



Michael Rosenberger

# Crown of Creation?

Origins of Christian Anthropocentrism  
and Possibilities of Overcoming



Nomos

# Interdisziplinäre Tierethik Interdisciplinary Animal Ethics

Herausgegeben von | Edited by  
Herwig Grimm, Wien und | and Michael Rosenberger, Linz

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Band 4 | Volume 4

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The printing was carried out with the support of the Fund for the Promotion of the Catholic Private University Linz.

Coverpicture: Noah's Ark and the Animals. Floor mosaic of the ancient basilica of Mopsuestia (now Misis, southeastern Turkey) from the 5th century.

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**The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek** lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>

ISBN 978-3-7560-1277-0 (Print)  
978-3-7489-4028-9 (ePDF)

#### **British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data**

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-3-7560-1277-0 (Print)  
978-3-7489-4028-9 (ePDF)

#### **Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Rosenberger, Michael

Crown of Creation?

Origins of Christian Anthropocentrism and Possibilities of Overcoming

Michael Rosenberger

381 pp.

Includes bibliographic references and index.

ISBN 978-3-7560-1277-0 (Print)  
978-3-7489-4028-9 (ePDF)

1st Edition 2024

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Published by

Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft mbH & Co. KG  
Waldseestraße 3–5 | 76530 Baden-Baden  
[www.nomos.de](http://www.nomos.de)

Production of the printed version:

Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft mbH & Co. KG  
Waldseestraße 3–5 | 76530 Baden-Baden

ISBN 978-3-7560-1277-0 (Print)  
ISBN 978-3-7489-4028-9 (ePDF)

DOI <https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748940289>



Online Version  
Nomos eLibrary



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## Preface from the co-editor

It is with pleasure that I write this preface to introduce the fourth volume of the series “Interdisciplinary Animal Ethics” as its co-editor. Unlike the other co-editor and author of this book, I am not a theologian but a moral philosopher. Hence, I would like to contextualise Michael Rosenberger’s book “Crown of Creation?” within the present animal ethics debate. I will do this by outlining three remarks regarding Christian theology’s role in the animal ethics debate.

By looking at the research published on animal ethics and human–animal studies, one can notice that Christianity and its prominent thinkers, like St. Thomas Aquinas, are portrayed as the main culprits of the human–animal divide. And many authors simplify the issue by blaming medieval theology for driving a wedge between the human–animal and non-human animal world. Even Peter Singer, in his new and thoroughly updated edition of *Animal Liberation*, falls into this trap: When explicitly referring to the times before Christianity, he proceeds by introducing the chapter *Man’s Dominion... a short history of speciesism* with a quote from the Old Testament (Gen 1:26 and Gen 9:1–3) and immediately rushes to medieval theology and Aquinas after three pages. The chapter *Man’s Dominion* ends by dealing with the question “Can Christianity redeem its past and become a non-speciesist religion?” Singer lists a few progressive theological accounts. As the reader of this book will realise, the short history of *Man’s Dominion* is too short indeed. Too short, that is, if one wants to understand present anthropocentric thinking and Christianity’s role in it. Rosenberger’s book counters the frequently told tale that Christianity is the main cause of anthropocentrism and speciesist maltreatment of animals today. The author provocatively argues that we would have ended up with anthropocentric thinking anyhow, even without Christianity and medieval theology. The straightforward reason for this is that anthropocentrism was well-established before Christianity and that Christian theology found itself in an anthropocentric landscape and built on what was there already.

Second, the theological debate within human–animal studies has become a visible and growing research area itself. The reason why this is not always recognised can—at least in part—be found in the fact that the whole animal

ethics debate is dominated by contributions in English. Hence, authors do not always engage with and rarely acknowledge research published in other languages. This translation of Rosenberger's book bridges this gap by making the lively theological debate in German-speaking countries accessible to English-speaking scholars.

Third, I would like to remark that Christian theology is not only part of the problems stemming from anthropocentrism but can become part of the solution: The thorough analysis of anthropocentrism's origin and its genealogy that we find in this book does not only provide a better understanding of what we are precisely facing in our attempts to overcome moral anthropocentrism. It might also provide insights that can be utilised to newly address the problem and to find better solutions.

With these observations and thoughts, I would like to end with a wish and a certainty: I wish for a wide readership of Rosenberger's book, now available both in English and in German. My hope is that both language gaps in the animal ethics debate and the moral divides between human and non-human animals that were and have been intentionally or unintentionally maintained in Christian theology will be increasingly overcome. And I would like to end with expressing the certainty that this book will further clarify the role of Christian theologies in the animal ethics debate. As illustrated by this book, theologians have supported the doctrine of anthropocentrism, but they have started to develop ways to think anew and formulate a wholehearted critique of their intellectual predecessors and religious doctrines.

Vienna, November 2023

Herwig Grimm

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## Foreword

With the publication of this book, a long-cherished wish has come true. Its initial ideas go back to the early days of the “Interdisciplinary Working Group for Human-Animal Studies” initiated by the Bündnis Mensch & Tier Foundation and founded in 2007. In the debates there, we kept coming back to the question of the role of Christianity in relation to animals and creation. And I realized that, as the only theologian in the group, I was able to give the first rudiments of an answer, but not a comprehensive and well-founded account. At the same time, everyone was aware of the enormous importance of the question of Christian anthropocentrism.

The project presented here required a great deal of preliminary thought and elaborate preparation. In particular, finding the relevant patristic texts was an enormously arduous task and certainly did not lead to their final and complete consideration. Nevertheless, the texts collected here provide a solid basis for tracing the development of the history of theology. In this respect, my student assistant at the time, Elena Deinhammer, has rendered invaluable services. Without her precise and meticulous research, this book would not have been possible. I would like to thank my current student assistant Viktoria Puchner for her profound research on the text-critical editions of the sources and secondary literature.

Scientific knowledge essentially lives from discourse. My colleagues from the aforementioned Interdisciplinary Working Group for Human-Animal Studies have repeatedly inspired me with their ideas, critically questioned me, enriched me with new perspectives and spurred me on with their collegiality and affinity. A symposium at the Catholic University of Eichstätt run by my colleagues Christoph Böttigheimer and Alexis Fritz on the question of God’s creation plan was also valuable for me. Especially with regard to the last chapter, I benefited greatly from this symposium, although I was unfortunately only able to participate via video link. Finally, many thanks go to my colleague Alfons Fürst in Münster, who was readily available to me as a patristic discussion partner and helped greatly to place my discoveries in the larger context of early Christian thought. Without his profound feedback, I would never have ventured so far into the territory of another theological discipline.



*Foreword*

I would also like to thank my colleague Martin Lintner in Brixen for obtaining the expert opinions and taking them into account in my textual revisions, as well as my co-editor Herwig Grimm in Vienna for including the book in our jointly edited series “Interdisciplinary Animal Ethics”. I would like to thank my patristic colleague Christian Lange in Würzburg for his very constructive and well-argued patristic expert opinion, which provided me with valuable information to supplement and clarify my explanations.

The printing of this book was generously supported by the Episcopal Fund for the Promotion of the Catholic Private University in Linz, for which I thank them very much. Finally, I would like to thank Nomos publishing house for their reliable and efficient cooperation over the years, especially Beate Bernstein in the editing department and Melanie Schweis in the typesetting department.

Linz, November 2023

Michael Rosenberger

# I Anthropocentrism as Christian patrimony. About the question of this book

One of the most successful East German music groups, Die Prinzen, released a new album to mark their 30th anniversary in March 2021. The title song has the following lyrics:

## *Crown of creation*

We came down from the trees and went up to the stars  
From a stone-age cave to an energy-saving house  
And evolution took its course  
Today we are the king, but far from being satisfied  
We have spread ourselves all over the planet  
And whatever gets in our way gets flattened

The whole forest is singing in chorus:  
“What on earth is the matter with you?”

We are the crown of creation  
Well, that’s alright then  
After us the deluge, after us the deluge  
Be on your guard  
We are the crown of creation  
What a shame  
For the animals I mean, the poor bastards  
No really, what a shame

We invented nuclear power and the TV schedule  
Automatic coffee makers, chicken barbecues  
It’s cool to be king, the things you can do  
We can travel at supersonic speed, wait in rush-hour traffic  
Prove black holes and not understand the world  
We are the crème de la crème in every field

The whole ocean is screaming:  
“Hey, who do you think you are?”

We are the crown of creation ...

Sometimes I ask myself, “Aren’t we ourselves the problem?”  
Like a flaw in the matrix and the system  
We rule while the planet is on fire

We are the crown of creation ...

(Die Prinzen 2021, CD Krone der Schöpfung, Songwriters: Alexander Zieme/ Henri Schmidt/ Jens Sembdner/ Mathias Dietrich/ Sebastian Krumbiegel/ Tobias Kuenzel/ Tobias Roeger/ Wolfgang Lenk, Lyrics by Krone der Schöpfung © Kobalt Music Publishing Ltd.—official music video on Youtube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=19Ru>

ONRmI\_8&ab\_channel=DiePrinzen and [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uo81IHKd51E&ab\\_channel=DiePrinzen-Topic](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uo81IHKd51E&ab_channel=DiePrinzen-Topic) accessed 5.11.2022)

Five musicians in Die Prinzen received their training in the 1980s in the Thomanerchor in Leipzig or the Dresdner Kreuzchor. They come from a form of church socialisation that is unusual for the GDR and know what the allusions to the Bible in their lyrics mean. That is what makes this song so interesting, for it positions traditional Christian convictions in the conflict between modern evolutionary theory and ecological catastrophes. The song has a four-part structure:

- On the one hand, the *stanzas* describe the enormous progress humans have made since they evolved into their own species, homo sapiens sapiens: From the trees on which our pre-human ancestors sat, to the stars to which we send unmanned and possibly soon-to-be manned spaceships, from stone-age caves to energy-saving houses, but also to nuclear power plants and supersonic aircraft. On the other hand, the stanzas depict the ecological catastrophe that is spreading with the almost infinite increase in human knowledge. Overwhelmed by our own abilities, we ascribe to ourselves the role of “king” and make ourselves wider and wider on the small planet Earth, without our hunger for more and more ever being satisfied.
- In a relatively short *interlude* between the verses and the chorus, the song changes perspective and slips into the viewpoint of the animals, who only shake their heads and are completely stunned in the face of anthropogenic environmental destruction. The animals of the forest ask, “What on earth is the matter with you?” And the animals of the ocean, “Hey, who do you think you are?”
- Finally, the *chorus* manifests how little humans are impressed by animals’ objections. Naïve as little children, they cling to their biblically based credo: “We are the crown of creation... After us, the deluge”.
- Only at the very *end*, in the singular and no longer in the plural of the first person, comes the question of whether we humans are not the real problem and the systemic fault. “We rule while the planet is on fire.”

It is remarkable that the chorus contains two allusions to the biblical Creation narratives in Gen 1–9. The “crown of creation” alludes to the image of God in Gen 1:26, the “flood” to Gen 6–9, very deliberately suggesting that the root of the present ecological catastrophe has something to do with the Christian message. Since the 1960s, as we shall see (chapter 1.3), this has

been a widely accepted thesis. But is it true, and if so, to what extent? That is the guiding question of this book.

In this first chapter, I will first look at the current position of the Catholic Church, which is showing the first signs of moving away from anthropocentrism but has not yet completely overcome it. Then I search for an urgently needed conceptual refining of the talk of “anthropocentrism”. On this basis, the guiding question of this paper can be precisely determined. Ten core theses describe the book’s main intellectual thread before a brief look at the structure is given in conclusion.

## *1.1 The current Roman Catholic position on the moral status of animals*

### 1.1.1 The 1991 Catechism of the Catholic Church

What the Roman Catholic Church officially teaches on a particular issue can usually best be read in the “Catechism of the Catholic Church” (CCC) from 1991. As questionable as it may be to write a catechism at all in the 21st century, because such a catechism is not the pedagogical method of choice in the context of the modern (and, by the way, well Socratic!) conception of education as education for independent thinking and of religious education as education for trust in God, and as dubious as the concrete text of the CCC may seem to many in the light of Vatican Council II, it should in most cases provide a rough initial guide as to what the majority of the universal Church hierarchy thinks about certain questions of faith and morals and how they “tick”.

This is all the truer if there is not yet a detailed papal or conciliar teaching letter on a topic. This is precisely the case for animal ethics. It is true that Pope Francis wrote a teaching letter on environmental ethics in the 2015 encyclical “Laudato si’”, as indicated by the subtitle “on care for our common house”. Although animals appear on almost every page, they are not the actual topic, but are predominantly perceived as part of ecosystems. Only in passing can individual animal ethics conclusions be derived from *Laudato si’*—a systematic form of animal ethics is not the goal.

So when we ask what “the Church” in the sense of the hierarchical ministry (and in this case most likely also in the sense of a large part of Christians) thinks about animals, the relevant sections of the CCC can certainly give us some initial guidance. They can be found in Article 3.2.2.7:

“The seventh commandment: ‘Thou shalt not steal’ (Ex 20:15; Dt 5:19; Mt 19:18)”. I quote them unabridged and add in brackets some technical terms of the original Latin text which allow the intention of the text to be understood more precisely:

“2415. The seventh commandment also enjoins respect for the integrity of creation (*observantiam integritatis creationis*). Animals, like plants and inanimate beings, are by nature destined for the common good of past, present, and future humanity [Cf. Gen 1:28–31]. Use of the mineral, vegetable, and animal resources of the universe cannot be divorced from respect for moral imperatives. Man’s dominion (*dominatus*) over inanimate and other living beings granted by the Creator is not absolute; it is limited by concern for the quality of life of his neighbour, including generations to come; it requires a religious respect for the integrity of creation (*integritatis creationis religiosam observantiam*) [Cf. CA 37–38].

2416. Animals are God’s creatures. He surrounds them with his providential care (*Ipse ea Sua providentiali amplectitur sollicitudine*) [cf. Mt 6:26]. By their mere existence they bless him and give him glory [cf. Dan 3:57–58]. Thus, men owe them kindness (*benevolentiam*). We should recall the gentleness (*accurata consideratione*) with which saints like St. Francis of Assisi or St. Philip Neri treated animals.

2417. God entrusted animals to the stewardship (*procurationi*) of those whom he created in his own image [Cf. Gen 2:19–20; 9:1–14]. Hence it is legitimate to use animals for food and clothing (*uti*). They may be domesticated to help man in his work and leisure (*assistant*). Medical and scientific experimentation on animals is a morally acceptable practice, if it remains within reasonable limits (*intra rationabiles limites*) and contributes to caring for or saving human lives.

2418. It is contrary to human dignity to cause animals to suffer or die needlessly. It is likewise unworthy to spend money on them that should as a priority go to the relief of human misery. One can love animals; one should not direct to them the affection due only to persons (*Animalia amare licet; affectio solis personis debita ad ea averti non deberet*).”

First of all, it is noticeable that some formulations remain unclear: What does it mean to “respect the integrity of creation (*observantiam integritatis creationis*)” (twice in CCC 2415)? If one takes “*integritas*” literally, man should not interfere with creation at all, but that is hardly what is meant. What are “reasonable limits” of animal experimentation (CCC 2417)? What is the measure of their reasonableness? And finally, what is “the love due

only to persons” and not to animals (CCC 2418)? With these questions, one notices that the text suggests evidence that it should actually create.

Beyond these serious ambiguities, the text as such is highly ambivalent. On the one hand, it strives in many respects for an appreciation of animals. Thus, the animals are presented as God’s creatures whom he embraces with his caring providence (*amplēctitur*). They praise God by their very existence and deserve human benevolence and sensitivity (CCC 2416). Therefore, they are entrusted to the caring stewardship or, more literally, the vicarious care (*procuratio*) of man (CCC 2417).

The reinterpretation of concepts of loving relationships into hierarchical relationships of domination, as the official German translation (unlike the English one) does, however, already shows that the Catechism has another tendency: It clearly advocates anthropocentrism, i.e. the conviction that the whole of creation ultimately exists solely for the sake of human beings. This is already expressed in the fact that animals are subsumed under the VII Commandment “Thou shalt not steal”. First and foremost, they are understood as things, as human possessions, and not as independent living beings created for their own sake. Consequently, they are mentioned in the text in the same breath as inanimate nature and natural resources. The standard for their “reasonable” treatment is not their own well-being, but the common human good understood across generations (CCC 2415). Cruelty to animals contradicts human dignity, not animal dignity (CCC 2418). From all this follows a clear hierarchisation or prioritisation of needs: Human needs come before animal needs, and human love is above animal love. As much as the Catechism strives for an appreciation of animals, this always remains within the limits of a consistently anthropocentric world view.

### 1.1.2 The 2015 encyclical *Laudato si’*

The same ambivalence between the classical anthropocentric framework and the pursuit of a new appreciation of animals is equally found in the encyclical *Laudato si’*, albeit with noticeable shifts in favour of non-human creatures.

In several places Pope Francis advocates classical anthropocentrism when he refers to CCC 2418 (LS 92; 130) or when he explicitly rejects biocentrism (LS 118). However, Francis clearly rejects the core thesis of classical anthropocentrism: “In our time, the Church does not simply state

that other creatures are completely subordinated to the good of human beings, as if they have no worth in themselves and can be treated as we wish.” (LS 69). And: “The ultimate end of other creatures is not us.” (LS 83). Furthermore, the “value proper to each creature” is described as one of the central themes of the encyclical (LS 16; cf. also LS 76; 208). Because the encyclical, like the *Canticle of the Creatures* of Francis of Assisi on which it is based, also uses “creature” to refer to living spaces (sun, water, earth, fire, etc.), it could even be classified as ecocentric or holistic. For it speaks of the intrinsic value of living beings (LS 69; 118), of species (LS 33; 36) and of the world (LS 115).

The closeness of *Laudato si'* to holism is also evident in the conviction that everything is interconnected—according to LS 16, one of the “central themes running through the entire encyclical”. From this descriptive picture of the world as an inseparable unity then normatively results the demand for fraternal love: “Because all creatures are connected, each must be cherished with love and respect, for all of us as living creatures are dependent on one another.” (LS 42). In keeping with the Franciscan style, the Pope emphasises the universal brotherhood of all creatures (LS 92; 228) and their belonging to a universal family (LS 89–92).

In terms of content, the intrinsic value of creatures is understood in contrast to the use value of a resource: “It is not enough, however, to think of different species merely as potential ‘resources’ to be exploited, while overlooking the fact that they have value in themselves” (LS 33). Intrinsic value is not scalar but transcends any calculation (LS 36). To perceive it is only possible from a different perspective than the “technocracy which sees no intrinsic value in lesser beings” (LS 118). The technocratic paradigm, which Pope Francis vehemently rejects, is blind to the intrinsic value of creatures. His thinking in categories of human ownership is opposed to the faithful view that creation is on loan, entrusted to human beings in faithful hands: “The created things of this world are not free of ownership: ‘For they are yours, O Lord, who love the living’ (Wis 11:26).” (LS 89). With this postulate of a divine claim to ownership, humans’ power of having creation at its disposal is massively limited. The exclusive or primary subsumption of non-human creatures under the VII Commandment is thus actually obsolete.

With reference to CCC 2416, Francis twice emphasises that the intrinsic value of creatures is based on the fact that they “give glory to God by their very existence” (LS 33; 69). God did not create creatures so that they might delight him, but so that they might experience delight in their own lives.



God rejoices precisely because creatures rejoice in life. The emphasis in *Laudato si'* is therefore on existence rather than on praising God: creatures do not first have to produce a benefit or an achievement in order to acquire value—this is given to them through their existence alone. Their existence is valuable in itself.

Francis is aware of the danger of playing environmental protection and human protection off against each other. But his prescription against this is again formulated in a strongly anthropocentrist way. He tirelessly emphasises the “immeasurable” (LS 65; 158), “infinite” (LS 65), “unique” (LS 69), “special” (LS 154), even “very special” (LS 43) dignity of human beings. At a decisive point, therefore, he seems to want to reject biocentrist egalitarianism: “This is not to put all living beings on the same level nor to deprive human beings of their unique worth and the tremendous responsibility it entails. [...] At times we see an obsession with denying any pre-eminence to the human person; more zeal is shown in protecting other species than in defending the dignity which all human beings share in equal measure. Certainly, we should be concerned lest other living beings be treated irresponsibly. But we should be particularly indignant at the enormous inequalities in our midst, whereby we continue to tolerate some considering themselves more worthy than others.” (LS 90; similar LS 119)

Of course, it is absolutely true that a commitment to the environment and animals cannot justify the neglect of human rights and interpersonal justice. And it is probably also true that some radical environmentalists and animal rights activists do exactly this by referring to the egalitarianism of all living beings. But the basic biocentrist idea of the equality of all living beings actually says something different. In this respect, LS 118 is more cautious and therefore more accurate: “This situation has led to a constant schizophrenia, wherein a technocracy which sees no intrinsic value in lesser beings coexists with the other extreme, which sees no special value in human beings.” This suggests that the denial of human and creaturely dignity usually goes hand in hand: Those who treat human beings primarily or exclusively as commodities with a price will do the same with non-human creatures and vice versa.

A significant spiritual depth shines forth when in a few passages reference is made to the fact that the Christ “incarnate”, i.e. having become creature, “has taken unto himself this material world and now, risen, is intimately present to each being, surrounding it with his affection and penetrating it with his light” (LS 221). He has thus become “a seed of definitive transformation” of the entire universe (LS 235). Here, Francis explicitly

refers to Teilhard de Chardin: “The ultimate destiny of the universe is in the fullness of God, which has already been attained by the risen Christ, the measure of the maturity of all things.” (LS 83) The interpretations of the Colossian hymn (Col 1:15–20) and the Logos hymn (Jn 1:1–18) in LS 99 are particularly dense: “One Person of the Trinity entered into the created cosmos, throwing in his lot with it, even to the cross. From the beginning of the world, but particularly through the incarnation, the mystery of Christ is at work in a hidden manner in the natural world as a whole.” Christian anthropology often points out that in the incarnation of God the dignity of the human being shines forth in a unique way. By analogy, one would have to conclude from the papal interpretation of the incarnation as the becoming of a creature that in it the dignity of both human and non-human creatures shines forth in a unique way.

An encyclical is not a scientific theological treatise and therefore enjoys the right to remain conceptually and argumentatively somewhat fuzzy. Pope Francis is recognisably trying to preserve the concern of classical anthropocentrism to protect human dignity and to stand up for interpersonal justice, but on the other hand to combine the concern of biocentrism and ecocentrism with respect for the intrinsic value of creatures and to fight for justice towards all creatures. *Laudato si'* thus goes a decisive step further than the Catechism. However, the encyclical does not achieve a complete paradigm shift. It continues to oscillate between traditional anthropocentrism and modern biocentrism and ecocentrism, even if it does show a sympathy by the Church for the latter that was hitherto undreamed of.

## *1.2 Clarification of the term “anthropocentrism”*

The debate about anthropocentrism is still often characterised by confusion of terms. For although in all language families accessible to me it is now clear that one must distinguish between three perspectives, this differentiation has by no means reached the entire breadth of the discussion. For this reason, I would like to present the current “state of the art” in advance (cf. for the German language area first Gotthard M. Teutsch 1987, 16–18 and Bernhard Irrgang 1992, 17):

The *epistemological, methodological or epistemic perspective* asks what standards are available to humans for environmental ethical judgements<sup>1</sup>. Here it is completely undisputed that it is only possible for them to look at the world with their human imaginative possibilities. They can expand these imaginative possibilities through technical aids, but not in principle leave them behind. For example, many animals emit sounds that humans cannot hear. However, humans can measure them by means of sonography and in this way make them accessible. Some animals also have sensory organs that humans do not possess, such as sensitivity to the earth’s magnetic field, which they use for orientation. Here, too, measuring devices can replace what human senses lack. In this respect, human perception of the world around us has expanded enormously in recent decades.

At the same time, this perception remains trapped in principle in humans’ opportunities for cognition. For even if we draw valid (!) conclusions about our own subjective feelings through the behaviour of animals and plants, it will forever remain closed to us to feel “what it is like to be a bat” —the title of the famous essay by Thomas Nagel in 1974. In other words: humans methodically recognise the world anthropocentrically, dogs methodically cynocentrically and bees methodically melissacentrically<sup>2</sup>. Nevertheless, certain animals, like humans, have a high capacity for empathy across species. The similarities in the structure and functioning of the brain cause similarities in gestures, facial expressions and behaviour, so that these in turn allow conclusions to be drawn about inner experience per analogiam. In order to compensate for the weaknesses of *methodological or*

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1 Anthroporelationality is sometimes spoken of (e.g. Hans J. Münk 1998, 231–245 and Markus Vogt 2009, 258–259)—but without defining exactly what is meant normatively by it and what derivations result from it. Münk and Vogt suggest that they understand the term and the concept behind it as an alternative and “compromise formula” (Markus Vogt 2009, 258) to teleological anthropocentrism. However, from everything I read there, it seems to me that this could rather be a refinement of methodological anthropocentrism.

2 The idea of a species-specific epistemic limitation is already found in the reflection by Xenophanes (born between 580 and 570 BC) that if animals had hands, lions would make lion-like and oxen ox-like images of gods (Hermann Diels (ed.)/ Walther Kranz (ed.) 1972–1975, 21 B 15/16), and in a poem attributed to Epicharmos (c. 540–460 BC) that dogs find other dogs most beautiful, donkeys other donkeys, pigs other pigs and indeed humans other humans (Hermann Diels (ed.)/ Walther Kranz (ed.) 1972–1975, 23 B 5). Cf. Urs Dierauer 1977, 62.

*epistemological anthropocentrism*<sup>3</sup>, the greatest possible development of the ability to empathise and think, i.e. to put oneself in the shoes of another species, is required. And yet limits remain.

The inescapability of methodological anthropocentrism has an immediate ethical consequence: it requires great humility. For in view of the relativity of the human perspective of knowledge, it is important to avoid any arrogance that expresses itself in the belief that humans know how nature works and what needs to be done to protect the environment and our fellow human beings. If we do not even know “what it is like to be a bat”, then it is not for us humans to elevate ourselves above animals and plants. Environmental and animal ethical decisions that we make are always subject to the limited perspective of knowledge that we humans are given.

The second, *formal perspective* asks who can assume what responsibility for their actions and whether one should speak of responsibility at all in the case of non-human animals. This second question is increasingly answered affirmatively in research, at least for certain animal species, with regard to intra-species rule-setting and rule-following (Fiona Probyn-Rapsey 2018, 49). However, this never addresses the immense responsibility for the survival of the biosphere as a whole. Here, it should be indisputable that only man rudimentarily possesses this opportunity. He is the addressee of global ethical demands—and only he.

Again, there is a danger of drawing wrong conclusions from this special position of man. In connection with the image of God in Gen 1, one can easily see where such unfounded conclusions can lead. While the image of God there describes only *formal anthropocentrism*, in later centuries the term was read as an answer to the third perspective, and material anthropocentrism was derived from it. From this historical fact, many American creation ethicists conclude that one should abandon the concept of the image of God as well as its modern translation with “stewardship”. Of course, this would be possible in principle—but it would in no way escape formal anthropocentrism. It would only be a matter of cosmetics and semantics, not hard content. I would therefore rather ask how a more effective firewall can be drawn between formal anthropocentrism and material anthropocentrism.

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3 Angelika Krebs 1997, 342–343 calls methodological anthropocentrism “metaethical anthropocentrism”. The adjective can be used appropriately, but the noun, as so often, disregards the distinction between anthropocentrism and anthropocentrism that is justified on the following pages.

Finally, the third, *material or teleological perspective* asks for whom the earth is to be preserved: Who are the *téle*, the (self-)ends, for the sake of which the means of nature may and should be used? Is it only human beings, as anthropocentrism claims? Is it all sentient, pain-sensing living beings, as pathocentrism or sentientism holds? Is it all living beings, as biocentrism postulates? Or is it living beings and inorganic matter, even collective entities such as ecosystems and species, as ecocentrism or holism would say? This is the Gretchen question of environmental and animal ethics par excellence, and it is not as trivial as one might think.

First of all, it is clear that all four teleological determinations are compatible with both methodological and formal anthropocentrism, indeed that all four usually affirm both of these. For no matter which teleological determination we choose, we do it as human beings and thus methodologically and formally anthropocentric. Hence, biocentrism, for example, emphasises the formal special position of human beings associated with their unique responsibility (Friedo Ricken 1987, 20; Hans J. Münk 1997, 26). It also methodically recognises that humans make environmental ethical value judgements according to human standards (Paul W. Taylor 1981, 204; Hans J. Münk 1997, 26). The same is true of ecocentrism (J. Baird Callicott 2017, 116; Helen Kopnina 2019, 4). Conversely, material anthropocentrism cannot necessarily be derived from the fact that humans are the only parties responsible and that they can only judge according to their standards of knowledge (Tim Hayward 1997, 49; Gavin Rae 2014, 7). The three perspectives must therefore be kept neatly apart and have no substantive nexus that would allow one to be derived from the other.

For the sake of this clear distinction between the three perspectives, I must at this point say a few sentences about *terminology*: Starting from the Anglo-Saxon area, it has become common in the last ten or fifteen years in the German and Romance language areas to speak of “anthropocentrism” when referring to the teleological question. I think this is a factually correct and appropriate development because the actual ideological positioning is linked to the teleological question—and semantically we traditionally designate ideologies with the suffix “-ism” and “-ist”.

However, “anthropocentrism” and “anthropocentric”, which is usually combined with it, do not fit together semantically. Purely linguistically, the adjective “anthropocentrist(ic)” belongs to the noun “anthropocentrism”—which is unfortunately not at all the case in English-language literature on this topic. Conversely, the adjective “anthropocentric” corresponds with the noun “anthropocentrism”, just as, for example, the adjective “ethical”

corresponds with the noun “ethics”. For linguistically, the suffix “-ism” denotes a world view, an ideology, whereas the suffix “-ic”—derived from the Greek adjective associated with it—denotes a method or approach (ethics, physics, logic...).

Consequently, a linguistically correct distinction must be made between moral, material or teleological anthropocentrism (with the adjective anthropocentric) on the one hand and formal anthropocentrism and epistemic anthropocentrism (both with the adjective anthropocentric) on the other (cf. Rob Boddice 2011, 13). This then also makes clear linguistically that no compelling conclusion leads from formal or epistemic anthropocentrism to material anthropocentrism. The firewall between the first two and the third perspective is clearly marked linguistically. This is exactly how I use the terminology in this book. Material anthropocentrism can then be referred to more briefly simply as anthropocentrism and anthropocentric. Anthropocentrism, on the other hand, always requires specification by an adjective so that it is clear in which perspective we are. Where I quote, however, I must leave the terminology of the source quoted. Here, the reader’s ability to recognise the possible terminological incongruence between the source and my commentary is then called for.

For me, it is a prerequisite that the designation of a teleological definition with an “-ism” only contains a description and in no way a valuation—neither positive nor negative<sup>4</sup>. This is by no means self-evident, because in social debates “-isms” are often accompanied by devaluations—just think of Islamism, racism or anti-Semitism. Those “-isms”, on the other hand, which are used in a less or non-judgemental way, are currently hardly present in public debates. This can lead to prejudice in one direction or another, and this is how I interpret the tendency of some animal ethicists to explicitly emphasise that they are material or teleological anthropocentrism, but not anthropocentrism. Here, a semantic trick is used that cannot be justified linguistically and should therefore be avoided.

Anyone who advocates anthropocentric teleology should unabashedly call themselves an anthropocentric. There is no shame in that, for—it

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4 Lori Gruen 2015, 24 distinguishes between “inevitable anthropocentrism”, by which she designates methodological anthropocentrism, and “arrogant anthropocentrism”, which in our terminology is material or teleological anthropocentrism. In contrast to my proposal, she has thus integrated a direct valuation into the terms—not through the noun “anthropocentrism”, however, but through the two assigned adjectives. I, on the other hand, would like to separate description and valuation conceptually, which is why I do not adopt Gruen’s terminology.

should be emphasised—there are undoubtedly respectable models of enlightened and humanistically motivated anthropocentrism that can at least reject the overexploitation of the environment with excellent reasons. However, in doing so, they involve moral feelings only slightly and therefore take people along in a comparatively top-heavy manner. They do not offer an approach to loving nature and taking pleasure in it “just so”, beyond utility calculations. What weighs more heavily in our context, however, is this: Their justifications are less convincing in terms of animal ethics than in terms of environmental ethics. Why one should treat animals well beyond human self-interest can hardly become clear if animals are not granted any intrinsic value. And enlightened humanist variants of anthropocentrism cannot do that if they want to be consistent. Most of their representatives therefore reject the inherent value theorem (cf. Michael Rosenberger 2021, 135–141). At the same time, they declare themselves to be environmental rather than animal ethicists. This makes a small but momentous difference.

Nevertheless, this book should not be understood as a blanket condemnation of anthropocentrism. Rather, it is about a thoroughly appreciative critique of a tradition of thought that has shaped Europe for two and a half millennia and continues to do so, a form of thought that has produced much that is good, but also brings with it serious downsides—and, as we will see at the end of my discussion, not only in the area of animal ethics. In the best sense of the word, I am concerned with an elucidation of modern, ecologically influenced anthropocentrism by reconstructing its roots and asking whether it does not need to be significantly broadened in order to meet the current challenges of a threatened planet. I will tackle this task “sine ira et studio” and hope that all anthropocentrists among the readers can meet my thoughts with the same attitude.

### 1.3 The central question of this book

In the above analysis of the animal ethics sections of the CCC, as well as in the search for the creation ethics rationale of *Laudato si'*, an undoubted tendency towards detachment from anthropocentrism has been noticed, which, however, has not yet reached its goal. In the CCC, the framework remains clearly anthropocentric; in *Laudato si'*, anthropocentric and non-anthropocentric thoughts almost balance each other out. The detachment of the Christian message from anthropocentrism, which un-



doubtedly has far-reaching consequences for the environment and animal ethics, is still pending.

So the question arises as to where this anthropocentrism actually comes from and what were the reasons for introducing it into the Christian message? The answers to this question have so far been mostly very superficial and clichéd or very fragmentary because they focus on a single epoch in history.

Largely unnoticed in his time, but probably the first to raise the question of the roots of European anthropocentrism, Albert Schweitzer did so between 1939 and 1942 in his fragmentary *Philosophy of Culture*, published only posthumously: “Why is it that European thought does not address the question of ethical behaviour towards creatures, or addresses it only reluctantly?” (Albert Schweitzer 2000, 139) Schweitzer’s still rather crude first ideas are worth reading and noting. He sees that the origins lie not in Judaism but with the Greeks, but also emphasises the catalysing contribution of early Christianity: “However the fact [that] Jesus does not recommend compassion for creatures may be explained: it has a disastrous effect on European thought. The view that ethics is concerned only with behaviour towards human beings and not also with behaviour towards creatures is regarded by him as sanctioned by Christianity. Throughout the centuries, this deeply ingrained prejudice has remained. Even today it has not completely got rid of it.” (Albert Schweitzer 2000, 143)

However, the public debate was opened in 1967, when the medievalist Lynn White published a sensational article in the scientific journal “*Science*” on “the historical roots of our ecological crisis”. In it, he proves that the technological and scientific dynamism of Western Europe, which began in the 11th century and continues today, has its roots in the widespread Christianisation by the Carolingians in the 9th century, for this led to a combination of two basic spiritual attitudes:

- Firstly, the biblical Creation narratives were understood in such a way that everything created existed solely for the benefit and well-being of man, because he alone was God’s image. Christianity had thus become the most anthropocentric religion in the world. “God planned all of this explicitly for man’s benefit and rule: no item in the physical creation had any purpose save to serve man’s purposes. And, although man’s body is made of clay, he is not simply part of nature: he is made in God’s image. Especially in its Western form, Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen. (...) Christianity, in abso-

lute contrast to ancient paganism and Asia's religions (except, perhaps, Zoroastrianism), not only established a dualism of man and nature but also insisted that it is God's will that man exploit nature for his proper ends." (Lynn White 1967, 1205)

- Secondly, however, the significant difference between the Latin Western and Greek Eastern Churches had to be explained, for only the Latin Church had produced the aforementioned technological–scientific dynamic, while the Christian East had lagged behind technically and scientifically. Here, White refers to the voluntarism of the Western Church, which emerged in the 11th century, and which places the human will and its freedom before or above the knowledge of reason. In contrast, the Greek Eastern Church remained intellectualistic, i.e. it placed the knowledge of reason before will and freedom.

This leads to the following conclusion for White: "first, that, viewed historically, modern science is an extrapolation of natural theology and, second, that modern technology is at least partly to be explained as an Occidental, voluntarist realisation of the Christian dogma of man's transcendence of, and rightful mastery over, nature". (Lynn White 1967, 1206) The ecological crisis cannot be solved simply by more natural science and more (environmental) technology, but only by spiritual conversion. The creation mysticism of Francis of Assisi and his idea of fraternity with all creatures lends itself to this, White concludes.

With this small essay, White initiated a debate that has not died down to this day. However, his thesis has often been coarsened and robbed of its temporal and spatial limitations. The medievalist White only analyses the Middle Ages. He does not ask where the medieval interpretations of the biblical narratives come from and whether they are exegetically correct. He also does not ask what is at the origin of Western voluntarism and why this only affected the Christian West, but not the Christian East. Finally, he does not analyse the post-Reformation and modern developments, which indicate that it was not so much Catholicism as Protestantism (and there especially Calvinism<sup>5</sup> as well as the Free Churches) that promoted environ-

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5 In his classic thesis, Max Weber attributed the economic success of Calvinist countries to their doctrine of predestination. Heinz Schilling 2022, 243–259 and more recent historical research, on the other hand, assume much more prosaically that the cause, analogous to the European Jews, lies in the expulsion of Calvinists from most of their areas of origin. As migrants, they were excluded from politics and all public offices in their new places of residence, so they could only gain the respect of their

mental destruction (cf. Peter Hersche 2020 and 2020a). As a medievalist, White sticks to his last. However, the title of his essay suggests that one has arrived at the historical roots, as if there were no prehistory for the Middle Ages. This is precisely what leads to uncovered generalisations and very sweeping accusations against “Christianity”. In the German-speaking world, it was above all Carl Amery who spoke out in 1972 with his monograph on the “merciless consequences of Christianity” and Eugen Drewermann in 1986 with his treatise on the “destruction of the earth and of man in the legacy of Christianity”. In popular science, their view of things has remained dominant to the present day.

Recently, Lynn White’s thesis has been put into perspective from another angle. Anthropology increasingly recognises that the medieval marriage morality of the Latin Church has been one of the most important causes of the economic development of the West in modern times. The strict demand for lifelong monogamy, the very far-reaching ban on intermarriage (up to second cousins!), the teaching that the consensus of the bride and groom constituted the marriage (and not the blessing of the priest, as in the Eastern Church!), the favouring of living spatially separated from relatives and the superiority of the spiritual family of the Church over the biological family led to the dissolution of clan structures step by step in the Latin West. Yet, sociologically, these are some of the greatest obstacles to innovation and economic progress (Jonathan F. Schulz et al. 2019, 1–12; Joseph Henrich 2020; Duman Bahrami-Rad et al. 2022, 1–3). Thus, at least in part, the “merciless consequences of Christianity” were not caused by Christian (Western and Eastern Church) anthropocentrism at all, but by Western Church marital morality (which differs strikingly from Eastern Church marital morality!) and were therefore not directly intended, but unintentionally contributed to as a “side effect”—a connection that has only received scholarly attention in the last decade.

Nevertheless, Lynn White’s thesis can hardly be dismissed as completely absurd and unfounded. There is probably a kernel of truth in it. The churches have therefore taken it up late, but very clearly, and acknowledged their complicity. The European Ecumenical Assembly (EEA) in Basel in 1989 stated: “We have failed because we have not borne witness to God’s

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fellow men through economic success. Moreover, due to migration, they have fewer traditional (extended family) ties. And finally, they live in locally autonomous religious communities whose members travel a lot for work and therefore maintain exchange and international contacts, which also benefits trade.

caring love for all and every creature and because we have not developed a lifestyle that corresponds to our self-understanding as part of God's creation. (EEA 43) And: "Conversion to God (metanoia) today means the commitment to seek a way out of the separation between human beings and the rest of creation, out of human domination over nature, out of a lifestyle and economic modes of production that seriously damage nature, out of an individualism that violates the integrity of creation in favour of private interests, into a community of human beings with all creatures in which their rights and integrity are respected." (EEA 45)

Pope Francis also candidly admitted in 2015 that "This allows us to respond to an accusation against Judeo-Christian thought: [...] If it is true that we Christians have sometimes misinterpreted the scriptures, today we must emphatically reject the inference of absolute dominion over other creatures from the fact of being created in the image of God and the mandate to rule the earth." (LS 67)

Despite this fundamental acknowledgement that Christianity has contributed significantly to anthropocentrism remaining the dominant ethical ideology in the West to this day, one must still ask where the Carolingian early Middle Ages took it from. After all, it is not an invention of Carolingian theology. Obviously, one has to go further back, into antiquity, to trace the roots of Western anthropocentrism. So where do its earliest beginnings lie? And if, as we shall see, these are to be dated centuries before the birth of Christianity, then what prompted Christianity to adopt it?

The intention of this question is not primarily historical but systematic, for only after a solid elucidation of the origins and theological motives of Christian anthropocentrism can the question be answered as to whether the positive concerns that motivated its reception can also be achieved in a contemporary form of theology with less or even no harm to non-human creatures.

The guiding question defined in this way outlines a field of the history of theology and the church that has not yet been dealt with, but also of systematic theology. While biblical animal ethics has been relatively well researched in recent decades (see chapter 2), the animal ethics of ancient Greek and Roman philosophy has at least begun to be explored (see chapter 3) and the animal ethics of the Middle Ages is increasingly being explored in a relatively large number of smaller studies, there have only been very selective analyses of the animal ethics of early Christianity, which do not yet allow for a coherent picture. This is therefore a missing link in the history of theology. If, as a systematic theologian, I venture into this incomplete

field, I do so with the necessary caution. As I said, my primary interest in knowledge is not of a historical nature, and my genuine expertise does not lie in historical research. Rather, I would like to better understand the current position of the church(es) in order to be able to make proposals for its reformation. Without a halfway differentiated perception of the origins, this cannot possibly succeed.

#### *1.4 Ten core theses of this study*

In ten core theses I would like to anticipate the most important results of this book. They will be substantiated and developed in detail in chapter 5 on the basis of textual testimonies.

- 1) As far back as in the earliest times of the Church, anthropocentrism was adopted by Christian theologians and is thus part of the “hereditary property”, the genes of Christian theology and the Church ethos. On the one hand, this explains why it has remained almost unquestioned for two millennia, and on the other hand, it makes clear the enormous challenge of overcoming it by modernising theology.
- 2) Anthropocentrism does not come from Jewish and biblical traditions, but from the mainstream of Greco-Roman philosophy, which has been anthropocentric since as early as the 5th century BC. By the time of the early Church, the anthropocentric paradigm had long since become so firmly anchored, well-argued and self-evident in Greco-Roman culture that its dubiousness was hardly noticed, despite lingering criticism from a small minority. It is—especially in Stoic popular philosophy—simply *sensus communis*. Moreover, it is (also) derived there from the belief in the good providence of the gods, i.e. theologically, whereby it literally imposes itself on early Christianity.
- 3) The Christian adoption of the anthropocentrism of Greco-Roman philosophy can only be understood against the background of two historical circumstances: On the one hand, the Roman Empire from about 300 BC to at least 400 AD is characterised by so-called Hellenism. Hellenism means that the entire culture of this epoch in the Mediterranean region and partly beyond is imbued with the Greek way of life. People (increasingly also the Jews!) move in this culture like fish in water—they often do not even notice that Greek culture is at work in a mode of behaviour or in outlook. On the other hand, early Christianity had already largely detached itself from its Jewish roots

around 200 AD. There are no longer any Jewish Christians, i.e. people who convert from Judaism to Christianity. And the dialogue between Christian and Jewish theologians continues (cf. Peter Schäfer 2010 and 2015), but only reaches a minority of believers in Christianity. This means that Jewish culture and beliefs have, to a large extent, been lost from view. Most Christians no longer notice that Judaism, and thus also Jesus of Nazareth, sometimes held decidedly different views than Hellenism. The language barrier—Christians can neither understand nor speak the Hebrew language of the Old Testament and the Aramaic language of the Palestinian Jews, in contrast to the Greek and Latin languages—does the rest.

- 4) Early Christianity's main arguments for anthropocentrism are not animal ethical, but have to do with core issues of early dogmatic development:
  - The starting point of all considerations is *soteriology* with the question under which conditions someone can attain eternal life. Step by step, the concept of free will crystallises itself, which only belongs to humans and fundamentally distinguishes them from animals. Humans are supposed to determine this free will through reason, which also distinguishes them from animals, who are called the “reasonless” (*aloga*).
  - This has mirrored consequences for *eschatology*: the Greek doctrine of the transmigration of souls, as it is found in Platonic and Neo-Platonic philosophy, is rejected in order to safeguard the idea of the uniqueness of earthly life, which characterises Jewish tradition and is an indispensable prerequisite for the concept of the Last Judgment and eternal life. But if souls are not allowed to wander from human to animal and from animal to human, as part of Greek philosophy assumes, then it is advisable, as a firewall between humans and animals, to make an essential and not merely gradual distinction between the rational immortal human soul and the exclusively vegetative and sensitive, therefore mortal animal soul.
  - In *creation theology*, one wants to emphasise God's wonderful providence and care for human beings—and does this in orientation towards the Stoa at the expense of non-human creatures by declaring human beings alone to be the purposes of creation. A hierarchy and a purely utilitarian relationship are thus created between humans and non-human creation. Even if one does not always

- understand it, all non-human creatures supposedly have a benefit exclusively for humans.
- In *anthropology*, the soteriologically and eschatologically central rational nature of man is biblically underpinned by an essential ontological (instead of existential relational) understanding of the image of God in Gen 1:26. This biblical passage, which had no great significance within the Bible and in early Jewish times and was understood quite differently in general, now becomes the central evidence for the uniqueness of man and for the anthropocentric conviction that creation was created solely for the sake of man.
  - Finally, on the meta-level, there is a fifth issue: the *ability to engage in dialogue with the secular majority society* and to prove that, as a small splinter group with provincial origins, they are on the cutting edge of the anthropocentric philosophical mainstream. By the mid-3rd century CE, there were about 100,000 Christians living in the Roman Empire (Kyle Harper 2020, 231). Out of a total population of about 75 million, this was a good one per thousand. Christianity was not yet a world religion, but consisted of largely autonomous, very plural small groups (Peter Gemeinhardt 2022, 12). Half a century later, around 300 AD, Christians already comprised 15 to 20 per cent of the total population, i.e. 10 to 15 million people, one hundred times more than fifty years earlier. They had become a “mass phenomenon” (Kyle Harper 2020, 231). Yet it was to take almost another century before they became the majority of the population. Until then, it was those who were Christian, rather than those who adhered to a different belief, who had to justify themselves. Demonstrating knowledge, mastery and affirmation of the current philosophy was vital in this context.
- 5) All five motives for the early Christian reception of Greco-Roman anthropocentrism culminate in the basic Greek theorem of animals as *aloga*, as beings without reason and language. This theorem therefore logically, but ultimately hardly reflected upon, becomes the key to the perception of animals among the mainstream of Christian theology.
  - 6) Even the first three centuries’ theologians, who tended to be animal-friendly, did not question the *aloga* thesis, despite good scientific knowledge and obvious observations of animal behaviour to the contrary. It was so deeply inscribed in Greco-Roman society that one did not even think of overturning it. In this way, it became part of the genetic code of Christianity.



- 7) Even on this side of non-human animals, the reception of rationalist anthropocentrism produces considerable collateral damage for humans:
  - Theologically, the establishment of the ability to reason as the central dividing line favours, in the long run, the discrimination of all those human individuals who can never attain this ability—i.e. stillborn children or children who die in the first years of life, as well as people with mental disabilities. To this day, there are debates about their ecclesiological status and their entitlement to receive the sacraments or a church funeral.
  - Cosmologically, like the Stoa, one has to make absurd hypotheses about the benefit of mosquitoes, lions and many other animals for humans. From the perspective of modern ecology, one can only smile indulgently at such attempts.
  - In terms of environmental ethics, anthropocentrism favours the ruthless exploitation of nature because it lacks the emotional inhibition threshold and tends towards an under-complex determination of “utilities” of nature (Michael Rosenberger 2021, 178–180). This harms humans themselves, not only the extra-human creation.
- 8) The reception of rationalist anthropocentrism, however, has also resulted in incalculable collateral damage for animals:
  - In the field of applied ethics, it establishes an extremely far-reaching authorisation to use animals, which cannot be restricted by the needs of the animals, but only by the well-understood needs of humans. Animals do not come into view for their own sake, but only for the sake of humans.
  - From a fundamental ethical point of view, in view of the texts in the Bible that strive for animal justice, there is inevitably an irresolvable inconsistency in Christian animal ethics, as can be clearly seen in the current Catechism of the Catholic Church and also in the encyclical *Laudato si'*.
  - Soteriologically, the exclusion of animals from salvation is the consequence. Animals, according to the widely held conviction of theology and churches, have no place in God's eternity despite the fact that biblical texts lead one to believe otherwise. Indirectly, God's act of creation becomes mere preparation and a temporary backdrop for his act of redemption, which only applies to humanity.
- 9) From the beginning until today, there has been and still is an animal-friendly minority position in Christianity, which is partly more biblical

than philosophical, partly more Neo-Platonic than Stoic in inspiration. It is first represented by early monasticism, which seeks to live out the anticipation of paradisiacal peace between humans and animals. To this day, there are religious communities that see this concern as an integral part of their charism. It can also be found in some manifestations of popular piety, such as the blessing of animals and the sharing of Easter bread with animals, as well as in Christian art, for example when in many illustrations the ox and donkey stand closer to Jesus' manger than Mary and Joseph, or when animals are together with humans under the tree of life. Theologically, it is easy to argue why it is time to turn the minority position into the official position of the whole church:

- Creation theology: Against the background of evolutionary theory, the close relationship of the species *homo sapiens* with many animal species, but even with plants, is obvious. Modern biology shows more and more clearly that the transitions from less to more intelligent living beings are fluid and often only nuances lie between them. Only the development of a central nervous system constitutes a qualitative leap. Seen in this light, humans are the relatively most highly developed living beings at present. But it would be completely misleading to claim that the whole course of evolution has only run towards them. Theologically, this calls for a massive reduction of teleology and highly cautious speaking of God's plan of creation.
- Soteriology: Non-human animals are just as capable of redemption as human animals because they are created and loved by God. The ability to redeem is not based on an essence-ontological quality, but on God's devotion and loving care, i.e. a relational-existential quality. This does not necessarily mean that those people who are enabled by their gift of reason to assume responsibility no longer have to disclose it before the judgement seat of God. It only means that this is not the only criterion for access to eternity.
- Christology: The mystery of the incarnation can be interpreted as God becoming flesh, i.e. becoming a creature, closely following the biblical etymology of the Hebrew word *בָּסָר* / *basar*. In Jesus Christ, God became a creature and showed his solidarity with all creatures, which gives them an unsurpassable dignity. This thesis also takes much better account of the fact that the Logos hymn in Jn 1 has numerous connections to the Creation narrative of Gen 1.

- Eschatology: The soul, which is mortal (!) like the body, can be interpreted in the sense of the “anima forma corporis” in an Aristotelian way as a cipher for the independence and the practical self-relation of human and non-human living beings. Then it stands for the uniqueness of every living being and excludes transmigration of souls entirely by itself. A soul understood in this way in all living beings is very much in line with the Christian conviction of the uniqueness of earthly life. No devaluation of non-human creatures is needed to support it.
- Anthropology: If Christian theology can obviously leave anthropocentrism well behind without having to give up the motives that spawned its introduction, then the idea of man created as the image of God in Gen 1:26 can be interpreted without bias as it is meant biblically: as formal anthropocentric and not as anthropocentrism. In Gen 1, the Creator ascribes to human beings the responsibility for the house of life on earth that has been lent to all creatures. This is exactly what is called “formal anthropocentric” in modern specialist discussion and is fundamentally distinguished from “(material) anthropocentrism” (see above chapter 1.2).
- Ethics: Finally, the adoption of the traditional minority position as the official position of the church(es) also allows the voluntary option of a consistently vegetarian or vegan diet to be recognised as an anticipation of Paradise and as an evangelical council. With the reduction of the evangelical counsels to three in the 12th and 13th centuries, monastic vegetarianism came under the wheels of a church that wanted to lump all religious communities together. This does not do justice to the diversity of charisms and vocations of religious Christians. Again, it was collateral damage that, along with the diversity of charisms, also uprooted the value of an animal-friendly dietary style.
- Meta-level: On the one hand, a renewed, non-anthropocentrically thinking form of Christianity could be alternative and in a good sense elitist on the level of practice, if it visibly highly values the vegetarian and vegan option and places value on very limited meat consumption in the full breadth of its membership. On the other hand, such a form of Christianity, which is currently becoming a social minority again, would be on the cutting edge of social discourse and go along with the trend of modern ethics towards much greater protection of animals.

- 10) The last thesis is dedicated to the theorem of the “merciless consequences of Christianity”. Without question, Christianity, by adopting Greco-Roman anthropocentrism, contributed significantly to the fact that the instrumental, technical–rational appropriation of the earth as a resource had and has destructive consequences. But if Christianity had not been so successful and remained a small minority of European societies to this day, Western culture would still have retained anthropocentrism as its dominant matrix and passed it on (unless Greco-Roman culture as a whole had perished in the era of migration of peoples!). For when Christianity adopted anthropocentrism, it had already been the dominant ideology of Greece and later Rome for 500 years and would have remained so even without the Church. In a way, one can perhaps say: when Christianity was still a tiny minority in the Roman Empire, it almost inevitably adopted anthropocentrism as the dominant ideology of the majority society, on the one hand in order to have a say and keep up, and on the other hand because most Christians did not come from the Jewish but from the Greco-Roman cultural sphere. By the time Christianity had become the majority religion three centuries later, anthropocentrism was already so deeply anchored in Christian doctrine that it was no longer recognised as problematic. Unnoticed, an ideology had seeped into Christian dogmatics that had hardly any biblical basis, indeed was diametrically opposed to the biblical mainstream.

It is time to correct this flaw in the genetic and embryonic development of Christianity.

### *1.5 The structure of this book*

Eric Daryl Meyer aptly describes the problem of Christian anthropocentrism and its consequences for non-human animals. “Christian theologians and biblical scholars have nearly ubiquitously, for a range of historical reasons, thought about human beings as categorically distinct from and superior to all other animals. Scholars in the far-flung-and-still-emerging field of animal studies draw attention to the way that such anthropological exceptionalism leads directly to staggering suffering and injustice borne (and resisted!) by nonhuman animals.” (Eric Daryl Meyer 2018, 56–57)

In view of this, Meyer argues for a double task: first, the historical developments of Christian “exceptionalism” must be analysed, and second, it is

necessary to look for the aspects of Christian theology that can contribute to overcoming it. “Some urgent tasks emerge where this work intersects with Christian theology. The deep sources of the tradition (the Bible and influential figures across its history) must be critically analysed to discern: first, where and how the rigid boundaries between human and other animals collapse under the weight of their own assumptions and, second, what hidden resources the tradition holds for thinking differently.” (Eric Daryl Meyer 2018, 57)

That is precisely what I see as the task of this book. Meyer has also devoted himself to it (Eric Daryl Meyer 2018a), but from a different angle, namely “Inner Animalities”, i.e. the animal qualities in humans. His book uses the Cappadocian Church Fathers and contemporary theologians to expose the immanent contradictions of classical Christian anthropology. The core thesis is almost identical to mine: “Christian theology takes up anthropological exceptionalism from Greco-Roman philosophy (particularly the Stoics), amplifies it with theological and scriptural reasoning, and then, at the dawn of the era of European colonial expansion, passes it into the secularized exceptionalism of Enlightenment humanism.” (Eric Daryl Meyer 2018a, 6)

My study illuminates the same problem as Meyer, but from a different angle. It focuses on anthropocentrism per se as well as on the entire epoch of patristics and proceeds in the following steps:

*Chapter 2* is devoted to the question of how *animals* are perceived and classified in the *pre-Hellenistic writings of the Old Testament*. It will be shown that the texts emphasise the similarities between animals and humans far more than the differences. Above all, being directly created by a good and loving God fundamentally connects them. The logical consequence is that animals are included in God’s covenant with his creation. As subjects of law, they enjoy a similar position as other precariously situated groups in society. If one wants to assign biblical thinking to one of the teleological reasoning approaches, it is biocentrist and not anthropocentrist.

*Chapter 3* attempts a passage through the *animal ethical considerations of Greco-Roman philosophy*. As early as in the time of the pre-Socratics, important courses were set, so that anthropocentrism was already firmly in the saddle by the time of Socrates. It is interesting that in Socrates and many other philosophers it contains a theological component: The fact that everything was created for humans proves the care of the gods for humans. In the Stoa, Greek anthropocentrism is systematised and brought to its

perfection. A five-part network of ideas, which are highly consistent with one another and can only be unlaced and changed as a whole, is stretched out. The popular philosophical current of the Stoa makes the five ideas associated with anthropocentrism socially acceptable, so that they spread throughout Greco-Roman culture in the following centuries.

*Chapter 4* takes into account the fact that Greco-Roman culture gradually seeped into parts of Diaspora Judaism during the long epoch of Hellenism. In traces, this also affects a few passages of the Old Testament, but above all the Greek translation of the Jewish Bible, the Septuagint. Those New Testament authors who, like Paul, come from Hellenistic Diaspora Judaism also adopt some paradigms of the Stoa, including its anthropocentrism. The example of the prohibition of ritual slaughter, which the early Church initially made binding for all Christians, but which lost all relevance by 200 AD at the latest, makes it clear how the animal ethical impulses of the Torah almost completely evaporated from Christianity within a few generations.

*Chapter 5*, which is by far the longest, goes through the *texts of the Church Fathers* and looks for traces relevant to animal ethics. These are analysed primarily with regard to the cornerstones of Stoic animal ethics. An enormous range of positions and approaches becomes clear. The aloga thesis and anthropocentrism are not fundamentally questioned anywhere. Nevertheless, there are remarkably many authors who take a far more animal-friendly position than the Stoa. Obviously, they have neither the intellectual nor the resource strength to ask the fundamental question, and perhaps they did not even recognise the problem as such in its profound dimension because they were too firmly rooted in Hellenism. Nevertheless, many of them strive for mindfulness before and sympathy with animals.

The last chapter, *chapter 6*, is about ensuring systematic yield in the sense of a *further development of Christian animal ethics*. The individual elements of the Stoic network of ideas around anthropocentrism are taken up again and brought into conversation with the current debates in the natural sciences and humanities. From this, perspectives emerge that anthropocentrism must be abandoned, but that this can only succeed in conjunction with a series of other overdue corrections of the Christian message. At the same time, it becomes clear that the Christian message carries the potential for healing. "While Christian theological anthropology is at least partly culpable for the structure of human self-understanding in the West, it also retains the disciplinary and discursive tools to address the widest frame in which human beings understand themselves." (Eric Daryl

Meyer 2018a, 14) This potential has significance far beyond the churches. For just as the genetic flaw of anthropocentrism is deeply rooted in Western thought, so too are those genes of Christianity that can contribute to a healthy development. It is only a matter of lifting them up.





## 2 Prehistory 1: Animals in the pre-Hellenistic writings of the Bible

“The Bible only has this anthropocentrist world view. An ethic that would take animals into consideration is not found in the Bible” (Eugen Drewermann 2012; expressed in the same way ten days earlier on 19.9.2012 at the 16th Philosophicum in Lech). In this assertion, which Eugen Drewermann has been advocating with increasing acuity and frequency for decades, the Bible is given a conceivably bad report card with regard to animals. But does it really have a (predominantly or consistently) anthropocentric world view? And is there really no ethic in it that takes animals into account? Has Christianity inherited its anthropocentrism from the Bible, as Drewermann suggests? These questions will be explored in the following.

In this chapter, I will limit myself to those biblical texts that can be dated back to before the time of Hellenism, i.e. before the reign of Alexander the Great. For them it is beyond doubt that they are not subject to any significant influence from Greek philosophy and thus reflect the Hebrew world in a relatively “pure” way (influences from the neighbouring oriental cultures included!). Those biblical texts that fall into the period of Hellenism and are potentially subject to the influences of Greek thought, on the other hand, are not discussed until chapter 4. These are the late writings of the Old Testament as well as the entire New Testament. Of course, it must always be borne in mind that the pre-Hellenistic books of the Old Testament are not available in the original text but have gone through processes of tradition up to the final editing of today’s Bible. However, since, in case of doubt, these processes have rather introduced a form of Hellenisation into the texts, where such Hellenisation is not to be found in the present text, it can be assumed that it was not present in the original text either.

In the following, it will suffice to go through a few key texts of the Old Testament—but to do so very thoroughly and precisely: the two biblical Creation narratives, the animal ethical directives of the Torah and finally those biblical texts that convey the vision of a comprehensive peace of creation.

2.1 Animals in the older Creation narrative (Gen 2–8): Companions and Fates

In the course of the 20th century, the historically critical interpretation of the Bible has recognised that in the first books of Scripture there are essentially two texts from different periods of Israel's history, which were only combined in the 4th century BC into the one text that is present today in the five books of Moses. The second of these texts is called the "Priestly Scriptures" because it pays great attention to liturgical observances and regulations and may have been written by a group of priests. It dates back to the 6th or 5th century BC, i.e. the time during or after the Babylonian exile (587–538 BC). The first text, on the other hand, dates back to the time before the Babylonian exile, thus tending towards the 7th century BC. For it, the term "pre-Priest-scriptural tradition" is common today. First, this older source will be analysed for its animal ethical implications.

The pre-priestly narrative begins with a small paradisiacal garden that God creates in the middle of the hostile desert (Gen 2:4b-25). There he "places" the human being and the animals (Gen 2:8.15), both of which he forms out of clay and breathes life into. He creates the animals with a clear purpose: they are to give help to the lonely man (Gen 2:18). They are not the equal help he is looking for, but the story implies a great closeness and similarity between animal and human if the divine attempt is not to be discredited as a farce. Both are formed of earth and likewise both are animated by the *nəfəš hajjāh* (נְפֶשׁ חַיָּה), the living breath. Both are mortal (Gen 3:19), although even for humans at the time the text was written, a continuation of life after death was by no means expected—Israel at that time saw death as the natural end of life for both animals and humans<sup>6</sup>. "He has life only because God breathed into him breath of life by way of respite.... Man as 'dust' is, strictly logically considered, not capable of life without death at all." (Joachim Jeremias 1990, 33)

Through the names that man gives to the animals (Gen 2:19), a close relationship is established: If the name is to give expression to the nature of the animals, and that is the point, man must know them well. In naming the animals, Adam establishes a relationship with them that is more than merely factual and purposeful, because he recognises their being and gives

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6 Ludger Schwienhorst-Schönberger 2004, 282 comments on this passage in the sense of a "naturalness of man as an animal". Cf. also Peter Riede 2017, 119 and chapter 4.1 in this book.

them respect. The naming of animals is therefore not primarily to be read as evidence of a position of dominance on the part of man but stands above all for his ability to recognise the nature of animals and his familiarity with them (Marie Louise Henry 1993, 26–27).

Man and animals are each other's companions and helpers, even though the animals are not equal to man. Only the woman whom God creates as the crowning glory of his work has that status (Gen 2:21–25). She alone is "bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. Male (אִשָּׁה / *ischah*) she shall be called, for from male (אִשׁ / *isch*) she is taken" (Gen 2:23). Together with the man she is to cultivate and tend the garden.

The narrative suggests that the garden God creates in the midst of the hostile, disorderly desert has a life-enhancing order: There is a centre where one or two trees stand<sup>7</sup>. The rivers that originate in the garden flow from there in the four cardinal directions and divide the garden into four areas ("quarters"). But the order of the garden, as beneficial as it is, is unstable and vulnerable (Gen 2:9–17). People are allowed to use everything, but they are not allowed to touch the tree (or the two trees?) in the middle, which symbolises order.

The very next chapter tells us that the first human couple abuses God's trust and upsets the order of the garden: Adam and Eve eat of the forbidden fruit. They upset the natural balance of the garden. In Gen 3:14, the story impressively demonstrates how this disturbs relationships: Enmity or opposition prevails from now on between man and the serpent, man and the habitat (soil, thistles, thorns), man and woman. The transgression of the law disturbs the community of life in the garden originally intended and made possible by God. The paradisiacal peace of creation is lost.

The Flood narrative, in which the priestly and pre-priestly texts are interwoven into a single story (Gen 6–8), is to be understood in a similar way. Both the pre-priestly (Gen 6:5) and priestly (Gen 6:13) narratives interpret the Flood as a consequence of human wickedness and sin: Because of the "wickedness of men", and because the earth is "full of violent deeds", the Flood comes, threatening not only the perpetrators but the very existence of the whole of creation. Sin disturbs the order of life and threatens the survival of even the innocent. It deprives them of the air to breathe and the space to live, so that they are in danger of sinking. It is not only human beings who are up to their necks in water.

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7 According to today's Bible text, there are two trees in the middle (Gen 2:9), but in reality only one of the two can be exactly in the middle.

Thus Noah, the only righteous one, is instructed to take two specimens of each kind of living creature into the lifeboat of the ark. The ark is therefore the archetypal symbol of the fact that the community of humans and animals, which is created for the purpose of survival, is bonded by fate. The formulation in Gen 8:1 “Then God remembered Noah and all the animals and livestock that were with him in the ark” illustrates how closely humans and animals are connected. What they have in common is God’s almost boundless mercy. And so Noah is able to send out two birds to test whether the earth is habitable again for all the living creatures in the ark. Raven and dove are the first test animals in (biblical) history, even if the experiments take place harmlessly and painlessly, unlike in many modern laboratories. Finally, God solemnly promises: “I will not curse the earth again because of man; for the striving of man is evil from his youth. I will not destroy all living things in the future, as I have done. As long as the earth endures, sowing and reaping, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night shall not cease.” (Gen 8:21–22)

## 2.2 Animals in the younger Creation narrative (Gen 1–9): Co-habitants and covenant partners

The more recent Creation narrative of the so-called Priestly Scriptures (Gen 1:1–2:4a) tells how God creates an orderly whole out of the originally existing, hostile chaos in seven day’s work. According to Gen 1:2, the earth was not simply non-existent before God began his creative work, but “hulabaloo” (חִלְבָּלוּ), “madness and confusion”. God’s act of Creation in the sense of this text is therefore not creation out of nothing, but an intervention that establishes order in a previously chaotic mass. Life is only possible where there is order in the sense of separation and distinction. Chaos is hostile and destructive to life.

Already in purely formal terms, there is a considerable difference between the first three works of Creation and those from the fourth to the sixth day: while at first it is a matter of three divorces of existing realities that were previously life-threatening (light from darkness, water above from water below, water below from land), in the second half of the week beings are created that were not there before. Those divorced things are named by God, the newly created beings are not. In terms of content, the first three days are about the preparatory ordering of the living space: “Successively... the deadliness of the primeval flood is eliminated, so that

finally the hullabaloo earth becomes a nourishing (!) earth that can serve as a living space for the living beings that are then to be created.” (Erich Zenger 1983, 84)

The fourth day of Creation, like the first and seventh, is dedicated to the temporal order of the living space: daily, weekly, monthly and annual rhythms (represented by the sun, moon and the Sabbath) are emphasised as realities of creation, with the week standing out as the supreme and at the same time sacred moment in the temporal order.

The next two days then serve the creation of living beings: The animals in the water, in the air and on the land, including humans. In the overall structure of the six days, the habitats and the living beings that reside in them correspond to each other: The living beings of the fifth day colonise the habitats of the second day and those of the sixth day the habitats of the third day. Habitats and living beings are not ordered according to an ascending or descending line (from the “lower” to the “higher” living being or vice versa), but in concentric circles according to their proximity to humans (Albert de Pury 1993, 139–140).

For the narrative, then, the distinction between habitats and living beings, “‘dwelling space’ and ‘inhabitants’” is the crucial point (Albert de Pury 1993, 139; cf. Erich Zenger 1995, 99). Animals and humans are equally characterised as inhabitants of habitats, receive the same reproductive blessing and, equally, only plants as food (even if cultivated plants are reserved for humans in Gen 1:29). Meat consumption is not permitted in the ideal state described by Gen 1. Thus, even the first Creation narrative designs “as a positive utopia for dealing with creation, a peaceful and non-violent relationship between humans and animals” (Bernhard Irrgang 1992, 130). The living beings live in the habitats allotted to them, there is enough space for all of them and they have enough food. “That the most precious good in the house of life of creation is the happy life of all living beings unfolds in Gen 1:29f with an image of peace that we must meditate on and concretise, especially today as a paradigm critical of progress.... The central point of this utopia is the coexistence of all living beings without violence.” (Erich Zenger 1989, 142).

The narrators are keen to explain the rhythm of the seven days, with the Sabbath as the climax and conclusion, as an order by God placed in creation from the beginning. Resting on the Sabbath on the seventh day is not a mere convention but corresponds to the “essence” of all living things. The fact that God blesses the Sabbath (Gen 2:3) brings about “the continuing, life-promoting validity of this order” (Bernd Janowski 1990,

59). Therefore, the Sabbath is not only for human beings, but for the whole of creation. It is also a day of rest and worship at the same time: breathing again and focusing on oneself as well as all creatures praising God belong inseparably together. The Sabbath, not man, is the “crown of creation”.

Diagram: Genesis 1—outline according to Erich Zenger 1983, 200

Day 1: TIME RHYTHMS	Day and night	
	Day 2: LIVING SPACE	Water and sky
	Day 3: LIVING SPACE	Soil and plants
Day 4: TIME RHYTHMS	Sun and moon	
	Day 5: LIVING BEINGS	Aquatic and flying animals
	Day 6: LIVING BEINGS	Land animals and humans
Day 7: TIME RHYTHMS	Sabbath	

But what is the *role of man* if, in the logic of this text, he cannot be dubbed the “crown of creation”<sup>8</sup>? Gen 1 undeniably ascribes a special role to man. And it is precisely these sentences that have had the most far-reaching consequences in the history of Christianity. On the one hand, man is called the image of God; on the other hand, he is given a “mandate to govern”. Both aspects require a thorough analysis that is independent of later theological and ecclesiastical interpretation.

Gen 1:26–27 reads: “Then God said, ‘Let us make man as our image, as our likeness. They shall rule over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, over the cattle, over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. God created man as his image, as the image of God he created him. Male and female he created them.’”

First of all, it is remarkable that the concept of the *image of God*, although highly prominent in this narrative and which recurs in Gen 5:1

8 The expression of man as the “crown of creation” appears relatively late, first appearing in Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1808). Cf. Barbara Schmitz 2012, 26.

and 9:6, has not found any echo beyond the Noah narrative in the entire Hebrew Bible—in contrast to its central meaning in Christian dogmatics (Otmar Keel/ Silvia Schroer 2002, 177–178; Barbara Schmitz 2012, 20). This calls for caution, because it could well be that Christian anthropology has interpreted things into the term that it does not contain. So what is meant? It is striking that the biblical text says that man was created “as” the image. The “as” points to a role, a function of man in creation. It is not an ontological statement about the nature of human beings, but a relational statement about their relationship to their fellow creatures (Otmar Keel/Silvia Schroer 2002, 177–178; Barbara Schmitz 2012, 20; in contrast to Renate Brandscheidt 2020, 36).

In this sense, exegesis names three meanings of the concept of the image (cf. Karl Löning/ Erich Zenger 1997, 146–155 and Otmar Keel/ Silvia Schroer 2002, 178–180): Man is the image

- 1) like a statue of a god: Statues of gods were called images of the deities in the ancient Orient. The role assigned to them is to be a medium of divine life force for all creation. Whoever looks at the statue and prays receives blessings and salvation.
- 2) like a king: In the ancient oriental kingdoms, kings were called images of the Godhead because, on the one hand, they were given the divine authority to rule in the name of the Godhead within their kingdom, but on the other hand, they were also charged with the duty of defending the order of life of their God precisely with regard to the weak. It is not only in the Bible that the king is committed to the ideal of a caring shepherd. And it is not only in Israel that there are depictions of the king as the protector of the tree of life, and thus of the divine order of creation. A king thus only fulfils his role as God’s image if he ensures justice in creation. This is what is meant when Gen 1:26, in the revised Einheitsübersetzung (ecumenical standard translation), formulates that man should “rule” over the animals in the various habitats. Consequently, man’s rule “does not have an exploitative or destructive (‘trampling down’) meaning, but fits into the image of kingship, which is characterised by peace (Ps 72:7–11), justice (Ps 72:12–14) and fertility of the land (Ps 62:16f)” (Ute Neumann-Gorsolke 2004, 307–308).
- 3) like a child: Some ancient oriental creation myths tell us that man emerged from the womb of the Godhead and therefore resembles it like an image. The likeness is, as it were, the similarity of a child to its

parents. This likeness should be shown by all human beings in their actions towards creation, according to the impetus from Gen 1:26–27.

Otmar Keel and Silvia Schroer assume that in Gen 1 this last aspect is the most important: “The aspect of vicarious dominion is not an issue in Gen 5:3, an association with an image of a god is not implied. Thus, one may also assume for 1:26 that with the likeness not only were thoughts of representation and dominion connected, but above all the greatest possible kinship between God and man was to be expressed.” (Otmar Keel/ Silvia Schroer 2002, 180)

In continental European philosophy and theology, the image of God was described by René Descartes (1596 La Haye en Touraine-1650 Stockholm) as “*maîtres et possesseurs de la nature*” (René Descartes 1637, *Discours de la méthode* VI,2). Descartes was not thinking of the ruthless exploitation of nature, but of its comprehensive mastery by human technology and science, and at least unconsciously paved the way for modern anthropocentrism. In contrast, Anglo-Saxon philosophy and theology had already begun to interpret the concept of the image of God with the concept of “stewardship” a generation after Descartes. The term was introduced into the debate on creation ethics in 1676 by Matthew Hale (1609–1676 Alderley, Gloucestershire)<sup>9</sup> and in recent decades has also been discovered in continental Europe (Gotthard M. Teutsch 1985, 98). Since then, it has become

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9 The term stewardship itself is very familiar in the religious debates of the 17th and 18th centuries in the Anglo-Saxon-speaking world. Matthew Hale, however, makes it the key concept in his reflections on contract theory and asks about the ethical consequences that follow from it. In his *Contemplations Moral and Divine*, Volume I, published posthumously in 1676, he entitled an entire chapter “The Great Audit, with the Account of the Good Steward” (Matthew Hale 1676, 409–484). In it he draws on Jesus’ parable of the talents (Mt 25:14–30) and lists a total of 17 groups of entrusted gifts. Among them are, as the 6th group, the works of creation and, as the 10th group, non-human creatures. However, while the works of creation call primarily for wonder and greater praise of God (theocentric), the non-human creatures call for stewardship, fiduciary treatment (biocentric). Thus, Hale writes: “I have esteemed them as thine in Propriety: thou hast committed unto me the use; and a subordinate Dominion over them; yet I ever esteemed myself an Accountant to Thee for them... I received and used thy creatures as committed to me under a Trust, and as a Steward and Accomptant for them; and therefore I was always careful to use them according to those Limits, and in order for those Ends, for which thou didst commit them to me.” (Matthew Hale 1676, 441–443). Cruelty and mistreatment of animals, as well as intemperance and lack of compassion towards them, are a breach of God’s covenant with creation, a breach of trust and justice (Matthew Hale 1676, 445–446). The book has gone through numerous editions, and the chapter quoted here in particular has



established as a useful term. The term stewardship also corresponds more to the description of God's action in the act of Creation. This is because, in contrast to the Babylonian creation myth *Enuma elish*, which depicts the creation of the world as a divine conquest, Gen 1 emphasises God's caring, loving relationship with his creation (Anathea Portier-Young 2019, 45–67). Thus, it can be summarised: being created in God's image means the "active responsibility of the royal human being as God's steward for the entire world of creation in the power of divine blessing" (Walter Gross 1995, 871).

Otmar Keel and Silvia Schroer assume that in Gen 1 this last aspect is the most important: "The aspect of vicarious dominion is not an issue in Gen 5:3, an association with an image of a god is not implied. Thus, one may also assume for 1:26 that with the likeness not only were thoughts of representation and dominion connected, but above all the greatest possible kinship between God and man was to be expressed." (Otmar Keel/ Silvia Schroer 2002, 180)

Of course, there is also criticism of the concept of likeness and its transposition with "stewardship". The concept behind both is half-hearted because it still gives humans a special position (Robert Shore-Goss 2016, 14). It falls short because it separates humans from other creatures instead of connecting them (Gloria L. Schaab 2011, 59). The talk of stewardship is seductive because it views creation as a household to be used and promotes utilitarian thinking (Gloria L. Schaab 2011, 58). It is seductive because it suggests that humans can manage and control the earth's house of life (Michael S. Northcott 1996, 129). These criticisms are certainly to be taken seriously, but only if the two concepts of the image of God and stewardship are taken out of their biblical context and isolated. In the overall context of Gen 1, it is perfectly clear that the earth must not be seen primarily in terms of utility. And it is equally clear that humans have more in common with other living beings than separates them. In this respect, it takes a very selective reading of Gen 1 to fall prey to an anthropocentric misinterpretation. Historically, however, it is precisely this selective reading that has dominated for almost 2000 years.

What is revolutionary, because it is directed against the real patriarchal environment, is the strong impulse in Gen 1 that all human beings are to rule as God's images, men as well as women. Moreover, likeness is not

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been reproduced in many smaller writings. So one can hardly claim that the history of Christianity is exclusively anthropocentric.

attributed to the king alone, but to every human being. In the concept of the image, therefore, and at least in this the later Christian reception is right, fundamental equality of all human beings is expressed. In the house of creation, all human beings are called to shape this house with direct authority given by God, but also with indispensable responsibility to be there for the community of all living beings in a caring, life-serving and beneficial way. It is about formal anthropocentrism, not material, teleological anthropocentrism.

*Gen 1:28* reads: “God blessed them and God said to them: Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it, and rule over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air and over all the animals that crawl on the earth!”

This is the so-called “*dominion order*”, the “*dominium terrae*”—a problematic concept from today’s point of view because it is prejudiced. While the first half of the verse with the blessing of fertility and multiplication is also promised to the animals, the second part is only dedicated to humans. But what does it mean? First of all, a comparison of different translations shows that it depends on the exact choice of words.

- “fill the earth and subdue it to you, and have dominion over...” (according to the revised Luther Bible 2017),
- “populate the earth, subdue it to you and rule over...” (according to the 1983 Einheitsübersetzung),
- “fill the earth and subdue it and rule over...” (according to the Einheitsübersetzung of 2016) or
- “fill the earth and make it arable and rule over...” (according to Othmar Keel and Silvia Schroer 2002)?

First of all, it is noticeable that the latter two translations omit the “*you*”. It does not appear in the Hebrew text. And of course, it makes a considerable difference whether the human being subdues the earth for himself or for another, greater one. In the sense of the aforementioned image metaphor, it is actually clear that it can only be a matter of subduing the earth to God, i.e. of making sure that God’s will is done in the whole of creation.

Furthermore, there are two verbs in Hebrew:

- *כבש* / *kabaš* literally means “to set foot on”. It could refer to the ancient oriental ritual used when someone took over a territory or a house in fief. The moment he first set foot on it, he took on the care and responsibility for it, but of course also the power over it. This power, when “setting foot on the earth”, would then consist of keeping the life house of creation liv-

able for all its inhabitants and defending it against destruction. Ancient oriental depictions show people defending their livestock against attacks by predators, placing their foot on the animals to be protected. One can interpret this as selfish, because the cow or goat is worth a lot to its owner. But one can also make the point that a living being is being protected in a caring way—at the risk of losing its own human life.

- 777 / *radah* literally means “to rule, to tread down”. The subsequent enumeration of the habitats of the animals indicates what is meant: Man should ensure that all living creatures get their habitat. This is often made clear in ancient oriental images of the so-called “Lord of the Beasts”: two ibexes or ostriches or other animals fighting with each other are separated by man in order to end their competition. However, “to rule” does not mean to kill, for in the sentence that follows, humans are also only given plants for food.

Of course, even caring, just and altruistic governance remains linked to the use of force. This is no different even in a modern democratic constitutional state. Order cannot be established without violence. But violence should serve to establish justice. It must be measured against this: “The terms *kibbesch* ‘to set foot on’ and *radah* ‘to tread down, trample underfoot, dominate’ used in Gen 1:28 denote rule that may include the use of violence... Apologetic exegesis that seeks to completely exclude the aspects of violence... and only focuses on responsibility does not contribute to processing the history of the impact of this command to rule.” (Othmar Keel/ Silvia Schroer 2002, 181)

The narrative ends in Gen 1:29–2:3 with the vision of cosmic peace (Karl Löning/ Erich Zenger 1997, 155–162). With a so-called formula of transfer, God, like a lord to his vassals, gives all living beings the earth as a house and the plants as food. Every living being has its place and its food. In this context, the vegetarian nourishment of all living beings is a sign of the fullness of life: “That the most precious good in the house of life of creation is the happy life of all living beings unfolds Gen 1:29f with an image of peace that we must meditate on and concretise, especially today as a paradigm critical of progress [...] The central point of this utopia is the coexistence of all living beings without violence.” (Erich Zenger 1989, 142)

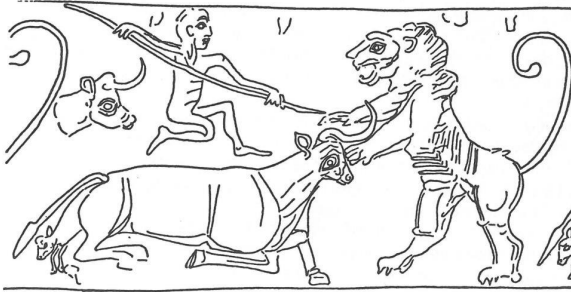
The Flood narrative, in which the priestly and pre-priestly texts are interwoven into a single story, has already been presented. What is new in the priestly narrative is the section on *God’s covenant with Noah and all creatures* (Gen 9:1–17): When Noah leaves the ark after the end of the great

## 2 Prehistory 1: Animals in the pre-Hellenistic writings of the Bible

*Illustration: The Lord of the Ibexes illustrates well what is meant by governing the animals: scarab from Akko (Tell Fuchar) c. 1600–1500 BC (taken from: Henrike Frey-Anthes 2010, fig. 4; cf. also Othmar Keel/ Silvia Schroer 2002, 208, fig. 161).*



*Illustration: On this Early Sumerian scroll seal from c. 3300–2900 BC, a naked man defends a calving cow against a lion while placing his foot on it (taken from: Jan Dietrich 2017, Fig. 1).*



flood, we are told, God makes a covenant—with him, with his descendants and “with all living creatures among you” (Gen 9:9–10; cf. Hos 2:20–21). God, man and animals become covenant partners. However, the covenant is not as harmonious as the initial peace of creation in Gen 1: fear and terror of man will settle over the animals, the previous relationship of trust is disturbed (Gen 9:2). Man, on whom the blessing of multiplication is pronounced twice, is henceforth allowed to slaughter and eat animals for food. However, he must not exploit them to the last drop of blood (Gen 9:3–4): He must pour away the blood when slaughtering—a profound symbol of

### 2.3 Animals in the instructions of the Torah: addressees of justice

*Illustration:* On this Neo-Assyrian scroll seal from the 9th-7th century BC, a man presents his dominion over the earth through his stamped foot on the caprid and simultaneously defending it from the lion (taken from: Jan Dietrich 2017, fig. 9). Keel and Schroer comment on the illustration thus: “‘Having under foot’ or ‘treading’ does not necessarily mean brutal, certainly not arbitrary submission, but can also imply the protection of the weaker from the stronger.” (Othmar Keel/ Silvia Schroer 2002, 181 fig. 144)



reverence. The killing of humans remains strictly forbidden, but the Bible obviously reckons with violations of this commandment. Thus, the Noahide Covenant is an agreement that reckons with man's sinfulness and violence and tries to limit it as much as possible—for the protection of people and animals. For never again, God promises, shall there be a flood that destroys everything (Gen 9:11).

### 2.3 Animals in the instructions of the Torah: addressees of justice

The Torah, i.e. the first five books of the Bible, contains over twenty commandments concerning animals. That is no small number. Of course, animal ethics cannot be developed from these alone. But certain basic orientations in dealing with animals emerge unmistakably. These reveal a dual perspective: on the one hand, domesticated animals are a valuable possession of humans, on the other hand, all animals—wild and domesticated—have their own significance as fellow creatures to be treated justly.

The first aspect, that domesticated animals are a *possession of man*, is addressed, for example, when it comes to questions of liability, be it in the case of lost, injured or dead domestic animals (Gen 31:39; Ex 21:33–34,37; 22:9–14), be it in the case of damage caused by domesticated animals (Ex 21:28–32,35f; 22:4). Even the obligation to help the enemy's donkey, which

had collapsed under its excessive burdens (Ex 23:5), is more likely to have arisen not out of concern for the animal but for its owner: “The enemy’s economic existence would be threatened if he lost the donkey on whose labour he depended.” (Peter Riede 2010, 1.4)

The second aspect, that animals are to be *treated justly for their own sake*, takes up much broader space. Paradoxically, the list begins with the statement that domesticated but violent animals are to be sentenced to death by stoning (Ex 21:28–32). The Bible, which does not yet make a distinction between punitive action and impunity, treats animals as “moral agents”, i.e. as responsible subjects of action—something we would certainly no longer do today (or at most in a very limited way, for example in the case of a “problem bear”). In addition, the following topics are addressed:

Protection of animal parents and their young from excessive stress: The young should stay with their mother for at least seven days before being slaughtered (Ex 22:29; Lev 22:27). Parents are not to be killed at the same time as their young, neither in the case of farm animals (Lev 22:28) nor in the case of wild animals (Dt 22:6–7). If one takes the young from their parents, then one should at least let them live. The Old Testament thus knows about the special protection of brood, birth and rearing of offspring.

Prohibition of sexual intercourse between humans and animals (Ex 22:18; Lev 18:23) and the interbreeding of different animal species (Lev 19:19): This idea of not mixing different species, which can also be observed in other areas, e.g. in agriculture or in the production of textiles, is an extremely important commandment for the Old Testament with its strongly symbolic thinking in order to preserve God’s order of creation.

Prohibition of harnessing different kinds of animals to the same cart at the same time (Dt 22:10): First of all, this commandment could also be counted among the latter logic of the prohibition of mixing. However, it could also have a directly animal ethical motive, namely that in the case of different species in front of a cart, one of the two draft animals is always the weaker one and is overburdened.

Ensuring decent working conditions for the animal (Dt 25:4): “You shall not bind the mouth of the ox that threshes.” Hard work should be rewarded with good nutrition—for humans as well as for animals.

Admonition to be careful when hitting animals: In the normative instructions of the Torah, the hitting of animals is not an issue. As a means of education, used in the right measure, it was just as acceptable at that time as the beating of people in need of protection. However, Num 22:23–34 tells the wonderful story of the prophet Balaam, who beats his donkey three

times because he mistakenly thinks it is stubborn. The donkey, however, has seen something that has escaped Balaam's notice and has thus shown himself to be the more understanding of the two. When Balaam realises this, he falls on his knees before the donkey and asks for forgiveness.

Limitation of animal slaughter by the blood ritual (Gen 9:4 a.o.): In principle, the slaughter of animals for meat consumption is permitted by the Noahide narrative. Nevertheless, the ritual of slaughter, according to which the animal's blood must flow out completely, sets a noticeable inhibition threshold. Man is supposed to consider whether he really has to kill the animal. And if he does, the killing must always be justified.

Sharing in the abundance of the Sabbatical year (Ex 23:11; Lev 25:7): Every seventh year is a sabbatical year in Israel, during which the fields are left fallow. What nevertheless grows in the fields is to be harvested by the poor people and the wild animals. It is precisely they who are to receive some of the abundance with which God bestows on his people.

Equal rest on the Sabbath: The probably oldest formulation of the Sabbath commandment in Ex 34:21 does not yet explicitly apply to animals and socially inferior people. But in Ex 23:12 and even more so in the (post-) exilic texts Dt 5:12–15 and Ex 20:8–11, the Sabbath also applies to animals used for ploughing and threshing, pulling carts and carrying loads and other work. Like people, animals are entitled to rest and recreation. Like humans, they are to “catch their breath” on this day (Ex 23:12). This is an eminently important rule that directly opposes the economic dynamic of producing more and more and exploiting human and animal labour for this purpose.

The Sabbath commandment is the crown of all the commandments of the Torah and the Sabbath itself in Gen 2:1–4a is the crown of all creation. If animals are also included in this commandment, then this shows how naturally the Bible grants them a legal status: “The animal, then, is under the protection of the law like man who is weak in rights.” (Marie Louise Henry 1993, 39). “The righteous knows what his cattle need.” (Prov 12:10).

## 2.4 *The vision of the peace of creation*

The Noahide narrative assumes that in earthly reality there are irreconcilable conflicts between humans and humans, animals and animals, and humans and animals: Competition for scarce resources cannot be resolved without violence. But the Bible also has a vision of how the earth will



be one day when God has completely redeemed and perfected it. Such a vision is by no means pure reverie, but has an impact on the present behaviour of those who allow themselves to be inspired by it: Visions (or less theologically: utopias) provide guidance because they point to a distant goal; they motivate because this goal seems attractive and criticise because they create a counter-image to reality and thus pose the question of whether everything really has to remain as it has always been and still is at present.

The Bible presents three great visions: that all people will be filled—an epitome of interpersonal justice (Am 9:11–15; Is 55:1–2; 25:6–8; the fulfilment through Jesus Mk 6:30–44, etc.); that people of all religions and cultures will go on a pilgrimage to Mount Zion—an epitome of global peace (Mic 4:1–5; Is 2:2–4; fulfilment through the risen Christ Rev 21–22); that all creatures will live together in a healthy community without violence—the epitome of peace in creation.

As we have seen, the two Creation narratives Gen 1–2 already “outline a peaceful and non-violent relationship between humans and animals as a positive utopia for dealing with creation” (Bernhard Irrgang 1992, 130). Living beings live in habitats that have been assigned to them, there is enough space for all of them, they have enough food, which consists exclusively of vegetables for all of them. In Paradise, both humans and animals are vegetarians. “That the most precious good in the house of life of creation is the happy life of all living beings unfolds in Gen 1:29f with an image of peace that we must meditate on and concretise especially today as a paradigm critical of progress.... The central point of this utopia is the coexistence of all living beings without violence.” (Erich Zenger 1989, 142).

The prophetic texts express it even more clearly (Hos 2:20–21; Is 32:15–20; 65:25; Eze 34:25–30 and especially Is 11:1–9): The Messiah will establish justice and righteousness, there will be peace, which is not only for the people of Israel, but includes the animals and all creation. Wolf and lamb, panther and little goat, calf and lion, cow and she-bear and their young, serpent and suckling dwell together, and the lion eats straw like the ox. In this list, a living creature in the care of man and a wild animal are brought together, as are adult animals and young animals and male and female animals. It could not be made clearer that all living beings are included in the great peace of the Messiah.

In the New Testament, this motif is explicitly taken up only once, but in a highly prominent place: In Mk 1:13, i.e. in the programmatic prologue of the Gospel of Mark, it is reported, as already explained, that the wild animals provide Jesus with fellowship during his forty-day stay in the desert. In



Christ, the new Adam, the messianic age dawns, which brings us the peace of creation already laid out in Paradise. In him God's reign and kingdom dawns—a kingdom that wants to include not only human beings but all creatures. In it, the cycle of violence against creation is broken and man is given the opportunity to live as a new creation himself. When a human being returns to its origins and does not sin, even wild animals become tame again, this is how Theophilus of Antioch interprets it around 180 AD (Theophilus of Antioch, Apology to Autolykus II,17).

A form of animal ethics that is guided by such a vision will not be able to be satisfied with the current status quo of animal husbandry and killing. Rather, it will constantly ask whether a next step is not possible to improve the situation of animals. It knows that the vision itself is an unattainable goal for humans. But here and now it is necessary to move towards this goal, without coming to an end, but also without stopping and putting our hands complacently in our laps. This kind of animal ethics, which finds itself in eschatological tension, thus poses the question to animal welfare activists of whether they have the necessary patience to be satisfied with small progress if it is continuous, and to animal owners of whether they have the consistency to immediately ask for the next improvement after an improvement has been made for their own animals.

