5. Respecting the dignity of creatures. Basic concepts of environmental and animal ethics

"Since its explicit beginnings, the environmental ethics discussion has been marked by the opposition of two main currents, the anthropocentristic and the non-anthropocentristic approaches.... They indeed discern the spirits." (Hans J. Münk 1997, 17) This sentence, which is already a quarter of a century old, still applies unchanged. A consensual solution to the basic question of environmental ethics is still not in sight half a century after it began. The differences of opinion are too fundamental. However, they can be narrowed down to one of three question perspectives, and this is what we shall do before we analyse the controversial approaches individually. For it is now clear in all the language families accessible to me that one must distinguish between three perspectives (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[10]. Here, it is completely undisputed that it is only possible for them to look at the world with their human imaginative capabilities. They can expand these imaginative capabilities 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 the lack of human senses. In this respect, human perception of the world around us has expanded enormously in recent decades.

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10 Some speak of anthroporelationality (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 anthropocentrics.

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At the same time, this perception remains trapped in principle by the human capacity for cognition. For even if we draw valid (!) conclusions about the subjective feelings of animals and plants through their behaviour, we will never truly be able to feel "what it is like to be a bat"— the title of Thomas Nagel's famous essay in 1974. In other words: humans recognise the world methodically anthropocentrically, dogs methodically cynocentrically and bees methodically melissacentrically[11]. 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 epistemological anthropocentrics[12]*, the greatest possible development of the ability to empathise and think along, i.e. to put oneself in the shoes of another species, is required. And yet limits remain.

The inescapability of methodological anthropocentrics 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 humans' place to elevate themselves above animals and plants. Environmental 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 take 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 in the affirmative in research, at least for certain animal species (Fiona Probyn-Rapsey 2018, 49). However, this is never about the immense re-

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11 The idea of a species-specific epistemic limitation is already found in the reflections 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 B.C.) 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.

12 Angelika Krebs 1997, 342–343 calls methodological anthropocentrics "metaethical anthropocentrism". The adjective can be used appropriately, the noun, on the other hand, disregards, as is so often the case, the distinction between anthropocentrism and anthropocentrics, which is justified on the following pages.

sponsibility that is to be negotiated in this book, namely the responsibility for the survival of the biosphere as a whole. It should be indisputable that only humans possess this ability to some extent. Man is the addressee of environmental ethical demands—and he alone.

Again, there is the danger of drawing wrong conclusions from this special position of man. In connection with the image of God in Gen. 1, we saw where such uncovered conclusions can lead. While the image of God there describes only *formal anthropocentrics*, in later centuries the term was read as an answer to the third question 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 anthropocentrics. It would only be a matter of cosmetics and semantics, not of hard content. I would therefore rather ask how a more effective firewall can be drawn between formal anthropocentrics and material anthropocentrism.

Finally, the third, *material or teleological perspective* already mentioned asks for whom the earth is to be preserved: Who are the teloi, 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 will be explored in the following. It is the crucial question of environmental 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 anthropocentrics, 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 anthropocentrically. 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 responsible parties 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 the *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 of anthropocentrism is linked to the teleological question—and semantically we traditionally designate ideologies with the suffix "-ism" and "-ist".

However, "anthropocentrism" and the usually combined "anthropocentric" do not fit together semantically. Purely linguistically, the adjective "anthropocentristic" belongs to the noun "anthropocentrism"—which is unfortunately not at all the case in English-language research literature. Conversely, the adjective "anthropocentric" corresponds with the noun "anthropocentrics", 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 associated Greek adjective—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 anthropocentrist or anthropocentristic) on the one hand and formal anthropocentrics and epistemic anthropocentrics (both with the adjective anthropocentric) on the other (cf. Rob Boddice 2011, 13). This then makes it clear linguistically that no compelling conclusion leads from formal or epistemic anthropocentrics to material anthropocentrism. The firewall between the first two and the third perspective is also linguistically clearly marked. This is exactly how I use the terminology in this book. Material anthropocentrism can then also be referred to more briefly simply as anthropocentrism. Anthropocentrics, on the other hand, always requires specification by an adjective so that it is clear which perspective we are referring to. 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 valu-

ation—neither positive nor negative[13]. 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 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 environmental ethicists who explicitly emphasise that they are material or teleological "anthropocentrics", but not "anthropocentrists". Here, a semantic trick is used that cannot be justified linguistically and should therefore be avoided. Those who advocate anthropocentrist teleology should unabashedly call themselves anthropocentrists. There is no shame in it.

In the following, I go through the four classical justificatory approaches of environmental and animal ethics one after the other—starting with the approach with the smallest scope and ending with the one with the largest scope. All four chafe most at the question of whether and, if so, to whom an "inherent value" or "dignity" must be ascribed. Only after discussing this question can a definitive decision be made as to which of the four approaches to justification has the highest internal consistency and reality-based adequacy.

5.1 Anthropocentristic approaches

For whom is the life house of the earth to be preserved? Who are the teloi, the (self-)ends, for the sake of whom or which the means of nature may and should be used? That is the core question to be negotiated here. Anthropocentrism answers it thus: Only human beings have moral status and deserve moral consideration for their own sake. All other entities are mere means to rational human ends (J. Baird Callicott 2006, 119). Or, as Gavin Rae puts it: Anthropocentrism is "the ethical understanding which claims that the human's privileged status over the nonhuman (animals, plants, minerals, and so on) means that the human is free to use these non-

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13 Lori Gruen 2015, 24 distinguishes between "inevitable anthropocentrism", by which she designates methodological anthropocentrics, 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.

humans to achieve its ends." (Gavin Rae 2014, 3; see also Helen Kopnina et al. 2018, 109).

Non-human entities therefore have their value solely in relation to humans, be it aesthetic or functional (as a use value). Nature is only worth protecting to the extent that it is "useful" in a well-understood sense to people living at present or in the future. Man's responsibility for nature is therefore understood exclusively as the responsibility towards his own kind. The inclusion of future (human) generations is its inherent component and removes the possibility of ruthless overexploitation of nature from anthropocentrism. Truly ethical anthropocentrism therefore demands the renunciation of consumption and power where this is necessary to protect nature and its foundations. But this is only necessary for the sake of preserving humanity. In this respect, anthropocentrism as an ethical concept is unquestionably advantageous because the traditional ethical rules and patterns of argumentation remain applicable (Tim Hayward 1997, 60–61).

Would the world be worth preserving if humanity were certain to die out? Consistent, hard anthropocentrism would have to give 'no' as an answer. Dieter Birnbacher, who did so in 1980, corrected himself a few years later[14]. However, while Birnbacher's positioning was of a fundamental nature and meant a "system change" from anthropocentrism to pathocentrism, many anthropocentrists have only carried out inner-systemic weakening of such particularly hard theses. Contemporary anthropocentrism therefore often appears in the form of "ecological humanism" and argues that human beings would deny their innermost being, their destiny to morality, if they abused nature. Taking ecological responsibility is an indispensable part of the realisation of humanity. Thus, Bernhard Irrgang seeks "ecologically oriented humanity as a horizon for weighing up... ecologically oriented humanity" (Bernhard Irrgang 1992, 67; similarly Markus Vogt 2009, 256–257 and 2016, 138). Its goal is an "appropriate consideration of living beings and nature in a weighing of goods" (Bernhard Irrgang 1992, 66). From this, Irrgang develops a model of graduated solidarity of humans with nature (Bernhard Irrgang 1992, 70).

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14 Dieter Birnbacher 1980, 132. On the other hand, Dieter Birnbacher 1988, 86 comes to the opposite conclusion: "Should humanity one day irrevocably turn into a pack of animal-cruel sadists, it would be better, seen in the totality of beings capable of suffering, if humanity were to die out and leave the higher animals to themselves unimpaired."

The argumentation of anthropocentrists in the Anglo-Saxon world is not much different. Bryan G. Norton emphasises that weak anthropocentrism subjects perceived human preferences to a rational critique but does not need to invoke an "intrinsic value" of non-human entities: "such an ideal need not attribute intrinsic value to natural objects, nor need the prohibitions implied by it be justified with nonanthropocentric reasoning attributing intrinsic value to nonhuman natural objects. Rather, they can be justified as being implied by the ideal of harmony with nature. This ideal, in turn, can be justified either on religious grounds referring to human spiritual development or as being a fitting part of a rationally defensible world view." (Bryan G. Norton 1984, 136). Thus, according to Norton, an ideal of harmony with nature is sufficient, and this can be justified both on religious and rational grounds. The values derived from this ideal are purely human, but not egoistic: the protection of other living beings is only for the sake of humans, but is nevertheless effective (Bryan G. Norton 1984, 137). In this context, Norton believes that it is not the distinction between anthropocentrism and non-anthropocentrism that is decisive, but the distinction between moral individualism and moral non-individualism (Bryan G. Norton 1984, 133). The greatest challenge is the resolution of conflicts between (human) individuals and the human community as a collective (cf. chapter 5.6). However, this challenge can be overcome with human reason.

The question is, however, whether there is really a substantial difference between the new "soft" and the classical "hard" anthropocentrism and what exactly this difference would be. Norton, at least, would have to answer Birnbacher's question of whether the preservation of the earth would be morally imperative if humanity were to safely die out in the negative. Irrgang leaves his answer up in the air. But what does he want to use to determine the "appropriateness" of taking living beings and nature into account when weighing up goods? This is where soft anthropocentrism comes to a grinding halt. For ultimately, the question always ends up in the binary alternative of whether one derives the criteria for the appropriateness of taking non-human Creation into account from the Creation itself or whether one ultimately thinks of it in terms of human beings. The distinction between soft and hard anthropocentrism may make differences in terms of gestures and optics, but not in content.

Where are the *historical roots* of anthropocentrism? At the beginning of the debates on environmental ethics within the horizon of Christian theology, it was still thought that anthropocentrism could be derived from the biblical Creation narratives. Thus, one of the pioneers of Christian en-

vironmental ethics, Alfons Auer, drew the conclusion from Gen. 1–2 "that the whole of the rest of the world is ordered towards man alone as the highest work of Creation [...], in Gen. 2 towards man as the centre around which everything is built, in Gen. 1 as the apex of the pyramid erected by Creation." (Alfons Auer 1981, 69 and 1984, 220) A few years after Auer, such considerations were already obsolete. The apex or crowning of Gen. 1 is the work of Creation on the seventh day, that is, the Sabbath, the resting and breathing of Creation. And the centre of the garden in Gen. 2 is a tree and not man.

So, in defiance of Lynn White, we have to look outside the Bible to get to the origins of anthropocentrism in ancient Greek philosophy. A crucial preliminary stage is formulated by the *Sophists* (c. 450–380 BC), who first call animals ἄλογα ζῷα or simply ἄλογα—living beings without logos, without reason and without language, without culture and technology, without morality and law. Even though the evaluative and not merely descriptive term aloga only became common with Aristotle (Urs Dierauer 1977, 33), the distinction between humans and animals through reason is "one of the most momentous theses of the 5th century [BC, MR]" (Urs Dierauer 1977, 39). By the end of the century, it had gained acceptance and was widely acknowledged.

The breakthrough to hard anthropocentrism is made by *Socrates*, and he does so in order to substantiate the care of the gods for human beings: "Tell me, Euthydemos, has it ever occurred to you to think about the care with which the gods have arranged everything that human beings need?—No, indeed, not yet, replied the latter." (Xenophon, Memorabilia 4,3,3) Thereupon, Socrates explains how everything, really everything, is arranged for man and his benefit: light, sun and moon, earth, water and fire, the seasons and much more. But even after this long treatise, his interlocutor Euthydemos is more inclined towards biocentrism: "I, said Euthydemos, am already considering whether the gods do anything at all other than care for human beings; only one thing still causes me concern, that the other living beings also participate in these benefits.—Is it not clear, replied Socrates, that these also are created and brought up for the sake of men (καὶ ταῦτα ἀνθρώπων ἕνεκα γίγνεταί τε καὶ ἀνατρέφεται)? For what other creature has so many advantages to enjoy from the goats, sheep, cattle, asses, and the rest of the animals, as man?" (Xenophon, Memorabilia 4,3,9–10). The fact that man can benefit from all animals is a decisive argument in favour of anthropocentrism for Socrates. However, this is motivated theologically: in the strict orientation of the world towards man, the care of the gods is shown in an unsurpassable way. The objection

of Euthydemos that the care of the gods could also apply to all living beings is not valid for Socrates, because only man possesses reason. Greek anthropocentrism only becomes plausible in the connection between the irrationality of animals and divine providence.

