CHAPTER 22

Discourses 18A and 18B: On Food

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The practice of philosophy as a way of life is a refrain throughout these *Discourses*. And life is, naturally, impossible without food. *Discourse* 18A opens stating that Musonius Rufus spoke often and very emphatically about food, because he considered it neither a small matter nor of trivial consequence. This is because he thought that the beginning and basis of temperance (ἀρχὴν καὶ ὑποβολὴν τοῦ σωφρονεῖν) lay in self-control (ἐγκράτεια) in eating and drinking. Musonius considered the lack of temperance to entail the lack of other virtues, assuming he was, with the early Stoics, committed to the unity of the virtues. Their debate was over what this unity entailed. Conversely, cultivating self-control in eating and drinking elicits other virtues. Musonius' view that the beginning and basis of temperance lie in self-control accords with the Socratic dictum that 'self-control is the foundation of virtue' (τὴν ἐγκράτειαν ἀρετῆς εἶναι κρηπῖδα) (Xen. *Mem*. 1.5.4). In treating nourishment as a weighty topic, Musonius joins a long tradition of thinkers including the Pythagoreans, Socrates, Plato, Antisthenes, Diogenes, Crates and other Cynics, Teles, and the authors of pseudo-Cynic letters and pseudo-Lucian's *Cynic*. Food is serious stuff for Seneca. Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius offer distinctive analyses of this topic. Many fragments of Epicurus discuss eating. Cicero, several treatises of Plutarch, and Simplicius's commentary on Epictetus's *Encheiridon* address food. Philo and Clement of Alexandria discuss it at length. The zenith of this tradition is Porphyry's *On Abstinence from Animal Flesh*.

My comments unfold as follows. First, I review what we can surmise about the typical viands of first-century Romans. Their dietary choices were rooted in opposed pairs of concepts: raw/cooked, pure/impure, civilized/barbarian, austere/luxurious, and strong/soft. Second, within this scheme I situate meat as a locus of moral debate. Third, a sketch of ancient philosophical vegetarianism contextualizes Musonius' arguments. Fourth, his arguments are reconstructed and unpacked. Lastly, I contrast two sorts of eaters portrayed in Περὶ τροφῆς.

1 What Did Romans Eat?

Greeks and Romans were obsessed with food. The poor majority struggled to get enough. The well-off minority fashioned an elaborate *haute cuisine*

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(Garnsey 1999, xi). Roman staples were grains, oil, fresh and dried vegetables, fresh and dried fruits, honey, wine, walnuts, almonds, hazelnuts, pinenuts, and chestnuts. Romans gathered mushrooms, asparagus, laurel, wild fruits, and snails. Milk, cheese, meat, and fish provided protein and fat (Corbier 1999, 129). Some honey may have been collected from the wild (Crane 1994). Yet descriptions of beekeeping by Varro, Virgil, Columella, and Pliny the Elder suggest that honey from apiaries was available in many locales. Thus, beekeeping was probably widely practised in imperial times in Italy. The Romans used honey to cook and bake, to sweeten wine and other drinks, and as a medicine to remedy certain ailments (Ransome 1986, 88–90). Like many other ancients, Musonius admires the sociability of bees. He opines that human nature most closely resembles the nature of bees, who survive by living and toiling together for their common good (*Discourse* 14, 92.25–8 Lutz). Marcus Aurelius appreciates the sociability of bees doing their part putting the world in order within a context of limits to eating and drinking (*Med.* v. 1). Seneca uses bees to argue for a version of kingship (*Clem.* 1.19.2–4).

The basic alimentary distinction was between *fruges*, products of the cultivated soil, and *pecudes*, products derived from non-human animals (hereafter: animals) raised for meat on uncultivated land. Farro (spelt, emmer) and barley were common grains prepared as pottage or baked into bread. Gardens (*horti*), vineyards, and orchards supplied *legumina* and *holera* (Hollander 2019). *Legumina* were pod-bearing plants of which one ate the seed pods, including the broad bean, chickpea, lentil, and lupini bean. Oil was often used as a condiment with beans (Corbier 1999, 134). *Holera* included many green vegetables, colza (rapeseed), and tubers, as well as varieties of cabbage and cardoon (*Cynara cardunculus*, a Mediterranean plant related to the artichoke cultivated for its edible leaves and roots), edible bulbs like onions, leeks, and garlic, beets, turnips, parsnips, carrots, broccoli, salad greens, and herbs (Dupont 1999, 118). Garden vegetables, grapes, and fruit were considered the most civilized type of food as they were edible raw or barely cooked in salads or made into wine. 'Indeed, the term "raw" was a misnomer, since these foods were partially or totally "cooked" (*cocta*) by the sun. So, when fruits and vegetables were harvested, they were, unlike meat, never in a raw state and subject to immediate spoilage' (Dupont 1999, 118–19). Cheese supplemented cereals and vegetables. Most extant recipes for cheese call for goat's milk or sheep's milk. Musonius' contemporary Pliny the Elder reports that at his time goat's milk cheeses were the most popular (*HN* 11.97).

Sacrifice of domesticated animals and hunting of wild animals were Romans' two sources of meat (*escam*). The meat consumed was usually fowl, pigs, or fish, which were generally the cheapest and most convenient animals to kill

for their flesh. Some localities provided rabbit, lamb, or beef. The main victims of public sacrifices were pigs, sheep, and cattle, whether male or female, old or young. Domestic sacrifices of young animals (piglets, pullets, lambs, kids) supplied most of the meat for home banquets (Dupont 1999, 119). Roman gentry seem to have preferred the flavour of wild boars to the meat of domesticated pigs, even if they had to rear the wild species in special enclosures on their estates. Domesticated birds raised on farms included chickens, geese, pigeons, and peafowl. Wild birds were trapped with birdlime. Fish and shellfish were caught with lines or nets. Fish farming was common. Many villas kept stocked pools (Kron 2014). Though produced on the fringes of cities, the flesh of *pecudes* was usually sold in urban markets, making it always a luxury item (Dupont, 120). 'The popularity of mince (*isicia*) and sausages suggests that the cheaper cuts of meat could be rather tough. The amounts of spices and flavourings used in some of Apicius's recipes, and the preference for exotica such as peacocks, may imply that the meat of the common domestic animals was rather tasteless' (Frayn 1995, 114).

Although more meat appears to have been raised and preserved in ancient Italy than Greece, peasants in both countries ate meat only on special occasions. This was meat from slaughtered domestic animals. 'Meat from wild animals, fish and birds was not classified as sacrificial; thus small birds, hares and fish often appear as tasty additions to the bland peasant diet' (Wilkins *et al.* 1995, 104). Fish 'were somehow not Roman, suitable only for the gross epicure, unknown to Rome's early divinities' (ibid. 105). Yet along the coast fishermen would catch and eat small fishes and shellfish while selling larger fish to the wealthy.

The normal ancient Mediterranean diet was so centred on cereals that the non-cereal complement usually took on a prominent role in social identification (Purcell 2003, 332). Thus, meat and eggs signaled the social superiority of those wealthy enough to eat them regularly. For unwealthy Romans, meat was generally an expensive garnish, a luxury which they often did without (Stein-Hölkeskamp 2005). The lower classes could afford to eat *ofellae* – meat consumed in small mouthfuls – of sausages, blood sausages, blood pudding, intestines, tripe, and sheep's head (Corbier 1989, 245).

In Roman society what one ate, its quality, quantity, and presentation, reflected one's station in life. Many struggled at subsistence levels. The poor, the peasantry, and the miserly lived on *puls* (gruel) with broad beans and lentils, cabbage and turnips, and greens. In its simplest form *puls* was nothing more than wheat flour mixed with water or milk. Cato gives a fancier recipe that combined semolina from high-grade wheat with cheese, honey, and eggs (Corbier 1999, 134). The semolina *puls* of the elite was served only as a

garnish for seasoned meat or brains. Besides meat and brains, oysters, fish, and home-baked bread marked high social status, according to Cicero. A popular delicacy served at banquets was dormouse (*glīs*) (Dunbabin 2003). Another was the nipple or vulva of pregnant sows. Both the elite and the populace shared a taste for such soft animal parts as the uterus of domestic and wild sows. At banquets these were served as appetizers (Corbier 1999, 134). Lamb brain and weasels were available to some.

