Bitch is Not a Four-Letter Word
Animal Reason and Human Passion
in Plutarch

J. MOSSMAN – F. TITCHENER

This pair of papers is dedicated to the memory of B.D. (1999-2009) and G.A. (2001-2003), faithful friends and loving companions both.

Animals matter to us. Many humans are tremendous lovers of companion animals and devote the kind of temporal, monetary, and emotional resources to them and their well-being that we traditionally associate with child rearing. And yet all is not warm and fuzzy when it comes to the friendly beasts. We humans, concerned about our position on top of the food chain, are anxious that what we eat not give us resistance to antibiotics, or vCJ disease, or salmonella. From another perspective, we value animals in scientific research as disease and treatment models. It is becoming clear that all kinds of animals serve as warning systems, from the old canary in the mineshaft to seizure-predicting dogs. And therapy dogs in general do everything from helping their owners dress, to visiting, to entertaining and comforting people confined to institutions.

Considering the integral role of animals in our lives, it is natural that we turn our attention to what we can learn about human virtue from Plutarch’s writings about them. In this inquiry, our focus on rhetoric means that we will not investigate the Parallel Lives, despite the many appearances of animals in the historical narrative, but will focus rather on the Moralia. It is no surprise to us that a humane, compassionate, tolerant, and wise human like Plutarch wrote several essays specifically about animals, notably Terrestriane an aquatilia animalia sint callidiora (De sollertia animalium), Bruta animalia ratione uti, and De esu carnium orationes ii. These essays were used by philosophers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as early evidence of the so-called “theriophilic paradox, the notion that while the human being occupies a higher rung in the universal hierarchy than the beast, as indicated by human power over the animal world, human behaviour justifies the
claim that human morality is on a lower level than that of the beasts.”

In modern times, the work of Newmyer is typical of the use classical scholarship makes of these essays, namely as ammunition for an animal rights movement, which of course can be seen as an extension of the Enlightenment interest in theriophily.

Yet although these ‘animal’ essays are grouped with Plutarch’s other ‘scientific’ essays in Loeb vol. XII (De facie, De primo frigido, Aquane an ignis sit utilior), our interest in Plutarch’s animals is not particularly scientific – rather, we are focusing on rhetoric. We hope that analysis of De sollertia animalium (and, to a lesser extent, Bruta animalia ratione uti) will provide insight into Plutarch’s own attitudes about virtues, arguing that the use of animals provides a kind of surrogacy or a place for Plutarch to argue his points at a safe remove. We also hope to show that there is more to these charming dialogues in terms of rhetorical skill and subtlety than may immediately be apparent, or has traditionally been assumed.

1. **Rhetorical strategies in *De sollertia animalium***

The structure of Plutarch’s dialogue on whether land animals are more intelligent than those of the sea is particularly interesting: Plutarch uses quite a technical philosophic debate as a background for a more naïve competition between two younger and less assured speakers, an arrangement which almost seems to be using two sets of arguments – one technical and one almost commonsensical, or at least based firmly on empirical observation – in favour of the proposition that animals are rational and (not: consequently, but: in any case) deserve to be treated well by humans. Coherence is preserved by the fact that the material in the less philosophical part of the dialogue sometimes echoes the earlier conversation, at least in terms of its subject matter and its choice of examples, and, importantly, in the way in which the dialogue comes to a somewhat abrupt end, as we shall see. Throughout both parts of the dialogue Plutarch allows his characters to employ frequent metaphors which quite deliberately suggest the blurring of the divide between animals and humans, and this technique, visible also in the *Lives*, here becomes integral to the argument Plutarch is making. There

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1 Rosenfeld (2003), 1. See also Garcia Arranz (1996).

2 We omit *De esu carnium* largely because of the relative immaturity of the work and poor text (Cherniss and Helmbold call it “jumbled”, Loeb XII, p. 537).

3 This section was originally published in a slightly different form as ‘Plutarch on Animals: Rhetorical Strategies in *de sollertia animalium*’, *Hermathena* 179 (Winter 2005), 141-63, by kind permission of Luc Van der Stockt; thanks go to the editor of *Hermathena* for in turn allowing the original version to appear.
is no space to summarize the argument in detail, so what follows will concentrate on a few of the most striking ways in which Plutarch uses the dialogue form to explore the issue of animal reason.

1.1. The frame

The *mise-en-scène* and the *dramatis personae* are important to the dialogue’s overall effect. The two speakers in the pre-competition dialogue are Autobulus and Soclarus. It seems plausible that this Autobulus, unlike the one who appears in the *Amatorius*, is Plutarch’s own father. Soclarus is clearly a friend of Plutarch’s family who does appear in the *Amatorius* and turns up often in the *Table Talk*. Their initial discussion (of which more in a moment) is brought to a close by the arrival of the two young contestants in the debate, another character who has agreed to referee, Optatus, as well as other spectators, one of whom, Heracleon of Megara, familiar as a genial character from the *De defectu oraculorum*, is said to be a keen fisherman and has a short speech encouraging Phaedimus. There is thus a clear generational mix: Autobulus and Optatus are older than Soclarus and Heracleon, who are in turn older than Aristotimus and Phaedimus. Just where all this is taking place is unclear, but we are given some important information in the opening speech: the day before this dialogue, the same group of discussants formed the audience for a reading of an encomium of hunting. Autobulus compares the effect of this λόγος to poetry, specifically to the effect of the martial poet Tyrtaeus on Spartan youth. Most interestingly, he also declares that he himself experienced a longing to go hunting again, and expresses his desire with a quotation from Euripides’ *Hippolytus*, from the passage where the maddened Phaedra longs to go hunting in emulation of the object of her secret passion. Martin, in an excellent piece on this opening, argues that the praise lavished on this encomium is in fact entirely ironic, which rules out any suggestion that Plutarch may be writing himself into the dialogue as the author of the previous day’s speech. He does not in fact employ the argument that the tragic context of

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4 He is almost certainly not L. Mestrius Soclarus, who should be identified as Plutarch’s son, but T. Flavius Soclusus of Tithora in Phocis, the son of Aristion, who dedicated a statue to Nerva in 98 (*IG* IX 1 200), with his two sons. See Puech (1981) and (1992), 4831-93, esp. 4879-83.

5 Soclarus is younger than Autobulus and is contemporary with Plutarch (964D). Optatus is Autobulus’ contemporary (965C). Heracleon appears to be roughly contemporary with Plutarch’s brother Lamprias in *De def. or.* (see esp. 412E-413B, 418D-419A). There are many references to the comparative youth of Aristotimus and Phaedimus: see, e.g., 965E.

