

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Augustine on irrational animals and the Christian tradition

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NOTE: Religious doctrine, deriving from Aristotle's naturalism, is important to consider, especially in the Western tradition, because it informs the development of science and secular humanism, as we'll come to see this quarter.

Much of what is today considered Jewish and Christian doctrine does not come from direct translation or even interpretation (called hermeneutics) of the Hebrew Bible or Christian New Testament. Doctrine has already been interpreted by Christian and Jewish "fathers," and what to include or exclude in the "canon" was voted upon or otherwise commented upon, a practice that is still ongoing by some scholars, theologians, priests, and rabbis to various extents.

Some of the influential Church "fathers" in the Catholic-Christian tradition are discussed here, namely Bishop Saint Augustine of Hippo (North Africa, 354–430 CE) and the Italian scholastic priest Thomas Aquinas (pronounced A-kwy-nas; 1225–1274 CE).

***The author begins by showing Augustine's argument against a group of Persian Christians known as Manichaeans who prohibited the slaughtering or eating of animals. Augustine thought their practice was based on a faulty understanding of the figure of Jesus (aka: "the Christ," Greek for "anointed one").

Augustine

Augustine does, however, continue the harsher new tradition started by St Paul in two important passages. In a treatise of AD 388 *On the Manichaean and Catholic Ways of Life*,³ he takes up the challenge which we have found in Porphyry on Christ's lack of concern for the Gadarene swine, although he may be unaware that Porphyry is associated with the challenge.⁴ It is perfectly true that Christ did not

¹ 1 Corinthians 9.9.

² Augustine, *Enarr. in Psalmos* 145.13-14; cf. 34.1.6. I owe this reference to Henry Chadwick, who takes it that Augustine is reassuring farmers who concluded only the pagan gods would care for their beasts.

³ Augustine *de moribus ecclesiae catholicae et de moribus Manichaeorum* 2.17.54.

⁴ In *Ep.* 102 Augustine knows of some of Porphyry's arguments against the Christians,

spare them, and that is because Christ was a Stoic as regards animals. That in effect is what Augustine is saying. For he ascribes to Christ the Stoic theory that animals cannot be brought within the community of just dealings, because they lack reason.⁵

And first Christ shows your abstention from killing animals and tearing plants to be the greatest superstition. He judged that we had no community in justice (*societas iuris*) with beasts and trees, and sent the devils into a flock of swine, and withered a tree by his curse, when he had found no fruit in it. ...

Try to identify
Augustine's
argument 1

The Manichaean holy men did not eat meat and did not themselves pluck the vegetarian food which they ate. Augustine invokes the Stoic theory against them a second time, when he says that he would at least regard them as observant if their motive were (as it was not) that animals die with pain. But, in fact, we disregard even this consideration, on the (Stoic) ground that animals do not belong to the legally protected community, because they lack reason:

And from this killing you debar even your followers, for it seems to you worse than that of trees. Here I do not much disapprove of your senses, that is of your physical senses. For we see and appreciate from their cries that animals die with pain. But man disregards this in a beast, with which, as having no rational soul, he is linked by no community of law (*societas legis*).⁶

Try to identify
Augustine's
argument 2

The Manichaean holy men were motivated by the belief that by eating vegetarian food they could release the divine trapped in it, so that god could return to his kingdom. Augustine asks if they would not release soul more quickly, if they spent their time cutting down trees and killing wolves.⁷ He returns to Manichaean practices in the *City of God* Book 1, written by AD 413. If you will not kill animals, then you should not kill plants either. But that is the error of the Manichaeans.⁸ Parallel arguments had already been recorded in Porphyry's treatise *On Abstinence from Animal Food*. It has been doubted that Augustine knew of this,⁹ and there is no necessity to suppose he did, although

but only from a correspondent. He speaks again of this correspondent's information in *Retractions* 2.31, but adds that the arguments must be by a different Porphyry from the philosopher, whom he indeed treats with respect as a worthy opponent in the *City of God*. I thank Gerard O'Daly for the information.

⁵ This is not actually gainsaid in the interesting passage to which Gillian Clark has helpfully drawn attention (Augustine *Gen. Lit.* 3.8, discussed in her 'The Fathers and the Animals: the rule of reason?' in Andrew Linzey, ed., *Animals on the Agenda*) where Augustine allows that birds and even fish have a life close to reason.

⁶ Augustine *de moribus Manichaeorum* 2.17, 59.

⁷ Augustine *de moribus* 2.17.58-9.

