφυλα, ἀλλοτρίω). The dichotomy of being respected/being used is bridged, or perhaps troubled, by χρᾶμαι, which is employed in two strikingly different senses in the passage: in the positive sense of “treat,” as in “treat as a friend,” the word’s dative objects are community members;¹³ in the sense of “use,” they are resources, commodities, or tools, as in, “using (χρώμενοι) some for labor and some for food.”¹⁴ The same exploitative idea is expressed here by the related noun χρεία in the phrase “the use of beasts.” Whereas the prescribed treatment of humans in the community (κοινωνία) is “sparing and not harming,” to be “deprived of the rights of community... just as...of citizenship” is associated here with being reduced to an object for use, exposed to any harm that suits the needs and pleasures of those within the community.

Going beyond a denial of justice toward animals based on practical needs, Stoics take the position, interrogated and even ridiculed in *Abstinence*, that animals, in fact, exist for the sake of humans. We see this idea expressed with the phrase “has been born (γεγονέναι) for us (ἡμῖν) and because of us (δι’ ἡμᾶς)” —and then countered with a reference to animals “born (γεγεννημένοις) not for us (οὐ πρὸς ἡμᾶς) but according to nature (κατὰ φύσιν), as we are (ὥσπερ ἡμεῖς)” (3.20.5). Regardless of Aristotle’s intent, “external teleology” —the idea of an ontological purpose that lies in serving the needs of

¹³ For “treating as friends,” see Xen. *Cyr.* 4.2.8 (ὡς φίλοις καὶ πιστοῖς χρήσεσθαι αὐτοῖς).

Regarding “use” in friendship, see note 26 below.

¹⁴ Cf. χρώμενοι βλαβερῶς (“treating harmfully” 3.20.5) and βορᾶ χρῆται at 3.20.6, where dangerous animals such as crocodiles, turning the tables, are said to “use” people as food. The passage brings to mind Calarco’s discussion (2015, 58-61) of the contemporary notion of “indistinction,” which heeds the shared vulnerability, even edibility, of humans and animals, as exemplified by philosopher Val Plumwood’s nearly fatal encounter with a crocodile (recounted in Plumwood 2000).

another—was drawn from a passage in which he says, “It is necessary to think...plants exist (εἶναι) for the sake of (ἕνεκεν) animals, and the other animals...for the sake of (χάρτιν) humans—the tame animals (ἡμερα) both for (διὰ) use (χρησιν) and food, and of the savage animals (ἀγρίων), if not all, at least most for (ἕνεκεν) food and other help, so that clothing and other tools may be created (γίνηται) out of them.”¹⁵ Stoic assimilation of this thought (within a providential framework) is suggested by various spokesmen in the works of Cicero, such as Cato in *On the Ends of Good and Evil* (3.67), who cites Chrysippus’s observation that “others (*cetera*) came into being (*nata esse*) for the sake of (*causa*) humans and gods, but these came into being for the sake of their own fellowship (*communitatis...suae*) and association (*societatis*),” with the result that “humans are able to use (*uti*) animals (*bestiis*) for their own interest (*ad utilitatem suam*) without injustice (*sine iniuria*).”¹⁶ Cicero in his own voice picks up the theme in *On the Laws* (1.25), when, speaking of animals (*pecudes*), he says, “It is evident that some were created (*procreatas*) for the use of humans (*ad usum hominum*), some for profit (*ad fructum*), and some for

¹⁵ Arist. *Pol.* 1256b16-20. The “recourse to external teleology,” Preus says (1983, 152), is rarely seen in Aristotle’s biological books. See also Orhan 2010, 51-52 with 61n20.

¹⁶ Balbus in Cic. *N.D.* 2.37-39 likewise credits Chrysippus with saying that “besides the world all things were created (*generata*) for the sake of (*causa*) other things...the produce (*fruges atque fructus*) that the earth causes to grow for the sake of animals (*animantium*), but animals for the sake of humans”—a point he makes at greater length in 2.154-62. (According to Chrysippus, this principle extends even to animals generally considered a nuisance, such as bugs, who “usefully” [εὐχρηστώς] wake us up, and mice, who “usefully” keep us tidy, as noted in Plut. *De stoic. repugn.* 1044d.) While Stoics posit a shared rationality between humans and gods, a common-man argument offered at *Abst.* 1.19.2 is more hierarchical: “Humanity...rules over all irrational beings as the god rules over humans.”

eating (*ad vescendum*).”¹⁷ The seemingly parodic view that Porphyry imputes to Chrysippus (“The pig...was not born [ἐγγόνει] for [δι’] anything other than being sacrificed, and the god mixed in the soul with its flesh like salt, devising an abundance of dishes for us” 3.20.1) is also reported by Cicero’s Balbus.¹⁸ Aristotle’s notion that although “there is no justice (οὐδὲ...δίκαιον), for example of a craftsman toward (πρὸς) a tool, and of a soul toward a body, and of a master toward a slave, all these things derive advantage (ὠφελεῖται) at the hands of those using them (χρωμένων)”¹⁹ leads, in turn, to Carneades’ wry *reductio ad absurdum*, as reported by Porphyry (3.20.3): “Well, the pig has been created (γέγονε) by nature (φύσει) to be killed and eaten, and, experiencing this, it obtains that for which (πρὸς ὃ) it is has been born (πέφυκε), and it benefits.”²⁰

¹⁷ See also Arr. *Epict.* 2.8: “The donkey has not been created (γέγονεν) as an end in itself (προηγουμένως), has it? No. But because we have a need (χρείαν) for a back that can carry something.” Augustine picks up the idea in *C.D.* 1.20, where he observes that it is permitted to kill animals, since “by the very just (*iustissima*) arrangement (*ordinatione*) of the Creator both their life and their death are subjected (*subditur*) to our uses (*usibus*).”

¹⁸ See Cic. *N.D.* 2.160. Cf. Clem. *Strom.* 7.6.33.3 Stählin, which attributes the thought to Cleanthes.

¹⁹ Arist. *EN* 1161a32-b3.

²⁰ The Carneades passage (*Abst.* 3.20.3-4 = Carneades fr. 97 Wisniewski) occurs in the part of the text (3.18.3-3.20.6) thought to be taken from an unknown work of Plutarch (Sandbach 1969 fr. 193). (Cf., however, *De fortuna* 98e, where Plutarch refers, with apparent approval, to the pig as “a very fat thing [πολύσαρκον], but a nourishment [τροφή] and a condiment [ῥῆσον] for a human.”) According to Diogenes Laertius (4.65), aside from some letters, Carneades’ writings were composed by his students. For opposition to the idea of external teleology, we may turn to Celsus, a second-century opponent of Christianity whose work can be reconstructed only through the hostile mediation of Origen’s *Against Celsus*, written in 248 CE. See *Cels.* 4.99: “Certainly it is not for a human being (ἄνθρωπον) that all things are made (πεποιήται τὰ πάντα), just as they are not made for a lion or an eagle or a dolphin.”

At the opposite end of the spectrum from the idea that animals exist just to be used by humans lies a proto-veganism conjured in the anxieties of opponents fearful of the consequence of not using animals “for labor and...food.” Indeed, a vegan critique of sorts is made explicit in the common-man argument that vegetarians must abstain from milk, wool, eggs, and honey to avoid inconsistency.²¹ “As you commit injustice (ἀδικεῖς) toward a human by taking away his clothes for yourself (ἀφαιρούμενος),” the argument goes, “so too [do you commit injustice] when you have shorn a ewe, for this is the clothing of the sheep,” while “milk has not been created (γέγονεν) for you (σοῖ), but for the just-born children,” and “the honeybee gathered together for herself the food that you took away (ἀφελόμενος) to supply a pleasure (ἡδονήν) for yourself” (1.21.1). Porphyry himself leaves open the possibility of non-harmful use such that the object is “treated” as belonging instead of being excluded. As he puts it, “The acquisition (λήψις) of physical needs (ἀναγκαίωv) does not harm (βλάπτει)...sheep, when, through shearing, we rather benefit (ὀνήσωμεν) them, and when we share (κοινωνήσωμεν) their milk while furnishing them with our care (ἐπιμέλειαν)” (3.26.12). In that idea of reciprocity achieved through care, we hear an echo of a point made earlier, that animals “through wisdom and justice have...made their masters servants and caretakers (ἐπιμελητὰς) of themselves” (3.13.2). These passages, in turn, echo Porphyry’s thoughts on bees, which bespeak community, reciprocity, and non-harming:

²¹ The arguments of “the average, common person” (ὁ πολὺς καὶ δημόδης ἄνθρωπος), which extend from 1.13.1 through 1.26.3, are a miscellany that includes appeals to custom (no nation is vegetarian 1.13.5), nature (there is an inborn and just war with animals 1.14.1), the gods (we sacrifice animals out of piety 1.22.1), and necessity (animals are needed for medical treatment 1.17.1-3), along with slippery-slope arguments (what if plants also have souls? 1.18 and 1.21.2).

With respect to the reception (παράληψιν) from bees of the produce that arises from our labors, it is appropriate (προσῆκει) to hold also the profit (ὄνησιν) as shared (κοινήν). For the bees gather the honey from plants, but we take care of them (ἐπιμελούμεθα). Therefore it is also necessary to apportion it so that there is no harm (βλάβην) to them, but that which is useless (ἄχρηστον) for them but useful (χρήσιμον) for us would be their wage for us. (2.13.2)²²

Porphry offers an even stronger characterization of reciprocity between domesticated animals and humans:

Birds, for example, and dogs and many...quadrupeds—such as goats, horses, sheep, donkeys, mules—perish if...deprived (ἀφαιρεθέντα) of community (κοινωνίας) with (μετὰ) humans. And nature, which crafted them, put them in need (χρεία) of humans, and humans in need (χρηΐζειν) of them, having furnished justice (δίκαιον) as innate (ἔμφυτον) both in them toward (πρὸς) us and in us toward them.²³ (3.12.2-3)

While Porphyry’s emphasis on reciprocity, community, and justice between humans and animals elevates animals to a position of moral agency, an analogy he draws with slavery raises questions about the possibility of non-harmful “use.” The animals that “through wisdom and justice...have made their masters servants and guardians of themselves,” Porphyry says, have managed this while “enslaved (δουλεύοντα) by the ignorance (ἀγνωμοσύνης) of humans” (3.13.2)—and “they are kind (εὐνοεῖ) to the one

²² For similar thoughts on harmless use, see Plut. *Soll.* 964e-65b.

²³ The “innate” (ἔμφυτον) justice referred to here appears to respond to the common-man argument that there is “war against beasts (θηρία), at least, [that] is innate (ἔμφυτος) and at the same time just (δίκαιος)” (1.14.1), discussed in section III below.

who owns (τῷ κεκτημένῳ) them” even if he “raises them not on their account, but for himself (δι’ ἑαυτὸν)” (3.13.3).²⁴ While the relationship between human and animal that Porphyry envisions seems to be not of master and slave but of mutual benefit—and therefore of non-harmful use—opponents subscribe to an unapologetic use of animals in which harm is not considered relevant. For Aristotle, as we have seen, “there is no friendship...and no justice toward...a horse or cow, or toward a slave as a slave.” Likewise, for Porphyry’s opponents, being “deprived of the rights of community...[and] citizenship” is associated with being made available for labor and food (1.4.2)—that is, with deprivation of the bodily integrity that is an essential part of both Athenian and Roman ideas of citizenship (understood in opposition to slavery).²⁵ While for these

²⁴ For the slavery analogy, see also, e.g., 3.18.6. Notwithstanding the reference to the “ignorance” of humans who enslave animals, Porphyry, like virtually every other ancient thinker, appears unable to imagine a world without slavery. When he refers to “the assistance of too many slaves,” along with “a surplus of property” and “a multitude (πλήθους) of objects,” as something “a person who has become accustomed to being satisfied with the least” will have been “liberated from” (ἀπηλλάχθαι), the problem is the excess of slaves, not the possession of them per se (1.47.2). Porphyry refers to his own household slaves in *Marc.* 35.

²⁵ For the Roman citizen as “the polar opposite of a slave” and the related notion of liberty as “non-subjection to the arbitrary will of either a foreign power or a domestic group or individual,” see, e.g., Arena 2012, 8 and 14. The figurative sense of slavery is encapsulated in the Stoic doctrine that, as Baltzly (2014) puts it, “only the sage is free while all others are slaves.” Cf. Porphyry’s reference to “the slavery of the body and...servitude to bodily passions” (3.27.10-11). For a description of the mistreatment of animals couched in the language of violated citizenship and slavery, see *Esu* 996f, where Plutarch insists that killing animals should not also involve “mistreating (ὀβριζόντες) or torturing (βασανίζοντες)” them. Both verbs have legal senses; the latter means “question by applying torture” or, simply, “torture” (LSJ s.v. II.2), a practice reserved for slaves when their testimony was required.

opponents, the separation from the community is precisely what enables the *use* of animals, including eating them, the analogy of slavery can be used in a different way, to present the relationship between owner and owned as non-harmful and reciprocal. Within this frame, the master is said to feed and clothe slaves and provide lodging in return for their labor—and both parties are said thereby to “benefit.” The abhorrent force of this logic, for us at least, casts doubt on whether “use” can ever be free of harm.²⁶ What is more, the logic of “reciprocity” can slip into an anti-vegetarian frame by which humans are said to protect and feed animals, and they in return are said to “give” their bodies to feed us.²⁷

Like reciprocity, the concept of “necessity” must be clarified. In one passage, for example, Porphyry seems to offer a slight rhetorical opening for meat-eating as a notional necessity while condemning, as he often does, harmful acts committed for pleasure or luxury.²⁸

²⁶ As previously noted, *χράομαι* is employed at *Abst.* 1.4.2-4 both in the sense of “using” as a resource (the way one would use a slave or a material commodity) and “treating” like a human, just as Xenophon employs the verb in the phrase “treat them as...friends” (*Xen. Cyr.* 4.2.8). However, the exploitative coloration of words related to *χράομαι* comes through even in the case of friendship, as we see in Aristotle’s discussion in *Nicomachean Ethics* (8.2-4)—it is only in the rare (*σπανίας*) case, he says, that friends are such not “on account of pleasure or usefulness” (*δι’ ἡδονὴν ἢ τὸ χρήσιμον*) but rather “on account of each other” (*δι’ αὐτοῦς*) (1156b24, 1157b1-3). Cf. Phaedimus’s observation in Plutarch’s *On the Cleverness of Animals*: “To the dolphin, alone and beyond others, belongs by nature that thing sought by the best philosophers: friendship without use (*χρείας*)” (*Soll.* 984c-d).

²⁷ On this notion of “reciprocity” in Lucretius, see note 36 below.

²⁸ The distinction between pleasure and necessity is a running theme in *Abstinence*, on which see below.

Harms (βλάβας) against plants and the consumption of fire and spring water and the shearings and milk of sheep and the taming (ἐξημέρωσιν) and yoking of oxen—the god grants pardon to those who use (χρωμένοις) them for preservation (σωτηρία) and endurance. But to subject animals to slaughter...not for the sake of food (τροφῆς) or fullness (πληρώσεως) but making a goal of pleasure (ἡδονῆς) and gluttony (λαίμαργίας) is exceedingly lawless (ἄνομον) and dreadful (δεινόν). (3.18.5)

Notwithstanding the specific examples—“the shearings and milk of sheep and the taming and yoking of oxen”—which hew to abstinence, the rejection of “subject[ing] animals to slaughter” for “pleasure and gluttony” does not appear to foreclose slaughtering them “for the sake of food or fullness,” as Porphyry puts it. Such an opening threatens to reduce Porphyry’s program to an anodyne call for moderation or simplicity by allowing meat-eating to be cast as in some sense necessary—though the necessity is weak or derivative, a “necessity” derived from the necessity of food itself. Within this framework, one could feel justified in eating meat “for the sake of food or fullness” even when other sources of nourishment are available. But by immediately adding, “It is enough (ἄρκεῖ) that we use as toilers and hard laborers those who have no need to toil” (3.18.6), Porphyry suggests that such non-lethal use constitutes the limit of the acceptable. In the context of the work as a whole, the opening is further limited by other statements—such as when Porphyry proposes an alternative culinary pleasure, citing Pythagoras for the idea that “committing injustice (ἀδικεῖν) against no one and flavoring (ἐφηδύνειν) with justice (δικαιοσύνη) are the seasoning (ῥῆσον) [of food]” (3.26.8). More to the point, Porphyry says, “We do a great injustice (πολὸν...ἄδικον)...because we kill [tame

animals]...and...feed on them, and their death is referable merely to food (βορὰν)” (3.26.4). Humans, Porphyry concedes, have needs and so cannot avoid inflicting some harm. The impossibility of utter harmlessness, however, does not absolve people of the responsibility to reduce harm as much as possible, in imitation of the highest god, who needs nothing and thus harms nothing. Throughout *Abstinence* Porphyry is clear that justice requires not killing harmless animals, and not eating them, except in the case of *strong* necessity: when meat is the *only* food one can obtain, as with the inhabitants of barren lands (4.21.1). In such cases, one may say, the god’s pardon is indeed apposite.

For Porphyry, even if “using” animals may be considered a necessity, harming them, particularly by killing them for food, is not necessary, at least under what he construes as normal circumstances, when food can be drawn from the land.

Notwithstanding the proto-vegan objection, Porphyry envisions human-animal relationships that are non-harmful and reciprocal. The ability of animals to have such relationships with humans is, in fact, of a piece with the justice relationships that they share with each other—relationships that Porphyry casts as different from human ones only in degree. Contrary to his opponents’ argument, by way of Hesiod, that Zeus gave justice (δίκην) to humans alone (1.5.3),²⁹ Porphyry asks, “Who does not recognize gregarious animals (συναγελαστικά), how they maintain (τηρεῖ) justice (δίκαιον) toward (πρὸς) each other?” (3.11.1). Later, speaking of Stoics, he observes that though

“considering tender love (φιλοστοργίαν) for children the origin for us of community

²⁹ See Hes. *Op.* 277-79. The passage, which “constitute[s],” Newmyer (2011, 82) says, “the earliest Greek attempt to differentiate human beings from other animals on philosophical grounds,” posits an undifferentiated mass of animals such that even in eating other species, as humans do, they are cast as lawless cannibals.

(κοινωνίας) and justice (δικαιοσύνης), and seeing that it is present, both great and strong, in animals, they say that animals do not have and are not worthy to have a share in justice” (3.22.7).³⁰ As he goes on to observe:

The extent to which the human differs from animals in ease of understanding and shrewdness and in matters of justice (δικαιοσύνην) and community (κοινωνίαν) is not extraordinary. For in fact many animals have left behind every human, one in magnitude and fleetness of foot, another in strength of vision and precision of hearing; but a human is not on account of this deaf or blind or impotent. (3.23.7)

Although the passage is lifted from Plutarch’s *On the Cleverness of Animals*, we will see that the positing of differences of degree rather than kind, of gradations rather than dichotomies, is characteristic of Porphyry’s thought throughout the treatise, encompassing reason, purity, virtue, and piety.³¹ By casting animals as moral agents, not just among themselves but in their relations with humans, he implicitly addresses a further argument of his opponents: “In the case of those for whom exercising justice toward us is not possible, neither does injustice by us occur toward them” (1.6.1).³² Animals, like some humans, may not possess the fullest measure of justice, Porphyry suggests, but, even if reciprocity is posited as a prerequisite of justice, many of them have a sufficient share of it to be treated with justice, to be thought of as part of a community, to be free of harm.

³⁰ For more on the Stoic theory of justice, see section III below.

³¹ For discussion of these attributes as matters of degrees, see, respectively, chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5.

³² See also Plut. *Soll.* 964b-c, from which the argument, offered by Soclarus (aligned with the Stoics), is taken verbatim.

III. Foundations of Justice

If justice is to be understood as a relationship, what is its basis? Toward the end of book 3, Porphyry polemically distinguishes his perspective on justice and the goal of life from the views of his opponents, both Epicureans and Stoics. “True justice (ὄντως...δικαιοσύνη),” as he puts it, “is not preserved (σώζεται) either when pleasure is the goal (τέλους) or when the primary things (πρώτων) in accordance with nature (κατὰ φύσιν)³³ make happiness (εὐδαιμονίαν) complete—or, in any case, are all presented (ἐκκειμένων γε πάντων).” Rather, Porphyry says, “when the goal is assimilation to god (ὁμοιοῦσθαι θεῷ) as much as possible (ὡς ἔνι μάλιστα), harmlessness (ἀβλαβές) is preserved (σώζεται) with respect to all beings (ἐν ἅπασιν)” (3.27.1). These allusions to Epicureanism and Stoicism, though misleading³⁴ allow Porphyry to contrast self-directed goals (pleasure, primary things) with his own other-directed notion of justice as consisting in harmlessness, as the striking verbal parallelism indicates (ἢ ὄντως σώζεται δικαιοσύνη... σώζεται τὸ ἀβλαβές). This is, notably, a harmlessness that extends beyond humans to all beings (ἐν ἅπασιν). In this section, examining the Epicurean idea of justice as based in contracts and utility, the Stoic idea of it as based in “appropriation,” and several other conceptualizations (“just war” against animals, justice as an external force, and natural law), I will consider how Porphyry confronts each of them, steadily pushing moral concern beyond the human.

³³ In his engagement with Stoics, Porphyry often employs their terminology. Beyond τῶν πρώτων κατὰ φύσιν, we find, e.g., ἀδιάφορος, τὸ καθῆκον, οἰκείωσις, and ὁρμή. For more on οἰκείωσις, see below.

³⁴ As Long and Sedley observe (1987, 1:357), “The bastion of Stoic ethics is the thesis that virtue and vice respectively are the sole constituents of happiness and unhappiness,” whereas “primary things in accordance with nature,” such as health and strength, are in the class of “indifferents.”

In the context of *Abstinence*, the most notable feature of the contractarian theory of justice offered by Epicurus's successor, Hermarchus, is that it excludes animals.³⁵ Hermarchus declares that animals are not rational, not able to make contracts, and thus not able to have a justice relationship with humans:³⁶

³⁵ Epicurean contractarianism has an antecedent in *Nicomachean Ethics* (1161b6-7), where Aristotle observes that “there seems to be some justice (δικαιον) between any human and any other capable of sharing (κοινωνῆσαι) in law (νόμου) or an agreement (συνθήκης).” For a complementary Aristotelian notion—of “a common justice and injustice, even if there is no community with each other and no agreement”—see the discussion of *Rh.* 1373b4-17 in the context of natural law below.

³⁶ Epicurus's own formulation is less categorical, with a chiasmic but otherwise identical treatment of animals and humans (ὅσα τῶν ζῴων...τῶν ἔθνῶν ὅσα). As he puts it: “As many animals (Ὅσα τῶν ζῴων) as were unable to make agreements (συνθήκας) concerning not harming (βλάπτειν) others and not being harmed, toward these there was no justice (δικαιον) and no injustice (ἄδικον). And the same goes for the nations, as many of them (τῶν ἔθνῶν ὅσα) as were unable or unwilling to make agreements concerning not harming and not being harmed” (Epicur. *Sent.* 32 ap. D.L. 10.150). See also the inscription of Diogenes of Oenoanda (fr. 43 and 56 in Martin Ferguson Smith 1993). In *On the Nature of Things*, the Epicurean poet Lucretius famously discusses a covenant between humans and domesticated animals (5.855-77), which Shelton describes (1994, 52) as a “tacit agreemen[t] to swap goods and services: food and protection from predators in exchange for meat, milk, wool, and labor, *tutela* for *utilitas*.” In its basis in reciprocity, such an arrangement resembles Porphyry's notion of non-harmful use—with the essential distinction that Porphyry excludes killing and meat. Lucretius, it should be noted, does not refer to meat in the passage, though in another passage that Shelton points to (1994, 56n22) he refers to a chain of edibility from animal to human as well as from human to animal (2.875-78). Like Homer, Lucretius portrays animals with compassion, such as the mother cow inconsolably grieving the calf led off to sacrificial slaughter (2.349-66), and he describes the sacrifice itself in a way that “makes the event seem repugnant” (Shelton 1994, 57).

By all means, if [people] were able to make an agreement (συνθήκην) with (πρὸς) the other animals, as with humans, concerning their not killing and not being killed without judgment (ἀκρίτως) by us, it would be good to lead out justice (δίκαιον) as far as (μέχρι) this, for it would be stretched toward safety (ἀσφάλειαν). But since it was in the realm of the impossible for animals that do not receive reason to share (κοινωνῆσαι) in law (νόμου), our advantage (συμφέρον) could not be procured through such means with respect to safety from other ensouled beings (ἐμψύχων) any more than from the unensouled (ἀψύχων). Only by taking the power, which we now have, to kill them can we have the safety that is possible. (1.12.5-6)

Regarding Epicurean contractarianism as such, Porphyry is briskly dismissive. The task he had set out for himself,³⁷ he says, was “to show that [animals] are rational (λογικὰ), not that they have made agreements (συνθήκας) with us, since even among humans not everyone makes agreements (συντίθεται) with us and no one would say that a person who did not make an agreement is non-rational (ἄλογον)” (3.13.1). However, as we can see from Hermarchus’s formulations, the contracts, and thus justice itself, are based on utility—specifically, “advantage” (συμφέρον). In this, Hermarchus follows Epicurus, who says, “Natural justice (τὸ τῆς φύσεως δίκαιόν) is a guarantee (σύμβολον) of advantage (συμφέροντος) for the purpose (εἰς) of not harming (βλάπτειν) each other and not being harmed (βλάπτεσθαι).”³⁸

³⁷ At *Abst.* 3.9.1.

³⁸ Epicur. *Sent.* 31 ap. D.L. 10.150. As Alberti (1995, 190n47) notes regarding Epicurean justice theory, “Utility and contract are both necessary factors for making a law just, and the loss of either one...is enough to make the law no longer just.”

Hermarchus's argument posits utility not only as the basis for justice among human beings but also as the reason for excluding animals.³⁹ The first part of the exclusion argument relates to the advantage (συμφέρον) of killing violent animals to provide "freedom from fear" (ἄφοβίαν) (1.10.1, 1.11.2) and nonviolent animals to protect the food supply. Speaking of the latter, Hermarchus says, "There is not, so to speak, any such animal of those allowed by the law [to be killed], which would not become harmful to us if allowed to take on an excess of abundance...devouring what is sent up for us by the earth as food."⁴⁰ Conversely, in language that recalls the opponents' discourse of "use" (1.4.4), discussed in the previous section, Hermarchus says that such an animal (cattle or sheep), "conserved in its current multitude, provides some uses (χρείας) for our way of life (βίον)" (1.11.3-4). The second part of Hermarchus's argument for excluding animals from justice relates to edibility. Speaking of "the people establishing these things in law from the beginning," he says that when it came to determining the non-edibility of

³⁹ Epicureans, it should be noted, use utility in a particular way, as something posterior to rather than prior to existence—that is, as something divorced from internal or external teleology. See, e.g., Lucr. 4.834-35. As Long and Sedley observe (1987, 1:63), "Much effort on the part of the Epicureans goes into combating the idea, common to both Platonists and Stoics, that the world is governed by divine providence." With respect to the useful in social life, Long and Sedley (1987, 1:135) cite Hermarchus's discourse at *Abst.* 1.7.1-2 while observing that "uncontrived patterns of behaviour, which turned out to be collectively useful, were recognized to have this feature, thus stimulating rational and deliberate efforts to institutionalize what was 'useful to the general structure of human life.'" This conception, of course, sets itself apart from the idea of a divinity as the origin of laws or customs.

⁴⁰ For related common-man arguments, see 1.16.2 and 1.24.1.

some ensouled beings, “advantage (συμφέρον) and disadvantage (ἀσύμφορον) were the reason (αἴτιον)” (1.12.1).⁴¹

For Porphyry, the Epicurean orientation toward utility, as it relates to food, risks slipping into an unacceptable quest for pleasure itself—not the simple removal of a need, like the satisfaction of hunger, but something more sybaritic:

If someone says, “The person extending (παρεκτείνων) justice (δίκαιον) as far as (ἄχρι) animals destroys (φθείρει) justice,” he does not recognize that he himself is not rescuing (διασώζει) justice (δικαιοσύνην) but increasing pleasure (ἡδονήν), which is hostile (πολέμιον) to justice (δικαιοσύνη). Certainly, with pleasure as the goal (τέλους), justice is shown to be destroyed (ἀναιρευμένη). For to whom is it not clear that justice grows by means of abstinence? (3.26.5-6)

While arguing against the necessity of meat, Porphyry depicts it repeatedly as a matter *merely* of pleasure, a choice people make even if a vegetarian diet is easier to obtain and even if meat-eating goes against human nature. As he says at the beginning of book 3, “The human is a harmless being (ἀβλαβὲς) by nature (φύσει) and one who tends to abstain (ἀφεκτικὸν) from providing pleasures (ἡδονὰς) for himself through the harming (βλάβης) of others” (3.1.3).⁴² Indeed, as Porphyry later says, citing Plutarch, “To kill

⁴¹ Cf. the common-man argument at 1.14.3: “A pig is not a useful thing (χρήσιμον) for anything other than meat (βρῶσιν).”

⁴² The claim that humans are “harmless by nature” (ἀβλαβὲς...φύσει) may perhaps be understood as aspirational, referring to the true self, i.e., *nous* (see 1.29.4) rather than embodied humanity. Still, Porphyry leans on arguments from nature throughout *Abstinence*, as can be discerned from the frequency of φύσις and related words, which occur well over 100 times in the course of the text. An opposing argument from nature, offered at 1.13.2, declares, “Flesh eating is in accordance with nature (κατὰ φύσιν) for a human

others (ἕτερα) gratuitously (ἐκ περιουσίας) and for pleasure and to destroy them (φθείρειν) is an act of absolute savagery (ἀγριότητος) and injustice (ἀδικίας)” (3.18.3).⁴³

One of Porphyry’s strategies for challenging animal sacrifice as well as meat-eating is to cast the putative necessity behind each of them as a matter of mere pleasure—that is, to recast them as false necessities. In the case of animal sacrifice, he undermines the sense of divine necessity by presenting the ritual as something humans do for their own sake. As he puts it, “We sacrifice to the gods none of the dishonored (ἄτιμων) animals, which provide no use (χρείαν) for our way of life (βίον), and none of the ones that give no enjoyment (ἀπόλαυσιν)” (2.25.1-2).⁴⁴ With respect to meat as a material necessity, he says, “If there are crops, what need (χρεία) is there to use (χρησθαι) the sacrificial animal (θύματι)?” (2.12.1)⁴⁵ and, later, “It is not the case that, since famines

being, but raw-flesh eating is contrary to nature (παρὰ φύσιν). When fire was discovered, then, [people] recovered, by cooking, what was in accordance with nature (κατὰ φύσιν), and they started to accept meat.” In *On Flesh Eating*, Plutarch repeatedly refers to the practice as παρὰ φύσιν. Unlike natural predators, he argues, humans have bodies ill-suited to killing, eating, and digesting other animals (*Esu* 994f-95b).

⁴³ Representing an unknown work of Plutarch’s, Sandbach fr. 193 continues from this citation through 3.20.6.

⁴⁴ The exclusion of “dishonored” (ἄτιμων) animals from sacrifice—that is, of those considered “unworthy” of it—provides an interesting counterpoint to the opponents’ fear, discussed above, that “justice is muddled...if we do not use (χρώμενοι)...some [animals] for food while considering them...deprived of the rights (ἄτιμα) of community (κοινωνίας)” (1.4.1-2). From the opponents’ perspective, an animal must be ἄτιμον, in the sense of being excluded from the community, precisely because it has a use (χρείας) (1.4.4), while from the Porphyrean-Theophrastean perspective people avoid sacrificing any animal that is ἄτιμον in the sense of *not* having any use (2.25.2).

⁴⁵ For more on pleasure versus necessity, cf. 1.38.2, 3.18.3, 3.18.5-19.1, 3.20.6, and 3.26.5.

and war have been causes of eating other animals, it is necessary to accept this for pleasure (ἡδονήν)” (2.57.3). From Porphyry’s perspective, pleasure, in fact, is what drives the discourse of meat apologetics—and, by extension, the denial of reason to animals, which he attributes, in an earlier passage (3.16.1), to gluttony (λαίμαργίαν). As he says at the beginning of book 4:

Those who approve flesh eating [do so], in truth, because of their lack of self-control (ἀκρασία) and their intemperance (ἀκολασία), having provided brazen defenses for themselves drawn from need (ἐνδεία), which they impute to nature as something greater than they ought to.... The promise of advantage (συμφέροντος) especially beguiles (ἐξαπατᾷ) those suborned (δεδεκασμένους) by pleasure. (4.1.1-2)

If utility ranks below necessity as a moral basis for eating animals, Porphyry suggests, pleasure is even lower. In the discourse of meat-eating, as he describes it, one can see claims of necessity (ἀνάγκη, ἔνδεια) made for what amounts to utility or advantage (τὸ συμφέρον), their interchangeability perhaps enabled by the fact that all three meanings are encompassed by χρεία. But pleasure, Porphyry argues, is the true motive for animal sacrifice and meat-eating. In excusing what Porphyry would characterize as the gratuitous infliction of harm for pleasure or enjoyment (ἡδονή, ἀπόλαυσις), Hermarchus’s Epicurean justice, then, yields its opposite: “absolute savagery and injustice” (3.18.3).

In the case of a related idea of justice presented soon in the text after Hermarchus—that of a “just war” between humans and animals—Porphyry breaks down the dichotomy that reductively pits one category against the other. According to this common-man argument, “The one urging people not to eat [animals] and considering it

unjust will also say that it is not just either to kill them or to take away (ἀφαιρεῖσθαι) their souls. But surely our war against beasts (θηρία), at least, is innate (ἔμφυτος) and at the same time just (δίκαιος)” (1.14.1). The animals with which people are at war, the argument continues, include those that “willingly attack humans” (wolves and lions); those that “attack unwillingly” (snakes); and others that destroy crops (1.14.1). “How is it,” the argument goes, “that we would be unjust in killing [animals] that attack (ἐπιχειροῦντα) humans, or [the animals] living with humans (συνανθρωποῦσιν), or crops?” (1.20.2). While, in this case, opponents attribute to vegetarians an absolute position on the killing of animals, Porphyry challenges what he presents as their all-or-nothing framing of justice, a dichotomy between, on the one hand, “living (ζῆν) and treating (χρωμένους) no [animal] with justice (δικαιοσύνη)” and, on the other, “treating every [animal] with justice and not living” (3.18.4). The opponents, it is true, suggest that human beings are not at war with all animals, and that they rightly abstain from “many living with humans (συνανθρωπούντων),” such as dogs, horses, and donkeys (1.14.3), but they do not speak of any possible justice relationship. As Porphyry argues, we need to think of justice relationships that distinguish non-harmful from harmful animals:

Just as, though there is a kinship (οἰκειότητος) for us with (πρὸς) other humans, we consider it necessary to kill and punish all the wrongdoers (κακοποιούς) [who] harm (βλάπτειν) the one who encounters them,⁴⁶ so too, among the non-rational animals, it is equally appropriate (προσῆκει) to kill the unjust in nature and the wrongdoers who are driven by nature to harm those who approach them, but it is unjust, in fact, to kill and slaughter those of the remaining animals that commit

⁴⁶ For a similar idea, cf. 3.26.2.

injustice against no one and are not driven to harm by nature, as is the case also with such humans. (2.22.2)⁴⁷

Porphyry says that it is in fact more reasonable to posit a justice relationship with loyal animals than with beastly humans:

Seeing that many people live by perception (αἰσθήσει) alone, not having intellect (νοῦν) and reason (λόγον), and many, in turn, have outstripped the most frightening beasts (θηρίων) in cruelty (ὠμότητι) and anger (θυμῶ) and greed (πλεονεξία)...how is it not irrational (ἄλογον) to think that there is some justice (δίκαιον) for us toward (πρὸς) such men but none toward the plowing ox and the companion (σύντροφον) dog and the ones that nourish (τρέφοντα) with milk and adorn their nurslings (θρέμματα) with fleece? (3.19.3)⁴⁸

⁴⁷ While dangerous animals may be killed in self-defense, Porphyry touches (disapprovingly) on aetiological tales that explain sacrifice as a punishment for non-dangerous animals (“They first subjugated a goat at Ikarios in Attica, because it had cut back a grapevine”; “Diomos was the first to slaughter an ox” because it “came forward and took a taste of the consecrated cake” [2.10.1-2]). Porphyry says that harmless animals should not be killed and harmful animals are unsuitable sacrifices even if killing them is allowed (2.23.1-2).

⁴⁸ The claim in this Plutarchan passage that “many people live by perception alone (ἐπ’ αἰσθήσει μόνον ζῶντας), not having intellect or reason (νοῦν δὲ καὶ λόγον οὐκ ἔχοντας),” seems to be in tension with the passage, at 3.1.4, in which Porphyry identifies as “true and also Pythagorean” the opinion that “every soul in which there is a share of perception (αἰσθήσεως) and memory is rational (λογικὴν).” However, in the context of the work as a whole, the phrase οὐκ ἔχοντας—rendered by Girgenti-Sodano as “*senza far uso*”—seems not so much to reinscribe the dichotomy of having/not having reason as to make a point about the degree to which people use (or do not use) their natural endowment of reason. Cf. nearly identical language in Plot. *Enn.* 3.4.2 (αἰσθήσει μόνον ἔζησαν) regarding those humans who, living “by perception alone,” are

One may detect in the passage a virtue-ethics-style appeal: who would wish to be the kind of person who shows ingratitude to such animals?⁴⁹ At the same time, there is again a suggestion of reciprocity between humans and domesticated animals, the basis of a kind of justice relationship. There is also a clear evocation of the tender love of animal parents for their children, transferred here to humans (their “nurslings”). Such tender love of parents for children, as we have seen, is referred to three chapters later (πρὸς τὰ ἔκγονα φιλοστοργίαν 3.22.7) in reference to the Stoic idea that it is “the origin for us of community and justice.” While the Stoics are criticized in that passage for recognizing tender love toward children among animals and still refusing them a share of justice, here we see an alternative, if only poetically suggestive, basis for a justice relationship between humans and animals: not so much reciprocity as their tender love of us.⁵⁰

Porphry’s breaching of the divide between human and animal is reflected in language that throughout the work assimilates humans both negatively to savage animals and positively to tame animals (who except for dogs tend not to eat meat).⁵¹ In a sense,

bound to be reincarnated as nonhuman animals or, in cases of even greater mental sluggishness, plants. The context is a discussion of how in humans “the greater” (τὸ κρείττον), i.e., reason, does not always “hold sway” (κρατεῖ). The Plotinian conceit of what me might call “downward” reincarnation—through turpitude as well as mental torpor—picks up on themes explored in Pl. *Phd.* 81e-82b and *Ti.* 91-92. Reincarnation is notably absent from Porphyry’s argument in *Abstinence*, however.

⁴⁹ For more on virtue ethics, see note 95 below.

⁵⁰ For the Stoic recognition of animals’ concern for their children, see, e.g., Cic. *Fin.* 3.62.

⁵¹ The permeability between man and “beast” in the context of “just war” brings to mind Aristotle’s observation that “the art of war (ἡ πολεμικὴ)...must be used against (πρὸς) both wild animals (θηρία) and, among humans, as many as are suited by nature to be ruled (πεφυκότες ἄρχεσθαι) but who are not willing (μὴ θέλουσιν)—this war being just by nature (φύσει)” (*Pol.* 1256b24-26). In assimilating wild, dangerous

we can conceive a distinction between animals—actual ensouled beings—and “the animal,” a trans-species category that connotes gratuitous pleasure-seeking and violence.⁵² The “animal” can be mapped onto the “bestial”—against which war (literal or figurative) might be considered just. For example, Porphyry names “the bestial” (θηριῶδες)—along with “the bloodthirsty” (φονικὸν) and “the impassive (ἀπαθείς) to pity”—as a quality that is fortified in us when “we slaughter...animals with wanton violence (ὑβρεῖ) or for the sake of luxury, or...for sport in theaters and hunting” (3.20.6-7).⁵³ Forms of ἄγριος (“savage”), including the verb ἐξηγρίωται, appear often, contrasting with πρᾶος (“gentle”), οἶκτος (“pity, compassion”), and especially ἥμερος. The last of these is used to describe, alternately, domesticated animals and cultivated or civilized and therefore gentle human beings.⁵⁴ Furthering the theme of harmlessness, Porphyry’s use of

animals to “wrongdoers,” Porphyry reverses the trope by which “barbarian” peoples are assimilated to wild, dangerous animals, on which see, e.g., Clark 2011b, 80-81.

⁵² On “the concept ‘animal’ ” and its possible “associat[ion] in the Greek mind with...uncontrollability (*akolasia*) and immodesty (*anaidia*),” see Korhonen and Ruonakoski 2017, 100. On the association between *anaideia* and dogs, see Franco 2014, 9.

⁵³ The line, from 3.20.7, marks the beginning of Porphyry’s long excerpt from Plutarch’s *Cleverness*. In that work, when Soclarus argues (959c) that hunting “provides a pure (καθαράν) spectacle of skill (τέχνης) together with intelligent daring (τόλμης νοῦν ἐχούσης) set against mindless (ἀνόητον) strength and force (βίαν),” Autobolus responds (959d), “And yet from that...they say that insensitivity (ἀπάθειαν) has come upon human beings and savagery (ἀγριότητα) that feeds (γευσασμένην) on slaughter.” Autobolus goes on to say (959e-f) that through meat-eating humans “strengthened as much as is murderous in themselves by nature and brutal (θηριῶδες) and made it unbending to pity, and blunted most of the gentle (ἡμέρου).”

⁵⁴ Cf. Arr. *Epict.* 4.1.120: “A human is not a wild beast (θηρίον) but a gentle animal (ἥμερον ζῷον).” Cf. also Arist. *Pol.* 1254b: “Tame animals (ἥμερα) are better (βελτίω) in nature (φύσιν) than wild animals

the word assimilates the domesticated animals his treatise aims to protect to the sort of gentle people who abstain from eating them, while, conversely, the killer and eater of harmless animals is construed as ἄγριος and θηριώδης—like a savage, wild animal, which may be killed in self-defense. In book 4, the two uses of ἥμερος, in reference to cultivated human beings and tame animals, appear in the same sentence (4.22.4):

“Wishing to make life (βίον) civilized (ἥμερον), [Triptolemus] attempted to rescue (διασώζειν) the animals living with humans (συνανθρωπεύοντα) and most of all the tame ones (ἥμερα).”⁵⁵ *Abstinence* uses ἥμερος and θηριώδης for both human and nonhuman

(ἀγρίων), but for all of them it is better (βέλτιον) to be ruled by a human, for in this way they obtain safety (σωτηρίας).” Porphyry also uses ἥμερος in a couple of instances (2.5.6, 2.14.2) to refer to cultivated plants. Regarding ἐξηγρίωται, which Porphyry uses to speak of “some nations [that] have become savage (ἐξηγρίωται) or are bestial (θηριώδη) by nature” (4.21.2), cf. Theophrastus on trees grown from seeds (instead of slips), which he says “become wild” (ἐξαγριοῦνται) and “degenerate from their class” (ἐξίσταται τοῦ γένους), with the result that they produce inferior fruit or no fruit at all (*HP* 2.2.4 and *CP* 1.9.1; see also *HP* 3.2.3).

⁵⁵ A momentary departure from this valorization of gentle and domesticated animals may be detected when Porphyry notes that “while some animals, those that are strong, dwell far away from (ἐκποδῶν) humans, the less noble (ἀγεννή) ones dwell far away from stronger wild animals (θηρίων), but, on the contrary, dwell with humans, either a bit removed...or living [closely] with humans (συνανθρωποῦντα), as dogs do” (3.9.3). Though Montanari casts ἀγεννής as “low-born, not noble, lowly,” Girgenti-Sodano and Bouffartigue-Patillon render it, respectively, as “fearful” and “weak”—and indeed the context of the passage is knowledge of one’s own strengths and weaknesses as a sign of rationality. From a different perspective, we might understand ἀγεννής in light of Porphyry’s observation concerning philosophers and society: “If someone thinks he remains free from passion (ἀπαθής) while living with people (συνανθρωπεύων), filling his perceptions (αἰσθήσεις) with corresponding passions (παθῶν), he is unaware that he is deceiving himself...and does not recognize how greatly he is enslaved to the passions precisely by his non-alienation

animals.⁵⁶ Accordingly, Porphyrean justice may be thought of as a separation, as it were, from “the animal” that does not exclude animals themselves.

As with Hermarchus’s contractarianism, the exclusion of animals is precisely the fault that Porphyry finds in *oikeiosis* (“appropriation”), the Stoic basis for justice, and why he supplements it with Theophrastean *oikeiotes* (“kinship”).⁵⁷ For Stoics, *oikeiosis* refers to the fact of considering, or the process by which one comes to consider, oneself

(οὐκ ἄλλοτριώσει) from the masses” (1.36.2). One of the common-man arguments (1.15.1) is that flesh-eating animals are more intelligent (συνετώτερα), since they are hunters (θηρευτικά) and have skill (τέχνην). Presumably, the threat they pose to humans and the animals that humans eat outweighs the recognition of their similar faculties.

⁵⁶ Korhonen and Ruonakoski (2017, 189) make a case for the trans-species application of these terms in Plato and Aristotle. As they put it, “The distinction between predatory/wild and tame/civilised is not between humans and other animals.... It is between some humans (and some animals).” For discussion, see esp. 79 and 100-101.

⁵⁷ As Schofield (1995, 193) notes, the prime testimony for *oikeiosis* as a Stoic basis for justice is in fact *Abst.* 3.19.2: “Perceiving (αἰσθάνεσθαι) is the origin (ἀρχή) of all appropriation (οἰκειώσεως) and alienation (ἄλλοτριώσεως), and those around Zeno posit appropriation as the origin of justice (δικαιοσύνης).” Cf. Cic. *Fin.* 3.62-68 and Plut. *Soll.* 962a. Aside from Theophrastean *oikeiotes*, there may be an antecedent for *oikeiosis* in Aristotle’s discussion of friendship in *EN* 1155a16-22, where he speaks of a natural *philia* between parents and children, both human and nonhuman, and among “those of the same species (ὁμοεθνέσι),” especially humans. “Anyone, even in travels,” he says, “would see that each person is ‘proper’ (οἰκεῖον) and dear (φίλον) to every other.” See, e.g., Sorabji 1993, 132, and Fortenbaugh 2011, 559. For human solidarity from the common man’s perspective, see *Abst.* 1.14.2: “There is not anyone who, seeing a snake, would not kill it if he is able, so that neither he nor any another person would be bitten, for there is not only hatred for those that are killed but also fondness (στοργή) of human for (πρὸς) human.”

and others as “proper to oneself” or “one’s own,” with a corresponding “impulse to care for” them⁵⁸—we might say, “include” them. As Clark puts it, “We begin with what we need for self-preservation.” With time, “we also recognize other people, beginning with our families, as appropriate objects of our concern.”⁵⁹ In Porphyry’s critique, “those who undertook to introduce justice (δικαιοσύνης) from appropriation (οικειώσεως) of (πρὸς) humans seem perhaps not to have recognized its specific property (ιδίωμα).” Such appropriation, Porphyry says, “would, in fact, be a sort of love of human beings (φιλανθρωπία)” —and here Porphyry uses φιλανθρωπία, conventionally “benevolence,” in a particular way that reinscribes the word’s etymology, emphasizing its anthropocentric limitation.⁶⁰ “But justice,” he continues, “consists in (κεῖται) abstinence

⁵⁸ Schofield 1995, 196. The concern for self and other constitute what Vander Waedt (1988, 104) calls “two species of οικείωσις,” i.e., “personal” and “social.” For personal οικείωσις, see 3.9.2, where Porphyry observes, “Each [animal] knows whether it is weak or strong, and it guards some things and uses others.” Along with German renderings, Martins (2018, 139) lists “*appropriation, familiarity, belonging, and endearment*” as “often-used translations” of *oikeiosis* in the English-speaking world, and he cites Plutarch’s definition in *On Stoic Self-Contradictions*: “*Oikeiosis* appears to be the perception (αἴσθησις) and apprehension (ἀντίληψις) of what is one’s own (τοῦ οικείου)” (*St. rep.* 1038c). For a new perspective on personal *oikeiosis* as the concept is employed by Epictetus, see Magrin 2018.

⁵⁹ Clark 2000a, 124n17.

⁶⁰ Martins (2018, 160) observes that aside from the first appearance of φιλανθρωπία—as a pejorative attached to the eponymous Titan in Aeschylus’s *Prometheus Bound*—Porphyry’s use of it represents the only case where it has a negative valence. Martins also notes (2018, 183) the apparent response at *Abst.* 3.26.9 to the opponents who refer at 1.5.2 (= Plut. *Soll.* 964f) to “us, the ones who think they live in a civilized manner (ἡμέρως) and benevolently (φιλανθρώπως).” Plutarch offers vegetarianism as “an excellent process of habituation toward benevolence (φιλανθρωπίαν)” and asks, “Who could commit injustice against a human while so gently and benevolently (φιλανθρώπως) disposed toward the alien

(ἐν τῷ ἀφελκτικῷ) and in the non-harming (ἀβλαβεῖ) of anyone at all who does not harm (βλάπτοντος)” (3.26.9). For a wider circle of consideration than allowed by Stoic *oikeiosis*, Porphyry draws on Theophrastus’s *On Piety* in a passage (*Abst.* 3.25) generally taken as a discussion of *oikeiotes* (“kinship”), although the term is employed only obliquely, in a reference to “the kinship (οἰκειότης) of passions (παθῶν)” (3.25.3) between humans and nonhumans. (An earlier Theophrastean passage [2.22.2] speaks of “a kinship [οἰκειότητος] for us with [πρὸς] other humans”). At 3.25.3, Porphyry says, “We hold (τίθεμεν) that all people are related (συγγενεῖς) to each other, and indeed to all the animals.” That is because “the principles (ἀρχαί) of their bodies are the same by nature,” not just “fundamental elements (στοιχεῖα), since plants also come out of these,” but rather “skin, flesh (σάρκας), and the class of humors innate (σύμφυτον) in animals.” More important, Porphyry refers to “there being in [animals] souls that are not different (ἀδιαφόρους) by nature...in desires (ἐπιθυμίας) and anger (ὀργαῖς), and furthermore in reasoning (λογισμοῖς) and most of all in perceptions (αἰσθήσεων).”⁶¹ The difference,

(ἀλλότρια) and unrelated (ἀσύμφυλα)”? (*Esu* 995f-96a). See also *Abst.* 3.20.7 (= *Plut. Soll.* 959f-60a, with slight variations): “Pythagoreans made gentleness to animals practice for love of human beings (τοῦ φιλανθρώπου) and for proneness to pity (φιλοκτίρμονος).” In *Cleverness*, the *dolphin* is said by Phaedimus to have a “love of humans” (τὸ φιλάνθρωπον) and indeed to be the only animal that “cleaves to a human precisely because he is human” (*Plut. Soll.* 984c).

⁶¹ Dierauer, it should be noted (1977, 172), asserts that this sentence “can certainly not come from Theophrastus,” since he and Aristotle “both differentiate between human and animal souls, and...consider rational thought to be a privilege of man” (172). Dierauer’s assertion is based primarily on his attribution of *Arist. HA* 588a17-b3 to Theophrastus (166) and on a Theophrastean passage transmitted by Photius concerning the ostensibly “grudging” behavior of animals (168). In *HA* 588a18-b3, as we have seen, “intelligence” in animals is cast as a matter of “traces,” “similarity,” and “analogy.” In the Photius passage

Porphyry suggests, is one of degree not of kind, since “as with bodies, so too with souls, some animals have them in perfected form, others in a weaker (ἥττον) form, but certainly all alike have the same principles by nature.”

Though employed, in effect, as an alternative, Theophrastean *oikeiotes* could have had some part in the evolution of Stoic *oikeiosis*.⁶² Later Stoics, according to Brink, could have “grafted on to their own doctrines the whole range of Theophrastus’s οἰκειότης”—that is, its concentric structure.⁶³ This point refers back to Brink’s observation that “the

(*Bibl.* 278 528b13-14 Henry = fr. 175 Wimmer), Theophrastus asks, “How does such wisdom (σοφία), which even the rational (οἱ λογικοὶ) acquire (μανθάνουσιν) with long practice, come to the irrational (τοῖς ἀλόγοις)?” (For a response regarding the Photius passage, see Cole 1992, 57-60.) Perhaps more strikingly, in *On the Senses* (*Sens.* 48 Diels), Theophrastus describes as “silly” the idea of Diogenes of Apollonia that “humans differ [from other animals] in the fact that they breathe purer [air], but not in their nature (τὴν φύσιν) just as ensouled beings differ from the unensouled.” As I noted in the introduction, I do not mean to impute to Theophrastus (or Plutarch or Porphyry) a single, fixed view of animals. However, in the context of *Abstinence* at least, the views expressed in 3.25.1-3 (and the corresponding first-person voice—λέγω, φαμέν, etc.) may be understood as belonging to both Theophrastus and Porphyry. For the connection drawn here between physical and mental sameness (skin, flesh, and humors on the one hand; desires, anger, reasoning, and perceptions on the other), see chapter 2, section III. Whether from a Theophrastean or Stoic perspective, it would seem to go without saying that one ought not to kill, much less eat, those who are οἰκεῖοι (“related” or “appropriate”) to oneself—and that “someone not abstaining (ἀπεχόμενος) from injustice toward those who are related (τῶν οἰκείων) would rightly be judged impious (ἀσεβής),” as Porphyry says at 3.26.1.

⁶² For the history of scholarly perspectives on the relation between the two ideas, see Görgemanns 2002, 166-68.

⁶³ Brink 1956, 141. This structure of concentric circles would be elaborated by the second-century CE Stoic Hierocles. The first circle, as he puts it, is the one, “which someone himself has drawn around his own

original feature in Theophrastus's scheme...is the chain of relationships from the smallest group among men all the way along to the largest and from thence to other living things."⁶⁴ That structure, by which relatedness is extended to ever larger groups, emerges from the first part of the Theophrastus passage in *Abst.* book 3:

We say that those who have been brought into being from the same...father and mother are related (οικείους) to each other by nature (φύσει). And...those sown from the same forefathers...and of course also citizens.... In this way, I think, we say that both Greek to Greek, and non-Greek to non-Greek, and all human beings to each other are related and of like kind (συγγενεῖς). (3.25.1-2)

While perhaps impinging, then, on Stoic *oikeiosis*, “a developmental theory,” as Fortenbaugh puts it, Peripatetic *oikeiotes* is, in contrast, “an objective, reciprocal relationship.”⁶⁵ As Clark clarifies with reference to her translation of *oikeios* in 3.25 as “related” instead of the usual “our own” or “appropriate,” Theophrastean *oikeiotes* “is a biological fact, from which moral consequences should follow,” while Stoic *oikeiosis* “is a process of recognizing and identifying what is ours.”⁶⁶ Alternatively, as Martins formulates the distinction, *oikeiotes* is “static” while *oikeiosis* is “dynamic.”⁶⁷

thought (διάνοιαν) as a fixed point.” As for “the outermost and biggest circle,” this one includes “the entire class of humans” (LS 57G = Stob. 4.27.23 Wachsmuth). Cf. Porphyry’s aspirational extension of harmlessness at 3.27.2, discussed in chapter 2, section IVA.

⁶⁴ Brink 1956, 135.

⁶⁵ Fortenbaugh 2011, 558.

⁶⁶ Clark 2000a, 176n510.

⁶⁷ Martins (2018, 181). For Martins (185), “the dynamic [principle of] *oikeiosis* forms a horizontal axis, which can extend justice to other living beings in the context of normal, everyday life,” while the

From Porphyry’s perspective, animals are indeed *oikeia* (“related” or “appropriate”) to humans, suitable objects of *oikeiosis* and, consequently, justice. Speaking of the time “when friendship (φιλίας) and perception of relatedness (συγγενές) held fast all beings (πάντα),” he says that “no one killed any being (οὐθὲν), considering the other animals (τὰ λοιπὰ τῶν ζώων) to be *oikeia*” (2.22.1). Picking up the theme in book 3, he observes, “Someone who has brought about for himself *oikeiosis* toward (πρὸς) animals (τὸ ζῷον) will not commit injustice (ἀδικήσει) against any individual animal” (3.26.7). Porphyry notably uses the same word (*oikeia*) to connect humans both to animals and to a higher ontological level, “the things that truly belong to us” (τὰ ὄντως οἰκεῖα), to which we must strive to “return” (ἐπανιέναι) in our quest for spiritual ascent (1.30.4). Savage humans do not cause us to “cut off our relationship (σχέσιν) with (πρὸς) the civilized (τὸ ἡμερον),” he observes (3.26.2), nor should we cut off tamer (ἡμερώτερα) animals (3.26.3). Indeed, Porphyry says, “we do a great injustice (πολὸν...ἄδικον) by killing both the tame and the savage (ἄγρια) and unjust (ἄδικα), and by eating the tame ones” (3.26.4). In Porphyry’s schema, “civilization” or “tamelessness,” aligned with the harmlessness of “the Greater” (referred to at 3.26.11), generates a chain of relatedness and appropriation from human to animal and from the human to the divine.⁶⁸

assimilation to god “forms...a vertical axis, which seeks the transcendence of physical existence.” It is the dynamism of *oikeiosis* versus the static quality of *oikeiotes* that makes him lend more weight to the former as an element of Porphyry’s thinking in *Abstinence*.

