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The Question of Lamb

Leo M. Kaiser

IN THE CLASS OF 1701 at Harvard was a certain Lamb who, as Clifford Shipton relates,¹ disappears from the records in the last quarter of senior year after two fines and a large bill for window-glass, and seemingly did not graduate. Lamb may well have been Joshua Lamb of Roxbury, Massachusetts, to be kept distinct from his son Joshua, who entered Harvard with the Class of 1723 only to die from a fall before graduating.² There exists in the Harvard College Archives a manuscript *quaestio*³ signed "J. Lamb," which Shipton assigns to 1697 when, of course, the elder Lamb would have been a freshman. But the *quaestio*, the text of which we publish for the first time below, is of the type that students normally argue the affirmative or negative of at Commencement ceremonies as Master's candidates.

The mysteries surrounding Sir Lamb may not be dissipated by the appearance of this edition of the *quaestio*. The work itself, however, proves to be nicely done, opening its reasoning with a sly echo of the most familiar line of Caesar's *Gallic War*, and proceeding with deft reminiscences of classical poets and prosateurs to demonstrate that brute beasts are not possessed of reason. Well-organized and smoothly flowing, with the merest touch of post-classical syntax, Lamb's effort surely must be representative of much student oratory at Harvard in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and as such wholly deserving of examination by the historian of American public speaking.

In our edition the spelling and paragraphing of the manuscript have been preserved, but not necessarily its punctuation or capitalization. A number of what seem to be merely copyist's errors are indicated in the notes to the text, along with designations of the classical authors echoed. Some of these surely have escaped our notice. Bracketed numbers in the text are the page numbers of the manuscript. To the

¹ Clifford K. Shipton, *Sibley's Harvard Graduates: Biographical Sketches of Those Who Attended Harvard College* (Boston, 1937), V, 73.

² Shipton, *ibid.*

³ Shipton (*ibid.*) terms it simply an oration. On the *quaestio*, see Samuel E. Morison, *Harvard College in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, 1936), II, 159-164.

Harvard University Library I am much indebted for a photostatic copy of the manuscript and other kindly services.

An Datur ⁴ Ratio in Brutis Proprie Dicta?

Hujus temporis philosophos in tres velut partes divisos ⁵ videamus. Qui Cartesianum sequuntur, omnem cognitionem imo et sensum bestiis adimunt, easque ut machinas seu automata a summo artifice ⁶ elaborata considerant. Alii e contra non cognitionem modo sed et rationem brutis tribuere videntur. Nos vero mediam inter extremos opinionem sequimur. Bruta ergo et sensu et cognitione quadam licet imperfecta donantur. Quamobrem ut fatemur bruta non machinas esse, nec omni sensu aut perceptione destitui, sic omnino negamus ea ratione propria donari. Sed quod ⁷ species aliqua sive umbra rationis ⁸ in brutis datur, quantumvis non tantus gradus quantus in hominibus, probabimus. Sit itaque prima conclusio: bruta et sensu et cognitione et perceptione quadam donantur. Multis argumentis probari potest conclusio, quae quantum fieri poterit contraheamus. Primo non minus videtur certum bruta aut sentire aut percipere quam certum est ea oculis, auribus et aliis ad sentiendum aptatis organis esse praedita.⁹ Non enim est verisimile bruta oculos ab Authore Naturae ¹⁰ accepisse, tametsi non vident nec percipiunt quicquam; aut nihil ea esse aliud quam machinas quae nihil sentiunt, nihil agunt. Secundo, nihil est fere quod ab experientia, a communi hominum sensu,¹¹ et ab ipsa evidentia magis abhorreat, quam sensum et cognitionem brutis adimere. Fieri enim vix potest ut canis venaticus per compendia viarum ¹² leporem insequatur, aut lepores ipsi per varios flexus ¹³ [19] canes insequentes cludent, aut bestiae aliae aliis struant insidias,¹⁴ ut quae ex praeda vivunt, si omni omnino cognitione priventur. Respondent nonnulli ¹⁵ illas brutorum astutias ex occultiore quodam naturae instinctu prodire. Id ultro fatemur, sed merito contendimus instinctum illum citra ullam cognitionem aut perceptionem intelligi non posse. Instinctu naturae canis ad venandum impellitur; sed nisi in eo esset velut docilitas quadam prodere ¹⁶ olfactu aut visu deprehensa, tremulo caudae motu ¹⁷ venatorem non admoneret.

⁴ The indicative is proper here since *An* introduces a single direct question.

⁵ Cf. Caesar, *Bellum Gallicum* 1.1: Gallia est omnis divisa in partes tres.

⁶ Cf. Cicero, *Timaenus* 6: si pulcher est hic mundus et si probus eius artifex.

⁷ The *quod* construction is post-classical.

⁸ Cf. Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* 30.2: veritatis umbras.

⁹ Ms: praeditas.

¹⁰ Cf. Tertullian, *De Anima* 16: naturae deus auctor est.

¹¹ Cf. Cicero, *De Domo Sua* 97: communem naturae sensum.

¹² Cf. Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* 5.5: compendium viae.

¹³ Cf. Lucretius 3.586: perque viarum omnis flexus.

¹⁴ Cf. Ovid, *Met.* 1.197-198: mihi. . . /struxerit insidias.

¹⁵ Ms: nonnulli.

¹⁶ Ms: perdere.

¹⁷ Cf. Ovid, *Met.* 8.375: hastarum tremulo . . . motu.

Verum, inquiunt, canes longa assuetudine vel verberibus etiam aut blanditiis et aliis formantur et instituuntur. At hoc ipsum evincere videtur bruta nec sensu nec perceptione destitui, quod plane demonstrat¹⁸ quod bruta non possunt esse machinae.¹⁹ Porro omnis ratiocinatio proprie dicta est cum reflexione conjuncta,²⁰ est omnis ratio unius cognitionis ex alia. Nam in omni ratione consequens cum antecedente comparatur, imo cognitio antecedentis conferri debet cum cognitione consequentis. Quod fieri non potest sine cognitione reflexa, qualis in brutis nulla esse potest. Omnis belluarum cognitio sola apprehensione aut naturali iudicio continetur, idque ad propriam conservationem iis datum est, vel ex ipsis naturae initiis proficiscitur.²¹ Atque haec innata cognitio cum appetitu conjuncta est. In brutis etiam est docilitas quaedam improprie dicta, quam obsectorum species et appetitus naturalis²² efficiunt. Itaque fatemur innatam brutorum [20] cognitionem ex variorum²³ sensibilibus impressione multum augeri et roborari. Verum omnis illa cruditio quae in bestiis cernitur ex connexionem imaginum quae inter se sunt colligatae, non ex ratione ipsa ducitur. Non enim id concedimus, docilitatem omnem esse cum ratiocinatione conjunctam; aut docilitatem esse rationis argumentum, nisi quando [est]²⁴ cum cognitione reflexa aut spiritali connexa sit memoria. Reflexionem habet sibi adjunctam, sed improprie dictam; est enim cognitio objecti ante cogniti, non cognitionis ipsius cognitio. Ex quibus quam plane demonstratur quod bruta non habent rationem proprie sic dictam.

¹⁸ Ms: demonstrant.

¹⁹ Ms: machinas.

²⁰ Ms: conjuncta.

²¹ Ms: proficiscitur.

²² Cf. Cicero, *De Finibus* 4.25: prima appetitio naturalis.

²³ Ms: variarorum.

²⁴ I have bracketed this as superfluous.

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