A recurring theme in Roman discourse is waste. 'Only small parts – the head or the brain or even just the tongue – of the most highly prized and the rarest birds (thrushes, pheasants, peacocks, parrots, ostriches, even nightingales) were served' (Corbier 1989, 241). Exotic imports from Africa, India, and the forests of Germania included peafowl eggs, ostrich eggs, flamingos, bears, antelopes, camels, and giraffes. Sea urchins and jellyfish were special treats. The most highly prized condiments were garum and liquamen. Garum was fish remains in a liquid state. Allex or (h)allec was made from cheaper fish or was the remains of fish whose decomposition had not yet reached a liquid state. The elite did not disdain plebeian dishes but distinguished themselves by the way those dishes were prepared and eaten. For example, they added a costly, refined sauce to completely disguise the taste of broad beans. Roman high cuisine transformed common foodstuffs.

The consumption of meat and sometimes of cooked foods was normally reserved for dinner, whereas cheese, fruits, and bread, were considered acceptable for lunch (Corbier 1989, 249). Roman funeral dinners had three courses: appetizers (*gustatio*), a course of meat and fish (*primae mensae*), and dessert (*secundae mensae*).

> The meal would have begun with bread, snails, tripe, liver, beets, turnips, mustard, eggs, and cheese, followed by meat, including pork topped with blood sausage, with pork sausage and gizzards on the side, and perhaps, if there were no costly boar meat, some bear (purchased at cut rates after a gladiatorial contest) and ham. Finally, for dessert, there would have been pie served with honeyed wine, chickpeas, lupine, walnuts, and apples – quantity but not quality. (Corbier 1999, 135)

A more modest meal is described by Ovid (*Met.* 8.638–79). Two strangers, Jove and Mercury in disguise, visit the cottage of the humble peasant couple Baucis and Philemon. The main dish served is cabbage boiled with a small slice of bacon. Appetizers of olives, chicory, pickled Cornelian cherries, radishes, creamed cottage cheese, and fire-roasted eggs accompany the table wine. Dessert consists of nuts, dried figs, wrinkled dates, apples, plums, grapes, and a honeycomb.

The Romans admired and encouraged frugality, even among the wealthy, though it could be relaxed for ritual occasions (Goddard 1994). Signs of failure to be frugal included eating too often, eating at odd times, the places where meals were taken, the quantity of food consumed, consumption of rare fare, consumption of exotic items imported from afar, and foods bought on the market rather than produced at home. Other abuses were wasted portions of meat and certain cooking techniques, like the excessive use of pepper. As an exotic spice, pepper usually made dishes more expensive and disguised what was being served. Republican sumptuary laws restricted the consumption of certain types of food. Simple cookery was honoured for respecting the ideal of frugality.

Corbier argues that excess and moderation were often measured in quantities of meat served without indication of the number of guests. This confirms that excessive feasts were associated with the overabundance of meat. The 'transference to monstrous persons of behaviour most often attributed to "bad" emperors shows the fascination that prodigious consumption of food (for example, extreme voraciousness for meat) held for the Romans. It played an essential role as a cultural marker' (Corbier 1989, 245). Thus, the means to eat meat freely brought with it moral hazards. Meat eating 'was hard to reconcile with serious simplicity, especially given the possibilities of moving meat-foodstuffs up the scale of profitability and luxury. The unease is ultimately reflected in the complex attitudes to the regulation of meat consumption in the metropolis of the late Republic and early empire' (Purcell 2003, 340). Many of the sumptuary laws in the late Republic, like the *lex Aemilia*, sought to regulate banquets (Zanda 2011, 51–69).

A potent conceptual contrast obtained between meat *qua* excess and plants *qua* frugality. Latin reflects this contrast.

> Just as excess easily assumed a powerful 'animal' connotation, so a powerful 'vegetable' connotation marked its opposite, for which Latin used the expressions *tenuis uictus*, *paruo uiuere*, or *parce uiuere*. This is but one aspect of a more general attitude toward life which could take the name of *frugalitas* (one also speaks of *parsimonia* or *moderatio*). *Frugalitas* was a virtue that by its etymology – *a fruge, qua nihil melius e terra* – perfectly accorded with the free consumption of products of the earth for which some of the sumptuary laws provided. (Corbier 1989, 246)

Instead of the slippery, abstract contrast between the concepts of *luxuria* and *frugalitas*, however, Romans preferred spelling out the kinds of concrete behaviour implied by *frugalitas*. Different times and different people played on

many different possible definitions of sobriety and frugality (Gildenhard and Viglietti 2020).

> At one time, *frugalitas* could involve contents, nearly always vegetarian; at another, moderation in quantities and cost; at still another, simplicity of culinary preparation. These three meanings did not condemn meat in the same way. They tended to project *frugalitas* onto a more or less imaginary other place: sometimes Rome's distant past, sometimes other peoples (that is peoples not subject to Roman rule). (Corbier 1989, 246)

Roman judgements about frugality and consequent habits intersected with a long tradition of Greek philosophers advocating a vegetarian diet discussed below. Roman authors suspicious of meat were influenced by their Greek predecessors into the imperial era. 'This tradition led adherents in Rome of the first centuries of our era to consider a strict vegetarian diet as an ascetic choice, at least among elites not constrained by poverty' (Corbier 1989, 247). This ascetic elite included the Stoics Seneca the Younger, Cornutus, and Musonius Rufus.

Besides frugality/luxury other opposites inflected Roman food preferences. As mentioned above, a second pair of opposites is 'raw', meaning items partly or fully cooked by the sun, versus items 'cooked' using fire.

> The opposition raw/cooked, which was formalized by anthropology and comparative history, appears consequently relegated to a secondary position where it is mixed with others of identical connotation: pure/impure, civilized/barbarian, and so on. In contrast, the last opposition, frugality/excess, occupies a place of first importance in a Rome whose culture was dominated by a rhetoric that used it as an inexhaustible source of stereotypes, of *exempla*, of moral figures. (Corbier 1989, 251)

Corbier concludes that none of the four pairs of opposites – frugal/luxurious, raw/cooked, pure/impure, civilized/barbarian – yield a univocal status to the consumption of meat but only ambiguities subject to various interpretations. She describes 'an evolution from religious to secular, from sacrificial to everyday, from frugality in consumption to a more elaborate and sophisticated attitude' (Corbier 1989, 251). Overall, what prevails is an ethic of balance favouring a Mediterranean diet. 'This ethic associates, on the one hand, cereals, wine, oil, dried and fresh vegetables, fresh or dried fruit, sugar supplied by the same fruits or honey, and foods from animal sources, milk, and cheese; and on the other, meats and fish' (Corbier 1989, 251). Thus, meat eating provoked ethical dispute.

2 The Banal Luxury of Meat

Roman authors sometimes contrasted meat eating as a barbarian practice with the meatless diet of early Romans. Sallust and Tacitus, for example, give the Numidians and the Germans a reputation for feeding themselves only to ward off hunger, without trimmings or refinements.

> But these barbarians were then, as they ought to have been, eaters of meat and drinkers of milk, like the Scythian Anacharsis cited by Cicero as an example of those who eat only on account of hunger – a *topos* of ancient literature. An exclusively vegetarian diet was normally ascribed, as a contrast, to early Rome (boiled cereals – the *puls*, the basic food of the first Romans according to Varro and the elder Pliny, and the Italian counterpart of the Greek maza dear to the heart of Epicurus; *legumina et holera*, dried and fresh vegetables). Manius Curius Dentatus, who was having his turnips cooked when he received the Samnites, was a proverbial reference – an *exemplum*, not an example. Not without malice, Martial made turnips the food of Romulus in heaven. (Corbier 1989, 246)

Thus, in the first century BC and the first century AD, a plant-based diet was often regarded as more civilized, because more traditional, than a meat-heavy diet. The indulgent, on the other hand, could discount such a view as mere nostalgia.

