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PORPHYRY, NATURE, AND COMMUNITY

Owen Goldin

I

As Sorabji has recently reminded us, the question of the nature and extent of ethical obligations to moral subjects other than human beings was widely discussed in antiquity. One of the chief texts is Porphyry, *On Abstinence from Animal Food*.¹ In this paper I explore one of Porphyry's arguments in the light of today's theorizing in environmental philosophy. I draw attention to a constraint on acceptable environmental ethical theory: to grant equal ethical standing to beings who are not human runs counter to the judgments that nearly all moral agents actually make. Callicott's version of Leopold's land ethic meets this need, but rests on a vague notion of "community." I examine an argument in *De Abstinencia* 3 that presents another theory that meets this need, but rests on a foundation that is both more nuanced and more metaphysically grounded than that of Callicott's "community": the Stoic notion of *oikeiōsis*.

The analysis of Porphyry's argument must rest on untangling the basic premises that are Porphyry's own from those that are subscribed to by his opponents.² In the present case, I argue, Porphyry employs as a premise the Stoic principle that one ought not harm another to whom one has the relation of *oikeiōsis*, a principle that has no place within Porphyry's own theory of justice. He does so in order to show the Stoics that their own principles entail ethical obligations to animals.

I begin by surveying the general issue of how questions concerning impartiality and community bear on environmental ethics. I then summarize Porphyry's account of the nature of justice, as presented in *Sentences* 32 and *Ad Marcellam*, and show how Porphyry follows Plotinus in his belief that justice in all of

its forms is not essentially other-regarding.³ I explore Porphyry's response to a defense of eating meat that has as its basis the rival, Epicurean theory of justice. I then turn to the Stoic defense of eating meat, based on their own account of justice, which, like the Epicurean argument, is based on the denial of justice in regard to animals. I explore Porphyry's response to this.

II

If a strictly anthropomorphic ethics is not tenable, the same can be said about any ethical theory that grants equal moral standing to beings of all species. It is what Aristotle calls an *endoxon* that there are times in which the good of plants, animals, and their environment ought to be sacrificed for the sake of certain human interests. We need an ethical framework that will allow us to grant special ethical standing to some subjects, without surrendering all decision making to our personal inclinations concerning those on whom our actions have some impact. An ethic of community has been offered as such a framework. For it seems that often the moral standing of those within one's community is greater than that of those outside of it. Further, even within one's community, there might be certain social structures that require that not everyone has equivalent moral standing. (For example, obligations to other members of one's family might trump moral obligations that might otherwise be overriding.) For this reason, ethicists attending to problems relating to the environment and the treatment of animals, most notably J. Baird Callicott, have turned to the model of an ethic of community in order to give a theoretical basis to ethical obligations to nonhumans and to make sense of how these obligations are to be prioritized in regard to others.⁴

This is a fruitful approach, but it rests on the notion of community, which is itself problematic. According to the biological sense of the term, a "community" is the set of all of the organisms that live within certain space/time parameters.⁵ Ecology tells us that among such organisms there will be a network of interdependence. Unless "community" in Callicott's argument is fatally ambiguous, he must be appealing to such a network in regard to the human as well as the natural world. But this casts the net too wide. Not all networks of independence constitute a community with its attendant obligations. For example, a machine on which we depend might in turn depend on us for upkeep, but we are under no obligation not to replace it with one that does a better job. The

question of the limits and nature of ethical obligations is recast as the question of the limits and nature of community.

We turn to *De Abstinencia* in order to shed light on this issue.

III

DA is a highly complex work, in which Porphyry stitches together empirical reports, quotations, and arguments borrowed from various sources. For rhetorical or dialectical reasons, Porphyry often makes use of material that derives from authors whose theoretical suppositions are very different from his own. Likewise, he sometimes explores the implications of an argument presented in such material, not always making clear that he does not share the theoretical basis of the argument. For this reason, it would be good to review Porphyry's general theory of justice, prior to turning to the arguments of *DA* that concern the issue of justice in regard to animals.

Sentences 32,⁶ a review and discussion of the account of the varieties of virtue that Plotinus presents in *Ennead* 1.2, presents Porphyry's outline of the varieties of virtue in general, and justice, in particular. Following Plotinus, Porphyry distinguishes four levels of virtue: political, purificatory, actually contemplating, and noetic. Purificatory virtue and actually contemplating virtue are together classed as "theoretical," because they are both concerned with *theōria*, human intellectual activity (32, 14–33, 3). He discusses each of the prime virtues (wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice) as they occur at each level. Because Porphyry's account of political justice is our main concern, it would be good to reverse the order in which Porphyry discusses the levels of virtue.

Noetic virtue is the Form of the virtue, as present in the hypostasis of intellect (29, 8–11). A Form as such is not found within a human being, and ethics has the human level as its focus.

