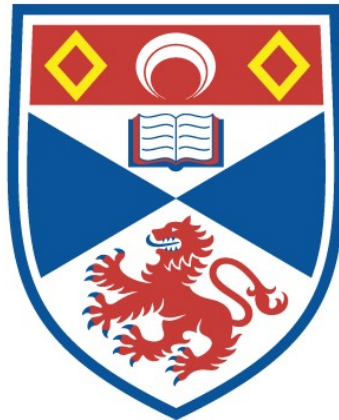


DEVELOPING ANIMAL THEOLOGY:
AN ENGAGEMENT WITH LEONARDO BOFF

Clair Susan Linzey

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews



2020

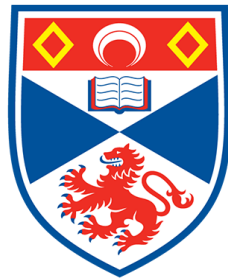
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Developing Animal Theology: An Engagement with Leonardo Boff

Clair Susan Linzey



University of
St Andrews

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
at the University of St Andrews

September 2019

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I, Clair Susan Linzey, do hereby certify that this thesis, submitted for the degree of PhD, which is approximately 75,000 words in length, has been written by me, and that it is the record of work carried out by me, or principally by myself in collaboration with others as acknowledged, and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for any degree.

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to develop animal theology in dialogue with Leonardo Boff, specifically in relation to his liberation, ecological, and contextual theologies. Through an examination of his major works relating to creation—notably, *Jesus Christ Liberator: A Critical Christology of Our Time* (1972), *Saint Francis: A Model for Human Liberation* (1981), *Ecology and Liberation: A New Paradigm* (1993), and *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor* (1995)—this thesis unravels the anthropocentric and instrumentalist thinking that characterises Roman Catholic thought about animals. In *Jesus Christ Liberator*, the work of Christ is considered only in relation to humanity, which in practical terms means that human beings—their life, worth, and destiny—are God’s primary, if not exclusive, concern. In *Saint Francis*, despite the obvious moral example provided, Boff almost wholly ignores Francis’s significance for other creatures, and his ecological theology tantalisingly remains insufficiently attentive to the animal issue.

Yet Boff’s ecological theology represents a significant shift, and at least notionally, he accepts the rights of other creatures. So paradoxically, his ecological theology is a catalyst for greater concern for creation, including animals. Boff may have influenced the thinking of Pope Francis, especially in the pope’s *Laudato Si’* (2015), and has certainly engendered greater theological thinking on the environment. Finally, this thesis proposes a non-anthropocentric reconstruction of the Trinity as Gentleness, Solidarity, and Fraternity, reinforced by Boff’s work in *Trinity and Society* (1986) and *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community* (1988). A Trinitarian theology of animal liberation is suggested based on, inter alia, the notion of communion as being “for” creation and the idea of Triune sight. The Trinity is proposed as a model for human–animal relations.

Acknowledgements

As Boff is a contextual theologian, in many ways so am I. My theology is the product of my having been raised by an animal theologian, Andrew Linzey. God's concern for and love of all creation is a basic tenet of how I was raised to see the world. In many ways I was an animal theologian before I even knew what that meant. This thesis takes as its starting point some of the basic tenets of animal theology, or rather, animal theology is accepted and taken as my starting point. What that entails will be explored later in chapter one. All of this is to say that although this doctorate is an attempt to move beyond and develop the work of my father, I remain more indebted to him than I can say. If some words or thoughts sound rather like his, it is because our thinking has undergone some natural osmosis. I have, wherever possible, acknowledged my indebtedness to him and his pioneering thought, but since he was the first person to teach me how to write and think, some natural convergence of ideas and expression will be evident. This is not to say that a departure from his ideas should not also be apparent, especially in relation to liberation, ecological, and contextual theologies.

My journey to Brazil and the resulting contextual theology would not have been possible without the friendship and guidance of Graham McGeoch. Without his support and encouragement, I would have been left floundering in a Euro-centric perspective. Special thanks are due to all those wonderful Brazilians who agreed to be interviewed by me and shared their perspective on their country, ecology, liberation theology, animals, and Leonardo Boff in particular. Namely, Professor Luiz Carlos Susin, Professor Claudio de Oliveira Ribeiro, Professor Jung Mo Sung, Dr Carlos Frederico Ramos de Jesus, Dr Bruno Garrote, Dr Carlos Naconecy, Professor Daniel Braga Lourenço, Keila Guimarães, and the members of Felinos du Campus at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro, Professor Patricia Österreicher, Thaissa da Silva Mocoos Puppín, and Maria Teresa Barcellos. Their insights and vision have helped form this thesis.

Thanks are also due to Professor Mario Aguilar, for bearing with me during the lengthy and sometimes arduous process of writing this thesis. Profound thanks are also due to Professor Kurt Remele and Dr Ryan Patrick McLaughlin for their thoughtful and insightful comments on this thesis. Thanks are also due to Katie Javanaud and Nick Austin whose encouragement and support helped me finish this

work. I also wish to thank Stephanie Ernst for her assistance in copyediting the thesis. Lastly, special thanks to my mother, Jo Linzey, for her help in proof reading the thesis.

This work is dedicated to the memory of my faithful and beloved companion Toby. He accompanied and sustained me throughout the journey. His love has illuminated every word.

Chapter 1: Introduction

On the outskirts of São Leopoldo, I see an emaciated, tired horse searching for food in a rubbish heap. Behind the horse, I see homes made out of corrugated cardboard and a small, thin child playing in the rubbish. I am on my way to a theological congress at EST Faculdades in São Leopoldo, in the south of Brazil. The image of the horse and the child on the rubbish heap haunts me as I travel through Brazil, as it brings together the central themes of my thesis—poverty, ecology, and animals—in the largest Catholic country in the world.

This thesis seeks to develop animal theology in dialogue with the Brazilian theologian Leonardo Boff. His work encompasses liberation, ecological, and contextual theologies, and it is in these principal areas that I hope to develop my animal theology. Boff's theology reflects the theological neglect of animals in the Roman Catholic tradition. Yet paradoxically, his thought, especially his ecotheology, may be a catalyst for greater concern for creation, including animals. I look in detail at four of his most significant works over three decades, works that best represent the development of his thought in these areas.

This introduction begins with a discussion of what animal theology is based on foundational insights of animal theology, which provides a guide to the key themes of the thesis and also reviews current literature. The last section of this chapter comprises my methodology and an outline of the chapters. It poses three guiding methodological questions which frame the thesis. It also contains a guide to the interviews conducted in Brazil in order to provide an overview of interview method, the interviewees, and their expertise. It ends by explaining the contents of the appendices.

1.1. What is animal theology?

Before I turn to my discussion of what animal theology is, some definitions may be useful. In discussions of creation theology, some terms are often used interchangeably—for instance, “animals” and “creatures.” Many theorists now adopt the language of “nonhuman animals” instead of “animals” because it signifies the fact that biologically humans are animals. This term is often used in an attempt to bridge the linguistic divide that can be used to separate humans from animals. While acknowledging the importance of language in constructing how we understand

human–animal relationships, this work will retain the word “animal.” For the sake of brevity, throughout this work “animal” will be understood as nonhuman animal, and “human” as human animal. For the purposes of this work, the term “animal(s)” is used to mean nonhuman animals in whom sentience can be reasonably supposed—that is, all mammals, reptiles, amphibians, birds, and fish. Sentience may be defined as the ability to experience pleasure and pain, including mental suffering involving fear, shock, terror, anticipation, anxiety, stress, foreboding, or distress.¹ The theological implications of sentience will be discussed below in relation to insight (e). Although insects are animals, they are not included within this definition because sentience has yet to be established in their case. “Creature(s)” is a broader term that is used to indicate beings within creation, which would include all animals, sentient or not. Creation here is understood as including all created beings, whether animals or plants, as well as other parts of the natural world, such as rivers, mountains, minerals, and so on.

To understand what is developed in this thesis, we must first grasp what animal theology is. Animal theology is a term coined by Andrew Linzey² in 1994 in his now classic work *Animal Theology*.³ The grounds for selecting and focusing on Linzey’s work are threefold. First, Linzey has pioneered the field. Mark Rowlands maintains that: “Andrew Linzey is virtually synonymous with the discipline of animal theology: a discipline that he has legitimate claim to have single-handedly invented.”⁴ Second, Linzey is the only theologian to be recognised by the awarding of a Lambeth Doctorate of Divinity by Archbishop George Carey for his “unique and massive pioneering work at a scholarly level in the area of the theology of creation with particular reference to the rights and welfare of God’s sentient creatures.”⁵ Third, Linzey’s corpus is much larger than generally appreciated. Apart from over 100 articles, his books, both authored and edited, on animals are: *Animal Rights: A Christian Assessment* (1976), *Christianity and the Rights of Animals* (1987), *Animals and Christianity: A Book of Readings* (1988), *Song of Creation* (1988), *Compassion*

¹ For a discussion of these issues, see Rollin, *The Unheeded Cry*.

² Although I am familiar with all of Linzey’s work, this thesis draws largely upon his animal theology corpus in particular—namely, *Christianity and the Rights of Animals*; *Animal Theology*; *Animal Gospel*; *Creatures of the Same God*; and *Why Animal Suffering Matters*.

³ Linzey, *Animal Theology*.

⁴ Rowlands quoted from his endorsement of Linzey, *Why Animal Suffering Matters*.

⁵ Statement by Archbishop George Carey at the conferring of the Doctorate of Divinity, Lambeth Palace, 2001, <https://www.oxfordanimaethics.com/who-we-are/director/>.

for Animals: Readings and Prayers (1988), *Political Theory and Animal Rights* (1990), *Animal Theology* (1994), *After Noah: Animals and the Liberation of Theology* (1997), *Animals on the Agenda: Questions About Animals for Theology and Ethics* (1998), *Animal Gospel: Christian Faith as if Animal Mattered* (1999), *Animal Rites: Liturgies of Animal Care* (1999), *Animal Rights: A Historical Anthology* (2005), *Creatures of the Same God: Explorations in Animal Theology* (2007), *Why Animal Suffering Matters: Philosophy, Theology, and Practical Ethics* (2007), *The Link Between Animal Abuse and Human Violence* (2009), *Other Nations: Animals in Modern Literature* (2010), *The Global Guide to Animal Protection* (2013), *Animal Ethics for Veterinarians* (2017), *The Ethical Case Against Animal Experiments* (2018), *The Palgrave Handbook of Practical Animal Ethics* (2018), *The Routledge Handbook of Religion and Animal Ethics* (2018), and *Ethical Vegetarianism and Veganism* (2018). He is therefore the theologian who has published more on the status of animals than any other. Bishop John Austin Baker claims him as “the greatest living writer on theology and animals.”⁶

In his introduction to *Animal Theology* Linzey states, “I hold that Christian theology provides some of the key categories of thought which enable a full satisfying ethical conception of the place of non-human creatures in our world.”⁷ Linzey does not offer a strict definition of the term, and so let me attempt to offer one. Animal theology is an attempt to view the Christian tradition through an animal-friendly lens, while retaining a critical approach to the tradition with regards to its concern for animals. Animal theology is involved, like feminist theology, in a process of looking again at the Christian tradition to reclaim and rebuild insights and voices concerning our relationship with animals. Although animals are now under discussion in various academic fields, animal theology is distinct from, for example, discussions in philosophy, which might include animal rights language,⁸ or discussions in law, which include conceptions of property or personhood.⁹ Animal theology begins from theological concepts, and although it may garner some insights from other animal

⁶ Baker quote taken from <https://www.oxfordanimaethics.com/2007/06/launch-of-creatures-of-the-same-god/>.

⁷ Linzey, *Animal Theology*, viii.

⁸ The philosophical literature on animal rights is considerable, but for the classic statement of the deontological case, see Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights*; and for the classic statement of preference utilitarianism, see Singer, *Animal Liberation*.

⁹ The legal literature on animals also is growing, but for a discussion of animals as property, see Francione, *Animals, Property, and the Law*; or for an example of the discussion of animals as legal persons, see Wise, *Rattling the Cage*.

fields, it is grounded in its own set of theological considerations. It begins from the perspective that although critical of the Christian tradition, contained therein are many resources for a better understanding our relationship with animals. Since Linzey pioneered the subfield there has been increasing literature on the subject of animal theology.¹⁰

In discussing the themes of animal theology, I will draw not just upon the work *Animal Theology* but on all of Linzey's corpus, to draw out what I consider to be the foundational insights of animal theology. Although his perspective has developed over time, a clear statement of Linzey's position is given in his "Credo" in *Animal Gospel*. It is the clearest, succinct articulation of what animal theology encompasses. It is worth reproducing here in full:

I affirm the One Creator God from whom all existence flows. I celebrate the common origin of all life in God. I undertake to cherish and love all creatures whose life belongs to God and exists for God's glory.

I affirm the life of Jesus as the true pattern of service to the weak. I promise my solidarity with all suffering creatures. I join hands with Jesus in his ministry to the least of all, knowing that it is the vocation of the strong to be gentle.

I see in the face of the Crucified the faces of all innocent, suffering creatures. I hear their cries for a new creation. I thank God for the grace to feel their suffering and give voice to their pain.

I affirm the Word made flesh as the new covenant between God and all sentient creatures. I seek to live out that covenant in acts of moral generosity, kindness and gentleness to all those creatures that God has gathered together into unity.

I affirm the life-giving Spirit, source of all that is wonderful, who animates every creature. I pledge myself to honor life because of the Lord of life.

¹⁰ Linzey has inspired and or facilitated a new generation of books on animal theology, including: The works on animal theology are now numerous, but see for example, Webb, *On God and Dogs*; McLaughlin, *Christian Theology and the Status of Animals*; Jones, *The School of Compassion*; Barsam, *Reverence for Life*; Smith, *Animals in Tillich's Philosophical Theology*; Sampson, *Animal Ethics and the Nonconformist Conscience*; Gilmour, *Animals in the Writings of C. S. Lewis*; and Nellist, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity and Animal Suffering*. In addition, Linzey is co-editor of the Palgrave Macmillan Animal Ethics Series which has commissioned over 35 volumes.

I affirm the hope of the world to come for all God's creatures. I believe in the Cross as the symbol of liberation for every creature suffering from bondage. I will daily trust in the redeeming power of God to transform the universe.

I pray that the community of Christ may be blessed with a new vision of God's creation. I will turn away from my hardness of heart and seek to become a living sign of the Gospel for which all creatures long.

I rejoice in animals as fellow-creatures: loved by the Father, redeemed by the Son, and enlivened by the Holy Spirit.

May God the Holy Trinity give me strength to live out my commitment this day.¹¹

Linzey's Credo is the starting point for considering the foundational insights of animal theology. What follows a discussion of these insights in which Linzey's position is summarised before looking at some of the alternatives and responses to his ideas. This discussion usefully provides a review of the major themes within animal theology. I hope to illustrate the ways in which the debates surrounding these insights have developed in order to give a sense of how they relate to the debates within Boff's work. These foundational insights should serve to indicate the themes I hope to develop in this thesis as well as serving as a review of the current literature. The foundational insights of animal theology are:

- a) The Triune God delights in differentiated being and so should we;
- b) God's own right as Creator establishes the rights of all sentient creatures;
- c) In Christ God embraces the flesh of all sentient creatures;
- d) In Christ God rejects the fallenness of the world and wills to create a new heaven and earth;
- e) The cross of Christ is the symbol of liberation of every creature suffering from bondage. God in Christ is the face of suffering of the world;
- f) God's generosity in Christ necessitates the response of moral generosity. Lordship should be expressed as service; and
- g) The life giving Spirit, source of all that is wonderful, animates every

¹¹ Linzey, *Animal Gospel*, 7-8.

creature. Approximating the Kingdom is empowered by the spirit.

Let me take each one in turn.

a. The Triune God delights in differentiated being and so should we

This deceptively simple point is at the heart of animal theology. It is the idea that God is concerned with more than simply human beings. God loves and delights in all creation. Celebrating creation is central to Linzey's work, epitomised in *After Noah* by Linzey and Dan Cohn-Sherbok, "there is a direct relationship between our inability to celebrate animals and our dismal record of exploitation. We should not be surprised that we exploit our fellow creatures if we do not know how to celebrate, rejoice, and give thanks for the beautiful world God has made."¹² The proper attitude towards creation and other creatures is one of celebration, delight and awe because "the world of living creatures exists because God loves them, and sustains them, and rejoices in them."¹³ This is an insight at the heart of Saint Francis' ministry, as will be discussed in chapter four.¹⁴ The wonder of creation is captured in the words of his follower Saint Bonaventure: "open your eyes, alert the ears of your spirit, open your lips and apply your heart so that in all creatures you may see, hear, praise, love and worship, glorify and honour your God."¹⁵ In celebrating other creatures, we are celebrating the world God has made.

Despite acknowledging God as Creator, the Christian tradition has tended to see the rest of creation as mere theatre or background to God's real concern, namely humanity. Humanity is the locus of God's concern for the world as evidenced by the *imago dei* and the incarnation. The Catholic tradition, especially the work of Thomas Aquinas, focuses on God's work in the world in relation to humanity to the exclusion of the rest of creation. This is explored in detail in chapter two of this thesis (40-47). A discussion of the particularity of Christ in the incarnation can be found in relation to Boff's work in chapter three (54-58). Delighting in the creation that God has made does not mean that humanity does not hold a special place in creation. Linzey holds a strong view of human uniqueness, that is humans as the servant species (which will be

¹² Linzey and Cohn-Sherbok, *After Noah*, 12.

¹³ Linzey and Cohn-Sherbok, *After Noah*, 12.

¹⁴ For more on Linzey's perspective on Saint Francis and animals see, Linzey and Barsam, "Saint Francis of Assisi."

¹⁵ Extract from Bonaventure, "The Soul's Journey into God," reproduced in Linzey and Regan, *Compassion for Animals*, 9.

discussed in insight (f)). However, delighting in God's creation does entail a rejection of moral anthropocentrism, which is the view that humans are God's sole or primary concern, that human wants and concerns are alone morally significant. Encompassed in the rejection of moral anthropocentrism is the rejection of the idea that human interests should always outweigh the interests of animals.¹⁶

Celia Deane-Drummond provides one response to the charge that theology is too focused on humanity to fully appreciate the importance of the rest of creation. Deane-Drummond takes an evolutionary biological approach to Roman Catholic theology to defend the idea that the *imago dei* applies not only to humans but also to a lesser degree to animals. Through a discussion of moral agency and the divine image, she suggests that "non-human animals can be thought of as in some sense sharing in moral agency, whether in a latent sense or through specific behaviour in their own moral worlds."¹⁷ From this she suggests that animals may share in the divine image, such that they may be considered "image-bearing" beings.¹⁸ In other words, she argues for animals as having in a limited sense, moral agency, which ties them to the divine image. In so doing she expands the category of the divine image to include animals within it and thus adjusting and reducing the emphasis on the theological significance of humanity.

This attempt to locate the divine image within created beings, rather than humans alone, stresses the interconnectedness of creation and reduces the anthropocentric focus. However, the conception of animals as moral agents is problematic and highly debated amongst philosophers.¹⁹ Although Deane-Drummond is only arguing for moral agency in a limited sense, even doing this leaves open a range of problematic questions. For example, if animals are moral and they eat each other, why can't we eat animals? Since murder and violence are common in the animal kingdom, it leaves open moral questions of how we should behave if we are all moral agents. Further, if they are moral agents, albeit in a limited way, does that then require the meting out of some corresponding form of justice? In short, attributing the image and moral agency to the rest of creation, while reducing the anthropocentric lens, can pose more questions than it resolves. At its worst it may

¹⁶ For a fuller discussion of anthropocentrism, see Linzey and Linzey, "Anthropocentrism."

¹⁷ Deane-Drummond, "Are Animals Moral?," in Deane-Drummond and Clough, *Creaturely Theology*, 209.

¹⁸ Deane-Drummond, "Are Animals Moral?," 210.

¹⁹ For more different perspectives on this debate, see Bekoff and Pierce, *Wild Justice*; Clark, *The Nature of the Beast*; and Rowlands, *Can Animal Be Moral?*.

even be construed as a call to return to the morality of nature, namely predation: eat and be eaten. The question of predation in nature will be explored again in relation to insight (d). Theologically Deane-Drummonds position blunts the *imago dei*. In trying to stress the interconnectedness of creation, she reduces the unique role that humans are called to take up in relation to creation.

A different theological vision of the *imago dei* is offered by Ryan Patrick McLaughlin. Building on Linzey's work, he undertakes a detailed analysis of the divine image based on the biblical witness. He concludes that, "God endows humanity with the divine image for the sake of keeping the divine order of the cosmos."²⁰ That is the giving of the image is linked with the task of caring for creation. The purpose of the image is our responsibility for creation.

This work attempts to problematise Boff's anthropocentric focus. The critique that Boff's theology is too focused on humanity to see the importance of other creatures is a reoccurring theme throughout this thesis, but is especially discussed in relation to his liberation theology in chapter three (54-65) and his Franciscan theology in chapter four (75-83). I develop further a Trinitarian approach to animal theology in chapter seven (162-177).

b. God's own right as Creator establishes the rights of all sentient creatures

In Linzey's first work *Animal Rights: A Christian Assessment*, he argued for an extension of the idea of rights to animals based on a philosophical conception of rights.²¹ However, as he acknowledges in his later work *Christianity and the Rights of Animals*, the response to his *Animal Rights* made him realise that a fully theological account of animal rights was required.²² In developing a theological basis for animal rights, he takes Dietrich Bonhoeffer as his starting point. Bonhoeffer writes that, "There is no right before God [but] ... The rights of natural life are in the midst of the fallen world the reflected splendour of the glory of God's creation."²³ Rights language only properly belongs to God and is reflected in creation as part of God's glory. In *Christianity and the Rights of Animals* and *Animal Theology*, this idea was developed into "Theos- rights": God's own right as Creator established the rights of all sentient

²⁰ McLaughlin, *Christian Theology and the Status of Animals*, 96.

²¹ For philosophical discussions of why animals do not have rights see, Frey, *Interests and Rights*; Frey, *Rights Killing and Suffering*; and Leahy, *Against Liberation*.

²² For a conservative Christian critique of *Animal Rights* see, Griffiths, *The Human Use of Animals*.

²³ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 127; discussed in Linzey, *Christianity and the Rights of Animals*, 70-2.

creatures.²⁴ “When we speak of animal rights we conceptualize what is owed to animals as a matter of justice by the virtue of their Creator’s right.”²⁵ Theos-rights, as Linzey terms them, are God’s right to have her creation respected and are based on four claims. First, “Creation exists for its Creator.”²⁶ That is, creation belongs to God and not humanity. Second, God is for and on the side of his²⁷ creation. God is not indifferent to creation rather “God the Creator is tied to what divine nature has created in creation.”²⁸ God is interested in and loves her divine creation. Third, God’s “for-ness” towards creation is a “continual affirmation” rather than a once and for all action in which sentient beings are “indwelt by the Spirit.”²⁹ The Spirit moves within creation, especially sentient life, luring it towards the peaceable kingdom. Fourth, if God is for creation, so should humanity be. “It may well be the special task of humans within creation to do what other creatures cannot do, at least in a consciously deliberate way, namely honour, respect and rejoice in the creation in which God rejoices.”³⁰ Rights language then is used here in a specifically theological sense. Linzey acknowledges the limitations of rights language but maintains that it can “convey to us that the claims of animals are God-based claims of justice.”³¹ From this insight it follows that animals are not here for human use. They are individual sentient beings with intrinsic value of their own. Animal theology rejects a purely instrumentalist conception of animals—the view that they are here for our use, a means to human ends. Instrumentalism will be discussed in relation to the Catholic tradition in chapter two (40-47).

Theos rights is perhaps the most debated idea within Linzey’s corpus.³² Responses to Linzey’s idea fall predominately into one of two categories. The first is to say that rights language is not appropriate language in a theological context.³³ Two different examples of this come from Stephen Webb and Stanley Hauerwas and John

²⁴ For a full exploration of “theos-rights,” see “The Theos-Rights of Animals” in Linzey, *Christianity and the Rights of Animals*, 68–98. Linzey of course is not the first theologian to suggest that animals have rights. See for example, Lawler, “On the Rights of Animals.”

²⁵ Linzey, *Animal Theology*, 27.

²⁶ Linzey, *Animal Theology*, 24.

²⁷ Throughout this thesis I refer to the divine as “he” and “she” interchangeably, to indicate the non-gendered nature of God.

²⁸ Linzey, *Animal Theology*, 24.

²⁹ Linzey, *Animal Theology*, 25.

³⁰ Linzey, *Animal Theology*, 25.

³¹ Linzey, *Animal Theology*, 27.

³² See for example, Marshall, “Does Creation have Rights?,” and Barclay, “Animal Rights: A Critique.”

³³ See for example, Barclay, “Animal Rights: A Critique,” 49-61; and Linzey’s response, “Animal Rights: A Reply to Barclay.”

Berkman. Webb argues that the theological language of grace and giving is more appropriate than the language of rights because “no matter how strategically important rights language is for the animal liberation movement, it is still preceded by and grounded in acts of charity. Giving is the more fundamental gesture.”³⁴ Hauerwas and Berkman go further still and reject the idea of rights for *both* human and animals. They argue that “Christians have far richer resources by which to address the question of how we should relate to other animals. Any appeal to rights pales in relation to the peace and love of Christ to which the Christian is called.”³⁵ Linzey pre-empts this criticism when he acknowledges, “in fighting for the positive good of animals and humans, Christians will need to utilize a varied vocabulary. All that is claimed here is that rights language should be part of the necessary armoury.”³⁶

The second response tends to critique Linzey from a philosophical perspective. To take one example, Clare Palmer interprets Theos-rights as a form of the philosophical argument for rights on the basis of certain capabilities. The argument goes that in order for beings to have rights, those rights are located in a similar quality or capacity that those beings share.³⁷ In Linzey’s case it is the capacity to be indwelt by the Spirit that humans and animals share. Basing rights on similarities or similar capacities, she argues, is problematic. “The emphasis on ethical ‘alikehood’ means that *differences* such as species membership, domestication, historical context, and location are not morally relevant. No particular individual characteristics or histories can enter into any ethical decision.”³⁸ Palmer, however, seems to have missed the central argument of Linzey’s position – it is not the capacities of the individual beings that gives them moral rights. It is God the Creator who has rights, and by extension only do other beings share in those rights. In short, Palmer has misunderstood the theological basis of the argument and failed to appreciate the development of Linzey’s thought from a philosophical to a theological argument.

The conception of rights in relation to Boff’s work is considered more fully in chapter five (112-119).

³⁴ Webb, *On God and Dogs*, 42.

³⁵ Hauerwas and Berkman, “A Trinitarian Theology of the ‘Chief End’ of ‘All Flesh’,” 67.

³⁶ Linzey, *Christianity and the Rights of Animals*, 95.

³⁷ The “capabilities approach” in animal rights is associated with the work of Martha Nussbaum. See Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice*; and Nussbaum, “The Capabilities Approach and Animal Entitlements,” in Beauchamp and Frey, *The Oxford Handbook of Animal Ethics*.

³⁸ Palmer, “Animals in Christian Ethics,” 168; original emphasis.

c. In Christ God embraces the flesh of all sentient creatures

In the prologue of John's Gospel it says first "in him was life" (1:4) and "the Word became flesh" (1: 14).³⁹ These are two related but distinct ideas. The first is that *all life* is comes from the Word. Linzey draws upon Edward Irving to explain the significance of this phrase: "Life we hold ... [to be] the purchase of Christ's sacrifice made from the foundation of the world ... Whether you regard the life of any individual or the life of the race of men, or the life of animals ... it is all a fruit, a common fruit of redemption, a benefit of the death of Christ."⁴⁰ The life encompassed by the Word is all life in creation. The second is that in the incarnation God took on flesh. Linzey interprets this to mean, not just human flesh, but all creaturely flesh. Flesh is an important distinction here, as it is what separates all animals, both human and non human, from the rest of creation. Flesh is also the basis of sentience and suffering. Only those beings who have flesh have the ability to suffer. In saying that Christ took on the flesh of sentient creatures, a claim is being made about the suffering of all sentient creatures. As Jürgen Moltmann writes, "God has made the suffering of the world his own in the Cross of his Son."⁴¹ Suffering is what is redeemed by Christ on the cross, suffering that includes animal suffering. One thinker who posits a moral equivalence between the suffering of innocence animals and the suffering of the innocent Christ, is John Henry Newman. He writes, "Think then, my brethren, of your feelings at cruelty practiced upon brute animals, and you will gain one sort of feeling which the history of Christ's Cross and Passion ought to excite within you."⁴² God in Christ affirms his love affair with all flesh.

Christian theology has traditionally tended to diminish the importance of nonhuman suffering.⁴³ To cite one example, Joseph Rickaby in his textbook on moral philosophy writes we have "no duties of charity, nor duties of any kind, to the lower animals, as neither to sticks and stones" and further that "in all that conduces to the sustenance of man may we give pain to brutes ... Nor are we bound to any anxious

³⁹ For a discussion see, Keener, *Gospel of John*, 385 and 406.