Dupont opines that in Roman society meat was downright uncivilized: 'Unlike *fruges*, meat offered no nourishment to the civilized man' (Dupont 1999, 122). One reason seems to have been that uncured meat spoils far faster than fresh fruit, vegetables, grains, and nuts. 'Meat was called "rotten" yet considered delicious, soft, and tasty' (Dupont 1999, 125). Romans idealized the past as a golden age of simplicity, austerity, and hard work, especially in the fields, which they linked to philosophical notions of self-sufficiency. They viewed their origins as peasant farmers and soldiers, free from extravagance and self-indulgence, uncorrupted by the wealth flowing into the republic as Roman territories rapidly grew during the second century BC. 'If the agricultural writers are to be believed, this was emphatically a culture that ate meat. Latin myths of agricultural simplicity and purity eulogize a period when mankind is already making use of the flesh of animals' (Beer 2009, 32). 'Even if meat occupied only a modest place in the popular diet – just as in more recent eras – its consumption was routinized in Rome to the point of justifying a regular provision' (Corbier 1989, 232). At Rome, when a celebration called for sacrifice, 'revelry was inconceivable without meat or animal flesh' (Corbier 1989, 233). Notions of excess and frugality underpinned Roman judgements on carnivory.

'The two poles of excess and frugality were not defined by the consumption of meat alone, since they addressed the whole range of food, but they were deeply marked by it' (Corbier 1989, 239).

Musonius condemns all excess, including meat, as luxury, and all luxury as corrupting (Weeber 2003). According to the ideology of the *mos maiorum*, luxury (*luxuria*) leads to 'softness' (*mollitia*). Men who wallow in luxury get soft and weak. Since strength is the quintessence of masculinity, such men become emasculated (Zanda 2011, 4). Zanda argues that luxury was perceived as the origin of all moral illness, a terrible many-headed monster like the Hydra to be defeated by Heracles. At stake in this fight was *Romanitas* itself. Though the laws were never enforced in Rome, sumptuary legislation was enacted by the ruling class, especially the senatorial class, 'to manifest their loyalty to the *mos maiorum* in front of the other members of the elite and the people, in order to re-enforce their legitimacy to rule in the eyes of those who held the power to give them power' (Zanda 2011, 110–11).

The consumption of meat in Rome continued to be contentious for centuries. Meat was not taken for granted. Consequently, the use of meat could not develop freely in all its forms and without restriction.

> On the other hand, the use of meat seems to have been relatively banal and widespread, at least in the city, even if certain social categories (slaves, the rural population, the poor) did not have access to it or even were forbidden it as being above their social station. Meat remained an expensive food, but it was not a rarity reserved for a small number of occasions and for a small elite. (Corbier 1989, 224)

In sum, meat was banal, ubiquitous, and controversial. For the ascetic elite meat posed a moral problem with a simple solution: abstinence. Philosophical vegetarians opposed carnivory as a vice.

3 The Vegetarian Cure

In a philosophical tradition stretching back at least to Plato, food demonstrated humanity's uncontrolled submission to overindulgence (πλεονεξία). The tradition of philosophical vegetarianism in ancient Greece traces back to the sixth century BC (Haussleiter 1935; Dombrowski 1984a). The most likely explanation for the flourishing of philosophical vegetarianism in antiquity is the common adherence to the concept of virtue (Dombrowski 2014). For Orphics, Empedocles, and Pythagoreans, belief in metempsychosis established

the value of the lives of animals as well as abstention from harming them. Pythagoreans also argued that killing and eating animals feeds a habit of cruelty while meatless living promotes purity, health, and well-being. Their arguments persuaded the Sextian philosopher Sotion and his student Seneca (*Prov*. 3.6; *Ep*. 108.17–19). Though the Stoics certainly valued psychic health and well-being, their physicalist understanding of the soul ruled out metempsychosis.

Socrates disapproved of overeating (*Mem.* 1.2, 2.1), easily avoided it, and advised those who overindulged to eschew food that stimulated their appetite (see Haussleiter 1935). According to Xenophon, 'Socrates jokingly alluded to Homer to make his point: Circe turned men into pigs by feeding them stimulating foods' (Dombrowski 1984b, 4). Thus, in warning against food that stimulates the appetite, as meat does, Musonius follows the example of Xenophon's Socrates.

In Plato's *Republic*, Socrates describes an idyllic, non-violent vegetarian republic in which human beings and animals live in mutual concord rather than as predator and prey (2.369b–372e). This city scornfully labelled a 'city of pigs' (ὑῶν πόλιν at 372d4) by Glaucon, Socrates calls 'the true and healthy city' (372e6–7) where people 'live in peace and good health' (372d2). For Plato, the philosopher ought ideally to be a vegetarian to (re-)establish the link with animals found in the mythical golden age of Cronus. The *Laws* (781e–783b) and *Epinomis* (974d–975b) show vegetarianism as an attempt to become the best person one can (Dombrowski 2014). In the *Gorgias* cookery is a mere 'knack' (ἐμπειρία) intended to gratify in contrast to the 'science' of medicine aimed at bodily health, which can employ unpleasant treatments. Musonius agrees with Socrates and Plato that gustatory pleasure is perilous. Moreover, Musonius explicitly states Plato's implicit idea that 'food is to us the medicine of life' (ἡμῖν ζωῆς καὶ φάρμακον ἡ τροφή ἐστι, *Discourse* 18B, 118.14–15 Lutz). Ancient food and medicine occupied opposite extremes along a single spectrum of the comestible (Bartsch 2015, 67).

The Platonist Plutarch and Porphyry argued for the impartial and equitable treatment of animals. Yet the Stoics' conception of justice denied that animals deserve impartial and equitable treatment largely due to the ontological division between humans and animals in their *scala naturae*. Instead, Musonius appeals to the virtues of temperance, frugality, and piety to argue for a simple, meatless diet. Frugality led Zeno, the founder of the Stoa, to adopt a meagre, meatless diet (Diog. Laert. 7.13). The successor to Aristotle as head of the Lyceum was the vegetarian Theophrastus. Pythagoras is not named when, in impassioned verses, Ovid presents his own argument for vegetarianism inspired by 'the Samian' (*Met.* 15.60–142). The genre of Roman satire offers a graphic critique of abhorrent eating habits. Trimalchio's feast in the *Satyricon*

is a prime example (Petr. 31–41, 47). Persius's poetry, indifferent to gustatory pleasure, prescribes dietetics of decoctions and raw beets as simple vegetarian cures (Bartsch 2015, 70–78). 'The *Satires*' allegiance is to the modest meals of the philosophers, the humble beans and legumes on which Cornutus and Stoic students subside (*sic* – presumably: subsist), the vegetarian diet that for the Romans symbolized the simple, old-fashioned way of life' (Bartsch 2015, 74). Both Musonius and Persius's teacher Cornutus distribute to their students 'a salutary vegetarian meal of Stoic philosophizing (5.62–65)' (Bartsch 2015, 75). Thus, Musonius and his contemporary Cornutus follow centuries of Graeco-Roman philosophizing on food while reflecting social mores shunning luxury among Roman aristocrats (Weeber 2006).

Osborne observes that Porphyry's main reason to reject meat is the desire to strip oneself of all superfluous pleasures and passions (Osborne 1995, 219). Musonius shares this rationale. But Porphyry backs this up with 'observations that meat-eating also involves injustice which adds to the problem. It is doubly corrupting because it is luxury procured at the expense of indefensible moral failure' (Osborne 1995, 219). As we will see below, the other reasons Musonius adduces for a lacto-vegetarian diet exclude the judgement that killing animals to eat them is unjust. Both philosophers were addressing presumably an affluent elite whose normal diet would almost certainly not have been restricted to simple necessities. Rather, their audiences enjoyed the practical freedom to choose whether to abstain from luxuries, including meat, or not. For Porphyry's readers, as for Musonius' students, 'it would be peculiar, but possible, not to kill or eat animals' (Osborne 1995, 222).

