

Preface from the co-editor

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

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

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

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

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

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

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