⁶⁸ Cf. the movement of the divine (θεῖον) between both humans and animals, as recognized by Egyptian priests, at 4.9.1. The idea of “the Greater” (κρείττων) itself links the divine, divine law, the priest, and vegetarianism. See 1.28.4, 1.50.3, 2.50.1, 3.17.2, 3.26.10-11, 4.18.5 (discussed below), and 4.20.8.

Even as Porphyry disrupts the dichotomy of human and animal and as he pushes justice beyond the border of the human, *Abstinence* is, nonetheless, pervaded by a discourse of norms and boundaries, a thematics of the fixed and immobile. All three major themes of *Abstinence*—justice, piety, and purity—concern limits on human behavior, and the treatise is accordingly shaped by words that relate to boundaries and laws: from ἀκίνητος (“not to be stirred or touched, inviolate...*proverbial of sacred things*”)⁶⁹ to χωρίζω (“to separate, divide, exclude”).⁷⁰ Palmer sees the Greek notion of justice as grounded in a cosmic “order that was the result of an elemental act of apportionment” in which “each component of the universe, gods, men, and natural objects had its allotted portion.”⁷¹ In this system, “the just man is ἐνδικός.... He remains ‘within his marks or limits’; unlike his opposite, who is ἔκδικος,” while violators are subject to “*Nemesis*, ‘distribution’ or ‘distributor’ ”—“a jealous, watchful spirit which

⁶⁹ LSJ s.v. II.2.

⁷⁰ Other words relating to boundaries and limits, the crossing of which violates purity as well as justice, include ὄρος derivatives and παρα- words such as παραβαίω and παράνομος. In such words and others, the appearance of the root νομ- (the o-grade of Indo-European *nem-, which means “assign, allot”) provides a further elaboration of the theme of limits. For *nem-, see Watkins 1992. The discourse of boundaries and limits is also employed by opponents, as when they refer to “the ancient law (νόμον) and boundary (ὄρον) by which Zeus” allowed fish, land animals, and birds to eat each other while to human beings alone “he gave justice (δίκην)” (1.5.3).

⁷¹ Palmer 1950, 168. The related notion of justice as giving what is due, though not generally welcome in Platonic thought (see, e.g., Porph. *Sent.* 40.75-77), has some relevance in Porphyry’s discourse on piety, as laid out in *Abst.* book 2. In that discourse, piety is regarded as rendering what is due to the gods. Thus Porphyry refers to “offer[ing] first fruits, exactly as was just (δίκαιον)” (2.8.2; see also 2.24.1.).

punishes trespasses and encroachments.”⁷² Indeed, alongside the more relationally oriented understanding of justice prevalent in Porphyry’s treatise, justice (δίκη) as an external force, an enforcer, along with Nemesis, of boundaries and proper portions, makes several appearances. Near the end of book 3, Dike, Aidos, and Nemesis are mentioned as goddesses who “kept company” (ὠμίλει) with the golden race “because they were contented with the fruit of the land” (3.27.10). In book 2, speaking of sorcerers who are punished “for their transgression (παρανομίας),” Porphyry notes that some penalties are “at the hands of the justice (δίκης) overseeing all mortal matters, both deeds and thought” (2.45.3).⁷³ In book 4, justice, appears as an agent of the law (νόμος) of the city, which, “having permitted others to eat meat,...allowed [the abstinent] to be self-ruling (αὐτονόμους) and revered (ἐσέφθη) them as greater (κρείττονας) than itself.” That law, Porphyry says, “surely brought the others, not [the abstinent], under its justice (δίκη) as initiators (κατάρχοντας) of injustice (ἀδικίας)” (4.18.5). Some people, in other words, need the threat of punishment to avoid harm to their fellow citizens, but not the abstinent philosophers, whose autonomy is to be respected because they adhere to a higher law. The law of the city, we might say, has an immovable, unchangeable, universal part, which justice enforces—as in the prohibition against murder—and a mobile, changeable, and particular part reflected, in Porphyry’s view, in the permission to eat meat.

The suggestion of the immovable and unchangeable in *Abstinence* points to a notion of natural law, a final theoretical basis for justice, which, because it is also

⁷² Palmer 1950, 162-63.

⁷³ For justice as a punitive force, cf. *Marc.* 22, which speaks of those who “can neither evade nor escape the notice of the gods and justice (δίκην), the gods’ attendant.”

universal, has important implications for the work’s universalizing aspirations.⁷⁴ In *Rhetoric* (1373b), Aristotle distinguishes “particular” (ἴδιον) from “general” (κοινόν) laws, which, he says, are those “based upon nature” (κατὰ φύσιν)⁷⁵ and—citing Antigone, as well as Empedocles and Alcidas⁷⁶—observes that “there is by nature, as all men in a manner divine, a common (κοινόν) justice and injustice, even if there is no community (κοινωνία) with (πρὸς) each other and no agreement (συνθήκη).” In *Nicomachean Ethics* (1135a3-5), he says, “Just things (δίκαια) that are not natural (φυσικά) but man-made (ἀνθρώπινα) are not the same everywhere, since not even forms of government (πολιτεῖαι) are the same, but one form of government alone is in accordance with nature (κατὰ φύσιν) everywhere, and that one is the best (ἀρίστη).” The Stoics, for their part, as Schofield observes, “could invoke Heraclitus, Pindar, Empedocles, the *Antigone*, [and] Plato...for a...view, well expressed by Cicero”: “Law was not contrived by human ingenuity, nor is it some popular decree, but it is something eternal, which rules the whole universe by means of wisdom in commanding and prohibiting.”⁷⁷ Voiced by

⁷⁴ For positive law, the opposite of natural law, cf. the reference in *Marc.* 25 to “the [law] variously established in nations and city-states (ὁ θετὸς κατ’ ἔθνη καὶ πόλεις),” which “strengthens community (κοινωνίαν)” but is “written (γραφόμενος) now in one way, now in another (ἄλλοτε ἄλλοιός).”

⁷⁵ See also Arist. *Rh.* 1368b7-9: “Law (νόμος) is, on the one hand, particular (ἴδιος) and, on the other hand, universal (κοινός). I call the written (γεγραμμένον) law in accordance with which (καθ’ ὃν) [cities] are governed (πολιτεύονται) ‘particular’; but I call ‘universal’ as many unwritten (ἄγραφα) things as seem to be agreed on among all.”

⁷⁶ Antigone is cited for her illegal burial of Polynices; Empedocles, for his universal prohibition against killing animals (discussed below); and Alcidas, for his un-Aristotelian affirmation that “god sent forth all people as free; nature has made none a slave” (Alcidas fr. 3 Avezzù).

⁷⁷ Schofield 1995, 205-9, citing Cic. *Leg.* 2.8.

Laelius in Cicero's *Republic* (3.33), "the classic Stoic statement of natural law," as Sorabji puts it,⁷⁸ declares that "true law (*vera lex*)...is spread among all (*diffusa in omnes*), unvarying (*constans*), and permanent (*sempiterna*)." Elsewhere, Cicero describes law as "the highest reason, innate (*insita*) in nature, which orders the things that must be done and prohibits the contrary."⁷⁹ As Striker has observed, the term "nature," by appealing to "the nature of the universe...[,] of man...[,] of human society, or...all of the above," promises "a solution to the problem of objectivity" through "standards...independent of human conventions or beliefs."⁸⁰

It is, in fact, "standards...independent of human conventions or beliefs" that Porphyry appeals to several times in defense of abstinence. In book 1, for example, he posits an unwritten divine law separate from and above ordinary laws:

Certainly, in fact, if lawgivers, had arranged legal matters for their cities in order to lead them up (*ἀνάγοντες*) to the contemplative (*θεωρητικὸν*) life (*βίον*) and to life (*ζωήν*) in accordance with intellect (*κατὰ νοῦν*), it would be necessary, while obeying them, also to accept their approvals concerning food. But if, having in view the life according to nature (*τὸν κατὰ φύσιν...βίον*), called the "middle (*μέσον*) life," they legislate things that would also be approved of by the many—for whom external and likewise bodily matters have been understood as the things that are good or bad—why would someone, citing the law of these men, overturn a mode of life (*βίον*) superior (*κρείττονα*) to every law that is written and

⁷⁸ Sorabji 1993, 151.

⁷⁹ Cic. *Leg.* 1.18.

⁸⁰ Striker 1996, 219.

ordained for the many, a life pursuing the unwritten (ἄγραφον) and especially divine (θεῖον) law? (1.28.3-4)

In carving out a space for himself and like-minded people committed to “the contemplative life,” Porphyry here appeals to a law that is “superior,” “unwritten,” and “divine”—all three adjectives pointing toward attributes of natural law.⁸¹ “Life according to nature” (τὸν κατὰ φύσιν...βίον), as the context makes clear, refers to something different, the life of the non-contemplative masses, “for whom external and likewise bodily matters have been understood as the things that are good or bad.”⁸² The similar-sounding phrase “laws of nature” (τοὺς τῆς φύσεως νόμους), which Porphyry uses in book 2, points in the opposite direction, away from the body and up toward the gods:

It would, in fact, be extraordinary for the Syrians not to eat fish; the Hebrews, pigs; and the greater part of the Phoenicians and the Egyptians, cows—and besides, with many kings striving to change them, to endure death rather than the transgression (παράβασις) of the law (νόμου)—but for us to choose to transgress the laws of nature (τοὺς τῆς φύσεως νόμους) and the divine rules (θείας παραγγελίας) on account of fears of people and of some slander from them. (2.61.7)

⁸¹ The phrase ἄγραφον καὶ θεῖον (“unwritten and...divine”) at 1.28.4 is unique in the extant Greek corpus.

⁸² As Clark (2000a, 133n96) observes, “The ‘middle life,’ according to Aristotle (*EN* 1095b14-23)...aims at recognition (*timē*)” in contrast “with the life of enjoyment chosen by ‘ordinary vulgar people’ and with the contemplative life.” Porphyry here seems to conflate the middle life of the political elite and lower life of the masses—devoted, respectively, to honor and “bodily matters.”

The proximity of “laws of nature” and “divine rules” here expresses their close relationship.⁸³ The unchanging, transcendent law, which in Porphyry’s view calls for abstinence from animals, is contrasted with the ephemeral dictates and concessions of rulers.⁸⁴

In his use of natural-law language in these passages and elsewhere,⁸⁵ Porphyry invites us to reconsider his suggestions that vegetarianism is for just a few people. Natural law is, in its essence, universal. We see this, for example, in Aristotle’s reference to Empedocles, in whose view the prohibition against killing animals is explicitly extended to everyone, not just a priestly-philosophic elite.⁸⁶ What might be called

⁸³ Whereas “divine rules” at *Abst.* 2.61.7 seems to correspond to “the [law] of god” (ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ) in *Marc.* 25, there appears to be a looser correspondence between “the laws of nature” (τοὺς τῆς φύσεως νόμους) in the former (a matter of prohibition) and “the [law] of nature” (ὁ...τῆς φύσεως) and “of mortal nature (ὁ τῆς θνητῆς φύσεως)” in the latter, which acts as a force of moderation in matters of the body, “pointing out the necessary (ἀναγκαῖον)” while it “cross-examines (ἐλέγχει) what is zealously pursued in vain or superfluously.” Speaking of the divine law and the law of nature, in *Marc.* 27, Porphyry says, “Starting from these, you will nowhere have a care for (εὐλαβήσῃ) the written (ἔγγραφον) law.”

⁸⁴ In *Cels.* 5.37, written about two decades earlier, the Christian polemicist Origen draws a similar distinction between “the written law of cities” (τοῦ ἐν ταῖς πόλεσι γραπτοῦ) and “the law of nature (τοῦ...τῆς φύσεως νόμου), which God would legislate,” and which ought to take precedence even at the cost of death.

⁸⁵ Quoting Asclepiades (a historian of the third century CE “known only through this passage,” according to Girgenti and Sodano [2005, 523]), Porphyry says, “Initially no ensouled being (ἔμψυχον) was sacrificed to the gods, and there was no law about it on account of its being forbidden by natural law (νόμῳ φυσικῷ)” (4.15.2).

⁸⁶ See Arist. *Rh.* 1373b13-15: “As Empedocles says concerning not killing (κτείνειν) the ensouled (τὸ ἔμψυχον), this indeed is not just (δίκαιον) for some and unjust (οὐ δίκαιον) for others, ‘but the law

Porphyry’s quasi-universalism may be understood, in contrast to the Empedoclean stance, as conditionally framed. If you want to fulfill the true nature of a human being, Porphyry suggests, you must abstain from eating animals; if, on the other hand, you do not want to fulfill that true nature—if you are among the ordinary people more concerned with external and bodily matters—then, the law of the city permits you to live your life that way. The city’s concession of meat-eating to ordinary people (and Porphyry’s putative concession of the same) does not negate or limit a universal law against killing harmless animals. There is a fundamental difference between positing a high standard applicable only to a few—which is how the stance of *Abstinence* is usually received—and setting a high standard that many people will be disinclined to pursue or unable to achieve, even if, as Porphyry observes, “The things apart from which [nature] could not endure...can be provided (πορίζεσθαι) both easily and together with justice (δικαιοσύνης) and freedom (ἐλευθερίας) and peacefulness (ἡσυχίας) and much gentleness (ῥαστώνης)” (1.51.7). To the extent that his program is difficult, Porphyry could be compared with the early Stoics, whose own form of assimilation to god, the condition of the sage, was thought to be achievable by only a few. The difficulty of living in complete harmony with the *logos* of the universe was not thought to compromise the universality of natural law or to exclude anybody, however abject, from the Stoic program. At the same time, as with later Stoics,

(νόμιμον) of all (πάντων) has been extended (τέταται) without a break both through the wide-ruling sky and, in turn, through the boundless earth’ ” (Emp. fr. 135 DK). See also Cic. *Rep.* 3.11.19, where Philus, channeling the skeptic Carneades, attributes to Empedocles, as well as Pythagoras, the idea that “there is one legal status (*unam...condicionem iuris*) for all living creatures (*omnium animantium*)” and that “inexpiable penalties hang over those by whom an animal is violated.”

Porphyry recognizes progress toward the goal rather than a dichotomy of success and failure.⁸⁷

Notwithstanding the programmatic exclusions, the ethos of *Abstinence* is expansive. From the standpoint of the moral patient, Porphyry consistently pushes justice's extension beyond the human boundary policed by Hermarchus and the Stoics. From the standpoint of the moral agent, he posits a divine law of harmlessness that, like Empedocles' law, "has been extended (τέταται)...through the boundless earth,"⁸⁸ regardless of the particular, contingent laws in individual cities and nations. The laws of such places, Porphyry insists, fall short of, and cannot be taken to override, the unwritten, divine law—natural law—which prescribes non-harming and abstinence. That higher law encompasses the philosopher, but not only the philosopher, because the practice of harmlessness is at the heart of justice itself and at the heart of what Porphyry takes to be the true nature of a human being.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ On "the rigidity of early Stoic ethics" and the second-century BCE scholar Panaetius's "readiness to admit 'likenesses of virtue' " as a probable "methodological concession which made Stoicism both less rigid and more humane," see Long (1974) 1986, 214.

⁸⁸ See again Emp. fr. 135 DK.

⁸⁹ In considering the varied universalizing tendencies in *Abstinence*, such as its allusions to natural law, I seek to temper or nuance the demographic exclusions from vegetarianism (1.27.1, 2.3.1) that most readers take to be decisive. Porphyry offers examples of self-sufficient contemplative communities, including fully vegetarian ones, in *Abstinence* book 4; for imaginings of non-contemplative vegetarian societies, see his tendentious use of Sparta, discussed in chapter 3, section III, and his treatment of the people of the Golden Age, discussed in chapter 5, section IV. To the question of what would happen if everyone chose a vegetarian life, Porphyry responds, "No one in fact would be so mad as not to believe it is incumbent on all people to strive to be virtuous" (4.18.6), as I discuss in the introduction.

IV. Justice as a Virtue

Throughout this chapter, I have considered justice as an external relationship of harmlessness that is extended or not extended to animals. At the same time, as we have seen, justice in the Platonic tradition was often conceived as an internal quality—a virtue. The play of internal and external, of self-directed and other-directed, maps onto our basic dialectic of purity and justice, and, as we will see in chapter 4, contemplation and action.⁹⁰ I will now take a brief look at justice as a virtue in both its internal and external aspects as it is presented by Aristotle, Plato, and Porphyry himself, with the aim of showing that justice for Porphyry cannot be reduced simply to a soul state.⁹¹

In antiquity, justice emerges as one of four canonical virtues (along with wisdom, courage, and self-control), whose inner and outer aspects are negotiated in various ways by Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics. In the *Republic*, Socrates referring to the perfect polity, says that “it is clear that it is wise (σοφία) and courageous (ἀνδρεία) and self-controlled (σώφρων), and just (δικαία).”⁹² In that work, in which the well-governed city-state and the just soul are reflections of each other, the latter is conceptualized as a

⁹⁰ In chapter 4, section IIB, I examine the four-level schema of virtue presented in Porphyry *Sent.* 32 as it relates to action, contemplation, and the ontological hierarchy laid out in that work.

⁹¹ Cf. Edwards 2016, 270-71, discussed below.

⁹² Pl. *Rep.* 427e6-11. Adam ([1902] 1905, 224) identifies this as “apparently the earliest passage in Greek literature where the doctrine of four cardinal virtues...is expressly enunciated.” In *Rhet.* 1366b1, Aristotle offers a more expansive list of “the parts (μέρη) of virtue (ἀρετῆς),” including not just “justice” (δικαιοσύνη), “courage” (ἀνδρεία), “self-control” (σωφροσύνη), and “wisdom” (σοφία), but also “magnificence” (μεγαλοπρέπεια), “greatness of soul” (μεγαλοψυχία), “generosity” (ἐλευθεριότης), “gentleness” (πραότης), and “intelligence” (φρόνησις).

tripartite complex of reason, spirit, and appetite—with “reason in command”⁹³ and “each part doing its function and not interfering with that of another.”⁹⁴ Such a conception of the just soul is reflected, for example, in Porphyry’s observation that “the essence of [justice (δικαιοσύνη)] is in the rational governing the irrational, and the irrational obeying” (3.26.10). In Aristotle’s definition, virtue is “an acquired condition (ἔξις) of freely choosing (προαιρετική), which is in a middle position (μεσότητι) in relation to us, determined by reason (λόγῳ) and by what the person with intelligence (φρόνιμος) would establish for himself.”⁹⁵ For the Stoics, as Long observes, “virtue is...a unitary disposition of the soul which can be analyzed into...practical wisdom, justice, moderation and courage.”⁹⁶ In Parry’s general formulation, virtue is “a settled disposition to act in a certain way.”⁹⁷

The way a disposition of the soul would inform one’s relationship to the external world is not hard to imagine. In the *Republic*, it is accepted as a given that the person with a just soul would not, for example, ever commit theft or adultery, violate oaths, or be

⁹³ Sorabji 1993, 155.

⁹⁴ Parry 2014, citing Pl. *Rep.* 441d-e and 443d. Cf. also the chariot in Pl. *Phdr.* 246a-b.

⁹⁵ Arist. *EN* 1106b36-7a2. The Aristotelian approach to ethics has re-emerged in recent years in the form of virtue ethics, which shifts the emphasis away from rules for actions (deontology) and evaluation of their consequences (utilitarianism) toward the aspirational ethical character of the agent. Such an approach arguably reduces the burden of proving that animals are “rational” or possessors of some other morally relevant trait. As Bryant (2013, 108) puts it, “Ideally one would ask, ‘What would a [kind, courageous, honest, temperate] person do?’” and not ‘What does the moral status of this entity require of me?’ ” Or, “ ‘What kind of person do I want to be?’ rather than ‘what rule am I to follow?’ ” (113).

⁹⁶ Long (1974) 1986, 200

⁹⁷ Parry 2014.

impious.⁹⁸ In a further development of this line of thought, Porphyry, as we have seen, says that with the soul in proper order, “there is a complete necessity for a human being to be harmless toward anything whatsoever.” Here Porphyry imagines “the passions drawn in and desires and anger extinguished, and the reasoning power holding its appropriate sovereignty” (3.26.10). In such a condition, perfect internal justice produces immediate “assimilation to the Greater” and perfect external harmlessness.

On the other hand, when the question emerges of how justice as external behavior can serve one’s self-interest, the Platonic tradition is able to point to the *eudaimonia* that comes from justice as an inner state.⁹⁹ As Porphyry puts it, “The just man (δίκαιος) is perceived as diminishing his share in bodily things (τῶν κατὰ σῶμα), but he does no injustice (οὐκ ἀδικεῖ) to himself: for by means of his training (παιδαγωγία) of himself and his self-control (ἐγκρατεία), he will increase (αὔξεται) his inner good (τὸ ἐντὸς ἀγαθόν)—that is, his assimilation to god (πρὸς θεὸν ὁμοίωσις)” (3.26.13). Porphyry’s use of τὸ ἐντὸς ἀγαθόν calls attention to itself, as this is the only occurrence of the phrase in the extant Greek corpus. As a substantive, ἀγαθόν has the dual sense of “benefit” or “advantage” and “moral good.” In speaking of the “inner good” of the just man, Porphyry concisely captures the nexus in eudaimonistic ethics between goodness and being good to oneself.

⁹⁸ Pl. *Rep.* 443a.

⁹⁹ See, e.g., Pl. *Rep.* 353e-54a. *Eudaimonia* (“happiness, well-being, success”) is, according to Blackburn (2016, 163), “the central goal of all systems of ancient ethics.” As Sharples (1996, 84) observes, “The question, for Plato, Aristotle, Epicureans, and Stoics alike, is what sort of life is best, what sort of life constitutes ‘happiness.’ ”

The interplay of inner and outer justice can be illustrated, in part, by the ways Porphyry uses forms of δίκαιος and δικαιοσύνη. The latter, an abstract noun, is derived from the former, an adjective, by the addition of the suffix -σύνη, as with another canonical virtue, σωφροσύνη (“moderation in sensual desires, self-control, temperance”),¹⁰⁰ which is derived from the adjective σώφρων.¹⁰¹ Porphyry identifies justice (δικαιοσύνη) as a virtue (ἀρετή) both explicitly¹⁰² and by grouping it with other virtues¹⁰³ and often uses δίκαιος for the “just” man as well as “just” groups of people.¹⁰⁴ At the same time, as we have seen, he frequently uses the neuter form of δίκαιος as a substantive that, together with πρὸς and an accusative object, represents a justice relationship, namely one of harmlessness. We see the dual aspects of “justice” as both an internal virtue or disposition (δικαιοσύνη), on the one hand, and a quality of external relations (δίκαια), when Porphyry notes that before eating, the Essene initiate “swears oaths...first to be pious to the divine, then to preserve justice (δίκαια) toward (πρὸς) people and to hurt no one...but always to hate the unjust (ἀδίκους) and succor the just (δικαίους)” (4.13.1).

As the overall thrust of book 3 strongly suggests, Porphyry’s theory of justice is not simply about justice as a virtue, much less justice as an inner state, but also about justice as a *relationship*, a being-toward (πρὸς) another. I began this chapter with a passage in which Porphyry defines justice (δικαιοσύνη) by saying its “essence (οὐσία) is

¹⁰⁰ LSJ s.v. 2.

¹⁰¹ For a pairing of these words, see *Abst.* 2.36.1.

¹⁰² See 4.18.6.

¹⁰³ See 1.51.7, 2.60.4, 3.1.1, and 3.13.2.

¹⁰⁴ See 3.26.9 and 4.16.9.

in the rational governing the irrational, and the irrational obeying” (3.26.10). In isolation, this formulation could lead one to conclude, as Edwards does, that for Porphyry, “justice is not, in *essence*, harmlessness towards harmless animate beings, but is itself a *state of soul* in which the rational part ‘rules over’ the irrational part.”¹⁰⁵ According to Edwards’s reading, “those actions which necessarily result from a just state of soul are just, while those which result from an unjust state of soul are unjust.”¹⁰⁶ Granting this, we still need to consider the two preceding sentences and the transitional phrase διὸ καὶ (“for *this* reason”), which provide the context, the reason that “the essence of [justice] is in the rational governing the irrational”—namely, that it produces harmlessness.

While inviting us to focus on harmlessness rather than the soul state as such, the sentences preceding the definition also suggest that the causal arrows between justice and harmlessness do not go in just one direction. As we have seen, Porphyry says, and partly repeats, that “justice (δικαιοσύνη) consists in (κεῖται) in abstinence (ἐν τῷ ἀφεκτικῷ) and in the non-harming (ἀβλαβεῖ) of anyone at all who does not harm” (3.26.9). Here Porphyry uses a formula (A + κεῖσθαι ἐν + B) that he employs elsewhere in *Abstinence*, as well as in *Sententiae*, to indicate that a condition or disposition (A) is produced, at least to some degree, by an action or set of actions (B). At *Abst.* 3.1.3, for example, he paraphrases Socrates to observe that “human happiness (τὸ εὐδαιμον) [does not] consist in (ἐν...κεῖσθαι) enjoying pleasure”—i.e., happiness is not produced by pleasure.¹⁰⁷ At

¹⁰⁵ Edwards 2016, 270-71.

¹⁰⁶ Edwards 2016, 270-71.

¹⁰⁷ Σωκράτης μὲν οὖν πρὸς τοὺς ἡδονὴν διαμφισβητοῦντας εἶναι τὸ τέλος, οὐδ’ ἂν πάντες, ἔφη, σύες καὶ τράγοι τούτῳ συναινῶσι, πεισθήσεσθαι ἐν τῷ ἡδεσθαι τὸ εὐδαιμον ἡμῶν κεῖσθαι, ἔστ’ ἂν νοῦς ἐν τοῖς πᾶσι κρατῇ.

Abst. 4.20.2, he says that “purity (ἀγνεία), in all cases, [consists] in putting aside and abstaining from many opposite things”—i.e., purity is produced by “putting aside and abstaining from many opposite things.”¹⁰⁸ To say, then, that “justice consists in abstinence and in the non-harming of anyone at all who does not harm” is to suggest not just that harmlessness emerges from a just mind state but that the just mind state also emerges from the *practice* of harmlessness and, more specifically, abstinence, even if the precise way this dynamic operates is not detailed or theorized here.¹⁰⁹ Such a causal relationship is in line with what Porphyry suggests at the beginning of book 3, when he says that meat-eating does not “contribute” (συμβάλλεται) to the virtues of self-control, simplicity, or piety, “but rather opposes (ἐναντιοῦται) them,” as well as his observation that “it is not possible with simply any diet whatsoever, and not at all with flesh eating, to achieve appropriation to god” (1.57.2). While Edwards acknowledges that her reading is “in fact...a simplification of Porphyry’s position, since...actions which result in a just soul

¹⁰⁸ διὸ ἐν πᾶσιν ἡ ἀγνεία ἐν ἀποθέσει μὲν καὶ ἀφέξει τῶν πολλῶν καὶ ἐναντίων. For the κείσθαι ἐν formula, see also *Sent.* 32.6-8 and 32.15-16: “The civic virtues consist in (ἐν...κείμεναι) moderation of the passions, in obeying and being guided by the reckoning of proper function in relation to actions” (αἱ μὲν τοῦ πολιτικοῦ ἐν μετριοπαθείᾳ κείμεναι τῷ ἔπεσθαι καὶ ἀκολουθεῖν τῷ λογισμῷ τοῦ καθήκοντος κατὰ τὰς πράξεις); “The [virtues] of the person making progress toward contemplation,” i.e., purificatory virtues, “consist in (ἐν...κείνται) standing away from the things that are here” (αἱ [ἀρεταὶ] δὲ τοῦ πρὸς θεωρίαν προκόπτοντος {θεωρητικοῦ} ἐν ἀποστάσει κείνται τῶν ἐντεῦθεν).

¹⁰⁹ One can begin, e.g., with the Aristotelian idea of virtue as a ἔξις προαιρετική (“an acquired condition of freely choosing” Arist. *EN* 1106b36-7a2) that results from practice or habituation. As Aristotle says, “Doing just acts, we become just” (τὰ μὲν δίκαια πράττοντες δίκαιοι γινόμεθα *EN* 1103b1). For Porphyry’s most systematic treatment of virtue, see again *Sent.* 32.

state are also just,” she adds, “For our purposes...this is unimportant.”¹¹⁰ In taking as important the just soul state both as the producer and the result of harmlessness, we can put forth a reading that encompasses the conventional Platonist definition of justice *and* the innovative way that Porphyry employs it, with harmlessness emphasized and extended beyond the human. We can, in other words, remain mindful not just of the belatedly appearing human moral agent in chapter 26 but also of the nonhuman moral patient whose treatment and status preoccupy Porphyry throughout the length of book 3.

¹¹⁰ Edwards 2016, 271n59.

Chapter 2: Rationality, Sentience, and Justice

I. Introduction

It has been aptly observed that “since antiquity” the question of “the moral standing of animals has...tended to center...on the nature of [their] mentation.”¹ The possibility of a justice relationship with them has, in other words, been made to depend largely on the criterion of reason. In the matter of rationality, Aristotle conceived a division between humans and animals that reached full expression with the Stoics,² who “denied animals memory, emotion, foresight, intention, and voluntary acts,”³ excluding them from justice. Since rationality has always been central in the debate over animals, I will first consider two opposing models for animal minds in relation to human minds, one positing a difference in kind, a dichotomy of rational and non-rational; the other, a difference of degree.⁴ Specifically, I will look at the various ways Porphyry’s opponents assign and

¹ Newmyer 2006, 11.

² Aristotle’s denial of reason to animals was preceded by that of Alcmaeon of Croton (fifth century BCE), as reported by Theophrastus: “[Alcmaeon] says that a human differs from other [animals] because he alone understands (ξυνίησι), and the others perceive (αἰσθάνεται) but do not understand, since to think (φρονεῖν) and perceive are different and not, as Empedocles says, the same” (Alcmaeon T 5 DK = Theophr. *Sens.* 25 Diels, p. 506). For the idea that thinking necessarily goes along with perceiving, in line with the Empedoclean position, see Strato’s argument (at *Abst.* 3.21.8), referred to in section III below.

³ Sorabji 2003, 90.

⁴ Gilhus (2005, 76) says that the notions that animals are either “categorically different from humans or...different from humans only in degree” are exemplified by the Stoics and the Academic skeptics, respectively. (For more on the skeptics as a source for Plutarch and, in turn, Porphyry, see note 75 below.) Calarco (2015, 11-12) contrasts the perspectives of Aristotle, Descartes, and Kant, which he says, “maintai[n] a sharp break between human and animal life,” with a contemporary one “influenced by

categorize mental functions and behaviors to construct and maintain the border between human and nonhuman—and the ways Porphyry responds. While opponents apportion perception, “appearance,” and belief to exclude rationality; distinguish memory and recollection; impute instinct to animals instead of rational choice; deny them virtue, vice, madness, and emotion; and, most of all, deny them language, Porphyry finds ways to trouble or break down such separations, distinctions, and exclusions. After focusing on reason, I turn in the next section, “Perception and Body,” to a different, more capacious criterion for moral consideration and a justice relationship: sentience itself. Drawing an analogy between bodies and souls under the rubric of “more and less,” Porphyry invites us to think of bodies, perceptions, and reason as packaged together—and to consider just such bodies, with their perceptions, as the ground on which the choice between harm and harmlessness toward animals becomes meaningful. In the last section, “Justice as Harmlessness,” I consider the condition of being in a body from a different angle: that is, the harm that is necessary for the survival of the body. While Porphyry concedes the necessity of harm, he—more than his intertextual counterpart Plutarch—emphasizes the possibility or at least the aspiration of justice-as-harmlessness toward ensouled beings, whose bodies, it is suggested, because they come with perception, also bring lives that those animals wish to preserve and that humans ought to respect.

Charles Darwin” that “stresses...fundamental continuities...among human beings and animals” and (like Porphyry) finds “differences of degree rather than of kind,” with “no huge leaps, abysses, or breaks between species.”

II. Reason and Language

In arguing for reason in, and justice toward, animals, Porphyry steadily pushes against the dichotomy of rational and non-rational. We see this perspective emerge repeatedly in book 3, as when Porphyry says, with respect to reason, “Let it be conceded, then, that the difference (διαφορὰ)” between humans and animals “is in the more and less (μᾶλλον καὶ ἥττον), not in complete deprivation (στερήσει), and not in absolutely having (ἔχειν), on the one hand, and not having on the other” (3.8.7).⁵ Later, asserting that the arguments he has presented prove that animals are rational (λογικὰ), Porphyry concedes that “the *logos* in most of them (πλείστοις)” is “imperfect (ἀτελοῦς)” but, as he puts it, “surely not stripped away (ἐστερημένου) entirely.”⁶ More important, he adds, “if there is justice (δικαιοσύνης) toward (πρὸς) rational beings (λογικὰ), just as our opponents say, how would there not be justice (δίκαιον), for us, also toward [animals]? (3.18.1).⁷ The difference between humans and animals “in readiness in learning (εὐμαθεία) and shrewdness (ἀγχινοία) and all that concerns justice (δικαιοσύνην) and community (κοινωνίαν)” is not surprising, Porphyry says (3.23.7). Animals may think (φρονεῖ/διανοεῖται) “more sluggishly” (νωθρότερον) or “more badly” (κάκιον) or

⁵ Cf. the use of διαφορά in *Isag.* 10.10-14 Busse, discussed in the introduction, section III. The contrast between διαφορά as a creator of dichotomies in the logical treatise and as a marker of non-dichotomous difference here is striking. For the use of μᾶλλον καὶ ἥττον in reference to animal intelligence, see also Plut. *Soll.* 963a and *Esu* 992d.

⁶ But cf., again, 3.2.4, where Porphyry says that *logos* in “many” (πολλοῖς) animals “also holds starting-points (ὑποβολὰς) for perfection (πρὸς τὸ τέλειον).” As *logos* encompasses both reason and language, I leave it untranslated throughout this discussion.

⁷ The passage concludes the discussion of internal (*endiathetos*) *logos* that begins at 3.7.1.

“possess *logos* that is weak (ἀσθενῆ) and turbid (θολερόν), like an eye that is short-sighted and troubled” (3.23.8), but none of that removes their fundamental possession of reason. Indeed, neither Porphyry nor his opponents propose “weak and turbid *logos*” as a reason for excluding animals from justice. The former appears too committed to inclusion, while the latter are too committed to maintaining the boundary between human and nonhuman to grant even inferior *logos* to fellow beings.

Both the insistence on reason as a matter of degree and the reluctance of opponents to concede any measure of reason to animals are set in relief when we examine Porphyry’s tendentious claim that Aristotle—along with Plato, Democritus, Empedocles, and Pythagoras—“recognized the participation (τὸ μετέχον) [of animals] in *logos*” (3.6.7). Setting up his discussion of animals’ “[*logos*] within, the one residing in the mind (*endiathetos*),” Porphyry cites Aristotle for the opinion that “the difference (παραλλαγή)” in reason “is not a difference (διαλλάττουσα) in essence (οὐσία), but is observed (θεωρουμένη) in the more and less (μᾶλλον καὶ ἥττον)” (3.7.1). Here, it seems, Porphyry exploits Aristotle’s use of the phrase μᾶλλον καὶ ἥττον in reference to certain characteristics (ἤθη) of animals (but not reason)⁸ and, more broadly, his reports of animals’ emotions and cleverness in his zoological works. Such material was congenial to later Peripatetics (Theophrastus, Dicaearchus, and Strato),⁹ as well as to practitioners of a hybrid genre of natural history that combined it with paradoxography, folklore, and fable.¹⁰ And Aristotle’s language does in fact seem to drift at times toward an affirmation

⁸ Arist. *HA* 588a18-28.

⁹ For Dicaearchus and Strato, see Preus 1990, 97-98.

¹⁰ For the use of Aristotle in natural-history works such as Plutarch’s *Cleverness*, Aelian’s *On the Nature of Animals*, Pliny’s *Natural History*, and Philo’s *On Animals*—and the overlap among them—see Helmbold

of something that sounds like reason, or a “more and less” model of it.¹¹ Even in the zoological works, however, descriptions of animals’ cleverness are qualified: the appearances of reason may evoke the intelligence of humans, but they are framed by a discourse of “traces” (ἵχνη), “similarity” (ὁμοιότητες), and “analogy” (τῶ/τὰ...ἀνάλογον).¹² Categorically denying animals “reason (*logos*), reasoning

1957, 311-12; Terian 1981, 54-56; French 1994, 179; and Vallance 2003. Porphyry cites Aristotle on animals’ cleverness and learning (3.6.5, 3.8.6, 3.9.20), and their lack of savagery when food is abundant (οὔτε...ἔσχεν ἄν ἀγρίως 3.12.4). He also uses natural-history-style anecdotes (3.5.1, 3.11.1), and appears to acknowledge the genre when he says, “These things, in fact, have been gathered in a greater number by the ancients in their [treatises] concerning the practical wisdom (φρονήσεως) of animals” (3.9.5)—perhaps alluding to Theophrastus’s *On the Intelligence (φρονήσεως) and Character of Animals* as well as other works with φρόνησις in the title. When Porphyry employs the genre’s descriptions of animals’ stereotypical good and bad behavior (3.23.4 = Plut. *Soll.* 962e-f), they serve, in a way, the discourse of positive and negative exempla that informs much of *Abstinence*.

¹¹ See, e.g., the references to “practical intelligence” (φρόνησιν), “learning” (μαθήσεως), and “teaching” (διδασκαλίας) at *HA* 608a14-21 and to animals that are “more intelligent” (φρονιμώτερα) and “share (κοινωνοῦσι) most in practical intelligence (φρονήσεως)” at *GA* 753a1-15. For φρονιμώτερα, see also *Metaph.* 1.1 (980b), where it appears along with μαθητικώτερα (“better able to learn”) and φρόνιμα (“intelligent”), and *Abst.* 3.8.6 (“Aristotle says that animals with keener perceptions [εὐαισθητότερα] are more intelligent [φρονιμώτερα]”). For Aristotle’s explanation of how φρόνιμος has different meanings for humans and animals, see *EN* 1141a22-28.

¹² As we see at Arist. *HA* 588a18-b3. As Sorabji (1996, 313) notes, “If Aristotle refers in passing to technical knowledge and thought..., this is to be understood in the light of the programmatic warnings at the beginning, as is sometimes emphasized by an ‘as if.’” Sorabji (1996, 313n3) cites *HA* 631a27, in which dolphins are said to “hold back their breath as though they made a calculation (ὥσπερ ἀναλογισάμενοι).” Earlier in the passage, we are told that they buoy a dead baby dolphin “as though having compassion (οἷον κατελευθύντες)” for it (*HA* 631a20). Plutarch, for his part, ridicules the “as it were” (ὥσανεὶ) trope while

(*logismos*), thought (*dianoia, nous*), intellect (*nous*) and belief (*doxa*),” as Sorabji notes,¹³ and declaring that of five elements of the soul—nutritive, sentient, appetitive, locomotive, and rational—the last belongs to humans alone,¹⁴ Aristotle decisively belongs not with those finding “more and less” reason in animals but rather with those finding none.

While an outright denial of animal reason, such as Aristotle’s or the Stoics’, made for a clean division between human and nonhuman, one could say that those like Porphyry who cast the difference between human and animal minds as a matter of degree rather than kind had an easier task of explaining how animals could function and survive, as individuals and species, in a world of endless peril.¹⁵ They could more readily, more

referring to people who say that “the bee ‘as it were’ (ὡσανεῖ) remembers, and the swallow ‘as it were’ prepares, and the lion ‘as it were’ gets angry, and the deer ‘as it were’ becomes seized with fear,” statements that he suggests are “contrary to manifest facts” (παρὰ τὴν ἐνάργειαν) (*Soll.* 961e-f, quoted nearly verbatim at *Abst.* 3.22.5). Clark (2000a, 175n494) explains that ὡσανεῖ was used by the Stoics “when a term applied not strictly but analogously.” (See also note 68 below.) Aristotle himself neither uses the word ὡσανεῖ in reference to animals’ faculties nor denies that, as Plutarch puts it, they “experience pleasure or get angry or become seized with fear or make preparations or remember.”

¹³ Sorabji 1993, 12 with n30, citing *On the Soul, Parts of Animals, Metaphysics, On Memory, Politics, Nicomachean Ethics, and Eudemian Ethics*. For *logos* and *logismos*, see, e.g., Arist. *Metaph.* 980b28. For *dianoia* and *nous*, see *De an.* 414a29-15a14. For *doxa*, see *De an.* 428a19-24.

¹⁴ See Arist. *PA* 641a23 and *De an.* 414a29-15a14.

¹⁵ See, e.g., Porphyry’s observation at 3.21.5 that “nature (φύσις)...did not make the animal sentient (αἰσθητικὸν) for the sake of mere (ψιλῶ) experiencing (πάσχειν) and perceiving (αἰσθάνεσθαι), but since there are many things appropriate (οἰκείων) to it, on the one hand, and alien (ἄλλοτρίων) on the other, it would not be possible to survive even briefly for one who did not learn (μαθόντι) how to be on guard against (φυλάττεσθαι) some things and associate (συμφέρεσθαι) with others.”

supplely, explain behavior that appeared purposive and rational. Those arguing that animals are devoid of reason had to find ways of defining it that would include humans and exclude all others, an operation that entailed dividing up and apportioning mental functions, as though from an à la carte menu. Porphyry, as we will see, strives to keep such functions together, emphasizing the unity of perception, “appearance,” and belief as well as the continuity between human and nonhuman in memory, rational choice, virtue and vice, emotion, and, most consequentially, language—that metonym for reason itself.

We find examples of apportioning mental functions to deny reason to animals—and, conversely, bundling those functions together to maintain it—in the case of *aisthesis* (“perception”), *phantasia*, and *doxa* (“belief,” “opinion”).¹⁶ In *On the Soul*, Aristotle says that all animals have a share in *aisthesis* (427b6-9), but he denies *doxa* to animals because it entails “conviction” (πίστις) and “being persuaded” (πεπεισθαι), which in turn require something Aristotle says that animals do not have—reason (λόγος) (428a19-24). Many animals, Aristotle says, do have *phantasia*, which he describes as a “faculty” (δύναμις) or “disposition” (ἔξις) “according to which we say that an image (φάντασμα) comes into being for us” (428a1-2).¹⁷ A bit later, he says that animals have “perceptive” (αἰσθητικῆ) *phantasia* but not “deliberative” (βουλευτικῆ) *phantasia*, which only rational beings (λογιστικοῖς, i.e., humans) have (434a6-7). Stoics likewise made a distinction between the rational (λογικαί) *phantasiai* of rational beings (i.e., humans) and the non-rational (ἄλογοι) ones of non-rational beings (i.e., animals), noting that the rational

¹⁶ As with *logos*, I will leave *phantasia* (“imagination,” “impression,” “appearance”) untranslated throughout this discussion.

¹⁷ Exceptions include ants, bees, and grubs (*De an.* 428a9-11). Aristotle also describes *phantasia* in *De an.* 427b17-19 as an “experience” (πάθος).

phantasiai are *noêseis* (“thought processes” in Long and Sedley’s rendering).¹⁸ But while Aristotle and the Stoics both allow animals a certain non-rational *phantasia*, Porphyry argues that being ensouled in itself provides access to *aisthesis*, *phantasia*, *doxa*, and, in some measure, rationality itself. The case is made most extensively when Porphyry challenges an argument based on antitheses (3.21).¹⁹ Specifically, the argument goes, if the rational exists, so must the irrational. Porphyry says that one can easily attribute the irrational to the un-ensouled (ἄψυχον) rather than to animals, as his opponents wish to do (3.21.2). He further suggests that anyone insisting on a division “within the class of ensouled beings (τοῦ ἐμψύχου)” between “the sentient (αἰσθητικόν) and the insentient (ἀναἰσθητον), the *phantasia*-forming (φαντασιούμενον) and the non-*phantasia*-forming (ἀφαντασίωτον),” would be “ridiculous” (ἄτοπος), since “every ensouled being (ἔμψυχον) is sentient and *phantasia*-forming (φανταστικόν) from the hour of its birth”

¹⁸ LS 39A = D.L. 7.51, citing the doxographer Diocles of Magnesia. Long and Sedley (1987, 1:240), among others, have connected such rational *phantasiai* with propositional content. See also Inwood 1985, 73-74; Frede 1987, 152-5; and Clark 2000a, 162n381; 3. Cf. Sorabji (1990), who argues that the Stoics, perhaps despite themselves, also allow animals a kind of propositional *phantasia*, although this would “mea[n] no more than that one thing is *predicated* of another” (307) and that the *phantasia* is “verbalisable” without being “verbalised” (309). Sextus Empiricus reports in *M.* 7.275-76 the Stoic view that humans do not “differ from ‘irrational animals’ (ἄλόγων ζώων)...by simple (ἀπλῆ) *phantasia* alone but by inferential (μεταβατικῆ) and synthetic *phantasia*”—that is, in Long’s rendering ([1974] 1986, 125), *phantasia* “created by inference and combination.” As Labarrière notes (1997, 265), although Porphyry, Plutarch, and Philo (in *On Animals*) discuss the *phantasia* of animals, “we do not find among any of them a trace of this distinction,” which amounts to a “Stoic counter-argument.” Labarrière finds the omission striking, since “no doubt none of this was unknown to the neo-Academics.”

¹⁹ See Plut. *Soll.* 960b-c, where the argument, voiced by Soclarus, is attributed to the Stoics.

(3.21.4). The same applies, he continues, with the demand that “there be within the class of ensouled beings both a rational (λογικόν) and an irrational part (ἄλογον).” The ridiculousness is heightened, Porphyry suggests, when such demands are made “in dialogue with people”—such as himself, presumably—“who believe that nothing partakes (μετέχειν) of perception (αἰσθήσεως) that does not also partake of intelligence (συνέσεως) and that there is no animal that does not naturally (κατὰ φύσιν) possess some belief (δόξα) and reasoning power (λογισμὸς), just as it has perception (αἴσθησις) and impulse (ὀρμὴ)” (3.21.4).²⁰ For Porphyry, then, *aisthesis*, *phantasia*, and *doxa* are packaged together with reason in a soul, which every animal has. Although, from a different perspective, he will observe the dangers of perceptions, imagination, and belief as potential vehicles of irrationality, the point stands that neither any of these mental faculties nor rationality itself separates humans from other animals.²¹

In the matter of memory, too, Porphyry asserts against the Stoics and Aristotle that it functions in animals more or less as it does in humans. Cicero, influenced by the Stoic Panaetius, distinguishes human and “beast” (*belva*) in *On Duties* (1.11-12) by saying that “inasmuch as it is moved by sensation (*sensu*), discerning (*sentiens*) very little (*paulum admodum*) of past or future,” the latter “adapts itself only to what is at hand and

²⁰ Edwards (2016, 283-84, and 2018, 43) interprets “people who believe that nothing partakes of perception that does not also partake of intelligence” as referring to the Stoics, but it is difficult to maintain this reading in light of the next clause (“and that there is no animal that does not naturally possess some belief and reasoning power”). The Stoics are rather the ones raising the objection concerning antitheses in the first place (Bouffartigue and Patillon 1979, 2:246n1); the people with whom they are “in dialogue” must be opponents of Stoics in the matter of animal reason, i.e., Porphyry and like-minded thinkers.

²¹ For more on these dangers, see chapter 4.

what is present.” In contrast, as a “participant in reason” (*rationis...particeps*), a human “discerns consequences, sees the causes of things...compares resemblances, and joins and connects future things to what is present.”²² Though Aristotle attributes the faculty of remembering (*μνημονεύειν*) to other animals, he distinguishes it from recollecting (*ἀναμνήσκεσθαι*)—“a kind of inference (*συλλογισμός*)” or “inquiry” (*ζήτησις*) that he says only humans are capable of.²³ As Sorabji observes, “One of the central concerns of Aristotle’s treatise” on memory “is to show that it, like appearance [*phantasia*], belongs to the perceptual part of the soul, and so is available to animals, unlike deliberately reminding oneself.”²⁴ Thus, “perception and memory would not prove rationality.”²⁵ Porphyry, however, asks what happens between perceptions if we posit that “perception (*αἴσθησις*) does not need intellect (*νοῦ*) for its own function (*ἔργον*).” If no intellect is involved, Porphyry asks, “what is the thing in [the animal] remembering (*μνημονεύον*) and fearing painful things and desiring useful things and”—more to the point—“contriving (*μηχανώμενον*) how things not present will be present and setting up (*παρασκευαζόμενον*) lairs and hideaways and, again, traps for those that will be caught and escapes from those that are attacking?” (3.22.1). In order to “contriv[e] how things not present will be present,” to prepare and plan, a mind would need to do more than be reminded by present things or have unconnected memories appear to it. It would need to

²² For a discussion, see Schofield 1995, 202. See also Sen. *Ep.* 124.16-18, which offers the example of a horse that “remembers the road when he has been moved to the beginning of it but in the stable has no memory of the road, however often trodden.”

²³ See Arist. *Mem.* 453a8-14. See also *HA* 488b25-26.

²⁴ Sorabji 1996, 322.

²⁵ Clark 2000a, 162n381.

follow some sort of chain of inferences, to grasp that a certain sequence of actions will bring about a desired result. In that respect, a form of passive memory without recollection, without reason, becomes hard to conceive. (Earlier, Porphyry speaks of the principal role of memory “in the acquisition [ἀνάληψιν] of reasoning [λογισμοῦ] and intelligence [φρονήσεως]” [3.10.3].)

When, in various passages of book 3, Porphyry turns to the outward behavior of animals, he challenges the tendency to dismiss as products *merely* of nature or unreasoning “impulse” those actions that would be considered purposeful, intelligent, and even moral if performed by humans.²⁶ In *Politics*, Aristotle says that while “a human being lives also by reason (λόγῳ),” animals, on the other hand, “live especially by nature (φύσει), and some, a little bit, also by habits (ἔθεισιν).”²⁷ Against the use of “by nature” to mean something like “preprogrammed,” Porphyry argues that reason is inborn in both animals and humans and develops through learning. As he observes, “In each animal some characteristic (ἰδίᾳ) virtue (ἀρετὴ) is prominent to which it is naturally disposed (πεφυσίωται), with neither nature nor the steadiness [of the virtue] taking away (ἀφαιρουμένου) their rationality (λογικόν)” (3.11.2). A bit earlier, he follows up on a reference to “the intelligence (φρονήσεως) of animals” with the observation that “the one who says these things belong to them by nature (φύσει) does not know he is saying that they are rational (λογικά) by nature (φύσει).” The alternative, he says, is that “*logos* is not

²⁶ In reference to the “analogs” discussed in Arist. *HA* 588a17-b3, and the idea of “a natural ability that can only be compared with the intellect in function,” Dierauer (1977, 167) speaks of the “paradoxical phenomenon that we would call instinct,” whose “double aspect of apparent rationality and factual irrationality seems to elude any more precise definition.”

²⁷ Arist. *Pol.* 1332b5-6.

constituted (συνισταμένου) in us by nature (φύσει)” (3.10.1). As Porphyry says, “Regarding the other animals, just as with humans, nature (φύσις) inculcated (ἐδίδαξεν) most things in them, and learning (μάθησις) furnished other things” (3.10.3). On learning, Porphyry says, in another tendentious use of Aristotle, “Animals have been seen teaching (διδάσκοντα) their children not only to do other things but also to speak (φθέγγεσθαι), as the nightingale teaches her nestling to sing.²⁸ And indeed as [Aristotle] himself says, animals learn (μανθάνει) many things from each other, and many things also from humans” (3.6.5).²⁹ Porphyry also challenges the Stoics’ conception of ὁρμή or *impetus* (“impulse”), which they construe as irresistible to animals but mediated by reason in humans.³⁰ As Seneca puts it, for animals, “natural (*naturales*) are the impulses (*impetus*) toward useful things; natural, the aversions to the harmful (*contrariis*)—without any reflection (*cogitatione*) that would dictate it, without deliberation (*consilio*), whatever

²⁸ On the nightingale, see Arist. *HA* 536b171-79. (Plutarch uses similar phrasing in *Soll.* 973b and *Esu* 992b-c.) Porphyry offers examples of animals learning circus skills (τέχνας) from humans at 3.15.1. Cf. Philo *De animal.* 23-28.

²⁹ As Porphyry continues, “Everyone bears witness to [Aristotle’s] speaking the truth—every trainer of colts and every groom and horseman and chariot driver, and every huntsman and elephant driver and herdsman and all the instructors (διδάσκαλοι) of animals (θηρίων) and birds” (3.6.5). Cf. also *Abst.* 3.22.3, where Porphyry raises the efficacy of punishment of domesticated animals in the framework of his argument for their rationality: “[Our opponents] themselves punish errant (ἀμαρτόντας) dogs and horses, not emptily (διὰ κενῆς) but for discipline (σωφρονισμῶ), creating in them through physical pain (ἀλγηδόνος) the mental pain (λύπην) that we call repentance (μετάνοιαν).”

³⁰ For Stoics as “the most typical ‘instinct’ theorists,” see Preus 1983, 154 and 158n18.

nature has commanded (*praecepit*) is done.”³¹ According to a testimonium from Clement, Stoics believed that while animals “are moved (κινεῖται) according to impulse (ὄρμη) and *phantasia*”—that is, without the ability to withhold assent—“the rational faculty (δύναμις λογική) proper to the human soul is not obliged (ὀφείλει) to rush ahead (ὄρμᾶν)...but rather obliged to judge (διακρίνειν) *phantasiai* and not be borne along (συναποφέρεσθαι) with them.”³² Porphyry, however, attributes to animals what a Stobaeus passage calls “species of practical impulse” (πρακτικῆς ὄρμης εἶδη)—“a term which is synonymous with rational impulse,” as Inwood observes.³³ Speaking of ἐπιβολή (“design”), defined as ὄρμη πρὸ ὄρμης (“impulse before impulse”)—along with πρόθεσις (“objective”), παρασκευή (“preparation”), and μνήμη (“memory”)—Porphyry not only identifies all of them as “rational” (λογικόν), but says that “all are proper to every animal (τοῖς ζῴοις ὑπάρχει πᾶσιν)” (3.22.2).³⁴

³¹ Sen. *Ep.* 121.21. With respect to this agency of nature, unmediated by an individual’s reason, Seneca links nonhuman animals with human infants (*Ep.* 121.11-13) but not, of course, with adults. As he says, “Each period of [human] life has its own constitution, one for an infant, another for a boy, and another for an old man” (121.15). The preceding responds to his imagined interlocutor’s query concerning “how an infant is able to appropriate itself (*conciliari*) to a rational constitution when he is not yet rational” (121.14-15).

³² *SVF* 2.714 (= Clem. *Strom.* 2.20.111.1-2 Stählin). According to Sorabji (1996, 318), Stoics would say that “assent is the special human prerogative which makes our actions ‘up to us,’ ” and since in animals “it could not be given by reason, it would amount to no more than an impulse to follow appearances.”

³³ Inwood 1985, 225. See *SVF* 3.173 (= Stob. 2.7.9a Wachsmuth).

³⁴ See Plut. *Soll.* 961c. For πρόθεσις, παρασκευή, and ἐπιβολή—all classified as “species of practical impulse” (πρακτικῆς ὄρμης εἶδη), along with ἐγχείρησιν, αἴρεσιν, προαίρεσιν, βούλησιν, and θέλησιν, see again *SVF* 3.173 (= Stob. 2.7.9a Wachsmuth).