Actually theorizing virtue corresponds to the goal of the practice of philosophy, as described in *Phaedo* 67d–69d: the condition of one who concentrates on the apprehension of the Forms. To clarify how virtue at this level can be a case of justice, Porphyry refers to the popular understanding of justice as doing one's own job (an account of justice that is central to Plato's *Republic*). Someone who has achieved this level of virtue can be considered as essentially intellect, and the job of intellect is to apprehend the Forms. Accordingly, the justice that is actually contemplating is

identical with the state in which intellect apprehends the Forms. (28, 1–2)

In order to attain this state, one's soul must be rid of the cares of the body, which, according to the stark dualism that Porphyry accepts from Plotinus, is alien to soul. Hence, the variety of virtue that "leads to contemplation" is "purificatory."

The theoretical virtues that advance towards contemplation (*theōria*) consist in keeping one's distance from the things of this world. This is why they are called purifications, since they are seen in the abstinence from actions that involve the body, and from the feelings that follow what happens to the body (*kai sumpatheiōn tōn pros auto*). (24, 1–4)

Justice at this level too is a matter of intellect doing its job. But purificatory justice consists not in the proper activity of intellect, knowing the truth, but in the secondary function of human intellect and *logos*, which is to rule the body, and in this way to still the bodily impulses and make possible the contemplative activity that constitutes justice at the next higher level. We shall see that in *DA* 1 Porphyry advocates a vegetarian diet as necessary for achieving what *Sentences* 32 calls "purificatory justice."

Noetic justice pertains to the transpersonal level of the Forms. Both varieties of theoretical justice pertain to a human being considered as an individual, apart from all political and social connections. Accordingly, none as such are concerned with the relations of one human being to another, the province of justice as usually conceived.

Porphyry begins his account of the political virtues by appealing to the tripartite division of the soul familiar from the *Republic*. What Plato considers a virtue as applied to an individual, Porphyry, following Plotinus (*Ennead* 1.2.2) calls a political virtue. Thus he identifies the political justice with the state in which all three parts (calculative, spirited, and desiring) are doing their proper job in respect to ruling and being ruled (23, 11–12, cf. Plotinus, *Ennead* 1.2.1, 19–21). This, of course, is the *Republic's* account of the justice of the *individual*—distinguished from the characteristic that makes a community just. Although individuals who are just in this sense will refrain from harming their neighbors,⁷ this is a concomitant of the justice of the individual, which virtue does not require a social context for it to be exercised.

Porphyry says more about political justice in the following passages:

Political virtues consist in having one's feelings in a measured state, which is a result of following, i.e., being a consequence of reasoning through what is one's duty concerning actions (*tou kathēkontos kata tas praxeis*). This is why they are called "political," since they aim at no harm being done to neighbors, and this comes from people coming together and forming a community (*koinōnia*). (23, 4–8)

The political virtues put the mortal human being in order. (24, 5–6)

Now the condition that is in accordance with the political virtues is seen in having one's feelings in a measured state, and it has as its goal living as a human being, in accordance with nature, but the condition that is in accordance with the theoretical virtues consists in being without feeling (*apatheiai*), the goal of which is being like G-d. (25, 6–9)

The goal of political virtue is variously described as having measured passions, putting in order the mortal human being, living in accordance with nature and acting in a manner that causes neighbors no harm. In the dualistic framework to which Porphyry subscribes, the mortal human being is the body. The virtues that are necessary for bodily health are those that keep one from self-destructive activity. We are reminded of the *Phaedo*, which contrasts philosophic virtue with what most people call virtue (cf. 68c8–9), the self-limiting that is required for maximal gratification of the body. Taking "nature" as "bodily nature," "living in accordance with nature" might perhaps refer to the same thing, especially given the centrality of the life according to nature in the ethics of the Stoics, according to whom all being is bodily.

What role is here played by other-regarding virtue, acting in a manner that causes others no harm? Again, we can see how this might be identified with the keeping one's passions within measure and with living according to nature, especially if there is an implicit reference to Aristotelian or Stoic teachings that human society is natural to human beings. But what relation does this have to the self-regarding virtue of achieving the bodily and psychological balance of the individual? What does it mean to identify what appear to be different kinds of virtue, calling both "political virtue"? Presumably, of the two goals, civic concord and individual bodily well-being, one is the means to the other.

Conceivably, having measured bodily passions is a means to the end of civic concord, in contrast to purificatory virtue, which is for the sake of the actualization of the individual as an intellectual being. But within *Sentences* 32 and *Ennead* 1.2 we see no

indication that political activity is taken to be basic to human life. The alternative is to understand Porphyry as saying that living in accordance with human nature means living in a manner best suited for the welfare of the body, and it is to this that human social structures are primarily oriented.

This account of Porphyry's general theory of the virtues is confirmed by another passage, from *Ad Marcellam*. Porphyry exhorts his wife to follow the philosophic life, which involves following the law of G-d, as distinguished from other varieties of law.