However, it is only in the *Stoa* that it is consistently developed and intensified: again, one of the two motifs is the theologically focused proof of the good providence of the gods. Thus, Cicero begins his thoughts on anthropocentrism in his treatise on the nature of the gods with the words: "It remains that at the end of my speech I finally show that everything in this world that men use was created and prepared for the sake of men." (Cicero, De natura deorum 2, 154). The second motif is from ethics or moral pedagogy: if man alone possesses reason, he is urged to use it in the right way. In terms of content, two main reasons are given for anthropocentrism: Firstly, everything earthly has a use for man, right down to the bedbugs that wake him up in the morning and the mice that admonish him to be careful with food. And secondly, the lower was created for the higher, the unreasonable for the reasonable: "The dogma of the creation of animals for the benefit of man stood and fell with the proof of the unreasonableness of animals." (Urs Dierauer 1977, 243)

Soon the mainstream of early Christian theology adopted the concepts and values of the mainstream of Greco-Roman philosophy, for a caring Creator was also believed in, and the strict teleology of the Stoa was very convenient for Christianity. In addition, it wanted to push back the doctrine of transmigration of souls, which was closely linked to the pro-creation and pro-animal position of Greek minority philosophy (Günther Lorenz 2013, 245). *Origen* (185 Alexandria–c. 254 Tyre), who in his writing "Against Kelsos" c. 240 AD deals, among other things, with the cosmocentrism of the now lost writing "True Doctrine" (Ἀληθὴς λόγος) by the Platonist Kelsos, which the latter wrote in Alexandria c. 180 AD, is paradigmatic for this transfer. Kelsos presents Christianity as an uneducated and socially isolating current and sees no reason for the assumption, which he already perceives as typically Christian, 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, for the cosmos forms a totality in which each component has its equal significance (this is how Origen refers to Kelsos' position in Contra Celsum 4, 74–99). In his defence of Christian anthropocentrism, Origen then adopts the rationalist position of the Stoa and thus the philosophical mainstream of his time.

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In this way, he is able to refute Kelsos' core thesis that Christianity is uneducated and apostatises.

The animal- and Creation-friendly, biocentristic or cosmocentristic minority position of Greek philosophy, as it lives on in Neoplatonism and Neo-Pythagoreanism, is also reflected in the growing church as a minority position. It is represented by early *monasticism*, whose adherents, for ethical and biblical (!) reasons, live a strictly vegetarian, partly even vegan life. This minority position is never lost in 2000 years of Church history, but always remains marginal.

To this day, anthropocentrism is the overpowering foundation of most human societies. It manifests itself invisibly in their institutions and rules and is in this way omnipresent (Fiona Probyn-Rapsey 2018, 48). Humans shape the entire earth according to their needs—non-anthropocentristic views are tolerated at most in nature reserves and national parks. This is why proponents of the other justificatory approaches to environmental and animal ethics are calling for a new era of "post-anthropocentrism" or "post-humanism" (Helen Kopnina 2019, 2).

From its beginning in Greek antiquity, the *adequacy* of anthropocentrism in relation to reality was repeatedly questioned. On the one hand, people wondered whether the deep gulf between rational humans and irrational animals and plants was consistent with empirical observations. Since antiquity, there had been an abundance of observations on animal behaviour that did not seem to be justifiably explainable without recourse to deductive reasoning, category building and imageless reasoning. On the other hand, people wondered whether utility was as one-way as anthropocentrism claimed, namely that ultimately it was always the rest of Creation that benefited humans and not sometimes the other way around. Principled and majority-supporting questioning of anthropocentrism only began with Charles Darwin's theory of evolution and has not yet been fully realised even at the philosophical level.

A second enquiry into anthropocentrism is, as far as I can see, rather modern and doubts its *internal logical consistency*: to justify the demand for species-appropriate treatment of animals, which since Immanuel Kant has also been raised by most anthropocentrists, the appeal to humanity is not sufficient. Many of them therefore emphasise the importance of empathy. Humans must empathise with animals and draw from this the necessary consequences for their actions (Bernhard Irrgang 1992, 67–70; Wilhelm Korff 1997, 81). As was already the case with Immanuel Kant (Moral Philosophy Collins AA XXVII/1, 459), reasoning by analogy is demanded here, for empathy cannot do without analogy. However, it must then grant

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the needs of animals an analogous value, but one that is independent of humans. Animal protection happens for the sake of the animals. Here, anthropocentrism cannot maintain its own approach.

Despite its long, almost 2500 years of dominance, the anthropocentristic approach to reasoning has reached its fundamental limits. It has clearly lost its self-evidence in modern ethics. The question is, however, what should take its place?

5.2 Pathocentrist/ Sentientist approaches

"The day has been, I grieve to say in many places it is not yet past, in which the greater part of the species, under the denomination of slaves, have been treated by the law exactly upon the same footing as, in England for example, the inferior races of animals are still. The day may come, when the rest of the animal creation may acquire those rights which never could have been withholden from them but by the hand of tyranny. The French have already discovered that the blackness of the skin is no reason why a human being should be abandoned without redress to the caprice of a tormentor. It may come one day to be recognized, that the number of the legs, the villosity of the skin, or the termination of the os sacrum, are reasons equally insufficient for abandoning a sensitive being to the same fate. What else is it that should trace the insuperable line? Is it the faculty of reason, or, perhaps, the faculty of discourse? But a full-grown horse or dog is beyond comparison a more rational, as well as a more conversable animal, than an infant of a day, or a week, or even a month, old. But suppose the case were otherwise, what would it avail? The question is not, Can they reason? nor, Can they talk? but, Can they suffer?" (Jeremy Bentham 1828, vol. 2, 235–236)

In this programmatic footnote to the new edition of his main work from 1789, *Jeremy Bentham* (1748–1832 London) compares the liberation of animals with the abolition of slavery in 1828. The ban on the slave trade was passed in the United Kingdom in 1807, but the ban on slavery did not follow in England until 1833 and in the USA until 1865. This impressively demonstrates Bentham's foresight and prophetic power. And indeed, for the first time in 2200 years, he succeeds in shaking the Western dominance of anthropocentrism by attacking head-on the thesis of the Aloga, the reasonless and speechless animals, which had been taken for granted since the time of the Sophists: it is not at all decisive whether animals can think or speak, but whether they can suffer, i.e. feel pain and

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pleasure. For modern animal protection, this paradigm shift can hardly be overestimated.

Bentham is the founder of utilitarian ethics. In the main work cited here, "An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation", he unfolds its four basic principles. The third is the "sentientist principle": the yardstick for the "utility" of an action is the happiness of all the individuals involved. Where an action promotes their happiness as a whole, it is "useful". Happiness, however, shows itself empirically through apparent pleasure and freedom from pain. Consequently, all beings that can feel pleasure and pain are morally relevant. These are all living beings that possess a nervous system, i.e. all animals. This is the meaning of the term "pathocentrism" or "sentientism": everything revolves around pleasure and pain.

Since Bentham, the representatives of utilitarianism have remained true to the sentientist principle. However, based on modern biological findings about the intelligence of some animal species, they add a supplement that grants additional rights to particularly intelligent animals. This is demonstrated by the most committed utilitarian in animal ethics today, the Australian philosopher *Peter Singer* (*1943 Melbourne). For most animals, Singer adheres to the sentientist principle. For him, all consciously felt interests are relevant, i.e. the interests of all sentient beings with a central nervous system (Peter Singer 1994[2], 84–85). However, Singer divides conscious interests into two groups: those that relate exclusively to the present and those that involve future expectations. The latter have creatures that plan into this future—and there are quite a few of these among both mammals and birds. Singer calls such living beings, whose interests are also oriented towards the future, "persons". His conclusion is obvious: there are people who are not persons because they never had or will have an expectation of the future, namely people with severe mental disabilities. And there are persons who are not humans, namely such animals in whom one must assume, on the basis of the results of behavioural research, a conscious thinking into the future (Peter Singer 1994[2], 119–120). According to Singer, such persons have an absolutely inviolable right to life because they cannot be replaced (Peter Singer 1994[2], 134 and 166). By killing them, one does injustice "to them personally", not only to the general public. For: "Very often [by killing a person, MR] everything the victim has endeavoured to do in the past days, months or even years is reduced to absurdity." (Peter Singer 1994[2], 129). Now, in traditional ethics, a person's life is violable when life is pitted against life—think of the legitimacy of self-defence killing. That is why Singer admits that the justification of his

protection of the life of persons, which goes far beyond all traditional ethics, "is an area where fully satisfactory answers have yet to be found." (Peter Singer 1994², 172)

Singer's provocation that not all humans should enjoy a right to life, but many intelligent animals should, is immense. This demand results in serious distortions of previous moral standards. Singer chooses animal protection at the expense of human protection—a highly questionable strategy. Moreover, it is only about animal protection of the most intelligent species. Animals that are not persons, because they cannot develop future concepts, can only hope for painless treatment—nothing more is provided for them. The "nasty ditch" between persons and non-persons is drawn differently than before, but it is not filled up.

Even more profound are the problems that utilitarianism buys into with its underlying epistemology. It follows empiricism, whose basic principle is that only empirically countable and weighable facts are valid. In such a model of thought, no human or animal individual can come into view as a unique, distinctive "personality", because such an attribution exceeds empirical data. This is why Peter Singer's concept of the person seems highly artificial and ultimately remains alien to his overall concept. *Tom Regan* (1938–2017 Pittsburgh) points this out in a very descriptive and pointed formulation: What has value for the utilitarian is the satisfaction of an individual's interests, not the individual himself (Tom Regan 2004⁴, 205–206). To illustrate his thesis, Regan chooses the comparison with a cup filled with liquid. From the utilitarian point of view, only the liquid has value, not the cup. From the point of view of traditional ethics, it is exactly the opposite: it is not the quantity of fulfilled interests, not the quantity of "happiness" that is the decisive yardstick for them, but the individual as a unique subject. Here, it becomes very clear how profound the differences are between traditional ethics and utilitarianism.

Tom Regan therefore tries to bring the sentientist option into traditional ethics. He ascribes an "inherent value" to certain living beings, which he explicitly describes as "more Catholic" in comparison with Albert Schweitzer's Protestant ethic of reverence for life (cf. chapter 5.3) (Tom Regan 2004⁴, 241). Living beings that have such inherent value matter as unique individuals. What matters is not their level of happiness, as in utilitarianism, but that they are themselves. And because they are unique and incomparable, inherent value cannot be measured. It is neither greater or smaller in one living being than in another, nor is it the same in all living beings, but it is simply "incommensurable", as one says in technical language, i.e. "immeasurable". Unlike the "intrinsic value" of experiences,

the "inherent value" of individuals is immeasurable, unearned and unlosable (Tom Regan 2004[4], 235–237).

Now, according to Regan, which living beings have inherent value? They must be "subjects of a life", i.e. individuals with a long list of capacities, namely beliefs, desires, ideas, memories, sense of the future, emotional life, interests, intentions to act, psychological identity over long periods of time and their own well-being (Tom Regan 2004[4], 243.153). With this long list, Regan sets the bar quite high for "subjects of a life", and he is well aware of that. It may be, he concedes, that living beings that are not subjects of a life also have inherent value. But it is difficult to justify this. Therefore, Regan wants the criterion of being the subject of a life to be understood as a sufficient, not a necessary criterion for the attribution of inherent value. Who then specifically counts as subjects of a life? For Regan, in a pragmatic approximation, these are mentally normal humans and mammals from the age of one year. Plants and "lower" animals, on the other hand, are not subjects of a life for him (Tom Regan 2004[4], xvi. xl. 78).

In conclusion, let us look at what unites the three sentientist approaches of Bentham, Singer and Regan and question them in terms of their adequacy and consistency. In doing so, I will refrain from repeating Regan's justified and principled criticism of utilitarianism's blindness to individuals. This can be remedied in principle, as Regan shows with his own approach. Nevertheless, open questions remain.

As far as the *adequacy* of the sentientist approach is concerned, both Singer and Regan show that the sole appeal to sentience is no longer sufficient today. What might have been sufficient in Jeremy Bentham's time, that attention be paid to the avoidance of animal suffering and to increasing animal pleasure, proves insufficient against the background of modern biology. The particularly intelligent animals would be given too little credit in an exclusively pathocentristic model. Therefore, both Singer with his person concept and Regan with his subjects of a life above pain-sensing beings try to establish a group of living beings endowed with more moral rights. Strictly speaking, they thus leave pathocentrism and supplement it with strongly human-oriented, albeit soft, "logocentrism".

Besides this nasty ditch "above" pain-sensing creatures, however, there is an equally nasty ditch "below" them. Plants that lack sensations of pleasure and pain are irrelevant in sentientist approaches. These approaches have done pioneering work for animal protection, but they can still do nothing with plants. Val Plumwood (2002, 258) rightly finds Peter Singer's "indifference to plant lives... deeply shocking".

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That the *internal consistency* of sentientism is fragile is amply demonstrated by the repairs attempted by Singer and Regan. One could almost ask whether their two concepts can pass as "sentientist" at all. But how would they be alternatively classified? A second sore point of consistency concerns the poor justification of future expectations as Singer's criterion for persons and for Regan's long list of criteria for the subjects of a life. Measured against the enormous scope of these concepts, the arguments supporting them turn out to be decidedly meagre. Thus, a number of unresolved questions remain here as well.

5.3 Biocentristic approaches

We are still at the question: For whom is the house of life on earth to be preserved? Who are the teloi, the (self-)ends, for the sake of whom or which the means of nature may and should be used? The starting point for biocentrist considerations is the observation that the earth as an ecosystem is a wholeness in which everything that exists is intertwined. Humans are members of this wholeness like all other living beings. In advance of any possible special position of man within Creation in the sense of formal anthropocentrism, which biocentrism certainly admits, man is first and even more originally integrated into nature and in this (!) respect equal to all living beings (Paul W. Taylor 1981, 206–207). Enlightened anthropocentrism cannot and will not deny this.

