

THE ARISTOTELIAN CARNIVORE
DE ANIMA AND THE ETHICAL ASPECT OF ANIMAL RATIONALITY

Handout

1) Aristotle (384-322 BCE)

On the Soul (ed. *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. J. Barnes)

428a8-11: That imagination is not sense is clear from the following considerations: Sense is either a faculty or an activity, e.g. sight or seeing: imagination takes place in the absence of both, as e.g. in dreams. Again, sense is always present, imagination not. If actual imagination and actual sensation were the same, imagination would be found in all the brutes: this is held not to be the case; e.g. it is not found in ants or bees or grubs.

427b7-15: That perceiving and understanding are not identical is therefore obvious; for the former is universal in the animal world, the latter is found in only a small division of it. [...] perception of the special objects of sense is always free from error, and is found in all animals, while it is possible to think falsely as well as truly, and thought is found only where there is discourse of reason.

429a5-8: And because imaginations remain in the organs of sense and resemble sensations, animals in their actions are largely guided by them, some (i.e. the brutes) because of the non-existence in them of thought, others (i.e. men) because of the temporary eclipse in them of thought by feeling or disease or sleep.

414b18-19: Certain kinds of animals possess in addition the power of locomotion, and still others, i.e. man and possibly another order like man or superior to him, the power of thinking and thought.

2) Porphyry (c.234-305)

On Abstinence from Killing Animals (ed. G. Clark)

3.6.7: But Aristotle and Plato, Empedocles and Pythagoras and Democritus, and all who have sought to grasp the truth about animals, have recognised that they share in *logos*.

3.21.6-9: [T]here is no way that the taking and pursuit of useful things, and rejection and avoidance of destructing and harmful things, which are consequent on perception, can be present in creatures which do not by nature reason and judge and remember and attend. [...] So every creature that has perception must also have thought.

3.8.6: Aristotle says that animals with keener perceptions are wiser.

3.13.1: But someone may say that animals are rational, but have no connection with us. Yet it was on the grounds that animals are non-rational that they removed the connection with them [...].

3.18.2: We shall not extend concern for justice as far as plants, because they appear to be quite incompatible with *logos*.

1.3.3: You may not realise that many people have argued against abstinence from animate [foods], and that, among philosophers, the Peripatetics, the Stoics and the Epicureans have made the most effort to oppose the philosophy of Pythagoras and Empedocles [...].

2.13.1: But perhaps someone might say that we take something even from plants. It is not the same kind of taking, for it is not from the unwilling.

3) Augustine (354-430)

Answer to Adimantus, a Disciple of Mani (in *The Manichean Debate*, ed. by R. Teske and B. Ramsey)

14.3: After all, the law does not speak about sacrifices when it says in Deuteronomy, *Kill according to the desire of your soul, and eat every sort of meat in accord with the pleasure that the Lord has given you*, but about the foods that pertain to a person's nourishment. But because the Manicheans say that it is a sacrifice even when certain animals are prepared for a person's dinner, they thought that these passages were, in accord with their interpretation, contrary to each other.

The Catholic Way of Life and the Manichean Way of Life (in *The Manichean Debate*, ed. by R. Teske and B. Ramsey)

2.17.54-59: First of all, Christ showed that your abstention from killing animals and from felling trees is utter superstition. For he taught us that we share no community of laws with animals and trees [...]. But the Son of God certainly ought not to have given a sign by means of murder if, as you suppose, either to kill a tree or to kill animals is murder [homicidium]. For he also gave certain signs by means of human beings, with whom we are, of course, united in a community of laws, but he did so by healing them, not by killing them. He would have also done this with animals and trees if he judged that we were united with them in a community, as you suppose. [...] But now I shall ask what bothers you about the killing of animals, and many points of this sort can be also raised on this subject. [...] For we see and perceive from their cries that animals die in pain – something, of course, on which a human being places little value in the case of an irrational animal, that is, one without a rational soul, with which a human being is not united by any community of laws.

3) Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)

Summa contra gentiles, Book Three: Providence (tr. by V. J. Bourke):

3.22.7-8: Now, among the acts pertaining to forms, certain gradations are found. Thus, prime matter is in potency, first of all, to the form of an element. When it is existing under the form of an element it is in potency to the form of a mixed body; that is why the elements are matter for the mixed body. Considered under the form of a mixed body, it is in potency to a vegetative soul, for this sort of soul is the act of a body. In turn, the vegetative soul is in potency to a sensitive soul, and a sensitive one to an intellectual one. This the process of generation shows: at the start of generation there is the embryo living with plant life, later with animal life, and finally with human life. After this last type of form, no later and more noble form is found in the order of generable and corruptible things. Therefore, the ultimate end of the whole process of generation is the human soul, and matter tends toward it as toward an ultimate form. So, elements exist for the sake of mixed bodies; these latter exist for the sake of living bodies, among which plants exist for animals, and animals for men. Therefore, man is the end of the whole order of generation. [...]

Thus we see that mixed bodies are sustained by the appropriate qualities of the elements; Plants, in turn, are nourished by mixed bodies; animals get their nourishment from plants: so, those that are more perfect and more powerful from those that are more imperfect and weaker. In fact, man uses all kinds of things for his own advantage: some for food, others for clothing. That is why he was created nude by nature, since he is able to make clothes for, himself from other things; just as nature also provided him with no appropriate nourishment, except milk, because he can obtain food for himself from a variety of things. Other things he uses for transportation, since we find man the inferior of many animals in quickness of movement, and in the strength to do work; other animals being provided, as it were, for his assistance. And, in addition to this, man uses all sense objects for the perfection of intellectual knowledge. Hence it is said of man in the Psalms (8:8) in a statement directed to God: “You have subjected all things under his feet,” And Aristotle says, in the *Politics* I [5: 1254b 9], that man has natural dominion over all animals.

5) Tommaso Campanella (1568-1639)

Del senso delle cose e della magia (ed. G. Ernst; my translations):

2.26: And everyone seeks eating to preserve oneself; and the wolf kills the sheep and every innocent animal for its own life, the sheep kills plants and vegetation, and animals kill each other; and the human being kills everyone for its own benefit.

1.13: It is silly to believe that the world doesn't feel only because it doesn't have legs, eyes, hands. [...] Depriving things of sensation because they don't have eyes, nor mouth, nor ears, is just as silly as depriving the wind of motion because it doesn't have legs, and to the fire the [capability of] eating only because it doesn't have teeth.

2.26: And so plants dress themselves with leaves, make children to live in its similar, dying in oneself; and in the same way the animals arm themselves with horns, just like plants with thorns; and in everything there is flight from and hate of death and love of life.