6 Martin (1979).
the quotation is that Phaedra’s desire is a symptom of her temporary madness, and that therefore Autobulus is implying that the desire he experiences is a form of insanity, but he might have done. However, while agreeing with Martin that there is a degree of irony in this opening sequence, we are not sure that its effect on the dialogue as a whole is quite as straightforward as he suggests, especially in relation to Soclarus, whom he regards purely as a stalking horse for Autobulus, Plutarch’s ‘spokesman’ 7. It is certainly true that Soclarus introduces the theme of the rationality of animals by quoting from the previous day’s discourse and that Autobulus disagrees with the ideas quoted, but Soclarus’ admiration for the rhetoric of the encomium need not imply that he is not somewhat detached from the point of view so elegantly expressed. Indeed, his stress on rhetoric and the playful use of the hapax συνεαρίζων might even suggest that the choice of the subject of the encomium, and/or the piece itself was not wholly serious. It emerges clearly at 960B that the previous day’s occasion was a sympotic one, which might support that assumption. The syntax of 959CD suggests a quotation from the encomium, which might be receiving praise for its literary qualities rather than its argument: a further quotation from Euripides (this time the Aeolus) seems to suggest the style of a literary encomium. If Autobulus is allowed to be ironic, so should Soclarus be. There is no reason to suppose that the encomium referred to is in fact a real piece of writing at all, extant or lost 8, but we would like to suggest that, although it clearly is not to be identified precisely with the most famous and earliest κυνηγητικὸς λόγος, that by Xenophon (because the speaker is said to have mentioned gladiators: if Martin is right and the encomium is an actual text by another author, then it must be a contemporary or near contemporary one) 9, there is a perceptible and important level of intertextuality with that work which is illuminating and which may clarify our view of the rest of Plutarch’s dialogue. We think this intertextuality is created by a number of means

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7 Martin (1979), 102.
8 Pace Martin (1979), 100-101.
9 Martin (1979), 106. The arena and the theatre continue to feature as a source of exempla throughout the dialogue: 959D and 965A presumably represent Autobulus’ considered point of view, though 963C is not altogether easy to read as completely ironic. There is a similarly mixed picture in the rhetorical debate: Aristotimus’ anecdotes from the Roman theatre are very much from the respectable end of animal participation – the ‘Dumbo’ anecdote at 968C and the performing dog at 973E-974A, both very lacking in gore. But Phaedimus darkens the picture at 977D, where he describes animals grouping by species but then running in panic to get away from other wounded or dying animals.
and for quite a specific purpose, which is reflected in the structure of the dialogue: to examine and redefine the relationship of hunting and paideia, the assertion of which is the most remarkable non-technical feature of Xenophon’s work. It seems very probable to us that for Plutarch’s readers the mention of a λόγος about hunting would automatically have made them think of Xenophon as the major authority on the subject and based his work directly on Xenophon without apparent regard for any lost works on the same subject. Plutarch is in fact the earliest author to identify Xenophon as the author of this work, and indeed quotes from it directly at Non posse 1096C. The strange phrase at 959C, καὶ γὰρ ἐκείνος ἔδοξέ μοι τὸ ἤητορικὸν ἐγείραι διὰ χρόνου (either: ‘for he [i.e., the reader] seemed to rouse his rhetoric from its long disuse’, or: ‘for it [i.e., the work read out] seemed to rouse its rhetoric from its long disuse’)10, might perhaps be explained as suggesting that this fictitious encomium had a classical precursor, and if so, Xenophon is the obvious choice. Xenophon and his book are also recalled in a number of ways throughout the dialogue, and especially in the early part of it: the connection between hunting and war implicit in Autobulus’ mention of Tyrtaeus is explicit in Xenophon (e.g., 1.18, 12.1-5); Autobulus fears that hunting is such an all-consuming passion that it will lead the young men to neglect other things, precisely the objection which Xenophon dismisses at 12.10; Autobulus mentions Phaedra and quotes from the Hippolytus, Xenophon twice mentions Hippolytus in his proem (1.2, as a pupil of Chiron, and 1.11 on his holiness and self-control)11. Autobulus, in arguing against the idea that hunting is a harmless outlet for human aggression (Xenophon broadly sees hunting rather as a preparation for war and a means of inculcating virtues; but see 12.9), uses the analogy of the habituation to violence of Athens under the Thirty; not only does Xenophon give an account of this in the Hellenica, but he is also concerned with the relationship of hunting to society, though he sees it as beneficial (see esp. 13.15), whereas Autobulus here uses the analogy to suggest that hunting, by encouraging luxury, has been detrimental to human society. There are a number of other intertexts with Xenophon which occur throughout the work, and to which we

10 We are doubtful about Martin’s interpretation of the phrase as meaning that the work roused the rhetoric of the contestants in the following debate (Martin [1979], 106).
11 We are inclined to accept the proem of Xenophon’s On Hunting as genuine, but even if those who argue that it is spurious are right, this is irrelevant, since Plutarch would have thought it an integral part of the work (as Arrian does: see Stadtier [1976] and [1980], 50-59). For the debate, see Marchant (1925), xxxvii and xlii-xliii, and Phillips – Willcock (1999), ad loc.
shall return, but this cluster at the opening of the dialogue introduces it as a hypotext for what follows\textsuperscript{12}.

The precise way in which Autobulus introduces the debate to come is also worth noting: yesterday, he says (960A), they had declared the opinion that all animals are to some extent rational, that they partake of dianoia and logismos, and the upcoming debate is presented as a consequence of this opinion. But the competition is presented as being offered very much \textit{de haut en bas}: it is intended to be instructive fun. Note the term βραβεύσομεν, which suggests adjudication in the Games (and see also 965D)\textsuperscript{13}. Legal language is also employed at 960AB: πρόκλησις and συνήγορος are both legal technical terms\textsuperscript{14}. We are being prepared for a more superficial and rhetorical debate than a philosophical one\textsuperscript{15}; the main issues are being presented as already clear. This line of argument is most evident at 962DE: of course animals have reason if you can argue about which class of them has more of it. This sense that the important decisions have already been taken the day before insensibly makes these decisions seem particularly secure, and even when the philosophical debate is partially reopened, by Soclarus urging discussion of matter which was too serious to be dealt with the previous day, there seems to be no real doubt in anyone’s mind that the basic view taken then will stand. Thus the anti-Stoic polemic which pervades this dialogue (which could be seen very much in series with Plutarch’s other anti-Stoic works)\textsuperscript{16} is given further punch by this dramatic device\textsuperscript{17}.

\textsuperscript{12} As Stadler (1976), 161 points out, “Actual citations do not define the debt of one ancient author to another”. Schnapp (1997), 28-29 also mentions this link with Xenophon, but does not really pursue it: see further below. Aristobulus’ argument in this passage seems tacitly to contradict Plato’s \textit{Protagoras} (322b).

\textsuperscript{13} For umpires in Plutarchan debates in this connection, see Hirzel (1895), II, 178 n. 1.

\textsuperscript{14} On πρόκλησις see Mirhady (1991); on συνήγορος see Harrison (1971), 158-61. The legal language is reprised at the start of the first speech of the contest at 965E. On the legal imagery, see also Hirzel (1895), II, 176 n. 4.

\textsuperscript{15} 963BC continues the impression that the tone of the rhetorical contest will be less lofty than that of the opening dialogue: the participants are νεανίσκοι who will συνερανίσειν, φιλολόγους καὶ φιλογραμμάτου ὄντας, and will adorn (ἐγκαλλωπίσασθαι) the argument.