⁸ Augustine *City* 1.20.

⁹ Aemilius Winter, *de doctrinae Neoplatonicae in Augustini Civitate Dei vestigiis*, diss.

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Eusebius had read it earlier and Augustine's contemporary Jerome made the fullest use of it.¹⁰ Porphyry attributes the sorites argument ('we'll have to spare plants next') first to the Stoics and Peripatetics, and then to the philologist Clodius, who may be drawing on the early Platonist Heraclides Ponticus (388-310 BC).¹¹ He also attributes to Clodius/Heraclides the argument that animals should like being killed, because their souls will be released for reincarnation into men. In this version, it is added that animals would be glad to become young again.¹²

The *City of God* 1.20 discusses the commandment, 'Thou shalt not kill', and insists that it forbids suicide. But some people had raised the question whether the commandment did not forbid killing animals too. It is then that Augustine asks, 'Why not apply it to plants?' and he replies that it should be applied to neither. For plants have no feelings, and as regards animals, he invokes the Stoic doctrine once again. Animals lack reason, and so have no rational community with us:

It is the more evident that a man may not kill himself since in the text 'Thou shalt not kill', which has nothing added after it, no one may be taken as exempted, not even he to whom the commandment is addressed. Hence some people try to extend this commandment to beasts and cattle also, so that it does not even allow any of them to be killed. Why not then extend it to plants and to anything fixed by its roots in the earth, and nourished by it? For even this class of things is said to be alive, although it does not feel, and so it can die too, and thus be killed when violence is done to it. And so the Apostle, speaking of seeds of this kind, says, 'What you sow does not come to life, unless it dies'. And in the Psalm is written, 'He kills their vines with hail'. But do we for this reason infer, when we hear 'Thou shalt not kill', that it is wrong to clear brushwood, and subscribe as if completely mad to the error of the Manichaeans?

Rather we set these ravings aside, and if when we read 'Thou shalt not kill', we do not on that account accept that this is said of thickets, since they have no feelings (*sensus*), neither do we accept it is said about irrational living things, whether flying, swimming, walking, or crawling, because they are not associated in a community (*sociantur*) with us by reason (*ratio*), since it is not given to them to have reason in common (*communis*) with us. Hence it is by a very just ordinance of the Creator that their life and death is subordinated to our use.¹³

Freiburg im Breisgau 1928, not currently available to me. But Augustine's familiarity with *Abst.* is assumed by Georges Folliet, 'Deificari in otio: Augustin, Epistula 10,2', *Recherches Augustiniennes* 2, 1962, 225-36, who cites in the same vein W. Theiler, *Porphyrios und Augustin*, Halle 1933, 8.

¹⁰ For Eusebius, see K. Mras, *Eusebius, Praeparatio Evangelica* 2, Berlin 1956, 459-61; J. Sirinelli, in Eusebe de Césarée *La Préparation Evangelique* 1, *Sources Chrétiennes* 206, Paris 1974, 28-34. For Jerome, Ernestus Bickel, *Diatribes in Senecae Philosophi Fragmenta*, vol. 1 *Fragmenta de Matrimonio*, Leipzig 1915, 395-420.

¹¹ Porphyry *Abstinence* 1.6; 1.18.

¹² Porphyry *Abstinence* 1.19. Cf. Râzi *On the Philosophic Life*, translated A.J. Arberry, *Asian Review* 1949, 703-13, at 707-8: this is the only justification for killing domestic animals (Reference from Thérèse-Anne Druart).

¹³ Augustine *City of God* 1.20.

According to Augustine's treatise 'City of God' (which follows the Stoic view) mentioned here, why don't plants or animals have community with humans?

We can see here the point at which the Stoic insistence on human reason as the prerequisite for receiving justice became irrevocably embedded in the Christian tradition of the Latin West. In the thirteenth century, Thomas Aquinas quotes Augustine's Stoic argument from *City of God* 1.20, when he reaffirms that it is permissible to kill animals.¹⁴ We shall see that the insistence on reason had not been a settled position among Christian writers in Latin before Augustine.