### 2.5 Contribution: Anthropocentrism in the pre-Hellenistic Bible?

What is the yield from going through the pre-Hellenistic biblical texts? Are they entirely or at least largely anthropocentric? The Creation narratives ascribe numerous similarities with humans to animals. Habitats are created for humans and animals. During the Flood, animals are in the same boat with humans, and afterwards they are covenant partners together with God. Man is neither the crown of creation—which in Gen 1:1–2,4a is the Sabbath—nor its centre—which in Gen 2:4b-25 is the tree (or the two trees?) in the middle of the garden. Rather, man is a steward, entrusted with creation as a loan to be cherished and cared for—including all the human and non-human inhabitants of this house of life. Finally, one would have to violently contort the meaning of the Torah with its numerous animal protection commandments if one wanted to read from them that animals exist solely for the benefit of humans. And the vision of the peace of creation clearly underlines that the Bible cannot imagine a fulfilled life

without or at the expense of animals. They, too, shall one day enjoy the great peace that God promises to his creation.

“The Bible only has this anthropocentric world view. An ethic that would show consideration for animals is not found in the Bible.” (Eugen Drewermann 2012). A more erroneous statement can hardly be made<sup>10</sup>. Anthropocentric thinking is only found in the Bible in individual texts from the time of Hellenism that are influenced by Greco-Roman philosophy—some late wisdom texts in the Old Testament as well as some Pauline passages in the New Testament (see chapter 4). They allow us to truly trace of the origin of Christian anthropocentrism: Greek and Roman philosophy, which will be examined in the next chapter.

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10 Gerd Häfner 2019, 305 considers this statement, which I have already made in Michael Rosenberger 2015, 127, to be “exaggerated”. He says: “As far as the relationship to the animal world is concerned, the biblical tradition is clearly determined by an anthropocentric perspective.” In doing so, he refers on the one hand to the Old Testament “dominion position” of man, which, however, as shown, does not reveal material anthropocentrism, but only formal anthropocentrism. On the other hand, he refers to Jesus’ words that attribute more value to humans than to animals. However, these also do not testify to anthropocentrism, but the opposite because Jesus obviously assigns intrinsic value to animals. As a reminder, anthropocentrism is defined by the thesis that everything is created solely for man. It embodies teleology (see chapter 1.2). And this is not to be found in the Bible. On the contrary, God takes care of the ox, as Gerd Häfner 2019, 314 notes against Paul as the literal sense of Dt 25:4. The ox is thus a *telos* in itself in the sense of the Torah. Therefore, Häfner effectively confirms rather than invalidates my statement.

### 3 Prehistory 2: Animals in Greco-Roman Philosophy

Where did Christianity inherit its anthropocentrism if it did not come from the biblical and early Jewish tradition? There is only one alternative to this, and it can be well documented: Ancient Greco-Roman philosophy, for it is recognised that since the 5th century BC, the overwhelming majority of its thinking has been anthropocentric. The best overall account of the subject to date was presented by Urs Dierauer in 1977. I follow his analyses in this chapter—focusing on the questions of the animals’ ability to reason and anthropocentrism.

In the Anglo-Saxon-speaking world, Richard Sorabji presented a study in the history of ideas in 1993 that traces the origins of Western anthropocentrism and its exclusion of animals from the moral community. Unfortunately, he did not receive Dierauer’s opus—presumably for linguistic reasons. There are similarities and differences between Sorabji and Dierauer:

- Sorabji sees the decisive “crisis”, on the basis of which the animals are qualified as *aloga*, in Aristotle (Richard Sorabji 1993, 7). Dierauer, on the other hand, dates it as early as the Pre-Socratics of the 5th century BC and also attributes a not insignificant role to Socrates. Compared to these, he relativises the role of Aristotle, as does Cecilia Muratori (2019, 261). On the basis of Dierauer’s convincing evidence, confirmed by Stephen T. Newmyer’s 2011 collection of sources, I will follow this position. Aristotle nevertheless remains one of the important factors in the unfolding of Greco-Roman anthropocentrism. And of course, Gary Steiner is right in this, it is only the Stoics who “elevate the boundary line between human and animal to a cosmic principle” (Gary Steiner 2008, 36). Thus, a process emerges that begins in the 5th century BC and extends at least to the 3rd century BC. Aristotle is an important player in this process, but not the only or all-important crisis factor. “The extreme end of this path is the unconditional rejection of the commitment to justice towards animals.” (Gary Steiner 2008, 44). It embodies the “culmination of this crisis” (Gary Steiner 2008, 44).
- Sorabji is also interested in the question of the transition from Greco-Roman philosophy to Jewish and Christian theology, which Dierauer does not address. Sorabji’s plausible thesis is that Judaism and Christianity adopted their anthropocentrism from Aristotle and the Stoics: “The Aris-

- totelian and Stoic denial of rationality to animals proved all too congenial to Jews and Christians.” (Richard Sorabji 1993, 8) The adoption of Aristotle’s anthropocentrism is unlikely to be proven for early Christianity; Aristotle’s rejection of an immortal soul is too frowned upon for that. But the adoption of anthropocentrism from the Stoa will prove to be correct.
- However, Sorabji links this to another thesis that must be modified against the background of Dierauer’s analyses. Sorabji claims that Christianity and Judaism had adopted one of many equally strong approaches to philosophy in a relatively free choice: “we are heirs of a Western Christian tradition which selected only one side from a much more wide-ranging Greek debate”. (Richard Sorabji 1993, 8) Dierauer’s analyses, on the other hand, rather suggest that Judaism and Christianity received the anthropocentrist mainstream philosophy of their time without much and conscious choice, while the non-anthropocentrist approaches were already massively in the minority long before the appearance of Christianity.

So let’s look into the sources to work out these lines.

### 3.1 Setting the course in the pre-Socratic era

*Homer* (8th/7th century BC) only attributes feelings to animals, but not thinking, for whenever the heroes of the *Iliad* are compared to animals, it is in relation to feelings, not thoughts (Urs Dierauer 1977, 8). For Homer and his time, feelings are thus already a natural part of animalism in man, and animals are symbols of irrationality. Furthermore, through a comparison with animals, human emotions become more clearly and undisguisedly visible, since in animals they are not “tamed” and shaped by reason. Without saying it, the Homeric epics presuppose the irrationality of animals.

*Hesiod* (c. 700 BC) “then expresses the conviction for the first time that the relationship of human beings to one another is governed and must be governed by an exactly opposite principle than the mutual relationship of animals: by lawfulness, not by violence”. (Urs Dierauer 1977, 14). In his “*Erga kai hemera*”, he writes: “Zeus decreed this as law among men: / The fish eat each other without punishment, the game in the fields/ And the winged birds, since none of them knows the law; / But to men he gave the law, the most blessed gift.” (Hesiod, *Erga kai hemera* 276–280) The fact that, on the one hand, there are many herbivorous animals and that, on the other, most people are not vegetarian and consume other animals,

is gallantly passed over by Hesiod. This is the only way he can assert the principled demarcation between humans and animals: while humans act according to the *nomos*, the law and the reasonable order of life, animals behave arbitrarily, cruelly and not based on rights.

With *Xenophanes* (around 570–after 500 BC), an essence–ontological hierarchisation becomes visible, which determines Greek debates from then on: Gods are higher than humans, humans higher than animals. However, Xenophanes warns against placing humans too close to the gods and too far away from animals. Humans, he says, are very fundamentally different from the gods (Xenophanes, VS 21 B 23).

*Heraclitus* (520–460 BC) also sees as great a distance between gods and humans as between humans and animals (Heraclitus, VS 22 B 82/ 83). However, in the following centuries, the distance between humans and animals was continuously increased and that between humans and the gods was reduced. In particular, the increasingly strong emphasis that humans had reason in common with the gods, which animals lacked, would be used as a reason for this. Ultimately, the seeds are already laid here for early Judaism and early Christianity to de-relationalise and essentialise the image of God in Genesis 1:26 and to interpret it in terms of the nature of reason (cf. chapters 4 and 5).

The *Sophists* (450–380 BC) develop above all a theory of culture in order to determine what is specifically human. For them, culture is no longer a gift of the gods, but an achievement of humans. Animals, on the other hand, are cultureless from the Sophist point of view, for culture arises precisely at the moment when man leaves the animal form of life (*θηριώδης βίος*) and passes into a form of life ordered by law and morality. “The existence of animals thus appeared as an inferior form of life that humans had already left far behind.” (Urs Dierauer 1977, 28). Art and technology go hand in hand with law and morality as man evolves away from the animal.

The condition of all of them is language, which animals do not have: “In everything else that we have, we do not differ at all from the other living beings and are even inferior to many of them in speed, strength and other qualities. But because we have the possibility of convincing one another and of communicating to one another everything we want, we have not only detached ourselves from animal existence, but have also joined together, founded cities, established laws and invented arts and crafts. In general, in all that we have accomplished positively, the gift of speech (*λόγος*) is involved.” (Isocrates, *Nicocles Oratio* 3, 5–6)

“That designation for animals which enjoyed great popularity especially in Hellenism and late antiquity probably also arose in sophist times: τὰ ἄλογα ζῶα, ‘those living beings who have no logos’ ... or also simply τὰ ἄλογα.” (Urs Dierauer 1977, 33). Of course, as early as in the 5th century there is contradiction to this profiled thesis, because observations indicate that animals communicate with each other. Also, the sophist conviction that animals do without reason what humans reasonably plan is by no means universally accepted. Nevertheless, in the long run, both the terms of the sophists and the beliefs behind them prevail. The distinction of humans from animals through reason and language “is among the most momentous theses of the fifth century” (Urs Dierauer 1977, 39). For animals, the consequences are fatal: “The emerging self-discovery of humans in the 5th century BC has as its flip side increasing animal concealment [...] The action of animals is *subject to* a logos, [...] in contrast to the human animal, which [...] *has* a logos” (Bernhard Waldenfels 2017, 252, emphasis in original). Animals as aloga cannot be perceived and appreciated in their intrinsic value.

*Alkmaion of Kroton* (late 6th–early 5th century BC) may be considered the first representative of the aloga thesis. For him, the decisive reason is man’s ability to deduce (τεκμαίρεσθαι) from sensory impressions to causes (according to Diogenes Laertius, VS 24 B 1) and thus to understand (ξυνίημι) instead of merely perceiving (according to Theophrastus, VS 24 A 5/ B 1a). Animals do not have this ability; they can only perceive. Human superiority is therefore not based on physical strength, but on intelligence. On this point, Alkmaion differs strongly from Empedocles and Anaxagoras, who acknowledge the intellect and the capacity for love and hate in all living beings (Urs Dierauer 1977, 43; Jean-Francois Balaudé 1997, 31–54).

But by the end of the 5th century, its conception had become accepted and was very much taken for granted. For example, Euripides writes about a horse: “And yet is but an animal that can neither speak (ἄφθογγον)/ Nor think, a useless (ἄχρηστον) creature.” (Euripides, *The Trojan Women*, VV 671–672).

### 3.2 Theological Anthropocentrism in Socrates

Socrates (469–399 BC) also expresses this conviction several times (according to Plato, *Laches* 196e–197b; *Politeia* 441b; *Kratylos* 399c). In him, we also encounter a form of hard anthropocentrism for the first time: from his

point of view, animals are created only for the sake of humans, whose outstanding talent is shown above all in making animals useful for themselves (Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 4, 3, 10). At the same time, anthropocentrism in Socrates serves to underpin the wise foresight and care of the gods through the human-centred teleology of creation for the first time. The framing of anthropocentrism is thus decidedly theological. “This is the first time in Greek literature that we encounter such a close connection between theology and anthropocentrism.” (Urs Dierauer 1977, 52). Let us take a closer look at the corresponding passage in Xenophon’s *Memorabilia* 4, 3:

“9. I, said Euthydemus, am already considering whether the gods do anything other than care for men; only one thing still causes me concern, that the other living beings also participate in these benefits. —

10. Is it not clear, replied Socrates, that also these are created and brought up (καὶ ταῦτα ἀνθρώπων ἔνεκα γίγνεται τε καὶ ἀνατρέφεται) for the sake of men? For what other creature has so many advantages to enjoy from the goats, sheep, cattle, asses, and the rest of the animals as man? For, as I believe, they are of more use than the plants; at least he nourishes and enriches himself from them as well as from these. Many people do not use the plants of the earth as food at all, but live by feeding on the milk of their herds, on butter and meat. But in this all nations agree that they tame and subdue the useful animals (τιθασεύοντες καὶ δαμάζοντες τὰ χρήσιμα τῶν ζώων), and avail themselves of their aid for war and many other uses. —

In this also I agree with you, said Euthydemus, for I see that even such animals as are far superior to us in strength become so obedient (ὑποχείρια) to man that he can use them for whatever he pleases (ὥστε χρῆσθαι αὐτοῖς ὅ τι ἂν βούλωνται). —

11. But remember also that for the many beautiful and useful things, because they are so different from one another, they have given us the appropriate sensory instruments for each, by means of which we enjoy all goods; that they have implanted in us the reason (λογισμὸν) by means of which, making sensual perceptions objects of thought and memory, we can ascertain what each thing is useful for, and invent all kinds of means of enjoying the good and keeping the evil away from us; 12. Finally, that they have also given us the faculty of making each other understand (ἐρμηνείαν), by means of which we communicate all good things to each other by instruction, and enjoy them together, agree on laws, and live in states. —

Yes, yes, Socrates, the gods must be very concerned for the humans.”

This dialogue between Euthydemos and Socrates reveals that the anthropocentrism advocated by Socrates is by no means self-evident. With a slightly mocking undertone and subtle exaggeration, Euthydemos questions him. Socrates, on the other hand, opens the door and answers immediately and without further ado with the core thesis of anthropocentrism that all living beings are created only for the sake of humans. He makes this thesis plausible with the fact that while there are people who almost exclusively use animals but no plants—namely the nomadic pastoralists—there are no people who only use plants but no animals—because even vegetarian arable farmers keep working animals and drink milk. While Euthydemos agrees with him in this respect, he is apparently less convinced by the subsequent argument that man is uniquely endowed by reason (λογισμός) and language (ἔρμηνεία). And towards the theological conclusion of the infinite care of the gods for mankind, he probably remains rather sceptical to speechless. Xenophon’s memorabilia are thus impressive testimony to the origin and theological character of anthropocentrism from the beginning, but also to the fact that it is by no means accepted without contradiction. The path to its final assertion as the mainstream of Greek philosophy takes several centuries.

### 3.3 Reason as the driver in Plato’s work

Plato (428–348 BC) adopts the Socratic thesis of reason being entrusted to man alone. But he turns it into an imperative to make use of it, which in his view people rarely do, for the use of reason requires great effort and long education (Plato, Theiatetos 186 b–c). Man could approach the gods on the one hand and animals on the other. He has λογιστικόν, reason, in common with the gods (Plato, Politeia IX, 12–13, 589 d-590 d), with animals θυμοειδής, courageousness and passion, and ἐπιθυμητικόν, desire (Plato, Nomoi V, 732 e; VI, 782 d-783 a; Philebos 31 d; 32 e; 35 c–e; 36 b; cf. Bernhard Waldenfels 2017, 253–254). Consequently, reason must attempt to domesticate the animal-like in man. Plato’s famous image, often reproduced in Baroque art, describes reason as the driver of a two-horse chariot. One of the two horses, representing the positive and negative aspirations of emotions, obeys, the other does not (Plato, Phaidros 246 a–b; 253 e-254 e). The domestication of animals thus becomes the paradigm of human self-disciplining and self-education. In both processes, reason is assigned



the guiding function: "Man acts well when his reason takes the lead, tames and restrains the irrational, animal forces of the soul and thus establishes order and harmony in the soul." (Urs Dierauer 1977, 68). But where human beings are not capable of self-education, according to Plato's sceptical ideas of democracy, a rational ruler should step in and take over this task (Plato, *Politeia* IX, 13, 590 c–d). For in a liberal democratic state, even animals would behave anarchically (Plato, *Politeia* VIII, 14, 563 c).

One of the most difficult problems concerning Plato's evaluation of animals is the question of how to reconcile his doctrine of the transmigration of souls with the exclusivity of man's endowment with reason (Urs Dierauer 1977, 77). Numerous passages prove that Plato believes in the transmigration of the soul from man to animal and from animal to man. But how does he imagine that a rational human soul suddenly resides in an irrational animal and vice versa? Dierauer assumes that, for Plato, the rational soul in the animal does not lose its power to reason, but only the possibility of using it (Urs Dierauer 1977, 78). Nevertheless, one will have to admit that the sharp demarcation between humans and animals, as signified by the designation of the latter as *aloga*, is difficult to reconcile with the classical Greek concept of the transmigration of souls. In its momentum, this rather aims at a similarity between humans and animals that is greater than their dissimilarity. Among the Neo-Platonists, therefore, numerous theories were formed in later centuries that contradicted each other in many ways as to how the problem could be solved. However, none of them was really convincing.

In his later work, Plato turns more strongly to the observation of nature, which was to take on a central role with his student Aristotle. Here, Plato recognises a certain capacity for memory in animals (Plato, *Philebos* 35 d), which is developed very differently in degree and obviously cannot be attributed to the desiring part of the soul. "Perhaps Plato would say that the memory of animals is a function of that psychic power which he claims in the *Nomoi* (961 d) enables, together with perception, the preservation of all living beings, and which he calls *Nus* in that passage." (Urs Dierauer 1977, 94). A stronger emphasis on the similarities between humans and animals, as it plays a major role in Aristotle, is indicated.

### 3.4 Broad development of the *aloga* thesis in Aristotle

Unlike the pre-Socratics Empedocles and Anaxagoras, who also conceded perception, feeling and desire to plants, Aristotle (384–322 BC) draws a sharper line between plants and animals and at the same time moves animals somewhat closer to humans, because plants, since they have no perception (αἴσθησις), are for him not living *beings* (ζῶα), but only *living* (ζῶντα) (Aristotle, *De anima* II, 2, 413 a 20–b 4). This fundamental distinction between plants and animals is never disputed later, but rather deepened when the Stoics—going beyond Aristotle—even deny plants have a soul (Urs Dierauer 1977, 114).

Aristotle regards the sense organs not only as essential for survival, but also as conducive to the good life (εὖ) (Aristotle, *De anima* III, 12, 434 b 23–26). He thus ascribes a certain intrinsic value to sensual pleasure—and indirectly to all those individuals who can feel sensual pleasure, thus also to animals (Urs Dierauer 1977, 115–116). Nevertheless, the *aloga* thesis is inviolable for Aristotle. For him, animals have no reason for various reasons:

- Man has a special physique that makes his ability to reason possible: for man alone possesses an upright gait because he alone has a divine nature (Aristotle, *De partibus animalium* IV, 10, 686 a 27–31). Moreover, man has been given hands because he is intelligent, and not, as Anaxagoras thought, that he has become intelligent because he has hands (Aristotle, *De partibus animalium* IV, 9, 686 a 27–687 b 5; cf. Giuliana Lanata 1994, 23; Mario Vegetti 1994, 130). These two Aristotelian thoughts on the morphological enabling conditions for intellect and reason are taken up and developed in the Stoa (Giuliana Lanata 1994, 21; cf. chapter 3.5).
- Animals do not form abstract concepts: they do not recognise the being (εἶναι) of a thing (Aristotle, *De anima* III, 4, 429 b 10–22), for they have no abstract concept of the general (καθόλου ὑπόληψις), but only concrete ideas and memories of the particular (καθ' ἕκαστα φαντασία καὶ μνήμη) (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* VII, 5, 1147 b 4)—albeit with some reference to the general (Aristotle, *Analytica posteriora* II, 19, 100 a 16–b 1). Animals thus have an idea and memory of a very specific scent, for example that of a prey animal or predator, but no concept of what “scent” is in general.
- Animals do not experience spiritual pleasures: while humans can take pleasure in scent as such, even in the scent of non-edible things such as a rose or incense, a dog or a lion cannot—it would only take pleasure

in the scent of its prey, in anticipation of eating (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* III, 13, 1118 a 18–23). Consequently, man could feel pleasure without touching anything, and thus purely mentally, the animal only in anticipation of the touch or in its accomplishment, and thus sensually. “For Aristotle, the difference between human and animal striving consists not only in the fact that man consciously, while animals do so merely unconsciously, turns towards the good, but also in the fact that an animal’s goods lie on a biological level, while those of man lie on a moral and cognitive level” (Urs Dierauer 1977, 124).

- Animals have no morality: Aristotle admits that animals have natural virtues (*φυσικὰ ἄρετα*). Man, however, has ethical virtues which he determines himself in prudent judgement, acquires through conscious practice and realises through insight (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* VI, 13, 1144 b 14–31). Therefore, it is merely a metaphorical way of speaking when someone calls animals virtuous or vicious because they have no moral insight (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* VII, 7, 1149 b 30–35). Analogously, fellowship and friendship among animals always aim at a benefit, whereas in humans they are oriented towards the moral (Aristotle, *Eudemic Ethics* VII, 2, 1236 b 1–6; *Politeia* I, 2, 1253 a 7–18). From the distinction between viciousness and beastliness (*θηριότης*, bestiality), however, it also follows for Aristotle that it is not appropriate to speak of man’s bestial behaviour when he acts viciously. Acting viciously means that there is a lack of rational judgement—acting in an animal-like manner would mean that there is a strong emotional impulse (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* VII, 7, 1150 a 1–3; cf. Richard Bodéüs 1997, 247–258). To speak of “bestial” behaviour in humans is thus a category mistake. If animals have neither virtues nor vices (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* VII, 1, 1145 a 25–26), man cannot become a wolf (Aristotle, *De partibus animalium* III, 2, 663 a 13). Here, Aristotle distances himself from a long tradition, including Plato, in favour of animals.
- Animals speak, but not on the basis of free agreement: A certain relativisation of the aloga thesis can be seen in Aristotle’s relatively far-reaching recognition of animal communication. Here, his close observation of nature comes into play, allowing him to recognise subtle details of animal behaviour. Thus, he emphasises that animals also express their inner contents vocally (*Aristotle, Politeia* I, 2, 1253 a 10–14), but only those contents that they can comprehend, i.e. not those of law and morality. Birds with their rich expressiveness could even teach and impart knowledge, i.e. form tradition (*Aristotle, De partibus animalium* II, 17, 660 a 35–b 2;

- Aristotle, *Metaphysics* I, 1, 980 b 21–25). Birds of the same species also had different dialects and taught each other to sing—they formed their language to a certain extent by agreement (Aristotle, *Historia animalium* IV, 101–111, 536 b 14–19). However, animals communicated mainly entirely by nature, while humans developed their language mainly by agreement (Aristotle, *De interpretatione* I, 2, 16 a 27–29).
- Animals have no art and reasoning: even the more gifted animals “live in their imaginations (φαντασίαι) and memory contents (μνήμαι) and have only a small share in experience (ἐμπειρία), the race of men, on the other hand, also live in art (τέχνη) and reasoning (λογισμοί).” (Aristotle, *Metaphysics* I, 1, 980 b 28).
  - Animals cannot plan into the future or act responsibly: they cannot undertake more complex planning when unforeseen difficulties arise, so they cannot act in the proper sense (πράττειν) (Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics* II, 6, 1222 b 18–20; *Nicomachean Ethics* VI, 2, 1139 a 17–20). Non-human living beings carried out their lives by nature (φύσει), some also by habit (ἔθει), but only man by reason (λόγω) (Aristotle, *Politics* VII, 13, 1332 b 3–5).
  - Animals cannot make reflective decisions: Aristotle admits that some animals are intelligent (φρόνιμος) and use their reason (φρόνησις) (Aristotle, *Historia animalium* I, 1, 488 b 15; *Metaphysics* I, 1, 980 b 22; *Nicomachean Ethics* VI, 7, 1141 a 26–28). Also, certain animals are more intelligent than others (Aristotle, *Historia animalium* VIII, 1, 589 a 1; *De partibus animalium* II, 2, 648 a 6–8; II, 2, 650 b 24–27; *De generatione animalium* II, 6, 53 a 10–13; *Metaphysics* I, 1, 980 b 21), with humans being the most intelligent (Aristotle, *De anima* II, 9, 421 a 18–23; *De partibus animalium* IV, 10, 686 b 22; IV, 10, 687 a 7–10.16 – 18; *De generatione animalium* II, 6, 44 a 30). Thus, the difference between animal and human intelligence seems more gradual than qualitative. But: for Aristotle, only humans are deliberative (βουλευτικός), i.e. deciding based on one’s own and on collective deliberation (Aristotle, *Historia animalium* I, 1, 488 b 24–25).

In summary, Aristotle recognises some abilities of animals on the basis of his precise observation of nature. But whenever it seems that he makes only a difference of degree between humans and animals, he immediately adds an argument that underpins the difference between them in principle. No other philosopher before him developed the *aloga* thesis as extensively

and justified it in so many ways as Aristotle. He thus makes a decisive contribution to the triumphant advance of this thesis.

Anthropocentrism, on the other hand, plays a lesser role for Aristotle, for the theological question of the care of the gods, unlike the teleological question of an all-encompassing direction of nature's development, has little significance for him. Nevertheless: "At one point Aristotle even goes so far as to assert that animals, too, were brought forth for the sake of human beings (Politeia I, 9, 1256 b 15–22) [...] This radically anthropocentrist statement is completely isolated in Aristotle." (Urs Dierauer 1977, 155).

The passage in Aristotle is as follows: "It must be clearly admitted that the plants were made for the animals and the animals for man; the domestic animals, that he might use them and feed on them; the wild animals, at least for the most part, that he might feed on them and make use of them for other needs, that clothing and other tools might be made from them. And since nature makes nothing imperfect or purposeless, she has made all these for man." (Aristotle, Politeia I, 9, 1256 b 15–22; commenting on this Mario Vegetti 1994, 131).

Dierauer rightly points out the context of the passage. It is about the basic order of the state and politics. Many thoughts that were popular at the time flow into these passages, such as the thesis shortly before that there were people who were slaves by nature. "Aristotle here justifies an existing institution, slavery, in a very similar way, just as shortly afterwards he justifies the de facto exploitation of animals by referring to their naturalness." (Urs Dierauer 1977, 156–157). He then even explicitly makes an analogy: slaves are human beings who are as far removed from rational human beings as animals are, because they do not have reason, but can only obey the reason of others (Aristotle, Politeia I, 5, 1254 b 16–26). Here, then, as with earlier authors, the aloga thesis and the anthropocentrism thesis are linked in terms of content. The one justifies the other. Moreover, anthropocentrism corresponds perfectly to Aristotelian teleology, which follows the idea that the lower serves the higher. Nevertheless: "Aristotle sees the telos of animals, like that of humans, in the development of their possibilities and in the realisation of their form of life, but not in their service to higher beings. In this there is a fundamental difference in emphasis between Aristotle's teleology and that of the Stoa, which regarded man as the end of the whole natural order." (Urs Dierauer 1977, 156).

The judgement of other authors is definitely harsher here, for despite all the great natural science, Aristotle remains very concerned to justify and stabilise existing social hierarchies in politics and ethics—including the

linking of “speciesism, racism and sexism” (Giuliana Lanata 1994, 28). One does not have to locate the decisive “crisis”, on the basis of which animals are qualified as *aloga* in Aristotle (Richard Sorabji 1993, 7). Nevertheless, it is about more than just a single passage, as Dierauer claims, for Aristotle repeatedly emphasises that there is no legal community between humans and animals (Aristotle, *Politeia* I, 5, 1254 b 12ff; III, 9, 1280 a 32; *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII, 11, 6, 1161 b 1ff; cf. Giuliana Lanata 1994, 35)—a central building block of anthropocentrism, which gains decisive importance in the Stoa. Thus, it might be a wise formulation to call Aristotle an “ambiguous genius” (Mario Vegetti 1994, 135).

### 3.5 Perfecting rationalist anthropocentrism in the Stoa

“There are no other ancient texts that emphasise the difference between man and animals as often and with such emphasis as the Stoic and Stoic-influenced writings.” (Urs Dierauer 1977, 224). With these words, Urs Dierauer outlines the special and key position of the Stoa for the view of the human–animal relationship in ancient philosophy.

Now the Stoa covers a period of around 500 years. The historical context of its emergence around 300 BC is the deep crisis of the Greek city states. The Stoa confronts this with a strong focus on the morality of the individual on the one hand and the cosmopolitan legal community of all people on the other. When the “mesopolis” of the city state becomes fragile, the “micropolis” of the individual and the “macropolis” of the global community of people must take on the burden and bear it in pairs.

A certain problem arises from the sources: With the exception of Kleanthes’ Hymn to Zeus, no complete works by the representatives of the older Stoa (300–150 BC) have survived. The transmission of their teachings is largely based on paraphrases and summaries by authors of later epochs, among them also opponents of Stoic philosophy. However, the Stoic doctrine proves to be astonishingly constant throughout five centuries, which is why one may assume that the early Stoa taught in a similar way to the middle and late Stoa (Urs Dierauer 1977, 221). We know the middle Stoa (150–0 BC) through its reception by Cicero, who was a student of Poseidonios and therefore had a thorough knowledge of Stoic ideas. The younger Stoa (0–200 AD) is well documented by the extant works of Seneca, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius.

### 3.5.1 The oikeiosis doctrine as a framing theory

The context of all Stoic considerations is the doctrine of oikeiosis, the doctrine of the loving attention of living beings to and friendship with themselves. This is an aspiration that nature has given to all living beings. In the terminology of modern biology, we would speak of the natural striving for self-preservation. Thus, Diogenes Laertios refers to the lost work *Περὶ τελῶν* by Chrysipp (281/276–208/204 BC):

“The first instinct, they say, which stirs in a living creature, is that of preserving itself (τηρεῖν ἑαυτό); it is a gift of nature from the beginning, as Chrysipp says in the first book on the final ends, in the words, for every living creature its first matter assigned to it by itself is its own existence as well as the consciousness of it. For it was not to be expected that nature should alienate the living creature from itself, or even that, having once brought forth the creature, it should not have taken upon itself either self-alienation (ἀλλοτριῶσαι) or self-appropriation (οἰκειῶσαι). It remains, therefore, only to say that it had befriended (οἰκειῶσαι πρὸς ἑαυτό) itself after the creation was accomplished. For thus it wards off all that is harmful and gives free access to all that is conducive to its own nature.” (Diogenes Laertios, *Lives and Opinions of Famous Philosophers* VII, 85).

Now, the natural striving for self-preservation is common to humans and animals. Both should live according to their nature. But because humans recognise and love themselves as rational beings from a certain age, living according to nature means for them, in contrast to animals, living according to reason. A rational life, however, goes beyond natural aspirations. On the one hand, this thought underpins the fundamental interconnectedness of all human beings, but on the other hand it tears open a deep gulf between humans and animals. A fundamental demarcation from animals occurs.

### 3.5.2 Animal Behaviour as Natural

Of course, the Stoic thesis that animals follow a natural form of striving that they neither learn nor understand is not simply plucked out of thin air. On the contrary, the Stoics cite a number of empirical observations to support it. Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43 BC) refers, for example, to ducklings that spontaneously enter the water and begin to swim without their parents having to teach them to do so; to chickens that also hatch duck eggs and

thus evidently follow an inner automatism without deliberation; to young birds that spontaneously spread their wings and attempt to fly; to newly hatched crocodiles and turtles that can learn nothing from their parents because the latter have buried the eggs in the sand and then made off; to newborn mammals that immediately suckle at their mother's breast (Cicero, *De natura deorum* 2, 128–129). And Lucius Aeneas Seneca (1–65 AD) refers to spiders that can build wonderful webs without ever having learned to do so, as well as to the spontaneous flight behaviour of animals from their natural enemies, which can also be observed from the first moment of life (Seneca, *Epistula* 121, 23).

Which of the early Stoics these examples originated with must remain obscure. Cicero and Seneca do not disclose their sources. The examples mentioned are not yet found in Aristotle, although he already distinguishes between behaviour by nature and behaviour on the basis of agreement and thus indicates the Stoic position in outline. Some of this may have come from Poseidonios (135–51 BC), but this ultimately remains speculative (Urs Dierauer 1977, 213). What is decisive, however, is the enormous advance in knowledge that lies in the distinction between spontaneous (modern science would say “innate”) and learned behaviour and in the criteriology for both. Spontaneous, natural behaviour occurs without a teacher through natural guidance alone: “sine magistro duce natura” (Cicero, *de natura deorum* 2, 128). The “knowledge” that guides such behaviour is not gained through experience: “scientia non experimento collecta” (Seneca, *Epistula* 121, 19). And two criteria serve to determine behaviour as natural and not learned: The rapidity with which the behaviour in question occurs “immediately” and its stereotypy, which knows no variance. “Slowly and in manifold variation comes what experience teaches; what, on the other hand, nature teaches is the same in all and is immediately bestowed upon them (et tardum est et varium quod usus docet; quidquid natura tradit et aequale omnibus est et statim).” (Seneca, *Epistula* 121, 20).

This paradigmatic dichotomy of “innate” and learned behaviour continues to have an impact right up to modern natural science. In principle, it has proven to be very fruitful. However, it has since been modified in two respects:

- All living beings with a central nervous system, including humans, have an innate basic mechanism for almost all behaviour, without which learning processes could not be initiated. When they take their first steps into life, they make use of these innate mechanisms, and even



later they are not simply extinguished. However, the entire behaviour of living beings with a central nervous system (apart from spinal reflexes!) is continuously developed and differentiated between through learning experiences. The radical opposition of innate and acquired behaviour is therefore not true—neither in humans nor in animals. Rather, one will have to say that all behaviour has an innate core that is independently shaped and individually developed through experiences.

- This also renders superfluous the harsh stoic contrast between animals, which supposedly only show natural behaviour, and humans, who after a certain age supposedly only show acquired, reflected behaviour. For the category error of the above-mentioned examples lies in the fact that, with one exception, all the modes of behaviour of newborn animals are compared with the behaviour of adult humans. Correctly, one should compare the behaviour of the offspring of animals with that of the offspring of humans and that of adult animals with that of adult humans. But the chicken that hatches duck eggs is not compared with a human who (in spontaneous emotion in the face of the childish scheme!) takes care of a parentless animal baby, and the example of the innate behaviour of sucking at a mother's breast is not used to establish a commonality between humans and other mammals either. Only once is a certain ability to learn attributed to an animal, namely the horse, which after long practice finds its way to its stable by itself (Seneca, *Epistula* 124, 16–17). Otherwise, however, learning is reserved for humans.

As fruitful as the Stoic distinction between natural and acquired behaviour has proven to be over the millennia, it is still not a suitable means with which to describe the difference between humans and animals. It is precisely this category error that has serious consequences in terms of animal ethics.

### 3.5.3 Rationality as a proprium of the human being

“Although references to the natural life of animals are not at all rare in Stoic ethics, the emphasis on the radical difference between humans and animals far outweighs them. Again and again, it is emphasised how important it is for man not to forget the fundamental difference between him and animals.” (Urs Dierauer 1977, 204). With these words, Dierauer rightly indicates that for the Stoa, the demarcation of humans from animals is not an end in itself but is done with moral pedagogical intent. This is

evidenced, for example, by Cicero when he admonishes: “It is useful for any enquiry into duty always to be aware of how far the nature of man is superior to that of cattle and the other animals. Animals, after all, have only a sense of sensual pleasure (*voluptas*) and give themselves over to it purely libidinally. The human spirit, however, is nourished by learning and thinking (*hominis autem mens discendo alitur et cogitando*)...” (Cicero, *De officiis* 1, 105). This comparison with animals is meant to illustrate the greatness and importance of specifically human duties. Similarly, Seneca writes: “In no way can I be of more use to you than by showing you that good which is according to your nature, and by separating you from the animals and placing you on the level of God.” (Seneca, *Epistula* 124, 21).

For the Stoics, reason is the only real good of man; all other goods that he has in common with animals are *adiaphora* (*ἀδιάφορα*), ethically neutral realities. In this sense, Seneca asks, “Why do you exercise your bodily powers? Nature has bestowed far greater ones on cattle and wild animals. Why do you cultivate your appearance? Even if you do everything possible, you are surpassed in beauty by the animals. Why do you comb your hair with such care? Whether you let it fall in the manner of the Parthians or tie it up in the manner of the Teutons ... any horse will shake a thicker mane and the lion’s neck will be adorned with a more beautiful bush of hair. If you practise running fast, you will not be a match for the little hare.” (Seneca, *Epistula* 124, 22).

In another letter, Seneca unfolds his thesis with an even greater number of examples: “All things consist in their good. The fruitfulness and taste of wine commend the vine, the swiftness the stag; how strong are oxen in regard to the back, you ask, whose only use is to carry a load; in the dog, the sense of scent is the best when he has to track wild animals, the running ability the best when he has to pursue them, the boldness the best when he has to bite them and go at them: That must be the best in everyone for which he is born, for which he is esteemed. What is the best in man? Reason! By this he surpasses the animals, by this he follows the gods. The perfected reason is his own good, the others are common to him with the animals and plants. He is strong—even the lions are strong. He is beautiful—the peacocks are also beautiful. He is swift—even the horses are swift. I do not say: Man has been surpassed in all these things. I do not ask what he has in him as greatest, but what is his. He has a body—even the trees have bodies. He has a drive and a voluntary movement—even the predators and worms have a drive and a voluntary movement. He has a voice—but how much clearer a voice have the dogs, how much more penetrating a

voice have the eagles, how much heavier a voice have the bulls, how much lighter and more sweet a voice have the nightingales? What is peculiar to man? Reason. This completes man's happiness when it is right and perfect. If, then, everything is praiseworthy when it has accomplished its good and reached the goal of its way of life, but for man reason is his own good when he has accomplished it, then reason is praiseworthy and has reached its essential goal. This perfected reason is called virtue, and the same is worthy of honour." (Seneca, *Epistula* 76, 8–10).

One sees the trap into which the Stoics, like most Greeks before them, fall. They forcefully search for the exclusive proprium of man, because supposedly only this exclusive proprium can determine the goal of the human way of life. But why should this actually be so? Can't a good that man shares with other animals also be his highest? That the question of the *bonum hominis* is central is completely understandable. But why does this *bonum* have to be an exclusive possession? This question is nowhere even touched upon in the texts reviewed here. One cannot get rid of the impression that human self-confidence is to be gained through the devaluation of other living beings.

Like Aristotle, and largely following him, the Stoics also have clear ideas about which specific abilities are reserved for those living beings that possess reason (cf. on the following Urs Dierauer 1977, 225–235):

- Language: The fact that animals do not have a language is such a fundamental basic conviction of the entire Stoa that one does not think one needs to talk about it much anymore. It has therefore been handed down to us above all by the opponents of the Stoa. In Seneca, however, we find the hint that the articulations of animal voices are “not articulated and confused and incapable of words (*non explanabilis et perturbata et verborum inefficax*)”—and that this is a picture of their soul, which is also devoid of *logos* (Seneca, *De ira* 1, 3, 7). On this one point, the Stoics deviate massively from Aristotle, who had granted language to animals.
- A conscious relationship to the past and future: According to Seneca, animals live largely in the present. They only remember the past when a memory of it is triggered by a sensory stimulus, and they cannot imagine the future at all (Seneca, *Epistula* 124, 16). Cicero concedes that animals have narrowly limited expectations and ideas of the future (*Cicero, De officiis* 1, 11). For him, this narrow limitation results from the fact that animals, unlike humans, cannot think in causal contexts.

- Freedom of will and action: “Every rational being acts only when it has first been excited by the idea (specie) of something, then has received an impulse (impetus), and finally when consent (adsensio) has confirmed this impulse”. (Seneca, Epistula 113, 18) This free assent (Greek *συγκατάθεσις*) is possessed only by man, for it presupposes rational judgement of the idea and the impulse it arouses. Thus, while all living beings must follow the plan of the gods, humans are the only ones who can and should do so of their own free will (Marcus Aurelius, *Meditationes* 10, 28).
- Morality: Animals have neither virtues nor vices (Seneca, *De ira* 1,3,7). When speaking colloquially of their fitness, this is therefore not meant in the moral sense. As empirical evidence of this thesis, the Stoics cite a feeling that animals lack. No animal is ashamed of anything or blushes because of misbehaviour (Epictetus, *Diatribae* 3, 7, 27). They therefore lack *αἰδώς*, a feeling for what is morally appropriate. Only man has a sense of order and measure—aesthetically as well as ethically (Cicero, *De officiis* 1, 14). Modern behavioural research teaches us otherwise.
- Knowledge of God and worship of God: In the Zeus hymn of Kleantes (331–232 BC), the human duty to praise the deity is justified by the exclusive kinship with God and the exclusive gift of language of man: “To praise you, Zeus, is fitting for all mortal men, for they come from you and have received language from all that lives and walks on earth alone.” (Stoicorum veterum fragmenta I, 537, 3–5). However, not only is the worship of God an exclusive endowment of man, but so is the knowledge of God: “It is claimed... that the spirit was given to man by God. Thus, we are related to the celestials and can be called their race or tribe (genus vel stirps). So then, among so many kinds of living creatures, there is no other besides man that has a knowledge of God.” (Cicero, *De legibus* 1, 24).

Of course, most of the elements that the Stoics ascribe exclusively to reason could also be demonstrated in animals with the means of today’s behavioural research and neuroscience. But the good intention of the Stoic considerations should not be overlooked. As already mentioned, the strong emphasis on man’s ability to reason serves to underpin the ethical claim for man to use this reason and to live in accordance with reason (Urs Dierauer 1977, 225). However, this morally good and correct intention is realised in the Stoa in a way that entails serious collateral damage for animals, for it cannot be separated from the “consistency and radicalism with which the

Stoics emphasise the irrationality of animals” (Urs Dierauer 1977, 224). The red carpet is thus laid out for anthropocentrism. Animals are excluded from the (cosmopolitically, immensely broad!) universal community of law.

### 3.5.4 Teleologically strict anthropocentrism

The presentation of the Stoic doctrine of creation had its starting point in the doctrine of *oikeiosis*. This natural striving of all living beings to befriend themselves and to be concerned about self-preservation has a wider horizon from the Stoics’ point of view. It only becomes comprehensible in its full meaning within the framework of Stoic teleology, anthropocentrism.

In his treatise on the nature of the gods, Cicero first describes, with many examples, how wonderfully and purposefully living beings are created and how there is basically no function of their bodies that does not have its purpose. Then he interjects: “Perhaps someone might now ask for whose sake (*cuiusnam causa*) such a mighty work was created. For trees and herbs, whose preservation is ensured by natural law, although they are without sentience (*sine sensu*)? That is absurd! Or for animals? But it is equally improbable that the gods should have taken so much trouble for creatures that cannot even speak and think (*mutarum et nihil intellegentium*). So for whom is the world supposed to have been created? Of course, for the rational living beings, that is, gods and men, undoubtedly the most perfect beings; for reason (*ratio*) surpasses everything.” (Cicero, *de natura deorum* 2, 133).

This section can be understood as a summation of Stoic anthropocentrism. All the key concepts of the ontology of living beings appear and the entire hierarchy of creatures is gone through. In the end, only the recourse to reason remains. But Cicero still wants to substantiate the evidence to support this thesis. He therefore introduces the last part of his treatise as follows: “It remains that at the end of my speech I finally show that everything in this world (*omnia in hoc mundo*) that men use was created and prepared for the sake of men (*hominum causa facta esse et parata*).” (Cicero, *de natura deorum* 2, 154). Cicero then goes through the various realities created one by one and shows that they all serve the benefit of man:

- *The world as a whole*: “In the beginning the world itself was made for the sake of gods and men, and whatever is in it was prepared and invented for the benefit of men. For the world (*mundus*) is, as it were,

the common house (*domus*) of gods and men, or their city (*urbs*); for only those who use reason (*ratione utentes*) live according to right and law (*iure ac lege vivunt*).” (Cicero, *de natura deorum* 2, 154). Cicero thus interprets “house” and “city” as communities of law. And only rational beings can belong to these, ergo gods and humans. One can see the circular argument: If the world is defined as a community of law, it only benefits the rational, namely the subjects of law. And because humans are rational, they have shaped the world as a community of law. Stoic anthropocentrism goes round in circles here.

- *The celestial bodies*: “Even the rotation of the sun, the moon and the other celestial bodies, although it also contributes to the cohesion of the world, nevertheless also gives a spectacle for human beings. For there is no species more insatiable, no species more beautiful and more outstanding in reason and talent (*nulla est enim insatiabilior species, nulla pulchrior et ad rationem sollertiamque praestantior*). For, observing their course, we have known the ripeness of the times, their diversities and changes. If, therefore, these are known to men alone, they must have been made for the sake of men (*quae si hominibus solis nota sunt, hominum facta esse causa iudicandum est*).” (Cicero, *de natura deorum* 2, 155).
- *Plants*: “The use and care (*usus et cura*) of them and of all things is the business of men.” (Cicero, *de natura deorum* 2, 156). “And even if the wild beasts rob or steal some of them, we do not say on that account that they are grown for their sake. For neither do men grow their fruits for the sake of mice or ants, but for the sake of their spouses, children and family members. Therefore, as has been said, the wild beasts enjoy secretly, but the masters (*domini*) publicly and freely.” (Cicero, *de natura deorum* 2, 157). Here, Cicero passes over wild plants and extrapolates all plants from cultivated plants, which man grows—which is rhetorically clever, but argumentatively deficient.
- *The animals*: “And far be it from us that this was done for the sake of the wild beasts, since we see that the wild beasts themselves are created for the sake of men (*ipsas bestias hominum gratia generatas esse*).” (Cicero, *de natura deorum* 2, 158–163, here 158).

With impressive consistency, Cicero pulls anthropocentrism through his treatise. Pre-Stoic philosophy did not do this with such stringency, and even within the Stoa hardly anyone is comparably clear. Nevertheless, “even if anthropocentrism is not formulated in the same extreme everywhere in the

Stoa, the assertion that animals were created for the sake of human beings is one of those propositions that are attested to practically all Stoics” (Urs Dierauer 1977, 240). The reason—I repeat myself—lies in the rationality of man and the irrationality of animals and all other living beings: “The irrational animals and things and objects in general, i.e. the irrational, need you as a reasonable man to be generous and free. But deal with human beings also on a communal basis, since they have reason.” (Marcus Aurelius, *Meditationes* 6,23,1).

So we always encounter the same two arguments to *justify anthropocentrism*:

- The original intention of the deities, who in great care want the best for man, becomes visible in the fact that everything is created for man (Cicero, *De natura deorum* 2, 158–161; cf. also Cicero, *De divinatione* 1, 118.120 and *Stoicorum veterum fragmenta* II, 1163–1166). “To put it bluntly, one could say in the sense of the Stoa: the yoke is not adapted to the ox, but conversely the ox to the yoke (cf. *Cic. nat. deor.* 2, 159).” (Urs Dierauer 1977, 242).
- The lack of reason in animals explains why they cannot be independent *τέλε* in the sense of cosmic teleology. The lower serves the higher, the reasonless the sensible: “Or was it not obvious that the lower beings are there because of the higher, but the higher because of each other? But higher than the inanimate is the animate, and higher than the animate is the rational.” (Mark Aurelius, *Meditationes* 5,16). Any counter-arguments are then fitted into the anthropocentrist system, for example when the usefulness of predators is explained by the fact that they promote the strength of the mind and body in humans (Cicero, *De natura deorum* 2, 161), the usefulness of bugs is explained by the fact that they wake people up from sleep in time, and the usefulness of mice is explained by the fact that they admonish people to be careful with food (*Stoicorum veterum fragmenta* II, 1163). Thus, Dierauer can summarise: “With the proof of the irrationality of animals, the dogma of the creation of animals for the benefit of man stood and fell.” (Urs Dierauer 1977, 243).

Now, it must be acknowledged and appreciated that some Stoics allow some *selective relativisation* of their hard anthropocentrism. With regard to non-human living beings, for example, Seneca concedes that nature also takes care of those living beings that are of no use to others (“*aliis inutilia*”; Seneca, *Epistula* 121,24). Sometimes Seneca even speaks out against the anthropocentrism he usually advocates: “For it is not we who are the reason

for the universe to alternate winter and summer... We think too highly of ourselves if we seem worthy enough that for our sake such great things should be set in motion.” (Seneca, *De ira* 2, 27, 2; cf. also Seneca, *De beneficiis* 6, 23, 3–4). But these are rather exceptions that confirm the rule. Of course, consistent anthropocentrism is particularly affected by the fact that there is also illness, suffering and death among humans. How can that be if the gods have created everything so wonderfully for man? Marcus Aurelius solves the problem by subordinating man to the whole of the cosmos and the gods: “Think, then, of that which the common nature ordains for the complete attainment of the goal as something similar to your health, and welcome everything that happens, however hard it may seem to you, because it leads to the goal, namely to the health of the world and to the prosperous activity and bliss of the highest God. For he would not send anything of the kind to a man if it were not useful to the whole.” (Marcus Aurelius, *Meditationes* 5, 8; similarly Epictetus, *Diatribae* 4, 7, 6).

Max Pohlenz, one of the most important researchers of the Stoa in the 20th century, argued in 1959 that the hard anthropocentrism of the Stoa was “originally far removed from the Greek spirit” (Max Pohlenz 1959, 99). It is therefore “a completely new attitude to life when the Stoa places precisely this thought [...] at the centre of its view of the world. But just as this attitude to life is foreign to ancient Greek life, so familiar is it to us from the Old Testament...” (Max Pohlenz 1959, 100). And he puts forward the daring thesis that the founder of the Stoa, Zenon of Kition (333–261 BC), brought anthropocentrism with him from his Cypriot homeland, which was influenced by Old Testament thought. However, this thesis was and is rejected by most researchers (cf. Urs Dierauer 1977, 240), for there is really nothing true about it: neither does the Old Testament think anthropocentrically, nor was Cyprus Jewish at the time of Zenon, nor is there any textual evidence that and of how Zenon should have adopted anthropocentrism from the early Jewish context. And finally, unlike in Pohlenz’s time, today we have a good reconstruction of the Greek origin of anthropocentrism.

But Dierauer’s thesis that anthropocentrism was presumably developed simultaneously in the Greek and Jewish cultural spheres is also untenable against the background of recent biblical exegesis (cf. chapter 2). Rather, the enormous contrast between the Old Testament (including the “apocryphal” books written in Greek but excluding the Greek translation in the Septuagint!), which is largely biocentrist in its thinking, and the anthropocentrist mainstream of Greco-Roman philosophy is striking. Nowhere in the Bible can you find a sentence that even begins to formulate it like Cicero: “In



the beginning the world itself was made for the sake of gods and men, and whatever is in it was prepared and invented for the benefit of men.” (Cicero, *de natura deorum* 2, 154). This anthropocentrism can be found, albeit sometimes more strongly, sometimes more weakly, throughout the Stoa (Urs Dierauer 1977, 220). What is more, on the question of whether or not non-human creatures belong to the community of law, the Bible and Greek philosophy diametrically contradict each other. This will be shown in the following section.

### 3.5.5 No legal community between humans and animals

In the previous chapter, we determined that the Old Testament naturally presupposes the legal community of humans and animals. Animals and humans are together in the lifeboat of the ark, together they are partners in God’s covenant with his Creation. Consequently, numerous norms of the Torah are dedicated to them.

Such a position is also held sporadically in Greek philosophy. Aristotle’s student *Theophrastus* (371–287 BC), for example, recognizes a legal community between humans and animals on the basis of their natural kinship, as the few fragments of his writing “On Piety” reveal. But in the mainstream of Greek philosophy, there is no mental space for such a community of law. The *aloga* thesis weighs too heavily. Both the Epicureans and the Stoics deny such a community, arguing that animals cannot enter into contracts. Moreover, the Stoics add, inclusion in law is based on natural kinship, and such kinship exists on the part of humans only with other rational beings. Law requires fundamental equality in a legal capacity. Animals are therefore ultimately to be treated like things. This is how Cicero summarises the Stoic doctrine: “Just as they believe that human beings are bound to one another by legal community (*iuris vincula*), so on the other hand they hold that man has no legal relationship with animals (*homini nihil iuris esse cum bestiis*). For Chrysipp aptly said that the rest came into being for the sake of men and gods, but they themselves came into being for the sake of their community (*communitatis*) and their covenant (*societatis*), so that men can therefore use the animals without injustice for their benefit (*ut bestiis homines uti ad utilitatem suam possint sine iniuria*).” (Cicero, *De finibus bonorum et malorum* 3, 67).

According to Chrysipp’s argumentation, the strict anthropocentrism of the Stoa excludes the attribution of animal rights, for it would, after all,

restrict the opportunities for humans to use animals, particularly for non-anthropocentric reasons. On the other hand, a close connection between humans and gods is established for the same reasons. They are connected by reason; consequently they stand in a moral and legal community. Stoic anthropocentrism is covertly a form of theo-anthropocentrism. Humans and gods form a common polis, a common state, from which, however, animals are excluded. This is how Cicero summarises grandly:

“Therefore, since there is nothing better than reason, and since this is both in man and in God, the first thing man has in common with God is reason. But to those who have reason in common, right reason (*recta ratio*) is also common: since this is the law (*lex*), it must be assumed that we men are also united to the gods by the law. Further, among those among whom the communion of law (*communio legis*) prevails, there is also the communion of right (*communio iuris*). But those to whom these things are common must also be considered as belonging to the same state (*civitas eiusdem*)... But they obey this heavenly order, the divine spirit and the almighty God (*caelesti discriptioni mentique divinae et praepotenti deo*), so that now this whole world is to be regarded as one common state of gods and men (*uniuersus mundus una civitas communis deorum atque hominum*).” (Cicero, *De legibus* 1, 23; similar, though shorter Cicero, *De legibus* 1, 33).

One immediately recognises how contrary the Stoic position is to the biblical one. There, it is not reason that is the reason for participation in God’s covenant, but being created and loved by God and his free offer to all creatures. It is not the ability to abide by laws and legal norms that leads to membership in the *civitas*, but the fact that one shares the one house of life of creation, that is, everyone sits in the same boat and either perishes together or lives well together. As grandly as the Stoic idea of the endowment of human beings with reason is developed, the biblical texts nevertheless reveal its enormous blind spot and its fatal consequences. The non-human living beings simply do not come into view.

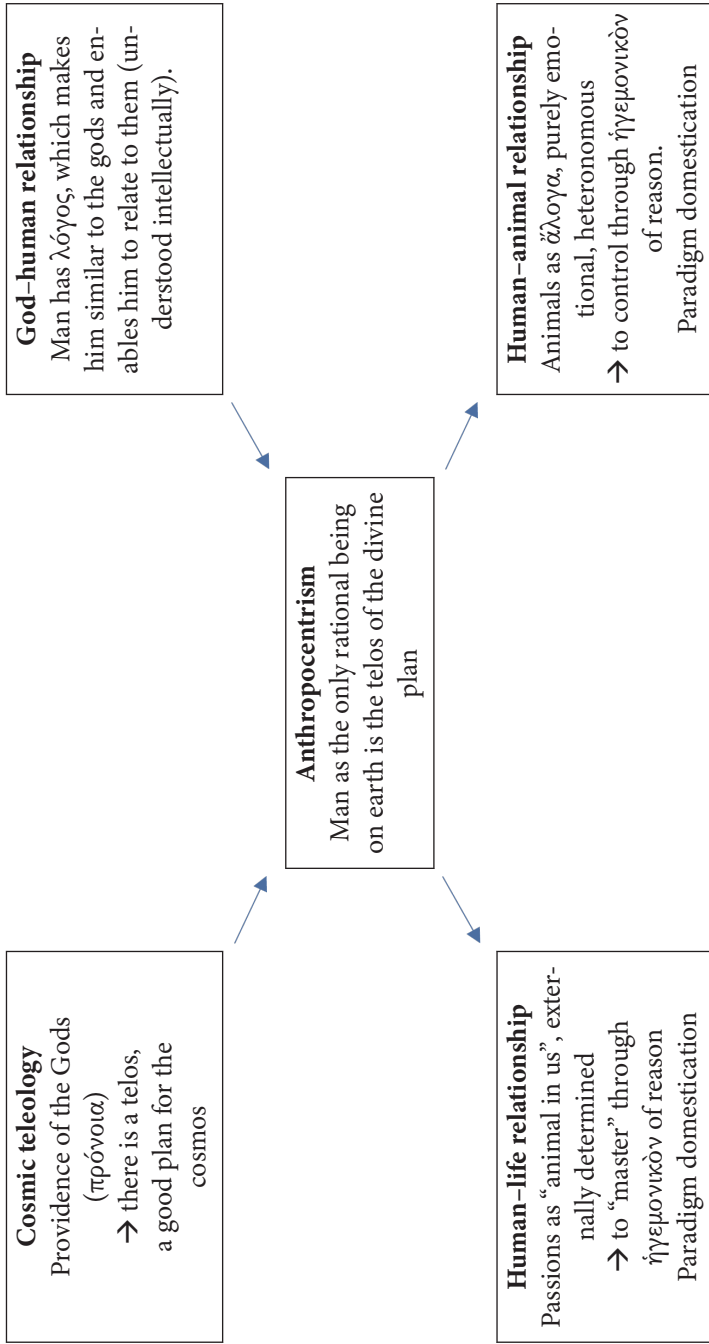
### 3.5.6 Summary: The Core Aspects of Stoic Anthropocentrism

At this point, the time is ripe for an interim assessment which, in maximum brevity, sums up the core aspects of Stoic anthropocentrism. The starting point, as has been emphasised several times, is the two premises of the benevolent providence of the gods and man’s endowment with reason,

which makes him similar to the gods and capable of a relationship with them. Anthropocentrism, i.e. the conviction that the entire world was created for human beings alone, necessarily follows from these two premises.

For the practical life of the morally responsible human being, two maxims result from this. The first concerns humans' relationship to animals and to non-human nature as a whole: they should be domesticated, i.e. guided into reasonable paths, so that they bring about as much benefit for and do as little harm as possible to man. The other maxim concerns man's relationship to his body and above all to his feelings: They are to be controlled because they are the "animal in us" which, without wise guidance, allows itself to be led by external stimuli and makes the human being completely alienated. It should only be noted in passing that in many texts this also justifies the hierarchical superiority of the rational man over the emotionally determined woman.

Diagram: The idea network of stoic anthropocentrism



This second maxim of Stoic ethics is often overlooked in animal ethics debates, although it has shaped Western ethics at least as much as the first, and although it is inseparable from the first in terms of thinking. People will treat the “animal within us” in the same way as the “animal outside us”. And that is, if one adopts the Stoic paradigms of domination, just as questionable, for why should we “master” our feelings in principle? Is there really nothing inherently good about them? And can’t we also critically accompany and balance feelings with other feelings? Why should it be reason alone that judges and corrects them? Could it not even be the case that feelings sometimes correct what seems perfectly reasonable to us? On the one hand, it is charming to demand the same treatment for oneself as for the animals. On the other hand, it seems highly problematic if the model of a hierarchy and an exclusive rule of reason is to apply to this.

One already suspects at this point why Stoic anthropocentrism will be attractive for early Christianity. The two premises can be combined with Christian convictions much better than the premises of other philosophical concepts of the time. Moreover, the Stoa is the popular philosophical model of late antiquity par excellence. The sacrifices for Christian reception lie rather in the two maxims that follow from anthropocentrism: They will hardly be biblically justifiable, but we will come to that in chapter 6.

### *3.6 Criticism of the Stoic Mainstream by a Minority*

The anthropocentrist thesis of the Stoa is steep and pointed. It is therefore not surprising that it arouses opposition. The intellectual origin of its critics is above all neo-pythagoreanism of the 1st century BC, which recognises only gradual, but not principal differences between humans and animals. But scepticism (represented in Pyrrhonism) and Neo-Platonism also contribute to the critical positions.

On the whole, the anti-Stoic critique gives the impression of ignoring some refinements to the Stoic argumentation. In any case, the empirical observations of the younger Stoa are not taken up, especially concerning the spontaneity, uniformity and limitedness of many forms of animal behaviour. Instead, the critics refer almost exclusively to the older Stoa. Since they also often use similar arguments and the same examples of animal behaviour, it seems reasonable to assume that they cite common sources unknown to us, which could be dated back to before Philon (Urs Dierauer 1977, 269; Ubaldo Pérez-Paoli 2001, 97). However, the level of argumenta-

tion of the anti-Stoics varies greatly. Conversely, the younger Stoa deals with their best representatives and their arguments at most very superficially. The discussion does not seem to have been very constructive on either side.

The criticism of the Stoa is as simple as it is effective: its main argument, that animals by nature behave expediently, while humans often do not, despite their reason, is accepted as such. But the right behaviour of animals by nature is precisely their way of exercising reason. After all, even the gods did not have to learn or acquire their knowledge and were still reasonable. Ultimately, an open flank of the Stoa is exposed here, for if animals, like the entire world, are created by the gods and the gods are the epitome of reason, then a certain reason must be inherent in everything created. This need not approach human reason, but to call the animals *aloga* is then in any case no longer possible—the deep gulf between humans and animals is replaced by a flowing transition.

Subsequently, it is then shown—in accordance with the Stoic schema—that animals possess both thinking (*ἐνδιάθετος λόγος*) and language (*προφορικός λόγος*). Some examples are put forward that can be confirmed from the point of view of contemporary behavioural research, but others belong to the realm of fantasy (Urs Dierauer 1977, 271). It was not yet possible for the ancient philosophers to verify the validity of individual reports of animal behaviour.

“The tendency to read human-like thoughts and feelings into an animal is evident everywhere.” (Urs Dierauer 1977, 272). As correct as Dierauer’s observation is, it cannot be used as a basis for the general discrediting of anti-Stoics. Nor is the anthropomorphic interpretation of animal behaviour automatically appropriate. Rather, a discussion based on modern behavioural research would be necessary, example by example—but this would lead away from our question.

### 3.6.1 Tiberius Iulius Alexander

In his dialogue “Alexander or on the Possession of Reason by Animals” (abbreviated Latin title *De animalibus*), of which only an Armenian translation has survived, Philon of Alexandria (15 BC-40 AC), who himself advocates Stoic anthropocentrism, refers to the non-anthropocentrist position of his nephew and son-in-law, Tiberius Iulius Alexander, in order to subsequently refute his arguments. We will get to know Philon’s own position in chapter 4.2. For the time being, we are concerned here with the position of his

nephew, which constitutes the oldest evidence of a well-founded anti-Stoic critique and comes from the New Academy.

Alexander begins by expressing his opposition to Stoic anthropocentrism. There is no unilateral benefit of animals for humans, but a mutual benefit of both for each other. Humans and animals could help and support each other very well (Philon, *De animalibus* 10). In the rest of the treatise, he then addresses the central argument for Stoic anthropocentrism, namely the claim that animals have no reason. “Reason is the best thing that exists; but men have conceded none of it to animals. Rather, they have appropriated it for themselves, as if they had received an irreversible reward from nature.” (Philon, *De animalibus* 11).

Following entirely the Stoic distinction, Alexander sees two kinds of reason—that in consciousness and thought (*ἐνδιάθετος λόγος*) and that in uttered speech (*προφορικός λόγος*). “But even if both kinds of reason appear imperfect in animals, they are nonetheless fundamental.” (Philon, *De animalibus* 12).

Alexander now devotes a relatively short time to animals’ capacity for communication, which he demonstrates with the example of numerous bird species (Philon, *De animalibus* 13–15). Much more extensively, however, he then deals with reason in the consciousness and thinking of animals: “But what is the use of speaking at length about expressed reason and disregarding reason in consciousness?” (Philon, *De animalibus* 16).

Alexander emphasises that he bases his theses on numerous empirical observations of the behaviour of animals in their genuine biotopes: “Some men [...] enter groves, thickets, marshes, and marshlands to observe different species of animals, and to discover whether only the human mind was made in the divine image, and has received a great honour, separate and distinct from that of all other creatures, or whether God has given a common advantage to all creatures.” (Philon, *De animalibus* 16). This sentence is remarkable in two respects. On the one hand, it expresses the importance of behavioural research and the proper interpretation of its results. On the other hand, in this sentence we encounter a criticism of the Stoic-inspired interpretation of the image of God from Gen 1:26 for the first time. Alexander questions “whether only the human mind was made in the divine image”. Obviously, this essence–ontological rather than relational–functional interpretation of the image of God was, in his perception, a prominent element of the theological argumentation of his uncle and father-in-law Philon, but possibly also of Hellenistic Judaism in Alexandria of his time more generally. In any case, Philon is the first to

document this idea in writing—and, as we will see in chapter 4.2, in several texts.

Alexander's core thesis is that reason, although in varying degrees, is present in all animals. "Nature places reason as the dominating force in all souls, but in such a way that in the one there is only a faint hint and a dim and easily destructible form of reason, while in the other [...] there is a clear and hardly destructible one. Thus, a form of reason which is not well visible is given to the other living creatures, but a constant and manifest one is given to man." (Philon, *De animalibus* 29).

This rationality manifests itself in some animals in an enormous skill (τέχνη). Alexander describes this in detail in the web-building of spiders, in the honeycomb construction and division of labour of bees, in the nest-building of swallows and in the tricks of trained circus animals (Philon, *De animalibus* 17–28). He also sees evidence of the art of healing because some animals know what helps them in case of injury or illness (Philon, *De animalibus* 38–39).

Even more comprehensively, he presents examples of the thesis that animals exhibit "virtues of the rational soul" (Philon, *De animalibus* 30). He cites prudence, especially in dealing with their offspring (Philon, *De animalibus* 34), and the capacity for voluntary, interspecies and equitable cooperation that Alexander recognises between free-ranging Thracian falcons and bird catchers (Philon, *De animalibus* 37). Animals are capable of prudence (Philon, *De animalibus* 45–46), moderation—in the sexual sphere even far more than humans (Philon, *De animalibus* 47–50), bravery (Philon, *De animalibus* 51–59) and justice (Philon, *De animalibus* 60–65). They thus possess all four Platonic cardinal virtues. However, animals also display a variety of vices—greed, deceit, bestiality, fear, aggressiveness and many more (Philon, *De animalibus* 66–70). Both virtues and vices presuppose reason (Philon, *De animalibus* 71).

In individual cases, one could, of course, using the background of modern behavioural biology, discuss whether Alexander's examples are suitable as evidence of a certain animal intelligence or not. However, it seems unquestionable that, overall, they rightly question the binary logic of stoic anthropocentrism—here the rational humans, there the reasonless animals.

According to Sextus Empiricus (Pyrrhonian Hypotyposes 1, 69, cf. chapter 3.6.3), the most famous and most cited example of animal intelligence comes from the Stoic Chrysipp. The animal-friendly minority of Greek philosophy received it as clear evidence of animals' capacity for reasoning. So did Alexander (Philon, *De animalibus* 45–46): A hunting dog comes



to a crossroads in pursuit of a fleeing deer. He sniffs first at the left path, then at the right, and finds no scent both times. Then, without sniffing, he takes the third and last path to continue pursuing the deer. The dog, according to Alexander and many other representatives of the minority opinion, concludes: If not A and also not B, then (with a total of only three possibilities) necessarily C. He no longer needs to verify his conclusion by sniffing.

The oldest surviving example of criticism of Stoic anthropocentrism and its *aloga* thesis shows well where the criticism is heading: it does not object to the fact that humans are gradually more intelligent than the other animals, but it does object to the fact that they alone possess reason, while animals are completely devoid of reason.

### 3.6.2 Plutarch of Chaironeia

The Platonist Plutarch of Chaironeia (40–125 AD) left behind an extensive literary work. It includes three treatises on animal reason and the moral status of animals.

The first of the three is “*De esu carniū*”—a rather early and, in terms of argumentation, not yet so mature work, which has also survived in fragments, but which nevertheless hints at some themes that make clear Plutarch’s singularity within the ancient discourse on animal ethics. Plutarch consistently demands the reversal of the burden of proof: it is not those who abstain from meat who must justify themselves, but those who eat it. The question of man’s treatment of animals is for him a question of justice (πρὸς τὰ ζῶα δίκαιον: Plutarch, *De esu carniū* 2, 7, 999 B). In this framework, proportionality between human benefit and animal harm is indispensable (Plutarch, *De esu carniū* 1, 2, 994 D). The infliction of animal suffering needs a proper reason. Even if the work remains with only these hints, the direction of Plutarch’s thinking is very clear.

A small but extremely artful and shrewd piece of writing is Plutarch’s “*Bruta animalia ratione uti*”, which already bears the use of reason by animals in its title. In it, Plutarch draws on an episode from Homer’s *Odyssey*. Odysseus comes to the sorceress Kirke, who has transformed his companions into animals, and demands that she change them back into their human form. Unlike in Homer’s *Odyssey*, however, in Plutarch Kirke asks him to first ask the animals if they want to be changed back into

humans at all. To find out, Odysseus talks vicariously to the pig Gryllos, which—in an example of subtle irony—can of course speak and argue.

Gryllos' position is clear and incontrovertible: humans are the most miserable creatures after all (Plutarch, *Bruta animalia ratione uti* 2, 986 D). Unlike Odysseus, he, Gryllos, and his other companions had the experience of both ways of living—as animals and as humans—and preferred to remain animals (Plutarch, *Bruta animalia ratione uti* 2, 986 E; a subtle allusion to Socrates, who advocated the opposite option), for animals have much more virtue (ἀρετή) than humans (Plutarch, *Bruta animalia ratione uti* 3, 986 F-987 B). Gryllos proves this to Odysseus using the four cardinal virtues. Thus, he can conclude that animals have reason (λόγος) and intellect (σύνεσις), albeit in varying degrees. But he does not believe that rational thinking, understanding and remembering (φρονεῖν καὶ λογίζεσθαι καὶ μνημονεύειν) show such strong differences between the various animals as between the various humans (Plutarch, *Bruta animalia ratione uti* 10, 992 D).

One of the many subtleties in Plutarch's treatise lies in the highly differing use of the Greek terms for animals. While ζῷον is used for animals and humans alike and thus denotes what connects them, θηρίον means an animal in contrast to and hierarchically subordinate to a human. Plutarch reverses this conceptually immanent hierarchy and, especially from the mouth of Gryllos, uses θηρίον to denote that animals are superior to man (Angela Pabst 2019, 80).

Odysseus remains sceptical: “But beware, Gryllos, is it not very daring to ascribe reason (λόγος) to those who are not given knowledge of God (θεοῦ νόησις)?” (Plutarch, *Bruta animalia ratione uti* 10, 992 E). Gryllos answers only with an ambiguous reference to Odysseus' father, Sisyphus, who has cunningly rebelled against the gods. The dialogue ends with this.

The third work by Plutarch that is relevant for us is a treatise on the intelligence of animals: “*De sollertia animalium* is a philosophical and rhetorical dialogue that discusses the special question of whether land or water animals are more rational. Thus, it is not a matter of proving that animals are rational; on the contrary, this is presupposed, even though some counter-arguments are found in the introductory dialogue, which the dialogue participant Soklaros argues unsuccessfully” (Beatrice Wyss 2019, 31). In reality, the question is about animal ethics: “The essay is [...] a contribution to animal ethics, not to philosophy about the nature of animals.” (Angela Pabst 2019, 87).

At the beginning, Autobulos expresses the thesis that the decisive dividing line runs between soulless and thus reasonless beings on the one hand and soul-possessing and thus rational beings on the other. Not between humans on the one hand and animals and plants on the other, but between humans and animals on the one hand and plants on the other, for animals have a precise idea of which beings are their friends and which are their enemies. And “the acts of seizing or pursuing, which arise from the perception of what is useful, and of escaping or fleeing from what is destructive or painful, could by no means occur in creatures who are naturally incapable of any kind of deliberation and judgement, recollection and sympathy. These beings, then, from whom you deny all expectation, memory, design or preparation, and all hopes, fears, desires or sorrows—they will also have no use for eyes or ears [...] If, then, we are so constituted that in order to have sensation we must have understanding, it must follow that all creatures who have sensation can also understand [...] As for those who foolishly assert that animals do not feel pleasure or anger or fear or make preparations or remember, but that the bee remembers ‘as it were’ and the swallow prepares its nest ‘as it were’ and the lion becomes angry ‘as it were’ and the deer is afraid ‘as it were’—I do not know what they will do with those who say that animals do not see or hear but hear and see ‘as it were’; that they have no cry, but cry ‘as it were’; that they also do not live at all, but live ‘as it were.’” (Plutarch, *De sollertia animalium* 3, 960 C-961 F). For Plutarch, then, it is inconsistent to interpret some animal capacities as analogous to human ones and others not. What is interesting here is the argument that the sense organs evoke mental ideas, which in turn produce expectations and desires in connection with memories. For this to happen, the ability to form concepts is needed.

The inconsistency of the comparison is continued after Autobulos when the Stoics claim that the reason of animals is given to them by nature, whereas in humans it is learned and acquired. In contrast, he sees natural and acquired parts in the reason of both humans and animals: “Reason as such is implanted by nature, but true and perfect reason is the result of care and education. And therefore, every living creature has the faculty of reasoning; but if what they seek is true reason and wisdom, not even man can be said to possess it [...] neither has every rational being in the same way a mental dexterity or sagacity that has attained perfection. For just as in animals there are many examples of social bonding and bravery and resourcefulness [...] so on the other hand there are many examples of the

opposite: injustice, cowardice, stupidity.” (Plutarch, *De sollertia animalium* 4, 962 C–D).

Even the everyday use of language shows Plutarch that plants in this sense have neither the capacity to learn nor reason: “Why do we call the sheep more unlearned than the dog, but not the one tree more unlearned than another? And why do we call the deer more cowardly than the lion, but not the one vegetable more cowardly than another? The reason is evidently this: just as in immovable things, the one is not slower than the other, and in soundless things the one is not quieter than the other, so also that which does not by nature possess the faculty of thinking (ἡ τοῦ φρονεῖν δύναμις) is not more cowardly and dull-witted and unrestrained. For in that this faculty has come to each again in a different degree, the apparent differences among living beings have arisen.” (Plutarch, *De sollertia animalium* 4, 962 F–963 A).

So comparing animals in terms of their ability to reason shows that they must have some reason after all: “In the same way, then, we should not say of animals that they are totally lacking in intellect and understanding and have no reason, even though their understanding is less acute and their intellect inferior to ours. What we should say is that their intellect is weak and dim, like a weak and dim eye.” (Plutarch, *De sollertia animalium* 5, 963 A–C).

The highlight of the dialogue is, of course, the questioning of anthropocentrism. And this is closely linked in Plutarch’s work to his plea for a vegetarian diet. Soklaros objects thus: “The Stoics and Peripatetics agree [...] that justice could not arise, but would remain completely without form and substance if all animals participated in reason. For either we are necessarily unjust if we do not spare them; or, if we do not take them for food, life becomes impracticable or impossible [...] We have, therefore, no help for or solution to this dilemma, which deprives us either of life itself or of justice (δικαιοσύνη), unless we preserve that ancient limitation and law by which the Creator distinguished the natural species, and gave to each class its special domain [...] Those who know nothing of right action towards us can receive no wrong from us.” (Plutarch, *De sollertia animalium* 6, 964 A–C). Soklaros here refers to the Stoic denial of a community of law between humans and animals: Only those who can abide by laws themselves, i.e. moral agents, can possess a moral status and be moral patients.

But Autobulos considers the anthropocentric conclusion inaccurate: “There is an alternative, a non-violent principle, which on the one hand does not deprive animals of reason, but on the other preserves the justice

of those who use them in a right way [...] Pythagoras [...] taught us how to profit from animals without injustice. It is certainly no injustice to punish and kill animals that are antisocial and only hurtful, or to tame those that are gentle and kind to man and make them our helpers in the tasks for which they are by nature eminently fitted [...] For life is neither abolished nor ended when a man no longer has for his banquets plates of fish or pâté of foie gras or meat of cattle and goats—or when he no longer forces some animals against their will to assert themselves and fight in the theatre or in the hunt [...] The fact is that it is not those who use animals who treat them unjustly, but those who use them harmfully and carelessly and cruelly.” (Plutarch, *De sollertia animalium* 7, 964 E-965 B). Autobulos thus considers animal use responsible as long as it does not do violence to animals but respects their own aspirations and needs. This demand for justice towards animals for their own sake is unique in all of ancient philosophy (Richard Sorabji 1993, 125; Bardo Maria Gaulty 2012, 53; Stephen T. Newmyer 2014, 232).

Now that it is recognised by all participants in the conversation that animals have reason to a graduated degree, the real main question arises as to whether land or water animals possess more reason and virtue. The hunter Aristotimos provides countless examples in favour of land animals (Plutarch, *De sollertia animalium* 9, 965 E-22, 975 C), the fisherman Herakleon a similarly large number of examples in favour of water animals (Plutarch, *De sollertia animalium* 23, 975 C-36, 985 C). In the end, the contest ends in a draw, which is very typical for Plutarch (Angela Pabst 2019, 88). The winner is the thesis that all animals possess reason (Plutarch, *De sollertia animalium* 37, 985 C) and must therefore be spared. “Thus, it appears that the young hunters and Peter’s disciples [...] delegitimised their own actions.” (Angela Pabst 2019, 89).

Beatrice Wyss sums up the point of the dialogue, which has a much higher intellectual level than Philon’s Alexander: Plutarch’s criticism “seems to be about the sharp division between *ἄλογα ζῶα* and *λογικὸς ἄνθρωπος*. I suspect as the reason a discomfort with the strict separation of living beings along a line of demarcation whose existence is somehow taken for granted, but which in reality cannot be so sharply demarcated; it is this reason, the *λόγος*, the *νοῦς*. It is this self-assurance of the Stoics who know so well that the animal, although it has a soul and is a living being and as such partakes of God (God, in the Stoic view, is the active principle in matter and in all living beings), is nevertheless entirely different from man, precisely because it has no *νοῦς* and no *λόγος*.” (Beatrice Wyss 2019, 33).

### 3.6.3 Sextus Empiricus

The physician and philosopher Sextus Empiricus (2nd century AD) is a representative of Pyrrhonism, a variant of scepticism that goes back to the ancient Greek philosopher Pyrrhon of Elis (ca. 362–275 BC). In his “Outline of Pyrrhonian skepticism”, also called “Pyrrhonian Hypotyposes”, he massively questions human cognitive possibilities. The comparison between animal and human cognitive possibilities in the Pyrrhonian Hypotyposes 62–78 serves him less to show the great intelligence of animals than the narrowly limited cognitive capacity of humans.

First, Sextus proves that animals have better sensory perception and thus also better ideas of reality (Sextus Empiricus, Pyrrhonian Hopotyposes 62–64). He then turns to reason, and there first to inner thought (*ἐνδιάθετος λόγος*) and then to outward language (*προφορικός λόγος*). As for thought, according to Sextus’ fiercest opponents, the Stoics, it consists in “the choice of what is proper to the species and the avoidance of what is foreign to it, the knowledge of the techniques directed to this end, the perception of the virtues which correspond to one’s nature, and of the things which relate to the affects and sufferings” (Sextus Empiricus, Pyrrhonian Hopotyposes 65).

In the following, Sextus restricts himself to a single animal species, the dog, on whose example he attempts to demonstrate all aspects one after the other. He demonstrates the dog’s cleverness with reference to Argos, the dog of Odysseus, who, according to Homer’s epic, is the only one to recognise his master on his return from Troy—despite the hero’s enormous physical change (Sextus Empiricus, Pyrrhonian Hopotyposes 68). As a second example, he cites Chrysipp’s observation, already known from Tiberius Iulius Alexander, that “the hound applies the fifth multi-membered unproven argument when he comes to a three-way path and, after sensing on the two paths that the game had not run along, immediately rushes along the third without having sensed here at all. For he concludes, says the ancient philosopher, in the following sense: ‘The game has either run along here or here or here. But neither here nor here. So here’” (Sextus Empiricus, Pyrrhonian Hopotyposes 69). “Sextus relies on Chrysipp for the argument that dogs know something of dialectic; this is very clever and devious; he beats the Stoics, as it were, with their chief representative.” (Beatrice Wys 2019, 32).

Finally, after Sextus has shown how the dog takes care of its recovery in case of injury or illness (Sextus Empiricus, Pyrrhonian Hopotyposes 70–71), he can sum up: “Then the dog is probably perfect with regard

to inward thinking reason; for on these things rests the perfection of this reason.” (Sextus Empiricus, Pyrrhonian Hopotyposes 72).

Sextus writes relatively briefly about reason expressing itself in language. He remarks: “Even if we do not understand the languages of the so-called reasonless animals, it is not entirely improbable that they talk to each other and that we just do not understand. For we do not understand the language of the barbarians when we hear it, but consider it to be an unvarying sequence of sounds. And we hear from the dogs that they make a different sound when they defend someone off than when they howl or are beaten or wag. In general, if someone wanted to concentrate on this, he would notice a great difference in the sounds of this and other animals in various situations, so that one could therefore rightly say that the so-called reasonless animals also participate in linguistically expressing reason.” (Sextus Empiricus, Pyrrhonian Hopotyposes 74–75).

The sceptical conclusion is therefore “that we cannot value our ideas more highly than those of rational animals. But if the reasonless animals are not more untrustworthy than we are for the assessment of conceptions, and if different conceptions arise according to the diversity of living beings, then I will indeed be able to say how each of the underlying objects appears to me, but how it is according to its nature, about this I will necessarily have to hold back because of what has been said above.” (Sextus Empiricus, Pyrrhonian Hopotyposes 78).

#### 3.6.4 Kelsos

The Platonist Kelsos lived in the second half of the 2nd century. In his lost work “True Doctrine” (*Ἀληθὴς λόγος*), which he wrote in Alexandria around 180 AD, he was the first to criticise Stoic anthropocentrism in its Christian form and advocated consistent Platonic cosmocentrism. Only fragments of his writings have come down to us through Origen (see below chapter 5.7) in his treatise “Contra Celsum”, written around 248 AD. Celsum had already died by this time, but his book obviously still experiences a lively resonance, so that Origen considers dealing with it worthwhile.

Kelsos portrays Christianity as an uneducated and socially isolating current (Horacio E. Lona 2005, 50–54 and 473–474; Michael Fiedrowicz 2011, 29–34; Peter Gemeinhardt 2022, 35 citing Origen, *Contra Celsum* 3, 44) and sees no reason for what he already perceives as the typically Christian assumption that the world was created for the sake of man. It could rather



be argued that it exists for the sake of animals, for by nature, no single species is destined to dominate the world. Christian anthropocentrism is therefore mistaken because the cosmos forms a totality in which each component has equal importance. Instead of anthropocentrism, one could just as well claim that “the world in its entirety was created no more for the sake of human beings than for the sake of reasonless living beings (οὐδὲν μᾶλλον ἀνθρώπων ἢ τῶν ἀλόγων ζῶων ἔνεκεν γέγονε τὰ πάντα)” (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4, 74), for the classical Stoic Christian arguments in favour of anthropocentrism do not hold water for Kelsos: “Why should these things be more for food for men than for the plants, the trees, grasses and thistles? [...] Even if one were to admit that these things are works of God, they are no more intended for food for us men than for the plants, the trees, grasses, and thistles [...] And if you say that these things—namely, the plants, the trees, grasses, and thistles – grow for men, why will you maintain that they grow for men rather than for the wildest reasonless animals?” (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4, 74–75). “But if you also hold up to me the saying of Euripides: ‘Then the sun and the night serve mortals,’ I ask: why then us more than the ants and flies? For even to them the night serves for rest, but the day for sight and activity” (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4, 77.)

Only at the end of a long treatise does Origen come to speak of the cosmocentrist counter-thesis of Kelsos, which he renders thus: “So the whole world was not made for man, nor for the lion or the eagle or the dolphin, but so that this world, as the work of God, might be complete and perfect (ὀλόκληρον καὶ τέλειον) in all its parts. For this reason, all things are well measured (μεμέτρηται τὰ πάντα), not with regard to one another—at most incidentally—but with regard to the whole (τοῦ ὅλου). God provides for the whole (μέλει τῷ θεῷ τοῦ ὅλου), and his providence (πρόνοια) never leaves it; nor does it deteriorate, nor does God take it back to himself after a time.” (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4, 99).

Kelsos also massively questions the anthropocentric interpretation of the biblical mandate to rule: “If someone wanted to call us the rulers of the reasonless (ἄρχοντας τῶν ἀλόγων), since we hunt and eat the reasonless creatures, we will ask: Why were we not rather created for their sake, since they hunt us and eat us? But we also need nets and weapons, and many men to help us, and dogs against the beasts that are to be hunted; whereas they were immediately and intrinsically provided by nature with the weapons by which we are easily overcome by them?” (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4, 78). “In reply to your assertion that God has given us the faculty of catching wild animals (θηρία) and making them useful, let us note that



it is probable that before there were cities and trades and such cooperatives and weapons and nets, men were indeed robbed and eaten by animals, but animals were by no means caught by men.” (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4, 79). “Therefore, at least in this respect, God rather subjected men to animals.” (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4, 80).

Finally, Kelsos also attempts to refute the *aloga* thesis and to prove that animals are endowed with reason. To do this, he uses the example of state-building insects: “If it seems that humans are above reasonless animals because they have built cities and have a state constitution with authorities and rulers, this says nothing; for ants and bees also have this.” (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4, 81). And these little animals even possess certain skills: “The ants remove the germs from the fruits they store, so that they do not swell, but may serve them for food all the year round.” (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4, 83). Finally, Kelsos also observes communication and language between them: “And when they meet, they also converse with each other (*ἀλλήλοις διαλέγονται*); therefore they do not get lost. So they have perfectly formed reason, common ideas of certain general truths, a language, facts and contents of language (*λόγου συμπλήρωσις ἐστὶ παρ’ αὐτοῖς καὶ κοινὰ ἔννοιαι καθολικῶν τινῶν καὶ φωνὴ τυγχάνοντα καὶ σημαίνόμενα*).” (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4, 84). So Celsus can conclude, “Well then, if someone looked down from heaven to earth, what difference would he find between what we do and what ants and bees do?” (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4, 85).

On one point, however, Kelsos makes a serious mistake, which Origen (*Contra Celsum* 4, 86–99) takes full advantage of: Kelsos shares the Egyptian conviction that animals can prophesy, thus have a special closeness to the gods and are in a sense more religious than humans<sup>11</sup>. Here Origen can easily connect to the Jewish philosopher Philon (see chapter 4.2), who had already decisively opposed Egyptian animal manticism two centuries earlier and is still well known in his and Origen’s common hometown Alexandria. Like Philon’s Hellenistic Judaism, Origen presents Stoic Christianity as enlightened and exposes Egyptian animal-based divination practices as superstitious and unreasonable.

Finally, however, Kelsos also comes to the question of eating meat: “So when it happens according to a custom (*πάτριον*) inherited from the fathers that they [sc. the Christians] abstain from any sacrificial animals (*ιερείων τινῶν ἀπέχονται*), they must abstain altogether from such (*τῶν τοιῶνδε*)

11 For the original wording of the Kelsos quote, see Johannes Arnold 2010, 68–71.

and (in general) from the enjoyment of all animals, as also seems right to Pythagoras, since he honours the soul and its organs.” (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 8, 28 in the punctuation of John Arnold 2010, 72). The argument of Kelsos against the eating of meat by Christians thus runs as follows: Almost all other religions know of animals that are completely taboo both for sacrifice and for consumption, such as the unclean animals in Judaism. Logically, this should also be the case in Christianity. But since Christianity rejects *all* kinds of sacrificial animals, it would also have to renounce meat altogether (Johannes Arnold 2010, 73). Kelsos refers here to Pythagoras, with whom he obviously agrees.

Lucia Bacci (2007, 117 and 119) is right that Kelsos is not really concerned with animals. He has little interest in them. Rather, on the one hand, he wants to lick the sting of the anthropocentric mainstream; on the other hand, he is interested in the big picture of cosmic harmony. He is a true holist. Before this, all parts of the cosmos, including humans and animals, pale into insignificance.

### 3.6.5 Porphyrios of Tyros

The Neo-Platonic philosopher Porphyrios (233–305 AD) came from Tyros in Syria via Athens to Rome, where he developed into Plotinus’ most important student. Like his teacher, Porphyrios was a staunch opponent of Christianity and a knowledgeable critic of the Bible. One of the most prominent writings in his oeuvre of over 60 monographs is the pamphlet “Against the Christians”, which, however, was completely destroyed by an edict from the Emperor Constantine precisely for this reason. His other writings, however, were positively received by Christianity.

Of particular importance for our question is his treatise “*De abstinentia ab esu animalium*”—“On the abstinence of eating animals”—which recommends abstinence from meat to philosophers who are particularly God-fearing and strive for perfection (Ubaldo Pérez-Paoli 2001, 94). While in the first two books of this work Porphyrios deals with the psychological and spiritual effects of eating meat and in the fourth book he offers cultural and historical reflections on nutrition in the early days of humankind, in the third book he is concerned with the moral status of animals and their ability to reason. It is actually the most animal ethical of the four books.

First, Porphyrios deals in detail with the aloga thesis. He disputes the Stoic coupling of the ability to reason with the question of whether a mode

of behaviour is learned: “Whoever says that animals have this [purposeful behaviour] by nature (φύσει) does not even realise that he is claiming that they are reasonable by nature.” (Porphyrios, *De abstinentia* 3, 10). Porphyrios refers to the gods, who also did not acquire reason by learning: “Nor did the divine become reasonable (λογικόν) by learning (μάθησις). For there was never a time when it was reasonless (ἄλογον), but simultaneously with its existence it was also sensible.” (Porphyrios, *De abstinentia* 3, 10). So, contrary to the Stoic conviction, animals do very well have reason, otherwise they could neither serve man nor envy and quarrel among themselves (Porphyrios, *De abstinentia* 3, 13). All animals have reason to some extent, even if most of them are imperfect (Porphyrios, *De abstinentia* 3, 18).

In a second step, Porphyrios deals with Stoic anthropocentrism. According to him animals are not created solely or primarily for human benefit—why else would there be wild animals that could not be hunted (Porphyrios, *De abstinentia* 3, 20)? And anyway, in such a strictly (mono-)teleological view as the Stoic one, man in turn would be created for the benefit of lions (Porphyrios, *De abstinentia* 3, 25). No, animals have the same mode of origin as humans and are therefore, unlike plants, their relatives (Porphyrios, *De abstinentia* 3, 26). It is piquant that Porphyrios here reinterprets the concept of οἰκέωσις, which is so central in Stoic doctrine. Whereas for the Stoics it meant being at home in one’s own existence, it is now used for the kinship relationship between humans and animals.

For Porphyrios, the preceding natural philosophical considerations lead to the legal community between humans and animals, which includes the prohibition of killing tame animals and only permits the killing of animals in self-defence. The principle of justice demands a necessity for every use of force, but the consumption of meat is not necessary (Porphyrios, *De abstinentia* 3, 18.26). Finally, the principle of non-harm is proper to God (Porphyrios, *De abstinentia* 3, 27). This last sentence is read by the overwhelming majority of interpreters as meaning that Porphyrios, like Pythagoras but unlike Plutarch, is not concerned with animals as such, but with the divine action on animals, which is supposed to be exemplary for humans. Living philosophically means taking the perfect God as one’s model—and this then also applies to his actions towards non-human creatures (Ubaldo Pérez-Paoli 2001, 94; Stephen T. Newmyer 2006, 97–98 and 2014, 232).

### 3.6.6 Summary

Since about the turn of the century, there has been noticeable criticism of the Stoic mainstream: of its sharp division between humans and animals, its striking certainty regarding the *aloga* thesis, its strict and monolinear anthropocentrism, and of its relentless exclusion of animals from the community of law.

This criticism comes from different sides and from different philosophical traditions—Neo-Pythagoreanism, Neo-Platonism, scepticism—and partly from rather unknown, but partly also from very prominent personalities such as Plutarch and Porphyrios. Initially, it is directed against the Stoa as a philosophical school, then also against Judaism and Christianity, insofar as these receive Stoic ideas.

The argumentative quality of the anti-anthropocentrist critique is very different, and so is its justification. Tiberius Iulius Alexander and Kelsos argue more in terms of popular philosophy along the lines of empirically made scientific observations. Sextus Empiricus mainly expresses scepticism towards human cognitive abilities—not about animals or animal ethics at all. Porphyrios thinks mainly from the doctrine of the transmigration of souls and at the same time propagates the ideal of perfection as a practical life option for a select few. Animals appear mainly indirectly and mediated through other teachings. Plutarch is the only one who is really centrally and directly concerned with animals and with justice towards them. At the same time, his argumentation is undoubtedly the most subtle and nuanced.

Reception of the anti-Stoic critique nevertheless remains limited. Long before the triumph of Christianity in the 4th and 5th centuries, namely since its emergence, the critique has been the position of a minority, which its representatives probably also recognise. Nevertheless, the question arises as to how Stoic anthropocentrism could enter early Judaism and early Christianity, when it diametrically contradicts all the biblical texts presented so far. The explanatory paradigm is: Hellenisation or Hellenism. The next chapter is devoted to this.