As a minority position, biocentrism already existed in antiquity. In its modern form, it goes back to *Albert Schweitzer* (1875 Kaysersberg/Alsace–1965 Lambaréné/Gabon), who developed a programmatic ethic of "reverence for life". The original experience that led him to this ethic occurred in September 1915, when he was travelling about 200 kilometres in a boat on the Ogowe River in Gabon. Schweitzer describes it like this: "In the evening of the third day, when we were near the village of Igendja at sunset, we had to sail along an island in the river, which was over a kilometre wide. On a sandbank to the left, four hippos with their young were wandering in the same direction as us. Then, in my great tiredness and despondency, I suddenly came across the word 'reverence for life', which, as far as I know, I had never heard and never read. Immediately I understood that it contained the solution to the problem I was struggling with. It dawned on me that ethics, which only has to do with our relationship to other people, is incomplete and therefore cannot possess complete energy. Only the ethics of reverence for life can do that. Through it we

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come to relate not only to human beings but to all creatures within our reach and to be concerned with their fate in order to avoid harming them and to be determined to assist them in their need as far as we are able....

The fundamental fact of man's consciousness is: 'I am life that wants to live, in the midst of life that wants to live'. Man, who has become thinking, experiences the compulsion to show the same reverence for all will to live as he does for his own. He experiences the other life in his own. It is considered good to preserve life, to promote life, to bring developable life to its highest value. Evil: destroying life, damaging life, holding down developable life. This is the essential, universal, absolute basic principle of ethics. Ethics up to now has been imperfect because it thought it was only concerned with the behaviour of human beings towards human beings. In reality, however, it is a question of how human beings relate to all life within their sphere. He is ethical only if life as such is sacred to him, that of human beings and that of all creatures. "(Albert Schweitzer 1966, 20–22; also Albert Schweitzer 1970, 179–180).

In retrospect, in this text Schweitzer describes his turning away from the Kantian ethics that he had represented until then. This was classically anthropocentristic. Now, however, he recognises that all living beings strive naturally to continue living. And he considers this fact to be ethically relevant: It is necessary to respect the living individual and its striving for self-preservation and to leave it untouched wherever possible. "Reverence for life" becomes his central term for this basic attitude. Of course, Schweitzer recognises that it is inevitable to take life in order to be able to live itself. But prior to the conflicts of life and possible trade-offs, all living beings are "moral patients", i.e. individuals who are morally relevant.

After returning from Gabon, Schweitzer tried to communicate his new ethics to wider circles. In his morning sermon on Sunday, 16 February 1919, he programmatically presented it in the church of St. Nicolai in Strasbourg, where he was working as a vicar at the time: "And if you immerse yourself in life, look with seeing eyes into the immense, animated chaos of this being, then suddenly you are seized like a dizziness. You find yourself in everything... Everywhere you see life—that is you! So what is recognition, the most learned as well as the most childlike: reverence for life, for the incomprehensible that confronts us in the universe, and that is like ourselves, different in outward appearance and yet inwardly of the same essence as us, terribly similar to us, terribly related to us. Abolition of the strangeness between us and the other beings... I cannot but have reverence for all that is called life, I cannot but sympathise with all that is called life: this is the beginning and foundation of all morality... Thou

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shalt experience life and preserve life—this is the greatest commandment in its most elementary form." (Albert Schweitzer 2017, 1237–1238). Here, the equality and interconnectedness of all living beings is placed before the particularities of the human being—a trend-setting step for all subsequent biocentrists.

Schweitzer was far ahead of his time. Only in the context of the ecological crisis does biocentrism receive greater attention. The pioneer of this phase is *Paul W. Taylor* (1923–2015 New York). He characterised his "biocentric outlook" in four theses (Paul W. Taylor 1981, 206–207; Paul W. Taylor 1986[1] / 2011[2], 99–100):

(1) As living beings, human beings are members of the community of life on earth in the same way ("in the same terms") as all non-human living beings.

(2) The ecosystem earth is a network of reciprocal ecological relationships between all living beings.

(3) Every organism is a "teleological centre of life". Its activities are directed towards self-preservation through space and time, even if not all living beings are aware of this. Thus, every living being has a unique "point of view", a perspective that only this living being can adopt. From this perspective, it has its own good ("good of its own"), something that is good for it (Paul W. Taylor[1] 1986/[2] 2011, 60) and is realised in the full development of its biological possibilities (Paul W. Taylor 1981, 199). The living being can evaluate subjectively, i.e. "perceive" the value of things in its environment for itself and use them or leave them unused. Ethically speaking, every living being is therefore a bearer of its own value ("inherent worth") and a moral patient. It has moral status ("moral standing a priori", Paul W. Taylor 1981, 199–201), which is why its goods must be respected and promoted by all moral agents as ultimate ends. Man should not anthropomorphise other living beings, but rather perceive and understand their point of view in order to gradually arrive at a holistic perception of all living beings and to take this into account in his actions. Taylor thus remains within the framework of classical moral individualism. What counts are individuals. Species, on the other hand, have their "own" good only through the aggregation of their members, and likewise biotic communities. Inanimate matter has no good of its own because it is not a teleological centre of life.

(4) In the perspective of this inherent worth (!), human beings do not stand higher than other living beings. Taylor speaks of "biocentric equality". In contrast to price, inherent worth is not scalar, i.e. it is not

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quantitatively higher or less high, but qualitatively the same. There is no superiority among individuals with inherent worth because each of them is not exclusively a means to the end of others (Paul W. Taylor[1] 1986/[2] 2011, 78–79). It is not arbitrarily available for the purposes of others, but is first and foremost unavailable: "The principle of intrinsic value states that, regardless of what kind of entity it is in other respects,... the realisation of its good is something *intrinsically* valuable... its good is prima facie worthy of being preserved or promoted as an end of itself. "(Paul W. Taylor 1981, 201)

One notices how precisely Taylor follows the Kantian distinction between dignity and price here—with the only difference that he does not tie the granting of dignity to morality, but to the pursuit of self-preservation. Of course, Taylor argues, humans have some unique capacities. But some other animals have other unique capacities, and there is no reason at all why man's unique capacities should be more valuable than those of other animals. For humans themselves, they are, but for other creatures, other qualities are more valuable. It simply depends on the point of view. To derive a fundamental superiority from a unique ability would be a category error because superiority can only exist where two individuals have fundamentally identical, i.e. comparable abilities. Therefore, humans cannot be morally superior to other living beings, only to other human beings. The talk of man as an animal rationale in Greco-Roman essence ontology was a specification, not a statement of superiority. It is true that the bonum hominis is a rational life. But for (most) animals and plants it is not a good—so why should humans be superior to all animals and plants on the basis of their possession of reason?

Taylor also reflects on the thesis that the inherent worth of an animal or a plant might be less than that of a human being. If this were the case, it would mean that the goods of humans would always take precedence over the goods of other living beings. Non-human living beings would have a moral status, but it would always be lower than that of humans—what would it matter then? The inherent worth theorem therefore only makes sense if the inherent worth of all its bearers is qualitatively the same.

In the German-speaking world, no one has spoken out so resolutely in favour of the Taylorian approach as *Friedo Ricken* (1934 Rheine–2021 Krailling). With the aim of translating Taylor into the horizon of Kantian categories, he emphasises that an animal has two properties analogous to self-finality in the Kantian sense: "It is the subject of purposes and it has a practical self-relation. Both are given by its ability to feel pleasure and pain." (Friedo Ricken 1987, 8). For "lower" living beings, to which plea-

sure and pain cannot be attributed, Ricken nevertheless sees "needs" that are analogous to conscious "interests", since plants also seek to fulfil these needs (for light or water, for example) in a very purposeful way. Ricken refers to Aristotle, who assigns this striving to the vegetative soul faculty (Friedo Ricken 1987, 14–16; cf. Aristotle, De anima II 4, 415a25-b2). Plants, too, therefore, relate to themselves. Their organism is not only the result but also the cause of material accumulations of itself; moreover, it is the bearer of identity in all material exchange. In metabolism, therefore, something like "freedom" is shown in a very analogous way, says Ricken, referring to Hans Jonas (1973, 123). From these considerations, Ricken postulates direct duties towards living beings, for they have a moral status and are moral patients.

Recently, in the German-speaking world, *Angela Kallhoff* in particular has been pushing biocentrism, with a special focus on human interaction with plants. Plants, she argues, try to avoid stress and develop strategies to do so. They strive to flourish. In this context, flourishing means a species-appropriate and low-stress way of life (Angela Kallhoff 2007, 90). Respecting a plant then means avoiding damage to it wherever possible and promoting its flourishing. Both damage and promotion are empirically recognisable, demonstrable and distinguishable for humans. However, this initially results in a very modest demand: harm must be ethically reflected on and justified.

The *internal consistency* of biocentrism should be relatively high compared to anthropocentrism and pathocentrism. In contrast to these, moral status is not based on certain abilities, but on a relationship—membership in the earth's community—and a property—delimitable individuality with a practical self-relationship. Biocentrism is thus the only one of the previous approaches to justification that does not contain any speciesism.

Discussions therefore tend to develop around its *adequacy* (cf. Michael Bruckner/Angela Kallhoff 2018, 164–166): On the one hand, biocentrism has the greater, though not insurmountable, difficulty of taking the ability to feel pleasure and suffering and the ability to think into account in an ethically appropriate way. In principle, this can be solved by including them in the consideration of goods without giving up the equivalence of inherent worth, as classical anthropocentrist ethics already does for different people (e.g. the mentally healthy and the demented). On the other hand, biocentrism is accused of being impracticable due to the inevitability of competition and the dependence of many living beings on organic food. But what at first glance seems like an insurmountable obstacle is, at second glance, the constant prerequisite for ethics. Ethical considerations

start with real, existing conflicts and competitive situations for scarce goods. John Rawls counts these among the indispensable "circumstances of justice" (John Rawls 1975, 148–152, § 22). A form of ethics that does not satisfactorily address the problems of competition and scarcity is not worthy of being called ethics. Not only must biocentrism be measured against this, but so must anthropocentrism.

5.4 Ecocentrist/Cosmocentrist/Holistic Approaches

The fourth and last major approach in environmental and animal ethics is ecocentrism or cosmocentrism or holism. This approach not only recognises intrinsic value in all living things, but also in species and ecosystems, as well as in inanimate matter: "Ecocentrism is the broadest term for worldviews that recognise intrinsic value in all lifeforms and ecosystems themselves, including their abiotic components." (Haydn Washington et al. 2017, 35)

  Ecocentrism has been around as long as humans have existed (Haydn Washington et al. 2017, 35). It may have emerged in early human societies and is thus the oldest of the four approaches presented here. Its breakthrough in modern environmental ethics came from one of the pioneers of the environmental movement, the US forest scientist *Aldo Leopold* (1887 Burlington IA–1948 Baraboo WI). Leopold saw how the exclusively economically oriented forestry of his time was destroying the forest as a habitat. Behind their short-term utilitarian thinking, he identifies thinking in terms of ownership and property, which he traces back to the supposedly biblical view of nature, as does Lynn White, whom I quoted earlier: "Conservation is getting nowhere because it is incompatible with our Abrahamic concept of land. We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us." (Aldo Leopold 1992, 18) Unlike Lynn White, however, Leopold also blames ancient Greece for anthropocentristic possessiveness (Aldo Leopold 1992, 149–150). And he acknowledges the critical voices in the Bible: "Thinkers since the days of Ezekiel and Isaiah have argued that overexploitation of the land is not only unbeneficial but unjust. In the general public, however, this conviction has not yet prevailed." (Aldo Leopold 1992, 150). Unlike Lynn White, Leopold is not a historian, which is why one should not put his considerations in gold standard terms. But what they do demonstrate is that, for Leopold, the reification of nature and its consideration as a resource and a possession is at the root of the problem.

In 1935, during a visit to the Faculty of Forestry in Tharandt/Saxony, the place of origin of the idea of sustainable forestry (cf. chapter 6.1), Leopold became acquainted with an alternative form of forestry with individual logging and natural regeneration. Inspired by this, he developed his holistic land ethic after his return to the USA: "If, on the other hand, we see the earth as a totality to which we belong, perhaps we will succeed in treating our environment with more love and respect." (Aldo Leopold 1992, 18). Thinking in ecological contexts and wholes becomes crucial for Leopold: "All ethics so far evolved rest upon a single premise: that the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts. ... The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land." (Aldo Leopold 1992, 151). Although a forester, Leopold argues, at least cautiously, for the establishment of true wilderness areas that are not commercially exploited: "A land ethic of course cannot prevent the alteration, management, and use of these 'resources', but it does affirm their right to continued existence, and, at least in spots, their continued existence in a natural state." (Aldo Leopold 1992, 151) For his land ethic, Leopold formulates the following categorical principle: "A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise." (Aldo Leopold 1992, 174) However, he did not succeed in systematically developing land ethics due to his early death.

Here, another pioneer of the modern environmental movement goes a step further: the Norwegian philosopher *Arne Næss* (1912 Slemdal near Oslo–2009 Oslo). In a scientific article published in 1973, he coined the term "deep ecology", which is still used today. Næss defines this precisely along the distinction between anthropocentrism and ecocentrism. In contrast to anthropocentristic surface ecology, his deep ecology abandons the ontological human–environment dualism and replaces it with the paradigm of organisms as nodes in the biospheric network of intrinsic relations (Arne Næss 1973, 95). Relations are intrinsic when they must be understood as an indispensable part of the definition of entities. A being cannot be described without its relations. In this view, ontological dualisms do not get to the heart of the matter. A human being is not who they are without their environment.