Three laws must be distinguished. They are: one, the law of G-d; second, the law of mortal nature; third, the law established in nations and states. So then the natural law, by determining the extent of the body's needs and by showing what is necessary for them, condemns what is pursued vainly or in excess. And the law established and promulgated in nations by compact strengthens social interaction through mutual agreement about the laws that have been established. The divine law, for its part has been established by the mind, for the salvation of rational souls in accordance with their conceptions. . . The established law, which is written in different ways in different times, is laid down for a particular situation, depending on the strength of the ruler's power . . . So then, first you must grasp the law of Nature and from it ascend to the divine law which also established the law of Nature. "For the written laws are laid down for the sake of the temperate men, not to keep them from doing injustice but from having injustice done to them." (*Ad Marcellan* 25–27)⁸

We can infer that one with political virtue will be one who follows the law of mortal nature. *Sentences* 32 left unclear the relation between this aspect of political virtue and that which has as its goal the welfare of others. The present passage suggests that civic laws make possible social interaction of the same of mutual protection; no doubt it also sometimes facilitates the positive goods that come from human interaction, such as philosophical discourse. What is important is that Porphyry explicitly indicates that its precepts need not be attended to by the person who is already temperate. For the law of Nature alone suffices for leading people to behave in ways conducive to the health of the body, and the divine law suffices for the rest (which we can safely identify with the acquisition of purificatory virtue and the virtue of one actually contemplating).

I have appealed to *Sentences* 32 and *Ad Marcellam* as evidence that even at the political level, Porphyry does not take justice to primarily consist in how one acts in regard to others. Insofar as

these texts conform to the ideas presented in Plotinus' *Ennead* 1.2, what Dillon says of Plotinus' ethics equally applies to that of Porphyry:

He would, of course, observe the vulgar decencies; it is just that they would be subsumed into something higher. One feels of Plotinus 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.⁹

IV

Porphyry ostensibly writes *DA* to convince his friend Firmus Castricius that he is mistaken in having abandoned a vegetarian regimen. He speculates that Firmus has been influenced by Epicurean and Stoic arguments against the ethical necessity of a vegetarian diet (I.1–3).

In opposition to Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics, Epicurus posited bodily pleasure as the end of human life. On his materialistic account, there is no fundamental difference *in kind* between the pleasures that come from indulging the body and those that come from engaging in the life of the mind.¹⁰ The pursuit of happiness is a matter of maximizing pleasure, which requires making prudential decisions concerning which pleasures are to be pursued, at what times.

An action or way of life is ethically obligatory only insofar as it leads to the happy life, so understood. All justice is contractual, for the sake of self-protection and as a prerequisite for feeling pleasure. The chief Epicurean objection to vegetarianism is that it does not lead to the happy life so understood. Were it possible to make a contract with animals, doing so would be in our best interest. Such a contract would entail obligations of justice towards them, which we would be required to respect. But since we cannot make such a contract, we are free to treat animals in any manner that we find to our own advantage (I.4–12).

There are three bases on which to infer what Porphyry takes to be the appropriate response to this objection. First, the Epicureans take justice to be a means to the end of the human good, and Porphyry's ethics differs radically from that of the Epicureans in regard to what that good is. Second, as we have seen, in *Sentences* 32 Porphyry develops a theory of justice, derived from the thought of his teacher Plotinus, according to which justice has various levels. Only at its lowest level is justice in itself concerned with

obligations towards others. At this level it has two related goals: mutual protection (the doing of no harm to a neighbor) and the solicitude for the body. This indicates that Porphyry agrees with the basic Epicurean point: that any obligations of justice that there may or may not be in regard to animals are not ultimately for the sake of the animals.¹¹ This is corroborated by a third piece of evidence: Porphyry's silence in regard to the Epicurean argument against vegetarianism. I consider each of these points in turn.

Porphyry follows the Platonic tradition in his evaluation of the pleasures of the body. These do not constitute the human good.¹² Following his presentation of the Epicurean defense of eating meat, Porphyry argues that bodily pleasures bind the soul to the body and hence draw a human being away from his or her proper good: the intellectual apprehension of eternal truth (*DA* 1.33, 39). Porphyry makes clear that his chief objection to the Epicurean rejection of vegetarianism is theoretical, concerning the very nature of the goal of human life and action.

A second point is that Porphyry's own, explicit account of the nature of justice and law in *Sentences* 32 and *Ad Marcellam* provides no evidence that he would dispute the Epicurean claim that obligations towards others, as such, are fundamentally contractual and hence not such as can exist in regard to animals.

A third point concerns not what Porphyry says, but what he does not say. If Porphyry thought that there are other-regarding obligations that are ultimately not for self-protection or one's own benefit, he would have responded to the Epicureans by means of presenting such an argument, like that developed in the debate with the Stoics presented in Book 3.