⁴⁰ Irving, *Collected Writings*, 295-6; discussed in Linzey, *Christianity and the Rights of Animals*, 30-32.

⁴¹ Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 277; see a discussion in Linzey, *Why Animal Suffering Matters*, 164-5.

⁴² Newman, "The Crucifixion," 138; discussed in Linzey, *Why Animal Suffering Matters*, 37-40.

⁴³ See for example, Geach, *Providence and Evil*. Geach argues that "God cannot share with his creatures" the "virtue of sympathy with physical suffering" (76-80). See Linzey's response to Geach in Linzey, *Christianity and the Rights of Animals*, 58-62.

care to make this pain as little as may be.”⁴⁴ In the light of this tradition, concern for animal suffering and pain may be considered at best a challenge.⁴⁵ Indeed even amongst thinkers who do not deny animal suffering there is a tendency to diminish its significance. A. Richard Kingston argues that “British theodicy, although not formally denying animal suffering, has virtually done so by reducing its intensity to almost zero.”⁴⁶ This is not just a trend in historic theological thought. At a recent conference in Rome, I responded to two examples of this. The first from South African theologian Ernst M. Conradie who not only saw no difference between eating a carrot and a rabbit, he argued that animals could be intrinsically valued and eaten at the same time.⁴⁷ Even if one thinks Conradie’s position extreme, Christopher Southgate at the same conference gave a whole paper on concern for animal extinction, without mentioning that extinction is a process in which animals suffer and die.⁴⁸ Even ecological theologians focused on climate change concerns have a tendency to not see animal suffering as a moral concern.

Many subsequent thinkers have taken up the idea of flesh as a central idea within animal theology. For example, David Cunningham builds on Linzey’s notion of flesh.⁴⁹ Cunningham suggests that “an account of the theological significance of flesh provides a ... starting-point for reflection on the relationships among elements of the created order, precisely because it blurs the boundaries among various species and thereby emphasises their interdependence.”⁵⁰ Flesh has become a key category for discussing human-animal relations because what we share in flesh is sentience.

Similarly in his *On Animals*, David Clough acknowledges the assumption of flesh in the incarnation as God’s taking on of creatureliness: “The doctrine of the incarnation does not therefore establish a theological boundary between humans and other animals; instead, it is best understood as God stepping over the boundary between creator and creation and taking on creatureliness.”⁵¹ Clough does not in this instance, however, make the connection between flesh and suffering, and thereby

⁴⁴ Rickaby, *Moral Philosophy*, 249-50.

⁴⁵ Rickaby only reflects the traditional view that animals are here for human use. See for example, Palazzini, *Dictionary of Moral Theology*. Indeed natural theologian Charles Raven doubted that animals can experience suffering (Raven, *The Creator Spirit*).

⁴⁶ Kingston, “Theodicy and Animal Welfare,” in Linzey and Regan, *Animals and Christianity*, 77.

⁴⁷ Conradie, “Could Eating other Creatures be a Way of Recognising their Intrinsic Value?”

⁴⁸ Southgate, “Reflections on Migration of Species in Response to Climate Change.”

⁴⁹ Cunningham, “The Way of All Flesh,” in Deane-Drummond and Clough, *Creaturely Theology*, 113.

⁵⁰ Cunningham, “The Way of All Flesh,” 117.

⁵¹ Clough, *On Animals*, 103.

misses an important theological interpretation of the redemption of suffering in Christ. However, it is included here as an example of how others have reflected on the idea of “flesh.”

The significance of flesh will be discussed in chapter three in relation to Boff’s liberation theology (56-57), and animal suffering will be discussed in light of his ecological theology in chapter five (119-122). There is an exploration of the Catholic tradition on animal suffering in chapters two (40-47) and six (128-135).

d. In Christ God rejects the fallenness of the world and wills to create a new heaven and earth

In Christ, God redeems the world, not just humanity. This simple insight alerts us to the idea that creation, including animals, need redemption. Implicit in holding that creation needs redemption is an acceptance that creation is fallen and imperfect and in need of redemption. For Linzey, the fallenness of the world is most clear in the suffering of animals. “Animals, we can properly suppose, have something to be redeemed *from*, namely the bondage to decay and the groans and sighs to which they are currently subject.”⁵² However, to accept the fallenness of the world is not to argue that creation does not also reveal the divine: “the very nature of creation is always ambiguous; it points both ways; it affirms and denies God at one and the same time.”⁵³ Creation is *ambiguous*, that is it both discloses and at the same time does not disclose God, the Creator. The significance of this is that “It follows that there can be no straightforward moral or theological appeal to the way nature is.”⁵⁴ Creation is not then a moral textbook, from which we can read off a series of commands. Like all creation, the natural world, both reveals and hides her Creator.

Many eco-theologians, including Boff, are keen to distance themselves from the idea of the fall of nature.⁵⁵ This distancing is seen as important because ideas of the corruption of nature have been seen as buttressing the use and abuse of creation. Thomas Berry argues that “We need to move from a spirituality of alienation from the natural world to a spirituality of intimacy with the natural world.”⁵⁶ It is our alienation

⁵² Linzey, *Animal Rites*, 108.

⁵³ Linzey, *Animal Theology*, 81; my emphases.

⁵⁴ Linzey, *Animal Theology*, 81.

⁵⁵ For a classic rejection of the fall of nature see, Fox, *Original Blessing*. In his rejection of the fall of nature, Fox accepts predation as God-given.

⁵⁶ Berry, “Christianity’s Role in the Earth Project,” in Hessel and Radford Ruether, *Christianity and Ecology*, 128.

from the natural world that has justified our abuse of it. Regaining a sense of our interconnection with the natural world and the wonder and beauty of it is seen as essential to treating the world better. This sense has led theologians such as Sallie McFague to conceive of the world as God's body as an affirmation of the created world.⁵⁷

An alternative to the ambiguity of creation is to affirm as James Nash does that there are moral norms to be found in nature. He argues that "Ecologically sensitized and otherwise reformed, the natural law approach can provide or point to an adequate framework for social and ecological ethics."⁵⁸ He argues for the augmentation of natural law theory with a "sense of ecosystemic compatibility."⁵⁹ In short, for Nash "following nature makes moral sense."⁶⁰ However, following nature which is characterised by predation, entropy and decay leaves us with difficult moral questions. For example, is killing God's will? Is the law of the jungle the same as natural law?⁶¹ There are even some eco-theologians, such as Richard Cartwright Austin who see "the beauty of predation."⁶² The question of predation is a difficult one and will be discussed at length in chapter five (98-100). The ambiguity of creation in relation to ethics will be discussed in more detail in chapter five (107-112).

e. The cross of Christ is the symbol of liberation of every creature suffering from bondage. God in Christ is the face of suffering of the world

In Christ, God rejects the fallenness of the world and takes all suffering upon himself on the cross. "If it is believed, in fidelity to the gospel story, that God truly enters into creaturely suffering, then there can be no good reason for excluding God's suffering presence from the realm of the non-human creation as well."⁶³ In short, God does not will the suffering of animals or humans. The suffering God in Christ redeems all suffering.

Traditional conceptions of atonement understand human bondage to be liberated by the redemptive act of the cross. Animal theology understands the

⁵⁷ McFague, *The Body of God*.

⁵⁸ Nash, "Seeking Moral Norms in Nature," in Hessel and Radford Ruether, *Christianity and Ecology*, 228.

⁵⁹ Nash, "Seeking Moral Norms in Nature," 246.

⁶⁰ Nash, "Seeking Moral Norms in Nature," 246.

⁶¹ A full discussion of natural law and its relationship to creation is beyond the scope of this thesis, but for further discussion see, Northcott, *The Environment and Christian Ethics*, 199-256;

⁶² Austin, *Beauty of the Lord*, 197.

⁶³ Linzey, *Animal Theology*, 52.

liberation that occurs to be one that encompasses the whole world, but especially other suffering creatures. Discussions of the idea of redemption in Boff's work will be considered in chapter three.

The idea that salvation in Christ extends beyond human beings is not a new idea. Indeed it is present in the biblical witness – “all things” in Christ.⁶⁴ However, the idea that animal suffering is not God's will is one that has received strong opposition in some Christian circles. For some hunting, trapping and killing animals is a form of glorifying God.⁶⁵ For example, W. E. Nunnally argues that “every aspect of bow hunting can become his or her own act of worship ... [since] the Scriptures sanction and even encourage the activity of hunting.”⁶⁶ These arguments reject the idea that God wishes us to reduce suffering in the world, instead seeing the act of killing as participating in God's creation. A common response to the idea that Jesus does not will animal suffering is to cite the story of Jesus and the pigs, in which Jesus appears to cast the demons into the pigs and the pigs drown (Matt. 8:28-34). As Stephen M. Vantassel argues “Christ had complete control of the situation and yet did not work to reduce animal suffering.”⁶⁷ The argument goes: if Jesus does not care about animal suffering, we do not need to.

Our conception of God's relationship to creation and whether or not nature is in some sense “fallen” is discussed at length in chapter five (107-112).

f. God's generosity in Christ necessitates the response of moral generosity. Lordship should be expressed as service

What we see in the life and death of Christ is the outpouring of divine generosity. Christ expresses God's lordship and power over the world through service and

⁶⁴ See Col. 1:19–20: “For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself *all things*, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross” (my emphases). For a discussion, see Wright, *Colossians and Philemon*, 17–22. See also Eph. 1:8–10: “With all wisdom and insight he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up *all things* in him, things in heaven and things on earth” (my emphases). For a discussion, see Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 153–246.

⁶⁵ For a Christian defence of hunting for sport see, Ammon, *The Christian Hunter's Survival Guide*. For Linzey's response to Ammon see chapter 7 “Hunting as the Anti-Gospel of Predation,” in Linzey, *Animal Theology*, 114-124. Linzey is not the first theologian to oppose sport hunting on the grounds that Christians should seek to liberate animals from their fallen state, see for example, Carpenter, “Christian Faith and the Moral Aspects of Hunting,” in Moore, *Against Hunting*.

⁶⁶ Nunnally, “Bow Hunting as an Act of Worship,” in Hill and White, *God, Nimrod, and the World*, 404-5.

⁶⁷ Vantassel, “Dominion over Animals,” in Hill and White, *God, Nimrod, and the World*, 344.

sacrifice. This is the basis of what Linzey terms the “paradigm of generosity.”⁶⁸ From Christological assumptions, he argues that God is on the side of the poor, the weak, and the marginalised. The example of Jesus should produce in us the response of moral generosity. “The pattern of obligation disclosed by Christ makes no appeal to equality. The obligation is always and everywhere on the ‘higher’ to sacrifice for the ‘lower’; for the strong, powerful and rich to give to those who are vulnerable, poor or powerless.”⁶⁹ Those who cannot speak for themselves lay a special moral claim upon us, especially children and animals. That adult humans have such power over animals is at the heart of our responsibility for them: that power should be expressed as service. “It is the sheer vulnerability and powerlessness of animals, and correspondingly our absolute power over them which strengthens and compels the response of moral generosity.”⁷⁰ This idea may be termed, “the moral priority of the weak.”⁷¹ Christian theology invites us to go further, and see that the weakest amongst us are deserving of more, not less, moral concern.

The moral priority of the weak is at the heart of Linzey’s animal theology and has also received a large amount of criticism. Whether the category of the weak and or the poor should be applied to animals has been criticised in terms of competing moral concerns. Neil Messer argues that Linzey’s conception of moral priority could “lead humans to sacrifice their own interests and well-being rather than exploit animals.”⁷² He uses examples of vegetarianism and animal experimentation to suggest that the moral priority of the weak could involve reducing harm to animals at the expense of their own wellbeing. Messer’s examples involve scenarios in which humans have to move away from their own self-interest for the good of animals. While one might argue that some level of sacrifice on the part of humanity may be necessary for other species to thrive, his examples do seem to pose an either/or problem in which moral calculations can only be made in favour of either humans or animals. As I have discussed elsewhere, the moral calculations in regard to animal experimentation are rarely humans or animals, but rather humans *and* animals.⁷³ In other words, it is not necessary to pose scenarios where one must choose between

⁶⁸ See especially “The Generosity Paradigm,” in Linzey, *Animal Theology*, 30–33.

⁶⁹ Linzey, *Animal Theology*, 32.

⁷⁰ Linzey, *Animal Theology*, 32.

⁷¹ See “The Moral Priority of the Weak,” in Linzey, *Animal Theology*, 26–44.

⁷² Messer, “Humans, Animals, Evolution and Ends,” in Deane Drummond and Clough, *Creaturely Theology*, 226.

⁷³ See Linzey and Linzey, *The Ethical Case Against Animal Experiments*, 51–53.

animal wellbeing and human wellbeing as they are often more intertwined than is supposed. Messer's ideas will be discussed further in relation to vegetarianism in relation to insight (g). But in relation to the critique that humans may have to give up their own interests for the sake of other beings. That is precisely Linzey's point – humans are to be the servant species, and that is a costly role: *the higher sacrificing itself for the lower*. This will be discussed further below.

In considering the practical implications of moral priority, ecological theologians tend to be more concerned with the whole, while animal theologians are more concerned with the individual animals. This critique is typified by Daniel Cowdin who argues that “exclusive moral concern for individual animals becomes incoherent at the level of land management. One thinks immediately of animal rights activists protesting the reduction of deer populations running ecologically rampant for lack of predators.”⁷⁴ Cowdin's language is laden with assumptions such as “land management” and “ecologically rampant” that would be picked up by animal theologians. His language belies an assumption that humans need to “manage” animals and the environment, and that there is such a thing as ecological balance to be achieved. The debate between competing moral priorities in ecological and animal ethics will be discussed at length in chapter five (119-122). Cowdin's ideas serve to provide us with an indication of the issues at stake.

The role that humans should assume in relation to creation is often related to the giving on “dominion” in Genesis 1:28. Dominion will be considered at length in chapter five (104-107), but Linzey argues that human dominion should be seen through the lens of Genesis 1:29, in which humanity is given a vegetarian diet. As Linzey is fond of saying, “herb-eating dominion is hardly a license for tyranny.”⁷⁵ Dominion is misunderstood when it is interpreted as domination over animals. Instead dominion should be understood christologically: Humans are “the servant species.”⁷⁶ The concept of the servant species is eloquently expressed by Linzey: “humans are the species uniquely commissioned to exercise a self-sacrificial priesthood, after the one High Priest, not just for members of their own species, but for all sentient creatures. The groaning and travailing of fellow creatures requires a species capable

⁷⁴ Cowdin, “The Moral Status of Otherkind in Christian Ethics,” in Hessel and Radford Ruether, *Christianity and Ecology*, 271,

⁷⁵ Linzey, *Animal Theology*, 126.

⁷⁶ For a full exploration of this idea, see “Humans as the Servant Species,” in Linzey, *Animal Theology*, 45–61.

of co-operating with God in the healing and liberating of creation.”⁷⁷ Animal theology does not deny human uniqueness, rather it conceives of that uniqueness as rooted in our God-given ability to serve creation.

The conception of humans as the servant species contains within it a strong idea of human responsibility towards creation and animals in particular. Even if other theologians have accepted the idea of human accountability for creation, few have taken on the strong notion of service, instead opting for roles conceived as “stewards” or “carers.”

One prominent example of the theology of “stewardship” is offered by *The Cornwall Declaration on Environmental Stewardship*.⁷⁸ The Cornwall declaration is a position endorsed by Jews, Roman Catholics and Protestants who see care for the earth as compatible with the capitalist free market economy. The declaration maintains that: “human stewardship ... unlocks the potential in creation for all the earth’s inhabitants as good. Humanity alone of all the created order is capable of developing other resources and can thus enrich creation, so it can properly be said that the human person is the most valuable resource on earth.”⁷⁹ The problem with this conception of stewardship is that it takes as read human control and manipulation of the earth. Furthermore, it fails to recognise our special duties to other animals, aside from the environment, and in particular the significance of animal sentience.

Another alternative to service, is the ethical attitude of care. This is frequently associated with feminist theologians, and argues that the language of care is preferable because it emphasises the nurturing role humans should assume towards creation. Care ethics arose as an alternative to, and in dialogue with, animal rights language.⁸⁰ Deane Curtin argues that “an ethic of care has an intuitive appeal from the standpoint of ecological ethics. Whether or not nonhuman animals have rights, we certainly can and do care for them.”⁸¹ Again, “The caring-for model does not require that those recipients of our care must be ‘equal’ to us ... It is based on developing the capacity to care, not the criterion of equality.”⁸² While it is not possible to offer a extensive engagement here, one obvious critique is: What counts as “care” or a

⁷⁷ Linzey, *Animal Theology*, 45.

⁷⁸ Cornwall Alliance, “The Cornwall Declaration on Environmental Stewardship.”

⁷⁹ Cornwall Alliance, “The Cornwall Declaration on Environmental Stewardship.”

⁸⁰ For a discussion of the development of the ethics of care see Donovan, “Feminism and the Treatment of Animals,” in Armstrong and Botzler, *The Animal Ethics Reader*, 47-54.

⁸¹ Curtin, “Toward an Ecological Ethic of Care,” in Donovan and Adams, *Beyond Animal Rights*, 65.

⁸² Curtin, “Toward an Ecological Ethic of Care,” 68.

“caring attitude”?⁸³ In short, care does not seem to provide a robust enough framework to support moral decision-making.

The relationship of humans towards creation, especially in relation to the idea of the servant species, will be discussed further in chapters three (58-62), four (85-87) and five (122-124).

g. The life giving Spirit, source of all that is wonderful, animates every creature.

Approximating the peaceable kingdom is empowered by the spirit

The Spirit is the source of all that is wonderful and of all moral enlightenment. All work towards greater concern for creation is only possible with and through the Spirit. The Spirit is the basis of all moral effort, awakening in us moral insights and leading us to work towards the peaceable kingdom.

In *Animal Theology*, Linzey discusses the biblical basis for vegetarianism (Gen 1: 1.29-30). In his discussion of Genesis, he reflects that, “even though the early Hebrews were neither pacifists nor vegetarians, they were deeply convicted of the view that violence between humans and animals, and indeed between animal species themselves, was not God’s original will for creation.”⁸⁴ Although Linzey explores this idea most clearly in relation to vegetarianism, it is an insight that can be applied to many aspects of our relationship with animals. The peaceable kingdom as it is envisioned here, is about living a life as free from violence as possible. It is the narrative of Noah that makes this clear how violence is not God’s intention, “The radical message of the Noah story (often overlooked by commentators) is that God would rather not have us be at all if we must be violent. It is violence itself within every part of creation that is the preeminent mark of corruption and sinfulness.”⁸⁵ The move away from violence is not to suggest that this is easy or even possible in all circumstances. “There may have been times in the past or even now in the present where we have difficulty imagining a life without killing for food. But *where we do have the moral freedom* to live without recourse to violence, there is a *prima facie*

⁸³ The limitations, if not the confusions, of caring are explored in Szybel, “Being Careful About Caring.” For a discussion of this idea in relation to Kathy Rudy’s work, see my Linzey, “Review of Loving Animals.”

⁸⁴ Linzey, *Animal Theology*, 126.

⁸⁵ Linzey, *Animal Theology*, 127.

case to do so. To kill without the strict conditions of necessity is to live a life with insufficient generosity.”⁸⁶

Messer has been critical of the language of approximating the kingdom, as he is concerned by the extent to which humans are deemed to be engaged in bringing forth the kingdom. “Linzey’s language of ‘approximating’ the peaceable kingdom has its dangers, because it tends to obscure this distinction between witnessing to and establishing the kingdom.”⁸⁷ Messer’s argument is based on the idea that the call to approximate the kingdom, may not take sufficiently seriously the fallenness of the human condition and the world. He questions the idea that humans are capable of saving themselves or the world: “We can only live in the world in dependence on God’s mercy and forgiveness.”⁸⁸ The idea that we can help enable the kingdom is to downplay our indebtedness to God. Further, he argues that “We are *not* called to inaugurate or establish that kingdom; the attempt to do so risks lapsing into a dangerous and potentially inhumane utopianism or fanaticism.”⁸⁹ Fanaticism can be allayed, according to Messer, if we are attentive to the question of whether taking an animal life in particular circumstances is “permitted or commanded.”⁹⁰ To use his example, when alternatives to animal use are found in the field of animal experimentation “then avoiding the killing of animals becomes a simple matter of faithfulness, not fanaticism.”⁹¹

Taking seriously the fallenness of the human condition and how far we are capable of approximating the kingdom is a fair question to pose. Unlike Boff (as discussed in chapter five, 107-112) Linzey grapples with the idea of the fall and to what extent humans are capable of acting morally.⁹² But Messer’s critique simply misses the mark, as he fails to account for the role of the Spirit in approximating the kingdom. Linzey is clear that, the role of servant species “is the divine work of redemption to which humans *are called by the power of the Spirit*.”⁹³ No moral action is possible without the Spirit. God awakens in us moral insight, hope, and can even help us attain, in a limited way, moral action moving us towards the kingdom.

⁸⁶ Linzey, *Animal Theology*, 135; original emphases.

⁸⁷ Messer, “Humans, Animals, Evolution and Ends,” 224.

⁸⁸ Messer, “Humans, Animals, Evolution and Ends,” 225.

⁸⁹ Messer, “Humans, Animals, Evolution and Ends,” 224.

⁹⁰ Messer, “Humans, Animals, Evolution and Ends,” 226.

⁹¹ Messer, “Humans, Animals, Evolution and Ends,” 226-7.

⁹² See the chapter, “Animal Rights and Parasitical Nature,” in Linzey, *Animal Theology*, 76-91.

⁹³ Linzey, *Animal Theology*, 55; my emphases.

The kingdom will be discussed in relation to Boff's liberation theology in chapter three (63-65). A further exploration and development of my own ideas on moral sight in relation to the kingdom is given in chapter seven (169-174).

Brilliant though many of these insights are it would obviously be wrong to conclude that Linzey's work is the final word on animal theology, nor would he want it to be. The key issue for this thesis is how and in what direction it should be developed.

1.2. Methodology and overview

This section combines my method with an overview of the thesis as a guide for readers. My overarching aim is to investigate whether Boff's theology can provide a new impetus to achieving a fully satisfying theology of sentient creatures, one that builds on the foundational insights of animal theology. With the help of Boff, I am trying to develop animal theology into a more coherent position.

The question, however, which might not unreasonably be posed, is – why focus on Leonardo Boff? First, he is the only first generation liberation theologian to move from focusing on the poor to encompassing the environment in his thought. Second, he has written over sixty books,⁹⁴ which have been translated into multiple languages, on liberation theology, the environment, and the poor. Since Boff is one of the very few Catholic, liberation theologians, perhaps one of the only Catholic theologians, to have addressed the non-human world, he is the obvious starting point for developing animal theology. The second chapter addresses in detail the importance of his work. It situates Boff's work in his theological and Brazilian context, as well as, reviewing the dominant tradition on animals in Catholic thought and in Brazilian culture.

Boff's perspective has changed over time, so I have selected the major relevant texts of his work that may have some bearing on animal theology. Each of those works is given a chapter, in which I begin by summarising the arguments in the texts as they relate to creation. In doing so, I seek to isolate both the problems and the potential within Boff's work for a new theological understanding of animals. The chapters cover the following ground. The third chapter explores the place of animals in Boff's seminal work of liberation theology, *Jesus Christ Liberator: A Critical*

⁹⁴ For his full bibliography, see the bibliography 229-234.

Christology of Our Time.⁹⁵ The fourth discusses animals in the light of Boff's Franciscan work *Saint Francis: A Model for Human Liberation*,⁹⁶ which marks the beginning of Boff's work embracing concern for the environment. The fifth chapter looks at Boff's embracing of ecological theology in his *Ecology and Liberation: A New Paradigm*⁹⁷ and *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*.⁹⁸ The examination seeks to answer the question of whether Boff's ecological theology sufficiently accounts for the life and suffering of individual animals. Throughout these three chapters, based on the foundational theological insights outlined in the previous section, I pose two methodological questions to his work:

1. What, if any, consideration does he give to animals as a theological concern?
2. What aspects, if any, of his theology could help the development of animal theology?

I pose the second question regardless of whether he himself has made the connection.

In chapter six, I turn to my third methodological question:

3. Has his theology been a catalyst for greater concern for animals in the Roman Catholic Church?

The sixth chapter compares the trajectory of Boff's thought with that of the Roman Catholic tradition, exploring to what extent ideas about animals have developed in the last fifty years. I argue that Boff's ecological work has been a catalyst for change, which is seen most clearly in the pontificate of Pope Francis. In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis universalises many of Boff's ideas on the environment and shifts the focus of theology towards of ecology and the poor. The last section of the sixth chapter explores how Pope Francis's encyclical is being received in Brazil.

After exploring these questions in chapter seven I propose to a more animal-friendly and creation-friendly theology inspired by his work. This section offers original theology inspired by Boff: a Trinitarian liberation theology conceiving of the

⁹⁵ Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*; originally published as *Jesus Cristo Libertador*.

⁹⁶ Boff, *Saint Francis*; originally published as *São Francisco de Assis*.

⁹⁷ Boff, *Ecology and Liberation*; originally published as *Ecologia, Mundialização, Espiritualidade*.

⁹⁸ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*; originally published as *Ecologia*.

Trinity as Gentleness, Solidarity and Fraternity. I then develop three of his ideas, namely – communion as being “for” creation, entering the Triune sight, and a Trinitarian model for our relationships with animals – to produce a more inclusive theology. The conclusion summarises the conclusions of the thesis, and suggests avenues for further research on the topic.

Throughout the thesis, most notably in chapters one and five, the interviews from my research in Brazil are drawn upon. The aim of the interviews was to achieve a better contextual understanding of the perception of Boff’s work, liberation theology, ecological theology, and animals. The interviews I performed cannot be considered in any sense representative of either the animal movement in Brazil or liberation theology, rather they represent personal impressions based on the expertise of the interviewee. They are the product of chance and willingness on the part of the participants to talk about the realities of Brazil as they saw them at that moment. I am profoundly grateful that so many people were willing to share so much of their time, energy, and thoughtful engagement. Depending on their expertise, the interviewees were asked about liberation theology or the animal movement. Some were also asked about the environmental movement in Brazil, and all were asked for their thoughts on the work of Boff. The purpose of the interviews is to add supplementary contextual knowledge to the thesis wherever possible.

The interviews followed a series of questions designed to allow the interviewee to give wide-ranging answers. Wherever possible the interviews were conducted in person, if not possible by email. The questions were viewed as initial starting points from which to begin conversations that then flowed into different areas depending on the interviewees’ expertise. All the in person interviews were recorded, with permission, and then transcribed. The interviews were then sent to the interviewees for approval, where they corrected and revised their final transcripts. All excerpts used in this thesis have been reviewed and approved.

The interviewees fall into two categories: liberation theologians and practitioners, and those academically engaged in the animal movement and practitioners. To help navigate the varying expertise of the interviewees here are brief introductions to each of them. Luiz Carlos Susin is the only interviewee who may be considered to bridge both categories. He is a professor of theology at Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul, executive secretary of the World Social Forum of Theology and Liberation, and editor of *Concilium*. Susin is also the first

liberation theologian to write a work on animal theology and liberation with Gilmar Zampieri, *A Vida Dos Outros: Ética e Teologia da Libertação Animal* (The Life of Others: Ethics and Theology of Animal Liberation).⁹⁹ Jung Mo Sung is professor of religious studies at the Methodist University of São Paulo. He is a liberation theologian who writes primarily on theology and economics. Claudio de Oliveira Ribeiro is a Methodist pastor and professor of theology and religious sciences at the Methodist University of São Paulo. He is a liberation theologian who has written on the subjects of liberation theology and gratitude, and pluralism and liberation. Keila Guimarães is a member of the Methodist Church in Botafogo, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. She is the national coordinator for the Shade and Fresh Water Project, which focuses on the education of young girls. Her interview is not referred to in the thesis as her interview and our meeting primarily served to give context to the practical work of liberation theology in Brazil. However, she is included here and in the acknowledgements as our time together was particularly informative and inspiring.

Carlos Frederico Ramos de Jesus is a lawyer and legal scholar. He coordinates the animal ethics and law study group in the Faculty of Law at the University of São Paulo. Bruno Garrote is a lawyer and a legal scholar. He teaches a course on “The Body and Legal Consciousness” in the Faculty of Law at the University of São Paulo. Daniel Braga Lourenço is professor of environmental law at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. His research interests are at the intersection of environmental and animal law. Carlos Naconecy is an independent scholar and director of the animal ethics department of the Brazilian Vegetarian Society. The only group interview conducted was with members of Felinos du Campus at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro. The group exists to care for the colony of stray cats that lives at the university. It is made up of volunteers from the university and the local community. I spoke to three members: Patricia Österreicher, a faculty member, Thaissa da Silva Mocoés Puppín, a student, and Maria Teresa Barcellos, a community volunteer. The interview focused on the struggles the group faced in helping the cats, and their perception of attitudes towards cats, and animals in general, in Brazil.