Four categories of arguments for vegetarianism in Greco-Roman antiquity have been identified (Dombrowski 1984b, 1): (A) Belief in transmigration of souls is true – animals were, or will be, human beings; therefore, animals should not be killed or eaten; (B) Medicine teaches that eating flesh harms bodily health; (C) Moderation or asceticism commits one to the belief that eating flesh harms the soul's health; (D) Beings that can suffer ought not to have suffering (or death) inflicted on them unnecessarily; it is not necessary that we inflict suffering (or death) on sentient animals in order for us to have healthy diets; therefore, we ought not to inflict suffering (or death) on sentient animals for the purpose of eating them (Dombrowski 2014, 539).

Musonius rejects metempsychosis and so argument (A). He endorses argument (B) and emphasizes argument (C). He thinks that since food is fuel, the purpose of eating is not to feel pleasure, but to regain energy, build strength and stamina, and preserve health. Argument (D) may imply that (E) killing and eating animals is unjust whenever it is unnecessary to survive. But Musonius never appeals to justice. Nor does he express concern about animals' suffering.

Instead, he makes two other arguments: (F) Eating flesh is contrary to human nature (which (B) may imply); (G) We ought to imitate the gods; the gods do not eat animals; therefore, our diet should resemble theirs. This arguably sneaks justice in through the back door. Adhering to human nature and imitating god (or the gods), an agreed Stoic/Platonist norm, might be construed as an updated version of the *Republic*'s definition of justice as 'doing one's own'. Yet Musonius' framework for justice shares very little with the approaches of a Christine Korsgaard or, on the opposite end, a Peter Singer.

Is vegetarianism an orthodox Stoic position or merely congenial with orthodox Stoicism? Zeno and Cleanthes were vegetarians. The evidence on Chrysippus is conflictual. On the one hand, Cicero's Cato says that (i) Stoics deny any rights exist between humans and animals, and (ii) commends Chrysippus's opinion that everything else was created for the sake of humans and gods, so humans can use beasts for their own purposes without injustice (*Fin.* iii. 67). And so, Cicero adds, 'as for the pig, what does it have to offer but meat? Indeed, Chrysippus says that it was given its soul to serve as salt to keep it from rotting' (*Nat. D.* 2.160). This anthropocentric pabulum is ingested by Epictetus, who states that God made some animals for the purpose of being eaten (*Diss.* 1.6.18). On the other hand, Chrysippus praises Euripides' verse that mortals need only Demeter's grain and draughts of clear water (*SVF* 3.706) – very spare vegan fare. Cornutus and his student Persius were vegetarians. Is Marcus Aurelius (*Med.* 6.13) disgusted when he reminds himself that the 'edibles' spread before him are really the dead bodies of a fish, a bird, and a pig, peeling off their patina of prestige to expose their paltriness? I suggest that vegetarianism should have been the orthodox Stoic position (Stephens 2022). Even without appealing to Stoic ethics, cosmopolitanism can be linked to veganism (Leep 2017). Lucretius defends the idea of an original social contract between human beings and animals that supplies long-term benefits to humans from protecting and domesticating animals (Dombrowski 2014, 546). So, instead of heeding Cicero's porky Chrysippus, Epictetus could have learned from Musonius that eggs, milk, wool, and honey are *harmless* providential gifts distinctly unlike the bloody flesh and hides of animals.

4 Musonius' Arguments

Musonius thinks the only legitimate purpose of food is to maintain life, health, and strength. Availability, low cost, minimal effort, naturalness, lightness, and purity constitute the legitimate criteria for selecting sustenance. These safeguards foster gastronomic temperance. Musonius faults fussing over food. He

finds it foul to devote time, energy, expense, and ingenuity to preparing food merely to please the palate. Gluttony (γαστριμαργία) and devouring delicacies (ὀψοφαγία) harm both body and soul. The soul is harmed by the vices of luxury and intemperance, and people with these vices are sicklier.

The driving consideration for Musonius is that the virtues of temperance and self-control dictate dietary frugality. The simple, down-on-the-farm, and down-to-earth ethos he defends prescribes a lacto-vegetarian diet. Meat is too tasty and too indulgent. Preparing it is too involved. These difficulties make meat too much of a hassle. Meat endangers the health of the body and soul. In *Discourse* 14 Musonius criticizes selfish human behaviour as indistinguishable from that of a wolf or any other of the wildest beasts (θηρίου τῶν ἀγριωτάτων), who are violent, natural-born marauders that spare nothing from which they may gain advantage. Musonius is unaware of the sociability of predators. Co-operative hunting, both among conspecifics and animals of different species, is only one example of their social collaboration. Though a different sort of 'ethology' is discussed by Posidonius and Seneca (*Ep.* 95.65–6), Musonius' opinions on this subject are faulty. So, his remark that the wildest animals 'have no part in a life common with others, no part in cooperation with others, no share of any notion of justice' (*Dis*course 14, 92.20–25 Lutz) is blinkered yet understandable (cf. *Discourse* 10, 78.26–31 Lutz).

5 *Discourse* 18A

Musonius begins 18A with an argument for natural nutriment. His first three premises establish criteria of selection. The three desiderata are: lower cost, greater abundance, and what is kindred to our species or of the same kind (φυλή) as us. This third criterion I translate as 'naturally suited to a human being', meaning easily assimilated by our bodies and salubrious.

1. Inexpensive food is preferable to expensive food.
2. What is abundant (available) is preferable to what is scarce.
3. Similarly, what is naturally suited to a human being (σύμφυλον ἀνθρώπῳ) is preferable to what is not.
4. Foods naturally suited to us are plants of the earth, grains, (presumably vegetables, fruits, nuts) and dairy products from domesticated animals (τὴν ἐκ τῶν φυομένων ἐκ γῆς, ὅσα τε σιτώδη ὄντα καὶ ὅσα μὴ τοιαῦτα ὄντα δύναται τρέφειν οὐ κακῶς τὸν ἄνθρωπον· καὶ τὴν ἀπὸ τῶν ζῴων οὐκ ἀναιρουμένων, ἄλλως δὲ χρησιμευόντων).
5. Fruits in season, some green vegetables, milk, cheese, and honey (τά τε ὡραῖα καὶ τῶν λαχάνων ἔνια καὶ γάλα καὶ τυρὸς καὶ κηρία) need no fire to cook them and can be eaten at once.

6. Hence, these foods are the most available (ἑτοιμότατα).
7. [Hence, these foods are preferable.]
8. [Grains and (other) vegetables are abundant and their preparations (e.g. *puls*) are inexpensive.]
9. [Hence, cooked grains and (other) vegetables are preferable, too.]
10. Hence, these foods are also suitable and natural foods for humans.
11. Therefore, we ought to eat these kinds of food.

The bracketed steps are implicit in this enthymeme. The conclusion seems akin in some way to the Epicurean *tetrapharmakos*, especially the third remedy. If it is, then here we can suppose a Senecan-style convergence, in at least some sense, with the Epicureans.

Why did Musonius judge the milk of ewes, nannies, and cows and the cheese made from that milk to be natural for us to consume but not the flesh of sheep, goats, and bovines? A plausible answer could be that he considered it harmless to milk mammals. In knife-sharp contrast, slaughtering domesticated animals and hunting down wild animals is violent and so savage. Hunting prey Musonius ascribes to wild, non-rational predators, rather than civilized, rational beings. Though our bodies are animal, our reason is divine. And he believes reason pacifies us to help civilize us. Accordingly, reason regards milking as peaceful, providential husbandry, making it, not spilling blood, civilized and so 'natural' for us.