\textsuperscript{16} 961D, where the Stoics are seen to undermine themselves because they too try to train their animals, is a typically Plutarchan commonsense attack on the Stoics. See Babut (1969a), 54-62, esp. 60: “Tout comme Diadouménos, en effet, Aristobule s’efforce de se placer sur le terrain de l’adversaire, pour mieux le confondre”.

\textsuperscript{17} As Sorabji (1993), 192 points out, Plutarch travesties Stoic argument here. Much of the argument which follows is repeated \textit{verbatim} by Porphyry in \textit{De abstinentia} (III, 21-22). As Sorabji (1993) has shown, the positions of both sides really
Finally, it is important that the competition is revealed at the end to be something of a rhetorical device in itself: for all that stress is laid on the competitiveness with which the competitors approach their task, through the legal and athletic imagery discussed above and in other ways, in the end no real judgement is made, certainly not by Optatus, despite Autobulus’ reference to him as an umpire at 965D. It is in fact Soclarus who collapses the competition into a draw and almost casually twists the whole contest into a rehearsal for combating the idea that animals do not have reason\(^8\). This setting up of a competition only to undermine it is a literary device used elsewhere by (for example) Lucian\(^9\). Here it further underlines the weight of evidence against the Stoics by stressing that the similarities between the two sides as presented in the debate are far greater than their differences from the Stoics, who are given no significant voice in the dialogue at all.

### 1.2. Methods of argument

The modes of argument used in the philosophical section are interestingly mirrored in the rhetorical debate which follows:

\textit{a) Comparison}

The speech of Soclarus (961F-962A) which follows Autobulus’ dismissal of the Stoics is couched in terms of a comparison between humans and animals. (This is just one feature of the way the discussion is phrased which leads into the extremely anthropomorphic approach, both of the philosophical discussion and of the rhetorical contest: see further below.) So comparison as a tool of argument features not only overtly in the rhetorical comparison between the land animals and the sea animals, but also in the more high-flown philosophical discussion which precedes it. Soclarus compares animals with humans to the detriment of animals, and Autobulus’ response is to compare them rather with each other and with plants, at 962F-963A. All plants are virtually the same, but animals are different from each other because they have different types and degrees of reason and virtue. (Plutarch depend on making different interpretations of what constitutes reason and what merely perception.

\(^8\) The authenticity of the end has been doubted because of its brevity, according to Helmbold’s note \textit{ad loc.} (though he does not give any references for this and we have been unable to track any down). But there is no need to suppose that the ending is not genuine: see further in section 1.3.

\(^9\) In the \textit{Toxaris}, for example: see Ni Mheallaigh (2004).
was evidently not a fruitarian.) One point of comparison which is particularly conspicuous by its absence here is one very regularly used to distinguish animals from humans in Greek thought: their lack of language\textsuperscript{20}. Plutarch presumably would not have wished to allow lack of language to be a determinant of lack of reason, though he comes close to allowing Aristotimus to do so at 973A, where he contrasts talking birds with silent fish, very much to the detriment of the fish.

b) Anthropomorphism

Both the philosophical discussion and the rhetorical debate display an attitude to animals which is extremely anthropomorphic. This is, however, apparently quite deliberate: at 961EF Autobulus is specifically made to attack those (perhaps partly Aristotle, but mainly the Stoics) who insist on making animal mental processes into similes with ὡσανὲι. By 962D he is using without argument or comment terms for moral qualities of animals, even including ἄνδρεία (see further in the next section). Is this usage metaphorical or not? It is left delicately uncertain (though we shall discuss it under the heading of metaphor). The degree to which these expressions can be read as live metaphors is left deliberately unclear, which can give the narrative an air of naïveté. In a sense, though, any naïveté about this is false: the fact that such terms can be used of animals and have a recognisable application for the reader in itself stacks up the argument against the Stoics. It also seems fair to point out, as \textsc{Newmyer} has done, that it is still the case that those modern philosophers who wish to accord moral status to animals are vulnerable to charges of anthropomorphism. He quotes \textsc{Griffin}\textsuperscript{21}: “When one carefully examines such charges of anthropomorphism, it turns out that they entail the implicit assumption that whatever it is suggested that animals might do, or think, really \textit{is} a uniquely human attribute. Such an assumption begs the question being asked because it presupposes a negative answer and is thus literally a confession of prejudgement or prejudice.” Plutarch has other, rather subtle ways of collapsing the differences between humans and animals, especially his use of metaphor, which we will examine in the next section. His anthropomorphism, we would argue, is not a mistake but a rhetorical strategy.

Anthropomorphism is so widespread in all ancient writings about animals (certainly in Xenophon and Arrian on hunting: see, e.g., Xen.

\textsuperscript{20} See Gera (2003), 11-17, 57-67, 207-12, and Sorabji (1993), 2, 80-86, and 216-19 on the extraordinary similarities between the ancient and the modern debates about the importance of language in determining animal reason; see also \textsc{Newmyer} (1999).

\textsuperscript{21} \textsc{Newmyer} (1999), 107 n. 18, quoting \textsc{Griffin} (1992), 24.
6.15, Arr. 7.6 on the hounds’ enthusiasm for the hunt), that it is easy for Plutarch to slip human qualities into his animal subjects almost without the reader noticing. A more complex instance of this occurs when Autobulus turns the ‘humans are better than animals’ argument on its head by arguing that animals are often superior to humans in terms of perception (but that does not mean humans have no perception at all), which is a clever move because the Stoics’ arguments on animal reason depended heavily on an expanded sense of perception. The metaphor he uses for animal intellect at 963B, comparing it to an eye with a cataract, is the climax of this stage. His next argument, that animals can go mad, and therefore must originally be sane (that is, rational), distinguishes perception from reason but continues the human/animal blurring by comparing the mad dog with a mad human (963E).

Soclarus’ answering speech is interesting in this context, especially the way in which he expresses the essential problem against which their philosophical opponents are attempting to argue: either humans are unjust or life becomes impossible: καὶ τρόπον τινὰ θηρίων βίον βιωσόμεθα, τὰς ἀπὸ τῶν θηρίων προέμενοι χρείας (964A)22. This speech perhaps constitutes the best argument against Martin’s characterization of Soclarus as a stooge for the Socratic Autobulus23, since it does raise the question of how to put the implications of the foregoing argument into practice—an important new point. Autobulus picks up on several aspects of its language and argumentation in his response, which still, interestingly, uses anthropomorphism to support its compromise approach24: where Soclarus describes human life as being lived φιλανθρώπως at 964A, Autobulus argues at 964F that animals who are φιλάνθρωποι should be cherished, not killed25. Significantly, he closes his speech with a

22 There is a note of traditional wisdom in the quotation from Hesiod here, and the general position is very similar to modern contractarianism: i.e., animals do not have rights because they cannot make contracts. See Sorabji (1993), 8, 117, 161-66, and Newmyer (1992), (1995), and (1997).