While opponents posit rational choice as a requirement for virtue, vice, and even madness, and thereby cast them as impossibilities for irrational animals, Porphyry casts these behaviors as markers, precisely, of rationality. Among the deniers of animals' rationality, we see an effort to hold them responsible nevertheless for what they do, as with Aristotle's claim that children and animals participate in "the voluntary" (τὸ ἐκούσιον) but not "deliberate choice" (προαίρεσις).³⁵ As Aristotle later clarifies, "The unjust act (ἀδίκημα) and the just act (δικαιοπράγημα) are defined by the voluntary and involuntary."³⁶ Whereas Aristotle decouples the "voluntary" from rationality to open a space for blaming irrational animals, Porphyry implicitly keeps the "voluntary" and rationality together. We see this, for example, in his treatment of animals' praiseworthy acts as evidence in themselves of rationality. If, as he suggests, "the acts of virtues (ἀρετῶν)" are seen as "proper (οἰκεῖα) to rational (λογικῆς) aptitude (ἐντρεχείας)" (3.11.2), then the evidently virtuous acts of animals could be taken as evidence of rationality³⁷—though, of course, opponents would classify such acts as mere analogs of virtuous behavior.³⁸ On the other hand, while acknowledging that "there are both vices

³⁵ Arist. *EN* 1111b7-10. See also *EN* 1111a25-26. Sorabji (1996, 326) notes that Democritus (fr. 257-58 DK) was similarly interested in preserving the culpability of animals. As Democritus puts it, "The man killing [animals] that commit injustice (ἀδικέοντα) and wish (θέλοντα) to commit injustice is unworthy of punishment (ἀθῶτος)."

³⁶ Arist. *EN* 1135a19-21.

³⁷ See *Abst.* 3.11-13 and 3.22-23. Cf. Philo *De animal.* 62 and 64, Plut. *Soll.* 962a-63b and *Gryllus* 986f-92e, and Sext. *P.* 1.67-68.

³⁸ See, e.g., Cic. *Leg.* 1.25 ("There is the same virtue in human and god and not in any other species [*genere*] beside") and Sen. *Ep.* 124.20: "There will be a certain good (*aliquod bonum*) in a mute animal;

(κακία) and jealousies (φθόνοι)” in animals, Porphyry adds that “they are not so heaped up as they are in humans” (3.10.4).³⁹ From a different perspective, Porphyry implicitly raises the question of why the Stoics, who “conced[e] that vice (κακίαν) is rational (λογικὴν),”⁴⁰ do not then attribute reason to animals when “every beast (θηρίον) is filled full (ἀναπέπλησται) of vice”—including, in many cases, “lack of self-control” (ἀκολασίαν) and “injustice” (ἀδικίαν)” (3.22.8).⁴¹ The probable answer—again, that such qualities in animals are not vices in the strict sense but analogs or likenesses—is not entertained here. Just as vice could be taken as evidence of reason, so too could madness, since it presupposes a prior non-mad (i.e., rational) state, as Porphyry argues.⁴² As he says, “It is not possible to come into a state of dysfunction (πάθει) without possessing the

there will be a certain virtue (*aliqua virtus*); there will be a certain perfection (*aliquid perfectum*)—but not absolute good or virtue or perfection. This in fact is granted (*contingunt*) to rational beings alone.”

³⁹ To illustrate his theriophilic argument here, Porphyry notes that “nearly everyone begets children while drunk. But animals...procreate for the sake of children,” i.e. intentionally (3.10.4-5). As Porphyry later wryly notes, “One vice does not belong to [animals], treachery against one who is kind,” while “humans plot against no one so much as the one who feeds them” (3.13.3).

⁴⁰ For Stoics, as Clark (2000a, 169n431) observes, “vice indicates rationality because it is disobedience to reason.” See Sen. *De ira* 1.3.4-7 (“Animals have been excluded [*prohibita*] not only from human virtues but also from their vices”).

⁴¹ Here, θηρίον seems to be used advisedly. (Not every ζῷον would be said to be “full of vice.”) As with humans, Porphyry employs animals, on occasion, as negative exempla—such as the hogs and male goats who might “agree” (συναινῶσι) that “pleasure (ἡδονὴν) is the goal (τέλος)” or the wolves and vulture who, though they may “approve” (δοκιμάζωσιν) of meat-eating, will not make us “concede...that they say (λέγειν) just things (δίκαια)” (3.1.3). Even in the service of vice, the rationality of the animals emerges from the verbs describing their discursive activities: συναινῶσι, δοκιμάζωσιν, and, most notably, λέγειν.

⁴² For this passage, see also Plut. *Soll.* 963c-f.

faculty (δύναμιν) of which the dysfunction is either a deprivation (στέρησις) or mutilation (πήρωσις) or some other suffering (κάκωσις).” The case of rabid dogs, for example, “testifies (μαρτυρεῖ) that animals have *logos* and the faculty of thought (διάνοιαν), and not an inferior (φάυλην) one,” since “rabies and madness (μανία) are a dysfunction of [this faculty] when it is troubled (ταραπτομένης) and mixed up (συγχεομένης)” (3.24.3-4).⁴³

While, as with vice, the Stoics denied animals anger and other emotions as requiring reason, Porphyry, imputing reason to animals, restores them in a way that has implications for the possibility of a justice relationship. For the Stoics, emotion properly entails a judgment (right or wrong), which can be made only by a rational being. In the case of anger (*ira*), as Seneca observes, though it “is an enemy of reason (*inimica rationi*), it is, nevertheless, born nowhere except where there is a place for reason.”⁴⁴ In Sorabji’s analysis, animals participate in the first two stages in Seneca’s schema of anger: an appearance (*species*)—we could say of something inimical—and then an “involuntary reaction (*impetus*) of the mind.”⁴⁵ This sequence falls short of “genuine anger” for Seneca, since that “involves the voluntary and rational assent of the mind to the

⁴³ Cf. *De ira* 1.3.7, where Seneca refers to animals’ “impressions”—*visus* and *species*—as “turbid (*turbidas*) and mixed up (*confusas*)” under normal circumstances. (As the context makes clear, *visus* and *species* correspond here to Greek *phantasia*. For *visus* as *phantasia*, cf., e.g., Cic. *Acad.* 2.145.) Porphyry, as we have seen, concedes that *logos* in animals may be “weak (ἄσθενῆ) and turbid (θολερόν)” (3.23.8).

⁴⁴ Sen. *De ira* 1.3

⁴⁵ Sorabji 1996, 319. We can accept Sorabji’s general analysis without also accepting his claim that the appearance in question is an “appearance of injustice.” For his explanation of this claim, based on a conflation of *De ira* 1.3.3-8 and 2.3-4, see 1996, 319n37.

appearance,” followed by “an uncontrollable surge that carries us away.”⁴⁶ Expanding his purview, Seneca says that “mute animals (*muta animalia*) lack human emotions (*affectibus*)” even if “they have...certain impulses (*impulsus*) similar (*similes*) to them.” Thus, “the mental attacks (*procursus*) and disturbances (*tumultus*) of [animals] are violent (*vehementes*), but they are not fear and anxiety and unhappiness and anger but certain things similar (*similia*) to these.” As for “love and hate,...friendship and animosity, dissension and harmony,” Seneca says that animals have “traces” (*vestigia*) of those.⁴⁷ Such a denial of emotions to animals, based on the assumption that human minds are fundamentally different from those of animals, is challenged by the ostensibly Theophrastean perspective presented by Porphyry, according to which human and animal souls are “not different (ἀδιαφόρους) by nature...in desires (ἐπιθυμίαις) and anger (ὀργαῖς), and furthermore in reasoning (λογισμοῖς) and most of all in perceptions (αἰσθήσεσιν)” (3.25.3).⁴⁸ In this passage, the observation about emotions, reasoning, and

⁴⁶ Sorabji 1996, 318-19. We see the four stages (impression; agitation; approval, the part requiring reason; and impulse) at *De ira* 2.3.5, where Seneca says that anger is not “the first confusion (*agitatio*) of the mind that the impression (*species*) of a wrong (*iniuriae*) has struck (*incussit*)” but rather “the subsequent impulse (*impetus*), which not only has received (*accepit*) the impression of the wrong, but approved (*adprobavit*) it.” Anger, Seneca says, is “an excitement (*concitatio*) of the mind to revenge, which proceeds from choice (*voluntate*) and deliberate resolve (*iudicio*).”

⁴⁷ Sen. *De ira* 1.3.6 and 8

⁴⁸ With some works of Theophrastus, who is credited with having written a treatise titled *On the Intelligence* (φρονήσεως) and *Character of Animals* (D.L. 5.49) and who was possibly a collaborator on the later books of Aristotle’s *History of Animals*, we see a stepping away from the human-animal division. See, e.g., Sorabji 1993, 177. For two different views that bring Theophrastus closer to Aristotle, cf., Dierauer 1977, 172, and Cole 1992, 61. While Dierauer argues that Theophrastus could not have claimed the souls of

perceptions is offered as an even stronger support (πολὸν δὲ μᾶλλον) for the overarching claim that “all people are related (συγγενεῖς) to each other, and indeed to all the animals” (3.25.3),⁴⁹ which is justified first with reference to the fact that “the principles (ἀρχαί) of their bodies are the same by nature”—specifically “skin, flesh (σάρκας), and the class of humors innate (σύμφυτον) in animals” (3.25.3)—and then, again, with the reference to “the kinship (οἰκειότης) of passions (παθῶν)” (3.25.3).⁵⁰ Based on the kinship of passions described here, Clark observes that Porphyry’s animals “are angry or afraid, envious or grudging,” and each of these “implies an assessment of the situation”⁵¹—which would, of course, run counter to the Stoic perspective on animals’ passions, as laid out by Seneca. Speaking of the passage, Fortenbaugh says, “Theophrastus attributes calculation to animals and seems to say that animals feel emotions in the same way” as humans.⁵² If

humans and animals are “not different by nature” (see note 61 in chapter 1, section III), Cole, on the other hand, argues that perceived differences in “approaches to animal intelligence and character” between Aristotle and Theophrastus “partially resolve themselves into questions of emphasis.” The heightened sympathy for animals seen in the later books of *HA* is what has caused some to credit Theophrastus. On this attribution, however, cf. Balme 1991, 7-10. As I have noted, my main interest is in a textual tradition taken to be sympathetic to animals, not in philosophers’ beliefs as such.

⁴⁹ For further discussion of this point, see again chapter 1, section III.

⁵⁰ δηλοῖ δὲ ἡ τῶν παθῶν οἰκειότης (“The kinship of the passions makes this clear”). In the absence of an explicit object for δηλοῖ (i.e., the thing that the kinship of passions makes clear or demonstrates), the structure of the argument, including the fact that the sentence is perhaps the final line of the Theophrastus excerpt, invites us to see the implied object—the thing that is demonstrated—as human-animal kinship itself. On the extent of the excerpt, see Bouffartigue and Patillon 1979, 2:148n5.

⁵¹ Clark 2000b, 90.

⁵² Fortenbaugh 2003, 185 ad *Abst.* 3.25.1-4.

Porphyry accurately cites Theophrastus, Fortenbaugh says, “it may be that Theophrastus means” that “when an animal experiences the emotion of anger, it thinks itself treated unjustly; and...may...act deliberately in the way...a human does when he takes vengeance.” At the same time, in the passage, the discourse of “more and less” emerges through an analogy between bodies and souls, both of which, we are told, “some animals have...in perfected form (ἀπηκριβωμένας), others in a weaker (ἥττον) form,” though, again, “all alike have the same principles by nature” (πᾶσί γε μὴν αὐτοῖς αἰ αὐταὶ πεφύκασιν ἀρχαί) (3.25.3).⁵³ Speaking of this “reference to less finely honed souls,” Fortenbaugh says, it “may be motivated by the belief that animals lack the capacity to formulate moral principles and therefore cannot be virtuous and vicious, just and unjust, in the way that humans can be.”⁵⁴ Such a lack could of course be used to justify excluding animals from a justice relationship, although Porphyry does not make that

⁵³ Regarding ἀπηκριβωμένας (from ἀπακριβόομαι), the word also appears three chapters earlier (*Abst.* 3.22.8 = *Plut.* *Soll.* 962b), in a “more or less” context, where Porphyry criticizes those who “accuse animals (θηρίων) of not being pure and perfected (ἀπηκριβωμένον) with respect to virtue, as if this were deprivation of reason, not poorness and weakness of reason.” We may take the idea of “perfected” bodies at *Abst.* 3.25.3 to refer back to the point made at 3.23.3: “Just as there is a difference [among animals] of sight in relation to sight and of flying in relation to flying—for cicadas and hawks do not see equally, nor do eagles and partridges fly equally—so not every rational being (λογικῶ) has a share in like manner of the versatility (εὐστροφία) and sharpness (δξύτης) that has obtained the summit (τὸ ἄκρον).” (Indeed there is an echo of sorts between ἄκρον and ἀπακριβόομαι.)

⁵⁴ Fortenbaugh 2003, 185.

move. The positing of a difference of degree rather than a difference in kind between human and animal minds points us in a more-inclusive direction.⁵⁵

Having considered perception, *phantasia*, and belief; memory; choice; and emotions, we can now turn to the most important division drawn between human and animal minds—language—which Porphyry attributes to animals despite efforts to defend it as the exclusive domain of humans. Of all the faculties and mental properties taken away from animals, of all the absolute lacks used to justify their exclusion from justice, language stands out, its metonymous association with reason strengthened by the dual meaning of *logos* (“reason” and “language”).⁵⁶ In an early philosophical expression of the human-animal divide, Xenophon mentions the ability “to articulate (ἀρθροῦν) the voice (φωνήν) and indicate (σημαίνειν) to each other all the things that we wish,” ostensibly given by the gods to humans alone.⁵⁷ In Stoicism, as Long observes, “being ‘rational’ connotes the ability to speak articulately, to use language.”⁵⁸ An apparent lack of language was taken as evidence that animals also lacked reason—and, to this day, some deniers of reason in animals question how they can have anything so much as a thought without the concept-building facility and communicative suppleness of human

⁵⁵ While Dierauer aligns Theophrastus with Aristotle on the question of animal reason (1977, 172), he does note something “new and revolutionary” in Theophrastus: “less the idea of human-animal kinship than the apparently derived claim that killing harmless animals is an injustice” (1977, 177).

⁵⁶ See, e.g., Sorabji 1993, 80.

⁵⁷ Xen. *Mem.* 1.4.12.

⁵⁸ Long (1974) 1986, 124.

language.⁵⁹ Aristotle says in *Politics* that animals have voice (φωνή) without speech (λόγος); their vocalizations, he says, expressing nothing more than pleasure and pain, cannot communicate the just and unjust—nor can animals *perceive* the just and unjust.⁶⁰ In *History of Animals*, Aristotle distinguishes among φωνή (“voice”), which requires a throat (φάρυγξ); ψόφος (“sound”), which is produced with other body parts; and διάλεκτος (“speech”), which requires both a throat and a tongue. “Sound” includes the buzz and chirp of insects, for example. As for the other two, Aristotle says, “Each live-bearing four-footed animal sends forth one voice (φωνήν) or another, but they have no articulate speech (διάλεκτον),” which is “a characteristic property (ἴδιον) of a human.” Aristotle suggests that what might be called the διάλεκτος of animals is only a likeness of the true διάλεκτος of humans—“[voice] that is articulated (ἐν τοῖς ἄρθροις), which one might say is, as it were (ὡσπερ), articulate speech (διάλεκτον).”⁶¹ According to Diogenes Laertius (7.57), the Stoics made a distinction, first, between φωνή and λέξις by which the former encompassed pure sound (ἦχος), while the latter was “articulate sound (ἔναθρον) alone,” and then between λέξις and λόγος, the latter “always signifying (σημαντικός),” whereas λέξις included meaningless words, like βλίτυρι.⁶²

Porphry offers a number of arguments for language in animals as communication that is sometimes comprehensible to humans but that is in any case meaningful to its users. Starting with the Stoic distinction between internal (*endiathetos*)

⁵⁹ See e.g., Davidson 1982, 322. For language as a prerequisite for moral consideration, see also Frey 1980, 86-100.

⁶⁰ Arist. *Pol.* 1253a9-18.

⁶¹ Arist. *HA* 4.9 (536b1-2b and 11-12).

⁶² See Blank 1996, 148n154.

and expressive (*prophorikos*) *logos*, he defines the latter as “voice (φωνή) signifying (σημαντική) through the tongue what is experienced (παθῶν) within (ἔνδον) and throughout the soul” and asks, “What of this is absent from the animals who speak (φθέγγεται)?” (3.3.2).⁶³ He goes on to argue that “since *logos* is what is uttered by the tongue—however it is uttered (φωνηθῆ), whether non-Hellenically or Hellenically, doggishly or in the manner of oxen—vocal animals (ζῷα...φωνητικά) share (μέτοχα) in it” (3.3.3). Our inability to understand their utterances is immaterial, he says, since, after all, we cannot understand the meaningful speech of foreigners, either (3.3.4-5).⁶⁴ What we can discern is that animals’ speech (φθέγγεως) has a “signifying quality” (τὸ σημαντικόν)” made evident both by its “intricacy” (τὸ ποικίλον) and its “variety”

⁶³ He adds, parenthetically, that “this definition is the most common and by no means attached to a philosophical school (αἰρέσεως)” (3.3.2). As Sorabji (1996, 323-24) notes: “Plato had defined thinking (*dianoia*, *dianoeisthai*) as silent inner speech (*logos*) [*Tht.* 189e-90a, *Soph.* 263e ff.]. And a tradition had grown up that speech and reason were two sides of the same coin, *logos*, one being externally directed (*prophorikos*) and one internal (*endiathetos*).” In Labarrière’s view, “It seems more likely to think...that it was the Stoics”—rather than the Academic skeptics—“who were the first to mobilize this distinction” in the polemics over the reason or non-reason of animals (1997, 275). For the Stoics, “the possession of *logos prophorikos* [did] not suffice to assure the possession of *logos endiathetos*”—conversely, the distinction could be used by Stoics to argue that “the latter [*logos*] could not exist independently of the former” (1997, 278). In Plutarch’s *Cleverness*, Aristotimus attributes *prophorikos logos* as well as φωνή ἔναρθρος (“articulate voice”) to starlings, crows, and parrots (*Soll.* 972f-973a).

⁶⁴ Cf. Sextus Empiricus’s argument (*P.* 1.74) that “even if we do not understand (συνίμεν) the voices (φωνάς) of the so-called (καλουμένων) irrational (ἄλόγων) animals, it is not at all unlikely (ἄπεικός) that they speak (διαλέγεσθαι), but that we do not understand (συνιέναι),” since, “hearing the voice (φωνῆς) of non-Greeks, we do not understand it, but we think it is undifferentiated (μονοειδῆ).” On this argument, see note 75 below.

(διάφορον) (3.4.2). And in fact animals and humans do communicate with each other, Porphyry adds, as in the case of the tame partridge that he himself reared (3.4.7) and other tame animals who “appropriately (οικείως) heed (ὕπικουσαν)” human voices, whether “angry, showing favor, summoning, pursuing, demanding, or giving” (3.6.1)—nor does a lack of a voice entails a lack of rationality (3.5.4).⁶⁵

Porphyry then proceeds to make a more-extensive argument for internal (*endiathetos*) *logos* in animals⁶⁶—for Stoics, the *logos* that mattered. As Sextus Empiricus reports in *Against the Professors* (8.275 ff.), “The Dogmatists [i.e., Stoics]...say that a human differs from irrational animals not by means of uttered (προφορικῶ) speech (λόγῳ)—for ravens and parrots and jays produce (προφέρονται) articulate voices (ἐνάρθρους...φωνάς)—but by means of internal (ἐνδιαθέτω) speech.”⁶⁷

⁶⁵ “That way,” Porphyry adds, “one would say that even the god who is above all (τὸν ἐπὶ πᾶσι θεὸν), and the others, by not speaking (φθέγγεσθαι) are not rational (λογικούς)” (3.5.4). There is a striking interpolation of Porphyrean theology here, in the midst of an ostensibly Plutarchan section—and a subtle assimilation of what is taken to be a low ontological level, the animal, with the very highest level.

Regarding the assumption that there can be no internal *logos* without external *logos*, modern science distinguishes Broca’s area of the human brain, which controls the ability to speak, from the Wernicke area, which controls the ability to understand language.

⁶⁶ From 3.7.1 roughly until his transitional language at 3.18.1.

⁶⁷ Speaking of “*logos endiathetos*, ‘inner reason, thought,’” Newmyer (2007, 164) explains, “[it] was felt to arise in the *hēgemonikon*,” which, in the Stoic view, “never attains rationality in animals.” Chrysippus is said by Aetius (LS 53H = *SVF* 2.827 and 836) to have conceived of the soul as composed of eight parts — all of them springing like the tentacles of an octopus from the ἡγεμονικόν, which directs them: sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch; “seed” (σπέρμα, the reproductive function); and “utterance” (φωνή). Cf. *principale*, the term used by Seneca in *De ira* 1.3 for that governing principle.

According to Varro, Chrysippus grouped children speaking their first words with ravens or a crow in that they cannot “talk” (*loqui*) but only “quasi-talk” (*ut loqui*).⁶⁸ That is, “as the likeness (*imago*) of a human is not a human, so in the case of ravens, crows, and children beginning to speak for the first time, their words are not words, because they are not talking.” The one who genuinely talks (*loquitur*) “places each word in its own place with knowledge (*sciens*).”⁶⁹ According to Diogenes Laertius’s description of Stoic doctrine (7.55), taken from Diogenes of Babylon, “The voice (φωνή) of an animal is air struck by an impulse (ὁρμη̃ς), but that of a human, which is perfected (τελειοῦται) at the age of 14,...is articulate (ἔναρθρος) and sent forth from reason (διανοίας).” Atherton notes that “the Stoic concession that some animals ‘talk’ may have been confined to their mimicry of human vocalisation,” though “how that concession was handled theoretically may have changed over time.”⁷⁰ If sometime after Chrysippus Stoics came to attribute *prophorikos logos* to animals, it was necessarily divorced from internal reasoning (*endiathetos logos*), as Sextus Empiricus notes in the passage above. We can, then, in line with the Stoics, imagine the *logos* of *prophorikos logos* in scare quotes—or, on the contrary, like Porphyry and Plutarch, cast the *prophorikos logos* of animals as arising, as with humans, from *endiathetos logos*.

Porphyry’s arguments about animal communication raise the objection, as Atherton notes, that “recognition of the crucial role of syntax in human languages, and of

⁶⁸ Varro *Ling.* 6.56. Atherton and Blank (2013, 321) note that “the original Greek was probably *hōsanei legei*.”

⁶⁹ Varro *Ling.* 6.56.

⁷⁰ Atherton 2012, 4.

the crucial role of knowledge of syntax in language mastery, is altogether absent.”⁷¹ For Chrysippus, as reported by Varro, syntax was a prerequisite of anything that could accurately be called language. The “language” posited by Porphyry does indeed seem to be non-syntactic, though the references to “intricacy” and “variety” are perhaps suggestive of a kind of patterning. As previously noted, Porphyry says that tame animals “appropriately heed” human voices, whether “angry, showing favor, summoning, pursuing, demanding, or giving” (3.6.1), on which Clark comments, “Animals may respond to a tone of voice rather than to words as signifiers.”⁷² Edwards observes that “the vast majority of Porphyry’s examples of animal communications are of a rather rudimentary sort...capable of signifying that, say, they are pained by something...or...afraid of something.”⁷³ However, while Porphyry’s discussion does not demonstrate that animals have or use “language”—understood as a system of recombinable signs governed by convention⁷⁴—he does point to the communicative space that animals create with each other and with humans through vocalizations and body language. It is communication of that sort—encompassed in a more capacious

⁷¹ Atherton 2012, 6.

⁷² Clark 2000a, 166n404.

⁷³ Edwards 2016, 284.

⁷⁴ See, e.g., Arist. *Int.* 16a20: “A noun (ὄνομα) is a vocal sound (φωνή) that is significant (σημαντική) according to convention (κατὰ συνθήκην).” See also Ammon. *in Int.*, which says that “Greeks reached an agreement (συνέθεντο) with one another to name things with these nouns (ὀνόμασι), Indians with others, and Egyptians with others” (30.33-35), and clarifies that a “convention (συνθήκη) concerning vocal sounds (φωνᾶς) is the work of humans alone” (31.22). As with the contract (συνθήκη) posited by Hermarchus in *Abst.* 1.12 as a basis of justice, the convention (συνθήκη) of language is cast here as excluding animals.

understanding of language—that Porphyry adduces as evidence of reason (in the register, again, of “more and less” rather than possession/deprivation).

In defending the model of the difference of degree and positing a unity of mental functions, Porphyry leans heavily on the skeptical tradition, offering arguments that are often epistemological in nature.⁷⁵ The suggestion that our inability to understand the vocalizations of animals does not constrain us to declare such vocalizations meaningless is matched by a later argument: “If we do not understand (συνίμεν) how [their deeds] are done on account of not being able to enter (εἰσδύνειν) their reasoning (λογισμὸν), we will surely not predicate (κατηγορήσομεν) non-rationality (ἄλογίαν) of them because of this”

⁷⁵ Such arguments, pioneered by Carneades, are an important source for Plutarch’s—and consequently Porphyry’s—writings on animals. On the influence of Carneades’ criticism of Stoic animal psychology, see Haussleiter (1935, 209). As Labarrière (1997, 261-62) notes regarding the polemics concerning animal reason that were waged between the Academic skeptics and the Stoics, “None of our sources is, properly speaking, Stoic or neo-Academic.” Labarrière (1997, 263n6) identifies “the principal texts providing a report of this polemic” as Philo’s *On Animals* and *On Providence*; Plutarch’s *On the Cleverness of Animals*, *Gryllus*, and *On Flesh Eating*; Sextus Empiricus’s *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* 1.62-78 and *Against the Mathematicians* 8.275-76 and 285-88; and, of course, Porphyry’s *On Abstinence* book 3. Although “the animal cause” was, as Labarrière says (1997, 266), “able to reinforce itself thanks to the use of certain arguments” of the Academic skeptics against Stoic dogmatism, that cause “probably was not that of the neo-Academics, since they professed no doctrine.” Whatever their motivations, skeptics throughout the ages have tended, as Floridi observes (1997, 47-48), to be at least open to the possibility of animal intelligence. (Floridi focuses on the much-cited “dialectical” dog of Chrysippus, ironically alluded to at *Abst.* 3.6.3. On the misuse of this Stoic illustration of the universality of logic, see Labarrière 1997, 276-77.) From a different perspective—that of uncertainty about metempsychosis, and thus about the possibility that “a human soul might linger still in a substance that is usually eaten,” Sissa (2016, 22) observes, “A vegetarian is a skeptic.”

(3.11.3).⁷⁶ Here, it seems, Porphyry touches on a crucial point. Aristotle, the Stoics, and others start from the assumption that animals are not rational, then look for alternative explanations for their apparently rational behavior. However, given the impossibility of accessing animal minds, on what basis does one select non-rationality rather than rationality as a starting point? And which approach allows for a more supple reading of animal behavior? Porphyry goes on to observe that “no one is able to penetrate the intellect (νοῦν) of god, but from the deeds of the sun we agree with those proclaiming him intellectual (νοερόν) and rational (λογικόν)” (3.11.3). The Stoics see “a *logos* which directs all things” behind the “orderly structure” of the universe, as reflected, for example, in celestial movements.⁷⁷ They decline, however, to recognize any rationality in animals from the orderliness of their behavior, preferring to bump explanation of animals’ apparently purposeful actions up to the level of Providence.⁷⁸ If, in the end, reason is defined as requiring some mental faculty that animals are said to lack—thought, intellect, belief, language—the claim that animals lack reason *because* they lack that faculty risks circularity.⁷⁹ One could say that putting all the mental functions together in

⁷⁶ See also Porphyry’s contradiction of Aristotle (*HA* 1 488b24-25): “[People] say [animals] do not deliberate (βουλεύονται) or hold assemblies or sit as jurors (δικάζουσιν)... But on what basis might someone prove (ἐπιδείξειεν) that animals do not deliberate?” (3.15.4).

⁷⁷ Long (1974) 1986, 146.

⁷⁸ Cf. Labarrière on Philo (1997, 278): “When it was needed, one could use the apparent intelligence of animals to praise the benefits of Creation, but...as soon as there was the opposite need to assure the preeminence of the human, there was no hesitation in appealing to Providence again.”

⁷⁹ The construction and reconstruction of “reason” as that which animals lack is part of the ongoing project of locating *something*, whether psychological or behavioral, that decisively separates humans from other animals. As Bryant (2007, 212) observes, “New information that appears to prove similarity between

one package, as Porphyry does—and establishing a fundamental continuity between human and animal minds—allows for more elegant explanations of animal behavior, even if it troubles the sense of human uniqueness.

III. Perception and Body

In a sense, the unified package of mental functions that Porphyry affirms against division and apportionment starts with perceptions and thus with the body, which for him is not just that from which one wishes to escape but also the shared ground of human and animal experience.⁸⁰ Porphyry takes stock of animals' embodiment—their fleshly, physical existence, their morally significant exposure to pain and injury as well as

humans and animals may only result in a redefinition of the term 'human' so that the oppositional categories of 'human' and 'animal' remain intact." See also Bryant's observation (2008, 18-19) that any "characteristic of an animal...put forth as justifying" meaningful protection—including cognition, capacities, and even sentience—"is countered by evidence that...animals do not have those characteristics *quite the way that humans have them*" (emphasis added). In other words, one could say that the "ought" in relation to animals, the way people feel we *ought* to treat them, remains steady even as the "is" continues to shift.

⁸⁰ For purposes of this discussion, I use "body," along with "embodiment," to encompass the entirety of the physical, flesh-and-blood experience, which, in the ancient context, could be thought of as arising from the interaction of material σῶμα and immaterial ψυχή (from a Porphyrean perspective) or of material σῶμα and material ψυχή/λόγος (dispositions of a fire-and-air mixture, *pneuma*, in Stoicism). For σῶμα used both for "material substance" and "human body" in a Stoic context (a citation of Cleanthes), see Nem. 2.21.6-9 Morani (LS 45C = *SVF* 1.518). On the materialism of Stoic psychology, see, e.g., Long and Sedley 1987, 1:273-74.

pleasure.⁸¹ The formulations he uses suggest that bodily existence is not just about being alive, as plants are, but about sentience. As he observes, “The comparison of plants to animals is certainly forced (βίαιον),⁸² for animals are naturally inclined to perceive (αἰσθάνεσθαι), to feel bodily pain (ἀλγεῖν), to fear (φοβεῖσθαι), to be harmed (βλάπτεσθαι) and therefore to suffer injustice (ἀδικεῖσθαι)” (3.19.2). Porphyry further argues that the senses that come with a body would be of no use without some means by which an animal could learn to “guard against (φυλάττεσθαι)” those things that are “alien” (ἀλλοτριῶν) and “associate with” (συμφέρεσθαι) those that are “appropriate” (οἰκείων) (3.21.5). As he goes on to say, “If you altogether take away (ἀφέλης)...expectation (προσδοκίαν), memory (μνήμην), objective (πρόθεσιν),

⁸¹ On this notion of “embodiment,” cf., e.g., Diamond’s observation (2008, 74) that “the awareness we each have of being a living body, being ‘alive to the world,’ carries with it exposure to the bodily sense of vulnerability to death, sheer animal vulnerability, the vulnerability we share with [animals].” See also Elizabeth Costello’s speech in Coetzee’s short story “The Lives of Animals” (1999, 33): “To thinking, cogitation, I oppose fullness, embodiedness, the sensation of being—not a consciousness of yourself as a kind of ghostly reasoning machine thinking thoughts, but on the contrary the sensation—a heavily affective sensation—of being a body with limbs that have extension in space, of being alive to the world.” Korhonen and Ruakoski (2017, 23) look for signs of recognition in Greek literature of “the bodies of nonhuman animals as centres of subjectivity” and a corresponding ability “to experience empathetic sensations pertaining to the movements of animals.”

⁸² Since it also means “violent,” βίαιος here carries a suggestion of discursive violence against animals, on which see below. Cf. Odysseus’s suggestion in *Gryllus* 992e that it is “terrible, even violent (βίαιον) to concede *logos* to those in whom a concept (νόησις) of god is not possible (ἐγγίνεται)” (i.e., animals). *Gryllus*, the human-turned-pig, answers with a riposte that ends the extant text, a reference to Odysseus’s atheist father (in some accounts), Sisyphus.

preparation (παρασκευήν), hoping (ἐλπίζειν), fearing (δεδοικέναι), desiring (ἐπιθυμεῖν), being distressed (ἀσχάλλειν), there is no advantage (ὄφελος) of eyes' or ears' being present" (3.21.7).⁸³ Citing the Peripatetic Strato, Porphyry makes the more fundamental point that "perceiving (αἰσθάνεσθαι) is not at all possible without thinking (νοεῖν)," since, for example, "letters often escape our notice as we traverse them with our eyes, and speech (λόγοι) falling upon our ears escapes us when we have our mind (νοῦν) on other things" (3.21.8).⁸⁴ Near the beginning of book 3, as we have seen, Porphyry identifies as

⁸³ For πρόθεσις and παρασκευή as "species of practical impulse"—rational impulses from the Stoic perspective—see again *SVF* 3.173 (= Stob. 2.7.9a Wachsmuth) and Inwood 1985, 225.

⁸⁴ See Plut. *Soll.* 961a. The passage in question (*Abst.* 3.21.8-9) encompasses the Strato excerpt (= Wehrli fr. 112), which itself includes a quotation from Epicharmus, a fifth-century comic writer; an anecdote concerning the Spartan king Cleomenes III that Plutarch must have added (see Bouffartigue and Patillon 1979, 2:246n3 and 247n5); and Plutarch's conclusion, abbreviated by Porphyry as "Whence it is necessary for all who have perception also to have intellect." According to Edwards's reading (2018, 37), Strato's argument "that sense-perception requires intellect, and is thus a rational capacity (which would make animals—who perceive—rational) is immediately dismissed by the phrase 'but let us suppose that sense-perception does not require intellect [νοῦ] to do its job' [*Abst.* 3.22.1]." Far from being dismissive of animals' rationality, however, this transitional language sets up a rhetorical question that reinforces it: "But whenever perception, having produced in the animal the distinction (διαφορὰν) between the appropriate (οἰκεῖτον) and the alien (ἀλλότριον), has departed, what is the thing in [the animal] remembering and fearing painful things and desiring useful things, contriving how things not present will be present and setting up lairs and hideaways and, again, traps for those that will be caught and escapes from those that are attacking?" (3.22.1). In the reference in the following sentence (3.22.2) to "those men (ἐκεῖνοι) saying these things (ταυτί)," the men in question are Stoics and "these things" evidently refers back to 3.21.1, where Porphyry sets up the Stoic argument from opposites or antitheses (discussed above in relation to *aisthesis*, *phantasia*, and *doxa*) in order to deny that if rationality in the universe requires the existence of

“true and also Pythagorean” the opinion that “every soul in which there is a share of perception (αἰσθήσεως) and memory (μνήμης) is rational (λογικὴν)” (3.1.4). In Porphyry’s discussion of the body and the senses, then, perception, is connected with thinking and reason and, in turn, justice. And though the possibility of harm to unensouled but living thing (i.e., plants) is contemplated, such harm is treated as categorically different from that which can be inflicted on ensouled beings—that is, living beings with bodies (i.e., animals both human and nonhuman).⁸⁵

For Porphyry, the commonality of human and nonhuman bodies, especially their sensory apparatuses, becomes a reason to posit a similarity of mind or soul. “Just about everyone has conceded,” he says, “that [animals] are disposed (διάκειται) similarly to us—at any rate, as far as perception (αἰσθήσεως) and the rest of their organization with respect to sense organs (αἰσθητήρια) and the flesh (σάρκα).”⁸⁶ In fact, he says, “they

irrationality the latter must be imputed to nonhuman animals. The anti-Stoic polemics of 3.21-22 are just a portion of a stretch of Plutarchan excerpts, from an unknown text or texts (3.18.3-3.20.6) and from *Cleverness* (3.20.7-3.24), which Porphyry concludes by saying, “Such things, then, were said in many books of Plutarch for the purpose of opposing the Stoics and Peripatetics.”

⁸⁵ While Porphyry casts animals and plants as, respectively, souled and unensouled, perceptive and non-perceptive, in conformity with the Aristotelian *scala naturae*, his evident anxiety over the possibility of harm to plants (discussed below) opens a space for extending ethical concern imaginatively and capaciously beyond animals, as various contemporary thinkers have sought to do. For bibliography and a discussion of resistance in the field of animal studies to such an extension, see Nealon 2016, xi-xiii. For a sympathetic perspective on the *aisthēsis* of plants, through the frame of Galen, see Holmes 2016.

Regarding plant “minds,” see note 95 below.

⁸⁶ Cf. “The Cambridge Declaration on Consciousness” of July 7, 2012, in which a group of neuroscientists declares, “Convergent evidence indicates that nonhuman animals have the neuroanatomical,

participate (κεκοινώνηκεν) equally with us...in the passions (παθῶν)” (3.7.2)⁸⁷ and “seem...to have a larger share (πλεονεκτεῖν)” of perception (3.8.1-3). In a Theophrastean passage, discussed above in section II, Porphyry notes that the bodies of animals and humans are also made of the same material—“skin, flesh (σάρκας), and the class of humors innate (σύμφυτον)” in them—and that this materiality coincides with souls that “are not different (ἀδιαφόρους) by nature...in desires (ἐπιθυμίας) and anger (ὀργαῖς), and furthermore in reasoning (λογισμοῖς) and most of all in perceptions (αἰσθήσεων)” (3.25.3). In that passage (3.25.1-4), we see, in Kahn’s words, how in “emphasiz[ing] the anatomical and psychological features that we share with the animals, above all, sense perception and feeling,” Theophrastus offers, “for the first time, a philosophical basis for the notion of a moral community between us and the animals”⁸⁸—a very different argument from the transmigration of souls.⁸⁹ This emphasis on the similarities of human and nonhuman bodies stands in contrast with the philosophical topos of the upright human body as uniquely suited to reason, which we see in Cicero’s *Laws* (1.26), for example, when he speaks of how nature has given humans “a corporal form fit and

neurochemical, and neurophysiological substrates of conscious states along with the capacity to exhibit intentional behaviors.” <http://fcmconference.org/img/CambridgeDeclarationOnConsciousness.pdf>, accessed June 17, 2020.

⁸⁷ As Dillon (2005, 2:801n44) notes, in reference to Porph. *Sent.* 32, “πάθος comports both the sensory experience and the emotional reaction to it.”

⁸⁸ Kahn 2001, 150.

⁸⁹ Cf. *Esu* 997d-e, where Plutarch privileges the inherent qualities of an animal’s soul—its share of “perception, sight, hearing, *phantasia*, and intelligence (συνέσθεως)” —over the Empedoclean possibility that, in a former life, it might have belonged to one’s mother, father, friend, or child. On Plutarch’s use of the reincarnation argument, see note 125 below.

convenient for the human mind..., cast[ing] the other animate beings (*animantes*) to the ground for their pasture” while “it has elevated humans alone, and has stirred them to contemplation of heaven.”⁹⁰ Porphyry, in a sense, replies to this line of thinking, by observing that while “differences (*παραλλαγαι*) between bodies can make [animals] sensitive (*εὐπαθῆ*) or insensitive (*δυσπαθῆ*)” and cause them “to have reason more or less (*μᾶλλον καὶ ἥττον*) at hand (*πρόχειρον*),” such variations “cannot utterly change (*ἐξαλλάττειν*) the soul in its essence (*οὐσίαν*), since they did not change (*ἔτρεψαν*) perceptions (*αἰσθήσεις*) or passions (*πάθη*) and did not cause them to have exited completely” (3.8.6).

While connecting animal and human bodies and minds, Porphyry dismisses the assimilation of animals and plants, which, as we have seen, he describes as “certainly forced” (*βίαιον*). Since for plants “there is no object of perception (*αἰσθητόν*),” he says, “nothing is alien (*ἀλλότριον*) or bad (*κακόν*) to them, and there is no harm (*βλάβη*) or injustice (*ἀδικία*)” (3.19.2). The argument appears to respond to a comment about how “superstition does not stop (*ἴστασθαι*) at animals but presses hard (*βιάζεσθαι*) even against plants,” followed by a demand to know “why the person who cuts the throat of an ox and a sheep commits injustice (*ἀδικεῖ*) more than one who cuts down a fir or an oak, if indeed a soul is implanted in the latter through reincarnation (*μεταμόρφωσιν*)” (1.6.3).⁹¹

⁹⁰ See also Xen. *Mem.* 1.4.11, Arist. *PA* 686a27, and Cic. *N.D.* 2.140.

⁹¹ Note the verbal echo of *βιάζεσθαι* here with *βίαιον* at 3.19.2. On the innocence of the ox and the sheep, see, e.g., Ov. *Fast.* 1.362, and chapter 5. According to Bouffartigue and Patillon (1977, 1:4), the opponents’ argument appears to refer to Empedocles’ claim to have lived as, among other things, a bush, as noted in D.L. 8.77. At *M.* 8.286, Sextus says, “Empedocles...thought (*ἠξίου*) that everything happened to be rational (*λογικὰ*), and not animals alone but even plants, writing expressly: ‘Know indeed that all beings (*πάντα*)

A later iteration of this point of view refers to the “souls” of plants, though this time without any reference to reincarnation: “If, as they say, even plants have a soul, what sort of life (βίος) would there be if we did not cut off pieces (ἀποτεμνόντων) from animals or plants? But if the one who cuts up (κατακόπτων) plants is not impious (ἄσεβεῖ), neither is the one who cuts up animals” (1.18).⁹² Since Porphyry excludes arguments based on reincarnation, his concern is, contrary to the assumption of the first objection, to draw a bright line between animals and plants in terms of their mental life, or lack of it. As he says, “We will not, in fact, extend (παρατενοῦμεν) the matter of justice (τὸ τῆς δικαιοσύνης) also to (πρὸς) plants because their disconnection (ἀσύγκλωστον) with respect to (πρὸς) reason (λόγον) appears great (πολὺ)” (3.18.2).

The bright line that Porphyry draws between plants on the one hand and animals, including humans, on the other, can be seen in *To Gaurus*, where he takes pains to clarify that Plato did not attribute any genuine mental life to plants. As we have seen, Porphyry observes that for plants “there is no object of perception (αἰσθητόν)” (3.19.2). This may seem, at first glance, to go against language in Plato’s *Timaeus* (77b-c), where the title figure says:

Certainly, everything that shares in (μετάσχη) life (ζῆν) may most truly (ὀρθότατα), with justice (ἐν δίκῃ), be called a living creature (ζῶον). Surely this [living being] that we now speak of [i.e., a plant] shares in the third kind of soul

have intelligence (φρόνησιν) and a share (αἶσαν) of thought (νόματος).’ ” We need not, however, take πάντα to include plants, as Sextus does, especially since there is no extant claim that Empedocles rejected eating them.

⁹² See also 1.21.2, where opponents say, “I have kept silent regarding the maxim (λόγον) of the Egyptians that we commit injustice (ἀδικοῦμεν) against plants too by laying hands on them (ἀπτόμενοι).”

(τοῦ τρίτου ψυχῆς εἶδους)...to which there is no share at all of opinion (δόξης) and reasoning (λογισμοῦ) and intellect (νοῦ) but [only] of perception (αἰσθήσεως), pleasant (ἡδείας) and painful (ἀλγεινῆς), accompanied by desires (ἐπιθυμιῶν)...⁹³ Therefore, in fact, it lives (ζῆ) indeed and is not other than a living creature (ζώου), but it has been fixed, stationary and firmly planted, on account of having being deprived (στερηῆσθαι) of the ability to move itself (ὕφ' ἑαυτοῦ κινήσεως).

As Wilberding explains, Porphyry's "Platonic objectors" argue on the basis of the *Timaeus* passage that "seeds (and thus embryos) must be animals," as we see at *Gaur.*

4.1.⁹⁴ However, as Porphyry says:

In making the distinction (διάφορον) between life (ζωῆς) and the absence of life (ἀζωίας), [Plato] appropriately (εἰκότως) includes plants (φυτὰ) too, since they would certainly be living (ὡς ἂν ἤδη ζῶντα), together with animals (ζῴοις). But, all the same, he concedes (δίδωσι) [only] as far as (ἄχρι) their name (προσηγορίας) their commonality (τὸ κοινὸν) with the beings specifically called (τὰ ἰδίως καλούμενα) animals (ζῷα), who share in (μετεσχηκότα) the self-moving (αὐτοκινήτου) soul. (*Gaur.* 4.3)

⁹³ The "third kind of soul" referred to here evidently coincides with the "appetitive": "the [part] of the soul that desires food and drink" (τὸ δὲ δὴ σίτων τε καὶ ποτῶν ἐπιθυμητικὸν τῆς ψυχῆς) (Pl. *Ti.* 70d), which is situated in humans between the midriff and the navel.

⁹⁴ Wilberding 2011, 20. The "main thesis" of *To Gaurus*, as Wilberding (2011, 7) notes, is that "the offspring becomes an animal only at birth." Although the authorship of the work was once uncertain (TLG still lists it under Pseudo-Galen), Wilberding (2011, 9-10), refers to "the [current] virtually universal consensus that Porphyry is indeed the author."

Porphyry similarly suggests that “one must understand ‘perceptions’ (αἰσθήσεις), ‘tendencies’ (ὀρέξεις), and ‘desires’ (ἐπιθυμίας)” in plants “as spoken of [by Plato] homonymously (ὁμωνύμως) and analogously (κατὰ ἀναλογίαν) and not as [features] rendered (ἀποδοιμένας) out of the self-moving soul (ἐκ ψυχῆς τῆς αὐτοκινήτου)” (*Gaur.* 4.8). As he goes on to say, “[Plato] does not fit together (συναρμόσας) the sensual impressions (πληγὰς) that are void of understanding (ἄσυνέτους), unknowing (ἄγνώστους), and without *phantasia* (ἄφαντάστους),” i.e., what plants are subject to, with the mental phenomena of “the opinionative (δοξαστικῆς) soul” (*Gaur.* 4.10).⁹⁵ The point is elaborated when Porphyry again draws a line between animals and embryos (and by extension plants) with respect to mental life, noting that even in a state of deep sleep, “an animal generates *phantasiai* (φαντάζεται),” whereas “the embryo is without means to generate *phantasiai* since it is not even active (ἐνεργῆσαν) in relation to perception (αἴσθησιν)” (*Gaur.* 15.2). In *Gaurus*, then, the line between plants and embryos on the one hand and all animals, including humans, on the other, is drawn on the basis of perception (αἴσθησις), *phantasia*, and cognition.⁹⁶ Plants are alive, but lacking a mental

⁹⁵ Although the passage is vexed, Wilberding (2011, 62n60) observes that “the idea seems clear enough: Plato is entitled to say that sensation belongs to plants only because he has carefully distinguished the passive motions of sensation from the active motions of the self-moving soul.” At *Gaur.* 7.3, Porphyry again notes that, though plants respond to their environment, they lack the crucial element of *phantasiai*. In that regard, their “pleasures” and “pains” can only be figurative. For a contemporary argument that, under the rubric of “enactivism,” plants have minds qua living beings, see Maher 2017. For a critique, see Allen 2017.

⁹⁶ While Edwards (2016, 279-83) cites, e.g., *Gaur.* 14.3.1-8 to argue that Porphyry separates these mental functions from true (i.e., noetic) reason, it is the distinction between the vegetative (τὴν φυτικὴν) and the self-moving soul (ψυχῆς τῆς αὐτοκινήτου) that matters in that passage and throughout the work.

life, they are presumably unable to experience harm the way a sentient being, an animal, can. In other words, Porphyry is consistent in *Gaurus* and *Abstinence* on the non-sentience of plants—and, conversely, the possession by non-embryonic animals of a mental life that encompasses perception and *phantasiai*.

While in *Abstinence* Porphyry excludes plants from *logos* and perceptions—and thus, apparently, the possibility of meaningful harm or injustice—he uses a more equivocal formulation in the context of regretfully acknowledging bodily necessity.⁹⁷ “We are accustomed to use (χρῆσθαι) the fruits (καρποῖς),” Porphyry says, “but not, indeed, also to cut down (κατακόπτειν) the trunks with the fruit, and we gather (συλλέγομεν) cereal grain and pulses when they have withered and are falling to the ground and are dead.” Our nature, he adds, “grants (δίδωσι) and allows (παρέχει) harm (βλάβην) for necessary things (ἀναγκαίους) with some limit (ἄχρι τινός)—if, at any rate, it is a harm (βλάβη) to take (λαμβάνειν) something from plants (φυτῶν), even if they remain living (ζώντων μενόντων)” (3.18.2-3). Since the force of the argument seems to rest on the gathering of fruit and crops that have already fallen,⁹⁸ one is left to wonder about vegetables (stems and roots) that cannot be obtained without killing the plants from which they are taken.⁹⁹ The lack of perception should suffice to answer that concern, and yet here and elsewhere, Porphyry seems to leave open the possibility that killing plants might indeed involve harm, something that he ruefully notes our mortal condition (i.e.,

⁹⁷ For the exclusion of plants from *logos* and perceptions, see again *Abst.* 3.18.1-2 and 3.19.2, which sandwich the more equivocal language here.

⁹⁸ See also 2.13.1 and 3.26.12: “Acquiring necessities does not harm plants, when we take what they cast off, or their fruits, when we use the fruits of those that have died.”

⁹⁹ Clark (2000a, 172n460) notes the omission of vegetables from Porphyry’s discussion.

our embodiment) prevents us from entirely avoiding. “Through [our own] justice (δικαιοσύνην),” he says, “we are harmless (ἀβλαβεῖς) to all, but through our mortality (τὸ θνητὸν) we are lacking (ἐνδεεῖς) in necessities (ἀναγκαίων)” (3.26.11). Soon after, when he floats the possibility of extending harmlessness “as far as (ἄχρι) plants,” he adds that if such an extension is not possible, “from that source there is the defect in our nature,...that we are not able to preserve the divine as untouched and harmless in all things, for we are not self-sufficient (ἀπροσδεεῖς) in all things” (3.27.2-3). In book 4, he says, “If only it were possible to abstain (ἀποστῆναι) without trouble even from the food that comes from crops (καρπῶν).... If only...we did not need (ἐδεήθημεν) food or drink, so that we might truly (ὄντως) be immortal (ἀθάνατοι)!” (4.20.13). While the contrafactual points to an ideal of perfect harmlessness and self-sufficiency that is unavailable to embodied humans, it is, as we will see, complemented by a discourse of possibility, according to which we ought to strive for, and are in fact able to achieve, a level of harmlessness that protects our souls while protecting the lives of harmless animals—even if bodily necessity demands some harm to non-sentient, but still living, plants.¹⁰⁰

If the body—with its fleshy needs and perceptions—unites human and animal (and separates them from plants), we might wonder about the ethical consequences for animals of an aspiration to transcend it. Conventionally, we are human by virtue of a divine connection that separates us from mere body, understood as what is “animal” in

¹⁰⁰ I will have more to say on this discourse of possibility in the next section and in chapter 3, section III.

us.¹⁰¹ As Renehan notes, “The most awesome claim in the entire ‘man alone of animals’ series is that man alone is, in one sense or other, divine.”¹⁰² In book 2, Porphyry refers to “the most divine (θειοτάτω) thing in us,” which “is of like kind (συγγενεῖ) by nature” to the god (2.19.4).¹⁰³ Bodies, because they tend to bring passions as well as perceptions, risk drawing the philosopher away from his goal of “assimilation to god.”¹⁰⁴ As Porphyry puts it in book 1, “We must shed (ἀποδυτέον) our many tunics,” including “this visible and fleshly (σάρκινον) one” (1.31.3). Our shared physicality with animals, because it is implicated in bodily desires, becomes problematic, as we saw with the casual reference to pleasure-centered hogs and he-goats, as well as meat-approving wolves and vultures (3.1.3). Yet Porphyry’s emphasis is clearly not on the sheer bodily grossness of animals, on which he has less to say than he does about bad human behavior. The pleasure-loving hog will be recast as the victim of the philosophical *reductio ad absurdum* that makes him the putative beneficiary of his own reduction to flesh on a plate (3.20.3).¹⁰⁵ The goat

¹⁰¹ See, e.g., Wolfe (2010, xv), who refers to “perhaps *the* fundamental anthropological dogma associated with humanism...namely, that ‘the human’ is achieved by escaping or repressing not just its animal origins in nature...but more generally by transcending the bonds of materiality and embodiment altogether.”

¹⁰² Renehan 1981, 251, citing, e.g., Pl. *Prt.* 322a and Arist. *PA* 656a8 and 686a27-28.

¹⁰³ But cf. Porphyry’s observation, discussed in chapter 3, that Egyptian priests “came to know that the divine does not pass through a human alone...and almost the same soul passes through all animals” (4.9.1).

¹⁰⁴ As Johansen (2004, 18) observes in relation to Plato’s *Timaeus*: “The irrational affections are a necessary result of embodiment.... The challenge we face as human beings is to reassert our rationality over the influence of necessity that arises through embodiment.”

¹⁰⁵ The *reductio ad absurdum* regarding external teleology and animals, is as previously noted, part of a polemic originally between Academics and Stoics, in which Chrysippus extended the utility of animals to

will appear among the animals in whom nature (φύσις) has “furnished justice (δίκαιον)” toward humans as an “innate” (ἔμφυτον) quality (3.12.3). Book 3 is concerned with animals not as exemplars of appetites (“the animal”)—nor as *mere* bodies—but as fellow vulnerable creatures.¹⁰⁶ It is precisely that shared physicality that provides the substance of a practice of virtue, for justice as harmlessness to ensouled beings has no meaning unless actual harm to them is possible.

IV. Justice as Harmlessness

A. Porphyry on “Taking Away”

In *Abstinence*, Porphyry says that justice consists in harmlessness, provides a basis for believing that animals can be meaningfully harmed and thus made to suffer injustice, and develops a thematics of unjust deprivation not just of the tangible (life and tranquility) but also of psychological attributes and ethical consideration itself. Against the claim that infliction of pain or death on animals cannot constitute a significant harm because they are unable to suffer the way humans do or have no interest in self-preservation that humans are bound to respect, Porphyry draws out animals’ self-ownership and self-interest—and the autonomy humans should strive for by not taking away what does not belong to them.

Porphyry’s virtual equation of justice with harmlessness can be seen in the parallel ways he discusses “preserving” and “extending” the two principles. As

humans even to tough cases such as bugs and mice, which he observed “usefully” (εὐχρηστώως) wake us up and keep us tidy, as noted in Plut. *De stoic. repugn.*, 1044d.

¹⁰⁶ For more on the distinction between animals and “the animal,” see chapter 1, section III.

previously noted, Porphyry makes both “justice” and “harmlessness” the subject of the verb σώζεται (“is preserved”) in his programmatic discussion of them (ἢ ὄντως σώζεται δικαιοσύνη... σώζεται τὸ ἀβλαβὲς 3.27.1). “When the goal is assimilation to god as much as possible,” Porphyry says, “harmlessness (ἀβλαβὲς) is preserved (σώζεται) with respect to all beings (ἐν ἅπασιν)” (3.27.1).¹⁰⁷ In the same passage, he lists a series of relationships that progressively enlarge the circle of harmlessness or ethical consideration, as the Stoic Hierocles does, while breaking beyond Hierocles’ outer limit, all of humanity. Thus comparing “the man led by passions (πάθεισιν)” who is “harmless (ἀβλαβής) only to (πρὸς) his children and wife” unfavorably with “the man led by reason (λόγῳ),” who “preserves (τηρεῖ) harmlessness toward (πρὸς) a citizen (πολίτην) and still more toward foreigners (ξένους) and all human beings,” Porphyry goes on to say that the person “who does not bring harmlessness to a standstill (στήσας) among humans but extends (παρατείνας) it also to (εἰς) the other animals (ἄλλα ζῷα) is more similar to god (μᾶλλον ὅμοιος θεῷ)” (3.27.2). In this language of salutary extension, we can see a response to opponents, who fretted that “justice (δικαιοσύνην) is muddled and motionless things are moved if we extend (τείνωμεν) justice (δίκαιον) not to (πρὸς) the rational (λογικὸν) alone but also to the irrational (ἄλογον)”—that is, “the other beasts (ἄλλα θηρία)” (1.4.1-2).

¹⁰⁷ The corollary to the alignment of justice and harmlessness—the idea that injustice entails a harm against another—can be seen, e.g., in Pl. *Cri.* 49c7-8, in which Socrates says, “Doing harm (κακῶς ποιεῖν) to people, I suppose, differs in no respect from committing injustice (ἀδικεῖν).” Aristotle refines the idea at *Rh.* 1368b6 by observing: “Let committing injustice (ἀδικεῖν) be for someone willingly (ἐκόντα) to harm (βλάπτειν) [another] contrary to the law (παρὰ τὸν νόμον).”