## 4 Prehistory 3: Pre-Patristic Traces of the Hellenisation of Biblical Animal Ethics

After the deportation of the Jerusalem upper class into Babylonian exile from 587 BC to about 545 BC, some of the deportees did not return to Israel, but scattered throughout the Near and Middle East and the Mediterranean. From this time onwards, there is a notable “Jewish” diaspora (although the term “Jewish” only appears in the Hellenistic period)—first in the Persian empire of King Cyrus and his successors, then from 333 BC in the Greek empire of Alexander the Great and his successors. From this moment on, an intensive encounter and confrontation between the Israelite-Jewish religion and Greek culture and its philosophy takes place.

But this encounter does not take place at eye level. It is not symmetrical, as if two cultures with equal rights and equal strength were meeting here. Rather, Greek culture is already dominant in purely quantitative terms. Today we would call it a “leading culture”. The Jewish diaspora thus absorbs Greek culture, while the reverse process does not take place.

This is precisely what is called Hellenism. It means the spread of Greek culture and language, but also of philosophy beyond the Greek heartland and its penetration “into all areas of life: in language and literature, religion and philosophy, science and art, politics and economics, education and upbringing” (Michael Tilly 2005, 42). No one can completely escape this influence “in the long run [...]” (Michael Tilly 2005, 43). Hellenism is thus a cultural and historical rather than a political phenomenon, although it presupposes Alexander’s world empire as a political framework for its enormous spread. Yet it remained the dominant cultural trend until late antiquity, that is, until a time when the Greek world empire had long since been replaced.

As a designation of a historical epoch, the term Hellenism has only been in use since the 19th century. However, in the sense of imitating the Greek way of life in language, costume and customs, the noun *ἑλληνισμός* and the verb *ἑλληνίζειν* were already used in antiquity. The New Testament calls Greek socialised Jews *ἑλληνισταὶ* (Acts 6:1; 9:29; 11:20).

The Hellenistic world encompasses a vast area, from Sicily and Lower Italy (Magna Graecia) to Greece, India and present-day Afghanistan, as well as from the Black Sea to Egypt. The Hellenisation of the Oriental popula-

tion ensures that, at least until the 7th century, a simplified form of Greek, Koiné (from κοινός, common), was used alongside Aramaic by the urban population of Syria. In Asia Minor, this even lasted considerably longer. The cultural traditions of Hellenism also survived the political collapse of the Roman Empire and continued to have an effect in Rome and the Byzantine Empire for centuries.

Relatively early on, Hellenism also gained considerable influence over Diaspora Judaism. From the 3rd century BC to the 1st century AD, the so-called Apocrypha emerged, religious writings in the Greek language that seamlessly followed the Hebrew books of the Jewish Bible in time and had a high status. Although they were probably never canonised in Judaism, the fact that some of them found their way into the canon of the “Old Testament” in Christianity presupposes their high esteem in Hellenistic Judaism.

Of even greater importance for the Hellenisation of Diaspora Judaism is the Septuagint, a translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek, which was produced from about 250 BC onwards, mainly in Alexandria, the largest metropolis in the eastern part of the Roman Empire and the centre of early Hellenistic Judaism. It was a project of the century. By about 100 BC, most of the books of the Hebrew Bible had been translated, with the rest to follow by 100 AD. The motivation for producing a Greek translation of the Bible may have been, internally, the strengthening of the identity of Diaspora Jewry, and externally, the self-confident presentation of one’s own tradition in the plural discourse of society (also symbolised by the fact that the Jewish Bible was thus able to find its way into the world-famous library of Alexandria, cf. Siegfried Kreuzer 2016, 46–49). “With the Septuagint, Judaism entered into a public discourse with Hellenistic world culture.” (Heinz-Josef Fabry, in: Erich Zenger et al. 2016, 61).

At the same time, a fundamentalist resistance movement was forming in Greek-ruled Israel: The Maccabees. Their emergence was triggered by the erection of a statue of a god in the Jerusalem Temple at the behest of the Greek Diadochi ruler Antiochus IV Epiphanes. For devout Jews, this meant the desecration of the most sacred aspect of their religion. But beyond this open disregard for religion by the ruler, Maccabean ideology also fed on a broad cultural unease about the increasing Hellenisation of their environment. For example, the fact that Greek men play sports completely naked was anathema to them. The “clash of civilisations” was fundamental in their view.

In this way, intra-Jewish conflicts arose between the Hebrew or Aramaic-speaking Jews of Israel and the Greek-speaking Jews in the Diaspora. As the movement of Jesus of Nazareth gradually became internationalised after Easter, these tensions quickly spread to it. Even the early Church in Jerusalem experienced a fierce dispute that could only be resolved by doubling the Church leadership and creating a separate governing body for each of the two parts of the Church: the Hebrew-Aramaic and the Hellenistic (Acts 6). And the fact that there is a tense atmosphere between Paul and the circle of the Twelve appointed by Jesus himself throughout his life is also due to this. While the Twelve are all Aramaic-speaking Galileans, Paul comes from the Hellenistic Jewish community of Tarsos. He does not understand the Aramaic mother tongue of Jesus, and the Hebrew way of life is foreign to him. “Paul uses the LXX, not the Hebraica. This means that he was not able to read the Old Testament in its original language. Rather, he was dependent on the translation that made the Old Testament accessible to him in his mother tongue: the Septuagint.” (Peter Pilhofer 2019, 19).

With the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish Temple in 70 AD, Judaism and the Jesus Community experienced a further surge in Hellenisation. The language of the entire New Testament and most of the writings of the early Church Fathers was Greek. The centre of young Christianity shifted from the one Hebrew centre of Jerusalem to several Greek and Latin centres: Rome, Antioch, Alexandria and Edessa. “Hebrew”, or more precisely Aramaic-speaking Jews, made up a smaller and smaller proportion of those who joined the Christian community, until at some point they disappeared altogether. Thus, in summary, “non-Hellenised’ Christianity has never existed [...]” (Peter Gemeinhardt 2022, 3).

In Judaism, however, there was a remarkable turnaround: After the Bar Kochba uprising against the Romans and the expulsion of the Jews from Palestine in 135 AD, Judaism henceforth existed only as Diaspora Judaism. In the territory of Palestine, it was as good as extinct. But the Palestinian Jews then took over the leadership of Diaspora Jewry. This increasingly distanced itself from its Hellenistic currents—at least where it recognised Hellenistic ideas as such—, forbade the use of the Septuagint, which it increasingly perceived as a “catastrophe” (Heinz-Josef Fabry, in: Erich Zenger et al. 2016, 62), and withdrew entirely to its Hebrew and Aramaic traditions. Therefore, almost all Hellenistic-Jewish writings have survived only in Christian manuscripts and codices. Hellenistic Judaism perished.

Christianity, on the other hand, soon became so embedded in Hellenistic culture that it no longer perceived it as foreign or coming from outside but

regarded it as a genuine heritage. Like Hellenistic Judaism before it, it read the Bible with Greek paradigms—but not vice versa: Greek philosophy with biblical paradigms. A dialogue with rabbinic Judaism, which continued regionally, could not stop this trend in its entirety.

In addition, there is a fundamental difference: while Judaism never proselytised in its entire history, Christianity sees itself as a missionary religion from the very beginning. In its opinion, the whole world ought to hear and accept the Gospel (Mt 28:16–20). But if you wanted missionary success, you had to engage with the surrounding culture. The message of Jesus had to be inculturated.

Christianity did not succeed immediately. For about two hundred years it remained a vanishingly small minority of less than one percent of the population (Kyle Harper 2020, 231). Only after the “Cyprianic Plague”, presumably an Ebola pandemic named after its most prominent reporter, Bishop Cyprian of Carthage, which raged from about 245 to 265 AD, did the community of Christians grow in leaps and bounds. People saw that Christians lovingly cared for their sick relatives and that this led to a much lower mortality rate than in the population as a whole. So all of a sudden many people joined Christianity. By 300 AD, Christians already comprised 15 to 20 per cent of the total population, making them a “mass phenomenon.” (Kyle Harper 2020, 231). When Emperor Constantine came to power a little later, he converted to the most dynamic and successful religious movement of his time.

In order to understand the assimilation of Stoic anthropocentrism by early Christianity, an additional consideration is important: when a small religious community sets out to become a “mass phenomenon”, it is easier to persuade the majority who do not yet believe to adopt new beliefs than to adopt a new ethos. We will prove this with the example of ritual slaughter in chapter 4.3.4. It is much easier to accept Jesus as the Saviour of the world than to eat only kosher slaughtered meat from now on. The success of Christianity in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries was also due to its flexibility in adapting to the morals and laws of the Greco-Roman world. It is obvious that in the long run this can diminish the credibility of one’s own message.

#### 4.1 *The late Old Testament texts*

In the Old Testament, as it is used in Christianity, there are some books from the time of Hellenism that are still written in Hebrew, some also in



Aramaic, and some that are written in Greek. The latter were obviously highly esteemed in early Hellenistic Judaism but were never included in the Jewish Bible due to its decline after the Bar Kochba revolt. Christianity, on the other hand, included them in the canon of its sacred writings.

Among the *Hebrew writings of the Old Testament*, there are four that fall in passages or entirely into the period of Hellenism, namely the Book of Proverbs and the Books of Job, Qohelet and Jonah. Of these, at least one deals directly with Hellenism, namely the Book of Qohelet. The books are briefly presented in the order of their dating, especially with regard to the perception of animals and the question of anthropocentrism.

The *Book of Proverbs*, also called Proverbs of Solomon, collects countless short sayings of wisdom from a period of around 600 years. The most recent of them date back to the 3rd century BC. Among them, a few deal with animals and emphasise above all their role model function vis-à-vis humans. “Thus, Prov 6:6–8 praises the wisdom of the ant, which in harvest time provides for its food in winter and sets it as an example for the lazy to emulate. The numerical verse Prov 30:24–28, on the other hand, puts together four animal species, the ant, the clipper, the grasshopper and the gecko, which make up for their smallness and weakness with a special measure of wisdom that guarantees their survival.” (Peter Riede 2010, chap. 1.9). These sayings reveal a certain closeness to Greek philosophy, which also often presents animals as models for humans. Unlike Greek philosophy, however, there is no reference in the Book of Proverbs to human reason, which the Greeks always emphasise. Similarities to the Greeks are again discernible in Prov 30:29–32, where kings are admonished not to strut around as vainly as the lion, the cock or the lead goat. Here too, however, there is no reference to human reason or the reasonlessness of animals.

The greatest fame may have come from Prov 12:10: “The righteous has mercy on his cattle, but the heart of the wicked is unmerciful.” Literally, it actually says: “The righteous knows the soul/desire (נפש—nepeš) of his cattle”, while the concept of mercy (רחמים—raḥmê) is only found in the second half of the sentence. Whoever wants to do justice to an animal must know its needs—an intellectual condition—and be moved by them—an emotional condition. Here, animals are quite naturally the recipients of justice—they belong to the legal community, which constitutes a fundamental difference to Greek philosophy.

The *Book of Job* was written between the 5th and 3rd centuries BC. A short passage from it pays tribute to the animals who can teach people about God’s creative power: “But only ask the animals, they will teach

you, / The birds of the sky, they will tell you. / Or speak to the earth, it will teach you, / The fish of the sea will tell you. / Who of them all would not know / That the hand of the LORD has made this? / In his hand rests the soul of all life (נֶפֶשׁ כָּל-חַיָּה—nepeš kāl-ḥāy) / and every man's body spirit (רוּחַ אִישׁ-בְּשָׂר-כָּל רוּחַ—rūaḥ kāl-bəšar-ʾiš).” (Job 12:7–10). One need not take the “asking” and “telling” literally at all. And yet the text speaks of a self-evident respect for animals as God's creatures as well as the perception of a fundamental equality with and difference from human beings: On the one hand, the “souls of all life” rest in God's hand. On the other hand, the rūaḥ is attributed to humans alone.

Towards the end of the book, in Job 38–39, the theology of creation is unfolded in an address by God to the suffering and questioning Job. Its structure follows the dichotomy of the creation of the foundations of life and living beings familiar from Gen 1. In Job 38:4–38, God emphasises his greatness and wisdom as the creator above all of light and water as the two elements most necessary for life. Unlike in Gen 1, the living spaces and plants do not appear here. God's speech then culminates in Job 38:39–39:30, where he substantiates his greatness and wisdom by referring to the diversity and talents of animals. He, and not man, is the Lord of the animals. His caring providence is not only for human beings but also for animals. The contrast with the Stoa is abundantly clear here, even if there is no sign of a conscious demarcation.

The third Hebrew text from Hellenistic times is the *Book of Qohelet*, which dates back to the second half of the 3rd century BC. “According to the instructions in Qoh 11:9–12:7, Qohelet [...] may have been a wisdom teacher or a scribe who taught young men of the Jerusalem upper class in early Hellenistic times. [...] The aim of the preacher is to provide guidance for a successful life in the face of the ambivalence of life's experiences. The starting point is not least social and economic upheavals in Syria–Palestine, prompted by Hellenism spreading across the Near East.” (Markus Witte 2006, chap. 3.4). The Book of Qohelet shows great intellectual “proximity to Near Eastern wisdom texts and to Greek philosophy from the Pre-Socratics to the Stoa and Epicurus” (Markus Witte 2006, chap. 3.1). The central question of happiness in Qohelet is also discussed in the Greek schools of philosophy.

The fulcrum of Qohelet's specific response is creation theology. “Qohelet's world, like that of the other biblical writers, is a dying world. Ecclesiastes only says this more clearly than those with his motto ‘it is all transitory’. Man and animal have the same fate of death (Qoh 3:19). With

this assessment, Qohelet is in line with the traditional Old Testament notion of death as an absolute limit and at the same time sets itself apart from eschatological and apocalyptic notions that emerged in the 3rd century BC. More forcefully than other biblical witnesses, he emphasises the absolute dependence of human beings on life spaces and life cycles opened up by God.” (Markus Witte 2006, ch. 4).

A clearly anti-Stoic and anti-anthropocentric punch line is contained in the passage in Qoh 3:18–21: “As for individual human beings, I thought to myself that God singled them out and that they themselves must realise that they are actually animals. For every human being is subject to destiny and the animals are also subject to destiny. They have one and the same destiny. When they die, so do those destinies. Both have one and the same breath. There is no advantage of man over the animal. For both are a breath of wind. Both go to one and the same place. Both are born from dust; both return to dust. Who knows whether the breath of individual human beings really rises upwards, while the breath of animals sinks down into the earth?” The closing question of this impressive paragraph resonates with a deep scepticism about the Stoic thesis. “Who knows?” asks Qohelet, doubting the strict divide between the rational soul of human beings and the reasonless soul of animals. Rather, he recognises an “animal-likeness of man” (Ludger Schwienhorst-Schönberger 2004, 282; cf. Peter Riede 2017, 119).

The fourth book of the Hebrew Bible from the time of Hellenism is the *Book of Jonah*. It dates back to the time around 200 BC and is thus clearly located in Hellenism and no longer in the Persian period, to which the Book of Jonah looks back with a transfigured gaze. As fairytale-like as the book may seem, it is nevertheless an impressive teacher’s tale that admonishes Hebrew Jews not to look down disdainfully on other cultures and religions. What is interesting is the emphasis twice on the role of animals in the city of Nineveh. Thus, animals are quite naturally seen as equal addressees of Jonah’s sermon on repentance: “All men and beasts, cattle, sheep and goats, shall not eat, nor feed, nor drink water. They shall clothe themselves in robes of repentance, both man and beast.” (Jonah 3:7–8).

And just as the animals are obliged to fast and repent, so in the end, since they obediently obey the call, they will be pardoned by God just as humans are. For God has compassion on them: “Then the LORD said: You have compassion (חַסָּדִים—*ḥastā*) on a castor bean bush for which you did not work and which you did not raise. Overnight it was there; overnight it died. Shall

I not then have compassion on Nineveh, the great city, where there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot distinguish between right and left—and so many cattle besides?” (Jonah 4:10–11). This concluding question is the most important passage in the book and the punch line of the narrative. God not only has compassion on the people who are so unreasonable that they cannot even distinguish right from left, but also on the animals who—the text suggests—are far more reasonable and insightful. Now, as I said, the objective of the text is not the refutation of other cultures, but their fundamental appreciation by Hebrew Judaism. The book is not concerned with refuting the *aloga* thesis. Nevertheless, it becomes clear that it is far from the authors’ intention to devalue animals in comparison to humans. They are included in the legal community of the great city of Nineveh with equal rights and obligations.

Like the Book of Job, the *Book of Jesus Sirach* was written around 200 BC. Until the first fragments of its Hebrew text were discovered in the synagogue in Cairo in 1896, which were accompanied by finds from Qumran and Masada in 1947 and 1964 respectively, it had been assumed for almost 2000 years that the book had been written in Greek. However, the original Hebrew text can no longer be completely reconstructed, so that the Greek text of the Septuagint is used here<sup>12</sup>. The Book of Sirach takes a very critical view of the emerging Hellenisation of Israel. To counteract the loss of Hebrew or early Jewish identity, Rabbi Ben Sira gathers young people around him in a “house of learning” (Sir 51:23). His theology of creation seems to do without animals for long stretches. Thus, in the great praise of the Creator in Sir 42:15–43:33, the “multitude of living creatures” is mentioned only once (Sir 43:25). Otherwise, the text is about the sun, moon and stars as well as the different aggregate states of water (snow, clouds, hail, hoarfrost, ice and mist). Not even human beings are mentioned. Their creation, on the other hand, is dealt with in detail in Sir 33:7–15—a kind of interpretation of the formation of man from clay in Gen 2 and a deeper reflection on the earthbound nature of human beings.

Ben Sira offers a comprehensive interpretation of the Creation narratives in Gen 1–9 in Sir 16:24–17:23. After the introductory verses (Sir 16:24–25), it is first emphasised that God’s order of creation, in which all creatures have each been assigned their own “domains” (ἀρχαί), lasts forever (Sir 16:26–27a). In the creative peace of Paradise, all creatures respected this

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12 A synopsis of the fragments of the Hebrew text is currently being compiled by a group of researchers led by Saarland University.

order. There is no competition and no hunger among them (Sir 16:27b-28). Nevertheless, all living creatures return to earth as created by God (Sir 16:29–30). Ben Sira does not yet know the idea of an eternal life.

The larger part of the treatise—and this is very symbolic—is devoted to the creation of man and his special place in creation (Sir 17:1–23): First, it is emphasised again that he too is created from earth and returns to earth (Sir 17:1–2a). However, the entire rest of the text then reflects his special position. And here something remarkable happens: for the first time, the image of God is reinterpreted in the sense of Greek thought. The functional–relational statement that man was created in the image of God (Gen 1:27) becomes the essence–ontological statement that he was created in His image (κατ’ εικόνα αὐτοῦ ἐποίησεν αὐτούς; Sir 17:3). This is the exact rendering of Gen 1:27 according to the Greek Septuagint, which, as I said, was produced by Hellenistic Judaism in Alexandria. It would be most exciting to know whether the original Hebrew text of the Book of Sirach still remains in Hebrew and relational–functional thinking or whether it too already thinks in categories of Greek essence ontology.

Further on, in describing the relationship between humans and animals, the ideal situation in Gen 1:28 is then mixed with the conflictual real situation in Gen 9:3: “He has put the fear of him on all living creatures / and power to command wild beasts and birds (κατακυριεύειν θηρίων καὶ πετεινῶν).” (Sir 17:4). This blending blurs the tension between a real fear-based and an ideal peaceful form of rule, which is the clincher in Gen 1–9—morally a highly problematic process. In what follows, human beings are then ascribed, entirely in the ductus of Greek essence ontology and in a very imprecise orientation to the Stoa (Johannes Marböck 2010, 214), gifts that obviously constitute their God-like image (Sir 17:6–23): decision-making ability (διαβούλιον), speech (γλῶσσα), understanding (διανοεῖσθαι), knowledge (ἐπιστήμη), insight (σύνεσις) and the ability to know God. Even if it is not explicitly stated that the image of God is given in the ability to reason, this conclusion is very obvious. After all, man is morally committed to the care of all living creatures: Sir 17:12 refers to the “everlasting covenant”, presumably the Noah covenant (cf. Johannes Marböck 2010, 216), which is summarised in Sir 44:18, quoting Gen 9:11 thus: “Never again shall all living creatures be destroyed by a flood.” Here the arc is closed that began in Sir 16:26–28 with the description of a comprehensive creation peace between humans and animals.

Paradoxical as it may seem, it is Ben Sira, who is extraordinarily critical of Hellenism, receives Greek anthropology. The essentialisation of Gen

1:27 is a paradigm shift that is encountered here for the first time and remains unique within the Christian Bible. And even if the juxtaposition of human reason and the reasonlessness of animals does not appear explicitly, it resonates perceptibly in the background. Nevertheless, the old biblical ideal of peace between humans and animals is still present and softens the otherwise steep anthropology of the book.

The *Book of Wisdom* was written directly in Greek. Scholars locate it in Egypt, probably in Alexandria, and date it back to the time between the Emperor Augustus' assumption of power in Egypt in 30 BC and a letter by the Emperor Claudius to the Jewish community of Alexandria in 41 AD. It was thus written practically at the same time and place as the work of Philon of Alexandria, which we will analyse in the following section.

The Book of Wisdom thinks very anthropocentrically. God takes the whole of creation into his service for the sole purpose of educating man. Even the animals, which are referred to here as *aloga* for the only time in the Bible, appear exclusively as God's teaching tools for the education of man. In the background is the Egyptian worship of animals as gods (Wis 12:24; 15:18–19), “the worst form of idolatry” (Luca Mazzinghi 2018, 319), which God seeks to eliminate “homeopathically” with the same remedy, that is, with animals, that is, animals that torment man (Wis 16:1, 5–14; 19:10) as well as with helpful animals that comfort man (Wis 16:2–4; 19:11–12). The frogs, locusts, biting flies and snakes torment, while the quails are comforting. The examples are thus taken without exception from the Exodus narrative—only too understandable for an Egyptian scripture. Like in a preview, it says at the beginning: “As a punishment for their unintelligent and unrighteous thoughts (λογισμοί), / By which misled they worshipped reasonless (ἄλογα) creeping animals and insignificant beasts, / You sent them a multitude of reasonless animals (ἄλογα ζῶα). / You should realise: One is punished by that by which one sins.” (Wis 11:15–16). The disdainful term “creeping things and beasts (ἔρπετὰ καὶ κνώδαλα)” was probably a “commonplace of polemics against the Egyptian animal cult, which was not limited to Jewish literature but was also practised by Greek philosophers” (Luca Mazzinghi 2018, 319 and 324).

But from the point of view of the Book of Wisdom, people are not very reasonable either. Rather, their unreasonableness is constantly emphasised. God must constantly intervene with punishment and encouragement so that they get back on the right path. God lays on them “like reasonless children (ὡς παισὶν ἀλογίστοις)” punishments (Wis 12:25). The *aloga* term is thus also applied to people.

Finally, a biocentrist or even ecocentrist counterpoint is set by the passage in Wis 11:24–26: “You love all that is, (τὰ ὄντα πάντα) / and abhor nothing of what you have made; / for if you had hated anything, you would not have created it. / How could anything endure without your will / or how could anything be preserved that was not called into existence by you? / You spare everything because it is your own, Lord, you friend of life (φείδη δὲ πάντων, ὅτι σὰ ἐστίν, δέσποτα φιλόψυχε).” God is thus literally a lover of all that exists and a friend of animate beings. Such formulations do not occur anywhere in the texts of the Stoa. In Greek, the φιλόψυχος is actually the one who clings to life in a cowardly manner. “The Book of Wisdom here turns the sense of the word around and makes it an adjective with a positive meaning.” (Luca Mazzinghi 2018, 318). God is like “a householder who has the highest regard and respect for the lives of his subjects” (Luca Mazzinghi 2018, 323).

The chronological passage through the Old Testament books from the time of Hellenism thus makes it clear, first of all, that early Judaism remains resistant to Greek paradigms for quite a long time. These are found only in the books of Jesus Sirach and Wisdom—the two latest books of the Christian Old Testament considered here, which are not included in the Hebrew Bible of Judaism. But even in these two, the harsh theses of Stoic anthropology and its deep divide between humans and animals are still tempered by traditional beliefs of the Hebrew Bible. This does not give them great weight.

#### 4.2 Philon of Alexandria

In the texts of the Book of Wisdom, we have already become acquainted with the early Hellenistic Jewish community of Alexandria. For a long time, it was the origin and centre of Hellenistic Judaism, but it largely perished during the revolt in the years 115 to 117 AD. Its most important representative is probably Philon of Alexandria (15 BC–40 AD). Philon, whose mother tongue is Greek and who does not understand Hebrew, can be considered a salient example of the symbiosis of Hellenism and Judaism in 1st century Diaspora Judaism. On the one hand, he is firmly rooted in the Jewish tradition; on the other hand, he is deeply influenced by Greek education (and not only by the Stoa, as it might seem in the following!). Three influences are significant for him (Beatrice Wyss 2018, 379):



- his great loyalty to Judaism,
- his acceptance of Greek culture and philosophy, whereby it can hardly be overestimated how deeply this “influenced the thinking of this devout Jew (... a pattern for the Christian thinkers who follow in his footsteps)” (Jacobus C.M. van Winden 1988, 1258), and
- his deep aversion to Egyptian culture, which is “known or even infamous throughout antiquity for its animal worship” (Beatrice Wyss 2018, 397). Philon rejects the Egyptian animal cults and their theriomorphism simply because of the Jewish prohibition of images, but also because, for him, the incomprehensible divinity cannot be experienced or recognised in an animal.

In the following, we will devote ourselves to three of Philon’s works: first, the already cited philosophical work on animal reason *De animalibus*, and then two works that try to defend the Torah against Greek culture and prove it reasonable: *De virtutibus*, which deals with the legal texts of the Torah, and *De opificio mundi*, which deals with the Creation narratives of the Jewish Bible.

In his predominantly philosophical *work on animal reason De animalibus*, which, as mentioned above, has only survived in an Armenian translation (cf. chapter 3.6.1), Philon refutes the anti-Stoic and anti-anthropocentric arguments of his nephew and son-in-law Tiberius Iulius Alexander: “It is the anthropocentric view of the cosmos, that all things—including animals—were made for man’s sake, that is challenged by Alexander and defended by Philo.” (Abraham Terian 1981, 36; on *De animalibus* in general: Otto Kaiser 2015, 125–126).

As for Alexander’s thesis that animals could speak, Philon distinguishes between the movements of the tongue and mouth on the one hand and their control by the rational soul on the other. Animals also had the first, but only humans the second (Philon, *De animalibus* 73). What we hear from animals are “meaningless and insignificant sounds made by animals” (Philon, *De animalibus* 98)—worse than the sounds of human stutterers (Philon, *De animalibus* 99).

With regard to the alleged capacity of animals for technology and artistry, Philon emphasizes, as in a Stoic textbook, that art is an acquired ability, but that spiders and bees do not acquire it, but have their abilities like all animals “from nature, not from learning” (Philon, *De animalibus* 78). Nor do their activities occur through free will: “Whatever they do



is done non-voluntarily because of the peculiarity of their constitution.” (Philon, *De animalibus* 80).

Finally, Philon also flatly denies animals the ability to think. The behaviour of the hunting dog mentioned by Alexander only looks like syllogistic reasoning, but this is a deception (Philon, *De animalibus* 84). Philon then sets the bar for reasoning at maximum height: “Surely animals have no share in the ability to reason, for this refers to a variety of abstract concepts in the mind’s perception of God, the world, laws, provincial practices, state, affairs of state, and numerous other things that animals do not understand.” (Philon, *De animalibus* 85).

But if animals possess neither language nor artistry nor thought, then a deep chasm opens up between reasonless animals and rational humans: “To raise animals to the level of humankind and to grant equality to unequals is the height of injustice. To ascribe serious self-restraint to indifferent and almost invisible creatures is an insult to those whom nature has gifted with the best part.” (Philon, *De animalibus* 100). Philon could hardly be more consistent in advocating Stoic cosmology. In doing so, he does not seriously address the empirical evidence of his nephew; rather, his own theses remain without in-depth scientific underpinning.

The style of those works in which Philo interprets the Torah and defends it against attacks from Greek culture is quite different. Here he tries to prove the compatibility of his religion with the Hellenistic “leading culture”. In doing so, he cannot avoid advocating theses that are not to the liking of the Stoa in individual cases.

His *treatise on the virtues*, “*De virtutibus*”, is to be read along these lines. In it, Philon takes up four virtues recognised in Greek culture and shows how broadly they are found in the instructions of the Torah: bravery, humanity (φιλιανθρωπία), repentance and nobility. Humanity occupies the most space in his account. It includes mildness (ἐπιείκεια), gentleness (ἡμερότης), goodness (χρησιτότης) and mercy (ἔλεος) (Walter T. Wilson 2015, 208). In the Torah, according to Philon, humanity is directed against Jews and pagans, the free and slaves, friends and enemies, and animals and plants (Katell Berthelot 2002, 49; Walter T. Wilson 2015, 208)<sup>13</sup>: “He [Moses] not only presented consideration and gentleness as fundamental

13 The similarity to a footnote in Jeremy Bentham’s magnum opus is striking. Bentham writes there almost 1800 years after Philon: “The day has come, and I am grieved to say that it has not yet passed in many places, when the greater part of the species, under the appellation of slaves, have been treated by the law on exactly the same basis as, for instance, in England the lower species of animals are still treated.

to the relations of men to their fellow men, but poured them out richly with a lavish hand on the nature of the reasonless animals (πρός τὰς τῶν ἀλόγων ζώων φύσεις) and the various species of cultivated trees.” (Philon, *De virtutibus* 13, 81). As many as 23 of the 227 sections are devoted to humanity towards animals—about one tenth of the entire book.

In detail, the treatise is about five commandments of the Torah (cf. also Robert M. Grant 1999, 1–14):

- “When an ox, a sheep or a goat is born, the young one should stay with its mother for seven days.” (Lev 22:27; Philon, *De virtutibus* 25, 126–133). Here Philon impressively describes the emotional and physical pain of the mother when the young is taken away from her too early.
- “You shall not slaughter an ox or a sheep or a goat in one day at the same time as its young.” (Lev 22:28; Philon, *De virtutibus* 26, 134–140).
- “You shall not boil a kid in its mother’s milk.” (Dt 14:21b; Philon, *De virtutibus* 26, 142–144).
- “You shall not muzzle the ox for threshing.” (Dt 25:4; Philon, *De virtutibus* 27, 145).
- “You shall not harness an ox and an ass together to the plough.” (Dt 22:10; Philon, *De virtutibus* 27, 146–147).

The exciting question now is how Philon, as an author influenced by the Stoics, justifies these animal ethical commandments. And here two figures of argumentation can be discerned (Katell Berthelot 2002, 50–54):

- 1) *There are analogies between humans and animals*: Thus, Philon first interprets Dt 22:10 appropriately as a commandment of animal ethics in such a way that the donkey, as the weaker of the two, is to be protected from being overtaxed: “It thinks of the weaker and does not want them to suffer discomfort or oppression at the hands of a superior force.” (Philon, *De virtutibus* 27, 146). He then transfers this animal ethical principle per analogiam to human beings, and there per allegoriam to the relationship of the Jews to the Gentiles. The ox, as a pure animal in the sense of kashrut, represents Judaism, the donkey, as an unclean animal, represents paganism. The commandment in the Torah therefore

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Perhaps the day will come when the remaining creatures will acquire the rights which could never, if not by the hand of tyranny, have been withheld from them.” (Jeremy Bentham 1828, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*. A new edition, corrected by the author, London, vol. 2, 235–236; German translation based on Alberto Bondolfi (ed.) 1994,78).

admonishes the Jews to treat pagans justly as well. “Those whose souls have ears can almost hear it saying in a clear and distinct voice that we should do no wrong to the people of other nations if we can accuse them of nothing but difference of race, which is no grounds for accusation, since nothing that is neither vice nor of vice justifies reproach.” (Philon, *De virtutibus* 27, 147). Now the principle of analogy includes similarities and dissimilarities. But although the dissimilarities between rational human beings and reasonless animals are considerable for Philon, animals may nevertheless insist on just treatment because they can suffer similarly to human beings. This conclusion clearly stands out from the Stoic argument.

- 2) *The comparison of animals and humans follows the logic “a minori ad maius”*: If in the case of animals, the mother is not killed at the same time as her child (Lev 22:28), then this applies all the more to humans. Thus, according to Roman law, pregnant women condemned to death would only be executed after the birth of their child. Philon sees a form of clever pedagogy at work here: “Moses [...] extended the duty of just treatment (ἐπιεικὲς) to reasonless animals (ἄλογα ζῶα) as well, so that by practising on creatures of other kinds we can show humanity to a much fuller extent towards beings similar to ourselves.” (Philon, *De virtutibus* 26, 140). In Philon, this analogising a *minori ad maius* is not an expression of anthropocentrism (against Abraham Terian 1981, 45), but its mitigation. For Philon, just behaviour towards animals retains its own moral value.

Thus, he can conclude: “You see how great the goodness (χρηστόν) that he shows is, and how generously he has extended it to every species, first to men, even if they are strangers or enemies, then to reasonless animals, even if they are impure, and lastly to sown crops and trees. For he who has first learned the lesson of justice in dealing with the unconscious forms of existence will not offend those endowed with animal life, and he who does not engage in molesting the animal creation is implicitly exercised to extend his care to rational beings.” (Philon, *De virtutibus* 29, 160).

In “*De opificio mundi*”, Philon finally interprets the first chapters of the Bible. For the first time, core ideas of Stoic cosmology and ontology are intertwined here with those texts that were used a little later for almost 2000 years to justify Christian anthropocentrism. I would like to pay particular attention to four aspects of content in the following: The Stoic *scala naturae* must be related to the biblical structure of God’s seven-day work. The Stoic

view of animals as reasonless beings must be introduced into the text in the first place since the Bible does not know this classification. The Stoic view of man as a rational being must be thought of together with the biblical category of the image of God. And Stoic anthropocentrism must be linked with the biblical mandate to govern man.

In Gen 1, the order in the creation of the animals is determined according to habitat, as we saw above (chapter 2.2). The spatially closer a group of animals is to the human habitat, the temporally closer it is created to man. Philon, on the other hand, interprets the arrangement according to the Stoic *scala naturae* ontologically in terms of a progression from the creation of the “lower” to the creation of the “higher” animals, with the quantitative measure of “soul”, i.e. of central sensation and control, determining the assignment. On the whole, Philon finds “that it is a very beautiful (πάγκαλος) sequence of stages in which the creation of living creatures took place according to his instruction. The crudest and least developed soul is assigned to the genus of fishes, the most perfect and in every respect the best to the human race, and that lying midway between the two to the race of land animals and air-walkers; for the latter is more sentient than that of fishes, but weaker than that which prevails in man. For this reason, as the first animate beings, he created the fish, which possess more of the bodily than of the spiritual substance and are, as it were, living beings and not living beings, moving inanimate creatures, since something soul-like was added to them only for the preservation of the body [...] After the fish he created the birds and land animals; for these are already more sentient and show more clearly in their design the peculiarity of their animate nature. Lastly, as has been said, he created man, to whom he gave as a special privilege the spirit, as it were a soul of souls (ψυχῆς τινα ψυχῆ).” (Philon, *De opificio mundi* 21, 64–66). And again Philon affirms, “But in the origin of individual beings the order is this, that nature begins with the most insignificant and ends with the very best.” (Philon, *De opificio mundi* 22, 67).

If one follows Philon’s account, one has to assume that the water animals were created on the fourth day, the air and land animals on the fifth and only man on the sixth. But this is not how Genesis 1 tells it. There, only two groups of living beings are distinguished between: On the fifth day, those creatures are created that do not live in the habitat of man, and on the sixth day, those creatures that live in the habitat of man—including man himself. Philon deliberately ignores this division of the biblical text because it does not correspond to the tripartite concept of the Stoic *scala naturae*, which he, however, wants to follow. “Philon [...] reads the results of the research

of his time into the Pentateuch.” (Beatrice Wyss 2018, 384). In a time when theories about the beginning of the world are in great demand, he wants to prove that the biblical Creation narrative is compatible with current natural philosophy (Beatrice Wyss 2018, 385).

The (unbiblical) *qualification of animals as aloga*, which is emphasised in the following quotation, among others, fits coherently into the Stoic *scala naturae*: “Among existing things there are first of all those which have nothing to do either with virtue or with wickedness, such as the plants and the reasonless animals (ζῶα ἄλογα), the former because they are inanimate (ἄψυχά) and not endowed with imagination (ἀφαντάστω φύσει), the latter because spirit and reason (νοῦς καὶ λόγος) are absent from them; but spirit and reason are, as it were, the house in which wickedness and virtue dwell. Then again, there are those who possess only virtue and have no part in wickedness, like the heavenly bodies; for these, it is said, are living beings, and sensible living beings at that, or rather each one entirely sensible, each one thoroughly virtuous and impervious to all evil. Finally, there are beings of mixed nature, such as man, who absorbs all opposites within himself: Reason and lack of reason, modesty and lack of discipline, bravery and cowardice, justice and injustice, to put it briefly, good and evil, beautiful and ugly, virtue and vice.” (Philon, *De opificio mundi* 24, 73). From this passage it is clear that the Stoic *scala naturae* includes as its fourth and highest level the celestial bodies, which, as living beings of pure reason, are superior even to man. In the biblical narrative, on the other hand, the heavenly bodies are not created *after* man, as one would now actually expect, but on the fourth day and thus even *before* the air and water animals. The fourth day, like the first and the last, is dedicated to the temporal order. So the heavenly bodies do not have an ontologically justified place in the Bible, but a functionally determined one: they serve to determine time.

But now Philon moves on to reflect on the *special position of man* and thus to the interpretation of Gen 1:26–28: “But one might ask the reason why man is the last piece in the creation of the world. [...] Now those who have penetrated more deeply into the meaning of the laws, and have investigated their contents as thoroughly as possible, give as their reason that God, by granting man reason (μεταδούς ὁ θεὸς ἀνθρώπων τῆς λογικῆς), which was, after all, the best gift, made him that related to himself, and therefore did not wish to begrudge him all the rest, that therefore he provided beforehand for him, the most kindred and dearest living creature (οἰκειοτάτῳ καὶ φιλτάτῳ ζῳῳ), everything in the world, because he willed that immediately

Diagram: Structure of the creation of living beings according to Gen 1 and according to Philo

Gen 1	Philon, De opificio mundi 21, 64–67.73
Fourth day: The stars as time indicators (no living beings)	Pisces: more body than soul
Fifth day: Air and water animals—those creatures that do not live in the human habitat	Birds and land animals: more clearly animate
Sixth day: Land animals and humans—those creatures that live in the habitat of humans	Human being: Spirit as soul of the soul, but only partly reason
	Stars: still above human beings, ensouled, all reason

after his creation he should lack none of the things necessary for life and for the good life (πρός τε τὸ ζῆν καὶ τὸ εὖ ζῆν).” (Philon, De opificio mundi 25, 77; cf. Jonathan D. Worthington 2011, 145). On the one hand, this interpretation of Gen 1 reveals the central role Philon ascribes to man’s endowment of reason completely without reference to the biblical text; on the other hand, it echoes a form of anthropocentrism that makes man the goal of creation rather than the Sabbath, as is the logic of the biblical narrative.

It follows logically from what has been said that the *image of God in Gen 1:26–27* is interpreted with participation in the divine nous or logos: “Reason is man’s special prerogative, whereby he is made superior to other animals.” (Abraham Terian 1981, 38)<sup>14</sup>. Here Philon vacillates between the relational–functional interpretation of man as God’s image and representative on earth and the essence–ontological interpretation of human reason in the image of divine reason.

14 The idea that human reason is fashioned in the image of divine reason is found throughout Philon’s work: De opificio mundi 6, 24–25; 23, 69; 46, 134–48, 139; Legum allegoriae 1, 31; 1, 42; 3, 96; Quod deterius potiori insidiari solet 80–85; De plantatione 18–19; Quis rerum divinarum heres 56–57; 230–231; De fuga et inventione 71; De somniis 1, 74; De vita Mosis 2, 65; De decalogo 134; De specialibus legibus 1, 81; 1, 171; 3, 83; 3, 207; De virtutibus 37, 203–205; Quaestiones et solutiones in Genesin 1, 4–5 (cf. Abraham Terian 1981, 131).

For the relational–functional interpretation, which is entirely in the sense of the Hebrew text of Gen 1, there are comparisons of a human being with a charioteer and helmsman, but above all with a governor of the divine king, who should be there in a caring way for the other creatures. Thus, Philon writes: “As a charioteer and helmsman, therefore, the Creator last of all created man, that he might guide the reins and steer the government over all earthly things, and take care (ἐπιμέλεια) of the animal and vegetable world. as it were *as* governor of the first and highest king (ὑπάρχος τοῦ πρώτου καὶ μεγάλου βασιλέως).” (Philon, De opificio mundi 29, 88).

The second, essence–ontological interpretation, which does not correspond to the original Hebrew text of the Bible, is based on the Septuagint translation and reads as follows: “After all other creatures, therefore, as has been said, man was created, and done so, as it is said, ‘*in the image of God and after His likeness*’ (κατ’ εἰκόνα θεοῦ καὶ καθ’ ὁμοίωσιν, Gen 1:26). Very true; for no earth-born being is so like God as man. But this likeness must not be supposed in the peculiarity of the body (σῶμα); for neither has God human form, nor is the human body God-like. That likeness refers only to the guide of the soul, the spirit (κατὰ τὸν τῆς ψυχῆς ἡγεμόνα νοῦν); for according to the only guiding spirit of the universe as the archetype, the spirit was formed in each individual human being, who is therefore, as it were, the god of the body, bearing it in himself as a divine image. For what the great Governing Spirit is in the universe, that is probably the human spirit in man.” (Philon, De opificio mundi 23, 69).

Philon quotes Gen 1:26 literally from the Septuagint. There the preposition κατὰ is used in the accusative. It denotes a goal towards which something is done, or a resemblance to a model. But this does not correspond to what the Hebrew text says. Georg Fischer translates it very literally like this: “We want to make ‘man’ *as* our statue, *as* our likeness!... And God created man *as* his statue, *as the statue of God* he created him.” (Georg Fischer 2018, 148 and 153). Fischer thereby interprets “as our statue” in the sense of a close *relationship* and “as our likeness” in the sense of an abiding difference (Georg Fischer 2018, 152). Philon, on the other hand, like the Septuagint, makes a similarity out of it in terms of being and names its content: it is the nous (cf. Jonathan D. Worthington 2011, 144–145). The controlling function of the human nous, however, is not related to creation, but, in the sense of the Stoic hegemonicon, to the human being alone.

In his interpretation of the second, older Creation narrative Gen 2, Philon returns to the idea of the similarity between God and man. Now



he uses the terms λόγος/ λογισμὸς instead of nous, but otherwise remains entirely on the path once taken: “But that he was also excellent with regard to the soul is equally clear; for for its formation God used as a model not one of the things present in creation, but, as has been said, solely his own reason (λόγος); whose image and imitation (Gen 1:26), he says, man became when he breathed into his face (Gen 2:7), where is the seat of the senses with which the Creator animated the body; but having established reason as the ruler (τὸν δὲ βασιλέα λογισμὸν), he gave over to that leading part (τῷ ἡγεμονικῷ) the senses...” (Philon, *De opificio mundi* 48, 139). On the whole, then, the interpretation of man’s being made in the image of God prevails in the sense of an essence ontological statement: man has reason, with the bestowal of which God created man *in* his image.

Finally, Philon also interprets the so-called “*dominium terrae*”, i.e. the governmental mandate over the earth in Gen 1:28: “For this reason also the Father, since he created him as a being by nature fit to rule (γεννήσας αὐτὸν ὁ πατήρ ἡγεμονικὸν φύσει ζῶον), not only actually, but also by an express word of God, appointed to rule (βασιλέα) over all that lives under the moon on the land and in the water and in the air” (Philon, *De opificio mundi* 28, 84)<sup>15</sup>. Unlike *De opificio mundi* 29, 88, it is not governorship but dominion that is spoken of here.

The interpretation of the second Creation narrative in Philon is also exciting. Three aspects are of particular importance for our topic: First of all, Philon sketches a picture of perfection of Adam (without Eve, who comes off very badly in Philon’s work!): “But that first man, the earth-born one, the progenitor of our whole generation, was, as it seems to me, the best of all (ἐκότερον ἄριστος), both in soul and body, and greatly surpassed his descendants.” (Philon, *De opificio mundi* 47, 136).

As evidence of the perfection of the soul, Philon then cites the image of God from Gen 1:26–27, albeit in terms other than those mentioned in the Septuagint. For him, this image of God is also recognisable in the fact that the human soul, unlike the body, is not created from existing matter, but by breathing on it. Finally, he sees Stoic anthropology confirmed at its best in the biblical scene: Reason is the queen and guide of the senses: “But that he was also excellent as regards the soul is equally clear; for for its formation

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15 That human dominion over animals is conferred on man by God is an idea often quoted in Philon: *De opificio mundi* 28, 83–29, 88 and 52, 148–150; *De specialibus legibus* 2, 69; *Legum allegoriae* 1, 9; *De mutatione nominum* 63; *Quaestiones et solutiones in Genesis* 1, 18–23; *De Abrahamo* 45 (Abraham Terian 1981, 45).



God used as a model not one of the things present in creation, but, as has been said, solely his own reason (μόνω τῷ ἑαυτοῦ λόγῳ); whose image and imitation (ἀπεικόνισμα καὶ μίμημα), he thus says, man became, since he was breathed on in the face, where is the seat of the senses, with which the Creator animated the body (ἐψύχωσεν); but after he had appointed reason as queen (τὸν δὲ βασιλέα λογισμὸν ἐνιδρυσάμενος), he gave over to that leading part (τῷ ἡγεμονικῷ) the senses, that he might be served by them [...] to be served.” (Philon, *De opificio mundi* 48, 139).

This so perfect Adam is described by Philon in the second step of his interpretation as a cosmopolitan in the house of the world. “This picture of a worldwide state in which man rules as God’s governor had already been sketched out by Philon in his interpretation of Gen 1:26.” (Gerhard Büsing 1998, 200). However, the hierarchy in this house of the world is rather steep, for the animals have to cower and obey. They are not citizens and consequently have no rights: “But we will express ourselves quite truthfully if we call that forefather not merely the first human being, but also the only citizen of the world (μόνον κοσμοπολίτην). For house and city was the world to him (ἦν γὰρ οἶκος αὐτῷ καὶ πόλις ὁ κόσμος), since no building had yet been carpentered by human hands out of building materials of stone and wood; in it he dwelt, as in his native land, with perfect security and without fear, since he was worthy of dominion over the earth-world (περιγεῖων ἡγεμονίας ἀξιώθεις), and all mortal beings cowered before him and were instructed or compelled, to obey him as their master (ὑπακούειν ὡς δεσπότη).” (Philon, *De opificio mundi* 49, 142).

The cosmopolitan right of citizenship belongs to Adam solely on the basis of his kinship with the divine logos, from which it is well explained Stoically why the animals are not entitled to citizenship. “His descendants, however, who share his peculiarity, must also preserve the characteristics of kinship with the ancestor, albeit in a clouded form. But in what does this kinship consist? Every man, in respect of his spirit, is related to the divine reason (πᾶς ἄνθρωπος κατὰ μὲν τὴν διάνοιαν ὠκειῶται λόγῳ θεῖῳ), being an image, a particle, a reflection of its blessed essence; but in the structure of his body, he resembles the whole world.” (Philon, *De opificio mundi* 51, 146).

Philon now places the naming of the animals by Adam in this context. To this end, he reflects the “courtly custom” (Gerhard Büsing 1998, 200), according to which the ruler must address the subordinate first and not vice versa. “Aptly he also ascribes to the first man the naming (τὴν θέσιν τῶν ὀνομάτων); for this is a matter of wisdom and kingship (σοφίας

καὶ βασιλείας); but he was a wise man by self-teaching and by his own instruction, being created by the hand of God, and also a king; but it behoves the Lord to address every one of his subjects. But an extraordinary ruling power (δύναμις ἀρχῆς) naturally surrounded the first man, whom God formed with care, and dignified with the second rank, by appointing him his governor (ὑπαρχον αὐτοῦ) and lord of all the others (ἄλλων ἀπάντων ἡγεμόνα), since even men living so many generations later [...] still command over the reasonless (δεσπόζουσι τῶν ἀλόγων)” (Philon, *De opificio mundi* 52, 148).

Now, given the multitude of terms for man’s dominion over creation, one could easily be inclined to grant man unlimited power. However, this is by no means Philon’s intention. On the contrary: “Philon understands the naming of the animals according to Gen 2:19f. as an expression of man’s outstanding wisdom and special intellect.” (Gerhard Büsing 1998, 201). Like a pupil before his teacher, man must prove that he recognises the nature of the animals and gives them appropriate names: “He says, then, that God brought all the animals to Adam, because he wanted to see what name he would attach to each (Gen 2:19), [...] He tested him as a teacher tests a pupil, awakening the faculty dormant in the soul and calling it to one of the business incumbent upon it, that he might by his own power give the names, not improper and unsuitable ones, but such as express the qualities of things very well. For since the power of thought was still unclouded in the soul, and no weakness or disease or passion had yet penetrated it, it received into itself in full purity the ideas of bodies and objects, and gave them their proper names, since it well divined what they signified, so that by their naming at the same time their nature could be discerned (νοηθῆναι τὰς φύσεις αὐτῶν).” (Philon, *De opificio mundi* 52, 149–150).

Let us take stock of the analyses of *De opificio mundi*:

- The Stoic *scala naturae*, the biological state of the art at this time is the dominant paradigm for the interpretation of God’s seven-day work. For their sake, Philon even gives the impression that certain tasks took place on different days than the Bible tells us (the water animals on the fourth day instead of the fifth, the land animals on the fifth day instead of the sixth, the heavenly bodies on the seventh instead of the fourth). While the Bible uses the spatial proximity to humans and thus a non-hierarchical category of relationships as a principle of division, Philon interprets the text in terms of an essence–ontological hierarchy, a *scala naturae*.

- The Stoic view of animals as reasonless beings, which is foreign to the Bible, determines Philon’s view of living beings. However, it has far fewer ethical consequences for him than for the Stoics. In any case, the conclusion that humans can use animals indefinitely is not to be found in his work. On the contrary, Philon binds human rule to his insight and wisdom—it obliges.
- Philon recognises the Stoic view of man as a rational being in the biblical discourse of the image of God. Here he marks a momentous shift from a relational–functional interpretation of man as God’s governor on earth to an essential–ontological interpretation of man as the only rational being. This shift, as we have seen, was already in the offing in the Septuagint. But as far as I can see, Philon is the first to document it extensively and explicitly. It is all the more remarkable that he sometimes continues to speak of man as the governor of the divine King, even making this governorship a leitmotif of his account in the interpretation of Gen 2.
- The biblical mandate to govern is thus already addressed. It is remarkable that there are no traces of hard anthropocentrism in the texts examined here. Although Philon unhesitatingly follows the “rational divide” between rational and non-rational beings, the ethical consequences remain limited. Here, in the light of *De virtutibus*, the animal-friendliness of the Torah is evident. Philon holds fast to it and defends it against attacks from outside.

Philon is the first (tangible) writer to read the Jewish Bible and religion through the lens of Greek and especially Stoic philosophy. He and his Jewish diaspora community in Alexandria initiated many of the decisive paradigm shifts that early Christianity was to adopt a short time later. Not only at this point, but also after it, did he become the link between Greek philosophy and early Christian theology—with enormous consequences for the newly emerging religion and its development over at least two millennia.

### 4.3 *The testimonies of the New Testament*

As in the Old Testament, the New Testament is full of animals. However, most passages in the Gospels deal with the relationship between shepherd and flock as a metaphor for the relationship between God or Christ and His own flock. Or the animals appear as a resource (fish) or a backdrop (the pigs in the parable of the merciful father). For our question about New

Testament animal ethics and the origin of Christian anthropocentrism, only a few relevant passages remain. First, we will look at some statements that can probably be attributed to Jesus himself. Then we will focus on Paul and the evangelists. Finally, we will look at the way the early church dealt with the commandment to ritual slaughter, probably the most recalcitrant animal ethical commandment in the Torah. In this way, the very first developments in New Testament times can be adequately traced.

#### 4.3.1 Jesus of Nazareth

What does Jesus of Nazareth himself think about animals? What place do they have in his theology of creation and his ethics? His statements on this question are not very rich—it is not the focus of his preaching. However, some of his impulses, which are primarily not aimed at animal ethics but at interhuman ethics, allow us to draw conclusions about his reception and interpretation of Old Testament animal ethics. Three words from Jesus, which, apart from differences in details, are found in Matthew and Luke in the same wording, i.e. come from the so-called Logia source Q, are relevant for this. Two of them are inspired by the Old Testament (pre-Hellenistic) tradition of wisdom; one responds to the contemporary Torah interpretation. In all three, those two figures of argumentation appear that we have already observed in Jesus' contemporary Philon: the analogy between humans and animals and the argument *a minori ad maius*. The following Jesuslogies are at issue:

- Mt 6:26 (par Lk 12:24) says: “Look at the birds of the air: They do not sow, they do not reap, they do not gather provisions into barns; your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?” First of all, the birds are cited here as a testimony to God's faithful care, which he bestows completely independently of whether someone sows and reaps and gathers provisions or not (Ulrich Luz <sup>5</sup>2002, 479). Luke reinforces this statement by speaking of “ravens”, i.e. birds that live off the seeds and food waste of man and therefore did not enjoy a good reputation at the time (Francois Bovon 1996, 304). This is followed by Jesus' argument in the form of the question of whether humans are not worth much more than birds. As emphasised above, both lines of argument presuppose similarities and dissimilarities between humans and animals. Therefore, the sentence cannot be used as evidence in favour of anthropocentrism. God cares for animals out of pure love as their

creator—in his eyes they have a value of their own. The sentence thus underpins biblical biocentrism.

- Mt 10:29–31 (par Lk 12:6–7) goes in a similar direction: “Do you not sell two sparrows for a penny? And yet not one of them falls to the ground without your Father’s will. But with you, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. So do not be afraid! You are worth more than many sparrows.” Again, Jesus first makes the analogy between sparrows (two in Matthew, five in Luke) as almost worthless economically, because they were the cheapest edible birds on the market (Ulrich Luz 1990, 128), and human beings: God’s care is for both, just as both are dependent on God. Utility is obviously not everything and not even the decisive factor—a clear rejection of the temptation of anthropocentrism. Then, as in the passage interpreted above, the argument *a minori ad maius* emerges.
- Finally, Mt 12:11–12 (par Lk 14:5) reads: “Which of you, having one sheep, will not seize it and pull it out when it falls into a pit for him on the Sabbath? How much more is a man than a sheep? Therefore, it is lawful on the Sabbath to do good.” For the analogy between sheep (an ox in Luke) and man to work, one must assume that both are helped for their own sake. The animal is thus primarily pulled out of the well not because it has a high economic value for its owner, but because it is suffering<sup>16</sup>. Luke further emphasises this by mentioning not only the ox as a living creature that has fallen into the well, but alternatively also one’s own son (Walter T. Wilson 2015, 204): “Which of you, when he falls into the well, will not immediately pull out his son or his ox, even on the Sabbath?” Consequently, Luke omits the surpassing argument *a minori ad maius*, which could hardly be brought into application for the son–man analogy. The equality between ox, son and sick person is thus emphasised even more strongly. All in all, the closeness of thought to Philo is unmistakable. “While Philo interprets laws about the treatment of animals in terms of their implications for the treatment of people, Matthew addresses a legal question about the treatment of people with

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16 This becomes even clearer when one considers that the practice of pulling the animal out of the well on the Sabbath is by no means uncontroversial at the time of Jesus. The Essenes forbade such help for animals, while the rabbis squirmed by either only allowing animals to be fed or making it a condition that a person only help himself and that the animal climbs out of the pit with its own strength. For Jesus, on the other hand, there is absolutely no question that one must help the animal and, as a practitioner from the land, does help (Ulrich Luz 1990, 238).

an illustration about the treatment of animals.” (Walter T. Wilson 2015, 221)

Jesus thus presents animals and humans as equally needy beings, dependent on the loving care of the Creator, but at the same time caringly loved by God—and draws analogous ethical demands from this for human behaviour towards both. “Although the statements in Matt 6,26, 10,29–31, and 12,12 are couched in arguments a *minori ad maius*, they do not have the effect of setting human beings on a different plane of existence vis-à-vis non-human beings. Instead, attention is drawn to the mutuality of people and animals as members of creation, which, as such, are united in their dependence on God’s provision, which extends even to individual members of each species.” (Walter T. Wilson 2015, 220). This logic could hardly be further from anthropocentrism.

#### 4.3.2 Paul of Tarsos

Things look different when we go through the letters of the Apostle Paul (c. 5 AD Tarsos-65 Rome). Paul, born and raised in Tarsos and thus a representative of Hellenistic Diaspora Judaism, which uses the Septuagint as its scriptural basis, is not overly influenced by Greek philosophy. However, on some ethical issues, including animal ethics, he is significantly influenced by the Stoa. This is evident, on the one hand, in his magnificent anthropology of conscience (Rom 2:14–15), in which he combines Deuteronomic theology of the heart with the Stoic doctrines of conscience and the normativity of human nature. On the other hand, his negative evaluation of homosexual behaviour (Rom 1:26–27; 1 Cor 11:14) is clearly Stoic-influenced, for again a reference to nature or unnaturalness, which is untypical of the Hebrew Bible, appears. The typically Greek, but biblically completely unknown expression of the “use” of sexuality also reveals the origin of these Pauline thoughts.

Paul rarely refers to animals in his letters. What is remarkable, however, is his interpretation of the animal ethical commandment of the Torah from Dt 25:4 “You shall not muzzle the ox for threshing”. As a reminder, Philon had interpreted this commandment in *De virtutibus* 27, 145 in such a way to demonstrate that the Creator shows his kindness and care to all creatures regardless of species (cf. chapter 4.2). Jesus does not interpret this commandment anywhere, but in his attitude towards animals he moves along the same line as Philon in *De virtutibus*. Paul, on the other hand, writes in

1 Cor 9:9–10: “Does God care about oxen? Does he not speak everywhere for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written: Let both the ploughman and the thresher do their work expecting to receive their portion.” Paul thus explicitly excludes the use of analogy and replaces it with an allegorical interpretation: the ox in Dt 25:4 is only an image for the working man. In comparison with Philon and Jesus, this represents a striking shift: “Paul disputes the literal sense of the Old Testament regulation by pointing out (in the form of a rhetorical question) that God does not care for oxen [...] According to Paul, what is said in Dt 25:4 about this context—the threshing ox must also be able to eat while working—cannot be said for the sake of the animal, because God’s care for the ox is excluded.” (Gerd Häfner 2019, 314). So here Paul thinks much more Stoically than Philon and negates the actual meaning of the Old Testament commandment. That is already a strong piece of anthropocentrism.

What is more difficult is the question of how Paul sees the role of animals in the resurrection of the dead. On the one hand, animals do not appear in his large chapter on this subject in 1 Cor 15. “Certainly, on the one hand, the evaluation of such an omission is open to attack: That Paul does *not* comment on certain aspects may be justified in the given problem. If the idea of a resurrection body was at issue, Paul would simply have had to focus on it.” (Gerd Häfner 2019, 315). On the other hand, 1 Cor 15 reveals that the fate of animals is not a very pressing concern for Paul.

Nevertheless, the redemption of animals occurs at least as a “collateral benefit” in Rom 8:18–23. There it says: “For I am convinced that the sufferings of the present time mean nothing compared to the glory that is to be revealed in us. For creation eagerly awaits the manifestation of the sons and daughters of God. Certainly, creation is subjected to nothingness, not of its own will, but by Him who subjected it, in hope: For it too, creation (κτίσις), shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption to the freedom and glory of the children of God. For we know that all creation groans and lies in birth pangs to this day. But not only that, but we too, though we have the Spirit as our firstfruits, we too groan in our hearts, waiting to be revealed as sons and daughters with the redemption of our bodies.”

In this passage, does “creation” include animals? This is affirmed in the exegesis: “In the past, there has been intense debate about who or what Paul means here by κτίσις. In the meantime, however, a certain consensus has emerged, according to which the extra-human nature and creature are being spoken of here.” (Michael Wolter 2014, 509; cf. also Gerd Häfner 2019, 309). Through the different attributes he assigns to human beings

on the one hand and to the extra-human creation on the other, Paul does reveal that he thinks anthropocentrically in orientation towards the Stoa and does not assign an intrinsic value to creation like Gen 1–2 (Michael Wolter 2014, 514; similarly also Gerd Häfner 2019, 313). Nevertheless, for the sake of human beings, he assumes that non-human creatures will also be freed from death and impermanence (Gerd Häfner 2019, 312), because human beings are “permanently dependent on the renewed creation and cannot exist without it” (Michael Wolter 2014, 514). To put it bluntly: for humans heaven without plants and animals would not be heaven, but hell. Therefore, Paul gathers the entire non-human creature under the cross of Christ: in suffering, but also in hope. “The universal perspective of redemption shows that there is a community of solidarity among the created, not only with regard to their origin from God, but also with regard to the (eschatological) future.” (Gerd Häfner 2019, 317). Even a hardened anthropocentrist like Paul cannot avoid this insight.

#### 4.3.3 The Gospels

At first glance, it seems as if the oldest evangelist *Mark*, who wrote his Gospel shortly after 70 AD, presumably in Rome or near Rome, did not pass on any impulses relevant to animal ethics, for he does not know the three Jesuslogies from the source Q, and nothing more relevant has been handed down from the mouth of Jesus. Nevertheless, it is Mark who gives his Gospel a biocentric or even cosmocentric perspective at two key points: in the prologue and at the final climax of the narrative.

Mark 1:12–15 reads: “And immediately the Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness. Jesus stayed in the desert for forty days and was tempted by Satan. He lived with the wild animals and the angels ministered to him. After John was delivered up, Jesus went to Galilee; he preached the gospel of God and said, ‘The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel!’” These sentences, which are placed immediately after the narrative of Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan, have a programmatic character in Mark’s Gospel as part of the prologue. In particular, the small subordinate clause “he lived with the wild animals”, which is often read over or passed over, has great theological significance since it is a reference back to Gen 1–2: in Christ, the new Adam, the Messianic age dawns, which brings the peace of creation already laid out in Paradise. In him God’s reign and kingdom dawns—a kingdom that includes not only human beings but



all creatures. In him the cycle of violence against creation is broken and man is given the opportunity to live as a new creation himself. For Mark, Christ is the new Adam, the true human being whose humanity tames wild animals. In his presence, they shed their menace and become peaceful. But they can only do this because Jesus confronts them differently than Adam. With the Fall of Man, the first human being also massively disturbed the relationship with animals. Since then, it has been fraught with tension and conflict. Jesus, however, gets along well with the wild animals even under the extreme conditions of the desert.

Now, with the Christ–Adam parallel, only half the potential of this passage has been exhausted, for then it immediately says: “The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand”. For Mark, this means that where a person lives in peace with animals, God’s reign has begun. The talk of the “kingdom of God” means a reality that embraces not only human beings, but all creatures. Praying for the coming of this kingdom in the Lord’s Prayer (to which Mark alludes in the Olivet Narrative, Mark 14:32–42) is the same as praying for peace between man and man, man and animal, and man and creation. For Mark, wherever the kingdom of God is spoken of, animals are to be taken into consideration. Without them, the kingdom of God is not complete.

Mk 15:33 must be read not only biocentrically, but cosmocentrically. Mark tells us here that on the day of Jesus’ crucifixion, from the sixth to the ninth hour, darkness came over the whole land. This is not an astronomical fact, but a theological interpretation: if it becomes dark at the sixth hour, i.e. at noon, when the sun normally shines brightest, then with the crucifixion of Christ the order of creation from Gen 1 is turned upside down. It is a cosmic catastrophe, as announced in Am 8:9 (Joachim Gnilka 1979, 321). The whole of creation is drawn into the disaster caused by the crucifixion of Jesus. At the same time, however, the whole of creation receives a perspective of hope for salvation through the one crucified.

Mark thus places the event of Jesus as the Christ narrated in his Gospel in a universal creation horizon. Both in his programmatic prologue and at the climax of his narrative, the crucifixion, he explicitly refers to the Creation narratives in Gen 1–2. Jesus as Christ came for the sake of all creation and all creatures. There is no trace of anthropocentrism.

*Matthew* as well as *Luke*, who write between 80 and 90 AD and largely adopt Mark 1:12–15 in their Gospels, delete the half-sentence about Jesus’ life with wild animals—presumably because the short reference is no longer comprehensible to their audience. They receive the darkness during Jesus’

crucifixion, on the other hand. Finally, both of them take the three animal ethically significant Jesuslogies from the Logical source Q that is available to them, which we have already discussed above (chapter 4.3.1).

A passage that has the highest significance for the justification of Christian animal ethics is Mt 7:12: “All things, therefore, that you expect of others, do also to them. This is what the Law and the Prophets consist in.” In this sentence from the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus quotes the so-called “Golden Rule” in its positive version. Matthew, however, adds a second half-sentence to this, which is not found in the source of the Sermon on the Mount (Luke does not convey it, cf. Lk 6:31), and claims: Whoever keeps this rule thereby fulfils everything that the Torah and the Prophets demand. Now, as we have seen (chapter 2.3), the Torah includes a considerable number of animal ethical rules, and Matthew knows this. So he is claiming no less than that animal ethics also follow the Golden Rule. This is a strong claim. For the border between species does not, in this logic, mark a limit to human responsibility. Humans have the ability to empathise with a non-human living being—at least to the extent that they can derive sufficient guidance for action from it—and this obliges them. Christian ethics include animals.

The fourth and latest Gospel according to *John*, which was probably written in Asia Minor around 100 AD, does not contain any direct references to animal ethics due to its very “mystical” orientation. Nevertheless, it already ascribes cosmic significance to the Christ event in its first sentences, namely in the powerful Logos hymn (Jn 1:1–18).

The parallels to Gen 1 are obvious: both texts open with “In the beginning”. In both, the semantic fields “word”/ “speak” and “become”/ “create” play a central role. At the centre of Jn 1:1–18 is the Logos, who is before all creation and uncreated because he is God. “All things came into being through the Word, and without it nothing came into being that has come into being” (Jn 1:3). Of this Word, verse 14 says: “And the Word became flesh (σάρξ) and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” For many centuries this phrase has been interpreted as “the incarnation of God”. This is not wrong, and yet it is only half the truth, for: “The absolute σάρξ is not paraphrasing for ‘man’ [...], but [...] expression for the earthly bound (3:6), the perishable (6:63) [...] in the incarnate Logos heaven descends to earth.” (Rudolf Schnackenburg 1981, 243).

Throughout the Old Testament, “flesh” always means that which is creaturely or also creatures in their entirety. With the incarnation of the divine

Word, the whole of creation becomes the body of God. The Word made flesh is “the body of the universe” (Sallie McFague 1993, 131) and incarnation is “God’s becoming creature” (Michael Rosenberger 2001, 20–21). Pope Francis aptly summarises this Johannine thought in his 2015 encyclical *Laudato si’*: “For the Christian experience, all the creatures of the material universe find their true meaning in the incarnate Word (*verbo encarnado*), because the Son of God took into his person a part of the material universe into which he placed a seed of definitive transformation.” (LS 235).

#### 4.3.4 The late New Testament epistolary literature

The latest texts of the New Testament, which were written well after 100 AD in the sphere of life of Hellenistic Jewish Christians, already use the *aloga* thesis as a matter of course—precisely when it comes to comparing immoral people with animals. More precisely, there are two passages, the second of which is probably literarily dependent on the first.

The first passage is found in the Epistle of Jude, one of the shortest writings in the New Testament. The letter is linguistically and stylistically of high quality, but at the same time extraordinarily polemical. It was written between 100 and 120 AD, possibly in Asia Minor. In any case, its author is a Jewish Christian and writes under the pseudonym of the (long-dead) Lord’s brother Judas. He is concerned with the sharp demarcation of the church from “opponents”. Of the latter he writes: “These, however, blaspheme what they do not know; but what they understand by nature, like reasonless animals (*φυσικῶς ὡς τὰ ἄλογα ζῶα ἐπίστανται*), on this they perish.” (Jud 10).

The Second Epistle of Peter is also a pseudepigraph, written in good Greek and testifying to Hellenistic learning. Since it is partly literarily dependent on the Epistle of Jude, it can only have been written after the latter, approximately in the first third of the 2nd century AD. Very similarly to the Epistle of Jude, it states: “those who let the filthy lust of their bodies rule them and despise the power of the Lord [...] are like reasonless animals, born by nature to be trapped and perish (*ὡς ἄλογα ζῶα γεγεννημένα φυσικὰ εἰς ἄλωσιν καὶ φθορὰν*).” (2 Pet 2:11–12).

Both passages take up classical *topoi* from Greek and especially Stoic philosophy. The immoral human being, like reasonless animals, does not recognise *qua* reason, but *qua* nature. Instead of approaching God and

striving upwards, he approaches those creatures that are below him in the *scala naturae*. In doing so, he betrays his vocation and gift.

#### 4.3.5 The Early Church's Detachment from the Commandment of Ritual Slaughter

If we take the texts of the New Testament together, it is easy to see that the Hellenistic influences in them are kept within narrow limits. By far the most of it is to be found in the only Hellenistic Jew among the New Testament authors, Paul. His anthropocentrism is clearly recognisable and far surpasses that of Philon, if we only think of both their different interpretations of Dt 25:4. Nevertheless, the question of non-human creation is a marginal question in Paul, more marginal than in the Gospels and infinitely more marginal than in Philon. That Paul is the (main) source of early Christian anthropocentrism seems unthinkable. It is more likely to be Philon and early Hellenistic Judaism in Alexandria.

In order to understand how the Hellenisation of early Christianity took place, it is helpful to reconstruct its handling of that commandment which can, without question, be described as the hardest ethical chunk from the bedrock of Jewish tradition: The commandment to ritual slaughter (cf. Michael Rosenberger 2019), for it is an excellent illustration of how strong the pressure on young Christianity was in the Hellenistic environment to break away from the specific commandments of the Torah, where these were not compatible with the Hellenistic ethos. At the same time, the law of ritual slaughter illustrates how persistently and energetically the Hebrew Jewish Christians, who were increasingly becoming a minority, resisted giving up the core of their Jewish identity.

That I still place this section in chapter 4 is not compelling. The processes I describe in the following range from the late New Testament to the early post-New Testament period. So the section could also be placed at the beginning of chapter 5. However, since it contributes essential insights for a better understanding of the transitional phase, I present it as the last point in chapter 4.

In terms of content, the ritual slaughter commandment represents a ritual of reverence towards the animal to be killed. The slaughterers know and acknowledge that they are taking the life of a fellow creature and that this is anything but a matter of course. With the blood completely drained away, the most precious thing belonging to the animal is left untouched: its

lifeblood. The Old Testament rules even go so far as to say that the blood of sacrificial animals must also flow out completely before they are offered to God. Not even God is allowed to take possession of the blood—it belongs entirely to the animal itself.

This contrasts with the thoroughly profane slaughter of Greco-Roman culture. For them, slaughter is a secular matter because, unlike in the Bible, animals do not belong to the legal community. If the commandment to ritual slaughter meets pagan Hellenists in the context of the early Christian mission, this cannot but lead to a complete lack of understanding. The symbolic *form* of the ritual is not understood; the symbolic *content* of the legal community of God, humans and animals is not shared.

In the New Testament, we still find evidence of the fact that the prohibition of blood consumption is one of the few instructions from the Torah that seem non-negotiable for (Hebrew-Aramaic) Jewish Christians. For although in the context of the mission to the Gentiles the entire Torah is declared not to be binding for Gentile Christians, and even circumcision is not required, this rule is adhered to: two of the four exception clauses of the “Apostles’ Council” from around 48 AD, which Luke lists in Acts 15:20, namely the abstention from meat sacrificed to idols and fornication, blood and strangled food, concern the prohibition of blood consumption, which thus becomes valid for Gentile Christians<sup>17</sup>. Burkhard Jürgens recognises in these clauses an inner structure of two commandments twice: The first two commandments of abstaining from meat sacrificed to idols and fornication refer to the sole worship of God (Burkhard Jürgens 1999, 163); the next two of abstaining from blood and choking refer to his creative power: No one shall take blood or the life breath from an animal—the vitality of creatures is inviolable (Burkhard Jürgens 1999, 164). Seen in this light, the Palestinian Jewish Christians would explicitly use the commandment of ritual slaughter against Greek anthropocentrism.

Paul does not agree with the exception clauses from the Apostles’ Decree. The Letter to the Romans testifies that, for him, eating unkosher meat is not a reprehensible act, but is possible in principle in the freedom of the gospel (Rom 14:14). It is only because it would cause offence to the “weak”, who still cling to the traditional commandments, that the “strong” are to abstain from eating unkosher meat. It seems piquant that Paul refers to the

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17 Paul claims in Gal 2:1–10 that there were no exception clauses at all. Historically, however, it is at least clear that such exceptions were subsequently practised in many Christian communities.

(Palestinian?) Jewish Christians as the “weak” and the Hellenistic “Gentile Christians” as the “strong”. In Philo’s interpretation of Dt 22:10, it is exactly the other way round. All in all, Paul’s statement must have been regarded as tremendous provocation for Jewish Christians: “The condemnation of any observance of the purity laws must have sounded to them like a motto to practical godlessness.” (Ulrich Wilckens 1982, 91). And the slaughtered animals? It is obvious that Paul does not think about them for a moment. They are like air to him. And because that is the case, he, although a Jew, does not like the commandment to ritual slaughter. But at first, Paul does not succeed with this breach of tradition.

Justin (c. 100 Flavia Neapolis = Nablus/Palestine-165 Rome), for example, in his dialogue with the Jew Tryphon, recognises the validity of the commandment of ritual slaughter without further ado (Justin, *Dialogus cum Tryphone Iudaeo* 20). And even for Tertullian (160–220 Carthage, see chapter 5.3), the abstention from animal blood is self-evident (Tertullian, *Apologetica* 9, 13). He does not refer to Acts 15:20, but to the Noahide covenant in Gen 9:4 (Tertullian, *De ieiunio* 4) or to the “beginning” of human history (Tertullian, *De monogamia* 5). Tertullian obviously knows the decree of the Apostolic Council in a modified version, in which only idolatry and fornication as well as the murder of human beings are mentioned and in which the prohibitions of blood and asphyxiation are missing (Tertullian, *De pudicitia* 12). While the older Alexandrian text retains Acts 15:20 with all four original prohibitions, the more recent Western codex, which Tertullian has in Carthage, changes the decision of the Apostolic Council—obviously to justify the more liberal and secular practice common in the West (Franz Böhmsch 2007, 47–48). Nevertheless, Tertullian exhorts us to hold fast to the Jewish prohibition on the consumption of blood. And in Alexandria, the Christians seem to have held on to it even longer. But at some point, it was no longer practised among them either.

The opening of the young church to the Gentile mission thus leads to the abolition of the Jewish commandment to ritual slaughter within a few generations in all (!) traditions, despite fierce resistance from the Palestinian Jewish Christians. Christian slaughter is thus at least formally profaned—a step that is understandable in view of the dynamics of the mission to the Gentiles, but with serious consequences. Even today, its consequences for the Christian attitude towards animals can only be guessed at in outline. The Church unwisely relinquished its influence on the slaughter of animals: “This more or less conscious sense of the ethical religious significance of animal killing, which only finds a tolerable form for humans

by being clothed in rites of worship, has no equivalent in the Hellenistic Christian, and thus in the Western industrial tradition.” (Heike Baranzke 2003, 314).

#### 4.4 On the threshold from the biblical to the patristic period

If we look back at the traces of the incipient Hellenisation of biblical interpretation in pre-Patristic times, we see that the transition from biblical biocentrism to Hellenistic anthropocentrism is prepared by numerous small shifts. The following facets contribute to this:

- The *adoption of the Stoic scala naturae* can only be found in Philon. It is found neither in the late Old Testament nor in the New Testament. And yet this essence–ontological hierarchy will soon play an important role in the Christian doctrine of creation and cover the spatial–relational order of creation of God’s seven–day work in Gen 1.
- The Stoic view of *animals as reasonless beings*, which is foreign to the Bible, determines the view of the early Jewish Diaspora community of Alexandria. It already became decisive in the Book of Wisdom, and even more so in Philon. From Hellenistic Judaism, it reached early Christianity a little later and established the momentous “rational divide” in Western ethics to this day.
- Alexandrian Judaism (in the Septuagint, the Book of Wisdom and the writings of Philon) unanimously interprets the biblical reference to the *image of God* in Gen 1:26–27 as referring to man’s ability to reason. The book of Jesus Sirach, which has only been preserved in Greek, although is originally from Hebrew Judaism, also takes this position (whether it was also contained in the original Hebrew text is as yet unknown). It marks a momentous shift from a relational–functional interpretation of man as God’s governor on earth to an *essential–ontological interpretation* of man as the only being endowed with reason. At the same time, man’s connection back to God and his instructions is made invisible: man is now no longer God’s representative, but a ruler by his own authority.
- It is remarkable that in the texts examined here, *traces of hard anthropocentrism* can only be found in Paul and very marginally. Although Hellenistic diaspora Judaism follows the Stoic “rational divide” between rational and non-rational creatures, the ethical consequences of this remain narrow for the time being. Here, the animal-friendliness of the Torah continues to have an effect. It is upheld and defended against

attacks from outside. Early Christianity, on the other hand, gradually bowed to the pressure of the Hellenistic environment in the context of the mission to the Gentiles. Thus, the last bastion of biblical animal ethics dissolved.

These very simplified processes of the history of ideas are unlikely to have been consciously controlled. The fact that there were fewer and fewer “Hebrew” (i.e. presumably Aramaic-speaking, Israel-born) Jewish Christians among the Christians who can keep the Old Testament and Jesus legacy alive was due to the dynamics of the early Christian mission. At some point, in most communities there was simply no one left who came from Hebrew culture. Thus, Hellenistic culture with its paradigms became the basic framework of Christian ethics without anyone questioning or reflecting on it. Local but frequent hostilities between (re-Hebraised) Jews and (fully Hellenised) Christians may have accelerated these processes.

The point here is not to evaluate the penetration of Christian theology by Greco-Roman philosophy as a whole. For animal ethics, however, it caused considerable collateral damage that continues to this day. When the texts of the early Church Fathers are analysed in the following chapter, we will be able to understand this penetration process even more precisely.



## 5 Traces of animal ethics in early Christian literature

In the first 250 years of its existence, Christianity was practised by a vanishingly small minority in the Roman Empire. In the face of an environment that did not believe at all or believed differently, it had more than enough to do to clarify its central core messages internally, to make them plausible and to defend them internally and externally. These include belief in the Resurrection and eternal life, in Jesus Christ as Saviour of the world, in a God who can be experienced in three ways, and the design of the central liturgical celebrations. Against this background, a separate form of animal ethics is not to be expected. Nevertheless, early Christian theology cannot develop in a way that is completely free of animal ethical positions. In their everyday lives, people deal with animals on a daily basis, and they are also mentioned in abundance in biblical and philosophical texts. Inevitably, the early Christian theologians had to adopt a position on this. In doing so, they set a decisive course for the long term, without realising it. The basic paradigms they adopted to describe the relationship between God, humans and animals are, once chosen, very difficult to correct. In fact, they continue to have an effect to this day.

So we are going on the trail of animal ethics in early Christian literature. In terms of time, we are concerned with the phase up to the beginning of the migration of peoples and the end of the Western Roman Empire. Augustine, who died in 430, will therefore be the last author examined here. This study is thus limited to the first two of three phases of Christianity in Late Antiquity as formulated by Peter Gemeinhardt (2022, 7), namely the two phases of the formation (until the middle of the 3rd century) and stabilisation (until the middle of the 5th century) of Christianity, while the phase of pluralisation (until the end of the 7th century) plays no role for our specific question. Spatially, Christianity of this epoch is an “urban religion” (Peter Gemeinhardt 2022, 16). It is formed predominantly from the urban population and in the cities and can thus tie in well with the high education in the cities.

Of course, from a historical point of view, it would be interesting to arrange the authors according to their linguistic and theological locations (Latin literature with its dualism between Rome and North Africa, Greek-Antiochene, Greek-Alexandrian, Syrian-Aramaic literature, etc.) in different

strands of tradition, so that, on the one hand, influences within Latin as well as Greek or Syrian literature would become more apparent and, on the other hand, adoptions from Greek into Latin or Syrian literature would become more clearly recognisable. I, however, am not a historian and feel that such an in-depth reconstruction of individual strands of tradition would be too much for me. However, a somewhat simpler and less in-depth reconstruction of early Christian animal ethics can suffice in good conscience for the systematic interest in knowledge represented here, namely to create perspectives for overcoming Christian anthropocentrism by identifying its roots.

The traces of the Church Fathers' animal ethics can be found in a wide variety of literary genres and thematic contexts. They embody important indications of the direction in which the specifically Christian perception of non-human creatures were to move in the centuries or millennia that followed. For with the entry of the Christian message into Hellenistic culture, a transformation of this message took place, such as probably only happened to the same extent again in the age of secularisation.

Two guiding questions will be decisive for our investigation: 1) Which paradigms of Greco-Roman philosophy that are relevant to animal and creation ethics do the early Christian theologians adopt and reinforce, relativise and weaken, conceal and ignore or criticise and correct? 2) How do they receive and interpret the passages of the Bible relevant to animal and creation ethics? Which passages are quoted, which are not? And how strongly are these incorporated into the philosophical paradigms or how independently are they interpreted? It should be noted that practically all the Church Fathers read only the Greek, and in some cases even only the Latin, translation of the Bible—one-sidedness and errors in the translations must therefore be taken into account, and we will encounter them very regularly in some biblical passages.

Ultimately, the question is how Christianity transposes the biblical message of divine creation and the human treatment of animals and non-human creation into Greco-Roman culture. In this regard, the patristic specialist debate of recent times is characterised by a series of “partly extreme research positions on the relationship of early church theology and [sic!] to ancient philosophy. They range from the assertion of a philosophical over-forming of Christianity to the statement that Christianity only took a few, peripheral and formal means of expression from contemporary philosophy, but never received its substance” (Charlotte Köckert 2009, 6).

It should first be noted that the biblical message and Greco-Roman culture do not stand side by side on an equal footing and are fused together from an impartial third position. Nor is it a matter of integrating Greco-Roman ideas into Hebrew-Jewish culture, as is the case in some late Old Testament books (cf. chapter 4.1). Rather, the challenge of the Church Fathers was to inculturate the biblical message into Greco-Roman culture. The ideological coordinate system, the philosophical matrix, is provided by this Greco-Roman culture. The early Church had to fit its message into this culture.

With regard to animals and non-human creation, this endeavour has a serious difficulty to overcome: Animals hardly play a role in Greco-Roman philosophical discourse and certainly have no value. Rather, the Platonic creation myth of Timaeus is dominant here, in which the animate living beings are created by sub-gods (Plato, Timaeus 41 a–d) and at the very end are just worthy of the remark that they do not need to be dealt with separately: “And now, then, the task set us of tracing the universe from its beginnings to the emergence of human beings seems to have pretty much reached its goal. For as to how the other animals came into being, we have only to state very briefly, since a lengthy discussion is unnecessary.” (Plato, Timaeus 91 e–92 c).

In addition, in the short comment immediately following from Plato’s Timaeus, the birds are created from simple-minded men, the land animals from those people who follow their instincts more than reason, the reptiles from the most unreasonable and the water animals from the most unreasonable and uneducated people. They are therefore not created directly but are “recycling products” from (and I apologise) human waste.

Against this background, it becomes understandable why many of the Church Fathers presented in the following and their audience are moved by the question of why, according to the biblical Creation narrative, man is only created after the animals and why there is such extensive mention of animals at all. The broad and largely positive thematisation of animals, their significance for God and human beings, and their value are alone in need of justification in Greco-Roman culture. The Church Fathers faced this challenge, and this should not be overlooked.

Now, it was clear to the Church Fathers in the 3rd and 4th centuries at the latest: “A Christian cosmology is gained in the interpretation of the biblical account of creation.” (Charlotte Köckert 2009, 542). It can be “read and interpreted as a natural philosophical text, because in the natural philosophy of that time, and especially in Platonism, cosmology was

decisively pursued in the interpretation of authoritative texts” (Charlotte Köckert 2009, 543). However, most of the Church Fathers read only Gen 1–2 as a Creation narrative. They do not perceive the significant role that the continuation of the narrative with the Flood and Noah’s covenant (Gen 6–9) plays in biblical cosmology. Only Irenaeus of Lyons (chapter 5.3), Ephraim the Syrian (chapter 5.9) and Ambrose of Milan (chapter 5.13) devote themselves to the animals in the ark in the sense of real animals and the covenant. All the other Church Fathers mention the ark at most ecclesiological as an image for the Church uniting a diverse “zoo” of people, or soteriologically and sacramentally as an image for redemption through the wood of the cross (ark) and the water of baptism (Flood) (cf. Hugo Rahner 1964, 504–547). But Ephraim and Ambrose, unlike Irenaeus, also do not notice that the Noah covenant is a covenant with all living beings. Even here, therefore, there is a remarkable reduction of the natural philosophical, animal ethical and creation ethical potential of the Bible.

Charlotte Köckert takes the reduction one step further. In her analysis of early Christian cosmology in Origen, Basil and Gregory of Nyssa, she limits herself to their interpretation of the first verses of Genesis, especially Gen 1:1–2, i.e. the introduction, and marginally Gen 1:3–19, i.e. the first four days of Creation. She omits the patristic interpretation of the second half of the Creation narrative without giving any reasons, and thus the question of the creation of animals and man. It seems as if for her the cosmos is only the living house of the earth, without its inhabitants. But this is precisely where it gets exciting. The Christian creation myth is more comprehensive than the Platonic one, and that says something about the Christian understanding of creation. A house without inhabitants is meaningless. The Church Fathers certainly recognised and addressed this in their interpretation of Gen 1–2, even, as we will see, in an anthropocentric framework and not biocentrically as in the biblical text itself.

After these content-related remarks, some formal preliminary remarks are necessary. In this chapter, we are dealing with a new phenomenon in the sociology of religion, which is determined by three components. Firstly, collectively we are dealing with a new religion that had broken away from the mother ground of the Jewish religion and had yet to find its own way. “Christianity” in the singular did not yet exist. The early Christian movement was divided into innumerable groups, some of which fought fiercely against each other. Even the rapid formation of a hierarchical leadership structure could not put a stop to this. It was not until the councils of the 4th and 5th centuries that a certain “homogenisation” (or, if one wants to

be precise, “oligogenisation”) began, at least in relation to the fundamental dogmatic questions.

Secondly, in the first three Christian centuries, almost all theologians underwent individual “conversions”—mostly not from Judaism, but from the pagan god cults to Christianity. The overwhelming majority of Christians were already former “pagans” in the 2nd century and at least until the beginning of the 4th century. In order to understand the theology of the early Christian authors, one must therefore always consider whether and why they converted from pagan religion to Christianity and how far they really broke away from their former religion. It will also be important to consider what they understood as belonging to the pagan religion and what they understood as belonging to Greco-Roman culture. The former had to be discarded, the latter could be retained. In this way, their biography decisively shapes their theology. From the 4th century onwards, we then increasingly encounter theologians who grew up in Christian families and confidently looked back on one or two generations of Christian ancestors. Their theology sometimes had noticeably different accents and characteristics. Christianity became the majority religion, following different dynamics than the small minority of the early period. Its embedding in the Greco-Roman culture was, of course, the same—nothing changed for the time being.

Thirdly, it must be taken into account that Christianity positioned itself positively in relation to the Hellenistic culture of Greco-Roman society from the very beginning. It made every effort to integrate itself as best it could into this culture and to keep up intellectually and communicatively with its opinion-makers. What was a break with the past on the religious level—the abandonment of pagan cults and the turning to the God of Jesus Christ in a “conversion”—therefore remained intentionally without inflicting drastic changes on the level of daily life and culture. The Hellenistic way of life was to be maintained. Of course, there were a few significant deviations, e.g. the Christian rejection of abortion, child abandonment and killing, or the opposition to gladiator fights. But they were very carefully dosed and did not establish an ecclesiastical “contrast society”. Rabbinic Judaism went a significantly different way, at least from the 2nd century onwards—its Hellenistic wing dissolved completely.

There were undoubtedly movements within Hellenism that were critical of society. One thinks, for example, of Neo-Pythagoreanism or Neo-Platonism. These are movements that developed their positions out of the tradition of Greek philosophy, although they did not agree with the social-cul-

tural mainstream on important issues, for example, on the question of the relationship between humans and animals, which visibly manifests itself in the dispute over meat consumption or abstinence from meat. Moreover, in the Roman Empire of late antiquity, there were increasingly religious and cultural movements that did not originate in the Greco-Roman cultural sphere but, like Judaism, seeped in from other (Far Eastern) cultural spheres. One only has to think of Manichaeism or the cult of Mithras. However, these immigrant cults, just like Christianity and Judaism, are faced with the necessity of justifying themselves before Greco-Roman culture with their paradigms.

One could, of course, ask the hypothetical question of whether early Christianity could not have positioned itself against the social mainstream on the animal issue in the same way as some of the aforementioned groups. However, it should not be ignored that Christianity, unlike the aforementioned movements, did not see itself as elitist, but wanted to go to all people and convert and baptise them in accordance with the Gospel's Great Commission (Mt 28:16–20). In view of this objective, more compromises with society inevitably had to be made than when one wants to be a small elite, as it declared.

In the following, we will therefore examine more closely how the Church Fathers place the animal ethical and animal theological impulses in the Bible in the matrix of Greco-Roman mainstream philosophy. Particular attention will be paid to those core aspects that span the web of ideas of Stoic anthropocentrism (cf. chapter 3.5.6): divine providence and care, man's endowment with reason and language as his exclusive proprium, dealing with feelings as the "animals in us", and dealing with real animals. At the centre, however, is the question of the teleology of anthropocentrism. For reasons of presentation, these five points of view are not always discussed in the same order, but they appear in each author's work, provided they have written something about them.

### 5.1 *Tatian*

The first author relevant to our topic belongs to the minority of those people who are critical of or even hostile to Hellenism, both before and after his conversion to Christianity. Tatian, who was born around 120 and who died around 180 AD, comes from the "land of the Assyrians" (Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos* 42, 1), that is, the "Aramaic-speaking heartland on the

middle Tigris” (Jörg Trelenberg 2012, 1). In Rome he became a disciple of Justin, who converted him to Christianity (Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos* 18, 6; Eusebius, *Church History* 4, 29). Due to Tatian’s radical convictions and his rejection of any Hellenistic influence on Christianity, however, he fell out with Justin (Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus haereses* 1, 28, 1). Tatian therefore returned to his Syrian homeland and founded an Encratite community there. The Encratites (from ἐγκράτεια, abstinence) were a strict ascetic movement of the early church from the end of the 2nd to the end of the 3rd century. They abstained completely from the consumption of meat and wine and lived sexually abstinent lives. As a movement demanding this lifestyle from all Christians, they dissolved around 300 AD. However, their ideas lived on in a moderate form in early monasticism, which practised this lifestyle as a voluntary option without demanding it from all Christians.

Tatian’s most famous work is the Diatesseron, a gospel harmony which was still used in worship in Syria in the 4th century, but was deliberately destroyed afterwards, so that we only possess fragments of it. A book περὶ ζώων which Tatian claims to have written about animals (Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos* 15) has also been lost. A work by Tatian which completely survived, on the other hand—albeit on a relatively narrow and poor source base (Miroslav Marcovich 1995a, VII)—is Ἐπιστολὴ πρὸς Ἑλλήνας/ *Oratio ad Graecos*, a polemic against the arrogance of Greek culture and for a non-Hellenistic understanding of Christianity written between 165 and 172 AD (Miroslav Marcovich 1995a, 2), which begins with the following sentence: “Do not be so hostile to the ‘barbarians’, you confessors of Greekism, and do not judge their teachings so begrudgingly! For which of your institutions does not owe its origin to barbarians?” (Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos* 1). The fact that this work has survived proves that, unlike Tatian’s other writings, it has always been considered helpful for Christian doctrine.

First of all, it is striking that Tatian places the killing of animals and the killing of humans in a close relationship. He opposes the *eating of meat* just as he opposes *gladiatorial fights*: just as the meat eaters feed themselves physically from animal flesh, the spectators of gladiatorial fights feed their souls with “human food”. Both are reprehensible. However, for Tatian, killing gladiators for sheer spectatorial pleasure is even worse than killing animals for meat, because in gladiatorial fights, killing becomes an end in itself: “You slaughter animals (ζῶα) for the sake of eating flesh (κρεωφαγία), and you buy men to offer man-eating (ἀνθρωποσφαγία) to the soul and to nourish it with most impious bloodshed. The robber, at any



rate, murders in order to rob, but the rich man buys gladiators in order to murder.” (Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos* 23, 5). Tatian thus rejects killing altogether, of humans as well as animals, but condemns it more harshly when it is done for the sake of killing, for pure pleasure. The purpose of food does not justify killing, just as robbery does not justify murder. But the act weighs more heavily when it is carried out for an end in itself. It is noteworthy that for Tatian the killing of gladiators does not weigh more heavily because they are human beings, but only because their death has no purpose outside itself. A gradation of the animals is therefore not connected with his evaluation.