Ethically, Næss first deduces a biocentristic principle from this holistic view, which he calls "biospheric egalitarianism": all living beings have the same right to live and flourish ("equal right to live and blossom", Arne Næss 1973, 96). However, this principle is only prima facie valid because real life practice always experiences conflicts and necessitates some

killing, exploitation, and suppression: "any realistic praxis necessitates some killing, exploitation, and suppression." (Arne Næss 1973, 95) In this respect, there is a need for "population planning" for all living beings that is oriented towards the capacities of the ecosystem. Næss associates the term population planning with two very different levels of regulation: Population planning for humanity, which is done primarily through birth planning, and population planning for non-human living beings, which is done primarily through the killing of individuals. This is his holistic approach: the existence of the system as a whole takes precedence over the lives of individuals, including individual humans, because it is their livelihood.

In a later interview, Næss makes clear how much deep ecology depends on the paradigm shift to ecocentrism: "Deep ecology ... is a movement in which one not only does good for the planet in the interest of people, but also in the interest of the planet itself. That is, you look at the globe as a unit and you talk about the individual ecosystems, you try to keep them alive as a value in themselves. That is, in their own interest... So, it results in a holistic way of looking at nature, that is, a way of looking at nature and humanity's relationship to nature that combines a basic attitude and enjoyment of nature with behaviour in society for nature." (Nancho Ijin Butai 1999)

One of the leading US environmental ethicists since the 1970s has been the philosopher *J. Baird Callicott*. Inspired by Leopold's land ethic, he has developed and systematised the ecocentrist approach. Callicott interprets both the pathocentrist and the biocentrist approaches as forms of "extensionalism": they expand the number of individuals with moral status but remain within the individualist concept by accepting the assumption that only individuals can have moral status. However, according to Callicott, the major environmental problems of the present cannot be solved in this way because what is at stake is the threat to transorganismic entities ("transorganismic levels of biological organisation", J. Baird Callicott 2017, 113). From the small to the large, he lists populations, species, communities, landscapes and biomes (especially water, desert, forest, meadow and tundra). Now, for 2500 years, Western philosophy has advocated an individualistically conceived morality based on teleological essence ontology (J. Baird Callicott 2017, 114). However, this does not work for ecosystems and other collectives, because ecosystems or species are not "teleological centres" (J. Baird Callicott 2017, 116).

Consequently, a more radical way of thinking is needed that abandons essence ontology as the basis of ethics (J. Baird Callicott 2017, 117). Calli-

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cott finds this in relational ontology: all members of a community are, in principle, exposed to situations of competition which force them to cooperate. And it is precisely this cooperation that ethics seeks to regulate normatively. Acting subjects are thus knots of social and ecological strands of relationships—without these relationships they are nothing. Their relationships define their rights and duties, and since living beings are members of different communities and have different relationships in each, different rights and duties arise depending on the community (J. Baird Callicott 2017, 122 citing Margaret Midgley 1984).

What is remarkable from the perspective of theological ethics is that Callicott adds a third criterion to the two usual criteria for plausible ethics, namely internal logical consistency and adequacy with external reality: an aesthetically and spiritually satisfying mediation. And he sees this in religions rather than in purely philosophical world views. He recognises that the Christian religion in particular has allowed itself to be challenged by Leopold's and White's criticism to find a more appropriate interpretation of the biblical texts. This, however, is also valuable and appealing to non-believers: "Responding implicitly to Leopold's critique and then explicitly to White's, adherents of the Judeo-Christian worldview, for example, have very effectively reconciled it [...] with the aims of conservation biology [...] and environmental ethics. In declaring the plants and animals that He created to be 'good', God might plausibly be understood to have declared them to be intrinsically valuable. God gave to Adam the job of dressing the Garden of Eden and keeping it. Thus the human dominion over nature might well be understood to be not that of a despot, but that of a steward or caretaker." (J. Baird Callicott 2011, 4)

The German ecologist and philosopher *Martin Gorke* bases his plea for holism primarily on the problem of the protection of wilderness areas, which is difficult to justify. While the protection of species is hardly justifiable for anthropocentrism—not all species are useful for humans—pathocentrism and biocentrism also reach their limits when it comes to justifying the protection of wilderness. Although wilderness areas generally serve species protection, not every additional wilderness area serves even better species protection. Nor does the species protection concept justify why a specific area should remain wilderness or become wilderness again. The decisive argument must therefore be "respect for self-organising nature" for its own sake (Martin Gorke 2010, 81). The extended categorical imperative is: "Act in such a way that you never treat everything that exists merely as a means, but always at the same time as an end in itself". (Martin Gorke 2010, 111–112). Gorke's subsequent attempt to apply the four basic

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principles of medical ethics by Tom Beauchamp and James Childress, in a slightly modified form, to environmental ethics, however, remains rather complicated and does not convince me.

The Australian ecologist Haydn Washington, the US social ethicist Bron Taylor, the Dutch social anthropologist Helen Kopnina, the South African ecologist Paul Cryer and the Swedish environmental scientist John J. Piccolo summarise their joint plea for ecocentrism thus (Haydn Washington et al. 2017, 39):

1) Ethically, there is no reason to deny respect to nature: "There is no philosophically or scientifically sound justification why moral concern should not be extended to all of the ecosphere, both its biotic and abiotic components".
2) From an evolutionary biological point of view, there is no justifiable dividing line between entities with and without inherent worth.
3) Spiritually speaking, ecocentristic values are increasingly flowing into nature-based forms of spirituality.
4) Ecologically, living beings and habitats are interdependent: "the ecosphere and all life is interdependent and [...] both humans and non-humans are absolutely dependent on the ecosystem processes that nature provides."

It is easy to see that the international quintet around Haydn Washington is primarily concerned with demanding an appropriate attitude towards all of nature, namely respect. This also results from their recognisable proximity to the contemporary spirituality of nature or Creation. However, the concept of inherent worth or dignity is usually additionally associated with the derivation of ethical norms or principles. Whether and, if so, how they imagine this, however, is left completely open by the five.

Disappointment with the anthropocentristic approach of international environmental policy can be felt in almost all ecocentristic approaches. Their complete ineffectiveness is strongly associated with anthropocentristic thinking: "It is difficult, therefore, to conceive of how continuing to prioritise self-interested anthropocentric rhetorical strategies will lead to effective collective action. We contend that such values do not provide the kind of affectively rich and resonant moral languages that are needed to inspire effective political action ... At best, such premises provide a disputable prudential and utilitarian argument for conservation. It is hard to imagine that such premises would inspire visionary proposals to maintain biodiversity, such as the one to protect at least a half of Earth's remaining ecosystems..." (Bron Taylor et al. 2020, 1093). When we consider in the following sections which of the four justificatory approaches to environ-

mental ethics is most appropriate, we need to take this emotional side into account.

Finally, we must again ask about internal logical consistency and adequacy with regard to external reality. Three questions in particular arise with regard to the *consistency* of ecocentristic approaches: Firstly, it is perfectly coherent to establish relationality as a constitutive element of the definition of being. However, there remains an epistemic difference between the relations of the individual and the individual itself—the individual is the logically superior, ontologically more comprehensive entity. The special status of individuals within anthropocentrism, pathocentrism and biocentrism, which is criticised by ecocentrism, ultimately remains. Secondly, the demand of respect for all that exists is extraordinarily plausible. But the theorem of inherent worth classically contains not only a demanded attitude, but also a normative principle. And how this can be conceived ecocentristically is not made visible by any of the authors. Thirdly, the ecocentrist approaches tend to place systems above individuals. In terms of thinking, they thus erect hardly any barrier to eco-totalitarianism: the system is everything, the individual nothing.

In terms of *adequacy*, ecocentrist approaches urge a more precise focus on the rationale of protecting collective systems or entities such as populations, species and ecosystems. Here, the first three justification approaches of environmental ethics, which focus on individuals, are often insufficient, for they must always argue with a benefit for morally relevant individuals—and this benefit is sometimes non-existent or at least not recognisable. Therefore, it will have to be asked whether and how this shortcoming can be compensated for.

5.5 Inherent worth/dignity as ascription of an individual moral status

Four approaches to the justification of environmental ethics are on the table, and it is time to choose one of them. To this end, two points of view in particular will be considered: In the next sub-chapter, we will explore the question of how the needs of individuals and systemic requirements can be mediated with each other. Before that, however, it must be clarified which entities are to be ascribed to "inherent worth" or "dignity". For without exception, all concepts of environmental ethics of the last few decades recognise the concept of inherent worth or dignity or its negation as having a guiding function. Even those who reject it must respond to it because it has this guiding function for competing designs.

Therefore, a word must first be said about the *terminology.* In English, one usually speaks of "inherent worth", sometimes also with the same meaning as "intrinsic value", which is inaccurate[15] . In Spanish, one speaks of "valor propio", in Italian of "valore proprio" and in French of "valeur propre". The concept of "creaturely dignity", on the other hand, has only become widespread in ethical debate in German-speaking countries. Because it appears in the Swiss Federal Constitution, it is also used there in an Italian translation, "dignità della creatura", and in a French translation, "dignité de la créature". In Italy and France themselves, however, it has not yet been received. The same applies to the English-speaking world: English publications on the Swiss constitution use the term "dignity of creatures", but the term does not appear there beyond the confines of Swiss legislation. De facto, therefore, we are dealing with a German-language and Swiss proprium. In terms of content, however, only some of the concepts of inherent worth and some of the concepts of creaturely dignity are congruent. Therefore, these concepts should first be clarified.

5.5.1 The normative content of the attribution of inherent worth/dignity

As the term "inherent worth" indicates, it refers to a value that is assigned to the being in question in advance of any valuation by others, i.e. that lies beyond the calculations of external utility. Something that has inherent worth has independence and self-purpose (Paul W. Taylor 1981, 201; Hans J. Münk 1997, 26). It is not absorbed in the relationship to other beings. This results in several normative contents (for the following, cf. above all Michael Rosenberger 2001, 146–153):

1) The ascription of inherent worth or dignity expresses that something has "moral standing a priori" and deserves "moral consideration" (Paul W. Taylor 1981, 199–201). First of all, a priori to concrete conflicts of interest, an inherently valuable being has a *moral status*. It is not

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15 Inherent value and intrinsic value are often used as interchangeable terms. John O'Neill 1992, 119–137 identifies several conceptualisations for intrinsic value, which in my opinion are on different levels and are compatible with each other. Tom Regan 1984, 264–273 and Paul W. Taylor 1984, 150–151 and 1986, 78–79 distinguish between inherent value as the dignified, non-scalar value of an individual and intrinsic value as the intentional, measurable value of a good. Paul W. Taylor 1981, 199–201, on the other hand, does not yet distinguish between the two concepts—one can see here a development of his thinking towards more conceptual precision.

arbitrarily available for disposition, but is first and foremost (prima facie) unavailable: "its good is prima facie worthy of being preserved or promoted as an end of itself" (Paul W. Taylor 1981, 201). Whoever has inherent worth is to be "morally considered" (Martin M. Lintner 2017, 120–121) and their "well-being [is to be] considered for the sake of the living being itself" (Martin M. Lintner 2017, 126).

2) A being with inherent worth or dignity is a subject towards which we have *direct duties*, i.e. a "*moral patient*" (Friedo Ricken 1987, 4; Hans J. Münk 1999, 289). The duties apply not only to people "in regard to" the being in question, but to the being itself.

3) Because the being that is accorded inherent worth or dignity has an end in itself, it must never be completely instrumentalised. This corresponds entirely to the formula for humanity of Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative: "Act in such a way that you treat" any being with inherent worth "at all times also as an end, never merely as a means." (modified from Immanuel Kant, Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten AA IV 429) In research literature, the term "prohibition of instrumentalisation" is often used. But strictly speaking, it is *prohibition of total instrumentalisation*. Kant's point is not to demand that people should not at all use each other or view each other in terms of utility. That would be completely impossible because we use each other all the time. The prohibition of total instrumentalisation, on the other hand, inculcates the duty to respect the used subject "at the same time as an end" for itself. This restricts use without making it impossible. "'Inherent worth' then denotes the normative premise that nature is not absorbed in being a means for human ends, but can only be used for the benefit of human beings if it is at the same time respected for its own sake." (Bernhard Irrgang/ Ralf Bammerlin 1998, 403; similarly Friedo Ricken 1987, 17 and Hans Gleixner 1989, 63).

4) In general, there is a *duty of justification* towards beings with inherent worth or dignity. Every use of such a being needs good and weighty reasons, which must be named and examined.

5) In fact, this means a *reversal of* the *burden of proof*: it is not a third party who must prove that an action against an entity with inherent worth or dignity is morally reprehensible, but rather the actor must prove that it is morally justified (J. Baird Callicott 2006, 115).