I had also hoped to be able to interview Boff himself during my time in Brazil, but unfortunately he was travelling and this was not possible. The first appendix contains the questions I sent to him, in English and Portuguese, to which he declined

⁹⁹ Susin and Zampieri, *A Vida Dos Outros*.

to answer. The second appendix contains sample interview questions to indicate the scope and kind of questions utilised. Appendices 3–10 contain edited excerpts of the interviews that are cited in the thesis. These excerpts are included to give context to the discussions that are referenced. The whole interviews are not included for the sake of brevity. The last appendix contains the UTREC authorisation letter.

In the next chapter, I indicate the significance of Boff's work and situate it within the Catholic tradition and Brazilian context in which he writes.

Chapter 2: Boff and His Context

The purpose of this chapter is to contextualise both Boff's work and the place of animals in Catholic thought and in Brazilian culture. A biographical sketch of the life and significance of Boff's work is offered in order to ground further discussion. The place of animals in Catholic thought is briefly considered as a benchmark from which to explore Boff's position. Through the use of interviews conducted in Brazil, an exploration of the how animals are understood in Brazilian culture is offered.

2.1. The significance of Boff's journey

This thesis focuses on the work of theologian and Brazilian public intellectual Leonardo Boff. He was born in Concórdia, Brazil, on December 14, 1938, into a large Catholic family of Italian descent. In 1959, Boff completed a study on Franciscan spirituality in a Saint Francis of Assisi convent,¹⁰⁰ before going on to study philosophy in Curitiba, Brazil, and then theology at the Franciscan Faculty of Theology in Petrópolis, Rio de Janeiro. Both he and his brother Clodovis were ordained priests within the Catholic Church, with Leonardo becoming a Franciscan in 1965. He "submitted his doctoral dissertation to then-professor Joseph Ratzinger"¹⁰¹ at the Ludwig-Maximilian University in Munich in 1971 and as such was trained in the European tradition, like many of his liberation theology counterparts. His dissertation was titled "The Church as Sacrament in the Horizon of the World's Experience: Essay of a Structural-Functional Fundamentalization of the Ecclesiology."¹⁰² His intellectual thought was principally formed by his Franciscan studies and his student years in 1960s Germany. This period was also shaped by the military dictatorship that came to power in 1964 in Brazil and remained in power until 1985.¹⁰³ From 1970 until 1992, he was a professor of systematic and ecumenical

¹⁰⁰ See <http://leonardoboff.eco.br/site-eng/bio/cv.htm>. Although not specified, this is probably the Saint Francis of Assisi Convent in Salvador, Brazil.

¹⁰¹ Cox, *The Silencing of Leonardo Boff*, 28. Cox writes that Boff's dissertation "was judged by his professors to be not only acceptable, but brilliant and unusually promising" (28). One of those professors was Ratzinger, who after the publication of Boff's later work, *Church, Charisma, and Power*, would become Boff's chief critic as prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, resulting in Boff's silencing in 1985.

¹⁰² See <http://leonardoboff.eco.br/site-eng/bio/cv.htm>.

¹⁰³ Pinheiro describes the military regime as responsible "for grave human rights violations that affected tens of thousands of Brazilians for twenty-one years. The estimates of numbers of people arrested after the coup vary from 10,000 to 50,000. Illegal detention and, in particular, systematic use of torture, resulting in death in many cases, became a common practice of the dictatorship's security

theology at the Franciscan Theological Institute in Petrópolis. The Vatican silenced him in 1985 after the publication of *Igreja: Carisma e Poder* (which appeared in English in 1985 as *Church: Charism and Power*,¹⁰⁴ hereafter cited as *Charism and Power*) and tried to silence him again in 1992, at which point Boff left the priesthood. Asked by interviewer Mac Margolis in *Newsweek International* in 1999 why he remained loyal to the Church, Boff replied, “I define myself more as [a] Franciscan Catholic than [a] Roman Catholic.” He elaborated: “Never forget, Saint Francis was a layman, he wasn’t a priest or part of the hierarchy. This is possible within the Christian faith.”¹⁰⁵ Boff’s Franciscan faith is central to all his theological arguments. His perspective on Saint Francis underpins his liberation and ecological theology.

Boff’s theological journey mirrors and contributes to the Catholic Church’s changing position on both liberation theology and ecological theology. Boff’s name is largely synonymous with the conflict between liberation theologians and the Vatican. Before I turn to the specific events of Boff’s silencing, I will outline that general debate between the Vatican and liberation theologians. Then, without going into the now well-known details of the controversy,¹⁰⁶ I will briefly sketch the events related to Boff’s silencing and their significance.

Liberation theology represented a new strand of thinking in Roman Catholic theology, which presented a challenge to the existing orthodox traditions. The obvious challenge was that “its deepest insights did not spring from the minds of scholars in the great universities of the First World, but rather from small communities of the poorest and least literate men and women in Latin America.”¹⁰⁷ Even though Boff studied in Europe, he argues that the insights of liberation theology spring from the context of Latin America.¹⁰⁸ Liberation theology’s emphasis on the plight of the poor, springing from the New Testament witness of Jesus’s particular concern for the

forces, made up of officers of the navy, air force, and army, and of the Civil and Military Police. More than 300 young people—students, workers, and militants—were kidnapped, imprisoned, tortured, murdered, and ‘disappeared.’” Pinheiro, “Political Transition and the (Un)rule of Law in the Republic,” 199. This brutal context was the backdrop to Boff’s early work on liberation theology, specifically *Jesus Christ Liberator* in 1972 as well as *Francis* in 1981.

¹⁰⁴ Boff, *Church: Charism and Power*; originally published as *Igreja: Carisma e Poder*.

¹⁰⁵ Margolis, “A Priest and His Message,” 66.

¹⁰⁶ For a sustained discussion of the events between Boff and the Vatican, see Cox, *The Silencing of Leonardo Boff*. To view the documents relating to the silencing of Boff, see Hennelly, *Liberation Theology*. For an account of how Ratzinger understood the events see, Allen, *Cardinal Ratzinger*, especially the chapter “Authentic Liberation,” 131–174.

¹⁰⁷ Hennelly, *Liberation Theology*, xiii.

¹⁰⁸ He makes this argument in a number of places, but specifically in *Jesus Christ Liberator*, he states that liberation theology emerges from “preoccupations that are ours alone, taken from our Latin American context.” Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 43.

marginalised, was challenging to a rich, established Church. These challenges might have been overlooked if not for the speed at which theologies of liberation were taking hold and gaining popularity.

The Vatican's objections to the theology of liberation fall into three main categories, from which other objections flow. The first concern was the apparent appropriation of Marxist theory into Christian theology and the subsequent focus on the "political."¹⁰⁹ This was especially problematic because of the "revolutionary" understanding of Marxist thought and the Vatican's concerns about violence. The concern about violence does not seem to be well founded. Boff and Gutiérrez, among other liberation theologians, use the language of "revolution," but there is no evidence that they planned to incite violent revolutionary uprisings. However, it is understandable that the Vatican might be concerned with the use of Marxist "revolutionary" language given its incompatibility with the non-violent teachings of Jesus. In the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's "Instruction on Certain Aspects of the 'Theology of Liberation,'" the Congregation recognises the authentic "yearning for justice," but it also maintains that "there are many political and social movements which present themselves as authentic spokesmen for the aspiration of the poor and claim to be able, though by recourse to violent means, to bring about the radical changes which will put an end to the oppression and misery of people."¹¹⁰ However, as discussed in chapter two, Boff is very clear that a transformation in society needs to occur but that it will be one brought about by God rather than humanity, or at least God in cooperation with humanity.

The second category of critique holds that theologies of liberation misunderstood and politicised the ideas of liberation found in the Gospel, which were fundamentally to be understood as *spiritual* liberation from sin: "The first liberation, to which all others must make reference, is that from sin ... [which] cannot be restricted to 'social sin.'"¹¹¹ The third critique concerns the focus on orthopraxy over

¹⁰⁹ See Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Ten Observations on the Theology of Gustavo Gutiérrez," 348–50. There it is stated that Gutiérrez "uncritically accepts" Marxist theory, particularly the conception of history, which produces "extreme ambiguity" in his theology, as Marxist theory becomes "the determining principle from which he goes on to reinterpret the Christian message" (349). For a discussion of Ratzinger's concerns about Marxism see, Allen, *Cardinal Ratzinger*, 139–141.

¹¹⁰ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Instruction on Certain Aspects of the 'Theology of Liberation,'" 395.

¹¹¹ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Instruction on Certain Aspects of the 'Theology of Liberation,'" 398. The instruction continues, "To demand first of all a radical revolution in social relations and then to criticise the search for personal perfection is to set out on a road which leads to the

orthodoxy, or the focus on correct action versus correct beliefs. Ratzinger characterises liberation theology as holding that “action is truth ... The only decisive thing is praxis.”¹¹² Liberation theology is perhaps unfairly criticised as being focused on practical action rather than on production of doctrinally sound theology.¹¹³ Indeed Boff’s focus on orthopraxis is not meant to usurp orthodoxy, rather it is meant as a corrective to it. It involved rejecting “the reduction of the message of Christ to systematic categories of intellectual comprehension” and embracing “creating new habits of acting and living in the world.”¹¹⁴ It was not that correct beliefs were not important, but rather that they needed to be balanced with correct action. Yet sadly the rhetoric of the debate became polarised between the “defenders of orthodoxy”¹¹⁵ and the exponents of orthopraxis. As one of Ratzinger’s biographers noted, the distinction between orthodoxy and orthopraxis was at the centre of his concern over liberation theology, that “by denying the priority of belief, Ratzinger argued, liberation theologians relativize Christian doctrine.”¹¹⁶

Boff was not the first liberation theologian to be scrutinised by the Vatican. Indeed, two years before Boff’s silencing, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith wrote “Ten Observations on the Theology of Gustavo Gutiérrez.”¹¹⁷ However, Boff was the only liberation theologian to go through a prolonged silencing. Since he was one of the more prolific and prominent liberation theologians¹¹⁸ at that time, “nearly everyone interpreted [Boff’s] silencing as a clear warning to that whole movement.”¹¹⁹

denial of the meaning of the person and personal transcendence, and to destroy ethics and its foundation, which is the absolute character of the distinction between good and evil.”

¹¹² Ratzinger, “Liberation Theology,” *Liberation Theology*, 374.

¹¹³ Although liberation theologians are focused on praxis, nonetheless a great deal of theological literature has been produced. This is perhaps most keenly evidenced in Ellacuría and Sobrino’s edited volume *Mysterium Liberationis* which addresses each doctrinal area in turn.

¹¹⁴ Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 47.

¹¹⁵ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “Instruction on Certain Aspects of the ‘Theology of Liberation,’” 412.

¹¹⁶ Allen, *Cardinal Ratzinger*, 136.

¹¹⁷ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “Ten Observations on the Theology of Gustavo Gutiérrez,” 348–50. For a discussion of Ratzinger’s concerns about Gutiérrez see, Allen, *Cardinal Ratzinger*, 153–56.

¹¹⁸ Hennelly comments, “Aside from his writing, teaching, and lecturing, Boff is editor of *Revista Eclesiástica Brasileira*, the most important theological periodical in Brazil, is a member of the theological commission for the Brazilian Bishops’ Conference, and is religious editor for *Vozes*, an important publishing firm. Boff, in short, richly deserves his reputation as the most prominent and talented theologian in the Portuguese-speaking world.” Hennelly, *Liberation Theology*, xxiv.

¹¹⁹ Cox, *The Silencing of Leonardo Boff*, 3.

In 1981 Boff published *Charism and Power*, but it was not until 1984–85 that the full impact of the work was felt. In May 1984, Cardinal Ratzinger, who previously had been Boff’s doctoral supervisor and who served as prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, summoned Boff to Rome to account for his views expressed in *Charism and Power*. The notice that the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith sent to Boff stated that there were concerns relating to his ecclesiology in four main areas: “the structure of the Church, the concept of dogma, the exercise of sacred power, and the prophetic role.”¹²⁰ Boff argues in *Charism and Power* that Church structure and hierarchy are the result of the Church’s growth in Roman and feudal societies, and as such the Church has taken on some of the characteristics associated with those societies.¹²¹ He argues that Latin American base communities are organising themselves in a way that has much in common with the early Church and that this is an authentic way of being the Church. Indeed, “people, especially the poor, are organizing themselves in order to live their faith in a communal way ... We are dealing with a true ecclesio-genesis, that is, the genesis of a Church that is born of the faith of the people.”¹²² This kind of argumentation was seen as a direct challenge to the authority of the Church and led to Boff’s summoning to Rome.

The review of of Boff’s ideas was officially termed a “colloquy” by the Vatican; however, it had a feeling more akin to a trial. As Cox described the event, “the ‘colloquy’ to which Ratzinger had invited him turned out instead to be a full-scale interrogation, an ecclesial trial followed by a verdict and, a few weeks later, by a sentence.”¹²³ The result of this colloquy was Boff’s receipt of an official notice from the Vatican indicating that he should begin a period of “obedient silence” for an unspecified length of time. The silencing was to include a ban on all his activities as a writer and lecturer, including abstention from his editorial work of the *Revista*

¹²⁰ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “Notification Sent to Fr. Leonardo Boff regarding Errors in His Book, *Church: Charism and Power* (March 11, 1985),” 427.

¹²¹ See Boff’s discussion in his chapter “The Power of the Institutional Church: Can It Be Converted?” in Boff, *Church: Charism and Power*, 47–64.

¹²² Boff, *Church: Charism and Power*, 131.

¹²³ Cox, *The Silencing of Leonardo Boff*, 8. Ratzinger was just one of thirteen cardinals who made the decision to silence Boff. In an interview, Boff stated, “I believe his [Cardinal Ratzinger’s] was a dissenting vote from the majority, because he knew other books of mine on theology, translated into German, and had told me that he liked them. Once, in front of the pope in an audience in Rome, he even referred to them favorably.” Boff, “A Brazilian Theologian Once Silenced by Cardinal Ratzinger Talks about the Old and the New Pope.” Although Ratzinger was head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, it does not seem that Boff holds him responsible for his silencing, despite their differing theological views.

Eclesiástica Brasileira.¹²⁴ His silencing received a large amount of international media attention,¹²⁵ which highlighted his theology rather than diminishing it, as the Vatican might have hoped. Within Brazil there was a great deal of support for Boff. Cox comments that “many Brazilians looked upon the Franciscan friar as a religious version of Pele, a champion of Latin American religion and Brazilian national spirit against outside intruders.”¹²⁶ This support took the form of protests, statements of support from both Catholic and Protestant groups, and public criticism of the silencing by ten brave Brazilian bishops. Boff himself did not join any of the protests but instead accepted discipline and remained silent, later remarking, “It is better to walk with the Church than alone with my theology.”¹²⁷

A year later, the silencing was lifted. What prompted this remains unclear, though Mario Aguilar has suggested that “his silencing was lifted because there was more harm in attracting attention to his writings than from ignoring them as those of a radical priest who was on the way out of the Church’s own hierarchical structures.”¹²⁸

In 1992, Boff wrote to the Vatican to renounce his priesthood. He still considers himself a member of the Church but now identifies himself as a layperson and theologian. It seems he grew weary of the constant scrutiny of his work and thought. In “Letter to My Companions on the Journey of Hope,” he explains the struggles of his work and his decision to leave the priesthood. “From 1971 onward,” he relates that, “I have frequently received letters, warnings, restrictions and punishments ... I accepted everything and submitted.”¹²⁹ Despite his acceptance and compliance with the terms of his first silencing, between 1991 and 1992 the censorship had begun again. He had been removed as editor from *Voices* magazine, “censorship was once again imposed on everything,” and he again had been banned from teaching theology for an unspecified period of time.¹³⁰ This second round of

¹²⁴ Cox, *The Silencing of Leonardo Boff*, 3.

¹²⁵ See for example, *New York Times*, “Theologian in Brazil Says He Is Silenced by Order of Vatican”; De Onis, “Brazil Catholics Divided over Pope’s Silencing of Liberal Franciscan Monk”; *Time*, “Religion: Boff Silenced. Rome Disciplines a Scholar.”

¹²⁶ Cox, *The Silencing of Leonardo Boff*, 5.

¹²⁷ Boff, “A Brazilian Theologian Once Silenced.”

¹²⁸ Aguilar, *The History and Politics of Latin American Theology: vol. I*, 130.

¹²⁹ See “Letter to My Companions on the Journey of Hope,” in Boff, *The Path to Hope*, 125–26. His account of the silencing is here seen in the context of wider scrutinising. This included his twice being removed temporarily as chair of theology and the condemning of his views, until it “became like an ever-tightening tourniquet rendering [his] work as a theologian, teacher, lecturer, adviser, and writer almost impossible” (125).

¹³⁰ Boff, *The Path to Hope*, 126.

ensorship culminated in his decision to step down from the priesthood, with Boff feeling that he could no longer continue.

Boff's first work after his renunciation of the priesthood in 1992 was *Ecology and Liberation*, his first work on expressly ecological theology. His later work is unsurprisingly characterised by a freedom of expression. Unhindered by the Brazilian military dictatorship (after the passing of the 1988 constitution, Brazil returned to full democracy) or by possible censure from the Vatican, Boff's work has a more unrestricted feel to it. It is also self-consciously addressed to a more global audience, with concerns addressing not just the Church or Latin America, but the state of the world. In an oblique reference to his struggles with the Church, the preface of *Ecology and Liberation* indicates this change in his writing:

The pieces collected in this volume were composed in the last two years, under the influence of precipitate and momentous political upheavals that have affected the author's life too. But he has only taken a different route. He has not changed direction. He has jumped into another trench, but he has not left the frontline. The struggle continues. These reflections are the fruit of crisis, which always has a purifying effect.¹³¹

The references to "political upheavals" concern not just his struggle with the Church but also his involvement with the movement for land rights and the concerns of the indigenous people in Brazil.¹³² The new trench he refers to is not just his new position as part of the laity¹³³ but also a reference to his newfound ecological concerns. As is explored in chapter four, Boff views his ecological work as an extension of his liberation theology, in that both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor are rooted in the will to dominate, which victimises both the environment and the poor. Despite his being one of the few first-generation liberation theologians to write extensively on

¹³¹ Boff, *Ecology and Liberation*, xi.

¹³² Boff reflects on the conflict between capitalism and the indigenous people in the Amazon in his chapter "All the Capital Sins against Ecology," in Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*. He writes that during the Grande Carajás Project, in which land clearing occurred for the mining of ore, "to speed up the clearing, many ranchers used the defoliant Tordon 155-Br (Agent Orange) or Tordon 101-Br, which is even more destructive, sprayed from a plane, thereby polluting soils and river, and killing many people, especially the Nhambiquara Indians, who were almost wiped out" (97).

¹³³ In his "Letter to My Companions on the Journey of Hope," Boff also refers to changing trenches: "There are moments in a person's life when, in order to be faithful to himself, he must change. I have changed. Not the battle itself, but the trenches from which I shall fight." Boff, *The Path to Hope*, 123. "Trenches" in this instance refers to the move from the priesthood to the laity within the Church.

the environment,¹³⁴ I will argue that Boff's ecological theology provides little basis for improving the status of animals. Instead his writings on liberation theology and Saint Francis provide the most fertile ground for considering the moral status of animals.

Boff is a prolific author, having written more than sixty books in Portuguese, with many of them translated into multiple languages. He is considered a public intellectual in Brazil and is often engaged in social and political commentary through writing for national newspapers and giving public lectures. His work has often set the tone for theological thinking in Brazil. It is not just his wide body of work that makes him a tricky scholar with which to engage. Whether it is due to the translation of his work from Portuguese or just his style of language, he is frequently difficult to interpret. He tends towards grandiose and verbose language, which means his exact meaning can be difficult to comprehend. His books tend to offer a theological vision but often lack detail and clarity. In this work it will not be possible to cover his vast corpus; instead I have selected key texts on liberation, Saint Francis, and ecology. These works best indicate how his thinking on creation and especially animals has changed over time.

With the advent of Francis's pontificate, concerns about the environment and the poor have become mainstream theological issues. Francis's papacy is marked by a concern for the poor, evident in his modest dress and living, his frequent preaching and communication on the subject, and his general pastoral focus. His second encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, brings together his concern for the poor with concern for the Earth. It is the most sustained reflection on the environment in a papal encyclical to date. Chapter five explores how Pope Francis has moved the Church in regard to ecology and how this relates to Boff's work, with special attention paid to *Laudato Si'*. This thesis explores the sensitivity to creation now found in the Catholic Church—a sensitivity that, as shall be explored, is in part galvanised by Boff's work on ecology.

¹³⁴ This is not to say that there was not a cohort of Brazilian and Latin American thinkers writing on the environment in the 1990s; they just were not considered first-generation liberation theologians. Susin, who was Boff's student, has written on ecological theology and, more recently, animal theology. See, for example, Wainwright, Susin, and Wilfred, *Eco-Theology*; and Susin and Zampieri, *A Vida Dos Outros*. Gebara, a Brazilian feminist liberation theologian, has also written extensively on the environment. See, for example, Gebara, *Longing for Running Water*.

2.2. Animals in Catholic thought¹³⁵

In order to understand Boff's theological thinking on animals, it is important to see his work within the context of the dominant tradition on animals in Catholicism. Although there are alternative voices and thinkers on animals within Catholic thought—notably, Saint Francis of Assisi—one thinker in particular has shaped the dominant view that has effectively become Catholic orthodoxy. That thinker is Saint Thomas Aquinas. Although I will argue that we are seeing a shift in the understanding of animals in the Catholic tradition, we have to begin with the orthodox, what subsequently became the scholastic position, in order to understand how this has influenced Boff and how much the Catholic position has changed. Aquinas makes three key arguments concerning the status of animals: (1) animals have no mind or reason, (2) animals are not rational and therefore have no immortal soul, and (3) animals have no moral status.

It was Aquinas in his *Summa Theologiae*, inspired by Aristotelian philosophy, who first fully systematised the view that animals were devoid of mental powers. “Dumb animals and plants are devoid of the life of reason whereby to set themselves in motion,” he writes; “they are moved, as it were by another, by a kind of natural impulse, a sign of which is that they are naturally enslaved and accommodated to the uses of others.”¹³⁶ Notice the development of the argument: Animals are on the same level as plants in being non-rational (or “irrational” as Aquinas actually puts it). Rationality is a sphere entirely reserved for the human species; everything else within creation is “devoid of the life of reason.” What directs or “moves” animated beings (animals and plants) is not rational direction or any self-chosen goal (because animals cannot rationally choose anything), but the movement of others or “a kind of natural impulse.” Animals, in other words, act “naturally” or as occasioned by others, rather than through deliberate will. And the proof of this is that they are “naturally enslaved” and “accommodated” to the uses of humans. The logic is plainly circular, of course: how do we know that animals, like plants, are slaves for human use? The answer is because we can enslave them.

The oddness of Aquinas's doctrine here consists in its lack of a biblical starting point. Although he does discuss the meaning of “dominion” and the *imago*

¹³⁵ This section draws and expands on my chapter “Animals in Catholic Thought: A New Sensitivity?,” 187–202.

¹³⁶ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, question 64, article 1.

dei, such discussions are overlaid by an essentially Aristotelian emphasis on rationality. Dominion is understood as “rational domination” allowed for—indeed, ordained by—the divine image, which is construed as the possession of rationality.¹³⁷ Indeed, as is now widely recognised, Aquinas was a radical in his time, trying to reconcile Aristotelian philosophy with Christian faith. But whatever the merits of his work in other areas, his influence as regards animals has been profoundly negative.¹³⁸ Aquinas effectively baptises an instrumentalist view of animals. We may define instrumentalism as the view that animals are here for our use: means to human ends.

Such a view predates Christianity, of course, but Aquinas’s use of Aristotle gives the view new life within the Christian Church. As Aristotle famously wrote, “since nature makes nothing without some end in view, nothing to no purpose, it must be that nature has made them [animals and plants] for the sake man.”¹³⁹ Compare that with these two lines in Aquinas’s “Summa Contra Gentiles”: “By divine providence, they [animals] are intended for man’s use according to the order of nature. Hence it is not wrong for man to make use of them, either by killing *or in any other way whatever*.”¹⁴⁰ What was thought “natural” or “according to nature” in Aristotle becomes in Aquinas a matter of “divine providence” as well.

Aquinas’s second argument is that animals do not have rational and therefore immortal souls. Thomist tradition distinguished between three kinds of souls: the “vegetative souls” of vegetables, the “sensitive souls” of animals, and the “rational souls” of humans (and angels and demons).¹⁴¹ Only rational souls were thought to be incorporeal (capable of withstanding physical death). It is important to see that this argument is of a piece with Aquinas’s instrumentalism. Like Aristotle, he embraces a natural hierarchy (buttressed in his presentation by divine providence) in which creatures are delineated by rationality in descending order: man, woman, animals, plants.¹⁴² In Aristotle, of course, “slaves” came under women, as his famous

¹³⁷ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae, Part I, QQ, LXXV–CII*, question 96.

¹³⁸ For a defence of Aquinas on animals, see Barad, *Aquinas on the Nature and Treatment of Animals*.

¹³⁹ Aristotle, *The Politics*, 1. VIII, 79.

¹⁴⁰ Aquinas, “Summa Contra Gentiles,” vol. II, 220–4; my emphases.

¹⁴¹ Mascall, *The Openness of Being*, 257–66.

¹⁴² Incidentally, the view that only men were fully rational (because men were made in the image of God) led both to doubts about the souls of women (who Aquinas thought were made in the image of God in a secondary way to men) and to the complete rejection of rational animal souls. The view that women were “close to the animal state,” to use Thomas’s words, has persisted throughout the centuries. The Quaker divine George Fox, for example, apparently met villagers who thought that women had “no souls, no more than a goose.” Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, 434. Berkman argues that “for Aquinas human beings do not have a particularly high ‘slot’ in the order of creation, being ranked the

justification for slavery shows and which has an obvious correspondence to his view of animals as similarly enslaveable.¹⁴³ But the central point is that since animals have no rational selves, they can have only perishable souls.

The distinction between “rational” and “non-rational” has led to entrenched dualisms in Christian thought that separate humans from the rest of creation. The view emerged that animals are, well, “just animals.” For example, whereas humans have “spirit,” animals have only “flesh”; humans have “minds,” whereas animals are just “matter”; humans are “persons,” and animals are mere “things”; humans have rational immortal souls, while animals have non-rational souls. These distinctions in favour of humans are reinforced by the historic language we use about animals: “brutes,” “beasts,” “irrational,” and “dumb.” Dualistic distinctions have always tended to disadvantage animals and elevate humans.

It is worth noting that the preceding arguments do not of themselves necessarily lead to the justification of animal cruelty or abuse. As Linzey has pointed out, lack of rationality and absence of an immortal soul should logically usher in a greater solicitude.¹⁴⁴ If animals are not rational, then this may increase their suffering since they experience the raw terror of confinement or injury without knowing why they are suffering or for what purpose. If animals are really non-rational, it follows that their suffering cannot be softened by intellectual comprehension of the circumstances. Also, as C. S. Lewis observed, if animals are not to be recompensed with an eternal paradise for the sufferings that they have to undergo in the present world, then that surely makes their current suffering of greater, not lesser, significance.¹⁴⁵

As we have seen, the strength of Thomism consists in its circularity: God put animals here for our use; we know that they are meant to be slaves because they are enslaveable; and because they are without reason and therefore are only means to human ends, they cannot have individual worth or a rational soul. Although Aquinas did not deny that animals feel pain, his position lays the groundwork for Cartesianism.

lowest of creatures with intellectual natures. Thus when human and non-human animals are seen within the grand scheme of God’s creation, their differences—however significant in their own right—seem not so great.” Berkman, “Towards a Thomistic Theology of Animality,” 23. However, this is to misconstrue the hierarchy as Aquinas understood it: men, women, then animals (even if one includes angels and demons). It is hard to maintain that the differences are not that great when the key one, rationality, is the difference between immortality and mortality.

¹⁴³ See Aristotle, *The Politics*.

¹⁴⁴ See Linzey, *Why Animal Suffering Matters*, chap. 1.

¹⁴⁵ See Lewis, *Vivisection*.

According to René Descartes, animals “act naturally and mechanically, like a clock which tells the time better than our own judgement does.”¹⁴⁶ Animals, for Descartes, are automata, without consciousness, rationality or feeling.¹⁴⁷ There are small, yet significant, steps from the idea that animals do not have rationality, to the idea that they do not have the same kind of consciousness, to the idea they do not feel pain. What is significant here is that Descartes’ view is underpinned by the Thomistic position on animals.