V

The Stoic objection to vegetarianism is more complicated than that of the Epicureans. First, there is a positive argument, to the effect that eating meat is good. The Stoics appealed to their holistic metaphysics, according to which the cosmos is an integrated unity, ordered by the *logos* which permeates it¹³ for the sake of its rational components, chief of which (apart from the *logos* as a whole) are human beings.¹⁴ Nonrational beings serve rational beings in many ways, especially as food. Indeed, Porphyry reports that on this view the blood of a pig is there for our benefit, to preserve the meat, like salt (3.20.1). So, from the Stoic perspective, in eating animals we further the teleological structure of the whole.

Second, there is a negative argument, to the effect that eating animals does not contravene the ethical obligations we have towards others, that is, obligations of justice. Although it is this argument that is the focus of *DA* 3, Porphyry assumes that it is familiar to his readers, and refers to it with a mere nod:

Since our opponents contend that we have an obligation to extend justice only to those like us, and for this reason they exclude irrational animals, come then, let us ask them to consider the view that is true and also Pythagorean, and indicate that every soul is rational, insofar as it has a share of sensation and memory. For once this has been proven, it will be reasonable for us to extend the notion of justice to every animal, even according to them. (3.1.4)¹⁵

It is the Stoics who deny that there are obligations of justice to beings that are not rational. Why do they do so?

The Stoics understand the cosmos to be a single rational animal, given its structure, order, and teleological direction by means of a fiery gaseous stuff called *pneuma* that interpenetrates all other bodies.¹⁶ For the *pneuma* to do its work, there must be some internal mechanism by which parts of a body, as it were, recognize which other parts belong to the same whole. At various levels, this is accomplished by means of a process called *oikeiōsis*, commonly translated as “appropriation.” This is the means by which the Stoics account for teleology in things, including human life and human action. It is by means of appropriation that one part of a living organism does things in the service of another part, and an animal does things in the service of its young.¹⁷ It is also by appropriation that people establish ethical bonds with one another, particularly the bonds that establish the obligations of justice.¹⁸ People recognize others as rational beings, and hence come to identify the others’ good as their own.¹⁹

Not all human beings extend their *oikeiōsis* as fully as they ought. People need to come to recognize a kinship among all rational beings, by virtue of their shared rational nature. This process is the path of moral education and development.²⁰ It is by virtue of the last step of this process that the later Stoics were “cosmopolitans,” citizens of the world. Thus the obligations of justice are extended to all human beings, regardless of nationality, gender, ethnicity, or social status. As such, Stoicism recognizes that all people have equal status as objects of ethical concern, and provides a powerful argument for impartiality in our treatment of others. On the other hand, at least among the

later Stoics this theory accounts for limits to the demands of impartiality, and recognizes good moral reasons for, in some cases, favoring family and other members of one's community.²¹ For reason determines that human society and its subgroupings are themselves natural, determined by the cosmic *logos* by which all things are ordered.²² One therefore recognizes that one's station in life involves certain special obligations or duties (*kathēkonta*), which typically involve requiring one to care for certain people in ways that are not equally binding on everybody.²³ That is to say, the relationship of being *oikeia* to others might not in all cases be equal. Filial piety, in particular, receives special attention, as in the ethical writings of Epictetus.²⁴ There is no algorithm for determining the extent and force of the obligation, nor how to adjudicate the inevitable conflicts between the demands to all human beings, insofar as they are human, and the special demands to human beings with whom one stands in special relations. But this lack of tidiness is a point in favor of Stoic ethical theory, since it reflects the ambiguities involved in actual decision making.

Stoic ethics thus serves as a model for a theory that recognizes the existence of special obligations that depart from strict impartiality without making moral decisions a matter of personal inclination.²⁵

Stoic thought addresses this issue by understanding the world as a complex of interrelated, overlapping, or nested structures, each of which has its parts standing in the relation of *oikeiōsis* with its other parts. Part of the world's teleological structure are the various communities in which people live and work. Each is a *polis*. Each *polis* is teleologically organized, so that each citizen has special roles to play, in regard to both the whole and other individuals. In its recognition of special ethical obligations, Stoicism grants legitimacy to common ethical intuitions that the good or interest of some moral subjects weighs significantly more than those of others.

But for the Stoics, a rational being, qua rational, can extend *oikeiōsis* only to other rational beings.²⁶ Outside of the universe as a whole and the gods, the Stoics recognized only human beings as rational animals. Hence, on their view, there are no moral obligations to other animals. As Cicero's Cato puts it:

Just as they think that rights bind men together, so they deny that any rights exist between men and animals. For Chrysippus excellently remarked that everything else was created for the

sake of men and gods, but these for the sake of community and society; consequently men can make beasts serve their own needs without contravening rights.²⁷

VI

DA 3 is primarily devoted to countering this argument. Porphyry does not clearly isolate those exhortations that derive from the Plotinian ethics to which he himself subscribes from the argument against the Stoics. But the starting points are so different that it is not hard to distinguish the two. As we have seen, Porphyry follows Plotinus in his belief that to gratify the body is to turn the soul away from its true good, self-alignment in accordance with Intellect, which good is to be achieved by pursuing the soul's own intellectual perfection. This belief is evident throughout *DA* (1.28–31 and *passim*). Eating animals gratifies the irrational aspect of the soul, and so hinders its intellectual perfection (*DA* 1.32–33 and *passim*). Abstaining from meat serves what *Sentences* 32 called “purificatory justice.” 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. This is the only one of Porphyry's arguments directly supporting a vegetarian diet that rests on premises to which he is known to subscribe on independent grounds.