6) Beings with inherent worth or dignity are bearers of their own goods (Philipp Balzer et al. (eds.) 1998, 45–50). In cases of ethical conflict, these goods must be *weighed fairly against* the goods of other beings with inherent worth or dignity (Michael Hauskeller 2015, 146). "Fair"

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means that the weighing of goods is "blind" to the owners of the respective goods. It does not matter whether they belong to a human being, an animal, a plant or a mountain, as long as they have been assigned inherent value in advance. What counts is only the weight of the respective goods in question. Equally important goods of human and non-human beings count equally: "their good is to be given as much weight in moral deliberation as our own good" (Paul W. Taylor 1984, 157). What remains open, of course, is how the weight of the goods is measured.

All six normative contents of the inherent worth/dignity theorem can also be argued without this itself. This already indicates that the attribution of dignity or inherent worth has more of an emotional than a rational effect. It signals an inhibition and an invitation to compassion. However, the direct obligations towards the being (2) and the fair weighing of its goods (6) cannot be justified if one denies the being in question any form of delimited "individuality"—without which, at best, an indirect duty would be justifiable. This observation will be of importance when it comes to the question of who is to be accorded inherent worth or dignity and who is not.

5.5.2 The necessary incommensurability of inherent worth/dignity

"In the realm of ends, everything has either a price or a dignity. What has a price can also be replaced by something else as an equivalent; what, on the other hand, is above all price, and therefore does not grant an equivalent, has a dignity... but that which constitutes the condition under which alone something can be an end in itself has not merely a relative value, i.e. a price, but an inherent worth, i.e. dignity." (Immanuel Kant, Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten AA IV 434–435)

   With these famous sentences, Immanuel Kant tries to clarify how dignity is to be understood. In the first sentence, it almost seems as if something can either only have a price or only have dignity. In reality, however, what has dignity always has a price, while what has a price does not always have dignity. This becomes clearer when one adds a second passage from Kant's work: Man, *considered as a part of nature*, has a "common value" and a utility value—and "*considered as a person*" a dignity that is "above all price" (Immanuel Kant, Metaphysics of Morals AA VI 434).

   If we disregard the fact that Kant only grants dignity to human beings— a question that we still have to clarify—, very clear characteristics of

what distinguishes dignity from price emerge at first (cf. on the following Michael Rosenberger 2001, 153–157):

1) Price signals replaceability and interchangeability, whereas dignity signals *uniqueness and non-replaceability*. In terms of utility, every human being is replaceable. As a person, however, they are irreplaceable. Now, replaceability and irreplaceability "are not ontological determinations in the first place, but different perspectives on things... Accordingly, to say that a thing has dignity is basically to call upon it to be looked at in a certain way (and treated accordingly)" (Michael Hauskeller 2015, 145).

2) The price signals the comparability of values that are scalar, i.e. occupy a continuous scale from a minimum to a maximum. It knows a greater or a lesser value and also an equal match in value (with Kant: "equivalence"). 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 consideration or it does not: "A being or an entity either deserves or does not deserve moral consideration. Moral consideration tends not to be a scalar term mapping degrees or levels." (William C. French 1995, 53–54). Either its goods are to be equally brought into an assessment or not. Dignity knows no more or less, no equal match but only either-or (Tom Regan 2004[4], 235–237). This and only this is what is meant by the term of "*equality*" of the bearers of dignity, as advocated by Arne Næss or Paul W. Taylor. It is about formal equality, because the concept of dignity is "a concept of equality" (Hasso Hoffmann 1988, 337).

3) The price denotes an instrumental value of the priced good for a specific purpose. It is, as Kant says, relative. Dignity denotes 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* (Tom Regan 2004[4], 235–237).

4) The price is competitive. Once spent, the money is no longer available to buy another good. Dignity, on the other hand, does not compete with the dignity of others. A person can show respect to all those who deserve it qua dignity. Yes, if someone disrespects the dignity of one party in a given situation, then he also disrespects the dignity of all other parties. Let us assume that an employer has advertised a job for which one of his friends is applying. And let us further assume that the employer gives the job to his friend solely because he is his friend, although he is not the best qualified candidate. Then this would not only be a violation of the dignity of the better qualified applicant,

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but also a violation of the friend's dignity. The employer would have
humiliated him and made him dependent on him.

The central point of this comparison is the second: dignity is not commen-
surable. All bearers of dignity therefore enjoy the *egalitarianism*, the formal
equality, that has been associated with it since the French Revolution. So
if we extend dignity to some non-human entities, they enjoy equality. And
this is precisely what biocentrists intend when they speak of the "equality"
of living beings. Thus, Bill Devall and George Sessions (1985, 67) define:
"all things in the biosphere have an equal right to live and blossom and
to reach their individual forms of unfolding and self-realisation." And Paul
W. Taylor justifies this fundamental equality of all living beings with their
equal membership in the earth's community: "the place of humans in the
domain of life on Earth is one of fundamental equality with other mem-
bers of the animal kingdom, an equality that extends to all forms of life in
our planet's natural ecosystem" (Paul W. Taylor 1983, 240). However, this
equality (as in the interpersonal sphere!) is of a purely formal nature. The
duties of humans are prima facie equally binding on all living beings: "we
owe duties to them that are *prima facie* as stringent as those we owe to our
fellow humans" (Paul W. Taylor 1984, 157). Tom Regan, who understands
the inherent worth of all subjects of a life in terms of us all having the
same right to be treated with respect (Tom Regan, in: Peter Singer (ed.)
1986, 43–44), sees this similarly in pathocentrism. Formally, the goods of
humans and non-human living beings should be given equal consideration
in the weighing of goods: "their good is to be given as much weight in
moral deliberation as our own good" (Paul W. Taylor 1984, 157).

On the other hand, all those who assume a *gradation of inherent worth*
commit a category error. These are numerous moderate anthropocentrists
such as Martin M. Lintner (2017, 124–129 and 175) or Heike Baranzke
(2015, 40–44 et al.), but also almost all process ethicists such as John B.
Cobb and Donald R. Griffin (1979, 77–78), Charles Birch (1993, 99–101)
and Michael Schramm (1991, 168–170) as well as certain utilitarians such
as Robin Attfield (1995, 178–179). To put it bluntly, there is no need
to introduce graded dignity or graded inherent worth. They add nothing
that could not be justified without them. Heike Baranzke (2015, 57) ex-
plicitly admits this: "the proclamation of an animal dignity would not
lead anywhere either". No, the goods of humans and non-human living
beings must be graded. Goods are scalar, weighted, compared and weighed
against each other. This also applies to the goods of different people. If
you only have one respirator, but several people who are seriously ill with
Covid-19, then you have to compare their chances of recovery with each

other. But the dignity of these people is not weighed against each other. They are respected when decisions are made fairly, i.e. without regard to the person; their dignity is disregarded when decisions are made unfairly.

5.5.3 The bearers of inherent worth/dignity. Methodological preliminary remarks

To which entities should "inherent worth" or "dignity" be ascribed? This is the question to be discussed here. Before it can be answered, some methodological preliminary remarks are helpful.

All four approaches "conclude" *from being to the ought*. They draw on observable facts to arrive at ethical statements. All four (!) understand "concluding" in the sense of plausibilising adequacy with regard to the reality that can be found and not in the sense of a compelling syllogistic deduction of the ought from being. Moral demands should be as appropriate as possible to the reality that can be found. In order to underpin this appropriateness, all four approaches strive for a hermeneutics of being with regard to the question of the ought. This corresponds to the classical natural law way of thinking that anthropocentrism also follows (which Heike Baranzke 2015, 50–52 passes over). "By nature, parts of nature have no inherent worth. Anyone who claims this is subject to the verdict of the naturalistic fallacy." (Bernhard Irrgang 1990, 336 and literally the same 1992, 85; similarly again 1992, 72) Well, Irrgang may be reassured, for no one asserts what he rightly marks as a fallacy. "The conclusion from fact to value is never logically compelling." (Michael Hauskeller 2015, 145) But this is just as true for anthropocentrism. Here, all four approaches must be measured against the same yardstick. The question is therefore not what can be logically derived from being for the ought, but which demands for the ought are most appropriate to being (adequacy) and can thus best be made plausible.

However, some approaches are more presuppositional than others. The *parsimony criterion*, i.e. the option of choosing the argumentatively more parsimonious of two otherwise equivalent approaches, is an important criterion in this context. Here, anthropocentrism in particular has two disadvantages: First, at the level of its analysis of being, it asserts that only humans possess reason. However, in view of the findings of modern biology, it is becoming increasingly difficult to substantiate this. Secondly, it formulates obligations "with regard to" animals (and plants) "vis-à-vis" humans on the level of ought requirements. Compared to this, the bio-

centrist demand of direct duties towards animals and plants is argumentatively far more parsimonious (Friedo Ricken 1987, 4). At the other end of the scale, ecocentrism must also allow itself to be asked whether it is argumentatively economical enough. Due to its paradigm shift from moral individualism to moral collectivism, it imposes heavy additional argumentative burdens on itself. Now, the criterion of parsimony can only be applied secondarily, namely when several comparably adequate and consistent approaches compete with each other. In itself, it does not justify a preference for one or against another approach. However, it should be kept in mind.

A third methodological preliminary remark concerns the relationship between *moral agents and moral patients*: In none of the four approaches are moral agents and moral patients completely congruent, not even in anthropocentrism. One thinks of the famous "marginal cases", i.e. people who do not possess sufficient reasonableness, such as people with dementia or those who are comatose, children or the intellectually disabled. They are obviously no longer moral agents (those with dementia or who are comatose, although their earlier expressions of will may have to be taken into account) or at most in a limited sense (children and the intellectually disabled, although their claim to self-determination has been significantly expanded in recent decades). Not all people have to be moral agents, otherwise the distinction would be invalid. Positively speaking, it enables the advocacy of moral patients who are incapable or limited in their ability to judge and express themselves—and this could also be realised in analogy with non-human living beings and collective entities. In contrast to law, such representations in morality are only imagined before the "inner court" of conscience anyway.

According to the fourth preliminary remark, it was Peter Singer who popularised the accusation of *speciesism* (Peter Singer 1994[2], 82–94). Speciesism means the insufficiently substantiated assertion that species membership has moral significance in a particular question. Singer accuses anthropocentrism of such speciesism but does not realise that his own ethics represent just such an ethic, which privileges a few additional species. If one wants to avoid speciesism, one must at least advocate "species-impartiality": "the principle of species-impartiality... that every species counts as having the same value in the sense that, regardless of what species a living thing belongs to, it is deemed to be prima facie deserving of equal concern and consideration on the part of moral agents. Its good is judged to be worthy of being preserved and protected as an end in itself and for the sake of the entity whose good it is." (Paul W.

Taylor 1986[1] / 2011[2], 155). From this perspective, biocentrism has clear advantages.

Complementary to the speciesism theorem is the talk of *extensionalism*. It says that recognised ethical concepts are extended to further individuals for whom they were not originally intended. Such an extension is by no means unproblematic. But if it is convincing, it has the charm of not requiring a radical break with the system. Pathocentrism and biocentrism are two stages in the expansion of moral individualism, which is classically embodied by anthropocentrism. Ecocentrism, on the other hand, explicitly does not see itself as an extension of preceding ethical systems, but as a paradigm and system change from moral individualism to moral collectivism. It will thus be necessary to examine, on the one hand, whether and to what extent moral individualism should be extended and, on the other hand, whether a radical system change to moral collectivism is necessary.

5.5.4 The bearers of inherent worth/dignity. The fundamental decision

To which entities should "inherent worth" or "dignity" be ascribed? This is the guiding question of this sub-chapter. It must be answered using philosophical arguments and can then be compared with theological considerations. So let us look again at the four approaches to justification:

Anthropocentrism regards only those who can in principle claim respect for their dignity as bearers of dignity. The maxim is: those who can, in principle, reasonably determine themselves must not be hindered in their self-determination by others. For morality must necessarily recognise the morality of others in order to not contradict itself. That is why we demand respect for the dignity of the lawless, the weak and the barely self-determined among those who are, in principle, capable of self-determination. The reason for ascribing dignity is thus not factual but potential moral self-determination. Now, on the one hand, it is clear that the set of moral agents must be the necessary minimum of moral patients in order for self-contradiction not to occur. However, the question arises of whether this is enough. Should the moral agents want it to be enough to consider only themselves as moral patients? Quite apart from the fact that the biological plausibility of ascribing reason to humans alone is continually declining, the plausibility of making moral capacity the sine qua non for recognition as a moral patient is declining at least as strongly.

Pathocentrism tears open two nasty trenches instead of one: The sentient beings that supposedly deserve its central attention are only the second

class of living beings. Above them are the extraordinarily privileged living beings to whom high intelligence is ascribed; below them are the plants, which receive no moral consideration at all. This makes pathocentrism the least consistent solution with which to justify an environmental ethic—it stands between all stools.