Aquinas’s third argument regarding animals is that they have no moral status or rather that their treatment should not be governed by moral considerations. Again, Aquinas laid out the grounds for this development. We have already seen that his instrumentalist view allowed for no limit on the human use of animals. His instrumentalist position was buttressed by another consideration: friendship was possible only between rational agents, and since animals were not rational, there could be no duties of friendship between the two. Aquinas notes that “the love of charity extends to none but God and our neighbour ... the word neighbour cannot be extended to irrational creatures, since they have no fellowship with man in the rational life.”¹⁴⁸ Therefore, “charity does not extend to irrational creatures.”¹⁴⁹ The only limit that Aquinas placed on cruelty against animals was that the practise of cruelty should not dehumanise the perpetrator.¹⁵⁰ The idea that cruelty to animals is bad for humans is one that has been incorporated into Catholic moral thinking and that is now supported by contemporary science, which will be explored in chapter three.

The preceding criticisms and others of Aquinas have been made before by numerous animal advocates, including Andrew Linzey,¹⁵¹ Peter Singer,¹⁵² Richard D.

¹⁴⁶ Descartes, *Discourse on Method in Philosophical Works of Descartes*, vol. 11, 115–118.

¹⁴⁷ For further discussion of the Cartesian position on animals and the idea that animals do not feel pain, see my chapter, “Animals in Catholic Thought: A New Sensitivity?,” 187–202.

¹⁴⁸ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, question 65, article 3.

¹⁴⁹ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, question 65, article 3.

¹⁵⁰ Aquinas, “Summa Contra Gentiles,” vol. II, 220–24.

¹⁵¹ Aquinas is discussed in many of Linzey’s works on animals, but see specifically his chapter “Reverence, Responsibility and Rights” in Linzey, *Animal Theology*, 3–27. He argues here and elsewhere that “as regards the treatment of animals, Aquinas remains the dominant historical force throughout Western Christianity” (19). His legacy for animals consists especially in the attribution of rationality only to humans and an instrumentalist view of animals, as discussed previously (Linzey, *Animal Theology*, 18–19). Linzey’s is a view to which I owe a great deal, as stated in the introduction.

¹⁵² See Singer’s chapter “Man’s Dominion ... A Short History of Speciesism,” in Singer, *Animal Liberation*, 202–34. Singer argues that for Aquinas “the only reason against cruelty to animals is that it may lead to cruelty to human beings. No argument could reveal the essence of speciesism more clearly” (213).

Ryder,¹⁵³ H. Paul Santmire,¹⁵⁴ Robert N. Wennberg,¹⁵⁵ and Ryan Patrick McLaughlin.¹⁵⁶ In response to these criticisms, there have been many modern attempts by theologians to reclaim Aquinas as a positive thinker for animals—notably, Celia Deane-Drummond,¹⁵⁷ Michael S. Northcott,¹⁵⁸ Willis Jenkins,¹⁵⁹ Mark Wynn,¹⁶⁰ and John Berkman, among others.¹⁶¹ Space does not allow for a full exploration of these views here, but generally, the line of argumentation from those wanting to defend Aquinas’s perspective on animals is that his views need to be understood within the wider context of his theology. When understood in that way, they argue, either Aquinas is more ecologically friendly than commonly suggested, or his work is less anthropocentric¹⁶² than animal theologians suggest.

Berkman argues that while Aquinas does say that animals exist for the sake of humans, “this does not represent Aquinas’ most considered view of the *telos* of non-

¹⁵³ See Ryder’s discussion “St Thomas and St Francis” in Ryder, *Animal Revolution*, 32–36. Ryder argues that in the time of the Renaissance, “the speciesism of Thomas Aquinas became a useful doctrine to allay any qualms of conscience” (43). Whether this is an entirely fair comment is not clear, since Ryder offers little to support his assertion that Aquinas was particularly referenced in support of animal cruelty in the Renaissance.

¹⁵⁴ See Santmire’s chapter “The Heightening of the Ambiguity: The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century and the Theology of Thomas Aquinas,” in Santmire, *The Travail of Nature*, 75–95. Santmire offers an assessment of Aquinas’s ambiguous legacy for nature, concluding that “Thomas’s conceptual resolutions define what the theology of nature is to be, in its overall shape, for many theologians for many centuries to come” (95). He provides an altogether more theological and more nuanced perspective on Aquinas than Singer or Ryder, but he is clear that Aquinas’s ambiguous theology has had a profound impact on subsequent theologies of nature.

¹⁵⁵ See Wennberg’s discussion “Duties to Animals Are Only Duties to Humans: Aquinas and Kant,” in Wennberg, *God, Humans, and Animals*, 120–23. Wennberg agrees with Singer that both Aquinas and Kant hold moral theories with no place for animals, and so they “morally condemn cruelty to animals without admitting direct moral obligations to animals” by arguing that cruelty to animals is bad for humans (121).

¹⁵⁶ See McLaughlin’s chapter “Thomas Aquinas and the Dominant Tradition,” in McLaughlin, *Christian Theology and the Status of Animals*, 8–20. McLaughlin argues that granting animals direct moral concern would “jeopardize central pillars of [Aquinas’s] thought”—namely, “Aquinas’s understanding of their [animals’] nature (and therefore the rights attached to human nature) or the scope of his eschatology.” Aquinas, for McLaughlin, remains “anthropocentric and conservationist” (20).

¹⁵⁷ Aquinas is discussed in many aspects of her work, but see especially Deane-Drummond, *The Ethics of Nature*; and *Eco-Theology*.

¹⁵⁸ See Northcott’s chapter “Creation, Redemption and Natural Law Ethics,” in Northcott, *The Environment and Christian Ethics*, 199–256.

¹⁵⁹ See Jenkins’s chapters “Sanctifying Biodiversity: Ecojustice in Thomas Aquinas” and “Environmental Virtues: Charity, Nature, and Divine Friendship in Thomas,” in Jenkins, *Ecologies of Grace*, 115–32 and 133–51.

¹⁶⁰ Wynn, “Thomas Aquinas: Reading the Idea of Dominion in the Light of the Doctrine of Creation,” 154–65.

¹⁶¹ Other thinkers, whom there is not space to explore, include Schaefer, *Theological Foundations for Environmental Ethics*, and French, “Beast-Machines and the Technocratic Reduction of Life,” 24–43.

¹⁶² Some thinkers prefer the term “humanocentric” to “anthropocentric” because the former has fewer androcentric and patriarchal connotations. However, throughout this work I use the terms interchangeably for stylistic reasons.

human creatures.”¹⁶³ He maintains that for Aquinas all creatures are “ordered towards ‘ultimate perfection,’” and thus “God’s plan in creation, while hierarchical, is by no means anthropocentric.”¹⁶⁴ However, this view seems hard to reconcile with Aquinas himself, whom Berkman quotes as saying that “the less noble creatures exist for the sake of the more noble creatures; for instance, the creatures below man exist for the sake of man.”¹⁶⁵

Wynn makes a similar argument about creatures being ordered towards perfection “rather than directed simply to the service of human beings” and adds that “their goals cannot be deemed merely trivial when they come into conflict with the ends of human beings—or at any rate, with human ends which do not touch on vital human interests.”¹⁶⁶ But his own language reveals the anthropocentric nature of the position: animal interests are subservient to human ends that “touch on vital human interests.” Even at best, Wynn retains the instrumental position that animals can be used as resources by humans.

Jenkins makes an argument that is, by his own admission, controversial—namely, that “God chooses to move creation to Godself by inviting humans into a friendship shaped by their intimacy with all creation.”¹⁶⁷ At first sight he appears to be suggesting that humans can be friends with other creatures, but as we have already seen, this is not permitted within Aquinas’s system. Rather, he means that as “charity turns humans toward the world to truly hear and see our fellow creatures,” we grow in divine friendship.¹⁶⁸ Though I do not wish to deny that humans can grow in closeness to God through encounters with the natural world, an idea discussed in relation to Saint Francis in chapter three, it is hard to reconcile this interpretation with Aquinas’s previously stated ideas about animals, unless we are again to understand animals and the natural world as human instruments used as tools towards human ends, albeit ends oriented towards the Creator.

From an ecological perspective, Northcott argues that “natural law ethics as we encounter it in Aquinas . . . provides the strongest conceptual base within the Christian tradition for an ecological ethic.”¹⁶⁹ His argument is based on a reading of

¹⁶³ Berkman, “Towards a Thomistic Theology of Animality,” 24.

¹⁶⁴ Berkman, “Towards a Thomistic Theology of Animality,” 24.

¹⁶⁵ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, question 65, article 2.

¹⁶⁶ Wynn, “Thomas Aquinas,” 162.

¹⁶⁷ Jenkins, *Ecologies of Grace*, 150.

¹⁶⁸ Jenkins, *Ecologies of Grace*, 140.

¹⁶⁹ Northcott, *The Environment and Christian Ethics*, 232.

creation that suggests that creation is permeated by divine goodness, upon which he bases a natural law ethic.¹⁷⁰ Northcott's argument relies on a conception of creation as inherently good. While space does not permit a full discussion here, the problems with the conception of creation as unambiguously good will be discussed at length in chapter five.

Deane-Drummond's ecological argument stems from a consideration of Aquinas's idea of the Chain of Being, which she understands as "affirm[ing] the continuity of human life with all life forms: we are an integral part of the whole complex chain of creation."¹⁷¹ She adds to this a consideration of the virtues in Aquinas and concludes that "as applied to our treatment of animals, consideration of the virtues forces us to stop and reflect, not just on how to treat animals, but on how we balance the demands of justice for animals with those for the human community."¹⁷² Again, here the underlying argument is that treating animals well is good for humans but that animals' welfare can be secondary to issues of human justice.

These attempts at rehabilitating Aquinas frequently come from ecological theologians, such as Deane-Drummond and Northcott, rather than animal theologians. As will be discussed more fully in chapter four, ecological theology is often at odds with animal theology because it is more concerned with sustaining the holistic system than with care for the individual creatures within the system. In this sense it may be that Aquinas's theology is more easily adapted to an ecological worldview.

Despite these attempts at rehabilitation, it is hard to ignore the legacy of Aquinas's position on animals. Whether or not he has been mischaracterised or misused over the centuries, the impact of his work casts a long shadow in terms of animals. It is a mistake to minimise the influence of his teaching on animals. Despite controversy during his lifetime, even that leading to theological condemnations, his thought has become the standard of Christian scholasticism. Even the Protestant reformers, such as Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli, never questioned Catholic inheritance in this regard. He was canonised only fifty years after his death and has been regarded for centuries as the father of Catholic theology. In 1879, Pope Leo XIII stated that Thomas's theology was a definitive exposition of Catholic doctrine, maintaining that

¹⁷⁰ See his discussion in his chapter "Creation, Redemption and Natural Law Ethics," in Northcott, *The Environment and Christian Ethics*, 199–256.

¹⁷¹ Deane-Drummond, *The Ethics of Nature*, 77.

¹⁷² Deane-Drummond, *The Ethics of Nature*, 77.

“among the Scholastic Doctors, the chief and master of all [intellectual] towers [was] Thomas Aquinas.”¹⁷³ He exhorts “venerable brethren, in all earnestness to restore the golden wisdom of St. Thomas, and to spread it far and wide for the defence and beauty of the Catholic faith, for the good of society, and for the advantage of all the sciences.”¹⁷⁴ In relation to animals, Thomistic formulations have held sway for subsequent centuries of Christian thought. His idea that animals have no mental life and act not by conscious will but by “nature” or “instinct” has been persuasive right up to the present day. It may be argued, quite rightly, that Aquinas represents only one perception of animals in the Catholic tradition, but it is hard to ignore his impact.¹⁷⁵ Under scholasticism, rationality became the arbiter of moral worth, a position that is still pervasive today.

2.3. Boff’s Brazilian context

Boff is undoubtedly a contextual theologian. His theology both grows from and speaks to his Brazilian experience and context. However, the cultural construction of animals in Brazil is deeply influenced by the dominant tradition on animals, which Boff also reflects.¹⁷⁶ Through an engagement with the interviews I conducted in Brazil, I will explore Boff’s Brazilian context in relation to animals in an attempt to better understand the context in which his thought emerges.

Bruno Garrote, a legal scholar, summed up the close relationship between meat, religion, and the right to bear arms in the popular expression “BBB”: “These are the 3Bs: *Boi*, *Bala* and *Bíblia* (cattle/bull, bullet and Bible, respectively). [People concerned with BBB] and their influences usually come together here in Brazil.”¹⁷⁷ Although I did not explore perspectives on gun control while in Brazil, the close connection between meat, politics, culture, and economics became clear during my interviews.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷³ Leo XIII, *Aeterni Patris*, para. 17.

¹⁷⁴ Leo XIII, *Aeterni Patris*, para. 31.

¹⁷⁵ For a greater exploration of the impact of Aquinas’s views on animals, see chapter one of Linzey, *Why Animal Suffering Matters*.

¹⁷⁶ For more on the contextual construction of animal ethics, see Palmer, *Animal Ethics in Context*. For a discussion of Palmer’s theory, see Dombrowski, review of *Animal Ethics in Context*, 113–15.

¹⁷⁷ See Appendix 7, “Excerpts from Dr Bruno Garrote Interview.”

¹⁷⁸ For a discussion on the importance of the meat industry in Brazil even when animal welfare standards are not enforced see, Appendix 6, “Excerpts from Dr Carlos Frederico Ramos de Jesus Interview.”

Luiz Carlos Susin, a liberation theologian, spoke about how the greatest challenge for animals in Brazil is the meat industry, since “the exportation of meat is the most important export in [Brazil’s] economy ... it is the centre of our international commerce.”¹⁷⁹ Brazil is, along with India, the joint largest exporter of beef in the world, and the commercial importance of meat exportation cannot be overstated.¹⁸⁰ The importance of the meat industry to the Brazilian economy was demonstrated in 2017, when JBS, the world’s largest meat-packing company, was embroiled in a corruption scandal. JBS, based in Brazil, was accused of bribing meat inspectors to ignore food safety problems.¹⁸¹ Although the company denied any wrongdoing and the investigation is ongoing, many countries around the globe, including the United States, the EU nations, and China, suspended trade in Brazilian beef.¹⁸² The impact on the Brazilian economy has been considerable, with estimates indicating that “Brazil lost between \$250m and \$300m in meat export revenue” in 2017 “as about 46 countries ... closed their doors to its products in the face of a scandal surrounding the alleged sale of rotten meat.”¹⁸³ Even with exports resuming, the damage to the Brazilian economy has continued because confidence in Brazilian beef has been damaged, and accordingly, sales have fallen by 19 per cent.¹⁸⁴

Carlos Frederico Ramos de Jesus, a legal scholar, gave me an insight into the relationship between Brazilian agribusiness (or agro-business as he refers to it) and successive Brazilian governments. He explained, “The three and a half leftist governments we have had, they have spent public money from our development public bank (BNDES) to increase their activities to be ‘national champions’ to export meat all over the world.”¹⁸⁵ Public money is used to support the agribusiness, which is seen as a crucial part of the Brazilian economy. The power of the agribusiness even extends to government positions: “in Dilma Rouseff’s government ... she had as her agricultural minister, one of the biggest agro-business women in Brazil, Katia Abreu. She was the president of the agro-business association in Brazil before she became a

¹⁷⁹ See Appendix 3, “Excerpts from Professor Luiz Carlos Susin Interview.”

¹⁸⁰ Meat Import Council of America, “2017 World Beef Trade: Major Exporters.”

¹⁸¹ Runyon, “JBS, World’s Largest Meat Company, Mired in Multiple Corruption Scandals in Brazil.”

¹⁸² According to an article at *CNNMoney*, “China, Mexico, Chile, Japan, the European Union and Hong Kong have taken varying measures to avoid importing Brazilian meat. For its part, Brazil’s government shut down three plants and suspended the export licenses for 21 meat packing plants too.” Gillespie, Darlington, and Brocchetto, “Brazil’s Spoiled Meat Scandal Widens Worldwide.”

¹⁸³ Ensor, “Brazilian Meat Industry Counts the Cost of Rotten Meat Scandal.”

¹⁸⁴ See Eatherton, “Brazil Resumes Exporting Meat to Major Markets.”

¹⁸⁵ See Appendix 6.

minister.”¹⁸⁶ Carlos Naconecy, a philosopher, agreed: “The meat industry here is very powerful. The number one financial contributors to the presidential elections here were the meat industry.”¹⁸⁷ Indeed, agribusiness supports both sides during elections, so that whoever is elected, the industry remains in power. Indicating how widespread the relationship is, Garrote said, “Most people elected have connections with agribusiness. They are owners of some company or large portions of land, or indirectly were financed by agribusiness—it is scary.”¹⁸⁸ The close alliance between the government and agribusiness serves to illustrate how ingrained the industry is in the structure of Brazilian society.

However, Susin points out that meat is not just an economic hurdle in Brazil; it also has strong cultural significance: “There is a culture of meat. For example, here in the south of Brazil we have the culture of the *gaucho*. Gaucho is a traditional figure here and in the north of Argentina—the gaucho’s clothes are typical in these regions. There is also *churrasco*—cowboy culture. Meat is fundamental for feasts and celebrations—without meat it seems we cannot celebrate.”¹⁸⁹ The cultural significance of meat is ingrained also in sports associated with cattle farming, such as rodeos.

The culture of meat is illustrated by the ferocity of the responses when discussions of vegetarianism and veganism arise. In my group interview with members of Felinos du Campus, a group that takes care of a stray cat colony at Pontifical Catholic University in Rio de Janeiro, the members disclosed how difficult it was to talk about not eating animals. Patricia Österreicher spoke about how she has largely stopped talking about animals because the response can be hostile: “It is very hard because they are aggressive, and they make fun of you.”¹⁹⁰ Thaissa da Silva Mocoos Puppín concurred that for some people caring about animals elicits “a form of humiliation ... they will make fun of you. You become a sport.”¹⁹¹ That even discussions about caring for animals are met with such resistance is a sign of how ingrained the culture of meat-eating is in the Brazilian context. The ridicule of vegetarians was surprising to hear about, given that as I travelled through Brazil, there were a great number of vegetarian and even vegan restaurants, indicating that the

¹⁸⁶ See Appendix 6.

¹⁸⁷ See Appendix 9, “Excerpts from Dr Carlos Naconecy Interview.”

¹⁸⁸ See Appendix 7.

¹⁸⁹ See Appendix 3.

¹⁹⁰ See Appendix 10, “Excerpts from Felinos du Campus, PUC Group Interview.”

¹⁹¹ See Appendix 10.

vegetarian movement is gaining momentum, if only commercially. Naconecy and I spoke about the rise in vegetarian and vegan commerce, and he remarked that it has been met with great resistance from agribusiness. “Some years ago they did not care about vegetarianism or what was happening in the animal movement. Now they are starting to react. They buy advertising space in magazines, with adverts that say: ‘Doctors say eating meat is good for you.’”¹⁹² Ramos de Jesus echoed Naconecy’s comments on the strong reaction of agribusiness to the vegetarian movement. He noted that as part of their media campaign, agribusinesses “have hired many popular actors, actresses, singers—some of them were even vegetarian before—and they have paid them to taste meat and say how delicious it is.”¹⁹³ Naconecy and Ramos de Jesus agreed, though, that this widespread media campaign promoting meat has been a good thing because it indicates that the Brazilian animal movement is having an effect and is thus worthy of an expensive media campaign in response.

The common idea that animals are just “things” was also articulated in my group interview with members of Felinos du Campus. One member, Patricia Österreicher, commented that animals “are not seen as living, sentient beings who have a right to life and dignity. [They are] just like objects. Even less than objects as an object belongs to you and you can sell it. An animal, it is just seen as a nuisance.”¹⁹⁴ Another member, Silva Mocoés Puppín, agreed with this general sentiment: “They are just good for barbeque. We have here in this country kitten barbeque.”¹⁹⁵

Discussion of the instrumental view of animals also arose in the group interview. Animals are understood as fulfilling a particular role. Österreicher remarked that “they are [considered] resources. Dogs are for shepherding; cats are for keeping mice away from grain, and horses [are for carrying].”¹⁹⁶ Silva Mocoés Puppín concurred with this description of the conception of animals: “They view animals as a product. We are going to feed them and use them. They provide something that will be used.”¹⁹⁷ It is clear from the interviews I conducted that the

¹⁹² See Appendix 9.

¹⁹³ See Appendix 6.

¹⁹⁴ See Appendix 10.

¹⁹⁵ See Appendix 10.

¹⁹⁶ See Appendix 10.

¹⁹⁷ See Appendix 10.

general conception of animals in Brazil is in line with the dominant Catholic position: that animals are resources, here for human use.¹⁹⁸

One of the most common questions I was asked while lecturing in Brazil was “why should we care for animals if they have no souls?” This is a concern that springs directly from a mischaracterisation of the dominant Catholic view on animals. As explored previously, Aquinas never denied that animals have souls; rather, he held that they have a *different kind* of soul from humans. But the view that animals do not have souls springs from this position because what is meant is that animals do not have rational, immortal souls, or souls like ours.

However, despite the difficulties outlined, there are signs of an emerging animal movement in Brazil. Daniel Braga Lourenço, a legal scholar, suggested in his interview that the movement is “like the Bryan Adams song—we are young, wild, and free.”¹⁹⁹ And although, as he acknowledged, this has some drawbacks for the animal movement, it also means there is a great possibility of change and growth. Carlos Naconecy said, “Everything has to be done here ... We have a huge amount of [animal] victims. We have a mission here.”²⁰⁰

Indeed, both legal and cultural change were already evident during my research in Brazil. As indicated previously, despite the nation’s largely meat-based culture, there are a large number of vegetarian and vegan restaurants, even outside the large cities. In addition, the legal challenges to practices thought to inflict cruelty on animals have been gaining momentum. The legal basis for banning certain practices is grounded in the Brazilian constitution, which was adopted in 1988. Article VIII states that the government is required to “protect the fauna and the flora, with prohibition, in the manner prescribed by law, of all practices which represent a risk to their ecological function, cause the extinction of species or *subject animals to cruelty*.”²⁰¹ Animal cruelty is thus considered unconstitutional, which has enabled animal advocates to legally petition for the banning of specific practices. For example, *farra do boi*, a practice similar to blood fiestas, was ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme

¹⁹⁸ For discussions of the Catholic-based permission to eat meat see, Appendices 6 and 7. Garrote implies that the dominant Catholic view on animals has entered “the Brazilian collective subconscious.”

¹⁹⁹ See Appendix 8, “Excerpts from Professor Daniel Braga Lourenço Interview.” Braga Lourenço also discusses the challenges for the animal movement in different parts of Brazil.

²⁰⁰ See Appendix 9.

²⁰¹ Chamber of Deputies, *Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil*, title VIII, chap. VI, art. 225, para. 1; my emphases.

Court and is now illegal.²⁰² Similarly, *vaquejada*, an ability rodeo, was ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court shortly after my visit there.²⁰³ Under this section of the constitution, there is potentially a lot of scope for legal change. Of course, there is resistance, and legal progress is slow, but nonetheless, there is hope.²⁰⁴

This chapter has laid the groundwork for a discussion of Boff's own views on animals, through an engagement with his biography, the dominant Catholic position on animals, and the Brazilian cultural context for animals. In this challenging cultural context for animals, it is perhaps not surprising that Boff has largely adopted the dominant position on animals. Despite this, there are signs within his theology of an attempt to move beyond this position, however unexplored. As I begin a more detailed exploration of his thought, I turn in my next chapter to his now classic work *Jesus Christ Liberator*.

²⁰² For a discussion of *farra do boi* see, Appendix 8.

²⁰³ For a discussion of the *vaquejada* decision see, Appendix 6.

²⁰⁴ For discussions of the growth of animal law in Brazil see, Appendices 6 and 8.

Chapter 3: The Liberator Who Does Not Liberate Creation

This chapter engages with Boff's *Jesus Christ Liberator*. It engages with the first two methodological questions, about what consideration he gives to animals and what if any of his theology could help the development of animal theology. Sadly, in *Jesus Christ Liberator* the work of Christ is only considered in relation to humanity. Boff does not consider the status of animals, or indeed the significance of creation, anywhere in this volume. The first part of this chapter outlines three areas in which this is most evident: redemption, resurrection, and the kingdom. The tragedy is that his anthropocentrism leads to a limited Christology, and therefore to a reduced concept of God. The second part of this chapter highlights three areas in which his theology could easily include creation and animals. Namely, the idea of incarnation as a "being-for-others," coupled with his concern for the periphery, and his call to interpret Jesus contextually. Together these aspects could provide the groundwork for a more inclusive Christology that takes into account the place of other creatures. These ideas will be developed in relation to animals in chapter seven.

Boff penned his seminal work *Jesus Cristo Libertador: Ensaio de Cristologia Critica para o Nosso Tempo* in 1972. It was subsequently published in 1978 in English as *Jesus Christ Liberator: A Critical Christology of Our Time* (hereafter cited as *Jesus*). As he acknowledges in his 1978 preface,²⁰⁵ *Jesus* was written at a time of political repression in Brazil,²⁰⁶ and its message of liberation reflects the context in which the book was written: "its intent is to underline the liberative dimensions present in the life, message, and practical activity of the historical Jesus."²⁰⁷

Although Boff's work explores a range of different Christological ideas, his critical engagement with the doctrine focuses largely on the message of social action

²⁰⁵ Boff notes, "This book was first published in 1972. It was put together in Brazil at a time when severe political repression was being exerted against broad segments of the church. The word 'liberation' was forbidden to be used in all communications media. *Thus the book did not say all that its author wanted to say; it said what could be said.* Nevertheless the liberation message was understood by Christians." Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, xii; my emphases.

²⁰⁶ On March 31, 1964, General Castello Branco led a coup d'état in Brazil, ushering in a military regime that would last until 1985. For a full account of the history and politics of this time, see Green, "Introduction," 1–17; and Dussel, *A History of the Church in Latin America*, 148–54. Dussel writes that after the coup, "rapidly there followed imprisonments, expulsions from the country, censure, withdrawal of citizenship, and the beginning of political tortures," forming what he coined "a perfectly organized system of oppression" (149). It is worth noting that while political repression was a reality for the context in which Boff was writing, he was not, as far as we know, a specific subject of this political repression.

²⁰⁷ Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, xii.

found in Jesus. The central Christological claim in *Jesus* is that in Christ we encounter God as a “being-for-others.”²⁰⁸ Jesus’s life was oriented towards others, especially God, and was lived for them.²⁰⁹ What is given in Jesus, then, is the image of a God focused on the needs of others. From this Boff draws implications about how humans should orient their lives: “It is by going out of oneself that human beings remain profoundly within their own selves; it is by giving that one receives and possesses one’s being.”²¹⁰ Being-for-others is how human beings become fully human: by being in relation with others, we become truly ourselves. While a Christology focused on the message of the living Jesus may seem unremarkable, in the context of the time, this was a strikingly new way to imagine the relevance of the incarnation.²¹¹

In terms of animal theology, *Jesus* reveals some of the underlying tensions that pervade Boff’s thought. On the one hand, he wants to retain the cosmic significance of the Christ-event, yet at the same time, despite his attempts to resist anthropocentrism, he sees the event’s relevance largely in terms of humanity. He emphasises Christ as liberator, yet the “others” for whom Christ gives his life appear to be mostly, if not entirely, human. These tensions will be explored in his ideas of redemption, resurrection, and the kingdom, before I turn to consider the more animal-friendly aspects of his Christology.

3.1. A limited Christology

a. Anthropocentric redemption

Jesus’s greatest moment of “being-for-others” is his sacrificial self-giving on the cross. This is the moment when God in Jesus takes upon himself the sins of the world, suffers, and dies for the salvation of others. God in Jesus is *for us* as he mediates our salvation. To explain how human redemption is possible, Boff utilises Jungian psychology, in which Jesus is understood as the “prototype-archetype of the true

²⁰⁸ Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 179. See also discussion of Boff’s conception of the incarnation later in this chapter in the section “Incarnation as a being-for-others.”

²⁰⁹ Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 195.

²¹⁰ Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 197.

²¹¹ Boff does, of course, discuss the Council of Chalcedon, but he significantly diverges from orthodox doctrine. He holds that Jesus “was lacking a ‘hypostasis,’ a subsistence ... He was completely emptied of himself and completely full of the reality of the Other, of God the Father.” Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 196. Although Boff maintains that the lack of hypostasis in Jesus does not make him any less human and rather that his being-for-others is the “highest perfection” of humanity (196), many theologians would have issues with this conception of the incarnation. This raises a fundamental question about the orthodoxy and adequacy of Boff’s Christology, but this question is beyond the scope of my work here.

human being.”²¹² Redemption is possible because “the Word, humanizing itself, assumed all this reality contained in the collective and personal human psyche, both positively and negatively, thereby touching all humanity.”²¹³ It is this kind of language that led one reviewer to remark that Boff’s book contains “sporadic flights of ... abstract jargon.”²¹⁴

Boff rather uncritically incorporates Carl Jung’s analysis into his theology. He offers no explanation as to why Jung’s analysis in particular should be chosen over other systems of analysis. There is no exploration as to why psychological theory is relevant here, beyond the fact that its use enables Boff to explain the ramifications of the incarnation to all humans through the language of psyches. Beyond this, the adoption of Jungian theory is odd for three reasons. The first is that Jung was a Western psychologist, and given Boff’s emphasis on Latin America, it seems strange that he would not reach for a more relevant Latin American explanation. The second is that Boff could have sought a clearer theological, even Christological, explanation. Theologians over the years have offered a variety of ways to explain redemption on the cross without an appeal to psychology.²¹⁵ The third is that by focusing on the adoption of the “human psyche,” Boff unnecessarily focuses the implications of the incarnation solely on the human creature. It is the human psyche that God assumes in Jesus, and therefore the human psyche becomes the focus of God’s redemptive work. This third problem is the focus of this section.