23 The midwifery image at the start of Autobulus’ reply (964C) is ironically applied by him to his philosophical opponents; it does not particularly characterize him as Socratic.

24 The argument that it is possible to make use of animals without treating them badly is related to the important passage at Ca. Ma. 5.2, where Plutarch insists that it is the mark of a good man to treat his animals (and his slaves) well. It is no accident, anyway, that Autobulus is made to attribute this argument to Plato and to Plutarch. Sorabji (1993), 118 and 125 claims that Plutarch is the only ancient author to insist that benevolence demands kindness to animals even if they are not owed justice.

25 Note also the medical language in Soclarus’ speech at 964B, answered by παρηγορία at 964E and the quotation from Aeschylus answering that from Hesiod.
reference to humans acting μετ’ ὠμότητος towards animals, a reversal of
the norm, since the original meaning of the expression refers to eating raw meat, an animal characteristic transgressive in humans.\(^{26}\)

c) Animal metaphors

This brings us to Plutarch’s use of animal metaphors in the dialogue, which is pervasive, and, as we have said, contributes to his argument by subtly collapsing the differences between humans and animals. There are numerous examples of animals behaving like humans throughout the dialogue and these can be seen as straightforwardly anthropomorphic, but there are also a number of examples (in the speech of each of the principal speakers) of humans behaving like animals, which are even more interesting. Through metaphor the status of both categories is problematised. Plutarch is, of course, aided in doing this by the literary tradition in which he is working, which from Homer on encouraged the comparison of men to animals. The comparison of animals to people is no huge step from that, and is in turn encouraged by genres such as animal fable (both in prose and in early poetry, such as that of Archilochus) and the mythological topos of metamorphosis. So too in Aristotimus’ speech the metaphors are intermingled with examples of man learning from animals which sometimes seem to have a mythological basis: the reference to spiders’ webs as a model for weaving (which perhaps recalls Arachne) at 966E begins this theme, which is then developed at 967C through a reference to Heracles, taken up again at 972A and explored more fully in terms of divination at 974A-975C (the end of Aristotimus’ speech). Phaedimus to some extent turns this around when he argues, at 975EF, that the land animals have learned to behave more like humans because they have associated with them more than sea animals have. Together with the examples discussed in the previous section, these passages show Plutarch subtly blending metaphor and argument.

i) Animals as people

We have already noted Aristobulus’ use of ἄνδρεία of animals at 962D; it is also used by Aristotimus of hunted animals at 966B and of ants at 967D (and note ἄνδρώδους at 970E). In general, Aristotimus’

\(^{26}\) There may also be a reference here (965B) to a notorious passage of Xenophon in which he describes trapping deer by using their fawns: 9.1-10; Phillips – Willcock (1999), *ad loc.* point out that the slowness of his scent-hounds probably dictated these cruel tactics.
account of the ants stresses precisely the same good qualities as Aristobulus at 962D: κοινωνία, ἀνδρεία, τὸ πανούργον περί τοὺς πορισμοὺς καὶ τὰς οἰκονομίας may be compared with Aristotimus’ οἰκονομίαι καὶ παρασκευαί, τὸ κοινωνικόν, ἀνδρείας εἰκών, all at 967D, and his use of δίκαιος (with which compare δίκαιον at 970C) mirrors Aristobulus’ reference to ἀδικία at 962D. In recounting a Stoic story which has ants ransoming a dead body, Aristotimus uses λύτρα as a simile, but the whole story acts as an illustration of the virtues he has ascribed to the ants. Aristotimus’ use of simile in general is very different from that criticised by Aristobulus as an attempt to deny virtues to animals: when he uses similes he is stressing their virtuous qualities, not denying them, as with the example of the ants, or of the ichneumon, described as arming itself like a soldier (966D), and like an athlete (980E). So the spider is like a charioteer or helmsman or net-handler at 966F, the hedgehog like a clever captain at 972A. Phaedimus does the same thing: fish are like wrestlers at 977E, and there is a fish actually called a ‘fisherman’ and well named at 978D. He also creates an extended ship simile to describe the symbiosis of whales and guide fish at 980F-981B. Tortoises uncovering their young are more joyful than a man digging up treasure at 982C, and the halcyon builds a nest like a ship (983C), like a coracle (983D).

Aristotimus’ comment on animals in love is worth dwelling on briefly in this context. We are back with metaphor: ἔρωτες δὲ θηρίων οἱ μὲν ἄγριοι καὶ περιμανεῖς γεγόνασιν, οἱ δ᾿ ἔχοντες οὐκ ἀπάνθρωπον ὡραϊσμὸν οὐδ᾿ ἀναφρόδιτον ὁμιλίαν. The expression of this sentence seems at first glance particularly naïvely anthropomorphic (οὐκ ἀπάνθρωπον), but when one looks closely at the first part of the sentence one can see Plutarch’s use of language clouding the issue. Some animals have passions which are ἄγριοι καὶ περιμανεῖς, says Aristotimus. ἔρωτες . . . ἄγριοι could be seen as a slightly clumsy use of a transferred epithet – the animals being ἄγριοι rather than their passions – were it not that this is a Platonic phrase

27 See also the comments on the social organization (κοινωνικόν, κοινωνικά) of elephants and lions at 972B and C.

28 He also uses a Stoic story, that of the dog’s syllogism, to argue for animal rationality at 969B, but in both cases he uses the story in a very un-Stoic way, without much acknowledgement that he is twisting it. Is this characterization of Aristotimus as one who isn’t all that good at philosophy (he subsequently, confusingly, rejects the idea that the dog is rationalizing and puts its ‘decision’ down to perception, which can’t really be what he wants to argue)? Or is it a deliberate ploy to back up Aristobulus’ irritation with the Stoics’ determination to misuse the evidence of their own eyes?

29 Θηρίων is in fact a conjecture of Helmbold’s; if the MS πολλῶν is retained, as it is by Drexler, the following point is strengthened further.
used in the *Phaedo* (81a7) of human passions. Περιμανής appears to be an exclusively Plutarchan word (though of course human love is regularly described as a form of madness, not least in the *Hippolytus*, which was quoted by Aristobulus): he uses it of human love at *De aud.* 43D. On the other hand, the rather flowery vocabulary Plutarch uses in the second half of the sentence (ὡραϊσμόν, especially, is an extraordinary word to use of an animal, having as it does overtones almost of affectation and effeminacy) stresses with increasing intensity the anthropomorphic quality of some animal affection. So, once again, metaphor can be seen to dissolve the differences between humans and animals and create human beasts and bestial humans.

