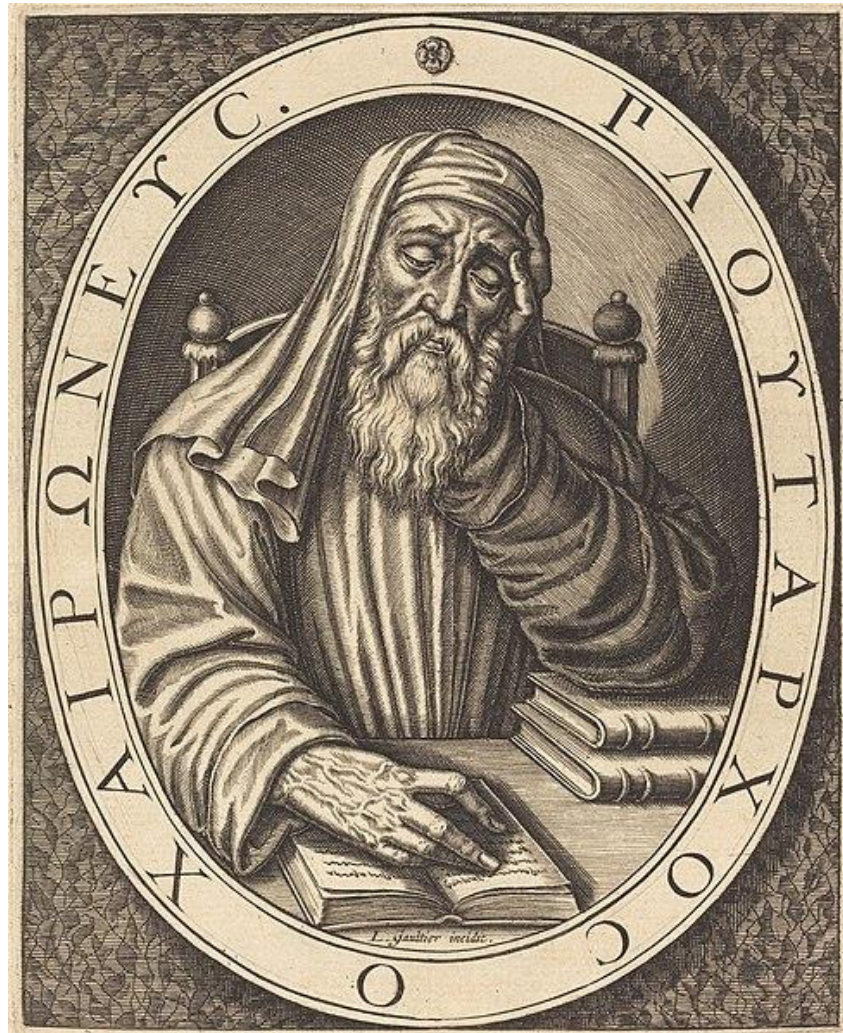


BELLARIA LVII



The Chaironean, Plutarch (engraving, Léonard Gaultier, d.1641)

PLUTARCH II

Introduction

Plutarch was one of the very few ancients who argued that animals were rational, sentient, felt pain and therefore deserved more care and respect than men usually accorded them. In a dialogue *On the Cleverness of Animals*, he introduces six speakers who first establish that animals are rational because they e.g. plan for the future, have memory, care for their young, show gratitude and can be courageous and big-hearted. Then, using hundreds of examples, the six debate whether land or sea animals are superior.

Aristotimus argues for land animals. Dogs put pebbles into a half-empty jar to bring the liquid to the top for drinking. Geese flying through eagles' territory carry stones in their beaks so they do not give themselves away by honking. Then what of the dim circus elephant, who, tired of being punished for forgetting his tricks, practised by moonlight to get them right? Cows in Persia can count: they lift a hundred buckets of water a day to irrigate the king's park - but not one more.

Phaedimus replies for marine animals. Fish must be brainy, being almost uncatchable. Sacred crocodiles in Egypt recognise the priests' voices when they call,

and open their mouths to have their teeth cleaned. Tunny fish are experts in optics and maths: having weak right eyes, they always keep their left eye to seaward to watch out for danger, and they feed in schools formed into perfect six-sided cubes. Dolphins have rescued countless humans from the sea. And so on and on and on...