The ramifications of Boff’s incarnational theology for redemption become clear in his discussion of whether there have been other incarnations in the universe. He questions whether the incarnation of Jesus of Nazareth has been the only incarnation of the Triune God and concludes that “nothing prohibits this same eternal Logos from having appeared and assumed the spiritual and evolutionary conditions of

²¹² Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 203. See Jung, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, see especially part 1 of volume 9, “Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious.”

²¹³ Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 203. Boff is drawing upon Jung here and his conception of the collective psyche. McLynn, Jung’s biographer, described Jung’s development of the idea: “Jung came to the conclusion that there existed something very like what Plato called in the *Timaeus* the ‘world-soul.’ Jung’s term for this core of actual and potential human mental dispositions he called ‘the psyche.’” McLynn, *Carl Gustav Jung*, 299–300. Boff is arguing that in the incarnation Jesus assumes the collective psyche, and thus his actions affect all humanity.

²¹⁴ Kerr, review of *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 398. This criticism seems fair given Boff’s adoption of Jungian analysis and terminology; indeed, it is a criticism that could arguably apply throughout his corpus.

²¹⁵ For a survey of different explanations of atonement, see Aulen, *Christus Victor*; and Beilby and Eddy, *The Nature of Atonement*.

other beings in other systems.”²¹⁶ The thrust of his argument here is that the Triune God cannot be limited, and so we cannot assume that the Logos would not have incarnated herself in other moments and other places in time.²¹⁷ However, as he begins to acknowledge, this idea has profound implications for redemption and salvation. He states, “The way redemption was realized here on earth would be merely *one* concrete form among many others by which the Word of God relates to creation.”²¹⁸ Perhaps the postulating of multiple incarnations should give Boff pause to question why his Christology might require multiple incarnations. Indeed, perhaps it is because he focuses so much on the salvation of the human psyche that he needs to postulate other incarnations to explain salvation in other parts of the universe. It is his focus on the human psyche being what is assumed in the incarnation that seems to limit the redemptive power of the incarnation. Lucy Gardner describes this as a tension within incarnational theology, where the focus is misplaced—what she calls “the doctrine of incarnation [becoming] ... the doctrine of ‘enhumanization.’”²¹⁹

By tying his Christology to the human psyche, the incarnation supposed carries with it the tendency to jettison materiality. The “psyche” is a nebulous concept, and though God may well have taken on the human psyche in the incarnation, that is not all that became incarnate. Saint John’s Gospel states that “the Word became flesh and lived among us” (John 1:14). It is the word “flesh” (*sarx*) that is significant here. God did not assume humanity but rather flesh, an embodied flesh, and humans are not the only enfleshed, embodied beings. Animals have flesh and bodies as well. What is taken up and redeemed in the Godhead in Jesus is fleshly, embodied existence. The embodied fleshly life is affirmed and redeemed by God in the incarnation. The postulation of multiple incarnations would not be necessary if a greater affirmation of the material world—and especially other sentient, fleshly creatures—were included in Boff’s Christology. If Boff were to adopt a broader view of what occurred in the incarnation—for example, that what Jesus took on was not

²¹⁶ Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 216. Boff is not the only theologian to give the idea of multiple incarnations serious thought. Tillich also considered the issue: “It is the eternal relation of God to man which is manifest in the Christ. At the same time, our basic answer leaves the universe open for possible divine manifestations in other areas or periods of being. Such possibilities cannot be denied. But they cannot be proved or disproved.” Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 96.

²¹⁷ Boff states that “there is nothing repugnant about the other divine Persons being incarnated. The mystery of the Triune God is so profound and so immense that it can never be exhausted by a single concretization like that which was realized within our earthly system.” Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 216.

²¹⁸ Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 216; emphasis in the original.

²¹⁹ Gardner, “Anglican Christianity: Animal Questions for Christian Doctrine,” 39.

merely human flesh but creatureliness in itself—redemption could then have significance for all of creation, in all parts of the cosmos.

Indeed, by focusing on the human psyche as the locus of God’s redemptive activity, Boff falls prey to the classic problem of redeeming only those particularities that Jesus assumed, otherwise known as the scandal of particularity. In feminist theological discourse, this has been succinctly summarised by Julie M. Hopkins: “The doctrine of the incarnation does not directly address the female sex. Whilst the Chalcedon dogma that Jesus Christ was ‘truly God and truly man’ can be interpreted to mean that Jesus was truly a divinized human, Church doctrine and practice has used the formula to legitimise male supremacy in authority and even in nature.”²²⁰ Although Boff does not stress the masculinity of the man Jesus and so avoids this particular expression of the problem, he is still focused on the human psyche as the object of redemption. This engenders another set of problems—for example, what are the ramifications for those with damaged psyches or those with impaired cognitive abilities? How do these factors affect their redemption? The focus on the adoption of the particular humanity of Jesus has implications for how we understand our relationship with the divine Christ. This is seemingly accepted by Boff, given his quoting of Gregory of Nazianzus: “That which God did not assume he also did not redeem.”²²¹ Yet he does not fully explore the implications of his incarnational theology. It does seem that, at least at this point, human *bodies*, as distinct from *psyches*, are not redeemed.

Moreover, the stress on the collective human psyche as the object of redemption is problematic because it limits the redemptive activity of God to the human species. While it is right to say that God is concerned with the salvation of humanity, since he became incarnate as a human, it is wrong to suggest that God is concerned only with human redemption. If what is redeemed in Jesus is the collective human psyche, it is hard to see how creation as a whole is redeemed. Indeed, since the biblical witness is clear that the Christ-event has significance beyond humanity, to all of creation,²²² Boff seems to be unnecessarily limiting his theology of redemption to

²²⁰ Hopkins, *Towards a Feminist Christology*, 83. Of course, Hopkins is not the first feminist theologian to write on the particularity problem in the doctrine of the incarnation; however, she succinctly and usefully articulates the problem. For different feminist explorations of this problem, among others, see Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex*; Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God Talk*; and Johnson, *Consider Jesus*.

²²¹ Referenced by Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 186.

²²² See Col. 1:19–20 and Eph. 1:8–10. For commentaries see previous note in chapter one.

humans. Furthermore, since his incarnational theology centres on Jesus as a “being-for-others,” it is a natural extension to include nonhumans—that is, all “others”—in that redemption.

b. A cosmic resurrection?

In chapter eleven of *Jesus Christ Liberator*, Boff considers the resurrected Christ in relation to the world. He states that in the resurrection, Christ did not leave the world, but rather “he penetrated it in a more profound manner and is now present in all reality in the same way that God is present in all things.”²²³ In Jesus’s death, Boff sees Jesus embracing a spiritual cosmic existence: “by the means of the resurrection, the new man emerged, no longer carnal but pneumatic, for which the body is no longer a limit but total cosmic presence and communion with all reality.”²²⁴ For Boff, in his resurrected form, Jesus is now a being for the cosmos, and his pneumatic being is now present throughout the cosmos.

The resurrection is seen as an event that reverberates throughout time and history, such that Jesus is now present in all reality. Boff defines the resurrection “as a total, exhaustive realization of *human reality* in its relationship with God, with others, and with the cosmos.”²²⁵ Through the resurrection, Jesus opened the cosmos and human beings to the reality of the divine. The bodily nature of the resurrection is especially significant: “Through this human being as body, Jesus assumed a vital part of matter. Consequently his relationship to our world is one of cosmogenesis. Jesus–human being is the result of a long process of evolution. As body-spirit, Jesus of Nazareth was also a nexus of relationships with the totality of the human and cosmic reality that surrounded him.”²²⁶ Cosmogenesis is defined as “the origin or evolution of the universe.”²²⁷ Jesus is understood as the origin of the universe yet also as part of the evolution of the universe. “Cosmogenesis” is a term used throughout Boff’s corpus, and it is taken up especially in his ecological theology. Boff’s work is influenced by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, from whose work this term is taken. Teilhard de Chardin says the following of Christ as the Omega, or cosmogenesis:

²²³ Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 207.

²²⁴ Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 199. The movement from Jesus to the Spirit is somewhat confusing. Some of Boff’s meaning is perhaps lost in translation, as when Boff talks about Jesus being present pneumatically; it is unclear whether he is referring to Jesus or the Holy Spirit or both.

²²⁵ Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 207.

²²⁶ Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 209.

²²⁷ *The Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “cosmogenesis.”

Omega: the end-point of cosmogenesis, the culmination of the process of *hominization* or spiritualization, where personal and universal meet in the Supra-Personal—a point therefore which is not simply the end of the whole process, the last term in its series, but is outside all series, autonomous and transcendent, and so is identified with God, the Centre of centres, and with *Totus Christus*.²²⁸

In Boff's consideration of the resurrected Christ, he indicates the openness of God to the whole cosmos.²²⁹ If the incarnation is Jesus's being for humanity, then the resurrection is Jesus's being for the whole of the cosmos. That is, "the resurrection manifested the full depths of Jesus' communion and openness."²³⁰ Boff's discussion of the resurrected Jesus moves to what he terms "Cosmic Christology,"²³¹ which "professes that Christ is in the beginning, the middle, and end of God's paths and the measure of all things."²³² He references Ephesians 1:10, Colossians 1:16, and John 1:14 in support of his argument.

Although his discussion of how God penetrates all things and is cosmically present seems to indicate some sort of cosmic redemption, Boff is far from specific. Although it is termed a cosmic Christology, there is little discussion of other beings other than humans or even other parts of existence being redeemed. It seems that the cosmic Christ is both everywhere and nowhere. The closest Boff comes to explaining cosmic redemption is when he states, "The material elements are sacraments that put us in communion with him, because they, in the most intimate part of their being, pertain to the very reality of Christ."²³³ It seems, then, that the whole material universe is suffused with the cosmic reality of Christ and assumes a sacramental character.²³⁴ The conception of the universe as sacramental is a complex one.²³⁵ Of

²²⁸ Teilhard de Chardin, *Hymn of the Universe*, 90; emphases in the original.

²²⁹ This is a theme that will be explored more fully in the subsequent discussion of Boff's ecological theology.

²³⁰ Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 199.

²³¹ The idea that the Christ-event has significance for the cosmos has a long theological history. For a discussion of biblical and patristic views on redemption and creation, see Galloway, *The Cosmic Christ*.

²³² Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 212.

²³³ Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 212.

²³⁴ The question of the presence of God in creation is one that is taken up in Boff's ecological theology and will be returned to in chapter four.

²³⁵ For a discussion of nature as sacramental, see Peacocke, "A Sacramental View of Nature," 132–42.

course, creation is pervaded by the Spirit and can therefore reveal glimpses of the Creator, but it is not perfect. There is also violence, entropy, and predation in the natural world, which belies its sacramental character. The ambiguity in Boff's thought about the nature of cosmic redemption can leave the reader unsure as to *how* the cosmos, beyond the human person, is redeemed.

Perhaps this can be best seen in his comment: "The Lord lived and travelled the narrow path of human beings."²³⁶ He draws on Teilhard de Chardin's ideas on the "process of growing consciousness and complexity in the evolutionary curve."²³⁷ He suggests that it is through human consciousness that the universe "finds its highest unity and convergence" and that "it is in the human being that the meaning of the totality is to be found."²³⁸ In the incarnation and resurrection, the cosmic Christ penetrates the cosmos through its highest expression: human consciousness.

There are several problems with Boff's use of Teilhard de Chardin to explain the cosmological significance of the incarnation and resurrection. The first is that as he does with Jung and redemption, Boff adopts Teilhard de Chardin rather uncritically, offering very little explanation as to why his theology is preferable or applicable. Second, the contention that human consciousness is the highest expression of the cosmos is questionable. He simply states that human consciousness is where "the meaning of totality" is to be found and offers no explanation for this assertion. In so doing, he is echoing Teilhard de Chardin, who writes, "Consciousness manifests itself indubitably in man and therefore, glimpsed in this one flash of light, it reveals itself as having a cosmic extension and consequently as being aureoled by limitless prolongations in space and time."²³⁹

Third, even if one accepts that human consciousness is "the meaning of totality," it is unclear in what sense or how that leads to Christ having an impact on the cosmos. Fourth, the idea that human consciousness is "the meaning of totality" may be seen as the arbitrary favouring of human consciousness above any other beings' consciousness. An alternative theocentric approach to ethics and the universe is suggested by James M. Gustafson, who suggests that a "moral pause"²⁴⁰ is required to reorient ourselves away from anthropocentrism. He argues that "if God is 'for

²³⁶ Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 214.

²³⁷ Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 214.

²³⁸ Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 214.

²³⁹ Teilhard de Chardin, *Hymn of the Universe*, 76.

²⁴⁰ Gustafson, *Theology and Ethics*, 108.

man,' he may not be for man as the chief end of creation. The chief end of God may not be the salvation of man. Man's place in relation to the universe has to be rethought, as does man's relation to God."²⁴¹ In short, humans may not be the apex or ultimate goal of creation, but that does not necessarily have to diminish God's concern for us.

Although Boff does not define the term himself, a definition of consciousness might be helpful: "the state of being conscious—the fact of awareness by the mind of itself and the world."²⁴² So beings are conscious if they are aware of their own mind and the world around them, which is not by definition a uniquely human attribute. Though Boff could not have foreseen this when writing *Jesus*, the idea that human consciousness is somehow unique has been discredited by the Cambridge Declaration of Consciousness, which holds that "the weight of evidence indicates that humans are not unique in possessing the neurological substrates that generate consciousness. Non-human animals, including all mammals and birds, and many other creatures, including octopuses, also possess these neurological substrates."²⁴³ Consciousness, at least scientifically speaking, is not then a uniquely human attribute, and to single out human consciousness as the culmination of creation is to ignore scientific evidence on nonhuman consciousness. Indeed, that the significance of the resurrection needs to be attached to the idea of consciousness is in itself rather question-begging.

Boff goes to great lengths to stress the importance of the humanness of Jesus and the importance of the incarnation for humanity, such that his turn to cosmic significance seems out of place. If Boff had laid rather more stress on the creatureliness of Jesus in the incarnation, this would have paved the way for speaking of Jesus as redeeming creation as a whole. The incarnation understood as the adoption of creatureliness would have given the resurrection significance for creation without need for talk of evolutionary processes and cosmogenesis, terms that add confusion rather than clarity to Boff's theology.

One possible explanation for his limiting of redemption to humanity might be that the scholastic hierarchy of rationality discussed in chapter one underpins his conception of the incarnation. Indeed, this seems likely given that his discussion of the possibility of multiple incarnations is prefaced with the question "Do other

²⁴¹ Gustafson, *Theology and Ethics*, 112–13.

²⁴² *The Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "consciousness."

²⁴³ Low, "The Cambridge Declaration of Consciousness."

rational beings exist in the cosmos?”²⁴⁴ Although this is not explicitly acknowledged by Boff, his belief that human consciousness contains the meaning of totality echoes the idea that humans are higher beings because they have rational, immortal souls. Aquinas maintained that “of all the parts of the universe, *intellectual creatures hold the highest place*, because they approach nearest to the divine likeness. Therefore, the divine providence provides for the intellectual nature for its own sake, and *for all others for its sake*.”²⁴⁵ All things in the universe are oriented towards, and exist for, the sake of intellectual creatures—in other words, humans. Although rationality is obviously not the same as consciousness, consciousness is nonetheless a requirement for rational thought. Thus, rationality in the guise of consciousness again becomes the arbiter of meaning and value within creation. In the scholastic hierarchy, only humans (excluding angels and demons) are understood to have rationality, and that is the basis for their superiority over the rest of creation. More recently, scientific research has shown that human and animal cognition—and as a corollary, intelligence—share more similarities than is commonly assumed.²⁴⁶ Even when Boff was writing in the 1970s, there was already growing evidence of the complexity of animal awareness and sentience.²⁴⁷ If Boff were to lay less stress on the importance of human consciousness, it might leave greater room for the value of the rest of creation.

In one sense, Boff is right about the uniqueness of human consciousness, in that consciousness is a requirement for moral action. Humans alone, as far as we know, are given the ability to make moral decisions. In this sense humans are unique, as they are uniquely capable of taking *responsibility* for other beings. It is this kind of consciousness that underlies the idea of humanity as the servant species. The uniqueness of humanity, then, consists in its ability to truly be-for-others, in the sense of care and responsibility. Though Boff does not bring this aspect of human uniqueness to the fore, it is there within his thought, and he could make a great deal more of humans as moral beings-for-others.

²⁴⁴ Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 215–16.

²⁴⁵ Aquinas, “Animals Are Not Rational Creatures,” 8; my emphases.

²⁴⁶ For a discussion of rationality in animals, see Benz-Schwarzburg and Knight, “Cognitive Relatives yet Moral Strangers?,” 9–36; and DeGrazia, *Taking Animals Seriously*.

²⁴⁷ See for example, Thorpe, *Learning and Instinct in Animals*; Harrison, *Animal Machines*; Brambell, *Report of the Technical Committee to Enquire into the Welfare of Animals kept under Intensive Livestock Husbandry Systems*. The Brambell Report was especially significant in that it tried to set limits to what should be done to farm animals in the light of recent scientific work.

c. *A limited kingdom*

The central message of Jesus's teaching is the preaching of the kingdom of God. The kingdom is "a total, global, structural revolution of the old order, brought about by God and only by God."²⁴⁸ That reordering of the world is understood in terms of liberation from alienation: "a liberation from sin, from its personal and cosmic consequences, and *from all other alienation suffered in creation.*"²⁴⁹ At once the possibility of the kingdom for nonhuman creation seems clear: the kingdom involves the freedom of "all" from "alienation suffered in creation." Tragically, Boff leaves this part of his thought unexplored and instead focuses on the kingdom as liberation for humanity from everything that alienates us. In order to bring about this new order, Jesus "makes two fundamental demands: He demands personal conversion and postulates a restructuring of the human world."²⁵⁰ That is, the kingdom requires first a personal change in orientation and attitude, followed by changes in the structure of human life. Conversion is a prefiguring of the kingdom and is understood as "the implementation of altered relationships at every level of personal and social reality"; these new relationships "express concrete forms of liberation and anticipate the kingdom of God."²⁵¹

Boff's discussion of the kingdom indicates the fundamental tensions within his thought as regards the work of Christ in relation to humanity and creation. He affirms the importance of the kingdom to all creation but explores only its relevance to humanity. Here Boff indicates how the scope of the kingdom of God cannot be limited: "The kingdom of God cannot be narrowed down to any particular aspect. It embraces all: the world, the human person, and society: the totality of reality is to be transformed by God."²⁵² Yet at the same time, he limits his conception of the kingdom by focusing only on its implications for humanity: "The kingdom of God is

²⁴⁸ Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 63–64. It is worth noting that although Boff uses the word "revolution," it is questionable whether he is using it in its fullest sense. His writing, while proclaiming the need for "transformation," falls far short of calling for the bloody military revolution that the language might imply. One perhaps may argue that Boff was constrained by the context of the time during which he was writing, as he himself claims that he says "what could be said" (Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, xii) rather than everything he might have wished. But I would argue that in his later writing, even in freer political situations, he does not go on to advocate for revolution in the violent sense. Rather, what is envisioned here is the need for a radical reordering of society in the light of the teachings of Jesus. That transformation of society is understood as a "revolution," but Boff is also clear that it is a "revolution" to be brought about by God.

²⁴⁹ Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 64; my emphases.

²⁵⁰ Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 64.

²⁵¹ Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 287.

²⁵² Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 55.

a total, global and structural transfiguration and revolution of *the reality of human beings*; it is the cosmos purified of all evils and full of the reality of God.”²⁵³ There is a tension here. Although he indicates the kingdom will have cosmic significance, he does not envision a complete transformation of creation, perhaps along the lines of the peaceable kingdom found in Isaiah 11:6. Rather, the transformation will be in the lives of human beings alone.

This theological tension arises from the lack of clarity in his thought. He does not seem to be clear in his own mind about how Christ is significant for creation aside from humanity. In Boff’s vision of the kingdom, “pain, blindness, hunger, tempests, sin, and death will not have their turn.”²⁵⁴ Since pain, blindness, hunger, tempests, and death also affect nonhuman parts of creation, one might assume that this vision also includes other beings. However, it is clear from the context, in which Jesus is described as “the liberator of humanity,”²⁵⁵ that only human suffering is envisioned. In short, it is *human* suffering that will end in the kingdom. One might argue that given the context in which Boff was writing this text, it was fair enough to focus on the immediate reality of human suffering. However, even in his later work, the suffering of animals in creation does not figure as a theme, as I will explore later on.

Yet despite his humanocentric focus, his notion of the kingdom has the potential to be more inclusive of creation and animals specifically. In his epilogue, he expands his vision of what the kingdom might look like: “What [Jesus] offers us by way of example is an option on behalf of those who are treated unjustly, a refusal to succumb to the will for power and domination, and solidarity with everything that suggests greater participation in societal living and fraternal openness to God.”²⁵⁶ This vision of the kingdom makes room for the possibility of a fuller Christology that includes all of creation. The problem is that Boff does not follow through the logic of his position to consider the relevance of the kingdom to nonhuman beings. However, that Jesus is on the side of “those who are treated unjustly” opens up the possibility of the kingdom for nonhumans, as it is not only humanity that suffers injustices. A fuller account of what the kingdom might look like for all creation would strengthen Boff’s Christology and give it truly cosmic significance. It could be the basis of understanding humans as beings for nonhuman others, guardians of creation. An

²⁵³ Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 53; my emphases.

²⁵⁴ Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 53.

²⁵⁵ Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 53.

²⁵⁶ Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 292.

expansion of his theology of the kingdom would enable Boff to iron out some of the ambiguities in his thought and make room for a more creation-inclusive Christology.

3.2. Building a more inclusive Christology

Boff's ambiguity leads him to inconsistency in his incarnational theology as regards creation; however, of all of the works in his corpus, *Jesus* contains the greatest possibility for including animals within his theology. Although he does not expand his theological concern to include animals within his theology, *Jesus* utilises several theological ideas that may provide the basis for a more inclusive Christology. I will look in turn at (a) incarnation as a being-for-others, (b) contextual interpretation of Jesus, and (c) the highlighting of the periphery, to consider how these areas might form the foundations of a more inclusive theology.

a. Incarnation as a being-for-others

The focal point of Boff's Christology is Jesus's teachings and his particular identification with the marginalised: "He seeks contact with the marginalized, the poor, and the despised."²⁵⁷ The significance of the stressing of the historical Jesus is laid out more fully in the epilogue to *Jesus*.²⁵⁸ By focusing on the historical Jesus, Boff draws parallels between Jesus's time and his Brazilian context, in order to emphasise the social and political teachings of the New Testament. He argues, "The message of Christ assumes a critical liberating function against repressive situations, be they religious or political."²⁵⁹ The images of Jesus as a countercultural thinker, a political figure who argued against the dominant ideas of his day, are particularly stressed. It is noted that Jesus "set all the authorities of his day against him"²⁶⁰ and that "he was arrested, tortured, and condemned to death."²⁶¹ All of this is highlighted to indicate Jesus's struggle to be a "being-for-others." In emphasising the self-giving

²⁵⁷ Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 74.

²⁵⁸ Boff explores six reasons for the focus: First, he identifies a "structural similarity" between our time and the time of Jesus in terms of oppression (Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 279). Second, the historical Jesus links us to the "liberative program and ... practices" of Jesus (279). Third, the life of Jesus indicates the conflict that his liberative program provokes (279). Fourth, the historical Jesus shows us how to live in faith by "following his life and his cause in one's own life" (279). Fifth, only through practical change do we gain access to God (279). Sixth, the historical Jesus provides a critique of society that calls for the transformation of reality (280).

²⁵⁹ Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 26.

²⁶⁰ Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 100.

²⁶¹ Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 101. The language and imagery used to describe Jesus's life and message are selected to resonate with the Brazilian political and military context.

of Jesus, Boff's notion of being-for-others theologises the concern for the other, since it is through Jesus's self-emptying that he is able to fill himself with concern for others. Jesus's being-for-others complements the liberation theology message of Jesus's orientation towards the poor, since the historical Jesus is particularly concerned for the poor.

But there are nonhuman "others" towards whom Jesus can be oriented. It is not clear why it is necessary to limit this paradigm to humans alone. The identification of Jesus as a being concerned with "others," particularly the "marginalized, the poor, and the despised,"²⁶² leaves open the possibility of those others being animal others. Animals are marginalised in society: billions of them are killed each year for food, fashion, entertainment, and research. Because they are such a marginalised part of God's creation, it would be a natural extension of Jesus's being-for-others to be on the side of animals. Although this possibility is unexplored by Boff, it would be a reasonable extension of his Christological perspective to include nonhuman others within the sphere of God's concern.

The idea of animals as "other" that humans and God are (or should be) "for" is a theme of this thesis. The idea will be returned to in chapter 7, when the idea of communion as a being "for" creation is considered.

b. Contextual interpretation of Jesus

Chapter eight of Boff's *Jesus* discusses the titles given to the figure of Jesus. He considers the Palestinian Christian names for Jesus (Christ, Son of Man), the Jewish Christian names (New Adam, Lord), and the Hellenistic Christian names (Saviour, Only Begotten of God).²⁶³ The titles given to Jesus indicate how those communities made sense of the figure of Jesus, with each group using "the most noble and honorable titles they had in their cultures."²⁶⁴ In chapter twelve, Boff considers the name we ought to give Jesus today, and it is in this chapter in particular that he emphasises the title of Jesus as liberator. He argues that "each generation ought to confront itself with the mystery of Christ and try to give him the names that correspond to our living experience of his inexhaustible reality."²⁶⁵ That is, as we

²⁶² Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 74.

²⁶³ Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 150–56.

²⁶⁴ Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 156.

²⁶⁵ Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 231–32.

encounter Jesus in the context of our lives, we should ask ourselves how the message of Jesus applies in our reality.

The call to name Jesus for today may be understood as an invitation to interpret Jesus today, in our context. Although Boff considers only the human context in *Jesus*, we also can ask: what is the reality for animals, and how would Jesus's message apply? The context for animals has changed beyond all recognition from the time of Jesus. For example, in Palestine in the time of Jesus, there were no forms of industrialised agriculture or animal research. A Christology for today should grapple with these new realities. The non-intensive, or pastoral, farming of animals at the time of Jesus was based on a subsistence model of the economy that, while not free from suffering and death, arguably involved less suffering than the intensive industrialised animal agriculture that is widespread today.

If Jesus's name for our context is to be "liberator," there is no reason that this title should be applied only to humanity. Animals are in need of liberation as well as humans. Liberation in the context of animals primarily means freedom from pain, suffering, oppression, and indeed predation itself. As will be explored in the next chapter, liberation in creation has its roots in Romans 8:20–21: "for the creation was subjected to futility ... in hope that the creation itself *will be set free* from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God" (my emphases). Theologically, creation is waiting to be liberated from futility, waste, and predation. But it also needs to be freed from human control, manipulation, and abuse. It is this freedom from human use that we can move towards.

However, the word "liberation" is not unproblematic when used in regard to animals because it carries connotations of alleged violence and terrorism in association with groups such as the Animal Liberation Front. In interpreting Jesus for our context, I therefore acknowledge that "liberation" is a loaded term for animals, one whose negative connotations may be hard to escape. In using the word in this context, I hope to reclaim the word "liberation" for animals—to move away from the violent connotations and reclaim a theological sense of liberation in line with Romans and liberation theology. A theological vision of setting free that includes freedom from oppression for humans and animals.

Indeed, one of the many things humans and animals need to be liberated from is violence. We are engaged in structures that institutionalise violence as defence, as entertainment, as research, and as food production, to name a few areas. We need to

extricate ourselves from cycles of violence and embrace more gentle ways of living in the world. In reclaiming the term “liberation,” I am embracing a peaceful, Christ-filled version of liberation, one involving a vision of a peaceable kingdom. Interpreting Jesus in this context is thus an invitation to look towards a more peaceable world, one in which all creation has been liberated from violence.

c. Highlighting the periphery

Alongside the invitation to interpret Jesus in our own context is an invitation to look as Jesus would to the margins and periphery of our context. Boff characterises his Latin American liberation theology as a “view from the periphery.”²⁶⁶ That is, it is a view that comes from the margins of society. Jesus’s ministry highlights the importance of the periphery: “It is the poor, the suffering, the hungry, and the persecuted who are blest, not because their condition itself has value but because their unjust situation is a challenge to the justice of the messianic king. Through Jesus, God has sided with them.”²⁶⁷ God, then, is on the side of those who experience injustice, of those who cannot speak for themselves. In Boff’s 1970s context, he saw the focus of God on the marginalised as resonating with the poor and oppressed of Latin America. However, I argue that the poor, while undoubtedly the focus of Jesus’s ministry, are only one of many manifestations of marginalisation in our society today.