While opponents are concerned with the quality of life that would be taken away from someone who treated animals like humans, “sparing and not harming (βλάπτων) them” (1.4.3-4), Porphyry concerns himself with the harm constituted by taking from animals something that belongs to and is valuable to them: their lives.¹⁰⁸ The idea that animals and their lives belong to them, of course, runs contrary to the conventional notion, ancient and modern, that domesticated animals belong to humans and the Stoic view that animals in general exist for the sake of humans.¹⁰⁹ But the notion of animals as belonging to themselves is raised several times, first by opponents, who attribute it to vegetarians: “Someone urging [people] not to eat [animals] and regarding it as unjust (ἄδικον) will say that it is not just (δίκαιον) to kill them or to take away (ἀφαρεῖσθαι) their lives (ψυχὰς)” (1.14.1). The implication is developed in an argument in book 2: “If someone should say that not less than crops (καρπῶν) the god also has given us animals to use (εἰς χρῆσιν), it is at least the case that when animals are sacrificed it brings some harm (βλάβην) to them because they are deprived (νοσφιζομένων) of life (ψυχῆς)”

¹⁰⁸ The Epicurean claim “Death is nothing to us” presents a possible objection to death-as-harm, though even in that framework loss may be found among the living, as in Lucretius’s description (2.349-66) of the bereft cow whose calf has been led to slaughter.

¹⁰⁹ Graf (2012, 44), noting that “animal sacrifice almost always concerns domesticated animals alone, and...is understood by its performers as a gift for the gods,” adds that “gift giving presupposes undisputed individual ownership of the thing...given away.” The *OLD* notes that *proprius*, referring to “one’s own absolutely or in perpetuity,” is also used as a technical term “for sacrificial victims.” For the Stoic idea that animals were created for the sake of humans, see again Cic. *Fin.* 3.67 and *Leg.* 1.25, as discussed in chapter 1, section II.

(2.12.3).¹¹⁰ In what follows, animal sacrifice is likened to giving away the possessions of others (ἄλλοτριῶν) against their will (μὴ ἐθέλοντος) (2.12.4)—the possessions at issue are the animals’ lives:¹¹¹

Sacrifice...is something holy (ὁσία), but no one is holy who gives thanks out of another’s belongings (ἐκ τῶν ἄλλοτριῶν), with that one unwilling (μὴ ἐθέλοντος), even if he takes crops and plants.... But if not even the one who took away (ἀφελόμενος) others’ crops sacrifices in a holy manner (ὁσίως), certainly it is utterly unholy to sacrifice while taking away things that are more valuable (τιμιώτερα) than [crops].... But soul is much more valuable... (2.12.4)¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Cf. Plut. *Esu* 994e: “For the sake of a little bit of flesh we take away (ἀφαιρούμεθα) life (ψυχήν), the light of the sun, lifespan (βίου χρόνον), things for which (ἐφ’ ἃ) they have come into being (γέγονε) and grown (πέφυκεν).”

¹¹¹ Cf. 2.24.3, where Porphyry compares the animal sacrificer who seeks to “retur[n] just recompense (δικαίαν ἀμοιβήν) for a good deed that is equal to the beneficence” to someone “who would wreath others, to return gratitude and honor, after having plundered (ἀρπάσας) his neighbor’s possessions.” Cf. also 2.13.3: “Crops seem to be ours (ἡμῶν), for we sow them and plant them and make them grow with other forms of attention. We ought to sacrifice, therefore, from our own belongings (ἡμετέρων), not from the possessions of others (ἄλλοτριῶν).” For a use of ἄλλοτριος to refer to animal bodies as “foreign bodies” that meat eaters take in, see 1.34.4.

¹¹² A similar observation about the relative value of plants and animals appears in *Gaur.* 14.2, where Porphyry criticizes opponents for “rendering the ‘soul’ characteristic of plants (τὴν φυτικὴν) superior (κρείττονα) to the self-moving soul (τῆς αὐτοκινήτου ψυχῆς),” i.e., that which belongs to animals. For my use of scare quotes here, cf. *Gaur.* 16.1: “Let the seed have a soul—if someone wishes to call the power characteristic of plants (τὴν φυτικὴν δύναμιν) a soul.” (Wilberding [2011], indeed, renders τὴν φυτικὴν as “the vegetative [power].”)

Though the immediate context of the passage is sacrifice, we are invited to extend the concern to the killing of animals in general by the priority of morals in relation to the gods and by the aspiration to assimilate oneself to them. In Plato's *Euthyphro* (10d) we are told that the gods love what is pious *because* it is pious; the pious is not so simply because the gods love it. According to Grube, this passage, "gives in a nutshell a point of view from which Plato never departed. Whatever the gods may be, they must by their very nature love the right because it is right." If, conversely, the gods disapprove of animal sacrifice because it involves taking away a life that does not belong to you—a taking away identified, as we have just seen, as a harm (2.12.3)—then such an act must be objectively wrong.¹¹³ For Porphyry, at least in the context of the arguments presented in *Abstinence*, taking away the life of a harmless animal, in a sacrifice or otherwise, is to be recognized as an instance of wrongdoing—especially by those whose aspiration is "assimilation to god."¹¹⁴

Such acts of harm necessarily have the cast of force and violence, a leitmotif in *Abstinence*, in which βία and related words appear frequently in association with the body and meat-eating. "No one would eat animals that died on their own (θνησεΐδια),"¹¹⁵

¹¹³ Grube 1980, 152. Striker (1987, 92) contrasts a consequentialist Plato with deontological Stoics, for whom "what is right or good is so, in a way, because it is prescribed by the gods."

¹¹⁴ See *Abst.* 1.57.2: "It is not possible with simply any diet whatsoever, and not at all with flesh eating, to achieve appropriation (οικειοῦσθαι) to god, not even to any of the individual gods (μερικῶν)—to say nothing of the god who is above all (ἐπὶ πᾶσιν) and is beyond (ὑπὲρ) incorporeal nature." See also 3.26.10-11: "The greater in the universe is absolutely harmless, and through its power, it is salvific of all, beneficent to all, and self-sufficient in relation to all."

¹¹⁵ For the taboo against θνησεΐδια, cf. *Abst.* 4.16.6 (on Eleusis) and D.L. 8.33 (on the Pythagoreans).

Porphyry says, “except for fish, which we also take (ἀναιροῦμεν) with violence (βία). So the injustice (τὸ ἄδικον) in these things is great (πολὸν)” (3.18.2). I have already noted the verbal echo of βιάζεσθαι in opponents’ objection at 1.6.3 and βίαιον in the response at 3.19.2—as well as Soclarus’s claim in *Cleverness* (959c) that hunting “provides a pure spectacle of skill together with intelligent daring (τόλμης νοῦν ἐχούσης) set against mindless (ἀνόητον) strength and force (βίαν).” Toward the end of his discourse on asceticism in book 1, Porphyry shifts the terms of Soclarus’s construction, positing a choice among humans—between the “violent” (βιαίους) laws of the body, on the one hand, and “the laws (νόμοις) of the intellect (νοῦ) and [its] roads, which are salvific (σωτηρίους)” (1.56.4). Earlier, referring to meat-eating, he observes that “the delight (χάρην) it holds is violent (βιαιάν)” (1.51.6). Crucially, the language of violently taking away the soul of an animal is picked up in Porphyry’s peroration at the end of book 3:

Those set free (ἐλευθερωθέντες) provide themselves with the things that formerly, in servitude (ὕπηρετοῦντες), they provided to their masters (δεσπόταις).¹¹⁶ Not differently, then, you too, after you are freed (ἀπαλλαγείς) from the slavery (δουλείας) of the body and from service (λατρείας) to passions that arise through the body (τοῖς πάθεσι τοῖς διὰ τὸ σῶμα), will feed yourself in all kinds of ways with internal things, just as you used to feed them in all kinds of ways with external things, justly (δικαίως) regaining (ἀπολαμβάνων) what is yours (τὰ ἴδια)

¹¹⁶ Speaking of a passage of *Marcella*, Wicker (1987, 122 ad 33.524) observes: “ἐλευθερία, a term which began as a political concept, was appropriated by Socrates to describe the internal freedom of the philosopher within the corrupt state. The concept was then extended to include the freedom of the soul from the passions through the achievement of self-sufficiency.”

and no longer taking away (ἀφαιρούμενος) with violence (βία) what belongs to others (τὰ ἀλλότρια). (3.27.10-11)

The fact that book 3 ends with the phrase οὐκέτι τὰ ἀλλότρια βία ἀφαιρούμενος lends particular emphasis to this idea. Packaged in the language of freedom versus slavery, this conclusion maps out a self-directed goal of autonomy. Yet the use of “justly” (δικαίως) in the last sentence and the evocation of “taking away with violence” as a harm against others maintains a vivid connection between that self-directed goal and the other-directed concept of justice as harmlessness toward others, specifically animals.

The violence of taking away another’s life or tranquility (when causing pain) does not, however, exhaust the range of harm sketched out in *Abstinence*, which is characterized by a thematics of unjust deprivation. We can see this in the frequency of the verb ἀφαιρέω, supplemented by στερέω and στέρησις—the away-ness of ἀπο- (for deprivation as well as willing separation) standing in continual contrast with the toward-ness of πρὸς (for relationships). The references to “taking away” from animals are numerous, including “taking away” their souls;¹¹⁷ “taking away” their *logos* and constituent mental faculties;¹¹⁸ and, correspondingly, “taking away” their connection with humans.¹¹⁹ We might, indeed, see the verb’s intratextual resonance as connecting the

¹¹⁷ See 1.14.1, 2.12.4, and 4.20.1. See also νοσφιζομένων at 2.12.3.

¹¹⁸ See 3.2.2 and 4; 3.8.2, 7, and 8; 3.9.1; 3.11.2; 3.21.7; and 3.22.8. See also the last sentence of Plutarch’s *Cleverness*, in which Soclarus, previously aligned with the Stoics, commends Aristotimus and Phaedimus for “contend[ing] well together against those who deprive (τοὺς...ἀποστεροῦντας) animals of *logos* and intelligence (συνέσεως)” (*Soll.* 985a).

¹¹⁹ See 3.13.1. The verb ἀφαιρέω is paired with ἀδικέω by the opponents who adopt a quasi-vegan critique of vegetarianism at 1.21.1, likening the shearing of a ewe with depriving a human being of clothing. In a

explicitly named injustice of killing with the more subtle ideological injustice of deprivation of *logos*—and thus see even the latter as a form of violence.

B. Plutarch on Harming and Necessity

We have already seen, in reference to the Epicureans, how Porphyry critiques pleasure as “hostile” to justice (3.26.5), and meat-eating as in most cases a matter of pleasure rather than necessity. We have also examined the issue of restricting vegetarianism to philosophers. It is worth considering how these issues play out specifically in Plutarch, a champion of animals and vegetarianism in several works, who seems however to condone meat-eating in other writings. In several cases, Porphyry’s revision in *Abstinance* of Plutarch’s discourse of necessity shifts the emphasis to the possibility of harmlessness.

The claim that “Plutarch would agree...vegetarianism is a lifestyle that is incumbent upon the philosopher, but...considers it supererogatory for the majority of human beings” is based on several passages suggesting a tolerance, even if a grudging one, for meat-eating.¹²⁰ In *Advice about Keeping Well* (131d-32a), Plutarch recommends a diet light on, but not free of, meat:

metaphysical register, cf. the reference to “badness” (κακία) as “a deprivation (στέρησιν) of the good” (3.27.5).

¹²⁰ The quotation, from Newmyer (2006, 100), initially aligns his reading of Plutarch with Dombroski’s (1984, 126), though Newmyer goes on to posit “the person of ethical convictions” rather than the philosopher per se as the target of Plutarch’s arguments for vegetarianism (2006, 102). As we have seen, Gilhus (2006, 77), Helmbold (1957, 537), and Dalby (2003, 341) assume that Plutarch’s vegetarian treatise, *On Flesh Eating*, represents a less-mature phase of Plutarch’s career, “a foible of...early manhood,” as

One must contrive by means of the quality of his food to make the largest part of it lighter (ἐλαφρότερον) and to be given to eat, with due caution, foods that are both solid and nutritious, such as the fleshy (κρεώδη) and cheesy ones and dried figs and boiled eggs—for it is difficult (ἔργον) always to refuse them (παρατεῖσθαι)—but to cling to (ἐμφύεσθαι) delicate (λεπτοῖς) and light foods (κούφοις), such as many of the garden vegetables (λαχάνων), and birds, and fish that are not fatty.... It is best (κράτιστον) to accustom (ἐθίσαι) the body not to need any meat (σαρκοφαγία) in addition. For the earth bounteously (ἄφθονα) sends up many things not only for sustenance (διατροφήν) but also for comfort (εὐπάθειαν) and enjoyment (ἀπόλαυσιν).

Going on to say that “custom (ἔθος) has become, in a manner, nature contrary to nature (φύσις...παρὰ φύσιν),” Plutarch cautions that “we must not use meat (κρεοφαγία) for the fulfillment (ἀποπλήρωσιν) of appetite (ὀρέξεως), like wolves and lions. Rather, “throwing it in as a prop (ὑπέρεισμα) and belt (διάζωμα) of our food, we must use other

Helmbold puts it—and similarly, in the case of *Gryllus*, which has its own vegetarian passage, Helmbold (1957, 490) describes the work as “written, perhaps, when [Plutarch] was quite young.” In *Gryllus*, the title character, a formerly human pig, says that “out of luxury (τυρφή) and a surfeit (κόρου) of necessary things (ἀναγκαίων), [a human] pursues foods that are unfit, and impure (οὐ καθαρὰς) because of the slaughter (σφαγαῖς) of animals.” Notwithstanding his ostensibly “civilized (ἡμέρους) tables,” the human engages in this pursuit “much more cruelly (πολὺ...ὠμότερον) than the most savage wild animals (τῶν ἀγριωτάτων θηρίων),” voraciously “using (χρώμενος) every species” rather than “abstain[ing] (ἀπέχεται) from most and mak[ing] war on a few because of the necessity (ἀνάγκην) of nourishment (τροφή), as wild animals do” (991c-d). We see much of this vocabulary in *Abstinence* as well.

foods (σιτίους) and dishes (ῥψοις) that are more in accordance with nature (κατὰ φύσιν) for the body and also do less to dim (ἀμβλύνει) the rationality (λογικόν) of the soul.”

In *The Dinner of the Seven Wise Men* (159b-c), Plutarch’s Solon presents a tragic view of eating in which humans are hard-pressed by biological necessity to avoid “the pollution (μίασμα) of our flesh (σαρκός),” particularly the digestive organs, which, like Tartarus, are “quite full of certain terrible (δεινῶν) streams (ῥευμάτων) and wind and fire kneaded together and corpses (νεκρῶν).” As he says, “in putting to death (θανατοῦντες) ensouled beings (ἔμψυχα) and destroying (ἀπολλύντες) the products of the earth (τὰ φύόμενα),” i.e., plants, “which also share (μετέχοντα) in life (τοῦ ζῆν) by being nourished (τρέφεσθαι) and growing (αὔξεσθαι), we commit injustice (ἀδικοῦμεν).” Be that as it may, we are told, “to abstain (ἀπέχεσθαι) from eating (ἐδωδῆς) meat (σαρκῶν), just as they record that old Orpheus did, is an example of sophistic thinking (σόφισμα) rather than an escape (φυγή) from acts of injustice (ἀδικημάτων) regarding food (τροφῆν).” Although “the one escape and complete (τέλειος) purification (καθαρισμός) toward justice (δικαιοσύνην) is to become self-sufficient (αὐτάρκη) and without any need (ἀπροσδεῖα),” Plutarch’s Solon says, “the god has imposed (προστέθεικεν)...a nature (φύσιν) that is the origin (ἀρχὴν) of injustice (ἀδικίας),” since “he has made self-preservation (τὴν αὐτοῦ σωτηρίαν) impossible (ἀμήχανον) without the oppression (κακώσεως) of another.”

We can observe striking adjustments away from the discourse of necessity toward the discourse of possibility if we compare the language in this passage and others with what we find in *Abstinence*. For example, Porphyry notably borrows much of the language of the last sentence regarding survival, harm, and injustice, but to make the opposite point. As he puts it, “The god did *not* in fact make self-preservation impossible

for us without the oppression of another, since in that way he would impose (προσετίθει) on us a nature that was the origin of injustice” (*Abst.* 3.26.9). We similarly see Porphyry (3.27.9-11) recast language in *Seven Wise Men* (160b-c) concerning the aporia the Danaids would experience if their eternal labor of filling perforated jars with water were to cease. Both Porphyry and Plutarch analogize that feeling to what people would experience if liberated from their slavery to food, but Plutarch treats that as an adynaton; Porphyry, as a real possibility.¹²¹ Plutarch asks what would happen if we stopped bringing things to our tireless flesh; Porphyry, what would happen if we stopped bringing things for our passions and desires. Plutarch’s flesh is intractable; it must be fed. Porphyry’s passions and desires can be weakened and even, theoretically, eliminated.¹²²

¹²¹ For more on Porphyry’s discourse of possibility as an optimistic supplement to the discourse of necessity, see chapter 3, section III.

¹²² With respect to passions or emotions, one can perhaps locate different orientations on the part of Porphyry and Plutarch. Porphyry refers favorably a number of times in *Abstinence* to ἀπάθεια, an absence of, or freedom from, passions or emotions, with ἀπαθής as the corresponding adjective (see 1.30.1, 1.36.2, 1.37.1, 2.34.3, 2.43.3, and 2.45.4). While a kind of ἀπάθεια is also a Stoic goal and μετριοπάθεια (“moderation of the passions”) is associated with the Peripatetics, “in the Platonist tradition,” these distinct orientations toward emotion “can be used as two stages in moral progress,” as Dillon (2005, 2:809n106) observes regarding Porphyry’s discussion of the civic virtues at *Sent.* 32.6-16. (See chapter 4, section IIB.) In a discussion of grief (*Cons. Apoll.* 102c-d), however, Plutarch valorizes μετριοπάθεια against Stoic ἀπάθεια, characterizing the latter as “cruel” (ἄγριον) and “rigid” (σκληρὰν). In *Abstinence*, the one negative use of ἀπαθής appears at the beginning of an excerpt from Plutarch’s *Cleverness* (*Abst.* 3.20.7 = *Soll.* 959f) as part of the claim that the gratuitous slaughter of animals for luxury and entertainment strengthens “that which is unfeeling to pity” (τὸ πρὸς οἴκτον ἀπαθές), though, as Clark (2000a, 174n478) notes, Plutarch himself has ἀκαμπές (“unbending”) instead of ἀπαθές. Plutarch does, however, use ἀπάθεια in the same

The difference is between a tragic view (there is nothing we can do about our need to eat and therefore do harm) and a more-hopeful view (we *can* stop bringing things for our passions and desires that will never satisfy them). Another important marker of this difference: the Plutarch passage says, “We are utterly at a loss regarding what we would do” (διαποροῦμεν ἡμεῖς...τί πράξομεν), but Porphyry asks, “What, therefore, will we do?” (τί τοίνυν πράξομεν;). And he has an answer: “We shall imitate the race of gold, we shall imitate those who have been liberated.” Overall, if we compare language that Porphyry explicitly attributes to Plutarch at 3.18.3¹²³ with Solon’s discourse, we see a marked shift in emphasis from the impossibility of avoiding harm to the possibility of limiting it. In the Solon passage, it is an “example of sophistic thinking” to avoid all meat; in *Abstinence* the argument is that “as Plutarch also says, just because our nature (φύσις) has need (δεῖται) of some things and we use (χρώμεθα) them does not then mean we should extend (προακτέον) injustice (ἀδικίαν) universally (ἐπὶ πάν) and against all beings (πρὸς πάντα).” Here a clear line is drawn between plants and animals:

If, as with air and water and plants (φυτῶν) and crops (καρπῶν), without which it is impossible (ἀδύνατόν) to live (ζῆν), we happened (ἐτυγχάνομεν) to need (δεόμενοι) the slaughter (φόνου) of animals and the eating (βρώσεως) of flesh (σαρκῶν) for life (βίον), nature (φύσις) would have a necessary (ἀναγκαίαν) intertwining (συμπλοκήν) with this injustice (ἀδικίαν). But if many priests of gods, and many kings of non-Greek peoples, considering it part of purity

discussion, when Autobulus refers to hunting (959d) as a source of “impassivity” (ἀπάθειαν) and even “savagery” (ἀγριότητα).

¹²³ The attribution introduces a passage from an unidentified work of Plutarch that extends through 3.20.6.

See Sandbach 1969 fr. 193.

(ἀγνεύοντες), and countless species of animals that do not touch (θιγγάνοντα) such food (τροφῆς) at all, live (ζῶσιν) and attain (τυγχάνουσι) the perfection (τέλους) of their nature (φύσιν), how is he not senseless (ἄτοπος), the one insisting (κελεύων)...[we are constrained] to live by treating (χρωμένους) none with justice (δικαιοσύνη)—or, by treating all with justice, not to live (ζῆν)? (3.18.4)

It should be noted that while *Advice about Keeping Well* and *The Dinner of the Seven Wise Men* both, in various ways, condone meat-eating, we find an element of this stance even in *Flesh Eating*, where Plutarch, while arguing for abstinence, acknowledges human intractability. “We would do well (καλῶς εἶχεν...ἡμᾶς),” he says, “having cut out (ἐκτεμόντας) our gluttony (γαστριμαργίαν) and bloodthirstiness (μυαιφονίαν), to be pure (ἀγνεῦσαι) for the rest of our lives.” On the other hand, he adds with a measure of exasperation, “if, by Zeus,¹²⁴ through habit (συνήθειαν), lack of error (το ἀναμάρτητον) is indeed impossible (ἀδύνατον), feeling shame (αἰσχυνόμενοι) for our error (τῷ ἁμαρτάνοντι) we will deal with it (χρησόμεθα) with the help of reason (διὰ τὸν λόγον).” Thus, he says, “we will eat (ἐδόμεθα) flesh (σάρκας), but feeling hunger (πεινῶντες), not living luxuriously (τροφῶντες). We will kill (ἀναιρήσομεν) an animal, but pitying (οἰκτείροντες) and grieving (ἀλγοῦντες) it, not mistreating (ὕβριζοντες) or torturing (βασανίζοντες) it” (996e-f).¹²⁵

¹²⁴ Here I follow the Loeb text (Helmbold 1957), with Bernardakis’s emendation of ἢ διὰ as νῆ Δία διὰ.

¹²⁵ It should be noted that when Plutarch says, “if, by Zeus, through habit, lack of error is indeed impossible,” the phrase rendered here as “if...indeed” is εἰ καὶ, which often implies “though I should be surprised if it were so,” according to Goodwin (s.v. καί, p. 301). The implication, then, would be that it is not at all impossible to avoid the “error” of meat-eating. Even with the measure of equivocation on meat-

The Plutarch passages, then, deal with the intractability not just of nature but, specifically, human nature. Though they need not be taken as superseding the defenses of animals and vegetarianism in *Cleverness*, *Flesh Eating*, and *Gryllus*, they at least provide a different, more status quo-enforcing perspective. Porphyry, like Plutarch, recognizes both varieties of intractability but chooses to emphasize the possibility of abstinence. For though nature may be immovable, human beings are not, and indeed, as he notes, they are “harmless by nature” (3.1.3). Unlike Plutarch’s Solon, who flattens the difference between plants and animals, licensing his audience to eat both, Porphyry preserves the distinction. He may wish that humans did not have to eat even plants, but he says that in the face of this necessity plant-eating remains a much less consequential harm than the killing and eating of perceptive, feeling, embodied animals.

eating evident in the passage, the concern for animals—a powerful and consistent theme of the work—is vividly conveyed by “pitying” and “grieving.” On such concern, cf. Edwards (2018, 50), who treats Plutarch’s peripheral reincarnation-based argument (998c-f) as though it were presented (along with “the gluttony of meat eating”) as “a central reason for adopting a vegetarian diet.” According to Edwards’s reading of the reincarnation argument (2018, 32), “if we could be certain that any particular animal did *not* possess the soul of one of our dead human relatives, then we would have *no reason at all* not to kill and eat that animal” (emphasis added). But after referring to the life/soul (ψυχήν) of an animal killed for a meal, Plutarch says, “Not yet do I say, perhaps, [the soul] of a mother or a father or some friend or child, as Empedocles said, but [a soul] partaking of perception, sight, hearing, *phantasia*, and intelligence” (997d-e). The innate faculties of the animal are what make the life hold value here, *not* the possibility that the soul belongs to a reincarnated loved one, even if Plutarch later entertains the possibility of reincarnation as well.

V. Conclusion

As we saw above in “Reason and Language,” whereas opponents tease apart mental functions to maintain rigid dichotomies of rational and non-rational, human and nonhuman, Porphyry packages the range of mental functions together with reason in the service of a model of “more and less” reason in animals. At the same time, as we saw in “Perception and Body,” the moral criterion for justice consideration in *Abstinence* appears to be perception rather than the rationality that accompanies it. Even if human life entails harm to other living beings, Porphyry is clear that the goal should be to minimize such harm. To emulate the highest god, who is utterly harmless, people must seek harmlessness in their own lives. Similarly, if stealing a harmless animal’s life offends the gods, it should equally offend those seeking to emulate the highest god. It could be that harmlessness in emulation of the gods is precisely why animals’ faculty of perception is important to Porphyry’s vegetarian argument. If animals were no more liable to be harmed than the unensouled, the case for not eating them would be undone, and if animals were without perception, injuring or killing them would not be a harm to them—or would, at most, cause only as much harm as taking away the life of a plant. But “justice,” as Porphyry says, “since it consists in harmlessness, extends as far as (ἄχρι) ensouled beings (ἐμψύχων)” (3.26.9). The bottom line of book 3 in particular, as we saw in “Justice as Harmlessness,” is that ensouled beings, as such, are to be included in the circle of justice—and a life in which one avoids harming them is possible. If one insists, on the contrary, that the killing of animals has no greater gravity for Porphyry than the harm of harvesting a tuber, one risks depriving *Abstinence* as a whole of its hortatory call for justice, purity from pollution, and piety. That is, one risks reducing it to a rump of

asceticism and dialectic—personal purity plus an argument for the sake of argument with Stoics and others—while ignoring the insistence with which the text puts forward a unified moral argument. As a practice tending toward assimilation to god, Porphyry’s vegetarianism *needs* its other-directedness, for it would be emptied of meaning if it were not in our power to harm—and thus choose not to harm—other animals.

Chapter 3: Purity and Abstinence

I. Introduction

Referring to the various biographies of Pythagoras and of the Pythagorean Apollonius of Tyana, among other texts, Larue identifies “three major types of motivation” for vegetarianism: “pity for animals, the refusal of defilement, and asceticism.”¹ Having looked at justice for animals—which, like pity, is directed outward²—I now turn to the other concerns referred to by Larue, both of which I group under the self-directed principle of “purity.” Asceticism receives a lengthy treatment in book 1 of *Abstinence* and further consideration in book 4 through a series of exemplary philosopher-priests, religious sectarians, and laypeople stretching from Greece as far east as India.³ Refusal of defilement—what we might call purity in the strict sense—emerges most notably in the final chapters of book 4, with a discussion of ἀγνεία (“purity”), defined, above all, as an absence of mixing—or, more to the point, an avoidance of mixing with that which is “alien.” As we will see, *mimêsis* (imitation) is like mixing inasmuch as imitating positive

¹ Larue 2015, 16-17.

² Though pity is other-directed like justice, one could say that it requires less of the moral agent than justice, as, for example, when Plutarch calls for pitying animals (οἰκτεῖροντες) while killing them (*Esu* 996e-f). For “kindness” (χρηστότης, εὐεργεσία, χάρις) toward domesticated animals and human slaves in the absence of justice, see Plut. *Cat. Ma.* 339a.

³ The discussion in book 4 begins where the exhortation at the end of book 3 had left off: with Golden Age people, identified in book 4 as Greeks. From this example of pure vegetarianism, discussed below in chapter 5, Porphyry proceeds to the Spartans and then non-Greeks (including Egyptians, Jews, the Magi, and Brahmans), whose selection reflects, to an extent, a canon set by Numenius, the second-century CE Neopythagorean Platonist. At the end of book 4, Porphyry offers brief discussions of Cretans and early Athenians before the text is cut off, curtailing the promised discussion of partially or fully abstinent sages.

exempla (things that are “appropriate” to oneself)—like the philosopher-priests and, best of all, god—is conducive to purity, while imitating negative exempla (i.e., that which is alien) is conducive to impurity.

Although the principle of non-mixing can be applied in any number of ways and Porphyry’s discussion of contamination in 4.20 encompasses sex, birth, death, and even thoughts, he begins, fittingly, with the non-pollution of vegetarian foods and the double pollution arising from meat.⁴ “The holy men” (οἱ ἱεροὶ), Porphyry says, “believed that in administering (προσφέροντες) food (τροφὴν) from crops (καρπῶν)” —that is, food “not taken (ληφθεῖσαν) from corpses or ensouled (ἔμψυχον) by nature” —they “did not stain (μαίνεσθαι) that which is ordered (διοικούμενα) by nature (φύσεως).”⁵ Conversely, “they held that the slaughter (σφαγὰς) of sentient (αἰσθητικῶν) animals and the taking away (ἀφαιρέσεις) of their lives (ψυχῶν) is pollution (μιασμόδες) for the living (ζῶντας), and, much more, to mix (μυγνύειν) a once-sentient body that has been deprived (ἀφηρημένον) of its sentient faculty (τὸ αἰσθητικὸν) and is a corpse with the sentience (αἰσθήσει) of a living being” (4.20.1).⁶ Porphyry suggests here that meat eaters harm themselves by harming others—killing them and “taking away” their souls—and then compound the harm to themselves by taking those dead bodies into their own. There is, in other words, a

⁴ For Porphyry’s general principle of non-mixing, see the beginning of the next section below.

⁵ On οἱ ἱεροὶ, see note 17 below.

⁶ It should be noted that the force of defilement emerges from the taking in of “a once-sentient body,” not from the taking in of an animal as such. The souls of slaughtered animals, Porphyry cautions, stay close to their bodies, disturbing the souls of those who eat their flesh. However, in clinging to lost bodies, animals’ souls are not different from those of humans who have been killed or who have taken their own lives (2.47.1-3). See also 1.38.2.

loss of purity, a defilement, arising first from injustice against another and then from something one does to oneself—we might say an other-directed impurity followed by a self-directed impurity.⁷

The interplay of internal and external, of purity and justice, is the ultimate concern of this chapter and the next one. I will start here by discussing Porphyry's conception of purity as non-mixing. I will next look at how he capitalizes on the philosophical-ethical notion of simple living while prescribing a more profound change in life, a form of asceticism. Surveying his Greek and non-Greek exempla of abstinence in book 4, I will show how they represent varying degrees of purity and justice, varying degrees of good and bad mixing. As with Porphyry's discussion of justice, this model of "more and less" in the category of abstinent exempla offers an alternative to a simple dichotomy; instead of the "pure" and "impure," there are people with different measures of purity, each of which attains some recognition and approbation while the goal remains full abstinence and harmlessness "as much as possible." In each point of discussion—the

⁷ Contrary to Edwards (2018, 51)—who says that "there is nothing particularly special about the avoidance of meat in Porphyry's mind" but it is "simply one of a number of things"—including sex, wine, perfume, and overeating—"that makes philosophical contemplation difficult"—Porphyry's references to "the slaughter of sentient animals and the taking away of their lives" and to the mixing of "a once-sentient body that has been deprived of its sentient faculty...with the sentience of a living being" mark meat-eating as a preeminent form of pollution. This preeminence is of course what one would expect in a treatise on vegetarianism. However, the list of Porphyry's works, both extant and lost, includes nothing on abstinence from sex, wine, or perfume. Nor is there any work on overeating as such, though in *Abstinence* meat-eating is treated as inherently gluttonous (e.g., 3.16.1 and 3.18.5). For more on meat-eating versus sex, see the discussion below.

ascetic recommendations in book 1 and the exempla and theory of purity in book 4—we will see how justice for animals, the theme of book 3, remains a persistent concern.

II. Impurity, Mixing, and the Belly

When Porphyry theorizes purity in the strict sense—as a refusal of defilement—he points to mixing as the source of that defilement. As he puts it, “Holy men (ἱεροὶ), indeed, regarded (ἐτίθεντο) purity (ἀγνείαν) as the condition of being unmixed (ἀμιξίαν) with one’s opposite (τοῦναντίον)” and “mixing” (μῖξιν), conversely, “as contamination (μολυσμὸν)” (4.20.1).⁸ Defining purity in language strongly reminiscent of his characterization of justice at 3.26.9—language that has the effect of aligning the two concepts—Porphyry says, “Purity, in all cases (ἐν πᾶσιν), [lies] in putting aside (ἀποθέσει) and abstaining (ἀφέξει) from many opposite things (ἐναντίων),” as well as “isolating (μονώσει) and taking (λήψει) what is appropriate (οἰκείων) and akin by nature (προσφυῶν)” (4.20.2).⁹ As he adds, “Both corruption (φθορὰ) and staining (μίανσις) are mixing (μῖξις) with the contrary (ἐναντίου)” (4.20.6).¹⁰

⁸ Although Porphyry makes this theorization very much his own, *Abst.* 4.20 lifts language from various Plutarchan sources that employ that language for different purposes. *Abst.* 4.20.5 and 8 borrow from *Quaest. conv.* 725c-d, which concerns the Nile’s variable muddiness and clarity; *Abst.* 4.20.8, from *Tranq.*, on making the best use of what fortune gives you; *Abst.* 4.20.13, from *Plut. Conv.* 160a-b, in which Solon complains of the nuisance of having to eat; and 4.20.14, from *Sanit.* 135e, which briefly defers to Theophrastus on the high cost to the soul of being in a body while making the opposite point: that the body is mistreated by the soul.

⁹ διὸ ἐν πᾶσιν ἡ ἀγνεία ἐν ἀποθέσει μὲν καὶ ἀφέξει τῶν πολλῶν καὶ ἐναντίων. For similar wording, see 4.20.9. Cf. 3.26.9 (ἡ δὲ δικαιοσύνη ἐν τῷ ἀφεκτικῷ καὶ ἀβλαβεῖ κείται παντὸς ὄτουσιν τοῦ μὴ βλάπτοντος)

While in its outlines this perspective on purity coincides with some traditional Greco-Roman ideas and is expressed through some of the same language, practices such as ritual cleansing after exposure to birth, death, and sex and temporary abstinence from food and sex were, as Finn observes, distinct from Porphyry's ascetic vision of "a discipline of soul and body for the good of the soul."¹¹ For Porphyry the passions of the body and the actions and thoughts associated with them are to be avoided as a general matter, not simply washed off before one enters a temple.¹² A surface cleaning will not do when the corruption is internal, not just in the mind but in the belly, as we will see in the anecdote Porphyry reports of Egyptian funerary disembowelment. Though contamination is, for him, a given of incarnation, we have in his schema the crucial choice of working to overcome it—or compounding it—through the way we conduct our lives, which inevitably encompasses not just what we do with ourselves but also what we do to others, particularly with reference to food.

Although diet remains paramount, Porphyry briefly considers other ways that being in a body entails pollution. Regarding birth, he says, "a soul has been stained

and the definition of the purificatory virtues at Porph. *Sent.* 32.15-16 (αἱ [ἀρεταὶ] δὲ τοῦ πρὸς θεωρίαν προκόπτοντος {θεωρητικοῦ} ἐν ἀποστάσει κεῖνται τῶν ἐντεῦθεν).

¹⁰ See also 4.20.4: "Both 'contamination' (μόλυσμα) and 'staining' (μίανσις) signify the mixing of one class (γένους) with another, especially when it is hard to wash out." On mixing and impurity, cf. Douglas's observation (1966, 53) regarding Leviticus: "Holiness requires that different classes of things shall not be confused." Porphyry's range of "mixing" words in *Abstinence* includes μῆξις, μίγνυειν, ἀμιξία, and ἐπιμίγνυσθαι.

¹¹ Finn 2009, 15 and 18. See also Clark 2000a, 192n662.

¹² See again 4.20.4, in note 10 above.

(μεμόλυνται) when it is embodied (ἐνσωμάτῳται)” and “the one being begotten (ὁ γεννώμενος) stains (μιαίνει) by the mixing of soul with body.” Conversely, “the one who died (ὁ ἀποθανών) stains when he leaves behind the body as a corpse, which is foreign (ἀλλόφυλον) to the living (ζῶντι) and alien (ἀλλότριον)” (4.20.7).¹³ As for sexual pleasures (ἀφροδίσια), as with meat-eating, Porphyry posits a bad mixture, an overdetermined pollution. As “the conjunction (σύνδοος) of female and male,” he says, sex has the effect of staining whether conception occurs or not. “If sperm is retained,” he says, “it produces a staining (μίανσιν) of the soul by means of its communion (ὀμιλία) with the body; and if it is not retained, by means of the death (νεκρώσει) of that which was deposited” (4.20.3).¹⁴ Elsewhere, Porphyry appears to advocate celibacy, as he says that the philosopher “does not sink (καθίησιν) to marriage” (2.52.3), and that “it is necessary to abstain from everything just as from sex” (1.41.4).

In connecting fundamental elements of biological necessity to pollution, Porphyry invites consideration of what can be done in a life to limit it. With respect to sex, we may say that Porphyry’s more urgent concern is not the biological pollution (male-female mixing, lively or dead sperm) but rather the effect that passion has on the soul. When he says that “both sex and nocturnal emissions [stain] because [they occur] when soul has

¹³ The pollution brought by birth and death, along with meat, is captured in a single sentence, a citation from Euripides’ *Cretans* at 4.19.2 (= fr. 472 Kannicht): “Wearing all-white garments, I flee (φεύγω) the birth (γένεσιν) of mortals (βροτῶν), and not approaching (χρμπτόμενος) a coffin (νεκροθήκης), I have been on guard against (πεφύλαγμα) the eating (βρῶσιν) of ensouled (ἐμψύχων) nourishment (ἐδεστῶν).” For the Orphic echoes of this passage, see chapter 5, note 34.

¹⁴ Homosexual intercourse is polluting for Porphyry because the sperm will die and because the act itself is “against nature” (παρὰ φύσιν) (4.20.3).

been mixed (μεμιγμένης) with body and pulled down (κατασπωμένης) to pleasure (ἡδονήν)” (4.20.3), it is evidently the reference to pleasure that sets up the next observation—that “the passions (πάθη) of the soul also stain by the intertwining (συμπλοκῆ) of the unreasoning (ἄλόγου).” As he goes on to note, “The soul is also stained by anger (ὀργαῖς), desires (ἐπιθυμίας), and the mass of passions (παθῶν), of which also diet (δίαιτα) is in a certain way partly responsible (συναιτία)” (4.20.8). Here we see something distinct from the biological necessities of birth and death, as well as from seminal emissions, which, on the species level at least, are equally necessary.¹⁵ Actions and mental states, which are connected, as Porphyry’s nearly anagrammatic reference to δίαιτα...συναιτία has the effect of emphasizing, are in our control—and, for Porphyry, δίαιτα, which generally means “mode of life,” is overwhelmingly about diet.¹⁶ Indeed, after his excursus on sex, Porphyry returns to food, comparing “the soul administering (διοικοῦσα) its own business (τὰ ἑαυτῆς) in a dry (ξηροῦ) body” with the soul in a body that is “flooded with the humors (χυμοῖς) of alien flesh (ἄλλοτριῶν σαρκῶν)” (4.20.8). As he adds, “One must feed [the rational (λογικῆς) soul] with intellect (νῶ) and be earnest in fattening it from this [intellect]”—that is, *nous*, one’s real self, as he observes at 1.29.4—“rather than fattening our flesh (σάρκα) from meat (βρωτῶν)” (4.20.11).

Going a step further, we might find a suggestion that even the necessity of birth is less than absolute, while diet can mitigate the congenital stain. Referring variously to “eternal life” (αἰώνιον...ζωήν), “blessed life” (μακαρίας ζωῆς), and “immortal life”

¹⁵ See, e.g., Finn’s observation (2009, 10) on celibacy, discussed in note 43 below.

¹⁶ See, e.g., the references to the ἄσαρκος δίαιτα (“fleshless diet”) at 1.2.1 and 1.52.1.

(ἀθάνατον βίον), Porphyry says that *nous* (“intellect”) supports them, whereas the fattened body, which “augments that which is mortal (τὸ θνητὸν),” has the effect of “ruining (παραιροῦν) and thwarting (ἐμποδίζον)” the soul and “stains it by embodying (ἐνσωματοῦν) it and pulling it down (κατασπῶν) toward the alien (ἄλλότριον).” (4.20.11). The negative formulations expressed here presuppose an alternative, positive outcome, whereby the soul is not ruined, thwarted, and pulled down by a fattened body but rather attains a kind of transcendence. In the meantime, Porphyry says, “being mortal (ἐν θνητῷ), we do not recognize (ἀγνοοῦμεν) that we make ourselves—if it is necessary to put it this way—still more mortal (ἔτι θνητοτέρους) by taking in [these provisions (ἐφόδιον)]” (4.20.14). We are, in other words, made more or less pure, drawn closer to or farther away from *nous*, by our actions. And here, quite differently from the Christian tradition, eating occupies a position of primacy even ahead of sex, perhaps in part because, unlike meat-eating, sex per se involves no harm to another, no taking away of that which does not belong to oneself, the source of pollution that Porphyry raises when he cites “the holy men” for the view that “the slaughter of sentient animals and taking away of their lives is pollution (μιασμοῦς)” (4.20.1).¹⁷

¹⁷ According to Patillon and Segonds (1995, 4:94n301), the phrase “the holy men” (οἱ ἱεροί), which Porphyry employs only once in *Abstinence*, does not appear to refer to any specific group but rather to the range of ascetic exempla that Porphyry has described in the course of book 4. If so, the claim is tendentious, since it is not at all clear that the widely varying and often only partially abstinent holy men—even as he has described them—could be said to have subscribed to the idea that killing animals *in itself* constitutes pollution. As with other tendentious claims in *Abstinence*, and significant interventions in source material, we are invited here to make a judgment about what is important to Porphyry rather than about the accuracy or cogency of what he says.

Beyond the mini-treatise of *Abst.* 4.20, and the treatise’s pervasive surface language of purity and mixing, we can find traces of violence against animals encoded in wordplay relating to “bad mixing.”¹⁸ Most notably, the word ἀκρασία with a short middle alpha, meaning “lack of self-control,” appears at important transitional moments such as near the beginning and end of book 1 (1.2.3 and 1.56.4) and in the first sentence of book 4. The same sequence of letters with a long middle alpha means “bad mixture.” However, the virtual identity of the two words means that “lack of self-control” always carries the suggestion of impurity by means of an unwholesome mixing of opposites that must be kept apart. In *Abstinence* all the references to ἀκρασία concern food, and occasionally they appear in a context suggestive of violence, as when Porphyry refers to “the laws of the body, which are violent (βιαίσις)” (1.56.4), and when he pairs ἀκρασία with ἀσελγές, whose definitions include “brutal” as well as “licentious” and “wanton” (1.52.4). Likewise, συγχέομαι and σύγχυσις, both employed to describe confusion of various sorts (concepts, thoughts, arguments, human affairs), have the underlying sense of a bad mixture.¹⁹ As we have seen, Porphyry presents opponents as saying that “justice is mixed

¹⁸ The Greek discourse of purity adopted by Porphyry includes overlapping terms for ritual purity (ἀγνεία), cleansing or cleanliness (καθαρ-), and holiness (ὅσιος and derivatives), all three of which appear at *Abst.* 1.57.2. Cf. D.L. 8.33, on Pythagoras. For a discussion of purity terms, see Kearns 2003. Referring to ὅσιος, Kearns notes that it “tends to specialize into meaning that which is proper and lawful with regard to holy things, or to traditional morality.” At *Abst.* 2.12.4, as we have seen, Porphyry observes in reference to sacrifice, “No one is holy (ὅσιος) who give thanks out of another’s belongings, with that one unwilling.”

¹⁹ For συγχέομαι, see 1.4.1, 2.4.1, 3.24.4, and 4.18.4; for σύγχυσις, 3.20.5 and, again, 4.18.4. While the Stoics distinguished three types of “mixing” (μίξις), of which “fusion” (σύγχυσις) is one—the others being “juxtaposition” (παράθεσις) and “blending” (κρᾶσις)—here, as elsewhere, I use “mixing” in a broadly

up (συγχέσθαι) and motionless things are moved if we extend justice (δίκαιον) not to the rational alone but also to the irrational” (1.4.1). Such language, suggesting sacrilege accompanying a bad mixture,²⁰ is structurally in line with Porphyry’s theorization of purity, though in this case it is expressed in Porphyry’s formulation of an opposing point of view. The different outcomes presuppose different sets of opposites. For Porphyry’s opponents, as he presents them, mentally “mixing up” rational man and irrational animal generates sacrilege, a kind of pollution. For Porphyry, it is the literal mixing of the living and sentient with the dead through killing and eating animals that has this polluting effect. The opponents’ view—linking justice for animals and abstinence from them with bad mixture and sacrilege—then, has an analogous opposite in the prevailing view in *Abstinence*, which, conversely, locates a bad mixture and sacrilege in the *denial* of justice toward animals that goes along with eating them.

thematic, non-technical sense. (See note 48 below.) On the Stoic distinction, see Al. *Mixt.* 216.14-218.6 Bruns (LS 48C = *SVF* 2.473).

²⁰ “Moving things that are motionless” (or “immovable”)—that is, things that are “not to be stirred, inviolate” (LSJ s.v. ἀκίνητος)—is “proverbial for sacrilege,” as Clark (2000a, 124n15) notes. On the theological importance for the Stoics of excluding animals from justice, see Labarrière’s discussion (1997, 267-68) of the passage (*M.* 9.123-32) in which Sextus Empiricus presents, in order to debunk it, a Stoic argument that if justice exists, so too must the gods. The opposing claim of justice for animals, as imputed to Pythagoras and Empedocles in the passage, is based on the idea that “there is one *pneuma* (breath), the one pervading the whole universe in the manner of a soul, the one that also unites us with them [animals].” The Stoic response, as presented by Sextus, is that “humans have some kind of justice and connection with each other and the gods” not because of the aforementioned *pneuma* but because of *logos*. Since justice is offered as a proof of the existence of the gods themselves, undermining it, from the Stoic perspective, by extending it to animals also would undermine a proof of the gods’ existence.

The language of purity, which is pervasive in *Abstinence*, figures as well in Plutarch’s *On Flesh Eating* in a limited but intertextually significant way that illuminates the entanglement, for Porphyry, of injustice and impurity. In that work, Plutarch uses καθαρ- words only three times, and a ἀγν- word only once, as well as μολυσμός (“contamination”) on the opening page (993b). There is, however, a concentration of this language of purity and pollution (including ἀκρασία) in the passage (996e-97a) where Plutarch speaks of the Egyptians, who, “having removed (ἐξελόντες) the belly (κοιλίαν) of the dead and held it up toward the sun, throw it out as the cause of all the things the person did in error (ἥμαρτεν).” As for us, he observes, “we would do well (καλῶς εἶχεν...ἡμᾶς), having cut out (ἐκτεμόντας) our gluttony (γαστριμαργίαν) and bloodthirstiness (μυαιφονίαν), to be pure (ἀγνεῦσαι) for the rest of our lives, since our belly (γαστήρ) is not the murderous, polluting thing (μυαιφόνον) but something that is polluted (μυαινόμενον) by our lack of self-control (ἀκρασίας).” This is the anecdote about an Egyptian funerary practice also used by Porphyry in *Abst.* 4.10, with some of the same language (κοιλίαν ἐξελόντες, πρὸς τὸν ἥλιον, ἥμαρτον, γαστήρ)—but prefaced (4.10.1) with references to “reverence (σεβάσματος) toward (πρὸς) animals”²¹ and “abstain[ing] (ἀπέσχοντο) from them as much as possible (ὡς οἶόν τε ἐστίν).” Whereas Porphyry reports the concern for a purification after death that makes one suitable to be received by the gods, Plutarch’s version pivots toward one’s present, physical existence. That is, while in both accounts Egyptians remove a part of the body (the belly) to remedy the pollution of the soul, Plutarch exhorts his audience to remove an accretion of the soul—“our gluttony and bloodthirstiness”—to remedy the pollution of the body (specifically,

²¹ Patillon and Segonds emend καὶ τὰ ζῷα as πρὸς τὰ ζῷα.

the belly).²² In Porphyry’s account, the Egyptians “thought that they needed a speech for the defense before divinity (τὸ θεῖον) concerning what they had eaten and drunk, and that on account of these things (διὰ ταῦτα) they needed to commit violence (ὕβρισαι)”—the ritual disembowelment” (4.10.5).²³ Plutarch uses the same verb (ὕβριζοντες) just after the discussion of Egyptians and purification to refer to the violence inflicted on the bellies of sows in a particularly cruel agricultural practice. It is such tortures that make Plutarch invoke Zeus the Purifier (Ζεῦ καθάρσιε).²⁴ For Plutarch, then, eating violently obtained

²² We can connect Plutarch’s apparently ironic concern here about what the soul does to the body (as opposed to the conventional Platonic concern with what the body does to the soul) with the passage in *Plut. Sanit.* 135e discussed in note 8 above, and also perhaps with the programmatically *physical* opening of *Flesh Eating* itself (*Esu* 993b), a visceral evocation of the sensorium of slaughter and meat-eating that strongly contrasts with Porphyry’s spiritual appeal to reasoned argument and his allusion to the trajectory of the soul at *Abst.* 1.1.3 (“from what sorts of things and to what sorts of things you have descended [καταβέβηκας]”).

²³ οὕτως ἀπολογίας δεῖσθαι ᾗθησαν πρὸς τὸ θεῖον ὑπὲρ ὧν ἔφαγον καὶ ἔπιον καὶ διὰ ταῦτα ὕβρισαι. In rendering this sentence, Patillon and Segonds (1995, 4:65n138), along with Girgenti and Sodano, take “belly” as the understood object of ὕβρισαι. On this point, Clark agrees (2000a, 185n607), though her translation (“on account of this violence should be done”) is more equivocal. Alternatively, one could make ὕβρισαι depend on ᾗθησαν and understand the Greek to mean something like “they thought that they needed a speech for the defense before divinity concerning what they had eaten and drunk, and that on account of these things [i.e., what they had unlawfully consumed] they had committed violence.” In that case, the object of the violence could be understood as the gods they had offended—and perhaps also the animals they had eaten. The density and multivalence of the sentence invite us not to limit ourselves to a single possibility of meaning.

²⁴ *Esu* 996f-97a. (In the same passage Plutarch also refers to the practice of pushing red-hot spits down pigs’ throats.) While characterizing these acts as “disgusting,” Edwards (2018, 48-49) emphasizes the

food (such as the horrifying delicacy generated by stamping on a pregnant sow’s belly) leads to impurity of the human belly; for Porphyry’s Egyptians, the impurity of the human belly requires violence against it (the ritual disembowelment). But such violence (ὕβρις) occurs not only “on account of” what one ate (διὰ ταῦτα) but perhaps also “by means” of it, in which case the very consumption of impure food would be, as in Plutarch’s reading, violence against the self. As we have seen, Porphyry imputes a double pollution to meat-eating comprising the impurity of “taking away” a soul and, then, taking in a dead body (4.20.1). In both uses of the Egyptian anecdote, there is the suggestion that meat-eating constitutes wrongdoing (ἥμαρτεν/ἥμαρτον), a source of impurity, and thus a harm to the eater stemming from a refusal to extend justice—or, as in *Abst.* 4.10, reverence—toward (πρὸς) the eaten. The ἀκρασία spoken of by Plutarch and Porphyry, a bad mixture coded as a lack of self-control, is both the cause and effect of this refusal.

III. Simple Living and Asceticism

If lack of self-control (ἀκρασία) leads to a bad mixture, the alternative that leads to purity (ἀγνεία) is σωφροσύνη, self-control, one of the canonical virtues. The term has a programmatic force, appearing in the opening chapter of book 1, when Porphyry expresses incredulity at Firmus’s return to meat-eating despite his σωφροσύνη, and, again, at the beginning of book 3, when Porphyry claims to have shown that meat-eating “does not contribute but rather is contrary to self-control (σωφροσύνη), simplicity

intemperate desire for culinary pleasure as the source of Plutarch’s moral indignation rather than animal suffering as such. But see, e.g., 993b, 994e, 996a-b, and 997d.

(λιτότητα), and piety, which especially contribute to the contemplative life (βίον).²⁵ In Porphyry’s defense of vegetarianism, which begins at 1.27 and casts it as good for body and soul, he speaks, in turn, of “a simple (λιτόν), self-sufficient (αὐτάρκη) life” (1.37.4), a goal supported by Stoics and Epicureans alike. However, Porphyry, developing a theme of Platonism, goes further in that passage, adding the notion of a life “filled (ἐμφορούμενον) as little as possible (ἥκιστα) with mortal things.”²⁶ Porphyry’s construction of self-control is, in other words, more radical than anything proposed by his philosophical opponents; as an ideologically motivated form of abstinence going beyond moderation, it qualifies as asceticism.²⁷ While this is not the sort of extreme asceticism that involves gross neglect or injury of the body, it demands more than the self-control, simple living, frugality, and self-sufficiency that constituted a common basis for the philosophical notion of the good life. For Porphyry, not just simplicity but abstinence

²⁵ The formulation appears to refer to the themes treated in books 1 (self-control and simplicity) and 2 (piety), respectively. The concept of self-control is also invoked in *Abstinence* as ἐγκράτεια.

²⁶ Vegetarianism itself is never advocated in the Platonic dialogues, though favorable or neutral references to it appear in *Rep.* 369d-73e, *Plt.* 269-274, and *Lg.* 781e-83b. Plato’s successors Xenocrates and Polemon may have favored vegetarianism (see note 62 below). Plato’s direct influence on *Abstinence* is manifested in a host of citations, which Bouffartigue and Patillon (1977 1:xxxiii-xxxiv) note are “much more numerous in the first two books” and “concentrated in a limited number of dialogues: *Phaedo*, *Theaetetus*, *Republic*, *Laws*, and *Symposium*.”

²⁷ See, e.g., Finn (2009, 1), who defines asceticism as a “voluntary abstention for religious reasons from food and drink, sleep, wealth, or sexual activity.” The term ἄσκησις itself appears at *Marc.* 5.87, and in *Abstinence* to refer to the “spiritual practice” (ἄσκησιν) of the Egyptians (4.6.3, 4.9.1) and the Essenes (4.13.6 and 9).

from meat is a necessary means of purification for anyone seeking salvation—necessary, that is, because greater harmlessness brings one closer to a likeness of god.

Repeatedly placed beside abstinence, simplicity in life emerges in Porphyry's treatise as a common goal among both philosophical schools and the non-Greek priests and sect members that Porphyry casts as philosophers. As he puts it, "I think nearly every philosopher, choosing frugality (εὐτέλειαν) instead of luxury (πολυτελείας), would approve the person satisfied with few things rather than the person who needs more" (1.48.1), even Epicureans, or as he says, "those for whom pleasure (ἡδονήν) is the goal (τέλος)" (1.48.2). Most of them, he says, "starting with their leader, appear to be satisfied with a barley cake and tree fruits, and they have filled their written works asserting nature's need for few things (τὸ ὀλιγοδεῆς) and presenting that which is necessary (τὸ ἀναγκαῖον) for it as sufficiently cured by things that are simple (λιτῶν) and very easy to obtain (εὐπόριστων)" (1.48.3).²⁸ We find similar language in the descriptions of his

²⁸ This notional consensus would presumably include Stoics, most notably the first-century CE vegetarian Musonius Rufus, whose "ideas and formulas," as Bouffartigue and Patillon (1977, 1:31-33) put it, are "obstinately recall[ed]" in *Abst.* 1.45-55, possibly because of a shared Epicurean source. (For an analysis of the Epicurean framework of *Abst.* 1.48-55, see Bouffartigue and Patillon 1977, 1:18-24.) Words used by Musonius in his discussion of vegetarian foods and meat (such as εὐπόριστον, εὐτελεῖ, λιτοτάτοις, and κουφοτάτην, and, conversely, ἐπιθυμία, πολυτελοῦς, ἡδονήν, and ἐμπόδιον) are reflected in Porphyry's language (εὐπορωτέρα, εὐτελεστέρα, κουφοτέρα, and ἐπιθυμίας at 1.46.2; πολυτελείας, ἡδονήν, and λιτῶν at 1.48.2-3; and ἐμποδίζει at 1.52.1). Stoic simplicity, such as it was, had an antecedent in the Cynics and then in the Cynicizing habits of Zeno, the school's founder, even if, as Finn (2009, 25-26) says, his "contempt for wealth was not generally understood by later Stoics as requiring them to adopt a life of voluntary poverty." For the frugal diet of Zeno, including figs, bread, honey, and legumes, see D.L. 7.1, 7.3, 7.13, and 7.26-27. For the benefits of a simple diet, see, e.g., Epicurus in D.L. 10.130-31.