We have seen that in *Sentences* 32, Porphyry considers other-regarding justice as “political,” for the sake of the welfare of the body, not the soul, which ought to be at the core of one's concern. I infer that the argument against eating meat for the sake of the purification of the self, and not the other-regarding arguments that follow, constitutes Porphyry's own argument against eating meat. That this is so is confirmed by Porphyry's repeatedly averring that his advocacy of a vegetarian diet is meant only for philosophers, not for the general run of people, since only the former have the contemplative life to lose if they are overwhelmed by the pleasure of eating meat (*DA* 1.27–8, 52–3). He would not say this if he thought that demands of other-regarding justice require that the interest of animals be taken into account.²⁸

Further support is provided by the following passage:

All of those who thought that justice makes its entry on account of *oikeiōsis* in regard to human beings are apparently also unaware of the distinctive characteristic of justice. For this would make it a kind of love for human beings, but justice consists in abstaining from and doing no harm to anything

whatever that does no harm. The just person is to be understood in this way—as having justice, which consists in doing no harm, extend to all living things; it is not to be understood in the other way. For the same reason its essence is found in having the rational part of the soul rule over the irrational part, and in having the irrational part follow. The reason for this is that when one rules and the other follows, it is altogether necessary for a person to do no harm to anything at all. (*DA* 3.26.9–10)

Porphiry begins by saying that fundamental to justice is not how one feels (and by extension, how one acts) towards those beings in regard to whom one is *oikeia*, but in the fact that one harms no being at all, *oikeion* or not. (Cf. Plato, *Republic* 335b–e.) Porphiry here makes clear that the truly just display the civic virtues because they are the sort of people who do no harm to others. They do no harm to others not because of any special bonds or relations that they have to these others but because just people simply are not of the nature that will lead to them performing harmful actions. Recalling *Sentences* 32, we infer that this is because a truly just person will have the rational part of the soul in charge, and this seeks contemplation, not some other-regarding activity.

I turn to Porphiry's main argument.

We recall the Stoic argument: there are obligations of justice towards all beings to which we are *oikeia*, all rational beings are *oikeia* to us, no animals apart from human beings are rational; hence there are obligations of justice to no animals besides human beings. There are two ways in which this argument could be countered. One could argue that animals are rational, and hence there is human *oikeiōsis* in regard to them; this is in fact the path that Porphiry takes. He writes, "We ought not to say that wild animals cannot think or be intelligent or have *logos*, even if their intelligence is slower than ours and they do not think as well as we do. Rather, their *logos* is weak and muddy, like an eye with a disorder, which does not see well" (*DA* 3.23.8). Alternatively, Porphiry could have argued that the notion of *to oikeion* is to be expanded to include other animals, for reasons other than shared rationality. The reader of *DA* would have already been exposed to a similar strategy. *DA* 2.22.1–2, part of a long quotation from Theophrastus' *On Piety*,²⁹ argues against religious convention by asserting that, like fellow human beings, animals are kin (*oikeia*) and it is wrong to murder kin. Theophrastus' reason for this is given in a long passage quoted in *DA* 3. He there says that kinship and family are determined by common parentage or ancestry, but

not only by this: kin and family have in common food, culture, and membership in the same kind. It is on these grounds that all human beings must be regarded as kin. We can make the same argument in regard to animals, for:

Humans and animals have the same principles because there is no natural basis for making distinctions among their souls. I have in mind the fact that they are subject to desire and anger, and further, the ways in which they reason, and most of all, the ways in which they all perceive things. . . This is shown by the kinship (*oikeiotēs*) of their passions. (*DA* 3.25.3)

Theophrastus departs from his teacher Aristotle, according to whom living beings of different species do have different principles, and hence by nature there are important reasons for treating them differently. Generic commonalities allow us to affirm that at bottom different varieties of living beings, especially different varieties of animals, are the same kind of thing. Differences between them are differences of more and less, not fundamental differences in kind.

As Theophrastus employs it, *oikeion* probably has a loose sense. His point seems to be that, on the basis of resemblance, we can conclude that there is some sort of affinity between animals and human beings. Consequently, we should treat animals more or less as we do each other. But Porphyry embeds his quotation in a rebuttal of the Stoic denial of *oikeiōsis* in regard to animals. In the present context his use of the quotation employing the term is obviously loaded. A Stoic might read Theophrastus as making the point that shared commonality in psychology or physiology is sufficient for animals to be *oikeia* in relation to us.³⁰ The Stoics would deny this, since these processes occur at levels of the pneuma's tensile motion that are lower than that of *logos*. For the Stoics, it is *logos* that makes us what we truly are, by which we are to be identified as both ethical agents and subjects.