The Lod Mosaic (not far from Tel Aviv, c. AD 300)

This week's *Bellaria* explores this theme in that and other essays. The first extract comes from *The Cleverness of Animals*:

Without reason and judgement, no animal could survive



960 E For nature, which does everything with some purpose and to some end, they rightly say, did not create a creature as sentient merely for the purpose of feeling something happening to it. No, for there being many creatures friendly to it, many also hostile, there was no time at all to survive if it had not learned to give the one sort a wide berth, while freely mixing with the other.

It is, to be sure, sensation that provides for each creature the capacity to recognize both [possibilities]; but as for the acts of seizing or pursuing [food], which ensue upon the perception of what is beneficial, as well as the eluding or fleeing of what is destructive or painful, **960 F** there is no mechanism for survival in creatures naturally incapable of some sort of reasoning and judging, remembering and paying attention.

ἡ γὰρ φύσις, ἦν ἕνεκά του καὶ πρὸς τι πάντα ποιεῖν ὀρθῶς λέγουσιν, οὐκ ἐπὶ ψιλῶ τῷ πάσχον τι αἰσθάνεσθαι τὸ ζῶον αἰσθητικὸν ἐποίησεν. ἀλλ' ὄντων μὲν οἰκείων πρὸς αὐτὸ πολλῶν, ὄντων δ' ἄλλοτριῶν, οὐδ' ἀκαρὲς ἦν περιεῖναι μὴ μαθόντι τὰ μὲν φυλάττεσθαι, τοῖς δὲ συμφέρεσθαι.

τὴν μὲν οὖν γνῶσιν ἀμφοῖν ὁμοίως ἡ αἴσθησις ἐκάστω παρέχει, τὰς δ' ἐπομένας τῇ αἰσθήσει τῶν μὲν ὠφελίμων λήψεις καὶ διώξεις, διακρούσεις δὲ καὶ φυγὰς τῶν ὀλεθρίων καὶ λυπηρῶν, **960 F** οὐδεμία μηχανὴ παρεῖναι τοῖς μὴ λογιζεσθαί τι καὶ κρίνειν καὶ μνημονεύειν καὶ προσέχειν πεφυκόσιν.

Why do animals have eyes and ears if not for some purpose?

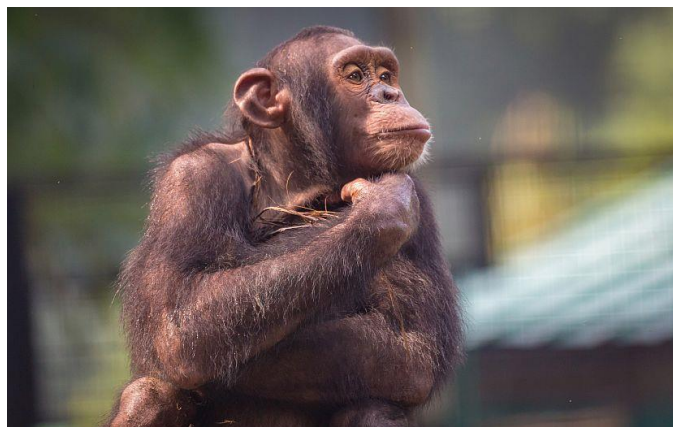


The tarsier (S.E. Asia)

960 F Those beings, then, which you [Stoics] deprive of all expectation, memory, design, or preparation, and of all hopes, fears, desires, or griefs—they will have no use for eyes or ears either, even though they have them. Indeed, to be rid of all feeling and imagination that has no use for these capacities, would be better, **961** rather than to toil and grieve and feel pain, with no means available by which these will be averted.

960 F ἀλλ' ὣν ἂν ἀφέλης παντάπασι προσδοκίαν, μνήμην, πρόθεσιν, παρασκευὴν, τὸ ἐλπίζειν, τὸ δεδοικέναι, τὸ ἐπιθυμεῖν, τὸ ἀσχάλλειν—οὔτ' ὀμμάτων ὄφελος οὐδὲν αὐτοῖς παρόντων οὔτ' ὤτων. αἰσθήσεως τε πάσης καὶ φαντασίας τὸ χρώμενον οὐκ ἐχούσης ἀπηλλάχθαι βέλτιον **961** ἢ πονεῖν καὶ λυπεῖσθαι καὶ ἀλγεῖν, ᾧ διακρούσεται ταῦτα μὴ παρόντος.