Tatian does not shake the Stoic terminology of *animals as “reasonless”*. The wording of his criticism of the natural and “wild” life of the Cynics could thus also have come from the Stoics: “Man, you who emulate the dog; you do not know God and have gone over to imitating the reasonless (*ἀλόγων μίμησις*).” (Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos* 25, 2). Here Tatian adopts Greek *aloga* terminology, which one would not necessarily expect him to use, especially considering its origin.

In terms of content, however, Tatian distances himself from the *aloga* thesis. He explicitly opposes the conviction of the “raven-croakers”—as he contemptuously calls the sophists—according to which humans differ from animals by reason, understanding and knowledge. In demarcation from both Stoic anthropology (Janet E. Spittler 2010, 357–358) and the Hellenistic ontologisation of the Septuagint and Philon, he interprets the image of God from Gen 1:26–27 as an endowment with the Spirit of God. While this interpretation also does not correspond to the intention of the Hebrew text, it is much closer to it as a relational interpretation. Tatian writes: “Man is not, as the raven-croakers (*κορακόφωνοι*) teach, ‘a being endowed with reason, susceptible to understanding and knowledge’ (*ζῶον λογικὸν νοῦ καὶ ἐπιστήμης δεκτικόν*), for if one follows them, it will be seen that even the reasonless beings are susceptible to understanding and knowledge (*καὶ τὰ ἄλογα νοῦ καὶ ἐπιστήμης δεκτικά*). But man alone is God’s image and likeness (*εἰκὼν καὶ ὁμοίωσις τοῦ θεοῦ*); but I do not mean a man who behaves like the animals (*ὅμοια τοῖς ζώοις πράττοντα*), but one who has gone far beyond his humanity to God Himself. [...] Now suppose that this organism [of man] thus formed resembles a temple, God wills to dwell in him by the Spirit (*πνεῦμα*), his emissary; but if he be no such sanctuary, man is superior to the animals only by his articulate voice (*προὔχει τῶν θηρίων ὁ ἄνθρωπος κατὰ τὴν ἔναρθρον φωνὴν μόνον*) and, since his other



expressions of life are quite like the animal ones, not a 'likeness of God' either" (Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos* 15, 3–5).

This interpretation of Gen 1:26–27 is unique in early Christian theology. It proves that there is definitely a minority in Christianity that resists the Hellenistic ontologisation of biblical key texts and adheres to a relational interpretation. At the same time, the identification of Godlikeness with religiosity rather than humanity, with faith rather than morality, is highly problematic and itself unbiblical. Tatian sees only Christians as true human beings—all non-believers or those who believe otherwise have ultimately forfeited their humanity (Janet E. Spittler 2010, 358), not to mention animals, which cannot be spiritual at all.

Although tending to be strongly anti-Stoic and rather animal-friendly, Tatian explicitly excludes the resurrection of animals. Only humans will be resurrected to be judged: "And therefore we cherish the belief that after the consummation of all things, bodies will also be resurrected [...] only once, after the consummation of the present time, and for the sole purpose of gathering men together for the sake of judgement." (Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos* 6, 1).

It is recognisable that Tatian does not yet manage to position himself clearly and consistently with regard to animals. For all his reserve vis-à-vis the Stoa and Hellenism, some of his core theses are in fact Greek. On the other hand, his distance from the aloga thesis and his linking of animal killing and human killing suggest tones that are rare in early Christianity.

## 5.2 *Theophilus of Antioch*

The next texts relevant to our question have come down to us from Theophilus, who was Bishop of Antioch from about 169 AD until the year of his death around 183 AD. Theophilus had a classical education and came to Christianity through the study of the Bible. As a Christian, he wrote numerous writings, of which only the three-volume apology *Ad Autolyicum* (written around 180) has survived, along with a few fragments. In it, the bishop tries to convince the pagan Autolykos of the Christian religion. It is a kind of "crash course" in the Christian faith, presenting the religion's most important contents briefly and concisely. Literarily and philosophically, it is not of a particularly high standard and does not present an overly sophisticated argument. Nevertheless, it is the oldest post-biblical testimony

to those shifts in the view of the human–animal relationship that took place in the Christian mainstream within less than one century.

With Theophilus we turn to Antioch on the Orontes for the first time. In Roman times, Antioch was, along with Alexandria, the largest and most important city in the eastern Mediterranean and the centre of one of the most venerable and largest Jewish diaspora communities. The very early foundation of the Christian community in Antioch “goes back to Hellenists expelled from Jerusalem, especially men from Cyprus and Cyrenaica, who also missionised Gentiles in Antioch [...] the consolidation of the community in Antioch is connected with the sending of Barnabas from Jerusalem to the Syrian capital, where he becomes the leading man” (Rudolf Pesch 1986, 350).

The Christian community of Antioch, which became the missionary base of Peter, Paul and Barnabas, was composed of three (!) groups from the beginning: Hebrew-Aramaic Jews, Hellenistic Jews and Hellenistic Gentiles. On the one hand, this shows the breadth and openness of the community, but it also provides an idea of the conflicts that could arise, for in Antioch there were uncircumcised Christians for the first time (Acts 15), which demanded a position to be taken on the following question: Do all men who convert to Christianity have to be circumcised, or do they not? The Apostles’ Council in Jerusalem in 48 AD (see chapter 4.3.4) goes back to this dispute in Antioch. If the Jesus community continued to see itself as a Jewish group, its members had to keep the commandments of the Torah, i.e. also the commandment of circumcision. If the Jesus Community became (more) independent of Judaism, circumcision could be dispensed with. The Apostolic Council decided in favour of the second option and thus opened the door for the Gentile mission. In Antioch, the members of the Jesus Community were called “Christians” (χριστιανόι, Acts 11:26) for the first time.

In Ad Autolycum, Theophilus is first concerned with the image of God. The one and incomprehensible God can be recognised in many ways—among others in his works of creation: “Consider, o man, his works: The timely change of seasons, the changes of weather, the orderly course of the heavenly bodies, the regular course of days and nights, months and years, the colourful beauty of seeds, plants and fruits, the various kinds of quadrupeds, birds, swimming and crawling animals, river and water animals; or the understanding (σύνεσις) put into the animals themselves for the reproduction and nourishment of their young, not for their own benefit, but for the use of man (οὐκ εἰς ἰδίαν χρῆσιν, ἀλλὰ εἰς τὸ ἔχειν τὸν

ἄνθρωπον); then the care (πρόνοια) which God bears in providing food for all flesh (πάσῃ σαρκί), or the subordination (ὑποταγή) in which, according to his arrangement, all beings are under man.” (Theophilos of Antioch, Ad Autolycum 1, 6)

The signals of this passage are very contradictory: On the one hand, Theophilos seems to think in a relatively animal-friendly manner, for the fact that animals possess insight (σύνεσις) had until then only been asserted by Plutarch (chapter 3.6.2) and Tatian (chapter 5.1). In mainstream Greek philosophy, this qualification is reserved for humans. And God’s “care” for “all flesh”, i.e. all creatures, is also entirely in line with the biblical message, but cannot be done with the Stoa. On the other hand, Theophilos claims that the reproduction of animals is not for their own benefit, but for the benefit of humans. And he speaks of the “subordination” of all living beings to man. One does not quite know how he intends to bring these contradictory statements together.

Theophilos begins his interpretation of the Creation narrative with the following reflections: “Nothing existed apart from God, but he himself was his space, was perfect enough for himself and was there before all times. But he wanted to create man in order to be known by him; for him, therefore, he prepared the world. For the created are in need of many things, but the Eternal is without need. So God, with his wisdom, begat his Word, which he had determined in his own interior (Λόγον ἐνδιάθετον), making it come forth from himself before all things. This word therefore he used as the means of all his creations, and created all things by the same (Jn 1:3).” (Theophilos of Antioch, Ad Autolycum 2, 10). As early as in these first sentences, Theophilos clarifies for what purpose God created the world: He wants to be known by a counterpart. And this counterpart is man, at whom the creation of the world is consequently aimed. However, man is needy, he needs the supportive and sheltering house of life on earth, which is therefore created for his sake (cf. Andrew Louth 2009, 43). Finally, Theophilos emphasises from the beginning that creation has to do with the divine Logos, Christ: Through the Word all things were created, and through the Word man can know God. The *anthropocentrism* that is visible here is thus a form of logocentrism and Christocentrism, as we will encounter in many authors.

In Ad Autolycum 2, 16–18, Theophilos interprets the fifth and sixth of the seven days of creation from Gen 1. Ad Autolycum 2, 16 explains the fifth day of creation and sees the aquatic animals as images of baptism, the carnivorous birds as images of greed and iniquity, and the carnivores in

general as images of robbery and murder. For the first time, the animals are interpreted exclusively allegorically—a form of interpretation that is considered typical of Alexandria for the following centuries, but which apparently also existed in Antioch in the early days of the Church. This hermeneutic is also continued in *Ad Autolyicum* 2, 17, where the wild land animals serve as an image for godless people. However, allegories only work if the factual half is correctly represented. Therefore, Theophilus feels compelled to say something about the sinfulness of the animals. The animals were by no means created evil by God but were only corrupted by man's sin: "Because he is the master (κύριος), the subordinates (τὰ δοῦλα) also sinned with him. Now when man shall rise again to an existence suitable to his nature, and shall do no more evil, they also shall return to their original gentle nature." (Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autolyicum* 2, 17). Quite incidentally, the human–animal relationship is interpreted here as a relationship between master and servant—an absolute hierarchy clearly beyond the Bible. The attribute κύριος normally only belongs to God himself.

Theophilus also maintains this steep hierarchy between humans and animals in his explanations of the creation of man. *Ad Autolyicum* 2, 18, like 2, 11, quotes the verses Gen 1:26–27 verbatim from the Septuagint and thus adopts its essential ontological interpretation of the image of God. God creates man *in* his image, not *as* his image, as the Hebrew Bible says. Theophilus concludes by underpinning the subordination of the "secondary" animals to the only "worthy" human beings with the following sentences: "For after God had created everything by his word, he considered everything secondary works (πάρεργα, more accurately translated: irrelevant works), but only the creation of man as a work worthy of his hands (ἄξιον ἔργον). [...] Having therefore created and blessed him, that he might grow and fill the earth, he subordinated all beings to him as submissive and servile (ὑπέταξεν αὐτῷ ὑποχέρια καὶ ὑπόδουλα τὰ πάντα)." (Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autolyicum* 2, 18).

Even if we do not yet find in Theophilus a thoroughly composed and coherent body of thought of a Christian doctrine of creation, the shifts from biblical to Hellenistic paradigms are clearly recognisable. Within just less than a century, mainstream Christianity, which in the meantime consisted almost exclusively of Christians of non-Jewish origin, had distanced itself far from its biblical roots and assimilated to its Hellenistic environment. The hierarchy between God, man and animal had become very steep.

### 5.3 Irenaeus of Lyons

Irenaeus (c. 135 Smyrna–c. 200 Lyons) probably comes from Smyrna (today's Izmir) in Asia Minor and is therefore still called “Irenaios of Smyrna” in the Eastern Church. According to his own account, he was a disciple of the bishop of his hometown, Polycarp of Smyrna (Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus haereses* 3, 3). Via Rome he reached Lugdunum (Lyon), where he was elected second bishop of the city in 177 AD.

Of his writings, apart from the *Epideixis* discussed at the end of the chapter, only the five-volume treatise against heresies, *Adversus haereses*, written around 180 to 185 AD (Norbert Brox 1993b, 101) has survived, and only in a relatively free Latin translation. Only a few scattered fragments of the original Greek text still exist, but not for most sections discussed here, so we have to make do with the Latin terms. In this work, Irenaeus deals with the heresies of the Gnostics, a very diverse and completely non-uniform current of thought, who take ideas from the most diverse religions and put them together in a patchwork fashion (Norbert Brox 1993, 8). Thus, the canon of topics in *Adversus haereses* is also determined by gnosis and in that respect is not representative of a complete exposition of Christian doctrine (Norbert Brox 1993, 13).

Irenaeus presupposes the Greek *aloga thesis* as a matter of course. Thus, he calls the animals “dumb animals (*muta animalia*)” (Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus haereses* 4, 33, 5; 4, 38, 4) and “reasonless animals (*animalia irrationalia*)” (Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus haereses* 4, 4, 3; 5, 8, 2). This denies the animals the two Stoic characteristics of reason: thinking and speaking. The casualness of the formulations shows that Irenaeus does not even think of doubting Stoic ontology. For him, its correctness is obvious.

Irenaeus is more reserved where he alludes to the Stoic *scala naturae*. While he adopts their classifications unchanged, he nowhere emphasises the hierarchy implied by the Stoics. Rather, he is concerned with God's wise and benevolent provision, which assigns to each creature the quality suitable for it as well as the optimal place in the house of life of creation: “In himself according to that which is inexplicable and inscrutable to us, he predestinatedly made everything as he willed (*omnia praedestinans fecit quemadmodum voluit*), and gave to each its place and order and the beginning of its creation (*consonantiam et ordinem suum et initium creationis donans*), to the spiritual beings the spiritual and invisible, to the celestials the celestial, to the angels the angelic, to the animals the animal (*animalibus animale*), to the water-dwellers the water, to the earth-dwellers the earth,

and thus he gave to all the suitable constitution (omnibus aptam qualitatis substantiam). But all things that were made he made by his ineffable word (infatigabili verbo).” (Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus haereses* 2, 2, 4). Compared to Philon (chapter 4.2), Irenaeus here stays much closer to the meaning of the biblical text: The Creator assigns a place to everything, no creature goes empty-handed, and the characteristics of every living being are appropriate to its habitat. One can feel the breath of the paradisiacal state of peace that Gen 1 wants to convey. At the same time, in the last sentence of the quotation, Irenaeus already hints at the Logos of God, Christ, through whom creation takes place. From the beginning, Christianity reads Gen 1 against the background of Jn 1—the Old Testament in the light of the New—and thus foreshadows the Christocentrist underpinning of Stoic anthropocentrism.

The interpretation of the *image of God* from Gen 1:26–27, on the other hand, moves in the ontologising thinking of Hellenism, for Irenaeus sees it embodied in free will and in the capacity for moral action: “Since, however, man has free will from the beginning (liberae sententiae ab initio est homo), just as God has free will, in whose image he was created, so he [the Apostle] always gives him advice to hold fast that which is good, which is accomplished in obedience to God.” (Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus haereses* 4, 37, 4). What is unspoken but implied is the Stoic conviction that animals have no free will. The image of God in human beings thus consists, at least in part, in resembling God in the ability to make free decisions of will.

When interpreting Isaiah’s vision of the *peace of all beasts* (Is 11:1–9)<sup>18</sup>, on the other hand, Irenaeus, quite in keeping with his Asia Minor origins, distances himself from an allegorical interpretation and insists on a literal interpretation: “Now I know well that some try to apply this to those uncultured people who have become believers from different peoples and circumstances and now agree with the righteous. But although this now applies to some people who come to the one conviction of faith from different peoples, yet at the resurrection of the righteous this also applies to those animals, for, as I said, rich in everything is God. And when creation is

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18 In the interpretations of the peace of creation by the Church Fathers, different conclusions sometimes become apparent, depending on whether we are dealing with the protological animal peace in paradise or the eschatological one at the end of days. These differences, however, concern exclusively dogmatic points of view. They have no bearing on animal ethics, which is why no stronger distinction is made in the following.

restored, then all animals must obey and submit (*obedire et subiecta esse*) to man and return to the first food given them by God, to the fruit of the earth, just as they were in obedience (*in obedientia subiecta*) to Adam. By the way, even now no one can show a lion feeding on straw. But this points to the size and fatness of the fruit. For if the lion feeds on straw, what must be the wheat itself, the straw of which serves as food for the lions!” (Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus haereses* 5, 33, 4).

The abundance of God’s kingdom after resurrection will be so immeasurable that even the great carnivores like lions will be satisfied with plant food. Thus, in eternity, all living beings can live together without violence, without eating each other. And although the hierarchy between humans and animals is not abolished there either, but the animals must continue to subordinate themselves to and obey humans, they are nevertheless included in the resurrection. One can see that Irenaeus rejects the Stoic “dogmas” (only) where they do not seem to him to be compatible with the Bible. How he imagines the presence of the animals in the paradisiacal peace remains in the dark. But in any case, they play a considerable role there: “Irenaeus should not be understood to propose the personal resurrection of individual creatures. [...] Nevertheless, Irenaeus’ emphasis on the presence of animals in the eschatological future is a significant departure from other patristic thinking.” (Janet E. Spittler 2010, 360–361).

Irenaeus compares, quite in the line of Greek philosophy, those people who do not control and steer their feelings by reason and do not use their free will to make a rational decision with the animals who cannot do this by nature, also doing so once with the idea of the chaff separated from the wheat from John the Baptist’s sermon on repentance (Mt 3:12): “But wheat and chaff, which are without life and understanding (*inanimalia et irrationalia existentia*), became so by nature (*naturaliter*); but the rational man (*homo rationalis*), by this the image of God, that he can freely choose and determine himself (*liber in arbitrio factus et suae potestatis*), bears in himself the cause, if he once becomes wheat, the other time chaff. Therefore he will also be justly condemned if, in spite of his understanding, he has lost his true understanding, and living irrationally (*irrationabiliter vivens*), has challenged the justice of God by yielding to all the spirit of the earth and serving all lusts, according to the words of the prophet who says: ‘When man was in honour, he did not understand; he became like

the unintelligent (*insipientibus*) beasts and became like them'. (Ps 48:13 LXX)<sup>19</sup>" (Irenaeus of Lyon, *Adversus haereses* 4, 4, 3).

Irenaeus presents his interpretation of the narrative of the Fall in Gen 3 in the following sentences: "Irrational (*irrationabiles*), then, in every respect, are those who do not wait for the time of growth and attribute the weakness of their nature to God. These insatiable and ungrateful ones know neither God nor themselves, if they do not want to be what they have become first: human beings capable of suffering (*homines passionum capaces*); and transgressing the law of the human race, they want, even before they have become human beings, to be like the Creator God and to admit no difference between the uncreated God and the now created human being. More irrational are they than the dumb animals (*plus irrationales sunt quam muta animalia*). For these do not reproach God for not having made them men, but each of them gives thanks with what it is for being." (Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus haereses* 4, 38, 4).

According to Irenaeus, the original human sin consists in not accepting the weakness and capacity for suffering of one's own nature and corporeality, thus denying one's own creatureliness and wanting to be uncreated, incorporeal and incapable of suffering, just like God Himself. Later, in patristic literature, the opposing concepts of pride (*superbia*) and humility (*humilitas*) will be used for this, which do not yet appear in Irenaeus. However, while animals willingly accept their nature and thank God for it, many humans do not and are thus "more unreasonable" (*plus irrationales*) than animals—a comparative that is strictly logically impossible: you cannot be more unreasonable than unreasonable. This attribution hits those it refers to all the harder.

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19 This psalm verse is often quoted in the patristic texts. The problem is that it already undergoes a considerable shift in meaning when it is translated into Greek. In the Hebrew Ps 49:13, it is said of rich and poor, wise and foolish alike: "But man does not abide in his splendour; he is like cattle that fall silent." In death, the thought goes, all are equal: rich and poor, man and cattle. In the Septuagint, the second half-sentence of Ps 48:13 reads thus, "... παρασυνεβλήθη τοῖς κτήνεσιν τοῖς ἀνοήτοις καὶ ὡμοιώθη αὐτοῖς." – "... he resembles the unintelligent cattle and becomes like them." In the place of being dumb in death is incomprehensibility in life—a totally different statement. One can see how the Septuagint Hellenises the Hebrew text: According to the Stoic conviction, man and animals are precisely not equal to each other in death, since the soul of man is immortal—a conviction that is unthinkable in Israel at the time of the Psalms. And it is equally unthinkable for the Psalms to describe animals as "incomprehensible".



A third time, Irenaeus compares people who live irresponsibly and give in to their desires to reasonless animals: “But those who reject the counsel of the Spirit, serve the lusts of the flesh, live irrationally, and throw themselves unrestrainedly into their desires (carnis autem voluptatibus serviunt et irrationabiliter vivunt et ineffrenati deiiciuntur in sua desideria), since they have no breath of the divine Spirit, but live after the manner of swine and dogs; the apostle rightly calls them carnal, since they know nothing but carnal things. And the prophets, for the same reason, compare those who walk so unreasonably to reasonless animals (irrationabilibus animalibus assimilant eos). [...] For through his own fault ‘he has become like cattle (assimilatus est iumentis)’ (Ps 48:13 LXX), because he has given himself up to an unreasonable life. And accordingly, we also say of such people that they have become reasonless cattle and animal-like! [...] Rightly, then, the apostle called all these, who, because of their unbelief and opulence, do not obtain the divine Spirit, and by various characters cast out the Spirit that makes them alive, and walk unreasonably in their lusts, carnal and beastly; the prophets called them cattle and wild beasts; custom interprets them as beasts and reasonless (irrational); the law proclaims them unclean.” (Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus haereses* 5, 8, 2–3). As in Greek philosophy, the *aloga* thesis is interpreted by Irenaeus as an admonition to people to use their own reason and to live life responsibly. One’s own guilt is more than clearly emphasized, and the entire Bible (Torah, prophets and writings, as well as Paul—but not Jesus!) must be used to support the reprehensibility of “animal behaviour” by humans.

*In summary*, it can be stated that Irenaeus is the first of the authors presented here to advocate the *aloga* thesis without qualification, albeit predominantly with a moral pedagogical impetus. The Latin translation, however, is very free at this point. The fact that the Greek *ἄλογα* is rendered with the Latin “irrationalia” and not (imitating the *alpha* privativum) with “arationalia” is correct, since the prefix “in-” corresponds to the “a-” privativum and the term “arationalis” does not exist in Latin. However, in “*adversus haereses*” “irrationalia” is used more often, literally “those who are not capable of reason”, which corresponds to the Stoic intention, but is an interpretation and not an exact translation. The writings of the Latin Stoa used in chapter 3.5 do not include this terminology. In terms of content, the classification as “irrationalis” means for Irenaeus, in line with Paul and the Stoa, above all to abandon oneself to one’s own desires and feelings. Whereas animals, in his view, cannot do otherwise, in humans it is a free, albeit irresponsible, decision.

Although Irenaeus consistently and clearly advocates the aloga thesis, he is more reserved with regard to the hierarchy between humans and animals. In any case, he receives the Stoic *scala naturae* without its steep gradient of values. The Bishop of Lyons, referring to Is 11, furthermore can only imagine eternity with the inclusion of all creatures. He resolutely rejects an allegorical interpretation of the text. Above all, however, there is no trace of Stoic anthropocentrism in him. One senses that Irenaeus wants to hold on to the animal-friendliness of the Bible within the framework of Greek ontology.

The *Epideixis*, the *exposition of the apostolic proclamation* mentioned by Eusebius of Caesarea (*Historia ecclesiastica* 5, 26), has also only survived in a single Armenian manuscript discovered in Yerevan in 1904 (Norbert Brox 1993a, 23–24). In terms of diction and content, however, it is so typical of Irenaeus that it can be regarded as authentic. It is a summary of *Adversus haereses*, which was written after these five books (Norbert Brox 1993a, 24) and a kind of “catechism of early Christianity” (Norbert Brox 1993a, 27). Therefore, it will be briefly examined for its passages relevant to our topic.

First of all, it is striking that in the *Epideixis*, unlike in *Adversus haereses*, Irenaeus interprets the vision of the peace of creation in Is 11 allegorically. The prophet thus indicates “in a symbolic way that people of very different descent gather together in unity and peace through the name of Christ. This is the assembly of the righteous, who are likened to oxen and lambs and kids, because they do no harm to anyone, whereas in former times they were like wild beasts by their extortions, both men and women, so that some of them became like wolves and lions, since they robbed the weak and made war with their own kind; but the women like panthers and vipers, who by deadly poisons or by their lusts (?) were even able to kill their loved ones. Gathered together in the one name, they adopt right customs by the grace of God, changing their wild and crude nature. Which is what has happened now.” (Irenaeus of Lyons, *Epideixis* 61). Here, Irenaeus apparently adapts to the mainstream, which he had previously explicitly opposed.

Otherwise, however, he sticks to his animal-friendly positions, for in the *Epideixis* he also advocates formal anthropocentrism without material anthropocentrism: “As the image of God, created man was placed on earth. [...] Now he was free and independent, having been created by God to rule over all those who are on earth.” (Irenaeus of Lyons, *Epideixis* 11). This is a very restrained interpretation of the image of God from Gen 1:26–27.

The animal theological highlight of the *Epideixis*, however, is the interpretation of the Flood narrative. For Irenaeus, the starting point is the irrevocable community of fate between humans and animals: “And since destruction overtook all, both humans and animals that were on earth, only what was protected in the ark remained alive.” (Irenaeus of Lyons, *Epideixis* 19). This leads him to a statement that must be unique for the entire time of the Fathers. Indeed, Irenaeus explicitly emphasises that the Noahide covenant applies to all living creatures: “But after the Flood, God decreed a covenant with the whole world, especially with all living creatures and human beings, so that all the growth of the earth would no longer be spoiled by a flood.” (Irenaeus of Lyons, *Epideixis* 22). I have not found a comparable statement anywhere else in the texts examined here.

#### 5.4 Clement of Alexandria

Titus Flavius Clemens, or Clement of Alexandria for short (c. 150–c. 215 AD), provides more extensive, though not yet consistent, systematisation of Christian thought. Biographically, we know relatively little about him. Born into a Greek milieu, he received a good Middle Platonic education, but later converted to Christianity. In Alexandria, where he stayed for the longest time of his life, he also became acquainted with the Stoa. The important Jewish community of Alexandria, on the other hand, had already largely perished during the revolt in the years 115 to 117 AD, and Clement did not get to know them. He taught at a Christian school in Alexandria until around 202, before leaving the metropolis for unknown reasons.

With his writings, Clement made a decisive contribution to the Christian reception of Greek philosophy and to the adoption of Platonic and Stoic elements in the Christian doctrinal edifice that was forming at this time. Despite his different religious affiliation, he was strongly oriented towards the earlier Alexandrian Philon. His three main works, which will be analysed below, are: the *Protrepticus*, an exhortation to interested pagans about Christianity as the true philosophy, the *Paedagogus*, which directly follows the *Protrepticus*, in which Christ is presented to the already baptised as the true teacher for a good life (including a very conscious diet), and the *Stromateis*, a mixed collection of philosophical aphorisms, the deeper truths of which, according to Clement, only Christians can recognise.

First of all, the *interpretation of the animal ethical norms of the Torah*, which is surprisingly strongly oriented towards Philon’s treatise *De vir-*

tutibus, is striking. The five commandments referred to there are discussed in exactly the same order, which does not correspond to the Bible. Clement fully adopts Philon's logic that mercy towards animals also teaches mercy towards humans and consequently allows the analogy and the argument a *minori ad maius*. However, he expands and deepens the argumentation. Pythagoras, as Clement introduces, took his explanations on mercy with animals from the Torah, which establishes the following commandments:

- “When an ox, a sheep or a goat is born, the young one shall stay with its mother for seven days.” (Lev 22:27; cf. Philon, *De virtutibus* 25, 126–133). On this point Clement elaborates, “In any case, the law commanded to abstain from immediate use, even for the purpose of sacrifice, in the case of the animals newly born in the flocks of sheep, goats, and cattle, both for the sake of the young and their mothers (*ἐκ γονέων τε ἔνεκα καὶ μητέρων*). In this way, beginning from below with the reasonless animals, it wished gradually to educate towards mildness [...] For if nothing happens without a definite purpose, and milk flows to the mothers after birth for the nourishment of the young, nature disregards (*ἀτιμάζει τὴν φύσιν*) whoever deprives the newborn of the care offered to it by milk. So the Greeks, and all who otherwise find fault with the law, ought to be ashamed, since, while the latter shows clemency even in the case of reasonless animals, they even abandon human offspring, although the law, by the precept just stated, since ancient times prophetically wanted to restrain them from cruelty. For if it forbids the young of reasonless animals (*ἄλογα ζῶα*) to be separated from their mothers before they have been suckled, much more, where men are concerned, does it seek to influence in advance the brutal and unruly nature of the senses, so that they may listen, if not to nature, at least to instruction.” (Clement, *Stromateis* 2, 18, 92). First of all, Clement holds that the purpose of the Torah is to spare animals—the offspring as well as the mother. It has intrinsic moral value. Secondly—and here Clement turns a Stoic argument against the Stoa—anyone who separates mother and offspring before weaning disregards the nature of animals. While the Stoa applies the maxim of living according to nature to human nature alone, Clement broadens its scope and also considers the nature of animals to be normative. Finally, taking this animal ethical commandment of the Torah as a starting point, he criticises the generally accepted Greek practice of child abandonment by analogy and the argument a *minori ad maius*. If they do not listen to the voice of nature, they should at least respect the Torah's instruction!

- “You shall not slaughter an ox or a sheep or a goat on the same day as its young.” (Lev 22:28; cf. Philon, *De virtutibus* 26, 134–140). Here, Clement refers to exactly the same analogy as Philon, namely the sparing of a pregnant woman condemned to death until the birth of the child. And he concludes, “Thus the law extended its clemency (ἐπιεικῆς) even to the reasonless animals, so that we might exercise clemency on those who are not of the same nature (ἀνομογενές) as us, and then to a far higher degree exercise philanthropy (φιλανθρωπία) against those like ourselves (ὁμογενές).” (Clement, *Stromateis* 2, 18, 93). From the Greek terms, it can be seen that Clement confines philanthropy to human beings as an enhancement of clemency, as is also in keeping with the etymology of the term. Philon had used the two terms equally for humans and animals.
- “You shall not boil a kid in its mother’s milk.” (Dt 14:21b; cf. Philon, *De virtutibus* 26, 142–144). Going beyond Philon, Clement cites an example from Plutarch of a practice that contradicts the biblical commandment. And he justifies the Torah’s commandment with the natural purpose of milk: “For food intended for the living shall not, it is said, become the seasoning of the slaughtered animal, and that which is intended for the preservation of life shall not be used in the eating of the dead body.” (Clement, *Stromateis* 2, 18, 94). Respect for the mother animal, which is the original aim of the Torah commandment, is not addressed by Clement.
- “You shall not muzzle the ox for threshing.” (Dt 25:4; cf. Philon, *De virtutibus* 27, 145). This commandment is also relatively briefly justified, this time by reversing the analogy by invoking justice: “for the labourer too shall receive his deserved wages (Lk 10:7; Mt 10:10)” (Clement, *Stromateis* 2, 18, 94).
- “You shall not harness an ox and an ass together to the plough.” (Dt 22:10; cf. Philon, *De virtutibus* 27, 146–147). Here, Clement takes his cue entirely from Philon. The weak animal is to be protected, just like the weak man, namely the unclean, the goy (Clement, *Stromateis* 2, 18, 94). Again, it is a question of justice.

In comparison with Philon, Clement expands the argumentation considerably. The animal-friendliness of the Torah is just as unquestionable for him as the analogy to human-friendliness. This is also shown in his interpretation of Mt 6:26, where Jesus emphasises *God’s care for the animals*. Clement writes: “No one, however, is poor in necessities, and never is a man completely forgotten. For it is one, God, who feeds all that flies and

all that swims, and in a word the reasonless living creatures (ἄλογα ζῶα); neither do they lack the least thing, though they do not provide for their food. But we are worth more (ἀμείνους) than they, because we are their masters (κύριοι), and are nearer to God, because we are more understanding (σωφρονέστεροι).” (Clement, Paedagogus 2, 1, 14). As with Jesus, and by analogy with the interpretation of the animal ethical commandments of the Torah, the argument a minori ad maius also appears here. However, the designation of humans as “masters” over animals, which is supplemented by the comparative “more understanding”, is surprising. In order to justify the higher value of human beings, there would be no need to refer to the relationship of dominion. Jesus, in any case, does not do this.

Like Neo-Platonism and Neo-Pythagoreanism, Clement is very critical of *meat-eating*, but without, like Tatian, elevating abstinence from meat to a general duty: “It is good not to eat meat or drink wine’ (Rom 14:21), therefore he [Paul] himself says, and likewise Pythagoras with his followers. For this is more fitting for animals; and since the exhalation thereof is more impure, it darkens the soul. However, one does not sin if he also eats such food, only he should do it with moderation and not consider it indispensable or become dependent on it, and must not be greedy for the flesh; for otherwise a voice will sound to him saying, ‘Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of a food!’ (Rom 14:20).” (Clement, Paedagogus 2, 1, 11). Clement here abbreviates the original meaning in Paul, who, as seen above (chapter 4.3.2), only problematizes the consumption of non-kosher meat, demands consideration for the “weak” and has not the slightest interest in the animals that are killed. Clement, on the other hand, reflects on the consumption of meat itself and, citing Pythagoras, pleads for great restraint, for he considers it not in accordance with human nature: “Nor [...] must we take too much meat for ourselves; for man is by nature (φύσει) not a glutton (ὀψοφάγος), but an eater of bread (σιτοφάγος) (cf. Xenophon, Memorabilia III 14, 2–3).” (Clement, Paedagogus 2, 7, 55).

Like Philon, Clement resolutely opposes the *Egyptian animal cults and their theriomorphism*: “Be convinced that these words are told to you on the basis of divine inspiration: ‘Do not think that stones are sacred (ἱερὰ), and trees, and birds, and serpents, but men are not!’ (Plato, Minos 319 A). On the contrary, consider men truly sacred, but animals and stones for what they are! For truly pitiful and unhappy men think that God speaks through a raven or a jackdaw, but through a man is silent; and the raven they hold in honour as a messenger of God, but the man of God they persecute, though he does not cry or squawk like a raven, but, as I think, speaks

reasonably.” (Clement, *Protrepticus* 10, 104). Hidden in this text is again an argument *a minori ad maius* (this time negative): if one already considers non-human beings sacred, one should consider human beings all the more sacred. And unlike Jesus, who regards the argument as self-evident and does not substantiate it further, Clement hints at a rationale: the reasonable speech of God-like man.

With regard to the *abilities of animals*, it is striking on the one hand that Clement, citing Plato, attributes language to them. Plato “believes that even the reasonless animals have language (διάλεκτος), which animals belonging to the same species understand” (Clement, *Stromateis* 1, 21, 143). In detail Clement proves his thesis with scientific observations on elephants, scorpions and fish. On the other hand, he affirms that animals by their nature do not possess knowledge of God: “Now as we do not compel the horse to plough, nor the bull to hunt, but use every animal for what it is naturally suited, so we justly call man, who is created for the contemplation of heaven, and is in truth a ‘heavenly plant’ (φυτὸν οὐράνιον, Plato, *Timaeus* 90 A), to the knowledge of God (γνώσις τοῦ θεοῦ); having recognised what is his own, what is exclusive and what is peculiar compared with all other creatures (τὸ οἰκείον αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐξάιρετον καὶ ιδιωματικὸν παρὰ τὰ ἄλλα ζῶα), we advise him to acquire godliness as a provision sufficient for eternity.” (Clement, *Protrepticus* 10, 100). The knowledge of God, then, is the most intrinsically human thing, which Clement assigns to man as exclusively as possible by means of three adjectives. One of them would have sufficed—this series of three signals the highest importance of this assignment.

After all, animals do not possess reason either—they therefore rightly bear the designation as *aloga*. But for Clement this is no reason for false self-assurance, for unreasonable people are much worse than reasonless animals: “Truly the animals (θηρία) are happier than people caught in error; like you they dwell in ignorance, but they do not hypocritically pretend to possess the truth. There are no clans of flatterers among them; the fishes are not superstitious; the birds do no idolatry; only the sky do they marvel at, because they have not been dignified with reason (λόγος) and therefore cannot know God. And so you are not ashamed that you have made yourselves more unreasonable than the reasonless animals (τῶν ἀλόγων σφᾶς αὐτοὺς ἀλογωτέρους πεποιηκότες), having worn yourselves out in godlessness through so many ages?” (Clement, *Protrepticus* 10, 108). The comparative *ἀλογωτέρους* is striking, for strictly speaking “more reasonless than reasonless” is an impossibility. Like Irenaeus with the “plus



irrationalis”, Clement deliberately accepts this paradox in order to make clear the drama of a form of behaviour in which people do not use their abilities of cognition and insight. As a collateral benefit, the irrationality of animals is thus somewhat defused—they are better off than unreasonable humans. Later we will see that Origen omits the comparative and equates the unreasonable humans with the unreasonable animals. For the animals, this clearly means a deterioration.

Clement first interprets the *image of God* in man from Gen 1:26–27 in the light of the fertility blessing that follows in Gen 1:28—without considering that animals also receive it: “And in this respect man becomes an image of God, inasmuch as a man helps to generate a man.” (Clement, Paedagogus 2, 10, 83). Then, however, he joins the line of interpretation that we first found (still without Christological deepening) in Alexandrian Diaspora Judaism: “Image of God’ is his Logos; but image of the Logos is the true man, the spirit (νοῦς) in man, of whom it is therefore said that he was created ‘in the image and likeness of God’, who through thinking (φρόνησις) in his heart became like the divine Logos and thereby reasonable (λογικός).” (Clement, Protrepticus 10, 98). And elsewhere: “For understanding (νοερός) is the word of God, and accordingly the image of the Spirit (τοῦ νοῦ εἰκονισμός) is manifested in man alone, just as the good man according to his soul is God-like and divine (θεοειδής καὶ θεοεἶκελος), and on the other hand God is man-like (ἀνθρωποειδής). For the constitution (εἶδος) of each is the spirit (νοῦς), and by it we are characterised.” (Clement, Stromateis 6, 9, 72). Here, Clement plays on the Greek word εἶδος, which is also contained in the two complementary terms God-like and man-like. The likeness between God and man is established by the endowment of the Spirit and mediated by the Logos, that is, Christ. Again, we encounter the close connection between anthropocentrism and Christocentrism, which is beginning to take shape in outlines.

The exclusive endowment of humans with reason and knowledge of God, however, has a drastic consequence in Clement: the exclusive attribution of *immortality* to humans. “Come to me, that you may be classed under one God and the one Logos of God, and not only have something in advance of the reasonless animals through your reason (λόγος); rather, of all mortals (θνητῶν) I grant it to you alone to enjoy the fruit of immortality (ἀθανασία). For I will, yea, I will also make you partakers of this grace, and give you the consummation of the benefit, incorruption (ἀφθαρσία); and the Logos I give you, the knowledge of God (γνώσις τοῦ θεοῦ), perfectly I give you myself.” (Clement, Protrepticus 12, 120). The self-gift of God,



the idea goes, is only possible through reason, as an intellectual gift. And it establishes immortality, which cannot exist without knowledge of God. This Stoic thesis, that reasonable humans will see eternity, but reasonless animals will not, appears here for the first time in early Christian literature. It continues to have an intense effect right up to the present day.

Finally, methodologically it is striking that in Clement the *allegorical interpretation of animals* increases significantly, predominantly as images for negative behaviour and aspirations in man. Thus, he interprets Jesus' cohabitation with wild animals in Mk 1:13 as follows: "He [Christ] alone among all who ever lived tamed the wildest beasts (θηρία), men, both birds, which are the reckless, and creeping animals, which are the deceitful, and lions, which are the irascible, and swine, which are the lustful, and wolves, which are the rapacious. But stone and wood are the unreasonable; yea, even more unfeeling than stone is a man sunk in folly. [...] See what the new song accomplished: men it made of stones, men of beasts." (Clement, Protrepticus 1, 4).

In Paedagogus in particular, animals are portrayed as lustful and voracious. All raw desires are seen in them, and people are compared to them who cannot control their passions: "... no longer reasonable (λογικός) is he who has erred against reason (ὁ παρὰ λόγον ἀμαρτάνων), rather a reasonless beast, given over to desires, ridden by all lusts (Θηρίον δὲ δὴ ἄλογον, ἐκδοτον ἐπιθυμίαις, ὧ πάσαι ἐπικάθηνται ἥδοναι)" (Clement, Paedagogus 1, 13, 102). "Other men live in order to eat, as indeed do the reasonless animals (ἄλογα ζῶα), for whom life (βίος) is nothing but their stomach; but we, according to the admonition of the Educator, ought to eat in order to live. For our purpose in life is not food, and our purpose in life is not pleasure; rather, for the purpose of our remaining on this earth, that the Logos may educate to incorruption (ἀφθαρσία), food is admitted." (Clement, Paedagogus 2, 1, 1). A few paragraphs further on, the comparison is intensified by comparing the immoderately gluttonous with creepers, the lowest animals according to the view of the time: "People who for the delight of their stomachs give up reason (λόγος) or friendship (φιλία) or even life (ζῆ), who crawl on their bellies, animals in the likeness of men (θηρία ἀνδρείκελα), ..." (Clement, Paedagogus 2, 1, 7).

*In summary*, a contradictory picture emerges: on the one hand, Clement continues to emphasise the animal-friendliness of the Torah, which he, like Philon, places in analogy to human-friendliness. Also, as far as the consumption of meat is concerned, his restraint shows a certain closeness to the animal-friendly positions of the Neo-Platonists and Neo-Pythagore-

ans. In this line, Clement finally even recognises the ability of animals to speak. On the other hand, as far as reason and knowledge of God are concerned, he deepens and intensifies the binary view of the Stoa: while animals do not possess these two gifts, they are given to humans—and in this their being an image of God is revealed. This is also the basis of their exclusive immortality, an idea that appears here for the first time but will accompany Christianity for two millennia. Even if anthropocentrism is still not explicitly advocated, the way is increasingly paved for it. Finally, the gloomy animal allegorism, which equates animals with uncontrolled desires, will also cast a long shadow. This will already become apparent with the next Alexandrian, Origen (chapter 5.6).

### 5.5 *Tertullian*

Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus (c. 160–220 AD) lived almost at the same time as Clement, but in Carthage and thus in the western, Latin half of the Roman Empire. He had an extensive literary, philosophical and juridical education and was married to a Christian woman. Towards the end of the 2nd century, he converted to Christianity and composed at least 31 theological writings. Since the persecution of North African Christians under Emperor Septimius Severus (193–211 AD), these had increasingly focused on apologies in defence of Christianity against external attacks. Tertullian's philosophical basis was largely Stoic—considerably more so than that of the authors presented above. As the first important writer of the Western Church, he shaped the Latin key concepts of theology for a long time.

Only a few passages in his work deal with animals. Once, Tertullian refers to the widespread conviction in ancient philosophy that animals, in case of illness, know about the herbal remedies that can help them recover, and gives some examples of this (Tertullian, *De paenitentia* 12). At one point, Gen 1:26–27 is also interpreted when it says in a subordinate clause: “man himself, the work and image of God, the possessor of the whole universe (*ipsum hominem, opus et imaginem dei, totius universitatis possessorem*)” (Tertullian, *De spectaculis* 2, 12). For the first time, the term “possessor” appears here, which later gains such great importance

in René Descartes' interpretation of Gen 1:26–28<sup>20</sup>. But these issues are not particularly important to Tertullian, so that it remains with the short subordinate clause.

The Carthaginian deals more intensively with the doctrine of creation, especially with regard to two topics. The first is the doctrine of the *transmigration of souls*. Interestingly, for him the core problem is not the migration of the soul from a human body into an animal body, but the migration from the body of one individual into that of another individual. The soul is very specifically organised for a certain living being and cannot possibly exist in another. Each soul is unique and perfectly created for the equally unique body in which it dwells. According to the species-specific nature (*natura*), there could be a similarity between different individuals, but not according to individual substance (*substantia*) (Tertullian, *De anima* 32). A transmigration of souls is therefore unthinkable. Tertullian thus proves that one can effectively refute the doctrine of the transmigration of souls without disparaging animals. One does not even have to use the idea that a human rational soul migrates into an irrational animal in order to recognise the problematic nature of the doctrine of the transmigration of souls. It is quite sufficient to perceive the soul as part of creaturely individuality. With this much more fundamental categorisation, Tertullian is able to undermine the doctrine of transmigration considerably more sustainably.

The second theme, in which the doctrine of creation plays a role, is Tertullian's dispute with Markion or with the Markionites. Markion (around 85, presumably in Sinope/ Province of Pontus—around 160) was initially a successful shipowner before he went to Rome around 140 and joined the Catholic community there. In 144, he broke with this community and founded his own church. Its core elements include distancing itself from Judaism, clear, easily understandable dualism between good and evil, and rigorous asceticism, including a general commitment to celibacy and sexual abstinence (Volker Lukas 2015, 7–8). In connection with this, Markion postulates a fundamental contrast between the good, merciful God of the New Testament and the ruthless, strict God of the Old Testament. Consequently, for him the Old Testament does not belong to the Holy Scriptures of Christianity. Despite some overlaps with Gnosticism, Markion is not a Gnostic in the full sense of the word (Volker Lukas 2015,

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20 Science and technology make us “comme maîtres et possesseurs de la nature”—“like masters and possessors of nature” (René Descartes 1637, *Discours de la méthode* VI,2).

10–13). Nevertheless, his community was remarkably successful and spread rapidly, also to North Africa.

For this reason, Tertullian has to deal with the Markionites. Around 203 he wrote his extensive work *Adversus Marcionem* (Volker Lukas 2015, 19). Tertullian evaluates Markionite dualism, which goes hand in hand with a devaluation of the material and corporeal, as disrespect for the Creator and his creatures and calls on Markion to *respect animals and their Creator*: “But inasmuch as you want to have your mockery of the little animals (*animalia minutiora*), whom the greatest artist (*maximus artifex*) has purposely so abundantly endowed with skill and power, teaching that great things are revealed in the humble, much as, according to the words of the Apostle, virtue is revealed in weakness, do once imitate, if you can, the houses of bees, the tunnels of ants, the webs of spiders, the weavings of silkworms; endure and withstand, if you can, the small animals that find themselves in your bed and home, the venom of wasps, the sting of flies, the buzzing and biting of mosquitoes. How will you fare with the larger animals, since you already experience from the small ones partly advantages and partly disadvantages, so that you cannot despise the Creator even in the small (ut nec in modicis despicias Creatorem)?” (Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* I, 14, 1–2). Here a typical train of thought becomes visible, which is found in many Church Fathers: It is precisely in the smallest creatures that the great God can be recognised and marvelled at particularly well, because despite their tininess, these animals have so many wonderful skills.

However, Tertullian defends the Old Testament not only on the basis of its Creation narratives, but also on the basis of the Torah, which he regards as outstanding evidence of *man’s special position*. Here we are with the Greek philosophers, who regard man’s capacity for justice and morality as proof of his superiority. At the same time, Tertullian wants to hold on to the goodness (*bonitas*) of the Old Testament and contradicts the thesis of the vengeful, punishing Old Testament God: “The goodness [of God] places man at the head of everything, which he should enjoy and master and even name (*bonitas praefecit universis fruendis atque regnandis, etiam cognominandis*) [...] Even the law [of the Torah], which you accuse so vehemently, which you so tug at in controversy, is enacted by goodness (*bonitas*), which counsels man to adhere to God, lest he appear as free as he is cast out. He would then resemble his own servants, the rest of the animals (*aequandus famulis suis, ceteris animalibus*), who are without connection with God, spurned by Him, left to themselves. But he alone, as man, should have the glory, alone be deemed worthy to receive a law

from God, and as a rational creature, capable of knowledge and science (animal rationale intellectus et scientiae capax), should also be held in bounds by rational freedom (libertate rationali) itself, subject to him who had subjected everything to him (ei subiectus qui subiecerat illi omnia).” (Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 2, 4, 4–6).

Here Tertullian goes far into Stoic waters. According to him, the distinction of man above all creatures is shown in his capacity for justice and morality, knowledge (also of God), science and freedom of will. He regards animals, on the other hand, as separate from God because they do not possess all these abilities. By virtue of his reason in cognition and decision-making, man stands between God and non-human living beings, subject to the one and master of the other. Tertullian defends the Stoic *scala naturae* here, invoking the Torah in which he believes it is evident—here he will have had in mind the dominion mandate from Gen 1:28.

Even if Tertullian’s doctrine of creation remains very fragmentary and is certainly not one of the core impulses of his work, it is more strongly influenced by stoic anthropocentrism than anything we have read so far from the early theologians. And as if it were the greatest matter of course, he obviously invokes the Old Testament Creation narratives. On the basis of his gift of reason and by virtue of divine commission, everything is subject to man; he is the “owner” of the universe. With Tertullian, Christian anthropocentrism clearly comes to the fore.

## 5.6 Origen

Origen (185 Alexandria–253/254, probably in Tyros) came from a wealthy, Christian Alexandrian family. His mother was presumably of Egyptian descent, while his father Leonides was a Roman citizen (Alfons Fürst 2011, 47 and 51). Leonides was killed in 202 in the North African persecution of Christians under Emperor Septimius Severus (193–211). The family was left impoverished, their property confiscated by the state. Thereupon, a woman of the Alexandrian upper class financed Origen’s education (Eusebius of Caesarea, *Church History* 6, 2).

Origen was thus, unlike most theologians of his time, socialized as a Christian from his youth. Due to his high qualifications, he was soon appreciated as a teacher of asceticism and therefore gave up teaching grammar in order to teach Christian philosophy and theology, but was nevertheless “a theological lateral thinker of distinction who caused offence even dur-

ing his lifetime” (Eberhard Schockenhoff 2012, 46). Some of his students were imprisoned, and Origen accompanied them pastorally to martyrdom. After the end of the persecution of Christians in 210, Bishop Demetrius of Alexandria entrusted him with public instruction in Christian philosophy, “the first and greatest lay theologian of the Church” (Eberhard Schockenhoff 2012, 47). Origen developed intensive travelling activity, among others to Rome, Athens, Caesarea and Palestine. Because of a conflict with Bishop Demetrius, he left Alexandria around 231/232 and settled permanently in Caesarea. In the meantime, ordained as a priest, he ran a house church there. He preached daily on a biblical text, wrote biblical commentaries and engaged in fruitful exchange with the rabbis of the Jewish community. Origen was one of the few early Christian theologians who understood some Hebrew and also read the original text of the Bible with the help of Greek translations. During the Cyprianic plague, he was called upon to sacrifice to Apollo, as are all citizens of the Roman Empire. Because of his refusal to do so, he was imprisoned and tortured, and after his release he presumably died as a result of the ordeal.

Most of Origen’s works have not survived in the original Greek, but only in a Latin translation by the monk Rufinus of Aquileia (ca. 345–411/412). Many have been completely destroyed by his opponents. Three are relevant to our question: *Περὶ ἀρχῶν*/ *De principiis* is a kind of Christian dogmatics written by Origen “probably in the early twenties” in Alexandria (Herwig Görgemanns/ Heinrich Karpp 1985, 6). The other two works were written in Caesarea, namely his sermons on the Book of Genesis around 245 and *Contra Celsum*, a defence of Christianity against Kelsos, whom we have already met (chapter 3.6.4), around 248.

Philosophically, Origen represents a Middle Platonic world view. “At the time of Origen, this school of thought had already integrated Stoic thought” (Agnethe Siquans 2016, 58), including above all anthropocentrism and the perception of animals as *aloga* (Max Pohlenz 1959, 449; Agneth Siquans 2016, 59). Although animals are ensouled, they are at the bottom of the hierarchical *scala naturae*, especially creeping and aquatic animals. Origen, on the other hand, takes the method of his biblical interpretation from Paul and Philon (Agnethe Siquans 2016, 55), i.e. from the tradition of Hellenistic Diaspora Judaism. In addition to the literal interpretation of the biblical text “*secundum litteram*”, there is also a spiritual symbolic interpretation “*secundum allegoriam*”, as in Clement of Alexandria (Maria Di Pasquale Barbanti 2003, 85–94). In fact, the latter gained an enormous

preponderance, while the former disappeared almost entirely. This had serious consequences for the perception of animals.

### 5.6.1 About the beginnings

In his *systematic-theological treatise* “*De principiis*”, Origen presents his view of the world order strictly hierarchically from top to bottom. First, he talks about God the Father, Son and Spirit, then about rational beings and their moral capacity. This brings him to his core concern: A virtuous life, which is impossible for reasonless beings, but commanded for rational beings and the basis for reward and punishment (Origen, *De principiis* 1, 5, 2). Even spiritual beings, when they sin, “can, by virtue of their depravity, be bound to the coarse body of the reasonless cattle” (Origen, *De principiis* 1, 5, 5). Already here, one can see that Origen counts corporeality as something animal and evaluates it negatively.

The second book of *De principiis* then deals with the levels arranged under human beings, namely animals, habitats and plants (Origen, *De principiis* 2, 1, 1; cf. also 2, 9, 3). Stoic teleology is echoed here: The entire cosmos with all creatures is created only for the sake of rational beings. Furthermore, Origen interprets diversity in a good Platonic way as something that has been split. This is not wanted and must be brought back to unity through a process of return.

Origen then arrives at his main topic, the doctrine of the soul. For his thesis that all animals are animate beings, he cites the Bible, where Gen 1:20,24 tells of the creation of “animate beings” and Lev 17:14 describes the blood as the soul of all living things. On the other hand, he refers to a conceptual analysis according to which animate beings are those that have senses and drives. Philosophy and the Bible were therefore in complete agreement on this question (Origen, *De principiis* 2, 8, 1).

But if animals, like humans, have a soul, what distinguishes them? Origen classically interprets the soul as a certain principle of movement from within. Inanimate objects are moved only from without, animate ones also from within, for they bring forth an idea, and this is an impulse. Animals produce this idea “naturally”: “Of everything that moves, some have the cause of movement in itself; others are moved only from without [...] Inanimate objects move from without themselves, animate ones from within themselves. From itself, namely, the animate moves when an idea (φαντασία) arises which gives rise to a drive (ὁρμή); and again, in some



living beings, ideas arise which give rise to a drive when the power of imagination (φύσις φανταστική) arouses the drive according to a plan.” (Origen, *De principiis* 3, 1, 2). Origen cites the web-building of a spider and the honeycomb-building of bees as examples of this.

Unlike animals, however, humans also possess a critical filter that checks the impulse generated by imagination for reasonableness and morality: “The rational being, however, in addition to the power of imagination, has reason, which judges ideas (Το μέντοι λογικόν ζῶον και λόγον έχει πρὸς τη φανταστική φύσει, τον κρίνοντα τὰς φαντασίας) and rejects some, adopts others, so that the living being may be guided by them. Further, since reason has the faculty of discerning between good and evil, by virtue of which, from deliberation, we choose good and avoid evil, so we are to be praised if we devote ourselves to the practice of good; to be censured if we do the contrary. It is not to be overlooked that the majority of the natural force diffused through the universe is in some way, though in varying degrees, in living beings. [...] The fact that this or that reproach from outside awakens this or that idea in us is admittedly not up to us: but the judgement whether we wish to apply the given in this way or in another is, after all, solely a matter for the reason in us (ἐν ἡμῖν λόγου ἐστίν), which, on account of the causes lying in it, leads us to those impulses which prompt us towards the beautiful and appropriate (πρὸς τὰς ἐπὶ τὸ καλὸν προκαλουμένας καὶ τὸ καθήκον ὁρμάς), or misleads us towards the opposite path.” (Origen, *De principiis* 3, 1, 3).

The fact that a certain external stimulus awakens a certain idea in a living being is natural and is out of its control. And the fact that the natural force that awakens this idea and, through it, the corresponding drive, is differently pronounced in human and animal creatures is also not their fault. The power of judgement, on the other hand, which is based on reason, is in principle possessed by every human being and can therefore relate to inner ideas and drives. Yes, the power of judgement even develops “legal and moral drives”, thus pushing man towards the good. According to Origen and the entire Greek mainstream philosophy, this is precisely what distinguishes humans from animals.

Consequently, a person who does not bring their reason to bear is similar to an animal: “But if the soul has not turned to the spirit and becomes one with it, but still clings to the body and thinks of carnal things, it is [...] similar to an animal (animali similis).” (Origen, *De principiis* 3, 4, 3). As usual in Platonism, Origen interprets “the soul as the middle between two conflicting laws, which can conform either to the higher principle of its



existence, the πνεῦμα, or to the lower, the σάρξ” (Christian Hengstermann 2016, 94 citing Origen, Commentarius in epistulam ad Romanos 1, 7). Man, who is placed between God and animals in the hierarchy of being, is to follow the spiritual in order to be God’s likeness, not the corporeal, which would make him an animal. “Where man does not follow the ‘law of the spirit’ [...] but abandons himself to the ‘drives’ of the soul, which he has in common with the animal [...], his movement is not that of a man, not a self-determined ‘movement through himself’ or ‘self-movement’, but the instinct-steered ‘movement of himself’ of the animal. In contrast, it is a matter of offering the animal in the human [...] in a ‘life according to the word’, as it were, as a sacrifice.” (Christian Hengstermann 2016, 105 in interpretation of Homiliae in Leviticum 2,2). Origen like the Stoic tradition does not speak of “instinct-driven”, but of “natural”. Biology has also abandoned the instinct theory since the middle of the 20th century, because “instinct” was only a black box for processes in the brain as long as its functional mechanisms were not known. Apart from that, however, Hengstermann aptly characterises the horror image of animalisation of the soul conjured up in *De principiis* and “especially in the Homilies” (Christian Hengstermann 2016, 104). At the same time, he suggests that Origen also interprets the Old Testament animal sacrifices allegorically: man should sacrifice the animal within himself in order to live rationally.

The interpretation of Gen 1:26–27 is also to be placed in this context. Origen interprets the statement of the Greek Bible that God creates man in his image and likeness as follows: Man has been the image (εἶδος) of God since his creation. Likeness (ὁμοίωσις), literally becoming like, is the potential that man must realise himself through a virtuous life. His primordial image for this is the Logos, Christ Himself. Thus, the ὁμοίωσις θεῶ is “the highest good to which the rational nature as a whole aspires” (Origen, *De principiis* 3, 6, 1; cf. Christian Hengstermann 2016, 96). According to Origen, the Greek philosophers would have recognised this from the Bible without naming its source.

### 5.6.2 The Homilies on Genesis

The second group of texts of importance for our topic are the *homilies on Genesis*. They were delivered in Caesarea around 245 AD in a relatively late phase of his life. A total of sixteen homilies have survived. “They probably represent only a section of an originally much larger number of homilies.”

(Peter Habermehl 2011, 7). While the Abraham cycle (Gen 12–25) has been preserved in its entirety, only two exemplary homilies each have survived from the prehistory cycle (Gen 1–11) and the Jacob-Joseph cycle (Gen 26–50) (Peter Habermehl 2011, 8). In concrete terms, this means that the first homily is dedicated to Gen 1, the second to Gen 6–8.

The *first homily interprets* the creation of the world as an allegory for the moral life of man. Origen interprets the creation of animals as an image of the creation of thoughts in the heart (Origen, *Homiliae in Genesim* 1, 8–11): The good thoughts rise like birds to the sky, the bad ones remain like creepers on the ground (Origen, *Homiliae in Genesim* 1, 8). On the basis of this allegory, however, a problem arises for the literal sense: Why does God consider all the animals in Genesis 1:21 to be good, even the creepers? Origen explains this by saying that good only becomes recognisable as good through that which is bad and that what is bad is a valuable challenge that man can grow from by confronting it: “What beauty and splendour the light possesses would remain hidden if the darkness of the night did not confront it.” (Origen, *Homiliae in Genesim* 1, 10). His negative interpretation of land animals lies in the same logic (Origen, *Homiliae in Genesim* 1, 11).

Origen makes a momentous statement about the creation of animals: “Only the heavens and the earth, the sun, the moon and the stars, and finally man were created by God; everything else, it is said in Scripture, came into being at his command.” (Origen, *Homiliae in Genesim* 1, 12). Here, Origen refers to Scripture, which says exactly the opposite: animals are also created by God, directly and completely independently of man. “It is hardly conceivable that the famous commentator on Genesis should have inadvertently made such a blunder. Did Origen sacrifice philological textual fidelity for the theological message here?” (Peter Habermehl 2011, 13). Habermehl’s question can be answered with “no” with regard to the text of the Septuagint. Origen reads in his Bible “Let the waters bring forth (productant) creeping creatures and birds” (Origen, *Homiliae in Genesim* 1, 8; cf. Gen 1:20 LXX: Εξαγαγέτω) and “Let the earth bring forth (productat) living creatures according to their kind” (Origen, *Homiliae in Genesim* 1, 11; cf. Gen 1:24 LXX: Εξαγαγέτω). So, according to the Septuagint, God gives the command to the water (unlike in the Hebrew text) and the earth (like in the Hebrew text) to bring forth the animals and thus apparently does not create them single-handedly like the heavenly bodies and man—at least if one reads over Gen 1:21 and Gen 1:25, where it also says in the Septuagint that God created the animals in question (ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς).

Origen is thus not philologically unfaithful to his biblical text, but selectively faithful. He over-interprets one formulation of the Septuagint, overlooks the other and draws from it the conclusion of man being privileged, which is not intended in the Hebrew text of Gen 1.

Finally, in Gen 1:28, God gives man the “*principatus bestiarum*”, which, according to Origen, is dominion over wild animals. Origen interprets this in such a way that the mind (*mens*) is to rule the senses (*sensus*) and not vice versa the senses the mind (Origen, *Homiliae in Genesim* 1, 12 and 1, 16). The image of God thus becomes the key to immortality: “It is our interior man, invisible and incorporeal, incorruptible and immortal (*interior homo noster est, invisibilis et incorporealis, et incorruptus atque immortalis*).” (Origen, *Homiliae in Genesim* 1:13). Ultimately, the Logos of God, Christ, is this image of God in man. Even the seed-bearing fruits given to man for food in Gen 1:29 are interpreted allegorically by Origen. They embody the capacity for anger and desire in us, which we can use rationally for justice (*rationabiliter utimur ad iustitiam*; Origen, *Homiliae in Genesim* 1,17).

Overall, the consistent allegorisation as collateral damage entails an extremely negative view of animals (and, by analogy, of the body!): “Although he talks about spiritual realities and spiritual struggles in the human microcosm, there is no room for a positive attitude towards the animals in the macrocosm, i.e. the physically existing animals, insofar as microcosm and macrocosm correspond to each other. Of course, animals are created by God, of course they are useful to humans, but they are—based on the idea of a graduated order of being—interpreted in the allegorical view [...] as inferior and dangerous, so that they have to be fought. This reflects the basic tenor of Origen’s moral interpretation, which thus implies a hostile attitude towards animals not only in the allegorical sense but also in physical reality.” (Agnethe Siquans 2016, 64).

In the *second homily* on Genesis, Origen preaches on the Flood narrative Gen 6–8. One after the other, he explains the text in the classical threefold sense: in his literal or historical interpretation, he takes up almost exclusively the technical construction of the ark—its size and its materials, its rooms and their function. In the spiritual or mystical interpretation, he takes up the Christological and ecclesiological interpretation that has been common since Justin (*Dialogus cum Tryphono Iudaeo* 138): The human and animal inhabitants of the ark symbolise different groups of people who are united in the one ark of the Church by the “spiritual Noah” (Origen, *In Genesis homilia* 2, 5) through the wood of the cross and the water of baptism.

Origen compares the coexistence of the animals in the ark with the vision of the messianic peace of creation in Is 11:1–9 and interprets both as images for the coexistence of different and sometimes even very wild people in the Church. As a third image, he draws on Peter's vision of the unclean animals in Acts 10: the unclean animals become clean, that is, the unredeemed people are redeemed because they are bound in the one cloth of faith, which has four corners, i.e. is held by four gospels. Finally, in the third, moral interpretation, Origen interprets the ark as the library of Christians, in which the Holy Scriptures have their place on the upper floors, but in the basement even pagan writings can have their place.

One can see that hardly anything remains of the actual intention of the Old Testament story when it is allegorised and condensed into a few statements. The animals as such completely lose their meaning. And this is the case even in the literal interpretation, in which Origen shows himself to be very fond of technology but has no interest whatsoever in living creatures<sup>21</sup>. In this respect, Origen stands in a long tradition: before him, Justin Martyr (*Dialogus cum Tryphono Judaeo* 138) and Tertullian (*De baptismo* 8) interpreted the Flood narrative purely allegorically. Cyprian of Carthage (*De unitate ecclesiae* 6) and Augustine (*In Ioannis Evangelium Tractatus* 6, 2; 6, 19; 7, 3; 9, 11; 11, 7; 120, 2) follow him. The only Church Fathers who interpret the narrative literally with regard to animals besides the aforementioned Irenaeus of Lyons (chapter 5.3) are Ephraim the Syrian (chapter 5.9) and Ambrose of Milan (chapter 5.13), both, however, by using it contrary to its intention of supporting strong anthropocentrism.

### 5.6.3 The treatise against Kelsos

The third of Origen's writings to be analysed here is *Contra Celsum*, a defence of Christianity against Kelsos, whom we have already met (chapter 3.6.4), written around 248 A.D. As a reminder, the Platonist (Michael Fiedrowicz 2011, 20) Kelsos lived in the 2nd half of the 2nd century. In

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21 There is only one flash of fascination for the living in Origen's work, and that is in *Contra Celsum* 4, 41. Against Kelsos' argument that the Flood narrative is a "fairly tale for underage children", Origen first emphasises, as he did in the second homily on Genesis, that the dimensions of the ark were to be multiplied by 300 according to Egyptian mathematics, and then there would be enough room for the animals. But then he asks his opponent: "Must it not finally arouse astonishment that by divine providence pairs of animals of every kind were brought into the ark, so that the earth in turn would have seed from all living creatures...".

his lost work “True Doctrine” (Ἀληθῆς λόγος), which he wrote in Alexandria around 180 AD, he is the first to criticise Stoic anthropocentrism in its Christian guise and, in contrast, advocates consistent Platonic cosmocentrism (precisely the “true” doctrine because it is ancient, cf. Michael Fiedrowicz 2011, 25). At the time Origen wrote his defence of Christianity, Kelsos had long since died, but his book was still on people’s minds, so Origen sought to confront it.

Kelsos’ work is obviously characterised by provocative comparisons between humans and animals—in modern terms we could say by biocentric egalitarianism. In Origen’s first reaction one already senses how much he feels provoked by this: “Now, in answering these diatribes against us, we address the question to those who take pleasure in them: Do you hold that all men without distinction, because of the surpassing greatness of God, are ‘like a swarm of bats or ants or frogs or earthworms? [...] But no well thinking man (οὐδεὶς τῶν εὖ φρονούντων) is likely to maintain that the reasonless (τὰ ἄλογα) stand higher than the reasonable ones (τὰ λογικά) because of the size of their bodies, for reason raises the sensible high to superiority over all the reasonless (πολὺν γὰρ εἰς ὑπεροχὴν ἀνάγει ὁ λόγος τὸ λογικὸν παρὰ πάντα τὰ ἄλογα).” (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4, 24). One can literally feel Origen’s speechlessness. In itself, Kelsos’ thesis is quite comprehensible: In view of the immeasurable greatness of God, the “size” differences between creatures disappear. But for Origen, reason has such weight that the gulf between humans and animals is for him as great as that between God and humans. With his word play of the direct opposition of ἄλογα and λογικά (ζῶα would be added to that), Origen shines rhetorically and at the same time covers up his argumentative weakness. There is no equidistance between God, humans and animals—Kelsos is right about that.

In the next section, Origen asks whether Kelsos perhaps considers humans as small as animals because they have sins, weaknesses and faults in their souls. But even if Kelsos thought so, Origen would reject this because the capacity for reason and virtue alone ennoble man. “Basically, no rational being (τὸ λογικὸν), be it what it may, may well be compared to an ‘earthworm’ because it possesses endowments of virtue (ἀφορμὰς ἔχον πρὸς ἀρετήν). For these do not permit persons to be compared to an ‘earthworm’ who are capable of virtue and can never entirely lose their seed (σπέρματα). It is thus shown that by no means are men in general only ‘earthworms’ towards God. For since reason owes its origin ‘to the word’ ‘which is with God’ (Jn 1:1–2), the rational being must therefore not

be altogether denied kinship with God (ὁ γὰρ λόγος τὴν ἀρχὴν ἔχων ἀπὸ τοῦ παρὰ θεῶ λόγου οὐκ ἔῃ τὸ λογικὸν ζῶον πάντῃ ἀλλότριον νομισθῆναι θεοῦ). [...] If the nature of reason (ἡ τοῦ λόγου φύσις) does not permit such a comparison to be adopted, we shall certainly not dishonour the human nature fitted for virtue (τὴν πρὸς ἀρετὴν κατεσκευασμένην ἀνθρωπίνην φύσιν), even if she should sin through ignorance, and not put herself on an equal footing with such living beings (ζῶα).” (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4, 25).

At this point it is easy to see how central the idea of the indwelling of the divine Logos, Christ, in man is for Origen. His anthropocentrism is ultimately based on logocentrism or, more precisely, Christocentrism. In contrast to the Logos hymn of John’s Gospel (cf. chapter 4.3.3), however, Origen interprets the incarnation in the Stoic spirit as becoming human and not in the biblical sense as becoming creature-like. Being steeped in Stoicism right down to the roots, it does not even occur to him that non-human creation can also participate in the divine Logos and be redeemed by it.

The central passages for our topic are found in *Contra Celsum* 4, 75–93. There, Origen works through the three most important themes in a very structured way: the question of cosmic teleology with the answer of anthropocentrism (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4, 75–80), the question of animal reason with the answer of the *aloga* thesis (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4, 81–87) and the question of the relationship of special animals to God with the answer of their possession by demons (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4, 88–93). With this last part, a new level of devaluation of animals is reached.

On the *question of the first theme of cosmic teleology*, Origen already writes in an earlier passage: “And as for the plants, so many and various, which are governed by an invisible, natural power working within them, and are created for no small benefit to all mankind (πρὸς χρείαν γεγονότων οὐκ εὐκαταφρόνητον ἐν τῷ παντὶ ἀνθρώπων), and as for the animals that are there for the service of men (τῶν ἀνθρώποις διακονουμένων ζῴων), ...” (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4, 54). One senses the matter-of-factness with which Origen states anthropocentrism in the subordinate clauses. It is not problematised in the least. However, this is done in great detail in the passages from 4, 75 onwards.

Origen begins by praising the Creator and a quotation from Scripture: “But we Christians, who worship only one God as the Creator of these things, we also thank Him for creating them and preparing for us such a glorious dwelling place, and for our sake also the animals that serve us (δι’

ἡμᾶς τοῖς δουλεύουσιν ἡμῖν ζώοις). ‘He causeth grass to grow for cattle, and plants for the service of men, to bring forth corn out of the ground, and that wine may gladden the heart of man, and that the countenance may be gladdened with oil, and that bread may strengthen the heart of man’ (Ps 104:14–15). But if God has also prepared food for ‘the wildest beasts’, there is nothing striking in this. For these living creatures (ταῦτα γὰρ τὰ ζῶα), as other philosophers have also said, were created for the sake of exercise for the rational living creature (γυμνασίου ἔνεκα γεγόνεναι τῷ λογικῷ ζῳῳ).” (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4, 75).

Psalm 104 sings of the Creator, who gives food to all living creatures, non-human and human alike. The Psalm makes only a gradual distinction between them, listing more food for humans than for animals: bread, wine and oil, the triad of the most prestigious (and, nota bene, vegan!) foods of the Mediterranean region of antiquity (cf. Michael Rosenberger 2014, 353 and 400–401). Nevertheless, the Psalm breathes great “biocentrist egalitarianism”. Before God, all living beings are equal: equally needy, equally mortal, equally loved, equally cared for. There is no trace of a hierarchy of purposes. That Origen nevertheless reads it in this sense shows how strongly he is influenced by Stoic teleology. He thinks he discovers it everywhere, even where the Bible describes the exact opposite.

In the Stoa, the fact that animals are physically much better adapted to their way of life than humans is interpreted as proof of their lack of reason, for if they possessed reason, a less well-suited body would suffice for them, as it does for humans. They could make tools, use animals as helpers and thus compensate for their physical shortcomings. Origen receives this thesis in the following sentences: “Therefore one might well admire Providence (πρόνοια) precisely because, in comparison with the reasonless beings (τὰ ἄλογα ζῶα), it has created the rational (τὸ λογικόν) as relatively needy for its own benefit. For the reasonless creatures their food is ready, because they have no means of using arts; nature also gives them clothing, for they are provided with hair or feathers or scales or housing.” (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4, 76). That a correct biological insight is described here is beyond question. However, the binary opposition of lack of reason and endowment with reason remains without justification—modern biology assumes a continuum of intelligence, as some animal-friendly authors already assumed in antiquity.

An important touchstone of teleology is the question of the direction of the food chain and the dynamics of domestication. Origen writes on this: “Kelsos counters himself [...] that [...] the reasonless creatures were created



for their sake, and says: 'If anyone should wish to call us the rulers of the reasonless (ἄρχοντας τῶν ἀλόγων), since we hunt and eat the reasonless creatures, we shall ask: Why are not rather we created for their sake, since they hunt and eat us? But we also need nets and weapons and many men and dogs to help us against the animals we hunt, whereas they were immediately and intrinsically provided by nature with the weapons with which we are easily conquered by them. But just there we can see how powerful an aid we have been given in the mind, which affords more protection than any weapon the animals seem to possess. Although, therefore, in bodily strength we are far inferior to the living creatures (τῶν ζώων), and in bodily size we are even greatly surpassed by some, yet by our intellect we rule over the wild beasts (κρατούμεν διὰ τὴν σύνεσιν τῶν θηρίων). We drive away the mighty elephants; those animals which can be tamed we compel by mild treatment; against those which cannot be tamed, or from the taming of which we cannot expect any benefit, we behave cautiously, and protect ourselves from them by keeping such animals confined when we please; but when we need their flesh for our food, we kill them as easily as we kill domestic animals. All things, then, the Creator has made subservient to the rational living creature and its natural mind (Δοῦλα οὖν πάντα τοῦ λογικοῦ ζώου καὶ τῆς φυσικῆς αὐτοῦ συνέσεως κατεσκευάσεν ὁ δημιουργός). And for one purpose we need the dogs, for example, to guard our flocks of sheep or herds of cattle or herds of goats or houses; for other purposes we need the oxen, for example, to cultivate the fields; the draught and pack animals we use again for other things. And so it may also be said that the lions, bears, panthers, wild boars, and similar wild beasts are given to us, that we may train the disposition that is in us to manly strength.' (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4, 78).

Kelsos challenges the all-encompassing, monolinear teleology of Stoic-Christian anthropocentrism by turning it on its head: Just as humans use animals, animals use humans—even as food. Kelsos does not want to resolve the contradictory nature of nature at all, but to leave it at that in great serenity. The only thing he wants to prove is that anthropocentrism is under-complex. Origen does not understand this point and wants to decide according to the majority of examples. He cannot bear the complexity of Kelsos' argumentation because it contradicts his Stoic understanding of divine providence. So he talks past Kelsos and comes back to his "ceterum censeo": "In contrast, note that although 'men catch wild beasts (θηρία)' and 'wild beasts rob men', yet there is a great difference between men who gain the upper hand by their intellect (συνέσει) and beasts, to whom their



wild and brute nature gives the upper hand over those men who do not use their intellect to protect themselves against the attacks of beasts.” (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4, 79).

Finally, Origen invokes Gen 2:18–20, where the creation of animals is underpinned by God’s intention to give man assistance. The Bible and philosophy therefore agreed in relation to anthropocentrism: “God has not subjected men to animals’; on the contrary, he has caused men to be able to bring animals under their control by means of their intellect and the artificial aids they are capable of inventing. For without divine assistance men would not have found the means to protect themselves against the animals and to become masters of them.” (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4, 80).

One has to admit that Origen’s arguments for anthropocentrism have clear flaws: In terms of natural science, there is at most sufficient evidence that humans are more intelligent than animals—but not that animals are reasonless. Cosmologically, the problem of the monolinearity of divine providence, which Kelsos impressively addresses, is not understood. And biblically, the testimonies for anthropocentrism that are cited are thin, in the case of Psalm 104 even simply wrong.

Origen apparently opens the *question of the second theme of animal reason* with a surprise, for he admits that animals have a certain analogy to rational beings: “But the Deity must be admired because he has given even to the reasonless animals the faculty of being, as it were, an image of rational beings (τὸ οἰονεὶ πρὸς τὰ λογικὰ μίμημα), perhaps with the intention of putting the rational beings to shame, so that they may become more industrious and economical in the use of their goods with regard to the ants, and so that, looking after the bees, they may render obedience to the authorities and take their share in the necessary affairs of state for the salvation of the cities.” (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4, 81).

First of all, the two key terms from Gen 1:26–27 of the Septuagint, namely image (εἰκὼν) and parable (ὁμοίωσις), do not appear. Given Origen’s linguistic sensitivity, this is probably no coincidence. Nevertheless, for an anthropocentrist, the thesis that animals are an image (μίμημα) of rational beings seems very daring. If the analogy is to be even rudimentarily justified, there must, for all the dissimilarity, be a resemblance with regard to the thing depicted, that is, the λογικὸν. The classical Stoic thesis that animals participate in the λογικὸν through their nature and not through their intellect, which Origen will use in *Contra Celsum* 4, 87, is not really convincing, for it destroys the analogy. The animals are then precisely not an image of rational beings.

Only a little later, however, Origen returns to the pure *aloga* thesis: “But why do I say ‘irrational animals’, since according to the opinion of Kelsos the animals are not irrational beings at all, as they are commonly called? So he is of the opinion that even the ants are not without reason, he who has presumed to want to speak ‘about the whole of nature’ and boastfully promises the truth in the title of his book. For he says of ‘the ants’, whom he makes ‘converse with one another’, as follows: ‘And when they meet, they also converse (διαλέγονται) with one another; therefore they do not fail to find their way’. Have they not, therefore, perfectly formed reason, common conceptions of certain general [facts] and a language and events and terms (οὐκοῦν καὶ λόγου συμπλήρωσις ἐστι παρ’ αὐτοῖς καὶ κοινὰ ἔννοιαι καθολικῶν τινῶν καὶ φωνὴ τυγχάνοντα καὶ σημαινόμενα)?’ For when one converses with another, it is in a language that ‘makes some concept clear’, but often also gives information about things that are called accidental. But to attribute this to ants is the most ridiculous thing in the world.” (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4, 84).

Kelsos presents an exact observation: ants communicate with each other. They therefore have a common language and use it to exchange common ideas that they can express and through which they learn from each other. Now, it can be argued whether and to what extent this observation by Kelsos is correct. Origen, however, refrains from doing so because he considers it ridiculous and not worthy of discussion.

“He [Kelsos] does not hesitate, in order to show the ugliness of his teachings to posterity, to add the following words: ‘Now then, if someone were to look down on the earth from heaven, what difference would he find between what we do and what ants and bees do? [...] But it would be foolish to suppose that he who looks down from heaven on earthly things would observe from so far away only the bodies of men and ants, and not rather look at the nature of the forces that move them, and the source of the movements, whether they be rational or irrational. But once he sees the source of all movements, it is clear that he will also perceive the difference and the precedence of man not only over ants but also over elephants. For he who looks down from heaven will be able to discover in the reasonless (ἐν μὲν τοῖς ἀλόγοις), however large their bodies, no other principle than, if I may say so, reasonlessness (ἄλογία); but among rational beings (ἐν δὲ τοῖς λογικοῖς) he will find reason (λόγος), which men have in common with divine and heavenly beings, nay, perhaps even with God who rules over all. Hence, it is also said of them that they were created ‘in the image

of God' (Gen 1:26–27); for 'image' (εικῶν) of God who rules over all is his Word (λόγος)." (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4, 85).

With an appealing thought experiment, Kelsos tries to draw Christians out of their shells: Imagine looking down at the earth from heaven! This experiment, which imagines the perspective of God, has been used in many contexts in the course of the history of philosophy and theology and has proved very fruitful if used correctly. Origen does not engage in this experiment, for he only sees what he has always seen and refuses to step out of his own edifice of thought at least once for a moment. A constructive dialogue is not possible in this way. It is a *petitio principii*, a classic circular argument.

We had already seen in the analysis of the Stoa (in chapter 3.5) that they considered the diversity of behaviour of individuals of the same species as an indication of the use of reason, and the stereotyped behaviour of all individuals of a species as an indication against it. Origen agrees with this reasoning: "And supposing that other 'remedies' are known to animals, how is it to be proved that it is not nature but reason that invents these remedies in animals? For if reason were the inventor, [...] there would be as many remedies in animals as in men. But since every animal has received means of healing corresponding to its nature, it is clear that they possess neither wisdom nor reason, but only natural (φυσική) wisdom, a disposition (κατασκευή) bestowed by reason (ὑπὸ τοῦ λόγου γεγεννημένη) to such things as are conducive to the well-being of every living thing (πρὸς τὰ τοιάδε σωτηρίας ἔνεκεν τῶν ζώων)." (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4, 87).

Urs Dierauer sees in this passage "probably the best and most complete description in ancient literature" of what has been called "instinct" since the Middle Ages (Urs Dierauer 1977, 217): a natural, "innate" disposition that enables certain performances and serves "to maintain the life" of living beings. The Stoic and Christian philosophies classified this ability as irrational, but, like Origen, attributed it to divine reason. Despite all the excellent interpretation that Dierauer provides and from which I have profited extraordinarily, considerable objections remain at this point: Firstly, the term "innate" does not occur, but only the term "natural". Secondly, there is no mention of "life preservation", but of the "salvation" or "well-being" of living beings, which is much more comprehensive. Thirdly, the instinct theory was already outdated long before Dierauer's dissertation, because the first insights into the former "black box" brain have been gained and animal behaviour can thus be described in a much more nuanced way. And fourthly, modern behavioural research has been able to gain fruitful in-

sights using the heuristic instrument of differentiating between behavioural variance and behavioural stereotypy as used by the Stoics. In the process, an enormous variance has also been revealed in animal behaviour, which the Stoics had not reckoned with. The Stoic method of proving the *aloga* thesis has become an instrument of its refutation. Origen could not yet have known this with such clarity, but there were already observations in this direction in antiquity, as we have seen on various occasions.

Most touching and depressing at the same time, of course, is the passage that reveals Origen's deeper motivation for his anthropocentrism: "In the case of ants, since they are irrational animals, there is no reason to fear that they will become proud and haughty if their actions are compared with those of humans, but humans, who by virtue of their rational disposition can perceive how lowly their participation is valued for others, could perhaps suffer harm, insofar as it depends on Kelsos and his words." (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4, 83). Here Origen reveals his deepest concerns and fears: Humans might lose their sense of self-worth, feel set back, humiliated and offended if they are put on a par with the rest of the animals. This passage is strongly reminiscent of Sigmund Freud's second, "biological mortification", which he sees as caused by Darwin's theory of evolution<sup>22</sup>. Freud relatively precisely describes the causes of the alienation between humans and animals that precede this mortification: anthropocentrism and the *aloga* thesis. Avoiding mortification by denying reality, according to Freud, is not a solution. Origen pursues the good intention of giving people self-confidence by bad means. At some point, the mortification becomes effective.

There remains *the question of the third theme, the relationship of animals to God*. Are animals possibly particularly "divine" and capable of recognising things that remain hidden from humans? Especially in Alexandria with its Egyptian animal cults, this question was hotly disputed. Origen could

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22 "In the course of his cultural development, man threw himself up as master over his fellow animal creatures. But not satisfied with this supremacy, he began to put a gulf between their nature and his own. He denied them reason and ascribed to himself an immortal soul, invoking a high divine descent that allowed him to break the bond of communion with the animal world. It is strange that this exaltation is still remote from the little child, as it is from primitive and primeval man. It is the result of a later sophisticated development. [...] We all know that the research of Ch. Darwin, his co-workers and predecessors, put an end to this exaltation of man a little more than half a century ago. [...] But this is the second, the biological mortification of human narcissism." (Sigmund Freud 1917, 4).

not avoid it any more than Kelsos. Since it is no longer relevant today to the same extent as the first two questions, we can deal with it relatively briefly.

As an argument against the special power of animals to prophesy, Origen cites a simple but indisputable fact: “If a divine power were really inherent in them, which makes future things known to them beforehand, [...] none of these animals could be caught by men at all.” (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4, 90). Origen does not leave it at that, however, to state the inability of animals to prophesy. He goes beyond this and sees some animals—as terrible as this may sound to modern ears—as the dwelling place of demons: “According to our view, certain evil and, as it were, titanic or gigantic demons have transgressed against the truly divine and against the angels in heaven, and have therefore fallen down from heaven (Lk 10:18) and are now doing their business on earth in the fatter and impure bodies. At the same time, they have a certain keen eye for what is to come, since they themselves are not clothed with earthly bodies. Since all their striving and activity after their descent is directed towards persuading the human race to fall away from the true God, they take up residence in the bodies of the most ferocious, wild and vicious animals and direct them wherever they want and whenever it pleases them [...], so that men allow themselves to be blinded by this prophesying power present in the reasonless animals and do not seek the God who encompasses the universe, nor do they fathom the true worship of God, but turn their thinking to earthly things...” (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4, 92).

The fact that animals become an image for vices is something we have already encountered in several authors, especially in the animal allegory of the older Alexandrian Clement. Origen’s allegorical interpretation of the creation of animals in the first homily to Genesis stands in this tradition. But to regard some animals as dwellings of demons goes a considerable step further. With all due understanding for people’s fear of tigers, lions or crocodiles, the Bible writes in Genesis that God considered animals to be good. Origen must completely ignore the literal sense of the biblical text in order to maintain his thesis.

But that is not all. Origen also thinks that he can find confirmation for his thesis in the purity commandments of the Torah and in the prophets: “In any case, in classifying the animals, he [Moses] determined that all those should be unclean which were considered prophesying by the Egyptians and the other peoples, while the others could generally be considered pure. [...] And it will be found in general, that not only in the law, but also in the prophets, these animals are always used as emblems of what is worst [...]

There seems now to exist for each genus of demons a kind of communion with each genus of animals” (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4, 93). The unclean animals in the sense of the biblical purity regulations are thus supposedly the very ones that are worshipped as sacred in the Egyptian animal cults. And it is precisely those that the prophets would use as images for morally reprehensible attitudes. Again, Origen violently contorts the meaning of the biblical texts. The question of pure or impure does not imply any moral judgement in the Bible but orders the world. The “unclean” animals are just as “good” as the “clean” ones, for all are created by God. It is only that some may be eaten and sacrificed and others not.

#### 5.6.4 Summary

A generation after Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria, an enormous amount had been clarified and developed. Thus, Origen reached a completely new level of systematisation of Christian anthropology and the doctrine of creation. In doing so, he concentrates (well Neo-Platonic) materially very strongly on the relationship between God or Christ and the human rational soul. Formally, his almost exclusive interpretation of biblical texts in an allegorical sense (exacerbating the Alexandrian tendency) is striking. What Philon (for Dt 22:10) and Paul (for Dt 25:4) had begun quite tentatively and selectively, now becomes the only method of interpretation, at least for the passages of the Bible referring to animals: the animals are nothing but images for inner-psychic processes.

One quickly realises that the material object and the formal object correspond perfectly—and therein undoubtedly lies Origen’s genius. In itself, his world of thought is extremely consistent. The result, which is nevertheless fatal for animals, follows compellingly from the two premises. Origen represents consistent anthropocentrism, which under the surface is a form of concealed Christocentrism or logocentrism, and a harsh interpretation of the aloga thesis. For him, animals have no value in themselves. More than that, in his engagement with the animal cults of his Egyptian homeland, he gets caught up in the whirlpool of demonising some animals. I have not noticed a single place in his work where he shows empathy or even appreciation for animals. This is clearly different with most of the authors presented here.

## 5.7 Lactance

The next leap in time in our treatise is not just one, but two generations. Lucius Caecilius Firmianus Lactantius (c. 250–c. 320), known as Lactance for short, came from western North Africa (from the area of present-day Tunisia). Emperor Diocletian appointed him as an official rhetor in his residential city of Nicomedia in Asia Minor (at the eastern end of the Sea of Marmara), where he met the Neo-Platonist Porphyrios, a sharp critic of Christianity who advocated a very animal-friendly philosophy (cf. chapter 3.6.5 above). During the Diocletianic persecution of Christians in 303, Lactance converted to Christianity and resigned from his state office. Still in Nicomedia, he witnessed Galerius' edict of tolerance in 311. In 314/315, Emperor Constantine entrusted him with the education of his son Crispus, which is why Lactance moved to "Gaul", presumably to Constantine's residence in Augusta Treverorum (Trier). Whether he died there or elsewhere is not known.

Lactance was a brilliant artist in his use of the Latin language. It is a pleasure to read his writings. Two of his numerous works play a role in the following: *De opificio Dei* on the creative work of God and *De ira Dei* on the wrath of God.

The theme of *De opificio Dei*, which was probably written during the Diocletianic persecution of 303/304, is corporeality in animals and humans (including the bodily correlations for the soul and spirit). By means of a strongly scientific approach, Lactance wants to provide proof of the Creator's benevolent providence and great wisdom. He does so without any reference to the Bible, which is very helpful in the debate with non-Christian philosophers.

Lactance begins with a programmatic prelude that actually says it all: "God the Father, our great Creator, gave us sense and reason (*sensum atque rationem*) so that we could recognise that we were created by him, because he himself is insight (*intelligentia*), he himself is sense and reason (*sensus ac ratio*). For the other living creatures, since he has not given them that power of mind (*rationale*), he has nevertheless provided (*providit*) their lives with great security." (Lactance, *De opificio Dei* 2, 1–2). Thus, Stoic anthropocentrism is out of the question for Lactance from the very first sentence. But unlike the Stoics, he sees no reason at all to doubt the divine care and provision for non-human creatures.

As evidence that God also cares for animals, Lactance describes with much love and empathy that they have fur to protect them from the cold, as well as “weapons” for defence, the ability to flee quickly or places to hide from predators. Thus, he can conclude, “Every animal (animans) possesses its means of protection.” (Lactance, *De opificio Dei* 2, 4). Where these were insufficient and a greater number of individuals fell prey to predators, greater fecundity could compensate for the losses (Lactance, *De opificio Dei* 2, 5). This is a most remarkable and biologically very accurate observation for the time<sup>23</sup>.

Lactance contrasts the physical advantages of animals with the mental superiority of man—which is also scientifically very correct. Man does not receive such physical advantages, but he does not need them either: “But to man, to whom he gave the gift of reason and the ability to think and speak (*ratione concessa, et virtute sentiendi atque eloquendi data*), he granted none of these qualities given to the animals, because reason could provide him with what nature had denied him. He put him into the world naked and bare, because he could arm himself by his spirit and clothe himself with the help of his reason.” (Lactance, *De opificio Dei* 2, 6). Here, the thesis of the “deficient human being”, which was already several centuries old at the time of Lactance and is still outdated today, is summed up magnificently and elegantly in language.

Of course, Lactance is not concerned with establishing the thesis of the deficient human being, but with its interpretation and evaluation. His opponents are above all the Epicureans, who claim that there is no providence because there is no God, but rather that everything came into being by natural chance (Lactance, *De opificio Dei* 2, 10–4, 24). “They complain that man, compared to the animals, comes into the world all too weak and fragile (*nimis imbecillus et fragilis*), [...] naked and defenceless (*nudus et inermis*), as if thrust into this misery (*miseria*) after a shipwreck [...]. According to this, nature is not the mother, but the stepmother of mankind, who [...] has shown herself to be so kind to the animals.” (Lactance, *De opificio Dei* 3, 1–2).

Lactance refutes the Epicurean thesis in two steps: On the one hand, nature is by no means always only kind and maternal, even towards animals. He refers to the birds, which can neither walk nor fly when they hatch and need a lot of parental care. In a sense, they too were born naked and

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23 Today, we speak of the so-called r-strategists, i.e. animal and plant species that compensate for their higher mortality with a higher reproductive rate r.



defenceless. The parental care of birds therefore reveals that they “possess something of human intelligence (*aliquid humanae intelligentiae*)”. On the other hand, humans do not need many natural advantages because they have reason: “But if such a creature is endowed with reason, why does it still need physical protection, since reason can replace nature? Reason serves to adorn and distinguish man to such a degree that nothing greater, nothing better could have been given to him by God.” (Lactance, *De opificio Dei* 3, 14).

Lactance sees people faced with the (fictitious) alternative of choosing either reason without the physical advantages or the physical advantages without reason. The Epicureans, however, are so foolish as to want both (Lactance, *De opificio Dei* 3, 12–13). In this, reason was such a great advantage that it far outweighed all the physical advantages of animals: “So it is the case that reason grants more to men than nature does to dumb animals, because in the case of the latter neither their mighty bodily strength nor their strong build could prevent them either from being oppressed by us or from being subject to our power (*aut opprimantur a nobis, aut nostrae subiecta sint potestati*).” (Lactance, *De opificio Dei* 3, 17).