Why think honey is natural provender for us? If Musonius believed that bees obtain honey from flowers (Columella, *Rust.* 9.14; Varro, *Rust.* 3.16; Sen. *Ep.* 84), perhaps he thought collecting honey akin to milking animals. Another possibility is that he shared the opinion that honey fell from the air (Columella, *Rust.* 10.4; Ath. 11.102; Verg. *G.* 4.1; Plin. *HN* 11.12). Pliny the Elder, for example, believed that 'honey comes from the air, and appears especially when Sirius is shining, after the Pleiades rise on the 23rd of March. … Pliny … is not certain whether it is the sweat of the sky, the saliva of the stars, or a juice formed from the air as it clears itself. But the excellence of honey proves its heavenly origin' (Fraser 1931, 114). This notion that honey originates from the heavens resonates with Musonius' belief that humans ought to feed themselves most like the gods do, who feed on vapours rising from the earth and waters.

The argument for natural nutriment is followed by a corollary: carnivory is unnatural for us.

1. Meat is natural for (certain) wild animals.
2. Humans are not wild animals but civilized beings.
3. Therefore, meat is not natural for humans.

Musonius declines to explain, as Plutarch does, how the anatomies of wild carnivores, who use no weapons to kill their prey and wolf down gory flesh torn

from still dying bodies, so clearly differ from human anatomy and ways of eating (*De esu carnium* 1.5). But since premise (1) can be interpreted to imply that meat is natural *only* for (certain species of) wild animals, it is controversial. So, Musonius argues that meat is not only unnatural for our bodies, but it also numbs our minds:

1. The exhalations (ἀναθυμίασιν) rising from meat are turbid and darken the human soul.
2. Those who eat a lot of meat seem slower in intellect (βραδυτέρους φαίνεσθαι τὴν διάνοιαν).
3. Hence, meat, a heavy food, is an obstacle to thinking and reasoning.
4. [Obstacles to thinking and reasoning ought to be removed.]
5. Therefore, we ought not to eat meat.

Premise (2) echoes Diogenes the Cynic who, when asked why athletes are so stupid, replied: 'Because they are built up of pork and beef' (Diog. Lart. 6.49; cf. Sen. *Ep*. 15.2–3 and Notario 2015). It would be ironic if true that illness from eating a raw octopus killed Diogenes (Diog. Laert. 6.76). The belief that meat impedes thought is shared by Pythagoras, Plutarch, Apollonius of Tyana (van Geytenbeek 1962, 102), and Porphyry. Premise (4) is implicit in this enthymeme.

Do the gods really like fumes from roasting meat? 'As in Greece, so in Rome meat was offered to the gods, who partook of the spilled blood and of the smoke of the burned meat' (Corbier 1989, 225). Musonius rejects the popular Graeco-Roman religious belief that smoky fumes rising from the roasting flesh of ritually slaughtered animals please the gods. It seems nearly certain that he thought sacrificing animals displayed grave ignorance about pious observances. He likely agreed with the Stoic Persius in *Satire* 5 that 'the men who sacrifice animal flesh to the gods are depicted as fools if they think gods care for meat (2.29–30, 45–50)' (Bartsch 2015, 79). These foolish farmers 'project onto the gods a desire for the same kind of meaty food that they, the mortals, value; they think (erroneously) that they can win the ear of Jupiter with a dish of lungs and greasy tripe' (Bartsch 2015, 90). Likewise, when Epictetus speaks of making libations and sacrifices, the offerings are first fruits, not flesh (*Ench*. 31.5).

Instead of nourishing ourselves like wild, unreasoning, carnivorous beasts on heavy food (meat), Musonius contends that the most god-like diet is best for us:

1. Of all earthly creatures, humans are the nearest of kin to the gods.
2. Hence, we should be nourished in a manner most like the gods.
3. The vapours (ἀτμούς) rising from the earth and water are sufficient for the gods.
4. Hence, we ought to be nourished on food most like those vapours, that is, the lightest and purest.

5. Eating the lightest and purest foods keeps our souls pure and dry.
6. Heraclitus stated that pure and dry souls are finest and wisest.
7. Therefore, eating the lightest, purest foods makes us finest, wisest, and most godlike.

This argument derives from Heraclitus's psychology by way of early Stoic cosmology and theology (see Harriman 2020, 81–2). According to Heraclitus, 'A gleam of light is the dry soul, wisest and best' (Diels 118; Marcovich 68; Stob. 3.5.8; Kahn CIX). This fragment 'defines the best condition of the psyche as a kind of *aithēr*, not fire as such but the clear and luminous upper sky, as contrasted with the murky and moist lower *aēr*, comprising haze, mist, and cloud. This atmospheric contrast between translucent and opaque, dry and damp, is preserved in the Ionian cosmology of Diogenes and directly applied to the psyche' (Kahn 1981, 247). One's psyche is strongly coloured by the food put into one's body.

> According to Theophrastus, Diogenes held that a man 'thinks well (*phronein*) with air that is pure and dry; for the juice or moisture (*ikmas*) disturbs his intelligence (*nous*); hence in sleep and drunkenness and when one is full of food, one thinks less well. And there is a sign that moisture removes intelligence in the fact that the other animals are not as smart; for they breathe the air from the earth and eat wetter food. (Kahn 1981, 247)

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Wetter food here includes meatier food though not perhaps (and oddly) juicy fruit, milk, or porridge. The doxography ascribes to Heraclitus an account of the celestial bodies as flames produced by a gathering of bright and pure exhalation (ἀναθυμίασις) from the earth and sea. 'If there is a kernel of truth in this report, it indicates that the matter of the best and wisest souls must itself constitute the effulgence of the heavenly bodies, or their celestial source and environment' (Kahn 1981, 250; see also Betegh 2007).

This Heraclitean idea is embraced by the early Stoics (Long 1996). Cleanthes and other Stoics identified the sun with Zeus (or his ἡγεμονικόν). They reasoned that all fire requires fuel, so the heavenly bodies are variously nourished by exhalations from bodies of water or the earth. The moon is nourished from fresh waters mixed with air, the sun from the sea, and the other heavenly bodies from the earth, according to Posidonius in the sixth book of his *Physics* (*SVF* ii. 650; Diog. Laert. 7.144–5). The reason given by Cleanthes to explain why the sun never wanders too far north or south from season to season is that the sun may not stray too far from his food (*SVF* 1.501; Cic. *Nat. D.* 3.37).

Cleanthes also argues that the radiance of the sun is more brilliant than that of any fire on earth because it casts its light far and wide over the boundless universe. Hence, since the sun consists of fire, and no fire could continue to

exist without sustenance of some sort, the sun is nourished by the vapours exhaled from the sea. The sun must then resemble either the fire used in ordinary life or that in the bodies of living creatures. Ordinary fire is destructive and consumes everything, scattering everything wherever it spreads. But the fire of the body is the glow of life and health; it is the universal preservative, nourishing, nurturing growth, sustaining, and bestowing sensation. Since the sun also causes each thing to flourish and to grow according to its kind, Cleanthes reasons that the sun resembles the kind of fires contained in the bodies of living creatures. Hence, the sun too must be alive, as must the other heavenly bodies, since they originate from the fiery heat of heaven (*SVF* 1.504; Cic. *Nat. D.* 2.40–41). The stars are divine, extremely intelligent, and fed by the moist vapors of the sea and earth (*Nat. D.* 2.42–3).

Cleanthes reasons that the human body is analogous to the divine sun, as the human soul relates to divine *logos* as part to whole. On this view, cosmic physics and theology inform our practice of eating.