Without intelligent mental activity, there is no perception



961 There is, in fact, a work of Strato, the natural philosopher, which proves that it is impossible to have sensation at all without some action of the intelligence. Letters frequently—as we survey them—falling on our sight, and words falling on our ears, escape our attention and evade us when we have our minds on other things; but then again [the mind] recovers, shifts its course, and pursues every detail of what had been neglected, reading it through; and this is the meaning of the saying:

‘Mind has sight and Mind has hearing;
Everything else is deaf and blind’

as [indicating that] the impact on eyes and ears, if the understanding is not present, brings no perception.

961 καίτοι Στράτωνός γε τοῦ φυσικοῦ λόγος ἐστίν, ἀποδεικνύων ὡς οὐδ’ αἰσθάνεσθαι τὸ παράπαν ἄνευ τοῦ νοεῖν ὑπάρχει. καὶ γὰρ γράμματα πολλάκις—ἐπιπορευομένους—τῇ ὄψει καὶ λόγοι προσπίπτοντες τῇ ἀκοῇ, διαλανθάνουσιν ἡμᾶς καὶ διαφεύγουσι, πρὸς ἑτέροις τὸν νοῦν ἔχοντας: εἴτ’ αὖθις ἐπανῆλθε καὶ μεταθεῖ καὶ διώκει τῶν προιεμένων ἕκαστον ἀναλεγόμενος: ἢ καὶ λέλεκται

‘νοῦς ὄρῃ καὶ νοῦς ἀκούει, τᾶλλα κωφὰ καὶ τυφλά’

ὡς τοῦ περὶ τὰ ὄμματα καὶ ὠτα πάθους, ἂν μὴ παρῇ τὸ φρονοῦν, αἴσθησιν οὐ ποιοῦντος.

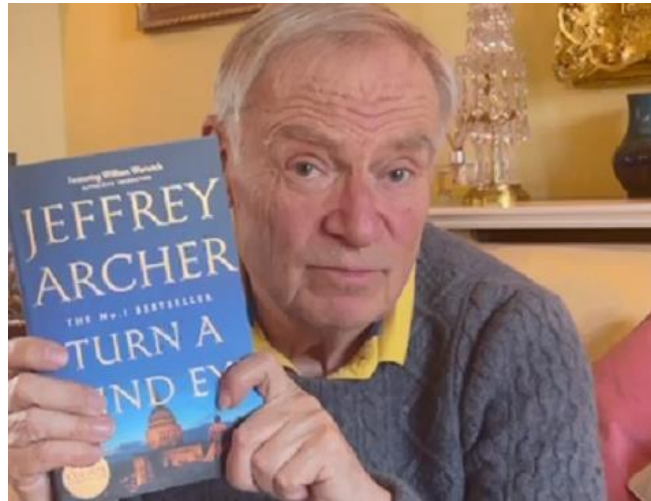


Cleomenes III, thinking about the Peloponnese

961 B For this reason also King Cleomenes, when a recital made at a banquet was applauded, being asked if it did not seem excellent, ordered them to judge, for his mind was in the Peloponnese. Whence it must follow that, for all to whom there is sensation, there must also be understanding, if it is our nature to sense by means of our understanding.

961 B διὸ καὶ Κλεομένης ὁ βασιλεὺς, παρὰ πότον εὐδοκιμοῦντος ἀκροάματος, ἐρωτηθεὶς εἰ μὴ φαίνεται σπουδαῖον, ἐκέλευσεν ἐκείνους σκοπεῖν, αὐτὸς γὰρ ἐν Πελοποννήσῳ τὸν νοῦν ἔχειν. ὅθεν ἀνάγκη πᾶσιν, οἷς τὸ αἰσθάνεσθαι, καὶ τὸ νοεῖν ὑπάρχειν, εἰ τῷ νοεῖν αἰσθάνεσθαι πεφύκαμεν.

If the mind does not function, how can perceptions of what is advantageous and what not be remembered?