In the context of his reflections on physique (Lactance, *De opificio Dei* 5–15), Lactance also comes to speak of the special characteristic of man’s ability to walk upright, which already belonged to good tradition in Greek philosophy, but appears for the first time in the Christian context: “Since it was God’s intention, of all living creatures, to make man alone heavenly, but all the rest earthly (*ex omnibus animalibus solum hominem facere coelestem, caetera universa terrena*), he created man upright for the contemplation of heaven (*ad coeli contemplationem*), and set him on two feet, that he might look whence he came; but the animals he created looking towards the earth, so that, since they have no immortality to expect (*nulla immortalitatis expectation est*), they would have only the belly and the lining (*ventri pabuloque*) to follow. Thus, the right reason and upright posture (*recta ratio et sublimis status*) of man alone, as well as his face, which is entirely similar and close to God the Father (*vultus Deo patri communis ac proximus*), indicate his origin and creator. His almost divine mind (*divina mens*), since he has been given dominion (*dominatus*) not only over the animals of the earth but also over his own body, has its seat at the very top of the head, and like from a high castle he sees and perceives everything.” (Lactance, *De opificio Dei* 8, 2–3).

For Lactance, the upright gait thus proves not only man’s endowment with reason and the raised gaze not only his being made in the image of

God (a new interpretation of Gen 1:26–27!), but also his dominion over his own body and animals as well as his sole vocation to immortality, which animals, looking towards the earth, cannot expect. Stoic-Christian anthropocentrism has grown here into a highly stringent edifice of thought that hardly seems surmountable once one has adopted even one of its premises.

Johannes N. Vorster (2015, 262–265), following Michel Foucault, shows how Lactance uses the representation of a bodily difference at this point to normatively demand a spatial difference and thus a social order: Man's upright gait (bodily characteristic) underpins his calling to heavenly heights (characteristic of social order), the animals' gaze to earth (bodily characteristic) justifies their exclusion from eternity (characteristic of social order). Here, Lactance adopts a common argumentation model from Greek philosophy, which he, however, brings to the point rhetorically in a particularly impressive way.

In the second work relevant here, *De ira Dei*, Lactance wants to refute the thesis from Greek philosophy advanced against Judaism and Christianity that God is never angry. In order to defend religion as such in this context, he presents it as the decisive difference between man and animals. First of all, Lactance states that no one questions the fundamental difference between man and animals: “But no philosopher has ever claimed that there is no difference between man and animals. And in general, no one who wanted to give himself even some semblance of wisdom has ever put the rational animal on an equal footing with the dumb and irrational (rationale animal cum mutis et irrationabilibus coaequavit). This is done only by some inexperienced individuals (imperiti), who themselves belong to the ranks of animals (pecudes).” (Lactance, *De ira Dei* 7, 1–2).

Despite the recognition of this difference, however, some would now claim that man and animals have the same destiny, namely death, and that is the end of everything. It is easy to recognise the Epicurean doctrine. In contrast, Lactance sees “something divine in man” and, on the basis of the spirit, “a manifest kinship (cognatio) with God” (Lactance, *De ira Dei* 7, 4). An animal walks on all fours and is turned towards the ground, a human being walks upright and looks upwards. He “exchanges glances with God, and reason cognizes reason (confert cum Deo vultum, et rationem ratio cognoscit). Therefore, as Cicero says, there is no creature on earth except man that has even the slightest knowledge of God (notitia Dei). He alone is endowed with wisdom to know religion as the only one, and this is between

man and beast the outstanding or even the only difference (vel praecipua, vel sola distantia).” (Lactance, *De ira Dei* 7, 5–6).

In comparison with the stoic mainstream, Lactance thus limits the special gift of man to a single ability, religion. Animals also have language, even laughter and forward planning for the future. Based on his unbiased and empathetic observation of animals, he leaves no doubt about this. Religion then emerges all the more clearly as the *proprium humanum*—and that obliges: “If, then, of all the qualities usually ascribed to man, some resemblance is also found in animals, it is clear that it is religion alone of which no trace and not the slightest inkling can be found in animals. One peculiarity of religion is justice (*religionis est propria iustitia*), which no other animal attains. For man alone commands (*imperat*); animals know only care for themselves. To justice is added the service of God (*Dei cultus*); he who does not submit to this service lives, alienated from the nature of man, the life of animals under human form (*a natura hominis alienus, vitam pecudum sub humana specie vivet*). [...] Thus, it is obvious that religion cannot be abolished in any way.” (Lactance, *De ira Dei* 7, 12–13).

From the perspective of modern natural science, one might find fault with the fact that Lactance ties justice so closely to religion that he must also deny it to animals. He obviously did not perceive the complex structures of social organisation in many animals. However, if one leaves this small flaw aside, his reflections testify to a high degree of differentiation and a clear effort not to assert more than he can prove. Lactance does not consider it expedient to unduly inflate the special position of humans and to base it on empirically refutable assertions. The anthropological point becomes all the more credible the more respect it also shows to animals.

The same intention guides Lactance when he once again addresses anthropocentrism. Unlike most Stoics, he accepts the objection that some animals are of no use to humans: “The Stoics have rejected this objection quite clumsily out of ignorance of the truth. For they say: ‘There are many among plants and among the number of animals whose use is at present still hidden; but in the course of time, it will be found, just as many things that were unknown in earlier centuries have already found necessity and use. What benefit then can be found in all the world in mice, in moths, and in serpents, all of which are troublesome and pernicious to man?’” (Lactance, *De ira Dei* 13, 11–12). The attempt to construct the benefit of mice and moths for man is thus considered by Lactance to be quite abstruse

and nonsensical. He does not see the teleology of the cosmos running so linearly towards man.

It is not because nature itself has shaped everything for the benefit of man that man is called to rule over creation, but because his wisdom, given by God, enables him to make use of the world in spite of all lasting adversities: “The Stoics could have answered more briefly and more truly in the following way: When God created man, as it were in the image of God and as the culmination of the divine work of creation (*divini opificii summum*), he breathed into him wisdom alone, so that he might subject everything to his rule and command and make use of all the amenities of the world (*ut omnia imperio ac ditioni suae subiugaret omnibusque mundi commodis uteretur*.” (Lactance, *De ira Dei* 13, 13).

Lactance proves that anthropocentrism does not have to be anti-animal and exploitative *per se*. The basis of his argumentations is an unbiased, precisely observed natural science, which he noticeably enjoys. Philosophical and theological argumentation must be measured against this empirical evidence. Connected with this is a great love for animals and a high regard for them. Lactance likes animals and concludes from this that God loves them. Although he explicitly rejects the resurrection of animals with Stoic arguments, he nevertheless sees them, in contrast to the Stoa, as gifted with many great abilities and very largely included in the care of the Creator (although Christ does not play a role here, since Lactance deals with non-Christians, cf. John N. Vorster 2015, 261). Compared to Origen, Lactance at any rate ensures that other tones of the relationship between humans and animals are heard in Christianity.

### 5.8 *Aphrahat*

“Most people imagine early Christian literature to be exclusively the products of authors writing either in Greek or Latin: *tertium non datur*. The reality, however, is quite different: Besides the Greek East and the Latin West, there is a third component that could be called the ‘*syriac Orient*’” (Sebastian Brock 2004, 7). The next two authors examined here come from this “*Syrian Orient*”. The first of them is Aphrahat, who is later repeatedly dubbed the “*Persian Sage*”.

Biographically, we do not know much about him. If we compile statistics on loan words in his writings, we find that he is hardly influenced by Greek or Persian vocabulary, “so that only the west of the Sassanid Empire comes

into question as his place of residence” (Peter Bruns 1991, 43). By his own admission, Aphrahat lived a celibate life and belonged to the ascetic “sons of the covenant”, a community similar to monasticism within the Syrian Church of the 4th century, which combined ascetic life with active social and church political activity. Asceticism and celibacy were prerequisites for admission to this group, which determined the ecclesiastical life of the region. Whether Aphrahat was also a cleric remains uncertain.

Literarily, what we know of Aphrahat primarily are his 23 *expositions*, which according to his own dating were written between 337 and 345 (Peter Bruns 1991, 36). They are conceived as a unit since the initial letters follow the Syriac alphabet and the 23rd exposition begins again with the Aleph. Their topics are exclusively questions of lived Christian piety, while dogmatic theological treatises, for example on Christology or the doctrine of the Trinity, are lacking. Aphrahat was concerned with spiritual practice and not with the dogmatic disputes of his time. Since he wrote in Syriac, I can only quote and discuss his expositions (as well as those of Ephraim below) from translations.

The expositions reveal “very clearly anti-Jewish polemics” (Peter Bruns 1991, 54), because in view of the threat of persecution under the Sassanid ruler Shapur II (309–379 AD), many Christians apparently flirted with conversion to officially tolerated Judaism. At the same time, however, the accounts testify that Aphrahat had intensive contact with rabbis and conducted lively discourses with them.

Animals come into play in the *exposition 13 about the Sabbath*—in the prominent role of the chief witnesses. Aphrahat’s core thesis is directed against the Jews around him: God did not give the Sabbath to reward those who keep it and punish those who do not, but to relieve those who have to work hard, and that includes non-believers and animals: “The Sabbath is not set between death and life, nor between righteousness and sin, but is given for rest [...] but not only for men to rest, but also for cattle.” (Aphrahat, Expositions 13, 2).

Aphrahat explains in detail that animals can neither sin nor earn salvation on working days and the Sabbath, for, he refers to a belief shared between Jews and Christians that “The animal has no resurrection to receive retribution for keeping the Sabbath. Nor does it go to judgement. Just as no other commandment, no law, was given to the beast to keep, so it has no profit from the Sabbath” (Aphrahat, Expositions 13, 2). And at the end of this section he concludes affirmatively, “This is the proof which I have

written down, that the Sabbath was given for rest to every creature that toils” (Aphrahat, Expositions 13, 3).

From the meta perspective, one can easily recognise his strategy: by means of the exclusion of a third party, namely animals, from redemption, the dispute between the first two parties, i.e. Jews and Christians, is bridged. Here they can meet and agree. At the same time, however, it becomes clear that Aphrahat and Syrian Christianity in his region are obviously more Hellenised than one might assume at first glance, for the clear emphasis on the conviction that only man can be judged and reach resurrection is typically Hellenistic—as is the talk of “dumb cattle” in the next section, which testifies to the adoption of *aloga* terminology into the Syrian world of language and thought. So it is Hellenism, of all things, that is supposed to unite Jewish and Christian convictions and unify their interpretation of the Sabbath commandment.

At the same time, Aphrahat also preserves classical biblical thinking when he speaks of a God who cares for animals as much as for all other creatures. “Therefore, the Sabbath is given for keeping, that the servants may rest, the maidservants, the hired servants, the strangers, and the dumb cattle (Ex 23:12), that all who toil may rest. For God is concerned for all his creation, even for beasts and cattle, even for the birds and the beasts of the field.” (Aphrahat, Expositions 13, 9). To underline God’s concern for animals, Aphrahat cites a considerable list of biblical quotations, pointing to two animal ethical commandments from the Torah, namely Ex 23:10–11 (in the Sabbatical year animals may eat what grows in the fields) and Dt 22:6–7 (one shall not take the incubating mother out of the nest together with her eggs), as well as Ps 147:9 and 36:7, Job 39:5–6, 30 and 38:41, Ps 104:27–29 and Is 34:15–17—biblical passages that speak in general terms of God’s care for animals. And Aphrahat summarises: “From this it is evident that God cares for all his creatures and that he forgets nothing” (Aphrahat, Exposition 13, 9).

In this way, Aphrahat’s position is ambivalent: on the one hand, he categorically excludes animals—in good Hellenistic tradition—from (heavenly) salvation; on the other hand, he includes them—in good biblical tradition—in the faithful (earthly) care of the Creator. This is hardly a position to be attributed originally to Aphrahat, but rather a reflection of widespread convictions in Syrian Christianity at the time and its confrontation with neighbouring Judaism. The doctrine of creation and the doctrine of redemption enter into an insurmountable hiatus. As inconsistent, even

schizophrenic as this position is, it can still be found today in many debates on Christian animal ethics.

### 5.9 Ephraim the Syrian

The second author from the “Syrian Orient”, Ephraim the Syrian, was born around 306 in Nisibis, today’s Nusaybin/Turkey directly on the border to Syria, into a Christian family and died in 373 in Edessa, today’s Şanlıurfa. Unlike Aphrahat, Ephraim lived in the Roman domain and not in the Persian one. In this border region between the Greek, Syrian and Persian cultural spheres, Christianity was theologically very diverse and experienced strong conflicts (Sebastian Brock 1985, 3–5). Ephraim was above all marked by controversies with the followers of Markion, Bardaisan and Mani (Thomas Kremer 2012, 94). He taught as an ascetic and deacon and was an advisor to numerous bishops. When Emperor Jovian (363–364) had to surrender Nisibis to the Persian Sassanids, Ephraim moved to the city of Edessa, a little further west. It was the Roman centre of the region and at the same time the city with the largest Christian community.

Like Aphrahat, Ephraim wrote his works in Syriac. The basis of his teaching is the Bible, which he mostly quotes by paraphrasing. While he was largely unfamiliar with contemporary Greek theologians and their dogmatic (Christological and Trinitarian) key concepts such as person, being and nature, he thought in a very Greek way in terms of the perception of man, animal and creation. He adopted anthropocentrism and its justification quite naturally. However, Ephraim interpreted the scriptural texts in the Antiochian tradition less allegorically than most of his contemporaries and thus added some original arguments to the familiar figures of thought.

Before we deal with his commentary on Genesis, we will first discuss his *hymns*. In them it becomes abundantly clear that for Ephraim man stands far above animals according to divine order: “He has set you apart from the animals” (Ephraim, *Hymni de fide* 36, 8). Entirely in accordance with the Greek *aloga* thesis, for Ephraim the animals also have no language and are mute. But this still makes them better than the demons, who constantly speak evil (Ephraim, *Hymni de fide* 38, 2). Theologically, Ephraim justifies the inability of animals to speak with a difference in their creation. While God breathed a soul into humans and thus made them capable of speech, he did not breathe a soul into animals themselves, which is why they are

mute (Ephraim, *Carmina nisibena* 44, 1–13 based on Gen 2:7,19; cf. Thomas Kremer 2012, 223–224).

Through the Fall, man became like animals. But in redemption, God offers man the opportunity to return from the animal-like to the God-like state: “As soon as we had become like the animals, God came down and became like us, so that we could turn around and become like him. O Blessed One, whose mercy has called us from here to there!” (Ephraim, *Hymni de fide* 37, 2).

Before the Fall, there were no unclean animals: “Before Adam sinned, all creatures were clean. And while they were pure, he adorned them with their names. When that man sinned in his will, the Creator rejected [the creatures] because of [Adam’s] sins. He declared some of them unclean so that he might teach [Adam] through them and bring him to purity. As it is written, he became both like wild and domesticated animals (Ps 48:13 LXX). Through them [God] presented [Adam’s] uncleanness, that he might see how unclean he had become, that when he saw his slothfulness he might despise it, that when he saw his great wound he might be ashamed, and when he saw how he had become he might weep and seek the splendour he had given away.” (Ephraim, *Hymni de fide* 34, 1–2). So some of the animals are made unclean only for the sake of educational benefit to man. God uses animals as a teaching tool—an extraordinarily anthropocentric and typically Stoic idea.

It should also be noted that Psalm 49:13 is rendered in the Septuagint version (there under the numbering 48:13). It is completely irrelevant whether Ephraim quotes directly from the Greek Bible or from a Syriac translation with the same and thus also Hellenised wording. What is decisive is the shift in meaning away from the dying human being, who resembles the cattle that fall silent in death, to the unreasonable human being, who becomes like the reasonless cattle when he deviates from the path of reason. And as if to reinforce this, Ephraim emphasises that the animals become a mirror for man because he has voluntarily given up his reason and has become exclusively body like them (Ephraim, *Hymni de fide* 34, 4). Only because man has turned from the spiritual to the physical can the animals teach him something, for they are exclusively bodies.

While for some Church Fathers some animals stand for good qualities, for Ephraim animals are exclusively images of bad qualities: “By means of the animals man admonishes and reproves himself that he does not become ravenous like a wolf nor kill like a wild animal. He will not adopt the hissing of the serpent or the silence of the scorpion. Neither will he, like



the latter, strike his friend in secret, nor will he, like the dog, rage against his Maker, nor be ‘like a horse or a mule that is without understanding’ (Ps 32:9).” (Ephraim, *Hymni de fide* 34, 5). Only Origen has ever spoken so negatively about animals.

In this ductus, it is relatively clear that, as already stated by Aphrahat, humans alone are destined for resurrection, whereas animals are entirely part of everything that is perishable (Ephraim, *Carmina nisibena* 44, 14–24). According to Ephraim, the work of animals already remains without reward on earth, so that they are also without hope of a reward in eternity. Human work, on the other hand, is already rewarded in this world, which is why God rewards humans with resurrection after this life (Ephraim, *Carmina nisibena* 44, 25–57). Moreover, animals do not practise asceticism, but humans do. Their reward is resurrection (Ephraim, *Carmina nisibena* 44, 58–68). Finally, animals may be killed just like plants, whereas humans must not be killed even in the case of serious illness or old age. This can only mean that animals and plants are not resurrected, but humans are (Ephraim, *Carmina nisibena* 44, 69–134). All three of Ephraim’s arguments for the exclusion of animals from resurrection could be questioned. For us, however, it is sufficient that they manifest (in agreement with Aphrahat, but in far greater detail) the fundamental Greek dichotomy between humans and other animals and underpin a classical Greek conviction.

Ephraim also interprets (like Origen, cf. chapter 5.6.2) the similarities between humans and animals less than their differences from his Bible, as we can see in his *commentary on Genesis*. To do this, we first have to look at the Hebrew text of Gen 1:20–27. It reads as follows: “Then God said, ‘Let the waters swarm (יִשְׂרָשׁוּ—yīšrāšû) with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth in the firmament of the heavens. And God created (וַיַּבְרֵא—wayyibrā’) the great aquatic animals and all living creatures that move about after their kind, of which the waters swarm (יִשְׂרָשׁוּ—šārāšû), and all feathered birds after their kind. [...] Then God said: Let the earth bring forth (וַתֵּצֵא—tôšē’) living creatures of every kind, of cattle, of creeping things, and of wild animals of the earth after their kind. And so it came to pass. God made (וַיַּעַשׂ—wayya’as) the wild animals of the earth after their kind, cattle after their kind, and all the creeping things on the ground after their kind. [...] Then God said: Let us make man (נַעֲשֶׂה—na’asê) in our image, like us! They shall rule over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, over the cattle, over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. God created (וַיַּבְרֵא—wayyibrā’) man in His image, in the im-

age of God He created (אָרָא—*bārā'*) him. Male and female, he created (בָּרָא—*bārā'*) them.”

So we are dealing with three verbs for God’s creating, two of which are used to refer to both animals and humans:

- *bara*, “to create”, a term reserved exclusively for God’s creative work, first appears in Gen 1:1 (God created the heavens and the earth), but then again in Gen 1:21 for the water and air animals, and finally in Gen 1:27 three times for man.
- *asa*, “to make”, is used first in Gen 1:25 for land animals and then in Gen 1:26 for humans.
- Only the third term, bringing forth from the earth, refers to land animals only.

In Ephraim’s Bible the weighting is significantly shifted (as in the Septuagint, cf. chapter 5.6.2), for he reads the same term “bring forth” in the creation of the water and air animals as in the land animals: “Let the waters bring forth all kinds of creeping things as living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth. And God created the greater dragons, and every living soul that the waters brought forth after their kind.” (Ephræm, *Commentarium in Genesisim 1*, 26). Thus, Ephraim’s Bible, like the Septuagint, aligns the process of creation of water, air and land animals—in the sense of a greater difference between them and humans. Man is now (if one passes over Gen 1:21 and 25!) the only living being that is not indirectly “brought forth” by water or earth, but directly created by God. Moreover, according to Ephraim, man is “formed” by God and not simply “created” (Ephraim, *Commentarium in Genesisim 2*, 9; cf. Thomas Kremer 2012, 213)—a difference that Ephraim probably interprets from Gen 2 and projects into Gen 1. “For Ephraim, therefore, there is an essential difference between the way God ‘formed’ man, i.e. shaped and created him, and the way the animals were brought forth.” (Thomas Kremer 2012, 213). Thus, it can be summarised “that in Ephraim almost all the details are already to be found that are of importance in Greco-Latin patristics in the question of the imago character of man” (Thomas Kremer 2012, 215). Ephraim is very Hellenistic in his approach to these questions.

Ephraim’s emphasis on the difference between humans and animals is heightened by his statement that land animals were created outside Paradise, but near it, “so that they might dwell near Adam” (Ephraim, *Commentarium in Genesisim 1*, 27). This opens up a deep chasm between humans and animals, which the Bible does not know, and at the same

time underpins maximum anthropocentrism: only so that they can serve humans (after the Fall) are the animals placed near Paradise at all. As long as man is in Paradise, he does not need them.

Ephraim's interpretation of Gen 1:28 also corresponds to this. The fertility blessing for man is entirely in the service of the dominium terrae. It is a blessing for dominion over animals, for God is already thinking of the time after the Fall. In Paradise, according to Ephraim, man does not need a blessing of his own, because Paradise is blessed per se. The blessing takes place temporally before man is placed in Paradise, but spatially outside it (Ephraim, *Commentarium in Genesim* 1, 31), for the animals are there, and man only has contact with them after the Fall.

In his interpretation of the second Creation narrative, Ephraim also reveals relatively harsh anthropocentrism, which is only somewhat mitigated by his sentences about the paradisiacal peace of creation. Thus, in interpreting Gen 2:19, Ephraim writes: "He [God] brought them [the animals] to Adam, that he might show his wisdom, and how the peace was between the animals and Adam before the transgression of the commandment. For they came to him as to a loving shepherd [...] and without fear of him, and they feared neither him nor each other. In front went the band of wild beasts of prey, and behind them went without fear the family of those whom they harm." (Ephraim, *Commentarium in Genesim* 2, 9). For a moment, the vision of peaceful coexistence between caring humans and fearless animals flashes here.

But in the very next paragraph, Ephraim returns to the language of harsh submission. He interprets the act of naming the animals as an exercise of almost total dominion: "God made Adam a god of creation by making him a ruler who would establish the names [of the animals] exactly as He had established these beings. But whenever Adam desired to become a god, he would be rebuked, reproved and shamed on account of his theft. Since Adam had indeed become a partner [of God], God established the names of all creatures, but reserved for Adam the names of all animals, so that by means of His wise knowledge they would receive the naming of their names as living beings. For without names, children and young people are considered dead. On account of names, those who are called are alive." (Ephraim, *Commentarium in Genesim* 2, 26, 1). Thomas Kremer (2012, 220) emphasises that the idea of man as a second God was also present in the early Jewish and Persian traditions at that time. And the Greek positioning of man between gods and animals is not far from this idea either. "According to Ephraim, the only thing that matters in Gen 2,19f

is that Adam takes up his dominion over the earth and becomes lord over everything. [...] Adam is granted universal dominion.” (Thomas Kremer 2012, 267 in reference to Ephraim, *Commentarium in Genesim* 2, 9–10). For Ephraim, this naming testifies to “a tremendous fullness of power: [...] authority to dispose of the essence of the divine work of creation. [...] And by giving the animals names, he really calls them into being, as it were” (Thomas Kremer 2012, 267). Ephraim himself affirms this with the following summary: “Wiser than all the animals was Adam, who was set before the animals as lord and ruler, and wiser than all was he who gave names to all.” (Ephraim, *Commentarium in Genesim* 2, 15).

To substantiate the enormous special position of man in creation, Ephraim uses a metaphor that we have not yet found anywhere: Man is clothed with glory and splendour (cf. Thomas Kremer 2012, 223). We had already seen that animals, according to Ephraim, are created outside Paradise and only man inside in his commentary on the first Creation narrative (Ephraim, *Commentarium in Genesim* 1, 27, 1 and 1, 31, 1). Ephraim gives the reason for this in his interpretation of the second Creation narrative: Man dwells in Paradise in a room full of glory that the animals cannot look at and which they are consequently not allowed to enter (Ephraim, *Commentarium in Genesim* 2, 15, 2). For Ephraim, the paradisiacal human being is clothed with a glory that he loses with the Fall, so that he becomes naked (Ephraim, *Commentarium in Genesim* 2, 13, 2). This is an emphasis that is rarely encountered elsewhere and may have Persian as well as early Jewish roots (Thomas Kremer 2012, 226–232; also Sebastian Brock 1985, 66–69). The metaphor of a garment of glory is there a metaphor for kings and rulers. For Ephraim, man is thus a king and ruler over creation.

Moreover, in the interpretation of the Flood narrative (Ephraim, *Commentarium in Genesim* 6, 9, 1 and 6, 10, 2), old familiar and new thoughts emerge in equal measure in comparison with the Greek and Latin authors. Ephraim interprets the narrative explicitly literally and not allegorically, as in *Carmina nisibena* 1, where he compares Noah’s situation with his own persecution and expulsion. The ark is a “place of refuge for man and beast” (Thomas Kremer 2012, 390 in reference to Ephraim, *Commentarium in Genesim* 6, 9, 3), while an allegorical ecclesiological interpretation of the ark, as it dominates in the vast majority of the Church Fathers, is found in Ephraim only in some hymns (Thomas Kremer 2012, 399).

The dominant motif for the interpretation of the Flood narrative is comprehensive animal peace, for the Creator had instilled passivity into preda-

tors for the time of the Flood and placed a limit on their predatory nature: “Lions go into the ark and cattle without fearful rushing and seeking shelter with the lions. At the same time with them wolves and lambs go in, hawks and sparrows, doves and eagles.” (Ephraim, *Commentarium in Genesim* 6, 9, 3). “And this is marvellous; neither did the lions remember their ferocity, nor did any other kind of land animal or bird desire their habits.” (Ephraim, *Commentarium in Genesim* 6, 10, 2). All living creatures on the ark live in “holiness” (Ephraim, *Commentarium in Genesim* 6, 12, 4). This interspecies peace on the ark is thus an archetype of the eschatological peace of creation (Ephraim, *Hymni de Ecclesia* 51, 2)—both an image of the archetype in Paradise and “a prefiguration of the redemption to be expected for humans and animals” (Thomas Kremer 2012, 209 and 390)<sup>24</sup>.

A specific feature of the two Syriac Church Fathers Aphrahat and Ephraim is their strong emphasis on sexual abstinence, corresponding to the view of the “sons of the covenant” to which they belong. In Ephraim, this resonates with the Flood narrative. He interprets the sin and violence of the people who cause the Flood primarily in sexual terms—and in turn interprets the asceticism of Noah and all the human and animal inhabitants of the ark primarily as sexual abstinence. He portrays Noah as a priest who must live abstinely during his priestly consummation (cf. Ephraim, *Carmina nisibena* 1, 45–50). For him, this is an even greater miracle than the paradisiacal peace that reigns between animals and humans on the ark.

The narrative of the Noahide covenant is also highly abbreviated in Ephraim (Ephraim, *Commentarium in Genesim* 6, 14–15; cf. Thomas Kremer 2012, 405). He comments only on the three Noahide commandments: the prohibition of eating blood, the prohibition of killing people and the commandment of killing those people who have killed themselves. It is important for Ephraim to emphasise that animals that have eaten people or parts of them on earth must give them back when they rise from the dead. What happens in the reverse case to animals that have been eaten by humans is not an issue he addresses. Again, the conviction that resurrection is reserved for humans is evident. Finally, not a word is said about the fact that Gen 9 explicitly states four times that God’s covenant applies to

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24 Note that according to Kremer, the image of the ark does have soteriological consequences. In the logic of this image, animals will also experience redemption. In this respect, this biblical strand clearly rubs shoulders with the Greek conviction, also received by Ephraim, that there is no resurrection of animals.

all human and animal creatures. Ephraim ignores this, as do all the other Church Fathers examined here, except Irenaeus of Lyons (cf. chapter 5.3).

In summary, it can be said that the hope that the two Syriac Church Fathers would have a different, less Greek-influenced view of animals has not been fulfilled<sup>25</sup>. Even though they may selectively emphasise animal-friendly ideas, they are firmly anchored in Greek anthropocentrism, which Ephraim even increases with his metaphors and topologies in his commentary on Genesis. The difference between humans and animals achieves an emphasis that is otherwise rare among the Church Fathers<sup>26</sup>.

### 5.10 *Cyril of Jerusalem*

With Emperor Constantine, we enter a new era in which Christian theologians are increasingly brought up as Christians as children. Cyril of Jerusalem, for example, was born in 313 in the environs of Jerusalem to Christian parents. He later became a priest and, because he was known as an excellent preacher, Patriarch of Jerusalem in 350. He died in Jerusalem in 386.

Cyril was not a scientist, but a pastor and preacher. His 24 catecheses on the individual articles of the Nicene Creed of 325 have come down to us in writing. Catecheses are sermons or lectures for a mixed, not necessarily educated audience who wish to receive baptism. We are therefore dealing with a different literary genre, which is, however, possibly more meaningful than many scientific treatises. Because they were written down, Cyril's catecheses were probably used in many places in the Near East to prepare for baptism.

In the *ninth catechesis*, Cyril speaks about the article of faith "*Creator of heaven and earth, of all that is visible and invisible*". He goes through

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25 Therefore, the thesis of Sebastian Brock 1985, 2–3 must be relativised, at least for the area of creation and animal ethics, which says: "here is a form of genuinely Asian Christianity which is free from the specifically European cultural, historical and intellectual trappings that have become attached to the main streams of Christianity [...] he is the one major representative of Semitic—Asian Christianity in its as yet un-Hellenised—un-Europeanised—form".

26 Sebastian Brock completely ignores this aspect and sees in Ephraim "an appropriate patron saint for ecologically minded people" (1985, 136). That he then tries to support this thesis by comparing Ephraim with the New Age theorist Fritjof Capra (Sebastian Brock 1985, 139–140) is a hardly forgivable faux pas. Even in 1985, Lynn White's thesis should have been known and taken seriously!

God's six-day work from Gen 1 day by day, so he finally comes to aquatic animals and asks by way of introduction: "Who can describe the beauty of the fish of the sea? Who can describe the size of the sea monsters and the nature of the amphibians, which soon live on dry land, soon in the water?" (Cyril of Jerusalem, *Procatechesis et Catecheses ad illuminandos* 9, 11). Similarly, he introduces reflection on birds and finally asks, "If you cannot discern the dumbest bird that soars on high, how will you understand the Creator of the universe?" (Cyril of Jerusalem, *Procatechesis et Catecheses ad illuminandos* 9, 12). In a third step, he comes to land animals and asks, "What man knows even the names of all the animals? Or who can write a special natural history? But if we do not even know the names of the animals, how will we understand their Creator?" (Cyril of Jerusalem, *Procatechesis et Catecheses ad illuminandos* 9, 13). The diversity, beauty and adaptability of animals is a good reason for Cyril to admire the Creator and his wisdom.

Cyril marvels at the tremendous abilities of animals, but even more at the creativity of God who created them: "God spoke the one word: 'Let the earth bring forth wild, tame and creeping animals (θηρία) after their kind' (Gen 1:24). And at the one word, out of the one earth have become different kinds of beasts: the so pious lamb and the carnivorous lion. There have become the various movements of the reasonless living creatures (ζώων ἀλόγων κινήσεις), to imitate the expressions of human wills (μιμήσεις ἔχουσαι διαφόρων προαιρέσεων ἀνθρωπίνων): the fox expresses human cunning, the snake shows the poison of human friendships, the neighing horse the exuberance of youth. The busy ant has become to awaken the sluggish and lazy man. If a man spends his youth in laziness, then he will be taught by the reasonless creatures; for the divine Scripture rebukes him with the words: 'Go to the ant, you lazy one, see its ways and imitate it, and be wiser than it!' (Prov 6:6) For take heed how it gathers its sustenance in due season, and do likewise: gather for yourself as treasures for the future the fruits of good works! And again, it is said: 'Go to the bee and learn how diligent she is!' (Prov 6:8) On various flowers they fly about to gather honey for your benefit. Thus, you shall wander through the divine scriptures to work your salvation, and, being satiated by them, say: 'How sweet are your words to my palate; more than honey are they to my mouth.' (Ps 118:103 LXX)" (Cyril of Jerusalem, *Procatechesis et Catecheses ad illuminandos* 9, 13).

Of course, Cyril understands animals here anthropocentrically as God's teaching tools for humans. But on the one hand, most animals come



off excellently, both cognitively and morally, and on the other hand, Cyril even emphasises that they “imitate” human decisions, that their behaviour thus shows a certain analogy to human behaviour. And this must be the case if one wants to postulate that humans learn from animals. Finally, with four biblical quotations in a single paragraph, Cyril is much closer to biblical texts than any author we have examined so far. This may be partly due to the genre of the sermon. And yet the biblical references reinforce Cyril’s extremely positive view of animals.

Thus, he concludes the treatise on animals with some questions: “Is the artist, then, not worthy of praise? Is creation already evil because you do not penetrate the essence of all that is created? Can you know the powers of all plants? Can you know what benefit each animal brings you? [...] From the various arrangement in creation you shall infer the power of the Creator.” (Cyril of Jerusalem, *Procatechesis et Catecheses ad illuminandos* 9, 14).

After praising the human body in relation to the sixth day of Creation, Cyril concludes his catechesis as follows: “I have now taught you at length about creation. But I have still left out a thousand things, especially from the incorporeal, invisible creation. Now you shall hate those who blaspheme against the wise, good artist. From what has been said and read, from what you can find and know through self-observation, from the greatness and beauty of creation, you shall recognise the Creator accordingly. Reverently you shall bow the knee before the Creator of the world, who made the sensuous and the spiritual, all things visible and invisible, and in grateful, praising words, with unwearied lips glorify God, saying: ‘How admirable are your works, O Lord, all things have you made with wisdom’ (Ps 104:24), to you be due honour, glory, greatness now and forever. Amen.” (Cyril of Jerusalem, *Procatechesis et Catecheses ad illuminandos* 9, 16).

Cyril quotes the same Psalm 104 here as Origen does in *Contra Celsum* 4, 75 (cf. chapter 5.6). But while Origen uses the Psalm as (supposed) proof of anthropocentrism and explains that animals were only created for human exercise, Cyril simply leaves the Psalm as praise to God. He invites us to wonder, to joy and to praise, for every creature is for him a single miracle.

Nonetheless, Cyril does not avoid an explicit confession of anthropocentrism in another passage, and does so in the context of a theme that, at first glance, seems to have no relation to non-human creatures. It is his *twelfth catechesis on the article of faith “who took on flesh and became man”*. Here, Cyril first of all inevitably poses the classic dogmatic question “*cur Deus*



homo?” and elaborates: “First let us examine the question: Why did Jesus descend to earth? Pay no attention to reasons that my own mind comes up with! [...] If you want to investigate the reason for Christ’s incarnation, go back to the first book of Scripture! In six days, God created the world, but the world because of man (ὁ κόσμος διὰ τὸν ἄνθρωπον). The sun, shining in most brilliant rays, was created to shine upon us. All animals were brought into being to serve us. Plants and trees were created for our benefit. Glorious are all creatures, but none of them is an image of God, man alone excepted (οὐδὲν εἰκὼν Θεοῦ, μόνος δὲ ἄνθρωπος). The sun was formed by the mere word, but man was formed by the hands of God: ‘Let us make man in our image and likeness!’ (Gen 1:26). One honours the wooden image of an earthly king; how much more does the spiritual image of God deserve honour?” (Cyril of Jerusalem, *Procatechesis et Catecheses ad illuminandos* 12, 5).

According to Cyril, the doctrine of creation could do without the commitment to anthropocentrism. Christology and soteriology, on the other hand, which lie behind the question “*cur Deus homo?*”, would not. Everything in God’s creation must come down to man, so that everything in God’s creation can come down to Christ, the Logos of God—even before the Fall. For Cyril, like many other Church Fathers after him, interprets Gen 1:26 in such a way that the plural of God “let us make man” refers to God the Father and God the Son together (Cyril of Jerusalem, *Procatechesis et Catecheses ad illuminandos* 10, 6; 11, 23). Man as a logos-gifted being is thus also an image of Christ, and Christ is not only a special divine man, as the Arians claim, but God from eternity. One senses how much the Christological and Trinitarian questions push to the fore in the 4th century and cover everything else, especially the doctrine of creation.

In order to be able to single out Christ, Cyril, like Origen, must single out the human being. Unlike Origen, however, Freud’s second, biological mortification does not play a role for him. Cyril does not see man’s self-esteem in danger. Therefore, he can speak very impartially of the beauty and usefulness of animals, marvel at their wonder and ascribe to them outstanding qualities. Like Lactance, he represents sympathetic, animal-friendly anthropocentrism.

### 5.11 *Basil of Caesarea*

Basil, born in 330 in the Cappadocian metropolis of Caesarea (today's Kayseri) and who died there in 379, was at least the third generation of his family to be Christian. His grandfather died as a martyr in the Diocletianic persecution of Christians, which strengthened the family's religious self-confidence. Basil, whose younger brother Gregory of Nyssa we will get to know in the following sub-chapter, studied in Caesarea, Constantinople and Athens and acquired broad scientific knowledge. Influenced by his older sister Makrina, who was already a nun, he decided to become a monk, founded a monastery in Cappadocia in 355 and lived there for five years, during which time he wrote the monastic rule that is still authoritative in Orthodoxy today. His baptism, which was still an adult baptism, took place during this time, in 356. As a monk, Basil lived a strictly vegetarian life and maintained this lifestyle even when he left the monastery to support Archbishop Eusebius of Caesarea. In 364 he was ordained a priest, and in 370 he was elected successor to Eusebius as Archbishop of Caesarea. He held this office until his death.

Basil was in the middle of the dispute between Arians and Nicenes about the appropriate Christology and doctrine of the Trinity, in which the Roman emperors interfered considerably for political reasons. In numerous sermons, however, he also dealt with creation and animals. A new genre of literature goes back to him: the *Hexaemeron*, literally translated "the six-day", i.e. a series of sermons on the six days of creation in Gen 1. Philon of Alexandria and Theophilus of Antioch had already written extensively on this. Now, however, the interpretation of Gen 1 took on a far greater significance, not only for Basil, but also for several of the early Christian authors who followed. Basil preached the series of sermons during Lent 378, the last year of his life.

His intensive use of pagan scientific literature was a complete novelty. "This approach is anything but self-evident. His predecessors apparently still shied away from treading this path. The Cappadocian's procedure can only be explained against the background of Christian *Chrêsis*, i.e. the use of non-Christian spiritual and cultural goods." (Rainer Henke 2000, 39). This is justified with two arguments: Systematically, Christian theology assumes that pagan authors also recognised some true things, since they were created by the one God and endowed with reason. And biblically, the three verses Ex 3:22; 11:2; 12:36 are interpreted allegorically, in which the Israelites fleeing Egypt are asked to take with them golden and silver

artefacts of the Egyptians. In this interpretation, the Egyptians are the pagan philosophers and gold and silver their accumulated knowledge. This also indicates the necessity of selection: not everything that shines in Greek philosophy is gold and thus worthy of being adopted into Christian tradition.

If we think back to the diagram that summarised Stoic anthropocentrism and its core ideas (Chapter 3.5.6), we can easily understand from this example what the method of *Chrêsis* means for Basil. He adopts statements about animals and the relationship between humans and animals (lower right quadrant) if and only if it

- serves to prove cosmic teleology and the benevolent providence of the Creator (*πρόνοια*) (upper left quadrant): Natural scientific “information is not an end in itself but serves the preacher as eye-opening evidence that all natural processes are subject to the Creator’s providence, that there is ‘neither anything superfluous... nor anything deficient’ (Hex 9,5: 154,20).” (Rainer Henke 2000, 59)
- is conducive to the clarification of the relationship between God and humans, i.e. portrays man as endowed with the divine *λόγος* in the image of God and Christ as the *λόγος* of God in person and thus as the mediator between God and man (upper right quadrant). The attribution of reason to humans alone aims at “the theocentric orientation of zoology.” (Rainer Henke 2000, 46) or
- serves the ethical–spiritual maturation of man (lower left quadrant): “The Christian homilet... takes up... the characteristics of animals cited by the pagan zoologists only where he wants to demonstrate the wisdom of the Creator God on the basis of the purposeful arrangement of fauna or to encourage man to make moral progress or deter him from bad behaviour.” (Rainer Henke 2000, 47)

Behind all this lies the conviction that animal behaviour is designed by the Creator in such a way that it can serve man in making ethical and spiritual progress in these three respects. At the same time, its presentation on the basis of biblical texts can show pagan intellectuals the wisdom of the Bible (Rainer Henke 2000, 49).

You can see the epochal change that took place about a generation before Basil: Christianity now has a firm grip on society and the state. The hard conflicts no longer take place with the pagan cults of gods and emperors, but within Christianity between individual groups and currents—in Basil’s time between Arian and Nicene Christianity. This allows for much freer,

more sovereign handling of scientific findings about animals—without the stoic theological–ethical framework of anthropocentrism being attacked in principle. We will see, however, that Basil considerably weakens and relativises the actual anthropocentrist thesis that all creatures exist solely to serve man. He does not give it up completely, but he is not far from it.

### 5.11.1 Sermons on various topics and occasions

In his *eighth sermon “Against the Angry”*, Basil compares poisonous and wild animals with the human passion of anger: “If we ourselves have once given room to anger, let it run free like a mighty stream, or calmly observed the ugly distortion of those seized by this passion, then indeed the truth of the saying became clear to us: ‘An angry man has no decent appearance’ (Prov 11:25). For when this passion (πάθος) has once supplanted rational considerations (λογισμοί) and obtained dominion over the soul (δυναστεία τῆς ψυχῆς), it loses the man completely and does not allow him to be a man at all, since reason (λόγος) is no longer at his command. What poison is to poisonous animals, anger is to irritated people. They rage like dogs, advance like scorpions, bite like snakes. Scripture also knows how to name those seized by passion with the names of the animals to which they resemble with their evil quality. They call them ‘dumb dogs’ (Is 56:10), ‘serpents’, ‘brood of vipers’ (Mt 23:33) and the like. For those who are disposed to harm their neighbour and to destroy their kinsmen may justly be reckoned among the wild and venomous beasts, which by nature (ἐκ φύσεως) bear an irreconcilable hatred against men.” (Basil of Caesarea, Homilia 8, 1). Thus, when passion (πάθος) instead of reason (λόγος) takes dominion over the soul (δυναστεία τῆς ψυχῆς), man becomes like an animal, and a very harmful one at that. Basil argues Stoically, quite differently from Aristotle, who can also find positive things in anger, but combines his thoughts with quite a few biblical quotations. The Bible and philosophy agree on this perception.

However, Basil shows that animals also display very touching behaviour in a personally delivered example from the *fourth sermon “on the martyr Julitta”*. The sermon is actually about the correct way of dealing with the death of a person we were close to according to Stoic ideals. This is characterised by dispassion (ἀπάθεια), the equanimous acceptance of what God, in his inscrutable wisdom, has ordained for mankind. Thus, Basil writes: “The loss of a beloved child, of a faithful spouse, of a dear friend, or of

a relative full of loud benevolence is not terribly difficult to a discerning man who has right reason for the guide of life (τὸν ὀρθὸν λόγον ἡγεμόνα τῆς ζωῆς ἐχοντι.)” (Basil of Caesarea, Homilia 4, 4). In order to make the decisive role of reason clearer, Basil now compares human grief with animal grief. The latter is characterised by the fact that animals find it much more difficult to get away from the habitual contact with deceased members of their species: “I myself once saw an ox crying at a manger because his pasture and yoke companion had died. In other animals, too, you can see that they are very attached to habit.” (Basil of Caesarea, Homilia 4, 4).

So the message is the same in the face of grief as it is in the face of anger: control your emotions, for that alone is worthy of you! “Do not be upset by misfortune! Do not speak of a blind coincidence of things, as if there were no ruler who governs the world. Nor conjecture an evil creator of the world, nor let intemperate sorrow breed pernicious doctrines; do not fall away from the true faith! [...] Remember that God, who formed and animated us, has given to each soul its own life span, and has appointed to one man this hour of death, to another another.” (Basil of Caesarea, Homilia 4, 5).

On the level of content, Basil does not deviate one millimetre from the Stoic teaching, which has become foreign to us today, to bear death with equanimity. What is interesting, however, is the nuances he conveys. While he first formulates his words from the perspective of an uninvolved observer in the third person, he abruptly switches to the perspective of the participant affected at the mention of the ox and speaks in the first person: “I myself once saw...”. Obviously, the ox’s grief has gone very much to his heart. But the very next sentence switches back to the impersonal form of “can be seen” or “is very much to be seen”. It seems as if Basil wants to suppress his sympathy for the ox immediately after he has caught himself in a strong emotion. But in reality, here of all places, he shows very personal feelings that make him seem human. The encounter with the animal stirs his soul—and he recognises something of himself. At the same time, he understands how touching the animal’s grief for its fellow animal is.

In his *second sermon on Dt 15:9, “Take heed to yourself!”*, Basil presents the classical Stoic argument that animals naturally recognise and do what is conducive to them, while humans should do so out of rational insight: “It is said, ‘Take heed to yourself!’ Every animal has innately (οἰκοθεν), on the part of God who creates all things, the faculties (ἄφορμὰς) for the protection of its own existence. You may find by careful observation that most animals, without instruction (ἄδίδακτον), know how to avoid

what is harmful, and on the other hand are impelled by some natural drawing (φυσικῆ τινι ὀλκῆ) to the enjoyment of what is useful to them. Therefore, also the God who educates us (παιδεύων ἡμας Θεός) has given this great commandment, that what is natural to those may be granted to us by means of reason (ὅπερ ἐκείνοις ἐκ φύσεως, τοῦτο ἡμῖν ἐκ τῆς τοῦ λόγου βοηθείας), that what is rashly (ἀνεπιστάτως) accomplished by the reasonless, may be done by us with attention and continued thought, that we may further be conscientious stewards of the faculties given to us by God, fleeing sin as the reasonless flee poisonous fodder, and seeking righteousness as they seek edible herbs. ‘Take heed therefore unto yourself!’ that you may be able to discern that which is harmful from that which is wholesome.” (Basil of Caesarea, Homilia 2, 2).

Again, the contrast between the rational and the reasonless serves to create ethical exhortation. For the sake of encouraging a rational life, Basil then also cites anthropocentrism: “You have received an understanding soul (Ψυχὴν ἔλαβες νοερὰν), with which you know God, fathom the nature of things, pluck the fruit of wisdom so sweet. All land animals, both tame and wild, and all animals that live in the water and fly through the air, are servile and subject to you (δοῦλά ἐστι καὶ ὑποχείρια).” (Basil of Caesarea, Homilia 2, 6). Thus, for Basil, dominion over animals is, on the one hand, evidence of God’s goodness and, on the other, evidence of specifically human abilities.

That the gift of reason obliges is also the basis of a thought in the *seventh sermon in times of famine*. Basil castigates the human practice of looking only to one’s own advantage in the face of adversity and refers to animals, who are always ready to share: “Let us who are capable of reason show ourselves no more cruel than the reasonless animals! These live from the natural growth of the earth as from a common good (κοινῆ). Flocks of sheep graze on one and the same mountain; many horses seek their food in one and the same meadow, and all animals thus allow each other the enjoyment of the necessary food. But we store up in our bosom what is common to all and keep alone what belongs to many.” (Basil of Caesarea, Homilia 7, 8).

In his *eleventh sermon against alcoholics*, Basil (like Irenaeus of Lyons and Clement of Alexandria before him) also cites animals as the “more reasonable” role models. For alcohol promotes sexual licentiousness and perversion, and so drunkards are even more unreasonable than the reasonless: “Yes, I would say that the intoxicated are more unreasonable (ἄλογωτέροι) than cattle: all quadrupeds, even the wild animals (θηρία), have their

regulated impulses (ὄρμαι) for mating. But those who are under the spell of drunkenness, and whose bodies are satiated with unnatural heat, are provoked into foul and shameless embraces and lusts every moment and every hour.” (Basil of Caesarea, Homilia 11, 3). “The reasonless know the limits of nature (τοὺς ὄρους τῆς φύτεως); but the drunken seek in man the woman and in woman the man.” (Basil of Caesarea, Homilia 11, 4).

Humans and animals often have in common that they strive naturally for what is good, such as love for their parents or benefactors. Basil therefore explicitly compares human children with animals. The highlight of his admonition in the *second of his 55 “detailed rules”* is then, of course, their love for God as our father, as our mother as well as our immeasurable benefactor. Here, Basil also refers to the famous quotation from Isaiah, according to which the ox and the donkey know their Lord, but Israel does not.

“What is perfected by free choice (προαίρεσις) is therefore already naturally (φυσικῶς) in us, if we are not wicked in our dispositions through malice. Hence, love against God is required of us as a necessary debt, the missing of which is the most intolerable of all evils to the soul. [...] But if children already have a natural love (φυσική στοργή) for their parents, as is shown both by the behaviour of the reasonless and by the affection of men in their first years for their mothers, we must not prove ourselves more unreasonable (ἄλογωτέροι) than minors and more savage than animals by behaving uncharitably and strangely towards our Creator. [...] Among those whom a natural trait compels to love, the benefactor is uppermost, and this trait is not found exclusively in men, but also in almost all animals, that they are attracted to those who have done them good. It is said that ‘the ox knows its owner and the ass the manger of its master’. But let it be far from us that the following should be said: ‘But Israel knows me not, neither do my people understand me’ (Is 1:3). For what shall I say of the dog, and many other such animals, which show so great an acknowledgment towards their providers? But if we feel naturally drawn in benevolence and love to benefactors, and undergo every effort to repay the benefits previously shown to us, what speech could possibly worthily describe the gifts of God?” (Basil of Caesarea, *Regulae fusius tractatae* 2).

Animals get angry and animals grieve. Animals take care of themselves and share food with each other. They practise sexuality in moderation and know and love their parents and benefactors. Basil knows a lot about animals, he likes and appreciates them and uses them much more often as an example than as a deterrent. Moreover, as a monk he adheres to



abstinence from meat and lives a vegetarian life. He also advises this in his *first sermon on fasting*.

In the spirituality of the early monks, fasting, including abstinence from meat, like sexual abstinence, is part of a freely chosen practice of coming close to Paradise and living a life like the angels. “Fasting was already a commandment in Paradise. The first commandment Adam received was: ‘From the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat!’ (Gen 3:17) [...] Yes, even the life in Paradise is a model of fasting, not only inasmuch as man walked like an angel and by frugality preserved the likeness of the angels, but also because everything that the human mind conceived afterwards, such as drinking wine (οἶνοποσία), slaughtering animals (ζωοθυσία), in general everything that clouds the spirit of man, was not yet known to those living in Paradise.” (Basil of Caesarea, Homilia 1, 3). It is remarkable that Basil writes here of the “slaughter” or “sacrifice” of animals and not of the “consumption of meat”, as would have been obvious by analogy with the drinking of wine. While drinking wine is about its alcoholic effect and thus about a human problem, abstinence from meat is about the suffering of the animals that have to give up their lives. This is very clear in the wording, which sounds poetic in Greek because οἶνοποσία and ζωοθυσία have the same rhythm and ending and rhyme. Strictly anthropocentric, such a consideration could hardly be justified. Here, the view of the empathetic preacher widens and understands animals as independent *téle* and sensitive living beings.

However, the paradisiacal duty to abstain from meat in Gen 1 also applies to animals. They too are to eat a purely vegetable diet. That is why Daniel, who is thrown into a lion’s den by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar, becomes a prototype of those who fast, for the lions take him as an example and do not eat him: “Daniel then, the ‘man of pleasure’ (Dan 9:23; 10:11), who ate no bread and drank no water for three weeks (Dan 10:2), cast into the pit, taught even the lions to fast (Dan 6:16–22). [...] for they did not open their mouths against the Holy One.” (Basil of Caesarea, Homilia 1, 7). The whole of creation renounces consuming other living beings—this is the ideal of Gen 1, which Basil takes up and realises with early monasticism.

Finally, Basil forcefully summarises the benefits of meat fasting: “No animal laments its death; no blood is shed; no death sentence is pronounced against animals by the inexorable belly; the knife of the butcher rests. The table is content with that which grows of itself.” (Basil of Caesarea, Homilia 1, 7). It is hard to speak much more clearly about one’s responsibility for the welfare of animals. Basil paints a picture of peace that could not have



been more aptly portrayed in Gen 1 and Is 11. Of course, he does not oblige Christians to eat a meatless diet, but “only” advises them to do so in the sense of a free decision—temporal abstinence from meat, however, and the moderate consumption of meat that this signals, are incumbent on all Christians (Ian Jones 2013, 28–29). But his gaze is firmly fixed on the welfare of animals. Argue as you will, but this is definitely no longer anthropocentrism. Although Basil never doubts it in theory, he turns away from it in practice.

### 5.11.2 The nine homilies to the Hexaemeron

With the *Ομιλῖαι εἰς τὴν Ἑξαήμερον* Basil opens a long and illustrious series of works of a new literary genre. The term τὸ ἕξαήμερον, denoting the six-day work of Creation, is first found in Philon, *Legum allegoriae* 2, 12, and in Christian literature for the first time in Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autolyicum* 2, 12. We also first encounter the literary genre of the interpretation of the first Creation narrative in Philon, namely *De opificio mundi*. Basil then uses ἡ ἕξαήμερος, the six-day Creation narrative, explicitly in the title of the book. “The Hexaemeron of Basil the Great is the earliest work devoted exclusively to the account of creation which has come down to us; it is also the most influential of those which cannot be interpreted allegorically.” (Jacobus C.M. van Winden 1988, 1260). It has a direct influence on the next two authors of this genre, namely Gregory of Nyssa, who defends his brother’s writing against misunderstandings (chapter 5.12), and Ambrose of Milan, who adopts the sermons of his episcopal colleague Basil almost verbatim in 386 (chapter 5.13).

Basil probably preached the homilies at the beginning of Lent in the last year of his life in 378—and did so within five days, Monday to Friday, with two on all days, namely in the morning and in the evening, and only one of the nine homilies on Wednesday (Stig Y. Rudberg 1997, XVI). Andrew Louth (2009, 44) suggests that it may have been an ancient tradition to read the entire Book of Genesis during Lent.

As early as in the *structure*, Basil visibly distances himself from the Stoic *scala naturae*. While Philon adapts his structure in *De opificio Dei* to the Stoic hierarchy of being, Basil sticks strictly to the biblical order. Thus, he arranges the three animal homilies in Hexaemeron 7–9 as follows: Aquatic Animals (7)—Aerial Animals (8)—Land Animals and Man (9) (cf. Basil of Caesarea, Hexaemeron 8, 2, where he explicitly emphasises this). One

senses the Christian self-confidence that has clearly grown in comparison to Greco-Roman philosophy.

*Methodologically*, Basil clearly rejects an allegorical interpretation of the Creation narrative: “I know the laws of allegory (νόμους ἀλληγορίας), although I did not draw them from myself, but rather came across them in the works of others. They do not take the scriptural words in their ordinary sense, and do not call water water, but understand by it some other nature; they also interpret plant and fish arbitrarily, and also twist and interpret the origin of creeping and other animals (θηρίων) entirely according to their taste, as the dream-interpreters interpret the dream-appearances entirely according to their head. But when I hear of grass, I think of grass, and plant, fish, wild animal, domestic animal; in general, I understand everything as it is said.” (Basil of Caesarea, Hexaemeron 9, 1; cf. also 3, 9). Basil thus distances himself from a tradition that begins with Theophilus of Antioch (Ad Autolyicum 2, 16–18, cf. chapter 5.2) and comes to flower with the Alexandrians Clement and Origen (cf. chapters 5.4 and 5.6).

In contrast to allegorism, Basil uses the knowledge of ancient natural science to an enormous degree and with great matter-of-factness (Andrew Louth 2009, 53), but this knowledge is always employed in the service of theological and ethical statements. The most important of these will be presented below:

*There is a well-thought-out and perfect divine plan for the benefit of all living beings, but especially of man:* Basil describes the divine plan of creation as perfect and encompassing all creatures: “But every one of the created beings (ἕκαστον δὲ τῶν γενομένων) has some purpose of its own (ἴδιόν τινα λόγον) to fulfil in creation.” (Basil of Caesarea, Hexaemeron 5, 4). “Nothing beyond what is useful (περιττότερον τῆς χρείας) has our God created, but neither has he forgotten anything of what is necessary (τῶν ἀναγκαίων).” (Basil of Caesarea, Hexaemeron 8, 7). Two examples to prove the perfection of creation are the observation that prey animals have higher reproductive rates to compensate for feeding losses (Basil, Hexaemeron 9, 5; also already Lactance, cf. chapter 5.7), and the physique of animals: “Even if you look at the limbs of animals, you will find that the Creator has given nothing that is superfluous, and left nothing necessary out.” (Basil of Caesarea, Hexaemeron 9, 5). One is about animal behaviour, the other about animal morphology. Both show how well animals are adapted to their living conditions.

It is remarkable that Basil advocates comparatively weak anthropocentrism: “Therefore, even if a species of grass is useful only to animals,

the benefit they derive from it also benefits us...” (Basil of Caesarea, Hexaameron 5, 2). This is formulated far more cautiously than by some authors before him. Basil recognises that non-human creation is useful to man in three ways: materially, religiously and ethically: “The one is there for man’s enjoyment, the other for the contemplation of the miracle of creation. Still other things are terrible in order to resist our recklessness.” (Basil of Caesarea, Hexaameron 7, 6). Nevertheless, Basil emphasises that God cares for all creatures: “The Lord of the wind and the sea has sown a trace of his great wisdom into the little creature. There is nothing God has not foreseen, for which he has not made provision (Οὐδὲν ἀπρονόητον, οὐδὲν ἡμελημένον παρὰ Θεοῦ). All things his never-sleeping eye beholds (Prov 15:3). To all he is near, caring for each one’s welfare (ἐκπορίζων ἑκάστω τὴν σωτηρίαν).” (Basil of Caesarea, Hexaameron 7, 5). The term *σωτηρία* here is quite ambiguous—it can also be translated as “salvation”. God thus provides for the “salvation” of all living beings, even the smallest. That is a strong statement!

*The scientific contemplation of creation leads to all the greater praise of the Creator* (cf. Domenico Ciarlo 2007, 144): Thus, Basil exhorts, “Learn to know the wisdom of God in everything, and never cease to admire it and to glorify the Creator in every creature (διὰ πάσης τῆς κτίσεως δοξάζειν τὸν ποιητήν)!” (Basil of Caesarea, Hexaameron 8, 7). He sees the diversity of species and their composition as special evidence of God’s greatness and creativity, saying, “But to wish to enumerate all the species of fish one by one would be to count the billows of the ocean or to measure the waters of the sea with a hollow hand.” (Basil of Caesarea, Hexaameron 7, 1). He also says that the appropriateness of natural behaviour shows God’s greatness, such as the migration of fish and sea creatures from spawning to feeding grounds and from winter to summer abodes: “Who is it that drives them? Where is a royal command? What public notice gives them the appointed time? Who is their guide to foreign lands? Everywhere you see the divine order, how it governs even the smallest things.” (Basil of Caesarea, Hexaameron 7, 4). Basil also interprets the migration of birds in an analogous way (Basil of Caesarea, Hexaameron 8, 5).

One senses the Bishop’s enthusiasm when he concludes his sermon at the end of the day: “The words of Scripture, read only in this way, are a few short syllables. The waters bring forth winged beasts, which fly above the earth in the firmament of heaven (Gen 1:20). But if one explores the meaning of these words, the great wonder of the Creator’s wisdom is revealed. Think of how many kinds of fowl he has provided! How has he separated

them according to species and kind, and how is each kind characterised by their peculiarities! The whole day was not sufficient to describe to you the wonders of the air” (Basil of Caesarea, *Hexaemeron* 8, 8).

*Some animals serve as negative role models for humans:* the moral analogue of the “wickedness” (κακία) of animals plays a rather minor role for Basil and mainly concerns predators. He describes the “cunning” of the crab that feeds on oysters as follows: “The crab craves the flesh of the oyster; but because of the hard shell it can hardly get hold of the prey. [...] When it sees the oyster warming itself comfortably in a calm place and opening its shells to the sun’s rays, it suddenly throws a small stone between them, thus preventing them from closing and, as you can see, replacing with cunning what it lacks in strength. This is the wickedness of those who have no reason and no voice (Αύτη ἡ κακία τῶν μήτε λόγου μήτε φωνῆς μετεχόντων). I would wish you the acquisitiveness and skillfulness of crabs, without harming your neighbour.” (Basil of Caesarea, *Hexaemeron* 7, 3). A second example is even more remarkable: the polyp adapts itself in colour to its surroundings so that its prey may feel safe and come so close to it that it can catch it. In this way, the polyp resembles those humans who adapt to their environment, even if it is morally corrupt (Basil of Caesarea, *Hexaemeron* 7, 3). So there is animal behaviour that is morally not worthy of imitation. Overall, however, the examples of positive animal behaviour far outweigh these.

*Many animals serve as positive role models for humans:* First of all, Basil sees some ways in which animals can act as role models with regard to virtues that relate to the relationship of humans to themselves. For example, the natural self-limitation of animals should be a model of *moderation* for humans: “How the species of fish have each allotted themselves a corresponding section, do not enter foreign territory, but remain within their boundaries! [...] But we are not like that. Where does that come from? Because we are shifting the eternal boundaries set by our fathers. We distribute the earth, add house to house, field to field, in order to take something from our neighbour. [...] the fish does not contradict the law of God (Ἰχθὺς οὐκ ἀντιλέγει νόμῳ Θεοῦ), but we humans do not want to adhere to the wholesome teachings (ἄνθρωποι σωτηρίων διδαγμάτων οὐκ ἀνεχόμεθα). Do not despise fish because they are speechless and reasonless (ἄφωνα καὶ ἄλογα)! Rather, fear being more unreasonable (ἄλογώτερος) than they, if you do not submit to the decree of God!” (Basil of Caesarea, *Hexaemeron* 7, 3–4). The final admonition is remarkable. On the one hand, because it is about respect for animals—a tone we have hardly heard before

in early Christian literature—and on the other hand, because this respect is demanded of all things towards fish, which, according to the Stoic *scala naturae*, occupy the lowest rank among all animals. Seen in this light, Basil's statements go a long way towards accommodating animals!

For Basil, the consistent orientation of animals towards their future can become a model of human *hope*: He speaks of the “endowment of animals with an eye to the future, so that we too may not cling to this present life but may devote all our care to the life to come.” (Basil of Caesarea, *Hexaemeron* 9, 3). Again, he sees fish, of all things, as particularly exemplary: “The fish know about a certain provision for the future; but we, for lack of hope for the future, waste our lives in animal lust. The fish changes so many seas to find some advantage; what will you say, you who live in idleness?” (Basil of Caesarea, *Hexaemeron* 7, 5). But the bishop is also impressed by the perseverance of the swallow, which is never discouraged by setbacks in building its nest or rearing its brood (Basil of Caesarea, *Hexaemeron* 8, 5).

Basil finds role models for *social virtues* rather in the animals of the air and the land—their social behaviour is easier to observe. Thus, he praises the hospitality of crows (Basil of Caesarea, *Hexaemeron* 8, 5), the care of storks for their old parents (Basil, *Hexaemeron* 8, 5), i.e. the legendary “stork's thanks” (*ἀντιπελαργώσεις*), which is still so called and applied to humans today, the boundless loyalty of dogs to their masters, beside whom they remain after the latter's death until they themselves starve (Basil of Caesarea, *Hexaemeron* 9, 4), and in general the love of animals between parents and young: “Incomprehensibly great among animals is the mutual love of parents and their young, because God, who created them, has replaced their lack of reason with an excess of sensual feelings (*διότι ὁ δημιουργήσας αὐτὰ Θεὸς τὴν τοῦ λόγου ἔλλειψιν διὰ τῆς τῶν αἰσθητηρίων περιουσίας παρεμυθήσατο*).” (Basil of Caesarea, *Hexaemeron* 9, 4).

This still leaves the *question of the intellectual abilities of animals*: First of all, Basil distinguishes animals as animate from plants as inanimate living beings in the Stoic tradition (Basil of Caesarea, *Hexaemeron* 7, 1). For him, there are different degrees of ensoulment between the individual animals: land animals have more of the life principle of the soul than water animals (Basil of Caesarea, *Hexaemeron* 8, 1). In any case, however, the soul of animals is earthly and therefore mortal: “Since, according to Scripture, the soul of every animal is its blood (Lev 17:11), but the blood condenses and turns into flesh, and the flesh decays and dissolves into earth, the animal soul is naturally earthy. [...] Do not think it is older than

its corporeal substance, or that it will continue after the dissolution of the flesh!” (Basil of Caesarea, *Hexaemeron* 8,2). Basil thus negates not only the pre-existence of the animal soul (and thus also transmigration), but also its post-existence in eternity. Despite all his love of animals, he sticks to the classical Stoic-Christian position with a (questionable) reference to the Bible.

Basil recognises an ability in some animals that is very similar to human syllogistic reasoning. Two examples are vultures and dogs. Vultures follow migrating armies because they hope to find corpses—and they cannot know this from birth, but only learn it from observation. Basil summarises the much-discussed example as follows: “You see countless flocks of vultures following the armies, which conclude from the armour what will happen to the soldiers. But this is not far from human reasoning (οὐ μακράν ἐστὶ λογισμῶν ἀνθρωπίνων).” (Basil of Caesarea, *Hexaemeron* 8, 7). The aloga thesis stands like a dogma in the room, which Basil does not want to question. And yet one wonders why the behaviour of vultures should only be “not remote” from human reasoning and how it can then actually be explained.

The second example comes from Chrysipp—we have already met it in Sextus Empiricus (chapter 3.6.3) and Tiberius Iulius Alexander, the nephew of Philon (chapter 3.6.1): “What the worldly wise have scarcely found after long years of study, namely, the chain conclusions (τὰς τῶν συλλογισμῶν πλοκάς) that, as you see, the dog knows, only instructed by nature (παρὰ τῆς φύσεως πεπαιδευμένος). For if he tracks a game, and in doing so encounters various tracks, then follows the tracks leading everywhere, yet by such conduct he only pronounces the syllogism (τὴν συλλογιστικὴν φωνήν): ‘The game has turned this way, or that way, or towards a third side; but it has run neither that way nor that way; consequently, it must have run towards this side.’ Thus, after rejecting what is wrong, he finds what is right.” (Basil of Caesarea, *Hexaemeron* 9, 4). Thus, according to Basil, the dog does not carry out a syllogistic conclusion, but is “taught by nature”. Here, the bishop sticks entirely to the traditional Stoic teaching.

Like Lactance (Chapter 5.7), Basil also cites man’s upright walk as a central biological correlation to the gift of reason. He interprets the half-sentence in Gen 1:24 “Let the earth bring forth” as follows: “The animals are earth-born and inclined to the earth. But the ‘heavenly plant’ (Plato, *Timaeus* 90 A-B), man, is distinguished as much by his physique as by the nobility of his soul. What shape do the quadrupeds have? Their head is turned towards the earth, looking at their belly and seeking in every

way to satisfy its lust. Your head is turned towards heaven; your eyes look upwards.” (Basil of Caesarea, Hexaameron 9, 2). The gift of reason, then, serves primarily to orient man towards God, so that he may live up to his kinship with God. As with Lactance, the bodily characteristics of the upright gait and the raised gaze become the code of social order.

Nevertheless, the lack of reason in animals is compensated for by an excess of feelings (Basil of Caesarea, Hexaameron 9, 4). Thus, despite everything, God’s kind care for his creatures becomes visible: “That God compensates for the lack of reason in the animal world at the same time reveals the goodness of the Christian Creator God and his love for every creature, a decisively new moment in the view of nature, especially in comparison with the Stoa. Basil repeatedly emphasised this revolutionary thought in the homilies of the Hexaameron.” (Rainer Henke 2000, 46).

*In summary*, Basil’s great love for animals and the sensitive way he speaks about them is an unmistakable and strong feature of his sermons. It also corresponds to his enthusiasm for the detailed animal observation of natural science. That he justifies monastic abstinence from meat so strongly in terms of avoiding animal suffering and feels compassion for a grieving ox is also new. On the level of practicality, then, Basil is a great animal lover. On the level of theological ethical theory, however, he harbours no fundamental doubts about the outdated positions of Stoic-Christian anthropocentrism and the *aloga* thesis. These are so deeply and firmly rooted in late antique culture that they are no longer perceived as questionable. Nevertheless, the core position of anthropocentrism, that everything was created solely for the benefit of man, remains extraordinarily weak in Basil. If he mentions it at all, and he does so rather rarely, he weakens it as much as possible. Basil is without doubt one of the “least anthropocentric” authors of the early Church.

## 5.12 Gregory of Nyssa

Gregory of Nyssa, born around 335/340 in Caesarea and who died after 394 in Nyssa, was the second youngest of ten children, who first married after his education and was soon widowed. Influenced by his eldest sister, the nun Makrina, and the second eldest of the siblings, his brother the bishop Basil of Caesarea (chapter 5.11), he becomes a monk and in 372, bishop of the newly established diocese of Nyssa, today’s Nevşehir in Cappadocia. Theologically, he thought and wrote more systematically than his brother



and continued his brother's Trinitarian ideas, especially at the Council of Constantinople in 381, where they were incorporated into the Creed. Gregory produced an extensive literary oeuvre, but unlike his brother Basil, he wrote much less about animals.

Gregory understands his work *De hominis opificio*, "one of the main works of patristic anthropology in the Greek language" (Giovanni Mandolino 2018, 416), which provides most of the content to be presented here, as the completion of what Basil did not elaborate on in the *Hexaemeron* due to time constraints, namely the Creation and being God's image of man. In doing so, Gregory, like his brother, draws intensively on contemporary natural science. He devotes more attention to the interpretation of the bodily constitution of man than to the interpretation of the soul and the spirit. Some thoughts reveal ideas that Basil had already established, while some appear for the first time.

The guiding question of *De hominis opificio* is why man is created as the final work of God according to the Creation narrative. Throughout his answer, Gregory underpins strong *anthropocentrism* from the very beginning, using poetic sentences to describe a world perfectly prepared for human use: "Already, then, all had come to its end. [...] And full was the earth of the seasonal fruits, sprouting at the same time as the blossoms, full were the meadows of all that grows in the meadows, and all the reefs and heights, and all the lowlands and hills, and all the valley bottoms, were adorned with fresh green grass and the colourful splendour of the trees, which had just risen from the earth, but were rapidly growing into perfect beauty. But all was merry, of course, and the animals that had come to life at God's command leapt about, sheltering in the bushes in herds and species, every bush and shade-giving shrub resounded with the songs of the songbirds. [...] and all the wealth of creation on land and sea was ready, but the partaker (ὁ μετέχων) was not. For as yet that great and venerable thing (τὸ μέγα τοῦτο καὶ τίμιον χρῆμα), man, was not resident in the world of things. For neither was it appropriate for the ruler (ἄρχων) to appear before the ruled, but only after the preparation of the ruler's territory was it time for the king (βασιλεύς) to appear." (Gregory of Nyssa, *De opificio hominis* 1–2). Nowhere else have we read the anthropocentric interpretation of God's six-day work in such rich and imaginative embellishment as here. And nowhere has human kingship been so directly equated with ownership or stakeholdership. To be a king is to be a beneficiary—an equation that can certainly be questioned. "Gregory imagines the scene of creation as a



lavish banquet laid out for a guest who has yet to arrive—a world made for human consumption.” (Eric Daryl Meyer 2018, 43).

Gregory regards free will as the decisive difference between humans and animals and as a constitutive characteristic of the human image of God. Thus, he writes in his treatise on virginity: “He was the image and likeness (εἰκὼν ἦν καὶ ὁμοίωμα) [...] of the power that is king over all that exists (βασιλευούσης), and therefore in the self-empowerment of decision, he received the likeness of him who has power over all things...” (Gregory of Nyssa, *De virginitate* 12). From this follows very classically: “The self-empowerment of man is [...] for Gregory the essential trait of the image of God [...] It is necessarily connected with man’s endowment with reason.” (Martin Streck 2005, 132–133).

Like Basil, Gregory asks above all about the characteristics of the body that predestine man as the ruler of creation and make his leadership role possible. First of all, this includes his lack of physical strength, which makes him in need of help, which is why he begins to dominate and domesticate animals. He needs this, but he can also do it (Gregory of Nyssa, *De opificio hominis* 7). The second characteristic, which is also already known to us, is the upright walk: “But the form of man is upright and directed towards heaven, and he looks upwards. This is also princely and denotes royal dignity (Ἀρχικὰ καὶ ταῦτα, καὶ τὴν βασιλικὴν ἀξίαν ἐπισημαίνονται). For the fact that among creatures man alone is thus constituted, and all others have their bodies bent downwards, clearly shows the difference of dignity between those bent under dominion and the power above them (τὴν τῆς ἀξίας διαφορὰν, τῶν τε ὑποκυπτόντων τῇ δυναστείᾳ, καὶ τῆς ὑπερανεστῶσης αὐτῶν ἐξουσίας).” (Gregory of Nyssa, *De opificio hominis* 8).

Finally, Gregory’s third specifically human bodily characteristic, which goes beyond that of his brother Basil, is the free play of the hands, which in the first place made possible man’s ability to speak. In *De hominis opificio* 8, “it is shown how the bodily characteristics of man were interrelated and how they were all oriented towards the service of the Logos: The upright walk frees the forelimbs from their function as supporting organs and is thus the prerequisite for the formation of the hands. The hands, in turn, free the mouth from the task of feeding itself directly; but this enables the mouth and tongue to take on a shape that makes possible the articulation of the voice. If, like the animals, we had to pluck the plants with our mouths, we would have a snout, calloused, thick lips and a rough, animal tongue, and would consequently only be able to utter animal sounds.” (Urs Dierauer 1977, 236). What Dierauer summarises compactly proves

Gregory's long and demanding chain of thought from the upright walk to the ability to speak, which would also do credit to modern biology. The human organism is presented as perfectly oriented towards the formation of language.

We have already pointed out elsewhere the hermeneutical problem of constructing a categorical, principled difference in dignity from these categorical, contingent differences in bodily constitution (Eric Daryl Meyer 2018, 46). The problem is not specific to Gregory but concerns all of Stoic natural philosophy. The conclusion from being to ought, as inevitable as it is, always remains precarious from an ethical point of view and requires highly nuanced and very careful exposition. In Gregory, on the other hand (as in the Stoa as a whole), it remains largely unreflective.

It is not surprising that the *aloga thesis* is not specifically explained in a work about the creation of man. In his sermon on the third Beatitude, "Blessed are those who mourn", Gregory does, however, mention it, for on the basis of their lack of reason, he denies animals the ability to mourn: "... anyone who sinks into the pleasures of this life cannot be assumed to mourn. The latter is also proved by the reasonless animals; these are indeed by nature in a pitiable condition—for what is more pitiable than to be deprived of reason? But they do not have a feeling of unhappiness; on the contrary, their life proceeds with a certain joy: the horse is full of high spirits, the bull romps about so that the dust flies up, the pig bristles, the young dogs joke, the calves leap; every living creature can also express its joy through various signs. But if they had any idea of the joy (χάρις) of reason, which they lack, they would not spend their dull, low life in joy (ἡδονή)." (Gregory of Nyssa, De beatitudinibus 3, 4).

Mourning in the true sense, and Gregory is quite Stoic about it, can only be given when someone has a clear idea of loss and the ways of coping with it, and when someone can therefore relate to it. He denies animals this possibility because, for him, they have no reason. For his part, Gregory evaluates their lack of reason objectively as a misfortune, but one that they would and could not feel subjectively—and describes their sensual pleasures in detail. In terms of content, his brother Basil was of the same opinion. However, if we recall the mode of representation with which he describes the mourning ox that he observed, then nevertheless a difference becomes clear. At least performatively, Basil hints that he is not happy with the Stoic concept of animals' inability to truly grieve. Gregory, on the other hand, does vividly describe the joys of animals, but he is obviously not moved to deny them the genuine joy that is reserved for rational beings.

Where Basil shows empathetic closeness to animals, Gregor remains at an indifferent distance from them.

On the whole, Gregory sees animals as closer to plants than to men within the framework of the Stoic *scala naturae*, which for him establishes the legitimacy of consuming animals as food in the same way as plants: “Therefore, the general lawgiver also gave over the nature of animals, as not far removed from plant life, to the use of man in the same way, to serve their owners instead of herbs; for ‘all flesh,’ he says, ‘eat as herbs of the field’ (Gen 9:3); only a little, indeed, does it seem to be in advance, by virtue of its sentience, of that which grows and multiplies without it. Let this be a lesson to those who are carnally minded, not to tie the mind too much to sensual things, but to be busy in the soul’s advantages, since the true soul shows itself in these, but sensibility is also in the animals.” (Gregory of Nyssa, *De hominis opificio* 15). Gregory does not follow the usual distinction between a purely vegetarian diet before the Fall and a carnal diet after the Fall. This is because, for him, the sentience of animals is not an ethically relevant endowment. Instead, he immediately mentions the warning that this assessment contains for humans, namely to set themselves apart from animals.

The human endowment of reason for Gregory thus remains a *commitment to morality* as well. In *De opificio hominis* 18, he describes in good Stoic manner that the nature of man is composed of two halves, the divine and the animal. The moral task of man now consists in controlling the second through the first. Whereas animals are driven to self-care by natural impulses, man must lead these forces to good through the guidance of reason. Elsewhere, Gregory uses the familiar Platonic image of the charioteer and wild draught animals: “If, on the other hand, reason, like some charioteer (τις ἡνίοχος), drops the reins, who then himself falls under the carriage and is dragged behind it, wherever the draught animals tear the team in their reasonless motion (ἢ ἄλογος κίνησις), then the impulses turn into passion, the malignancy of which can also be seen in the reasonless creatures (τότε εἰς πάθος αἱ ὀρμαὶ καταστρέφονται, οἷον δὴ καὶ ἐπὶ τοῖς ἀλόγοις ἔστιν ἰδεῖν).” (Gregory of Nyssa, *Dialogus de anima et resurrectione* 8, 7). This image from Plato’s *Phaedrus* (cf. chapter 3.3), which is still echoed in many idioms today—for example, when “unbridled behaviour” is mentioned—, illustrates more clearly than almost any other the efforts of Greek ethics to domesticate the animal in man and make it both harmless and useful. It illustrates the Greeks’ deep mistrust of feelings, which then casts its long shadow on animals as well.

Gregory both theologically and spiritually is strongly oriented towards his older brother Basil but does not have his esprit and above all does not adopt his great love for animals. He makes anthropocentrism unusually strong by explicitly equating the kingship of man, which he recognises in the image of God, with the authorisation to use creation. His biological derivation of man's ability to speak from his upright walk is also genuine. Overall, non-human creation is not a major concern for him.

### 5.13 Ambrose of Milan

Ambrose was born in Augusta Treverorum (Trier) in 339 and died in Mediolanum (Milan) in 397. His parents belonged to the Roman senatorial aristocracy. His father, Aurelius Ambrosius, was the prefect of the province of Gallia Narbonensis (in present-day southern France) and died early. Ambrose received a good legal education so that he could pursue a career as a civil servant like his father. In 372/373 he became the prefect of the province of Aemilia-Liguria with its seat in Milan, one of the imperial residences at the time. But in 374 he was elected Bishop of Milan by the people, although he was still a catechumen. After consultation with the emperor, he accepted the office and within a week received baptism and the ordinations of deacon, priest and bishop. Because of his new task, he now dealt with theology for the first time. He did not become a great theologian, but rather a church politician who took his theology from Basil of Caesarea (chapter 5.11) and other great theologians of his time and transferred it from the Greek-speaking to the Latin-speaking world.

More than half of his writings are devoted to biblical interpretation and are probably based on sermons. As far as I can see, Ambrose was the only one of the Church Fathers to have written his own treatise on the story of Noah: *De Noe et Arca* from the year 378. Elsewhere, the ark is often the only part of the story mentioned. The wood of the ark and the water of the Flood are understood as an image of the cross of Christ and the water of baptism, and sometimes there is also mention of the two birds, the raven and the dove, which Noah sends out. Above all, however, the ark is used as an image for the church, in which a veritable "zoo" of people are peacefully united and live together in harmony. Ambrose, on the other hand, interprets much of the narrative, and does so in a twofold process: First, he explains the literal sense of the text, then the "sensus altior", the higher, i.e. allegorical sense. He consistently recognises this in man's

confrontation with his desires and passions. Noah is the righteous, that is, the mind (*mens*) that subdues all irrational passions and locks them up, as it were, in the ark of his reason (Ambrose, *De Noe et Arca* 9, 30).

Not everything that Gen 6–9 has to say about animals is interpreted by Ambrose. He often skips over theologically significant verses and instead dwells on questions of detail. For our question, it seems to me that only one longer passage is significant, namely the discussion of the question of why animals have to die in the Flood, although they have not sinned. Ambrose uses several arguments to explain this. First, for him it is like an army that must die if the commander of the army has made a mistake and dies himself: “If man perishes, to whom the Lord God has given a royal power (*regalis potestas*) over every species of animals” (Ambrose, *De Noe et Arca* 10, 31), then all animals must perish with man. Even in a plague, animals would eventually be infected along with humans. The second argument is the analogy with the body: if the head dies, all the other parts of the body die with it, which, conversely, need not be the case. “The head and, as it were, the leading organ of the rest of the animals is man (*caput et principale quoddam caeterorum animalium homo est*).” (Ambrose, *De Noe et Arca* 10, 32). Finally, Ambrose puts forward anthropocentrism as his third and most important argument. Citing Ps 8:8, he holds that animals were created for the sake of man. Therefore, if man were to be extinguished, their existence would no longer have any purpose: “Because of him are they all; some for the sake of usefulness, some for the sake of pleasure, some for the sake of lust. It was therefore logical to think that when man is extinguished from the surface of the earth, those who were created for his sake should likewise be extinguished.” (Ambrose, *De Noe et Arca* 10, 33).

Not only does Ambrose’s allegorical interpretation of the Noah narrative disappoint from an animal theological perspective, but so does his literal one. The fact that animals are saved at all; that God’s covenant applies to them just as it does to humans; that they experience a community of destiny, but also a community of law with God and humans, is not addressed by Ambrose. Here, the trained administrator is obviously simply out of his depth.

Probably the most important and best-known piece of writing by Ambrose that refers to the Creation is the *Hexaemeron*, which we will deal with in the following. It is strongly oriented towards Basil’s model and interprets the Creation narratives literally, not allegorically. In contrast to the latter, however, the scientific examples are expanded considerably, while the theological and philosophical reflections are reduced to a minimum (cf.

also Maria Pia Ciccarese 2016, 103–110). Ambrose’s paraenetic concern, of course, remains the same as Basil’s: amazement at the wonder of creation and the greatness of the Creator. The Bishop of Milan uses the verb “*mirari*” countless times (cf. Maria Pia Ciccarese 2016, 96–98). He aptly formulates: “*Mirabilis natura in maximis [...] mirabilis etiam in minimis*” – “Nature is admirable in its biggest facets... and also admirable in its smallest aspects” (Ambrose, *Hexaameron* 6, 6, 37).

In terms of content, the focus is on the exemplary nature of animals as “*exempla*” (Maria Pia Ciccarese 2016, 98–103). Like Basil, Ambrose cites individual negative examples concerning the behaviour of predators, for example when he admonishes that humans should not become predators (Ambrose, *Hexaameron* 5, 5, 13–14). Much more extensive, however, as with Basil, are the examples in which animals are considered positive role models. For example, fish, which know their territories by nature and are content with them, admonish moderation and respect for boundaries (Ambrose, *Hexaameron* 5, 10, 26–27). Numerous birds are a model of hospitality (Ambrose, *Hexaameron* 5, 16, 54). Birds are also used to illustrate mildness and mercy (Ambrose, *Hexaameron* 5, 16, 55). A frequent theme is the love of animals between children and parents, for example in the case of water animals (Ambrose, *Hexaameron* 5, 3, 7) and crows (Ambrose, *Hexaameron* 5, 18, 58). Finally, the doves are mentioned as an example of fidelity beyond the death of a partner (Ambrose, *Hexaameron* 5, 19, 62).

Of course, the example of the dog pursuing game and seemingly concluding syllogistically appears again. As mentioned, it comes from Chrysipp, and we encountered it in Sextus Empiricus (chapter 3.6.3), Tiberius Iulius Alexander (chapter 3.6.1) and Basil of Caesarea (chapter 5.11.2). Ambrose comments: “No one doubts that the dog has no reason (*exsortem rationis canem esse nemo dubitaverit*). And yet, if one observes its acumen (*sensus eius vigorem*), one would like to think that it makes use of reason in its fine sense of intuition. For example, what very few people in schools are able to accomplish, even if they spend their whole lives learning, namely, to carry out syllogistic deductions (*coniunctiones syllogismorum*), the dogs, as will be easily seen, know how to do by means of natural instruction (*naturali eruditione*). [...; here follows the well-known example, note MR]. What humans can hardly manage in spite of long, properly trained thinking, results for the dogs in a natural way (*ex natura suppetit*): First they convince themselves of what is false, then, after eliminating that which is false, they arrive at the truth.” (Ambrose, *Hexaameron* 6, 4, 23). Ambrose’s explanation thus remains entirely within

the classical Stoic patterns of explanation, which illuminate the difference between learned and natural abilities and reserve the learned ones for humans.

The Ambrosian commentary on the creation of man makes a strict distinction between the image of God, which is Christ alone, and the human soul, which is created in the image of God, that is, after Christ: “So then our soul accords with the image of God (*ad imaginem Dei*). In it, man, you are whole; for without it you are nothing, but are earth and are dissolved into earth. [...] It is through her that you rule (*per quam dominaris*) over all the other beings of the animal and bird world. She accords with the image of God, but the body is formed after the manner of animals (*haec est ad imaginem Dei, corpus autem ad speciem bestiarum*). The latter bears the pious seal of the imitation of God (*pium divinae imitationis insigne*), the latter shares the lot (*consortium*) with the beasts and monsters.” (Ambrose, *Hexaemeron* 6, 7, 43). Ambrose is keen to signal a clear hierarchical difference between man and Christ. Furthermore, he attributes the likeness to the soul alone, not to the body, because the body is mortal, as is the case with animals.

It is astonishing, however, that in the entire *Hexaemeron* there is hardly an allusion to the command to rule from Gen 1:28–29. The subordinate clause in the quotation just referred to is one of the rare exceptions. If, on the other hand, one follows the overall structure of the treatise on the creation of man, Ambrose moves directly from the morphology of the human body and the significance of the soul to the Sabbath (Gen 2:1–4). That there is a divine plan for creation is echoed everywhere. That everything has its purpose and function, likewise. But Ambrose does not say that everything exists for man. And that man has the role of ruler is only cautiously hinted at. Thus, the Bishop of Milan remains extraordinarily reserved on the question of teleology and anthropocentrism. Reflection on the relationship between humans and non-human creatures does not occur in the Ambrosian *Hexaemeron*.

#### 5.14 John Chrysostom

John of Antioch, who in the 6th century was given the nickname *Χρυσόστομος*, Golden Mouth, due to his rhetorical talent, was born around 348 in Antioch and died in 407 in Komana Pontika. His father, a high officer, died soon after John’s birth, so that he was brought up alone



by his Christian mother. He studied law and was baptised in 371. After his mother's death in 372, he went to the Syrian desert as a monk, but due to his poor health had to return to Antioch in 378. In 381 he was ordained a deacon, in 386 a priest and finally in 397 Patriarch of Constantinople. From 403 onwards, he had to go into exile several times because his sharp criticism of rich displeased the empress and emperor. On his way from one place of exile to the next, he died in 407.

Chrysostom is the early Christian theologian from whom the most publications have survived. His oeuvre is enormous. It consists of scientific treatises, biblical commentaries, sermons and letters from his exile. Nevertheless, his writings on creation are limited. They are mainly found in his sermons to the people of Antioch, which are set against a very concrete event: during Lent 387, the Antiochian population destroyed the statues of the emperor and his family standing on pillars in protest against new taxes. The very next day, in retaliation, several inhabitants were killed, including children. In this extremely tense situation, Chrysostom preached twenty sermons "on the pillars", which also made a great impression on the pagan population and noticeably calmed the situation.

First of all, it will come as no surprise that the gifted preacher sees *language as the special, exclusively human characteristic and gift*. In a sermon on repentance that can neither be located nor dated, he states: "For this very reason we have an advantage over wordless creatures (τῶν ἀλόγων ζώων), because we have a word (ἐν τῷ λόγον ἔχειν), can speak to one another through the word, and love the word (λόγου ἐρᾶν); for a man who does not love the word is more unreasonable than the beasts (ἀλογώτερος τῶν κτηνῶν), because he does not know why he has been honoured and whence he has received this honour. Therefore, the Prophet rightly speaks: 'Man, since he was honoured, did not understand, behaved like the unintelligent animals and became like them (Ἄνθρωπος ἐν τιμῇ ὢν οὐ συνῆκε- παρασυνεβλήθη τοῖς κτήνεσι ἀνοήτοις, καὶ ὠμοιώθη αὐτοῖς).' (Ps 48:13 LXX)" (John Chrysostom, De paenitentia homiliae 3, 1). Chrysostom thus interprets logos in this sermon primarily in terms of language; the aloga are, in his perception, primarily speechless. The word is the special splendour and adornment of man; it honours him to be able to speak. To prove this, Chrysostom refers to a scriptural word already known to us, which he mistakenly ascribes to a "prophet", although it comes from a Psalm (and thus, if he wanted to ascribe it to a person, it would have to be attributed to David). This he interprets differently from those authors who have quoted it so far: Man has not understood what his honour is,



namely, the word, and has thus become like the unintelligent animals. Although the Septuagint does not speak of ἄλογα, but of ἀνόητα, thus rendering impossible Chrysostom's play on words, he interprets the Psalm verse entirely in his sense: He who does not appreciate the logos, language, becomes an animal.

In his seventh homily to the Antiochians on the image columns, Chrysostom asks what could give comfort to people in this precarious situation. And here he comes to *anthropocentrism as the strongest proof of divine love and care*, which he combines quite Stoically with the thesis of man's dominion over creation, symbolised in his likeness to God: "For when you hear that God made the heavens and the earth, the sea, the air, the waters, the many stars, the two great lights, the plants, the four-footed animals, the swimming and flying creatures, in short, all visible things, for your sake and for the sake of your salvation and your honour (διὰ σέ καὶ τὴν σωτηρίαν καὶ τιμὴν), do you not receive abundant consolation, and receive in this the greatest proof of the divine love, when you consider that God has called into existence a world of such size and nature, of such beauty and extent, on account of you, who are so small? Therefore, when you hear that God made the heavens and the earth in the beginning, do not pass over what has been said hastily, but survey in your mind the expanse of the earth and consider how He has set before us such a delicious and abundant table and has given us many delights in every place. And the greatest thing is that He did not give us this so great and glorious world as a reward for our labour or as recompense for good works, but that at the same time He formed us with it and with this kingship (βασιλεία) honoured our race. For 'Let us make a man,' he said, 'in our image and likeness (κατ' εἰκόνα ἡμετέραν καὶ καθ' ὁμοίωσιν).' (Gen 1:26 LXX). Which means, 'in our image and likeness?' An image of dominion, he says (τῆς ἀρχῆς εἰκόνα φησὶ), and as there is none in heaven higher than God, so let there be none on earth higher than man! This then is the one and first honour which he did him, that he made him in his own image. The second is that he gave us dominion, not as recompense for our labours, but as a pure gift of his human kindness and grace. The third is that he gave it to us as something natural; for some rulership is natural; some comes from a vote; [...] that which is not possessed by nature easily changes and passes to others; [...] Here, then, the dignity of kingship is always obtained by birth, and no one has ever seen a lion forfeit his dominion. Now God has also given us such kingship from the beginning and set it before us all. And not by this alone has he honoured our nature, but also by the pre-eminence of

place, assigning to us paradise as our chosen abode, and giving us reason, and bestowing upon us an immortal soul (καὶ λόγον δούς καὶ ψυχὴν ἀθάνατον χαρισάμενος).” (John Chrysostom, *Ad populum Antiochenum homiliae* 7, 2).