Hellenized non-Greek exempla.²⁹ The Egyptian priests “pursued simplicity (λιτότητα), dignity (καταστολήν), self-control (ἐγκράτειάν), endurance (καρτερίαν), justice (δίκαιον) in everything, and lack of greed (ἀπλεονέκτητον)” (4.6.4). Accordingly, “their diet (δίαιτα) was simple (λιτή) and unrefined (ἀφελής)” (4.6.8). Speaking of the Essenes, Porphyry refers to “their simplicity (λιτότης) with respect to their diet (δίαιταν), and its small quantity (ὀλιγότης)” (4.13.5).³⁰

At times, Porphyry goes so far as to present exemplary frugality as a kind of surrogate for abstinence. As Bouffartigue and Patillon note, regarding Porphyry’s use of Plutarch’s *Life of Lycurgus*, he omits a long portion of the account (12.46c) on hunting and sacrifices, “preferring to underline...the frugality and temperance” of the Spartans’ shared meals.³¹ As Porphyry puts it, “Intending to attack...luxury (τρυφῆ),” Lycurgus “brought in...the preparation of common meals (συσσιτίων), so that, people, gathering together, would dine with each other on fixed portions of shared dishes (ὄψοις) and bread (σιτίσις)” (4.4.1). In Porphyry’s description, meat can be detected only in ὄψοις and the

²⁹ While the non-Greeks are cast in familiar Greek terms, as philosophers as much as they are priests or sect members (see, e.g., 4.6.1 and 4.11.2), the device of featuring non-Greeks underlines a Neoplatonic topos, according to which wisdom is shared among the nations, on which see Clark 1999, 126, and Johnson 2013, 190-91 and 298.

³⁰ Porphyry’s account of the Essenes (*Abst.* 4.11-14) is drawn from several works of Josephus, esp. *BJ* 2.119-33 and 2.137-59. (See Clark 2000a, 185n610.) Speaking of this account, Finn (2009, 48-49) observes that it casts their diet “in terms of a Greek philosophical frugality which restricts food to a necessary minimum,” in contrast to the evidence of the Qumran scrolls, which explain these “patterns of abstention...above all, by a predominant concern for advancing in holiness through the strict observance of ritual purity, and...by a penitential understanding of fasting.”

³¹ Bouffartigue and Patillon 1977, 1:xxxii. See also Bouffartigue and Patillon 1979, 2:xviii.

diminutive ὀψωνία, which comes up in a list that is otherwise limited to vegetarian fare: barley, wine, cheese, and figs (4.4.6). Regarding the Essenes, Porphyry, again out of frugal fare, creates the sense of a vegetarian diet, saying that sect members, “pure (καθαροὶ) themselves,” enter the dining hall as if it were a “holy (ἅγιόν) precinct (τέμενος).” There a baker (σιτοποιός) and a cook (μάγειρος) serve, respectively, loaves (ἄρτους) and, to each person, “one bowl of one dish (ἑδέσματος)” — “food (τροφή) that is holy (ἁγνή) and pure (καθαρά)” (4.12.2-3).³²

However, it is not just a simple diet but vegetarianism that Porphyry argues is best for the aspirant “eager (σπεύδων) to live, as much as possible (ὡς ἔνι μάλιστα), in accordance with *nous* and to be unhindered (ἀπερίσπαστος) by the passions (παθῶν) in accordance with the body” (1.46.2). Porphyry challenges such a person to “show that meat (κρεοφαγία, literally ‘flesh eating’) is easier to obtain (εὐπορωτέρα) than dishes (ὄψων) made from fruits and vegetables”,³³ that it is “cheaper” (εὐτελεστέρα), comparatively free of the hazard of pleasure (ἀνήδονος), and “lighter (κουφοτέρα) in digestion and swifter in bodily assimilation”; and “that it rouses desires (ἐπιθυμίας) less

³² Although ἑδεσμα can mean “meat” as well as “food,” and μάγειρος “butcher” as well as “cook,” nothing suggests that Porphyry would describe meat as “holy and pure,” a phrase that he added here, as Clark (2000a, 186n616) notes.

³³ Cf. 1.49.4, where Porphyry says that vegetarian foods—cast as “everyday things” (τὰ τυχόντα)—“are adequate (ικανὰ) to support what nature necessarily needs” and that they are “very easy to obtain (εὐπόριστα) on account of their simplicity (λιτότητα) and small quantity (ὀλιγότητα),” whereas “there is a need for unensouled foods (τῶν ἀψύχων) even for the person who attaches himself (τῷ...ἀπτομένῳ) to meat-eating, but for the person satisfied with unensouled foods the need is half as much.” For more on the ease of obtaining plant foods, see note 67 below.

and contributes less to the thickness (πάχος) and strength (ῥώμην) of the body than the unensouled diet” (ἀψύχου διαίτης) (1.46.2).³⁴ Whereas “the fleshless diet (ἄσαρκον διαίταν),” Porphyry says, “contributes to health and suitable (σύμμετρον) endurance (ὑπομονήν) of the labors (πόνων) of philosophy” (1.2.1), meat (τὰ κρέα) not only “does not contribute to health” but actually “thwarts (ἐμποδίζει) health” (1.52.1). Bodily health itself, as Porphyry later says, is something that “it is necessary to take care of (τηρεῖν) not out of fear of death, but for the sake of not being thwarted (ἐμποδίζεσθαι) in relation to the goods (ἀγαθὰ) that come from contemplation (θεωρίας)” (1.53.2).³⁵

The path that Porphyry maps out in *Abstinence* generally matches what Wellman calls “moderate asceticism,” that is, “the theory that one ought to repress one’s desires as far as is compatible with the necessities of life,” rather than “extreme asceticism, ...the theory that one ought to annihilate one’s desires totally.”³⁶ Porphyry’s stance also corresponds to one of several philosophical arguments for asceticism enumerated by Wellman: “Lower desires interfere with the pursuit of knowledge, which is essential for the good life...either by causing an agitation that destroys one’s power of reasoning or by

³⁴ Regarding bodily “strength” (ῥώμη), as the context makes clear, this is not a desideratum. Here it is notably paired with “thickness” (πάχος), and at 1.47.2 it appears among “an *Iliad* of ills” including “thicker exhalations, an abundance of excretions, [and the] thickness (παχύτης) of the chain.” Cf. 1.52.2, where the philosopher is said to have “no need either for strength (ῥώμης) or an increase of physical force (ἰσχύος) if he intends to dedicate himself (προσέχειν) to contemplation (θεωρία), not to action (πράξις) and debauchery (ἀκολασίας).” On πρᾶξις, see chapter 4, note 54.

³⁵ Contemplation can, it turns out, also help the body, since “the thing[s] that [are] especially suitable for maintaining [health] are the condition of an undisturbed (ἀτάραχος) soul and the disposition of thought (διανοίας) toward (πρὸς) true being (τὸ ὄντως ὄν)” (1.53.2).

³⁶ Wellman 1967.

fixing one’s attention on sensory objects that distract from the transcendent reality.”³⁷ In Porphyry’s way of life, actual harm to the body is not encouraged, although, in *Marc.* 34, he does say, “Often people cut off (κόπτουσί) a limb for survival (σωτηρία); be ready to cut off (ἀποκόπτειν) your whole body for the sake of your soul.”³⁸ In *Abstinence*, Porphyry speaks less figuratively of those who “did not spare (ἐφείσαντο) even their eyes in their desire (πόθῳ) for undistracted (ἀπερισπάστου) inner contemplation (ἔνδον...θεωρίας)” (1.36.1). In book 4, we are told that often the Samaneans, “alleg[ing] that they are well (εὖ ἔχειν)...consign their bodies to fire so that, in fact, they may separate the soul, at its purest, from the body” (4.18.2-3). Such actions, however, serve as illustrations of an extreme commitment to contemplation and purity—a kind of outer limit—not as models to be followed in every particular.³⁹

³⁷ Wellman 1967.

³⁸ The observation is, of course, reminiscent of Matt. 18:7. Speaking of Origen, the third-century Christian theologian, Finn (2009, 100) notes that his alleged self-castration under the influence of Matt. 19:12 was possibly a “slur given undue credence by Eusebius.” Telling Firmus, “I would not say you are inferior in nature to the laypeople (ἰδιωτῶν) in some places (παρά τισιν),” Porphyry refers to the self-castration (τομάς...μορίων) and abstinence from certain animals of the Galli at *Abst.* 1.2.3, apparently suggesting that if even they can show willpower, Firmus should be able to remain fully abstinent.

³⁹ As Patillon and Segonds note (1995, 3:xlii), the passage on suicide (4.18.1-3) is drawn from Josephus, specifically a speech that the Jewish leader at Masada gives while it is under siege by the Romans (*BJ* 7.352-57). The speech, with its appeal to the example of the Indians, is meant “to fortify [the men] in their resolution” to die. Since the Samanaeans’ actions appear to be at odds with Porphyry’s critique of suicide as creating a tighter bond with the body rather than an escape from it (*Abst.* 1.38.2 and 2.47.1), the emphasis would seem to be not on the suicide per se but on the subordination of body to soul.

The relative moderation of Porphyry’s approach becomes clearer in light of the generic distinction between Greek philosophical asceticism, centered on frugality and virtue, and the Judeo-Christian variety, in which fasting operated “as an expression of mourning,” of “penitence and humility...accompanying prayer for divine aid, whether for forgiveness or revelation.”⁴⁰ Although in Clark’s view the ideal philosopher of *Abstinence* “is more isolated and more austere than either Pythagoras or Plotinus,” she finds “more extreme” behavior in “the role models of Christian texts,”⁴¹ including “coarse,...probably dirty clothing”; “withdrawal into solitude”; “virginity for life and acute concern with any manifestations of sexual desire”; “severe deprivation” of “food, drink, and sleep”; “a marathon of prayer and Bible study”; and “lasting, and sometimes punitive, damage to health.”⁴² Although Porphyry says that “it is necessary to abstain from everything just as from sex” (1.41.4), he immediately adds that “one must concede to nature a little nourishment (ὀλίγον...τροφῶν) on account of the necessity (ἀνάγκην) arising from ‘becoming’ (γενέσεως)” (1.41.4).⁴³

⁴⁰ For this distinction and the formulation, see Finn 2009, 63.

⁴¹ Clark 2000c, 29.

⁴² Clark 2000c, 47.

⁴³ Apparently reading *γενέσεως* here as referring to procreation, Finn (2009, 10) observes that Porphyry’s asceticism “did not demand renunciation of all sexual activity, but a reduction towards the minimum which nature necessitated for the survival of the species.” Clark (2000a, 139n150), interpreting *γενέσεως* as something closer to “embodiment,” observes, “The philosopher can abstain entirely from sex, but, in this world of coming-to-be, he cannot abstain entirely from the food he needs to stay alive.” Along these lines, I render *γενέσεως* as “becoming” (see LSJ s.v. *γένεσις* III.2).

For Porphyry, the discourse of necessity is, however, optimistically complemented by one of possibility. When, in book 4, he wishes “it were possible (οἶόν τ’ ἦν) to abstain (ἀποστῆναι) even from the food that comes from crops without trouble” (4.20.13), such an aspiration, cast as an adynaton, is neither a prescription for starvation nor an invitation to eat whatever one might.⁴⁴ With respect to diet, we are told, Lycurgus organized Spartan society so that there would be “the least possible (ἥκιστα)” need to eat animals (4.3.1). The Egyptians abstain from animals “as much as possible” (ὡς οἶόν τέ ἐστιν) (4.10.1). More generally, as we have seen, Porphyry recommends a life “filled (ἐμφορούμενον) as little as possible (ἥκιστα) with mortal things” (1.37.4), one lived “as much as possible (ὡς ἔνι μάλιστα) in accordance with *nous*” (1.46.2), with the goal of “assimilation to god as much as possible (ὡς ἔνι μάλιστα)” (3.27.1). Faced, in other words, with the necessity entailed by embodiment, we must push ourselves to the limits of possibility toward that which is godlike.

Though one could say that the push beyond simple living and simple food to full abstinence from meat allows Porphyry to distinguish “a way of life opposed to that of ordinary people,” one should not lose sight of the bondage and harm he imputes to meat itself.⁴⁵ For Porphyry, bondage to the body is compounded specifically by the “double

⁴⁴ Cf. 1.38.1: “As long as someone is in disagreement (διαφέρηται) about meat (βρωτῶν) and pleads the case that one must eat (βρωτέον) this too, but does not have in mind (διανοῆται) that if it were possible (εἰ οἶόν τε ἦν) one should abstain (ἀφεκτέον) from all food (τροφῆς), he is seeking popularity while speaking in favor of (συναγορεύων) the passions (πάθεισι).”

⁴⁵ For the quotation and hypothesis that Porphyry’s vegetarianism is motivated by a desire to differentiate the philosopher from the ordinary person, see Bouffartigue and Patillon 1977: 1:lxv. For “the renunciation of edible animal flesh” as “a practical, embodied philosophical performance,” see Sissa 2016, 20.

chain” (διπλοῦ...δεσμοῦ) of meat-eating—one being “that which the passions coming out of taste fatten (πιαίνει)”,⁴⁶ the other, “that which we make heavy and potent (δυνατὸν) from the greedy consumption (ἐμφορήσεως) of alien (ἀλλοτριῶν) bodies” (1.34.4). For Porphyry, simplicity is a necessary but not sufficient condition for assimilation to god, a preliminary clearing away of clutter. Speaking of “the father of all things,” Porphyry describes him as “more impassive (ἀπαθέστερος) and purer (καθαρώτερος) and more self-sufficient (αὐταρκέστατος)” than “the one who approaches him” (1.57.3). And since “a god is a god” (θεός ἐστι θεός) not just by “being in the presence (πρὸς...ὄν) of the best things (ἀρίστοις)” (4.20.15) but also through radical self-sufficiency and its corollary harmlessness, it is vegetarianism, and not just moderate self-control or simple frugality, that brings us closer to that divine ideal.

IV. Purity and Imitation

Proximity to the divine ideal of harmlessness, we might say, is mediated by exempla, models for imitation. Indeed, a recurring feature of *Abstinence* is what might be called the hortatory rhetoric of imitation, seen in words such as μίμησις (*mimêsis*), μιμέομαι, and ἐκμιμέομαι. Porphyry urges imitation of god (2.3.1) and—short of that—of “the priests” (ἱερέας) (4.18.9) and “[the nations] that are pious (εὐσεβῆ) and dedicated to the gods” (4.21.6), “the holy (ὁσίους) and ancient (παλαιούς) men” (2.35.2), and, alternatively, “the

⁴⁶ For the image of “fattening,” cf. 4.20.10: “It is one thing to nourish (τρέφειν), another to fatten (πιαίνειν), and one thing to give that which is necessary (ἀναγκαῖον), another to furnish luxuries (τροφᾶς).” For meat as that which “thickens” (παχύνουσιν) the soul, cf. Plut. *Esu* 995d-e. Cf. also *Gryllus* 991c-d, where humans are criticized for “pursu[ing] foods that are unfit, and impure because of the slaughter of animals” and for doing so “out of luxury and a surfeit of necessary things.”

golden race” (χρυσοῦν γένος) and “those who have been set free” (τοὺς ἐλευθερωθέντας)” (3.27.10).⁴⁷ Conversely, he cautions against imitating negative exempla, such as “the nations that eat flesh out of necessity” (4.21.6). The thematics of imitation (μίμησις), expressed in positive and negative exempla, can, in turn, be mapped onto the thematics of mixing (μίξις), both good and bad, with the striking similarity in sound of the two words, μίμησις and μίξις—and the proximity of the themes—serving to heighten this sense of analogy. If bad mixing is with an opposite or with something that is alien (ἄλλότριος), good mixing is with something that corresponds to one’s true nature, something that is appropriate (οἰκεῖος). The positive and negative exempla are, respectively, appropriate and alien.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Porphyry himself, of course, serves as a prime exemplum. Cf. his self-description via Plotinus’s words of praise in *Plot.* 15 as “at once poet, philosopher, and hierophant (ἱεροφάντην).” Although Porphyry uses the phrase μίμησις τοῦ θεοῦ only once, other expressions convey a similar notion of assimilation or appropriation, including ὁμοίωσις πρὸς θεὸν (3.26.13), ὁμοίωσις πρὸς τὸ κρεῖττον (3.26.10), οἰκειώσις πρὸς τὸ θεῖον (2.45.2, 4.9.1), and θεῶ...τινί...οἰκειοῦσθαι (1.57.2).

⁴⁸ In terms of thematic proximity, we find three uses of μιμεῖσθαι at 4.18.4 and again at 4.18.6, followed by a prescriptive μιμητέον (4.18.9), just before the discussion of purity and mixing commences at 4.20.1. For the contrast of τὸ ἄλλότριον and τὸ οἰκεῖον, see, e.g., 1.30.7. As previously noted, I use “mixing” in a non-technical, broadly interpretive sense, referring, one might say, to a coming together of subject and object, whether it is cast as an approach, an association or relationship, an offering, a mingling, a union, or a process by which the subject *becomes* the object or something like it. In my use of “mixing,” what matters is not so much the precise mode of this coming together as the question of whether subject and object are similar or dissimilar. The good mixing that looks for similarity and proximity to god could be contrasted with Lévi-Strauss’s notion of “good distance” between humans and gods, on which see Sissa 2016, 12.

But since flesh-and-blood humans tend to fall short of perfection, their appropriateness as exempla is a matter of degree, of “the more and less”—and in this we may see something analogous to Porphyry’s treatment of the difference in reason between animals and humans. That is, we may see his entire schema not as a series of rigid dichotomies of possession and lack but as one that encompasses differing levels of participation—and this principle applies not just to reason but also, we might say, to justice and purity. Thus, while Porphyry sets up his discussion as a rebuttal to “testimony that neither anyone among the sages (σοφῶν) nor any nation has rejected meat (βρῶσιν)” (4.1.2)⁴⁹—testimony that he says “sufficiently drives hearers on to great injustice (μέγεθος τῆς ἀδικίας)” —his accounts favorably present the partially abstinent along with the fully abstinent. The varying degrees of abstinence represent varying degrees of closeness to the interwoven goals of harmlessness, justice, and purity. As Porphyry observes, “For some priests it is prescribed (προστέτακται) that they abstain (ἀπέχεσθαι) from eating (βορᾶς) all animals; for others, that they abstain, at any rate, from some.” In view of the differing restrictions in different places, he says, “drawn from all over (πανταχοῦ παραληφθέντας), they appear to abstain from all animals if someone should interpret (ὑπολάβοι) all of them [i.e., the priests] (τοὺς πάντας) as one” (4.5.5). This argument, though hardly cogent in its own terms, appears to be connected to an idea of complete abstinence, on the individual level, as the sum of partial abstinences. As Porphyry says, “It is necessary for the completely (τελείως) law-abiding (νόμιμον) and pious (εὐσεβῆ) person to abstain from all [ensouled beings]; for if some people, in a partial manner (κατὰ μέρος), abstain out of piety (εὐσέβειάν) from some animals, the

⁴⁹ Cf. 1.13.5 and 1.15.3.

person who is pious in every respect (πρὸς πάντα) will abstain from all of them” (4.18.10). Each partial abstinence is, in other words, cast not as an unacceptable failure to reach full abstinence but rather as a kind of exemplary ascetic discipline that demonstrates the possibility of something more thoroughgoing. The suggestion appears to be that if it is possible to exercise the discipline of eliminating some animals from one’s diet, to merely “taste” meat,⁵⁰ or to be fully abstinent at certain times, it is indeed possible to be fully abstinent from all animals at all times.

While presenting abstinence as a matter of degree, with full abstinence as the best course to pursue, Porphyry also gives us, in book 4, reason to think that his treatise’s purview extends beyond just a few people. In Porphyry’s use of positive exempla such as Spartans and Essenes and various far-flung negative exempla, we can find suggestions of a universalizing orientation that runs counter to the exclusive language he occasionally uses. Nor does he seem to be thinking only of the purity of the individual in book 4, as he often brings the discussion back to animals, reinforcing his earlier justice arguments. We see the interplay of justice and purity, as well as the question of universality, in Porphyry’s treatment of the contested figure of Pythagoras in *Abstinence* and perhaps also his omission of Plotinus, a vegetarian who, at least in the *Enneads*, rejects any concern for the lives of animals.⁵¹

In his discussion of non-Greek exempla, Porphyry constructs a hierarchy of abstinence both within and among groups of priests and cult members. Within the Egyptian priestly caste, for instance, general dietary restrictions prohibit fish and certain

⁵⁰ See *Abst.* 2.28.2, regarding the Pythagoreans, as discussed below.

⁵¹ See *Enn.* 3.2.15, discussed below.

cattle—including males that have been “tamed” (δεδαμασμένα)—as well as carnivorous birds and certain hooved animals (4.7.2-3), but, as Porphyry also notes, “many abstained absolutely (καθάπαξ) from ensouled beings (ἐμψύχων), and, in periods of purification (ταῖς ἀγνεΐαις), at least, all did” (4.7.2).⁵² The different practices correspond to different hieratic levels. Thus, while there was “philosophizing in accordance with truth” among “prophets” and several other levels of functionaries, those at the lower levels “were similarly pure (καθαρεύει...ὁμοίως) for the gods, by no means with such exactness (ἀκριβείας) and self-control (ἐγκρατείας)” (4.8.5). Likewise, in the case of the Persian Magi, as Porphyry explains, the “most erudite (λογιώτατοι) neither eat nor kill (φονεύουσιν) an ensouled being (ἔμψυχον), but remain faithful (ἐμμένουσι) to the ancient (παλαιᾷ) abstinence (ἀποχῆ) from animals” (4.16.2), while a second group “use (χρῶνται) animals but do not kill (κτείνουσιν) any of the tame (ἡμέρων) animals,” and a third group, “similarly to the others, do not partake of (ἐφάπτονται) all animals.” Thus, the three typologies of abstinence range from the best, complete abstinence, to a justice-oriented partial abstinence (one that spares the more-innocent “tame” animals), to a presumably more arbitrary partial abstinence.⁵³ Appearing last among the non-Greek

⁵² In the Theophrastean account in book 2, full abstinence is suggested: “Someone could learn by observing the most erudite people of all, the Egyptians, who were so far (τοσοῦτον ἀπεῖχον) from killing any of the other animals that they made images of them as imitations (μιμήματα) of the gods—to such a degree did they think animals are related (οἰκεῖα) and of like kind (συγγενῆ) to the gods and to humans” (2.26.5; cf. the phrase οἰκεῖους τε καὶ συγγενεῖς at 3.25.2).

⁵³ As Clark (2000a, 187n634) observes, “The claims here that the Magi were divided into three groups, that they did not kill or eat animals, and that they believed in reincarnation, sound like assimilation to Pythagoreanism.” In Porphyry’s explanation, abstinence among the Magi derives from a belief in the

exempla of book 4, the fully abstinent Brahmins and Samanaeans represent “the high watermark of ethnically specific virtue, piety, and wisdom,” as Johnson puts it.⁵⁴

Speaking of the Samanaeans, Porphyry says, “Their provisions consist of rice, bread, fruit, and vegetables” (4.17.8).⁵⁵ Among the Brahmins, he says, “to touch (θιγεῖν) ensouled food (τροφή) at all is considered tantamount to the most extreme (ἐσχάτη) impurity (ἀκαθαρσία) and impiety (ἀσεβεία)” (4.17.4-5).

While the emphasis in book 4 is on asceticism and purity, the justice concerns of book 3 remain a leitmotif as Porphyry speaks of animals in terms of psychic similarity, community, reverence, abstinence, and “sparing and not killing.” In his discussion of Egyptian priests, he refers to their “spiritual practice” (ἀσκήσεως) and “appropriation (οἰκειώσεως) to (πρὸς) the divine (θεῖον)” as sources of knowledge that “the divine does not pass through (διήλθεν) a human alone” and that “almost (σχεδὸν) the same soul passes through all animals” (4.9.1). The priests’ “reverence (σέβας)...for animals,” Porphyry says, similarly comes “from intelligence (φρονήσεως) and thorough knowledge

transmigration of souls (μετεμψύχωσιν) between human and animal bodies (4.16.2). For more on tame animals, reciprocity (under the rubric of justice), honored and dishonored animals, innocent animals, and sacrifice, see chapter 1, sections II and III; chapter 5, section V; and also the discussion below. On the value of domesticated animals (sheep, goats, pigs, and cattle) as providers of resources and labor and their consequent worthiness as sacrificial victims, see Shelton 2007, 107-12.

⁵⁴ Johnson 2013, 28.

⁵⁵ Regarding the Samanaeans and Brahmins, Porphyry observes that “others have such reverence (σέβας) for them..that even the king...comes to supplicate them” (4.17.10). We can see here an assimilation of Porphyry’s exempla and animals in that both are described as “revered” or “reverend” (σεμνός, σεμνότης) or as objects of reverence (σέβας, σεβάσιμος, σέβομαι). See 4.6.2, 5, and 7; 4.9.6 and 9-10; 4.10.1-2; 4.11.2; and 4.16.1. Cf. the reference to those “reverencing” (σέβοντας) *nous* (2.53.2).

of things divine” (4.9.9) and from understanding that, when liberated from the body, “the soul of every animal is rational (λογικήν), prescient of the future (προγνωστικήν τοῦ μέλλοντος),” and “capable (δραστικήν) of all the things of which a human mind is capable when set free (ἀπολυθείς)” (4.10.1).⁵⁶ The Egyptians, he notes, “employed every animal for their god-making (θεοποιίαν), and mixed together (ἀνεμίξαν), in a more or less similar way (ὁμοίως που), animals (θηρία) and humans” (4.9.2), showing that animals, “in accordance with the will of the gods, form a community (κοινωνεῖ) with one another” and that both domesticated and wild ones (ἄγρια) “are nurtured together with us (σύντροφα ἡμῖν)” (4.9.3).⁵⁷ “Appropriately (εἰκότως),” Porphyry says, the priests honored (ἐτίμησαν) [animals], and abstained from them as much as possible (ὡς οἷόν τε ἐστίν)” (4.10.1).⁵⁸ For Jews, in turn, he says that, aside from the familiar prohibition against eating pigs or shellfish, “it is also forbidden (ἀπηγόρευτο) to kill (ἀναιρεῖν) those [animals] who are suppliants (ικετεύοντα) and, in a manner of speaking, flee for refuge (προσφεύγοντα) in houses—much less to eat them” (4.14.1-2)⁵⁹—just as it is forbidden to

⁵⁶ Cf. Porphyry’s final observation concerning the Essenes, of whom he says, because of their lifestyle, discipline, and piety, “appropriately (εἰκότως), among them, there are many who have foreknowledge of the future (τὰ μέλλοντα προγινώσκουσιν)” (4.13.9). The common theme that emerges from this verbal echo seems to be that a purified soul, a liberated soul, can see the future, whether it comes from a human or animal body.

⁵⁷ The “mix[ing]” (ἀνεμίξαν) referred to at 4.9.2 constitutes a “good” or at least acceptable mixture precisely because of the fundamental kinship of human and nonhuman animals.

⁵⁸ More categorically, he also says, “As one must abstain (ἀφεκτέον) from a human, so must one abstain from the other animals (ἄλλων) too” (4.9.6).

⁵⁹ As Clark (2000a, 187n627) observes, “much less to eat them” is Porphyry’s addition to Josephus (see Joseph. *Ap.* 2.29.213-14).

“jointly kill (συνεξαίρειν) parents with their young” (4.14.2). Evoking in a positive sense a phrase used negatively by opponents of justice for animals, Porphyry says that the Jewish lawgiver “bids sparing (φείδεσθαι) and not killing (φονεύειν) animals who labor together with humans (συνεργαζομένων), even in enemy land.”⁶⁰

Turning to early Athens again at the end of the extant portion of book 4, Porphyry notes an ancient local law—“not to harm (σίνεσθαι) animals” (4.22.2)—that brings us back to kinship and community, with a hint of the universal.⁶¹ With regard to this law, still active at Eleusis in the third century BCE, though it was promulgated by Triptolemus, “the most ancient of lawgivers in Athens,” we are told that Xenocrates was “in doubt as to what in the world Triptolemus intended when he enjoined abstaining from animals” (4.22.3).⁶² “Did he believe it is terrible (δεινὸν) to kill (κτείνειν) one’s relatives (τὸ ὁμογενές),” Porphyry asks, “or did he see it was happening that the most useful

⁶⁰ For opponents’ negative use of “sparing (φειδόμενος) and not harming (βλάπτων),” see *Abst.* 1.4.3.

⁶¹ Two other such laws mentioned in the passage are “to revere (τιμᾶν) parents” and “to honor (ἀγάλλειν) the gods with crops (καρποῖς).” As Patillon and Segonds (1995, 3:li) note: “Porphyry resumes...the idea...developed in...4.2 that the customs of Greeks, formerly good, were subsequently corrupted.”

⁶² Porphyry draws the account of Xenocrates and Triptolemus from Hermippus of Smyrna, a biographer active in the third century BCE, who “revelled in falsified sensationalism, particularly in death scenes” (Sharples 2003). Hermippus is also one of the sources of Diogenes Laertius’s account of Pythagoras, discussed below. Regarding Xenocrates, Clement (*Strom.* 7.6.32.9 Stählin) imputes to him and Polemon, two of Plato’s successors at the Academy in the fourth century BCE, an apparently purity-based rationale for vegetarianism—namely that “the food from flesh (σαρκῶν) is harmful (ἄσύμφορόν)” because “having been digested (εἰργασμένη), [it] assimilates (ἐξομοιοῖ) [the eater] to the souls of the irrational (ἄλόγων).” However, other testimonia suggest Xenocrates had some interest in animals for their own sake, on which see Sorabji 1993, 209.

(χρησιμώτατα) animals were being killed (ἀναιρεῖσθαι) by people for food?” In that case, he continues, “wanting (βουλόμενον) to make life (βίον) civilized (ἥμερον), [Triptolemus] tried to save (διασώζειν) the animals living with humans (συνανθρωπεύοντα) and especially the most tame (ἥμερα) of them” (4.22.4). The adjective ὁμογενής (rendered here as “one’s relatives”) can refer either to blood kin—assuming the passage of human souls into animal bodies, a Pythagorean or Empedoclean notion, which Porphyry also imputes to the Magi—or to things “of the same kind or general character,” a Theophrastean notion of kinship based on similarity of features. The second explanation, which proposes sparing “the most useful animals”—as opposed to eating them—evokes Porphyry’s ethos of “use” without harm,⁶³ just as συνανθρωπεύοντα and the double use of ἥμερος (ἥμερον...ἥμερα) to refer both to civilized human life and tame animals goes back to the Theophrastean idea of kinship. Civilized/tame humans, as we have seen, have a kinship with tame/civilized animals, a shared character of gentleness that breaks down the human/nonhuman dichotomy.⁶⁴ As Porphyry begins to speak of “such a law (νόμος) of Drakon...an eternal (αἰώνιος) rule (θεσμός) for those who inhabit Attica” that requires honoring gods and heroes with cakes and first fruits of crops (4.22.7), the timelessness and applicability to an entire region offer another suggestion of harmlessness that extends beyond priests and philosophers—just before the text breaks off.

The possibility that vegetarianism might cover a whole people, not just an elite class, emerges also toward the beginning of book 4 when Porphyry observes that

⁶³ On the idea of “use” without harm, see chapter 1, section II.

⁶⁴ See chapter 1, section III.

vegetarianism was “appropriate” (οἰκεῖον) for the Spartans (4.5.2). Referring to “the simplicity (λιτότης) of the Lacedaemonians concerning their diet (δίαιταν), even though it was established by law (νενομοθετημένη) for the multitude (εἰς πλῆθος),” he compares them favorably to other people, “who have been corrupted both in their souls and bodies.” For a polity (πολιτεία) such as Sparta, Porphyry says, “it is clear that complete abstinence is appropriate (οἰκεῖον),” while meat-eating (βρώσεως) is appropriate “for corrupted [polities].” Regardless of the historical dietary habits of the Spartans, Porphyry’s formulation has the important effect of opening up a space for the possibility of a vegetarianism that encompasses not just priestly or philosophical elites or religious sects but a whole city or nation. The description of the Spartans also invites us to reconsider Porphyry’s earlier reference to the livelihoods to which, he says, his treatise “will not bring its exhortation” (1.27.1): “those who pursue handicrafts,” “bodily athletes,” soldiers, sailors, orators, or “those who have undertaken the political life” (1.27.1). Taken at face value, a categorical exclusion of soldiers and athletes of the body would exclude the Spartans from the very abstinence that Porphyry declares to be “appropriate” to them. We can either see a contradiction here or entertain the possibility that the earlier exclusion was not as categorical as it seemed. On the other hand, Sparta, as presented by Porphyry, is more or less free from sailors and orators. As he puts it, “Neither did commercial cargo sail into the harbors, nor did experts in speeches tread upon Laconia or any vagabond seer, fosterer of courtesans, or handicraftsman of gold or bronze ornaments, since there was no coinage” (4.3.5).⁶⁵ In the case of craftsmen,

⁶⁵ Referring to crafts and courtesans, *Abst.* 4.18.7-8 in a sense, resumes 4.3.5. For approval of the absence of sailing because of its association with “foreign luxuries,” see also Porphyry’s discussion of Egyptian

Porphyry draws an implicit distinction between “useless crafts” (4.3.5), which he says were banned (presumably things like gold and bronze ornaments) and “everyday necessary objects: beds, chairs, tables,” which were skillfully crafted (4.3.7). While this valorization of useful or necessary crafts does not fully negate the exclusion of craftsmen from abstinence at 1.27.1 or the elitist-sounding language at 4.18.7 (“[The law] would not accept into the citizen body [people] from every craft”), it does make the exclusion, like that of soldiers and athletes, seem less categorical. Sparta, a society fit for full abstinence, had craftsmen who, “having been set free from useless things, displayed beauty of workmanship in necessary things” (4.3.8).⁶⁶ In the case of the Spartans, then, Porphyry points to a more expansive conception of vegetarian possibility than his elitist discourse suggests elsewhere in the treatise. Even though their laws were made for the multitude, he says, the post-Lycurgan Spartans maintained the sort of simplicity of life that makes complete abstinence appropriate. Just as the contemplative life is one that Porphyry would wish for the individual, the purity, simplicity, and abstinence that he associates with the Spartans, not just a priestly elite, would appear to match a wish for society. If the Spartans could practice a universal simplicity (construed as at least potentially vegetarian), Porphyry seems to suggest, why should other societies not aspire to do the same?

Toward the end of his discussion of ancient Greeks and of non-Greek exempla, Porphyry similarly suggests a universalizing impulse in his brief treatment of negative

priests (4.8.4).

⁶⁶ Likewise the exemplary Essenes were each assigned a craft, which they spent much of their day practicing (4.12.2 and 4).

exempla, those peoples whose meat-eating is excused by necessity and those who are merely savage and therefore unworthy of emulation. In the first category, Porphyry mentions the Nomads, Troglodytes, and Ichthyophagi, who, he says, “out of necessity (δι’ ἀνάγκην) brought [themselves] around to this need (τὸ ἀναγκαῖον) of food, since their land is barren (ἀκάρπου) to such a degree that it does not even bear plants (βοτάνας), but only dunes and sand” (4.21.1). In the second category, he says, “some nations have become savage (ἐξηγρίωται) or are bestial (θηριώδη) by nature.” Even so, he adds, “it is not appropriate (οὐ προσήκει) for sensible people (εὐγνώμονας), on the basis of [such nations], to slander human nature (ἀνθρωπίνης... φύσεως). For in that way, at least, not only the matter of animal-eating (ζωοφαγίας) but even the matter of human-eating (ἀνθρωποφαγίας), and the rest of civilized gentleness (ἡμερότητας), will be up for debate” (4.21.2). The implication in the first case is that those who do not live in such harsh environments are *not* constrained to eat animals. For these people (indeed, most people), vegetarianism remains a choice they can make—or, at least, a goal they can strive for, as Porphyry’s discourse of possibility repeatedly reinforces.⁶⁷ As for those people who “have become savage” (ἐξηγρίωται) or are “bestial (θηριώδη) by nature,” both the verb and the adjective point to the assimilation of violent humans to violent

⁶⁷ Cf. 1.47.2, where Porphyry refers to “the unensouled and simple diet” as “available to all” (πᾶσιν εὐπόριστος). The idea that vegetarian fare is readily available to ordinary people is underlined by 12 uses of εὐπόριστος in 1.47-51, 2.13-14, and 4.20.12. As Martins (2018, 188) observes, “Porphyry is above all interested in a feasible (*durchführbaren*) ethics.... In the end, [*Abstinence*] is an attempt to present vegetarian ethics as a possible (*mögliche*) way of life.” That said, Martins adds, “Ultimately, this ethic is still very demanding and accessible only to a few, as [Porphyry] acknowledges by calling his audience ‘philosophers.’”

animals—the opposite of the assimilation of animals and humans who are characterized by “tameness”/“civilized gentleness” (ἡμερότητα). Though the items up for debate in case human nature should be “slander[ed]” are not parallel, we can understand both “the matter of animal-eating” and “the matter of human-eating” to be resolved in favor of abstinence, and such abstinence, along with “the rest of civilized gentleness,” to be aligned with true “human nature.” The effect, then, is the suggestion that vegetarianism is available to human beings in general and is in accordance with human nature, which is civilized rather than beastly. After a litany of barbaric behaviors among the Massagetai and others (4.21.3-5), Porphyry observes, “Just as we have not undone (κατελύσαμεν) civilized gentleness (ἡμερότητα) toward (πρὸς) humans on account of these people, in like manner we will not imitate (μιμησόμεθα) the nations that are flesh-eating by necessity, but rather those that are pious (εὐσεβῆ) and dedicated (ἀνακείμενα) to the gods” (4.21.6)—the best exempla rather than the worst.

The matter of universality connects notably with Pythagoras and his followers, who represent, in *Abstinence*, perhaps Porphyry’s foremost Greek exempla. We see this connection made both in the context of a critique of vegetarianism and Porphyry’s response to that critique. In book 1, when a critic says, “There is a sign, not a small one, that Pythagoras did not hold a sound opinion (μὴ ὑγιῶς δοξάσαι),” since “none of the sages was persuaded,” his next thought—“But suppose that all human beings were persuaded by his doctrine”—is followed by a vision of environmental despoliation from the overpopulation of animals (1.15.3-1.16.2). In book 4, when the question returns twice (“If all imitate [μιμήσωνται] you, what will happen to us?... With everyone imitating

[μιμησαμένων] such people, what will happen?”),⁶⁸ Porphyry brings in Pythagoras to respond: “If all people become kings, life (βίος) will be hard to get through (δυσδιέξακτος), but kingly dominion should not in fact be fled,” and “No one in fact would be so mad as not to believe it is incumbent on all people to strive to be virtuous” (4.18.6).⁶⁹

Although, when it comes to his dietary rules, Pythagoras is beset by a complicated and contradictory tradition, as we will see, Porphyry consistently aligns him both with vegetarianism and with concern for animals. At the beginning of *Abstinence*, though without naming him, Porphyry refers to the “reverence” (εὐλαβείας) he and Firmus had “practiced toward those ancient and godfearing (θεοφόβους) men who taught these things” (1.1.1).⁷⁰ In that passage, Porphyry tells Firmus that the Peripatetics, the Stoics, and the Epicureans are “the ones extending most of the contrary arguments (ἀντιλογίας) to the philosophy of Pythagoras and Empedocles, of which you have been eager (ἐσπούδακας) to be a follower (ζηλωτής)” (1.3.3). Thus, the sides are drawn up: Porphyry, aligned with Pythagoras and, to a lesser degree, Empedocles, will rebut the opponents of vegetarianism. In book 3, Porphyry refers to “the opinion that is true and also Pythagorean,” that “every soul in which there is a share of perception and memory is rational” (3.1.4). Pythagoras is named among those who “recognized the participation (τὸ

⁶⁸ See 4.18.4 and 6.

⁶⁹ Cf. 3.27.8: “But, people say, if everyone should be persuaded by these things, what will happen to us? It is clear that we will be happy with injustice banished from human beings and justice governing as a citizen beside us, too, just as in heaven.”

⁷⁰ As Clark (2000a, 121n2) says, “ ‘ancient and godfearing’ probably refers to Pythagoras and Empedocles, as in 1.3.3.”

μετέχον) [of animals] in *logos*”—in a tendentious list that includes Aristotle, Plato, Empedocles, Democritus, and “as many as cared to understand the truth (ἀλήθειαν) about them” (3.6.7). And Porphyry attributes to Pythagoras the belief that animals “have been assigned (εἰληχότα) the same soul (ψυχὴν τὴν αὐτὴν)” as humans (3.26.1). Pythagoras also serves, in book 3, as a paragon of compassion. We are told that “the Pythagoreans made gentleness (πραότητα) to animals (θηρία) practice (μελέτη) for love of human beings (τοῦ φιλανθρώπου) and for proneness to pity (φιλοικτίρμονος)” (3.20.7).⁷¹ And Porphyry says that “Pythagorean seasoning (ὄψου) is tastier (ἥδιον) than the Socratic one: for Socrates said that the seasoning of food is to be hungry, but Pythagoras said that the seasoning is to commit injustice (ἀδικεῖν) against no one and to flavor (ἐφηδύνειν) with justice (δικαιοσύνη)” (3.26.8). At the same time, Pythagoras and his followers are presented as models of the ascetic life. Porphyry uses Homeric language to cast them as heroic, referring to “ ‘the glorious actions (κλέα) of men of old,’ of Pythagoreans and sages (σοφῶν), of whom some inhabited the most desolate (ἐρημότατα) places, others, also cities’ temples (ἱερὰ) and sacred groves (ἄλση), from which disturbance (τύρβη) had been entirely excluded (ἀπελήλαται)” (1.36.1).⁷²

⁷¹ *Abst.* 3.20.7 = Plut. *Soll.* 959f. Cf. Theophrastus’s argument that abstinence from animals entails, a fortiori, nonviolence toward men (2.31.3); cf. also *Abst.* 3.26.6, Plut. *Esu* 995f and 997e, and the Pythagorean discourse in *Ov. Met.* (15.463-65). However, Porphyry later argues that “love for human beings” is inadequate as a basis for justice (*Abst.* 3.26.9).

⁷² Regarding τύρβη, cf. Latin *turba* “crowd,” which comes from the Greek word. The quiet corners of a city would create a space for contemplation without enforcing a complete isolation from society. The fact that ἔρημος is an anagram of ἡμερος reinforces the connection between measured solitude, self-cultivation, and gentleness.

In casting Pythagoras and his followers as exempla of abstinence, Porphyry emphasizes one part of the tradition while downplaying another—perhaps shaped by social necessity—that cast them as only partly abstinent or unconcerned with animals. While, indeed, many in antiquity took Pythagoras’s vegetarianism for granted, others sought to debunk what Aulus Gellius calls “the old false opinion that [he] did not eat animals.” Diogenes Laertius, whose account is drawn from multiple, often contradictory sources of dubious historical reliability, reports both that Pythagoras sacrificed a hecatomb when he discovered his eponymous mathematical theorem (8.12) and, alternatively, that he sacrificed only inanimate objects (8.19); that he was the first to train athletes on meat and, alternatively, that this was a different Pythagoras from the philosopher (8.12-13). Speaking of the philosopher, Diogenes says he “forbade (ἀπαγορεύειν) even killing (φονεύειν), not to mention eating (ἄπτεσθαι), animals, which have in common with us (κοινὸν...ἡμῖν ἐχόντων) the just claim (δίκαιον) of a soul (ψυχῆς)” (8.13), and here perhaps we have a suggestion, in alignment with *Abstinence*, that animals are worthy of justice for their own sake.⁷³ But further complicating matters, Diogenes reports that the foregoing was a “pretext” (πρόσχημα) and that “in truth (τὸ...ἄληθές) [Pythagoras] forbade eating (ἄπτεσθαι) ensouled beings (ἐμψύχων) for the

⁷³ The complete phrase (τῶν ζώων κοινὸν δίκαιον ἡμῖν ἐχόντων ψυχῆς), which explains why Pythagoras forbade killing and eating animals, seems to emphasize not the transmigration of souls but the shared possession of a soul by humans and animals as an attribute that in itself entails a justice claim. An anecdote attributed to Pythagoras’s near-contemporary Xenophanes in which Pythagoras, recognizing by its voice the soul of a human friend (φίλου ἀνέρος) in a puppy’s body, intervenes to stop him from being beaten (D.L. 8.36-37) also bespeaks a concern for animals, albeit a derivative one based on the idea that they may be animated by human souls. Edwards (2018, 31) emphasizes the derivative character of the concern.

purpose of training people (συνασκῶν) and accustoming (συνεθίζων) them to contentedness (εὐκολίαν) in life (βίου), so that food (τροφᾶς) was very easy to obtain (εὐπορίστους) for them” (8.13). Diogenes also reports that Pythagoras forbade eating only certain animals or parts of animals (8.19-20 and 34). Gellius, for his part, cites Aristotle’s student Aristoxenus as claiming that Pythagoras “ate tiny piglets too and rather tender goat kids” (4.11.6). Whether such attributions of meat-eating to Pythagoras and his followers reflect an effort to “refashio[n] Pythagoreanism in order to make it more rational” or whether they, “in fact, recogniz[e] the non-rational dimension of Pythagoreanism” such as the possible “religious motivations” of “Pythagoras’ eating of kids and suckling pigs,”⁷⁴ it seems likely that these denials or vitiations of Pythagorean abstinence reflect the force of social necessity. Given that “animal sacrifice was the central act of Greek religious worship and to abolish it completely would be a radical step,” as Huffman puts it,⁷⁵ the allowance of some flesh eating, rational or not, would serve to make Pythagoreanism appear less subversive.⁷⁶

While the polemics of opponents appear to inform Porphyry’s own description of Pythagoreanism in *Abstinence*, the limited, highly circumscribed meat-eating that he acknowledges among (at least some) Pythagoreans makes sense in relation to the framework of exempla and the theme of “more and less.” In the opponents’ discourse, we

⁷⁴ The quotations are from Huffman (2018), who argues for the latter position against Kahn (2001, 70) and Zhmud (2012, 228).

⁷⁵ Huffman 2018.

⁷⁶ As I hope is clear, my concern here is not with the historical Pythagoras but rather with his contested reception through the centuries. For a critical analysis of testimonia on Pythagoras and his followers, however, see Burkert (1962) 1972, 97-109, 180-82, and 192-208.

read, as in Diogenes Laertius, that “Pythagoras was the first to strip away the old diet and give meat (κρέα) to men training in athletics” (1.26.2)⁷⁷ and that “some people record (ἱστοροῦσι) that even the Pythagoreans themselves eat (ἄπτεσθαι) ensouled beings (ἐμψύχων) when they sacrifice to the gods” (1.26.3). What would seem to be Porphyry’s rebuttal, that “Pythagoreans...abstained (ἀπείχοντο) from eating animals (ζωοφαγίας) their whole lives (τὸν πάντα βίον),” is in fact qualified by the claim that “when they distributed (μερίσειαν) some animal to the gods as an offering (ἀπαρχήν) instead of themselves (ἀνθ’ ἑαυτῶν), having tasted only that [or, having only tasted that] (τούτου γευσάμενοι μόνον), they lived (ἔζων) for truth (ἀλήθειαν), not touching (ἄθικτοι...ὄντες) the rest (λοιπῶν)” (2.28.2).⁷⁸ However, while Porphyry seems to acknowledge in this way that occasional meat-eating took place among some Pythagoreans, his emphasis, as with the virtuous philosopher-priests in book 4, is on their abstinence, and he continues to hold them up as models to emulate. As he says in book 2: “We will faithfully imitate (ἐκμιμησόμεθα) the holy (όσίους) and ancient (παλαιούς) men, offering first fruits (ἀπαρχόμενοι), for the most part (τὸ πλεόν), to the gods from the contemplation (θεωρίας) that they themselves have given us, and which we have come to stand in need of (ἐν χρείᾳ) for true salvation (ὄντως σωτηρίαν)” (2.35.2). The Pythagoreans, he then

⁷⁷ For Porphyry’s own use of the same anecdote, see *VP* 15. In another version, the trainer was Pythagoras’s pupil (Iambl. *VP* 25). While rejecting the idea that meat-eating is healthful, Porphyry includes athletes among his list of people for whom vegetarianism may not be appropriate at *Abst.* 1.27.1.

⁷⁸ For “tasting” as a marker of participation in civically required sacrifice, specifically at the time of Decius’s edict (250 CE), see Townsend 2011, 220 and 229n38.

says, made their main offerings to the gods from numbers and lines (2.36.1).⁷⁹ As with the book 4 exempla, in the case of Pythagoras and his followers, nearly complete abstinence is a step below complete abstinence in the hierarchy of purity and justice.⁸⁰

While “Pythagoreanism seemed to offer Porphyry, for his theory and his practice, a sort of institutional framework,”⁸¹ another obvious exemplum of vegetarianism, Plotinus, the teacher whose ideas Porphyry was largely responsible for preserving in his arrangement of the *Enneads*, goes strikingly unnamed in *Abstinence*, an absence that

⁷⁹ The equivocation on Pythagorean vegetarianism in *Abstinence* is magnified in Porphyry’s *Life of Pythagoras*, a collection of contradictory anecdotes that is more in line with the encyclopedism of Diogenes Laertius than the treatise framework of *Abstinence*. In *VP* 7, Porphyry cites Eudoxus for the claim that “Pythagoras practiced such purity (ἀγνεία) and avoidance (φυγή) of acts of slaughter (φόνους) and of the ones doing the slaughtering (τῶν φονευόντων) that he not only abstained (ἀπέχεσθαι) from ensouled beings (ἐμψύχων), but also never even approached (πλησιάζειν) butchers or hunters”—a testimonium to which Burkert ([1962] 1972, 200-201) attaches particular weight, since Eudoxus was a pupil of Archytas, a prominent fourth-century Pythagorean mathematician. At Porph. *VP* 15 and 34, however, we read that Pythagoras pushed meat as an athletic trainer; ate sacrificial victims “rarely” (σπανίως); and “propitiat[ed] the gods...least of all with ensouled beings (ἐμψύχοις), unless it was ever (πλὴν εἰ μὴ ποτε) hens or the tenderest of pigs.” See also Porph. *VP* 43 and 45. The unequivocal abstinence spoken of by Eudoxus, then, is sedimented with various accretions that are mostly but not entirely cleared away in *Abstinence*.

⁸⁰ For the idea of a hierarchy among Pythagoreans, along the lines of the Egyptians and Magi, see Iamblichus *VP* 150, in which we are told that Pythagoras himself and his “contemplative” followers (τῶν θεωρητικῶν φιλοσόφων) did not sacrifice animals, but he ordered (προστέτακτο) other followers, “hearers” (τοῖς ἀκουσματικοῖς) and “politicians” (τοῖς πολιτικοῖς), “to sacrifice ensouled beings sparingly (σπανίως), perhaps a rooster, a lamb, or some other newborn animal but not an ox.”

⁸¹ Bouffartigue and Patillon 1977, 1:xxxvi.

could be connected with his unambiguously negative views concerning animals.⁸²

Referring, in phrasing reminiscent of Hesiod, to “the other animals’ practice of eating each other” (τὴν ἀλληλοφαγίαν τῶν ἄλλων ζώων),⁸³ Plotinus observes that instances of that practice “are necessary (ἀναγκαῖαι), since they are transformations (ἀμοιβαί) of animals (ζώων) that are not able to remain unchanged (οὕτω μένειν) for all time, not even if no one kills them.” Given this inevitable changeability, he asks, “why is it necessary to hold a grudge if, at the time when it is necessary to depart from life, they depart in such a way as to provide a use (χρείαν) to others?” Also: “If dying is an exchange of body just as of clothing...or even for some a putting aside (ἀποθέσεις) of body...why would animals’ changing (μεταβολή) into each other be terrible, since it is much better than for them not to be born in the first place?” (*Enn.* 3.2.15).⁸⁴ One might think that Plotinus’s own strict abstinence, referred to in Porphyry’s biography of him, was motivated by straightforward purity concerns, a wish to keep “the animal” at bay.⁸⁵ A difference of opinion, of course,

⁸² Cf. Bouffartigue and Patillon (1977, 1:xxxv-xxxvi), who attribute the fact that Plotinus’s “name does not appear a single time in *Abstinence*, even when Porphyry cites him almost literally,” in part, to “Plotinus’s not yet having the status of author.” In addition, speaking of “all [the] cases of possible influence of Plotinus on Porphyry,” they say that “Plotinus is always in concurrence with an earlier source: Pythagorean literature, Orphic literature, Numenius, Plato, Homer” (1979, 2:5).

⁸³ Cf. Hes. *Op.* 277-78 (ἔσθθιν ἀλλήλους).

⁸⁴ Plotinus’s point of view emerges oddly at *Abst.* 1.19.2 in the voice of opponents, who suggest that killing animals might be a favor to them, since “their return (ἐπάνοδος) to the human (ἐπὶ τὸν ἄνθρωπον) would be swifter, and bodies that are eaten would not create pain (λύπην) in their souls.”

⁸⁵ Cf. Clem. *Strom.* 7.6.32.9 Stählin, on Xenocrates, discussed in note 62 above. As Porphyry reports in *Plot.* 2, Plotinus “did not abide taking remedies made from wild animals (θηριακὰς ἀντιδότους), saying that he did not even allow foods from the bodies of tame (ἡμέρων) animals.” The logic is perhaps that to take in

would not in itself have prevented Porphyry from citing Plotinus (as we have seen, he erroneously claims Aristotle for his side on the issue of animal reason at *Abst.* 3.6.7). Still, Plotinus’s understanding of killing as a non-harm with respect to animals would have contravened what is perhaps the core tenet of Porphyry’s treatise—even if, in Porphyry’s biography of him, he is presented as a clear exemplum of the contemplative life.⁸⁶

V. Conclusion

“There being, in reality, [two] models (παραδειγμάτων), the divine (θείου), which is happiest (εὐδαιμονεστάτου), and the ungodly (ἀθέου), which is most miserable (ἀθλιωτάτου),” Porphyry says, paraphrasing Plato’s *Theaetetus*, “will [the philosopher] not make himself like (ὁμοιῶσεται) the former and unlike (ἀνομιώσεται) the latter?”⁸⁷

“the animal” is bad enough with tame animals but worse with wild animals. As Grmek (1992, 2:336-37) explains, “theriac” concoctions, “in vogue in the Roman world” from the time of Nero, were made from dozens of ingredients, including the flesh of wild animals such as vipers.

⁸⁶ See chapter 4 below. Like Plotinus, Orpheus, another vegetarian figure, albeit a mythical one, goes unmentioned except, possibly, in the last, lost part of the work, which may be gleaned from Jerome’s *Against Jovinian*. After a summary of *Abst.* 4.11-19 and 4.22 in *Adv. Jovinian*. 2.14, there is the observation that “Orpheus in his song thoroughly execrates flesh eating.” (The next sentence reads, “I would refer to the frugality of Pythagoras, Socrates, and Antisthenes, with the result of our confusion, except that it would both be tedious and require its own work.”) In the extant text of *Abstinence*, possible references to Orpheus and Orphism are coded, as in the “theologians” (θεολόγοι) referred to at 4.16.5 and perhaps also 2.36.3-4, as well as in the prophets of Zeus in Crete referred to at 4.19.1. See Clark 2000a, 154n297, 189n641, 190n658, and 191n660.

⁸⁷ *Abst.* 1.37.4; *Pl. Tht.* 176e.