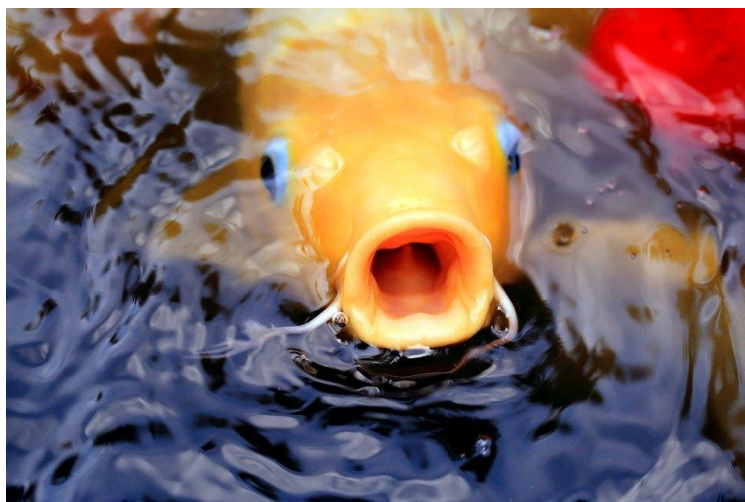


961 B But let us assume that sensation does *not* need the mind to perform its own function. But [in that case], when in an animal the perception demonstrating the difference between what is friendly and what is hostile is gone, what is it that from this time on remembers the distinction, fears the painful, and wants the beneficial?

961 B ἔστω δὲ μὴ δεῖσθαι τοῦ νοῦ τὴν αἴσθησιν πρὸς τὸ αὐτῆς ἔργον. ἀλλ' ὅταν γε τῷ ζῳῷ πρὸς τὸ οἰκεῖον καὶ τὰλλότριον ἡ αἴσθησις ἐνεργασαμένη διαφορὰν ἀπέλθῃ, τί τὸ μνημονεῦόν ἐστιν ἤδη καὶ δεδιὸς τὰ λυποῦντα καὶ ποθοῦν τὰ ὠφέλιμα;

[Obviously, Plutarch goes on, it is the mind that comes into action at this point, ensuring that the significance of the sensation is understood. *As all men recognise*: after all, they beat disobedient horse and dogs – but why bother, if that beating means nothing to them?]

Animal reactions to stimuli demonstrate that they experience pleasure



961 D Now the name of pleasure via the ears is ‘enchantment’, while that through the eyes is ‘magic’: men use both kinds to catch animals. **961 E** For deer and horses are bewitched by pipes and flutes, and crabs are involuntarily lured from their holes by lotus pipes, and they say that fish, when there is singing and clapping, will rise to the surface and approach. The horned owl, again, can be caught being bewitched by magic, as men dance within this vision, with pleasure at their rhythm striving to twist his shoulders.

961 D ἡδονῆς δὲ τῆ μὲν δι' ὠτων ὄνομα κήλησις, ἐστὶ, τῆ δὲ δι' ὀμμάτων γοητεία: χρῶνται δ' ἑκατέροις ἐπὶ τὰ θηρία. 961 E κηλοῦνται μὲν γὰρ ἔλαφοι καὶ ἵπποι σύριγξι καὶ αὐλοῖς, καὶ τοὺς παγούρους ἐκ τῶν χηραμῶν ἀνακαλοῦνται βιαζόμενοι ταῖς φώτιγξι, καὶ τὴν θρίσσαν ἀδόντων καὶ κροτούντων ἀναδύεσθαι καὶ προῖέναι λέγουσιν. ὁ δ' ὠτος αὖ πάλιν ἀλίσκεται γοητευόμενος, ὀρχουμένων ἐν ὄψει μεθ' ἡδονῆς ἅμα ῥυθμῷ γλιχόμενος τοὺς ὤμους συνδιαστρέφειν.

The idea that animals do not 'really' feel emotions is irrational



961 E As for those who foolishly affirm that animals do not feel pleasure or anger or fear or make preparations or remember, but that the bee 'as it were' remembers, and the swallow 'as it were' prepares her nest, and the lion 'as it were' grows angry, and the deer 'as it were' is frightened—961 F I don't know what they will do about those who say that beasts do not see or hear, but 'as it were' hear and see; that they have no cry but 'as it were' cry; nor do they live at all but 'as it were.' For these last statements are no more contrary to plain evidence than those [other ones that they have made], in my view.