As long as one remains in moral individualism, everything points to *biocentrism.* It can be supported by at least three considerations. Its main thesis is that every living being has *its own good*, a "good of its own", 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 inherent worth of a living being, however, is grounded in the potency of realising 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 concrete Thus-Being of the living being, then the direct moral duty to respect and promote the fundamental potency of the self-realisation of every living being arises a priori for man. "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 conceptions. 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). And "then the Kantian assumption that animals existed only as means... appears as an unjustified and almost arbitrary positing." (Michael Hauskeller 2015, 144)

Every living being has two *characteristics analogous to self-interest* in the Kantian sense: "It is the subject of purposes and it has a practical self-relation." (Friedo Ricken 1987, 8; also Eberhard Schockenhoff 1993, 403). Even living beings that have no sensations of pleasure and pain possess "needs" that are analogous to conscious "interests". Plants tend to fulfil their needs, for example for light and water, very purposefully. 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. In metabolism, therefore, something like "freedom" (Hans Jonas 1973, 123) becomes apparent in a very analogous way. Consequently, it is not acceptable to compare the abilities of healthy animals or plants with the abilities of "defective"

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humans and then draw a supposed analogy (Robin Attfield 1995, 176). This does not do justice to plants, animals or humans. An analogy must start at the formal level: With the *capacity of all living beings to live and develop according to their possibilities*: "living creatures each in different ways have the capacity to lead the form of life proper to their own kind" (Robin Attfield 1995, 176). Of course, such a conclusion by analogy does not allow a compelling deduction from being to ought. However, its formal, logical consistency can be demonstrated.

A second, almost parallel line of argument for biocentrism comes from process ethics. Frederick Ferré's "calogenic view" follows the Platonic concept of the beautiful and is strongly influenced by aesthetics. He assumes that the reason for attributing inherent worth to an entity is its *subjective* immediacy (Frederick Ferré 1995, 425). What is meant is the temporal immediacy of *experiencing and enjoying in the now* (rejoicing in the now; Frederick Ferré 1995, 419). A being that can "enjoy" something in the now must make evaluations and decisions about what it considers "beautiful" for itself. Accordingly, it is not the capacity for morality that is the criterion for the recognition of inherent worth, but the capacity for enjoyment (John B. Cobb/ Donald R. Griffin 1979, 53–56). Conversely: "For things that do not seem to have any capacity for enjoyment, no intrinsic value is conceivable." (John B. Cobb/ Donald R. Griffin 1979, 75). Process ethics allows for analogies: For it, the concept of the beautiful includes everything that is usable, i.e. valuable, for a being. And the process of valuation does not have to take place consciously or self-consciously: a primitive unicellular organism absorbs certain things into itself, others not. It therefore "values" in the broadest sense and is a "centre of appreciation and preference" (Frederick Ferré 1995, 424) and therefore has inherent value. The English play on words that everything is "valuable", that possesses "value-ability", "evaluation ability", often appears in this context.

A final argument is more supportive: the *uniqueness of each organism.* Modern science regards each organism as a "unique, irreplaceable individual" (Paul W. Taylor 1981, 210) and discovers its uniqueness, not only but also in its genetic identity. The recognition of this uniqueness increases the chance of developing a sensitivity to what a living being is and how wonderfully it shines in its uniqueness. It should be noted that uniqueness and irreplaceability "are not primarily ontological determinations [but] different perspectives on things [...] Accordingly, to say that a thing has dignity is basically to invite it to be looked at (and treated) in a certain way" (Michael Hauskeller 2015, 145).

Let us move on to the fourth and last approach: *Ecocentrism*, as has already been shown, very consciously makes a systemic shift from moral individualism to moral collectivism. Since it is in this way more radical than the other three approaches, it will have to present all the more weighty reasons in order to be considered plausible. For the founding father of ecocentrism, an ethical relationship to the "land" (i.e. the biosphere) is inconceivable without its inherent value: "For me, it is inconceivable that an ethical relationship to the land can exist without love, consideration, admiration and respect for its value. By value, of course, I mean much more than material value; I understand it to mean value in the philosophical sense." (Aldo Leopold 1992, 173) Here, inherent value is simply postulated, not substantiated, which may be forgiven by a forest scientist, but not by ecocentrism as such.

A few ecocentrists claim there is also an inherent value in inanimate matter and not only for living beings and collective entities consisting of living beings. They justify the unavailability of everything that exists a priori from its *otherness and givenness* (Robert Elliot 1994, 31–44; Stephen R.L. Clark 1994, 113–128): The experience of the otherness of nature creates a distance in which a fundamental unavailability is founded. In order that this distance is not experienced as threatening and leads to a fundamental fear of nature, man is given the second experience of aesthetic values without recognisable intention or purpose (aesthetic value without intention). With this, man can be in awe of the otherness of nature. What remains open in these reflections, however, is how normative ethics can be developed from this double experience of nature beyond the concept of inherent value. In this respect, it has hardly found an echo in the advancing debates.

Most ecocentrists do not claim there is inherent value in inanimate matter, but only in living beings and collective entities made up of living beings, such as populations, species, ecosystems or biomes. Thus, deep ecology abandons the ontological human–environment dualism and replaces it with the paradigm of *organisms as nodes in the biospheric web of intrinsic relations* (Arne Næss 1973, 95). Relations are intrinsic when they are understood as an indispensable part of the definition of organisms. In this respect, there is a need for "population planning" for all living beings, oriented towards the capacities of the ecosystem (Arne Næss 1973, 96), both for humanity (primarily through birth planning) and for non-human living beings (primarily through the killing of individuals). This is the holistic approach: the survival of the system as a whole takes precedence

over the lives of individuals, including individual humans, because it is their livelihood.

This is precisely the main argument of ecocentrism for its systemic view: The major environmental problems of the present cannot be solved with approaches of moral individualism because they involve *threats to transorganismic entities* (J. Baird Callicott 2017, 113): populations, species, communities, landscapes and biomes (especially water, desert, forest, meadow, and tundra). Now, for 2500 years, Western philosophy has advocated an individualistically conceived morality based on teleological essence ontology (J. Baird Callicott 2017, 114). But this does not work for ecosystems and other organismic collectives because they are not "teleological centres" (J. Baird Callicott 2017, 116). Traditional essence ontology must therefore be replaced by relational ontology as the basis of ethics (J. Baird Callicott 2017, 117). In it, acting subjects are to be seen as knots of social and ecological strands of relationships—without these relationships they are nothing. Their relationships define their rights and duties, and since living beings are members of different communities and have different relationships in each of them, different rights and duties arise depending on the community (J. Baird Callicott 2017, 122).

As understandable as the concern of ecocentrism is, many questions remain unanswered to this day: First of all, it is not really clear in the ecocentrist approaches how the totalitarianism of the ecosystem over individuals can be intrinsically avoided. Nor does it become clear how the inherent worth of organisms can be justified if individuals are not decisive. And finally, the approach of justification with living beings as nodes of social and ecological strands of relationships gives the impression that the individuals, even if not as isolated individuals, are the starting point of the considerations.

The question thus remains open whether systems are valuable in themselves ("inherent value") or only in their significance for their members ("utility value"). Traditional individualist ethics would opt for the second alternative. This does not prevent it from viewing constituted systems as "quasi-persons". A look at law, which is related to ethics, makes this clear. There, a distinction is made between natural and legal persons. Natural persons are real individuals, legal persons are "quasi-individualised" institutions, i.e. constituted systems. Such systems are presented in law as analogous to persons, as if they were individuals. They have clearly defined rights and duties; they enjoy a legal status. But only natural persons are ascribed dignity by law—only they deserve to be preserved and respected for their own sake. The existence of legal persons, on the other hand, is

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extinguished by a simple legal act when they can no longer fulfil their purpose. Legal status thus accrues to natural persons a priori, but to legal persons a posteriori when they are established as such by a legal act.

It is precisely from these considerations that my plea for "*holistically based biocentrism*" arises: this is, in its basic form, a form of moral individualism and attributes inherent worth or dignity to all living beings and only to them. In a comparison of the first three approaches to the justification of environmental ethics, biocentrism has clearly proven to be the most adequate, consistent and also the most parsimonial option. However, in order not to end up in system-blind individualism that ignores all the relationships of living beings, I speak of holistically based biocentrism. Collective systems have no inherent worth a priori. 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. This can sometimes even mean that the system takes precedence over the individual, as in law. Also, again analogous to law, it may well make sense to ascribe a moral status to certain communities of life a posteriori and treat them as "quasi-persons". In concretising the model proposed here, we must therefore keep a careful eye on whether it can sufficiently protect collective life communities. Overall, then, holistically grounded biocentrism is moral individualism bound to the common good.

5.5.5 The theological deepening of the attribution of inherent worth/ dignity

Is the philosophical reasoning presented here also compatible with Christian developments? And conversely, can theology provide an additional benefit? As a reminder: theological ethics does not lead an independent existence alongside philosophical ethics or even in competition with it. Rather, it participates in the debate of philosophical ethics and tries to deepen it (cf. chapter 3/Introduction). According to the core thesis of "Autonomous Morality" by Alfons Auer (1971 and 1984[2], 212–215), there is no material ethical proprium, no "special morality" for the Christian (or any other) religion: "The human is human for pagans as well as for Christians." (Alfons Auer 1984[2], 212). Nevertheless, faith opens up a horizon of meaning that integrates, stimulates and critiques ethical judgement formation and justification. So let us look again at the two main sources of the Christian ethos presented in the previous chapters, the Bible and

the liturgy, as well as supplementing them with some recent magisterial statements and systematic-theological reflections.

Biblically, a relatively clear option in favour of biocentrism can be identified. Although plants were not yet considered living beings at the time most biblical texts were written, the fundamental distinction is that between living beings and habitats. Although the anthropocentristic mis-interpretation of the image of God and the governmental mandate in Gen. 1:26–28 has dominated the field for the longest time in Church history, it has been set right by exegesis in recent decades. The image of God and the mandate to govern afforded to man are aimed at methodological and formal anthropocentrics, but not at material anthropocentrism. In general, one must read these sentences embedded in the context of the entire Seven Days Work. Johannes Reiter and Hans Münk recognise in them the direct reference by God to all creatures as a metaphor for their inherent worth (Johannes Reiter 1989, 195–196; Hans J. Münk 1997, 26 and 1999b, 283). On the basis of this reference, it is said in Gen. 1 that everything was good. Everything was created good by God, found to be good and included in redemption (Hans J. Münk 1997, 23).

In Gen. 2–3, we recognised a significant difference to other ancient oriental Creation myths: While in these myths humans and animals are created for the benefit and joy of the deity, in Gen. 2–3 they are there for their own sake and for the joy of life (Othmar Keel/ Silvia Schroer 2002, 142). Consequently, the narrative does not think theocentristically or anthropocentristically, but biocentristically. Finally, the flood narrative in Gen. 6–9 also underpins biocentrism: all living beings are equally threat-ened by the flood, all are to be saved. All living beings are God's covenant companions, so justice is due to all for their own sake. Consequently, the commandments of the Torah contain a series of regulations that protect animals for their own sake and give them certain rights.

The biblical vision of the peace of Creation can indeed be understood in a theoretically anthropocentric way, as Paul demonstrates under Stoic influence in Rom. 8. Its dynamic, however, is towards a biocentrist view of the world, and in most biblical testimonies this is precisely the case. We would think God too small if we imagined that he created the non-human Creation only as a temporary backdrop or resource. Moreover, other bibli-cal texts from the Hellenistic era explicitly doubt Greek anthropocentrism, as Ecc. 3:18–21 powerfully demonstrates.

With Paul, however, there are indications that Stoic anthropocentrism will begin its triumphant march in Christian theology a little later. In the *liturgy* of the Church, this paradigm shift is still reflected today, but, as

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we have seen, in recent decades it has gradually been relativised. Like the texts of the masses at Christmas, many liturgical forms oscillate between anthropocentristic, biocentristic and ecocentristic formulations. Only the ductus of the IV High Prayer in the post-conciliar missal is consistently composed in a biocentristic manner. Finally, *popular piety* has remained closer to biblical biocentrism than the official liturgy.

As far as *doctrinal statements* are concerned, we must first look at the Pastoral Constitution "Gaudium et Spes" of *Vatican Council II*, which in 1965 was still characterised by unbroken anthropocentrism. Thus, it can simply state: "According to the almost unanimous opinion of believers and unbelievers alike, all things on earth should be related to man as their center and crown [centrum suum et culmen]" (GS 12; note that the official English translation fails to translate well "culmen", which does not mean "crown" but "summit"). The biblical mandate of government also does not experience any limitation; on the contrary, it is to be extended even further: "Meanwhile the conviction grows … that humanity can and should increasingly consolidate its control over Creation [imperium suum super res creatas]..." (GS 9). This reflects an attitude to life that—seven years before the Club of Rome report and still two years before Lynn White's critique—is still based on an unbroken optimism that man can get to grips with everything for the lasting good of humanity. Creation is even referred to in Latin as "res creatas", i.e. "created things". The fact that it is about living beings is deliberately concealed. And even the concept of culture is defined in terms of dominance over Creation: "The word "culture" in its general sense indicates everything whereby man … strives by his knowledge and his labor, to bring the world itself under his control. [cognitione et labore in suam potestatem redigere studet]..." (GS 53). "When man develops the earth by the work of his hands or with the aid of technology, in order that it might bear fruit and become a dwelling worthy of the whole human family…, he carries out the design of God manifested at the beginning of time, that he should subdue the earth [terrae subiiciendae]..." (GS 57). The only perspective of hope for Creation is that of Paul who, despite adopting Stoic anthropocentrism, cannot avoid granting Creation access to eternity: "...all that creation which God made on man's account will be unchained from the bondage of vanity [a servitute vanitatis liberabitur tota creatura illa, quam Deus propter hominem creavit]" (GS 39 alluding to Rom. 8:21). All in one, the Pastoral Constitution is thus a mirror of its time. Of all things, the document that listens most to the voice of the "world", of secular society, adopts here one of

its worst aberrations. In terms of responsibility for Creation, the Council came a few years too early.