> The Cleanthean perspective on everyday decisions about food depends upon a distinctly theoretical, top-down approach to moral reasoning. In this respect, it is significant that Cleanthes is attributed with a unique understanding of the formulation of the Stoic *telos*: unlike Chrysippus, Cleanthes discounts 'human nature' in the command to live in accordance with nature. Universal nature is sufficient to guide action without reference to the human part; universal theory, in short, is enough. (Harriman 2020, 83–4)

Musonius bemoans the fact that people degrade themselves lower than the brutes beneath us instead of emulating the gods above. His directive to assimilate to divinity anticipates Porphyry (*Abst.* 3). Rather than choosing the lightest, purest foods, as the gods do, human beings defy *logos* and feed themselves much worse than non-rational animals (ἀλόγων ζῴων).

1. Non-rational animals, driven by appetite as by a lash, fall upon their food.
2. Non-rational animals are satisfied with what comes their way and seek only satiety (cf. Sen. *Ep.* 59.13).
3. Non-rational animals are not guilty of fussing over their food and exercising ingenuity in transforming it.
4. People today contrive all kinds of arts and devices to give relish to eating and make more enticing the act of swallowing (cf. Sen. *Ep.* 95.23).
5. As some have written books on music and medicine, so some have written books on cooking.
6. Cookbooks aim to increase the pleasure of the palate, but they ruin the health (cf. Sen. *Helv.* 10.8, *Ep.* 88.18, 90.15; *Vit. beat.* 11.4).

7. Therefore, many have descended to such a deplorable level of delicacy in eating and gastronomy that they feed themselves much worse than non-rational animals.

Recall that Musonius first argued that human beings are not wild animals, and so we ought not to eat as if we were carnivorous predators. Second, he reasoned that our *logos* lifts us nearer to the gods than other animals. So, we ought to eat the lightest and purest foods, which most resemble the nutriment of the gods. Our *logos* demonstrates this. Moreover, the gods engage in no cookery at all. Yet instead of eating in a way that approximates divinity (as much as our bodies permit), many people debase themselves below non-reasoning animals. People do this by perverting their *logos* into a tool for titillating the palate at the cost of their health. Instead of using *logos* to feed like pure, wise, god-like beings, foodies abuse their *logos* by writing cookbooks to further promote indulgence in the pleasures of luxury. Musonius joins a host of philosophers contemptuous of cookbooks. Plato in *Gorgias* (464d ff.) 'contrasted the cookery book of Mithaecus of Sicily unfavourably with medical works' (Wilkins and Hill 2006, 207).

Musonius' attack on hedonism appeals to argument type (B), whereby medicine shows that luxurious foods like meat harm one's bodily health. He contends that indulgence in dainty delicacies makes a man soft, sickly, weak, and womanly.

1. Those who are luxurious and intemperate in food have much less vigorous health.
2. Some men refuse the most common foods and utterly ruin their digestion.
3. In this way these men are like women who have the unnatural cravings of pregnancy.
4. The appetites of these men continually demand being sharpened either by neat wine or a tangy sauce or some sour relish (cf. Sen. *Helv*. 10.5).
5. Therefore, the appetites of these luxurious, intemperate eaters are like worn-out (ἀχρεῖος) iron which constantly needs tempering (cf. Sen. *Ep.* 47, esp. §8).

So, if our appetites are like weakened, blunted blades, then we are less useful, we depend on others to temper us, etc. For the temperate, simple sustenance suffices to sate hunger and supply contentment. The fussy, in contrast, demand special treats. Cravings for very particular, fancy foods render gourmands dissatisfied with the basics. Fancy dainties dull the appetite and, worse, destroy digestion.

Pernickety gourmands resemble softened, blunted blades. Musonius contrasts them with a certain Laconian. Laconians were famed for their iron toughness. Seeing someone so ruined by luxurious dining habits that he turned

down an expensive, young peacock, finding it unappetizing, the Laconian quipped that he could eat a vulture (γύψ) or another bird that feeds on carrion (τόργος). To enjoy luxurious delicacies so routinely as to take them for granted indicates a person oblivious to real hunger. Even the meanest of fowl fills the stomach and fuels the body. So, contentment with whatever food is available, no matter how nasty the coddled find it, the story of the Laconian is a lesson in self-sufficiency, flexibility, and gustatory gratitude. Disdain for *any* kind of edible marks the spoiled, intemperate priss.

Similar unfussiness was shown by Zeno of Citium. Even when ill, he would not let his physician prescribe him expensive, delicate squab. Instead, Zeno insisted on food no fancier than his slave would get (cf. Stob. 4.33.31; Sen. *Ep*. 18.10–11; Epict. *Diss*. 3.26.37). If slaves can recover with indelicate chow, he figures he can too. 'It is not only that such rich specialties as squab are to be avoided, but also that special attention *tout court* to food is suspect. Food eaten by slaves is perfectly suitable for the *sapiens*' (Harriman 2020, 83). By proceeding in a bottom-up fashion, matching theoretical knowledge with its practical application, Harriman thinks that Zeno inverts Cleanthes' top-down approach. Zeno understands the pernicious consequences of yielding to the delights of dainties when ill. 'This suggests that Rufus is using Zeno to make a point about attending to the effects of pleasure. The consequence of succumbing once to pleasure is that one inevitably yields permanently. This seems to be an admission that the factor of the human body's susceptibility to pleasure must be considered relevant in understanding the practical application of theoretical knowledge' (Harriman 2020, 94).

Musonius insists that food is fuel, not an indulgence. So, the plainest fare must do if one is to become temperate. He demands not relatively plain food, but the very plainest. Why? Because delicacy, whether in body or mind, cannot foster virtue. Only toughness can. So, Musonius declares that a good man ought to be no weaker (μαλακώτερον) than a slave. What makes dining on delicious delicacies dangerous is that each morsel eaten creates a craving for more. Gustatory hedonism is a slippery slope that slides us inexorably into excess. Pleasure in food and drink accelerates its pace too swiftly to allow slamming on the brakes. This is why Musonius thinks Zeno adamantly refused to indulge the least bit in tasty treats. It may be significant that the figs Zeno was fond of eating were green, not honeyed (Diog. Laert. 7.1). This emphasis on tough alimentary training reiterates the theme of *Discourse* 6. 'The case of food is clearly a prominent, specimen application of Musonius' theory of *askesis*' (Harriman 2020, 93). Musonius' answer to the power of pleasure is the sort of training 'that combines cognitive development of the soul with the non-cognitive habituation of both body and soul' (Harriman 2020, 94). Succumbing to delicacy in food

and drink inevitably softens the soul, enslaving it to pleasure. The good master their appetites and are slaves to none.

6 *Discourse* 18B

18B opens with an attack on gluttony (γαστριμαργία) and devouring delicacies (ὀψοφαγία). These vices afflict the great majority of people, Musonius thinks, because they strive to get dainties even when they are unavailable, cannot resist them when they are present, and overeat them so much that they get sick. Seneca too warns that luxurious eating causes many complex diseases and disorders (*Ep.* 95.25–9). Gluttony Musonius defines as intemperance (ἀκρασία) concerning food causing people to prefer the pleasant over the beneficial. 'Devouring of delicacies' (ὀψοφαγία) he defines as nothing but excess (ἀμετρία) in using ὄψον, meaning relishes, food prepared with sauces, sometimes specifically fish, or more broadly haute cuisine. He argues that excess is always evil but excess in eating dehumanizes the akratic. Greed for gourmet foods perverts akratics, debasing them into subhuman beasts like pigs or dogs. Incapable of civilized etiquette, they grab at their food instead of using their hands politely. By ogling the offerings, they abandon propriety. They gobble their goodies and stuff their gullets, destroying their dignity. The shamefulness of their conduct is shown by our likening them to mindless creatures (ζῴοις ἄφροσι) rather than to mindful human beings. This again echoes Seneca's comparison of unrestrained eating to the behaviour of a dog (*Ep*. 72.8) and how the food-obsessed degrade themselves to or beneath the level of animals (*Ep*. 60.4).

The goal is to exercise orderliness (τάξει) and decorum (κοσμίως) in eating, demonstrating self-control there first. Musonius warns that this difficult task demands keen attention and practice. The reason he prioritizes self-control in eating is that, of the many delights which tempt us to err – including presumably inebriation and sex – gustatory pleasure is the toughest to combat.