961 E οἱ δὲ περὶ τούτων ἀβελτέρως λέγοντες μήθ' ἦδεσθαι μήτε θυμοῦσθαι μήτε φοβεῖσθαι μήτε παρασκευάζεσθαι μήτε μνημονεύειν, ἀλλ' ὥσανεὶ μνημονεύειν' τὴν μέλιτταν, καὶ ὥσανεὶ παρασκευάζεσθαι' τὴν χελιδόνα, καὶ ὥσανεὶ θυμοῦσθαι' τὸν λέοντα, καὶ ὥσανεὶ 'φοβεῖσθαι' τὴν ἔλαφον—961 F οὐκ οἶδα τί χρήσονται τοῖς λέγουσι μήτ' βλέπειν μήτ' ἀκούειν ἀλλ' ὥσανεὶ βλέπειν' αὐτὰ, καὶ ὥσανεὶ ἀκούειν', μηδὲ φωνεῖν ἀλλ' ὥσανεὶ φωνεῖν,' μηδ' ὅλως ζῆν ἀλλ' ὥσανεὶ ζῆν'. ταῦτα γὰρ ἐκείνων οὐ μᾶλλον ἐστὶ λεγόμενα παρὰ τὴν ἐνάργειαν, ὡς ἐγὼ πείθομαι.

In *Beasts are Rational*, Plutarch presents a conversation between Odysseus, Circe and Gryllus ("Grunter") the pig. Odysseus asks Circe if she will kindly restore his men from their current animal state to the men they once were. Circe replies that it would only be fair to enquire if they *want* to be so re-transformed and selects Gryllus the pig to argue the animal case.

Gryllus has explained that animals have no interest in gold and silver, fine clothes and tapestries. Their pleasures are entirely natural. He explains:



990 Let us, in fact, first describe these pleasures. Well then, our pleasure in fragrant substances, those that by their nature stimulate our sense of smell, besides the fact that our enjoyment of this is simple and costs nothing, also adds utility by its ability to distinguish between foods. For the tongue is said to be, and is, a judge of what is sweet or bitter or sour, when liquid flavours combine and fuse with the organ of taste.

But our sense of smell, being an assessor even before we taste, judging of the quality of each food much more critically than any royal taster in the world admits [into our stomach] what is proper, rejects what is alien, and will not let it touch or offend the taste, **990 B** but informs on and denounces what is bad before any harm is done.

990 καὶ ταύτας γε πρῶτον διέλθωμεν. ἡ μὲν οὖν πρὸς τὰ εὐώδη καὶ κινουῦντα ταῖς ἀποφοραῖς τὴν ὄσφρησιν οἰκείως ἡδονή, πρὸς τῷ τὸ ὄφελος καὶ προῖκα καὶ ἀπλοῦν ἔχειν, ἅμα χρειαν τινὰ συμβάλλεται τῇ διαγνώσει τῆς τροφῆς. ἡ μὲν γὰρ γλῶττα τοῦ γλυκέος; καὶ δριμέος καὶ αὐστηροῦ γνώμων ἐστὶ τε καὶ λέγεται, ὅταν τῷ γευστικῷ προσμιγέντες οἱ χυμοὶ σύγχυσίν τινα λάβωσιν.

ἡ δ' ὄσφρησις ἡμῶν, πρὸ τῶν χυμῶν γνώμων οὔσα, τῆς δυνάμεως ἐκάστου πολὺ τῶν βασιλικῶν προγευστῶν σκεπτικώτερον διαισθανομένη, τὸ μὲν οἰκεῖον εἴσω παρήσι, τὸ δ' ἀλλότριον ἀπελαύνει, καὶ οὐκ ἔῃ θιγεῖν οὐδὲ λυπηῆσαι τὴν γεῦσιν **990 B** ἀλλὰ διαβάλλει καὶ κατηγορεῖ τὴν φαυλότητα πρὶν ἢ βλαβῆναι.

Humans are corrupted by artificial smells

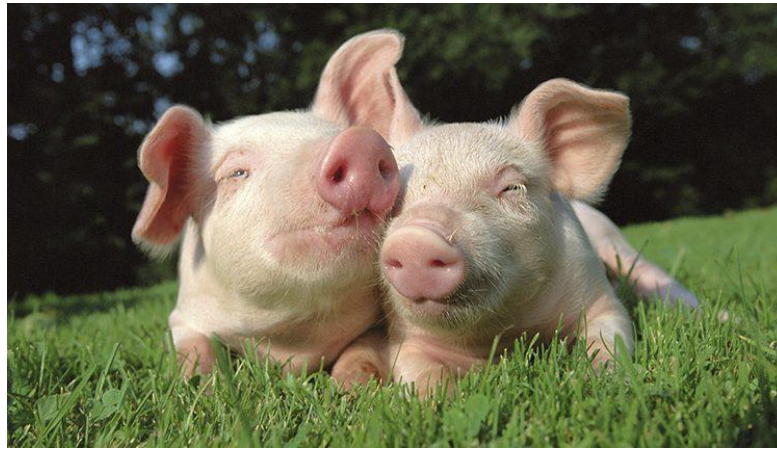


990 B And in other ways [smell] is no nuisance to us, as it is to you, in respect of incense and cinnamon and nard and leaves and malobathrum and Arabian aromatic reeds, with [the aid of] a formidable dyer's or witch's art, 'unguentation' by

name, forcing you to collect and mix [it all] together, thus at a great price buying an effeminate, emasculating luxury which has no real use for anything. Yet, though such is its nature, it has depraved not only every woman, but lately the greater part of men as well, so that they refuse to sleep even with their own wives unless they come to bed reeking of myrrh and scented powders.