First of all, this last sentence, in which Chrysostom distinguishes man’s endowment with reason from his being made in the image of God, is interesting. Reason is added to the image of God as an additive, like paradise and immortality. This is quite unusual. Early Christian theologians usually equated the image of God with the gift of reason. Chrysostom thinks differently. More important, however, are the two main arguments through which he wants to comfort people, for in the face of imperial punitive measures, the Antiochians felt quite small and frightened. Their situation did not feel like domination at all. Chrysostom comforts them with two thoughts: on the one hand, with the message of anthropocentrism: the small human being is declared the goal and purpose of the great Creation. There could be no greater proof of divine love, Chrysostom is convinced. Ultimately, the Stoic idea of *pronoia* gains new topicality and existential depth here. The Stoics already saw it as proof of divine care and tried to draw self-confidence from it. This is precisely what Chrysostom does in the time of fear and despair in his hometown.

On the other hand, Chrysostom comforts the Antiochians by pointing out that they have a royal dignity in creation—and by nature, not by choice; permanently, not temporarily; given by God, not earned by performance. The emperor, on the other hand, has his dignity only by choice and temporarily—it can be taken from him tomorrow. The image of God from Genesis 1 is thus socio-politically charged without inciting rebellion against the emperor. Moreover, it is related to a place (the Garden of Paradise) and a time (eternity) that surpass all imperial claims. Neither the imperial palace in Constantinople nor the duration of an imperial reign can match it. This kingship of man also appears in his *Homiliae in Genesin*. There, in answer to the already familiar question as to why creation was created before man, he writes that it was so that man could enter his festively decorated royal city like a king (Johannes Chrysostomus, *Homiliae in Genesin* 8, 2).

Obviously, the first argument of anthropocentrism did not convince all listeners. In particular, heterodox critics such as Manichaeans, Markionites, Valentinians unanimously doubt the anthropocentrist teleology of ecclesiastical orthodoxy. Their misgivings and doubts are explicitly taken up by the preacher: “For many, in addition to what has already been said, make the following objection: ‘If man is the king of the reasonless (βασιλεὺς τῶν

ἀλόγων), why then is he surpassed by many of the same in strength, agility and swiftness?” (John Chrysostom, *Ad populum Antiochenum homiliae* 11, 4). Again, Chrysostom answers quite classically: man makes use of animals by virtue of his reason, so that they serve him (cf. Blake Leyerle 2019, 279–281). At the same time, according to his continuation of the argument, the human body is so constituted that it can and should also obey reason.

A year before the homilies to the Antiochians on the image columns, in Lent of the year 386, Chrysostom delivered his *Sermones in Genesim*, homilies on the first chapters of Genesis. In them, appropriately for Lent, the main role is not played by creation but by the narrative of the Fall. This is prepared by Sermo 3 on the question of what “according to his likeness (καθ’ ὁμοίωσιν)” means in Gen 1:26, namely *likeness of dominion*. Chrysostom answers with remarkably pointed formulations: ‘Not a likeness of essence, but a likeness of dominion (οὐκ οὐσί α ς ἀπαρλλαξία, ἀλλ’ ἀρχῆς ὁμοιότης). But that ‘after his likeness’ means being mild and meek and becoming like God through powers according to the reason of virtue (κατὰ τόν τῆς ἀρετῆς λόγον), as Christ says, ‘Be like my Father in heaven’ (Mt 5:45). For as on this wide and spacious earth some of the living creatures (τῶν ζώων) are less reasonable (ἀλογώτερα) and some are wilder, so some of the thoughts (τῶν λογισμῶν) in the vastness of our soul are less reasonable and more animal (ἀλογώτεροι καὶ κτηνώδεις), some wilder and more terrible. They are therefore to be subdued and tamed, and to be entrusted in order to reason the dominion (ἀρχή) over them. [...] We subdue lions and return their souls tame, and you doubt whether you can convert the wildness of thought into gentleness?’ (John Chrysostom, *Sermones in Genesim* 3, 1).

The passage above contains a lot of interesting aspects: First of all, the image of God is not interpreted ontologically in the sense of “equality of essence”, but ethically in the sense of imitating the exercise of dominion. It implies an obligation and task, which corresponds perfectly to the intention of the Hebrew Bible. Unlike the Hebrew Bible, however, Chrysostom does not understand dominion as a setting of relationships, and certainly not in relation to real animals. Rather, he is concerned with dominion over the “animal in us”, i.e. dominion over one’s own thoughts and feelings. Man should become mild and gentle like God and tame and domesticate the animal in himself; then he will be the likeness of God.

In his homilies on Genesis, however, we also find a negative interpretation of dominion. Chrysostom interprets the naming of the animals by

Adam in Gen 2:19–20 as a “symbol of dominion (σύμβολον δεσποτείας)”. He compares it to the custom of a master who has bought a new slave immediately giving him a new name (John Chrysostom, *Homiliae in Genesis* 14, 5, 19)—a harsh, identity-destroying demonstration of power that is far removed from the intention of the biblical text, which in fact speaks not of a change of name but of a naming<sup>27</sup>. Chrysostom thus seems to vacillate: on the one hand he sees human dominion over animals as an imitation of the good, caring Creator God, on the other hand as a pure demonstration of power. And in another place, he describes man’s harsh, fear-inspiring dominion over animals (as well as man’s fear of some animals) as a consequence of sin (John Chrysostom, *Homiliae in Genesis* 9, 4). Chrysostom obviously did not become quite clear on this question.

For Chrysostom, too, *animals* can serve as *models* in many ways. Sometimes they are a negative role model for passions (John Chrysostom, *Homiliae in Genesis* 12, 10), but mostly a positive role model: “Learn from the reasonless (παιδεύθητι παρὰ τῶν ἀλόγων) [...] and marvel at your Lord not only because he created the sun and the heaven, but also because he brought the ant into being; for though it be a little beast (βραχὺ τὸ ζῶον), yet it is full proof of the greatness of the wisdom of God (τοῦ μεγέθους τῆς σοφίας τοῦ Θεοῦ).” (John Chrysostom, *Ad populum Antiochenum homiliae* 12, 2). It is precisely the small animals such as bees, ants, spiders, birds and many others that Chrysostom cites as examples. As with Basil and Ambrose, positive examples predominate. However, he also knows negative examples and therefore urges discernment: “If there is anything good in them, accept it, and if they have some natural merits, strive to make them your own by your resolution of will (διὰ τῆς προαιρέσεως); for God has gifted you with [the faculty of] volition, that by him you may appropriate their natural advantages (τὰ φυσικὰ αὐτῶν πλεονεκτήματα), and so also be rewarded; for their right conduct does not come from a decision of the will and from reason, but merely from their nature (οὐκ ἐκ προαιρέσεως καὶ λόγου, ἀλλ’ ἀπὸ φύσεως μόνης).” (John Chrysostom, *Ad populum Antiochenum homiliae* 12, 2). What is given to animals by nature, man must acquire autonomously through the *προαίρεσις*. This is his ability, but also his task. Thus, Chrysostom concludes with the admonition,

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27 Note the extremely precise analysis by Benjamin H. Dunning 2015, 71–95. Dunning also shows, among other things, that in Chrysostom there is an explicit connection between the dominion of man over animals and the dominion of man over woman. This connection does not need to be shown in detail here.

“Gather, then, the best and adorn yourself with it; for you are the king of the reasonless (βασιλεὺς τῶν ἀλόγων)” (John Chrysostom, *Ad populum Antiochenum homiliae* 12, 3).

If man errs in this moral task, he is, it is now an established phrase, more incomprehensible than animals: “Wherewith, then, shall we excuse ourselves, what shall we say in our defence, if we are more incomprehensible (ἀνοητότεροι) than the reasonless? For a bird once caught in a snare and then escaped, and a deer that has escaped from the net into which it has fallen, cannot easily be caught again by the same means; for experience teaches them all to be cautious. But we fall into the same nets in which we have often been entangled, and do not imitate the caution and care of the reasonless (τῶν ἀλόγων τὸ προνοητικὸν καὶ μεμεριμνημένον), who, after all, are endowed with reason.” (John Chrysostom, *Ad populum Antiochenum homiliae* 15, 2).

*In summary*, it can be said that creation does not play a particularly important role in Chrysostom’s thinking. Compared to his gigantic oeuvre, it only appears in homeopathic doses. The few existing passages, however, reveal a conscious and original conception. Creation in its immensity and diversity demonstrates God’s care and man’s greatness and can give him confidence in himself and God. Moreover, creation, especially in the form of animals, is an example in the moral sense. Therefore, the concept of likeness and the biblical mandate to rule are primarily interpreted allegorically in terms of inner-psycho processes.

### 5.15 Nemesios of Emesa

Very little is known about the life of Nemesios, bishop of Emesa (today’s Homs in Syria). However, the dating of his immensely widely received work (Moreno Morani 1987, V) “On the Nature of Man” (κεφαλαίωδης περὶ φύσεως ἀνθρώπου/ *De natura hominis*) shortly before 400 AD is based on several clues from the work itself. Nemesios is both philosophically and medically literate. *De natura hominis* is the first systematic treatise on Christian anthropology (David Lloyd Dusenbury 2021, xv and 2021a, 45) and has two prominent predecessors: both Hippocrates and Zenon wrote works with the same title (David Lloyd Dusenbury 2021a, 46). Nemesios argues largely on the basis of Greek philosophy, especially Neo-Platonism and the Stoa. At the same time, he was the first Christian author to receive the medical writings of Galen (Galenos of Pergamon, c. 130–210 AD) to a

greater extent and to make them fruitful for anthropology. What is almost more astonishing, however, is that he acknowledges Aristotle in decisive respects—even if he does not quote him explicitly, but only makes “silent borrowings”, where he adopts his thoughts (Martin Streck 2001, 559 and 2005, 21). In early Christianity, Aristotle was not considered worthy of reception; indeed he was downright frowned upon, among other things because he did not grant immortality to the human soul, which makes the positive reception of some of his thoughts by Nemesios all the more remarkable.

Overall, Nemesios is characterised by an optimistic world view, to which his anthropocentrism, strongly linked to the idea of divine providence, contributes considerably. This is already abundantly clear in the first two chapters of his work, which are extraordinarily long and very programmatically conceived. Nemesios begins as follows:

“As is well known, man is in communion with the soulless (τοις ἀψύχοις κοινωνεῖ), he participates in the life of the reasonless living beings (τῆς τῶν ἀλόγων ζώων μετέχει ζωῆς), he participates in the thinking of the reasonable (τῆς τῶν λογικῶν μετείληφε νοήσεως). [...] By reason man unites himself with the incorporeal and rational forms of nature (συνάπτεται διὰ τοῦ λογικοῦ ταῖς ἀσωμάτοις καὶ νοεραῖς φύσεσιν): he deliberates, he thinks, he judges each one, he strives for the virtues, he welcomes the summit of the virtues, piety (λογιζόμενος καὶ νοῶν κρίνων ἕκαστα καὶ τὰς ἀρετὰς μεταδιώκων καὶ τῶν ἀρετῶν τὸν κολοφῶνα τὴν εὐσέβειαν ἀσπαζόμενος). That is why he also stands, as it were, on the borderline between spiritual and sensual essence (ὥσπερ ἐν μεθορίοις ἐστὶν νοητῆς καὶ αἰσθητῆς οὐσίας); through the body and corporeal dispositions he is in communication with the reasonless and soulless living beings, but through reason with the incorporeal beings, as has been previously remarked. The Creator has evidently gradually linked together the different forms of nature, so that the whole of creation is one and related (ὥστε μίαν εἶναι καὶ συγγενῆ τὴν πᾶσαν κτίσιν). From this especially this follows: there is only one Creator of all things (εἷς ὢν ὁ πάντων τῶν ὄντων δημιουργός). He did not merely combine the existence of the individual atoms into a unity. He also fitted the individual things together. [...] He linked them together by the small kinship and difference of their nature (συνάπτων ἀλλήλοις τῇ κατ’ ὀλίγον οικειότητι καὶ παραλλαγῇ τῆς φύσεως). Therefore, the wholly soulless beings do not differ much from the plants with their nutritive power. On the other hand, these beings are not different from the reasonless and sentient beings. Moreover, the reasonless beings are not entirely separated

from the sensible ones, they are not without relation to each other, they are united by a natural bond of kinship (δεσμοῦ τινος εἶναι συμφυοῦς καὶ φυσικοῦ).” (Nemesios of Emesa, *De natura hominis* 1).

As if in a programmatic prologue, Nemesios opens his treatise on human beings with an emphasis on his being integrated into non-human creation. This is anything but self-evident. He sees man as harmoniously embedded in the cosmic community of creation of everything that exists. He has something in common (κοινωνεῖ) with all creatures and is related to them, and likewise these are related among themselves, for otherwise no connection could arise between them. Preliminary to his special position, then, man is a fellow-creature among many others. Creation is an organic unity, everything is connected to everything else and related to each other (cf. Urs Dierauer 1977, 246). The similarities far outweigh the differences. The Stoic *scala naturae*, contrary to its original intention, is first and foremost interpreted as unifying (David Lloyd Dusenbury 2021, 159) by correlating the peripatetic notion of *κοινωνία* with the Stoic *οἰκειώσις* (David Lloyd Dusenbury 2021, 46 and 2021a, 52). These are (Aristotelian) tones that were not heard in the entire preceding patristics—a novelty that does not abolish anthropocentrism, but clearly puts it into perspective.

In this cosmic vision, human beings are located—entirely in the tradition of Greek philosophy—in the middle or borderland between the living beings, with whom he has the body in common, on the one hand, and the spiritual beings, with whom he has reason in common, on the other. He is, as it were, a bridge being between two worlds. Nemesios describes in detail which abilities the gift of reason brings with it. Man can reason, think, judge, but all these abilities amount to morality and piety. If they are not used for that purpose, they are in vain.

At the same time, Nemesios strives to make the gap between the irrational and the rational as small as possible, almost invisible, for he also admits that non-human beings have some abilities that are close to reason. Thus, he writes in the following passage: “After that, God turned from the irrational to the rational being, the human being. Nor did he create him all at once; rather, even before that, he implanted in the other beings certain natural understandings (φυσικὰς τινὰς συνέσεις); he gave them manual dexterity and abilities to do all sorts of things for their good (πρὸς σωτηρίαν). As a result, they seemed to stand closely with the reasonable (ἐγγυὲς λογικῶν). Thus, he created the truly rational living being, man (τὸ ἀληθῶς λογικὸν ζῶον τὸν ἄνθρωπον). The same kind of progressive



development will be found further in the study of the voice...” (Nemesios of Emesa, *De natura hominis* 1).

In terms of natural science, Nemesios is sufficiently educated in the teachings of Aristotle that he recognises the continuum of nature from the completely reasonless to the very rational living beings (and also, as the last remark suggests, from the completely mute to the extensively speaking living beings). In a difficult analysis of text fragments, Urs Dierauer (1977, 249–251) suggests that Nemesios may have taken his cue from the Stoic Poseidonios. His complete texts are missing, however, so that the possibility of reconstructing them remains limited.

Strikingly often, Nemesios uses terms that actually contain a contradiction in themselves: “natural intelligibility”, which is basically “reasonless reasonableness”. One senses how Nemesios struggles, since he cannot express a continuum with classical terms but only a binary exclusionary difference. In the end, he comes back to this binary logic when he talks about man as the “truly” rational being. All other living beings are obviously not “truly” rational. This is where the language of Greek philosophy reaches its limits, and one senses this more in *De natura hominis* than in other early Christian writings.

Nemesios then introduces anthropocentrist teleology with the observation, strongly made in Gregory of Nyssa (chapter 5.12), that man is created as the last creature in Gen 1: “Man was created last. Was it logical, after all, not only that after the creation of all things for his sake (πάντων δι’ αὐτὸν γενομένων), things for his need (πρὸς τὴν χρῆσιν αὐτοῦ) were first procured, and only afterwards he himself was brought forth, to use them, but also because, as nature was created which could be comprehended by the intellect and the sense of sight, there had also to be a bond for both together; the universe was to be a unity, sympathetic with itself, and not alien to itself (ἵνα ἐν ἧ τὸ πᾶν καὶ συμπαθὲς ἑαυτῷ καὶ μὴ ἀλλότριον αὐτὸ ἑαυτοῦ). Then the living being was created that unites the two forms of nature: man (τὸ συνδέον ἀμφοτέρας τὰς φύσεις ζῶον ὁ ἄνθρωπος). Such, in short, are the works of the Creator’s wisdom.” (Nemesios of Emesa, *De natura hominis* 1). It is, as it were, like the construction of a vault: the keystone, which connects the two halves of the arch and creates a stable unit, is inserted at the very end, as its name indicates.

The fact that man only enters the stage of the cosmos when everything that is to be of use to him has been provided seems self-evident for Nemesios, but in contrast to Gregory of Nyssa, it does not seem to be the actual main argument. Rather, he is concerned that with man, the unifying being



comes into the world. Only a being that has reason and body can bind the universe together into a unity. Only through this being does reason not remain alien to the physical and the physical not alien to reason. Only in this being can the world feel compassion for itself. Here, Nemesios considerably shifts the Stoic teleology, which is strongly conceived in terms of purposes. The question of an individual who is entitled with ends or benefits moves far into the background. The ultimate telos is the unity of the cosmos, of the whole. One could almost call Nemesios an ecocentrist or holist.

The unifying function of man, however, places a great burden and obligation on him: “On the border between the reasonless and sensible nature stands man (Ἐν μεθορίοις οὖν τῆς ἀλόγου καὶ λογικῆς φύσεως ὁ ἄνθρωπος ταχθείς); when he turns to the body and loves bodily pleasures more, he prefers the way of life of the reasonless (τὸν τῶν ἀλόγων ἀσπάζεται βίον). [...] When man despises all pleasures of a corporeal kind and turns to reason, he attains the divine, most godly life, to that life which is especially suitable for man; he will then be like the heavenly one (οἷος ὁ ἐπουράνιος) [...] This is the principle of rational nature (λογικῆς φύσεως τὸ κεφάλαιόν): avoiding and repelling the bad, seeking out and embracing the good.” (Nemesios of Emesa, *De natura hominis* 1).

Starting from a completely different point, Nemesios returns to the classical admonition of controlling passions through reason and leading a morally good life. A person who takes this to heart will be “like the heavenly one”—though here is no allusion whatsoever to the likeness of God in Genesis 1. Nemesios, although a bishop, argues purely philosophically.

For Nemesios, animals have no reason, but they do not need one either: “For none of the rational movements are manifested in the reasonless animals; for they have no arts, no sciences, no acts of the will, no virtues, nor is there anything else of reasoning activities (οὔτε τέχναι μαθήματα βουλαὶ οὔτε ἀρεταὶ οὔτε ἄλλο τι τῶν διανοητικῶν) in them. From this it clearly follows that animals have no share in a rational soul (οὐ μέτεστι λογικῆς ψυχῆς αὐτοῖς). It would also be truly foolish to call the reasonless animals reasonable (ἄτοπον λέγειν τὰ ἄλογα λογικά). Although very young boys have only reasonless movement, yet we say: they have a rational soul; for when they have grown up, they manifest the activity of their reason. The reasonless being, on the other hand, which at no time of his life displays the reasoning part, would have a rational soul in vain; for the ability to think will be of no use to him. All men have unanimously admitted: God has created nothing superfluous. If this is true, then the rational soul must

have been superfluously implanted in both tame and wild animals (τοῖς κτήνεσιν καὶ τοῖς θηρίοις), for it is never able to express its own work in these animals. It would be a reproach against Him who gave the body an improper soul (τοῦ δόντος ἀνάρμοστον ψυχὴν τῷ σώματι).” (Nemesios of Emesa, *De natura hominis* 2).

Nemesios argues here with the principle of parsimony: God created the world in such a way that nothing is missing, but also nothing is too much. He gave everything the optimal appropriate measure in view of genuine objectives. To ascribe a rational soul to animals, although they could not develop their potential, would therefore be an accusation against the Creator, who then would obviously not have adhered to His principle of maximum efficiency. Here, Nemesios is subject to circular reasoning: animals have no arts and sciences, so they do not need reason and are without reason. Because they are reasonless, they cannot develop arts and sciences. Nemesios thus abandons his own previously established principle of describing a continuum between reasonlessness and “full” reason. Thus, he falls short of his own possibilities.

One senses, however, how much Nemesios wrestles with himself at this point when analysing the following paragraph: “It is better, therefore, to suppose the following: a suitable soul has been inserted into every body; further: the animals, according to their disposition, have nothing more than the natural simplicity which is apparent in their activities. Every single species of the reasonless moves by its own impulse (κατ’ οἰκείαν ὀρμὴν); every species has been created for the use and operation of the impulse from the beginning. [...] The Creator did not leave them altogether helpless; rather, He bestowed on each a natural, not a rational, insight (φυσικὴν, οὐ λογικὴν, ἐνέβαλεν σύνεσιν). To some he even gave cunning (πανουργία), as it is an image of skill and a shadow of reason (ὥσπερ τέχνης εἰκόνα καὶ σκιὰν λογικὴν). For these two reasons he did so: the animals were to avoid momentary dangers and to protect themselves from future ones; he also wished, as already stated, to unite the whole of creation under himself (συνάψαι τὴν κτίσιν πᾶσαν ἑαυτῇ).” (Nemesios of Emesa, *De natura hominis* 2).

Nemesios wavers back and forth and yet does not reach his goal. On the one hand, he speaks Stoically of a “drive” (ὀρμὴ) in animals—a notion that had far-reaching consequences and dominated biology as recently as half a century ago. On the other hand, he returns once again to the oxymoron we have already encountered: the “natural, non-rational insight” (φυσικὴ, οὐ λογικὴ σύνεσις) or, as I pointedly put it, “reasonless reasonableness”.

Nemesios' main aim is to explain why animals can avoid danger and protect their lives, using some artifice (τέχνη), even cunning (πανουργία). We know from modern behavioural research that the use of a ruse actually requires an extremely high level of intellectual ability, such as a “theory of mind”, i.e. the knowledge of what the other person is thinking. Only those who can read their counterpart's thoughts can consciously deceive. Some animals can indeed do that, and this is possibly more than just a “shadow of reason” (σκιά λογική).

Finally, Nemesios justifies the irrationality of animals empirically with the fact that their behaviour is stereotypical, whereas human behaviour shows enormous variance. We have already met this Stoic argument, which is used above all by Seneca, several times: “But that these animals do not act rationally is clear from this: every single animal of the same species does the same things similarly; the activities of the animals in the herd differ only in such a way that one animal does more, the other less; but the whole species of animals moves only according to a single natural impulse (κατὰ μίαν ὁρμήν). [...] This is not true in the case of man. There are, after all, innumerable kinds of human activity (μυρία γὰρ ὁδοὶ τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων πράξεων). Something independent and voluntary is, after all, reason (ἐλεύθερον γὰρ τι καὶ αὐτεξούσιον τὸ λογικόν). Therefore, all men do not perform one and the same activity, as is the case with every single species of the reasonless living beings. These alone move by nature (φύσει γὰρ μόνη). The natural movements, on the other hand, are similar in all of them (ὁμοίως παρὰ πᾶσιν). The operations of reason take place differently in different men; they are not necessarily the same in all men.” (Nemesios of Emesa, *De natura hominis* 2; cf. Urs Dierauer 1977, 216).

Nevertheless, Nemesios sees animals as well as human beings as recipients of divine providence: “All things depend on divine will, and from there they derive their lasting existence and well-being. Even the basis of atoms and multiplied things is capable of receiving providence. This is clearly seen in the animals, which are guided by orders and leading beings; there are many kinds of these animals. For example, bees, ants and most animals that gather in flocks are placed under some leaders, whom they follow obediently. This can be seen in particular if one looks at the state constitution of humans. The state constitution is obviously receptive to the concerns and administrative measures of its legislators and its leaders. If the constitution is receptive to these acts, why should it not be receptive to the providence of the Creator?” (Nemesios of Emesa, *De natura hominis* 43).

At the end of his treatise on man, Nemesios thus returns to the view of all creation. Here he introduces an aspect that has always fascinated ancient reflection: that animals also form states. Animals form “animal worlds” or “quasi-cities” (David Lloyd Dusenbury 2021, xviii), each with their own rules and power relations. The human poleis are inserted into the zoopoleis. They gradually surpass them in their enormous receptivity to laws but are constructed according to analogous principles. And equally analogously, both are open to divine providence, which is not confined to man alone. What is special about man is that he is the regent of the cosmopolis and, as it were, exercises “global governance” in the polis of creation (David Lloyd Dusenbury 2021a, 57–58).

*All in all*, Nemesios is probably the best example of the early Christian authors who makes the greatest intellectual (and in his case: purely philosophical!) effort to overcome anthropocentrism—and yet falls short of that goal. He emphasises the organic kinship of all creatures and the interrelatedness of all created things. He reflects intensely on the continuum between complete lack of reason and maximum endowment with reason and struggles to find concepts that can grant animals something like reason. The Stoic form of anthropocentrism, that everything is created for the benefit of man, is not important to him. Rather, his teleology boils down to the unity of the cosmos and thus has holistic echoes. And yet he ultimately remains trapped in both anthropocentrism and the aloga thesis. One suspects how deeply they must have been anchored in the society of the time that he does not question them fundamentally anywhere.

### 5.16 *Pseudo-Athenagoras*

Athenagoras of Athens was an early Christian apologist of the second half of the 2nd century. However, the work “*De resurrectione mortuorum*”, which was published under his name, did not come from his pen, but was written much later under a pseudonym. This is largely undisputed in patristic research. However, the dating of this work generates discussions that flared up again only a few years ago.

Indeed, from the structure and argumentation of the treatise, Nikolai Kiel concludes that *De resurrectione* “responds directly to Celsus’ objections concerning the resurrection” (Nikolai Kiel 2016, 177). In his widespread refutation of the equally widespread food-chain argument (resurrection from the dead is impossible because animals ate parts of the

human body), Kiel assumes a dependence in this respect on Galen (Nikolai Kiel 2016, 371 and 388) and, like Jacques Schwartz (1914–1992 Strasbourg) and Jean-Marie Vermader (1978, 125–134) before him, concludes that it originated in the first half of the 3rd century (Nikolai Kiel 2016, 390).

Horacio E. Lona (2017, 184–188), on the other hand, considers a much later point in time to be plausible: firstly, the *Alethes logos* of Kelsos was rather unknown in Athens, but the arguments he put forward in it were, since they were widespread. Secondly, the proximity between Origen and *De resurrectione* claimed by Kiel does not exist on closer analysis. And thirdly—quite decisively—the Christian reception of Galen only began at the end of the 4th century with Nemesios of Emesa. This is therefore the *terminus post quem* and justifies the plea for the work being dated later (Horacio E. Lona 2017, 188). As a non-patristician, I do not dare to make my own judgement on this question. However, Lona’s arguments seem very plausible to me, which is why I agree with his dating and place “*De resurrectione*” directly after Nemesios of Emesa.

*De resurrectione*, like *De natura hominis* by Nemesios, is a purely philosophical treatise. The Bible does not appear in it, not even in a single quotation. Rather, the anonymous author attempts to prove that resurrection from the dead is necessary. The exposition is of tremendous clarity and possesses an almost scholastic degree of systematisation. At the same time, it represents a clearly Stoic ontology and teleology, while the concrete *telos* is described and positioned in demarcation from Stoa and Epicurus.

*De resurrectione* is, as I said, extraordinarily systematic. In chapters 1 to 10, it is first demonstrated in the sense of a *via negativa* that the resurrection of human beings firstly does not contradict human nature, secondly is not impossible for God and thirdly is not unjust towards any group of individuals. The author provides evidence of the first thesis in chapters 5 to 7, where he argues for the belief, bizarre in today’s perception, that human flesh, unlike animal flesh, cannot be assimilated after being eaten and concludes that “the human species seems to be biologically engineered for resurrection in a way that animals are not” (Janet E. Spittler 2010, 360).

In his proof of the third thesis, non-human creatures come into play: “The unjust (τὸ ἄδικον) would come into consideration in the resurrection question either with regard to the resurrected one himself or to some other besides him. That no being standing outside humanity and belonging to the world would thereby suffer injustice is clear from the outset. The purely spiritual natures (νοητὰ φύσεις) will hardly be wronged by the resurrec-

tion of men; for the resurrection of men brings them neither limitation of their existence nor harm nor dishonour. But neither will any injustice be done by it to the reasonless or to inanimate nature (οὐδὲ τῶν ἀλόγων ἢ φύσις οὐδὲ τῶν ἀψύχων), for the reasonless will no longer exist after the resurrection, and against a non-being there is no wrong (περὶ δὲ τὸ μὴ ὄν οὐδὲν ἄδικον); supposing, however, that they continued forever, even then no wrong would be done to them by the renewal of the bodies of men; for if no injustice is done to them now, in that they must submit (ὑπέκοντα) to human nature and the needs of those who depend on them, and are subjugated and many times enslaved (ὑπὸ τε ζυγὸν ἡγμένα καὶ δουλείαν παντοίαν), much less will this be the case when men have become immortal and needless of their services, so that they will then be freed from all bondage (ἐλευθερωθέντα δὲ πάσης δουλείας). Nor, if they could speak, would they certainly accuse the Creator (δημιουργός), as having degraded them below men against justice, since He had not granted them the same resurrection as them; for a just man does not determine unequal nature to the same end (Ὦν γὰρ ἡ φύσις οὐκ ἴση, τοῦτοις οὐδὲ τὸ τέλος ἴσον ὁ δίκαιος ἐπιμετρεῖ); moreover, beings who lack the concept of justice cannot make the accusation of injustice<sup>28</sup>. Nor, further, can it be said that injustice is manifest in regard to the resurrected man himself..." (Athenagoras, *De Resurrectione* 10).

Strictly systematically, the treatise considers all possible scenarios: The resurrection could be unjust to purely spiritual beings, to other human beings or to non-human living beings. It is this last case that interests us. The anonymous author considers two possibilities: Either, which he obviously assumes himself, non-human living beings no longer exist, and against non-existent things by definition there is no injustice, or, what he considers factually not given but conceivable in principle, non-human living beings will be resurrected. Then they will be liberated because humans will have no more needs and servitude will thus be ended—a perceptive thought which clearly contrasts Pseudo-Athenagoras with Irenaeus of Lyons, who also assumes a hierarchy of service in eternity (chapter 5.3). In this second case, the non-human living beings also could not complain if their resurrection was different from that of humans, because it is part of the principles of justice that unequal things must be treated unequally.

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28 I will not go into this aspect here. See especially Janet E. Spittler 2010, 359: "In *De resurrectione*, Athenagoras introduces one of the most important aspects of the Stoic assessment of animals, that is, the impossibility of doing injustice to animals."

After the resurrection from the dead has thus proved to be impossible *per viam negativam*, Pseudo-Athenagoras treads the *viam positiva* in chapters 11 to 24: “It is now a question of proving the doctrine of resurrection to be true directly from the cause according to which and from which the first man came into being” (Pseudo-Athenagoras, *De Resurrectione* 11). Thus, the author does not want to make the resurrection plausible on the basis of a revelation, but to prove it as necessary from a philosophical point of view. The following very long quotation describes his again extraordinarily systematic considerations:

“We get the reason for creation (ὁ ἀπὸ τῆς αἰτίας λόγος) when we ask ourselves whether man was created accidentally and purposelessly or for a specific purpose (πότερον ἀπλῶς καὶ μάτην γέγονεν ἄνθρωπος ἢ τινος ἔνεκεν); and if for a definite purpose, he is then there to live for himself after his creation, and to continue in the nature created for him, or because some other being is in need of him (διὰ χρείαν τινός); but if he was created with a view to a need, is it then the Creator (τοῦ ποιήσαντος), or some other being who is near to him and enjoys high care. What we can already find on more general consideration is the fact that everyone of understanding, everyone who is moved to action by sound judgement, does nothing of what he deliberately sets in motion purposelessly, but either to satisfy a need of his own, or to benefit another being for whom he is concerned, or because of the work itself, namely, if a natural trait and love (ὀλκῆ τινη φυσικῆ καὶ στοργῆ) moves him to its production. Thus, man (let an example explain the matter) builds a house because he himself needs it; but he also builds shelters for cattle, camels or for the other living creatures that he needs (τοῖς ἄλλοις ζώοις, ὧν ἔστιν ἐνδεής) which are suitable for each of these animals; judging by sight, he does not do this for his own use, but he does so, considering the end purpose (οὐκ ἰδίας ἔνεκεν χρήσεως κατὰ τὸ φαινόμενον, ἀλλὰ κατὰ μὲν τὸ τέλος); first he does it out of care (ἐπιμέλεια) for his fosterlings. [...] Thus do men. But God also did not create man without a purpose, for he is wise; but no work of wisdom lacks a purpose (οὐδὲν σοφίας ἔργον μάταιον). Nor did He create him because He himself was in need of him; for He is in need of nothing at all; but for a being who is wholly without need, none of His works can serve for his own need. But neither did He make man for the sake of another creature. For no rational being capable of judgement, be it a higher or a lower one, was or is brought into existence in order to serve another for use, but in order, once it exists, to have its own life and continuance (Οὐδὲν γὰρ τῶν λόγῳ καὶ κρίσει χρωμένων οὔτε τῶν μειζόνων οὔτε τῶν



καταδεστέρων γέγονεν ἢ γίνεται πρὸς ἑτέρου χρείαν, ἀλλὰ διὰ τὴν ἰδίαν αὐτῶν τῶν γενομένων ζωὴν τε καὶ διαμονήν). Nor can reason attribute the origin of man to any need; for immortal beings are without need, and in no way require any human aid for their existence; whereas beings without reason must, according to the natural course of things, allow themselves to be governed, and render to man the services appropriate to their nature, while they themselves are incapable of availing themselves of man; for right it was and is not, to place ruling and leading in the service of a lesser being, or to subordinate the reasonable to the unreasonable (τὸ ἄρχον καὶ ἡγεμονοῦν ὑπάγειν εἰς χρῆσιν τοῖς ἐλάττωσιν, ἢ τὸ λογικὸν ὑποτάττειν ἀλόγους), which after all is unfit for ruling. If, then, man is not created without a reason or purpose (for no divine work is without a purpose), and if, further, his origin is due neither to a need of the Creator Himself nor to a need of another being created by God, it is clear that, in the first and more general respect, God created man because He is God and because His goodness and wisdom shine forth from the work of creation in general. But if we look at the matter more from the point of view of the created human beings, then it is because He wants them to live, and not a life that is only kindled for a short time but is then extinguished completely. Of course, God has granted a short life to the reptiles, to the air and water animals, and in general to everything without reason, whereas He bestowed upon humans, who have the Creator in them (ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἀγαλματοφοροῦσι τὸν ποιητήν) and are endowed with reason and discerning understanding (νοῦν τε συνεπιφερομένοις καὶ λογικῆς κρίσεως μεμοιραμένοις), eternal perpetuity. For their destiny is, in the knowledge of their Creator and of His power and wisdom, and in the fulfilment of the law and right, to live throughout eternity without all suffering in those goods by which they also already gave firmness and support to their preceding life, although they dwelt in mortal and earthly bodies. Everything that has come into being for the sake of another, as soon as that for which it came into being ceases, must also cease to be..." (Pseudo-Athenagoras, *De Resurrectione* 12).

The unknown author first outlines the idea of a "realm of purposes", as we know it in modern times, especially from Immanuel Kant: Nothing is purposeless, everything has its purpose—especially in terms of logically linking the purposes with each other towards the great overall goal, the *telos*. Pseudo-Athenagoras argues that one must not look too closely at the immediate purpose of an action, but rather at the comprehensive *telos* towards which it is designed. Only then does one understand the meaning of that action. This, the author emphasises, already applies interpersonally,



for example when building a house or stable, but even more so when asking about the reason for the creation of the world and of man and thus about the purpose of divine action. The Creator has a reasonable, recognisable plan with his Creation.

However, the divine plan follows two different forms of logic of its own, depending on whether one looks at it from God's perspective or from man's perspective—this idea could also come directly from Kant. From God's point of view, it is clear that He has no needs. So He cannot have created man for the satisfaction of His own needs, but only "because He is God" and because He wants to show His goodness and wisdom. From His point of view, creation happens solely out of freedom and love.

Things are different, according to Pseudo-Athenagoras, "from the point of view of created human beings": Man has the need to live, to acquire knowledge of God and to do good. This need is permanent, and therefore it can only be meaningful if it can also find permanent fulfilment. Therefore, man must necessarily (!) be destined for eternal life, for otherwise his need would not be purposeful, and then the Creator would be proven not to be rational. But that cannot be.

Of course, the argument of pseudo-Athenagoras only works on the premise that the realm of ends actually runs towards a single great and rational telos. If one doubts this premise, and many would do so today, then the argument collapses like a house of cards. What is more relevant to our question, however, is the collateral damage done to non-human creatures: Animals and plants have a need to live, but no need to know eternal life and thus no need to live forever. In accordance with the principle of parsimony, it would therefore not be rational for them to be given eternal life if they do not strive for it at all. No, they exist solely for the sake of man, who, as a rational being, possesses an end in itself and can use animals for his own purposes. However, as soon as man no longer needs non-human creatures (and this is the case in eternity), there is no longer any reason why they should continue to exist.

"If, therefore, the Creator of the world created man to have an understanding life and, having once beheld God's glory and the Creator's wisdom, to abide in the vision of these things forever, according to the intention of the Creator and the nature of man, then from the cause of origin arises the certainty of eternal continuance, and from this the certainty of resurrection, without which there could be no continuance of man. Thus, the resurrection, as is evident from what has been said, is clearly proved by

the cause of origin and by the Creator's intention." (Pseudo-Athenagoras, *De Resurrectione* 13).

After Pseudo-Athenagoras has thus proven resurrection to be necessary for thought and thus, from his point of view, to exist, reflections follow on the continuity between earthly and heavenly life in the face of death and the decomposition of the body.

"If one believes in God as the Creator of this universe, then, unless one wishes to be unfaithful to one's own principles, one must conclude from His wisdom and justice, that He watches and cares for all created things (τῇ τούτου σοφίᾳ καὶ δικαιοσύνῃ τὴν τῶν γενομένων ἀπάντων ἀνατιθέναί φυλακὴν τε καὶ πρόνοιαν); on the basis of this knowledge, one must then be convinced that nothing of earthly and heavenly things is left without supervision (ἀνεπιτρόπευτος) and without care (ἀπρονόητος), and that the attention of the Creator extends to everything in the same way, to the invisible and the visible, to the small and the greater. For both the totality of creatures needs the providence (πρόνοια) of the Creator and each individual according to its nature and purpose (καθ' ὃ πέφυκε καὶ πρὸς ὃ πέφυκεν). It would, however, be useless zeal to now enumerate all the individual species, or to enumerate what is conducive to each form of nature; we must speak only of man here; for he is the object of our enquiry." (Pseudo-Athenagoras, *De Resurrectione* 18).

According to the author, God's care and providence are fundamental for all living beings. However, he qualifies, to each "according to its purpose", literally "according to what it has become". From the animals' point of view, this could be interpreted as rather cynical, for since the reasonless are Stoically conceived as purposes for others, the Creator's concern is ultimately only that animals (and plants) fulfil their purpose for man. Once they have done their duty, they can go. The cool rationality of a strictly philosophical argument does not allow for any mitigation by positive emotions at this point, which theological arguments would offer.

But why is there a need for a Last Judgement? Pseudo-Athenagoras sees such a judgement as necessary because otherwise it would be better to live completely in pleasure like the animals: "Is it not much safer to assume that the Creator guides and directs His works, looks at everything that somehow exists or becomes and holds judgement over works and thoughts? For if there were no judgement somewhere on the works of men, they would have nothing in advance of the reasonless; indeed, they would be even more unhappy than the latter, since they must dominate their passions and strive for piety, justice and other virtues; the manner of life of tame and wild beasts

would then be best (ὁ δὲ κτηνώδης βίος καὶ θηριώδης ἀριστος); virtue would be unreasonable (ἀρετὴ δὲ ἀνόητος), the threat of punishment flat ridicule. Unrestricted enjoyment would be the highest of goods (Τὸ δὲ πᾶσαν θεραπεύειν ἡδονὴν ἀγαθὸν τὸ μέγιστον)...” (Pseudo-Athenagoras, De Resurrectione 19).

From all this, the author concludes that there must be judgement, not in this earthly life and also not immediately after death, when the soul and body are separated, but in eternity, where the whole human being is reunited and can be judged as a whole. However, this argumentation, which is again strongly reminiscent of Immanuel Kant, is considerably flawed, for one can certainly ask whether it would not be meaningful and fulfilling to live morally even without judgement. And anyway: is a virtuous life only a means to the end of attaining eternal bliss? Or does virtue not mean living virtuously just (!) because one has recognised it as right?

Now, of course, Pseudo-Athenagoras is in very concrete conflict with his time. He wants to distance himself equally from the two popular philosophies, Stoicism and Epicureanism, and give priority to the Christian message for philosophical reasons. The ideal of the Stoics is dispassion, that of the Epicureans spiritual pleasure. The author contrasts both with the Christian idea of eternal bliss, for plants have already received dispassion from the Creator and animals have received natural pleasure. In the one case, plants would be better off than humans, in the other, animals. Belief in the Last Judgement and eternal life therefore proves to be the golden third way, which deserves preference over the other two:

“Surely it would not be right to assume that beings who act according to immanent moral and rational laws, and therefore also lead an intelligible and moral life, have no higher aim than those creatures who lack logical discernment (ἐπεὶ μηδὲ θεμιτὸν ταῦτὸν ὑποθέσθαι τέλος τῶν τε λογικῆς κρίσεως ἀμοιρουντων καὶ τῶν κατὰ τὸν ἔμφυτον νόμον καὶ λόγον ἐνεργούντων, ἔμφρονί τε ζῶῃ καὶ δίκῃ χρωμένων). Thus, painlessness (τὸ ἄλυπον) should not be destined as the final goal for human beings; this, after all, would also come to the completely insentient beings. But neither can the final aim of men lie in the enjoyment of that which nourishes and delights the body, and in an abundance of sensual pleasures (πλῆθος ἡδονῶν); otherwise the life of cattle (κτῆνος) would necessarily have precedence, and the virtuous life would be purposeless; such may be a suitable final goal for cattle, but not for men who have an immortal soul and are capable of logical discernment (οὐκ ἀνθρώπων ἀθανάτω ψυχῇ καὶ λογικῇ κρίσει χρωμένων).” (Pseudo-Athenagoras, De Resurrectione 24).

The unknown author concludes: “The final goal of an intelligent life and logical discernment may be seen, without going wrong, in the fact that man lives inseparably and eternally together with that for which the natural intellect is primarily and first of all given to him, and that he feels unceasing delight in the contemplation of the Giver and His counsels. Admittedly, most people will not reach this high goal because they attach themselves to the things of this world with too much passion and vehemence. But the great number of those who stray from their goal cannot overturn their common destiny. Meanwhile, a special judgement takes place on this, and each individual receives reward or punishment in due measure for the good or evil he has done in life.” (Pseudo-Athenagoras, *De Resurrectione* 25).

Pseudo-Athenagoras is undoubtedly the best example of where consistent Christian anthropocentrism leads. If one shares the basic assumptions of a divine, completely rationalised plan of creation on the one hand and the exclusive endowment of reason in humans on the other, everything else follows quite naturally: Non-human creatures are only created for the sake of humans, and as soon as they have fulfilled their task for them, they can leave. As astute as the unknown author’s argumentations are and as perfectly systematised his train of thought is, animals and plants are dispensed with without the slightest remorse. Not the slightest joy about their existence, not the slightest compassion for their sorrows, not the smallest sign of attachment and affection is visible. Analogously, the God of Pseudo-Athenagoras is a cold and rationally calculating God down to the last detail. There is nothing to be seen in him of the Christian image of God, overflowing with love that is given away free of charge. Anyone who wants to understand anthropocentrism will find here the best illustrative material both for its immanently brilliant consistency and for its frighteningly one-sided adequacy in relation to the reality of creation.

### 5.17 *Jerome*

Sophronius Eusebius Hieronymus was born in Stridon in the Roman province of Dalmatia in 347. As child of wealthy Christian parents, he went to Rome to study and was also baptised there. After stays in Trier and Aquileia, he travelled to Syria around 373, where he lived for some time as a hermit. In Antioch he learned Greek and Hebrew and was ordained a priest around 379. He then went to Constantinople and again to Rome from 382 to 384. When a young widow, whom he was accompanying

spiritually, fasted herself to death, Jerome fled Rome in 385 to embark on a pilgrimage to the biblical sites together with the widow Paula and her daughter Eustochium. In 386 they settled in Bethlehem and used Paula's inheritance to found several monasteries and a pilgrims' hospice. Jerome died there in 420.

Jerome left behind a rich literary oeuvre. He is the author of the Vulgate, which was the authoritative Latin translation of the Bible for a long time. It is difficult to say how much he translated from Hebrew and how much he relied on the Greek Septuagint—one suspects the latter. In addition, he wrote other translations, biographies of great personalities, commentaries on the prophetic books, the Gospels and Paul's letters, and an extensive collection of letters.

Jerome was, as can be seen from the list of his works, a biblical commentator. He does not write systematic theological or philosophical treatises. And since he does not interpret the Book of Genesis or the other books of the Torah, the opportunities for reconstructing his theology of creation and animals, if he has one, are slim. Therefore, we will only deal with two rather minor topics: his interpretation of the peace of creation in the Book of Isaiah and his exhortations to abstain from eating meat.

Jerome begins his *interpretation of Is 11:6–8* by stating that Jewish and “Judaising” Christian interpreters often interpret the passage literally and refer to the Second Coming of Christ in such a way “that in the clarity of Christ [...] all wild beasts will return to tameness and, having laid aside their former wildness, wolf and lamb will feed together” (Jerome, *Commentarium in Isaiam prophetam 4 ad Is 11,6ss*). But such interpretations would have to face two questions: Firstly, whether everything is really to be understood literally and not rather spiritually, and secondly, whether the literal interpretation is worthy of God's majesty, since it would be very much like a fictional story. There is no such perfection of the world with peace between men and animals, but only the perfection of man in virtue. “Jerome is aware that he is paying homage here to a philosophical maxim of the Stoics, but at first he refers unconvincingly to the Psalmist for its correctness, only to seek refuge in philosophy [...] Only now does he also refer to the Stoics, whom he has had in mind all along.” (Vincent Buchheit 1990, 33).

It is thus clear to Jerome that the “Judaising” Christians are succumbing to a serious delusion. In reality, he says, Isaiah's vision in spiritual allegorical interpretation is an image for the people in the Church: the persecutor of Christians Paul as a lion and the peace-loving Hananias as a lamb would

feed together in the Church of Christ, “so that what Noah’s ark once represented in the Flood, now the Church represents in the world (ut quod Arca in diluio, hoc Ecclesia praestet in mundo)” (Jerome, *Commentarium in Isaiam prophetam* 4 ad Is 11,6ss). Assuming that, the ethical message of the passage is not that the “ox” becomes aggressive, but that the “lion” becomes tame: “non bos vertatur in rabiem, sed leo mutetur in mansuetudinem.” (Jerome, *Commentarium in Isaiam prophetam* 18 ad Is 65,25s). Or put a little differently, it is “not that simplicity passes into ferocity, but that ferocity learns simplicity (non ut simplicitas in feritatem transeat, sed ut feritas discat simplicitatem)” (Jerome, *Epistula* 106, 1).

While Irenaeus of Lyons (chapter 5.3) emphasises the literal interpretation of Isaiahan animal peace, Jerome, like most of the Church Fathers before him, clearly breaks away from this tradition with reference to Stoic arguments. However, one can only understand this in his case if one knows the background of the “Judaising” Christians against whom Jerome takes a stand. These groups obviously increasingly advocate messianic chiliasm, i.e. they assume a period of exactly one thousand years until the dawn of the final messianic kingdom of Christ—and it is against these groups that Jerome wants to position himself (Vinzenz Buchheit 1990, 31). The Stoic exclusion of non-human creatures from eternity is thus used as a means to invalidate the highly emotional messages of the chiliasts. The collateral damage is to animals and plants.

In another respect, however, Jerome proves to be more “animal-friendly”: with reference to the paradise in Gen 1, in which all living creatures eat a purely vegetable diet, he, like all early monasticism, resolutely propagates the belief in a vegetarian lifestyle or at least extensive abstinence from meat (cf. on this Michael Rosenberger 2014, 156–157 and 330 as well as 2016, 64–65). Paradoxically, this impulse is much more Greek and much less biblical than one would like to think: While the Jews fast in a restrained and very varied manner (Veronika E. Grimm 1996, 13–31), numerous philosophers of Greek and Roman antiquity advocate relatively strict and radical fasting due to their decided hostility towards the body (Veronika E. Grimm 1996, 32–56). The early Christians, like their mother religion and like Jesus of Nazareth, initially fasted relatively little (Veronika E. Grimm 1996, 57–84), but with the increasing social and state recognition of Christianity, this changed. Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen and Eusebius paved the way step by step (Veronika E. Grimm 1996, 85–147); Jerome and Augustine made the breakthrough to a form of fasting that had “anorectic features” (Veronika E. Grimm 1996, 148–179).

Early Christian monasticism in Syria and Egypt engaged in strict vegetarianism from the beginning. When not fasting, the monks ate only bread and salt (Apophthegmata Patrum 217; 226), i.e. dry food as opposed to fresh fruit, cooked vegetables and fatty meat, drank absolutely no wine (Apophthegmata Patrum 566; 593; 787; 974–975) and abstained almost entirely from oil (Apophthegmata Patrum 169). They regarded abstinence as a privileged means of overcoming bodily desires (Apophthegmata Patrum 318; 919). Their xerophagy (ξεροφαγία), the “eating of dry things”, whose central features are abstinence from meat and wine, must be understood in the context of sexual morality: According to ancient thought, eating dry food promoted abstinence because eating moist fruit or cooked vegetables stimulates the production of sexual bodily fluids and eating meat makes one feel sexually aroused. The three young men in the royal court of Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon who practise xerophagy (Dan 1:4–16) and do not burn in the fiery furnace (in allegorical patristic interpretation in sexual temptation) serve as a shining biblical example of this (Dan 3; cf. John Cassian, *Conversations with the Fathers* 12, 11).

On the whole, however, early Christianity remained true to its roots and adopted the restraint of Jesus and Judaism towards overly strict abstinence laws. Above all, it cautioned against turning fasting and xerophagy into an ideology within which every pleasure in eating and drinking is demonised.

*The letter from Jerome to the young Roman widow Furia*, written around 395 (Jerome, *Epistula* 54), is decisive for the widespread dissemination of the idea of combining sexual and culinary abstinence. Furia had written a letter to Jerome, whom she did not know personally, asking how she could best realise her intention of remaining a widow and not marrying a second time. In his reply, Jerome first urges her to dress simply and live modestly. Then he turns to food: For all the esteem in which food is held as a gift from God (1 Tim 4:3–4), it nevertheless incited young people to feel sexual desire and was worse than Etna, Vulcano, Vesuvius and Olympus (Jerome, *Epistula* 54, 9). Galen had already written this in his book on the protection of health.

Jerome, therefore, citing two biblical passages already known to us, warns against “hot” foods that stir up sexual desire: “When eating, avoid all hot foods! I am thinking here not only of meat, about which the vessel of election [meaning Paul, MR] expresses itself in the following words: ‘It is recommended not to drink wine and not to eat meat’ (Rom 14:21). [...] The ardour of the body must be counteracted with food that does not irritate. Daniel and the three young men also fed on vegetables (Dan 1:4–16).”



(Jerome, *Epistula* 54, 10). On the one hand, the popular reference to the three disciples in the fiery furnace appears here; on the other hand, Rom 14:21 is quoted in abbreviated form, as in Clement of Alexandria (chapter 5.4), and a general recommendation to abstain from meat is interpreted from the Pauline admonition to abstain from non-kosher meat in consideration of the weak.

In conclusion, Jerome recommends a strict diet to the young widow: culinary abstinence promotes sexual continence. It is good preparation for contemplating Scripture, which in turn is highly recommended (Jerome, *Epistula* 54, 11). Of course, the connection between sexual and culinary pleasure perceived by Greek philosophy and medicine has a kernel of truth, but both are evaluated negatively by Jerome in a way that contradicts the biblical theology of creation.

The *treatise Adversus Iovinianum* is directed against Iovinian, a monk called “Epicurus of the Christians” (Jerome, *Adversus Iovinianum* 1, 1). Jerome did not know him personally, but some of Iovinian’s writings were brought to him, to which he replied. He took up individual examples of Iovinian’s theses without much system and tried to refute them. In *Adversus Iovinianum* 1, 18 he reflects on the question of the permissibility of eating meat. In doing so, he first confirms that God gave humans permission to eat meat in the “second blessing” after the great Flood (Gen 9), which he had not given in the “first blessing” in Paradise (Gen 1). However, according to Jerome, God gives this permission solely “because of our hardness of heart (propter duritiam cordis nostri)”. However, the corresponding regulations (such as the Old Testament permission to divorce or the commandment of circumcision) only apply until the coming of Christ: “But after Christ has come at the end of time, he will turn the omega back to the alpha [...] and we shall eat no flesh.” (Jerome, *Adversus Iovinianum* 1, 18). Again, Jerome appeals to the abbreviated version of Rom 14:21 to also support his thesis biblically.

In *Adversus Iovinianum* 2, 5–17, Jerome addresses the question in more detail. He first recapitulates Iovinian’s thesis, which illustrates his classical Stoic anthropocentrism: “Everything was created to serve mortals. And as man, the rational animal (animal rationale), as it were the inhabitant and possessor of the world (quasi quidam habitator et possessor mundi), is subject to God and worships his creator, so all animals were created either for the food of men, or for clothing, or for ploughing the earth, or for transporting the fruits, or for man himself.” (Jerome, *Adversus Iovinianum* 2, 5). He then has Iovinian quote Psalm 8:5–6, from whose hierarchical



subordination of animals to humans Iovinian interprets the human authorization to freely use animals (which the text does not give!). “Let it be, says he [Iovinian], the ox prepared for ploughing, for sitting the horse, the dog for helping, the goats for milk, the sheep for wool. And what is the use of swine, besides eating the flesh?” (Jerome, *Adversus Iovinianum* 2, 5). And after a long enumeration of animals, he concludes, “If they are not eaten, all these were created in vain by God” (Jerome, *Adversus Iovinianum* 2, 5). Finally, he proves this biblically by reading Rom 14:20 in exactly the opposite sense as Jerome and concludes from this that, for Christians, nothing is unclean and therefore, in principle, everything can be eaten (which comes much closer to the Pauline intention in this text than Jerome’s reading). Finally, Iovinian also cites 1 Tim 4:4–5: “Everything that God has created is good, and nothing is reprehensible if it is enjoyed with thanksgiving”. And he stresses that Jesus was, after all, called a “glutton and a drunkard” (Lk 7:34; Mt 11:19), and that was a good thing.

Jerome’s reply, like Iovinian’s exposition, begins with philosophical considerations: “I testify that we do not follow the dogma of Empedocles and Pythagoras, who believed not to be able to eat everything that moves and lives because of the *μετεμψύχωσις* [in the Latin text, the Greek word for the transmigration of souls is used here, MR], and to hold guilty of the same crime those who cut down a fir or an oak, who are their murderers and poisoners, but that we worship our Creator, who made all things for our use. And as the ox is prepared for ploughing, the horse for sitting, the dog for helping, the goats for milk, the sheep for wool, so are the swine and the deer and the goats and the hares, etc. But these are not immediately made for eating, but for other uses of men.” (Jerome, *Adversus Iovinianum* 2, 5). Many animals have a medicinal use, and analogously there are many other uses of animals. Affirming their use does not mean affirming their consumption.

This answer is interesting insofar as Jerome does not reject the Stoic anthropocentrism of his opponent; on the contrary, he explicitly confirms it. And he also explains why: he firmly rejects the doctrine of the transmigration of souls of the Platonists and Pythagoreans—it is incompatible with the Christian message of the Resurrection. Moreover, the latter also regard the killing of plants as murder—a view from which Jerome clearly distances himself. The affirmation of Stoic teleology obviously seems to him the only way to accomplish this distancing. While the Stoics (and apparently also Iovinian) demonstratively express their anthropocentrism by eating plenty of meat, Jerome, however, does not want to draw this conclusion. For

him, the use of animals leaves much more room for manoeuvre than just consumption. The consumption of meat does not necessarily follow from anthropocentrism.

As in Iovinian's thesis, Jerome's answer cites the biblical texts second. First, Jerome again emphasises that man lived a vegetarian lifestyle in paradise: "As long as he [Adam] fasted, he was in paradise; he ate and was cast out." (Jerome, *Adversus Iovinianum* 2, 15). Only after the great Flood did "He [God], acknowledging man's most eager throat, give them permission to eat meat" (Jerome, *Adversus Iovinianum* 2, 15). Finally, Jerome cites Ex 16:3 and Num 31:4–5, where the Israelites crave the fleshpots of Egypt during their wanderings in the desert: "Despising the food of angels, they craved the flesh of Egypt." (Jerome, *Adversus Iovinianum* 2, 15). From all this he concludes that a vegetarian diet, though not absolutely obligatory, is strongly advised: "As we prefer virginity to marriage, the same applies to satiety and meat fasting and spirituality." (Jerome, *Adversus Iovinianum* 2, 17).

*Summarising* Jerome's positions, we see that the first thing that stands out is a considerable difference in content and language between the textbook against Iovinian and the letters. In his letters (and this can also be said beyond the one examined here), Jerome tends towards great radicalism. At times, it is almost obsessive how he describes and castigates sexual and culinary temptations. There is little sign of inner freedom and serenity. One foresees why Jerome had many bitter enemies among his contemporaries.

The treatise against Iovinian, on the other hand, is much more sober, factual and objective, which makes it easier to understand that and why Jerome adheres to Stoic anthropocentrism—he definitely wants to exclude the doctrine of the transmigration of souls. Secondly, it reveals a clever idea that is encountered for the very first time: Anthropocentrism does not automatically mean slaughtering animals and eating meat. Animal use can also be thought of in a more diverse way. Finally, however, it becomes apparent, especially in comparison with Basil of Caesarea (chapter 5.11), that Jerome has no interest in animals as such. He interprets the account of animal peace in Is 11 allegorically—for him, animals have no place in heaven. And his advocacy of renouncing meat has nothing, absolutely nothing to do with real animals. It is solely about man, who should resist the temptations of the world. Basil describes the same idea quite differently. He affirms the world and earthly realities wholeheartedly, but at the same time has great empathy for non-human creatures. His plea for the renunciation of meat

has the same biblical references in common with Jerome's but is structured quite differently in terms of its systematic considerations.

### 5.18 Augustine of Hippo

We come to the last author in our passage through early church and theological history. Aurelius Augustinus was born in 354 in the North African town of Tagaste (today Souk Ahras/ Algeria). His father Patricius was a pagan municipal official and was baptised only shortly before his death, while his mother Monnica was Christian. From 371 Augustine studied rhetoric in Carthage and lived in a non-marital partnership. His partner, whose name he never mentions, gave birth to their son Adeodatus in 372. From 373 Augustine taught rhetoric in various places. At this time, Manichaeism was spreading in North Africa, a still very young religion founded in Babylon in the 3rd century, which thinks and lives in a radically dualistic way which despises the body. From 373 to 382, Augustine belonged to this world religion, whose last activities can still be traced in China in the 17th century. Traces of his Manichaean period can be found in Augustine's thinking even after his conversion to Christianity.

In 383, Augustine moved to Rome with his wife and son, and in 384 to Milan, then the imperial residence. His widowed mother Monnica followed him there in 385, persuaded him to separate from his "unworthy" companion and arranged a suitable engagement. Under her influence, he approached the Christian religion. In 386 he had his decisive conversion experience. He decided to live a celibate life and, together with his son, was baptised by Bishop Ambrose of Milan on the Easter Vigil in 387 (Chapter 5.13). On the way back to Africa, his mother died in the Roman port of Ostia before they embarked. In 391, Augustine founded a monastery in Hippo Regius (today Annaba/Algeria), became a priest and in 396 Bishop of the city. He held this office until his death in 430, during the siege of the city by the Vandals.

Augustine created an extensive body of systematic theological writings, biblical commentaries and sermons that have had a broad and lasting history of reception. Creation and non-human creatures do not play a main role in it but are nevertheless abundantly present. In this context, Augustine often adopts his perception of animals from his great model Ambrose of Milan. Since he understood little Greek, the Ambrosian Hexaemeron, written in Latin, is particularly significant for him, which in turn is a translation

of the Greek prototype of Basil of Caesarea (chapter 5.11) into the western half of the Empire. Augustine also has Latin translations of other Greek texts (Matthias Baltes/Dieter Lau 1994, 362), so the thoughts of Eastern theology are not completely foreign to him.

In terms of *terminology*, Augustine rarely calls animals *animalia*, but also hardly ever *irrationalia*. Rather, he uses the specified terms for domesticated (*pecus*) and wild (*belva*, *bestia*) animals (Gillian Clark 1998, 68). He thus favours neither the scientifically neutral term *animalia* nor the philosophically pejorative term *irrationalia*, but rather orients himself towards designations from the real world.

### 5.18.1 First approach to determining the differences between humans and animals

Nevertheless, Augustine very naturally adopts the *hierarchy of being* that was recognised in his time: Immortal rational beings (angels) are above mortal rational beings (human beings), the latter above non-rational but sentient living beings (animals), the latter in turn above non-sentient but striving living beings (plants), and the latter finally above inanimate matter (Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 7, 3; 9, 13; 11, 16; 12, 22; *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 144, 13; cf. Agnethe Siquans 2016, 68). In two places, Augustine even devotes himself specifically to the question of what evidence there is of humans being superior to animals, and answers with the classic reference to animals being tamed by humans, but not vice versa humans by animals (similarly also Augustine, *De diversis quaestionibus* 13; *De libero arbitrio* 1, 7, 16). In doing so, he does not find it necessary to justify why reason is the decisive measure of rank and why he denies it to animals (Gillian Clark 1998, 68). For him and his addressees, this is not a question at all.

The *aloga thesis* is also found quite frequently elsewhere in his works (e.g., Augustine, *De ordine* 2, 11, 31; *De libero arbitrio* 1, 53; see on this Gillian Clark 1998, 69). Mostly they are simple statements like this: “For even the souls of wild animals live, but understand nothing (*vivunt, sed non intelligunt*).” (Augustine, *De trinitate* 10, 4, 6). Occasionally, however, a longer and more nuanced justification is given: “I build a house [...] But in this I am no better than a swallow or a little bee, for the earlier one also builds its nest and the later one its combs artfully. But I am better than them because I am a rational animal (*his melior, quia rationale animal sum*). But if it is reason that observes proportions, are the proportions

less suitable and consistent in what the birds build? From the bottom of my heart: they are perfectly consistent. For I am not better in making the proportions of numbers, but in knowing the numbers (Non ergo numerosa faciendo, sed numeros cognoscendo melior sum). What then? Can those work with numerical relations without knowing them? They can indeed. How are they taught to do so? Just as we too adapt the movements of the tongue to the teeth and the palate so that letters and words come out of the mouth, and do not think about with which movement of the mouth we must do this. What good singer, even if musically inexperienced, does not retain both the rhythm and the melody in his memory by natural sense itself (*ipso sensu naturali*) when singing? Can anything be better regulated? Even if he does not recognise anything, he still acts under the impression of nature (*operante natura*). So, when is he superior and preferable to the animals? When he knows what he is doing. Nothing else elevates me above the animal than that I am a rational animal (*nihil aliud me pecori praeponit, nisi quod rationale animal sum*).” (Augustine, *De ordine* 2, 19, 49).

In this passage, Augustine first of all makes clear the decisive difference between the “*sensus naturalis*” and the “*cognoscere*”: in humans, too, many activities happen unconsciously, controlled by memory, which contains a sensory memory of the right action and recalls it without thinking. Only when humans begin to rationally analyse their actions, i.e., when they become aware of the rhythm and melody of the song as such, do they act differently from animals. The question remains open as to whether animals can actually not carry out such abstractions at all. We would have some doubts about that today. Conversely, however, the example makes it very clear that humans act rationally much less often than they imagine. Most human actions follow precisely the pattern that Augustine calls “*operante natura*”.

Augustine, like many before him, sees the central physical distinguishing feature in humans’ *upright walk*. The inner part, namely reason, is unique to humans. The exterior, however, i.e., the body and life, is common to humans and animals. The only physical difference between them is their upright gait. For humans, this is therefore a striking reminder of their moral obligation: “In all this, we differ from animals only in that we do not have a bent, but an upright body shape. This fact is a reminder given to us by our Creator that we should not, with our better part, that is, with our soul, be like the animals, from whom we differ in having an upright body.” (Augustine, *De trinitate* 12, 1, 1).

Augustine sees the human body as perfectly suited for the rational soul, which should strive upwards, towards heaven—a sign of the wonderful providence of the Creator: “Furthermore, how gloriously God’s goodness, how gloriously the providence of the great Creator (*Quanta dei bonitas, quanta providentia tanti creatoris apparet*) is shown in our body, although it has nothing in advance of that of animals as far as dying is concerned and is weaker than that of many animals. The position of the sense organs and the distribution of the other limbs, in addition to the appearance, shape and posture of the whole body, already reveal that it is made for the service of a rational soul (*ad ministerium animae rationalis factum*). For man was not created bent down to the earth, as we see in the reasonless animals (*animalia rationis expertia*); rather, the form of his body raised up to heaven admonishes him to strive for the things that are above (*Col 3:2*).” (Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 22, 24; similarly, *De Genesi ad litteram* 6, 12, 22).

### 5.18.2 Appreciation of animal skills

Although Augustine, in some cases, actively justifies the aloga thesis, he recognises numerous remarkable abilities in animals. Thus, at the beginning of the second book of *De doctrina christiana*, he reflects on the meaning of signs (*signa*). He also mentions animals, whose ability to *communicate* with each other he recognises. As an example, he mentions a chicken that finds food and informs the other chickens about it by calling. The crucial question of whether the animals communicate consciously or whether their calls are an unconscious repetition of behaviour stored in their memory is left open by Augustine at this point because it is not part of his theme: “Animals also have certain signs among themselves (*Habent etiam bestiae quaedam inter se signa*), in order to make known the desire of their soul. [...] Now whether these signs, such as the expression or the cry of one in pain, without the will to signify anything (*sine uoluntate significandi*), simply follow the movement of the mind (*motum animi*), or whether they are really given to signify (*an uere ad significandum dentur*), that is another question, which does not belong to the matter under discussion here.” (Augustine, *De doctrina christiana* 2, 2, 3). This at least leaves open whether certain animals want to signify something intentionally and consciously.

In contrast to Origen (Chapter 5.6), Augustine even attributes the capacity for *memory*, which must also be presupposed for merely unconscious, sensually induced sign-giving, to the lowest animals according to the conception of the time, fish (Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram* 3, 12; cf. Agnethe Siquans 2016, 66). In another context, however, he makes clear that he ultimately locates this animal “intelligence”, as astonishing as it may be sometimes, in sensual and not in thinking talents. In this sense, he deals with the classic question of how Argos, Odysseus’ dog, was able to recognise his master when he returned to Ithaca, while the humans, including his wife Penelope, did not recognise him because of his physical change. His answer to this question is: “What do you think it is, if not a certain ability to feel, not to know (*vis sentiendi, non sciendi*)? For in sense (*sensu*) the animals surpass us, though here is not the place to seek the cause of this; but in mind, reason, science (*mente autem, ratione, scientia*) God has preferred us to them.” (Augustine, *De quantitate animae* 28, 54; cf. Gillian Clark 1998, 76). So the dog Argos has such an excellent sensory memory of his master that he recognises him long before humans do. According to Augustine, however, he does not need to think.

In the context of the question of how we can love God, Augustine also addresses the question of how we can actually imagine what is going on in the soul of another human being or animal. He sees the indispensable prerequisite for this in a deep form of *kinship* with the soul: “As for the soul, we do not inappropriately attribute its knowledge (*nosse*) to ourselves because we too have a soul. We have never seen a soul and have not formed a generic or species concept of it from the resemblance to other things we have seen; rather, as I said, we know of its essence because we ourselves have a soul. [...] For the movements of bodies, through which we perceive the life of other beings besides ourselves, we judge on the basis of their resemblance to us (*ex nostra similitudine*). [...] And this is not a peculiarity of, say, human prudence and intellect (*Neque quasi humanae prudentiae rationisque proprium est*). Animals also feel that they live (*sentiunt vivere*), not only of themselves, but also of each other and of us. They too do not see our souls, but experience them from the movements of the body, and quickly and easily through a certain natural connection (*conspiratione naturali*). So, we know the soul of another from our own, and from our own we believe what we do not know (*Animum igitur cuiuslibet ex nostro novimus, et ex nostro credimus quem non novimus*).” (Augustine, *De trinitate* 8, 6, 9).

According to Augustine, both the idea of what a soul is and the idea of what is going on in another animate being, whether human or animal, are gained solely by analogy with our innermost experiences. We observe the bodily changes in ourselves and others and conclude from them “ex similitudine” the invisible state of the soul. However, this always remains an unproven and unprovable assumption, a belief (*credimus*). What is decisive for us is that Augustine attributes this ability to animals and humans alike because it is assigned to the *anima sensibilis* and not to the *anima rationalis*. And because humans and animals have the same capacity for the faculty of the soul, they can also empathise with each other—animals with humans, humans with animals. Augustine presents a brilliant analysis of the capacity for *empathy* here!

Overall, it is easy to see that Augustine attributes relatively much to the sensual power of the imagination and memory and comparatively little to reason. Thus, he can grant animals numerous abilities that they have in common with humans. The barrier of the *aloga* thesis is not jumped over, but it is lowered considerably.

### 5.18.3 The specifically human capabilities

Despite the breadth of Augustine’s assessment of animals’ abilities, two abilities remain reserved for humans: judgement and free will. He emphasises that animals have sensory perception but cannot judge it from a higher perspective (Augustine, *Confessiones* 7, 17, 23). Humans and animals have imagination in common, but only humans have the power of judgement (Augustine, *De trinitate* 10, 5, 7; *De civitate Dei* 19, 14). Humans alone can distinguish good from evil, what is just from what is unjust (Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 29, 2, 2). The decisive difference for Augustine, and this is thoroughly Stoic, is that imagination is passive and thus a faculty of feeling, while judgement and decision of the will are active and thus faculties of thinking. The dividing line is drawn in a razor-sharp way, and active faculties, according to the Stoic thesis, are only possessed by man. Augustine also argues in this way:

“For every living soul, not only the rational as in men, but also the irrational as in animals, birds and fish, is moved by impressions. But the rational soul either agrees or disagrees with the impressions on the basis of a decision of the will (*voluntatis arbitrio*); the irrational soul, however, does not have this judgement (*iudicium*); nevertheless, it is impelled according



to its nature and kind (*pro suo genere atque natura*) as soon as it has been influenced by an impression. And it is not in the power (in *potestate*) of any soul to determine what impressions come to it, whether in the bodily sensory faculty, or in the inner mind itself [i.e. the imagination, MR]; yet the striving of every animal (*appetitus cuiuslibet animantis*) is moved by such impressions.” (Augustine, *De Genesi ad Litteram* 9, 14, 25).

Sarah Byers assumes that with the redundant formula “*voluntatis arbitrium*” Augustine wants to make the affiliation to reason as clear as possible in order to nip any misunderstanding in the bud (Sarah Byers 2006, 182). For actually, one of the two terms would suffice perfectly—be it *voluntas*, be it *arbitrium*.

The active performance of human reason becomes even clearer in the following quotation: “Animals, too, can perceive bodily things through the external sensory faculty of the body and, when they have been inserted into memory, remember them and strive for what is beneficial, fleeing from what is inappropriate. Meanwhile, to ascertain this and not only to seize it in natural desire, but also to entrust it to memory with intent (*de industria*) and in this way to keep it there, and when it gradually wants to sink into the past, to imprint it again by recollection and reflection, so that, just as the thought is formed from what the memory carries with it, so also what is in the memory is fixed by the thought; to form and survey artificially produced impressions, by taking out here and there a piece of memory and, as it were, patching it together; to see how in this kind of thing the probable differs from the true: Not in the spiritual, but precisely in the bodily realm, such and similar things are done and remain, although in the realm of the sensible (in *sensibilibus*) and of that which the soul drew to itself from this through the sense of the body, yet not [entirely] without understanding (*rationis expertia*), and are common to men and animals (*hominibus pecoribusque communia*). But it lies on a higher level of understanding to judge these corporeal things according to incorporeal and perpetual reasons (*sublimioris rationis est iudicare de istis corporalibus secundum rationes incorporeales et sempiternas*).” (Augustine, *De trinitate* 12, 2, 2).

Four aspects seem remarkable to me in this passage: firstly, Augustine describes magnificently what it means to reactivate memories purposefully, literally “with diligence” (*de industria*), so that they do not fade into oblivion but are reinforced in memory. Secondly, he distinguishes from this the targeted recombination of sensory impressions or memory images, which can lead people to new insights. Thirdly, he admits that even in the realm

of sensory faculties in humans and animals (!), such recombination “does not happen [entirely] without reason”. He thus concedes a minimum of rationality to animals, however one may imagine this precisely. Finally, and here he is back on Stoic ground, he emphasises that a human judgement is made according to immutable principles that are still above the human being, but in which he has a share by virtue of his reason. The introspective analysis of one’s own thinking that Augustine presents here is captivating. The only question that remains open is how he knows that the processes in animals are not similar to those in humans. Here, he trusts the Stoic dogma without critical questioning.

Augustine also sees a commonality between humans and animals in the fact that both strive for harmony and peace. However, the peace of man is different from the peace of the animal: “If we were therefore irrational animals (*irrationalia animantia*), we would strive for nothing more than the orderly harmonisation of the parts of the body and the tranquillity of striving (*requiem appetitionum*); that is, nothing more than the tranquillity of bodily existence and opportunity for enjoyment, so that the peace of the body may promote the peace of the soul. For if the peace of the body is lacking, the peace of the rational soul (*inrationalis animae pax*) is also prevented, because it cannot gain the peace of striving (*requiem adpetitionum*). Both, however, the harmonising of the parts and the tranquillity of striving, serve the peace that soul and body have with each other, i.e. the peace of ordered life and well-being. For as animals show their love for the peace of the body by avoiding pain, and their love for the peace of the soul by pursuing pleasure to satisfy the demands of their striving, so also by fleeing from death they clearly show how much they love the peace by which the soul and body are held together. Since, however, man has a rational soul (*rationalis anima inest*), he subordinates the whole of what he has in common with the animals to the peace of the rational soul (*totum hoc, quod habet commune cum bestiis, subdit paci animae rationalis*), in such a way that he views things spiritually and does not forget them, that he looks at things mentally and thereafter so directs his actions that the orderly agreement between cognition and action results, which we have called the peace of the rational soul (*ordinata cognitionis actionisque consensus, quam pacem rationalis animae dixeramus*).” (Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 19, 14).

Animals and humans, according to Augustine, equally strive physically for the harmony of their body parts, i.e. for freedom from pain and well-being, and mentally for the fulfilment of their sensual aspirations. However,

while animals are completely satisfied with the fulfilment of these two goals, a third goal is added for humans on the basis of their reason, which regulates and sometimes suspends the other two: the “peace of the rational soul” as “the ordered agreement between knowing and doing”. Achieving this goal supersedes all lower goals of the body and the sensual soul faculty.

Judgement is ultimately the prerequisite of a decision made out of free will in the comprehensive sense (Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram* 8, 23, 44; *Contra Felicem Manichaeum* 2, 3). Nevertheless, Augustine hesitates to deny animals free will altogether, as the following quotation proves: “The freely willed causes (*causae voluntariae*), finally, proceed either from God or from angels or from men or from other animate beings (*animalium*), insofar as, in the case of souls that lack rationality (*animarum rationis expertium*), those movements with which they act according to their nature (*secundum naturam suam*), when they strive for or avoid something, can be called wills (*voluntates*) at all.” (Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 5, 9).

Note: In *De trinitate*, Augustine admits that animals are “not entirely without reason”, in *De civitate Dei* he speaks of the “will” of animals, “insofar as one can call it that”. This does not result in a principled denial, but it does relativise the *aloga* thesis to a certain extent. In any case, Augustine does not seem to be comfortable with the nasty trench of binary Stoic logic. He would have liked to make the transition from human to animal a little smoother.

#### 5.18.4 Humans’ and animals’ relationship to God

As with reason and will, Augustine also opens the door a tiny crack wide with regard to the relationship of humans and animals with God, without fundamentally questioning the Stoic difference. Thus, on the one hand, he interprets the Logos hymn in *Jn 1* in such a way that all creatures are created by Christ, the eternal Word of God, and exist in him—in their corporeality as well as in their liveliness and animateness, i.e. with their entire creaturely existence. But after the word metaphor, the light metaphor appears in the Logos hymn of John’s Gospel, and here Augustine makes a distinction. While all creatures behold the light of Christ, animals do so only sensually, whereas human beings do so sensually and spiritually. It is precisely this that constitutes being human, to behold the light of Christ in the rational spirit:

“Therefore, because there is one Word of God through which all things came to be, which is itself the unchangeable truth, all things are original and unchangeable all at once in Him, [...] Among the things created by the Word is also the body, which is not life. It would not be created by the Word if there were not life in it before it exists. For that which became was already ‘life in Him’ (Jn 1:3–4), and not just any life; for the soul is also the life of the body; but it too is created because it is mutable. By what was it created if not by the unchangeable Word of God? For ‘all things came into being through the Word, and without the Word nothing came into being’. What therefore came to be was already ‘life in him’, and not just any life, but that life which is ‘the light of men’ (Jn 1:9), namely the light of the rational spirit by which men differ from animals and by which they are men (*lux utique rationalium mentium per quas homines a pecoribus differunt et ideo sunt homines*). So there is no bodily light, no light of the flesh, whether it shines down from heaven or whether it is kindled on an earthly flame, for the senses not only of men but also of animals down to the smallest worm; for all these see that light. But that life is ‘the light of men.’” (Augustine, *De trinitate* 4, 1, 3).

We also find a similar dynamic in his interpretation of Ps 145:10, whose Hebrew wording “May we give thanks to you, O LORD, all your works, let your pious praise you” is rendered by the Latin translation as Ps 144:10: “*confiteantur tibi, domine, omnia opera tua, et sancti tui confiteantur te*”. The “thanks” and “praise” in the Hebrew text thus become “confess”. The bar is thus raised considerably higher in the Latin text. And this is why Augustine is reluctant to ascribe to animals the ability to make an explicit confession: “The addressees of the call to ‘*confiteri*’, ‘*benedicere*’ and ‘*hymnum dicere*’ are not all creatures, but only the rational ones: ‘*nemo hoc sentiat, quod mutus lapis aut mutum animal habeat rationem intellegendi deum; hoc qui putauerunt, multum a ueritate aberrauerunt*’ (*Enarrationes in Psalmos* 144, 13). The anthropological narrowness already noted [...] with regard to Rom 8:19–23 also determines the interpretation of the Creation psalms that stop at the ‘*Confessio*’. As little as the reasonless creature can ‘sigh’, so little can it rejoice. Man, on the other hand, whom Augustine meaningfully calls ‘*creatura laudatrix*’ (*Sermo* 29, 1), is able to judge the ordered beauty of every creature and to appreciate it, for ‘*uox quaedam est mutae terrae, species terrae. [...] et hoc quod in ea inuenisti, uox confessionis ipsius est, ut laudes creatorem*’ (*Enarrationes in Psalmos* 144, 13).” (Cornelius Petrus Mayer 2002, 108).

As Augustine pointedly puts it: “They have no voice to confess... they have no voice to preach (uocem non habent confitendi... uocem non habent praedicandi)”. (Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 144, 13). And in his interpretation of Psalm 147, he repeats, “Just do not think that the reasonless soul invokes God; the soul cannot invoke God, only rationality (Ne hoc cogitatis, irrationalem animam invocare Deum; non novit anima invocare Deum, nisi sola rationalis).” (Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 146, 18).

It must be said clearly that Augustine is not judging Greco-Roman philosophy here by the standard of the Bible, but the meaning of the Bible by the standard of Greco-Roman philosophy. Where the Bible calls people and animals indiscriminately to the praise of God, Augustine introduces a difference from the outside. In doing so, he can take his cue from the Hellenistically influenced Paul, Philon and many others. And yet it is striking how little the otherwise text-sensitive rhetorician takes the biblical formulations seriously here.

Consequently, for Augustine, as for the great majority of the Church Fathers, man alone is called to eternal salvation, for animals “have neither the capacity for sin nor for virtue; but they live according to a mysterious, marvellous order (*occulta pro suo genere moderatione*); they give man a lesson, and he understands, in view of their activities, the obligation to strive for spiritual and eternal salvation, that great privilege which constitutes his superiority over all irrational animals (*qua omnibus irrationalibus animantibus antecellit*).” (Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram* 3, 16, 25). Mind you, the human privilege is not eternal salvation, but the obligation to strive for it. Augustine’s logic is classic: anyone who cannot sin cannot live virtuously; anyone who cannot live virtuously cannot strive for eternal salvation; anyone who does not strive for eternal salvation does not need to receive it. According to this logic, nothing is taken away from animals—they will miss nothing.

Nevertheless, “they obey God in their own way: ‘in suo ... genere obtemperant deo, non rationali uoluntatis arbitrio’ (*De Genesi ad litteram* 9, 14, 24).” (Matthias Baltes/ Dieter Lau 1994, 364–365). They follow the divine order by nature and thus are a model for human beings, who should do so on the basis of their own reflection and decision.

Augustine makes maximum use of the freedom opened up for animals by the Stoic arithmetic of salvation. However, he does not cast doubt on the basic data of the Stoa. In the context of modern debates on animal and Creation ethics, this must seem deficient. In the context of his time, one must nevertheless show him sympathy and respect.

### 5.18.5 Ethical consequences for humans and animals

What are the ethical consequences of the preceding considerations? It should come as no surprise that, measured against their philosophical and patristic prehistory, they are largely traditional—albeit with some notable emphases. In one passage of *De trinitate*, for example, Augustine combines his interpretation of three passages of Scripture in order to show that a man, who is only concerned with himself and his own desires, becomes similar to an animal and thus undergoes a painful descent: “By beginning with a perverse striving for likeness to God, one arrives at likeness to the animals. Thus, it comes about that those who are stripped of their first garment earned garments of animal skins through their mortality (Gen 3:21). The true honour of man is called the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26); it can only be preserved in reference to Him by whom it was imprinted. [...] So, since he [man], like that [Adam], does not wish to be below anyone, he is driven, as a punishment, even from the centre, which is himself, further downwards, that is, to that in which the cattle delight; and thus ‘man’, since his honour is the likeness of God, his dishonour the likeness of the beast, ‘put in honour, has not seen it, has become like the reasonless cattle, and similar to them’ (Ps 48:13 lat.)” (Augustine, *De trinitate* 12, 11, 16).

The first biblical narrative Augustine reflects on in this passage is the Fall narrative of Gen 3. When man strives to become not only similar to God, but equal to God, and thus to rise one step up the Stoic *scala naturae*, the opposite happens: he falls down to the level of an animal. Instead of God, he becomes like animals. Then he needs the protection of animal skins, which diminishes him in comparison with his previous clothing, because the garment of virtue protected and adorned him better. The second biblical narrative is Gen 1. Actually, man should have been God’s likeness on earth by behaving responsibly and imitating his model in love and virtue. But because he behaved differently, what the Latin translation of Ps 48:13 (Hebrew 49:13) says came to pass: due to a lack of insight, he became like a reasonless animal.

Mirroring this is the ethical imperative to control the “animal in man” with reason. The fifth and sixth days of the work of Creation are interpreted in this sense in the thirteenth book of the *Confessiones*, which, in contrast to *De Genesi ad litteram*, presents an allegorical interpretation of the Creation narrative throughout. There it says: “Abstain from unruly, wild pride, the slackening lust of sensuality, and the deceptive appearance

of science, that the wild beasts may become tame, the domestic animals gentle, and the serpents harmless. For the passionate impulses of the soul are symbolically embodied in them.” (Augustine, *Confessiones* 13, 21). In *Epistula* 22 to Casulanus, Augustine calls immoderate eating *alugia*, because it causes one to lose reason. Overall, he follows the Stoic ideal of controlling one’s passions through reason (Augustine, *De libero arbitrio* 1, 8, 18).

His interpretation of the Hebrew Ps 36:7–8 is also about the animal in man: “You save men and animals, o Lord. How precious is your love, o God! People shelter in the shadow of your wings.” In Augustine’s Latin translation as Ps 35:7–8 this reads: “Homines et iumenta saluos facies, Domine; sicut multiplicata est misericordia tua, Deus. Filii autem hominum sub tegmine alarum tuarum sperabunt.”

In a first reflection, Augustine considers what is common to humans and animals, namely that both are included in the divine care for their earthly well-being: “Great is your mercy, and manifold is your mercy, God, and you show it both to men and to animals. For from whom does the salvation of men come? From God. Does not the salvation of animals come from God? For He who created man also created the animals. He who created both saves (*saluat*) both. But the welfare of animals is temporal (*salus iumentorum temporalis*). [...] Manifold is your mercy, o God, that not only to men but also to animals may be given what is given to men, this carnal and temporal welfare (*carnalis et temporalis salus*).” (Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 35, 11).

In a second step, however, Augustine then reflects on the specific vocation of man, which, according to his conviction, distinguishes him from animals, namely the vocation of the hope of eternal salvation. To do this, he relies on a distinction in the Latin text. It speaks once of human beings (*homines*) and once of children of humans (*fili hominum*). For Augustine, *homines* are those people who behave like animals and strive only for physical well-being, while *fili hominum* are those who behave like humans and “hope under the shadow of God’s wings”. Thus, he can distinguish: “But those men (*homines*) rejoice together with the animals in reality (*in re*), but the children of men (*fili hominis*) in hope (*in spe*). The former pursue present goods (*praesentia bona*) with the animals; the latter hope for future goods (*futura bona*) with the angels. [...] If we bear the image of the earthly man, we are humans (*homines*). If we bear the image of the heavenly man, we are children of humans (*fili hominum*), because Christ is called the Son of Man. Adam, in fact, was man, but not the Son of Man. Therefore, those who desire carnal goods and temporal well-being belong

to Adam. We exhort them to be children of humans, hoping under the shadow of his wings...” (Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 35, 12). Again, we encounter the Stoic imperative to subdue the animal in man and to follow the spiritual aspirations that carry man up into the sphere of the angels.

But how should man deal with real animals? Augustine comes to this in his interpretation of Ps 146:6: “It is He who creates the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in it. He keeps faithfulness forever.” He begins by emphasising that God, who made all animals, including the sparrow, the grasshopper and the worm, gives them all his care: “None of them has He not made, and His care (*cura*) is for all of them.” (Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 145, 13). But God’s commandments are addressed only to man: “The care does not extend to the commandment, for the commandment He has given only to man (*non ad praeceptum cura est, nam praeceptum soli homini dedit*).” (Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 145, 13). But what does this mean in concrete terms? To answer, Augustine brings two apparently contradictory Bible verses into conversation with each other: the verse from Ps 36:7 “You save men and animals, o Lord” and the sentence by the Apostle Paul in 1 Cor 9:9–10, with which he interprets Dt 25:4 “You shall not muzzle the ox for threshing”. Paul writes: “Does God care about oxen? Does he not speak everywhere for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written: Let both the ploughman and the thresher do their work, expecting to receive their portion.”

Augustine asks whether the two scriptural texts do not contradict each other. His answer is this: “God does not worry about admonishing you about what to do with the ox. Human nature itself does that (*natura ipsa humana*). Man was created to feed his animals. It is not for this that he has received commandments from God, but it is put into his mind by God (*insinuat* est illi in mentem a Deo), so that he can do it without commandment. For this is how God created him. [...] In relation, then, to the course of the commandment, ‘God does not care for the ox’ (1 Cor 9:9). With regard to the providence for the universe (*ad prouidentiam uniuersitatis*), by which he created all things and governs the world, ‘you save men and animals, o Lord’ (Ps 35:7 *lat.*)” (Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 145, 13; a very similar argument in Augustine, *De agone christiano* 8, 9).

This text is captivating in its probity. Very directly and completely transparently, Augustine contrasts a biocentrist quotation from the Old Testament with an anthropocentrist quotation from the New Testament and asks



whether the contradiction can be resolved. In doing so, he tries to reconcile two concerns: on the one hand, not to discredit the Word of God in the Bible, for that would be an impossibility for him. On the other hand, not to deny or devalue God's care for animals, which is so clearly attested to in the Old Testament. His proposed solution works with a rhetorical trick: Man already knows by nature that animals should be treated well, so he does not need any commandments. He only needs commandments for the right treatment of fellow human beings. Of course, one could quickly question this solution, from both sides: On the one hand, it is unfortunately not the case that humans treat animals well quite spontaneously and without commandment, and on the other hand, human nature does indeed provide stimuli to treat other humans with care. From a factual point of view, therefore, the Augustinian solution is not correct. But it shows how honestly he struggles—on the one hand, to take the whole Bible seriously and not just an excerpt he likes, and on the other hand, not to sweep God's love and care for animals under the table.

In the following passage, Augustine even goes a step further. Some of his contemporaries obviously object to the fact that the New Testament trumps the Old in case of doubt. In this case, Paul beats the Psalm; anthropocentrism beats biocentrism. Augustine counters this with a word from the mouth of Jesus, the highest authority of Christian faith: "Look at the birds of the air: They neither sow nor reap nor gather provisions into barns; your heavenly Father feeds them." (Mt 6:26). From this Augustine concludes, "And apart from man, the animals belong to God's care, that they may be fed, not that they may receive the law. So as far as giving the law is concerned, 'God does not care for the ox' (1 Cor 9:9). But as for creating, feeding, guiding and governing, God cares for all creatures." (Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 145, 14). As I said, for Augustine it is unthinkable that the Word of God can err. That is why he considers the contradiction between Paul and the Psalm claimed by his opponents to be non-existent. But if it did exist, the Lord's Word would beat Paul, and the Lord's Word is biocentrist. Augustine obviously does not advocate unrestricted anthropocentrism.

Ultimately, Augustine is subject to a classic category error in this passage: because the commandments are addressed solely to human beings as moral agents, and their content can only refer to human beings as moral patients. According to this reasoning, there must be a kind of symmetry between rights and duties: Only those who have duties can also have rights. This is not explicitly stated anywhere in this passage, but it is the unspoken

presupposition that Augustine must make in order for his argumentation to work. And: it is the unthinking presupposition of the whole theoretical edifice around Stoic anthropocentrism. A classic is–ought fallacy.

That Augustine had precisely this consideration in mind can be proven with a passage from his treatise on the customs of the Catholic Church and the Manichaeans. In his discussion of Manichaeism, to which he adhered for a decade, he explicitly refers to the Stoic conviction that there is *no legal community* between humans and non-human beings: “Furthermore, because animals lack reason, there is no legal community (*societas iuris/societas legis*) between them and humans (Augustine, *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* 2, 17, 54 and 59). But there is a community of all reasonless beings, just as there is a community between rational beings (human beings and angels).” (Matthias Baltes/Dieter Lau 1994, 359). Augustine gives as examples that Jesus sends the legion of demons he casts out of a possessed man into a herd of pigs, which then drowns in the lake (Mt 8:32), and curses a fig tree, which then withers (Mt 21:19). He interprets these two events as follows: “Christ [...] shows that there is no legal community (*societas iuris*) for us with the animals and trees... For also concerning the people with whom we are united in a legal community (*sumus iuris societate coniuncti*), he gives certain signs, but in terms of healing people and not killing them. This he would also have done concerning animals and trees, if he had judged that we are united with those in the same community which we ascribe to you.” (Augustine, *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* 2, 17, 54). Augustine supplements this argumentation with reference to the Bible or Jesus of Nazareth himself in the following with philosophical argumentation with reference to the *aloga* thesis: there he speaks of the “animal with which there is no connection to a legal community because it has no rational soul (*bestia, cum qua scilicet rationalem animam non habente nulla legis societate copulatur*)” (Augustine, *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* 2, 17, 59). Finally, Augustine supplements his argumentation with a practical life argument: if there were kinship of all corporeal beings (*cognatio omnium corporum*) among themselves, as the Manichaeans claim, the prohibition to kill would have to apply to all of them, and then man would no longer be able to live, because he would not even be allowed to kill plants in order to feed himself (Augustine, *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* 2, 17, 61).

Augustine, basing his argumentation on Old Testament biocentrism, makes us feel a great kindness towards animals. God’s love and care is for humans and animals. In this way, he considerably softens Stoic anthropocentrism, which he nevertheless does not question, for only humans

strive for eternal salvation. This obliges them, but definitely excludes animals from eternal salvation. They do not belong to the legal community of God and man.