The clearest signal of the Church's turnaround was the "*conciliar process for justice, peace and the integrity of creation*" initiated in 1983 at the Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Vancouver. In particular, the Ecumenical Assemblies of Stuttgart (EAS) in 1988 for the Churches in the Federal Republic of Germany and Dresden (EAD) in 1989 for the Churches in the GDR did pioneering work on environmental ethics (cf. on this section Michael Rosenberger 2001, 164–166). Both assemblies formulate a *clear rejection of anthropocentrism*. In the Stuttgart text, for example, it says at the very beginning of the part on Creation ethics: "Reverence for life forbids seeing the animal and plant world primarily from the point of view of their usefulness and usability for humans. This also applies to inanimate nature." (EAS 171). Accordingly, the Assembly complains: "Nature has predominantly become a raw material." (EAS 173a). Here, the Kantian prohibition of total instrumentalisation is even intensified, for "primarily" or "predominantly" reaching further than the Kantian "alone". At the end of the chapter on Creation ethics, Stuttgart repeats its rejection of "any exclusively human understanding of creation" (EAS 233a). EAD 1/(44) and likewise EAD 10/(7) oppose thinking narrowed to humans, which sees an animal only as an object and reduces it to its use value. EAD 10/(3) calls for a redefinition of man's position in nature.

The second fixed point is the explicit recognition of the *inherent worth of non-human creatures*. Stuttgart formulates this again in the framework paragraphs of the chapter on Creation ethics: In EAS 171, the inherent worth is justified by the fact that all creatures are loved by God. EAS 233a emphasises categorically and without justification: "The inherent worth of non-human creation is to be respected." This corresponds to the fact that the introductory paragraph (EAS 11) speaks of responsibility *before* creatures and not only *for* creatures. In OED 1/(44) and 8/(8), Dresden calls for respect for the inherent worth of fellow creatures. EAD 12/(12) emphasises the "inherent worth of everything created, regardless of its utility value" and "the dignity of even the 'least' creatures".

Finally, Stuttgart (EAS 181) defines "*life* and that which serves life" as the supreme principle of Creation ethics. This concept of life is clearly related to all living beings. EAD 1/(47) speaks with the same intention of an "option for life" as the basic perspective of Creation ethics. In this respect, the reflections of the German-language conciliar process, inspired by Albert Schweitzer, tend strongly towards biocentrism, even if they do not explicitly mention Schweitzer.

At first glance, this seems to be quite different in *Pope Francis' encyclical "Laudato si'"* of 2015 (cf. on the following also Andrea Vicini 2016, 176–182). In individual passages, he represents classical anthropocentrism when he states with reference to the Catechism of the Catholic Church: "the same wretchedness which leads us to mistreat an animal will not be long in showing itself in our relationships with other people. Every act of cruelty towards any creature is 'contrary to human dignity' (CCC 2418)." (LS 92). And again: "it is contrary to human dignity to cause animals to suffer or die needlessly. (CCC 2418)" (LS 130). Biocentrism is once even explicitly rejected (LS 118).

Francis, on the other hand, 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 purpose of other creatures is not to be found in us." (LS 83). Furthermore, the "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 Sun of Francis of Assisi on which it is based, also uses "creature" to refer to living spaces (sun, water, earth, fire, etc.), one could even classify it as *ecocentristic or holistic*, for it speaks of the value "in themselves" or "of their own" (in the Spanish original always "valor propio") of living beings (LS 69; 118), of species (LS 33; 36) and of the world (LS 115).

Laudato si's closeness to holism is also evident in the conviction that everything is interconnected—according to LS 16, one of the central themes that run through the entire encyclical. LS 9 quotes Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople with the "humble conviction that the divine and the human meet in the slightest detail in the seamless garment of God's creation, in the last speck of dust of our planet". This metaphor of Christ's seamless garment from the St. John Passion, which we analysed earlier (cf. chapter 4.2), hardly makes sense outside an ecocentristic grounding. The demand of brotherly love then also normatively results from the description of the world as an inseparable unity: "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 inherent worth is understood as *opposed to the utility value* of a resource, as was already the case with Immanuel Kant: "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). The intrinsic value is not scalar, but exceeds every calculation (LS 36). It can only be perceived 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' (cf. Wis 11:26)." (LS 89) With this postulate of the divine claim to ownership, human power of disposal over Creation is massively limited.

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). In the interpretation of Gen. 2, we saw that no theocentrism can be derived from this. God did not create creatures so that they might delight him, but so that they might 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 by their very existence*. Their existence is valuable in itself.

Nevertheless, Francis is aware of the danger of playing off *environmental protection and human protection* against each other. He tirelessly emphasises the "immeasurable" (LS 65; 158), "infinite" (LS 65), "unique" (LS 69), "special" (LS 154), even "very special" (LS 43) dignity of the human being. At a crucial 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 cannot justify the neglect of human rights and interpersonal justice. And it is probably also true that some radical environmentalists do exactly this by referring to the equality 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 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 usually goes hand in hand with that of creaturely dignity: 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 dimension* shines forth when in a few passages reference is made to the fact that *the "incarnate", i.e. creatural,* "*Christ* 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). 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 draw the conclusion from the papal interpretation of the incarnation as creature incarnation that in it the dignity of creatures shines forth in a unique way.

An encyclical is not a scientific theological treatise and therefore enjoys the right to remain somewhat fuzzy conceptually and argumentatively. Pope Francis is recognisably trying to preserve the concern of classical anthropocentrism, to protect human dignity and to stand up for interpersonal justice, on the one hand, and to combine it with the concern of biocentrism and ecocentrism, to respect the inherent value of creatures and to fight for justice towards all creatures, on the other.

Especially when, like Pope Francis, one thinks of Creation ethics and incarnation together, strong arguments arise for biocentrism. Incarnation means "taking on flesh", the becoming of God as a creature (Sallie McFague 1993, 131; Michael Rosenberger 2001a, 20). God becomes solidary with all creatures—in being born, in living and in dying. God's incarnation has a dynamic that is strongly driven by his compassion for

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creatures and urges us to be compassionate too (Robert Shore-Goss 2016, 124 and 128): "Jesus is the incarnate and compassionate face of God. He invites us, 'Be compassionate as Abba God is compassionate' (Lk. 6:36)." (Robert Shore-Goss 2016, 126). Man is called to an "incarnational compassionate care for the least among humanity and other life." (Robert Shore-Goss 2016, 146)

In contemporary devotion to the Stations of the Cross, this idea of the co-suffering God has experienced analogous theological expansion. Roland Peter Litzenburger's pen and ink drawing of the crucified Christ in the outline of a dolphin "dying of poison and dirt" (1974), Adolfo Pérez Esquivel's depiction of the crucifixion, which places the crucified Christ against the backdrop of the exploited and destroyed globe, or the X. Station of the Cross by the same artist, in which the robbery of the clothes of Christ is depicted in the midst of the destroyed rainforest, the garment of the earth (both 1993), are well-known examples of this broadening of horizons (Michael Rosenberger 2001a, 70). A parallel to this is offered by the artist Deborah Sengl's "Via dolorosa" from 2012, which is worth seeing. In the classic 14 Stations of the Cross, she replaces the figure of Jesus with a chicken, thus drawing attention to the connection between the suffering of Jesus and the suffering of animals in intensive livestock farming (Deborah Sengl 2012). This is similar to what Pope Francis writes at the end of his encyclical on Creation: "Mary, the Mother who cared for Jesus, now cares with maternal affection and pain for this wounded world. Just as her pierced heart mourned the death of Jesus, so now she grieves for the sufferings of the crucified poor and for the creatures of this world laid waste by human power.." (LS 241). And the Ecumenical Assembly of Dresden already stated in 1989 (EAD 1/(46)): "In the cross of Jesus as the non-violent end of violence there is thus also hope for fellow creatures."

Tendency-wise, then, the trend of current Creation ethics and Creation spirituality, despite some remaining plurality, is towards holistically based biocentrism, as I have philosophically justified. Theology and spirituality can underpin this trend with the following considerations:

– *Theology of Creation*: Everything is directly created by God and found to be good. To call the world we find Creation is to claim its ethical incalculability in the name of God. At the same time, the world is interpreted as borrowed from God. It is not a human possession, but a loan in human trusteeship. Something borrowed is treated with particular care, so that the theology of Creation can more forcefully underpin the respect for the world that was previously philosophically justified as respect for Creation.

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– *Creation ethics*: All living beings are interconnected, dependent on each other and are in the same lifeboat of the ark. They are all God's covenant companions, brothers and sisters of a universal family and thus addressees of justice (moral patients).
– *Soteriology and Christology*: All living beings are included in the mystery of the suffering, dying and resurrecting of Christ. For ethically acting believers, it is therefore a matter of recognising Christ in their needy fellow creatures. The sentence that is so significant for Christian spirituality is to be extended to all creatures: "Amen, I say to you: Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. "(Mt. 25:40)

Against this background, the threefold potential of the Christian faith for generally human, philosophically based environmental ethics now also becomes clear. It

– *criticises* anthropocentrism, which, although reasonable, comes across as too self-evident and self-assured, and its natural tendency towards technocratism.
– *inspires* the search for the ever "greater justice" (Mt. 5:20), which is never satisfied with the already recognised (interpersonal) standards of justice.
– *integrates* the cool world view of philosophy into a deeper view of reality as a mystery to be respected shyly and reverently.

5.5.6 The emotional power of holistically based biocentrism and its spiritual deepening

The world stands at the abyss. And at least the courageous, like us in chapter 2, are looking into this abyss. Consequently, the goal of environmental ethics must be to show ways and means to slow down the current force of economic and technological rationality and to take away its dominance over all social processes (cf. chapter 2.8). In view of this enormous task, an ethical approach that recognisably plays down rather than dramatises will only contribute to maintaining the status quo. To put it very clearly: 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, 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 doctrine alone—neither an anthropocentric nor a non-anthropocentric one. Because: "More than in ideas or concepts as such, I am interested in how such a spirituality can motivate us to a more passionate concern for the protection of our world. A commitment this lofty cannot be sustained by doctrine alone, without a spirituality capable of inspiring us, without an 'interior impulse which encourages, motivates, nourishes and gives meaning to our individual and communal activity' (EG 261)." (LS 216) It is therefore all the more necessary to ask which philosophical doctrine is most open and affinitive to spiritual motivations. And here the biocentrist and ecocentrist approaches are ahead (Haydn Washington et al. 2017, 39).

It must not be misjudged that the philosophical concept of dignity is not primarily a rational principle of action, but an emotional inhibition, for 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 argumentatively, recourse to it would be dispensable, which is also what many advocate. The reference to human rights is quite sufficient and does not require a reference to dignity. But without the mention of dignity, much of the emotional charge would be lost. The importance and urgency of the issue would be 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 more true when the theological concept of the brotherhood and covenant of all creatures is used in addition to the philosophical concept of dignity. It evokes vivid images that are understandable to everyone and is thus even more holistically appealing. It is not for nothing that Friedrich Schiller uses the metaphor of all people becoming "brothers" (and sisters) in his "Ode to Joy" to illustrate human dignity. And in the setting in Ludwig van Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, Schiller's "*all* people" is emphasised through uncounted repetitions as the egalitarian core of the idea. So, both use a more passionate spiritual metaphor instead of a cooler philosophical one.

When Heike Baranzke (2015, 57) assumes that "proclaiming an animal dignity would not lead anywhere either", purely on the argumentative level she may be right. Argumentatively, animal and environmental protection can be justified anthropocentristically as well as biocentristically or

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ecocentristically. But I think it is naïve, if not negligent, to exclude the emotional side so completely, for anthropocentrism (cf. Michael Rosenberger 2001, 162–163)

– tends to trust more in *technical rationality* and is more seduced by the "technocratic paradigm" than biocentrism or ecocentrism. It tends more to overestimate the human knowledge of natural processes and the human possibilities of managing nature.
– tends towards the all-dominant *economistic thinking* that sees the ecosystem only as "natural capital" and at best protects it for the sake of long-term economic consequences. According to Kant, however, the concept of dignity is exactly 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.

Holistically based biocentrism, on the other hand, will apply the traditional precautionary principle, which, in principle, anthropocentrism also recognises, more readily and comprehensively and 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 for holistically based biocentrism.

5.6 Moral individualism and the common good principle

How can the needs of individuals and systemic requirements be mediated in an ethical judgement? This question, which has already come up several times, will be discussed in this second step. It is a problem that all four approaches to justification have to face. Bryan G. Norton (1984, 133) is even convinced that alternative anthropocentrism or non-anthropocentrism is less significant for environmental ethics than the alternative moral individualism or moral non-individualism. Even though I do not want to participate in this comparison: the question of how individual and collective good can be balanced in an ethical judgement is a difficult and, at the same time, pressing question.

Often, individualistic and systemic approaches stand head-on against each other. Ecocentrism sees itself as a break with the tradition of the other three approaches, which are united by their focus on the individual. But the more individualistic approach to animal ethics and the more systemic approach to environmental ethics will not find common ground as long as the question of their methodologically coherent mediation remains unresolved. So, what might a solution look like (cf. Michael Rosenberger 2018, 124–135)?