990 B τᾶλλα δ' οὐκ ἔνοχλεῖ, καθάπερ ὑμῖν, τὰ θυμιάματα καὶ κινάμωμα καὶ νάρδους καὶ φύλλα καὶ καλάμους Ἀραβικοὺς, μετὰ δεινῆς τινοῦ καὶ δευσοποιοῦ φαρμακίδος τέχνης, ἧ μυρεψικῆς ὄνομα, συνάγειν εἰς ταῦτ' οὐ καὶ συμφαγεῖν ἀναγκάζουσα, χρημάτων πολλῶν ἡδυπάθειαν ἄνανδρον καὶ κορασιώδη καὶ πρὸς οὐδὲν οὐδαμῶς χρήσιμον, ὠνούμενους. ἀλλὰ καίπερ οὔσα τοιαύτη, διέφθαρκεν οὐ μόνον πάσας γυναῖκας ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν ἀνδρῶν ἤδη τοὺς πλείστους, ὡς μηδὲ ταῖς αὐτῶν ἐθέλειν συγγίγνεσθαι γυναίξιν, εἰ μὴ μύρων ὑμῖν ὀδωδυῖαι καὶ διαπασμάτων εἰς ταῦτ' φοιτῶεν.

But animal smells are entirely natural, free of deceit or trickery



990 C But sows attract boars, and nannies bucks, and other female creatures their consorts, by means of their own special odours; scented, as they are, with pure dew and grassy meadows, they are attracted to the nuptial union by mutual affection. The females are not coy and do not cloak their desires with deceits or trickeries or denials; nor do the males, driven on by the sting of mad lust, purchase the act of procreation by money or toil or servitude. No! Both parties celebrate at the proper time a love without deceit or hire, a love which in the season of spring awakens, like the burgeoning of plants and trees, the desire of animals, and then immediately extinguishes it.

[Neither does the female continue to receive the male after she has conceived, nor does the male attempt her. Slight and feeble is the regard we have for pleasure: our whole concern is with Nature.]

990 C ἀλλὰ κάπρους τε σύες καὶ τράγους αἰγες καὶ τᾶλλα θήλεια τοὺς συννόμους αὐτῶν ταῖς ἰδίαις ὀσμαῖς ἐπάγεται, δρόσου τε καθαρᾶς καὶ λειμῶνων ὀδωδότα καὶ χλόης, συμφέρεται πρὸς τοὺς γάμους ὑπὸ κοινῆς φιλοφροσύνης, οὐχὶ θρυπτόμεναι μὲν αἰ θήλειαι καὶ προῖσχύμεναι τῆς ἐπιθυμίας ἀπάτας καὶ γοητείας καὶ ἀρνήσεις, οἱ δ' ἄρρηνες, ὑπ' οἴστρου καὶ μαργότητος, ὠνούμενοι μισθῶν καὶ πόνου καὶ λατρείας τὸ τῆς γενέσεως ἔργον, ἄδολον δὲ σὺν καιρῷ καὶ ἄμισθον Ἀφροδίτην μετιόντες, ἧ καθ' ὥραν ἔτους ὡσπερ φυτῶν βλάστην ἐγείρουσα τῶν ζῶων τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν εὐθύς ἔσβεσεν.

Examples of animals' human understanding and sympathies From *The Cleverness of Animals*



(i) How the dog Capparus captured a thief

[A certain fellow slipped into the temple of Asclepius, took such gold and silver offerings as were not bulky, and made his escape, thinking that he had not been detected.]

969 E But the watchdog, whose name was Capparus, when none of the temple-guards responded to its barking, pursued the escaping temple-thief. First the man threw stones at it, but could not drive it away. **969 F** When day dawned, the dog did not approach close, but followed the man, always keeping him in sight, and refused the food he offered. When he stopped to rest, the dog passed the night on guard; when he set off again, the dog got up and kept following, fawning on the other people it met on the road and barking at the man and sticking to his heels.