Book 2 of *DA* is meant to show that a vegetarian diet does not violate conventional religious practice. Its arguments have as their audience those who take conventional religion to be an adequate guide to ethical practice. This is why, in this context, Porphyry was able to make use of Theophrastus' argument in its original form, without providing any deeper theoretical support. Theophrastus had rested his argument on the assumption that it is unjust to hurt those who are of our kind and those with whom we live. This is, on the face of it, a reasonably uncontroversial assumption and, within *DA* 2, it was not incumbent on Porphyry

to provide a theory concerning the nature of kinship, community, or justice. But in Book 3, Porphyry develops a different argument, to a different audience. The Stoics he is addressing have developed a theory concerning justice and *oikeiōsis* that goes well beyond everyday belief. They restrict obligations of justice to rational beings; a refutation of the Stoic denial of obligations of justice to animals, on the Stoics' own terms, must rest on showing that animals besides human beings are in fact rational.

Porphyry employs two basic strategies in order to show this. First, he argues that animals are not so different from us in their psychology, anatomy, and pathology as to make it unreasonable that they will be greatly different from us in their capacity to reason (3.7–8). Porphyry goes to some length to present his own catalogue of such similarities; it is to this effect that he also cites the authority of Theophrastus. Porphyry also presents positive arguments for animal rationality. There were at his disposal the resources to present a metaphysical argument for this conclusion. According to the cosmology of Plato's *Timaeus*, the soul of all animals is of the same stuff as the soul that animates the world,³¹ and it is this which makes possible transmigration to and from animal forms.³² The human form is the norm, by which body is ensouled. Animal forms deviate from that as a sign of the aberrance of reason. But such an argument would not be convincing to a Stoic. The Stoics follow the *Timaeus* in taking the world to be a single ensouled animal. For them soul is a material stuff, *pneuma*, undergoing a certain motion. The pneumatic motions that typify soul are present at the level of the world as a whole, as well as at the level of individual animals. But this motion is not by nature rational. For this, a more complex kind of motion, that of *logos*, is required. This is found at the level of the cosmos as a whole, and at that of gods and human beings, but is absent within the other animals, considered as such. So in addressing the Stoics one cannot argue for animal rationality on the basis of a cosmological metaphysics. The argument must be largely empirical.³³ Porphyry must show that the level of rational life is not to be distinguished from that of animal life.

This is why, following the example of Plutarch,³⁴ Porphyry goes to some length to present examples of rational animal actions. Porphyry's argument is behavioristic. Animals are seen to communicate, and to do complicated, goal oriented things the same as, or similar to, the things we do (*DA* 3.9–17, 22–24). If it is agreed that we do these things by virtue of rationality,³⁵ the same ought to be said of animals. As he puts it, "If we do not understand how

animals act because we cannot enter their reasoning, we will still not declare them irrational for that reason. For it is not possible to enter into the mind of G-d, but, based on what the sun does, we have agreed with those who have declared Him intellectual and rational" (3.11.3). The mind of an animal might be a black box, but the things an animal does are available for everyone to see.

At its best, this discussion serves to show how hazy are the boundaries between instinctive and rational purposive behavior, and between animal calls and the use of language. It is for this reason that contemporary philosophers have taken interest in *DA*.³⁶ At its worst, as Porphyry himself admits (3.4.1), *DA* 3 strains credulity with tales of animals "learning to dance, drive a chariot, fight one-on-one, and walk a tight-rope, indeed even <learning> to read and write, play a musical pipe or lyre, shoot a bow, and ride a horse and so forth" (*DA* 3.15.1).

VII

The main argument of *DA* 3 can be summarized as follows. There is a moral obligation to respect the demands of justice in regard to all for whom there is *oikeiōsis*, a class which comprehends rational beings. (Contra the Epicureans) this is so whether or not any contracts or agreements have been made (3.13.1). Animals are rational, hence the demands of justice extend to them as well. Porphyry writes "These considerations and others that we shall recall in due course (while reviewing the ideas of the ancients) show that animals are rational, and that in most of them *logos* is imperfect but not wholly absent. But if, as our adversaries admit, justice pertains to rational beings, why couldn't we have a principle of justice towards animals?" (3.18.1). Included among the demands of justice are the demands not to kill, except for certain cases in which this is necessary for one's own survival. Porphyry tells us that Plutarch "grants permission and allows one to inflict a certain amount of harm, for the sake of necessities, if to take something from plants even as they remain alive counts as harm. But to destroy and kill other things gratuitously, for the sake of pleasure, belongs to the utmost cruelty and injustice" (3.18.3). We need to eat, but we do not need to eat meat. Hence the eating of animals is an intrinsic evil. (We see that, oddly enough, Porphyry accepts the controversial premise of the argument, that animals are rational, but not the key uncontroversial one, that it is in itself unjust to do harm to other rational beings.)