Augustine concludes the discussion by appealing to Genesis. Because of the Stoic point in *City of God* 1.20 about reason and community, God is just in subordinating animals to us. Once again, Thomas Aquinas repeats the point and quotes Augustine's words.¹⁵ But Augustine's claim that the death of animals, as well as their life, was subordinated to our needs, is an oversimplification of Genesis, an oversimplification recently repeated by the British Minister of Agriculture, Mr Selwyn Gummer, exhorting us to eat beef during an epidemic of mad cow disease. It telescopes together several distinct stages in the story. For, as Thomas Aquinas acknowledges,¹⁶ it was only after the Fall of Man, when things had already gone badly wrong, that man was allowed to kill animals. The dominion granted to man over animals before the fall did not involve killing them. Food was vegetarian.¹⁷ After the fall, Adam and Eve were provided with the skins of animals (not necessarily killed),¹⁸ and it was only in a later generation that Abel became a shepherd and his sacrifice of animals was preferred to Cain's vegetarian sacrifice.¹⁹ It was later still that God made a new covenant with Noah, and that only after Noah had protected all kinds of animals, even unclean ones, from the flood by preserving them in the ark. Noah then made a burnt offering (not for eating) of animals, and God explicitly extended his original provisions, by allowing man to eat animals as well as green plants.²⁰ It is on this second agreement that Augustine's account needs to rely. It was still later again that the threat of human sacrifice arose, when Abraham was commanded to kill his son, but then allowed to substitute a ram.²¹

Animals for man before Augustine

Augustine's view that animals exist for humans was in line with a long

¹⁴ Thomas Aquinas *Summa Theologiae* 2.2, q. 64, a. 1.

¹⁵ Thomas Aquinas *Summa Theologiae* 2.2, q. 64, a. 1; cf. *contra Gentiles* 3.112; *de Caritate* a. 7, ad. 5.

¹⁶ Thomas Aquinas *Summa Theologiae* 2.1, q. 102, a. 6, ad. 2 refers to the time after the Flood.

¹⁷ Genesis 1.26-30.

¹⁸ Genesis 3.21.

¹⁹ Genesis 4.3-5.

²⁰ Genesis 8.20-9.4

²¹ Genesis 22.

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earlier tradition, which can be copiously illustrated from pagan and Christian sources alike.²² The earliest attribution to a Greek philosopher that I have noted is Xenophon's ascription of the view to Socrates.²³ This takes us back to the fifth century BC. Aristotle asserts that animals exist for humans and infers that there is such a thing as a just war. This concept, here introduced for the first time into Western Philosophy, is surprisingly applied in the first instance to hunting animals, and in the second to capturing those who are naturally slaves.²⁴ The most extreme elaboration of the idea that animals are for man is found in the Stoics. According to Chrysippus, bugs are useful for waking us up and mice for making us put our things away carefully. Cocks have come into being for a useful purpose too: they wake us up, catch scorpions, and arouse us to battle, but they must be eaten, so that there won't be more chicks than is useful (*khreia*).²⁵ As for the pig, it is given a soul in place of salt, to keep it fresh for us to eat.²⁶ Philo not only takes over into Jewish philosophy the idea of animals,²⁷ except snakes and suchlike,²⁸ being for man, but declares it sacrilege to question Providence by denying this.²⁹

Many of these ideas also end up in Jewish philosophy as well. However, Judaism has a tradition of Midrash, or multiple commentaries and stories, rather than one "true" narrative.

But there was opposition. Aristotle's successor Theophrastus shows his independence again. He is aware of the argument that God has given animals for our use. But he insists that they are still not ours, and so not suitable for sacrifice.³⁰ The sceptic Carneades replies to the Stoics that if it is the natural function (*telos*) of the pig to be eaten, it ought to benefit from being eaten, because that is what function implies.³¹ Not all of the Christian fathers were uncompromising. Basil of Caesarea insists that animals live not for us alone, but for themselves and for God.³² And John Chrysostom points out that animals exist not necessarily for our use, but to proclaim the power of

Theophrastus appears again, challenging Aristotle, just as other Church fathers mentioned here challenge Augustine

²² Some, but not all, of the examples are cited in A.S. Pease's note to Cicero *de Natura Deorum* 2.154 (cf. his 'Caeli enarrant', *Harvard Theological Review* 34, 1941, 163-200; J. Haussleiter, *Der Vegetarismus in der Antike*, Berlin 1935, 247-8; H. von Arnim, *SVF* 2.1152-67.

²³ Xenophon *Mem.* 4.3.9-10.

²⁴ Aristotle *Pol.* 1.8, 1256b15-26.

²⁵ Plutarch *Sto. Rep.* 1044D; 1049A.

²⁶ Porphyry *Abstinence* 3.20 (drawing on Plutarch); Cicero *ND* 2.160; *Fin.* 5.38, Philo *Opif.* 66 (*SVF* 2.722); Plutarch *Quaest. Conv.* 685C; Pliny *NH* 8.207; Varro *de RR* 2.4,10; ascribed to Chrysippus' predecessor, Cleanthes; *Clement Stromateis* 7.6.33; cf. 2.20.105.