Whether fully or partly abstinent, Porphyry’s models point toward a life that is not just “simple” (λιτόν) and “self-sufficient” (αὐτάρκη), in the parlance of Hellenistic philosophy, but “filled as little as possible (ἥκιστα) with mortal things”—which in *Abstinence* means a life characterized by radical σωφροσύνη, free of the bad mixture, impurity, and harmfulness that meat-eating entails. Though not to be followed in all particulars, the non-Greek priests and sect members featured in book 4 offer paradigms not just of frugality but of contemplation and abstinence. The imperfection of abstinence in some cases is secondary to the message that—contrary to any claims of necessity made for meat-eating—full abstinence is possible. Indeed, Porphyry saves the fully vegetarian Brahmans and Samanaeans for last, just before his quotation from Euripides’ *Cretans* (“I have been on guard against the eating of ensouled nourishment” 4.19.2) and the mini-treatise on purity, with its urgent call not to mix one’s body with the flesh of creatures whose lives were forcibly taken away. Purity, in other words, is found in conjunction with justice, and one might infer that they make a good mixture because, as virtues, they are appropriate to each other.⁸⁸ Disbelief in vegetarian models, on the other hand, leads to “great injustice” (4.1.2) along with impurity. For Porphyry, even when the focus is on the individual’s purity and ultimate salvation, concern for the related other, including animals, is never far away—nor is it limited to just a few.

⁸⁸ See again the structural similarity of Porphyry’s descriptions of justice and purity, and the resonance between them: ἡ δὲ δικαιοσύνη ἐν τῷ ἀφεκτικῷ καὶ ἀβλαβεῖ κεῖται παντὸς ὄτουοῦν τοῦ μὴ βλάπτοντος (3.26.9); διὸ ἐν πᾶσιν ἡ ἀγνεία ἐν ἀποθέσει μὲν καὶ ἀφέξει τῶν πολλῶν καὶ ἐναντίων (4.20.2).

Chapter 4: Purity and the Soul

I. Introduction

Porphyry's ideas on purity are closely connected with his theory of soul, which posits a descent from a higher ontological level into the merely physical, in the form of a body. As Johnson says, "The doctrine of the descent of the soul, its imprisonment in the material world and forgetfulness of its divine origins, and its need for an ascent from this world as the only true salvation was at the center of the Neoplatonist cosmological framework."¹ Since, for Porphyry, the true self is intellect (*nous*), the goal of the individual is a return, an ascent back up to that level. In this chapter, which focuses on Porphyry's perspective on the soul, I will begin with the soul's necessary fall and its possible path to re-ascent. While it is easy, in such a discussion, to fix one's gaze on the self, I will try throughout to reclaim some of the other-directedness—the harmlessness to human and nonhuman alike—that remains a crucial part of what Porphyry sometimes calls "salvation" (σωτηρία). After a consideration of the relationship between purity and ethics, I will turn again to the question of Porphyry's elitism and how it coexists with what I argue to be his universalizing aspirations.

II. Porphyry's Metaphysics and Theory of Self

A. The Fall of Soul

When Porphyry speaks of "imitation (μίμησις) of god" (2.3.1), "assimilation (ὁμοίωσις) to god" (3.26.13), or "appropriation (οἰκειώσις) to the divine" (2.45.2, 4.9.1), he frames

¹ Johnson 2013, 110.

the best imitation in theological or quasi-theological terms.² But in another register, the best imitation is a “union” not with god or the divine per se but with the most “appropriate” thing, *nous* or “intellect,” which is at the same time one’s true self. As Porphyry observes, once again employing the discourse of possibility (κατὰ δύναμιν τὴν ἡμετέραν)³:

Our goal (τέλος) is to obtain (τυχεῖν) the contemplation (θεωρίας) of what is real (τοῦ ὄντος), since this attainment accomplishes, to the extent of our ability (κατὰ δύναμιν τὴν ἡμετέραν), the union (σύμφυσις) of the contemplator (θεωροῦντι) and contemplated (θεωρουμένῳ). For the ascent (ἀναδρομή) is to nothing other than one’s real self (τὸν ὄντως ἑαυτὸν); and the union is with nothing other than one’s real self (τὸν αὐτὸν ὄντως). And *nous* is one’s real self (αὐτὸς...ὄντως), so the goal is also to live (ζῆν) in accordance with *nous* (κατὰ νοῦν). (1.29.3-4)⁴

² With these phrases, Porphyry refers to the abstinent philosopher (“imitation of god” 2.3.1); the just man (“assimilation to god” 3.26.13); and “men who are divine and have knowledge of divine things” (θεῖων καὶ θεοσόφων ἀνδρῶν), along with Egyptian priests who “recognized that the divine does not pass through a human alone...but that almost the same soul passes through all animals” (“appropriation to the divine” 2.45.2, 4.9.1). In each case, we are looking at a proximity to or approximation of god that entails discipline, harmlessness, and knowledge—all oriented, in some sense, around the human-animal relationship. Cf. Plato’s observation in *Theaetetus* (176b) that “assimilation [to god] is becoming just and holy with wisdom” (ὁμοίωσις δὲ δίκαιον καὶ ὄσιον μετὰ φρονήσεως γενέσθαι).

³ Cf. Pl. *Thi.* 176b: φυγή δὲ ὁμοίωσις θεῶν κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν.

⁴ Cf. *Abst.* 2.61.1, where Porphyry says that “the best offering to the gods is pure (καθαρὸς) *nous* and an impassive (ἀπαθής) soul.” Cf. also *Sent.* 32.44-47, where Porphyry says that “the good” (ἀγαθὸν) for the soul “lies in joining (συνεῖναι) with what begot it (γεννήσαντι),” which as Dillon (2005, 2:811n125) clarifies, is the intellect (i.e., *nous*). On the self as intellect, cf. *Marc.* 8: “I am not this man capable of being

Pitted against life “in accordance with irrationality” (κατὰ τὴν ἀλογίαν 3.27.7), life according to *nous* (κατὰ νοῦν)⁵ appears to evoke the system of hypostases (or levels of reality) theorized by Plotinus and treated by Porphyry in *Sententiae*, encompassing the One, Nous, and Soul.⁶ *Nous* figures in that system as the realm of the Platonic Forms,⁷ midway between the One (the highest reality, the source of all being) and Soul (ψυχή), while the material, sensible world (not itself a hypostasis) lies at the bottom or, one could say, at the farthest extension.⁸ (With Intellect and Soul as being, non-being lies both

touched (ἀπτὸς), who is subject to (ὑποπτωτός) perception (αἰσθήσει), but the one that is to the greatest extent (ἐπὶ πλείστον) removed (ἀφεστηκώς) from the body, the one that is colorless and without form (ἀσχημάτιστος), not at all touchable (ἐπαφητός) but capable of being grasped (κρατητός) by thought (διανοία) alone.”

⁵ For other uses of this phrase, see 1.31.2, 1.40.1, 1.48.1, and 3.27.7. For *nous* as reason, rationality, or simply paying attention, see, e.g., 3.10.4, 3.19.3, 3.21.8-9, and 3.22.1. *Nous* is also “food (τροφή) of the rational (λογικῆς) soul” (4.20.11). For the soul as the “body” of *nous*, see *Marc.* 26.

⁶ While the hypostases are considered throughout *Enneads* and *Sententiae*, Plot. *Enn.* 5.1 “constitutes both an exposition of Plotinus’s metaphysical system, and a guided ‘ascent’ for the [individual] soul” (Dillon 1991, 347). In Porphyry’s work, *Sent.* 30 encompasses the terms ὑποστάσεις, ψυχή, νοῦς, and τὸ πρῶτον in a discussion of the orientation of body to Soul, Soul to Intellect, and Intellect to the One.

⁷ Cf. the reference to “*nous* and the intelligibles (νοητῶν)” at *Abst.* 1.31.2.

⁸ The capitals are a convention for distinguishing the hypostatic levels, the “universal realities,” as Smith (2005, 66) puts it, from “individual realities such as intellects and souls.” See also Wicker (1987, 97), who, in his translation of *Marcella*, differentiates between “νοῦς as the state of the soul deriving from Intelligence” and “Νοῦς as Intelligence itself, one of the triple hypostases,” as in Plot. *Enn.* 1.1.8. Wicker adds that, “as with other technical terms of Neoplatonism, it is often difficult to determine with certainty which sense is meant.” Precisely because of this indeterminacy, I avoid capitalizing the term in my translations of *Abstinence*.

above and below, respectively in the One and the material.)⁹ Although the One is never mentioned by name in *Abstinence* and the term *hypostasis* appears only once,¹⁰ we are at least invited to think of the hypostasis *Nous* by the repeated suggestion of a fall from being and an aspiration to return to it. In *Abstinence*, *nous* is aligned with nature (φύσις) (2.53.2), and with incorporeality (ἄσωματιάν) and truth (ἀληθείας) against falsehood (ζῶντες...ψευδῶς) and “the things of the same class with bodies” (τῶν τοῖς σώμασι συμφύλων) (1.31.2). At the same time, *nous* has a salvific character, as when Porphyry refers to the “the laws (νόμοις) of *nous*” and its “saving (σωτηρίοις) roads (ὁδοῖς)” (1.56.4)—in opposition to “the laws of the body, which are violent (βιαίιοις)” —and when he says that *nous* “maintains our eternal life (τὴν αἰώνιον ἡμῖν ζωὴν συνέχει)” (4.20.11). Vegetarianism, Porphyry says, is seen as “necessary” (ἀναγκαίαν) by “those who undertake as a goal the life in accordance with [*nous*]” (1.48.1). Likewise, Porphyry says, in people “whose perception turns back (ἀπέκλινεν) from attacking (ἄπτεσθαι) animals of other kinds (ἄλλοφύλων...ζώων), *nous* is quite clear in abstaining (ἀφεξόμενος) from [animals] of the same kind (ὁμοφύλων),” i.e., humans (2.31.3).

⁹ As Porphyry gnominically puts it in *Sent.* 26, “With respect to non-being (μὴ ὄν), we beget (γεννώμεν) one kind [i.e., the kind below] because we have been separated (χωρισθέντες) from being (τοῦ ὄντος); we preconceive (προεννοοῦμεν) the other kind [the kind above] by holding fast (ἐχόμενοι) to being.” More fundamental, however, is the distinction between the material and immaterial—as Porphyry says in *Sent.* 39, “the perceptible (αἰσθητοῦ) and material (ἐνύλου)” versus “what really exists (τοῦ...ὄντως ὄντος) and subsists (ὑφεστηκότος) in itself (καθ’ αὐτὸ) as immaterial (ἀύλου).”

¹⁰ In *Abstinence*, the sole use of *hypostasis* refers to the “existence” (ὑπόστασιν) of “badness” (κακία), which “the fall of the soul into the material produced (παρήγαγεν) as a deprivation (στέρησιν) of the good” (3.27.5).

The descent of the soul, in Porphyry’s account, is a matter both of an inherent “incapacity” (ἀδυναμίας) or “fault” (μοχθηρίαν) and of a readiness to compound the ill effects of that fault through a bad mixture with what is foreign (ἀλλόφυλον, ἐκφύλων) or alien (ἀλλότριον)—the material and the bodily, preeminently meat—instead of what is *oikeios*. At the beginning of *Abstinence* Porphyry refers to the fall of the soul when he promises to tell Firmus “from what sorts of things (ἀφ’ οἷων) and to what sorts of things (εἰς οἷα) you have descended (καταβέβηκας)” (1.1.3). The soul’s ascent—“returning (ἐπανιέναι) from here (ἐντεῦθεν) to (πρὸς) what truly belongs to us (τὰ ὄντως οἰκεῖα),” as he puts it—entails, in turn, “putting aside (ἀποθέσθαι) all the things that we have taken as an addition from our mortal nature (ἐκ τῆς θνητῆς... φύσεως), together with the passionate clinging (προσπαθείας) to them, through which our descent (κατάβασις) arose (γέγονεν)” (1.30.4).¹¹ In our fleshly bodies, Porphyry suggests, we are like exiles in “a foreign (ἀλλόφυλον) nation (ἔθνος)” who “are not only banished (ἐξορίσταις) from their own people (τῶν οἰκεῖων)” but “filled full of the foreign (ἐκφύλων) passions (παθῶν) and

¹¹ Cf. 1.45.1, where Porphyry says, “For virtuous people (σπουδαίοις), abstinence (ἀποχή) from touching both meat (βρωτῶν) and pleasures and actions through the body is much more appropriate (οἰκειότερα), because it is necessary for the one partaking of bodily things to descend (καταβαίνειν) from (ἀπὸ) appropriate (οἰκεῖων) habits to administer (εἰς παιδαγωγίαν) to the irrational in us.” Though the imagery in the chapter (1.45) is complex, involving a human subject; reason (a tutor or charioteer); and unreason (a child), the point seems, as elsewhere, to be that bodily things (including, of course, animal bodies) cause us to “descend” from that which is “appropriate” to us (i.e., that which is “proper to” or “belongs to” us), namely contemplation.

habits (ἔθῶν) and customs (νομίμων)” (1.30.2).¹² From the perspective of our true selves, Porphyry says, “we were, and still are, intellectual (νοεραὶ) beings (οὐσίαι).”¹³ However, on account of our “incapacity (ἀδυναμία) for eternal (αιωνίου) communion (συνουσίας) with (πρὸς) the intelligible (νοητὸν) and our inclination (δυνάμειος), as it were, toward the things that are here (τὰ τῆδε), we have become entangled (συνεπλάκημεν) with the perceptible (αἰσθητῶ)” (1.30.6). Once the descent from the intelligible into the perceptible has occurred, Porphyry continues, “all the capacities that operate (ἐνεργοῦσαι) through perception (αἰσθήσεως) and the body shoot forth” because of “some fault (μοχθηρίαν) of the soul” (1.30.7).¹⁴ And even if the soul “does not destroy

¹² Cf. Plotinus’s exhortation in *Enn.* 1.6.8: “Let us flee to our own dear (φίλην) country (πατρίδα)...from which we came (ἴθην παρήλθομεν).” Cf. also August. *C.D.* 15.1 in which the citizens of God’s city are cast as “pilgrims” here on earth, awaiting the day when they will be reunited with God.

¹³ As a translation, “intellectual” does not fully convey the metaphysical force of νοερός, which is made clear by the context.

¹⁴ Citing this passage as well as 1.33.3 and 1.38.4, Edwards (2016, 281-82 with n155) observes that “Porphyry is incredibly negative about such capacities” as “perception..., perceptual impressions..., memories..., and opinions..., as well as passions,” all of which, she says, Porphyry associates with the irrational soul in both humans and nonhumans. For Porphyry’s wariness of the unreason and passion that can follow perceptions, *phantasiai*, memory, and belief (not quite the same as casting the faculties themselves as irrational), see also 1.31.1, 1.34.7, and especially 4.20.9. As Clark (2000a, 193n671) notes, the problem here is that “thought, which should be directed to the intelligibles, becomes involved with the material world and its effect.” Though Edwards says that, for Porphyry, “the rational part of the soul is responsible for the contemplation of the Platonic forms” (281)—and that, consequently, the evidence he presents in *Abstinence* for animals’ rationality “fails to make them rational according to his own [theory]” (288)—Porphyry does not assign any mental faculty, including *nous*, to humans exclusively. Rather he observes that “reverence...for animals” among Egyptian priests came from understanding that, when freed

(φθειρούσης) the essence (οὐσίαν) of itself by engendering (γεννήσει) irrationality (ἀλογίας),” still, through irrationality, it “is connected (συναπτομένης) to mortality (θνητὸν) and dragged down (καθελκομένης) from what belongs to it (οἰκείου) to what is alien (ἄλλότριον)” (1.30.7).¹⁵ In a related image, Porphyry speaks of perception (αἴσθησις) as “a nail (ἦλος) of soul to bodies, which by the very wound of its passion (πάθος) glues and as it were nails the soul to enjoyment (ἀπόλαυσιν) through the body” (1.38.2-3).¹⁶ Likewise, “the passions (πάθη)...and all of irrationality (ἀλογία), when it is thickened, draw down (κατάγει) the soul and turn it away (ἀποστρέφει) from its proper (οἰκείου) love (ἔρωτος) for reality (τὸ ὄν)” (1.33.3). Even if the body can never fundamentally change the soul, one can still thicken (παχύνων) the chain (δεσμόν) binding the soul to the body through actions, including dietary choices (1.38.2).¹⁷ As

from the body, “the soul of every animal is rational, prescient of the future,” and “capable of all the things of which a human mind is capable when set free” (4.9.9-4.10.1); indeed, the Egyptians realized that “almost the same soul passes through all animals” (4.9.1).

¹⁵ On the unchangeability of the soul, see also 3.8.8: “Someone might grant, on the one hand, that the soul is affected in common (συμπάσχειν) with the body, and experiences something (πάσχειν τι) from it when [the body] is affected (διακειμένου) well or badly, and, on the other hand, in no way grant that [the soul] changes (μεταβάλλειν) its own nature (φύσιν).” As Clark (2000a, 169n425) notes, “Arguments that the soul is affected together with the body (*sumpaskhein*) were used by the Stoics to show that the soul is also corporeal.”

¹⁶ For “nailing,” see also 1.31.5. Regarding πάθος, Dillon (2005, 2:801n44) notes that the term “comports both the sensory experience and the emotional reaction to it.”

¹⁷ See the punning connection, at 1.55.1, of “prisoner” (δεσμώτην), “meats” (ἐδεσμάτων), and a “chain” (δεσμόν) that anxious thought for culinary variety thickens (παχυνεῖ). Cf. Plut. *Esu* 995d-e, where “the eating of flesh (κρεοφαγία)...thickens (παχύνουσιν) souls” themselves “through repletion (πλησμονῆς) and

Porphyry elsewhere observes, the body “fattened” (παινόμενον) on meat “makes the soul suffer from hunger (λιμώπτειν...ποιεῖ) for the blessed (μακαρίας) life (ζωῆς) and strengthens (αὔξει) the mortal part (θνητὸν), carrying away and hindering (ἐμποδίζον) [the soul] in relation to immortal life (πρὸς τὸν ἀθάνατον βίον)” even as “it stains (μιαίνει) the soul by embodying (ἐνσωματοῦν) it and pulling it down (κατασπῶν) to that which is alien (ἀλλότριον)” (4.20.11). While the soul remains unchanged in essence, such language emphasizes how it can be gravely obstructed—even “dragged,” “drawn,” or “pulled” down (καθελκομένης, κατάγει, κατασπῶν)—by diet, particularly meat.¹⁸

At the same time, if the soul is essentially unchangeable, a moral hazard—the separation of purity from action—arises from the further idea that it never fully descends from the intelligible. Plotinus’s position, as Karamanolis says, is that “the soul as such”—“a transcendent, rational entity” as opposed to the derivative “soul in body”—“always remains in the intelligible realm.”¹⁹ Based on *Abstinence* and other works, Linguiti says, “it is difficult to tell” whether Porphyry accepted this doctrine, concerning which Iamblichus accused him of inconsistency.²⁰ “As it seems, however,” Linguiti continues,

surfeit (κόρου),” and Philostr. *VA* 1.8, where meat “thickens (παχυνούσας) the mind (τὸν νοῦν).” The Porphyry passage is, like the overall discussion of body and soul, a complex of metaphors. Clark (2000a, 136n115) notes “springs” and a “chain” at *Abst.* 1.33.2-6, where the springs are also “deadly drinks” (θανασίμων πομάτων) and perception is “the mother city” of “the foreign colony of passions in us” (τῆς ἐν ἡμῖν ἐκφύλου τῶν παθῶν ἀποικίας).

¹⁸ As I previously noted with regard to the defilement that emerges from the taking in of “a once-sentient body,” such defilement—and likewise the dragging down of the soul—emerges not from eating animals as such but from eating flesh. Human souls would also be dragged down by cannibalism.

¹⁹ Karamanolis 2007, 100-101. See Plot. *Enn.* 4.8.8.1-3.

²⁰ Linguiti 2012, 191-94 with n27, citing Iambl. *De anima* 30.2-13 (= Stob. 1.49.32.63-77 Wachsmuth).

citing *Abst.* 1.42.1, “Porphyry’s main concern is to fight against the moral irresponsibility that could derive from a distorted interpretation of the Plotinian doctrine of the undescended soul.”²¹ Following Clark, along with earlier scholarship, Linguiti identifies the target of the passage as “some Gnostics,” possibly together with “some Platonists...influenced by them.”²² In the preceding chapter, as well, Porphyry asks, “Why would it be necessary to extinguish the passions (πάθη) and be dead to them and to practice this every day if it were possible for us to operate according to *nous* (κατὰ νοῦν) while attached (συναπτομένους) to mortal things (θνητὰ) without the supervision (ἐπιβλέψεως) of *nous*, as some have declared?” (1.41.1).²³ If, he continues, “you are able to be in the presence of the immaterial (πρὸς τοῖς ἀύλοις)” while eating and drinking

²¹ Linguiti 2012, 191. At *Abst.* 1.42.1, Porphyry says, “Thinking that someone suffering passion (παθαινόμενον) in his perceptive faculty (κατὰ τὴν αἴσθησιν) is active (ἐνεργεῖν) with respect to the intelligibles (πρὸς τοῖς νοητοῖς) has thrown off many of the non-Greeks too, who out of contempt (ἐκ καταφρονήσεως) have advanced upon every species of pleasure, *saying that it is possible to be concerned with other things and leave unreason to deal with these.*” (I borrow the translation of the italicized portion of the sentence, which is vexed, from Clark.)

²² Linguiti 2012, 192; Clark 2000a, 139n152. According to Bouffartigue-Patillon (1977, 1:36), “The Gnostic origin of the ideas combated by Porphyry in 1.42.2-3 has long been recognized,” e.g., by Bernays. See also Armstrong 1966, 1:44n2, on Porph. *Plot.* 16.

²³ Though the referent of τινες in <ὥς> τινες ἀπεφαίνοντο (“some have declared”) is unclear, the theme of moral hazard connects this group both with “the people saying we have two souls” at 1.40.2 (i.e., Numenius; see Porphyry ap. Stob. 1.49.25a.18-22 Wachsmuth) and the Gnostics apparently referred to in 1.42. (See preceding note.) Notwithstanding a possible ambiguity in ἐπιβλέψεως, Clark, Bouffartigue-Patillon, and Girgenti-Sodano render it as a subjective genitive indicating the “supervision” or “surveillance” conducted by *nous*.

luxuriously, “why not also when having sex with lovers?” (1.41.2). The answer is that one cannot, in fact, be concerned with the immaterial while indulging in sensual pleasures, for “where there is perception (αἴσθησις) and apprehension (ἀντίληψις) of [perception], there is a standing away (ἀπόστασις) from the intelligible (νοητοῦ); and to the extent there is an excitement (ἀνακίνησις) of irrationality (ἄλογίας), to that extent there is a standing away from intellection (νοεῖν)” (1.41.5). That is why, Porphyry says, “it is not possible, for the one being carried (φερόμενον) here and there (τῆδε κάκεισε) to be there (ἐκεῖ),” i.e., in the intelligible world, “while being here (ἐνταῦθα),” in the material world. “We pay attention (προσοχὰς ποιούμεθα),” he says, “as wholes (ὅλοι), not with part (μέρει) of ourselves” (1.41.5).²⁴ What we do and what we eat, then, are things that matter in the pursuit of transcendence, in the climb back to our “real self” and what “truly belongs to us.” Although “the return to the life of divine intellect is always available to us,” as O’Meara says, it does require “chang[ing] the focus of our lives, the level at which we are acting.”²⁵

²⁴ We may see here an affinity with Strato’s argument, cited at 3.21.8, that “perceiving (αἰσθάνεσθαι) is not at all possible without thinking (νοεῖν)” because, for example, “letters often escape our notice as we traverse them with our eyes, and speech (λόγοι) falling upon our ears escapes us when we have our mind (νοῦν) on other things.” This is not to exclude the possibility of a dual focus on the immaterial and the needs of others, as we see in Plot. 8.11-23 and 9.5-22. The “supervision of *nous*,” referred to at *Abst.* 1.41.1, seems key.

²⁵ O’Meara 1993, 102.

B. Virtue and the Ascent of Soul

Having looked at the body-soul relation in the context of the soul's necessary descent, I now turn to the relation of soul and *nous* in the context of the soul's possible re-ascent, which Porphyry casts as “the ascent to one's real self” (εἰς τὸν ὄντως ἑαυτὸν ἢ ἀναδρομή 1.29.4) or, alternatively, “salvation.” As with the notion of “assimilation to god,” we will see that this ascent involves a kind of imitation and that it depends on actions as well as thoughts.

Though the notion of ascent of soul, as Porphyry presents it in *Abstinence*, is not identical with the schema in *Sent.* 32, there is enough overlap to provide a fruitful comparison in relation to the issue of other- and self-directed virtue. Of the four levels of virtues (ἀρεταί) presented in the latter text (civic, purificatory, contemplative, and paradigmatic)²⁶—each including the same four canonical virtues (wisdom, self-control, justice, and courage)—the civic (πολιτικοῦ) virtues are the easiest to associate with justice in the conventional sense, since they are explicitly other-directed. Though the purificatory virtues—“those of the person who is going up (ἀνιόντος) toward (πρὸς) contemplation (θεωρίαν)”—are at least notionally self-directed in the sense of aiming at individual salvation, they have ramifications for behavior, and perhaps the same may be said of the contemplative virtues: “those of the already accomplished (τελείου) contemplative (θεωρητικοῦ) person and of the one who is a contemplator (θεατοῦ)

²⁶ Here and below, I use the terms employed by Lloyd (1967) and, with one exception, Emilsson (2015). As Emilsson (2015) notes, *Sent.* 32 elaborates on *Enn.* 1.2, a work in which Plotinus relates several levels of virtue to the exhortation in Pl. *Th.* 176a-b to escape the material world and become like god through virtue, as discussed below in section III.

already.”²⁷ More remotely, the paradigmatic virtues are “those of *nous*, to the extent that it is *nous* and pure of soul (ἀπὸ ψυχῆς καθαρός)” (32.1-5).²⁸

The civic virtues (αἰ...τοῦ πολιτικοῦ), which “look toward the harmless (ἀβλαβῆ) community (κοινωνίαν) of neighbors” (*Sent.* 32.6-10), “have their sights set on making life in a group possible,” as Brisson observes, and perhaps “not only of human beings...but also of animals who live in groups,” as suggested by συναγελασμός and κοινωνία.²⁹ Such virtues, “lying in moderation of the passions (μετριοπαθεία)³⁰ by means of following and being guided by the reckoning (λογισμῶ) of proper function (καθήκοντος) in relation to actions (πράξεις)” (32.5-10), serve to “release” (ἀπαλλάττουσαι) the soul from one part of a “double evil” (διπλῆ...κακία 32.46), which Porphyry identifies as “joining with [inferior things] and [doing so] with an excess of passion” (τό τε τούτοις συνεῖναι καὶ μετὰ παθῶν ὑπερβολῆς 32.46-47). Addressing the latter evil, civic virtues are “judged honorable (τίμια)” even if the purificatory (καθαρτικαὶ) virtues, which address the more fundamental evil of “joining with inferior

²⁷ “A viewer (of the forms),” as Dillon (2005, 2:809n105) explains.

²⁸ As Emilsson (2015) explains, “paradigmatic virtues are the Platonic Forms, or paradigms, of the different virtues.”

²⁹ Brisson 2005, 1:132. διὸ πρὸς κοινωνίαν βλέπουσαι τὴν ἀβλαβῆ τῶν πλησίων ἐκ τοῦ συναγελασμοῦ καὶ τῆς κοινωνίας πολιτικαὶ λέγονται (*Sent.* 32.8-10). Regarding the rarity of συναγελασμός (“gathering in a herd”), Brisson (2005, 1:132n189) observes that at *Abst.* 3.11.1 Porphyry offers ants and bees as examples.

³⁰ On μετριοπάθεια, see note 33 below.

things (τοῖς ὑστέροις)” in the first place, “are judged more honorable (τιμιώτεροι) because they release the soul from its badness (κακίας) qua soul (ὡς ψυχὴν).”³¹

The purificatory virtues, less obviously connected with one’s actions toward others, but perhaps not unconnected either, concern “the person making progress (προκόπτοντος) toward (πρὸς) contemplation (θεωρίαν)” and “lie in standing away (ἀποστάσει) from the things that are here (τῶν ἐντεῦθεν).”³² They are called “purifications” (καθάρσεις), since they involve “abstinence (ἀποχῆ) from actions (πράξεων) [done] with the body (μετὰ τοῦ σώματος) and from the passions shared with it (συμπαθειῶν τῶν πρὸς αὐτό)” (32.16-18). Whereas the civic virtues “set in order (κατακοσμοῦσι) the mortal human (θνητὸν ἄνθρωπον)” (32.19-20), the purificatory virtues are those of “a soul standing away (ἀφισταμένης) [from the body] toward (πρὸς) true being (τὸ ὄντως ὄν)” (32.19). The civic virtues, Porphyry adds, “are forerunners (πρόδρομοί) of the purifications (καθάρσεων)” because “the one who has been set in order (κοσμηθέντα) in accordance with them necessarily stands away (ἀποστῆναι) from doing anything foremost with body (σὺν σώματι)” (32.20-23). While “the disposition (διάθεσις) in accordance with the civic virtues is seen (θεωρεῖται) in the moderation of the passions (μετριοπαθεία), holding as its goal (τέλος) to live as a human (τὸ ζῆν ὡς

³¹ Plotinus similarly says, “It is absurd (ἄλογον) for [us] not in any way to be assimilated (ὁμοιοῦσθαι) [to god] in accordance with these [civic virtues]...but for the assimilation (ὁμοίωσιν) to be in accordance with the greater ones” (*Enn.* 1.1.2.23-26). This is because “the civic virtues...do really (ὄντως) set us in order (κατακοσμοῦσι) and make us better (ἀμείνους) by delimiting (ὀρίζουσαι) and moderating (μετροῦσαι) our desires (ἐπιθυμίας)” (*Enn.* 1.2.2.13-16).

³² On the resonance of this wording with Porphyry’s characterizations of justice at *Abst.* 3.26.9 and of purity at 4.20.2, see chapter 1, note 108, and chapter 3, note 9.

ἄνθρωπον) in accordance with nature (κατὰ φύσιν),” Porphyry says (32.29-31), “the disposition in accordance with the contemplative [virtues] is seen in impassibility (ἀπάθεια), whose goal (τέλος) is assimilation to god (ἢ πρὸς θεὸν ὁμοίως)” (32.31-32).³³ Purificatory virtues, accordingly, lie between the civic and contemplative, as the disposition that bridges μετριοπάθεια and ἀπάθεια, moderation of the passions and impassibility. While in *Sent.* 32, Porphyry casts the goal of impassibility as “assimilation to god,” in *Abstinence* (3.27.1) he says that “when the goal is assimilation to god as much as possible, harmlessness is preserved with respect to all beings.” Although we need not assume perfect congruity, the overlapping language invites us to consider how the pursuit of impassibility and assimilation to god through the higher virtues (those above the civic) can be associated with an outer-directed avoidance of harm that extends beyond neighbors and, again, beyond human beings.³⁴

³³ As Dillon (2005, 2:809n106) says regarding μετριοπάθεια, the term “originally denoted the Aristotelian ideal, as opposed to the Stoic one of ἀπάθεια, extirpation of the passions, but in the Platonist tradition they can be used as two stages in moral progress.” On Porphyry as the figure who “gave a decisive impetus to the tendency to harmonize the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle,” as demonstrated, e.g., by his employment of μετριοπάθεια in *Sent.* 32, see Hadot (2015, 63-65). For the contrast between Peripatetic μετριοπάθεια and Stoic ἀπάθεια, see, e.g., Cic. *Acad.* 1.38 and D.L. 5.31.

³⁴ On this extension of harmlessness, see Edwards’s reading (2016, 272-73) of *Sent.* 32 and *Abst.* 3.27.2, which refers to “the man led by passions” who is “harmless only to (πρὸς) his children and wife”; “the man led by reason,” who “preserves harmlessness toward (πρὸς) a citizen and still more toward foreigners and all human beings”; and the person “more similar to god (μᾶλλον ὅμοιος θεῷ),” who “does not bring harmlessness to a standstill among humans but extends it also to (εἰς) the other animals.” Identifying the three respectively as “unjust, civically just, and purificatorily just,” Edwards says that “civic justice is perfectly compatible with being a meat-eater, while purificatory justice (i.e., that of the philosopher) entails

The ascent back to *nous* is undertaken, then—at least in its earlier stages—through just behavior and non-harming, but also through “abstinence,” in this case, “from actions [done] with the body and from the passions shared with it” (32.16-18). Here we find another obvious intertext with *Abstinence*, in the word ἀποχή—one that invites us, as an effect of that intertext, to think of meat-eating as a prime example of those aforementioned “actions.” We might say that Porphyry extends the intertext if we consider his reference to “the passions shared with it” together with his observation (at *Abst.* 2.45.4) that the pure person “approaches the god...with a truly pure freedom from passion in the soul and the lightness of the body not weighed down by alien and foreign juices and passions of the soul.”³⁵ In *Sent.* 32, Porphyry’s program encompasses actions (or, more precisely, abstinence from certain kinds of actions) with an emphasis on internal work. As he puts it, “Accept (παραλαμβάνοι) only necessary pleasures and perceptions that are for the sake of healing or the relief of suffering,” removing pains if possible, but otherwise “endur[ing] them gently, reducing them by not being affected in common with them (μὴ συμπάσχειν).” Anger and fear should be suppressed. “Desire for every inferior thing (φάυλου),” Porphyry says, “must be expelled (ἐξοριστέον)” (32.111-

vegetarianism.” Though in her view, “Porphyry’s theory of justice has it that the justice of an action is determined solely by reference to the soul state of the agent” (2016, 273), the repeated prepositions (πρός, εἰς) at *Abst.* 3.27.2 point to relationality and outer-directedness.

³⁵ Cf. *Abst.* 1.32.2, where ἀποχή is used for abstinence “from those sensations (αἰσθημάτων) that stir up passions (πάθη),” including those that “arise from food,” and 1.45.1 for abstinence “from contact with pleasures (ἀπολαύσεων) and actions (πράξεων) through the body (διὰ σώματος).” In calling attention to these intertexts, I do not mean to suggest that *Sententiae* advocates vegetarianism or disparages meat-eating, neither of which it mentions.

23). Though in *Abstinence* the call to vegetarianism leads to a greater emphasis on actions than we find in *Sent.* 32, the latter text notes that “whoever has the greater [virtues] necessarily also has the lesser ones” ready to be activated “in the circumstances of ‘becoming’ ” (κατὰ περίστασιν τῆς γενέσεως) (32.78-82), i.e., earthly human existence, in which actions are required. In other words, the cohabitation of lower virtues with higher ones provides a way of conceptualizing what harmlessness would mean at the level of the contemplative virtues. One could say that the harmlessness envisioned at the civic and cathartic levels would remain operative even in the person who has achieved the contemplative level of virtues (if such an accomplishment is even possible in a lifetime).³⁶

As in *Abstinence*, with its various exempla, the idea of imitation is suggested by the schema in *Sent.* 32. At each level, there is not just a goal or target (τέλος or σκοπός) concerning what one wants to achieve but also a model—what one wishes to become. Thus, the person acting in accordance with practical (i.e., civic) virtues, we are told, is “a good (σπουδαῖος) person”,³⁷ with purificatory virtues, “a divine (δαιμόνιος) person, or even a good *daemon* (δαίμων ἀγαθός)”; with contemplative virtues, “a god” (θεός); and with paradigmatic virtues (τὸ τῶν παραδειγματικῶν), “a father of gods” (θεῶν πατήρ)

³⁶ On this point, see *Sent.* 32.94-96: “We must pay attention most of all to the purificatory virtues, considering that the attainment of them [is] in this life (ἐν τῷ βίῳ τούτῳ), and the ascent (ἄνοδος) to the more-honored [virtues] [is] also through them.” From another perspective, one could also pick up on the reference to increasing one’s “inner good” at *Abst.* 3.26.13 and understand harmlessness at the contemplative level to be a kind of harmlessness to one’s true self, i.e., *nous*.

³⁷ As Dillon (2005, 2:813n145) points out, “σπουδαῖος [is] the (primarily) Stoic term for...the man of virtue.”

(32.90-93). Clearly the third level, a fully accomplished assimilation to god, sets the bar quite high, while the fourth level goes further still, encompassing the perfection of the Platonic Forms of virtues themselves. As the name “paradigmatic” suggests, these virtues are the ultimate “example[s] for imitation.”³⁸ Although *Sent.* 32 lacks the pervasive discourse of imitation that we find in *Abstinence*, one could say that the process of becoming “a good person,” “a divine person,” “a god,” or “a father of the gods” entails striving to imitate what each exemplum does at its level of virtue or what it has done to reach that level.

The ascent of the soul has a counterpart in Porphyry’s notion of σωτηρία or “salvation,”³⁹ which he connects with abstinence. The LSJ definitions of the noun include “deliverance, preservation”; “safe return”; “security, safety”; “bodily health, well-being”; and, with New Testament examples, “salvation.” *Abstinence*’s use of σωτηρία is divided between references to physical safety or survival, as with two instances in Hermarchus’s

³⁸ Montanari s.v. παράδειγμα. Cf. *Plot.* 7.44-47, where Porphyry says that Plotinus “continued putting forward [one of his followers] as a good example (παράδειγμα) for those studying philosophy.”

³⁹ In his focus on the ascent of soul, Porphyry has little to say in *Abstinence* on reincarnation—despite the musings of Plato and Plotinus on the topic. Whereas both predecessors discuss the movement of souls between human and nonhuman bodies, Porphyry avoids this line of argument against meat-eating, as well as eschatology in general. As Bouffartigue and Patillon (1977, I:lviii) observe, “when Porphyry evokes union with God, or the forms of relationship that one is able to have with him, he never situates them explicitly after death. They appear to be realizable in the ‘hic et nunc.’” (For what is perhaps a different perspective in *Sent.* 32, see note 36 above.) For the view—not reflected in *Abstinence*—that “in Porphyry’s interpretation of [Pl. *Phdr.*] 249, the cycle of rebirth (reincarnation) is broken permanently when the soul chooses three consecutive philosophical lives, at which time [it] is perpetually in union with the One,” see Simmons 2015, xviii and ch. 9.

discourse (1.10.2), but also to the security of the soul, in which case we can justifiably render σωτηρία as “salvation.”⁴⁰ Porphyry, in fact, draws a contrast between safety and salvation in the penultimate chapter of book 1 while underlining the necessity of abstinence. Having just observed that “the contemplative (ὁ θεωρητικὸς)...will not search out the meat of ensouled beings (ἐμψύχων βρώσεις) as if not satisfied with food from that which is unensouled (τῆ τῶν ἀψύχων),” Porphyry says, “Even if the nature of the body were not that way in the case of the philosopher and not so easily managed and easy to heal with what happens to be around (τῶν τυχόντων), but if it were necessary to bear even pains (ἀλγηδόνας) for the sake of true (ἀληθινῆς) salvation (σωτηρίας), would we we not bear them?” (1.56.1-2). As elsewhere in *Abstinence*, the use of “true” (ἀληθινῆς) here, as a modifier of σωτηρία, can be read as a marker of a core idea of the text.⁴¹

“Salvation (σωτηρίας) for us,” Porphyry adds, “arises through deeds (ἔργων), not through mere listening (ἀκροάσεως...ψιλῆς) to teachings (λόγων)” (1.57.1). As he says earlier, “If being happy (τὸ εὐδαιμον) had been defined (ἀφώριστο) as the acquisition of teachings (ἐν λόγων ἀναλήψει), it would be possible to achieve the goal (τέλους) [even] for those who are heedless (ὀλιγοροῦντας) of foods (τροφῶν) and kinds of deeds (ποιῶν ἔργων),” something he suggests we must not be. Rather, “since it is necessary for us, having been purified through words and deeds, to obtain life in exchange for our current life (ζωὴν δεῖ ἀντὶ ζωῆς ἀλλάξασθαι τῆς νῦν),” he says, “come, let us consider what sort of words

⁴⁰ See, e.g., Girgenti and Sodano’s observation (2005, 538) that “salvation” (*salvezza*) in *Abstinence* “consists in the *return* (ἐπιστροφή, ἀναστροφή) of the soul to God after the fall into the material.” It is useful to contrast σωτηρία with ἀσφάλεια, which is used in *Abstinence* always with the sense of *physical* safety.

⁴¹ For more on this point, see the introduction, section III.

(λόγοι) and what deeds (ἔργα) bring us into this [life] (εἰς ταύτην ἡμᾶς καθίστησι)”

(1.29.5-6). As Bouffartigue and Patillon put it, “For Porphyry, abstinence is a means, not sufficient but indispensable, for arriving at salvation.”⁴²

III. Purity and Ethics

In his pursuit of purity, Porphyry follows a tradition that extends from Pythagoras and Empedocles through Plato, the early Academy, the Neopythagoreans, and Plotinus.⁴³ It is a tradition of seeking transcendence of the bodily for one’s immortal soul through a life of virtue, asceticism, and contemplation. At the same time, the problem of how a philosopher, a contemplative person, abides in the world runs through this tradition.

There is a steady negotiation between action and contemplation that we may map onto the dialectic of justice and purity. Although, in the case of Porphyry, virtue—or, more precisely, other-directed virtue—is an essential part of the program, asceticism and contemplation have often been cast as the parts that truly matter.

It is indeed possible to find an ethics of self-directed withdrawal in two Platonic passages that are clearly influential for Porphyry, but also, in both cases, an other-directed element. In *Phaedo* (67a-c), we are told, “In the time in which we live (ζῶμεν)...as it seems, we will be nearest to knowing if as much as possible (ὅτι μάλιστα) we have no association (μηδὲν ὁμιλῶμεν) with the body and do not share (κοινωνῶμεν) anything with it, unless there is an absolute necessity (ὅτι μὴ πᾶσα ἀνάγκη), and...we

⁴² Bouffartigue and Patillon 1977, 1:liii-liv.

⁴³ One of Empedocles’ titles was *Purifications* (οἱ Καθαρμοί: see D.L. 8.63 and 8.77). For his declaration of a universal law against killing, see Arist. *Rh.* 1.13, discussed in chapter 2, section III.

purify ourselves (καθαρεύομεν) of it until the god himself sets us free (ἀπολύση).” In the same passage, purification (κάθαρσις) is presented as “separating (τὸ χωρίζειν) the soul, as much as possible (ὅτι μάλιστα), away from the body, and accustoming (ἐθίσαι) it to being gathered together (συναγείρεσθαι) and mustered (ἀθροίζεσθαι) into itself (καθ’ αὐτήν) out of the body, from every side (πανταχόθεν).”⁴⁴ The speaker is of course Socrates, imprisoned and awaiting execution precisely for his other-directedness—“not politics per se but a certain form of political life, a life of being ‘a busybody in private,’ ” as Weiss describes it, or as Timmerman puts it, an “erotic art...of seeking wisdom and of seeking it together with others.”⁴⁵ In *Theaetetus* (176a-b), we are told that because “it is not possible for ills (κακὰ) to be...seated among the gods, but, necessarily (ἐξ ἀνάγκης), they wander about this mortal nature (θνητὴν φύσιν) and this place (τόπον),” one must “attempt (πειρᾶσθαι) to escape (φεύγειν) from here (ἐνθένδε) to there (ἐκεῖσε) as quickly as possible (ὅτι τάχιστα).” This “flight” (φυγή), however, is “assimilation to god (ὁμοίωσις θεῷ), as much as possible (κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν),” which is a matter, in turn, of “becoming just (δίκαιον) and holy (ὅσιον) with wisdom (μετὰ φρονήσεως)” because “god is in no way, in any manner, unjust (ἄδικος)” but “as just as is possible (ὡς οἶόν τε δικαιοτάτος), and there is nothing more like him (ὁμοιότερον) than the one among us who becomes, in turn, as just as possible.” Even construed as an inner state, justice as it is presented here is inseparable from behavior in the world, with the way one interacts with

⁴⁴ Cf. *Marc.* 10.179-83, where Porphyry says, “Train yourself (μελετώης) to ascend (ἀναβαίνειν) into yourself (εἰς σεαυτήν), collecting (συλλέγουσα) away from the body all the parts (μέλη) of you that have been scattered and cut up into a multitude of pieces (εἰς πλῆθος) from the unity you had until then (ἀπὸ τῆς τέως...ἐνώσεως).”

⁴⁵ Weiss 2012, 132; Timmerman 2013.

others, as Socrates makes clear when he presents “seem[ing] to be good and not bad” as the wrong reason to “flee vice (πονηρίαν) and pursue virtue (ἀρετήν).”⁴⁶ Since Socrates is talking about a quality of justice that other people can perceive, whether accurately or falsely, his discourse here concerns visible behavior. For Porphyry, as we have seen, assimilation to god is a way of conceptualizing purity and connecting it to justice, as his use of this concept brings together ideas of self-sufficiency (αὐτάρκεια 1.54.6) and universal harmlessness (τὸ ἀβλαβὲς ἐν ἅπασιν 3.27.1), as Girgenti suggests.⁴⁷

Among those who cast Porphyry’s purity concerns as overwhelmingly self-directed, there is a tendency to compare him unfavorably to Plato. Speaking of a passage of *Abstinence* in which Porphyry cites Plato for the idea that “the philosopher should not be carried along with (συμπεριφέρεσθαι) inferior (φαύλοις) habits (ἔθισμοῖς),...but should attempt to alter (μεταβάλλει) them for the better” or otherwise “go in quest of the true (ὀρθὴν) road (ὁδὸν), traveling over it himself” (2.61.6), Bouffartigue and Patillon find “two grand tendencies of Plato”—either to retreat into contemplation or serve as an educator in the city. For Porphyry but not for Plato, they say, the educational role “passes...into the background.”⁴⁸ As they go on to note, Plato’s *Republic* book 6 “narrowly joins the two tendencies, showing that the obligation of the philosopher is to contemplate the Good to reform the city according to this model,” even though “he runs

⁴⁶ ἀλλὰ γάρ, ὃ ἄριστε, οὐ πάνυ τι ράδιον πείσαι ὡς ἄρα οὐχ ὢν ἔνεκα οἱ πολλοὶ φασι δεῖν πονηρίαν μὲν φεύγειν, ἀρετήν δὲ διώκειν, τούτων χάριν τὸ μὲν ἐπιτηδευτέον, τὸ δ’ οὐ, ἵνα δὴ μὴ κακὸς καὶ ἵνα ἀγαθὸς δοκῆ εἶναι.

⁴⁷ Girgenti and Sodano 2005, 527.

⁴⁸ Bouffartigue and Patillon 1977, 1:xxxiv-xxxv.

the risk of letting himself be deformed by it.”⁴⁹ Elsewhere Bouffartigue and Patillon observe, “From the beginning of his exhortation, at 1.28.3-4,” Porphyry “opposes two ways of life”: the contemplative life in accordance with *nous* and the life according to nature (the “middle life”). Speaking of the latter, which they align with Stoicism, they say that “a Middle or Neoplatonic is only able to take it for inferior, since it is not made uniquely for contemplation.” Porphyry, they say, “found in Plato the undeniable guarantor of the attitude that he proposed, on the condition of retaining only one aspect of his doctrine and forgetting that the political constitutes an essential element of the original Platonic investigation.”⁵⁰

However, in the opposition between a civic-minded Plato and a hermetic Porphyry and Plotinus, the social role of the two Neoplatonists tends to get lost. Referring to “an ethics of giving” implied in Plotinus’s work, O’Meara says, “The vision of the One (the Good) *may*...lead to the desire to communicate the Good...on the political level (lawgiving in the image of the Good) and on the individual level through the example of wisdom and virtue that can be given to others.” Indeed, “Porphyry’s *Life* suggests that Plotinus was active...as a model and guide for his friends and followers”—an exemplum, that is, to be imitated.⁵¹ We see the other-directedness of Plotinus in that work, though the emphasis is on his steady intellectual focus:

⁴⁹ Bouffartigue and Patillon 1977, 1:xxxiv-xxxv.

⁵⁰ Bouffartigue and Patillon 1977, 1:lix-lx.

⁵¹ O’Meara 1993, 108-10. Regarding the ethics of giving, see Hornum’s reference (2002, 25) to “the donative nature of Form and the One,” which “give existence to all...things” and O’Meara’s discussion of “The Derivation of All Things from the One” (1993, 60-78), which starts with Plotinus’s query (*Enn.* 5.1.6.3-8) concerning how the One “did not remain a thing unto itself but such a multitude flowed out,

Warding off the anxieties and cares of life from so many people, he never, while awake (ἐγρηγορότως), slackened his extension (τάσιν) toward (πρὸς) *nous*. He was both gentle (πρᾶος) and available (ἐκκεείμενος) to all who in any way had an acquaintance with him. Wherefore, having passed 26 whole years in Rome and having arbitrated disputes for the greatest number of people, he never had any enemy among the officials. (*Plot.* 9.16-22)

In Plotinus's never-faltering concentration on *nous*, we might see the disposition of man acting according to contemplative virtues, a god, as it were, in the schema of *Sent.* 32. Elsewhere Porphyry refers to Plotinus as “this divine man” (τούτῳ τῷ δαιμονίῳ), which would seem to identify him as someone at the cathartic, not the contemplative, level of virtue, though, in the same sentence, Porphyry appears to point higher.”⁵² In either case,

which is seen in things that exist” (οὐκ ἔμεινεν ἐκεῖνο ἐφ’ ἑαυτοῦ, τοσοῦτον δὲ πλῆθος ἐξερρήνη, ὃ ὀρᾶται μὲν ἐν τοῖς οὕσι). On a more mundane level, see Porphyry's reference to *Abstinence* itself (at 1.1.3) as “equal in worth” to his friendship with Firmus. See also Schniewind's observations (2005, 54 and 58-59) regarding Plotinus and the broader issue of the role of the Platonic sage: “The principle of generosity of the Good means that the Good necessarily and automatically shares this quality with beings on every level of reality.” Thus, “the more the sage imitates the Good,...the more he naturally imitates this principle of generosity,...tak[ing] on himself the function not only of a model which should be looked at so as to know how it would be good to act, but also of an active pedagogue.” For an extreme take on Plotinian ethics, see Dillon 1996, 324: “[Plotinus] would, of course, observe the vulgar decencies.... One feels...that he would have gladly helped an old lady across the road—but he might very well fail to notice her at all. And if she were squashed by a passing wagon, he would remain quite unmoved.”

⁵² “To this divine man most of all, who often through reflection led himself on to the first god, the one beyond...that very god appeared, the one who has neither shape nor any Form but is seated beyond Intellect and everything that is intelligible” (μάλιστα τούτῳ τῷ δαιμονίῳ φωτι πολλάκις ἐνάγοντι ἑαυτὸν εἰς τὸν

whether as a “god” or “a divine man,” Plotinus, in Porphyry’s account, was not self-absorbed but someone who “associated (συνῆν) both with himself and others at the same time” (*Plot.* 8.19). Whether through the magnetism of his thought or the attraction of his benevolent care, Plotinus was able to attract “many auditors (ἄκροατὰς)” (*Plot.* 7)—including doctors, politicians, and others with worldly roles—drawing them toward a life that led, in turn, toward his own divine model (though it seems that only a few gave themselves over entirely to philosophy, a further indicator, in Porphyry’s description, of an ethos of difference of degree). Like Plotinus, “whose care for others...Porphyry records so prominently in his *Life of Plotinus*,” as Smith observes, Porphyry can be seen as an exemplum in his own life, in view of “the commentaries and philosophical explanations provided for his friends, his words of advice to his wife and his general concern with finding a way of ‘salvation’ for all.”⁵³ The case for programmatic other-directedness may be stronger still for the Porphyry of *Abstinence*, who presents *harmlessness* as an essential element in the assimilation to god (3.26) and, unlike Plotinus, extends that harmlessness to animals.

There is, as we have seen, a critical tendency to find a subordination of other-directed justice to self-directed purity in Neoplatonist thought, starting with Plotinus and Porphyry. According to Bénatouil and Bonazzi, for example, while “Philo and Plutarch...both argued for a tight connection between θεωρία and πράξις,” for “a deep

πρῶτον καὶ ἐπέκεινα θεὸν ταῖς ἐννοίαις...ἐφάνη ἐκεῖνος ὁ θεὸς ὁ μήτε μορφήν μήτε τινὰ ἰδέαν ἔχων, ὑπὲρ δὲ νοῦν καὶ πᾶν τὸ νοητὸν ἰδρυμένος). Porphyry says that one time he himself “approached (πλησιάσαι) and was united (ἐνωθῆναι) with” this god beyond, i.e., the One (*Plot.* 23.7-14).

⁵³ Smith 2005, 71. For more on Porphyry’s possible concern for “salvation for all,” see the conclusion below.

transformation of oneself (i.e. of one's own soul)" through the contemplation of divine objects that "inevitably bears practical (ethical but also political) consequences," such consequences "were progressively neglected" by later Platonists.⁵⁴ Neoplatonists, Gerson says, "identify the contemplative life with the highest stage reachable by an embodied person in the process of assimilation to the divine," treating "the practice of ethical virtue" as desirable but "inferior and belonging to a life of secondary value."⁵⁵

Addressing Porphyry specifically, Johnson says of *Sent.* 32 that "the severely limited place of civic virtues within the overall conception of the virtues must be emphasized."⁵⁶

Goldin goes so far as to assert that none of the four levels of virtue, including the civic one, are other-directed. As he puts it, "Porphyry follows Plotinus in his belief that justice

⁵⁴ Bénatouïl and Bonazzi 2012, 10. The division between θεωρία and πράξις is referred to explicitly by Porphyry at *Abst.* 1.52.2, where, as we have seen, the philosopher is said to have "no need either for strength or an increase of physical force if he intends to dedicate himself to contemplation (θεωρία), not to action (πράξεσι) and debauchery." Several other reference to πράξις perhaps clarify that Porphyry is not disparaging action as such but rather action that is tied in with the body. These include 1.45.1, where he refers to abstinence "from contact with pleasures (ἀπολαύσεων) and actions (πράξεων) through the body (διὰ σώματος)"; 1.47.2, where he refers to "strength (ρόμης) that rouses (ἐγειρούσης) one to actions (πρὸς πράξεις)"; and, as we have seen, *Sent.* 32.17-18, where he explains that the purificatory virtues are so named since they involve "abstinence from actions (πράξεων) [done] with the body (μετὰ τοῦ σώματος) and from the passions shared with it (συμπαθειῶν τῶν πρὸς αὐτό)." Similarly, at *Abst.* 1.31.5, when Porphyry says that, "along with actions (ἔργων), one must also stand away from (ἀποστατέον) the passionate attachment (προσπαθείας) to them and from passion (πάθους)," the context is specifically negative actions, such as eating (meat, presumably) and taking bribes.

⁵⁵ Gerson 2005, 21.

⁵⁶ Johnson 2013, 294n201.

in all of its forms is not essentially other-regarding.”⁵⁷ As an extension of Goldin’s understanding of civic virtue, he observes that “abstaining from meat serves what [*Sent.*] 32 called ‘purificatory justice,’ ” adding that “according to this argument, the eating of meat is to be avoided out of self-interest, not for the sake of the animal to be eaten.”⁵⁸ It should be noted, however, that Goldin’s reading privileges *Sent.* 32 and *Marcella* over *Abstinence*, and takes as confirmation of Porphyry’s self-interested perspective his “repeatedly averring that his advocacy of a vegetarian diet is meant only for philosophers”⁵⁹—a claim that, as we have seen, is far from decisive.

We need not accept Brisson’s emphasis when, speaking of the civic virtues, he observes, “The soul at this level is turned away from its true being, since it is turned toward the body and the city.”⁶⁰ Nor must we fully accept Annas’s notion of a “rift in Plato’s thought” that Plotinus could not repair: “between conceptions of virtue as...an uncompromising but committed engagement with the world and, on the other [hand], a flight from and rejection of it”⁶¹—that is to say, an entirely self-directed notion of “becoming like god.” Plotinus, as we saw in Porphyry’s biography of him, “never, while awake, slackened his extension toward *nous*,” yet at the same time “ward[ed] off the anxieties and cares of life from so many people.”⁶² While care for others, including nonhuman others, requires redirecting one’s soul from the body, the model of Plotinus

⁵⁷ Goldin 2001, 356.

⁵⁸ Goldin 2001, 363.

⁵⁹ Goldin 2001, 363.

⁶⁰ Brisson 2005, 132.

⁶¹ Annas 1999, 70.

⁶² Porph. *Plot.* 9.16-22.

shows that in the human who has become “divine” or even like god, extension toward *nous* does not exclude but indeed coincides with that other-directed gaze.