#### 5.18.6 The question of meat consumption

In *Confessiones* 10, 30–34 Augustine goes through the human temptations according to the five senses and in 10, 31, 43–47 he comes to the sense of taste and the question of the right way of dealing with food and drink (cf. also Gillian Clark 1998, 74–75). Among other things, he also addresses the consumption of meat. First, he refers to various biblical examples: to Noah, who is allowed to eat meat (Gen 9:2–3), to Elijah, who fortifies himself with meat at the brook Kerith (1 Kings 17:6), and to John the Baptist, who feeds on locusts (Matt 3:4). Conversely, Esau was corrupted by his desire for a dish of lentils (Gen 25:34), David overcame his desire for water (2 Sam 23:15–17) and Jesus overcame his desire for bread (Mt 4:3). The people of Israel were also rebuked in the wilderness, not because of their desire for meat but because of their grumbling and rebellion against God (Num 11:1–20). From all this, Augustine concludes, “I do not fear impurity of food, but impurity of desire” (Augustine, *Confessiones* 10, 31, 46). It is not the kind of food but the observance of the necessary measure (*meta necessitatis*) that is decisive.

Even if it is not explicitly stated in the *Confessiones*, the question of eating meat is always directed by Augustine against the Manichaeans, to whom he belonged for a decade and who practised strict abstinence from meat. Thus, Augustine emphasises in *The City of God* that the Fifth Commandment “You shall not kill” does not refer to living beings without sense impressions such as plants, nor to living beings without reason such as animals, but solely to rational living beings. On the other hand, he regards the Manichaeans’ conviction that the killing of all living beings is forbidden as “silly stuff (*deliramenta*)” (Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 1, 20).

He deals with the Manichaeans’ obligatory abstinence from meat in more detail in his treatise on the customs of the Catholic Church and the Manichaeans: “That you abstain from killing animals (*ab animalium nece*) and from tearing down plants, Christ has pointed out as extremely superstitious, who proves that we have no community of law (*societas iuris*) with animals and trees, sends demons into a herd of swine (Mt 8:32), and withers the tree on which he finds no fruit (Mt 21:19). [...] But surely the

Son of God was not about giving a sign of murder, when to kill a tree or animals, as you say, is murder. [...] There is a very sure reason not to kill a man, lest you kill him whose wisdom and virtue are of the highest use to others, or him who may attain to wisdom. [...] Whoever therefore discards a tree, frees a soul from its body, which does not advance in wisdom (animam nihil in sapientia proficientem). [...] Those souls in such bodies cannot grasp the divine commandments.” (Augustine, *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* 2, 17, 54–56).

Supported by such examples from the life of Jesus, Augustine shows that it is thus again the lack of belonging to the community of law that legitimises the killing of plants and animals. And this in turn is due to lack of reason. Consequently, the aloga thesis is at the origin of his argumentation.

Further on, Augustine also comes to speak of the two-class organisation of the Manichaean community, in which the elect (*electi*) neither pluck a potato from the ground nor tear off herbs, but gladly receive and eat the plants harvested by the hearers (*auditores*). Augustine forcefully rejects this clean hands theory: “It makes no difference whether you yourself commit the crime or whether you want someone else to commit it because of you.” (Augustine, *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* 2, 17, 57).

Finally, Augustine addresses the Manichean argument that a flea may be crushed because this is not a sin due to its small size. Augustine counters this with the continuum of body size between very small and very large animals: From the flea he goes to the fly larva, which is only minimally larger, from this to the adult fly, then to the bee larva and the adult bee, to the grasshopper larva and the grasshopper, to the mouse pup and the adult mouse, and finally on and on until he reaches the elephant. There is only a tiny difference in size between two living beings. If the Manichaeans did not consider it a sin to kill a flea because of its small size, where did they want to draw the line to the elephant (Augustine, *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* 2, 17, 64)?

According to everything that is reported about him, Augustine was not a great meat eater. But he wanted to distance himself clearly from the radicalism of the Manichaeans. Their animal- and plant-ethical argumentation seemed neither consistent nor appropriate to him. He could not admit that they also contain positive stimuli because of his former membership and the resulting negative bias.

## 5.18.7 Valuing even the least creatures

Nevertheless, Augustine's work is full of admiration and appreciation of even the tiniest creatures. So the reference to the continuum of body size from the flea to the elephant must also be read backwards. Not only is the elephant great, but so is the flea. This leads to the diffident first beginnings of biocentrism (which is not further carried out): "And if [...] they ask me whether I am of the opinion that even the soul of a mosquito is still better than daylight, I will answer: Yes, even it. It would not deter me that a mosquito is so small, but only reinforce the fact that it is alive. For one wonders what animates these tiny limbs, what leads the little body hither and thither according to the wish of its natural desire, what moves the running animal according to the measure of its feet, what makes the wings of the flying creature vibrate and directs them. Whatever this does, it appears to him who considers it rightly as something so great in this little creature that it must be preferred even to the ray of light which dazzles our eyes." (Augustine, *De duabus animabus* 4, 4).

Augustine demonstrates here high sensitivity for the fascination and wonder of life. His love for the little mosquito makes him attentively observe and describe its behaviour and search for the reason for its movements, which he cannot yet discern with the state of natural science at that time. Nevertheless, he defends small animals, which are often devalued because they feed on waste, carrion or faeces: "Not insignificantly, one also wonders in the case of certain very small creatures whether they are to be counted among the first creations or are a consequence of the corruption of mortal things. After all, the majority of them originate from the infirmities of living bodies, from the refuse, the exhalation or the decay of cadavers, some also from dead trees and rotten plants and fruits. And yet we have no right to say of them all that God is not their Creator. There is in them all a certain adornment of the nature of their kind, and that to such an extent that they suggest to him who looks at them rightly all the greater admiration, all the richer praise of the Almighty Artist, 'who created all things in that wisdom' (Ps 103:24 lat.). [...] It is rather she, Wisdom, who creates even that which is smallest in corporeality, and animates it with a sense so keen that we marvel with far deeper admiration at the agility of a flying gnat than at the size of a striding beast of burden, and wonder more at the buildings of little ants than at the burdens of camels." (Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram* 14).

We have already noticed admiration for the small and smallest animals in many of the Fathers of the Church. The fact that these are also God's creatures and were not produced secondarily from carrion or excrement only after the creation of the world is extremely important to them. If one correlates this assessment with the Platonic *Timaeus*, according to which the animals as a whole are only subsequently created by sub-gods, the contrast becomes clear. The equal and equally immediate creation of animals and humans relativises the gap between the *aloga* thesis and anthropocentrism considerably: "Augustine's explanations of animals seem almost scientific or even naturalistic. He displays a high regard for God's creation and does not constantly ask about the usefulness of animals for humans. He also perceives animals independently of humans, but not independently of the Creator." (Agnethe Siquans 2016, 65).

#### 5.18.8 Weak anthropocentrism and cautious criticism of anthropocentrism

Augustine is not very interested in the teleological question. Moreover, he points out the questionability of the Stoic conclusion from the endowment of reason to the position in the hierarchy of purposes. According to Augustine, economic calculations of utility follow a different form of logic than the question of ontology. A horse, for example, has a higher monetary value than a slave. Utility value is therefore not measured by the degree of rationality, but by the extent and urgency of the needs that one hopes to realise (Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 11, 16). This is an unconventional, very perceptive remark that could still bring joy to today's economic science and current ethics, for dignity and prices, as Immanuel Kant emphasises, follow their own logic and must not be mixed together. In general, dignity is a non-scalar idea that must not be graded. Dignity is not gained by hierarchically subordinating other beings and denying them dignity.

Augustine therefore pays little attention to questions of utility and cosmic teleology. "He does not dedicate much space in his writings to the practical and common use of animals, for example as sources of labour and food." (Midori E. Hartman 2017, 72). Even more, he criticises the fact that many people judge the whole of creation only in terms of its usefulness for themselves and not as something that exists and is valuable in itself, considering "not themselves, but only their usefulness (non eas considerantes, sed utilitatem suam)" (Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 12, 4).

The question of benefit is thus a question of perspective: Is it a question of benefit for man or of benefit for God? “The Manichaeans pose this question by saying: Why was it necessary for God to create so many animals, whether in the water or on earth, which are unnecessary for man? Many of them are also harmful and terrible. But in saying such things, they do not understand how beautiful they all are to their Creator and Artist, who uses them all for the guidance of the universe.” (Augustine, *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* 1, 16, 25). At this point, Augustine compares those who ask only about animals’ usefulness to man to laymen who enter a craftsman’s workshop and see tools lying around that they consider superfluous. The craftsman, however, knows exactly what he needs his tools for and ridicules the laymen. This is what God, the creator and administrator of the world, does to those who consider some of his creatures useless.

Augustine counters the question of utility with the question of beauty and order: “But I confess that I do not know why snails and frogs were created, or flies and worms. But I see that all are beautiful in their way [...]. For I do not look at any animal’s body or limbs in which I do not discover that measures and numbers and order belong to a harmonious unity. Whence they come, I do not know, except from the highest measure and number and order, which consists in the unchangeable and eternal majesty of God.” (Augustine, *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* 1, 16, 26). And he concludes, “What, then, are we charged to inquire about the superfluous [animals]? If it displeases you that they are of no use, may it please you that they do no harm; for though they are not necessary to our house, through them the wholeness of this universe is fulfilled (*eis tamen completur huius universitatis integritas*), which is much greater and better than our house. For God manages it much better than each of us manages his house.” (Augustine, *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* 1, 16, 26). With this reference to the integrity of the universe, Augustine already has one foot in the perspective of holism.

Let us therefore summarise with Agnethe Siquans: “An anthropocentric perspective is [...] only very rudimentarily discernible in the interpretation of animal creation in *De Genesi ad litteram*. In *De civitate Dei* 12, 4, Augustine describes the order of creation, of which animals that have no use are also a part, and thus transcends the limits of a narrow anthropocentric world view: ‘*Non ex commodo vel incommodo nostro sed per se ipsam considerata natura dat artifici suo gloriam*’. Augustine is thus closer to Celsus’ view that the world was not created for man but as a whole

was God's world (cf. Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4, 99) than to Origen's anthropocentrism." (Agnethe Siquans 2016, 68).

What Agnethe Siquans points out, because it is truly remarkable in the context of patristics, should not, however, lead one to classify Augustine as an ecocentrist in the full sense. He adopts approaches in this direction and relativises anthropocentrism noticeably. Although he does not completely escape the Stoic thought construct, he weakens it as much as possible. This is also visible in his interpretation of the divine mandate to rule man in Gen 1:28: "This is what the natural order prescribes; this is how God created man. For he said (Gen 1:26): 'He shall rule over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over all the beasts that creep upon the earth.' Gifted with reason, created in God's image, man was to rule only over the reasonless creatures, not over man but over the beast. Therefore, the first righteous were instituted more as shepherds of animals than as kings of men (*primi iusti pastores pecorum magis quam reges hominum constituti sunt*), which God might also thereby suggest what the order of creatures (*ordo creaturarum*) required and what the merit of sinners (*meritum peccatorum*) is." (Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 19, 15).

Before the Fall, according to Augustine, humans were entrusted not so much with kingship over humans as with shepherding care for animals. This is part of the order of creation. An unjust, subjugating and enslaving dominion only emerges from it after the Fall. The image of God in the sense of *similitudo* thus obliges us to deal with people and animals in a good way that imitates God and is thus loving and caring (Isabelle Bochet 2010, 509 and 514). It does not establish a right for humans to use animals<sup>29</sup>.

In his commentary on Genesis against the Manichaeans, Augustine moves more along classical Stoic and this means ontological lines. There, he expresses the following thoughts about the image of God in man: "That man is said to be created in the image of God is said of the inner man, where reason and intellect are (*ubi est ratio et intellectus*). [...] For all other

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29 Once, Augustine uses the reference to the image of God as an argument against the transmigration of souls: "The human soul is created in the image of God (Gen 1:26). He will not give his image to the dog and the pig (*Anima humana facta est ad imaginem Dei; non dabit imaginem suam cani et porco*)." (Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 146, 18). Taken out of context, this sentence sounds very harsh and contemptuous of animals, and certainly the wording is not particularly fortunate (Gillian Clark 1998, 71–72). Nevertheless, one should be careful about drawing too many conclusions from this one sentence. The overall Augustinian style is much more animal-friendly.



living creatures are subject to man (*omnia enim animalia caetera subiecta sunt homini*), not because of the body, but because of the understanding (*propter intellectum*) which we have and they have not, although our body is also created in such a way that it shows that we are better than the wild animals and therefore similar to God (*Deo similes*). For the bodies of all animals [...] are inclined to the earth and not erect like the body of man. This indicates that our spirit must also be raised up to its height, that is, to the eternal spiritual things. Thus, it is evident that man, especially by the Spirit, is created in the image and likeness of God, to which the uprightness of the body bears witness.” (Augustine, *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* 1, 17, 28). The upright walk of man is seen here in good Stoic tradition as a sign of man’s vocation to exert his dominion over the earth.

But how can it be, the Manichaeans ask, that man dominates the animals when so many of them kill or harm people without the latter being able to defend themselves against it? It is true that man, according to Augustine, lost the perfection of the image of God with the Fall (*amisit perfectionem illam qua factus est ad imaginem Dei*). Because of the fragility of his body, he could therefore be killed by many animals (*a multis feris propter fragilitatem corporis possit occidi*) but be dominated by none (*a nullis tamen domari potest*), although he himself dominated so many (Augustine, *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* 1, 18, 29). Here Augustine perceives and takes seriously the factual imbalance of power between humans and animals. Unlike in *De civitate Dei*, he leaves it at that without asking for the ideal of a caring ruler.

However, Augustine emphasises that humans’ dominion over animals and their dominion over the animal in themselves, i.e. over human passions, must be considered together: Rightly understood, the mandate to rule from Gen 1:28 also means that we “subdue all the affects and movements of the soul, which we have similarly to the animals, and let them be ruled by moderation and modesty (*dominaremur per temperantiam et modestiam*). For if these movements are not mastered, they will tear us out, lead to the most abominable habits, tempt us to indulge in various harmful pleasures, and make us similar to all kinds of wild animals (*similes omni generi bestiarum*). But when they are mastered and subdued, they become wholly tame and live in harmony with us.” (Augustine, *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* 1, 20, 31). Here, too, Augustine moves strongly in Stoic waters and pleads for the classical Greek subordination of feelings to reason.

### 5.18.9 Summary

As a lover of the Bible and a rhetorical language artist, Augustine is inspired by the Holy Scriptures to a higher degree than hardly any other Church Father—and therefore often speaks of God’s care for and love of non-human creatures. For him, they belong to the self-evident fluidity of faith. “With his theocentrist view, which also treats non-human creatures with esteem in regard to the Creator, Augustine is clearly in the tradition of Basil, while he opposes Origen’s anthropocentric orientation.” (Agnethe Siquans 2016, 70).

From this fundamentally animal-friendly attitude, Augustine extends animals’ abilities as far as is at all possible within the framework of Stoic ontology. He attributes as many abilities as possible to humans and animals together. He achieves this by ascribing many more abilities to the senses and memory and far fewer to reason than was customary in his time. Ultimately, this also makes humans more “animal-like”—many of their everyday activities take place without reason because they are based on sensory impressions and memories. Yet, for Augustine, Stoic ontology sets the decisive limit: for him, too, judgement and freedom of will only belong to human beings.

Nonetheless, Augustine is able to weaken anthropocentrism because he does not consider the perspective of utility to be the decisive one. Here, he distances himself noticeably from Stoic teleology, which leaves no room for the non-useful and, due to its strict rationalism, subjects everything to efficiency thinking. For Augustine, considerations of utility always take second place in the context of his faith in a God of overflowing love. And even if he does not take the decisive final step of explicitly turning away from anthropocentrism, it can still be stated: “Animals in Augustine experience respect as God’s creatures, as parts of the divine world order. This leads to respect for non-human creation—because of the Creator. Humans have a prominent place in this order of creation, but they are not the centre of the world. This is God, the Creator. Humans are creatures like animals and also part of God’s world.” (Agnethe Siquans 2016, 71).

### 5.19 *The Animal Ethical Impetuses of Early Christian Theology in the Context of Hellenism. A Summary*

At the end of this chapter, it is time to draw some general observations from the analysis of the eighteen authors. To begin with, it is worth recalling

once again that in the first 250 years of its existence, Christians constituted a vanishingly small minority in the Roman Empire. In the face of an environment that did not believe or believed differently, Christianity had more than enough to do to clarify its central core messages, to make them plausible and to defend them internally and externally. These include belief in the Resurrection and eternal life, in Jesus Christ as the Saviour of the world, in a God who can be experienced in three ways, and the design and meaning of the central liturgical celebrations and sacramental sign acts. Against this background, an elaborated form of animal ethics was not to be expected and did not become visible anywhere. Nevertheless, early Christian theology did not develop entirely without standpoints that were relevant to animal ethics. Without suspecting it and without wanting to, it set out a decisive course which has continued until today.

Two questions guided our investigation in the previous chapter. First, how do the early Christian theologians position themselves in relation to the paradigms of Greco-Roman philosophy and culture that are relevant to animal and creation ethics? And secondly: How do they receive and interpret the passages of the Bible that are relevant to animal and creation ethics? Only the combination of both questions will provide an overall picture of the animal ethical decisions that took place in the first Christian centuries.

### 5.19.1 The Church Fathers and the Fixed Points of Stoic–Hellenistic Philosophy

In our analysis of animal ethics in Greek mainstream philosophy and especially in the Stoa, five core aspects emerged that span the web of ideas of anthropocentrism and are inseparably interwoven there (cf. chapter 3.5.6): divine providence and care, man's endowment with reason and language as his exclusive proprium, the handling of feelings as the "animals in us" that is "dominated" by reason, the handling of real animals that is also dominated by reason, and, at the centre, the teleology of anthropocentrism.

The early Christian theologians largely adopt these five aspects as a package. However, they weight them very differently in each case—in comparison with other theologians as well as in comparison of the aspects among themselves.

- Only in Origen do we find the *idea of divine providence* (πρόνοια/ providentia) directly connected with strong anthropocentrism. Augustine un-

- derpins it with his reference to the special gifts of man (intellectually in terms of reason, physically in terms of man's upright gait). However, several authors from the 4th century emphasise that divine providence applies to all living beings, including non-humans—such as Lactance, Nemesios of Emesa and Pseudo-Athenagoras. This is basically relativisation, if not indirect neutralisation, of anthropocentrism. On the whole, the idea of providence is not emphasised as strongly as in the younger Stoa. This only happens in Nemesios of Emesa, who also subsumes it comprehensively under the idea of rationality (nothing that God provides for is superfluous or useless, for that would call God into question as pure reason). This idea of rationality, for its part, is questioned in Augustine—he doubts that all creatures are under the maxim of utility. Nevertheless, it has to be said that the idea of divine providence cannot be eliminated from the early Christian faith in creation. It always resonates in the background; indeed, one would not be wrong to claim that Stoic *πρόνοια*/ *providentia* is partly responsible for early Christianity's attraction to this philosophical current.
- The *aloga thesis*, which has shaped Greco-Roman philosophy since the 5th century BC, is taken for granted by the Church Fathers. We find clear distancing from it only in Tatian, who was considered a heretic. On the other hand, we find their explicit confirmation and underpinning in Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Ephraim the Syrian, Gregory of Nyssa and John Chrysostom. At least two Church Fathers, namely Basil of Caesarea and Augustine of Hippo, noticeably struggle to mitigate and relativise it—admittedly without questioning it in principle. The idea of a steep, hierarchical *scala naturae*, which the Stoics closely associated with the *aloga thesis*, is taken up by only a few of the Church Fathers. Tertullian strongly affirms it, Origen rather weakly. Irenaeus of Lyons is reserved to distant about it; Basil of Caesarea extraordinarily critical of it. Finally, Nemesios of Emesa reinterprets the *scala naturae* and understands it above all as proof of the interconnectedness of all creatures. He thus turns the Stoic idea on its head. It must be emphasised, however, that none of the Church Fathers goes as far as Philon, who adapts the distribution of the works of Creation on the six days to the Stoic *scala naturae*. Here the Bible beats Greek ontology—this is so clear as day that it is never questioned. Finally, it is striking that most of the Church Fathers emphasise how wonderful and precious even the smallest and “lowliest” creatures are. To the ears of orthodox Stoics, this must have sounded like provocation.

- At the centre of the Stoic coordinate system is *anthropocentrism*, which has shaped mainstream Greco-Roman philosophy since the 5th century BC. Not a single Church Father explicitly questions or even denies it. However, the affirmative statements have very different weighting. We find only a weak emphasis in Ambrose of Milan. In comparison, we find a clearer emphasis in Tertullian, Origen, Lactance and Cyril of Jerusalem. The emphasis is strong and very determined in Ephraim the Syrian, Gregory of Nyssa and Pseudo-Athenagoras. In many cases, anthropocentrism is derived from Christocentrism/logocentrism: Christ, the Logos, can only be received and recognised by rational living beings. And because creation is designed for the incarnation of the Logos (understood as becoming a human being and not a creature), it is only there for the sake of human beings. This is explicitly argued by Theophilus of Antioch, Irenaeus of Lyons, Clement of Alexandria, Origen and Cyril of Jerusalem. That anthropocentrism does not necessarily have to come across as arrogant towards animals, however, is shown in particular by Lactance and Cyril of Jerusalem, whose sympathy for animals is unmistakable. In addition, there are recognisable efforts to relativise anthropocentrism in Nemesios of Emesa, Jerome and Augustine. A de facto departure from anthropocentrism is made by Basil of Caesarea, in whom the commitment to anthropocentrism is rather empty of content and has therefore largely lost its effect. The question of eternal life is also connected with anthropocentrism. If only man possesses reason, it is clear to the Church Fathers that only he can freely and reflectively decide on his salvation. Therefore, the *aloga* cannot have eternal life—they do not aspire to it, and they lack nothing if God withholds it from them.
- The *mastery of the passions* and the senses by the hegemonicon of reason is strongly paralleled in Stoic philosophy with the mastery of the reasonless animals. Passions are “the animal in us”. More or less explicitly, Irenaeus of Lyons, Origen, John Chrysostom, Nemesios of Emesa, Pseudo-Athenagoras and Augustine take up this idea. They are usually found in the context of allegorical interpretations of biblical animal texts or in further reflections on animals based on them. Animals are often used as “models” of virtues and vices—for virtues, especially in Basil of Caesarea and, following him, in Ambrose of Milan.
- The fifth and last element is *animal ethics in the proper sense*. With the exception of Clement of Alexandria, who expands and deepens Philon’s sensitive interpretation of the animal protection commandments in the Torah, as well as with great restraint from Aphrahat, it is limited to the

interpretation of the governmental mandate over animals from Gen 1:28. Anciently and biblically, this commission (formally anthropocentric, but not teleologically anthropocentric!) was meant in such a way that the king or all humans should fairly and sensitively arbitrate conflicts and competitive situations between different animals, but also between humans and animals as well as between humans (cf. chapter 2.2). In the context of the *aloga* thesis and the Stoic *scala naturae*, it is interpreted by the Church Fathers as meaning that the rational are to guide and “rule” the irrational. It is striking, however, that several Church Fathers remain very reserved, such as Basil of Caesarea and Ambrose of Milan, or explicitly characterise “dominion” as pastoral care, such as Augustine. The same Augustine, like John Chrysostom, also sees the despotic rule of man over animals as a consequence of sin. The Stoa had already understood ruling over the reasonless not as a reign of terror and arbitrariness, but as wise, rational governance. Only in connection with its strong anthropocentrism did it interpret this reason technically/instrumentally as a use for exclusively human purposes. The Church Fathers only very partially subscribe to this instrumental thinking. Only Theophilus of Antioch, Origen and Gregory of Nyssa advocate a strong anthropocentric calculation of utility. Cyril of Jerusalem, Basil of Caesarea and Jerome express varying to sceptical views. Lactance, Nemesios of Emesa and Augustine take an explicitly critical and negative stance.

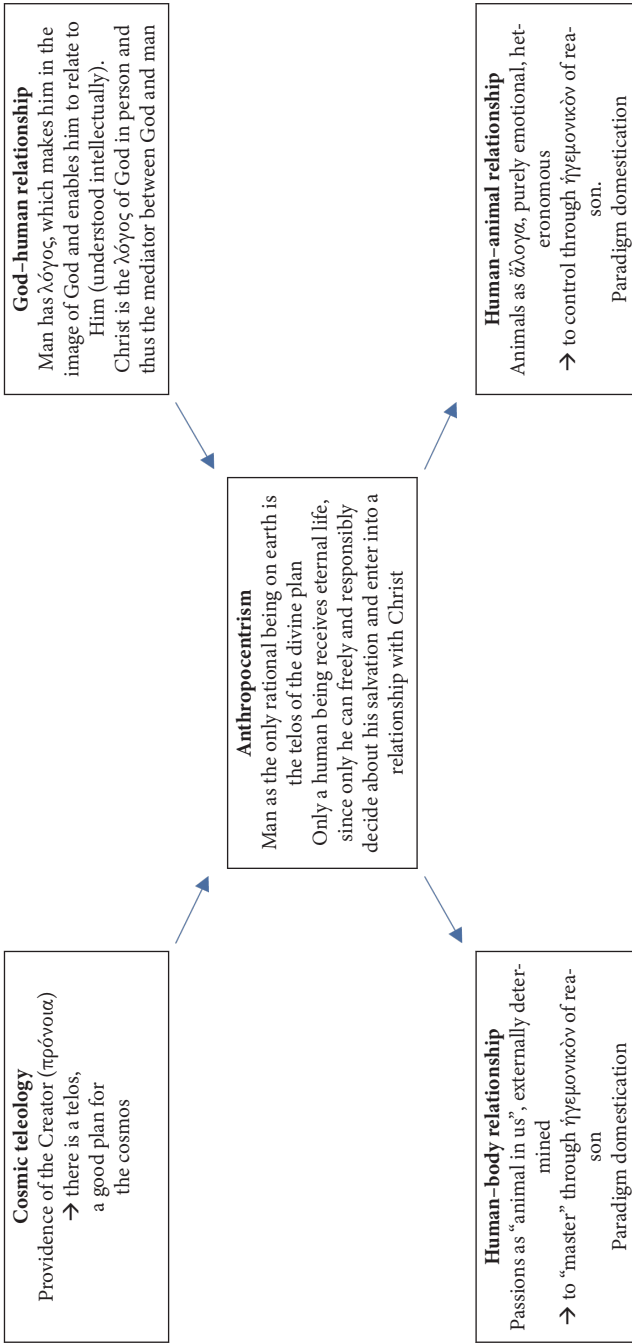
The situation is thus far less uniform than one would spontaneously think. It is true that not a single early Christian theologian shakes the anthropocentric coordinate system of the Hellenistic mainstream in principle. Despite some unmistakable doubts in detail, the five core aspects of Stoic thought are, if not affirmed, then at least left largely untouched by all of them. And yet the range of the Church Fathers’ attitudes towards non-human creatures is wide: some positions cannot be qualified as anything other than “hostile to animals” (Origen, Pseudo-Athenagoras). Some are neutral, but rather distant and alien towards animals (Tertullian, Ephraim the Syrian, Gregory of Nyssa and Jerome). Quite a few, however, let us feel their joy in the proximity to and observation of animals and show pronounced kindness towards animals, in which for them the kindness of God towards animals is reflected (Irenaeus of Lyons, Lactance, Cyril of Jerusalem, but above all Basil of Caesarea, Nemesios of Emesa and Augustine).

One must therefore look more closely than just at the striking label of “anthropocentrism yes or no”. Hellenism ticks anthropocentrically in its overwhelming majority—however one may evaluate that. And the small group of early Christians, who soon lost touch with their Jewish roots, did not recognise the contingency of this Hellenistic idea. Perhaps because they were not yet self-critical enough to do so, but much more likely because they focused their attention on other problems that were more pressing for them.

On the whole, however, animals have far more weight in the thinking of the Church Fathers than would have been expected in the pre-structuring of the cosmological debate of Greek philosophy. This can only be due to the biblical (Creation) texts, which assign much more importance to animals than Plato’s *Timaeus* and even more so the Stoa. The biblical concept of God’s personal relationship to all creatures, characterised by love, noticeably softens the harshness and arrogance of Stoic rationalism for many Church Fathers. Such a cold form of anthropocentrism as in the younger Stoa is not to be found anywhere in early Christianity.

Early Christianity sees in the Stoa a congenial philosophy. Unlike Plato, who believes in the transmigration of souls, and unlike Aristotle, who considers both human and animal souls mortal, the Stoa is convinced of an immortal human soul and a unique life on earth. For early Christians, this promises the closest possible proximity to the message of resurrection (in the context of animal ethics in Tertullian, Basil, Jerome and Augustine). The Stoic idea of an inalienable human dignity and universalistic cosmopolitanism can also be ideally united with the Christian image of man and the missionary mandate. And finally, the Stoic idea of good divine providence corresponds excellently to the Christian image of God and the idea of man’s endowment with reason to the idea of a Logos who became flesh.

Diagram: The network of ideas of Christian anthropocentrism





In other words, the Stoic edifice of thought offers the early church so many positive points of contact that its rough edges are generously passed over. Some are even no longer recognisable because the Septuagint has already sanded down and adapted the Bible's contradictions to Greek ontology, which we reflect on again in the following section. The price of this relatively unrestricted reception of the Stoa, however, can no longer be overlooked today: a notion of a divine plan of creation that is far too strong; an intellectually reduced understanding of redemption and the relationship with Christ; tragic devaluation of what is corporeal and of feelings; equally tragic devaluation of animals; and as the centrepiece in the middle, highly problematic teleological anthropocentrism.

### 5.19.2 The Church Fathers and Biblical Animal Ethics

As we already noted in the introduction to this chapter, the Christian Creation myth is more comprehensive than the Platonic one that dominated the Hellenistic cultural sphere, which leaves the creation of animals to the sub-gods and only mentions it in one sentence at the very end. In Gen 1, one and a half days out of seven are dedicated to animals, they receive the same blessing as humans, land animals are created on the same day as humans, humans are instructed to eat a vegetarian diet just like animals, and all living creatures are given the house of life and rest on the Sabbath. This says a lot about the Christian understanding of creation. A house without inhabitants is meaningless, and the fundamental characteristic is not some exclusive gift but being an inhabitant. Against this background, it becomes understandable why many Church Fathers and their audience are moved by the question of why the Bible speaks so extensively of animals. The broad and largely positive thematisation of animals, their significance for God and human beings and their value require justification in Greco-Roman culture. This is the challenge the Church Fathers face, and this should not be overlooked.

No Church Father would have thought of questioning the paramount importance of the Holy Scripture in any way. Its authority was inviolable for the early church, and anyone who undermined it, like Markion, was immediately identified as a heretic and excluded. Nevertheless, this alone does not guarantee comprehensive and proper reception of the biblical impetuses. In concrete terms, as far as I can see, *four significant constrictions* stand in the way of this in the early Christian era. The first two are of a

principled nature and were unavoidable, the last two are contingent and could possibly have taken a different course:

- the *dogmatic* narrowing that results from the almost exclusive focus of *a religion in statu nascendi* on a few core statements of its faith. As understandable as it is for a new religion to initially focus on a few core issues and attempt to clarify them discursively, it runs the risk of beliefs creeping in behind the scenes that have not been reflected upon, discussed and tested. At some point, however, they become so deeply and firmly anchored in the belief system that they are difficult to remove even when they are recognised as errors. For the early church, the question of the relationship between humans and animals is precisely one that lies on the periphery of the core field of faith in creation and therefore does not receive the attention it deserves in itself. There is no open inner-church controversy about the aloga thesis and anthropocentrism—and where it does flare up, as with Origen, it is brushed aside relatively quickly because it comes from a church opponent like Kelsos.
- the *fundamental theological* narrowing that results from the (undisputed!) necessity to inculturate the Christian faith into the secular philosophy of society and not vice versa. If early Christianity had chosen the opposite path, it would have remained a fundamentalist sect and never become a religion spanning the world. But it recognised, appreciated and accepted the knowledge and wisdom of the surrounding culture—and this has remained the strategy of the mainstream churches to this day, despite all fundamentalist currents. Nevertheless, in every *process of inculturation*, as open and opening as it is at first, there is also an often-concealed narrowing: The distinction between what can be adopted and what should not be adopted tends to be too adoption-friendly, i.e. not critical enough. In this context, “in dubio pro reo” means: “In case of doubt, the convictions of the secular culture are adopted”. Sometimes this later turns out to be a mistake.
- the *religion-genetic* narrowing resulting from the creeping *alienation of the early Church from Hebrew Judaism* and the Hebrew Bible. With the spatial spread of Christianity throughout the ecumenism of the Roman Empire and the shift of its centre away from Jerusalem, as well as with the re-Hebraisation of Hellenistic diaspora Judaism after the Bar Kochba revolt of 132–136 AD, there occurred—partly fuelled by local conflicts and without ignoring some lasting regional processes of exchange—ever greater alienation of the Church from its Jewish root soil. This observa-

tion holds true even if one does not assume that, with Peter Schäfer (2015, 11), there was a “parting of the ways”, i.e. a final and complete separation between the sister religions (!) Judaism and Christianity (cf. also Peter Gemeinhardt 2022, 20–21). Despite all the assurances of the mosaics in the early Christian basilicas, the *ecclesia ex circumcissione* no longer exists, and certainly not as a halfway equal sister to the *ecclesia ex gentibus*. With this, however, much knowledge about the Jew Jesus of Nazareth, his culture, his way of life and his handling of the Holy Scriptures is lost.

- the *hermeneutical* narrowing that arises from the increasing *dominance of allegory* as the preferred method of scriptural interpretation. Occasionally, the (purely) allegorical interpretation of the Creation narratives and the biblical vision of animal peace is explicitly rejected (Irenaeus of Lyons, Basil of Caesarea); sometimes it is deliberately used only as one of several methods (Theophilus of Antioch, Augustine). More and more often, however, it is propagated as the only “truly spiritual” method of interpreting Scripture (Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Ambrose of Milan, Jerome). Origen and Jerome explicitly justify this on the grounds that a literal interpretation would make many biblical narratives seem fairy-tale-like or fabulous, e.g. the Noah narrative or the vision of the peace of the beasts. Nevertheless, allegorism must be seen as a highly ambiguous means of resolving this problem. By definition, it is “a method of textual interpretation that presupposes that the literal sense is not the actual or only sense of a text, and therefore attempts to tap into its assumed [...] depth of meaning [...] In order to make this dimension of meaning accessible, the text is related point by point to a system of reference built up by the philosophical or theological convictions of the interpreter” (Thomas Söding 1993, 400). And this is precisely where the problem lies: it is largely left to the subjective (and usually not further substantiated!) judgement of the interpreter which elements of a text he interprets allegorically and with reference to which system of reference he decodes them. Here lies the decisive difference between myths and parables, which are perceived as holistic images, and allegoresis, which breaks down a narrative into many individual images and interprets some of them quite isolated from the overall context. Thus, the biblical vision of animal peace understands the playing of the human infant in front of the adder’s loophole as an image of trust and guilelessness, but the infant and the snake as real beings. The allegorism of the Church Fathers (with the exception of Irenaeus of Lyon), on the other hand,

interprets animals as metaphors for various groups of people and thus eliminates the real animals from the text. The same happens with the Flood narrative: the wood of the ark is typologised as the wood of Jesus' cross, the water of the Flood is typologised as the water of baptism, the ark is typologised as the church, and the animals in the ark are typologised as the various groups of people, wilder or tamer, more educated or less educated. The Noah narrative is thus reinterpreted as an image for living together in the colourful zoo of the church. The bottom line is that the increasingly consistent allegorising of animals in biblical narratives ensures an increasing fading out that real animals are increasingly faded out—to their detriment and damage.

The result of these four narrowings is that the material selection of biblical texts available for animal ethics is becoming more and more limited. And this small residual number of biblical texts is then also formally interpreted in an increasingly Hellenistic way.

- The *allegorical interpretation* eliminates animals from all the texts that appear “fairytale-like” to Hellenism: The vision of animal peace in Is 11 is only interpreted literally by Irenaeus of Lyons, its New Testament counterpart Mk 1:13 only by Clement of Alexandria. Otherwise, the biblical peace of animals is interpreted as a hidden speech about peace among human beings. The Flood narrative Gen 6–9, one of the central Old Testament texts on the ethics of the relationship between humans and animals, is similarly affected: that the animals of all species are saved at all (as the only exception, Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4, 41); that God's covenant applies to them just as it does to humans (cf. the negative finding in Andrew Louth 2001, 154–155 and also already in Hugo Rahner 1964, 504–547; the only exception is Irenaeus of Lyons); that they form a community of destiny, but also a community of law with God and man; all this is not perceived by the Church Fathers.
- Due to the *alienation from Hebrew Judaism*, attention to the animal ethical norms of the Torah is lost: Only Clement of Alexandria (and, to be precise, Aphrahat with anti-Jewish intent) takes up Philon's great reflections. After that, the corresponding commandments are completely lost sight of. Clement is also the only one who positively appreciates Jesus' reference to God's fatherly and motherly care for animals in Mt 6:24–34—the alienation is thus not only an alienation from the Old Testament, but also from the Jewish Rabbi Jesus (who, by the way, argues in the wisdom tradition in the specific passage Mt 6). It is most clearly visible in

the abandonment of the Jewish commandment of ritual slaughter. This commandment, which is so important from the point of view of animal ethics and which gets under the skin emotionally, was imposed on the “Gentile Christians” in the Apostles’ Council Acts 15 as one of only three Jewish commandments—against the fierce resistance of Paul. But after Tertullian at the latest, it no longer plays a role and vanishes without any internal church disputes. There are simply no Jewish Christians left who could stand up for the retention of ritual slaughter.

What remains as a written basis for considerations relevant to animal ethics is a relatively manageable body of texts:

- the two Creation narratives Gen 1–3, in which an exclusively allegorical interpretation of animals is forbidden out of respect for the faith in creation,
- the Logos hymn Jn 1, corresponding to Gen 1,
- the Psalms, in which animals are abundantly mentioned (first and foremost Ps 8 and Ps 104, but also many others) and which also defy an exclusively allegorical interpretation,
- Those biblical passages that deal with a vegetarian diet: Gen 1:29 in conjunction with Gen 9:3; Dan 6; 9–10 and Rom 14:20–21 in an abbreviated reading. Tatian and Basil of Caesarea interpret animal ethical reasons for their plea in favour of voluntary vegetarianism from these passages; Clement of Alexandria understands this as natural on the basis of Gen 1, while Jerome interprets vegetarianism in Gen 1 as a state of spiritual purity.

Of course, one must also bear in mind that not all Church Fathers had a complete collection of the biblical books at their disposal. Many scriptural quotations may only have been transmitted to them from the writings of other Church Fathers. Nevertheless, without the aforementioned “restrictions”, they would have been able to make far more biblical texts fruitful in terms of animal ethics.

Alongside this serious quantitative restriction of the textual basis is a qualitative shift in interpretation: the Septuagint, the authoritative text of the Old Testament for both the New Testament authors and the Church Fathers, is not simply a translation of the Hebrew text into Greek, but at the same time (mostly unconsciously and unintentionally) its Hellenistic interpretation and “recolouration”. This will be illustrated once again by

the two examples that have come up most frequently in the course of our investigations:

- Gen 1:27 LXX (and its inner-biblical citation in Sir 17:3 LXX) reads: κατ’ εἰκόνα αὐτοῦ ἐποίησεν αὐτούς. Here, for the first time, the image of God is reinterpreted in terms of Greek thought. The functional–relational statement that man was created as the image of God (Gen 1:27) becomes the essence–ontological statement that he was created in His image. The preposition κατὰ in the accusative denotes a goal towards which something is done, or a resemblance to a model—in the concrete case, the latter. But this does not correspond to what the Hebrew text says. Georg Fischer translates it very literally as follows: “We want to make ‘man’ as our statue, as our likeness!... And God created man as his statue, as the statue of God he created him.” (Georg Fischer 2018, 148 and 153). Fischer thereby interprets the threefold “as our statue” in the sense of a close *relationship* and the “as our likeness” in the sense of an abiding difference (Georg Fischer 2018, 152). The Septuagint, on the other hand, makes it a similarity in terms of being. Since Theophilus of Antioch, this interpretation has guided all patristics.
- Ps 48:13 LXX reads, “παρασυνεβλήθη τοῖς κτήνεσιν τοῖς ἀνοήτοις καὶ ὁμοιώθη αὐτοῖς”—“he resembles the reasonless cattle and becomes like them”. The “he” in the patristic reception refers to unreasonable, immoral people. In the original Hebrew of Ps 49,13, however, it is said of rich and poor, wise and foolish alike: “But man does not abide in his splendour; he is like cattle that fall silent.” In death, the thought goes, all are equal: rich and poor, man and cattle. In the Septuagint, on the other hand, the silencing in death is replaced by the lack of understanding in life—a completely different statement. You can see how the Septuagint Hellenises the Hebrew text: According to the Stoic conviction, man and animals are precisely not equal to each other in death, since the soul of man is immortal—a conviction that is unthinkable in Israel at the time of the Psalms. And equally unthinkable for the Psalms is to describe animals as “reasonless”. Hellenism upgrades humans and downgrades animals—and thus makes it impossible to compare their fates. Thus, the Septuagint and, following it, the Church Fathers must inevitably reinterpret the sentence.

Beyond the reinterpretations in the Septuagint text, some Church Fathers look for those formulations in the Creation narratives Gen 1–3 that can be used (independently of the original intention of the biblical authors) to

mark a difference between humans and animals, and ignore those formulations that clearly state there is a form of equality between humans and animals. Thus, for example, Origen and Ephraim strongly emphasise that according to Gen 1:20 and 24 LXX, animals were “brought forth” from the water or the earth and not directly created by God. The fact that God “makes” and “creates” animals in the same way as humans (Gen 1:21 and 25 LXX), on the other hand, is passed over. Likewise, Ephraim interprets from Gen 2:7 and 19 that God did not breathe the breath of life directly into animals but reserved this privilege for man alone. Obviously, he seeks what he wants to find and ignores what does not fit into his concept.

So, a plethora of factors from more than half a millennium of intellectual history ultimately leads to the animal ethical ideas of the Church Fathers that have influenced Christian theology to this day. Most of these factors are grounded neither in the Jewish Bible nor in the preaching of Jesus of Nazareth but influence the small and young Church first from “outside”—from the Hellenistic culture that dominates the entire Roman Empire—but then “from within” because practically all Christians were born into this Hellenistic culture and grew up in it. They do not perceive Hellenism as foreign, but as their own—before they turn to Christianity and also after they have become Christians.

Christian anthropocentrism thus has neither (pre-Hellenistic) Old Testament nor Jesuan roots. At the same time, with the social acceptance of Darwin’s theory of evolution, it has become a fossil of intellectual history. This is then all the more reason to ask systematically and theologically in the last chapter whether it is not time to put 2000 years of Christian anthropocentrism to rest and establish a new form of creation ethics in its place.





## 6 On the (further) development of Christian animal ethics

“Let’s talk about ourselves. We are indeed soaring to greatness, if not god-like at least for our own emotional gratification. Our individual organismic selves, our tribe, our species are the culmination of Earth’s achievement. Of course we think this way. [...] We are so brainy compared with the rest of life that we actually do think of ourselves as demigods, somewhere halfway between the animals below us and the angels above, and moving ever upward. It is easy to suppose that the genius of our species is on some kind of automatic pilot, guiding us to an undefined empyrean that will exist with perfect order and provide personal happiness. If we ourselves are ignorant, our descendants will find the empyrean as humanity’s destiny when someday, somehow they arrive there. So we stumble forward in hopeful chaos, trusting that the light on the horizon is the dawn and not the twilight.” (Edward O. Wilson 2016, engl. original 48–49).

With these trenchant sentences, the great biologist Edward O. Wilson (1929 Birmingham AL–2021 Burlington MA) sums up the core of Christian occidental anthropocentrism: Man sees himself in the middle position between animals and angels—this is exactly the Stoically inspired Christian image of the human position on the *scala naturae*. The Church Fathers would not have said it differently—only the word “demigods” would have been replaced by “images of God” (except for Ephraim the Syrian). However, what did not play the slightest role for the Church Fathers, but was only added in modern times, is an irrepressible scientific and technical optimism in progress. It is a by-product of anthropocentrism, which makes its extremely problematic side openly visible.

It is precisely this modern optimism about progress that has been in its greatest crisis for some years now. The young generation realises how much humanity has manoeuvred itself into a dead end over the past few decades. The worldwide Fridays for Future movement and other young environmental movements can no longer be placated with vague promises—they see that we are standing on the edge of the abyss. “The light on the horizon” that progress optimism promised us as “dawn” is thus now perceived rather soberly as “twilight” only a few years after Wilson’s book was written.

According to Wilson, there has been a minority position over the millennia that has interpreted the world non-anthropocentrically and defined the role of humans much more modestly: “There is an unbreakable chain of self-understanding that thinking people largely neglect. One of its lessons is that we are not as gods. We’re not yet sentient and intelligent enough to be much of anything. And we’re not going to have a secure future if we continue to play the kind of false god who whimsically destroys Earth’s living environment, and are pleased with what we have wrought.” (Edward O. Wilson 2016, engl. original 50)

Wilson had to endure some criticism because in these and other passages he leaves the ground of his own discipline, biology, and ventures far into philosophical and theological terrain. Some have ridiculed him as a preacher for this. And yet his theses quoted here call for a debate on the matter, which one should not avoid despite or rather because of all the discomfort.

Anthropocentric teleology weighs heavily on the Christian message in the ecological age—and would not be theologically necessary if one thinks of the message of the Old Testament and Jesus himself. But its 2000-year history—as old as that of Christianity itself—makes it in effect akin to a dogma: it seems to many Christians and theologians that to abandon anthropocentrism is to betray a core message of the Christian faith.

So let us first ask whether overcoming Christian anthropocentrism would be theologically legitimate. Three considerations lead us to argue for an affirmative answer:

- First of all, it remains a very serious fact that anthropocentrism has *shaped the entire history of Christianity and theology*. To want to overcome it is therefore a considerable intervention in the architecture of theology. It must be well justified and comprehensively thought through. But that does *not* make a *paradigm shift impossible*. Admittedly, it will remain difficult, as a brief review of the Second Vatican Council shows: “At the end of the third session of the Second Vatican Council, an influential theological advisor to the bishops, the young theology professor Joseph Ratzinger, presented an interim report in which he took preliminary stock of the situation. In it, he expressed the assessment that the disastrous, because it is unbiblical, influence of the Stoic natural law tradition on Christian ethics had now been overcome (Joseph Ratzinger 1965, 40–47). Actual developments were to disprove this optimistic prognosis more quickly than most people inside and outside the Church thought possible at the time.” (Eberhard Schockenhoff 2021, 230). Ratzinger was

referring to the “disastrous, because it is unbiblical, influence of the Stoic natural law tradition” especially in sexual ethics. However, the same observation is appropriate for creation ethics. And Schockenhoff’s analysis is just as correct here: it will take much longer than one would suspect for stoic anthropocentrism to be overcome.

- However, Christian anthropocentrism, although it has spread into the capillaries of theology, but also of liturgy, has *never been dogmatised*. Would that even be possible? First of all, it is clear that only historically revealed truths can be dogmatised. What is reasonably justifiable does not need dogmatisation, but cannot be dogmatised either, because the Church has no exclusive competence with regard to reasonably justified truths. Now, anthropocentrism in particular was justified exclusively philosophically for five centuries before the emergence of the Church—that it represents a revelatory truth has consequently never been asserted by the Church and would also ignore this historical fact. However, it could theoretically be that the truth of revelation is inseparable from the truth of reason of anthropocentrism. Then the truth of reason itself would be indirectly dogmatised as soon as the truth of revelation based on it is dogmatised (according to Josef Schuster 1984). Here, one could think of the dogma of the incarnation, the incarnation of God, which in the patristic interpretation is closely linked to anthropocentrism through the Logos idea. Because of this link, the Church has long treated it like a dogma and propagated it. It is like traditional Christian sexual morality: the Church authorities have tried to conceal its historical origin in a very specific, contingent philosophical current—and to pretend it has a revealed status, which does not exist in reality (Eberhard Schockenhoff 2021, 74–101). As soon as this suggestive manoeuvre is uncovered, one would have to prove that the connection between Christology and anthropocentrism is biblically the only possible one—because it is not a Church Father but the Bible that is the source of revelation. And there one comes up against insurmountable difficulties, as was shown in chapter 2. Despite all its official confirmations, especially in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, anthropocentrism is therefore not a dogma, but only a *constant, but historically contingent and changeable teaching* of the Church.
- With a view to overcoming Christian anthropocentrism, (besides numerous statements made during the ecumenical conciliar process for justice, peace and the integrity of creation, cf. Michael Rosenberger 2001) some *statements by Pope Francis* in the encyclical *Laudato si’*, which I have

already quoted in chapter 1, are encouraging: “In our time, the Church does not simply state that other creatures are completely subordinated to the good of human beings, as if they have no worth in themselves and can be treated as we wish” (LS 69). And “The ultimate purpose of other creatures is not to be found in us” (LS 83). These are two clear examples of distancing from anthropocentrism. A significant dimension of spiritual depth also shines forth when Francis points out that Christ, who became “flesh”, i.e. creature, “has taken unto himself this material world and now, risen, is intimately present to each being, surrounding it with his affection and penetrating it with his light” (LS 221). He has thus become the “seed of definitive transformation” of the entire universe (LS 235). The interpretations of the Colossian hymn (Col 1:15–20) and the Logos hymn (Jn 1:1–18) are particularly dense: “One Person of the Trinity entered into the created cosmos, throwing in his lot with it, even to the cross. From the beginning of the world, but particularly through the incarnation, the mystery of Christ is at work in a hidden manner in the natural world as a whole” (LS 99). Francis thus not only denies that everything in the “kingdom of ends” is ordered towards man, but furthermore affirms a holistic understanding of the incarnation that takes the Hebrew meaning of “flesh” seriously. He thus opens all doors to overcoming Christian anthropocentrism christologically and soteriologically.

Overcoming Christian anthropocentrism would therefore be theologically legitimate. But is it also advisable? For the justification of a paradigm shift, this is clearly to be demanded. From the perspective of at least six scientific disciplines, the answer here is also an unequivocal yes:

- *Theologically*, it is important to take into account what we have worked out in chapter 2: The Bible teleologically thinks biocentrically to a large extent, without being reflexive about it. Only formally does it advocate anthropocentrism, i.e. it sees human beings as the recipients of responsibility for creation, as is manifested, for example, in the concept of image in Gen 1:27. But the sense of the seven-day work of the Creation is not man alone, but the community of all living beings as inhabitants of the house of life. This biocentristic basic orientation runs at least through the entire pre-Hellenistic Bible. And even among the Hellenistically influenced late Old Testament and New Testament texts, only a few position themselves in favour of anthropocentrism.

- *Philosophically*, biocentrism embodies the far less steep teleology. It gets by with considerably fewer presuppositions and, in accordance with the principle of parsimony, is *ceteris paribus* preferable to anthropocentrism. If one reviews the passage through the philosophical and theological texts (in chapters 3 and 5) from a distance, one is struck by how hard they (must) try in all centuries to prove the *aloga* thesis on which anthropocentrism is based. Obviously, it has never been possible to silence the critical voices with convincing arguments. One must always confront them anew. The *aloga* thesis thus proves to be a black hole that devours an incredible amount of energy without really producing anything fruitful.
- From a *scientific* point of view, evolutionary biology does not allow for a monilinear teleology, which is indispensable for anthropocentrism. Life on planet Earth has evolved independently in many different directions. The strands of development diverge in more and more ramifications rather than converge into one strand. Moreover, modern behavioural and cognitive biology cannot identify such a deep divide between humans and animals as claimed in the *aloga* thesis. Gradual differences undoubtedly exist, and it is not at all in dispute that *homo sapiens* is the most intelligent species on the planet, relatively speaking. But the binary code of Greek philosophy between the Logos-endowed and the *aloga* is far too wooden to do justice to reality.
- *Psychologically*, since Sigmund Freud, the *aloga* thesis has been seen for what it really is: the reaction to “the second, the biological mortification of human narcissism” (Sigmund Freud 1917, 4). The sword of Damocles of this mortification has hovered over humans not only since Charles Darwin. Rather, people of all centuries have perceived and thematised a form of kinship between humans and animals—and many of their contemporaries have perceived this as a threat and as questioning. Freud, on the other hand, points out that the “self-consciousness” gained by devaluing others is ultimately unhealthy and pathological. A psychologically healthy person possesses a self-consciousness that does not devalue others but enhances and values them.
- From a *moral and psychological* point of view, anthropocentrism is one of the central blockades for a new relationship to non-human creation. It is true that it can rationally justify ecological and animal ethical humanism. But emotionally, it creates a climate in which people are more likely to be seduced by the “technocratic paradigm” of being able to do and shape everything, to more readily subscribe to economism, which sees

- only (natural) capital in non-human creation, and to be more quickly inclined to chauvinistic thinking that derives primarily rights, but no duties, from the special position of humans, thus turning the intention of Gen 1:27 on its head (Michael Rosenberger 2021, 179).
- *Sociologically*, the adoption of anthropocentrism in early Christianity was the logical consequence of the affirmation of the surrounding secular society and its paradigms. The scientific avant-garde of antiquity thought anthropocentrically. In order to have a say in the discourse, early Christian theology was obliged to join and internalise this paradigm—and that is exactly what it did. For the same reason, however, it must now follow the paradigm shift that has been scientifically underway since Darwin. “In this process, the evolutionary worldview is taken for granted, and the question is whether Christology fits into it or can be fitted into it, and not vice versa.” (Karl Rahner 1976, 180). It is not the theory of evolution that is at issue, according to Rahner, but faith in Jesus as the Christ. The discussion triggered by Darwin has been intensified by the dramatic escalation of the ecological crisis, the ideological cause of which is primarily identified as anthropocentrism. In the Rahnerian sense, one must consequently ask not with which tools of ethical humanistic anthropocentrism the environmental crisis can be solved, but which teleology is best suited to interpreting, understanding and ultimately also solving the environmental crisis. Theology should not ignore the scientific trend towards biocentric and holistic concepts.

All six scientific disciplines discussed here thus make it urgently advisable to carry out the creation–theological paradigm shift away from anthropocentrism towards a less steep and presupposition-rich teleology. Of course, and here lies the valuable core of Stoic philosophy, it remains a teleology. A cognitivist form of ethics cannot be formulated without recourse to being—despite all justified admonitions not to fall into the “naturalistic fallacy” (George Edward Moore). On the one hand, this teleology must not be constructed in an overly simplistic, mono-linear way—this is forbidden by the findings of biology, which reveal many directly contradictory dynamics of nature. Living beings, in view of the finite resources on planet earth, live on the premise that other living beings die. The question of theodicy must therefore be constitutively integrated into a creation–theological teleology. On the other hand, the epistemic character of the connection between being and ought must be made permanently visible: It is not a matter of logical deductions, but of contingent, fallible and revisable, yet not simply

arbitrary or capricious interpretations of being with a view to opening up the potential of meaning. For example, the fact that we usually do not agree with the statement that the meaning of life is dying, but rather that the meaning of dying is the emergence of new life, is contingent. This conviction is not compelling. However, it is (more) helpful in practical life and therefore preferable with good reasons.

We need a teleology, but a new, more contemporary teleology than that of anthropocentrism. Arguing for such a paradigm shift is no small feat. Nevertheless, this venture will be undertaken in the following and an attempt will be made to sketch the first outlines of a new architecture of the Christian view of the relationship between God, humans and non-human creatures. To do so, it is inevitable to bring back into play those five points of view that have been and continue to be inextricably linked since the Stoa and throughout 2000 years of Christian history:

- The question of God's providence and its scope
- The question of the ability of humans and/or animals to reason and, in connection with this, their relationship to Christ.
- The question of the teleological interpretation of natural processes and a teleology appropriate to the natural sciences
- The question of the significance of feelings and how to deal with them
- And finally: the question of how to deal with animals and plants

It remains to be taken into account that in these questions I inevitably reach beyond the boundaries of my discipline, moral theology. I will therefore only be able to deal with them on a "first level of reflection". Nevertheless, there is no alternative to this approach.

### 6.1 *You are wanted! The question of God's providence*

"Above all, however, it [religion]—especially in its Christian variants—has become a means by which man can puff himself up, make himself important. Often insecure, he can convince himself that he is wanted and desired by a God who created him personally." (Andreas Urs Sommer 2022, 41). If we strip this sentence of an avowed atheist philosopher of its polemic, it contains an indisputable truth: the conviction that every human being is wanted and desired and thus valuable is one of the core messages of Christianity. Already biblically, it is linked to the idea of a personal Creator, God, who knows us even before we are born (Ps 139). But through the

Stoic influence on early Christianity, what the Bible states as an intimate happening between God and the individual is linked to the objective idea of an all-encompassing, foreseeing and forethinking plan of creation. That is not necessary. In the following, I will therefore pursue the question of whether and how the question of divine providence can be considered and formulated differently. To this end, after a brief outline of the history of philosophy and theology, I will offer some systematic theological considerations.

### 6.1.1 Historical Philosophy/Theology

“In antiquity, the belief in the fateful, meaningful work of the gods that excludes all chance and governs the universe according to unbreakable laws, or even in the rule of a hypostasised *πρόνοια*, is widespread and a characteristic topos especially for the Stoa.” (Wolfgang Schrage 2005, 15). With these words Wolfgang Schrage opens his study on the idea of providence in the New Testament. With these words he makes clear his main interest right at the beginning: the question is whether the conception of providence of *Greek philosophy* and especially of the *Stoa* corresponds to that of the Bible and what it means for today’s theology if this is not the case.

“For the Stoa, providence is a divine world soul or world reason, rationally and pantheistically structured and deduced from the purposeful order of the course of the world and of human life, which as a formative and creative power sensibly plans everything in advance, penetrates it causally—rationally and teleologically keeps it in motion.” (Wolfgang Schrage 2005, 16). Thus, the Stoa’s concept of providence is as steep as one can possibly imagine. If everything proceeds strictly according to rationally recognisable and comprehensible laws, the question of theodicy must also be answerable. And so it is: All conceivable evils are declared to be either useful for the overarching whole or educationally valuable for man. He should therefore submit to the divine plan with equanimity and dispassion. This proves his true freedom, which therefore is not threatened or diminished by almighty providence. In terms of content, Stoic providence runs unambiguously and straightforwardly towards man. From certain human abilities and animal and plant inabilities (descriptive), the reasonable plan of the “gods” is inferred (normative) to determine everything for the benefit of humans. The original intention here is both to impart self-awareness and



to admonish people to take responsibility. For the passive acceptance of an inscrutable “fate” (*fatum*), as advocated in the pre-Socratic period, would be irrational. This is precisely where the significant progress in intellectual history lies: only if there is a teleology of some kind (in the singular) or at least particular teleonomies (in the plural), i.e. lawful dynamics of nature that man can at least partially recognise by virtue of reason, can he assume responsibility for shaping his life and the world. The stumbling block of the Stoa is, of course, that it believes it recognises this teleology too clearly and unambiguously and narrows its content solely to man as the *telos*.

Compared to the Stoa, the *Bible* is conspicuously reticent about the *concept* of God's providence. “The idea of a divine providence (Latin *providentia*, Greek *πρόνοια*) comes from Greek thought, from where it influenced Hellenistic Judaism and early Christianity.” (Roman Kühschelm 2001, 895). “The Old Testament Jewish tradition, except for Hellenistic Judaism [...] does not betray any original interest in the theme of divine providence [...] Yet a certain form of historical guidance, world government and providence attributed to the sovereignty of YHWH is also attested to here.” (Wolfgang Schrage 2005, 31–32). Therefore, the *idea* of God's providence is also highly present in the Bible. Thus, the Old Testament sees God as the controller of history (Ps 78; 105–106; Is 2:12–22; Jer 25:9–14, etc.) and of creation (Gen 6–9; Ps 65:7–14; 104:27–30; 145:15–16).

The difference to the Stoic doctrine is nevertheless significant: “While the Stoa sees in the cosmic order the teleological planning of the impersonal *πρόνοια*, in Old Testament thought the trust in the personal God as the supporting ground dominates” (Roman Kühschelm 2001, 895). “The decisive perspective of the New Testament also on the subject of providence is [...] not shaped by the thought of the *potentia absoluta* of an omnipotent, all-predetermining God or even of world reason harmoniously and purposefully governing the universe” (Wolfgang Schrage 2005, 137). “The interpretative approach and framework is rather the plan and the will conceived by God 'before the foundation of the world', and is therefore reliable, to bring salvation to the world through Christ.” (Wolfgang Schrage 2005, 261). The biblical concept of providence thus primarily serves a relational determination—man may and should entrust himself to God—while the Stoic concept of providence aims at the ontological determination of the cosmos as thoroughly reasonable. The Bible speaks explicitly of an existential attitude in the first-person perspective, while the Stoic account seeks to hide any existential interest behind the distanced analysis of the third-person perspective.

For the Bible, God's providence is "not an independent topos and not an object of speculation" (Wolfgang Schrage 2005, 261): "If one is certain of salvation in the relationship experienced with God and Christ, and if the promise of God's victory, which can finally be expected, is firmly founded, the question of what happens to one personally or what happens to the world in detail obviously becomes relative" (Wolfgang Schrage 2005, 262). Rather, it is about "the expectant reliance on God's promise and his irrevocable faithfulness" (Wolfgang Schrage 2005, 263).

Against this background, it is easier for the question of theodicy to remain unanswered in the Bible, especially in the New Testament, and at the same time to be raised all the more audibly. "Not everything that befalls man and the world can be directly linked to God, especially not that which is contrary to God and negative. Attempts to explain evil are largely dispensed with. A God who predetermines and causes misery and death is mentioned only occasionally. God is not the one responsible for all suffering, cries and pain. It is true that there are many meanings and interpretations of the sufferings and evils that befall Christians, and certainly not an illusion of an ideal world or the justification and glorification of human fragility and misery. But often enough the question of whether something is intended by God's providence or why people are not spared it is left unanswered and no attempt is made to find a hidden meaning in it. Even Jesus does not receive an answer to his why-question (Mk 15:34). Only Easter illuminates such an answer a posteriori." (Wolfgang Schrage 2005, 263–264). The "Why?" of the crucified Christ and his subsequent loud cry remain in space. While the Stoa tries to explain away suffering as something reasonable and meaningful and demands that we bear it with equanimity, the Bible gives suffering a voice and makes it clear that any answer to the "why" question would be cynical and cold-hearted.

How did the *Church Fathers* manage to position themselves within this tension between the Stoa and the Bible? "The early Christian doctrine of providence can be understood as a struggle to find a form of thought that corresponds to the biblical understanding of God, because it had to take the risk of receiving the Greek metaphysics of providence. The recourse to Stoic cosmic thinking, which conceives the *πρόνοια* as a purposeful order of the world by virtue of its inherent world reason, was also to have a lasting influence on the Christian doctrine of providence because it sought to answer the question of theodicy by illuminating the order instituted by God in the act of creation." (Georg Essen 2001, 897). In this, as we saw in chapter 5, there is certainly room for manoeuvre. Whereas Nemesios of Emesa, for

example, sketches out a steep teleology that is consistently rationalistic to the last, Augustine is much more supple and advocates a flat, moderate teleology that still leaves room for non-rational processes. Nevertheless, the patristic image of God in essential points is more Greek than biblically determined. For it cannot be overlooked “that the patristic theologians as a whole could hardly detach themselves from the Hellenistic understanding of the divine as the necessary ontological ground of existing reality. Even the philosophical requirement that the concept of God must be linked to its essential immutability was not really dealt with in a productive way. [...] This problem of the form of thought was to have a lasting influence on the further development of the Christian doctrine of providence, if not to burden it altogether.” (Georg Essen 2007, 388). The Church Fathers set a course that continues to have an effect today.

It is *Immanuel Kant* who, on the one hand, substantiates the Stoic doctrine of providence with new arguments and, on the other, expresses the greatest scepticism about its usefulness. Quite traditionally, Kant defines providence as a deeper wisdom and purposefulness of nature in contrast to fate as inscrutable, arbitrary coercion of nature. But then he asks primarily about the function of the providence paradigm in the context of ethics, for what we call providence cannot be observed empirically in nature but can only be grasped intellectually. Providence is therefore something that “we do not actually recognise in these art forms of nature, [...] but [...] can and must only think about them in order to form a concept of their possibility according to the analogy of human art acts” (Immanuel Kant, *On Perpetual Peace* AA VIII, 362). In other words, the notion of providence is a human construct—albeit a helpful and useful one and necessary for understanding nature. “The concept of providence, in fact, allows us to form a practical idea of the ‘coincidence’ of the purposiveness of nature with the moral purpose of reason.” (George Sans 2015, 2564). The function of the concept of providence, then, is to substantiate moral claims by recourse to divine planning and purpose. However, Kant continues, this function can be better fulfilled by a less steep concept, namely the concept of nature: “The use of the word nature is also, when as here it is merely a matter of theory (not religion), more suitable to the bounds of human reason [...] and more modest than the expression of a providence discernible to us, with which one presumptuously sets Icarian wings to oneself in order to come closer to the mystery of its unfathomable intention.” (Immanuel Kant, *On Perpetual Peace* AA VIII 362).

The effort to construct less steep argumentation leads Kant away from the concept of providence towards the concept of nature. One could also say: away from Stoic theology towards Stoic philosophy. Theology, however, follows this path only after a two-hundred-year delay. Julia Knop (2017, 50–55) shows very instructively how the paradigm of providence, which is classical in traditional theology, has completely decayed within the last one hundred years. To this end, she analyses the relevant articles in the three editions of the “*Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*” to date. Engelbert Krebs, in the first edition from 1930 to 1938, still proceeds, with the unshakeable certainty of Neo-Scholasticism, from a maximum conception of the immutability, omnipotence and omniscience of God. In the second edition from 1957 to 1965, Karl Rahner remains faithful to this conception of content, but already discusses misunderstandable interpretations of the divine attributes and the theme of human freedom. Finally, Georg Essen’s article in the third edition from 1993 to 2001 deconstructs the paradigm of providence as a model of thought that has historically fulfilled certain functions and thus puts it into perspective.

In the meantime, the deconstruction of the concept of providence has become widely accepted in Catholic and Protestant theology. This could be easily seen in the debate on so-called “intelligent design” in the 2000s. Put simply, it was about the question of whether it can be scientifically proven that behind the natural development of the world there must (!) be an intelligent designer, i.e. an omniscient Creator who plans everything ingeniously. While the Free Churches widely share this thesis, the mainstream churches expressed scepticism towards or even rejection of it. Even Cardinal Christoph Schönborn, who had initially shown a certain sympathy towards intelligent design, quickly backed down when he understood the theoretical problems he had gotten himself into. A strongly rationalistically charged idea of divine providence therefore has no future in the mainstream churches.

### 6.1.2 Systematic theological

More recently, Oliver Wintzek in particular launched a frontal attack on the talk of divine providence, which, in contrast to the critiques reviewed so far, is primarily justified on the grounds that talking of divine providence makes a strong understanding of human freedom impossible. Wintzek refers to a thesis by Nicolai Hartmann. Unlike the Stoics, Hartmann, influ-

enced by modern scientific thinking, considers the course of nature to be “blind” and continues: “Divine providence is quite different. It is teleological, a final determinism. In it, final purposes are the determining factor. And because the determining force in them is an infinite and ‘omnipotent’ one, which moreover permeates all world events—even the small spiritual world of man, man with his teleology is powerless in the face of it. Here he no longer finds any scope for self-determination; more correctly, what appears to him as his self-determination is in truth the power of divine providence working through him and over him. [...] man’s providence is utterly annulled, his self-determination reduced to appearance, his ethos destroyed, his will paralysed. All his initiative and purposeful activity is transferred to God. [...] Thus the final determinism of divine providence abolishes ethical freedom.” (Nicolai Hartmann <sup>2</sup>1935, 741).

There is much that needs to be deepened and clarified in this quotation in order to understand it comprehensively. However, what is decisive for our question is what theological conclusions Wintzek draws from it. From his point of view, the classical idea of God’s omniscience and providence, which he calls “theological determinism”, brings serious problems for the core of faith (Oliver Wintzek 2017, 20). Also, on this basis, God himself would no longer be free, but determined by his own rules (Oliver Wintzek 2017, 24). However, anyone who claims that theological determinism is compatible with anthropological libertarianism, i.e. with a strong idea of human freedom (“theological compatibilism”), is postulating something impossible to consider: “The God of theological determinism is conceivable, but irrelevant because of its presence, which cannot be named otherwise than totalitarian. [...] The God of theological compatibilism—according to the thesis—is not consistently thinkable because compatibilism is not compatible with a strong concept of freedom and contingency.” (Oliver Wintzek 2017, 25).

If God is thought of in Neo-Platonic terms as eternally at rest in himself and in Aristotelian terms as acting in categories of causality, Wintzek continues, the specifically Christian aspect of the image of God is lost (Oliver Wintzek 2017, 33–34), namely that a free God interacts with free human beings. In view of this, Wintzek deplores the traditional mistrust of theology towards contingency and pleads for an alternative: “The mistrust that prevails here, that God’s sovereignty would be broken if radical contingency were allowed, should be contrasted with a trust in God’s ability to be contingent: Instead of teleologically undermining and eternalistically making impossible the self-originating freedom, and as a consequence justi-

fably integrating human suffering into God's sovereign plan and thus also unbearably obscuring God's morality, a conceivable and relevant theological alternative would have to emerge." (Oliver Wintzek 2017, 148).

Now, first of all, I agree with Wintzek when he states that the classical image of God as eternally unchanging, all-knowing and all-powerful is in urgent need of correction—this has already been stated. And likewise, I share Wintzek's plea for a strong, libertarian concept of human freedom. However, Wintzek (like Nicolai Hartmann) criticises not only the determinism of God, but also that of nature. And there he exceeds the competences of the humanities. Scientific determinism, which is ultimately a legacy of the Stoa (!), is a method that the natural sciences have chosen autonomously. Please note it is a method, not a result. Natural sciences construct the world *as if it were* exclusively determined by cause–effect relationships and therefore completely determined. And they arrive at many very useful results. Conversely, philosophy and theology, which as humanities construct the world *as if there were* exclusively freedom and responsibility in it, come to equally important and helpful findings. This is their autonomously chosen method, which the natural sciences have no right to interfere with.

The talk of God that Wintzek problematises only makes sense in this second context. From the perspective of the natural sciences, it has no meaning at all. What Wintzek rightly criticises, that God and his care since the Stoa have been linked with a thoroughly rationalised plan, which in turn manifests itself in the laws of nature, is therefore a Stoic and Christian category error: theorems of the first-person perspective of the humanities (God, freedom) are mixed with theorems of the third-person perspective of the natural sciences (laws of nature, teleology, determination), which is an absolute no-go. However, if the autonomy of the two perspectives and their own language games is respected, the theorems of the natural sciences and the humanities are equally justified. The prerequisite is a constructivist epistemology that overcomes traditional realism. The fact that the Stoics did not yet know constructivism cannot be blamed on them any more than on early Christian theology. Today, however, a pre- or non-constructivist theory is simply no longer communicable.

Without her assigning it so pointedly epistemologically, a clean distinction between the two perspectives is exactly the plea of Julia Knop. Thus, Knop begins with the sober observation that today no one needs the idea of divine providence to explain any natural or historical processes—the reference to inner-worldly causes suffices (Julia Knop 2017, 49). Such a

reference uses the explanatory patterns of the third-person perspective of the empirical sciences.

Conversely, however, what the concept of God aims at is also freed from paradigms of the third-person perspective, for the talk of divine providence aims to strengthen the human sense of self and responsibility—and it achieves this well without recourse to a teleology solely with reference to the person of God (Julia Knop 2017, 49). For the only thing at stake here is the belief in an ultimate meaningfulness and goodness of the world and of life, despite all lasting contradictions. It is not for nothing that the existential location of the biblical Creation narratives is the question of theodicy. From the third-person perspective, we see becoming and passing away, living and dying, flourishing and destruction. But only from the first-person perspective can we decide whether we want to recognise pure absurdity in it, like Albert Camus' Sisyphus, or a spark of meaning and love after all. In the sense of this second alternative, we could then say: "It is not about a divine master plan that could justify all world events in toto. It is not about a world strategy that has existed from eternity and only needs to be brought to fruition. Rather, it is about describing the personal participation of the human being, turned towards God in freedom, in his divine life." (Julia Knop 2017, 54).

In this context, Georg Essen emphasises the biblical concept of the covenant. With it, he can grasp and relate the moment of God's freedom as well as the freedom of people. "Covenant" is a term of the first-person perspective because a covenant agrees on claims that the covenant partners make on each other. In terms of natural science, however, the term is meaningless. Those who speak of a covenant presuppose a libertarian understanding of freedom: "The interpretation of history as the commerce between the liberating freedom of God and the liberated freedom of man, captured in the concept of the 'covenant', leads in turn to a theological concept of history as the place of intersubjectively binding practice, in which the individuating gaze of the one God calls man into a freedom that means responsibility for himself and for the neighbour. „ (Georg Essen 2007, 390). Essen draws consequences from this for the theological talk of providence (if one wants to maintain it at all): "In this respect we have to understand divine providence as an act of self-limitation of divine freedom in favour of created ones." (Georg Essen 2007, 393).

With the clear distinction between the two perspectives of knowledge and the constructivist foundation of theology, the opportunity arises to realise the common biblical and philosophical concern that is hidden in



the talk of divine providence: to describe a position of faith that confesses the goodness of the world and of life and tries to recognise and live out a meaning in all its absurdities and contradictions. At the same time, constructivist theology opens up the possibility of more clearly locating the talk of God's incomprehensibility and mysteriousness. It is in no way a capitulation to the scientific demands for exactness and precision, but a compelling consequence of the contextualisation of the speech of God as well as the speech of freedom and responsibility in the first-person perspective.

This does not resolve the question of theodicy, but it can be better classified and, above all, brought up more audibly. While (pre-constructivist) Stoic teleology explains suffering either as useful for the overarching whole or as pedagogically valuable for human beings, the Bible leaves the shouted out "why?" of Jesus (Mk 15:34) and remains silent about it—unlike the bystanders who seek an explanation for the "why?" and want to take action.

Seen in this light, it would be a matter of speaking of providence and even more so of God's plan in a most modest and restrained way (if at all); of not defining God's plan in more detail but keeping it open as an inscrutable mystery; of always marking faith in God's goodness as a faith in the enduring contradictions of life; and of giving voice to the cry of the suffering and not drowning it out by referring to faith in resurrection.

In this context, a form of modern, earthbound theology of the cross, which holds the suffering of the world within the darkness of God, gains a new and deeper meaning. It is not for nothing that Mark's Passion, with its darkness from the sixth to the ninth hour, refers back to the first Creation narrative. What is laid down there on the first day of creation, that there is light in the day and darkness in the night, is turned upside down at the moment of Jesus' death. The whole of creation suffers with the Son of God—and the Son of God with the whole of creation. Christian art has always kept this thought alive, whether by depicting the sun and moon above the arms of the crucified Christ, or by designing the cross as a tree of life. The tree of life is an ancient symbol of the divine order of creation, much older than Judaism and Christianity. If the tree of life has been designed and sung about as the cross of Christ since the early church, then the suffering of creation in its entirety is given expression in it and is inseparably linked to the suffering of the Son of God. There is no more consistent way to relativise the talk of God's providence.

And animals or non-human living beings as a whole? If the emphasis is on individual creation by a loving God, there is no reason to exclude them



as recipients of divine care. The only argument put forward for this could be the *aloga* thesis.

6.2 *Saved as the Body of God. The Question of Man's Endowment with Reason and his Relationship with Christ*

The *aloga* thesis still stands unchanged with many people. It enjoys great popularity and is, as it were, the anthropocentrists' most incisive one "but" against those who want to put animals, plants and ecosystems in a better position. The "biological mortification of human narcissism" (Sigmund Freud 1917, 4) triggered by Darwin is obviously still very deep-seated within many. In view of this, the tendency of many Church Fathers to appreciate also or even particularly small, inconspicuous animals and to flatten the steep *scala naturae* of the Stoa appears in a new light. It is a clear signal against the mainstream and its strong reservations. And yet, as mentioned several times, it does not mean that they fundamentally question the *aloga* thesis. In the following, this will be done in a behavioural–biological way as a first step. It is evident that, compared to antiquity, we have made enormous progress in animal observation. Nevertheless, we encounter a modern dispute about the *aloga* that in intensity is hardly inferior to the ancient one.

Theologically, the *aloga* thesis has been linked by the Church Fathers with the theorem of the incarnate divine Logos, Jesus Christ. Now this connection is not a problem in itself, for it is obvious that the two core statements of the Christian faith, the doctrine of creation and the doctrine of redemption, must be placed in relation to each other. The question to be discussed here, however, is whether the traditional reduction of the incarnation of God to becoming human, which is justified on the basis of man's exclusive ability to reason, is appropriate. This question, which will be explored in the second section, becomes more acute when animals can no longer be qualified as *aloga*.

Finally, one must ask about the idea of resurrection from the dead, which that corresponds to the incarnation of the Logos. Classically, non-human creatures were excluded from this—in line with the Stoa, but contrary to the biblical testimony. It must be examined whether new perspectives can be opened up for this under the framework conditions of a renewed form of Christology.

### 6.2.1 Ethological

“Reason” is not only a container term in the context of modern cognitive research. It was already so at the time of the Stoa. Even back then, what was used to determine whether a person was gifted with reason or not was a controversial issue. In going through ancient philosophy and early Christian theology, we have seen how diverse the criteria are by which reason is verified or falsified.

In the following, I will limit the question to how much “practical reason” animals have, i.e. how much “morality” can be attributed to them. I will explain this question on the basis of the reflections of three renowned antagonists: Michael Tomasello, who strongly emphasises the differences between humans and animals and ultimately advocates a gentle *aloga* thesis; Frans de Waal, who emphasises the similarities between humans and animals and disputes the *aloga* thesis even in Tomasello’s unassuming guise, but does not want to call animals moral beings; and Marc Bekoff, who represents de Waal’s theses even more pointedly and clearly affirms the classification of some animals as moral beings.

All three agree that the question of animal morality has several sub-questions:

- (1) Do some animals have empathy, that is, are they able to empathise and sympathise with the feelings of other individuals?
- (2) Do some animals have a (still relatively rudimentary) *ethos* and thus inevitably also a certain “*unethos*”, i.e. can they intentionally harm and help each other?
- (3) Do some animals have a theory of mind, i.e. can they mentally imagine what other individuals are thinking or intending and thus anticipate their behaviour in their own minds?
- (4) Do some animals have shared intentionality or *we-intentionality*, i.e. can they cooperate in such a way that they pursue a common goal and play different roles to achieve it?
- (5) Do some animals possibly have a sense of justice, i.e. can they develop an idea of reward and punishment and their proportionality to benefits or harm?
- (6) And do some of these animals possibly have a broader conception of justice that balances the complex interactions of many individuals over long periods of time and strives for a balanced equilibrium?

Put simply, the abilities from the later stages presuppose those of the earlier stages. As far as the first two abilities are concerned, all three researchers agree that numerous animals that live socially possess them. *Michael Tomasello* summarises the two abilities under the umbrella term “altruistic helping” (Michael Tomasello 2016, 1–3), which is characterised by compassion, benevolence and care and represents a kind of “morality of sympathy” (Michael Tomasello 2016, 7–8). This form of morality is—as the name suggests—fed by feelings and not by rational considerations and is primarily directed towards those individuals who one finds likeable.

From the morality of sympathy, Tomasello identifies the morality of fairness in a comprehensive sense, which aims at cooperation even among distanced individuals and seeks to shape this according to the standards of justice and equality through agreements. This was necessarily highly complex and most likely (!) limited to humans (Michael Tomasello 2016, 2). For the concept of fairness is about the establishment of a balance that firstly also includes guilt, shaming and punishment, secondly takes into account the complex relationships within a group and thirdly signifies a consciously perceived obligation: You shall do this and not that! According to Tomasello, a comprehensive conception of justice requires the abilities of levels (3) to (6)—and he does not find these in animals, at least not clearly.

Ontogenetically, this uniqueness of humans has to do with the fact that only humans had to develop a complex distribution of roles in hunting in order to be successful and survive (Michael Tomasello 2016, 4). This is because man is the only creature that (before settlement and agriculture of the Neolithic Revolution) depends on large quantities of meat but does not have the bodily characteristics to hunt this meat without tools and complex cooperation. In contrast, most predators that hunt together are physically so well equipped that it is sufficient for them all to try to snatch the prey at the same time. They do not need the we-intentionality of distributed roles to be successful. At the same time, the prey is usually so large that there is enough food for everyone involved in the hunt and the question of distributive justice does not arise. Chimpanzees, on the other hand, the only apes that hunt together, use meat only as a supplement, while their main food is plants (Michael Tomasello 2016, 26–28).

Humans are thus much more dependent on each other than all other socially living animals, according to Tomasello's “interdependence hypothesis”, and from this dependence an intensity and complexity of cooperation develops like in no other species. While in great apes the driving force for cooperation is competition—some individuals cooperate to win competi-

tion against others—and coalition building is based primarily on sympathy, humans cooperate for the sake of cooperation and the maintenance of social relationships (Michael Tomasello 2016, 26). Tomasello refers to David Hume, who names two conditions for the emergence of ideas of justice: First, no one in the group may have absolute dominance. And second, all group members depend on each other for elementary basic needs. The second condition, according to Tomasello, does not exist in apes (Michael Tomasello 2016, 37–38).

While there are still too few experiments with apes in the area of transactional justice, Tomasello sees clear indications, although not yet complete proof (!), in the area of distributive justice that apes have no concept of justice:

- In the so-called ultimatum game, a first player is given a good of which he must offer a part to a second player. If the latter refuses the share of it offered to him because it seems too small, the first player must also give up his share and both go away empty-handed. If, on the other hand, the second actor accepts the offer, he receives it and the first actor receives the rest. Unlike humans, the second actors in chimpanzees and bonobos accept any offer greater than zero, while humans reject very unfair offers (Michael Tomasello 2016, 32–33).
- Social comparison also seems to be absent in apes: Chimpanzees do not refuse to eat worse food than their conspecifics, but they do refuse to eat worse food than they are used to. They compare food, not its distribution among individuals (Michael Tomasello 2016, 33 in replicating an experiment by Sarah F. Brosnan 2006). Similarly, chimpanzees and bonobos do not become outraged when the human experimenter allocates unequal amounts of food to them, but they do when he withholds the better pieces and does not distribute them to conspecifics. Tomasello concludes that apes feel compassion and “social anger” but have no concept of something that is earned and therefore owed to them (Michael Tomasello 2016, 34).

“There is thus no solid evidence that great apes have a sense of fairness in dividing resources, and much evidence that they do not.” (Michael Tomasello 2016, 33). Note Tomasello’s caution in making snap judgements. He does not say that apes have no sense of fairness, only that the evidence suggests little in favour of that idea and much against it. He leaves the door open a crack.

According to Tomasello, insofar as animals practise helping each other reciprocally, this most likely occurs solely out of sympathy and not by deriving the action from ideas of justice. Sympathy is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for justice. In addition, there must be at least implicit consent or agreement to help each other. "The key point for current purposes is that great ape patterns of reciprocity on the behavioural level are underlain not by any kind of implicit agreement or contract for reciprocity, much less by any kind of judgments of fairness or equity, but only by interdependence-based sympathy operating in both directions." (Michael Tomasello 2016, 25).

Judith Benz-Schwarzburg describes a relatively highly developed example that can still be assigned to compassionate morality as follows: "In an experiment, rats freed conspecifics trapped in a tube. In contrast, they did not open tubes that were empty or only contained objects. If a second tube enticed them with a piece of chocolate, they opened both tubes and typically shared the chocolate with the freed animal. Thus, rats also respond pro-socially to the distress of conspecifics, suggesting biological roots of empathically motivated helping." (Judith Benz-Schwarzburg 2015, 246–247).

But here's the kicker: although Tomasello values animal capacities to the greatest extent possible within the morality of likeability, he ultimately remains within the scope of the *aloga* thesis: animals have no rationality. Their morality is founded on emotions alone, not on thoughts and reasoning. Conciliatory Stoics and Church Fathers have also gone this far.

*Frans de Waal*, on the other hand, sees at least in some particularly intelligent and social animal species a morality that includes considerations and calculations. De Waal wants to do away with the Stoic thesis that the good in humans is what is "humane", with rationality given to humans alone, and the evil in humans is the "animal" in them, the emotional, which must be tamed by culture (Frans de Waal 2006, 9). According to this "façade theory", morality and culture are a paper-thin façade that covers wild, cruel nature, but quickly collapses under pressure (Frans de Waal 2006, 34–36 and 2008, 25–35). In Konrad Lorenz and many representatives of sociobiology, de Waal still sees precisely this theory at work, according to which reason must dominate instincts and culture must dominate nature (Frans de Waal 2006, 9). In contrast, Charles Darwin assumed that humanity arose naturally and morality evolutionarily. In evolutionary biology, good and evil were of equal origin: "If animals can have enemies, then they can also have friends; if they can deceive each other, then they can also

be honest; and if they can be vicious, then they can also be friendly and altruistic.” (Frans de Waal 2000, 31). In general, the Stoic paradigm has two major problems in the context of evolutionary theory: First, it undermines its explanatory power because it does not attribute an evolutionary origin to reason and morality. And secondly, modern “Stoics” such as Lorenz and sociobiology did not identify an alternative source from which morality could arise. In contrast, de Waal argues “that morality by no means begins with humans and, contrary to what we might think, is not an exclusively human achievement.” (Frans de Waal 2015, 12).

A significant difference between de Waal and Tomasello concerns the “material” for observing animal behaviour. While Tomasello relies mainly on humanly constructed (and thus methodologically strongly anthropocentric!) experiments with animals, de Waal draws mainly on observations of animals in an open enclosure or in the wild, interacting without human influence. This is a fundamentally different setting. We know from observations of human behaviour that people behave in a far more nuanced way, especially in relation to moral questions, when they are in a real conflict situation than when they are questioned in a thought experiment or placed in artificial situations as in the ultimatum game. It is true that field observations also have their limitations because one cannot infer what is going on in animals’ minds with the same precision as in constructed experiments. Nevertheless, one should not neglect their “anthropocentrist bias”: “When apes [...] are tested among their peers, they perform significantly better, and in the wild they pay attention to what their conspecifics know or don’t know.” (Frans de Waal 2015, 43).

De Waal also sees empathy as a necessary condition for morality (Frans de Waal 2006, 238–246 and 2008, 43–48): The ability to empathise with the feelings of others is a condition of possibility for the development of the Golden Rule and thus of some kind of ethos. This capacity for empathy is located in very early structures of the brain and is present in a simple form in all animals (imitation, physical empathy, transmission of emotions).

The fact that even purely emotionally based morality of compassion can lead to enormously high-level behaviour can be shown by an example in chimpanzees: relatives but also non-related male chimpanzees as well as female chimpanzees who are friends with a deceased mother adopting her orphaned young. There is no recognisable self-interest for such behaviour, at least among the non-relatives. The behaviour is therefore very altruistic (Christophe Boesch et al. 2010, 1–6). However, it does not yet presuppose any considerations of justice and can in principle be explained without

calculating thinking and deliberation on the part of the chimpanzees in question.

But what about the higher morality that Tomasello, in agreement with de Waal, calls morality of justice? Research on this question has only existed since the beginning of the 21st century. At least a simple sense of justice has been demonstrated in dogs. If all dogs are rewarded equally for the same performance after a training session, they are all satisfied. If they are all not rewarded despite their performance, they are also satisfied—they concede this decision to a human trainer because they cooperate with him or her out of an intrinsic motivation and for the pleasure of cooperation. However, if some dogs are rewarded and others are not, the non-rewarded ones refuse to cooperate for days. They will not even let the human pack leader get away with such evident injustice (Frans de Waal 2008, 64–68; Friederike Range et al. 2009).

According to de Waal, a more comprehensive ethos of justice and reciprocity emerges above all where the two central resources of living together have to be shared: food and sexuality. The further back an animal's memory goes, the more comprehensive balances of giving and receiving can be drawn up, and the more diversely it is possible to remember who gave how much and who received how much. This gives rise to what de Waal calls "reciprocal altruism" (Frans de Waal 2000, 37): Giving and receiving no longer have to occur at the same moment but can be far apart. And they can take long detours via many individuals. A gives to B, B gives to C, C gives to D... and at some point, D gives something to A (Frans de Waal 2006, 257–294 and 1997, 31–37).

But woe betide any animals if the balance between give and take for an individual is not created equally in the long run. In other words, if they receive a lot but give little. Then there are drastic sanctions. The need of others to retaliate arises. Monkeys notice everything and retaliate. The one who does not respect the ethos of justice is consistently denied the sharing of food and tenderness. Nothing more is given to it, and nothing more is taken from it. For the sake of justice, apes are prepared to accept their own disadvantages. Unlike their human relatives, they enforce economic sanctions without regard for their own disadvantages.

In addition to sanctions, which are usually imposed unanimously by the whole group, authority figures in the group can help to secure justice through mediation. If they succeed in arbitration, this further increases their authority (Frans de Waal 2000, 47). For: "Without any doubt, prescriptive rules and a sense of order grow out of a hierarchical organisation

in which the subordinate constantly watches out for the dominant.” (Frans de Waal 2000, 118). In order for leaders to actually promote justice, packs only recognise those personalities who are completely impartial and prefer to look after the weak (Frans de Waal 2006, 119–120). “A just leader is not so easy to find, so it is in the interest of the community to keep him in power as long as possible.” (Frans de Waal 2000, 164).

Because great apes have much flatter hierarchies than animal apes, their need for ethical regulation increases immensely (Frans de Waal 2006, 117). In a monarchy, there is less to negotiate than in a democracy—we know this in the human sphere as well. The ability to negotiate ethically relevant points of contention in a nuanced manner and the realisation of flat hierarchies thus go hand in hand.

Ethology usually gives four components or “ingredients” as necessary conditions for morality (Jessica C. Flack/ Frans B.M. de Waal 2000, 22; cf. Sarah F. Brosnan 2006, 168):

- Sympathy-related components: bonding, helping and emotional contagion; learned adaptation to and special treatment of the disabled and injured; the ability to mentally swap places (cognitive empathy)\*.
- Norm-related components: prescriptive social rules; internalisation of rules and anticipation of punishment\*; a sense of social regularity and expectation of how one should be treated\*.
- Reciprocity: concept of giving, trading and revenge; moralistic aggression against violations of the rules of reciprocity.
- Getting along with each other: peacemaking and conflict avoidance; caring for the community and maintaining good relations\*; accommodating conflicting interests through negotiation.

Especially in the areas marked with an asterisk\*—i.e. cognitive empathy, internalisation of rules, expectation of fair treatment and concern for the community—humans seem to have developed considerably further than most other animals, according to Flack and de Waal. Conversely, however, this also means that some animals possess considerable potential of all four components of morality. At the same time, de Waal admits that he is reluctant to call chimpanzees “moral beings” (Frans de Waal 2015, 31).

One of the first researchers, apart from Frans de Waal, who devoted himself to the ideas of justice of animals is *Marc Bekoff*. He calls it “wild justice”. His specific focus is on animal play behaviour, because “if we define justice and morality as social rules and expectations that balance differences between individuals to ensure harmony in the group, then that is



exactly what we observe when animals play with each other” (Marc Bekoff 2008, 114). Play signals are particularly honest signals; cheating very rarely occurs. They reveal trust and empathy, apology and forgiveness, fairness and cooperation, joy and honour (!).

Morality reveals many similarities to playing. In both cases, it is a voluntary activity according to rules that must be known and understood by the participants (Marc Bekoff/ Jessica Pierce 2009, 456–457). In canids, for example, there are precise rules about how hard one may bite, that sexual advances are forbidden and that dominance behaviour must be kept to a minimum. Play is also a voluntary affair that ends immediately if the rules of fairness are blatantly violated. Neuroscience and behavioural research show that playing causes more flexibility and learning ability in the brain. During play, players continuously evaluate the intentions, signals and compliance with certain rules of their playmates (Marc Bekoff/ Jessica Pierce 2009, 459).

Play behaviour is not about dealing with material inequalities such as food and sex, which are the focus of Tomasello and de Waal's research, but about dealing with inequalities of behaviour. This has two major advantages (Sarah F. Brosnan 2006, 167–168): First, it broadens the scope of enquiry and shows another area in which animal and human responses to inequalities may have evolved. And second, it offers insight into the ways in which inequality considerations can directly influence an individual's survival and reproduction, becoming a direct target of natural selection.

Games need clear sign language to be recognised as games. Canids bow to each other to open a game. And if they intend to bite the other player, they bow again beforehand to avoid the misunderstanding that it is now a serious fight (Marc Bekoff/ Jessica Pierce 2009, 461). If the bite was accidentally too strong, they again apologise by bowing (Marc Bekoff/ Jessica Pierce 2009, 465).