In a first step, the question arises as to which norm-ethical theory group is at all capable of establishing such a connection between individualistic and systemic perspectives. The pathocentrist approaches, i.e. utilitarianism and animal rights approaches such as Tom Regan's, do not manage this because both varieties are exclusively individualistic in their 'genetic code'. Utilitarianism replaces the traditional principle of the common good with the principle of maximising the sum of benefits ("the greatest happiness of the greatest number"). In this principle, the collective is considered only as a sum of individuals. The relationships between individuals, on the other hand, play no role. In animal rights approaches, individual rights are at the centre. Here, too, the common good orientation of classical ethics has no place by definition. The pathocentrisms developed so far are therefore pure individualism.

The situation is different in the large family of theories of justice, which regard justice that transcends the individual and are oriented towards the common good as the supreme principle of ethics. Whether they are more strongly influenced by natural law (as in Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas or Martha Nussbaum) or whether they argue more strongly in terms of contract theory (as in the Hebrew Bible, John Rawls or Jürgen Habermas), they fundamentally strive to combine an individualistic and systemic view. The individualistic view comes to the fore primarily through the contract situation (the "original state") and the rights resulting from it, the systemic view through recourse to 'nature' or 'general facts', which even modern contract theories cannot do without. In principle, theories of justice have long sought to mediate individual and systemic aspects, even if they do so more or less thematically and reflectively.

Now, both anthropocentrism and biocentrism in their dominant forms can be assigned to the theories of justice. Both aim at fair trade-offs and comprehensive justice between all moral patients. Before we examine how they determine this, however, it is helpful to return to a consideration that helped the young John Rawls to initiate his change of sides from utilitarianism to justice theory, for on the one hand, it makes the misun-

derstanding of utilitarianism clearer, and on the other, it clarifies what a good theory of justice must necessarily take into account. It was Rawls' great "aha" experience during his theory-building which revealed that instead of isolated consideration of individual actions or norms, as is usual in utilitarianism, the *holistic consideration of rules within the systems of rules* in which they are embedded must take place. Rules are part of a "practice" and cannot be understood at all without taking this practice into account. This is how Rawls formulated it as early as 1955 in his famous, still utilitarian essay "Two Concepts of Rules". In the theory of justice, two decades later, this becomes the fundamental option of focusing the material object on just institutions (John Rawls 1975, 23–27, § 2). Institutions are systems of rules. The parties in the original state cannot choose individual rules, but only packages of consistent rule systems, i.e. institutions. This prevents cherry-picking, which has drastic consequences for animal and environmental ethics.

The *concept of system* originates from systems theory, which was first developed in the mid-20th century by biologists (Ludwig von Bertalanffy, Humberto Maturana, Francisco Varela) and cyberneticists (Norbert Wiener, William Ross Ashby) and was soon transferred to sociology (Talcott Parsons, Niklas Luhmann). In addition to the analytical, descriptive potential of the system concept, its normative, prescriptive potential was also increasingly recognised, so that today the systemic approach has also found its place in (psycho)therapy and (social)ethics. The term "system" is used to describe a totality of elements that are interconnected and seen as a structured unit. A system therefore comprises individual elements, their relations and the structural laws of these relations. In this respect, a systems theory goes beyond relationist theories in two ways: on the one hand, it considers not only certain, quasi-personal relations (such as that between a dog and a human being), but also apersonal ones (such as that between a tree and the nutrients it takes from the soil). On the other hand, the structural laws of the relations are also taken into account (such as the fact that an animal must eat other creatures if it wants to survive itself).

So how can individual and systemic requirements be combined in an ethical judgement? In order to answer this question, it is of great importance to first recognise the *irreducibility of the individualistic and systemic perspectives to each other* and thus their inherent normative autonomy. The individualistic and the systemic perspectives are, in principle, not reducible to each other, but represent two independent, legitimate and, from an ethical point of view, necessary perspectives on reality. A system is something other than the sum of its individuals, and an individual is

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something other than the smallest part of a system. For this reason, individualistic and systemic perspectives can and must (!) complement each other. The either-or must become a both-and. Adequate environmental ethics necessarily needs a duality of perspectives. The individual perspective is about inter-individual distributive justice; the systemic perspective is about inter-systemic allocation. Under this second perspective, there are "generalised obligations". These are obligations of the present generation to ensure a stable flow of resources in the future to ensure the continuation of life. This keeping open of systemic options is the condition of possibility for individual needs to be met in the future (Bryan G. Norton 1984, 144).

In biocentrism, as in all models of moral individualism, but unlike ecocentrism, systems are not valuable in themselves, but only for their members. Systems therefore have no "inherent value", only "utility value". There is a *primacy of the individual*. At the same time, however, ecosystems are conditions of possibility for the individual well-being of their members. So, there is a *priority of the ecosystem*. It is precisely this tension that I try to express in holistically based biocentrism.

The classification of biocentrism among forms of moral individualism does not prevent it, due to its holistic foundation, from considering certain systems, i.e. populations, species, communities, ecosystems and biomes as "quasi-personalities". By analogy with law, ethics can distinguish between natural persons, i.e. real individuals, and "quasi-personalised" institutions, i.e. systems. Such systems are presented as analogous to persons, as if they were individuals. They have clearly defined rights and duties; they enjoy a moral status. But biocentrism ascribes dignity only to natural persons—only they deserve to be preserved and respected for their own sake. Institutions, on the other hand, are ascribed moral status a posteriori; a priori, they have no inherent value. They are, however, 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.

How do theories of justice solve conflicts between individuals and systems? The basic form of such solutions is always the weighing of goods. If we take Rawls' understanding of the system of rules seriously, these are never exclusively trade-offs between the goods of individuals, for systems also need goods in order to be maintained. Weighing up goods therefore weighs up goods

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- of different individuals among each other,
- of different systems with each other and
- of individuals and systems with each other.

In the third case—and this is the one that is interesting for us—the classic rule of balancing the common good is applied in the interpersonal sphere: "Provided that the dignity of the person is respected, the claims arising from the community take precedence over the claims of the individual in the case of conflict". (Wilhelm Korff 1995, 1119). In short, provided that every individual is formally treated equally without regard to the person and is not completely put to use, the common good takes precedence over individual welfare. This is compelling because the individual depends on his or her community, but the community does not depend on a specific individual. Therefore, it is reasonable to give priority to the community, i.e. the system, when allocating goods materially[16]. Formally, the individual has primacy over the community through the principle of equal treatment and the prohibition of total instrumentalisation. Materially, the community has priority over the individual with regard to the allocation of goods.

At this point, the *distinction between group utility and third-party utility* becomes important. If it is necessary to deny or even deprive a group member of certain goods in order to preserve the group, then this is justified as long as the individual who has to make the sacrifice is determined without discrimination. Thus, it benefits the population of a country as a whole if the vulnerable groups are vaccinated against Covid-19 first. Those who do not belong to these groups can be required to wait for vaccination for the sake of the common good—at the risk of falling ill and dying during the waiting period. Analogously, sustainable hunting that adjusts population size to the capacities of the ecosystem benefits the individual deer or roe deer as a member of that system—even though it may mean the individual "total loss" of being shot down (James Sterba 1995, 192). In the case of both inoculation against the coronavirus and hunting, the survival of the system comes first, for which the individual must put aside his or her needs, for without the preservation of the system, the individual's existence would also be endangered. Both times it is an indispensable condition that there is "no respect for the person". In the case of inoculation against the

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16 Karlheinz Ruhstorfer 2012, 263 and Valentin Zsifkovits 2012, 83 emphasise that the common good is not the sum of the individual good of individuals, but their structural, systemic condition of possibility, with reference to various papal doctrinal letters as well as the texts of the Second Vatican Council.

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coronavirus, for example, this corresponds to the prohibition of favouring powerful or rich people; in hunting, it corresponds to the refusal to preferentially hunt trophy bearers.

So far, we have only looked at the trade-off between the goods of individuals and the system that embeds them. However, there are also cases where the treatment of individuals has an impact on completely different systems. Extensive grazing, for example, greatly promotes biodiversity and builds up humus at the same time, quite the opposite of agricultural cultivation of food crops. Now, biodiversity and humus build-up benefit the broader regional ecosystem. This benefits people, livestock and wildlife. Again, this is about the realm of group utility. Just as humans are expected to designate nature reserves for the sake of biodiversity and thus make a 'sacrifice', analogous 'sacrifices' can be expected from farm animals, for which the keepers provide a good life in a biodiverse environment.

But what if it is not the benefit of a wider system that is at stake, but that of *another subsystem at the same level,* in which the individual in question is not involved and from which consequently neither he himself nor his species nor his ecosystem will ever benefit? Do fish, for example, have to 'sacrifice' themselves for the sole purpose of being able to feed humanity? As long as fishing is sustainable and done in such a way that fish stocks remain stable, fishing also serves the fish themselves and is beneficial to the group. Currently, however, the world's oceans are being overfished. Could feeding humanity be a legitimising reason for this? Systemically, one could argue against this that humanity is also only served in the very short term if the oceans are fished dry. But here I see a prerogative of moral individualism: a sacrifice cannot be demanded from the one who does not benefit in any way from the targeted good. For such a sacrifice would be exclusively altruistic, and altruistic action can only be given freely and never demanded or imposed by third parties. The cod is interested in the survival of its species and the preservation of its marine ecosystem. But it is not interested in the survival of humankind.

The "common good before individual good" therefore only applies where the individual is part of the community in question and group benefit exists. As soon as there is a purely external benefit, the principle of the common good of balancing interests comes to nothing. In the sense of the *biocentristic egalitarianism of all living beings,* this also applies where plants or animals are supposed to be of use to others. In contrast to anthropocentrism, this cannot be demanded. This is perhaps the most important material difference between the two approaches—it is significant and perceptible, but not fundamental, as some anthropocentrists believe.

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The interpretation of the principle of the common good of classical social ethics in terms of system preservation and the distinction between group and third-party utility thus allow for a sufficiently coherent and appropriate combination of individual and systemic requirements within the framework of environmental ethics. Classical theories of justice do not need a new conception, but only the expansion of individuals with moral status in order to transform moral individualism that ignores the common good into common good-oriented moral individualism.

5.7 Epilogue: Being born and dying as cornerstones of ethics of Creation

The example of the coronavirus vaccination shows how much the social debates of Western industrialised countries have developed towards pure individualism in recent decades: The common good is no longer accorded any fundamental importance; it is merely a necessary evil and an obstacle to the realisation of the individual good. The enormous state aid for companies and their employees in the coronavirus crisis will probably not change this. How deeply pure individualism has now taken root in our thinking can be seen in the jurisprudence of the constitutional courts, which are finding fewer and fewer arguments as to how they can adequately position the common good as the counterpart with equal rights to the individual good.

One consequence of individualism that ignores the common good, and a very symptomatic one at that, is that the prohibition of killing humans as well as animals or plants is completely torn out of its systemic contexts.

– In all three approaches to the justification of moral individualism, there is a tendency today to discuss the killing of people on demand in purely individualistic terms and to overlook the fact that such killing has repercussions for those around the person concerned, indeed for society as a whole.

– In anthropocentrism, the (painless) killing of animals and plants is hardly problematised; in pathocentrism, on the other hand, the killing of animals is elevated to the main problem and that of plants is faded out.

– What is usually overlooked is that killing is the taking of a quantifiable and to be quantified good. It is not "life" that is taken away, but a (prognostically assessable) very specific lifespan with a very specific quality of life. Therefore, not everything is taken from a living being with its killing, but something, because no one can take away the

lifespan that has already been lived and the experiences that have been had during this lifespan.

– The fact that killing can even be a consequence of respect for the dignity of the individual who is killed plays no role at all in current debates (Michael Hauskeller 2015).

– Finally, moral individualism quickly forgets that no animal, not even the animal homo sapiens, can do without consuming organic matter. Human and non-human animals live from the fact that other living beings die. And we must go even further: new living beings can only be born when old living beings make room and die because the earth's resources are limited and can only support a limited number of living beings.

– The recognition of the natality and mortality of all living beings is a spiritual or virtue-ethical prerequisite for conducting objective discussions in this field. Every living being, whether plant, animal or human, is constantly dependent on an environment that keeps it alive. But this is only possible if all living beings also leave when the time comes. It does not matter which approach to environmental ethics one follows: Without humility, the basic attitude of ars moriendi, nothing meaningful can come into being.

As significant and indispensable as the idea of a unique individual with inalienable dignity is, it is equally problematic that its embeddedness in a larger whole is almost completely ignored in current social and scientific discourses. Here lies the deeply justified and pressing concern of ecocentrism, which we can no longer ignore. This is also the basis of my plea for holistically based biocentrism.

An old story tells how two Buddhist monks look at the earth. Reproachfully, one says, "Look how they're eating each other!" The other shakes his head and replies: "They don't eat each other—they feed each other!" (Roger S. Gottlieb 1999, 160) In reality, and this is the typical punchline in Buddhist stories, both monks are right. They represent two well-founded and unrefutable perspectives on how we can and must look at the world. One perspective is that of scarce goods for which there is fierce competition. The other perspective is that of abundance, which gives us the freedom to love one another and give ourselves to one another. Much would be gained if we were to put the currently dominant first perspective on an equal footing with the second, which has fallen by the wayside.