ii) People as animals

Sometimes in the *Lives* Plutarch can describe individuals and groups as bestial, to great effect. Here similar expressions provide another dimension to the examples in the previous section, again, throughout the dialogue, though they are less frequently used. So Aristobulus refers to human ἄγριότης at 959D, punning on ἄγριον (‘hunting trips’), as he leads into his comparison between men killing beasts and men killing men in Athens under the Thirty Tyrants. He describes part of man’s nature as φονικὸν καὶ θηριῶδες at 959E, and Aristotimus echoes that at 970C (on which, more in a moment). Phaedimus claims that housemartins fear man ὅσπερ θηρίον at 984C. Once again Aristotimus provides us with a complex example of this at 970BC, interestingly as part of an argument that no justice is in fact owed to sea animals. Once again his vocabulary looks back to Aristobulus’ (even though, of course, he was not present for the opening discussion). In his last speech when presenting his compromise solution to the problem of how animals should be treated, Aristobulus argued that there is no injustice in killing animals who are ἄμικτα καὶ βλαβερὰ κομιδῇ (*964* F); here Aristotimus calls the creatures of the ocean and the deep ἄμικτα γὰρ ἐκεῖνα κομιδῇ καὶ ἀστοργα καὶ πάσης ἄμοιρα γλυκυθυμίας. He then quotes Homer (*Iliad* XVI, 34) and, in expanding the quotation, uses ἄμικτον again, this time of the subject of the quotation (Achilles). But only

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30 Aristophanes also uses ἄγριος as a noun of an aggressive homosexual at *Clouds* 349; that it was a technical term for a particularly aggressive type of homosexual is also suggested by Aesch. 1.52. The *Clouds* passage also characterizes this type of love as μανία.

31 There is an interesting parallel use of imagery in Xenophon’s tirade against the sophists at 13.9: οἱ μὲν γὰρ σοφισταὶ πλευστίους καὶ νέους θηρώνται, οἱ δὲ φιλόσοφοι πάσι κοινοί καὶ φίλοι. Note also the use of κοινοί, and see Plutarch’s use of its cognates to denote animal social cooperation in 972B and C. See also Schnapp (1997), 23-27.
someone who was himself θηριώδης would use the same argument of the land animals. So he applies a quotation – which he explains as comparing a man to the animals in the sea – back to those animals, and at the same time compares a hypothetical opponent to a beast.

1.3. The characters of the rhetorical contest

Finally, we would like to examine aspects of the characterization of the participants of the rhetorical contest before drawing a few conclusions. We have already looked at the preparation for the contest in section 1.1.1. The start of the contest effectively interrupts Autobulus’ tirade against cruelty (including the cruelty of hunters), as Soclarus announces the approach of the contestants and warns Autobulus not to offend them. He instantly identifies the opposing groups, distinguishing each with a quotation from Homer, with a third for Optatus, followed by another from an unknown poet. This volley of poetry clearly marks the change in tone, as does Autobulus’ declaration at 965E that they will follow Optatus’ experience (ἐμπειρία) rather than Aristotle’s books. This seems to be less a rejection of Aristotle’s views on animal reason (though Autobulus would indeed wish to reject them) and more a marker of the change in direction towards a more practical and anecdotal set of arguments. It is, then, Soclarus whose exchange with Phaedimus establishes the order of speaking and starts off Aristotimus’ speech.

There is a lacuna near the beginning of this speech, but it still seems reasonable to suppose that Aristotimus did not spend too long on the moral weaknesses of fish (his speech is, as it stands, about the same length as Phaedimus’). It seems, therefore, that his material on the capacity of hunting to educate did come early in the speech. We would argue that we have here another set of intertexts with Xenophon, with the twist that he contrasts the educational benefits of hunting with the lack of the same benefits in fishing.

The overt reference in 965EF is to Plato’s Laws (823d-824a), the full text of which privileges daytime hunting with dogs and horses over all other kinds, and lays down that it should be allowed to take place everywhere, bans night-time hunting with nets, and confines snaring birds and fishing to certain localities. The distinctions between the types of hunting here are made on the basis of the type of paideia they provide, and nets are in disfavour as being underhanded\(^3\). The vocabulary in all three passages is very similar: for example 966B φιλόπονον (also used

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\(^3\) Barringer (2001), 51 suggests that Plato here “praise(s) the type of hunting that Vidal-Naquet links to the mature hoplite and condemn(s) that associated with the immature ephebe”: if so, he may be wanting to redefine the straightforward paideutic
of the social and anthropomorphized ants at 967D), to which compare *Laws* 824a5 and Xen. 12, where he frequently extols the virtues of hard work using cognate terms. Aristotimus, like Xenophon, points out that the hunt is beloved of Apollo and Artemis (966A; Xen. 1.1, 6.13, 13.16-18). At 971A, the story of the hounds that will not eat the dead hare has no direct parallel in Xenophon, but may nevertheless recall his work in general, as he devotes so much space to hare-coursing, much more than to any other type of hunting.

It is important that the Xenophontic paideutic argument in favour of hunting takes pride of place over any actual philosophic argument here: indeed, at 966B the main point of the previous discussion now appears merely as an attributed argument (οἱ φιλόσοφοι δεικνύουσι, rather than being internalized. It is in this context that the echoes of Autobulus’ speech (discussed above in section 1.2c) should be read: the hunters and fishermen of the second part of the dialogue arrive at the conclusion that animals have reason from a very different perspective and draw very different conclusions from it. The virtues of the various animals are, in large measure, important, insofar as they reflect well on those humans who interact with them (and this interaction can include killing them).

In any case, it is clear that both speakers are considerably less expert, even on a rhetorical level, than their elders. Aristotimus is the more assured of the two, yet his grasp of the philosophical debate is less than secure (see, e.g., n. 28 above), and he himself acknowledges to some extent that his display of examples is in danger of being a little incoherent: he makes quite an elegant (false) apology for his collocation of ants and elephants at 968B, but at 970E his apology for using a variety of examples on the grounds that animals display more than one virtue at once seems rather engagingly inexpert. Some of his examples are really more repetitive than polyvalent, like the doublet of Porus’ elephant at 970CD and the elephants at 974D, for all his attempts to give them a different aspect. One area where he does seem to introduce a new and germane argument is that of animal – or, more precisely, bird – speech and song, at 972F-973E. It is possible that his remark that birds teach humans ‘in some measure [τρόπον τινά] that they too are endowed both with rational utterance and with articulate

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33 In addition to those cited above, see the use of ἥμερος at 970E (of dogs), picking up on the language of 964F.
34 Is there an echo here of Xenophon’s self-deprecation at 13.4-5?
[ἐνάρθρου] voice\textsuperscript{35} looks back in its qualified assertion of animal rationality to 963B; but, as we saw above, in general this well established argument is absent from the first discussion. And Aristotimus does this well, establishing logically that birds teach each other to sing as well as learning to talk, and so simultaneously enlightening their instructors about animal reason. The legal metaphor at 973A (προδικεῖν καὶ συνηγορεῖν) makes the birds’ achievement seem the more impressive.