²⁷ Philo *Quod deus sit immutabilis* 4,74-8; *Questions on Genesis and Solutions* 94.

²⁸ Philo ap. Eusebius *Praep. Ev.* 8.14, 397B-D.

²⁹ Philo *de Animalibus* 100.

³⁰ Theophrastus ap. Porphyry *Abstinence* 2.12-13.

³¹ Porphyry *Abstinence* 3.20. Carneades here overlooks a second, related meaning of 'function', to refer to the intentions of the designer or user; Richard Sorabji, 'Function', *Philosophical Quarterly*, 1964.

³² Basil *Liturgy*.

Can you summarize these opposing views?

the Creator.³³ In the twelfth century, the medieval Jewish philosopher Maimonides was to insist that since we could have been created without most other things, although perhaps not without plants, those other things cannot exist for us.³⁴ Moreover, God's goal in creation is not the production of mankind, but of as many species as possible – the principle of plenitude.³⁵ But Maimonides does make a concession: God's Providence is concerned with us, not with individuals below the human level. And in evidence he again reinforces the importance of reason, because he says that man is the only species endowed with intellect.³⁶

It is not at all obvious why it should be supposed that animals exist for us, and for us not merely to admire, but to kill. Our superiority of intellect is hardly relevant to the latter. But two further arguments were introduced, the utility of animals to us, and the naturalness of our using them. Unfortunately, these arguments cut both ways. The argument on utility is best set out in the pages of Origen's treatise *Against Celsus* and of Porphyry's *On Abstinence from Animal Food*, at a point where he is again drawing from Plutarch.³⁷ In reply to the utility argument, the Platonists Celsus and Porphyry object that flies are not useful to us, whereas we are very useful to crocodiles.

Origen's position is an extreme one. He does not accept, as Basil was later to do, that animals exist also for their own sakes. On the contrary, he identifies himself with the Stoics who maintain, he says, that irrational animals are made primarily (*proëgoumenôs*) for rational beings. Rational beings have the value of children, irrational the value of the afterbirth (*khorion*) which is created with the child.³⁸

On the question of natural equipment, Celsus again shows that the argument cuts both ways: crocodiles are very well equipped to eat us. One might add that bacteria are much better adapted to survive mankind than mankind is to survive bacteria.³⁹ Origen replies to Celsus that God has given us intelligence to protect us. But Celsus complains that before man developed cities, arts and weapons, he was unprotected. This last point was later to be endorsed by a Christian, Arnobius the teacher of Lactantius, in his reply to those pagans who gave too divine a status to the human soul.⁴⁰ There had in fact been a history of discussing the idea that man alone is born defenceless and naked.⁴¹

³³ John Chrysostom *Homily on Genesis* 7.11-12.

³⁴ Maimonides *Guide for the Perplexed* 3.13.

³⁵ *Ibid.* 3.25.

³⁶ *Ibid.* 3.17, translation in Chapter Twelve.

³⁷ Origen *Against Celsus* 4,74-80, esp. 78-80; Porphyry *Abstinence* 3.20.

³⁸ Origen *Against Celsus* 4,74; cf. Porphyry *Letter to Marcella* 32, where the embryo's outer covering is for the sake of its development, but is later discarded.

³⁹ James Lovelock, *Gaia*.

⁴⁰ Arnobius *Adversus Nationes* 2.18.

⁴¹ Anaximander A.10 Diels-Kranz (= *Dox. Gr.* 579); Plato *Protagoras* 320D-322A; Aristotle, reporting others, *PA* 4.10, 687a23 ff; Epicurus ap. Lactantius *Opif.* 3.1; 6; Lucretius 5,222-34; Pliny *Nat. Hist.* 7, proem 1-5; Galen *de Usu Partium* 1.2.

What was Jewish philosopher Maimonides' view?

What was Origen's view?