IV. Conclusion

When we consider the extension of purity, or salvation, to others—what might be called “other-directed purity”⁶³—we encounter a limit corresponding to the one that Porphyry appears to place on the obligation to be vegetarian. For if the text excludes craftsmen, athletes, soldiers, sailors, orators, and politicians from its call to abstinence and addresses only philosophers, even while casting abstinence as a requirement of salvation, then it effectively limits salvation to philosophers alone. Such an outcome is liable to draw criticism for its elitism, as we will see below, and one might consider such criticism to run parallel to the criticism Porphyry’s limitations on abstinence have drawn from the perspective of justice for animals. However, instead of concluding that Porphyry’s supreme concern is purity, specifically the purity of a few, we might consider “philosophers” here as a functional category, open to anyone willing to do what philosophers are supposed to do, not as a fixed category of social class. From that perspective, the barriers appear more fluid, the aspirations more inclusive.

Porphyry’s disparagement of non-philosophers has drawn much notice—and it is reflected in an abundant lexicon of pejoratives, including οἱ τυχόντες (“ordinary people”), οἱ ἰδιῶται (“laypeople”), οἱ πολλοί (“the many”), and ὁ ὄχλος (“the crowd”), ὁ πλῆθος

⁶³ I use this phrase to mark a departure from the unmarked alignment of purity with the self-directed. In the case of the generally outer-directed justice I have discussed, one aims not to harm others with respect to their bodies. In the case of outer-directed purity, one aims to help others along to the purity of soul that one wishes for oneself.

(“the multitude”), and ὁ κοινός (“the common person”). A mannered pessimism about what such people are capable of comes through in a passage of book 1 in which Porphyry answers the objection, previously raised, that vegetarianism, if widely adopted, would cause animals to overrun the earth.

The ordinary person (ὁ πολὺς) is not intelligent (συνετός) about what is advantageous (τοῦ συμφέροντος) either for his own interest (τοῦ ἰδίου) or for the public interest (τοῦ κοινοῦ) and unable to make a judgment (κρίσιν) between good (ἀστείων) and inferior (φάυλων) habits (ἔθων).⁶⁴ In addition to these things, there is much wantonness (ἀσελγὲς)—full of intemperance (ἀκρασίας)—among the many (τοῖς πολλοῖς). Therefore one should not fear there will ever not be people eating (βρωσόμενοι) animals. (1.52.4)⁶⁵

Here we may detect a note of exasperation or the air of a disappointed idealist, someone predicting failure while still perhaps hoping for the realization of his vision, as in the inspirational peroration of 3.27.10—“Let us imitate the golden race; let us imitate those who have have been set free.” Recall that this exhortation is set up as a response to a question concerning universality—“If everyone should be persuaded by these things, what will happen to us?” (3.27.8)—which is resumed at 3.27.10: “What, therefore, will we do?” At the end of book 3, then, one may infer, the “us” encompasses not just philosophers, but everyone, an inference reinforced by Porphyry’s construction of the

⁶⁴ Cf. Porphyry’s claim that animals “know everything that is advantageous (τὸ συμφέρον)” (3.9.4).

⁶⁵ For the anti-vegetarian argument relating to the overpopulation of animals, see 1.11.3-5, 1.16.2, and 1.24.1. For another response to this argument, centered on animals’ mortality and their need for human protection, see *Abst.* 1.53.1 and 4.14.3. Cf. also *Lucr.* 5.855-77 and *Arist. Pol.* 1254b, discussed in chapter 1, notes 36 and 54.

Golden Age itself as a time of universal vegetarianism.⁶⁶ Indeed, we see in this passage and in the following one that Porphyry’s pessimism about how people presently are coexists with an idealistic sense of how they ought to be:

If in fact everyone thought (πάντων...φρονησάντων) the best (ἄριστα) thoughts, there would be no need (χρεία) for bird catching, fowlers, fishermen, swineherds.... But if manifold thoughtlessness (ἀφροσύνης) of all possible shapes remains among humans, the ones who will eat [animals] voraciously (οἱ ταῦτα λαιμαργήσοντες) will also be countless. (1.53.1)

In these passages, Porphyry notably picks up language that appears in his citation of Hermarchus, the Epicurean, in book 1. Hermarchus says, “Even now,” the penalty of the law is all that “holds back ordinary people (τοὺς τυχόντας) and hinders them from doing that which is detrimental (ἀλυσιτελέξ) either in public (κοινῇ) or in private (ιδίᾳ),” whereas “if everyone (πάντες) were similarly able to see and remember the advantageous (τὸ συμφέρον), they would not need laws in addition” (1.8.3-4). Porphyry, for his part, suggests that if everyone not only could see the advantageous but “thought the best thoughts,” meat-eating, which he aligns with “thoughtlessness,” would disappear, as would the various servicers of those who “voraciously eat” the bodies of animals. If everyone thought the best thoughts, human slaughterers of harmless animals would disappear, and all, in fact, would be on a path to purity and salvation.

In part because of his disparagement of non-philosophers, Porphyry’s stance on what Augustine refers to in *City of God* (10.32) as “a universal way of liberating the soul” remains a matter of contention. Commenting on Porphyry’s failure to grasp that

⁶⁶ See the discussion of the origins of sacrifice in chapter 5, section IV.

Christianity was the very thing he was searching for, Augustine claims that Porphyry “far from doubtfully confesses that there is some such path”⁶⁷—both universal in scope and singular—the path “by which all souls without exception are liberated” and without which no soul is liberated.⁶⁸ Accepting Augustine’s premise that Porphyry must have believed in such a path, Smith refers to Porphyry’s “attempt to bring philosopher and man on the street together in a common form of salvation” and to “his search for a way of bringing the soul to god—he could call it salvation—which would be open to all men and nations and not restricted to philosophers.”⁶⁹ Simmons, for his part, locates in the fragmentary *Philosophia ex oraculis* “a hierarchical soteriology” that was “in a sense universal,” encompassing purification of the “intellectual soul” (for “the mature Neoplatonic philosopher”) and of “the lower or spiritual part of the soul” either through continence (for “novice philosophers”) or through cults and theurgy (for “a vast majority of human beings”).⁷⁰ In Clark’s view, however, the more likely scenario is that “Porphyry

⁶⁷ According to August. *C.D.* 10.32, “When Porphyry says in his book on the return of the soul...that [a teaching] that contains a universal way of liberating the soul (*universalem...viam animae liberandae*) has not yet been acquired in one particular sect, either by any true philosophy (*philosophia verissima aliqua*) or by the morals and teaching of Indians or by the *inductio* of the Chaldaeans, or any other way, and that the same path has not yet been conveyed to his awareness by historical investigation, far from doubtfully (*procul dubio*) he confesses that there is some such path (*aliquam*), but that it has not yet come to his awareness.”

⁶⁸ *Nam quae alia via est universalis animae liberandae, nisi qua universae animae liberantur ac per hoc sine illa nulla anima liberatur?*

⁶⁹ Smith 2000, 187, and 2011, 2.

⁷⁰ Simmons 2015, xi-xiv.

denied any claim that there is a single way of liberating the soul”⁷¹ (in the mode of Christianity) and would not have believed in “a way accessible to all,”⁷² since he “is contemptuous of the common man...who cannot make the moral and intellectual effort required by *On Abstinence*.”⁷³ Elsewhere, she asks, “What about the working classes, the *banausoi* with their vulgar ideas, their material satisfactions and their failure to understand, who need the concessions made by civic laws [*Abst.* 2.41.5]? Have we any reason to think that Porphyry at any time sought a universal way of salvation accessible even to them? Bluntly, no.” Clark goes on to say that *Abstinence* is “an unusually isolationist account of the true philosopher” and that “in his surviving work, there is no sign of interest in the souls of ordinary people.”⁷⁴

While one could argue that Porphyry does in fact show signs of interest in the souls of ordinary people,⁷⁵ the distinction between classes of people does not seem as salient as the universal human condition of fallenness and the universal possibility of overcoming it, at least as a notional goal. As always, a distinction remains between what Porphyry thinks he can expect of people and what he would have them do—or what they would be capable of with discipline, commitment, and the right principles. As we have seen, the “incapacity (ἀδυναμία) for eternal communion with the intelligible and [the]

⁷¹ Clark 2007, 136.

⁷² Clark 2000c, 48.

⁷³ Clark 2000c, 48.

⁷⁴ Clark 2007, 139.

⁷⁵ We see such interest in *Marcella*, e.g., to the extent that much of what it advocates is couched in the language of conventional piety, “an assemblage of familiar quotations,” as Clark herself (2007a, 169) puts it, though Simmons (2018, xi) interprets *Marcella* as “written for...novice philosophers.”

inclination (δυνάμεως), as it were, toward the things that are here” (*Abst.* 1.30.6) hinders not just people construed as less worthy, but all human beings. Conversely, while Porphyry says in *Marc.* 6 that “it would not be possible for those intending to remember their homeward journey (νόστου) from their foreign residence here (ἐκ τῆς ἐνταυθοῖ ξένης καταγωγῆς) to make the return journey (ἐπάνοδον) with pleasure...and ease,” such a journey remains, nonetheless, a possibility for anyone willing to undertake it.⁷⁶ One might say, the willingness (or lack of willingness)—the receptivity to the call to philosophy—is the heart of the matter. One would expect the attraction of transcendence to elude “the one who sleeps,” an overarching description for the excluded people referred to at *Abst.* 1.27.2-3. However, anyone who sleeps can wake up, and in that respect there remains hope that even the somnolent might open their eyes, perhaps in a moment of crisis, and—if they are exposed to appropriate philosophical models—take their first steps on the philosophical path. In *Abstinence*, as we have seen Porphyry observes, that “with the passions drawn in and desires and anger extinguished, and the reasoning power holding its appropriate sovereignty, assimilation to the Greater follows immediately.” With an incantatory repetition of πᾶν, Porphyry evokes universality as he goes on to say that “the Greater in the universe (τῷ παντί) is absolutely (πάντως) harmless, and through its power, it is salvific (σωστικόν) of all (πάντων), beneficent to all (πάντων), and self-sufficient (ἄπροσδεές) in relation to all (πάντων)” (3.26.10-11).

⁷⁶ For a different view, cf. Johnson (2013, 10-11 with n44), who cites *Marc.* 6-8 and several fragments to point not just to the “hardship and rigor” of “the life of the soul seeking God (or pursuing virtue)” and its “ascent” as something “only a few would achieve” but also to the need for “specialists” who could be “arbiters of the transmission of truth to a select coterie of students.”

Like Porphyry, in a sense, Plotinus appears to cast the potential for salvation in universal terms, when he asks, “Is there not at all a human being (οὐδ’ ἔστιν ὅλως ἄνθρωπος) who does not have also this thing, either potentially (δυνάμει) or actually (ἐνεργείᾳ), that in fact we say is to be happy (εὐδαίμονα)? (*Enn.* 1.4.4). No one, in other words, is excluded from the path. Describing the means of “escape” (φυγή), Plotinus says, “It is necessary while, as it were, shutting down vision to exchange (ἀλλάξασθαι) it and awaken (ἀνεγείραι) another vision (ὄψιν ἄλλην), which everyone (πᾶς) has but few (ὀλίγοι) use (χρῶνται)” (*Enn.* 1.6.8). The distinction is, again, between what people are willing to do and what, in their essence as human beings, they are able to do. To the philosophically inclined, particularly “those attaching their happiness (εὐδαιμονίαν) to god and the imitation (μιμήσεως) of god” (2.3.1), abstinence will commend itself; to the “one who sleeps,” it will not readily do so. And yet Porphyry himself leaves no doubt that abstinence from meat is a crucial part of the process of purification that leads where every soul ought to go—and where every soul is fundamentally able to go—away from the body, up toward intellect.

Chapter 5: Piety and Sacrifice

I. Introduction

According to a “common-man” argument, “we sacrifice animals to the gods themselves, contributing (συντελοῦντες) to piety (εἰς εὐσέβειαν)” (1.22.1). In the last chapter of book 1, Porphyry himself remarks that “someone might be at a loss (ἀπορήσειε) as to how we place abstinence (ἀποχήν) in purity (ἐν ἀγνείᾳ), although, in sacrifices, we slay sheep and oxen and consider this sacrifice pure (ἀγνήν) and welcome to the gods” (1.57.4).¹ In book 2, Porphyry takes up the question of piety and animal sacrifice, referring to it as “a matter (λόγον) that is hard to decide (δυσδιαίτητόν),”² one “needing much explanation if we are to settle it both truthfully (ἀληθῶς) and pleasingly for the gods.” His own opinion— “things as they appear to us (τὰ φαινόμενα ἡμῖν)” (2.1)—emerges most succinctly when he says that Theophrastus “appropriately (εἰκότως) forbids (ἀπαγορεύει) those wishing to be truly pious (τῷ ὄντι εὐσεβεῖν) from sacrificing ensouled beings (ἔμψυχα)” (2.11.3) and again when he says that “the completely (τελείως) law-abiding (νόμιμον) and pious (εὐσεβῆ) person must abstain (ἀφεκτέον) from all [ensouled beings]” (4.18.10).

The references to being “truly” and “completely” pious imply, by contrast, two lesser forms of “piety”—the latter praiseworthy (albeit imperfect) within the framework of “more and less”; the former simply erroneous, the product of a false necessity arising from misconceptions about the gods. In this chapter, I will consider how Porphyry

¹ Sheep and cattle are the harmless animals par excellence. Though grammatically the participles μηλοσφαγοῦντες and βοουθυτοῦντες modify the “we” of τίθεμεν (“we place abstinence in purity”), the perspective has clearly shifted.

² The components of δυσδιαίτητος (“hard to decide”) suggest that sacrifice is not just a difficult question but the basis of a “bad diet.”

responds to personal, civic, and religious claims of necessity in relation to sacrifice; his theory of piety as a form of justice, of rendering what is due to the gods; and his theology and demonology in light of the mimetic model of good and bad exempla that I have previously discussed. That same model will help us make sense of the sometimes contradictory accounts that Porphyry provides of the origins of sacrifice. Overall, the chapter will consider how Porphyry seeks in book 2 to reconcile purity, justice, and piety in the face of this fundamental civic-religious practice. I hope to show, ultimately, how the lengthy discussion of sacrifice in book 2 is an integral part of Porphyry's overall argument for a vision of justice that includes animals as well as humans and gods.

II. Piety and Necessity

While Porphyry says that animal sacrifice should be off-limits to the “completely law-abiding and pious” person, other passages in book 2 use equivocal language that might be seen at first as elevating personal purity over the justice claims of animals. When animal sacrifice is necessary, Porphyry seems at times to be saying in these passages, one should at least not eat the animal. We might gather, in other words, that the lives of animals are of less concern than the need to preserve purity by keeping their bodies out of one's own. However, Porphyry never actually claims a personal necessity to sacrifice animals, nor does he acknowledge a civic necessity, though its gravitational pull may be detected in some of his formulations.

Although in book 2 Porphyry repeatedly refers to a personal “necessity” of sacrificing animals and logically separates killing from eating, the necessity is far from absolute and the separation need not be seen as salvaging purity at the expense of justice.

The claim of a logical separation, a non-necessary inference, between killing animals and eating them (2.2.1-2), is elaborated at the start of book 2. A need to kill some animals (because of destructiveness or danger, or in sacrifice), Porphyry says, does not entail either eating them or killing domesticated ones, just as the putative necessity of meat for some people (athletes, soldiers) does not entail the same for philosophers and indeed for everyone (2.4.1-3). Though in each case, Porphyry challenges the inference, it is worth considering whether he even accepts the premise. While it does seem that Porphyry concedes the necessity or at least the appropriateness of killing animals who are “unjust in nature...driven by nature to harm those who approach them” (2.22.2), and perhaps the necessity of meat for athletes and soldiers (based on his exclusion of them from the scope of his discourse at 1.27.1),³ it may well be the case, current translations notwithstanding, that he never actually says animal sacrifices are necessary. When Porphyry says, regarding such sacrifices, that he will “necessarily demonstrate (ἐξ ἀνάγκης...ἐπιδείκνυται) that one must not eat [the animals] (τὸ μὴ δεῖν ἐσθίειν),⁴ the

³ But see my discussion of Spartans, in chapter 3, section IV.

⁴ Porphyry’s argument (2.44.2-2.46.2) is not in fact a “necessary” demonstration in any logical sense but rather an appeal to the consensus view of people he identifies as “*theologoi*”—“probably the authors” of the *Chaldaean Oracles* (Clark 2000a, 153n292), a lost work “conventionally attributed to a certain Julian the Chaldaean...or to his son, Julian the Theurgist” (from the second century CE) and quoted in Iamblichus’s *On the Mysteries of the Egyptians* (Potter 2003). According to Porphyry, the *theologoi* exhorted sacrificers “to abstain from [the sacrificial animals] and to purify themselves beforehand by fasting, especially from ensouled beings.” The resulting holiness (ἀγνεία) would serve as a “safeguard of reverence (φυλακὴν πρὸς εὐλάβειαν)” —a protection against harm from “those [the sacrificers] approach[ed] and appease[d]” (2.44.2-4). The argument, then, seems to be that some of the wiser people who recommended expiatory animal sacrifices—and indeed even sorcerers (2.45.1)—understood both the

embedded clause (εἴπερ καὶ θύειν ἀνάγκη ποτέ) might be rendered, as in Clark’s translation—“even if it is sometimes necessary to sacrifice them.”⁵ In that case, there would seem to be an acknowledgment on Porphyry’s part that animal sacrifices, however regrettable, may, on occasion, be required. However, there are good reasons to render the clause with a contrafactual coloration, as “if indeed it is *ever* (ποτέ) necessary (ἀνάγκη) to sacrifice them” (2.44.1). Before *Abstinence*, the only extant example of the sequence εἴπερ καὶ...ποτέ is in Plato’s *Theaetetus* (199d), where it has a strong contrafactual force.⁶ More important, Porphyry’s actual discussion of the “necessity” of sacrifice establishes it as contingent on false, worldly needs and tied up with the appeasement of lower divinities that are best avoided. Speaking of such beings, Porphyry says, “If it is fitting (προσῆκε) to sacrifice some ensouled being to *daemones* or to gods or to some powers (δυνάμεσιν), for some reasons either known or even unknown by human beings, it is not, because of this, necessarily required (οὐκ...ἐξ ἀνάγκης δεῖ) to feast (θουινᾶσθαι) on animals” (2.2.2). The construction, as before, does not assert that it is ever proper to sacrifice animals to *daemones*, much less gods—indeed, as we will see, Porphyry says it is *daemones*, not gods, who “take pleasure (χαίροντες) in the ‘drink-offering and odor of a burnt sacrifice (κνίστη)’ ” (2.42.3). What he does assert is that if one “must” perform

need to keep the forces engaged by these sacrifices at some distance and the danger of attracting those forces by eating sacrificial animals.

⁵ See similarly Bouffartigue-Patillon and Girgenti-Sodano.

⁶ κωλύει οὐδὲν καὶ ἄγνοιαν παραγενομένην γνῶναι τι ποιῆσαι καὶ τυφλότητα ἰδεῖν, εἴπερ καὶ ἐπιστήμη ἀγνοῆσαι ποτέ τινα ποιήσει (“nothing stops both the ignorance that comes upon someone from making him know something and blindness from making him see *if indeed knowledge will ever make someone ignorant*”).

such a sacrifice, one need not—or even must not—also eat the animal. As we will see below, Porphyry indicates that there is every reason to shun the bad *daemones* who fatten themselves on animal sacrifices as misguided humans do.

In view of Porphyry’s insistent separation of killing and eating, we might say that the admonition to avoid eating sacrificed animals amounts to a strategy of harm reduction traceable to other-directed purity concerns as well as concern for the animals themselves. In the act of killing, harm inheres both in the injustice toward the animal (the taking away of life) and in the exposure to impurity precisely through the act of injustice. The taking in of that animal body through eating, in turn, compounds the harm to oneself, as Porphyry also makes clear (4.20.1).⁷ An additional harm in eating that pertains to the animal can be gathered from Porphyry’s references to cannibalism, as in the analogy he offers at 2.57.3: “It is not the case that, since famines and war have been causes of eating other animals, it is necessary to accept this for pleasure, just as we have not allowed cannibalism either, and neither is it the case, because people sacrificed animals to some powers, that they had to eat them, since people who sacrificed humans did not on account of this, at least, taste human flesh.”⁸ Addressing the non-necessity of eating animals at the

⁷ See again 4.20.1 (discussed in chapter 3, section I), in which Porphyry tells us that the holy men “held that the slaughter of sentient animals and taking away of their lives is pollution for the living” (4.20.1). See also the discussion of how souls of the violently slaughtered, human and nonhuman, remain attached to their dead bodies (2.47.1-3).

⁸ οὐ τοίνυν ἐπεὶ λιμοὶ καὶ πόλεμοι αἴτιοι τῆς τῶν ἄλλων ζώων βρώσεως γεγόνασιν, ἐχρῆν ταύτην καὶ δι’ ἡδονὴν παραδέξασθαι, καθάπερ οὐδὲ τὴν ἀνθρωποφαγίαν προσηκάμεθα· οὐδὲ ἐπεὶ ἔθυσάν τισι δυνάμεσιν ζῶα, ἐχρῆν καὶ ἐσθίειν αὐτά. οὐδὲ γὰρ ἀνθρώπους θύσαντες ἐγεύσαντο τούτου γε ἔνεκα σαρκῶν ἀνθρωπίνων. (2.57.3).

beginning of book 2, Porphyry likewise says, “The laws allow (συνεχώρησαν) defending oneself against enemies that are attacking, but to eat them has been considered to be no longer in accordance with the human (κατ’ ἄνθρωπον)” (2.2.1). In the *Iliad*, which Porphyry refers to multiple times, it is a horrifying desecration to have one’s corpse eaten by birds and dogs, while the even-more-extreme act of eating one’s enemies subsists only in feverish wishes.⁹ In that work, Achilles, ritually sacrifices Trojan youth (23.175-83) without, of course, eating them—one might say, demonstrating Porphyry’s principle. In view of Porphyry’s claim that animals are not different in body or soul from humans (3.25.3), one might suppose that the repeated separation of killing concerns not just pollution of the soul of the person who eats an animal but also the desecration of the animal, a harm beyond the harm of killing.

Beyond these considerations, we can understand the discussion of sacrificing animals without eating them as responding to social necessity, a civic duty to participate. It is commonly held that the centrality of the ritual of sacrifice to the public life of the ancient *polis* made opting out of it a highly significant and charged act.¹⁰ With a note of defensiveness, Porphyry himself says:

⁹ For references to the *Iliad*, see *Abst.* 1.13.3, 1.47.2, 2.141.1, 2.59.2, 4.18.4, and 4.20.4 and 13. With the phrase “having eaten Priam raw” (ὠμὸν βεβρώθοις Πρίαμον *Abst.* 1.13.3 = *Il.* 4.35), our text takes up the Iliadic idea, implicit in Zeus’s imagining of Hera’s vengeance, that eating an enemy is the worst thing you can do to him. For this idea, see, esp. *Il.* 22.345-49.

¹⁰ See, e.g., Detienne ([1979] 1989, 6): “To refuse to eat meat is not only to behave in a manner different from one’s fellows, it is to decide not to carry out the most important act in civil religion.” Vidal-Naquet ([1981] 1986, 22) seems to go even further: “When Ephorus [the fourth-century BCE historian]...contrasted two types of Scythians...one of them cannibal, the other vegetarian...he was rationalizing and locating

I do not come to undo (λύσων) the prevailing customs (νόμιμα) among each people,¹¹ for it is not now my task to speak concerning the government (πολιτείας). But since the laws (νόμων) in which we live as citizens (πολιτευόμεθα) have granted that we may honor (γεραίρειν) the divine power (θεῖον) even with the simplest (λιτοτάτων), unensouled things (ἀψύχων), in choosing the simplest we will sacrifice following the law of the city. (2.33.1)¹²

We see a similarly defensive tone when, setting up his cross-cultural discussion, Porphyry says, “If those in charge of the security (σωτηρίας) of cities, and entrusted with their piety (εὐσέβειαν) toward (πρὸς) the gods, abstain from animals (ζώων), how could anyone dare (τολμήσειεν) to censure (αἰτιᾶσθαι) abstinence as harmful (ἄσύμφορον) for cities?” (4.5.6).¹³ As with the many tales of meat-eating and animal sacrifice among Pythagoras and his followers,¹⁴ it is conceivable that the apparent limitations that

geographically a mythical opposition that is also an equivalent. The vegetarian is no less inhuman than the cannibal.” See also (1981) 1986, 4. Derrida (1991, 114), developing the idea of a sacrificial order (*carnophallogocentrism*), asks, “In our countries, who would stand any chance of becoming a *chef d’Etat*...of thereby acceding ‘to the head,’ by publicly, and therefore exemplarily, declaring him- or herself to be a vegetarian?”

¹¹ Cf. Jesus’s declaration in Matt. 5:17 that his purpose is not to destroy existing laws.

¹² Notwithstanding the first-person plural (πολιτευόμεθα), I take the claim here regarding the laws to be general and not specific to Porphyry’s time (when as noted below, persecution for non-participation in sacrifice must have seemed a real possibility).

¹³ The force of moral indignation in response to the sheer effrontery conveyed by the verb (τολμάω) is perhaps heightened by its use in reference to acts of cannibalism (2.57.2) and the gratuitous slaughter of animals for luxury and entertainment (3.20.7). See also 4.2.9.

¹⁴ For the contradictory testimonia on Pythagorean sacrifice and diet, see chapter 3, section IV.

Porphyry places on the scope of vegetarianism—his observation, for example, that “abstinence from ensouled beings...is not prescribed (παραγγέλλεται) for all human beings without qualification (ἀπλῶς πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις), but for philosophers” (2.3.1)—was informed by social pressure, such as the persecutions of non-sacrificing Christians under Decius in 250 and Diocletian in 301.¹⁵

Still, while pressures to conform can be found in Porphyry’s era, his emphasis remains on the possibility of abstinence rather than the civic necessity of sacrifice and meat-eating. Plato, Porphyry says, thought “the philosopher should not be carried along with inferior habits,...but should attempt to alter them for the better” or otherwise “go in quest of the true road, traveling over it himself, wary neither of dangers from the many nor of some other slander, if it should come to pass” (2.61.6). As Porphyry goes on to observe:

It would indeed be dreadful if, with the Syrians not tasting (γεύσασθαι) fish, and the Hebrews, pigs; and many of the Phoenicians and Egyptians, cows—but even when many kings strove to change them they submitted to death rather than

¹⁵ My point here is not that philosophers are free from social pressure. Rather, to limit the scope of a heterodox practice—to cast it as just for a few, not for the many—is to formulate a heterodoxy that is inherently less threatening to the social order. For the dating of *Abstinence* (between the late 260s and early 270s CE), see the introduction, section I. On Decius’s edict, requiring sacrificial meat-eating backed up by a certificate, and Diocletian’s persecutions, see, e.g., Clark 2011, 47-48. On the surprising claim that Porphyry was an active supporter of Diocletian’s Great Persecution of Christians, see Townsend 2011, 221 and 230n43. While rejecting animal sacrifice, Christianity also largely rejected vegetarianism, as in 1 Tim. 4:3. See also Tert. *De ieiun.* 15.1, according to which “[the apostle Paul]...condemns in advance the heretics intending to command perpetual abstinence in order to destroy and despise the works of the Creator.”

transgression of the law—we would choose to transgress the laws of nature and the divine commands on account of fears of people and of some slander from them. (2.61.7)

If Porphyry’s exempla were willing to die before breaching their dietary prohibitions, “fears of people and of some slander from them,” he suggests, are not a sufficient reason to violate such precepts. While of course slander can lead to death, as in the case of Socrates, Porphyry appears to contrast physical violence with the mere words of others. Regardless of any danger, Porphyry suggests, and especially in its absence, there is no legitimate civic necessity for the philosopher to participate in animal sacrifice. Nor, as we will see, do the gods require it.

III. Porphyry’s Gods and *Daemones*

Piety is itself a form of justice in that it entails rendering to the gods what is due to them.¹⁶ Thus Porphyry refers to “offer[ing] first fruits, exactly as was just (δίκαιον)” (2.8.2).¹⁷ However, since for Porphyry “the gods” do not constitute a monolithic category but rather a hierarchy, analogous to his hierarchy of purity, discussed in chapter 3, and his ontological hierarchy, discussed in chapter 4, there are different sorts of sacrifice that one can say are “due” to the different levels of divinity. Here too we can apply the

¹⁶ Cf. Cic. N.D. 1.116: *Est enim pietas iustitia adversum deos* (“Piety is in fact justice toward the gods”).

Speaking of Arius Didymus’s summary of Peripatetic ethics (Stob. 2.7.25.27-29 Wachsmuth), Fortenbaugh (2003, 190) notes that “piety is grouped together with holiness, uprightness, good fellowship and fair dealing (ὀσιότης, χρηστότης, εὐκοινωνησία and εὐσυναλλαξία)” and that all of these “mean dispositions” are “considered subordinate to justice.”

¹⁷ See also 2.24.1.

interpretive idea of “mixing.”¹⁸ That is, as Porphyry theorizes in book 4, a good mixture is with that which is appropriate or similar, while a bad mixture is with that which is alien or different. Thus, in sacrifices to the gods, Porphyry suggests, what is due to each one is that which is similar in nature. Likewise, those who sacrifice must be mindful of their own relationship with the divine, honoring the immaterial divinities who reflect their true nature as immaterial soul or *nous* and shying away from the material divinities, the bad *daemones* associated with material bodies, the false selves, from which they must escape.

As Porphyry explains, different sacrifices are appropriate to different levels of the divine hierarchy (2.34.1)—and, indeed, as we go down the list, we find sacrifices ranging from immaterial thoughts to grossly material flesh. At the top is the utterly self-sufficient god, “the one who is above all” (θεῶ...τῷ ἐπὶ πάντων), to whom one should offer only “pure (καθαρᾶς) silence” and “pure conceptions (ἐννοιῶν) concerning him,” as well as “our own spiritual elevation (ἀναγωγήν)” (2.34.2-3).¹⁹ As Porphyry describes him in book 1, this “god who is above all” (1.57.2) is “beyond incorporeal nature (ὑπὲρ τὴν ἀσώματον φύσιν).” The “first god” (ὁ...πρῶτος θεός), whom Porphyry refers to as “incorporeal (ἀσώματος), motionless (ἀκίνητος), and indivisible (ἀμέριστος), neither in anything (ἐν τινι) nor bound (ἐνδεδεμένος) in himself (εἰς ἑαυτόν),” likewise “has need of

¹⁸ See again note 48 in chapter 3, section IV.

¹⁹ The same goes for the incorporeal “soul of the world,” referred to in a later schema attributed to “some Platonists” (2.36.6-2.37.1), discussed below. Cf. Lucr. 5.1198-1203: “It is not any sort of piety (*pietas*)...to sprinkle...altars with much blood of four-footed animals.... [Piety] is rather to be able to watch (*tueri*) all things with a calm mind (*placata...mente*).” As Clark (2000a, 153n292) says, ἀναγωγή is “a technical term for the raising of the intellect towards the gods,” as seen in the *Chaldaean Oracles*. See also Porph. *Sent.* 30.8 and *in Tm.* II fr. 79.35 Sodano.

(χρήζει) nothing external (οὐδενὸς τῶν ἔξωθεν)” (2.37.1),²⁰ nor does “the soul of the world” (κόσμου ψυχῆ) (2.37.2). Elsewhere in this blended theological complex, there are the “offspring” (ἐκγόνοις) of the “god who is above all,” namely “the intelligible (νοητοῖς) gods,” to whom “one must add hymn singing arising from reason (ἐκ λόγου)” (2.34.4); “the gods within heaven (οὐρανοῦ), the wandering and the fixed,” to whom “the theologian says to offer first fruits (ἀπάργεσθαι) that go as far as barley groats and honey and the fruits of the earth, and the other blooms” (2.36.3-4);²¹ “the multitude (πλῆθος) of invisible gods, whom Plato called *daemones* without distinction” (2.37.4); and “the rest of the multitude (τὸ...ἄλλο πλῆθος),” which “is commonly called by the name *daemones*” (2.37.5), who are not actually gods.²² It is only the last group, Porphyry says, that ever

²⁰ Clark (2000a, 152n291) assimilates the “god who is above all” to the “first god.” Based on the description of the latter as “incorporeal” and the former as “beyond incorporeal nature,” it is possible to read them as distinct here, though the modes of sacrifice may converge. On the other hand, Clark’s reading appears to be in line with Porphyry’s reference at *Plot.* 23.7-14 to “the first god, the one beyond” (τὸν πρῶτον καὶ ἐπέκεινα θεὸν)...who has neither shape nor any Form but is seated beyond Intellect and everything that is intelligible.”

²¹ See also 2.37.3: “To the remaining gods, the world and the fixed and wandering ones—visible gods made of soul and body—one must give thanks in turn...through sacrifices of unensouled things.” According to Johnson (2013, 74), in the Porphyrean corpus, “the visible or ‘heavenly gods,’ ” i.e., “the stars and planets,” are more or less aligned with the Olympians gods. Regarding the “theologian” (θεολόγος), the term is “most often used for Orpheus but applicable to any inspired poet or interpreter...and in this context may mean Pythagoras” (Clark 2000a, 154n297; see also Bouffartigue and Patillon 1979, 2:11). For the identification of “theologians” (plural) with the authors of the *Chaldaean Oracles*, see note 4 above.

²² The relationship of Porphyry’s divine hierarchy in *Abstinence* to Plotinus’s hypostases is disputed. As Blank (1996, 146n124) observes, “the three hypostases of Neoplatonic theology” are “the One or the Good, which is the...cause of all; the Creator God or Demiurge of Plato’s *Timaeus*, which is...a Mind or *Nous*;

demands propitiation through blood sacrifice. Porphyry’s system of gods and *daemones*, then, allows him to limit the “need,” such as it is, for animal sacrifice to the lowest level of divine beings, particularly the “malicious” (κακοεργοί) ones (2.38.4), which he characterizes as a bad lot best avoided.²³

Discussing bad *daemones*, Porphyry casts them as material and alien beings whom one must not associate with or imitate. It is not, in fact, the gods, Porphyry says, but these *daemones* “who take pleasure (χαίροντες) in the ‘drink-offering and odor of a burnt sacrifice (κνίση),’ through which their pneumatic and corporeal part becomes fat (πιαίνεται)” (2.42.3). Animal sacrifice only attracts *daemones*, Porphyry says, which is

[and] the world soul.” In the schema(s) of *Abstinence*, Girgenti and Sodano (2005, 529) find that the highest god is equivalent to the One, from which come Intellect and Soul, followed by the multitude of gods and *daemones*, while Bouffartigue and Patillon (1977, 1:xxxix) describe the theology of *Abstinence* as “clearly pre-Plotinian.” As they observe (1977, 1:xxxix-xl), citing *Abst.* 1.57.2, 2.34.2, and 3.5.4, the distinction Porphyry draws between the supreme god and the other gods is common in Middle Platonism, while the phrase ὁ ἐπὶ πᾶσι “is typically Porphyrean.” Cf. *Abst.* 3.1.3, where Porphyry uses a similar phrase to refer to intellect (νοῦς), which he says “rules among all” (ἐν τοῖς πᾶσι κρατῆ). Smith (2000, 183-84) finds Middle Platonic influence in the hierarchy whose description starts at 2.37.1, specifically in the way it “mov[es] straight from the ‘first god’ to the cosmic soul” while “omitting intelligible gods.” Bouffartigue and Patillon (1977, 1:xxxix) trace the schema of 2.37—with the first god, the soul of the world, and the visible gods—to the *Timaeus*.

²³ “It is clear (δῆλον),” Porphyry says, “that one should not sacrifice animals to the gods at all” (2.24.5). Specifically, when he speaks of “the gods within heaven, the wandering and the fixed,” he endorses the admonition of the *theologos* “not to sacrifice even one ensouled being (ἐμψυχον...μηδὲ ἕν)” to them (2.36.4). As Porphyry puts it, “The person taking thought (φροντίζων) for piety (εὐσεβείας) knows that no ensouled being is sacrificed to the gods, but to other *daemones*, either good (ἀγαθοῖς) or bad (φάυλοις)” (2.36.5).

why “an intelligent (συνετὸς) and self-controlled (σώφρων) man will beware (εὐλαβηθήσεται) of using (χρησθαι) such sacrifices.”²⁴ The *daemones*, Porphyry says, “do not attack (ἐπιτίθενται) a pure (καθαρᾶ) soul, because of its dissimilarity (ἀνόμοιον) to them” (2.43.1). Though the class of *daemones* includes good ones that “res[t] upon their *pneuma*²⁵ but rul[e] it (κρατοῦσαι) in accordance with reason (κατὰ λόγον)” (2.38.2), “the souls that do not rule the conjoined (συνεχοῦς) *pneuma*,” Porphyry says, “...might appropriately (εἰκότως) be called malicious (κακοεργοὶ)” (2.38.4). According to Porphyry, these bad *daemones*, who “are themselves the causes (αἴτιοι) of the misfortunes (παθημάτων) around the world”—such as plagues, crop failures, earthquakes, and droughts—make people believe that the gods are the cause (2.40.1), “turn[ing] us...to entreaties and sacrifices” (2.40.2). They “secur[e] the approval of the multitudes (τὰ πλήθη),” Porphyry says, “by kindling people’s desires (ἐπιθυμίας) with sexual desires (ἔρωσιν) and longings (πόθοις) for wealth and power (δυναστεϊῶν) and pleasures (ἡδονῶν), and in turn vanity (κενοδοξία), from which factional disputes (στάσεις) and wars grow” (2.40.3). To the extent that people pursue such worldly things, they become dependent on, indeed imitate, bad *daemones* (2.42), rather than becoming like god and separating themselves from such concerns in a life of contemplation.

²⁴ The bad mixing with *daemones* compounds the bad mixing of the sacrificer with slaughtered animals, whose troubled souls, Porphyry warns, stay close to their bodies, disturbing those who eat their flesh. See 2.47.1-3.

²⁵ As Clark (2000a, 155n306) explains, “The *pneuma*, ‘breath,’ sometimes called the *ochêma*, ‘vehicle’ or ‘chariot’ of the soul [as in Pl. *Ti.* 41d-e], is an intermediary between the incorporeal soul and the material world...acquired in the heaven[s] and...envisaged as air or fire” that “becomes thicker and heavier as it descends.” For the Stoics, soul was itself *pneuma* (DL 7.157).

Although these *daemones* “want to be gods” (2.42.2), they are material beings who provoke and strengthen material desires and the attachment to the body.²⁶

Imitation of and mixing with the higher levels of the divine hierarchy require a different orientation toward the body and worldly things, a solitary detachment from them and the clamorous crowd of *daemones* and disturbed souls. Those who aim higher will not have to kill animals either to propitiate *daemones* (2.43.2) or obtain information through divination (2.51-52), because they have practiced “standing aloof” (ἀφίστασθαι) from the material of divination—marriage, trade, slaves, promotion, fame (2.52.2-3)—that is, from false social necessity. In line with the harmless self-sufficiency of their exemplum, aspirants will aim “to approach (προσέρχεσθαι) the god alone (μόνοι),” not “troubled (ἐνοχλούντων) or hindered” by a multitude (an ὄχλος, as it were) of *daemones* (2.47.3). The solitude of the approach stands in contrast with the “multitude” (πλήθος) of invisible gods (2.37.4) and *daemones* (2.37.5), who are not actually gods, and the “multitudes” (πλήθη) whose approval they secure (2.40.3), as well as with the “crowd” (ὄχλος) contained in the words ἐνοχλούντων and ἐνοχλήσεως.²⁷ Overall, Porphyry says,

²⁶ Regarding Porphyry’s demonology, Bouffartigue and Patillon (1979, 2:47) observe that although it depends on Middle Platonic sources, the *Chaldaean Oracles*, and Hermetic writings (attributed to Hermes Trismegistus, the Egyptian god Thoth), “it is more useful to think of Porphyry as the founder of a doctrine than as a compiler.”

²⁷ See also 2.49.1, where Porphyry refers to “the philosopher and priest (ἱερεὺς) of the god who is above all (ἐπὶ πᾶσιν),” who “striv[es] to approach (προσιέναι) god, alone to the alone (μόνος μόνῳ), through himself (δι’ ἑαυτοῦ), without trouble (ἐνοχλήσεως) from accompanying entities (τῶν παρομαρτούντων).” For another negative use of πλήθος, see 2.15.3: “Divinity (δαιμόνιον) looks to the character (ἦθος) of the sacrificers rather than the magnitude (πλήθος) of that which is sacrificed.” See also 1.35.2.

“we, as far as possible (κατὰ δύναμιν), will not need what [bad *daemones*] provide.”

Rather, framing the choice in terms of positive and negative exempla, he says, “We make every effort (πᾶσαν σπουδὴν)...to assimilate ourselves (ὁμοιοῦσθαι) to god and those around him (τοῖς ἀμφ’ αὐτὸν)...and to make ourselves dissimilar (ἀνομοιοῦσθαι) to bad (πονηροῖς) people and *daemones* and, generally, anyone that takes pleasure (παντὶ τῷ χαίροντι) in the mortal (θνητῷ) and material (ὕλικῷ)” (2.43.3). This, he says, we can accomplish “through freedom from passion (ἀπαθείας), articulated judgment concerning the things that really exist (τῶν ὄντως ὄντων), and a life oriented toward those very things (τῆς πρὸς αὐτὰ ταῦτα ζωῆς)” (2.43.3)—a life in other words, characterized by simplicity rather than multiplication, contemplation rather than bodily pursuits; a life that in its self-sufficiency and harmlessness is worthy of our divine model, allowing us to approach it in a condition of suitable similarity. For Porphyry, the discourse of appropriation and companionship in relation to the gods is, in turn, repeatedly connected with abstinence, which he characterizes as a prerequisite for getting close to them. “It is not possible with simply any diet whatsoever, and not at all with flesh eating,” Porphyry says, “to achieve appropriation (οἰκειοῦσθαι) to god, not even to any of the individual gods (μερικῶν)—to say nothing of the god who is above all (ἐπὶ πᾶσιν) and is beyond (ὕπερ) incorporeal nature” (1.57.2). Similarly, Porphyry asks, “Will the priest of the father himself bear to become a grave of dead bodies, full (πλήρης) of defilements (μιασμάτων), while striving (σπουδάζων) to become a companion (ὁμιλητῆς) to the Greater (κρείττονι)?” (2.50.1-2).²⁸

²⁸ Cf. *Marc.* 17: “[The wise man] both makes himself well-pleasing (εὐάρεστον) to god and becomes divine (ἐκθεοῖ) by means of the similarity (ὁμοιότητι) of his own disposition (διαθέσεως) to the blessedness that goes with immortality (τῷ μετὰ ἀφθαρσίας μακαρίῳ).”

Because the gods are harmless and self-sufficient, the logic of *mimêsis* dictates that any sacrifices to them must also be both harmless (2.12.3) and simple (2.13.4). As Porphyry says, “It is necessary to sacrifice those things, sacrificing which we will harm (πημανοῦμεν) nothing, for it is necessary for nothing so much as sacrifice to be harmless (ἀβλαβὲς) to all” (2.12.3). Correct understanding of the harmlessness and self-sufficiency of the gods, Porphyry suggests, contributes to justice as well as purity and piety. For if, as he puts it, a young man “has been convinced that the gods do not have a need (χρείαν) of these things [animal sacrifices], but regard the character (ἦθος) of those who approach them (προσιόντων), taking the greatest sacrifice to be correct judgment (ὀρθὴν...διάληψιν) concerning them and the circumstances (πραγμάτων) [of nature],²⁹ how will he not be self-controlled (σώφρων) and holy (ὅσιος) and just (δίκαιος)?” (2.60.3-4). The choice between animal sacrifice and abstinence, then, is between, on the one hand, a vicious loop of desire, greed, passion, and harmfulness by which one mixes oneself with bad *daemones*, and, on the other, a virtuous cycle of detachment, contemplation, and harmlessness by which one draws closer to the gods and becomes ever more like them. In offering as sacrifice “pure silence” and “pure conceptions” concerning “the god who is above all,” as well as “our own spiritual elevation (ἀναγωγήν)” (2.34.2-3), we offer our own ascent to what that god already is, and what, in fact, we too already are in our true being. Animal sacrifices, in all their smoky, fatty materiality and flesh-and-blood harmfulness, are precisely the wrong kind of *mimêsis*. Far from demonstrating purity or piety, far from elevating us toward the gods, and far from warranting the philosopher’s adherence to a city’s “inferior habits,” they drag us

²⁹ I take τῶν πραγμάτων here to refer, more fully, to τῶν τῆς φύσεως πραγμάτων, as at 2.49.2.

down to the appetites of the worst *daemones* and increase our burden of impious contamination.

IV. The Origins of Sacrifice

While Porphyry's theology and demonology invite us to consider *mimêsis* and mixing from the perspective of a hierarchy of divinity, the accounts of the origins of sacrifice that he draws from Theophrastus and Dicaearchus, in books 2 and 4 respectively, present the same invitation from a temporal perspective.³⁰ Instead of looking toward the highest divine level for models to follow and the lowest level for models to shun, we are invited, in these accounts, to locate a positive exemplum in the people of the distant past and a negative one in the people of the present. Although the details are occasionally in conflict, the temporal and ethical priority of crops in sacrifices (together with the non-necessity of animal sacrifices) emerge unequivocally. Like the virtuous non-Greeks described in book 4, who exist in the historical past or a kind of eternal literary present, the people of Porphyry's rationalized Golden Age offer a model, holding out the

³⁰ A large portion of *Abst.* book 2 comes from Theophrastus's *On Piety*, extending from 2.5 to 2.32, with occasional acknowledgments of Theophrastus along the way, at 2.7.3, 2.11.3, 2.20.2, and 2.26.1. For a possible schema of excerpts, see Bouffartigue and Patillon (1979, 2:29), whom I follow here when I credit passages in this part of the treatise either to Theophrastus or Porphyry himself. (At 2.32.3, Porphyry says, "These, in fact, are Theophrastus's chief points concerning the necessity of not sacrificing animals [τοῦ μὴ δεῖν θύειν ζῴα], except for the myths that have been thrown in and a few things added and shortened by me." At 2.33.1, he continues, "As for me..."). The Theophrastean discourse in *Abst.* book 2 contains two main elements: aetiologies of animal sacrifice and arguments against it.

possibility that their harmless, abstinent way of life can, in some sense, be re-created and even universalized.

When Porphyry refers to Theophrastus’s demonstration that “the ancient [practice] (τὸ παλαιὸν) of sacrifices was through crops (διὰ τῶν καρπῶν)” (2.20.2), he offers the essential point of a collection of contradictory aetiologies of animal sacrifice. Theophrastus’s general account (2.5-7) posits a trajectory in which the sacrifice of “first fruits (ἀπαρχαί)” developed, first by nature and then by culture, before famine and the moral degeneration of war—or sheer greed—led to eating animals and sacrificing them (or vice versa). In this account, sacrifices followed the natural development of the earth, consisting, first, of grasses, then of the wood and fruit of trees (2.5.2 and 5), until a shift, with the advent of agriculture, to crops (καρπῶν), such as legumes and barley (2.5.6, 2.6.1). Eventually, however, Theophrastus says, “the succession to the most fearsome (δεινοτάτων) sacrifices was brought in, full of cruelty (ὠμότητος)..., with people slaughtering (σφαζάντων), and bloodying the altars.” In this first iteration of the origin of animal sacrifice, the cause was catastrophe—famine and war (2.7.2), or perhaps famine caused by wars, i.e., man-made catastrophes. Further along in the Theophrastean discourse, famine crops up again, as we are told that through a “careless[ness] of holiness” (ὀσιότητος...ἔξαμελησάντων)” and a “lack (ἔνδειαν) of lawful (νομίμου) food (τροφῆς),” people “rushed (ῥομήσαν) to eat the flesh (σαρκοφαγεῖν) of each other,” before they turned to “the bodies of the other animals” (τὰ τῶν λοιπῶν ζώων σώματα)” (2.27.1 and 3).³¹ “Contrariwise (πάλιν), because of a surfeit (κόρω) of lawful food,” we

³¹ Cf. Plut. *Quaest. conv.* 728c-30f, which offers a strikingly different aetiology of sacrifice from the one in the Theophrastean account that Porphyry picks up in *Abst.* book 2. Both accounts derive animal sacrifice

are then told, people “went toward forgetfulness (λήθην) of piety (εὐσεβείας), treading upon insatiate desire (ἀπληστίας), leaving nothing untasted (ἄγευστον) or uneaten (ἄβρωτον)” (2.27.4). Greed, we might suppose, is what turned abundance into scarcity, peace into war and meat-eating. What seems to be a different perspective follows: “With the intention of not dishonoring their sacrifices (ὡς οὐκ ἄτιμα ποιούμενοι τὰ...θύματα) to gods, they were induced to taste (γεύσασθαι) them, and by means of the origin (ἀρχὴν) of the practice (πράξεως), eating animals (ζωοφαγία) became for humans an addition (προσθήκη) to food from crops” (2.27.6). Here the logic seems to be that after offering animal sacrifices, people began eating animals as a way of valorizing the sacrifices. Elsewhere, however, Porphyry seems to suggest that eating animals *preceded* sacrificing them.³² The matter of whether eating or sacrificial tasting, scarcity or greed, comes first remains unresolved, then, a casualty, perhaps, of the encyclopedic approach to

from a scarcity of crops, but in Plutarch’s account, the ancients began to sacrifice animals because “they were hemmed in by the heaped-up multitude [of animals], and some oracle...from Delphi exhort[ed] them to succour the crops that were being destroyed” (729f). Such an explanation seems to retroject into the past the vegetarian future envisioned by Hermarchus in *Abst.* 1.11—a world overrun with “harmless” animals who, through sheer numbers, have ceased to be harmless. Cf. also the gloomy conception of early life in *Flesh Eating*, in which a harsh environment made people turn, in desperate hunger, to eating animals (*Esu* 993d-f). Plutarch imagines someone from that time chastising the people of the present day for doing the same even amid a relative abundance of “necessities” (ἀναγκαίων) (994a).

³² As he puts it there, “Having eaten (γευσάμενοι) ensouled beings (ἐμψύχων)” because of famine, people “made first offerings (ἀπήρξαντο) of them...being accustomed to make first offerings of their food” (2.10.3). See also 2.33.3.

exposition.³³ Still, throughout Theophrastus’s discourse, the temporal and ethical priority of crops in sacrifices (and the superfluity and wrongness of animal sacrifices) remains constant.³⁴ The Golden Age people, whose sacrifices never went beyond crops, are the exemplum the present-day reader will be exhorted to imitate (3.27.10).³⁵

The topoi of scarcity and abundance (or abundance in scarcity) configure what Vallance refers to as “two broad lines of argument” emerging from “the variety of ancient models of human history”: one emphasizing, as Porphyry does, a moral decline from a Golden Age “through other ages of increasing metallic baseness”; the other (the “developmental” model), emphasizing the “gradua[l] progress[ion]” of civilization “through the discovery of technological, political, and linguistic benefits.”³⁶ The latter

³³ For the contradictory information that this encyclopedic approach entails, cf. Diogenes Laertius’s treatment of Pythagorean vegetarianism and meat-eating and Porphyry’s own treatment of these themes in his *VP*, both discussed in chapter 3, section IV,

³⁴ Cf. the litany of rituals in the passage from Euripides’ *Cretans* quoted at *Abst.* 4.19.2, where the initiates speak of “having performed the thunder rites of Zagreus who roams by night / and the raw-flesh banquets” before the final phase of their initiation, in which, as they say, “I have been on guard against (πεφύλαγμα) the eating (βρώσιν) of ensouled (ἐμψύχων) nourishment (ἐδεστών).” The transition from raw meat to vegetarianism would be a chiasmic undoing of the devolution from vegetarianism to meat-eating posited earlier in book 4, a symbolic return to a pure origin. Zagreus is the name for Dionysus in Orphic legend, the son of Zeus and Persephone who was killed and eaten by Titans before being made immortal. The ashes of the Titans, who were punished with incineration, in turn, formed the raw material of human beings (Clark 2000a, 191n660). Cf. *Esu* 996b-c, in which the Orphic story is connected with Empedocles’ notion that human embodiment is a punishment for meat-eating and other crimes.

³⁵ For the Golden Age as a positive ethical model in Theophrastus’s account, see Martins 2018, 130.

³⁶ Vallance 2003. For discussion of the two perspectives on the early life of humankind, see also Martins’s summary (2018, 106-7) of Haussleiter’s account (1935, 57-87), which pits Hesiod, Theophrastus, and Plato

model finds expression, for example, in the account transmitted by Diodorus Siculus (1.8), according to which “the human beings engendered in the beginning..., established in a disorderly and bestial (θηριώδει) life, went out in a scattered way to forage and took as their food both the most pleasant of weeds and the self-growing fruits of the trees.” Diodorus goes on to say that “with none of the things useful (χρησίμων) for life (βίον) having been discovered,” early people “passed life with difficulty (ἐπιπόνως διάγειν), naked of clothing, unaccustomed to dwellings and fire, and without any conception at all of cultivated (ἡμέρου) food.” Since both the Golden Age and developmental models presuppose technological progress, the difference lies in their stance toward the pre-technological time—whether it was idyllic or “bestial,” as Diodorus says.³⁷ In the case of Theophrastus’s account of humanity’s original condition, as we have seen, the emphasis is less on scarcity as deprivation than on satisfaction in scarcity (versus later greed). We

on the one hand against Democritus, Aristotle, Hermarchus, and—Martins adds (113-4)—the author of *Against the Vegetarians* on the other. (One could add Hippocrates to the latter group: see *VM* 3 on the transition of humans over time from a “bestial” [θηριώδεις] raw diet to a more healthful cooked diet.) As Fowler (2003) notes, Hesiod’s account in *Works and Days* (109-26) “talks of a ‘golden *genos*,’” whereas “reference to a golden *age* occurs first in Latin” in the expressions *aurea saecula* and *aurea aetas*. The Golden Age, Fowler says, “is associated especially” with Cronus or Saturn “and is marked by communal living and the spontaneous supply of food.” It ends with “a series of inventions that lead to the modern condition of humanity”—plows, ships, walls, swords. As McEvelley (2002, 200-201) observes, “Both Empedocles and Plato associate abstention from killing and from meat-eating with the age of Kronos.”

³⁷ The pessimistic view of early man is also reflected in the opponents’ observation at 1.6.2: “They say that the first people to come into existence (τοὺς πρώτους γενομένους) spent their whole lives (διαβιῶναι) unluckily (οὐκ εὐτυχῶς).” For different views of the provenance of Diodorus’s *Kulturgeschichte* as, respectively, Democritean and non-Democritean, see Spoerri 1958 and Cole (1967) 1990.

see the same in an additional rationalized vegetarian reading of the Golden Age, which Porphyry draws from the Peripatetic Dicaearchus (*Abst.* 4.2.1-8). Speaking of Greece, Dicaearchus says that “the ancients (παλαιούς) were born near the gods, were best (βελτίστους) in nature (φύσει), and lived the best (ἄριστον) life (βίον), with the result that they are considered a golden race (γένος) compared with today’s people (τοὺς νῦν), who begin from adulterated and quite inferior (φασλοτάτης) material.” Because such people ate sparingly, to their benefit (4.2.4), Dicaearchus explains, their way of life (βίος) “seemed appropriately (εἰκότως) desirable (ποθεινός)” for later people, who have tended to “desir[e] great things and fal[l] into many ills (κακοῖς)” (4.2.6). Echoing language in Theophrastus’s account (2.5.6), Dicaearchus observes that “the thing said later—‘enough of acorns’—makes clear (δηλοῖ) the simplicity (λιτὸν) of the first people and the improvised character (αὐτοσχέδιον) of their food (τροφῆς)” (4.2.6).³⁸

In their lives of “simplicity” and “frugality, the first people anticipate the exempla that will appear later in book 4, but, as he does elsewhere, Porphyry makes a point of drawing out the justice theme related to the non-harming of animals. As he notes, in

³⁸ From the Golden Age, humanity evolves in Dicaearchus’s account through two further stages: “Later the pastoral (νομαδικός) life (βίος) came in, in the course of which people had thrown already excessive (περιττοτέραν) acquisition (κτησιν) around themselves and taken hold (ἤψαντο) of animals, having apprehended that some happened to be harmless (ἄσινῆ), but some were harmful (κακοῦργα) and savage (χαλεπά). And thus, in fact, they domesticated (ἐπιθάσσευσαν) some and attacked (ἐπέθεντο) others, and, at the same time, war (πόλεμος) entered along with (συνεισηλθεν) the same life (βίω)” (4.2.7). Here we find a suggestion that the pastoral life is inherently problematic, notwithstanding the position taken in book 3 that it is acceptable to use animals in agriculture, albeit without eating them. From the pastoral phase of human life, Dicaearchus arrives at the final mode of living, the agricultural one (γεωργικόν) (4.2.8).

setting up Dicaearchus’s account, the Golden Age people of Greece “killed (φονεύειν) no ensouled being (ἔμψυχον)” (4.2.1).³⁹ Summing up that account of “the blessed life (μακάριόν...βίον) of the most ancient people (παλαιοτάτων),”⁴⁰ Porphyry says that “not less than other things, abstinence from ensouled beings is what fulfilled (συνεπλήρου) it.” In that time, he says, “War did not exist, because injustice (ἀδικίας) had been expelled,” whereas “both war and greediness (πλεονεξία) toward each other entered together later (ὕστερον) at the same time with the unjust treatment (ἀδικία) of animals,” specifically, their slaughter (φόνος), and luxury (τροφήν)—a concomitance of evils that causes Porphyry to “wonder at those who have dared to say that abstinence from animals is the mother of injustice (ἀδικίας)” (4.2.9). The fact that Porphyry’s evident double aim in this passage—“showing that the golden race, the best, abstained from eating meat” and “linking injustice toward animals with the origin of war and murder”—“is not drawn from Dicaearchus’s text without a certain amount of interpretive work” lends clarity to his intervention, which fits into a vegetarian, pro-animal schema consistent with the overall argument of *Abstinence*.⁴¹ We see, in fact, an emphasis on non-harming and

³⁹ In this, Porphyry makes a claim that Clark (2000a, 179n544) says “is almost certainly [his] emphasis.”