The ethical theory that Porphyry works through in opposition to the Stoics develops the Stoic theory, which accounts for both impartial obligations to all members of a community, and particular obligations to particular members of the community.³⁷ It does so by expanding the community to include more than those beings commonly recognized as rational. In this, Porphyry seems to be on the right track. But for those of us who take as a starting point the existence of obligations to biota and ecological communities, or who disagree with where he draws the line between the rational and the irrational, he is going about this the wrong way. Though forms of rationality, whatever that is, may be exhibited by animals other than human beings, many of us reject the premise that all of those beings to which we have ethical obligations are rational. The key is to find a notion of community other than mere interdependence,³⁸ which includes both rational and nonrational beings, but not artifacts and other beings that we do not grant to be moral subjects.³⁹ Though he does not give us its solution, Porphyry's recasting of the Stoic argument helps clarify the problem.⁴⁰

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NOTES

1. *De Abstinencia* (hereafter referred to as *DA*), Greek text with French translation in *Porphyry: De l'abstinence*, intro. by J. Bouffartigue and M. Patillon; text ed. and trans. J. Bouffartigue, 3 vols. (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1977–1995); English translation *Porphyry: On Abstinence from Killing Animals*, trans. G. Clark (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000).

2. Cf. Clark, *On Abstinence*, p. 6, who writes of *DA* "Much of it is . . . report and discussion of other people's arguments, deployed to win an argument rather than to explore all the implications."

3. I here agree with the summary of Porphyry's vegetarian ethics presented without support in U. Dierauer, *Tier und Mensch im Denken der Antike* (Amsterdam: Verlag B. R. Grüner, 1977), p. 287.

4. J. B. Callicott, "The Conceptual Foundations of the Land Ethic" in *In Defense of the Land Ethic* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), pp. 93–94. "[O]ur recognition of the biotic community and our immersion in it does not imply that we do not also remain members of the human community . . . or that we are relieved of the attendant and correlative moral responsibilities of that membership, among them to

respect universal human rights and uphold the principles of individual human worth and dignity.”

5. Even in its strictly biological usage, “community” is rife with enough ambiguity to call into question its usefulness as a theoretical foundation for environmental ethics. See S. Shrader-Frechette and E. D. McCoy, *Methods in Ecology: Strategies in Conservation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 11–31.

6. E. Lamberz, ed., *Porphyrii, Sententiae ad Intelligibilia Ducentes* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1975), pp. 22–35.

7. See *Republic* 442e–443b.

8. The translation is lightly modified from K. O. Wicker, *Porphyry the Philosopher: To Marcella, Text and Translation, with Introduction and Notes* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), pp. 67–69.

9. J. Dillon, “An Ethic for the Late Antique Sage” in L. Gerson, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 334.

10. See especially Epicurus, *On the End*, quoted in Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 3.41–2, A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), hereafter referred to as LS, 21L.

11. Interestingly, Porphyry sums up his thought on the varieties of law with a sentence (“For the written laws are laid down for the sake of the temperate men, not to keep them from doing injustice but from having injustice done to them”) which is a loose quotation of Epicurus fr. 530: “Laws are laid down for the sake of the wise, not to keep them from doing injustice, but from having injustice done to them.” Porphyry is one to employ quotations out of context, for his own purpose. Clearly he is doing so here, in using Epicurus in support of the neoplatonic ideal of contemplation. But the passage does provide some additional support to my contention that he does not regard correct other-regarding behavior as a key element of the justice of the philosopher.

12. After he indicates the central error that underlies Epicurean ethics, Porphyry stresses that even if one does grant the Epicurean principle that bodily pleasure is the good at which our actions should aim, light and easily available food ought to be preferred. Hence by their own account the Epicureans ought to be committed to vegetarianism (*DA* 1.48, 1.51.5–6 and 1.54). This parallels the structure of what I take to be the main argument of *DA* 3: even if one accepts the principles of Stoic ethics (which Porphyry does not) one still ought to maintain a vegetarian diet.

13. Calcidius 292 = LS 44D = SVF 1.88; Calcidius 293 = LS 44E; Diogenes Laertius 7.138 = LS 47O = SVF 2.634.

14. Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods* 2.81–164, includes LS 54 LMN; Porphyry makes fun of this teleological scheme at 3.20, which includes LS 54P and SVF 2.1152.

15. This and other translations from *DA* cited in this paper are by Frank Romer and the author.

16. Galen, *de plac. Hipp. et Plat.* 5.3.8 = LS 47H = SVF 2.841; Alexander, *de mix.* 223.25-35 = LS 47L = SVF 2.441.

17. See especially Diogenes Laertius 7.85 = LS 57A = SVF 3.178; Plutarch, *On Stoic Self-contradictions* 1038B = LS 57E = SVF 3.179, 2.724; Cicero, *On Ends* 3.62 = LS 57F.