There were other contributions, too, to the debate on the naturalness of our using animals. Aristotle argues that just as it is natural for the soul to rule the body, so it is natural for man to domesticate animals, and the domesticated ones have a better nature.⁴² Theophrastus and Plutarch, by contrast, represent the sacrificing and eating of animals as a decline from earlier practice and one brought on by war, famine, hunger and poverty.⁴³ Plutarch challenges anyone who thinks meat-eating natural to kill an animal with his teeth and eat it raw.⁴⁴ Clodius, however, again drawing probably on Heraclides Ponticus, had earlier pleaded, rather implausibly, that eating *cooked* meat at least was natural, as shown by its universality.⁴⁵

The Christian appeal to irrationality as ethically crucial

In the Latin West it was Augustine above all who stamped the test of rationality into Christian discussions of how to treat animals. We have seen two examples of how Augustine, followed by Aquinas, accepted the Stoic view that animals can be killed, because, lacking reason, they do not belong in our community. There is an even more far-reaching conclusion in Thomas Aquinas. Citing Aristotle as his authority, Thomas says that intellectual understanding (*intelligere = nous*) is the only operation of the soul that is performed without a physical organ, and infers that the souls of brute animals are not immortal like ours.⁴⁶ Here the alleged irrationality of animals makes the difference between them and us a chasm, for it is the difference between mortal and immortal souls. Augustine did not go as far as this explicitly. At most, he took a step in this direction, in that some of his proofs of the immortality of the human soul presuppose its rationality.⁴⁷ But the idea that the non-rational parts of the soul are mortal is already found in Plato's *Timaeus*,⁴⁸ though implicitly denied in his *Phaedrus*, where the immortal gods have the non-rational parts of the soul.⁴⁹ It is not surprising, therefore, that Platonists disagreed on whether non-rational soul is immortal.⁵⁰ This would have implications for animals

⁴² Aristotle *Politics* 1.5.

⁴³ Theophrastus ap. Porphyry *Abstinence* 2.9; 2.12; 2.27; Plutarch *Esu.* 1.2, 993C-994B.

⁴⁴ Plutarch *Esu.* 1.5.

⁴⁵ Porphyry *Abstinence* 1.13.

⁴⁶ Thomas Aquinas *Summa Theologiae* 1, q. 75, a. 3, *respondeo* (citing Aristotle *DA* 3.4, 429a24); *Contra Gentiles* 2.82.

⁴⁷ Augustine *Soliloquia* 2.22; 2.24; *de Immortalitate Animae* 8-9, with Gerard O'Daly, *Augustine's Philosophy of Mind*, London 1987, 75.

⁴⁸ Plato *Timaeus* 69C.

⁴⁹ Plato *Phaedrus* 246A-247C.

⁵⁰ No: Albinus(?) *Didaskalikos* 25, 178,19; 21-5, Hermann; Porphyry and Proclus ap. Damascius *Comm. on Phaedo* 124,13-20. Yes: Xenocrates, Speusippus, Numenius, Plotinus, Iamblichus, Plutarch of Athens, according to Damascius, loc. cit.

when, from Iamblichus onwards, the Neoplatonists denied them rational souls (see Chapter Thirteen).

Before Augustine, the linkages between animals, reason and immortality were by no means settled. Admittedly, Eusebius had anticipated him to the extent of saying that our souls are immortal and quite unlike those of irrational animals (*alogá zôia*), despite the views of the philosophers with their raised eyebrows.⁵¹ But Lactantius, who like Augustine wrote in Latin, had not even accepted that animals lack reason (*ratio*). They have reason, can converse (*colloqui*), laugh (*ridere*) and exercise foresight, perhaps perfect foresight (*perfecta providentia*). The only way in which man differs is not through reason, but through what Cicero mentioned, knowledge of God. This knowledge is perfect reason (*ratio perfecta*), or wisdom (*sapientia*), and we are given an upright posture, to look at the heavens, solely for religious reasons.⁵² Lactantius further uses our knowledge of God, reminding us that it is (almost) the only thing that distinguishes us from animals, as one of the proofs of the soul's immortality.⁵³ Our reason forms no part of the proof, and indeed elsewhere Lactantius says that reason has been given to us because of our soul's immortality,⁵⁴ not immortality because of our reason. In comparison with this, Augustine has taken a big step towards Thomas Aquinas' view that our rationality implies the immortality of human souls alone. **STOP HERE**

Lactantius' teacher Arnobius, another Christian writing in Latin, had taken a similar view. Answering pagans who speak of our souls as divine (he refers to followers of Plato, Pythagoras and Hermes Trismegistus),⁵⁵ he replies that we are little different from the animals. In many men there is not much sign of reason, whereas in animals there are images of reason and wisdom which we cannot copy, and if they had had hands, they would have produced new works of art.⁵⁶

Some early Christians had taken another tack. Not accepting the rationality of animals, Origen none the less sometimes accepts the transmigration of human souls into animals,⁵⁷ and the eventual salvation of all souls, evidently even of those that were in animals.⁵⁸ Basil of Caesarea speaks in one of his prayers of God having promised to save both man and beast.⁵⁹ Admittedly, the relevant Biblical passages were often interpreted in a different sense. When Isaiah

⁵¹ Eusebius *Demonstratio Evangelica* 3.3, 106C-D in PG 22, 193C.

