

3 Prehistory 2: Animals in Greco-Roman Philosophy

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

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

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

totelian and Stoic denial of rationality to animals proved all too congenial to Jews and Christians.” (Richard Sorabji 1993, 8) The adoption of Aristotle’s anthropocentrism is unlikely to be proven for early Christianity; Aristotle’s rejection of an immortal soul is too frowned upon for that. But the adoption of anthropocentrism from the Stoa will prove to be correct.

- However, Sorabji links this to another thesis that must be modified against the background of Dierauer’s analyses. Sorabji claims that Christianity and Judaism had adopted one of many equally strong approaches to philosophy in a relatively free choice: “we are heirs of a Western Christian tradition which selected only one side from a much more wide-ranging Greek debate”. (Richard Sorabji 1993, 8) Dierauer’s analyses, on the other hand, rather suggest that Judaism and Christianity received the anthropocentrist mainstream philosophy of their time without much and conscious choice, while the non-anthropocentrist approaches were already massively in the minority long before the appearance of Christianity.

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

3.1 Setting the course in the pre-Socratic era

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.2 Theological Anthropocentrism in Socrates

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.3 Reason as the driver in Plato’s work

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

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

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

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

3.4 Broad development of the *aloga* thesis in Aristotle

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

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

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

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

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

Aristotle, *Metaphysics* I, 1, 980 b 21–25). Birds of the same species also had different dialects and taught each other to sing—they formed their language to a certain extent by agreement (Aristotle, *Historia animalium* IV, 101–111, 536 b 14–19). However, animals communicated mainly entirely by nature, while humans developed their language mainly by agreement (Aristotle, *De interpretatione* I, 2, 16 a 27–29).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.5 Perfecting rationalist anthropocentrism in the Stoa

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

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

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

3.5.1 The oikeiosis doctrine as a framing theory

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

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

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

3.5.2 Animal Behaviour as Natural

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.5.3 Rationality as a *proprium* of the human being

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.5.4 Teleologically strict anthropocentrism

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.5.5 No legal community between humans and animals

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

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

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

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

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

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

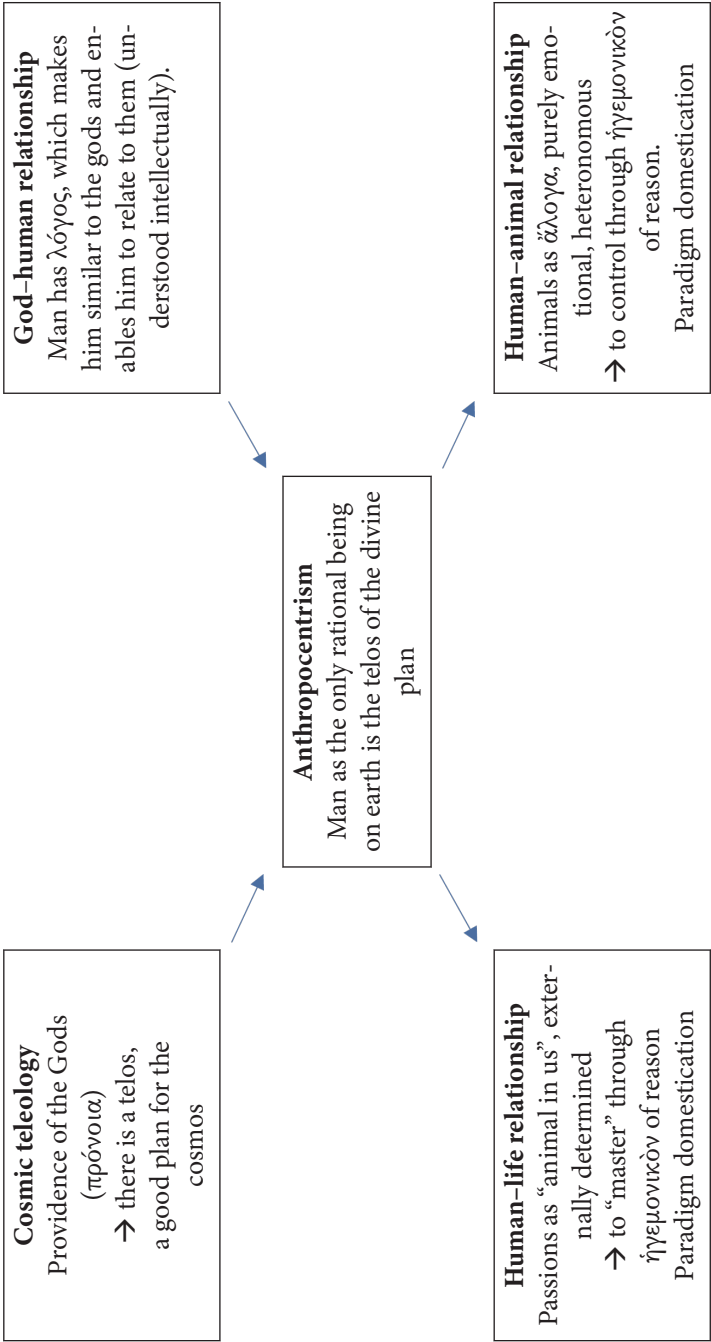
3.5.6 Summary: The Core Aspects of Stoic Anthropocentrism

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

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

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

Diagram: The idea network of stoic anthropocentrism



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

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

3.6 Criticism of the Stoic Mainstream by a Minority

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.6.1 Tiberius Iulius Alexander

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.6.2 Plutarch of Chaironeia

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.6.3 Sextus Empiricus

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.6.4 Kelsos

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

On one point, however, Kelsos makes a serious mistake, which Origen (*Contra Celsum* 4, 86–99) takes full advantage of: Kelsos shares the Egyptian conviction that animals can prophesy, thus have a special closeness to the gods and are in a sense more religious than humans¹¹. Here Origen can easily connect to the Jewish philosopher Philon (see chapter 4.2), who had already decisively opposed Egyptian animal manticism two centuries earlier and is still well known in his and Origen’s common hometown Alexandria. Like Philon’s Hellenistic Judaism, Origen presents Stoic Christianity as enlightened and exposes Egyptian animal-based divination practices as superstitious and unreasonable.

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

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

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

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

3.6.5 Porphyrios of Tyros

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.6.6 Summary

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

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

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

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