At the end of his speech (975C), Heracleon addresses Phaedimus. His command to him to raise his brows perhaps suggests Homeric-style glowering (as in the formula ὑπόδρα ἰδὼν), in which case this echoes the Homeric quotations which heralded the first speech. He comments on Aristotimus’ speech: οὐ παιδιὰ τὸ χρῆμα τοῦ λόγου γέγονεν, ἀλὰ ἐρρωμένος ἀγὼν καὶ ῥητορεία κιγκλίδων ἐπιδέουσα καὶ βήματος. This confirms what was said earlier about the contest being not wholly serious in intent, and also picks up on the legal imagery we noticed earlier\textsuperscript{36}. It may also, once again, suggest an educative process: the speakers have progressed beyond childish games and (in terms of the imagery, anyway), into adult activities. But that none of this is very serious becomes apparent at the start of Phaedimus’ speech: the fishermen are hungover, Aristotimus disgustingly sober. The reference to the preceding day, though, sets the scene (we would argue) for another oblique reference to Xenophon. Xenophon rejects criticism of hunting on the grounds that it distracts people from their domestic concerns and stresses that it promotes the good of the city and therefore everyone’s domestic well-being (12.10-11); in the same section (12.15-21) he insists on the virtue of hard work (intrinsic to the practice of hunting as he has described it)\textsuperscript{37}. Phaedimus’ words turn some of this on its head as he describes the dogs and horses and the nets lying idle, and stresses the amount of leisure they have to discuss the issue. And yet there may be an underlying sense that the contest is providing at least as much good paideia as a hunting trip could, in light of the earlier discussion and indeed of Heracleon’s words, suggesting that the level of debate has been higher than expected. The military word ἐκεχειρία might suggest that Phaedimus shares Xenophon’s view of these activities as a good preparation for war, and is explaining the debate in terms which correct

\textsuperscript{35} The insistence on articulation is tendentious (is Aristotimus once again being characterized as one who has either imperfectly digested his philosophy or is deliberately overriding others’ distinctions?): see Sorabji (1993), 80-81 for its importance in the argument of Diogenes of Babylon (D.L. VII, 55).

\textsuperscript{36} And see also παραιτεῖσθαι in 975C.

\textsuperscript{37} The figure of Heracles seems to be hovering behind the text here, especially in the personification of Virtue, though he is not one of the pupils of Chiron listed in the opening chapter: see Phillips – Willcock (1999), ad loc.
the vocabulary of leisure and diversion much in the same way that Heracleon corrected the impression of a childish game with his legal imagery. It could be argued that the whole contest is an illustration of Xenophon’s dictum that παίδευσις γὰρ καλὴ διδάσκει χρῆσθαι νόμοις καὶ λέγειν περὶ τῶν δικαίων καὶ ἀκούειν. Certainly Phaedimus’ later argument that sea creatures, being harder to catch, train fishermen to be more cunning (976C-E) seems to be developing the Xenophontic argument that hunting promotes other qualities.

But it also may well be that there is an ironic undercurrent here. Phaedimus has, as he points out, the harder task in this debate (975E), but nonetheless sometimes appears a little inept. His argument at 975F, that the land animals have become imbued with human habits because of their proximity to humans, is interesting in itself, but then finishes with a very self-defeating metaphor at 975F. He is essentially employing the same criteria as Aristotimus (συνέσεως ἐργα καὶ μνήμης καὶ κοινωνίας, 975E), but sometimes uses examples less than well (the story of Crassus and his moray eel is over-elaborated for the context, it cannot be wise to describe his fellow fishermen as like the Persians in 977E, and it might be thought dangerous for his argument as a whole that he remarks in 982C on the crocodile’s prescience about where the Nile will reach: οὔ φασι λογικὴν ἀλλὰ μαντικήν). He indirectly attacks Aristotimus not only for the dubiousness of some of the sources of his examples (but then uses some dubious sources himself, including the final story – which he admits is mythical and apologises for – but also plenty of material from Egypt which has no health-warning on it), but also for introducing δόξας φιλοσόφων, which seems discordant with the first part of the dialogue.

That said, he often takes up points from the previous speech in the manner of a good debater: for example, at 976C he mentions divination with crocodiles, answering Aristotimus’ last point, he compares the sea bass favourably with Porus’ elephant because it draws the hook out of his own flesh at 977B, refuses to believe Aristotimus’ story at 972B, attributed to Juba, about elephants helping each other out of pits (977D), picks up what he says about hedgehogs at 979AB, refocuses his account of the ichneumon preparing to attack the crocodile at 980E, turns Aristotimus’ point that the gods prefer hunting to fishing against him at 983E-984C. He even purports to complete one of Aristotimus’ dog stories (at 969E) by adding a prequel in the form of an incident where the dolphins bring Hesiod’s corpse to light in the first place38. This polemical approach on the whole makes Phaedimus’

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38 There are also some sets of examples which less explicitly balance something in Aristotimus’ speech: for example, Phaedimus’ account of fishy procreation balances
speech less inventive in terms of its arguments than Aristotimus’, though we should like to dwell briefly on two passages: first, the octopus at 978F-979A. The starting point for this part of the discussion is the early statement of Aristotimus at 965E that the octopus eats his own tentacles. Phaedimus defends the octopus against this charge (implying, Aristotimus says, that the octopus is ἄργος ἢ ἀναίσθητος ἢ γαστρίμαργος ἢ πάσι τούτοις ἐνοχὸς); on the contrary, its behaviour is caused by cunning and is aimed at ensuring that it remains the hunter rather than the prey. He concludes by interestingly applying the Xenophontic concept of hunting as paideia to the fish themselves, and portraying the food chain as a competition in terms which suggest self-reference to the paideutic activity in which he and Aristotimus are involved, as well as referring back to 976DE, where he described the intellect-sharpening benefits of fishing: καὶ τὸν κύκλον τούτον καὶ τὴν περίοδον ταῖς κατ᾿ ἀλλήλων διώξει καὶ φυγαῖς γύμνασμα καὶ μελέτην ἡ φύσις αὐτοῖς ἐναγώνιον διενότητος καὶ συνέσεως. Animal hunters sharpen their wits on each other just as human hunters do39.

Our final passage is 984CD, where Phaedimus stresses the gratuitous nature of the dolphin’s affection for man in contrast to that of the land animals, who, he claims, feel only cupboard love for man. He uses vocabulary familiar from the earlier discussion and from Aristotimus’ speech (ἡμερώτατα), but he reserves φιλάνθρωπον for the dolphins. Here he makes his only reference to philosophy, in accordance with his promise at the start of the speech: dolphins have by nature, he says, what the best philosophers seek, τὸ φιλεῖν ἄνευ χρείας. There seems to be a suggestion here that dolphins are not only superior to the land animals, but actually to man, in respect of this important virtue at least.

When he draws his speech hurriedly to a close, Aristotimus, in very formal legal language, calls for a vote, which as we have seen does not come to pass. The agon is instead collapsed into general proof that animals do have reason. The rhetorical polemic of both speeches (but particularly Phaedimus’) is undermined in favour of Soclarus combining both speeches against the Stoic point of view.