⁵² Lactantius *Divine Institutes* 3,10, citing Cicero *Leg.* 1.8.24.

⁵³ Lactantius *Divine Institutes* 7,9,10; *Epitome* 65,4.

⁵⁴ Lactantius *Opif.* 2.9.

⁵⁵ Arnobius *adv. Nationes* 2.15.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 2.17.

⁵⁷ Origen *On First Principles* 1.4.1; 1.8.4; but contrast *Contra Celsum* 8.30.

⁵⁸ Origen *On First Principles* 3.6.5-6.

⁵⁹ Basil *Liturgy*.

prophesies that the leopard shall lie down with the kid,⁶⁰ and Paul tells us that the creature shall be delivered from corruption,⁶¹ these passages are sometimes connected, and taken to refer not to an afterlife for animals, but to the last thousand years of this earth when Christ will reign, the devil be punished and the just, who will be resurrected first, will judge the living.⁶²

Pro- and anti-animal strands in Christianity

I have dwelt on the anti-animal tendency in the Christian tradition. It would be wrong to ignore other strands, and I am grateful to Margaret Atkins for emphasising and illustrating them to me. There was the theme of the goodness of the animal creation, and there was the tradition of individual saints returning to paradisaic relations with the animals, communing with them and curing them. This latter tradition is found already in the desert fathers,⁶³ and is praised by John Chrysostom in the fourth century, who himself spent ten years in the desert.⁶⁴ It is followed later by the Celtic Saints,⁶⁵ and celebrated in the Franciscan tradition, notably by St Bonaventure and Raymond Sebond,⁶⁶ though even on St Francis' example caveats have been entered.⁶⁷

Praise of the animal creation is well exemplified in the fourth century in Basil of Caesarea's *Hexaemeron* and more briefly in John Chrysostom's *Homily on Genesis*.⁶⁸ Both themes are taken up by Augustine: the recovery by individuals of pre-lapsarian immunity from dangerous animals⁶⁹ and the beauty and order to be found in animals.⁷⁰ I shall leave the details to Margaret Atkins.⁷¹

⁶⁰ Isaiah 11,6-9.

⁶¹ Romans 8.21.

⁶² Irenaeus *adv. Haereses* 5.32.1; 5.36.3; Lactantius *Divine Institutes* 7.24.7. This is the probable meaning also of Tertullian *adv. Hermogenem* 11.3.

⁶³ See e.g. N. Russell, *Lives of the Desert Fathers*, 43-4; 110.

⁶⁴ John Chrysostom *Homily* 39.35 on the Epistle to the Romans.

⁶⁵ See Helen Waddell, *Beasts and Saints*.

⁶⁶ This is well discussed by J. Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore*, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1967, 214-16; 237-40.

⁶⁷ John Passmore ('The treatment of animals', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 36, 1975, 195-218, at 243 *Man's Responsibility for Nature*, London 1974) repeats a story from *The Life of Brother Jonathan*, ch. 1, in *The Little Flowers of Saint Francis*, which represents the saint as objecting to the violation of property, not the callousness, when the trotters are cut off a living pig.

⁶⁸ Basil *Hexaemeron*, Homilies 7-9; John Chrysostom *Homily on Genesis* 7,11-12.

⁶⁹ Augustine *Gen. Lit.* 3.15.24.

⁷⁰ Augustine, e.g. *Gen. Lit.* 3.14.22; *Reply to the Epistle of the Manichaeans called Fundamental* 37; *de Vera Religione* 77; *de Genesi contra Manichaeos* 1.16.26. The fullest account of this side of Augustine is in Clarence J. Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore*, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1967.

⁷¹ Margaret Atkins, work in preparation, shows that Augustine is answering the Manichean view that the world of matter is evil, and that it is not merely with respect to

Even so there are heavy qualifications. Animals are to be admired not for their own sake, but as pointers to God. We must not let the creature take hold of us, so that we forget the Creator.⁷² Even the suffering of animals serves this purpose of pointing the way to God. It reminds us that he implanted the urge to struggle against disintegration and emulate his own unity.⁷³ Moreover, in the very same breath in which Augustine speaks of animal beauty he reminds us that a weeping man is better than a happy worm, and that though mice are better than bread and fleas than gold, men are still higher in the scale of value.⁷⁴ This would be compatible with caging a lion, to remind us of its Creator.