Particularly strong wolves, dogs and coyotes deliberately restrain themselves during play, as excessive aggression is not tolerated by the group. The individuals concerned are no longer asked to join in, and if they join in of their own accord, the others stop playing. In this way, playing tends towards fundamental equality: physical dominance or differences in rank are faded out for the duration of the game (something we know from humans when adults play with small children). Play thus seems to be an important field for practising cooperation and negotiating social agreements (Marc Bekoff 2006, 53; Marc Bekoff/ Jessica Pierce 2009, 459, 462), and not only for

canids, but also for rats, wallabies and many other animals (Marc Bekoff/ Jessica Pierce 2009, 463).

Play behaviour has direct consequences for the fitness of individuals. Adolescent coyotes that have little desire to play or are excluded from games are much more likely to leave the pack than those that do participate. In this context, the rate of premature mortality for individuals that stay in the pack is 20 per cent, but for those that leave the pack it is 55 per cent—more than double (Marc Bekoff/ Jessica Pierce 2009, 468). Apparently, there is a direct fitness link between fair play and early survival, making this behaviour highly susceptible to change through natural selection. According to Sarah F. Brosnan (2006, 167), this is the first evidence of a direct fitness effect of adherence to or violation of social norms or standards.

Bekoff emphasises the evolutionary continuity between animal and human morality even more strongly than de Waal. He justifies this, among other things, with the criterion of parsimony. “The principle of parsimony suggests the following hypothesis: A sense of justice is a continuous and evolved trait. And, as such, it has roots or correlates in closely related species or in species with similar patterns of social organisation.” (Marc Bekoff/ Jessica Pierce 2009, 456). Unlike de Waal, Bekoff should have no problem describing chimpanzees as moral beings.

Referring explicitly to the Max Planck Institute in Leipzig, whose director is Michael Tomasello, Bekoff summarises his position: “Of course some people want to learn more about animals to make the case for human uniqueness, usually claiming that humans are ‘above’ and ‘better’ than other animals. But the more we study animals and the more we learn about ‘them’ and ‘us’, we frequently discover there is not a real dichotomy or non-negotiable gap between animals and humans because humans are, of course, animals. There is evolutionary continuity. Art, culture, language, and tool use and manufacture can no longer be used to separate ‘them’ from ‘us’ [...]. Line-drawing can be very misleading especially when people take the view that non-human animals are ‘lower’ or ‘less valuable’ than ‘higher’ animals, where ‘higher’ means human. In many ways ‘we are them’ and ‘they are us.’” (Marc Bekoff 2006, 45). “There is No Great Divide: Animals do Think!” (Marc Bekoff 2006, 46).

How are the three positions to be evaluated? First of all, it is striking that Tomasello, de Waal and Bekoff are still working from Stoic distinctions and demarcations. And, like their ancient predecessors, they base their considerations on observations of animal behaviour. So the Stoic method was in principle very successful—except that the potential falsifications

were blatantly underestimated due to the inescapable methodological anthropocentrism. Modern natural science has become considerably more cautious here.

For all their differences, Tomasello, de Waal and Bekoff position themselves very similarly on many points. First of all, they are jointly convinced that morality develops evolutionarily and unfolds in a bottom-up manner to ever greater complexity. They attribute a form of morality of sympathy to a great many animals, making it clear that they have at least some basic elements of human morality. All three also clearly emphasise the importance of social coexistence for the emergence and further development of morality. Finally, they agree that reflection on morality, i.e. what we call “ethics” as distinct from ethos, is the preserve of humans. However, Tomasello strongly doubts an ethos of justice among some animals, while de Waal accepts it within narrow limits and Bekoff even does so extensively.

Tomasello is recognisably anxious to base animal morality exclusively on emotions—and to reserve the rationality of a calculated idea of justice for humans. This relatively sharp distinction between emotional morality of compassion and rational morality of justice enables Tomasello to grant many animals something like morality at all, and that is a decisive step forward. But his discourse is strongly reminiscent of the times when women were considered to have only morality of pity and only men morality of justice—a thesis that has been convincingly refuted by feminist criticism in recent decades. Consciously or unconsciously, Tomasello puts animals in the place where women were not long ago.

Recently, however, Tomasello seems to have opened the door a crack to include rational decision-making by animals: Great apes subject evidence that refutes their previous assumptions to close scrutiny. In other words, they investigate the reasons for their decisions. Tomasello and his colleagues call this “rational monitoring” of the decision-making process (Cathal O'Madagain et al. 2022, 1971). Humans do not do this until they are five years old. However, apes remain indifferent when conspecifics express a contrary assumption. Humans react to such an assumption as early as three years of age by seeking verification. So while humans are more sensitive to contradiction from peers, great apes are more attentive to contradictory physical evidence.

Despite this cautious approach by Tomasello towards practical reason in animals, above all one fundamental question remains: can the line between morality of sympathy and morality of justice be drawn as clearly and sharply as Tomasello suggests? Are the transitions not necessarily more flu-

id, as de Waal in particular emphasises? Neurobiologically, all animals with a brain have structures of thinking, structures of feeling and structures that connect the two of them. And it is precisely in these connecting structures (in mammals, including humans, the so-called prefrontal cortex) that decisions about one's own behaviour take place, as the research of Antonio R. Damasio (1997 and 2000) in particular has shown. Practical reason cannot be realised without a connection between thinking and feeling. Thus, even the morality of sympathy involves processes of reasoning, however simple they may be. Some animals may have little rationality—but they are not reasonless, i.e. without any practical reason.

If we reflect on the ethological insights philosophically from a certain distance, *Mark Rowlands'* treatise “Can animals be moral?” can be a good guide. Most ethologists, Rowlands says, question whether animals can be moral agents in the same way that humans are. But that is not the question at all. The question is rather whether they can act morally—that is, act on moral grounds (Mark Rowlands 2012, 21). And for this, the hurdles are not as high as Tomasello, de Waal and Bekoff assume. “For an individual to act morally, [...] it is not necessary that she have the ability to reflect on her motives or actions; nor does it require that she be able to explicitly formulate or understand the principles on which she acts, nor that she be able to adopt an impartial perspective of the sort required for a sense of justice.” (Mark Rowlands 2012, 22).

Assuming that the bar for moral action is lower than generally assumed, Rowlands concludes on the basis of the ethological observations referred to earlier that some animals can be motivated to act for moral reasons—in the form of morally charged emotions. For such have a moral content because they guarantee the truth of a moral proposition (Mark Rowlands 2012, 71). These animals therefore act morally. But does this also make them moral agents?

A person is a moral agent if and only if she can be held morally accountable and morally evaluated (praised or blamed, rewarded or punished) for her intentions and actions (Mark Rowlands 2012, 75). Animals are not moral agents in this sense, as we do not hold them accountable. This is because we can only do so with individuals who can question and reflect on their own moral motivations (Mark Rowlands 2012, 93–98). Nevertheless, many animals are moral subjects, i.e. individuals who are at least sometimes motivated to act for moral reasons (Mark Rowlands 2012, 89).

In essence, Rowlands is putting many animals on the side of people who are capable of committing crimes. We do not consider children and people

with dementia or severe mental disabilities to be moral agents in the sense just defined—we do not evaluate their actions morally because we assume that they are not at all, not yet or no longer capable of questioning and reflecting on their actions. At the same time, we have to assume that children are moral subjects at a very early stage. Otherwise, we would not be allowed to try to educate them morally. The moral demands on children therefore increase with each year of life—and, in a mirror image, the moral demands on dementia patients decrease with each progression of dementia. This shows that the continuum between moral subjecthood and moral agency in humans is fluid. We do not yet reproach a six-year-old for some actions that we would certainly reproach a ten-year-old. Similarly, we will not deny all responsibility to people with mild or moderate mental disabilities or people with incipient dementia but will make this dependent on the scope of the respective action. Moral agency is therefore by no means a binary concept but describes a continuum between 0 and 100.

For our debate, it is completely sufficient to recognise animals as moral subjects in the sense presented, for Tomasello, de Waal and Bekoff agree that some animals can act like human children at the age of four, five or six. The term “morally analogous” is inappropriate for such behaviour—it is coyly concealed as “non-moral” or “irrational” and represents a negation without offering an affirmation. If one wants to mark a difference to humans, the term “protomoral” is more appropriate, for on the one hand it makes clear that protomoral behaviour is already moral behaviour, and on the other hand it signals that human morality has continuously developed from animal (proto-) morality and at the same time far exceeds it.

### 6.2.2 Christological

For the Church Fathers, as we have seen, the question of reason is closely linked to the question of the divine Logos, Jesus Christ. When the Logos enters this world, so the reasoning goes, he can reveal himself in a way that is significant for salvation history only to those creatures that are capable of receiving him. According to that argumentation, these are only rational beings, i.e., according to the Stoic conviction, human beings. Animals and plants or even inanimate nature can therefore have no communion with Christ and consequently cannot be redeemed to eternal life.

This conviction has become highly questionable at least since the middle of the 20th century. At that time, the churches' opposition to the theory

of evolution was in its last throes. In his 1950 encyclical *Humani generis*, Pope Pius XII conceded to the natural sciences that they could investigate “the origin of the human body from pre-existing and living matter”, but restricted this by saying that monogenism, i.e. the descent of all human beings from Adam, should not be called into question (HG 36–37). But only fifteen years later the Second Vatican Council affirmed the freedom of research and science without any restriction (GS 36; 59; 62) and thus paved the way for the reconciliation of evolutionary theory and faith. Its full recognition came in an address by Pope John Paul II to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences on 22 October 1996: The theory of evolution is “more than a hypothesis”.

*Karl Rahner* (1904 Freiburg i.B.-1984 Innsbruck) had already made the overdue paradigm shift twenty years earlier in his “Foundations of the Christian Faith”. According to Rahner, it is not the theory of evolution that is at issue for the modern world, but faith in Jesus as the Christ. Theology must rethink this and show its compatibility with modern scientific thinking. “In doing so, the evolutionary world view is taken as a given and the question asked is whether Christology is compatible or can be compatible with it, and not vice versa.” (Karl Rahner 1976, 180). Rahner thus states a reversal of the burden of proof: while in his time Darwin was still under strong social pressure to prove the compatibility of his theory with the Christian faith, 100 years later the wind has turned 180 degrees. Now the Church and theology are challenged to show the compatibility of the Christian faith with modern natural science. From his long and circuitous justification for this reversal of the burden of proof, one can see that Rahner was exposed to fierce intra-theological and intra-church resistance.

Rahner is explicitly not concerned with deriving Christology from the theory of evolution. That would be a category error and would rob theology of its independence. Rather, it is about “an intrinsic affinity and the possibility of a reciprocal correlation” (Karl Rahner 1976, 181). In order to demonstrate this affinity, Rahner first assumes that all matter comes from a single origin and therefore represents a unity (Karl Rahner 1976, 183). This matter possesses the possibility of self-transcendence, of transcending itself to become something greater. “Becoming must be understood as a becoming more, as the emergence of more reality [...] as real self-transcendence, self-outdoing” (Karl Rahner 1976, 186). And this self-transcendence reaches out to its ground, its condition of possibility—the absolute mystery.

This, however, makes it conceivable that this absolute mystery, which believers call God, can submerge itself into the world and its matter: "Precisely because the movement of the development of the cosmos is thus carried from the outset and in all phases by the urge for greater fullness and intimacy and the ever closer and more conscious relationship to its ground, the message that an absolute immediacy with this infinite ground comes about is absolutely given in itself." (Karl Rahner 1976, 192). Absolute immediacy with the infinite ground means that this ground becomes part of matter and its history. In this message "it is said that before and behind everything that is individual and to be classified [...] the infinite mystery always already stands and that in this abyss is the origin and the end, the blessed goal" (Karl Rahner 1976, 193). The materialisation of the infinite reason in the world, as Christians believe in Jesus Christ, is then "the absolute promise of God to [...] creatures and the acceptance of self-communication" (Karl Rahner 1976, 195) by creation in one. As God, Jesus Christ is the absolute promise to creation; as a creature, he embodies the acceptance of this promise by creation. In this way Rahner wants to "take really seriously the word that the Logos became *flesh*" (Karl Rahner 1976, 182, emphasis there).

Rahner's great reflections, however, have a huge flaw: although they interpret the theory of evolution philosophically and theologically in an ingenious way and although they place the whole of creation within the horizon of redemption, they persist in traditional anthropocentrism. For despite the emphasised unity of the cosmos, Rahner is concerned with justifying why God could not become *just any* creature, but had to become *man*. For him, the dynamic of evolution inevitably runs towards man, because only in him does "the basic tendency of matter to discover itself in spirit through self-transcendence reach its definitive breakthrough" (Karl Rahner 1976, 182).

Here, we must make a clear distinction: That "what matter is can only be said from man [...] We say here deliberately: from 'man'..." (Karl Rahner 1976, 184), is entirely correct and simply reflects what we call today "epistemic anthropocentrism". Of course, the interpretation of the development of evolution must be opened up from a human perspective, with human categories and ways of understanding—how else?

But for Rahner, the increase in matter is directed towards that being which possesses "spirit" in the full sense of the word. And so, for him, "there is no reason to deny that matter should have developed towards life and towards man" (Karl Rahner 1976, 187). At this point, Rahner speaks of



“differences in essence” between human and non-human creation and of the “self-transcendence of essence”. So much “essence” is rather suspicious to today’s theologically sensitive ears, and Rahner does not specify what he means by it. He continues by speaking of the human being as the “actual event of self-transcendence”, which the “lower [...] preludes [...]” (Karl Rahner 1976, 187). For him, non-human creation is “that reality which we call vulgar and, in its quite correct sense, ‘unconscious’ [...], that which possesses only its own idea, entangled in itself” (Karl Rahner 1976, 188). However, the cosmos finds itself in man (Karl Rahner 1976, 190–191).

God, the absolute reason for and the infinite mystery of the cosmos, thus reveals himself directly to man as the only spiritual creature and as mediated to the cosmos as a whole through man. Mentally, Rahner is very close here to Paul’s Stoically inspired anthropocentrism in Rom 8. There, too, the “freedom and glory of the children of God” is attributed to the whole of creation. But there, too, it takes place through the mediation of human beings and for the sake of human beings. With their strong emphasis on the unity of creation, both in its origin and in its future, Paul and Rahner clearly go beyond the Stoa. But despite Rahner’s affirmation, the Johannine “becoming flesh” is subordinated to Pauline Stoic cosmology (and specifically in the form of its *scala naturae*—keyword “the lower”, “preluded”).

Like every theologian, Rahner was also a child of his time. That theology must open up to modern evolutionary biology and enter into dialogue with it became clear to many in the 1970s. But that anthropocentrism can no longer be maintained so smoothly and easily, precisely because of the theory of evolution, was not yet seen. Carl Amery’s criticism of Christian anthropocentrism from 1972 and even more so Lynn White’s criticism from 1967 were obviously not perceived by Rahner. And so, although he takes a first important step, he does not yet take the necessary second one.

It seems that the dogmatic description of the relationship between Christology and creation theology has developed little since Rahner. Thus, *Franz Gruber* remains strongly oriented towards Rahner in his remarks on “The Unity of Creation and Incarnation” (Franz Gruber 2001, 208–210) and “Incarnation and Evolution” (Franz Gruber 2001, 210–214). Like Rahner, he sees the significance of the incarnation for the whole of creation: “In Christ, God loves creation unconditionally and makes himself known to it as Logos. In this way creation receives a dignity and depth that is unsurpassable.” (Franz Gruber 2001, 208). “Thus creation too becomes visible in the Logos Son as the counterpart truly willed by God, as that created for the sake of



God's communion of life with the other of himself." (Franz Gruber 2001, 209).

As for Rahner, it is also decisive for Gruber that traditional anthropocentrism must be broken up: "The Logos of God is the way, the truth and the fulfilment of life. [...] Christian anthropocentrism also culminates in this sentence. That this, however, is not the last word of Revelation, is equally to be noted. For the goal of creation is its transformation into the kingdom of God. This transformation does not remain reduced to human beings alone." (Franz Gruber 2001, 214). However, Gruber does not problematise the fact that Rahner stops halfway here. Rather, he concludes: "If one does not reject Rahner's theological-philosophical reflection from the outset because of its idealistic way of speaking, then his interpretation is the most coherent metaphysical and theological mediation to date of the Christian claim to the meaning of an absolute goal of creation with a general evolutionary understanding of the world." (Franz Gruber 2001, 213).

Fifteen years later, *Elizabeth Johnson* followed the same path. With explicit reference to Rahner, she too thinks in terms of the theory of evolution as the basic social narrative and asks herself how the Christian message can fit into this. She sees the antiquated language of the Nicene Creed and its need for reform, but also its ability to reform, which is based on the description of God's activity in the world: "As for the Nicene Creed, it too may seem dated. At the very least its language speaks with the vocabulary of a bygone era [...] Yet pulsing underneath its threefold structure is a narrative of divine engagement with the world..." (Elizabeth Johnson 2015, 16).

Like Rahner, Johnson emphasises that the Logos became flesh and not just man. Jesus' humanity therefore stands for a part of the whole of creation. "In truth, the type of sarx that the Word became was precisely human flesh. Homo sapiens, however, does not stand alone but is part of an interconnected whole." (Elizabeth Johnson 2015, 195). Johnson refers to this perception as "deep incarnation", in line with Niels Gregersen. "The flesh that the Word of God became as a human being is part of the vast body of the cosmos. The phrase 'deep incarnation', coined by Niels Gregersen, is starting to be used in Christology to signify this radical divine reach through human flesh all the way down 'into the very tissue of biological existence' with its 'growth and decay'..." (Elizabeth Johnson 2015, 196). And she concludes, "The incarnation is a cosmic event" (Elizabeth Johnson 2015, 197). The scope of this deep incarnation goes all the way to the cross—the incarnate Christ suffers with all creation—and to resurrection—the incarnate Christ opens the way to eternity for all creation. Johnson speaks

by analogy of “deep resurrection” (Elizabeth Johnson 2015, 207). In all this, she remains oriented towards Rahner, to whom, as she explicitly confesses, she owes an enormous debt (Elizabeth Johnson 2015, xvii). Sallie McFague, on the other hand, who is subsequently presented, is quoted by Johnson only in passing and without addressing her quite different proposal for a paradigm shift.

After four decades, Rahner’s paradigm shift in systematic theology thus seems to have found a certain acceptance: affirmation of the redemption of all creation through Christ—without overcoming traditional anthropocentrism in a way that is incisive in terms of thought. Systematic theological thinking seems to have stopped halfway. Let us therefore turn to a pointed counter-proposal. *Sallie McFague* (1933 Quincy MS–2019 Vancouver) is a generation younger than Karl Rahner and wrote her most significant works only after his death—at a time when the ecological question was increasingly coming to the fore. In view of this, McFague’s goal is primarily a different way of seeing the world and, only for its sake, a different way of seeing God: “to cause us to see differently”, “to think and act as if bodies matter”, “to change what we value” (Sallie McFague 1993, 17). Dogmatics is put into operation to shape the world.

Like Rahner, McFague also starts from the societal recognition of evolutionary biology, which states there is a fundamental interdependence between humans and the cosmos. However, she places the ecological question on an equal footing with evolutionary biology. “We are part and parcel of the web of life and exist in interdependence with all other beings, both human and nonhuman. [...] The evolutionary, ecological perspective insists that we are, in the most profound way, ‘not our own’: we belong, from the cells of our bodies to the finest creations of our minds, to the intricate, ever-changing cosmos. We both depend on that web of life for our own continued existence and in a special way we are responsible for it, for we alone know that life is interrelated and we alone know how to destroy it.” (Sallie McFague 1990, 202).

Unlike Rahner, McFague has already received the debate on “the historical roots of our ecological crisis” triggered by Lynn White in 1967. For her, traditional Western, Judeo-Christian anthropocentrism is the root of evil and must be overcome. “As we near the close of the twentieth century we have become increasingly conscious of the fragility of our world. We have also become aware that the anthropocentrism that characterizes much of the Judeo-Christian tradition has often fed a sensibility insensitive to our proper place in the universe.” (Sallie McFague 1990, 202). She wants to re-

place anthropocentrism with theocentrism, biocentrism and/or cosmocentrism (Sallie McFague 1990, 203), although it remains completely unclear which of these alternative teleologies is really her favourite or how she wants to combine these different approaches. In this respect, she remains extremely vague.

But how can a renewed, non-anthropocentric form of theology speak of God and the world? McFague, inspired by the parables of Jesus and the philosophy of Paul Ricœur, assumes that theological speech is always and exclusively metaphorical because the actual cannot be said univocally. "Metaphor is the way by which we understand as well as enlarge our world and change it." (Sallie McFague 1982, 18). But theological metaphors can be irrelevant or harmful to the Earth's ecosystem—and are not necessarily helpful. The classical talk of God as the king, ruler and patriarch of the universe has become such harmful talk in the 21st century. Its asymmetrical dualism between God and the world marks a great distance and difference between the two—it is an anthropocentric, hierarchical, potentially destructive model. As an alternative, McFague proposes interpreting the cosmos as the body of God. The incarnation of God takes place in the whole of creation and not just in a single creature, the man Jesus of Nazareth. McFague sees a double proximity to tradition in this concept: she recognises the cosmic dimension of the divine in mysticism, in Hegel and in process theology. She finds the body metaphor in the ecclesiastical talk of the body of Christ and the body of the church, compared to which the talk of the body of the cosmos means expansion. "Christianity is the religion of the incarnation par excellence. Its earliest and most persistent doctrines focus on embodiment: from the incarnation (the Word made flesh) and Christology (Christ was fully human) to the eucharist (this is my body, this is my blood), the resurrection of the body, and the church (the body of Christ who is its head), Christianity has been a religion of the body." (Sallie McFague 1993, 14).

The metaphor of the cosmos as the body of God gives rise to a new view of the human being in creation. If it is first about his corporeality and not about his spirituality, then his position is no longer above the other creatures, but at their side and connected with them. "The organic world view and the new creation story brings it to our attention indisputably that we are bodies, made of the same stuff as all other life-forms on our planet; that we are bodies among the bodies of other life-forms on earth, and that, all together, we form one body, the body of the Earth which is again but one of the bodies in the greater universe." (Annalet van Schalkwyk 2008,

208). But if man is a tiny, transient part of creation, he should humbly acknowledge that he was created from the ashes of extinct stars. “We are all made of the ashes of dead stars” (Sallie McFague 1993, 44).

If the world is understood as the body of God, God can only be accessed and experienced through this body. “In the universe as a whole as well as in each and every bit and fragment of it, God’s transcendence is embodied. The important word here is ‘embodied’: the transcendence of God is not available to us except as embodied.” (Sallie McFague 1993, 133). The non-objective God can only be experienced in an objectively mediated way through the corporeal world. “We never meet God unembodied” (Sallie McFague 1987, 184). This corresponds to the fact that for McFague the most important sense for the knowledge of God is not, as in the philosophical tradition, the sense of sight, which perceives from a distance and thus tempts us to objectify, but the sense of touch, which allows what is to be felt to come very close to it and to be touched by it (Sallie McFague 1997, 95; cf. Margit Eckholt 2009, 24–25). God is to be taken seriously and valued in this cosmos, for creation is his very own self-expression. The body metaphor is therefore connected with the greatest possible appreciation of creation.

The passion of the cosmically incarnated God is therefore always present everywhere creatures suffer. God suffers with the creatures, and they participate in his crucifixion. “All pain to all creatures is felt immediately and bodily by God: one does not suffer alone. In this sense God’s suffering on the cross was not for a mere few hours, as in the old mythology, but it is present and permanent. As the body of the world, God is forever ‘nailed to the cross’, for as this body suffers, so God suffers.” (Sallie McFague 1990, 216).

This understanding logically has consequences for soteriology. Salvation is the redemption of all earthly matter, all bodies, not just human, here and now (and only in a derivative way at the end of time). “Creation is the place of salvation, salvation is the direction of creation.” (Sallie McFague 1993, 180). And this salvation takes place where creatures are liberated, healed, loved. “In the universe as the body of God, the direction (or the hope) of creation is a movement towards the inclusion of all living beings in the liberating, healing, inclusive love of God in a community where presence among us is celebrated in its fullness and bounty.” (Annalet van Schalkwyk 2008, 211).

McFague explicitly rejects accusations of pantheism and classifies her approach as ecofeminist pantheism (Sallie McFague 1993, 47–55). In it,

God is not reduced to the world, but is seen as one who is willing to act in and through the world as well as to suffer in and with the world. To avoid misunderstandings, McFague draws on Ex 33:18 several times: as Moses at Sinai sees only the back of God, so we see “only” creation as the back of the living God (Sallie McFague 1993, 131–145). We cannot look God in the face any more than Moses could. Moreover, McFague uses other—and specifically personal—metaphors for God to avoid a pantheistic misunderstanding. “Without the use of personal agential metaphors, however, including among others God as mother, lover, and friend, the metaphor of the world as God’s body would be pantheistic, for the body would be all there were. Nonetheless, the model is monist and perhaps most precisely designated as panentheistic; that is, it is a view of the God–world relationship in which all things have their origins in God and nothing exists outside God, though this does not mean that God is reduced to these things.” (Sallie McFague 1987, 71–72).

But what is the role of Jesus in such an understanding of God and the world? For McFague, Jesus is the metaphor and parable of God (in *genitivus subiectivus and obiectivus!*) *par excellence*. “The belief that Jesus is the word of God—that God is manifest somehow in a human life—does not dissipate metaphor but in fact intensifies its centrality, for what is more indirect—a more complete union of the realistic and the strange—than a human life as the abode of the divine? Jesus as the word is metaphor *par excellence*; he is the parable of God.” (Sallie McFague 1975, 76; cf. also 1982, 19). Elsewhere McFague also speaks of the paradigm and culmination point that Jesus is for the incarnation of God in the world. “The radicalization of incarnation sees Jesus not as a surd, an enigma, but as a paradigm or culmination of the divine way of enfleshment.” (Sallie McFague 1993, 133).

However, Jesus is only one of many examples of God’s incarnation in this world, which at best has a relatively special position (“culmination point”). There is no causal relationship between the incarnation of God in Jesus and the incarnation of God into the world. “When I confess that Jesus is the Christ, I am saying that he is paradigmatic of what we see everywhere and always: God with us, God with and for all of us, all creatures, all worldly processes and events. [...] If incarnation were limited to Jesus of Nazareth, it would not only be a surd (and hence, absurd), but paltry in comparison to God’s embodiment in all of creation.” (Sallie McFague 2001, 20). According to McFague, however, the idea of Jesus’ uniqueness must be abandoned not only because it does not fit into her concept of a cosmic incarnation, but also because it is firstly offensive to other religions, secondly implausible

and absurd in an enlightened world, and thirdly incompatible with the scientific view of the world (Sallie McFague 1993, 159). Jesus does reveal God's love in a very pure form, but this is only "paradigmatic [...] but [...] not unique" (Sallie McFague 1987, 136). For Christians, Jesus is special because he is their founder and their "historical choice" (Sallie McFague 1987, 136). But that is all he is.

McFague uses the term "Jesulatry", created by Paul Tillich in this context (Sallie McFague 2001, 159; cf. Ioanna Sahinidou 2015, 20). Whoever worships Christ as unique makes an idol out of a historical person, for this view is individualistic, anthropocentric and spiritualistic (neglecting the body). The attack on classical Christology could hardly be more massive. According to McFague, two essential transformations of the concept of the incarnation are needed. "The first is to relativize the incarnation in relation to Jesus of Nazareth and the second is to maximize it in relation to the cosmos." (Sallie McFague 1993, 162).

As far as human freedom and responsibility are concerned, the apersonal image of the world as God's body remains limp. McFague sees the special position of human beings biblically in participating in God's creative work. She thus advocates formal anthropocentrism as grounded in the biblical Creation narratives. However, she enters unnoticed into the fairway of Stoic interpretations of Genesis 1 when she sees human self-consciousness, reflectivity and freedom as the decisive ontological basis for responsibility and places this in the image of God. "We human beings might be seen as partners in creation, as the self-conscious, reflexive part of the creation that could participate in furthering the process." (Sallie McFague 1993, 104).

She also speaks of "the peculiar kind of creatures we are, namely, creatures with a special kind of freedom, able to participate self-consciously (as well as be influenced unconsciously) in an evolutionary process. This gives us a special status and a special responsibility: We are the ones like God; we are selves that possess bodies, and that is our glory. It is also our responsibility, for we alone can choose to become partners with God in care of the world; we alone can—like God—love, heal, befriend, and liberate the world, the body, that God has made available to us as both the divine presence and our home. Our special status and responsibility, however, are not limited to consciousness of our own personal bodies, or even of the human world, but extend to all embodied reality, for we are that part of the cosmos where the cosmos itself has come to consciousness. If we become extinct, then the cosmos will lose its human, although presumably not its divine, consciousness. As Jonathan Schell remarks, 'In extinction

a darkness falls over the world not because the lights have gone out but because the eyes that behold the light have been closed' (Jonathan Schell 1982, 128)." (Sallie McFague 1990, 216–217).

The first part of this long quotation is problematic due to the very traditional conflation of the biblical Creation narrative and Stoic ontology, but at least it is fitting in its result, for it presents formal anthropocentrism, and this can indeed only be justified with the special intellectual abilities of humans. But the formulation "we are the part of the cosmos in which this has come to consciousness" and, even more so, the Schell quote expose the passage as not only formally anthropocentric, but at the same time covertly teleologically anthropocentric. Man is not the eye of creation without which it goes blind, but rather one who eclipses the light of God in creation. If humanity is erased from the earth, the cosmos loses nothing at all—and possibly gains quite a lot. In later publications, McFague makes up for this lapse by resorting only to terms taken from the general creation ethics debate, but no longer connected to the body metaphor: Humans, she argues, are guardians and caretakers of the small planet (Sallie McFague 1993, 108–109) as well as partners and helpers of God in the work for a sustainable planet (Sallie McFague 2008, 58). Even though McFague does not explicitly mark this change of terms and metaphors as a correction, I read it this way.

McFague's approach is extraordinarily consistent and provides a striking alternative to Rahner in embedding Christology in an evolutionary world view. I see her greatest strength in comparison with Rahner in the fact that the connectedness of the Logos with the whole of creation is constructed through being of shared flesh, shared corporeality rather than through consciousness and spirituality. Here McFague exposes the error of thinking in classical theology from the Church Fathers to Rahner: if we take seriously the belief in the incarnation of the Logos, creatures do not need reason (the ability) to have direct and immediate communion with him. It is not the spirit but the flesh that is the hinge of salvation: *caro cardo salutis*.

However, McFague also leaves a big question mark: For her, as presented, there is no uniqueness to Jesus Christ. The historical Jesus of Nazareth is a special person and an impressive example of God's incarnation in creation—but no more. "According to her, the model of the cosmos as God's body excludes any claims of Christ's uniqueness, who is a 'paradigmatic embodiment of God.'" (Ioanna Sahinidou 2015, 20). In this context, McFague understands the Christological dogmas of the first four councils as "founding models" (Sallie McFague 1982, 103) that later on can and



sometimes even must be replaced by other models. “She opts for a creative interpretation of dogma that sees Jesus Christ as the ‘founding model’ from which new models can grow.” (Margit Eckholt 2009, 16). Pointedly, one can say: “Nature and not just Jesus is the sacrament of God.” (Ioanna Sahinidou 2015, 20). Let us recall the three arguments against the uniqueness of Christ: firstly, the postulate would be hurtful to other religions; secondly, it would be implausible and absurd in an enlightened society; and thirdly, it would be incompatible with the scientific view of the world (Sallie McFague 1993, 159). Moreover, it would be individualistic, anthropocentric and spiritualistic (bodiless and without presence).

So should we leave Nicaea behind and become Arians? Would this correspond, as with God’s plan of creation, to a retraction of all too steep theses of classical theology? Let us look at the arguments one by one:

- Whether the confession of Jesus as the Christ is individualistic, anthropocentric and spiritualistic depends entirely on how it is formulated and justified. Of course, this has often been the case in the course of church and theological history. But fundamentally, the belief that God is incarnated in a special way in a single creature leaves all the room in the world for a holistic (God is present in the whole of creation), biocentric (God is incarnated in a special way in a living being, without it having to be a human being and precisely this human being) and body-centred present interpretation of the Christ event (salvation takes place here and now and bodily).
- In her thesis that the uniqueness of Christ is incompatible with the scientific view of the world, McFague is probably thinking primarily of the theory of evolution. If this is taken seriously, evolution by no means runs directly and unidirectionally towards man and even less towards Christ, even if Teilhard de Chardin claimed so. One could also think of the possible existence of life on other planets in other galaxies: what would it mean for these living beings that they have no contact whatsoever with the Logos of God in person and cannot even know about Him? However, all these are not insurmountable obstacles against the background of Rahner’s considerations. Especially if one takes the classical doctrine of the Trinity seriously, the incarnation of God the Logos in a single, historically identifiable creature is joined by the incarnation of God the Holy Spirit in the cosmos as a whole. Ioanna Sahinidou is absolutely right that a properly understood doctrine of the Trinity opens more doors here than it closes.



- Of course, abandoning Nicene Christology would make it easier for many non-believers to access the Christian faith and would give many believers the feeling that they are “orthodox” after all. McFague is undoubtedly right with this argument. But the question is whether the quantitative acceptance of an article of faith is the primary or sufficient criterion for its correctness. After all, one need not interpret it as ominous and tragic if the majority of people decide otherwise at this point. After all, this seems to have been the case already in the Johannine community (Jn 6:66).
- McFague makes the most serious accusation against classical Christology by saying that it is hurtful and demeaning to those who are different and non-believers. Again, one must admit that Christology was often used in this way in the course of Christian history. In this respect, however, a serious category error was committed. The confession of Christ is not an acknowledgement of an objectively provable fact and as such would also be meaningless. And of course, the question of personal salvation does not depend on whether one explicitly affirms Christ. The redeemed in the parable of the Last Judgement (Mt 25:31–46) manifestly did not do so. As with the question of God's providence (cf. chapter 6.1.2), it is rather a matter of a very personal conviction of the first-person perspective. The existential question is: “Who am I, Jesus of Nazareth, for *you*?” Peter's answer in the fourth Gospel makes this clearer than in the other three Gospels: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life.” (Jn 6:69). The uniqueness of Christ is thus to be interpreted analogously to the uniqueness of spouses to each other. It is not objectively measurable or ascertainable; indeed, for different people, and with good reason, different people may be religiously unique. Christianity has no right whatsoever to impose the uniqueness of Jesus Christ on all people but can only advertise it. Seen in this light, it is a serious category error to use the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, which is a scientific–theological consensus formula for teachers, in the liturgy as an existential confession of personal devotion and faithfulness.

Understood correctly, all McFague's arguments against Nicene Christology can be invalidated. This does not prove anything, and as I said, this would not work. However, the classical affirmation of Christ can be connected without problems with its expansion for the whole of creation. This is precisely the aim of *Niels Henrik Gregersen's* concept of “deep incarnation”. In addition to the danger of anthropocentrism, Gregersen also sees the

danger of “chronocentrism” (Niels Henrik Gregersen 2016, 2). He criticises classical theology for placing an excessive focus on the historical period of Jesus’ life—largely neglecting the extension of the cosmic Christ far beyond Israel and the year 30. God has a “date” with the world in history—quite literally in the double sense of date and appointment. According to Gregersen, this is the unique perception of the connection between God and the world in Christianity, which is without parallel in other world religions. “God has not only created the framework of the world, but also has a ‘date’ within it. This intertwining of Creator and creature—‘without separation, without confusion’ (Council of Chalcedon 451 CE)—is without parallel in other world religions.” (Niels Henrik Gregersen 2010, 167).

Gregersen sees theological potential in the idea of a “date” between God and the world that can be localised in space and time. However, in order to develop it, the bodily-spiritual existence of Jesus must be considered in expanded terms, as is expressed today in philosophy with the concept of extension: Christ has an extended body, an extended consciousness, extended interactions. A form of Christology fixed exclusively on the historical Jesus would therefore remain on the surface of the skin—only when it is extended to the cosmic Christ does it go under the skin. “If we think of the incarnation in purely historical terms (Jesus as a bygone historical figure), and at the same time subscribe to the metaphysics of historicism (all that exists only exists as indexed in time and space), we could only speak of a skin deep incarnation. [...] In contrast, deep incarnation presupposes a wide-scope view of incarnation by focusing on the extended mind of Jesus. [...] The very notion of incarnation is to be expressed as part of an extensive interactionist view of the embodied mind. But the concept of incarnation also operates within the horizon of a cosmic Christology.” (Niels Henrik Gregersen 2016, 2).

Gregersen’s concept of “deep incarnation” thus pleads for a fruitful and exciting connection of the Christ personalised in Jesus with the cosmic Christ. “The view of deep incarnation speaks of a universe in which God is not only present in a general manner (as expressed in traditional concepts of the immanent activity of the divine creator), but in which God is conjoining and uniting with the material world in the bodily form of God’s incarnate Son of Logos or Wisdom. [...] what from our temporalised perspective is an event that took place in the 30 years of the life story of Jesus is from the perspective of eternity a process beginning with creation itself, which culminated in the incarnation of Jesus, and is still with us because of the depths of the resurrection of Christ.” (Niels Henrik Gregersen 2016, 4).

Pope Francis also sees this deep connection: “For the Christian experience, all creatures of the material universe find their true meaning in the incarnate Word (*verbo encarnado*), because the Son of God took into his person a part of the material universe in which he placed a seed of definitive transformation” (LS 235). In this interpretation, a mediating authority between Christ and creation does not occur. The Logos enters directly into the matter of this world and acts directly on it. Unlike Rahner, human reflectivity and spirituality do not play a mediating role. The humanity of the Logos does not step between this and the cosmos but is part of the cosmos. In contrast to Rahner and Paul, who construct a triadic relationship of Logos–human being–cosmos, Pope Francis speaks of a dyadic relationship of Logos–cosmos. He thus no longer needs an anthropocentric structuring of the Christ event and can unfold its meaning for creation as one and as a whole much more directly.

### 6.2.3 Eschatological

The Jewish tradition and, following it, the message of Jesus of Nazareth are deeply coined by the idea of the uniqueness of earthly life. This is an indispensable prerequisite for the ideas of the Last Judgement and the raising of the dead that permeate both Jesus' preaching and the creed of the first Christians. The Greek doctrine of the transmigration of souls, as is inherent in Platonic and Neo-Platonic philosophy, is for this reason firmly rejected throughout patristics. In contrast, the Stoic concept of an eternal life of all rational beings seems very close to the Judeo-Christian message of resurrection. That the Stoa understands eternal life as a continued existence of the rational soul freed from the body and not as a holistic re-creation by a faithful and loving God is overlooked and passed over by the Church Fathers. If, however, the guarantor of eternal life is not the faithfulness of the Creator but the possession of a rational soul, all creatures without reason are excluded from eternal life. Ultimately, then, an inaccurate perception of the biblical message of resurrection, already tinged with Hellenism, is responsible for early Christian theology's conviction that animals and plants must be excluded from salvation and eternal life.

A second reason for the attractiveness of the Stoic concept of eternity is that it calls on all rational beings to make a responsible decision about their own salvation. Only those who possess reason, as is clear to Stoa and the Church Fathers, can and must make reflective and free decisions

about their salvation. Now, the idea of the Last Judgement undoubtedly only makes sense if those to be judged have acted freely and of their own volition. Particularly in view of the highly developed Roman legal system, this is immediately obvious to everyone in the Roman Empire, and the biblical stories of God's judgement support this idea. However, this seems to exclude non-human beings all the more clearly from eternal salvation (and disaster), for they cannot decide freely and responsibly.

The pseudo-Athenagoras (cf. chapter 5.16) develops these considerations most clearly: Animals and plants have a need to live, but no need for knowledge of the eternal and thus no need to live forever. In accordance with the principle of economy, it would therefore not be rational for them to be given an eternal life if they do not strive for it at all. No, they exist solely for the sake of human beings, who, as rational beings, have their own purpose. As soon as man no longer needs non-human creatures, and that is the case in eternity, there is no reason for them to continue to exist. Lactance argues in the same direction (chapter 5.7).

We observed a completely different tendency in Tertullian (chapter 5.5). For him, the core problem with the Platonic doctrine of the transmigration of souls is not the migration of the soul from a human body into an animal body, but the migration from the body of one individual into that of another individual. The soul is very specifically designated to a particular living being and cannot possibly exist in another. Each soul is unique and perfectly created for the equally unique body in which it dwells. Tertullian proves that one can effectively refute the doctrine of transmigration without disparaging animals. One does not even have to bother with the idea that a human rational soul migrates into a rational animal. It is quite sufficient to perceive the soul as part of creaturely individuality. With this much more fundamental categorisation, Tertullian is able to undermine the doctrine of the transmigration of souls in a much more sustainable way and at the same time avoid devaluing animals, even underpinning their fundamental similarity to humans.

However, non-human creatures have a place in eternity only for Irenaeus of Lyons. Referring to Is 11, he can only imagine heaven with the inclusion of all creatures. Irenaeus decisively rejects an allegorical interpretation of the text, as becomes visible in later times, e.g. in Jerome. Thus, there is at least one patristic advocate of the resurrection of all living creatures. For him, the biblical testimony stands above philosophical arguments.

On what basis the resurrection of animals and plants is to take place remains open, however. For Irenaeus, too, there is no question that only

human beings have insight and free will. Redemption for animals would therefore have to be thought of in two stages—which is still in line with but goes further than Irenaeus' idea. First of all, redemption happens for all creatures on the basis of divine love and faithfulness to them, completely independent of their merits or the possession of an immortal rational soul. For those creatures who have insight and free will, however, it cannot take place over their will or even against it, but only with respect for that will. Otherwise, one could speak neither of human freedom nor of divine justice. According to this understanding, insight and free *will* would not be a condition for resurrection itself, but only for a specific form of what happens in the context of resurrection, namely judgement in the double sense of establishing justice and administering it correctly.

In popular piety, the idea of the redemption of all creation has always remained alive, against all theological objections, through two millennia. Pope Francis revived this image of an eternity populated by all creatures in his encyclical *Laudato si'*. Of all creatures, he writes, "The ultimate purpose of other creatures is not to be found in us. Rather, all creatures are moving forward with us and through us towards a common point of arrival, which is God, in that transcendent fullness where the risen Christ embraces and illumines all things. Human beings [...] are called to lead all creatures back to their Creator." (LS 83). "In union with all creatures, we journey through this land seeking God." (LS 244). "Eternal life will be a shared experience of awe, in which each creature, resplendently transfigured, will take its rightful place and have something to give those poor men and women who will have been liberated once and for all." (LS 243).

Anyone who takes seriously the incarnation of the divine Logos, which was the subject of this sub-chapter, cannot avoid postulating a redemption of the entire cosmos. "Theologically, each creature in the web of life is a symbol of presence; each is intrinsically good, embraced by God and called into redemptive future. In Christ, God entered evolving creation in a profoundly new way: the Incarnate One, Word-become-flesh, became an earth creature, sharing biological life with others on this planet. The risen Christ has assumed a cosmic role, leading creation back into God in a great act of love and thanksgiving that will be realized in its fullness in the great eschaton." (Mary E. McGann 2012, 49).

6.3 “The ultimate purpose of other creatures is not to be found in us” (LS 83).  
*The question of the teleological interpretation of natural processes*

Today, teleologies are strongly questioned from various sides. The natural sciences do not recognise any teleologies per se, since they methodically assume chance. Natural philosophies are less methodologically determined in this respect, but are quickly suspected of metaphysicism if they only speak cautiously of teleology. And theological teleologies are suspected of ideology outside their own discipline anyway. Nevertheless, within the framework of cognitivist animal and environmental ethics, teleological considerations and decisions cannot be avoided, for the question of whether the cosmos exists solely for humans or also for animals or even for all living beings or even first and foremost for ecosystems must be clarified before one can make concrete normative statements in this respect. This does not necessarily require a teleology of being, but a teleology of ought. However, whether the latter can be justified without the former, and if so, how, must be well considered.

In the following, I proceed in two steps: First, I pose the fundamental question of teleonomies in the plural and a teleology in the singular. Then, I discuss which of the classical four environmental and animal ethical models of teleology is most appropriate in the context of modern natural science on the one hand and ecological threat scenarios on the other.

6.3.1 Particular teleonomies and comprehensive teleology

A particular teleonomy in the nature of individual living beings represents an answer to the question of what a living being naturally strives for and what function such striving has for it. Thus, the observation that all living things seek food is usually interpreted as their striving for self-preservation. A comprehensive teleology of nature as a whole, on the other hand, attempts to answer the question of for whose sake the cosmos exists—for the sake of human beings (anthropocentrism), pain-sensitive beings (pathocentrism), living beings (biocentrism) or ecosystems (holism).

Both levels—that of teleonomies and that of teleology—are interrelated. If one were to claim that living beings have no teleonomy of self-preservation, the teleology of biocentrism would be deprived of its basis. Conversely, the teleology of biocentrism does not necessarily follow from the recognition of the teleonomy of self-preservation of living beings, because it could

be that this teleonomy is secondary and is relativised by another teleonomy (in stoic anthropocentrism, for example, by the striving for knowledge of reason). The teleonomy of self-preservation of living beings is thus a necessary but not sufficient criterion for the teleology of biocentrism.

The classical moral–theological position can be illustrated by *Thomas Aquinas* (1225 Aquinas-1274 Fossanova). Thomas, following in the footsteps of Aristotle, acknowledges both particular teleonomies in the nature of individual living beings and a comprehensive teleology of nature as a whole.

Thomas places the particular teleonomies in the context of his anthropology and ethics under the concept of natural inclinations (Thomas Aquinas, *summa theologiae* I–II q 94 a 2). Every agent acts for the sake of a good that he wants to achieve through his actions. In doing so, human reason conceives of all those things to which man has a natural inclination as goods and thus as desirable. Thomas names three such inclinations (*inclinationes naturales*):

- The striving for self-preservation, which man has in common with all living beings and which arises from the vegetative faculty of the soul (*anima vegetativa*).
- The striving for procreation and the raising of offspring, which humans have in common with all animals due to the sensual faculty of the soul (*anima sensibilis*) (today we would say: the striving for species preservation).
- The striving for community life and knowledge of God, which only man possesses, in particular in the rational faculty of the soul (*anima rationalis*). Here, Thomas reduces human relationships with each other and with God to the rational dimension on the one hand, and on the other, denies animals any reason. He adopts both assumptions from the Stoa and its reception in Christian theology.

Thomas is well aware that he cannot prove the three natural inclinations empirically, but that they represent interpretations of plant, animal and human behaviour. This is one of the reasons why he formulates them in such a general way that sufficient room for interpretation remains, especially for the weighting of the three aspirations among each other and their concrete design in individual cases. What is decisive, however, is that each example of natural striving has an inner functionality and, as a rule, is directed towards a meaningful purpose. Otherwise, Thomas would have to assume that nature is dysfunctional—which in the context of faith would reflect on the Creator. It is therefore reasonable for him to take natural inclinations—

one's own as well as those of other living beings—into account when thinking about and deciding on one's own actions. This does not exclude but rather includes the fact that the inclinations of different individuals or of a single individual can conflict with each other. But it does mean that they are directed towards real goods—and these are relevant in terms of ethical action. The current animal welfare debates are basically attempts to transfer this Thomasian figure of thought to farm animals. From animal striving, one deduces what is good for them, and the animal welfare thus recognised is seen as the ethically required goal of action.

As far as the overarching teleology is concerned, Thomas is completely oriented towards the Stoa. For him, therefore, there are two kinds of beings: those that are externally controlled and those that control themselves from within. However, only beings who have free will can control themselves, and only those who can make a judgement and a decision on the basis of rational considerations have free will. These are human beings. Animals, on the other hand, according to Thomas, are completely externally controlled by environmental stimuli (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles* II, 47–48).

This division of the world into actively acting and passively externally controlled beings has serious consequences for Thomas. Whoever can act actively is an agent (*principalis agens*) who has his purpose in himself. What is only controlled from outside, on the other hand, is an instrument that has no end in itself but is absorbed into being an end for agents. Animals are thus by nature subordinate to humans because they are unfree slaves. It is not a sin to kill them because they are created for the benefit of man and ordered towards him and his needs. Cruelty to animals is only forbidden because it could be directed against humans as cruelty in a next step or because an animal that belongs to another human being is harmed (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles* II, 112).

If man acts in accordance with reason (*ratio*), he can therefore do anything to animals that benefits him because they are subordinate to him as a rational being. But for Thomas this does not mean that feelings towards animals are completely irrelevant. On the contrary: if man is additionally guided by feeling (*passio*), he will have mercy (*misericordia*) towards suffering animals. And that is a good thing (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I–II q 102 a 6 ad 8). Here, Thomas cannot help but appreciate, against Stoic axiomatics, the numerous biblical passages that speak of mercy with animals. However, this does not play a central role for him. As a so-called supererogatory work, i.e. as a deed that is not demanded by justice but is



voluntarily done beyond it and is therefore “meritorious”, mercy towards animals remains a secondary appendage of his anthropocentric ethics.

The teleonomy of self-preservation inherent in all living beings and the teleonomy of the preservation of the species inherent in all animals are thus always and in principle negated by the teleonomy of cognition given exclusively to humans. They are not even mentioned in his justification of anthropocentrism.

Can such establishment of teleonomies or a teleology still be justified in an evolutionary world view? *Christian Kummer* explores this question. From the paradigms of evolutionary theory (changeability, development, chance, ...) it is clear to him that Darwin “no longer saw any place for talk of purposes in nature” (Christian Kummer 2011, 63). This is evident from the fact that “adaptation is not a question of intention, but an inevitable consequence of mutual competition” (Christian Kummer 2011, 63). Evolution thus pursues neither a particular nor an overarching telos—it has no intention. Since Darwin, therefore, people have been designing widely ramified family trees instead of a straightforward *scala naturae*. Paradoxically, however, humans are at the very top of these family trees and are thus valued as the highest living beings, as in the Stoa.

But what, Kummer asks, could be evolutionary and biological criteria for a higher valuation of certain species? He makes the following suggestion (Christian Kummer 2011, 106):

- The increase in functional differentiation as well as the integration of the different abilities into the whole of the organism.
- The decrease in the organism’s dependence on the environment.
- The increase in the individual autonomy of the living being. The more autonomy a living being possesses, the more it has become an end in itself.

Ultimately, all three of Kummer’s criteria boil down to the assumption that evolution tends towards the greater autonomy and independence of living beings. This is quite plausible from the point of view of evolutionary biology. However, in my opinion, Kummer ignores two aspects: Firstly, from an epistemological point of view, the concept of (reflection-based) autonomy is a methodologically anthropocentric concept. This cannot be different but should be reflected explicitly. And secondly, Kummer represents a very individualistic understanding of autonomy. The fact that, according to his understanding, the most “autonomous” living beings are, of all things, the most social animals, is ignored. I consider that a biological omission.

Nevertheless, Kummer emphasises that we cannot identify a comprehensive purpose for evolution—such a purpose would be entirely speculative. But what about man’s ability to define purposes? Does he stand outside evolution on the basis of this ability or is this ability only a sham? Kummer expressly wants to keep this question open. He considers it possible that man only reads purposes into nature because he cannot imagine them any other way.

Biologically, Kummer’s considerations are probably well considered and correct. Philosophically and ethically, however, they are insufficient, for cognitivist ethics cannot be satisfied with leaving the question of a rationally recognisable order of nature completely open. Such an order will have to contain end–means relations. Otherwise, only ethical non-cognitivism would remain. Of course, the competition-driven evolutionary dynamic itself has no intentions. But it proceeds according to laws that determine who wins the competitive struggle and who loses it—and these give evolution a certain rough direction. The fact that biodiversity in the course of evolutionary history has continued to increase despite all five previous mass extinctions (macro perspective) and that social organisms have evolved towards increasingly complex interaction and, precisely because of this, towards ever more intelligence and autonomy (micro perspective) points to the immanent telos of nature after all.

Against this background, it is remarkable that all four established justificatory approaches to environmental and animal ethics, i.e. anthropocentrism, pathocentrism, biocentrism and ecocentrism, are teleologically structured. Without a careful premise about the telos of nature, environmental and animal ethics (and ultimately cognitivist ethics as a whole) do not seem to be justifiable. It is therefore not necessary to fall prey to the “naturalistic fallacy” (George Edward Moore) and conclude from being to ought without any critical hermeneutics. Nor is it necessary to derive an all-embracing monolinear teleology from the limited teleonomies observed in natural science. But within the framework of cognitivist ethics, one cannot avoid resorting to something like rule-based “nature”. Even contractualists like John Rawls (who refers to “general facts” and classifies his theory as natural law theory) and discourse ethicists like Jürgen Habermas (who needs “nature” as that which is not made by human beings to underpin his idea of equality) have recognised this.

Here lies the undeniable merit of the Stoa. It has written into the pedigree of occidental ethics that claims of ought must be indispensably related to knowledge about being. Its weakness, however, lies in the fact that it has

developed a teleology that is all too simple and straightforward compared to evolutionary biology and that focuses solely on human beings. It can only justify this with a rationalistically narrow concept of reason. Both are no longer convincing today, and are even harmful to humans, animals, plants and ecosystems.

Christian theology and ethics of creation should therefore emphasise more clearly the irrevocable conflict of natural teleonomies, which, in view of the limited resources in the earth's ecosystem, lies in the fact that all living beings are dependent on the death of other living beings. This creation–theological origin of the theodicy question must not be covered up with unctuous phrases but must remain as an indissoluble objection to naïve harmonisation of the talk of divine love and care, and even be made strong. At the same time, however, the effort must be upheld to interpret directional indications for potential meanings that give pre-ethical goods and ethical claims a foundation from the numerous conflicting teleonomies of nature. Renouncing the development of such potential meanings would signal a capitulation of cognitivist ethics.

### 6.3.2 Biocentrism as the most appropriate teleology<sup>30</sup>

Ecologically speaking, the world is on the brink of disaster. Consequently, the goal of any form of environmental and animal ethics must be to show ways and means to curb the current force of economic and technological rationality and to take away its dominance over all social processes (cf. Michael Rosenberger 2021, 44–47). In view of this enormous task, an ethical approach that recognisably plays down rather than dramatises will only contribute to the preservation of the status quo. To be clear: the cool apathy of Stoic anthropocentrism may have a rational plausibility, but due to its lack of emotion, it will not initiate change. For this to occur, emotionalisation is necessary—in connection with a considerable broadening of horizons. What is needed is an ethical approach that invites and enables people to put themselves in the shoes of an animal or a plant.

Pope Francis is absolutely right when he stresses that the solution cannot be expected from a doctrine alone—neither an anthropocentric nor a

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30 On this section, see Michael Rosenberger 2021, 131–188, which presents, appreciates and weighs up all four approaches in great detail. In the following, I will concentrate on a few of the arguments presented there.

non-anthropocentric one because: “It is a question of talking not so much about ideas, but above all about the motivations that arise from spirituality in order to foster a passion for environmental protection. For it will not be possible to commit ourselves to great things with doctrines alone, without a ‘mysticism’ that animates us, without ‘inner motivations that spur, motivate, encourage and give meaning to personal and communal action’ (EG 261).” (LS 216). The question, therefore, is which teleology is most open and affinitive to spiritual motivations. And here the biocentrist and ecocentrist approaches are ahead (Haydn Washington et al. 2017, 39).

In the discourse of the last five decades on the environmentally and animal ethically appropriate teleology, almost everything revolves around the question of to whom dignity should be ascribed: humans, animals, plants and/or ecosystems? The concept of dignity does not establish a rational principle of action, but an emotional inhibition, which is paradoxical since talk of (human) dignity is of Stoic origin and thus stems from a rationalist model of thought. Granting dignity to someone means: “Stop! Stop and look at the dignitary from the other, non-benefit-oriented perspective! Perceive him or her as an independent you with his or her own needs!” The attribution of dignity, on the other hand, contributes little to determining the content of rules of action in conflicts over goods. Rationally and argumentatively, recourse to it would be dispensable, which is also advocated by many for whom the reference to rights is completely sufficient. But without the mention of dignity, much of the emotional charge is lost. The importance and urgency of the issue is downplayed. This is precisely where the importance of granting dignity to all creatures, not just all human beings, lies. Talk of “dignity” is a signal booster of the first order.

This is all the truer when (as in the encyclical *Laudato si'*) theological talk of the brotherhood and covenant fellowship of all creatures is used to complement the philosophical concept of dignity. It evokes vivid images that are understandable to everyone and is thus even more holistically appealing. Argumentatively, animal and environmental protection can be justified anthropocentrically as well as biocentrically or ecocentrically. But I think it is naïve, if not negligent, to completely exclude the emotional side, for anthropocentrism (cf. Michael Rosenberger 2001, 162–163)

- tends to trust *technical rationality* more and is more seduced by the “technocratic paradigm” than biocentrism or ecocentrism. It tends to overestimate more the human knowledge of natural processes and the human ways of managing nature.

- tends towards the all-dominant *economistic thinking* that sees non-human living beings and the ecosystem only as “natural capital” and at best protects them for the sake of long-term economic consequences. According to Kant, however, the concept of dignity is precisely the opposite category to measurable and scalable monetary values. It sets the ethical perception of dignity bearers exactly against the economic calculation—knowing full well what power the latter possesses.
- is more easily seduced into *chauvinism* by deriving primarily rights and hardly any duties from the special position of humans, thus subordinating non-human living beings on principle.

A holistically based form of biocentrism, such as the one I advocate below, will apply the traditional precautionary principle, which in principle anthropocentrism also recognises, more readily and comprehensively and will thus proceed more cautiously and in a more error-friendly manner. It is more inclined to humble acknowledgement of the limits of one’s own knowledge and ability and to reverent wonder before the immeasurable mysteries of the cosmos. In view of the enormous requirements for the preservation of an earth worth living on, this is a strong argument in its favour.

It is precisely from these considerations that my plea for holistically based biocentrism arises. In its basic form, this is a form of moral individualism and attributes intrinsic value or dignity to all living beings and only to them. In a comparison of the justificatory approaches of environmental ethics, biocentrism proves to be the most appropriate, consistent and economical option. It does not exclude any living being from the community of morally relevant individuals—there is no “nasty rift” between humans and animals or between animals and plants. However, in order not to end up in system-blind individualism that ignores all relationships of living beings, I speak of holistically based biocentrism. Collective systems have no dignity. However, they are of paramount importance for the common good of living beings because they are the condition of possibility for the individual good of their members. As in law, this can sometimes even mean that the system takes precedence over the individual (common good principle). Also, in an analogous manner to law, it can make perfect sense to ascribe a moral status to certain communities of life a posteriori and treat them as “quasi-persons”. All in all, holistically based biocentrism is thus moral individualism bound to the common good.

Let us define more precisely what this is all about in six theses (cf. Michael Rosenberger 2021, 157–162):

- (1) All living beings have an inalienable dignity. They have a moral status a priori and must therefore be morally respected for their own sake. We have direct duties towards them.
- (2) Dignity is the opposite of a price (Immanuel Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals* AA VI 434–435). A price signals replaceability and interchangeability, whereas dignity signals uniqueness and non-replaceability. Furthermore, a price signals the comparability of values, which are scalar, i.e. they occupy a continuous scale from a minimum to a maximum. It recognises greater or lesser value and also equality (with Kant “equivalence”) of value. Dignity, on the other hand, signals incomparability (incommensurability) and is not scalar but binary. Either a being has dignity, or it has no dignity. Either it deserves moral respect or it does not.
- (3) Dignity is an end in itself. It belongs directly to its bearer, is not transferable and cannot be exercised by proxy like rights. Unlike a prize, it cannot be lost.
- (4) Any action affecting an individual with dignity shall be justifiable to that individual.
- (5) As dignitaries, living beings must never be completely instrumentalised, never viewed exclusively in terms of their benefit to others. They must always be considered and respected at the same time and even first as an individual counterpart, as a “you”.
- (6) Individuals with dignity are bearers of their own goods. These must be included in fair consideration of goods. Dignitaries have a right to fair treatment.

The attribution of dignity to all living beings and only to them, i.e. the plea for biocentrism, can be supported by some further considerations. The main argument in its favour is that every living being has its own good, which is realised in “the full development of its biological powers” (Paul W. Taylor 1981, 199). In addition, it is also a (co-)bearer of other goods, e.g. the good of its own population and the good of its own species, which consists in the transmission of genetic information and in the preservation of the species. The dignity of a living being, however, is grounded in its potency to realise its own biological powers (Paul W. Taylor 1984, 154–155). If it is then further presupposed that “membership in the earth’s community” (onto-)logically precedes the living being’s concrete Thus-Being, then there

arises a priori the direct moral duty to respect and promote the fundamental potency of each living being's self-realisation. "Now there is indeed a property that human beings share with animals and which is at least as plausible a basis for the ascription of absolute value as Kantian autonomy and related concepts. This property consists in the fact that every human being and every animal is a good for itself... no human being and no animal experiences itself as a means to another end." (Michael Hauskeller 2015, 143).

Put another way: Every living being has two properties analogous to self-purposefulness in the Kantian sense. "It is the subject of purposes and it has a practical self-relation." (Friedo Ricken 1987, 8). Even living beings that cannot sense pleasure or pain possess "needs" that are analogous to conscious "interests". Plants tend to fulfil their needs, for example for light and water, in a very purposeful way. This corresponds to the reasoning of Aristotle, who also attributes striving to the vegetative soul faculty (Friedo Ricken 1987, 14–16; Aristotle, *De anima* II 4, 415a25–b2). Plants also relate to themselves. Their organism is not only the result but at the same time the cause of material accumulations of itself and the bearer of identity in all material exchange.

Theologically, the philosophical argumentation can be deepened and emotionally substantiated: Non-human living beings, just like human beings, are created directly by God and are wanted and loved by him (Gen 1–2). God himself becomes "flesh", i.e. creature, and thus gives all "flesh", i.e. all creatures, an unsurpassable dignity (Jn 1:14). Finally, creatures are included in salvation—the "kingdom of God" cannot be conceived without them (Is 11; Mk 1:13). Biocentrism is thus not only the most appropriate approach for philosophical reasons, but also the most extensively attested to and the most anchored biblically.

In summary, a relatively consistent picture emerges: cognitivist environmental and animal ethics needs recourse to particular teleonomies (the striving of animals and plants for their own goods) as well as to a carefully formulated comprehensive teleology (the dignity of all living beings). Only on this basis can the complex balancing of goods be carried out, which inevitably results from the conflict of different interests. Without this, there would be no theodicean question, but also no ethics! In view of this conflict, biocentrism proves to be the most appropriate, least discriminatory teleological definition in the age of ecological crisis. Time is pressing for it to replace 2500-year-old anthropocentrism. "The ultimate purpose of other creatures is not to be found in us." (LS 83).

#### 6.4 Body signals for the good. The question of the importance of feelings

An old story tells how a professor is on holiday on a farm during the summer. When he offers to help the farmer with the harvest, the farmer wants to give him an easy job and sends him to sort the potatoes. He is supposed to put the big ones in one basket and the small ones in another. But when the farmer comes to pick up the sorted potatoes around noon, there is not a single one in either basket. The professor had not been able to decide what was meant by “large” and what by “small”.

This is a paradigmatic example. Pure thinking is unable to draw a clear and discrete boundary within a continuum because this necessarily contains a final, non-rationally justifiable, i.e. “arbitrary” moment. Now, in the case of potatoes, this may be ethically irrelevant. However, the weighing up of goods, which is part of all ethical decisions, is not different in principle. This raises the question that I would like to explore in the following: Do purely rational decisions exist at all, as we like to postulate for “objective” discussions in the wake of the Stoa and 2000 years of Christian ethics? And if not, what is the relationship between reason and emotion for moral judgement? Can feelings contribute anything substantial to ethical decision-making?

In a first step, a look at history will help us to better understand the Stoic position and its Christian reception. In a second step, I undertake a re-evaluation of the emotions with the current knowledge of neuroscience, which at the same time enables a confirmation of the classical spiritual teaching and practice of the discernment of spirits (cf. on the following: Simon Blackburn 1998; Michael Rosenberger 2002, 59–72; Michael L. Spezio 2011, 339–356).

##### 6.4.1 Greek scepticism towards feelings

Ancient philosophy does not recognise an appropriate term for what we call “feeling” in English. The Greek term for feeling is *πάθη* or *πάθος*, the Latin term is *affectus* or *passio*. This indicates the basic perspective from which feelings are viewed: They are “passions”, impulses that arise from external influence, which man suffers and which ultimately threaten his (rational) autonomy. Accordingly, the question is asked about the immediate cause that gives rise to a feeling, but not whether a feeling can also convey content, whether it “says something” of itself.



This view of emotion, which is general in ancient philosophy, finds its extreme culmination and summary in the teachings of the Stoa. The goal of man is the subordination of passions to reason. The latter is regarded as the ἡγεμονικόν, as the dominating and controlling authority, which orders and directs emotions. Accordingly, the Stoic ideal is ἀπάθεια, dispassion. This does not necessarily have to be interpreted as complete lack of feeling. What is decisive, however, is that reason alone should guide action; passions contribute nothing substantial to the formation of moral judgement. This subordinate position manifests the “bias against the pathé that is deeply rooted in Greek thought” (Peter Kaufmann 1992, 27).

In the Middle Ages, too, the assessment of emotions moves entirely along the lines laid out by Greek philosophy. *Thomas Aquinas* defines affects as “acts of the sensual faculty of striving, in so far as they are connected with bodily changes” (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I–II q 20 a 1). For him, affects are processes that are suffered, and only the body, not the soul, can suffer in the proper sense. Behind this is the everyday experience that feelings produce directly and not voluntarily controlled somatic effects (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I–II q 22 a 3). Nevertheless, Thomas in the wake of Aristotle takes a somewhat more positive view of passions than the Stoics. If man strives to be good, not only spiritually but also with sensual desire, he is to be called more perfect. Sensual desire for a morally valuable object is therefore good (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I–II q 24 a 1 and 3). Thomas here explicitly distances himself from the Stoics and follows the Peripatetics (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I–II q 24 a 2). As a logical consequence of his theology of creation, he outlines a holistic anthropology in which every part of the human condition is regarded as good and significant. Passions then have the important role of “corporealising” the judgements made by reason, spreading them into the bodily existence of man and shaping it from reason.

However, even with Thomas, passions have a heuristic function very indirectly at most, for feelings direct the attention of reason to opportunities for action with which man has already had good experiences. The goodness of these experiences creates a “resonance” in them, which in turn becomes a motive for action (Eberhard Schockenhoff 2007, 72–73). In this thought lies the germ for what we find in the Ignatian discernment of spirits and in the neuroscientific findings of the present in a much more precise and detailed way. In Thomas, it remains a germ that is not further unfolded.

The basic line remains the same in antiquity and the Middle Ages: reason and emotion are understood as strictly separate realities. They stand

in a hierarchical relationship to each other. Reason is considered to have dominion over passions. It makes the relevant decisions; it is supposed to order and control passions. Passions, for their part, are the extended arm of the rational will into the body, the medium by means of which the soul shapes the body, but which in turn contributes nothing to the formation of moral judgement by reason.

#### 6.4.2 Feelings as a Constitutive Component of Reason

From the 17th century onwards, the perspective from which feelings are viewed changes. They are now understood as sensations, an inner state of mind that deserves attention for its own sake. The inner state of a person manifests itself in feelings, for anthropological basic structures correspond to it as immanent conditions of possibility for its emergence. These must be perceived even before the question is asked as to which external influences have contributed to the emergence of a feeling. The sign of the change in perspective outlined in this way is a completely new, only gradually clearly defined terminology. Instead of *passiones* and *affectus*, English now speaks of feelings and sensations, French of sentiment, German of *Gefühl* and *Empfindung*—the purely passive categories are replaced by more active ones.

The philosophical current that provides for sustained reevaluation of feelings is Anglo-Saxon empiricism. For it, there is no such thing as thinking that is purely independent of experience; rather, all knowledge is experience-based and connected with feelings. *Francis Hutcheson* (1694 Drumalig-1746 Glasgow) developed an approach on this basis in his metaethical essay “Illustrations on the moral sense” in 1728, which is still discussed today as “moral sense philosophy”. Its core thesis is the assumption of an innate moral sense, which in turn generates a fundamental moral feeling that allows us to recognise good and evil, right and wrong. Reason only has the task of conducting an accompanying check to ensure that the moral sense is not disturbed and subject to a sensory illusion.

What was introduced into ethics from moral sense theory on the basis of observed phenomena could not be sufficiently specified, however, as long as the biological structures of cognition and feeling had not been researched more precisely. It is only the neuroscientific findings of the last few decades that allow a more precise classification of the two variables and their embedding in a comprehensive framework. Among the various

syntheses, the work of the Portuguese American neurologist *Antonio R. Damasio* stands out. His findings, which have been intensively discussed and further developed and refined in detail over the last twenty years, but which, despite all attempts, could not be refuted in principle (cf. Michael L. Spezio 2011, 339–356), will guide the following presentations.

Damasio starts from three striking examples of neurology. The first occurred in the summer of 1848, when a sensational accident occurred during blasting work for the construction of a railway in Vermont (USA). Through his own carelessness, an iron bar several centimetres thick was catapulted at high speed through the skull of the foreman Phineas Gage, penetrating it at an angle. To everyone's amazement, he was able to walk and talk again just a few minutes later, despite the visible hole across his head. Only after months did changes in his personality become noticeable. His sense of responsibility and social behaviour was completely destroyed. Despite his intact cognitive faculties, he was no longer able to pursue a normal profession. His life ended in a human catastrophe. Although it was not possible at the time to explain this tragic development medically, a country doctor documented the case so meticulously that it has remained a reference case in neurology to this day.

Damasio himself experienced a similar case in the early 1970s. He pseudonymously calls it the "Elliot case": A man aged about 35 who had a benign brain tumor directly above the nasal cavity was successfully operated on, whereby a small part of the healthy brain tissue surrounding the tumor in the so-called prefrontal cortex, a region directly behind the forehead, slightly above the nose, also had to be removed. After the operation, all of Elliot's rational abilities remained unchanged; he continued to be intelligent and possessed tremendous knowledge and skills. What was disturbed, however, was his ability to plan the future, to judge and to decide—to such an extent "that he could no longer act as a reliable member of society" (Antonio R. Damasio 1997, 68). Because of his unreliability, Elliot lost his job and lived a listless life. Damasio also observes an unusual emotional distance in him, even from his own biography and from moving events in it. Memory is very good, but joy and pain about one's own experiences are completely absent. "Knowing without feeling"—this is how Damasio sums up his patient's condition (Antonio R. Damasio 1997, 78).

Finally, neurology is aware of anosognosia, the inability to feel an illness as one's own. Patients suffering from anosognosia are aware of their, often, life-threatening condition, but do not feel any emotions about it. They know, for example, that it is their own left side of the body that

is irreversibly paralysed. But instead of sadness or despair, they feel an unshakable cheerfulness and indifference. The part of the body affected is *recognised* as one's own, but not *felt* as such. One might be inclined to view this positively as Stoic apathy. The tragedy, however, is that people with this condition do not actively participate in their recovery and rehabilitation, which at the very least slows it down extremely, and sometimes prevents it altogether.

In the case of anosognosia, a different area of the brain is damaged than in the cases mentioned previously. However, in all examples, a complete loss of feelings can be registered. This is why Damasio combines the cases mentioned into a working hypothesis: feelings are relevant, indeed indispensable, for social behaviour and ethical decisions in humans. He tries to substantiate this neurologically.

The concept of mind has been used to describe very different things in the course of the history of philosophy. Damasio defines it as follows: An organism possesses mind when it is able to shape the future consciously and make plans, when it can therefore act in a true sense (Antonio R. Damasio 1997, 131). Several activities are necessary for such action:

*Thinking:* The brain stores knowledge and memories preferably in the form of images. For reasons of storage capacity, these are not stored as facsimiles (in a computer this would be a bitmap graphic), but in dispositional patterns, from which they are reconstructed in a creative and interpretive manner depending on the current situation (in a computer this would be a vector graphic). Thinking takes place largely in the construction, reconstruction and combination of such images and not in concepts—in analogies and not in univocities. In a concrete situation, analogous, i.e. structurally related, cognitions of memory are evoked and brought into connection with the present in order to interpret it.

*Being moved by emotions*<sup>31</sup>: From a neuroscientific point of view, emotions are complex systems of immediate and involuntary, i.e. not consciously controlled, physical reactions (Antonio R. Damasio 1997, 193). A higher pulse rate, a changed breathing rate or other phenomena are such emotions in the body. Emotions thus affect the body from the brain, but in turn they

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31 In the German translation by Antonio R. Damasio 1997, “emotion” is rendered as Gefühl, “feeling” as Empfindung (Antonio R. Damasio 1997, 14). In contrast, the German edition by Antonio R. Damasio 2000 translates “emotion” with Emotion and “feeling” with Gefühl. This second terminology is obviously the right one.

influence brain processes through feedback from the body. This happens in particular during

*Feeling:* If an emotion is consciously perceived in the brain, Damasio calls this perception a feeling (Antonio R. Damasio 1997, 198–199). Feelings are therefore representations of bodily states in the brain. All feelings are preceded, evolutionarily and also logically, by a “background feeling”: the “image of a bodily landscape that is not shaken [by emotions]” (Antonio R. Damasio 1997, 208). In comparing current feelings with this background feeling on the one hand, and in establishing a connection between current feeling and contemporaneous perception of the environment on the other, the brain can gain information that is significant for the (survival of the) organism. Emotions are therefore carriers of information. Their depictions in feelings “are just as cognitive as any other perceptual image” (Antonio R. Damasio 1997, 218). A comprehensive concept of the mind must consequently include feelings. It is precisely at this point that Damasio applies his central hypothesis.

The purpose of thinking—according to Damasio—is decision-making. The purpose of decision-making, in turn, is to ensure that the organism reacts as appropriately as possible to the current environmental conditions. Emotions play an irreplaceable role in this because they have the character of somatic markers. An emotion is a “body signal” that pre-sorts the conceivable options for action in the decision-making process and eliminates most of them even before rational consideration (Antonio R. Damasio 1997, 238). In addition, emotion directs the attention of thinking to a few, very specific possibilities for action by emotionally reinforcing them. Overall, the system that generates emotions in the body and then feeds them back into the brain is therefore a “tendency apparatus” (Antonio R. Damasio 1997, 239), an evaluation and interpretation system. From the sheer vastness of facts for thinking, a tiny part is selected, controlled by emotions, which thinking can then consider and bring to another emotionally guided decision<sup>32</sup>.

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32 Ultimately, this is the answer to the well-known problem of the difference between unconditional existential fulfilment and the impossibility of reflexively catching up with it completely. Expressed mathematically: practical reason cannot be grasped in algorithms but is learned through models and examples. It consists in recognising structures (“patterns”) that connect thoughts with feelings. Decisions are made through analogies, and the analogies are emotionally coloured, because only through feelings can the regressus ad infinitum be overcome, which thinking would otherwise fall prey to—cf. Patricia S. Churchland 1996, 194–196.

Feelings thus represent condensed value experiences of a human being. It is thanks to them that the mind is capable of intuition and creativity. Without feelings, these intrinsic human abilities would not be possible at all. And it is precisely the prefrontal cortex that is the neuronal network of the brain responsible for the acquisition of feelings. If it fails, the aforementioned devastating consequences occur.

In rationalist ethics from the Greeks to Kant, feelings serve at most as the driver of action. In terms of content, they have no influence on moral judgement. However, “Experience with patients like Elliot suggests that the cool strategy advocated by Kant and others is far more in keeping with the way patients with prefrontal damage approach decisions than with the usual *modus operandi* of normal people.” (Antonio R. Damasio 1997, 236). People with a prefrontal cortex lesion are incapable of seeing the future as their own and thus as significant; they are completely absorbed in the present; they are unable to filter out of the sheer flood of possible actions those that have a chance of fulfilling meaning. The mind, as Damasio defines it as the ability to act independently, thus emerges from the entire organism (Antonio R. Damasio 1997, 311). Reason cannot be realised without the reciprocal connection of thinking and feeling, of brain and body. Feelings are an integral part of “practical reason”.

Francis Hutcheson’s thesis that there is an innate “moral sense” that can be grasped in a feeling can be affirmed in principle. In neurological terms, it consists in the two-way networking of brain processes and somatic mechanisms, which in turn form the basis of the indissoluble connection between thinking and feeling. However, Hutcheson’s opinion that it is only *one* morally relevant feeling produced by the moral sense is misguided. Actually, a whole range of feelings claim significance for human decision-making and judgement.

At this point at the latest, the classic idea of “*discernment of spirits*” comes into play, as it has shaped the spiritual tradition of Christianity. Ultimately, it aims at an attentive perception of one’s own feelings—and not in a rational reflexive way, but in a holistic way. It is about feeling current feelings and their long-term dynamics and comparing them with earlier feelings of one’s own or of others (e.g. of the people around Jesus or the saints). Then, a judgement can be made as to whether the option for action from which these feelings arise leads to more faith, hope and love or not, i.e. whether it comes from the Holy Spirit or the evil spirit, in the traditional image.

Ultimately, both modern neuroscience and the classical discernment of spirits suggest a completely different picture of feelings than the Stoic-inspired ethical tradition of the Occident. Feelings are, first of all, not sinister, dangerous and unreasonable temptations from an evil external world that *threaten* our autonomy, but bodily signals that give us valuable and reasonable (!) clues about right and good behaviour and thus in the first place *make* autonomy *possible*. Without them, thinking would be completely helpless and lost. Only with their help can a sentient being come to decisions worth living. It is evident that feelings (just like clever thoughts) can lead someone astray. However, unmasking such feelings is not solely and not even primarily a matter of thinking, but above all of a “critique of feelings by the feelings themselves”, as proposed by the classical discernment of spirits<sup>33</sup>.

From a psychological point of view, the Greek scepticism, even aversion, towards feelings has a clearly recognisable cause: those who follow their feelings suffer a certain loss of control, for feelings come over us; we do not make them and cannot control them willingly. On the contrary, they control us and have us in the palm of their hand because they can be incredibly strong. This contradicts the Stoic image of the autonomous, sovereign and domineering human being. Theologically in terms of creation, this image cannot be upheld. Man is in many ways determined externally because of his integration into a bodily creation. And this alienation is per se neither bad nor corrupt, nor is it part of a lowly animal nature, but rather of his good creation. He may accept with gratitude and humility that not all judgements about what is good come from himself. In many cases, the decisive insight is given to him without his doing. To grasp it, however, requires a sophisticated and nuanced culture of feelings.

### 6.5 “Come to me, brother wolf!” The question about animals and plants

As we have seen in the textual analysis, the range of positioning of the Church Fathers towards animals is quite wide. This also relates to the core point of Christian animal theology: the interpretation of the governmental mandate in Gen 1:28. Their opinions range from empowerment to harsh

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33 Ignatius of Loyola, the master of this discernment, experiences this firsthand. All the rational objections of his confessor do not help him to recognise the asceticism he practised in Manresa as excessive. Only the deeply felt disgust at this way of life can convince him (Ignatius of Loyola, Report of the Pilgrim No. 25).



slave-like ownership (as in John Chrysostom with reference to the naming in Gen 2) and to the widely predominant understanding of humans being obliged to care for animals. In contrast to the dominant Stoic perception of animals from the point of view of their usefulness to humans, many Church Fathers remain very reserved (especially Lactance, Nemesios of Emesa and Augustine). On the whole, most of the Church Fathers are considerably more animal-friendly than the majority of Stoic philosophers. They are recognisably concerned to moderate and soften Stoic anthropocentrism, even if they do not see themselves as being in a position to overcome it. Gentle reforms, but no revolution—this is how one could summarise the broad line of their ideas.

From this pathway of the early church, many Christian ethicists today draw the conclusion of enacting gentle reforms in order to gravitate towards ecological and animal ethical humanism, but also retain anthropocentrism as their basis for such changes. I hope to have shown that this is only possible by ignoring several intrinsic flaws of stoic anthropocentrism, which I have identified in this publication. First, copying the early Christian strategy of dealing with the Stoa would be oblivious to history. Neither is Christianity today the tiny minority in a majority society dominated by Stoic anthropocentrism, nor can we overlook the fatal consequences of anthropocentrism for non-human creation in the 21st century.

Moreover, the analysis of the Stoa's five-part network of ideas has highlighted the need for profound and comprehensive changes in Christian theology. Those who want to cling to anthropocentrism will find it difficult to make these changes, and thus risk the ever-advancing untrustworthiness of Christianity. The five ideas that make up the core of the network can only be corrected together, so deeply are they interconnected due to the enormous internal coherence of Stoic ideas. Renewed Christian animal ethics must therefore postulate theological corrections far beyond animal ethics. This is briefly repeated in the following presentation of the five ideas:

- The talk of *God's providence* is to be taken with the utmost caution. It must not be understood as an objective fact, but must be read in the context of God's loving care for his creatures and the existentially experienced trust in God. Moreover, it encompasses all living beings as recipients of divine love and care. An understanding of providence that explains away all adversities and antinomies of life by invoking God's higher logic is to be strictly rejected. The question of theodicy remains



the radical, permanently unanswerable question that must always be voiced and heard anew, even for the sake of the Crucified Christ.

- The *aloga thesis* of man’s exclusive gift of reason cannot be upheld in its absoluteness. This was already suspected in antiquity, even among the Stoics, for otherwise there would not have been such a gigantic effort to defend it. Moreover, in conjunction with the new view of emotions proposed in chapter 6.4, purely rational and cool-headed people, such as the Stoa constructs as the ideal image of humans, would be the truly reasonless. Theologically, this has massive consequences for humans’ *relationship with Christ*. The connection of the incarnated Logos with all flesh does not take place through intellect, but through the body and co-creatureliness. Otherwise, the incarnation would not be necessary at all, because the divine Logos can also connect with rational beings without incarnation, as the Stoics rightly claimed. Seen in this light, one of the early Church’s most momentous mistakes was that it played down the potential criticism of the Stoa in the message of the incarnation (and also conversely the Stoa’s potential to be critical of the incarnation) and made it largely invisible. *Eschatologically*, everything thus boils down to the hope that all creatures will be raised to new life by the faithful and loving Creator.
- Cognitivist ethics needs recourse to both particular teleonomies and a cautious comprehensive *teleology*. The Stoa correctly recognised this, and it is important to adhere to it despite all criticism. What is necessary, however, is that the teleology be constructed in a much less steep and hierarchical and by no means monolinear way. Among the four classical approaches to justification in environmental and animal ethics, *biocentrism* is therefore the most appropriate. It is the model of moral individualism that draws no principled boundaries between different individuals and thus includes them all. At the same time, it best reflects biblical thinking and thus guarantees that the Christian message is faithful to its origins. Unlike a large number of the pathocentrist approaches, biocentrism is furthermore aware at all times that a vegetarian or vegan lifestyle alone does not solve all problems. Animals are supposed to be legal persons, yes, but so are plants. Therefore, as called for in chapter 6.1, the theodicy question remains virulent because there is no flawless behaviour in terms of animal and environmental ethics that could amicably resolve all competition. Rather, the annoyance remains that every creature can only live at the expense of other creatures. One of the greatest theological (!) tasks in the context of animal ethics is to keep this

awareness awake and to endure the hardly bearable tension that results from it. Proponents of pathocentrist animal ethics especially are tempted to think of redemption too simply.

- If you want to value animals, you also have to value *feelings*. The Stoic devaluation of animals only worked because it was linked to a decidedly negative view of (human and animal) feelings. Modern neuroscience shows that feelings are a necessary component of (practical) reason. Pure thinking without a connection to the corresponding feelings is not capable of evaluating insights and making them fruitful for one's own actions. The 2000-year-old spiritual tradition of the discernment of spirits, which guides us to good and life-serving decisions through an internal critique of feelings by means of empathy, has always known this intuitively, without being able to unfold it in an argumentatively appropriate way in the coordinate system of an anthropology of Greek provenance. The reevaluation of feelings also means the relativisation, though not a devaluation (!), of thinking. Thinking and feeling together constitute reason. This clearly defuses the discussion about a feeling-based morality of sympathy in contrast to a purely rational morality of justice, as is conducted in behavioural research.

As a relatively young field of ethics, animal ethics is currently caught up in disputes over principles that are sometimes reminiscent of religious wars, or at any rate of the Babylonian confusion of languages. Anthropocentric approaches are pitted against non-anthropocentric approaches, utilitarian against justice approaches, animal welfare against animal rights approaches, principle-oriented against pragmatist approaches and emotivist against rationalist approaches. Christian animal ethics can no more escape these discourses than any other. But it can, more than many others, reflect on history and learn from mistakes made. And perhaps non-Christian animal ethics, whether secular or otherwise religious, can also learn something from Christian history and its mistakes. At any rate, this would be desirable in order to develop a form of animal ethics that can inspire as many people as possible and bring about better living conditions for as many animals as possible.

The “Fioretti di San Francesco”, a legendary account of the life of Francis of Assisi written in the late 14th century and thus almost two centuries after the historical events it depicts, contains the story of the Wolf of Gubbio in chapter 21, which is missing from all the old accounts of his life and is

therefore hardly likely to be historical. Nevertheless, it reflects the spirit of the saint and can provide good food for thought.

Near the village of Gubbio lived a wolf that killed animals and people. The inhabitants were so afraid of him that they never left the village unarmed. When Francis heard about it, he left the village to look for the wolf. When he saw him from afar, he called out, “Come to me, Brother Wolf!” When the wolf approached, Francis rebuked him for his cruel actions and made an agreement with him. In future, the wolf was not to harm any man or animal in Gubbio. In return, the inhabitants of the village would give him something to eat every day. As the story goes, the wolf kept to the agreement, as did the villagers. And he stayed there until the end of his life.

The story tells of how there are inevitably competitive situations in this world—between humans and humans, humans and animals, animals and animals, between humans and plants, animals and plants, and plants and plants. Sometimes this competition leads to bloody conflicts. These cannot simply be overcome with human force; the wolf is obviously too clever for that. It must therefore be recognised that there will be no unrestricted dominance by one party or another in the conflict. But what is the alternative? Francis approaches the wolf and calls out, “Come to me, brother wolf!” And he comes. Apparently, he senses that the saint wants to meet him guilelessly and defencelessly and is looking for a constructive solution for both sides. One may speculate how Francis might have made the proposed terms of the agreement clear to the wolf. It would hardly have been possible with words alone. But he succeeds in concluding the deal. Unlike in Stoic philosophy, it is possible to include the wolf in the legal community of humans. The wolf abides by its obligations just as much as the villagers because both sides experience the solution as fair and feasible. They share the resources, and sharing connects them.

“Come to me, brother wolf!” In animal ethics, as in human ethics and also in the still barely developed field of plant ethics, it is a matter of emphasising siblinghood more than antagonism, cooperation more than competition, commonality more than difference—without denying or trivialising antagonism, competition and difference. An animal ethics approach that does not do this cannot claim to have any validity.

### 6.6 *Crown of Creation? A conclusion*

The expression that refers to human beings as the “crown of creation” develops relatively late. It first appears in the work of Johann Gottfried Herder (1744 Mohrungen–1808 Weimar) (Barbara Schmitz 2012, 26). And yet it captures relatively well what the Stoic tradition gave to early Christianity: consistent and irrefutable anthropocentrism. Christianity internalised it so strongly from the beginning that it thought it could be found in many biblical texts.

But I want to prevent a misunderstanding. It is not my intention to make the Stoa a scapegoat and absolve Christianity of guilt, nor is it my intention to portray the Stoa as stupid and deluded. On the contrary, the five elements of the network of ideas around anthropocentrism could only have remained recognised for so long because they are extremely intelligent and incredibly consistent with each other. The Stoic structure of thought is impressive and fascinating. Moreover, it has not only produced terrible things, but also many beneficial ones. The establishment of universal human rights would have been inconceivable without the Stoa, and the United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights explicitly adopted Stoic figures of reasoning. Christianity, Europe and indeed the world therefore owe much to the Stoa. But the best ideas also have dark sides. The more their strengths shine, the greater their shadows are cast. What the Stoa achieved for humanity in 2000 years, it bought at the expense of non-human living beings and nature, as we recognise today. And precisely because the Stoic arguments are so clever and plausible, they have long been able to conceal their weaknesses in thought with great efficiency.

The fact that this book looks primarily at the dark sides of Stoic thought and its Christian reception is in the nature of its question. One of the tasks of critical theory is to bring the dark areas of intellectual history to light. Only in this way can they be overcome. And that is the real intention of this study.

In 1956, a German archaeological team led by Theodor Bossert and Ludwig Budde found the floor mosaic from the late antique basilica of Mopsuestia from the second quarter of the 5th century during excavations at the burial mound of Misis in southeastern Turkey. In the middle, it shows a hitherto unseen depiction of the Flood narrative. In its centre, on four wooden feet, stands an oversized box (Latin *arca* can mean both ark and chest). Noah’s right hand protrudes from the only opening on the side of this box with an outstretched index finger. Around the box only animals

are visible—in the inner rectangle fourteen animals of the air, including a magpie, rock partridge, guinea fowl, goose, cock and hen as well as a peacock, in the outer rectangle eighteen land animals, including a lioness, fallow deer, dromedary, lion, billy goat, donkey, leopard, pig, ox, bear and ostrich, which, although a bird, is counted among the land animals because it cannot fly. In contrast to the biblical narrative, most of the animals are not depicted as pairs. On the box-like ark is the inscription: ΚΙΒΩΤΟΣ ΝΩΕΠ—the box of Noah (whereby the final Rho is given different interpretations, either as a component of the name “Noer”, or as an abbreviation of a third word, or as the numeral 100).

As far as humans are concerned, only Noah’s hand can be seen, nothing of his family, and the rest of the biblical narrative is not depicted either. The mosaic concentrates on the essentials. And these are obviously the animals, which take up about 90 per cent of the surface, and the ark, which stands in the middle of the depiction. The emphasis of the depiction becomes clear when we compare it with other depictions of the ark from around the same time:

- A coin from Apameia from the reign of the Roman Emperor Marcus Julius Philippus (244–249 AD) shows Noah and his wife in a box-shaped ark floating on waves. On the top right of the ark sits a raven, while from the left a dove carries an olive branch—the two birds that Noah sent out to scout the terrain at the end of the flood according to Gen 8. In the left half of the picture, Noah and his wife stand after leaving the ark with their hands raised in thanksgiving. Apart from the two birds sent out on Noah’s behalf, no animals are visible—they would hardly have had room on the tiny coin.
- Numerous early Christian sarcophagi and catacomb paintings from the 3rd and 4th centuries show Noah all alone in an orant position in the ark. He stands there as an image for the soul of the deceased. No other people or animals are depicted.
- Two other floor mosaics from this period depict animals, but without any connection to the Noah narrative: In the Villa Romana del Casale (not inhabited by Christians) near Piazza Armerina in Sicily, a 4th century floor mosaic shows a variety of interactions between humans and animals, especially fights and domestication. These are striking illustrations of Stoic anthropocentrism and its emphasis on human domination due to reason. In the floor mosaic from the Basilica of Aquileia from the beginning of the 4th century, on the other hand, most of the animals are

depicted on their own. There is no recognisable theological interpretive context; rather, the artists are simply expressing their delight in animals. This corresponds to many Church Fathers in whose texts we have observed a similar joy.

- The two oldest pictorial cycles of the Noah narrative were once in the Roman patriarchal basilicas built under Emperor Constantine, each on the northern nave walls, on which there was a pictorial passage through the entire Old Testament: The cycle in San Paolo fuori le Mura had four; the one in Old Saint Peter's had two images of the Noah narrative. Both cycles perished with the old basilicas but had been painted off by the beginning of the 17th century, so we know of them.

Like no other early Christian depiction of the Noah narrative, the mosaic of Mopsuestia shows an enormous variety of animals. On the other hand, there is no evidence of an allegorical understanding of the image, as was already widespread at the time. Neither is there any indication that the box of the ark is meant to symbolise the Church (which would usually be indicated by a cross), nor is there any evidence that the sacrament of baptism is alluded to—water is not even depicted. Both an ecclesiological and a sacramental-theological interpretation can therefore be excluded with great probability.

The depiction is about the animals. They are worthy of God and Noah to be saved from the great Flood. Not for the sake of man, who should subjugate and domesticate them as in Piazza Armerina, but for their own sake. Noah's outstretched finger makes it clear that Noah is speaking to them or showing them something: the way out to freedom, to a new, better life. In this way, the mosaic in Mopsuestia sets a striking counterpoint to early Stoic Christian anthropocentrism.

The image was buried for a long time before it was dug up again. Perhaps the biblical biocentrism that shines in the Noah narrative can also be unearthed and re-appropriated.

## Source texts of the Church Fathers

The following text editions have been used primarily for the citations of the original language of the sources. The English translation of the texts is based on a version that consulted various text translations in German, English, French and Italian, compared them with the original texts and edited them independently with regard to the precise terminology of animal ethics.

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