⁴⁰ Porphyry uses a similar phrase (τῆς μακαρίας ζωῆς) to refer to the “blessed life” of the soul at 4.20.11.

⁴¹ While these quotations from Patillon and Segonds (1995, 3:xiv) recognize Porphyry’s foregrounding of injustice toward animals in his engagement with Dicaearchus, Bouffartigue and Patillon offer a somewhat different perspective in an earlier volume of the Budé commentary when they cast Porphyry as less interested in animals than Theophrastus (1979, 2:20 with n3). As they put it, “In the murder and consumption of animals, Porphyry sees only one victim, which paradoxically is the human being, or rather his soul,” whereas “Theophrastus campaigns also for animals...deplor[ing] cruelty,” as we see in the reference to ὁμότης at 2.7.2. Theophrastus’s “attitude,” they add “prefigures that of Plutarch, who displays his pity for animals in *On Flesh Eating*” (Bouffartigue and Patillon 1979, 2:20 with n4, citing *Esu* 994e and

kinship with animals in Empedocles' Golden Age encomium, part of the Theophrastean discourse that Porphyry appropriates: "Kypris was queen... / They would appease her with pious (εὐσεβέεσσιν) statues, / and painted animals... /...The altar was not drenched by the unceasing slaughter of bulls" (2.21.2-4).⁴² As Porphyry goes on to say, "I think that when friendship (φιλίας) and perception of relatedness (συγγενές) held fast all beings (πάντα), no one killed any being (οὐθὲν), considering the other animals (τὰ λοιπὰ τῶν ζώων) to be related (οἰκεῖα)" (2.22.1).⁴³ Nor are the bloodless sacrifices of the Golden Age entirely of the past. As Porphyry says, they "are even now still preserved (σφύζεται) among some peoples—traces, as it were, of the truth" (2.21.4).

Porphyry explicitly invokes the Golden Age in one of his mimetic appeals, an exhortation near the end of book 3:

Let us imitate the golden race (χρυσοῦν γένος); let us imitate those who have been set free (ἐλευθερωθέντας). For indeed Aidos and Nemesis and Dike kept company (ὠμίλει) with [the former] because they were satisfied (ἠρκοῦντο) with the fruit

996f-97a). Thus, as with Theophrastus, Bouffartigue and Patillon separate the Plutarchan passages, which Porphyry employs to support his argument, from Porphyry's own notional point of view.

⁴² See also 2.27.7, an overlapping excerpt of the same Empedoclean passage, which notes that in this era "this was...the greatest defilement (μύσος) among people, / to bereave [bulls] of their life (θυμὸν) and then devour / their...limbs." (The adjective modifying "limbs," ἦια, rendered as "*puissants*" by Bouffartigue and Patillon, is an epithet of Apollo in the *Iliad* but otherwise undefined in LSJ.)

⁴³ This observation, among other textual evidence, is at odds with Edwards's observation (2018, 28) that "little in what is said" in *Abstinence's* Golden Age accounts "suggests that these people were vegetarian out of a concern for animals." See also Empedocles' cri de coeur at 2.31.5: "Alas that the day without pity did not utterly destroy me in former times, before I contrived the merciless (σχετλι') acts of devouring (βορᾶς) for my lips."

(καρπῶ) of the earth (γῆς)—fruit that for them “the wheat-giving earth bore spontaneously (αὐτομάτη) in ungrudging abundance (πολλόν τε καὶ ἄφθονον).” (3.27.10)⁴⁴

For Porphyry, then, the people of the Golden Age are not just a figment of an imaginary past but a model to imitate. Needing little and consequently finding abundance in what the earth gives them, they were suitable company for Justice and her attendants. The Golden Age and the narrative of moral decline, here as in other writers, serves the purpose of admonishing those in the present by showing that a better way once existed—a life of simplicity and the justice of non-harming. And if such a life and such justice once existed—and “traces” of it “are even now still preserved among some peoples”—there is a possibility that they can be re-created.

V. Conclusion

I began this chapter by considering Porphyry’s denial that animal sacrifice is necessary for personal or civic reasons, then looked at how his notion of rendering to the gods what is due to them excludes such sacrifice. As I have done elsewhere, I employed the thematics of good and bad imitation and mixing as an interpretive frame, in this case both for Porphyry’s theology and demonology and for the accounts he presents of the origins of sacrifice. In conclusion, I now turn to the question, contested among contemporary scholars, of whether one can detect an underlying discomfort in the practice of animal

⁴⁴ The motif of the departure of Aidos and Nemesis from human society goes back to Hes. *Op.* 197-200. In Aratus’s rendering in *Phaen.* 96-136, Justice flees humanity with the ascendancy of the race of bronze, who he says “first...partook of (ἐπάσαντ’) plowing oxen (βοῶν...ἀροτήρων)” (132).

sacrifice in the Greco-Roman world. While one might register such discomfort as a defensive undertone in opponents' suggestion that justice for animals amounts to impiety,⁴⁵ we can find in Porphyry's transitional remarks between books 2 and 3 a vision that includes animals as well as humans and gods in the interconnected ideals of justice, purity, and piety.

In his lengthy challenge to the piety of animal sacrifice, Porphyry has provided much grist for contemporary scholars, especially his allusion to the Bouphonia, a ritual in which "an ox sacrifice was followed by a 'trial' at which guilt for the killing was eventually fixed on the sacrificial axe or knife."⁴⁶ To an extent, the scholarly discussion has centered on the question of how troubling animal sacrifice in general was for its ancient practitioners. This question, in turn, relates to the idea of the sacrificial animal's consent. According to Parker, "recent interpretations," aligned, respectively, with Burkert and Vernant, "are largely divided between those which see sacrifice...as a dramatization

⁴⁵ "Justice is mixed up and motionless things are moved if we extend justice not to the rational alone but also to the irrational" (1.4.1)—a claim I discuss below. For the evocation of impiety here, see again Clark 2000a, 124n15.

⁴⁶ Parker 2003. See *Abst.* 2.30.4. In general terms, the centrality of animal sacrifice in Greco-Roman religion has been widely assumed (see, e.g., Parker 2003 and Graf 2012, 47), though recently challenged in the Roman context of 200 CE and beyond (see Elsner 2012). Regarding the Bouphonia, Obbink (1988, 284) observes that "Theophrastus' description of the bizarre rite has been made to stand as evidence in, if not the basis of, nearly every modern discussion of sacrificial practice" despite the fact that "this rite (in particular the sacrifice of a domestic draught animal)...is without question aberrant in Greek sacrificial procedure." In the view of Faraone and Naiden (2012, 2), the Bouphonia—Burkert's "primary source for guilt-ridden sacrifice," as they put it—was "both idiosyncratic and distorted by Pythagorean and vegetarian concerns."

of killing, violence, and the associated guilt, and those for which...it is a way of legitimizing meat-eating by treating the taking of life that necessarily precedes it as a ritual, i.e. a licensed act.”⁴⁷ Of these two approaches, Parker says, “the former...stresses that rituals such as the Bouphonia raise the issue of sacrificial guilt, the latter that they resolve it.”⁴⁸ Whether emphasis is placed on guilt or absolution, however, animal sacrifice is part of a permission structure that presupposes a question of legitimacy. *Abstinence*, as we have seen, targets all three sources of permission and legitimacy. The gods do not need, desire, or approve of animal sacrifice, Porphyry tells us. The state’s calls for such sacrifices should not be binding. And the animals themselves do not freely “give” their lives but have them violently and illegitimately taken away.⁴⁹

Discomfort in the sacrificial act would explain why, as Parker observes in his general description of the ritual, “water was sprinkled on the victim to force it to ‘nod’ agreement to its own sacrifice.”⁵⁰ “The desire to play down the violence in the sacrificial ceremony,” as Detienne puts it,⁵¹ can likewise be seen in the tales of animals who, expressing the gods’ will, conveniently indicated their own willingness to be

⁴⁷ Parker 2003. See Burkert (1972) 1983 and Vernant 1989. According to Graf (2012, 49), “The idea that sacrifice is a Neolithic invention among pastoralists and agriculturists, who adapted hunting techniques for symbolic use, is becoming more and more plausible.” Another grand theory, that of Girard (1977), posits, as Ramelli (2012) puts it, “that every culture is founded on the collective murder of a surrogate victim” and that “the sacrificial act restores peace in a previously disrupted community.”

⁴⁸ Parker 2003.

⁴⁹ See the discussion in chapter 2, section IVA.

⁵⁰ Parker 2003.

⁵¹ Detienne (1979) 1989, 9. See also Scheid (2003), who notes that, in the Roman context, “representations of traditional sacrifice underline calm.”

sacrificed⁵²—in the common-man section of *Abstinence*, we hear of a bird who, “having flown down, sat on the altar, and gave itself to the hands of the arch-priest” (1.25.7) and a cow who “rushed through [a gate] and stood beside the altar” (1.25.9). Likewise, in Graf’s view, “Ovid’s etiological catalog of sacrificial animals that...called their death upon themselves” and “other myths [that] tell the same story”⁵³ suggest that “at least at some point in ancient society, killing an animal in sacrifice was perceived as not just matter-of-fact.”⁵⁴ However, we need not place a temporal limit on discomfort in the sacrificial act, since in our own time we see happy animal mascots for animal-based foods projecting an eagerness to be sacrificed, and may perceive our own eager projection of “the animal” within (greed, dirtiness, cowardice, stupidity) onto flesh-and-blood animals.

The discomfort we may discern in the sacrificial act must, on the other hand, be considered against the manifest discomfort in recusal from sacrifice and the flesh of a sacrificed animal, in the perceived defiance of the gods (and the polity), which Porphyry

⁵² “History is full, indeed, [with examples of] how [the gods] themselves prescribed to people both the act of sacrificing to them and eating (προσφέρεσθαι) the sacrificed [animals] (τῶν τυθέντων)” (1.25.1).

⁵³ Graf 2012, 45-47. Regarding Ovid, Graf (2012, 46n41) cites *Fast.* 1.337-456 and points to “similar stories” of aetiological blame, in *Abst.* 2.10, “presumably both from Theophrastus”: the goat in Ikarios, for eating a vine (2.10.1), and the ox at the Dipolieia, for eating the sacred cake (2.10.2). However, Graf notes (2012, 46n41), in *Abst.* 2.22-23, “Porphyry discusses whether the animals that deserve death should be sacrificed, and he rejects [the practice] for theological reasons.” Ovid’s Pythagoras speculates that the killing of animals may have begun with the dangerous ones and proceeded to goats and pigs as punishment for eating crops, though he vehemently insists on the innocence of sheep and the plow-driving ox (*Met.* 15.106-142); cf. Detienne (1979) 1989, 6.

⁵⁴ Graf 2012, 45-47.

strives to address in book 2. The idea that abstaining from blood sacrifice would compromise piety is connected, in a way, with the opponents' idea, expressed at *Abst.* 1.4.1, that “justice is mixed up (συγχεῖσθαι) and motionless things (ἀκίνητα) are moved if we extend justice not to (πρὸς) the rational (λογικὸν) alone but also to the irrational (ἄλογον).”⁵⁵ Whether one is avoiding sacrifice or treating animals with justice, one is perceived to be interfering with the divine order, with the proper arrangement of gods, humans, and animals. One of Porphyry's aims in *Abstinence* is, then, to show that not eating animals, and indeed not killing the harmless ones, is consistent with justice and piety. In setting up book 3, Porphyry says:

Since justice (δικαιοσύνης) possesses its greatest beauty (κάλλιστον) in piety (εὐσεβεία) toward (πρὸς) the gods, and since this (ταύτης) comes together (συνισταμένης) to the greatest extent possible (ὡς ἔνι μάλιστα) through abstinence (ἀποχῆς), there is no reason for fear concerning justice (δικαίου) toward (πρὸς) people, that in some way we may break (θραύσωμεν) it while preserving (διασφύζοντες) holiness (ὁσίαν) toward (πρὸς) the gods. (3.1.2)

In the triangle of animals, humans, and gods mapped out by Porphyry's opponents in *Abst.* 1.4, gods and humans (τὸ λογικὸν) are pitted against animals (τὸ ἄλογον). Porphyry reconfigures this triangle. Whereas inclusion of animals in the justice relationship—which Porphyry refers to implicitly two sentences later (3.1.3) and explicitly in the next two sentences (3.1.4)—“mixes it up” for opponents, such inclusion (through abstinence)

⁵⁵ Among three other uses of ἀκίνητος in *Abstinence*, one refers to “the first god (ὁ...πρῶτος θεὸς)” (2.37.1), retrospectively correcting the misconception that extension of justice to animals—or, really, anything humans are capable of—could ever “move the motionless.”

makes justice/piety (both possible referents for ταύτης) “com[e] together” for Porphyry. The bad, unstable mixture connoted by συγχεῖσθαι and κινεῖσθαι becomes a good, stable mixture, indicated by συνισταμένης. The cohesion of συνισταμένης and the saving force of διασώζοντες also stand in contrast to the brokenness suggested by θραύσωμεν, which Porphyry says we need not fear. Aligning piety, abstinence, and justice, Porphyry posits a triangle of animals, humans, and gods in which all are included in the justice relationship (τὸ δίκαιον...πρὸς for animals [3.1.4] and humans [3.1.2]; τήν...όσίαν...πρὸς for gods [3.1.2]) without confusion or conflict.⁵⁶ The three groups, in turn, correspond to the triple concerns of *Abstinence*—justice, purity, and piety.

Far from being yet another turn in an extended plea for the preservation of personal purity, Porphyry’s discussion of sacrifice incorporates a strong justice element, an other-directed element. In *Abstinence*, justice for animals, purity for humans, and piety for gods are not only consistent but interconnected, even inseparable. Porphyry’s treatise in its fullness shows that these principles are not merely self-directed. Each one—a kind of reverence—is comprehensible only in light of the other, an other recognized as one’s own.

⁵⁶ The homology between justice toward men and piety toward the gods is supported by a corresponding homology between impiety and injustice, as highlighted in the LSJ definition of ἀσεβεία, which characterizes it as “opp. ἀδικία,” via a citation from Xen. *Cyr.* 8.8.7: διὰ τὴν ἐκείνων περὶ μὲν θεοῦς ἄ. περὶ δὲ ἀνθρώπων ἀδικίαν. Likewise under the definition of ἀσεβέω, we find “opp. ἀδικέω, Ar. *Th.*367.”

Epilogue

In this dissertation, I have aimed to capture the fullness of Porphyry's *On Abstinence from Animals*, read it sympathetically, and connect its arguments in a coherent, unified interpretation built around its three grand themes (justice, purity, and piety) by approaching it as a work of moral suasion and a work of literature, whose intra- and intertextual resonances yield something more than a collection of propositions or sources. In reading this way, I hope to have brought out underexamined aspects of the text and to have pushed beyond interpretations that bracket the justice arguments regarding animals, view those arguments as subordinated to a self-directed concern for personal purity, or take the ostensible demographic restrictions on abstinence to be decisive. In Porphyry's treatise, a discourse of "more and less" with respect to animal reason is consistent with the "more and less" of abstinence itself among the work's priestly and philosophical exempla and the results, "more and less" successful, of assimilating oneself to god "as much as possible." Throughout, I have sought to highlight the other-directedness, inclusiveness, and sense of moral possibility in Porphyry's discourse, not just in his treatment of justice toward animals but also in his treatment of purity and piety.

In chapter 1, I focused, as book 3 does, on justice as an other-directed principle, considering it first as a relationship—a being-toward another. I explored the implications of inclusion in and exclusion from that relationship and how Porphyry negotiates the concept of "use." I also examined how Porphyry strives to push moral concern beyond the human in response to Stoic *oikeiosis* and Epicurean contractarianism and utility. Turning finally to the inner state of the moral agent, I considered justice as a virtue, elaborating on its inseparability from harmlessness.

In chapter 2, I considered animal minds and the ways that different conceptions of those minds have provided a basis for arguing that justice should be extended or denied to animals. In the matter of rationality, I presented two opposing models, one positing a difference in kind between human and animal, a dichotomy of rational and non-rational; the other, a difference of degree (“more and less”). I looked at the various ways that Porphyry’s opponents—Aristotle as well as Stoics—assign and categorize mental functions and behaviors to construct and maintain the border between human and nonhuman, and Porphyry’s responses, with regard to perception, “appearance,” and belief; memory; instinct; virtue, vice, madness, and emotion; and, most of all, language. Shifting my focus, I then looked at how Porphyry invites us to think of bodies, perceptions, and reason as packaged together and to regard perceptive bodies as the ground on which the choice between harm and harmlessness toward animals becomes meaningful. From a different perspective, I considered harm as part of the condition of being in a body, contrasting Plutarch’s emphasis on the necessity of harm with Porphyry’s characteristic emphasis on the possibility of harmlessness. As a practice tending toward assimilation to god, I argued, Porphyry’s abstinence *needs* its other-directedness.

In chapter 3, I looked at how Porphyry capitalizes on the philosophical-ethical notion of simple living while prescribing a form of asceticism. Whether fully or partly abstinent, Porphyry’s models point toward a life characterized by radical self-control, free of the bad mixture, impurity, and harmfulness that meat-eating entails. Surveying his Greek and non-Greek exempla of abstinence in book 4, I showed how they represent varying degrees of purity and justice, varying degrees of good and bad mixing. As with

Porphyry's discussion of justice, this model of "more and less" in the category of abstinent exempla offers an alternative to a simple dichotomy; instead of the "pure" and "impure," there are people with different measures of purity, each of whom attains some recognition and approbation while the goal remains full abstinence and harmlessness "as much as possible." I also showed how justice for animals, the theme of book 3, remains a persistent concern in both the ascetic recommendations in book 1 and the exempla and theory of purity in book 4.

In chapter 4, I looked at how Porphyry's ideas on purity are closely connected with his theory of soul. In considering his treatment in both *Abstinence* and *Sententiae* of the soul's necessary fall and its possible re-ascent, I sought to shift the focus of interpretation at least partly away from the self-directed to the other-directed, i.e., harmlessness to human and nonhuman alike. With regard to the philosopher's place in the world, I considered the interplay of contemplation and action, reclaiming for Porphyry, again, some of the other-directedness that scholars have tended to erase. In discussing Porphyry's ostensible elitism, I foregrounded the universalizing aspirations in his ethical system, drawing a distinction between what people are willing to do and what, in their essence as human beings, they are able to do and ought to do—namely, abstain from eating animals while directing their souls away from the body, up toward intellect.

In chapter 5, I explored the implications of two of Porphyry's claims: that Theophrastus "appropriately forbids those wishing to be truly pious from sacrificing ensouled beings" and that "the completely law-abiding and pious person" must practice full abstinence. I considered how Porphyry responds to personal, civic, and religious claims of necessity in relation to sacrifice; his theory of piety as a form of justice, of

rendering what is due to the gods; and his theology and demonology, again within the interpretive frame of imitation, which I also applied to the apparently contradictory accounts that Porphyry provides of the origins of sacrifice. Like the ascetic priests and philosophers of book 4, the Golden Age people described in book 2 provide a model of abstinence, with the added dimension of universality. Finally, positing an underlying cultural discomfort both with the practice of animal sacrifice and the recusal from it, I considered how Porphyry seeks in book 2 to reconcile the claims of purity, justice, and piety. Most of all, I hope to have shown that the lengthy discussion of sacrifice in book 2 is an integral part of Porphyry's argument for a vision of justice that includes not just humans and gods but animals—our perceptive and, to some degree, rational *oikeia* in the class of ensouled beings.

Appendix

A Summary of *On Abstinence from Ensouled Beings*

Porphyry starts in book 1 with a catalog of combined Stoic and Peripatetic anti-vegetarian arguments, drawn from Plutarch's *On the Cleverness of Animals* (964a-c): justice is confused if we extend it to animals instead of using them (1.4-1.5.2); there is no justice among animals (1.5.3); we cannot commit injustice against those that cannot exercise justice toward us (1.6.1); we need them for food (1.6.2); killing an ox or sheep is no worse than killing a fir or an oak (1.6.3). An extended excerpt of the Epicurean Hermarchus follows in which the advantageous is presented as the basis of justice (specifically, non-killing) among people (1.7-9) and for withholding justice from animals for the sake of safety and food (1.10-1.12.4). Hermarchus also lays out Epicurean contractarianism: unable to make a contract with animals, he says, humans are therefore allowed to kill them (1.12.5-6). After the Hermarchus excerpt, Porphyry runs through a catalog of common-man arguments: flesh eating (though not raw flesh eating) is in accordance with nature (1.13.2); no nation abstains from eating animals (1.13.5); there is an inborn and just war between humans and animals (1.14.1); meat does not damage either the soul or the body (1.15.1-2); none of the sages was a vegetarian (1.15.3); without meat-eating, animals will overburden the earth (1.16.1-2); animals are necessary for medical treatment (1.17.1-3); what if plants also have souls and we commit injustice against them by laying hands on them? (1.18, 1.21.2); humanity rules over all animals as god rules over humans (1.19.2); if animal souls are mortal, killing them is not wrong; if their souls are immortal, killing them expedites their return to human nature (1.19.3-1.20.1); it is just to kill animals that attack humans or the animals living with humans or

crops (1.20.2); for consistency, vegetarians should not use animal products such as milk, wool, eggs, or honey (1.21.1); we sacrifice animals out of piety (1.22.1); gods, demigods, and heroes are celebrated as killers of animals (1.22.1-2); vegetarianism is apt to encourage cannibalism by holding that eating pigs and cattle is equivalent to eating humans (1.23.1); abstaining from meat will cause the earth to be taken over by snakes and birds (1.24); there are many instances of gods teaching people to sacrifice and eat animals (1.25.1-10); if people are led to believe that taking life is unjust, how will they defend themselves against enemy attacks? (1.26.1); and, finally, Pythagoras gave meat to athletes (1.26.2), and some say that the Pythagoreans taste sacrificial animals (1.26.3).

From 1.27 onward, Porphyry discusses the contemplative life, asceticism, and their relation to vegetarianism, from which he appears to exclude craftsmen, athletes, soldiers, sailors, and orators in favor of “the person who has taken account of who he is, where he has come from, and where he ought to hasten” and who “assumes things about food and other proper functions that are removed from those in accordance with other livelihoods” (1.27.1). Elevating the contemplative life and the unwritten divine law above civic laws (1.28.3-4), Porphyry identifies the intellect (*nous*) as the true self and advocates life in accordance with that true self (1.29.4). The chapters that follow thematize the path back to the self through “words and...deeds” (1.29.6) that separate us from perceptible things and their attendant passions (1.30.1). Speaking of the need to “stand aloof” from the complex of perception, *phantasia*, unreason, and passions (1.31.1) in favor of contemplation of *nous* (1.31.2), Porphyry singles out sensations arising from food (1.32.2) and, under the rubric of taste, the taking in of “alien bodies,” i.e., meat (1.34.4)—part of a brief catalog of dangers posed by each of the five senses (1.33.5-

34.5). Porphyry goes on to celebrate ascetics set apart from ordinary society (1.36.1) and their way of life, which is “simple and self-sufficient and filled as little as possible with mortal things” (1.37.4)—a life in which, “giving only that which is necessary to nature,” one “will refuse everything besides this as striving for pleasure” (1.38.2). Such asceticism is necessary, Porphyry explains, because it is not possible to maintain focus both on sensual materiality and the immaterial (1.39-42). Irrationality, he says, “is like horses without a charioteer” (1.43.2), but the virtuous person “always has reasoning present, in command, and guiding unreasoning like a charioteer” (1.44.1).

In the remainder of book 1, Porphyry offers ascetic arguments against meat-eating. Inanimate foods, he suggests, are easier to obtain than meat; they are less expensive, less pleasurable, and “lighter in digestion and swifter in bodily assimilation,” and they “rous[e] desires less and contribut[e] less to the thickness and strength of the body” (1.46.2). Porphyry casts vegetarianism as a liberation from “an *Iliad* of ills”—both physical and practical—and a supplier of “peace for reasoning, which provides salvation to us” (1.47.2). Assimilating vegetarianism to frugality, he says, “I think nearly every philosopher, choosing frugality instead of luxury, would approve the person satisfied with few things rather than the person who needs more” (1.48.1). In chapters 49 to 51, Porphyry makes the case that what is eaten beyond bodily necessity—that is, beyond the easily obtainable and easily prepared—cannot bring peace to the soul. Meat does not contribute to but rather thwarts the health of the body (1.52.1-3), he says, notwithstanding what ordinary people think—their intractability suggests that opponents’ fears of a planet overrun by animals because of universal vegetarianism are unfounded (1.52.4). Continuing on the theme of health, Porphyry says that it is to be taken care of “not out of

fear of death, but for the sake of not being thwarted in relation to the goods that come from contemplation” (1.53.2). Conversely, “an undisturbed soul and the disposition of thought toward true being” are “especially suitable things for maintaining” health (1.53.2). Porphyry presents the fear of death as underlying not just the fear of abstinence (1.54.2) but also the pursuit of wealth and fame (1.54.3). His proposed solution to the disturbances caused by these fears and desires, specifically with regard to food, is for people to “take the necessary as a limit” (1.54.5) and to pursue “self-sufficiency” and “assimilation to god” (1.54.6). The desire for luxuries, Porphyry suggests, is a product of “miseries within” (1.55.2), “terrible disturbance” (1.55.3), a “long[ing] for being filled with what is absent” (1.55.3). Returning to meat, Porphyry says that the contemplative person will not search it out as though unsatisfied with “food from that which is unensouled” (1.56.1). Such a person would abstain from meat even if doing so were painful (1.56.2), but, as Porphyry emphasizes, the current investigation is not about the endurance of bodily pain but rather about the abandonment of needless pleasures (1.56.4). Concluding on the theme of assimilation to the divine, Porphyry declares, “It is not possible with simply any diet whatsoever, and not at all with flesh eating, to achieve appropriation to god, not even to any of the individual gods—to say nothing of the god who is above all and is beyond incorporeal nature” (1.57.2).

In Book 2, Porphyry takes up the problem of animal sacrifice as it relates to piety. There is, he argues, a logical separation between killing animals and eating them (2.2.1-2), and, with regard to the latter, “Abstinence...is prescribed not simply for all human beings, but for philosophers,” especially “those attaching their happiness to god and the imitation of god” (2.3.1), just as in civic life different dietary rules exist for priests

(2.3.2). It is fallacious, Porphyry says, to argue that a putative necessity to kill some animals (because of destructiveness or danger, or in sacrifice) entails either eating them or killing domesticated ones—or that the putative necessity of meat for some people (athletes, soldiers) entails the same for philosophers (2.4.1-3).

Drawn from Theophrastus's *On Piety*, a trajectory of sacrifice follows—from roots and leaves (2.5.2) to acorns (2.5.6) to barley (2.6.1) to wheat cakes (2.6.3) to flowers, wine, honey, and olive oil (2.6.7), before the initiation of blood sacrifices (2.7.2). Two negative exempla, atheistic Thoans, who made no sacrifice, and Bassarai, who made human sacrifices, which they ate, were suitably punished (2.8.1-3). In the case of Athens, aetiological stories cast animal sacrifices as stemming from an accidental killing (pigs 2.9.2), a granting of assent (sheep 2.9.3), or an original crime (goats 9.10.1 and oxen 9.10.2), though “the greatest number of people allege famine and the injustice that comes from it as the cause” (2.10.3). Different peoples sacrifice different animals—and correspondingly have different rules of piety and impiety—according to their needs (2.11.1-2). However, Porphyry points to the non-necessity of meat-eating, short of famine and war (2.12.1), and urges honoring the gods not with animals but with crops (2.12.2-3), for “when animals are sacrificed it brings some harm to them because they are deprived of life” (2.12.3). In response to the arguments that plants are harmed in vegetarianism (1.18 and 1.21.2) and that vegetarians must avoid all animal products to be consistent (1.21.1), Porphyry says that plants let their fruit drop (2.13.1); we share in the work of the beehive and so rightfully share its produce (2.13.2); and crops, in some sense, belong to us (2.13.3). “That which is inexpensive and easy to obtain is holier than that which is hard to come by, and it is pleasing to the gods,” Porphyry says (2.13.4); plants, he insists,

are easier to obtain than animals (2.14.1-2). Moreover, as he says, concluding for a moment his excerpt from Theophrastus, “divinity looks to the character of the sacrificers rather than the magnitude of that which is sacrificed” (2.15.3). Examples of the gods’ preference for humble offerings—crops, not cattle—are then presented (2.16-17); humble images of the gods, made from pottery and wood, are likewise closer to the divine than more-refined objects (2.18). In sacrifice, a pure soul is what pleases the gods (2.19.4).

Returning to Theophrastus, Porphyry repeats that the ancients sacrificed crops and, before that, grasses (2.20.2); libations consisted of water, then honey, oil, and finally wine (2.20.3). Turning, within the Theophrastean frame, to an excerpt from Empedocles (2.21.1-4), Porphyry alludes to the nonviolence of the Golden Age, which he says was characterized by the “friendship and perception of relatedness” toward animals (2.22.1). Responding to the just-war argument, Porphyry says that just as it is right to kill unjust evildoers among humans, so too with animals, but by the same token, “it is unjust” to kill harmless animals, “as is the case also with such humans” (2.22.2). On the other hand, harmful animals are unsuitable sacrifices even if killing them is allowed (2.23.1-2). Animal sacrifice, Porphyry says, should not be done for any of the three reasons for sacrificing to gods—to offer honor, express gratitude, or seek blessings (2.24.1). Pointing to self-interest, Porphyry observes that we sacrifice only animals that serve a need or offer pleasure (2.25.1), whereas the Jews of Syria, for example, burn the entire animal rather than eating it (2.26.2). Porphyry also touches on the abstinence of Egyptians and notes their belief in the kinship of animals, gods, and humans (2.26.5).

The aetiological discussion resumes with the observation that in the beginning sacrifices to the gods employed crops (2.27.1) until famine led to cannibalism and then

human sacrifice (2.27.1) and eventually the substitution of animals (2.27.3)—followed, it seems, by the tasting of animals (2.27.6). (Whether as part of the same narrative or a different narrative, satiety of lawful food [2.26.4] is also said to figure in the consumption of animals.) The important point, as before, is the temporal and ethical priority of crops, reinforced with another Golden Age image from Empedocles (2.27.7) and restated at 2.29.1. After Empedocles, we find a reference to the bloodless altar at Delos (2.28.1) and a somewhat contradictory set of claims about the abstinence of the Pythagoreans (2.28.2). The origin of the Bouphonia at Athens (part of the Diipoleia festival) is described: the taboo murder of a working ox who had eaten a sacrificial cake (2.29.1) led to a complex ritual of blame shifting by which guilt for the act was transferred to the sacrificial knife (2.30.3). Porphyry reiterates the unholiness of eating animals (2.31.2), offers the argument that harmlessness toward animals is conducive to harmlessness toward humans (2.31.3), and presents Theophrastus's conclusion that sacrificial offerings to the gods should be from crops alone (2.32.1).

In the next section of book 2, after noting that simple, non-animal sacrifices are allowed by the laws of the state (2.33.1), Porphyry proceeds to consider what sorts of sacrifices are appropriate for each divine level. It would be absurd, he notes, to make animal offerings to the gods when we ourselves abstain from meat, since the gods, who are not inferior to us, cannot need anything that we ourselves do not need (2.33.2). Appropriate sacrifices include “nothing perceptible,” for “the god who is above all” (2.34.2); “hymn singing arising from reason,” for “the intelligible gods” (2.34.4); and nothing beyond “barley groats and honey and the fruits of the earth and the other blooms,” for “the gods within heaven” (2.36.3-4). There follows a discussion, attributed

to “some of the Platonists” (2.36.6), of gods and *daemones*. “The first god” (2.37.1) and “the soul of the world” (2.37.2) need nothing, while for the “visible gods” (2.37.3), i.e., heavenly bodies, unensouled sacrifices are appropriate (2.37.3). Among *daemones*, Porphyry says, there are both good ones (2.38.2) and those that “may appropriately be called malicious” (2.38.4); the latter, responsible for the world’s troubles (2.40.1), lead people to believe that the gods are to blame (2.40.1-5), an impossibility, since “neither does the good ever harm nor is the bad ever beneficial” (2.41.1). It is in fact these bad *daemones*, not the gods, “who take pleasure in the ‘drink-offering and odor of a burnt sacrifice’ ” (2.42.3). Porphyry advises steering clear of such *daemones* and conducting one’s life so that “as far as possible, [one] will not need what they provide” (2.43.3).

Picking up the discussion of eating as logically separate from sacrificing, Porphyry observes, “All the theologians agreed on this point, that in expiatory sacrifices one must not partake of those that are sacrificed, and one must use purifications” (2.44.2). Even sorcerers, Porphyry says, try to protect themselves this way (2.45.1), “abstaining briefly from impure food,” although they are “filled with passions” (2.45.3). The pure person, on the other hand, “approaches the god...with a truly pure freedom from passion in the soul and the lightness of the body not weighed down by alien and foreign juices and passions of the soul” (2.45.4). The souls of slaughtered animals, Porphyry cautions, stay close to their bodies, disturbing the souls of those who eat their flesh (2.47.1-3), whereas “the philosopher...appropriately abstains from all ensouled food, striving to approach god, alone to the alone,...without trouble from accompanying entities,” i.e., other souls (2.49.1), and will not “bear to become a grave of dead bodies, full of defilements” (2.50.1). It would be unjust, Porphyry says, to kill an animal for divination,

just as it would be to kill a human for that purpose (2.51.2). In any case, the philosopher stands aloof from the material of divination—marriage, trade, slaves, promotion, fame (2.52.2-3). And as with any other type of sacrifice, animal sacrifice for divination does not entail eating (2.53.3). Chapters 54 and 55 catalog various customs of human sacrifice in ancient times. In 2.56, such human sacrifice is discussed in the context of wars, plagues, and droughts. Here too, Porphyry says, sacrifice did not entail eating (2.56.10); when people under siege ate each other, they were condemned (2.56.11), as when Hamilcar Barca ordered such cannibals trampled by elephants (2.57.1). Again, on the question of necessity, Porphyry says, “It is not the case that, since famines and war have been causes of eating other animals, it is necessary to accept this for pleasure” (2.57.3). Likewise, “it is not necessary also to eat animals just because people sacrificed them to some powers,” since “the people who sacrificed humans did not on account of this, at least, taste human flesh” (2.57.3). Chapter 58, once more, decouples sacrificing animals and eating them and repeats that animal sacrifices are made to *daemones*, not gods; chapter 59 repeats that ancient sacrifices were accomplished with cakes and crops.

In the conclusion, Porphyry connects animal sacrifice with extravagance and warns against “the notion of being able to bribe the divine power and make amends for injustice with sacrifices” (2.60.1). “The best offering to the gods,” he says, “is pure *nous* and an impassive soul”; modest material offerings are also acceptable with the right frame of mind (2.61.1). Finally, referring to Syrians, Jews, Phoenicians, and Egyptians who held fast to their various forms of abstinence, even enduring death, Porphyry says, “It would be extraordinary for us to choose to transgress the laws of nature and the divine rules on account of fears of people and of some slander from them” (2.61.7).

In book 3, Porphyry argues, primarily, for justice toward animals and, secondarily, for their possession of reason. As he puts it: “Since our opponents have said that [justice] ought to extend to similar beings alone and on account of this they cross off animals that are ‘without reason,’ come let us demonstrate the opinion that is true and also Pythagorean, showing that every soul in which there is a share of perception and memory is rational. With that proven, we will appropriately, even according to them, extend justice to every animal” (3.1.4). In the arguments that Porphyry presents in book 3, the opponents in question are, for the most part, the Stoics, who Porphyry says are “driven by self-love” to claim that every other animal is non-rational (3.2.4).

The argument for animal rationality begins with “expressive *logos*”—that is, language. Porphyry argues that, as with foreign languages, our own inability to understand animals’ vocalizations does not mean their speech or they themselves lack *logos* (3.3.3-5, 3.4.4, 3.5.2-4). There are reports of humans who have understood animal speech, both ancient and more recent, such as Apollonius of Tyana (3.3.6) and even a friend’s slave (3.3.7), not to mention Arabs and Etruscans, comprehenders of ravens and eagles respectively (3.4.1). Animal speech is varied in such a way as to suggest language (3.4.2-3). Some animals are able to imitate human speech sounds (3.4.4-5); if others are unable to do so, it could be because of a lack of training or of the requisite vocal equipment (3.4.6). Nor does a lack of speech mean a lack of *logos*, since “that way one would say that even the god who is above all, and the others, by not speaking, are not rational” (3.5.4); birds understand the silent gods and transmit their communications to humans (3.5.5). Porphyry relates his experience with a partridge who responded to his

speech (3.4.7); Crassus had a beloved lamprey that came when he called it (3.5.1).¹ More broadly, Porphyry appeals to the reader's experience of communication with animals (3.5.6-3.6.1 and 5) and the observation that animals learn from each other as well as from humans (3.6.5), notwithstanding the claim that animals do what they do merely by nature (3.6.4). Animals are calmed by music (3.6.2; see also 3.22.4). Even Stoics, Porphyry says, concede a form of logical thinking to dogs (3.6.3),² and animals' participation in *logos* has been recognized by Aristotle, Plato, Empedocles, Pythagoras, and Democritus (3.6.7).³

Moving on to internal *logos*, Porphyry lays down the principle of “more and less”—a principle that will figure prominently in the course of his argument for reason in animals (3.7.1 and 7). Humans and animals, Porphyry says, are similar in their bodies; they are subject to illness and other afflictions (3.7.2-7) and to the passions of the soul, including perceptions arising from the senses (3.8.1). In many cases, animals have sharper senses than humans (3.8.3-5; see also 3.14.2). The differences in bodily constitutions and keenness of senses are analogous, Porphyry suggests, to differences in reason—that is, again, differences of degree but not of essence or nature (3.8.6-9).

The rational soul and wisdom of animals, which Porphyry announces he will demonstrate (3.9.1), encompass their knowledge of their own weaknesses and strengths and of what is advantageous to them (3.9.2-4). Against the argument that signs of intelligence in animals are a matter of “nature,” Porphyry says such a claim is tantamount

¹ See also Plut. *Soll.* 976a.

² But see chapter 2, note 75.

³ But see chapter 2, section II.

to conceding that they are “rational by nature” (3.10.1; see also 3.11.2). Both humans and animals, Porphyry says, combine nature with learning, and animals have memory (3.10.3). Taking a theriophilic turn, Porphyry says that, like humans, animals have “both vices and jealousies” but that “they are not so heaped up as they are in humans” (3.10.4). Contrary to the argument that there is no justice among animals, Porphyry observes that gregarious animals “maintain justice toward each other” (3.11.1) and illustrates his point with various natural-history *topoi* of animals’ virtuous behavior (3.11.1).

In the remainder of this portion of text based on Academic arguments (ending at 3.24.6)⁴—Porphyry employs and circles back to various sorts of arguments and evidence: the epistemological argument (“If we do not understand how [animals’ deeds] are done on account of not being able to enter their reasoning, we will surely not predicate non-rationality of them because of this” [3.11.3; see also 3.15.4]); the anti-just-war argument (3.12.1-5, 3.18.4, 3.19.3); claims about animals’ behavior (3.11.1, 3.13.2-3, 3.14.1, 3.20.6, 3.23.4-5) and their understanding of human language (3.15.2); the learning argument (3.15.1, 3.22.3); the marginal-cases argument (not all humans make contracts [3.13.1], do human things well [3.15.3], hold assemblies [3.15.4], or have cities or written laws [3.15.5]); the argument that we deprive animals of reason so that we can eat them (3.16.1, 3.17.3; see also 3.6.6); the plant-animal-difference argument (3.18.2 and 4, 3.19.2), and the more-and-less argument (3.18.1, 3.22.8, 3.23.1-3, 3.23.6-8; see also 3.25.3)—as well as elaborations of the theme of necessity versus pleasure (3.18.3-5, 3.19.1, 3.20.6-7), a rebuttal of the notion that animals exist for our use (3.20.1-6), and

⁴ For the origins of 3.2 through 3.24 in extant and non-extant Plutarchan texts and earlier Academic polemics against Stoics, see notes 13-14 in the introduction and chapter 2, note 75.

stories adduced to show the respect in which animals have been held by “gods and divine men” (3.16.1-3.17.2).

Against the Stoic argument from opposites—if the rational exists, so must the irrational—Porphyry says that one can easily attribute the irrational to the unensouled rather than to animals, as his opponents wish to do (3.21.1-2); indeed, Porphyry says, “there is no animal that does not naturally possess some belief and reasoning power, just as it has perception and impulse” (3.21.4). To survive, to use perceptions to pursue useful things and avoid harmful things, Porphyry suggests, animals need the ability to reckon, judge, remember, and be attentive (3.21.5-7). Strato argues that perception requires thought (3.21.8-9), and if anyone argues that perception can exist without intellect, there remains the question of what faculty in animals makes use of the information gleaned from these perceptions after the perceptions have passed (3.22.1). Porphyry mocks the “as it were” trope, the idea that, e.g., “the bee ‘as it were’ remembers, and the swallow ‘as it were’ prepares, and the lion ‘as it were’ gets angry, and the deer ‘as it were’ becomes seized with fear,” statements that he suggests are “contrary to manifest facts” (3.22.5). Against a Stoic-informed doubt raised about how animals could possess the beginning of a trait (virtue or reason) that they cannot fully realize, Porphyry points to what he regards as just such an unfulfillable beginning in the Stoics’ own attribution to animals of tender love for children, which they posit as the beginning of justice in their account even while refusing to concede to animals any share of justice (3.22.6-7); he further claims, with some exaggeration, that Stoics place the perfection of reason beyond the capacity even of men—alluding, that is, to the extreme difficulty of achieving the status of a Stoic sage (3.23.3). Applying the Stoic notion of vice as rational, Porphyry

wryly observes that “every beast is filled full of vice” (3.22.8). Finally, there is an argument from deprivation: “It is not possible to come into a state of dysfunction without possessing the faculty of which the dysfunction is either a deprivation or mutilation or some other suffering,” as with rabid dogs, whose condition “testifies that animals have *logos* and the faculty of thought, and not an inferior one,” since “rabies and madness are a dysfunction of [this faculty] when it is troubled and mixed up” (3.24.2-5).

In 3.25, Porphyry switches sources from Plutarch to Theophrastus to make a case for kinship between humans and animals on the basis of their bodies and souls. In his own voice, Porphyry connects the sameness of soul with his earlier rebuttal of the just-war argument, noting that savage humans do not cause us to “cut off our relationship with the civilized ones” (3.26.2). Likewise, Porphyry says, we should not cut off tamer animals (3.26.3), against whom we commit “a great injustice” when we kill them along with savage animals and eat them (3.26.4). Once again, Porphyry sets pleasure in opposition to justice (3.26.5) and posits abstinence as a training in harmlessness toward other humans (3.26.6)—harmlessness, Porphyry suggests, is indeed possible (3.26.9 and 12). Justice itself “consists in abstinence and in the non-harming of anyone at all who does not harm” (3.26.9), while its “essence...is in the rational governing the irrational, and the irrational obeying” (3.26.10). With reason in control, “there is a complete necessity for a human being to be harmless toward anything whatsoever” (3.26.10). What’s more: “with the passions drawn in and desires and anger extinguished, and the reasoning power holding its appropriate sovereignty, assimilation to the Greater follows immediately. The Greater in the universe is absolutely harmless, and itself through its power is salvific of all and beneficent to all and self-sufficient in all things” (3.26.10-11).

While producing harmlessness, justice benefits the just person, since “by means of his training of himself and his self-control, he will increase his inner good—that is, his assimilation to god” (3.26.13).

In reference to Epicureans and Stoics, Porphyry says, “True justice is not preserved either when pleasure is the goal or when the primary things in accordance with nature make happiness complete—or, in any case, are all presented” (3.27.1). Rather, “when the goal is assimilation to god as much as possible,” Porphyry says, “harmlessness is preserved with respect to all beings” (3.27.1). Indeed, “the person “who does not bring harmlessness to a standstill among humans but extends it also to the other animals is more similar to god” (3.27.2) even if it is not possible to live without harming plants (3.27.3). Greater material need strengthens the bond of (spiritual) poverty (3.27.4); true riches means needing nothing, while committing injustice makes one poor even if one is rich in the conventional sense (3.27.5). The true self (intellect) stands in opposition to injustice and to its ally pleasure (3.27.6), and the person who lives in accordance with intellect is more discerning about what is to be chosen or not chosen than the one who lives in accordance with irrationality (3.27.7). A vision of the human race freed from injustice and the impulse to endlessly fill the leaky jar of passions (3.27.8-9) leads, finally, to a universalizing appeal to the Golden Age (3.27.10) and to the interconnected goals of self-sufficiency and harmlessness (3.27.11).

At the start of book 4, Porphyry says that he has already responded to the “pretexts” of defenders of meat-eating, who hide their intemperance behind the claim of “need” (4.1.1). He now promises to address the claim that there were no vegetarian sages

or peoples and “to produce solutions concerning advantage and the other questions” (4.1.2).⁵

A survey of abstinence in various nations begins with the Greeks, “because they are the nearest kin among those providing testimony” (4.2.1). For the Greeks, Porphyry uses Dicaearchus’s account of the Golden Age, which Porphyry casts as showing that the people of that time “killed no ensouled being” (4.2.1). In this time, described in mythical terms by Hesiod (4.2.2), a time before farming or any other craft (4.2.3), people were able to spend their days “without toils and cares,” and without illness (4.2.4), eating only moderate quantities of food, or less because of scarcity (4.2.4). With no war, life at the time was characterized by “leisure, a nonchalance about necessities, health, peace, friendship” (4.2.5); accordingly, it came to be seen as desirable by later people (4.2.6). Pastoralism, the next phase of human life, was characterized by the killing of harmful animals and the taming of non-harmful animals—a division drawn, to an extent, in Hermarchus’s account⁶—but it was also characterized by “excessive acquisition” and the emergence of war (4.2.7). In time, Porphyry says, with increased understanding of “the things that seemed useful,” people “fell into” agriculture (4.2.8). For Porphyry, the most notable aspect of this progression is that “war and greediness...entered...at the same time with the unjust treatment of animals,” specifically their slaughter (4.2.9). Turning to the Spartans, whom he casts as virtuous exemplars, Porphyry claims that Lycurgus, their

⁵ The advantage and usefulness to society of killing and eating animals is outlined, as we have seen, in the text of the Epicurean Hermarchus quoted in 1.7-12. Porphyry’s task will be to show that abstinence has not been disadvantageous to societies but quite the opposite.

⁶ For Hermarchus, even the ostensibly harmless animals would become harmful if sufficiently populous; otherwise, he says, they can be useful (1.11.2-5-1.12.1).

lawgiver, organized society so that there would be “the least possible” need to eat animals (4.3.1). Porphyry considers Lycurgus’s assault on luxury through the elimination of gold and silver coinage (4.3.3-6) and the institution of common meals—and the virtuous consequences of these measures (4.4.1-4.5.1). Without claiming that Sparta was actually vegetarian, Porphyry notes that “the simplicity of the Lacedaemonians concerning their diet...was established by law for the multitude.” Accordingly, vegetarianism was “appropriate” for the Spartans, while meat-eating is appropriate for “corrupted” polities (4.5.2).

In the next portion of book 4, Porphyry sets out to consider societies in which elites or members of religious communities were vegetarian or abstained from at least some animals. As he argues, in those nations in which people “were mindful of good order, civilized gentleness, and piety toward the divine,...for the salvation of cities and their advantage, abstinence was enjoined if not for all people, for some”—namely, “the ones who sacrificed to the gods for the city” (4.5.3). For some such priests, Porphyry says, abstinence from all animals was enjoined; for others, abstinence from some animals, with the result, in Porphyry’s view, that “drawn from all over, [the priests] appear to abstain from all animals if someone should interpret all of them as one” (4.5.5). If such protectors of the city are abstinent, Porphyry asks, “how could anyone dare to censure abstinence as harmful for cities?” (4.5.6).

After the Greeks, the first of the peoples to be considered is the Egyptians, among whom the priests, like philosophers, “gave their whole life to the contemplation and observation of the divine” (4.6.3). These philosopher-priests, were part of a circuit of reverence that also included the gods and animals (4.6.2 and 5; see also 4.9.6 and 4.9.9-

4.10.2). Resisting social mixing (4.6.2, 4.6.5-7), the priests “pursued simplicity, dignity, self-control, endurance, justice in everything, and lack of greed” (4.6.4), and their diet was, accordingly, “simple and unrefined” (4.6.8). Porphyry proceeds to lay out various forms of dietary abstinence, ranging from particular animals or particular times to complete abstinence from ensouled beings, as well as sexual abstinence (4.7.2-7), before a general discussion of the daily lives of the priests, which, he says, involved physical labor (4.8.1), astronomy, religious observance, hymns, and mathematics (4.8.2). Different hieratic levels corresponded to different levels of “exactness and self-control” (4.8.5). Animals emerge as a particular concern in relation to the Egyptian practice of representing gods as animals or combinations of human and animal (4.9.1-3) and of associating animals with the gods (4.9.4, 4.9.7-9). Porphyry concludes the Egyptian discussion by describing a burial rite involving purification through disposal of the belly, construed as a source of pollution (4.10.3-5).

In reference to the Jews, Porphyry speaks of their abstinence from various animals, notably pigs (4.11.1), before shifting to one sect, the Essenes (4.11.2), among whom he finds self-control (4.11.3, 4.12.7); shared possessions (4.11.5); a lack of commerce (4.11.8); communal dining, as with the Spartans (4.12.2-5, 4.13.1); a strong sense of justice (4.13.1) and truth (4.13.2); and a simple diet (4.13.5), as well as a steadfast refusal, even under torture, to eat prohibited foods (4.13.6). Porphyry says that the Essenes believed that “bodies are perishable, and their material is not lasting, but immortal souls always endure” (4.13.8). Turning again to the larger group of Jews, Porphyry notes that “it is forbidden to kill those [animals] who are suppliants and, in a manner of speaking, flee for refuge in houses—much less to eat them” (4.14.2)—just as it

is forbidden to “jointly kill parents with their young” or to slaughter “animals who work with humans even among the enemy” (4.14.2). Against the argument that vegetarians will cause animals to overrun the world, Porphyry says: “He [the Jewish lawgiver] did not fear that, by multiplying, the race of animals who are not sacrificed would cause famine for humans, for he knew first that the prolific are short-lived, then that mortality is great whenever they do not obtain care from humans, and indeed also that there are other animals who attack the one who multiplies” (4.14.3). There are many animals, Porphyry says, who have not overrun the earth despite not being eaten by humans, e.g., snakes, and, in any case, killing does not entail eating (4.14.3-4).

Briefly considering the Syrians, Porphyry offers a story of degeneration in line with the aetiologies of sacrifice in book 2: from abstinence to animal sacrifice to meat-eating (4.15.1-4). Turning to the Persian Magi and the cult of Mithras, Porphyry describes a hierarchy of three groups, with varying degrees of abstinence, including complete abstinence among “the most erudite” (4.16.2). In this chapter, Porphyry covers animal names given to people, which his source interprets as allegorical for the movement of human souls into animal bodies (4.16.3-4), then shifts to features of Greco-Roman culture such as Latin personal names and nicknames of gods derived from animals (4.16.5) and rules of abstinence from beans, fish, domesticated birds, and certain fruits at Eleusis (4.16.6).

Shifting, finally, to the Indian subcontinent, Porphyry elevates the wholly abstinent Brahmins and Samaneans (4.17.1-4.18.3). The hereditary Brahmin philosophers (4.17.1) are divided between those who live in the mountains and those who live by the Ganges, the former eating fruit and milk curdled with herbs; the latter, fruit

and some wild-grown rice (4.17.4-5). Both groups live in isolated huts and spend most of the day praying and singing hymns to the gods, with as little social contact as possible (4.17.6). Samanaeans, who are chosen (4.17.1 and 7), leave their children to the care of the king and their wives to the care of relatives (4.17.7). They live together outside the city, spending their days in discussions concerning the divine, and they eat rice, bread, fruit, and vegetables (4.17.8). Regarding both the Samanaeans and Brahmans, Porphyry observes that “others have such reverence for them..that even the king...comes to supplicate them” (4.17.10). Porphyry concludes with a description of the Samanaeans’ suicide by fire (4.18.1-3), a means of liberating the soul after a life seen as something like “a necessary service rendered to nature” (4.18.1).

Regarding the problem of generalized asceticism or vegetarianism—what if everybody did it?—Porphyry credits his response to Pythagoras: “With all people being virtuous, it is not possible for them to find a pathway to governance in which they reserve merit for virtue; but no one in fact would be so mad as not to believe it is incumbent on all people to strive to be virtuous” (4.18.4 and 6). At the same time, Porphyry says, “the law concedes many other things to the common person that it does not concede to the philosopher, but it does not even permit them to the one who lives well as a citizen” (4.18.7). With diet too, Porphyry says, “whatever has been conceded to the many, one would not concede it also to the best” (4.18.8). Observing, to sum up, that “the holy laws among nations and city-states have manifestly prescribed purity for members of religious guilds and forbidden them from eating ensouled beings and, as far as the multitude, have hindered them from some things, whether for the sake of piety or on account of some harms from the food” (4.18.9), Porphyry says, “It is necessary for the completely law-

abiding and pious person to abstain from all [ensouled beings], for if some people, in a partial manner, abstain out of piety from some animals, the person who is pious in every respect will abstain from all of them” (4.18.10). After citing a passage from Euripides concerning the abstinence of prophets of Zeus in Crete (4.19.1), Porphyry moves on to a theorization of purity.

In Porphyry’s theorization of purity, he says, “Holy men, indeed, regarded purity as the condition of being unmixed with one’s opposite” and mixing, conversely, as “contamination” (4.20.1), and he proceeds to explain how, by this principle, meat-eating (4.20.1) and also sex (4.20.3 and 6) pollute, as do birth and death (4.20.7) and the passions (4.20.8). What should be fattened, Porphyry says, is what is “most important in us”—“the rational soul,” not our flesh (4.20.11). Intellect, Porphyry says, “maintains our eternal life,” while the fattened body “makes the soul starve for want of blessed life and augments that which is mortal,...stain[ing] it by embodying it and pulling it down toward the alien” (4.20.11). One should, then, work to reduce the flesh’s needs to small amounts of easily obtained food (4.20.12). Indeed, Porphyry says, “if only it were possible to abstain without trouble even from the food that comes from crops, if only there were not this perishable aspect of our nature!” (4.20.13).

In the following chapter, Porphyry takes up the Nomads, Troglodytes, and Ichthyophagi—peoples that, unlike his presumed readers, are forced to eat meat because of the barrenness of their land (4.21.1). Instead of such peoples—or barbaric examples that are employed to “slander human nature” (4.21.2)—we must imitate “those that are pious and dedicated to the gods” (4.21.6). After that, Porphyry returns to examples of abstinence with a consideration of Triptolemus’s three laws still in force at Eleusis in the

time of Xenocrates (“to respect parents, honor the gods with crops, and not harm animals” 4.22.2) and Draco’s edict (a requirement to honor gods and local heroes with cakes and first fruits of crops 4.22.7)—at which point the text breaks off.

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