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39 Detienne – Vernant (1991), 33 and n. 42 curiously make this passage apply to human hunters rather than piscine ones.
2. Rhetorical strategies in Beasts are Rational or Gryllus (Mor. 985D-992E)

This is a dialogue between Odysseus (O.) and Circe (C.), then Odysseus and Gryllus (G.), a pig, or, since he is representing all animals, more correctly ‘the’ pig. O. goes to C. wishing to turn any Greeks she has back into men in order to increase his own fame and glory. C. says that O. must persuade the animals that regaining their human form is advantageous or desirable to them. If the animals agree, C. will restore them, and there is no real penalty if O. loses except acknowledging poor advice (κακῶς βεβουλεύσθαι). G. is chosen to argue on behalf of all the animals. The contest is unresolved and the dialogue may be incomplete, to an unknown degree.

This essay is very funny. Plutarch was a master of how best to pitch his product, frequently using theatrical metaphors and theatrical language to sugarcoat the pill, as it were – to make his message palatable to his audience. Another of his methods for doing this is to use alter egos, particularly in the dialogues. Gryllus is one of his more creative ‘alter egos’, able to speak quite freely to O. (one reason the essay is so funny is that both C. and G. needle O. quite freely; O. without question spends most of the dialogue on the defensive).

A brief synopsis follows.

1. O. approaches C. about his plans for increasing his own glory by rescuing any transformed Greeks she still has with her, lest they live out a life both pitiful and without honour (οἰκτρὰν καὶ ἄτιμον, 985E). C. accuses him of letting his own ambition (φιλοτιμία) bring misfortune not only to himself and his companions, but to those he had never even met. O. says she will make him a beast indeed if he is persuaded that “changing from beast to man spells ruin” (συμφορά ἐστιν ἄνθρωπον ἐκ θηρίου γενέσθαι, 985F). C. asks him if it isn’t true (οὐ γὰρ ἤδη) that he has already done worse to himself by turning down immortality with a beautiful woman like herself in favor of a mortal woman whose expiration date has passed (presumably Penelope!), and all in order to add to his notoriety, pursuing phantoms instead of truth. O. gives

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40 No less than Desiderius Erasmus agreed, using ‘Gryllus’ as an example of the genre at which he was aiming with ‘In Praise of Folly’ (Prefatory Letter by Desiderius Erasmus to His Friend Thomas More [1509?]; Erasmus wrote ‘In Praise of Folly’ while staying with More at his house in Oxford).

41 Titchener (forthcoming).

42 “Generally speaking, the works of Plutarch which deal with subjects relevant to animals are mainly an attack on the Stoics and a defence of the Academic views” (Tsekourakis (1987), 366-93).
up and concedes the entire point, giving a remarkable imitation of the male half of an old married couple when he asks why they must so many times struggle about the same things; she should do him a favor and turn the men loose. C. invokes Hecate and tells O. he must persuade the animals first, as they are not ordinary (οὐ γὰρ οἱ τυχόντες).

If they do not agree, O. must argue with them. If he wins, they will be turned back into men. If O. loses, he must be satisfied that he has been a poor counselor. O. wants to know how such converse can take place between man and beast; C. again mocks his ambition (φιλοτιμία) and says she will provide a representative to speak for all. Gryllus appears, and O. asks how to address him, using a formal Homeric phrase (ἤ τίς ἦν οὗτος ἄνθρωπων, cf. Od. X, 325). C. sees no reason to call the pig anything other than G., which means something like ‘Grunter’, and says she will leave the room to avoid any suggestion that G. is not arguing his genuine ideas in order to curry favor with C. (χαριζόμενος).

2. G. appears, greets O., and gets right to the point. O. defends his choice to restore only the Greeks of the transformed swine, and reveals the fact that he has asked C. to transform them. G. rejects the offer to change with some dismay, and compares O’s horror of the transformation to that of a small child trying to escape lessons. O. offers, rather insultingly, the observation that G. has lost both shape and reasoning power, and then attempts reverse psychology, suggesting that G. became a pig because he already was pig-like. G. stops O. cold, using his Homeric epithet ‘King of the Cephallenians’, which here has the connotation of ‘King of the Brainiacs’, and challenges O. to engage in an actual debate on the topic, and give up invective. O. agrees.

3. G. begins a discussion of virtues, in which humans definitely come off the worse. Beasts are not tricky, but have “naked courage under the impulse of genuine valor. No edict summons them, nor do they fear a writ of desertion”. Their nature hates subjection; they are not conquered even when physically overpowered; they never give up in their hearts; their courage concentrates sometimes in one place at the

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43 Plutarch uses Circe and her pig-men as a different kind of example in Praecepta coniugalia (139A), where he compares Circe’s transformation of the men to fishing with poison – quick and effective, but ultimately rendering the quarry unusable. There is no suggestion that she has elevated the pig-men to some higher existence!

44 Earlier in this paper, we delineated Plutarch’s familiarity with Xenophon, and particularly the latter’s work on hunting; it is interesting to note that Xenophon’s father, and his son, were named ‘Gryllus’.

45 Space limitations prohibit anything but a brief rehearsal of G.’s argument.
end of their lives so that they ‘fight’ even after death. They don’t beg, ask for pity, or acknowledge defeat. When animals are caught, if they’re full grown they commit suicide by starvation. ‘Taming’ them means performing an emasculation of their fighting spirit. In beasts, valour is common to both genders, showing that it’s more natural than in humans, among whom men only exhibit valour, and this valour consists in avoiding negative consequences. G. invokes Homeric similes, pointing out that no one wants to get compared to a man, but they do want to be ‘lion-hearted’.

The discussion turns to Temperance, defined as “curtailment and an ordering of the desires that eliminate those that are extraneous or superfluous and discipline in modest and timely fashion those that are essential”. Animals are immune to the pull of evil pleasures; they don’t indulge in luxurious living or lack sobriety. G. at this point adds a personal reminiscence about his former (i.e., human) craving for gold and ivory, and envied those who had those things even if it meant acting badly or being unlucky, or even criminal (like Dolon and Priam). G. remembers envying O., whom he’d seen earlier in life, not because of intellect or virtue, but because of a really good cloak, described in considerable detail, including the nature of the clasp. Happily, G. is now immune to these things, since what desires does the beast have? Good smells, while fun, also make it possible to choose the correct food (and are free, besides); plus, one saves all that time and money involved in burning incense or using scented oil. On top of that, you’ve got your own built-in scent, useful when it comes to sex. Females don’t tease but deliver the goods, and everyone quits after pregnancy (which is of course the point of sex!). There is a long diatribe against gay sex, but the real problem appears to be time-wasting during quests (i.e. Heracles literally missing the boat when the Argonauts sailed because he was looking for Hylas). But rooster on rooster action evidently often resulted in one or both getting burned alive, as a bad omen. Even worse, men upset the natural order by attempting sex with goats, sows, and mares, while women go for male beasts, producing monsters. G. says approvingly that no animal feels lust for humans under any circumstances, and only eats them through necessity.

While animals enjoy eating, humans make a fetish of it. G. observed that each animal eats only its proper food but humans eat anything; they eat meat even when plenty of vegetables are available, even though they get terrible gas\textsuperscript{46}. In a suddenly serious tone, G. deplores the

\textsuperscript{46} In De tuenda 134CD, Plutarch again discusses the problem of gas from eating meat – pain and distention. “The violent disturbances lower down in the bowels result-
slaughter of animals for food, and the fact that no kind of food (animal) is exempt. Useless arts are eschewed by animals, and they don’t specialize either – each is a medical specialist, hunter, self-defense expert, and musician! G. allows that some animals are smarter than others, just like humans.