969 E ὁ δὲ φρουρὸς κύων, ὄνομα Κάππαρος, ἐπεὶ μηδεὶς ὑλακτοῦντι τῶν ζακόρων ὑπήκουσεν αὐτῷ, φεύγοντα τὸν ἱερόσυλον ἐπεδίωκε. καὶ πρῶτον μὲν βαλλόμενος λίθοις οὐκ ἀπέστη, **969 F** γενομένης δ' ἡμέρας, ἐγγὺς οὐ προσιῶν ἀλλ' ἀπ' ὀφθαλμοῦ παραφυλάττων, εἶπετο καὶ τροφήν προβάλλοντος οὐκ ἐλάμβανεν, ἀναπαυομένῳ δὲ παρενυκτέρευε καὶ βαδίζοντος πάλιν ἀναστὰς ἐπηκολούθει, τοὺς δ' ἀπαντῶντας ὁδοιπόρους ἔσαινεν, ἐκείνῳ δ' ἐφυλάκει καὶ προσέκειτο.



969 F When those who were investigating the robbery learned this from men who had encountered the pair and were told the colour and size of the dog, they pursued all the more vigorously and overtook the man and brought him back from Crommyon. **970** On the return the dog led the procession, capering and exultant, as though it claimed for itself the credit for pursuing and capturing the temple-thief. The people actually voted it a public ration of food and entrusted the charge of this to the priests in perpetuity, thereby imitating the ancient Athenian kindness to the mule.

969 F ταῦτα δ' οἱ διώκοντες, πυνθανόμενοι παρὰ τῶν ἀπαντῶντων ἅμα καὶ τὸ χρῶμα φραζόντων καὶ τὸ μέγεθος τοῦ κυνός, προθυμότερον ἐχρήσαντο τῇ διώξει, καὶ καταλαβόντες τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἀνήγαγον ἀπὸ Κρομμυῶνος. **970** ὁ δὲ κύων ἀναστρέψας προηγείτο γαῦρος καὶ περιχαρής, οἷον ἑαυτοῦ ποιούμενος ἄγρην καὶ θήραμα τὸν ἱερόσυλον. ἐψηφίσαντο δὴ σῖτον αὐτῷ δημοσίᾳ μετρεῖσθαι καὶ παρεγγυᾶσθαι τοῖς ἱερεῦσιν εἰς ἀεὶ τὴν ἐπιμέλειαν, ἀπομιμησάμενοι τὸ πρὸς τὸν ἡμίονον φιλανθρώπευμα τῶν παλαιῶν Ἀθηναίων.

(ii) A retired mule refuses to leave his mates



970 For when Pericles was building the Hecatompedon [=the Parthenon] on the Acropolis, stones were naturally brought by numerous teams of draught-animals every day. Now one of the mules who had assisted gallantly in the work, but had now been discharged because of old age, used to go down every day to the Ceramicus **970 B** and meet the beasts which brought the stones, turning back with them and trotting along by their side, as though to encourage and cheer them on. So the people of Athens, admiring its enterprise, gave orders for it to be maintained at the public expense, voting it free meals, as though to an athlete who had succumbed to old age.

970 τὸν γὰρ ἑκατόμπεδον νεῶν Περικλέους ἐν ἀκροπόλει κατασκευάζοντος, ὡς εἰκός, λίθοι προσήγοντο πολλοῖς ζεύγεσι καθ' ἡμέραν. τῶν οὖν συνειργασμένων μὲν προθύμως, ἤδη δὲ διὰ γῆρας ἀφειμένων ὁρέων εἰς, κατερχόμενος εἰς Κεραμεικόν, **970 B** καὶ τοῖς ἀνάγουσι ζεύγεσι τοὺς λίθους ὑπαντῶν ἀεὶ συνανέστρεφε καὶ συμπαρετρόχαζεν, οἷον ἐγκελευόμενος καὶ παρορμῶν. διὸ θαυμάσας αὐτοῦ τὴν φιλοτιμίαν, ὁ δῆμος ἐκέλευσε δημοσίᾳ τρέφεσθαι, καθάπερ ἀθλητῆϊ σίτησιν ὑπὸ γῆρας ἀπειρηκότηι ψηφισάμενος.

Next week: Plutarch on politics