Plutarch on the Treatment of Animals: The Argument from Marginal Cases

far from agreed upon by scholars. Empedocles seems to have believed that men during the Golden Age naturally spared animals because human natures were then more gentle and amiable; see, for example, Empedocles: The Extant Fragments, ed. M. R. Wright (New Haven 1981), fragment 119 (Diels-Kranz 130), with Wright's commentary, 284; more recently, Brad Inwood, The Poem of Empedocles (Toronto 1992) 60-61, interprets Empedocles' Golden Age theory and its implications for human behavior toward animals. In the case of Pythagoras, Tsekourakis 370-379 has shown that various beliefs contributed to Pythagoras' opposition to meat-eating, including his belief in metempsychosis and his notion that consumption of meat befouled the soul. Concern for animals as suffering creatures seems to have played little part in Pythagoras' doctrine, which sets him apart from Plutarch.

Chrysippos, whom Plutarch charges (1047B) with saying anything that occurs to him.

18 Plutarch's treatise De Stoicorum repugnantibus (On Stoic Self-Contradictions) is a lengthy catalogue of contradictions detectable in Stoic doctrine, most especially in the works of

19 See note 4 above.

20 It might be noted that even Tom Regan, "An Examination and Defense of One Argument Concerning Animal Rights," passim, while offering an exhaustive defense of the proposition that animals are entitled to any rights to which marginal cases of humans are entitled, hesitates to specify what those rights might be. In The Case for Animal Rights (Berkeley 1983) 276-280, Regan argues that all moral agents and patients possess at least the right to respectful treatment, a point of view remarkably similar to that advanced in Plato's discussion of Cato's unfeeling treatment of his slaves and animals. Regan argues that according respectful treatment to marginal cases of humans will prevent persons from treating them as if they were receptacles of value without value of their own, for such a view would allow one to harm them by causing them suffering. Such behavior is, in the view of both Plato and Regan, morally wrong.

Caterpillar

I am born
And then, all at once,
The pale light of spring,
That has hung for my whole life
In the air like winter's breath,
Changes into gold.

And the warm hand of the sun,
Through the new leaves,
Falls trembling over me.
And beneath me, beneath the rough bark
I have known forever, the sleeping sap rises
Through the very skeleton of this tree.

It is then that I feel at my shoulders
An ache
That will pull me into air.

And so, even as the last clinging web,
Where I was born with a thousand others
To crawl across a tree,
Floats shining to the ground,
I twirl my silk around and around
Just me
Then sleep, then wake again, born and new.

Now in the hot sun, my wings
Like petals dry blue and butter
And suddenly, the whole world fills for me
With flowers,
The way the world must fill for you
With those stars you love, that sometimes,
On the darkest nights, step down.

And catch the wish you throw them.

Kathryn Winograd
Littleton, Colorado