If the poor are marginalised in global society today, and of course they are, how much more so are animals? Animals are on the periphery of our existence, and although many people share their lives with animals, often their suffering, especially the suffering of those with whom we do not share our lives, remains at the periphery of our consciousness. Billions of animals are slaughtered every year for food. In the United Kingdom alone, nearly 28 million cattle, sheep, and pigs and 870 million poultry are slaughtered annually. That is not to mention the 500 million animals used worldwide in animal testing and the countless others used in entertainment and sport.²⁶⁸ Animals, like the poor, are victims of institutions of oppression. Animals are a subject of the periphery and the margins. As I type here in this library, the chair I am seated on has a cushion made of leather, and the table is also covered in leather. I

²⁶⁶ Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 264. The notion of the periphery in liberation theology has subsequently received much discussion. See, for example, Aguilar, *Theology, Liberation and Genocide*; and Dussel, “Theologies of the ‘Periphery’ and the ‘Centre’: Encounter or Confrontation?,” 87–97.

²⁶⁷ Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 282.

²⁶⁸ For more information and further statistics, see Linzey, *The Global Guide to Animal Protection*.

am literally writing on top of dead, exploited animals. The use of animals is so widespread, systematic, and ubiquitous that unless our attention is specifically drawn to the issue, it can be hard to see. Boff reminds us that it is here on the margins of our lives, an area most people would rather forget, where God's concern is located. God in Jesus is concerned with those at the periphery, those whom society forgets and ignores; it is here that God has chosen to focus his attention. Linzey argues that what we see in Jesus's moral teaching is a paradigm of inclusive moral generosity, culminating in the moral priority of the weak.²⁶⁹ While Boff does not explore the periphery in relation to animals, his theology can be logically extended to include them.

This chapter indicated the limited anthropocentric thinking within *Jesus* in relation to three areas – resurrection, redemption and kingdom – and sadly indicated Boff's lack of theological consideration of animals. Yet it also illustrated the potential of Boff's liberation theology for animal theology. I hope to have shown that the conception of the incarnation as "being-for-others," coupled with a concern for the periphery, and the call to name Jesus for today may provide the foundations for a liberation theology of creation, and especially animals, even though this is not explored directly by Boff himself. These themes will be returned to in chapter seven to help develop a more animal inclusive theology. The next chapter focuses on Boff's *Saint Francis* and explores Franciscan themes in relation to animal theology.

²⁶⁹ See the chapter "The Moral Priority of the Weak," in Linzey, *Animal Theology*, 26–44.

Chapter 4: Fraternity Only with Humans

The purpose of this chapter is to explore Boff's representation of Saint Francis in work of the same name. It again addresses the methodological questions of whether Boff is attentive to the theological issue of animals, and whether his theology can help develop animal theology. I argue that despite the moral exemplar provided by Saint Francis, Boff almost wholly ignores his significance for other creatures. He reinforces an anthropocentric focus by limiting the Franciscan concept of fraternity to humanity, by interpreting the stories of animals and Saint Francis only in relation to humanity, and emphasising his teaching only in terms of the significance of the poor. However, there are important themes that Boff brings out of the narrative of Saint Francis that can be related to animals: gentleness, praxis, fraternity, and the poor. I explore these themes and reframe them to include concern for animals. The ideas of gentleness and fraternity will be built upon in chapter seven as part of my development of animal theology.

Saint Francis was born in Assisi in Umbria, Italy in 1181 or 1182. The son of a wealthy silk merchant, Francis grew up in luxury. After a conversion experience at twenty-five he gave up all his worldly goods and renounced his father to become a penitent. Within a few years he attracted a following as he started to call others to become penitents with him. In 1209–10 he compiled his Rule for his Friars Minor and gained initial papal approval from Innocent III, after which the friars began to preach penance. Francis lived a humble life of poverty and travelled as a penitent proclaiming the Gospel. He died on October 3, 1226.²⁷⁰ Saint Francis is one of the most popular and iconic saints in Catholic history. Pope John Paul II declared him “the heavenly Patron of those who promote ecology” in 1979,²⁷¹ but Francis is perhaps most commonly associated with stories of his relationships with animals.

Francis's early biographers, such as Bonaventure and Thomas of Celano, retold these narratives and explored their theological significance. According to Celano, Saint Francis “overflowed with the spirit of charity, bearing within himself a deep sense of concern not only toward other humans in need but also toward mute,

²⁷⁰ For a chronology of Francis' life and the early growth of Franciscanism see, Robson, *St. Francis of Assisi*, xx–xxvi.

²⁷¹ John Paul II, “Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All of Creation.”

brute animals: reptiles, birds, and all other creatures whether sensate or not.”²⁷² The narratives are examples of Francis’s deep concern for other beings and his sensitivity and care for nonhuman life. They include Saint Francis freeing lambs on their way to slaughter and befriending the wolf, saving worms from being crushed underfoot, and preaching to the birds.

However, Franciscan scholars have often overlooked the stories of Francis and animals, preferring instead to explore his emphasis on poverty and fraternity. Deborah M. Jones wonders, “Why has so little been advanced on the subject of animals by Franciscans in the centuries since the death of the founder of the Order?”²⁷³ One answer suggested by Edward A. Armstrong is that scholars seem to feel embarrassed about dealing with the animal narratives. He argues that “more serious writers and critics tend either to pass lightly over them, apparently regarding them as trivial, or to discuss them in a naïve way.”²⁷⁴ The result of this embarrassment is that the animal narratives frequently are not given their full theological consideration or are dismissed as part of hagiographical legend.

Keith Douglass Warner suggests there are good reasons to suppose that these legends are more than just hagiographical gloss. He identifies several themes that are found only in the narratives associated with Saint Francis—namely, the way “Francis relates to animals as brothers and sisters,” “learns or practices humility as a result of interacting with animals,” feeds animals “with food or the word of God,” and “experiences love and compassion as a result of interactions” with animals.²⁷⁵ Additionally, none of his interactions involve “demonstrations of power or commands to act obediently.”²⁷⁶ Francis does not command the animals; rather, he relates to them as brothers and sisters. In short, while it might be tempting to dismiss the animal

²⁷² Thomas of Celano, “The Life of Saint Francis,” vol. 1, 248.

²⁷³ Jones, *The School of Compassion*, 72. For a detailed examination of Franciscan theology, see Osborne, *The History of Franciscan Theology*. Osborne details the history of the Franciscan theological tradition, but it is notable how little mention is made of animals and creation.

²⁷⁴ Armstrong, *Saint Francis*, 6. Armstrong argues that Francis is a “nature mystic,” a term that has invoked some debate among Franciscan scholars, which I do not have space to fully explore. In arguing that Francis is a “nature mystic,” Armstrong defines such a person as someone with an experience “of enlightenment or exaltation . . . inspired by or dependent upon his attitude toward nature and the extent to which he regards nature as a manifestation of the divine” (16). However, Sorrell maintains that while Francis is a nature mystic, he is not, as Armstrong suggests, one of many nature mystics, broadly conceived, in the Christian tradition. Francis’s mysticism arose not from intellectual training but rather from contemplating the natural world: “Contemplating the unity of creation and Creator, Francis enters a state of mystical transcendence.” Sorrell, *St. Francis of Assisi and Nature*, 96. For a full discussion of Sorrell’s position, see his chapter four, 69–97.

²⁷⁵ Warner, “Taking Nature Seriously,” 61–62.

²⁷⁶ Warner, “Taking Nature Seriously,” 61.

narratives as just part of the hagiographical tradition of illustrating the holiness and power of saints,²⁷⁷ there are unique elements to the animal stories associated with Saint Francis. These elements suggest an authenticity and a novelty to Saint Francis's relationship to animals.²⁷⁸ All of this suggests that these stories deserve more scholarly attention than they have previously received. However, understanding Francis's relationship to animals is not just a matter of scholarly debate; it has practical implications for the attitudes and practices of modern-day Franciscans.

Saint Francis's compassion towards animals has become legendary, and yet modern-day Franciscans have very little to say about concern for animals. Andrea F. Barone recounts comments from her students, such as "*Everyone* knows that Franciscans love nature and animals," that she maintains demonstrate "a common perception: that Francis, and Franciscans, are seen as having the kind of compassion that transcends species."²⁷⁹ Despite this perception, she argues, "Franciscans have yet to acknowledge, or make a statement regarding any of the contemporary ethical issues involving animals."²⁸⁰

All branches of the Franciscan order have offices of "Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation" (JPIC).²⁸¹ It might be assumed that animals would be included within the sphere of "integrity of creation"; however, they are not the particular focus, since the term is wider than just sentient beings, including all that is created. The publication *Guidelines for the Animation of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation* contains a brief section on how the integrity of creation is understood. The publication cites article 71 of the *General Constitutions General Statutes of the Order of Friars Minor*, which itself states, "Following in the footsteps of Saint Francis, the friars are to maintain a reverent attitude towards nature, threatened from all sides today, in such a way that they may restore it completely to its condition of brother and to its role of usefulness to all mankind for the glory of God the Creator."²⁸² The section in the *Guidelines* briefly expands on each of the themes from the constitution: (1) an attitude

²⁷⁷ For more on hagiography and animals, see Short, *Saints in the World of Nature*; and in regard to Saint Francis hagiography, see Short, "Hagiographical Method in Reading Franciscan Sources," 63–89.

²⁷⁸ A position argued by Warner, "Taking Nature Seriously," 63. Sorrell, in *St. Francis of Assisi and Nature*, argues for his "tremendous originality" (144).

²⁷⁹ Barone, "Franciscan Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation," 191; emphasis in the original.

²⁸⁰ Barone, "Franciscan Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation," 191.

²⁸¹ See, for example, Order of Friars Minor, "JPIC: The General Office for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation."

²⁸² Order of Friars Minor, *General Constitutions General Statutes of the Order of Friars Minor*, article 71.

of respect, (2) restoration of nature's condition as brother, and (3) nature's "role of usefulness."²⁸³

Although many of the ideas mentioned in the discussion to follow are examined at later points in this thesis, it is worth considering the form that Franciscan concern for creation takes. Let me take each theme in turn. First, the guidelines expand on the call for "an attitude of respect":

Respect means to look at something attentively: to know Nature, to admire it, to contemplate it, to love it. It is an invitation to accept Nature and all its creatures as gift, to sing to the Highest through all creatures, because all of them are an expression of the love of God. Respect leads us to be critical of all forms of exploitation and production that disrespect Nature, that damage it in irreversible ways.²⁸⁴

The first point to be made is that there are no distinctions made within creation. "Nature and all its creatures as gift" are considered as a whole. It may be argued that in taking this approach, the *Guidelines* are simply following Francis himself. This is a point that will be considered later. However, the lack of distinctions is significant because it does not indicate whether different kinds of respectful attitudes might be required in our relationship with creation—for example, different kinds based on sentient or non-sentient life.²⁸⁵ A second point is that respect is based in the notions of creation as a "gift" and creatures as "an expression of the love of God."²⁸⁶ A third point to consider is that the invitation to "love" and "admire" nature is coupled with a corollary call "to be critical of all forms of exploitation." This could be understood as an invitation to oppose animal exploitation, but as yet the Franciscan JPIC offices have been silent on this issue.

Second, the constitution's reference to restoring nature's "condition of brother" is explained as follows: "Humankind and Nature share a common destiny in that they are both creatures and saved (cf. Rom 8). Franciscanism is certainly a particular way of seeing and relating to God, but it is also a concrete and specific way

²⁸³ Order of Friars Minor, *Guidelines for the Animation of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation*, 19–20.

²⁸⁴ Order of Friars Minor, *Guidelines for the Animation of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation*, 19.

²⁸⁵ Sentience is an issue that will be explored more fully in chapter four.

²⁸⁶ The theme of creation as a "gift" will be taken up in chapter five in relation to Catholic teaching.

of being in the world and of treating the creatures of Nature: it is structured around the idea of universal brotherhood, where plants, animals, all things become brother and sister.”²⁸⁷ The idea of fraternity as it pertains to animals will be more fully explored later in this chapter. However, again, at this point it is worth acknowledging that the “universal brotherhood” makes no distinction between plants and animals. It is possible to be equally in fraternity with plants and other sentient beings.

Third, according to the *Guidelines*, nature’s “role of usefulness” is understood as

useful, but not utilitarian. It is not useful in the economic sense, where things and people can be bought and sold and converted into a quantity of money. Rather, we are dealing with usefulness that promotes *the integrity of individuals and of all people*. It is a usefulness that springs from love, the same love through which the Father desires that all have life in abundance. This all leads to the conclusion that *human beings are the primary end of all that exists, and that no other interest can be placed above them*. We need to find forms of production that foster individual and collective liberty, along with responsible creativity that promotes respect for Creation. We must promote equitable relations between nations and continents, respect for cultural plurality, and a search for those things that can unite us in peace and freedom.²⁸⁸

This statement glosses over and typifies the instrumentalist and anthropocentric thinking that has characterised the dominant tradition on animals. Creation is understood as here for human use, and “no other interest can be placed above” human interests. It is hard, then, to see how the notion of integrity of creation means more than creation being important as a means to human ends. The statement also does not do justice to the Roman Catholic position in the Catechism of animals as “giving glory to God.”²⁸⁹

Although there is certainly potential for greater moral thinking about animals within the JPIC framework, as it stands it is sadly animal-blind. There are no

²⁸⁷ Order of Friars Minor, *Guidelines for the Animation of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation*, 19.

²⁸⁸ Order of Friars Minor, *Guidelines for the Animation of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation*, 19–20; my emphases.

²⁸⁹ For more on the Roman Catholic position on animals, see chapter six.

statements on the moral significance of animal suffering or sentience and no sustained discussion of what our relationship to them should be. As Warner wonders in terms of the work of JPIC, “what about our work on behalf of Creation? This is definitely the weakest of the three.”²⁹⁰ The crucial point here is that this is the tradition in which Boff’s thought on Saint Francis and animals emerges—one of institutionalised muddled thought and disregard for animals.

Again, the Franciscan tradition has laid more emphasis on Saint Francis’s teachings of poverty and peace than on his moral example of relations with creation, especially sentient beings. It is from this tradition that Boff’s interpretation of Saint Francis springs. In 1981 he published his *São Francisco de Assis: Temura e Vigor* in Portuguese, which was published as *Saint Francis: A Model for Human Liberation* (hereafter cited as *Francis*) in English in 1982. *Francis* is the beginning of Boff’s theological reflection on the nonhuman world. It combines his fascination with Franciscan themes and his commitment to liberation theology.

The central thesis of *Francis* will be explored in the following sections but may be summarised as follows. Humanity needs more gentleness, which Boff understands as the ability to care for and enter into communion with others. The example of Saint Francis is one of care and communion with the world and all its inhabitants. Boff accepts that reorienting ourselves towards a life of gentleness is difficult and suggests that one concrete way to implement gentleness is through the praxis of poverty. Poverty is given a much wider definition than lack of material things and is rather conceived as a profound humility, which involves renouncing our desire to dominate and control. Boff suggests that once we have entered into the concept of radical poverty, by refusing to live by dominating others, we shall be able to live fraternally with all of God’s creation. Fraternity is thus the ultimate goal of the Franciscan way of being in the world. This is how Boff interprets Saint Francis’s life and teachings, and he holds him up to be the pre-eminent role model for humanity.

4.1. The neglect of Saint Francis’s concern for animals

a. Limited fraternity

²⁹⁰ Warner, “Taking Nature Seriously,” 54.

Saint Francis offers an alternative way of living in community and of being a church based on fraternity.²⁹¹ The brothers were to be known as “lesser brothers,” and Francis considered himself the least of all. In other words, the community was to be a community or fraternity of service and equality. But fraternity was more than an idea of how the brothers were to live together; rather, it was a vision for how to relate to the world. Boff’s understanding of Saint Francis’s fraternity is described in lyrical terms and deserves to be reproduced in full:

The fraternity would not be completely open and liberated if it were not open upwardly, in a true cosmic democracy with all creatures. To be truly fraternal, one must live fraternally with the birds, fire, water, the lark, the wolf, the worm on the road, treating all with respect and devotion, gentleness and compassion. In other words, the relationship with nature is not primarily one of ownership, but rather of living together and of conviviality. We all belong mutually to one another in a relationship of equality and symmetry. If there is some privilege with respect to the universality of goods, it must be a privilege for the poor, the defenseless, and the weak.²⁹²

Boff eloquently narrates the vision, but the praxis is obscure. At no point does he explore what this practically entails for our relationship with creation and other creatures. Since he lists animals alongside non-sentient material elements, it is not clear exactly what respect and compassion might entail. Indeed, while the vision sounds idyllic, it must be asked, how can one have fraternity with fire? Or cancer cells or viruses? The question of the goodness of nature will be explored more fully in chapter four, but it is hard to imagine what a fraternity that encompasses everything in nature, including natural disasters, famine, and illness, might look like.

Like Saint Francis, Boff makes no distinctions between parts of nature, not even distinguishing living beings from non-living entities. It might be argued that he is just being consistent with the Franciscan vision by treating all of creation with

²⁹¹ Unlike other monastic orders of Francis’s time, the Franciscan brothers were not to live in monasteries; instead they were to live among the people. Also, unlike in the established Church, there was to be no hierarchy among the brothers, only a community of radical equality. In other words, Saint Francis provides a model of being in communion that is actually subversive of Church structures. For other examples of visions of the Church, see Hardy, “Created and Redeemed Sociality,” 21–47.

²⁹² Boff, *Saint Francis*, 95. For a popular exploration of the priority that should be given to the weak, see Sheppard, *Bias to the Poor*.

respect and compassion. But Francis's lived example, as depicted in the animal narratives, seems to suggest a special care for and gentleness towards God's sentient animals. It is the birds to whom Francis preaches, the lambs whom he frees from slaughter, a wolf whom he feeds.²⁹³ The lives of animals who can be harmed are what interest Francis especially. Although he may have respect and compassion for all of creation, he does not preach to stones or rivers. Boff does not provide any detailed exploration of Francis's relationship to animals, apart from the previously cited example of inclusive-sounding language without any substance. While Francis may have not made distinctions in his language about nature, his actions, such as freeing lambs from slaughter, reveal that some sentient members of the fraternity may require more care and compassion than others.

Moreover, Boff's phrase "cosmic democracy" is odd, since it is unclear how animals and plants could participate in this. The fact that animals cannot consent or represent themselves is one of the main arguments for extending moral solicitude towards them.²⁹⁴ As Bauckham rightly suggests, "when Boff refers to Francis's view of the world as a 'cosmic democracy,' the description is too modern to be entirely appropriate, and it does not distinguish a 'democracy' of political rights from one of mutual service."²⁹⁵

In response it might be argued that Boff is putting forward a new way of being with creation²⁹⁶ that is more than a list of ethical prescriptions—a new attitude towards our relationship with the world. Boff writes that Saint Francis "lives this same peaceful and creative attitude with the animals. He frees the caged birds, the sheep led to the slaughterer, and is indignant with those who mistreat animals."²⁹⁷ This is a fine account of Saint Francis's radical relationship with the animals—freeing animals who are going to be slaughtered is indeed a strong moral message, one that

²⁹³ The question of whether Saint Francis was a vegetarian has been the subject of some debate. Sorrell argues that Francis embraced the Gospel diet that saw all animals as clean and therefore eatable. But he is clear that Francis's rule entailed a variety of dietary proscriptions for his followers, which certainly limited the amount of meat that could be eaten (Sorrell, *St. Francis of Assisi and Nature*, 75–79).

²⁹⁴ See the discussion in Linzey, *Why Animal Suffering Matters*, 21.

²⁹⁵ Bauckham, *Living with Other Creatures*, 204.

²⁹⁶ Perhaps Boff's idea is one of mutual service, as Bauckham suggests, with Boff seeing Francis's relationship to creation as one based on an idea of mutuality built on the notion of courtesy. As such, Bauckham suggests that "Francis regards all the creatures . . . as brothers and sisters, because they are fellow-creatures and fellow-members of the family of those who serve God." Bauckham, *Living with Other Creatures*, 203–4. This is a better explanation of how Francis saw the relationship between himself and other creatures; however, this is Bauckham's view of Francis. It is not clear that Boff conceives of the relationship as one based on mutuality and service.

²⁹⁷ Boff, *Saint Francis*, 98.

goes beyond respect and compassion—and it is quite clearly *liberation* for animals themselves. However, Boff makes little of this point; it is an almost throwaway thought unexplored at the end of a section. There is no call to liberate the animals, to reduce their suffering, or even to consume less meat.

Indeed, in a moment where Boff could say something positive about our relationship with animals, he turns promisingly to the narrative of Saint Francis and Brother Wolf. In the story a wolf is terrorising the town of Gubbio. Saint Francis recognises that the wolf is hungry and convinces the wolf to stop hurting people if the people feed him. This is a legend that could be used as an example of how to live peacefully in mutually symbiotic relationships with creation, how to feed animals who are in need of care. Instead, the lesson Boff gleans from the story is one of non-violence among humans, a lesson that, albeit important, ignores the story's significance for human relations with the nonhuman world. Boff humanises the legend: the wolf is not a wolf, but instead “the legend deals with two actors who confront one another and whose only relationship is one of violence and mutual destruction.”²⁹⁸ He stretches the narrative into a metaphor: the wolf is no longer a living being in need of food but rather is the inner human wolf who needs to learn the peaceful way of life that Saint Francis offers. While I do not want to take away from the important message of peace that Boff brings to the fore here, it ought to be noted that this is a missed opportunity to look at the multiple levels of the narrative and expound on the concept of a universal fraternity.²⁹⁹

Boff argues that Saint Francis lived “the radical fraternity of *all beings*.”³⁰⁰ From an animal perspective this certainly seems a positive message—namely, the recognition that “all beings” can exist in a fraternal relationship. At this point one might expect an exploration of what the fraternity of all beings might mean for humanity's relationship with the nonhuman world. However, Boff quickly qualifies this statement: “Francis lives this experience of Christ as Brother. From there comes the discovery of the umbilical cord that unites *all human beings*, the understanding of the Church as fraternity and as universal confraternization blossoms.”³⁰¹ In just a few short sentences we have moved from a fraternity of “all beings” to “all human

²⁹⁸ Boff, *Saint Francis*, 99.

²⁹⁹ For a discussion of the multiple meanings of animal motifs in hagiography, see Alexander, *Saints and Animals in the Middle Ages*. The theological significance of the wolf story will be revisited in the section “Interpreting Saint Francis's relationship with animals” in this chapter.

³⁰⁰ Boff, *Saint Francis*, 117; my emphases.

³⁰¹ Boff, *Saint Francis*, 117; my emphases.

beings.” Sadly, Boff’s interpretation of Saint Francis is less radical than Saint Francis himself.

b. Impoverished anthropocentrism

Boff writes that “modern humanity has forgotten that in our activity with nature we must deal not only with things, but also with something that affects us at our deepest level. *We do not simply live in the world. We colive.*”³⁰² The idea that we “colive” in the world and that we must renounce the will to dominate could have powerful implications for how we exist in the world with other beings. The notion of coliving could reorient our thinking towards more fraternal living with the rest of creation. However, it is circumscribed by Boff’s emphasis on humanisation: “*there is no doubt that we must organize the systematic satisfaction of our basic needs and humanize the world.*”³⁰³ While his critique of domination and possession is telling, the underlying perspective remains wholly anthropocentric.³⁰⁴ It is humanity’s basic needs that need to be satisfied, not the needs of all of God’s creatures. This perspective seems out of step with Saint Francis himself, who cared deeply about the basic needs of creatures, especially animals. “Humanizing the world” is a double-edged notion, since it implies an extension of human power rather than its renunciation.

Just after Boff reminds us that we “colive” in the world, he states, “*We cannot achieve our identity while denying a friendly and fraternal relationship with our natural world.*”³⁰⁵ Fraternity is not about living in a harmonious relationship with God’s creation but about achieving “our identity.” Further, he rather gives the game away, when despite his protestations about possession, he refers to “*our natural world.*” But of course, it is not our world but God’s world: fraternity and ownership do not easily cohere. Again, he argues that “to be radically poor [is] to be fully human” since “only the *vere expropriatus*, the one who has truly disappropriated him, can become a *frater menor*, a brother of all.”³⁰⁶ However, since the fraternity envisaged by Saint Francis clearly extends to brother and sister creatures, poverty

³⁰² Boff, *Saint Francis*, 46; my emphases.

³⁰³ Boff, *Saint Francis*, 45–46; my emphases.

³⁰⁴ Boff’s critique of domination is a recurring theme within his work. It is found in both his liberation and ecological theology. A fuller discussion of domination as a will to power will be explored in chapter four. The significance of domination in his Franciscan theology will be discussed in relation to praxis in the section of this chapter titled “Praxis as a refusal of domination.”

³⁰⁵ Boff, *Saint Francis*, 46; my emphases.

³⁰⁶ Boff, *Saint Francis*, 72.

cannot be only about humans becoming more human. Unfortunately, the truth of the critique is in the title of the work: “a model for *human* liberation.”

Elsewhere, Boff refers to how Francis “let things be.”³⁰⁷ “Letting be” is understood as a part of Boff’s critique of domination, but he does not extend the logic of the position to include animals. The potential significance of this attitude towards other creatures should not be minimised. To let be is, as Boff rightly judges, to renounce possession, manipulation, and control.³⁰⁸ When understood in relation to animals, this attitude’s ethical and theological ramifications are gargantuan. It means that instead of seeing animals as here for our use, we should rather celebrate their natural lives and respect them by leaving them alone. Linzey argues for the importance of “letting be” in regard to animals, suggesting that the significance of this position may be summarised thusly: “animals have the right to be left alone.”³⁰⁹ Sadly again, in a moment in which he could extend Franciscan concern to animals, Boff fails to recognise the significance of Saint Francis’s relationship to creation.

c. Interpreting Saint Francis’s relationship to animals

It seems clear, then, that Boff has insufficiently grasped the radicality of the Franciscan message in relation to animals. Although *Francis* frequently refers to the narrative of the life of Saint Francis, Boff reads off that life into a series of principles such as gentleness, poverty, and fraternity.³¹⁰ Though the importance of these themes should not be dismissed, Boff is inevitably involved in a process of abstraction that runs the risk of distorting Francis’s actual life. That is to say, Francis does not put forward a series of rules or principles by which to live; rather, he provides a lived example of a Christlike life in the world.

The narratives of Saint Francis and animals easily can be written off as some kind of hagiographical gloss—that is, as a way of embellishing his legend or as an illustration of his extraordinary life. But these stories pack a much greater theological punch than is often appreciated: Linzey argues, “as we grow in union with, and love for, God the Creator, so we should likewise grow in communion with, and love of,

³⁰⁷ Boff, *Saint Francis*, 39.

³⁰⁸ Boff, *Saint Francis*, 39.

³⁰⁹ Linzey, “Letting Be,” 28.

³¹⁰ The themes of gentleness and poverty will be discussed more fully in “The Franciscan promise” part of this chapter.

God's other creatures."³¹¹ This is not an unusual idea in the lives of saints. Thomas Merton wrote, "It was because the saints were absorbed in God that they were truly capable of seeing and appreciating created things, and it was because they loved Him alone that they alone loved everybody."³¹²

Saint Francis's relationship with creation may be conceived as simultaneously a throwback to and an anticipation of the new and renewed creation. Merton wrote eloquently of the peace of creation, shared with animals: "The beasts and the trees will one day share with us a new creation and we will see them as God sees them and know that they are very good."³¹³ The peaceable relations Francis has with creation are suggestive of the cosmic peace expressed by the concept of the sabbath in Genesis 2:3—"So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation." Jürgen Moltmann explores the theological significance of the sabbath in his *God in Creation*. He argues that the sabbath is an "ecological day of rest,"³¹⁴ and "when the sabbath is sanctified, a time is sanctified which is there for the whole creation. When the sabbath is celebrated, it is celebrated for all created being."³¹⁵ The sabbath signifies the beginning of creation but is also an anticipation of the future state of peaceableness.

Robert Murray also argues that the biblical accounts "present the vision of harmony restored between heaven and earth, humankind and other creatures."³¹⁶ God's goal in creation can be understood as peace or, as Murray puts it, "the cosmic covenant."³¹⁷ By enacting a peaceable relationship with creation, Francis anticipates the messianic peaceableness that is promised to all creation. As Linzey and Ara Barsam indicate, "the theological significance of Francis' life may be understood as a prefiguring of that state of peaceableness within creation which will finally be accomplished at the end of time."³¹⁸

Celano recounts how Saint Francis preached to the birds:

³¹¹ Linzey, "Franciscan Concern for Animals," 89.

³¹² Merton, *Seeds of Contemplation*, 7.

³¹³ Merton, *No Man is an Island*, 16.

³¹⁴ Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 296.

³¹⁵ Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 284.