We should take a warning from the case of Aristotle, who speaks of the beauty of animal studies, without thinking we owe them justice, when he defends zoology as a subject against astronomy, by reminding us of Heraclitus' saying that there are gods even in the kitchen.⁷⁵ A further warning is supplied by the Cynics, who dwell on the cleverness of animals, not in order to urge kindness to them, but in order to contrast the folly of human practices.⁷⁶

Much the same situation can be found in Thomas Aquinas. He, too, maintains that the creation is good and animals beautiful, while insisting on the hierarchy that puts humans above them.⁷⁷ At most there are two passages in which a more radical modification has been detected: animals exist for their own sake, as well as for humans.⁷⁸

One point, however, which has been made by Margaret Atkins,⁷⁹ is that although the arguments in praise of the Creation do not protect individual animals, they are the sort of arguments that can be used to support the conservation of species. In that case, the attitude to be recommended to humans is opposite to that which Augustine ascribes to God. For we have seen that Augustine makes God's providence extend to animals as individuals.

By and large, despite some opposing tendencies, my impression is that the emphasis of Western Christianity was on one half, the anti-animal half, of a much more wide-ranging and vigorous ancient Greek debate. And I think this helps to explain why until very recently

our need, pleasure, comfort, or convenience (Augustine *City* 11.16; 12.4) that animals are to be admired.

⁷² Augustine *Enarratio in Psalmos*, 39, verse 8.

⁷³ Augustine *Lib. Arb.* 3.23.232-9; *Gen. Lit.* 3.16.25.

⁷⁴ Augustine *de Vera Religione* 77; *City* 11.16.

⁷⁵ Aristotle *Parts of Animals* 1.5, 645a7-31.

⁷⁶ See Chapter Twelve above.

⁷⁷ Thomas Aquinas *Summa Theologiae* 1, q. 75, a. 2; 1, q. 70, a. 1.

⁷⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *de Veritate* q. 5, a. 3; in *2 Sent.* d. 1, q. 2, a. 3, as interpreted by John Wright, *The Order of the Universe in the Theology of St Thomas Aquinas*, Rome 1957, 145-7.

⁷⁹ Contribution to the symposium on animals held by the Classical Association in Oxford, April 1992.

we, or at least I myself, have been rather complacent about the treatment of animals.

**The re-emergence of Ancient Greek arguments for animals:
Ikhwan al-Safâ, Montaigne, Leibniz**

The pro-animal side of the Greek debate was maintained chiefly by Platonists, Pythagoreans and some Aristotelians. It gets things the wrong way round to suggest that Platonism is to blame for overthrowing a kindly Biblical tradition, and even to name those two Platonist champions of animals, Celsus and Porphyry, as if they were opponents.⁸⁰

The Greek case for animals does re-emerge at various later times. One interesting example is a text from a rather isolated group of perhaps four tenth-century Islamic thinkers, the Ikhwan al-Safâ, or Brethren of Purity. In *The Case of the Animals Versus Man Before the King of the Jinn*, the animals are allowed to put their case before an impartial third party for being liberated from man, and they draw on Ancient Greek arguments.⁸¹

The superiority of animals was to be promulgated to a wide literary public in the sixteenth century by Montaigne. In the *Apology for Raymond Sebond*, first published in 1580, he took up the case of ancient scepticism, with a view to promoting Christian faith over reason. Montaigne often followed Plutarch on animals, and, given this, there is no need to doubt that animal superiority, not merely animal goodness, was what he was maintaining.⁸² He also introduced a new sceptical theme based on the opening up of the American continent: the superiority of the noble savage, although this theme is more fully taken up by Rousseau.⁸³ Plutarch was not Montaigne's only source. Sextus Empiricus was another, and his remarks on animal language may suggest at least an indirect acquaintance with the ideas of Porphyry's treatise *On Abstinence from Animal Food*.⁸⁴ In his later *Essay on Cruelty*, Montaigne after all accepted the Stoic view that we owe no justice to animals. But, like Plutarch,⁸⁵ he insisted that we owed humanity, and not only to animals, but also to plants. And with animals that are close to us he recognised the existence of mutual obligations.

⁸⁰ C.W. Hume, founder of the Universities Federation for the Welfare of Animals, in one of their publications, *The Status of Animals in the Christian Religion*, London 1956.