18. *DA* 19.2 = SVF 1.197, quoting Plutarch: “[T]he followers of Zeno posit appropriation as the principle of justice.” See also Cicero, *On Ends* 3.68 = LS 57F.

19. See *On Ends* 3.62-3, trans. Long and Sedley, p. 348 (57F).

20. Stobaeus 4.671.7-673.11 = LS 57G.

21. Cf. Long and Sedley, p. 353.

22. Cicero, *On Ends*, 3.64.

23. See especially Cicero, *On Ends* 3.32 = LS 59L = SVF 3.504; Epictetus, *Discourses* 2.10.1-12 = LS 59Q, 3.2.4, 4.4.16.

24. See A. F. Bonhöffer, *Die Ethik des Stoikers Epictet* (Stuttgart: F. Enke, 1890), pp. 90-92; translated in *The Ethics of the Stoic Epictetus: An English Translation*, trans. W. O. Stephens (New York: Peter Lang, 1996), pp. 129-32.

25. A similar point is made in A. J. Holland, “Fortitude and Tragedy: The Prospects for a Stoic Environmentalism” in L. Westra and T. M. Robinson, eds., *The Greeks and the Environment* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1997), pp. 160-61.

26. See Cicero, *On Ends* 3.20.67.

27. *On Ends* 3.67, trans. Long and Sedley, pp. 348-49 (57F).

28. In comments on an earlier draft of this paper, Roslyn Weiss suggests that the point of Porphyry’s restriction is that those incapable of the highest state of personal virtue need not try to live up to the standards that such a state requires. Thus, those incapable of the highest standard of justice need not abstain from eating meat. I counter that nowhere in Porphyry’s work, including the exhaustive account of virtue and law in *Sentences* 32 and *Ad Marcellam*, do we see why acting on the behalf of others, considered as such, is to the benefit of one’s soul.

29. See J. Bernays, *Theophrastos’ Schrift über Frömmigkeit* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1979), pp. 37-8.

30. See also 3.7.2-5, where physiological similarities and similarities in pathology are taken as evidence for a general similarity, which in turn supports the case for similarity in regard to the possession of reason.

31. Although Plotinus sometimes sharply distinguishes human souls and the animal realm, he also sometimes endorses an account of rational soul enlivening both humans and beasts, which owes much to the

Timaeus. See Eve Browning Cole, "Plotinus on the Souls of Beasts," *Journal of Neoplatonic Studies* 1 (1992), pp. 70–79.

32. There is evidence that Plato's assertion that the souls of the wicked are reborn into animals was not taken literally by Porphyry, but scholars are not agreed on this. For an overview of the possible ways of assessing the evidence, see J. Carlier, "L'après-mort selon Porphyre" in A. Charles-Saget, ed., *Retour, repentir, at constitution de soi* (Paris: Vrin, 1998), pp. 133–60. Carlier argues that Porphyry's metaphysics is in accordance with Plato's assertion, but that he nonetheless balks at accepting this result.

33. Porphyry also makes appeal to the Stoics' teleological biology. He argues that perception and other cognitive faculties would be worthless without the reason that allows one to make inferences concerning the information that they allow one to take in (*DA* 3.21.5).

34. See especially *Gryllos* (*That Animals Have Reason*) and *Sollertia*.

35. The Stoics took speech to occur by virtue of emissive (*prophorikos*) *logos*; which is a manifestation of inner *logos* (*DA* 3.3.1).

36. See D. Dombrowski, *The Philosophy of Vegetarianism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984); Sorabji, *Animal Minds*, section 1.

37. Roslyn Weiss has objected that Porphyry's argument itself proceeds on the basis of strict impartiality. I grant this, although some of Porphyry's stories of the relations between people and animals are indications that he recognizes the value of special relations (e.g., 3.5.1 on how Krassos was profoundly moved by the death of his pet eel, and 3.23.4 on the solicitude that male doves show their family).

38. At 3.12.3 Porphyry counters the Stoic denial of justice in regard to animals by pointing to the interdependence of animals and human beings, due to the providential teleological design of a cosmic Demiurge. He says that this same Demiurge has implanted within all members of such a network a natural sense of justice. He here comes very close to expressing Callicott's ecological ethic of community. I confess that I am not sure how to reconcile these few lines with either the account of justice developed in *Sentences* 32 or the main argument of *DA* 3, which restricts the obligations of justice to rational beings.

39. In this regard the suggestions of Sorabji, *Animal Minds*, pp. 126–28 are helpful.

40. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the April 2000 meeting of the Pacific Division of the American Philosophical Association, in Albuquerque, NM. This reading of the paper was followed by Roslyn Weiss's presentation of her provocative and penetrating comments, for which I am very grateful. Valuable help was also given by two anonymous referees of *HPQ* and by Joshua Davis and Gretchen Lieb.