³¹⁶ Murray, *The Cosmic Covenant*, 43.

³¹⁷ Murray, *Cosmic Covenant*. Murray's argument is that cosmic peace is the goal of creation, as indicated by many narratives within the biblical text, including the creation stories.

³¹⁸ Linzey and Barsam, "Saint Francis of Assisi," 25.

My brother birds, you should greatly praise your Creator, and love Him always. He gave you feathers to wear, wings to fly, and whatever you need. God made you noble among His creatures and gave you a home in the purity of the air, so that, though you neither *sow nor reap*, He nevertheless protects and governs you without your least care.³¹⁹

Again, preaching to other creatures may seem strange, until the command to preach the Gospel to the whole creation is brought to mind: “And he said to them, ‘Go into the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation’” (Mark 16:15). Linzey argues that “as God is the Creator of all, so all things are to be included within the work of salvation.” He continues, “By befriending and protecting animals, Francis manifested in his life the very divine generosity which he believed to be at the heart of the cosmos.”³²⁰

Boff claims that “the Franciscan world is full of magic, of reverence and respect.”³²¹ But this is to claim both too much and too little—too much in that the world of Saint Francis is not a world of make-believe or fantasy. Neither, more importantly, is it a world of human tricks and apparitions. Saint Francis is not a wizard. To claim all this is to see Francis as a wonder-worker in the sense in which Jesus was sometimes understood in the Gospels. The statement also claims too little in that what is actually demonstrated in the life of Saint Francis is an enchanted world.³²² To enchant may be defined as “to delight and charm.”³²³ What is revealed in Saint Francis is the true status of the world as an enchanted place full of delight—that is, a place in which God’s own Spirit enlivens and charms creation. Creaturely inspiration is not some human manufacture; it is testimony that the third person of the Trinity is immanent in all things, but especially Spirit-filled, enfleshed, living creatures. Bonaventure writes of how “it was that by God’s divine power the brute beasts felt drawn towards [Francis] . . . it seemed as if he had returned to that state of primeval innocence.”³²⁴ What Saint Francis does is represent to humans God’s own interest in the creation that he has made. Animals are fellow creatures, created on the same day of creation, also loved by God and blessed by him. As David Kinsley

³¹⁹ Thomas of Celano, “The Life of Saint Francis,” vol. 1, 234; emphasis in the original.

³²⁰ Linzey, “Franciscan Concern for Animals,” 89.

³²¹ Boff, *Saint Francis*, 35.

³²² For a discussion of the meaning of enchanted nature, see McGrath, *The Reenchantment of Nature*.

³²³ *The Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “enchant.”

³²⁴ Bonaventure, “Legenda Minor 3:6,” quoted in Sorrell, *St. Francis of Assisi and Nature*, 52.

comments, “for Francis what we refer to as ‘dumb nature’ is far from dumb; it is eloquent in singing and testifying to the beauty of its creator.”³²⁵

4.2. The Franciscan promise

a. *Gentleness as an orientation to the world*

Boff’s *Saint Francis* begins with the description of Saint Francis offered by Saint Bonaventure: “Saint Francis was a man of God. And because he was a man of God, he always lived what is essential. And so he was simple, courteous, and gentle with everyone, like God in His mercy.”³²⁶ Boff later defines gentleness in this rather convoluted line: “Gentleness, or also care, is the compassionate Eros, capable of feeling and communing with the other, which is not detained in the enjoyment of its own desires, but rather rests in the other with tenderness and love.”³²⁷ He reaches this definition by utilising the concepts of pathos and eros (which he capitalises in his work). He states that pathos is the capacity to feel and to create feeling in others.³²⁸ For Boff human existence *is* feeling: “Not the *cognito, ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am), but the *sentio, ergo sum* (I feel, therefore I am).”³²⁹ Related to pathos is eros, understood broadly as passion. “Eros does not only imply a feeling, but a co-feeling, a consent ... having com-passion ... an entering into communion.”³³⁰ Eros is differentiated here from its popular representation as sexual desire. The best expression of eros is “oblative love,” involving disinterested joy and service to God and neighbour.³³¹ Eros, then, is self-giving love, the basis of communion.

Saint Francis thus is appealing as the human expression of eros as a way of correcting the “terrifying lack of gentleness”³³² in contemporary culture. He is held up as a model of gentleness for our time in how he demonstrates communion with God, human beings, and other creatures. Saint Francis is more than a saint; rather, he is the

³²⁵ Kinsley, “Christianity as Ecologically Responsible,” 123.

³²⁶ Boff, *Saint Francis*, 3.

³²⁷ Boff, *Saint Francis*, 14. There are echoes of Boff’s conception of Jesus as a being-for-others in his understanding of Saint Francis’s relation to others.

³²⁸ See also Birch, *Feelings*. Birch’s work explores the “feelings” of human beings, nature, animals, and God in turn.

³²⁹ Boff, *Saint Francis*, 9; emphases in the original.

³³⁰ Boff, *Saint Francis*, 11.

³³¹ Boff, *Saint Francis*, 12.

³³² Boff, *Saint Francis*, 15.

“purest figure (*gestalt*) of Western history,” who models how we can relate “panfraternally” to the created world.³³³

At first glance, Boff’s generalised interpretation of Saint Francis may appear strange, until we appreciate that it has its genesis in the work of the existential psychologist Rollo May. May’s work, especially his *Love and Will*³³⁴ and *Power and Innocence*,³³⁵ came to prominence during Boff’s time as a student at the University of Munich in Germany. Indeed, Boff cites May’s admiration of Franciscan innocence, which is described as “the preservation of an infantile clarity at an adult age.”³³⁶ May draws on the work of Sigmund Freud and Jung, as well as, his personal experience as a psychologist. His conviction in the aforementioned works is the dialectical relationship between love and will, and between power and innocence. He argues that when power and innocence are not in balance in individuals, they can become destructive. May is almost certainly the influence behind Boff’s characterisation of eros as gentleness, since May understands eros as “the source of tenderness ... the longing to establish union, full relationship.”³³⁷

Some aspects of May’s thought, and Boff’s use of it, should be emphasised. In the first place, May’s writing, like Boff’s, sometimes tends towards generalisations and grandiose ideas, which may or may not be transferable to Boff’s interpretation of Saint Francis’s life. Second, May’s work is that of a *humanist* psychologist who is principally, if not wholly, concerned with human relations with other humans. Nowhere does May consider the relationship of humans to animals or to the creaturely world. It might then be suggested that May’s analysis encourages the focus on humanity in Boff’s interpretation of the Franciscan narrative.

Nevertheless, understanding Saint Francis as a model of gentleness, however that characteristic is conceived, is a good starting point for repositioning human relations with other creatures. Whatever we make of Boff’s interpretations of the notions of eros and pathos, we can be sure of the importance of gentleness in Saint Francis’s ministry to all creation. This can be seen in the narrative of Brother Worm, which recalls how Saint Francis would move worms from his path, so they would not be harmed by other passers-by. Boff’s contention is that we need more Saint Francis–

³³³ Boff, *Saint Francis*, 18.

³³⁴ May, *Love and Will*.

³³⁵ May, *Power and Innocence*.

³³⁶ May, quoted in Boff, *Saint Francis*, 19.

³³⁷ May, *Love and Will*, 75.

like gentleness and compassion in the world and greater sensitivity to the beings within it.³³⁸ Although this might seem a rather obvious point—that the world needs more gentleness and kindness—it is rather central to a kinder world for other creatures. The need for more gentleness and compassion in the way humans relate to the world is a highly commendable notion and one that should be welcomed by most environmental and animal-friendly thinkers.

The case for gentleness is strengthened further when it is appreciated that the link between animal abuse and human violence is one of the most researched fields of applied psychology.³³⁹ It is now well established that there is a specific relationship between violence to humans and violence to animals that merits at least some consideration. Marie Louise Petersen and David P. Farrington in their research discovered that “of 64 inmates: 48% of those convicted of rape and 30% convicted of child molestation had histories of animal cruelty,” and “of 28 sexual homicide perpetrators: 36% committed acts of animal cruelty in childhood, and 46% in adolescence.”³⁴⁰ Although such statistics need to be interpreted with care, it is clear that there is a statistical link of significance. Indeed, it is now possible to make *predictive* judgements based on previous relationships of abuse. For example, research by Jack Levin and Arnold Arluke shows that it is possible to *predict* that children involved in hands-on cruelty to dogs and cats will become serial killers.³⁴¹ In short, the evidence overwhelmingly shows that violence against animals leads to violence against humans.³⁴² We need to take account of animal abuse, not least of all because violence against animals is part of a cycle of violence in which there are human victims. It is a system in which humanity has become too desensitised to violence. We need greater sensitivity to violence and suffering if we are to enter into a wholesome relationship with the rest of creation. A world with greater gentleness towards all sentient creatures is vital to reducing the cycle of violence in the world.

b. Praxis as a refusal of domination

³³⁸ This is a motif that has found expression in artistic depictions of Saint Francis since the late thirteenth century. See Robson, *St. Francis of Assisi*, 239.

³³⁹ For a guide to some of the recent research, see Nelson, “The Connection between Animal Abuse and Family Violence: A Selected Annotated Bibliography,” 369–414.

³⁴⁰ Petersen and Farrington, “Measuring Animal Cruelty and Case Histories,” 2.

³⁴¹ Levin and Arluke, “Reducing the Link’s False Positive Problem,” 163–71.

³⁴² See Gullone, *Animal Cruelty, Antisocial Behaviour, and Aggression*.

Boff's thesis is that gentleness, as Saint Francis's attitude to creation, is to be implemented through the "new praxis of Saint Francis."³⁴³ This "new praxis" is born out of Francis's conversion experience, after which Francis began to identify himself with the poor. Praxis begins with poverty, which is not defined solely in material terms. Poverty is defined by Boff as "a way of being by which the individual lets things be what they are; one refuses to dominate them, subjugate them, and make them the objects of the will to power. One refuses to be over them in order to be with them."³⁴⁴ Obviously, poverty defined in these terms is a herculean challenge requiring an "an immense asceticism" that necessitates the renunciation of domination, control, and manipulation.³⁴⁵ The desire to possess is what alienates humans from each other and the world. In order to enter into the Franciscan worldview, as Boff conceives of it, one is required to abandon ideas of possession and the will to dominate, in order to move into a different kind of relationship with the world.

Indeed, Boff suggests that the more "radical" the poverty, the easier it is to embrace reality and commune "with all things."³⁴⁶ In short, "poverty is thus a synonym for humility; this is not another virtue, but an attitude by which the individual is on the ground, in the earth, at the side of all things."³⁴⁷ He argues that this is not an idealised version of Saint Francis and nature, but rather it is an opportunity to re-evaluate how we relate to the rest of creation. But he emphasises that such poverty is the result of immense struggle and perseverance:

It was at the end and not at the beginning of his life that Francis composed the hymn to Brother Sun. To begin where Francis ended is a disastrous illusion. Making the effort to retrace the path, in great humility, trying to become one with things, especially the smallest, is to feed the hope that perhaps our world may also be transformed and may reveal its fraternal and filial character.³⁴⁸

³⁴³ Boff, *Saint Francis*, 39.

³⁴⁴ Boff, *Saint Francis*, 39. For a similar defence of the vow of poverty in monasticism, see Williams, *Poverty, Chastity and Obedience*.

³⁴⁵ Boff, *Saint Francis*, 39. The theme of renouncing domination will reoccur in Boff's later ecological work, as he explores what this might mean in terms of our relationship with the environment.

³⁴⁶ Boff, *Saint Francis*, 39.

³⁴⁷ Boff, *Saint Francis*, 39.

³⁴⁸ Boff, *Saint Francis*, 40.

Despite Boff's insistence that this is not a romantic ideal, the language used to describe the vision remains grandiose and idealised. However romanticised the notions, Boff interprets fraternity as the end result of poverty. It is this conception of poverty, understood as profound humility, that opens up the possibility of universal fraternity, especially with other sentient beings.

The conception of poverty as a refusal to dominate other beings, while not explored in relation to animals by Boff, could have radical implications for how we relate to creation. If humanity took up this praxis of radical poverty, it would mean abandoning the use of animals for food, clothing, entertainment, sport, and research, to name a few areas. The refusal to live by dominating others would mean the end of animal exploitation in all its forms. An attitude of being "at the side of all things" is perhaps a more radical notion that Boff realises, since it would involve a reordering of how all humanity lives with creation.

c. Fraternity with all creation

Fraternity is one theme in the life of Saint Francis to which Boff devotes a great deal of time. Francis's biographer Celano writes of how Francis "called all creatures his brothers and sisters" as one who had "arrived at the glorious freedom of the children of God."³⁴⁹ Celano seems to suggest that Francis has fulfilled the Pauline vision depicted in Romans: "For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God" (Rom. 8:19–21). The theological implication here is that humans, once redeemed in Christ, should rescue other creatures from bondage, and these creatures will likewise be redeemed. A fuller explanation of the animal-positive understanding of this passage, in line with Celano, is suggested in a Church of England report titled *Man in His Living Environment*:

Both the sufferings of animals and the sufferings of Christ could lead to cynicism if considered in isolation. But in the context of Easter and Pentecost the suffering of Christ takes on new meaning and this new meaning gives

³⁴⁹ Thomas of Celano, "First Life of St. Francis," 81. Cited by Boff in *Saint Francis*, 34.

point to the groaning and travailing of all creation. Jesus is the revelation of God and of the true nature of man and he is also the redeemer of all mankind. And on man, thus redeemed, falls some responsibility for the redemption of all creation.³⁵⁰

In short, then, the role of humanity is to aid in the redemption of creation. Saint Francis is a moral example of how to aid in the redemption of other creatures and how to be a child of God.

This thought is echoed from a different perspective by Saint Francis's other biographer, Saint Bonaventure, who argues that when Saint Francis "considered the primordial source of all things, he was filled with even more abundant piety, calling creatures no matter how small, by the name of brother and sister because he knew they had the same source as himself."³⁵¹ The insight that animals are our "brothers" and "sisters" in creation was an immensely radical thought in the thirteenth century, predating the discoveries of Charles Darwin and evolution. Notice how Saint Francis arrived at this conclusion not through any geo-biological speculation, but through reflection on the doctrine of God as Creator and Father of all.

This is recognised by Boff as a "distinct way of being-in-the-world, not over things, but together with them, like brothers and sisters of the same family."³⁵² He continues:

The Franciscan world is full of magic, of reverence and respect. It is not a dead and inanimate universe; things are not tossed here, within the possessive appetites of hunger; nor are they placed one beside another. They are alive and have their own personality; they have blood ties with humanity; they live in the same Father's house as humanity. *And because they are brothers and sisters, they cannot be violated, but rather must be respected.* It is from this that Saint Francis, surprisingly, but consistent with his nature, prohibits the brothers from cutting any tree at the roots, that they might bud again.³⁵³

³⁵⁰ Church Information Office, *Man in His Living Environment*, 65.

³⁵¹ Bonaventure, "The Life of St. Francis," 254–55.

³⁵² Boff, *Saint Francis*, 35.

³⁵³ Boff, *Saint Francis*, 35; my emphases.

The statement that other creatures are our brothers and sisters and “cannot be violated” is an encouraging one from an environmental perspective. But it is unclear exactly what this means in context. Boff understands fraternity as a way of being in relationship—of being not above creation but alongside it. He states that “fraternity places Francis on the same level as the creatures. [Francis] does not define himself as distinct from them, by emphasising what makes him different.”³⁵⁴ It is worth noting how different this approach is from Francis’s near contemporary Aquinas, who focused on the differences between humans and other creatures.³⁵⁵ Instead, Saint Francis sings along with other creatures. Boff suggests, “Modern humanity has difficulty signing along with things because we are not with them.”³⁵⁶ The call of Saint Francis, then, is to orientate ourselves towards being with the rest of creation as opposed to lording over it. Fraternity is then understood as an orientation towards creatureliness, towards seeing ourselves as fellow creatures.

It is worth noting here, despite my critique of Boff, that this fraternal understanding of creation is a step beyond the dominant instrumental view of nature. Previous theological thought, notably illustrated by Charles Davis, reflects a scholastic view of nature. Davis argues that “nature ... is open to man’s exploitation. No longer is it regarded as sacred and untouchable. This is the inevitable consequence of man’s scientific understanding of nature. Nature ceases to be mysterious. What man intelligently masters, he proceeds to dominate and control.”³⁵⁷ Davis is here legitimising a dominionism view of nature: dominion is made possible by our scientific understanding of creation, and that dominion over nature is God’s will. In the context of the dominant instrumentalist interpretation of creation, Boff’s embracing of an attitude of “reverence and respect”³⁵⁸ is positively enlightened.

Although Boff does not explore what fraternity with other sentient creatures might look like, the answer is nonetheless there within his interpretation of Saint Francis. Revealing the “fraternal and filial character” of this world would involve a radical reassessment of the way humans treat other beings and an imagining of what that new fraternal relationship might look like. Saint Francis began such a reimagining. The stories of Saint Francis tell of his liberating of animals on their way

³⁵⁴ Boff, *Saint Francis*, 37.

³⁵⁵ See further discussion of this in chapter one. But the principal difference, from which other distinctions follow, is rationality.

³⁵⁶ Boff, *Saint Francis*, 37–38.

³⁵⁷ Davis, *God’s Grace in History*, 21.

³⁵⁸ Boff, *Saint Francis*, 35.

to slaughter. Saint Bonaventure writes that Saint Francis “often paid to ransom lambs that were being led to their death, remembering that most gentle Lamb who willed to be *led to slaughter* (Isa. 53:7) to pay the ransom of sinners.”³⁵⁹ The identification of suffering animals with Christ, along with their liberation from slaughter on Christ’s behalf, communicates a powerful message about animal suffering. It might be argued, then, that the Franciscan idea of fraternity includes within it the liberation of animals from suffering and death. Fraternity thus is a much more liberatory concept than Boff himself allows.

d. The poor and nonhuman creatures

The primary lens through which Boff sees Saint Francis is one of poverty. Saint Francis’s purpose, as Boff characterises it, was to evangelise and live among the poor.³⁶⁰ The Franciscan way of being a Christian, of living with the poor, has a particular resonance for Boff’s Brazilian context. Living among some of the poorest communities in the world, he finds the message of Saint Francis’s identification with and compassion for the poor especially poignant. Brazil has seen a great many political and economic changes in the twentieth century; however, social inequality and widespread poverty have remained consistent.³⁶¹ In this context of massive inequality and poverty, the figure of Saint Francis is appealing. Saint Francis’s identification with the oppressed and the marginalised would have been doubly poignant at the time Boff was penning *Francis*, given the military regime.³⁶² Moreover, Saint Francis’s life of being with the poor resonates with liberation theology’s emphasis on “the preferential option for the poor.”³⁶³ Both Boff and Francis see in the Gospel God’s self-identification in Jesus with the poor, and they

³⁵⁹ Bonaventure, “The Life of St. Francis,” 255; emphases in the original.

³⁶⁰ Boff, *Saint Francis*, 115.

³⁶¹ Sachs states, “According to the 1998 *Human Development Report* published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the poorer half of the Brazilian population, which held 18 percent of the total annual income in 1960, saw its share sink to 11.6 percent in 1995. At the same time, the richest 10 percent went from holding 54 percent of the domestic income in 1960 to 63 percent in 1995.” Sachs, “*Quo Vadis, Brazil?*,” 332.

³⁶² Dávila reports how the Brazilian dictatorship “relied on widespread torture, detention, and harassment of political opponents” to ensure its power. Dávila, Foreword, xii.

³⁶³ Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, xxv. The term has been used in different ways, but was first articulated as a theological principle by Gutiérrez in 1971. The term encompasses the idea that God in Jesus is on the side of the poor, and is particularly concerned with the poor, the weak, and the marginalized. It became the central message of liberation theology. Gutiérrez articulated this concern as “an option for the poor is an option for the God of the kingdom whom Jesus proclaims to us ... [God has a] predilection for the poor, the hungry, and the suffering.” Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, xxvii.

make this the heart of their theological work. Francis interprets this as a call to give up his wealth and influence and live a life of poverty and humility alongside the poor and other creatures. Boff interprets the Gospel as meaning that God is on the side of the poor and that this is where his theological focus should be. In short, he focuses on the message of the poor, not only because the message is there in the life of Saint Francis and indeed the Gospel, but also because that is the context in which Boff is writing.

Saint Francis is undoubtedly concerned with the poor. However, there are points in *Francis* in which Boff's focus is so centred on the plight of the poor that it seems he may be missing other messages within the Franciscan narrative. For example, he writes:

Identified with the world of the poor, Francis accepts the poor's universe of representation. This is organized by means of the logic of the subconscious and is expressed by way of *symbols*. Francis' entire language is laden with *archetypal symbolism*. The mysteries of Jesus are represented by him in a concrete manner, very much in the way of the people. Thus, he was the one who introduced the living celebration of Christmas through the manger scene, with the sheep, the ox, and the donkey.³⁶⁴

There are some suggestions that Saint Francis is responsible for the addition of animals to the nativity story. For example, Dominic Alexander recounts that "Francis is also said to have built a nativity scene one Christmas at Greccio, and the hay from this holy installation cured animals of their illnesses, and eased difficult births for women who lay upon it."³⁶⁵ However, to suggest that Francis alone is responsible for the inclusion of animals in the story of Christ's birth is to miss out on the longer tradition of narratives of Jesus relating to animals and those narratives' significance. In fact, the first known recording of animals at Jesus's birth is found in the apocryphal literature of the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew: "And on the third day after the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, Mary went out of the cave and, entering a stable, placed the child in the manger, and an ox and an ass adored him. Then was fulfilled that which was said by Isaiah the Prophet, 'The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's

³⁶⁴ Boff, *Saint Francis*, 124; my emphases.

³⁶⁵ Alexander, *Saints and Animals in the Middle Ages*, 170.

crib.”³⁶⁶ The nativity narrative and other stories of Jesus and animals found in the apocryphal literature³⁶⁷ serve to illustrate that the Christ-event has significance beyond humanity to the whole of creation, including animals.

Putting aside the validity of the nativity story, it seems reductive to characterise the animals in Francis’s narratives as “symbols.” While of course it is true that animals have been used to symbolise many things in human language over the centuries, Boff may be missing a larger theological point—which is that the entire creation, not just humanity, is affected by the coming of Jesus. In that sense, animals in the nativity story are true symbols, in that they participate in what they point to.³⁶⁸ Their presence in the story is not merely archetypal as Boff suggests; rather, they symbolise that all of creation is caught up in the Christ-event. That animals and creation in general are involved in the Christ narrative is suggested in both Ephesians and Colossians, in which “all things” are taken up into Christ (Eph. 1:10; Col. 1:20).³⁶⁹

Moreover, while Boff carefully explores Saint Francis’s identification with the poor, he interprets the poor in a solely humanocentric way. However, the ministries of both Saint Francis and Jesus emphasise the poor, weak, vulnerable, and marginalised, descriptors that can apply beyond the human realm to how we treat vulnerable nonhuman creatures. As I wrote in chapter two, theology from the periphery can be applied to all beings who are oppressed and marginalised, including animals. However, in practice the periphery rarely means anything other than the human periphery, the human margins. We forget that humanity exists as part of a larger creation, and if we could begin from the periphery of creation, we would have a radically different view. This is an argument that I suggest can be applied to most of Boff’s corpus. I will go on to expand on this argument in relation to his ecological theology in the next chapter.

³⁶⁶ “The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew,” in Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 94.

³⁶⁷ Again in Pseudo-Matthew, there is a story about the child Jesus greeting lions who come to worship him (“The Gospel of Pseudo Matthew,” in Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 97–98). In the Infancy Gospel of Thomas, the child Jesus molds sparrows out of clay (“The Infancy Gospel of Thomas,” in Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 75–76). In the Protoevangelium of James, the significance of Christ’s birth is envisioned as affecting all creation, with birds, sheep, and goats becoming still (“Protoevangelium of James,” in Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 64). All of these accounts illustrate that Francis is part of an unfolding tradition of creation relating to the Creator.

³⁶⁸ For a discussion on symbols, see Tillich, *Systematic Theology*. He states that “The symbol participates in the reality which is symbolised” (9).

³⁶⁹ See chapter one note for commentaries.

As we have seen in this chapter, Boff does not give any sustained consideration of animals in his work on Francis. The major themes Boff explored can easily be applied to nonhumans, but he simply does not make that connection. I have explored Boff's anthropocentric lens in regard to Francis. Boff reflects the blindness of the Catholic tradition even when confronted with a figure that liberates us from traditional anthropocentric perspectives. However, Boff's analysis contains ideas that could easily be expanded to become animal-friendly. I will return to these ideas, especially gentleness and fraternity, in my development of animal theology in chapter seven. Many of the ideas explored in this chapter, such as the refusal of domination and fraternity, underpin Boff's next conceptual move into talking about the relationship of the poor to the environment in his ecological theology. Indeed, it may be argued that his ecological theology is a natural continuation of his Franciscan theology. The next chapter will explore Boff's ecological theology, and question if there is space within it for the moral considerations of animals.

Chapter 5: Cosmological Liberation without Animal Liberation

This chapter considers Boff's turn towards ecological theology in his works *Ecology and Liberation* and *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*. I return again to my methodological questions of what theological consideration does Boff give to animals and what of his theology may help the development of animal theology. I argue that Boff avoids the narrow anthropocentrism of *Jesus*, but sadly remains insufficiently attentive to the animal issue. His ecotheology embraces a holistic approach to the cosmos that sees humans as co-piloting the universe with God. The focus on interdependence and balance within eco-systems fails to take account of fallenness and violence in the world, especially as regards animal suffering. Boff's ecotheology is fundamentally incapable of taking into account the suffering of *individual animals* as it is too focused on a holistic approach. Yet, his ecotheology represents a significant shift in his work and, at least notionally, he accepts the rights of other creatures, a shift from simple anthropocentrism.

In the 1990s, Boff turned his attention from liberation theology to incorporate ecological theology into his thinking. In 1993, he published *Ecologia, Mundialização, Espiritualidade* in Portuguese, which was subsequently published in English in 1995 as *Ecology and Liberation: A New Paradigm* (hereafter cited as *Ecology*). Shortly after in 1995, he penned *Ecologia: Grito da Terra, Grito dos Pobres* in Portuguese, which was published in English in 1997 as *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor* (hereafter cited as *Cry*). Both texts represent an attempt to relate the problem of poverty to larger ecological concerns. Boff argues that current ecological problems have come about because of a misguided view of growth and development. In order to address this crisis, we need not only a new approach to development and economics but also a radical reimagining of how humanity should interact with the earth. The guiding idea for this new relationship to the world is ecology.

Boff draws upon the first definition of ecology offered by German biologist Ernst Haeckel in 1866. Haeckel defined it as “the study of the interrelationship of all living and nonliving systems among themselves and with their environment.”³⁷⁰ The concept of relationality is what is significant for Boff: “The basic concept of nature

³⁷⁰ Haeckel, *Allgemeine Entwicklungsgeschichte der Organismen*, quoted in Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 3.

seen from an ecological standpoint is that everything is related to everything else in all respects. A slug on the roadway is related to the most distant galaxy.”³⁷¹ Boff expands this conception to go beyond the created order and include human social relations: “Ecology stands for the relations, interaction, and dialogue of all existing creatures (whether alive or not) among themselves and with all that exists ... Ecology encompasses not only nature (natural ecology) but culture and society (human ecology, social ecology, and so on).”³⁷² The central idea is the interrelated and interdependent conception of the universe that springs from this perspective. Boff’s hope is to use the relational conception of ecology and apply it on a larger scale to the global environmental crisis.

He argues that humanity has lost its sense of connection to and dependence on the world because of the way humans have thought about their relationship to the world. He argues that thought about the earth has been dominated by belief in two supposed “infinities”: (1) “inexhaustible” material resources and (2) unlimitable human progress. “Both infinities are illusory,” he claims.³⁷³ The focus of the Western capitalist paradigm, which is based on these infinities, is one of unlimited growth without regard for any other species or the damage human growth inflicts on the environment. Boff identifies the underlying problem as the desire for power. “The will to power is not necessarily perverse,” he writes; “the issue is the will to power as domination.”³⁷⁴ In an extension of his Franciscan ideas, he argues that the structural issues of poverty and the environmental crisis are both rooted in the will to power as domination.³⁷⁵ He provides a critique not only of how we interact with the environment but also of how we participate in an economic system that commodifies its weakest members. It is not just that humans use and abuse the environment for its resources; it is that we are part of a structural system that does not question whether we have the right to do so.

5.1. Ecology and the neglect of animals

³⁷¹ Boff, *Ecology and Liberation*, 10.

³⁷² Boff, *Ecology and Liberation*, 9. This is the broader definition of ecology embraced by Pope Francis in *Laudato Si*. See chapter six for an exploration of how Pope Francis uses the language of ecology.

³⁷³ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 2.

³⁷⁴ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 74.