1. Other pleasures we can refrain from for months or years.
2. But it is impossible for us to go without eating once or twice a day.
3. Thus, we are tempted by pleasure in eating more often than by other pleasures.
4. The more often we are tempted by pleasure in eating, the more dangers we face.
5. Therefore, pleasure in eating is the most difficult of all to resist (cf. Homer, *Odyssey*, 7.216–18).

To support this argument Musonius identifies no fewer than seven mistakes or hazards (ἁμαρτήματα) to avoid when eating or serving food.

1. Eating more than one ought to is wrong.
2. Eating too hastily is wrong.
3. Overindulging in pickles and sauces is wrong.
4. Preferring sweeter foods to healthier foods is wrong.
5. Serving inferior food to guests than to oneself is wrong (cf. Martial, *Ep*. 3.60; Juvenal, *Sat*. 5; Plin. *Ep*. 2.6).
6. Serving less food to guests than to oneself is wrong.
7. Eating at a time when something else ought to be done is wrong.
8. Thus, at each meal there is not one hazard for wrongdoing, but many.
9. There are even more (than these seven) hazards connected with eating.
10. Therefore, if a man wishes to show self-control (σωφρονήσειν), he must be free of all these mistakes and not be guilty of any of them.

The value of preserving sociality through polite dining habits explains (5) and (6), but also (1) and (2). Hasty eating disrupts conversation, for example. Concern for physical health motivates (1), (2), (3), and (4). But why is utter perfection with refection the standard Musonius sets for self-control? It must be because he regards all the virtues as unitary.

Attaining this impeccable character requires understanding the purpose of food. But theoretical understanding alone does not generate self-control. In *Discourse* 5, Musonius argues that practice is more effective than theory. 'The examples of temperance and self-control are raised to make the point that acting temperately is more important than being able to give an account of what one ought to do. … Virtuous behaviour is clearly not to be explained purely by reference to theoretical knowledge' (Harriman 2020, 84). Achieving flawless self-control requires coupling knowing with doing. Knowing what food is for and how to manage it must be applied to one's practice all day long. Habitually choosing the right morsels for the right reason is vital. That reason is always to nourish and strengthen the body, never to please the palate or tantalize the tongue.

To substantiate this anti-hedonist teleology, Musonius asserts a homology between plant and human physiology.

1. The root nourishes the plant by taking food from outside it.
2. The human throat was designed to be a passage for food (to the stomach).
3. The stomach nourishes the human body from the food and drink taken into it.
4. Thus, the stomach and throat in humans were made for the same purpose as the root in plants.

5. Plants receive nourishment so that they may survive, not for their pleasure.
6. Similarly, the human throat was not designed to be an organ of pleasure.
7. Therefore, 'food is to us the medicine of life' (ἡμῖν ζωῆς καὶ φάρμακον ἡ τροφή ἐστι), it is not for our pleasure.

Steps (1) through (6) of this analogical argument are insightful, but the conclusion does not follow from them. A relevant disanalogy is overlooked: plants lack *tongues* and a sense of taste. Adults have on average two thousand to eight thousand taste buds which discriminate five basic qualities: sweet, salty, sour, bitter, and umami. True, the human digestive system extracts nutrients and water in a way rather like roots extract nutrients and water from soil. But most plants create energy through photosynthesis, whereas from sunlight the human body takes in no calories and makes only vitamin D. Moreover, gustation and olfaction crucially differentiate human eating from the nourishment of plants. Gustation allows us to distinguish dangerous from wholesome foods. We use taste to choose nutritious *and* delicious foods, including those with essential minerals and higher calorie content, which are typically salty, sweet, and/or savoury. By contrast, bitter substances, which are often toxic, we reject (Reynolds 2005). Consuming bitter chemicals can cause nausea or even death (Barlow 1999). Sour tasting substances can indicate acidic, fermented, or rotten food (Breslin 2013). So, this argument fails to delegitimize a preference for tasty beneficial foods. By stimulating us to prefer tastier foods, the physiology of our tongues reliably steers us towards edibles that are more nutritious than bland or acrid alternatives.

The saying that 'food is to us the medicine of life' is apt enough. Many of Musonius' comments on food echo Seneca, who characterizes himself as a doctor whose prescriptions help sick souls recover (*Ep*. 8.1–2, 78.25). Musonius considers it essential to grasp the function of food and its role in a good life. The authority he appeals to is Socrates, although elsewhere the saying is attributed to Diogenes the Cynic (Stob. 3.6.41; G182).

1. Socrates said it best: 'The majority live to eat but I eat to live.'
2. The majority spend their lives chasing gustatory pleasures.
3. No reasonable person whose ambition is to be a mensch (ἄνθρωπος) will desire to be like the majority.
4. Therefore, we should emulate Socrates and eat to live.

Most people wrongly believe pleasures make life good. Consequently, their daily devotion is not simple bread but grand, gratifying gustation. By contrast, followers of Socrates conceive of food strictly as a means of pursuing the true good, a virtuous life. Seneca put it elegantly: 'one cannot attain virtue without food, yet food has nothing to do with virtue' (*Ep*. 88.31).

Musonius next invokes divine providence to argue that the intelligent design of the human body makes it plain that pleasure is not the purpose of food. This argument is more cautious than the earlier plant physiology analogy.

1. Food's function is to nourish and renew strength.
2. The process of digestion and assimilation nourishes us and renews our strength.
3. During this process we feel no pleasure.
4. Hence, when food is performing its real function, it produces no pleasure.
5. Digestion and assimilation involve a (much) longer process than the moment of (chewing and) swallowing.
6. If the god who made us had designed eating as a pleasure for us, then the god would have had us enjoy it for a longer time.
7. Therefore, the god who made human beings provided us with food and drink for the sake of preserving our lives and not for giving us pleasure (cf. Sen. *Ep*. 119.15).

The inference that since the pleasure of eating is so brief, only a fool troubles himself much for the sake of it, appears in Democritus (fr. 235D) and Plutarch (*Conv. sept. sap*. 160a). Nigrinus similarly bases this inference in physiology (Lucian, *Nigr*. 33). A text closely resembling this passage in Musonius appears in Simplicius's commentary on Epictetus, *Ench*. ch. 34 (van Geytenbeek 1962, 107).

I suggest that Musonius rebuts the contention that eating is about pleasure by implicitly appealing to the Stoic doctrine of 'affiliation' or 'endearment' (οἰκείωσις). According to this theory, infants have an innate impulse to seek what they perceive as their own or what belongs to them. Most immediately they treat their bodies as belonging to them. Accordingly, self-preservation and self-love motivate human behaviour, not pleasure. This Stoic theory tacitly undergirds Musonius' philosophy of food.

After the providential design argument that food is for preserving life Musonius expresses astonishment at the excessive efforts expended catering to such a fleeting feeling of pleasure when food is tasted. He bemoans the preparation of myriad treats (ὄψων μυρίων). The lunacy of sailing the sea from end to end searching for exotic delicacies disgusts both Musonius and Seneca (cf. *Ep*. 60.2–3; *Helv*. 10.5–6; *Prov*. 3.6).

Musonius deplores the fact that cooks (μάγειροι) are in greater demand than farmers (cf. Sen. *Ep*. 114.26: *Aspice culinas nostras et concursantis inter tot ignes cocos*). He is appalled that some fanatics squander the value of their estates to serve up meals without benefitting their bodies at all from the costliness (τῆς πολυτελείας) of the food (cf. Sen. *Ep*. 78. 22–4 and 95.18–29).

Whereas extravagant dining does the body no good, Musonius adduces several physical benefits of frugal eating in his next argument.