O., having no intellectual recourse, finally suggests that beasts cannot possess reason because they do not have knowledge of god in them (οἷς οὐκ ἐγγίνεται θεοῦ νόησις, 992E). G. retorts with the suggestion that O.’s father, then, cannot be the famous atheist Sisyphus. It is not clear whether this is the true end of the dialogue. On the one hand, the argument appears to be exhausted, and Plutarch does sometimes end essays with a question (e.g., Praecepta coniugalia), but the dialogue is known to be incomplete, and it does seem rather abrupt.

Methods of Argument
Comparison. In this dialogue, the main comparison is between humans and animals, with subcategories where men are compared to women, mortals to immortals, and wild to tame. Yet the main comparison may be more subtle. Odysseus does not want to free all Circe’s pig-men, but only the Greek ones. His first question to Circe is whether she has any Greeks in her menagerie. Upon hearing that she does, he reveals his plan to restore them to humanity and increase his own fame. Upon meeting Gryllus, Odysseus immediately expresses sympathy for all the transformed men, but reiterates his plan to rescue Greeks only, as is reasonable or fitting (εἰκός). It is inviting to think that Plutarch is slyly applying a Greek/non-Greek comparison to the human/animal dynamic; the Greeks, represented (presumably) by the virtuous animals, will fare better in the comparison, and yet the non-Greeks, identified with the human half of the equation, cannot take offense. This idea is supported by the fact that Gryllus’ arguments are, in general, anti-Stoic, and thus we are encouraged to identify Gryllus’ arguments with the ideas of Plutarch himself. In particular, Gryllus’ insistence on the virtue of animals is at odds with the Stoic idea of reason being the source of virtue.

ing from medication, by decomposing and liquefying the existing contents, increase rather than relieve the overcrowding” (Loeb trans.).

47 Elsewhere (Quaest. Graec. 301D) Plutarch discusses the tradition that Sisyphus was O.’s real father.

49 The question of to what extent Plutarch was or was not speaking for the benefit of the Romans has been thoroughly examined of late, most notably at the Sage and Emperor Conference of 2001 in Chapel Hill, NC, the proceedings of which are available in Stadter – Van der Stockt (2002).
Anthropomorphism. Since this dialogue expressly concerns the comparison of animals to humans, we see fewer human attributes being applied to animals. In fact, during the discussion of the fruit of female/animal unions (the Minotaur, Aegipans, Sphinx, Centaurs, 991A), it is clear that the combination of the two is not a good thing. Some of Plutarch’s comments about animal behaviour are just plain wrong. Homosexuality definitely exists among many species; in the mountain west we are familiar with the phenomenon known as the ‘sweet bull’. It is also not true, at least in dog owners’ experiences, that dogs abstain from certain varieties of food and eat only that which they must have. On the other hand, Gryllus rather startlingly claims to be and have been all along arguing as a sophist (989B), putting his arguments in order and defining his terms, so we cannot dismiss his words as simply amusing chatter. In this, he is surely more man than pig.

The characters
Because one of the participants in the dialogue is not only an animal, but a pig, it is possible for Plutarch to put words in Gryllus’ mouth that would be offensive or hard to hear coming from a human. As Gryllus reproaches humankind for its fighting, sexual, eating, and drinking habits, he is immune from reciprocal criticism. He can mock Odysseus (‘King of the Brainiacs’), just like Circe can mock Odysseus as uxorious, since she is immortal and not subject to normal human female restraints. This sock puppet-like technique is clearly one of the most appealing things about the dialogue, with no possibility of a Thersites-like comeuppance. In the same way that the Romans could tolerate drama as long as it was Greeks getting drunk, breaking up brothels, tricking their fathers, and behaving badly, Plutarch’s audience can tolerate Gryllus’ barbs and arguments without being disloyal to the humans.

3. Conclusions
Hartman called De sollertia ‘dulcissimus hic suavissimusque liber’; Dodds called it ‘one of the most charming of Plutarch’s dialogues’; neither they nor most other scholars take it very seriously. Gryllus, likewise, is inevitably referred to as slight, light, and charming (the Loeb introduction begins [p. 489] “Many will find this little jeu d’esprit as pleasant reading as anything in Plutarch”). We hope to have shown,
however, that both essays feature a high level of literary and rhetorical sophistication, and we would also like to assert that there is some philosophical value to them as well. The claim of *De sollertia* to contribute to the philosophical debate on animals must rest, as Sorabji has shown, on its assertion that animals are owed kindness, even if not justice (see above, n. 24). But its form may also contribute something more serious than attractive and persuasive presentation. In his discussion of the two main modern theories about animal rights, Sorabji identifies as problematic their tendency to ‘one-dimensionality’ and, in comparing the ancient theories with them, remarks: “The Stoic idea of animals as occupying a single circle beyond the outermost limit of concern overlooked the variety of connexions we may have with them. The idea that all just dealing depended on contract and expediency overlooked the many other springs of justice. Moral theories may seek to make things manageable by reducing all considerations to one. Insofar as they do, this is so much the worse for them.” He insists upon “the need for multiple considerations in ethics.” One of the consequences of employing the dialogue form, and indeed introducing two interdependent discussions, is that Plutarch avoids the danger of one-dimensionality. By introducing four very different major characters, all of whom have very different views of what is owed to animals, but all of whom have, from their different perspectives, respect and admiration for them, Plutarch is able to suggest a wide ‘variety of connexions’ between humans and animals, and to use them against the Stoics. This is not really a piece which ‘attacks’ hunting and fishing, or defends them; it has a wider agenda than that, seeking rather to combat a mindset which Plutarch sees as mistaking the place of man in the universe than to target one activity or another (unlike Plato in the *Laws*). So none of the characters is particularly unsympathetic, none dominant for the whole essay. The intertextuality with Xenophon adds a further dimension. The connection he makes between hunting and *paideia* seems to be sometimes validated, sometimes challenged; but the distinction he makes between sophists and true philosophers, and the idea that interaction with animals is important for the rest of one’s activities, tacitly inform a good deal of the debate. *Gryllus*, likewise, uses humor and deflection to perpetrate a rather subtle, possibly patriotic, argument, and simultaneously entertains while attacking

50 *De sollertia* appears to have had some influence: for one thing, it seems likely that the author of the pseudo-Oppianic *Cynegetica* had in mind the opposition between hunting and fishing presented here when he wrote his companion piece to the *Halieutica*. 
Stoic doctrine. The familiar characters of Odysseus and Circe, combined with the seemingly outrageous idea that the transformed pig-men prefer their new status, relax the audience and show yet another weapon in Plutarch’s arsenal for making his points palatable. Charming indeed though they may be, there is more to these essays than an amusing collection of cute anecdotes and dodgy natural history.