⁸¹ Translation by L.E. Goodman, Boston, Mass, 1978.

⁸² George Boas is hesitant in *The Happy Beast*, Baltimore 1933.

⁸³ For these various themes, see *Apologie de Raimond Sebond*, in P. Villey ed., *Les Essais de Michel de Montaigne*, vol. 2, Paris 1922, 186-214; 218; 329-49. There is a new translation into English by Michael Screech, London 1991.

⁸⁴ On language, see Sextus *PH* 1.73-7; Porphyry *Abstinence* 3,3-6.

⁸⁵ Plutarch *Marcus Cato* 5.2.

Montaigne's ascription of reason to animals helped to provoke the backlash of the Cartesian position that animals have no feeling at all, whether that was Descartes' own meaning, or only the interpretation of his followers.⁸⁶ Descartes explained his motivation in the *Discourse on Method* of 1637. If we do not recognise the enormous difference between ourselves and animals, we may fancy that we, like them, will not be liable to punishment after death. Conversely, once we do realise how much the animals differ, we can understand much better the arguments proving that our souls are independent of the body's death.⁸⁷ Descartes' denial of feeling and soul to animals went beyond anything found in the Greeks. I do not know whether the extreme character of his position was partly due to the need to counteract Montaigne.

There was another sixteenth-century reader of the Greeks whose work proved influential, in that it brought Leibniz into the debate. In 1544 Rorarius wrote a treatise, *That Brute Animals Possess Reason Better than Man*, in two books. A manuscript of this was printed in 1648, thus provoking a whole article on Rorarius by Pierre Bayle in his *Dictionary*, coupled with reflections of Bayle's own concerning Rorarius, the Cartesians, the Aristotelians and Leibniz.⁸⁸ Leibniz replied to the version of 1702.⁸⁹ He objects that Descartes is wrong to deny that animals have sense perception. They do, and hence their souls are immaterial, and so indestructible. Ordinary opinion would unwittingly rob of us immortality, either by allowing (for the case of animals) that conscious beings could be wholly material, or by denying (in the case of animals) that immaterial souls are indestructible. Although animal souls are as indestructible as ours, Leibniz avoids Rorarius' mistake of sapping the foundations of religion by denying any specific difference. The differences are very important, and here Leibniz reimposes a rationalistic view. First, animals have only memory, not reason, and so can attain only to universals based on induction or experience, which we saw Aristotle granting to animals in Chapter Three above. They are like the empiricist doctors of antiquity (the ones described in Chapter Six above as memorists), who have no understanding of cause and effect, but merely expect good or harm from the same thing in similar circumstances. Humans, by contrast, can use their reason to attain to the universal necessary truths and

⁸⁶ The latter, according to John Cottingham, '“A brute to the brutes”? Descartes' treatment of animals', *Philosophy* 53, 1978, 551-9.

⁸⁷ Descartes *Discourse on Method*, end of part 5.

⁸⁸ See O. Kristeller, 'Between the Italian Renaissance and the French Enlightenment', *Renaissance Quarterly* 32, 1979, 41-72; George Boas, op. cit.; Leonora Rosenfield, *From Beast-Machine to Man-Machine*, Oxford 1941.

⁸⁹ Leibniz, 'Extrait du Dictionnaire de M. Bayle, article "Rorarius", p. 2599 sqq. de l'édition de l'an 1702, avec mes remarques', in Gerhardt, ed., *Philosophische Schriften* 4, 524-54, at 524-9.

deductive syllogisms of Aristotelian Science: just the capacity which we saw the memorists dismissing as useless. Further, the souls of beasts are not spirits, because they have no understanding of reasons and so no freedom. Moreover, they do not preserve their personality, because they have no knowledge of self, and such knowledge is necessary for reward or punishment after death. Thus the religious doctrine of reward and punishment which Descartes saw as threatened if animals were conscious, and Bayle if their souls were like ours, is safely preserved by Leibniz. In summarising Leibniz, Bayle says that the moral status of human souls makes them citizens of the City of God.

Leibniz expounds more fully in his *Monadology* of 1714 a theory to which he alludes only briefly here. The souls and bodies of animals and men were made and united together at the time of the Creation, and will last for ever, but in changing sizes. Animal bodies will be shrunk to microscopic size at death, so that they can live, for example, on a particle of dust. And birth is only an expansion of their microscopic bodies, which are fully organised within the seed.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Leibniz *Monadology*, translated Latta, pp. 114-16.