1. Slaves are usually stronger than their masters.
2. Bumpkins (τοὺς χωρίτας) are usually stronger than city slickers (τῶν ἀστικῶν).
3. The poor are usually stronger than the rich.
4. Slaves, bumpkins, and the poor are less fatigued by their labour.
5. Slaves, bumpkins, and the poor are less often ill.
6. Slaves, bumpkins, and the poor endure more cheerfully cold, heat, lack of sleep, and every such hardship.
7. Slaves, bumpkins, and the poor eat the cheapest food.
8. Therefore, those who eat the cheapest food are the strongest.

Pricey foods spoil the privileged by sullying their souls and ruining their bodies. But what if this were not so? Musonius considers the counterfactual situation in which expensive and cheap food strengthened the body equally well. Cheaper food, nonetheless, has other advantages.

1. In general, food that is easy to get is better than food that is hard to get.
2. Food that requires no work is better than food that requires work.
3. Food that is available is better than food that is not at hand.
4. Easy accessibility, easy preparation, and greater availability typify cheaper food.
5. Hence, cheaper food is more conducive to temperance (σωφρονικωτέρα) and more befits a good man (πρέπει ἀνδρὶ ἀγαθῷ).
6. Hence, even if expensive (πολυτελὴς) and cheap (εὐτελὴς) food strengthened the body equally well, one ought to choose the cheaper food anyway.
7. Therefore, choosing cheaper food is more fitting and reasonable (πρεπωδέστερον τοῖς ἐπιεικέσιν).

The idea is simple: waste is bad. We mortals have short lives. Our time, effort, and resources are limited and precious. Thus, convenience counts. Musonius repeats three criteria of convenience he introduced early in *Discourse* 18A. The first, accessibility, recommends inexpensive over expensive food. The second measures the effort needed to prepare it. By this criterion raw foods are best because they require no cooking. The third criterion, availability, favours abundance over scarcity. The fourth criterion, as seen above, is what is natural to our species instead of what is natural to wild predators. The fifth criterion, Cleanthes' Heraclitean purity of the soul, results from imitating how the sun-god feeds. The sixth criterion, Zenonian unfussiness, measures satisfaction with even the crudest of edibles. Together these six criteria – (a) lower cost, (b) easier preparation, (c) abundance, (d) naturalness, (e) piety, and (f)

unfussiness – constitute a matrix for guiding responsible choices. Reasonable, responsible people recognize that extravagance is unjustifiably wasteful, whereas frugality is an ingredient of good living.

Musonius sums up *Discourses* 18A–B by reiterating three main theses his arguments demonstrated. First, the purpose (σκοπὸν) of food is to produce health and strength (ὑγίειάν τε καὶ ἰσχύν). Eating for pleasure abuses the body by violating the divinely provident design of our anatomy. Second, eating agreeably with nature and the gods requires parsimony. Luxury is anathema. Third, when eating one ought to respect decorum and due limit (κόσμου τε καὶ μέτρου). Politeness and restraint obligate dinner guest and host alike. Most of all, one should excel in being unstained and unhurried (τῷ τε ἀμολύντῳ καὶ τῷ σχολαίῳ). This phrase can be interpreted to mean both that greedy, speedy gobbling spatters greasy gravy on one's body and is antisocial, and that meaty meals darken one's soul. Feeding in a frenzy is rude, uncivilized, and dehumanizing. Hunger must never be allowed to put to rout reason or calm, measured self-restraint.

7 Conclusion

The Stoics classified food with things that are neither good nor bad but indifferent (ἀδιάφορον). As we saw, Zeno's ravenous Laconian could eat a vulture. In the face of starvation, virtuously practiced cannibalism was warranted because, in *On Justice*, Chrysippus permits eating human corpses (Diog. Laert. 7.188). So, how one deals with indifferents, the Stoics held, reflects one's virtue or vice, thus determining one's happiness or misery. Therefore, although food in itself is indifferent to a Stoic's happiness, selecting, preparing, serving, eating, and sharing food with others are decisive for a good or bad life.

Food is also connected to other indifferents like health and illness, wealth (and hosting banquets) and poverty, social privilege and beggary. Justice, whether towards the wild animals we hunt, the domesticated animals we breed and slaughter, or the bees whose honeycombs we take, concerns Porphyry, not Musonius. Rather, Musonius deplores wasting resources to get food and squandering effort and cost to prepare and serve it. He focuses on what, when, and how to eat, both as host and guest. Knowing the purpose of food is essential. He emphasizes the necessity of frugality and spurning all excess, all luxury. He describes how to eat always as a rational, civilized human being instead of a non-rational, predatory carnivore. Musonius lambastes the hedonist's belief that the purpose of eating is to please the palate. He defends a functionalist view that our divine creator gave us food as medicinal fuel to

nourish our bodies, restore our strength, and promote our health. For both Musonius and Seneca eating 'is a moral action of the Self, and self-awareness, judgment, control, and wise decision must determine and justify it, if it is to be an act that will ensure a purposeful experience and become a way of life' (Richardson-Hay 2009, 83).

'On Food' opposes two types of eaters. One is the *gourmand*. The gourmand is the wealthy, delicate, fussy, sluggish, slow-thinking city slicker (ἀστικός). His body is weak. His stomach is weak. He lacks stamina. He is sickly. He sells whatever he must to indulge his exorbitant cravings. Often his appetite flags and must be revived by increasingly exotic viands. More often he greedily gobbles goodies. His table is spread wide with dormice, sow teats, sow womb, peafowl, mullets, oysters, sea urchins, garum, home-baked bread, parrot heads, and thrush tongues. Cooks painstakingly prepare his surfeit of sauced delicacies. This glutton lives to eat. Never sated, he obsesses over the anticipated delights of his next feast. Though judged a master by social rank, the slicker is really a servant to his horrible habits. Intemperance makes the gourmand a slave. (For Seneca on gustatory slavery, see Richardson-Hay 2009, 93–4.)

Opposite the gourmand is the country bumpkin (χωρίτης). This hale and hearty rustic thinks nimbly, works hard, and toils tirelessly. He never complains. He makes his own meals, making do with whatever he gets – a few raw vegetables, some porridge and broad beans, a piece of fruit, a handful of olives, a chunk of cheese, or perhaps a cup of milk. Though his rations are cheap and meagre (cf. *Discourse* 6, 54.13 Lutz: τροφῆς λιτότητι), the bumpkin is unburdened by hardship (cf. *Discourse* 7, 58.30 Lutz: πόνου καταφρονεῖν). With calm decorum, he eats to live, like Socrates. Food fuels his labour. Fools judge the bumpkin to be a slave, supposing his station in life is low. Yet the bumpkin is actually an admirable *worker*. Daily training inculcated in him impeccable habits governing food and drink. No puppet to cravings, he mastered his appetites. The rustic's hard-earned self-control frees him to work on a regimen of other virtues.

Musonius admires bumpkins (farmers) in *Discourse* 11. Self-control is the central theme in *Discourse* 8. There Musonius argues that to gain self-control, kings must master their desires. The knowledge that leads to self-control (σωφροσύνη), he explains, is philosophy. Philosophy certainly 'teaches one to be above pleasure and greed (πλεονεξία), to admire thrift (εὐτέλεια) and to avoid extravagance (πολυτέλεια)'. *Discourses* 18A–B complements *Discourse* 8 by showing that self-control is needed not just by kings, but by everyone who eats.

The imperative to shun luxury and cultivate self-control includes a mindful diet consisting of simple, inexpensive, easily accessible foods requiring little to

no preparation. Such meals lack meat, fish, relishes, sauces, and pricey spices. Thus, Musonius prescribes an austere, lacto-vegetarian diet of mostly uncooked foods. Habituating oneself to this diet and self-controlled eating liberate in two ways. First, they steer us away from the allure of haute cuisine. Vice comes in many flavours. Seeing fancy food for what it is, a dangerous distraction, enables us to evade delicacy, illness, indolence, and weakness. Second, Musonius' philosophy of food is as medicine to inoculate against the hazards of hedonism. Living by his prescriptions frees his students to devote themselves to practising virtue. Food is thus made to serve the pursuit of an admirable life.

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