³⁷⁵ Boff extends his critique of the will to dominate, discussed in the previous chapter, to humanity’s relationship with nature. He argues that humanity views itself as having power and dominion over nature: “this conception has consecrated and underpinned the violence and aggression unleashed against nature since the beginning of the modern era.” Boff, *Ecology and Liberation*, 85.

a. Ecology and overdependence

As described previously, Boff draws on the scientific conception of ecology but expands it beyond its original biological definition. In particular, he embraces James Lovelock's notion of the planet as "Gaia,"³⁷⁶ evolutionary theory,³⁷⁷ and Stephen Hawking's *A Brief History of Time*.³⁷⁸ In considerable detail, he explores how life developed from the big bang through to the formation of life on Earth. Life exists in a delicate balance: if only a few elemental changes were to occur, life as we know it would cease to exist. While Boff uses a variety of scientific theories, such as evolution and Gaia, to inform his discussion, it is ecology that remains the guiding principle of his argument.

Life is guided by what Boff refers to as a "cosmogenic principle."³⁷⁹ He argues that the very fundamentals of life are grounded in "four original interconnections: gravity, the electromagnetic force, and the strong and weak nuclear forces."³⁸⁰ These forces, which have not been wholly explained by science yet, "should probably be understood as modes of *primordial action* through which the universe itself acts, interacts with its elements, and is self-regulating."³⁸¹ The cosmogenic principle is an idea that explains the evolution of the universe with an appeal to the divine and these four scientific principles. The principle is the foundation of life itself and can be thought of as a primordial action, or what Boff later calls "divine energy." He combines the aforementioned scientific theories with Teilhard de Chardin's ideas on the divine universe.³⁸² Teilhard de Chardin's description of the "divine milieu" conveys a similar image: "God reveals himself everywhere . . . *as a universal milieu*, only because he is *the ultimate point* upon which all realities converge."³⁸³ In both Boff and Teilhard de Chardin, God is present

³⁷⁶ Lovelock, *Gaia; The Ages of Gaia; and Scientists on Gaia*.

³⁷⁷ See Margulis and Sagan, *Microcosmos*; Swimme and Berry, *The Universe Story*; and Jantsch, *The Self-Organizing Universe*.

³⁷⁸ Hawking, *A Brief History of Time*.

³⁷⁹ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 45. This term is related to the definition in chapter two of cosmogenesis as "the origin or evolution of the universe." *The Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "cosmogenesis." Note the similar use of language in *Jesus* and *Cry* about the universe: "cosmogenesis" in *Jesus* (209) and "cosmogenic" in *Cry* (45).

³⁸⁰ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 45.

³⁸¹ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 45; my emphases.

³⁸² Teilhard de Chardin's use of "cosmogenesis" is explored in chapter two. But for reference he sees Jesus as the cosmogenic alpha and omega—the beginning and end of the universe.

³⁸³ Teilhard de Chardin, *Le Milieu Divin*, 114; emphases in the original.

throughout—and is the force driving—the universe, but Boff overlays his analysis with an appeal to evolutionary theory.³⁸⁴

One problem with Boff's adoption of ecology as the basis of his environmental theology is his overdependence on the idea itself. Ecology (or rather, what he perceives it to be) is Boff's sole standard of critique. He repeatedly uses phrases such as “anti-ecological”³⁸⁵ and “ecological contradictions”³⁸⁶ and questions whether views and actions are compatible with ecological ideals or not, to critique ways of interacting with the world. Whether something is ecological becomes the norm by which to judge its moral validity. The danger is, however, that the concept becomes deified—that is, it constitutes the standard by which human actions should be judged. Ecology becomes God. It may be argued that his over-reliance on the concept leaves little room for a theological interpretation. Boff could have reached for a theological explanation of caring for creation based on biblical ideas, but instead ecology becomes the arbiter of moral action.

Boff critiques other forms of scientifically led developments, such as genetic engineering and cybernetics, for suggesting a technological messianism that will eventually save humanity from its problems. Boff argues that “we now have a technocratic messianism that claims it will be possible to give everyone more than abundant food, housing, medical care, and leisure.”³⁸⁷ However, he does not hold ecology up to the same standard of critique. Boff is arguing that ecology, which is primarily a scientific exploration, will eventually deliver humankind from the current crisis. Is this not a kind of ecological “messianism”? Although he is critical of other scientific ideas, especially the idea of scientific progress, he adopts this concept of ecology rather uncritically. He does not attempt to see the limitations of the concept, although, as will be shown, they are not insubstantial.

b. All in God, God in all

“All in God, God in All” is the title of chapter seven of *Cry*. At first sight it appears that Boff is advocating pantheism—namely, that the world is identical with God. And there are passages that do suggest that God is intimately present in, if not identical

³⁸⁴ In particular, Boff draws on Swimme and Berry, *The Universe Story*; Barrow and Tipler, *The Anthropic Cosmological Principle*; Longair, *The Origins of Our Universe*; Lovell, *Emerging Cosmology*; and Sagan, *Cosmos*, among others.

³⁸⁵ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 80.

³⁸⁶ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 128–29.

³⁸⁷ Boff, *Ecology and Liberation*, 75.

with, creation. “God did not create the world *in* time, but *with* time,”³⁸⁸ avers Boff. Again, he speaks of “an otherness that comes from God without being God but which depends on God, bears the marks of God, and points towards God.”³⁸⁹ He picks up process cosmology (after Whitehead³⁹⁰ and his followers Hartshorne,³⁹¹ Ogden,³⁹² Cobb,³⁹³ Griffin,³⁹⁴ and Haught³⁹⁵) and concurs with its assessment that instead of God and the world set facing one another, God is “set within the process of the world and the world is regarded as *within* God’s process.”³⁹⁶ Once again, “God is not identified with the cosmic process ... but God is identified *in* the cosmic process.”³⁹⁷

Yet Boff resists pantheism because it apparently does not allow for “difference.” In pantheism, he argues, “everything is identical; all is God”: “The heavens are God, Earth is God, the rock is God, bacteria are God, the human being is God, each thing is God ... That is obviously wrong. One thing is *not* another; there are differences in this world. Pantheism respects such differences, while pantheism denies them.”³⁹⁸ He thinks that by making this distinction between pantheism and panentheism, he can save his schema from the well-known philosophical difficulties.³⁹⁹ But they are still present within panentheism, for while God may not be identical with creation, God is nevertheless identified with the processes within creation and therefore cannot be absolved from responsibility for the processes that cause misery in our world. And Boff does not confront the obvious process that characterises the natural world and that brings in its train waste, futility, suffering, and death—namely, predation.⁴⁰⁰ As it stands, his system undergirds the appropriateness of predation as a system willed and indeed sustained by the Creator. Boff therefore

³⁸⁸ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 144–45; emphases in the original.

³⁸⁹ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 144.

³⁹⁰ See Whitehead, *Process and Reality*.

³⁹¹ See, for example, Hartshorne, *Beyond Humanism; Man’s Vision of God and the Logic of Theism; The Divine Relativity*; and *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes*.

³⁹² See Ogden, *The Reality of God and Other Essays*; and Ogden and Hartshorne, *Theology in Crisis*.

³⁹³ See Cobb and Griffin, *Process Theology*; and Cobb, *Process Theology as Political Theology*.

³⁹⁴ See Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil*.

³⁹⁵ See Haught, *The Promise of Nature*; and *The Cosmic Adventure*.

³⁹⁶ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 147; my emphasis.

³⁹⁷ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 147; my emphasis. For another ecological process theology, see McFague, *The Body of God*. McFague suggests that the world is envisioned as God’s body as “a way of thinking of God’s transcendence in an immanent way—that ‘the world is our meeting place with God’” (vii).

³⁹⁸ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 153.

³⁹⁹ For a discussion of the problems of pantheism and panentheism, see Owen’s classic work *Concepts of Deity*—on pantheism, 65–75, and on panentheism and process theology, 75–89. For a discussion of the problems in Hartshorne’s process conception of God, see Gunton, *Becoming and Being*.

⁴⁰⁰ For a consideration of the theological issues with God creating a world in which there is predation, see Lloyd, “Are Animals Fallen?,” 147–60.

opens himself up to the criticism that he is blind to animal suffering—that he does not even register it as a theological or moral issue. That observation is reinforced by the fact that there is not even a mention in either book of the plight of animals or any discourse on the meaning of their creaturely existence. There is not even one paragraph devoted to animal suffering.⁴⁰¹

The problem with such a close identification of God’s will with ecology is that this threatens to overlook entropy in the natural world as represented by violence, disease, sickness, and death. This perspective fails to see the moral evil that entropy represents and how it needs to be overcome and redeemed. Hence, the moral imperative to care about the suffering of animals is undermined—for if God is content with this system, why should we ourselves seek to change it? In short, many Christians do not care for animals for the simple theological reason that they do not think that God does. Sadly, Boff’s system as a whole does not provide the necessary theological corrective to this moral indifference.⁴⁰²

Even more problematic is the oft-reported yet still telling objection to process thought and panentheism—namely, that such a God is so circumscribed by the processes he has created that he cannot actually save us from them.⁴⁰³ How can God liberate us from the very process within which he resides and indeed organises and refashions the world? Boff ironically embraces the notion of a suffering (passible) God, tellingly quoting a passage in which Julian of Norwich writes that “all creatures who could suffer were suffering with him”⁴⁰⁴ and, even more tellingly, quoting the line from William Bowling in the seventeenth century that “Christ poured out his

⁴⁰¹ For an attempt to reconcile animal suffering with the God of process theology, see McDaniel, “Can Animal Suffering Be Reconciled with Belief in an All-Loving God?,” 161–70. As McDaniel makes clear, there are arguments to be made that may reconcile predation with a process theology God. However, Boff sadly does not consider predation and suffering as a theological problem.

⁴⁰² For a theological account that sees the role of humanity as “saving” the natural world from itself, including animals, see Torrance, *Divine and Contingent Order*. For a recent philosophical defence of the need to intervene to prevent predation in the natural world, see McMahan, “The Moral Problem of Predation,” 268–93. McMahan argues that “we have a moral reason to try to prevent animals from suffering and dying from these causes [predation and other causes of animal suffering in nature]” (291). For a discussion of McMahan’s position, see Lazo, “Consequentialism and Thought Experiments in *Philosophy Comes to Dinner*.”

⁴⁰³ One somewhat hyperbolic statement of this position is given by Gunton in relation to Hartshorne’s process theology God. Gunton argues, “Whatever the value of the exposure of the contradictions and moral shortcomings of the classical concept of God, it is of little benefit to overthrow a tyrant if he is replaced by an ineffectual weakling, and this is the impression that remains.” Gunton, *Becoming and Being*, 221.

⁴⁰⁴ Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, 40, quoted in Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 180.

blood as much for cattle and horses as for men.”⁴⁰⁵ But nowhere does he actually take into account the sufferings of animals in a systematic way or eke out the challenge of such suffering for dogmatic and moral theology. In other words, while notionally accepting the connection between the suffering of Christ and the suffering of nonhuman creatures, Boff fails to develop the connection as a possible answer to the problem that predation itself raises—namely, how the bondage of suffering is to be redeemed.

However, Boff’s system could be revised if only he would take on board the notion that the pain and suffering of fellow creatures needs to be included in any consistent and thoroughgoing liberatory work in theology. Of course, this would require a much more attentive ear to the groaning of creation envisioned in Romans 8 and a more positivist account of human responsibility to other sentients. It could be done, but Boff has yet to do it.

c. Human uniqueness

At first sight, it appears that Boff’s thoroughgoing rejection of anthropocentricity would result in an equally thoroughgoing rejection of human uniqueness, but that is not so. Anthropocentrism is properly understood as the view that “nothing has intrinsic value, nothing has otherness and meaning *apart from the human being*. All beings are at the disposal of human beings, to serve as their property and under their control, so that humans may attain their desires and projects.”⁴⁰⁶ In short, “human beings feel that they are *above* things rather than *alongside* and *with* things.”⁴⁰⁷ Boff goes even further and argues that it is not only anthropocentrism at work here but also *androcentrism*—that is, male domination over women and the rest of creation. As he explains, man “regards woman as part of nature that he must possess exclusively, domesticating her and subjecting her to his rational, objective, and voluntarist logic.”⁴⁰⁸ The will to dominate is thus identified as the root of the problem of humankind’s relationships to the world and to each other.

⁴⁰⁵ Quoted in Bradley, “El Cristo Cósmico,” 116, cited by Boff, *Cry*, 180. For a fuller discussion of nonconformist voices, see Sampson, *Animal Ethics and the Nonconformist Conscience*.

⁴⁰⁶ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 70; my emphases.

⁴⁰⁷ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 70; emphases in the original.

⁴⁰⁸ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 71. This also represents in Boff’s own work a significant step forward, for while he had previously denounced anthropocentrism in *Francis*, androcentrism was previously not considered.

In *Cry*, Boff rails against the notion that the world was made for human use or pleasure, or even “for us.” However, humans nevertheless occupy a unique place, as they should, within his ecotheological system and in his theology in general. He argues that “consciousness driving the universe toward accelerating the pace of evolution, toward being more highly organized and more directed,” and thus specifically human consciousness enables human beings to become “co-creators”⁴⁰⁹ of the universe. This is similar to Boff’s view of human consciousness already discussed, but to this he adds the idea that humans are “co-piloting”⁴¹⁰ the governing of creation. He does this to underline humanity’s special role; we are not just products of evolution but rather the reflexive part of the universe, with responsibility for it. Here he again may be drawing on the work of Teilhard de Chardin, echoing Teilhard’s thought on human consciousness as moving the universe towards the “Omega Point”:

The conclusion is inevitable that the concentration of a conscious universe would be unthinkable if it did not reassemble in itself *all consciousnesses* as well as all the *conscious*; each particular consciousness remaining conscious of itself at the end of the operation, and even (this must be absolutely understood) each particular consciousness becoming still more itself and thus more clearly distinct from others the closer it gets to them in Omega.⁴¹¹

Although Teilhard de Chardin does not posit humans as co-pilots, he nonetheless sees human consciousness as moving the universe towards its destination. As Ursula King writes, “in Teilhard’s vision the human being is not a static center, but ‘the axis and leading shoot of evolution.’”⁴¹² As previously discussed, the idea of human consciousness as the apex of creation can be a problematic one, if not conceived in terms of responsibility for creation.

Although Boff’s critique of anthropocentrism is maintained throughout *Cry*, it does not go far enough. Boff retains what he refers to as an “anthropic principle”: “human beings accordingly establish a basis, a reference point, whose function is

⁴⁰⁹ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 56–57. The concept of human consciousness as a driving force within creation is an expansion of his ideas on human consciousness found in *Jesus*.

⁴¹⁰ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 122.

⁴¹¹ Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, 287; emphases in the original.

⁴¹² King, *Spirit of Fire*, 175.

cognitive, which merely reveals their singularity as a thinking and reflexive species.”⁴¹³ He is suggesting that human cognitive abilities and consciousness single humans out as unique within creation. He argues that the anthropic principle does not place humanity above the rest of creation since “that uniqueness does not entail a break from other creatures but strengthens our relationship to them, because the principle of understanding, reflection, and communication first exists within the universe.”⁴¹⁴ Boff defines anthropocentrism as the idea that “everything throughout the fifteen-billion-year-story exists solely for the human being, man and woman. Hence, everything culminates in the human being.”⁴¹⁵ But this is precisely the implication of his anthropic principle, since humans are the pinnacle of creation and the only reflexive part of it—which is tantamount to saying that humans are the culmination, and by implication the most important part, of creation. The argument that humans have a special role to play in creation because of their cognitive and moral abilities is not in itself problematic, but Boff does not define human uniqueness in terms of service or responsibility towards creation.

Boff writes that “as much as we are part of the universe (collapsed universal wave), an axis in the vast current of beings and of living things, each individual human being possesses his or her own irreducible uniqueness.”⁴¹⁶ This apparently derives from the fact that each human being “is unique and consciously knows that he or she is unique.”⁴¹⁷ He argues that we are not dealing here with quantities but with “a new quality of creation expressed through human *pathos* (feeling), *logos* (reason), *eros* (passion), *nomos* (law), *daimon* (inner voice), and *ethos* (ethics).”⁴¹⁸ But his list of distinctly human attributes or qualities is little more than a refashioning of the scholastic theological demarcations between humans and animals, as discussed in chapter one.⁴¹⁹ The historical claim was that animals do not possess a mind, an immortal soul, or much sentience (if any), and have no spiritual standing. But since Boff grounds his ecotheology in empirical evidence concerning the world as it is, then we must by the same token question the empirical basis for his awarding some or

⁴¹³ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 22. Boff is drawing on the work of Teilhard de Chardin and the work of Barrow and Tipler, *The Anthropic Cosmological Principle*.

⁴¹⁴ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 22.

⁴¹⁵ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 70.

⁴¹⁶ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 59.

⁴¹⁷ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 59.

⁴¹⁸ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 60.

⁴¹⁹ See the section “Animals in Catholic thought” in chapter one.

most of the aforementioned attributes uniquely to human beings. Consider that there is now ample scientific evidence demonstrating that all mammals and birds (at least) are sentient.⁴²⁰ In other words, humans are not the only species capable of feeling, as Boff seems to imply; indeed, the overwhelming evidence is that mammals experience suffering only to a greater or lesser extent than we do ourselves. Similar evidence also contradicts the notion that animals are incapable of *logos* (reason) or, most oddly of all, *eros* (passion).⁴²¹ Again, far from not observing *nomos* (law), it can be claimed that animals more perfectly obey it than human beings do themselves since animals cannot choose to do otherwise. It is only human beings, in fact, who are fully enabled to live contrary to what is for other species natural law—that is, strictly speaking, the law of nature.

Moreover, Boff falls into the trap, so common to theological expositors, of supposing that humans alone are conscious individuals. According to the scholastic view, discussed in chapter one, there are persons and things. Persons are living, conscious subjectivities, whereas animals are simply non-individualised collectivities. In fact, however, there are no grounds for denying individuality to sentient creatures. In the words of Tom Regan, animals are “the subject-of-a-life” and therefore bring subjectivity into the world.⁴²²

None of this is meant to deny that Boff is right in supposing that only human beings possess *ethos* (ethics). As far as we know, human beings alone are moral agents, responsible for their actions, in a way other creatures are not.⁴²³ In that sense the anthropic principle is valid; human beings are uniquely able to know the difference between right and wrong and to acknowledge duties to other creatures that

⁴²⁰ For a discussion of these issues, see Rollin, *The Unheeded Cry*.

⁴²¹ For a discussion of these issues, see Benz-Schwarzburg and Knight, “Cognitive Relatives yet Moral Strangers?”; and DeGrazia, *Taking Animals Seriously*.

⁴²² Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights*, 243. Regan argues that “individuals are subjects-of-a-life if they have beliefs and desires; perception, memory, and a sense of the future, including their own future; an emotional life together with feelings of pleasure and pain; preference- and welfare-interests; the ability to initiate action in the pursuit of their desires and goals; a psychological identity over time; and an individual welfare in the sense that their experiential life fares well or ill for them, logically independently of their utility for others and logically independently of their being the object of anyone else’s interests” (243). Those who satisfy these criteria have “inherent” value. Regan argues that sentient animals meet these criteria.

⁴²³ There is some philosophical debate about whether animals have moral agency. This debate is outside the scope of this thesis, but for an argument that animals can be moral, see Bekoff and Pierce, *Wild Justice*. For alternate perspectives, see Clark, *The Nature of the Beast*; and more recently, Rowlands, *Can Animal Be Moral?*

those creatures cannot acknowledge to us.⁴²⁴ Indeed, the case for the right treatment of animals relies precisely on this basis. But contrary to Boff's approach, this does not require the denigration of animals as beings without feeling, reason, passion, or law. And most of all, it does not require the denial of individuality to fellow sentient.

d. Dominion and domination

As already noted, Boff locates domination and the will to power as integral to the Western capitalist paradigm. He states that "there is no denying that in contemporary societies human beings have made themselves the centre of everything ... everything must be at their service."⁴²⁵ He argues that human beings, personally and collectively, strive for "*dominium terrae*, the conquest and domination of the Earth."⁴²⁶

He locates the theological justification for this view in the granting of dominion in Genesis: "The biblical text leaves no doubt when it says, 'Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air' (Gn 1:28). These texts present a clear call to limitless demographic growth and unrestricted *dominium terrae*."⁴²⁷ Boff is emphatic: "There is no getting around the meaning of these texts. The learned exegesis of so many who keep trying to situate and re-situate such texts in the context of Middle Eastern anthropology in order to dispel their anti-ecological tenor [Boff here gives a reference to Jürgen Moltmann's *God in Creation*] will not do."⁴²⁸

But Boff's own exegesis is itself questionable on many fronts. In the first place, he looks at "dominion" (*radah*) in isolation from the narrative in which the idea is embedded. In context, the granting of dominion is contingent upon the making of humans in God's own image, and thus the two ideas belong analytically together. God's granting of dominion is not absolute. Humans must exercise their God-given power in accordance with God's own moral will because they are made in the image of a God who is holy, loving, and just. The theology of Genesis 1, therefore, is of humanity given special God-like powers for the purpose of caring for God's own

⁴²⁴ As Lewis once wrote, "it is our business to live by our own law not by hers [nature's]." Lewis, *Present Concerns*, 79. See also a discussion of this in Linzey, "C. S. Lewis's Theology of Animals," 60–81.

⁴²⁵ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 69.

⁴²⁶ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 69.

⁴²⁷ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 79.

⁴²⁸ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 80. For a discussion of Moltmann's conception of creation see, McLaughlin, *Preservation and Protest*; and McLaughlin, "Anticipating a Maximally Inclusive Eschaton."

good creation. This view is not eccentric, as Boff seems to suppose; rather, it is now the established view among Old Testament scholars.⁴²⁹

In the second place, there is clear internal evidence from the narrative itself. It is often overlooked that after the making of humanity in God's image (Gen. 1:26–27) and the granting of dominion (Gen. 1:28), human beings are then given a vegetarian, indeed vegan, diet: “And God said, ‘Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the Earth, and every tree with the seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food ... I have given every green plant for food’” (Gen. 1:29–30).⁴³⁰ This original vegetarian diet is changed only in Genesis 9:3, after the human descent into wickedness symbolised by the Fall and the flood: “Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you; and *as I gave you the green plants*, I give you everything” (my emphasis). So although there is indeed a changed relationship in the later Genesis narrative, the text itself confirms that the granting of dominion was not absolute since even the eating of animals for food was originally forbidden. As indicated in chapter one, Linzey remarks that, “herb-eating dominion is hardly a license for tyranny.”⁴³¹

It is certainly true, however, that dominion has been interpreted within the tradition as precisely that: a license for tyranny. The dominant voices within the Christian tradition have regarded dominion as unrestricted domination. These voices include seminal Christian thinkers such as Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, and Calvin.⁴³² And Boff is right to allude to this tradition, even if his own exegesis is peccable. But in doing so, he overlooks the theological basis for what he previously described as a “fraternal” and compassionate relationship with nature.⁴³³ Specifically, he disregards the biblical basis for vegetarianism (required of both humans *and* animals) by failing to see that Genesis 1 offers a vision of an original creation in which humans dwelt peacefully with other animals. Boff claims that “paradise is a prophecy of the future

⁴²⁹ See Jónsson, *The Image of God*. Jónsson surveys the views of many Old Testament theologians, and with the exception of Karl Barth, they all concur that God-given dominion means responsibility.

⁴³⁰ Cairns comments, “The dominion is certainly connected with the image, and one may say that, without the image, the dominion would never have been given.” Cairns, *The Image of God in Man*, 28. He goes on, “In the case of the animals, there is a limit to man's dominion. Their blood, that is to say their life, belongs to God” (29).

⁴³¹ Linzey, *Animal Theology*, 126.

⁴³² For a discussion of the dominant tradition on animals, see McLaughlin, *Christian Theology and the Status of Animals*.

⁴³³ Boff, *Saint Francis*, 46.

projected back upon the past.”⁴³⁴ Undoubtedly, he is correct in this, but Boff crucially overlooks the substance of the original vision that concerns earthly harmony between animals and humans. Whatever the historicity of the first creation saga, it is wrong to minimise or overlook this remarkable eco- and animal-friendly beginning to Genesis. The animal-friendly narrative is even more remarkable when one considers that the person or persons who wrote Genesis were not themselves vegetarians or pacifists or against capital punishment or indeed against aggressive war. Despite their own explicit acceptance of violence, they preserved the astonishing insight that God had originally willed a peaceful and harmonious creation.

It is odd that Boff does not discuss in this context the morality of killing animals for food and other purposes; indeed, nowhere does he explicitly address the issue at all. But one has to ask: What does it mean to critique the common (if erroneous) notion of human dominance over the earth if one does not also at the same time call into question the wide range of uses to which we subject animals? Specifically, he does not address the ethics of vegetarianism and veganism, which are now increasingly canvassed on ecological grounds because animal agriculture has been implicated in climate change and because systems of animal husbandry are inefficient systems of food production.⁴³⁵ Current estimates suggest that animal agriculture accounts for 30 per cent of annual greenhouse gas emissions.⁴³⁶ For example, “for each litre of milk she produces, a typical cow emits 19 grams of methane, which is the equivalent warming effect on the planet as 440 grams of carbon dioxide.”⁴³⁷ Indeed, because farmed animals are frequently fed grains and soya, they are protein-making systems in reverse. One study suggests that producing one kilogram of protein from cattle requires six kilograms of plant protein, indicating not only that more emissions are released from animal agriculture, but also that there is greater pressure on land to produce animal agriculture.⁴³⁸ Boff notionally sees the problem since he mentions the deforestation of land for the unsuccessful Ludwig

⁴³⁴ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 37.

⁴³⁵ Poore and Nemecek, “Reducing Food’s Environmental Impacts through Producers and Consumers,” 987–92. In a discussion of this research, Poore explains, “A vegan diet is probably the single biggest way to reduce your impact on planet Earth, not just greenhouse gases, but global acidification, eutrophication, land use and water use.” Quoted in Carrington, “Avoiding Meat and Dairy Is ‘Single Biggest Way’ to Reduce Your Impact on Earth.”

⁴³⁶ Thornes, “Animal Agriculture and Climate Change,” 245.

⁴³⁷ Thornes, “Animal Agriculture and Climate Change,” 246.

⁴³⁸ Pimentel and Pimentel, “Sustainability of Meat-Based and Plant-Based Diets and the Environment,” 6605–35.

project, in which “almost 9 million acres (larger than Belgium or Israel)” of the Amazon was cleared “to produce wood pulp and a large agricultural project to export beef, rice, and soybeans.”⁴³⁹ Explicit here is an acceptance that land is despoiled for cattle farming in the Amazon, but he fails to draw out the obvious implications. Boff’s lack of consideration of the animal issue weakens rather than strengthens his ecological position.

e. Fallenness and violence

The fallenness of nature refers to the idea that the predation, futility, and decay seen in the natural world are not God’s original intention for the world. As such, the world can be considered “fallen” and ambiguous.⁴⁴⁰ Unlike many ecotheologians,⁴⁴¹ Boff seriously considers the notion of the Fall and the fallenness of the world. However, and perhaps paradoxically, at the beginning of his discussion, he adamantly rejects the notion of “the fall of nature.” He writes that there is no other belief that more “distort[s]” ecology than this doctrine—this “belief that the whole universe has fallen under the power of the devil introduced by the human being” and that because of this “the universe has lost its sacred character; it is no longer the temple of the spirit but the harvest field of the demons; it is corrupt, sinful, decadent matter.”⁴⁴² This demonisation of nature has led people to have “little appreciation for this world, and for centuries it has hindered religious persons from having a project to carry out in the world.”⁴⁴³ Even more, he writes, “it has impeded scientific research and made life harsh, because it made heavily suspect any pleasure, achievement, and fulfilment dealing with and enjoying nature. In this way of seeing things, original sin outweighs original grace.”⁴⁴⁴

These sweeping characterisations simply miss the mark. Believing that the natural world is in some sense fallen, or that it exhibits natural evil, does not involve us in believing that all earthly experiences of pleasure or achievement or fulfilment are “heavily suspect.” Neither does it require us to believe that the whole world is a harvest of demons or that there is no goodness or value within it. By overstating the

⁴³⁹ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 91.

⁴⁴⁰ For a discussion on the fallenness of nature, see Clark, “Is Nature God’s Will?,” 123–36.

⁴⁴¹ See McFague, *The Body of God*; Radford Ruether, *Gaia and God*; and Adams, *Ecofeminism and the Sacred*.

⁴⁴² Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 80–81.

⁴⁴³ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 81.

⁴⁴⁴ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 81.

limitations of the doctrine, Boff simply befuddles the issue. It is certainly true that there has been an otherworldly tendency in Christian scholasticism that has sometimes been taken to be the core of Christian belief. But Boff fails to see that this tendency was in its own time an attempt to distinguish between good and evil in the natural order.⁴⁴⁵

It is particularly ironic that Boff, the liberation theologian, should be cavalier about the demonic, since New Testament scholars such as Walter Wink have done much to recapture the notion as a relevant moral and sociological tool in theology. In particular, Wink suggests that the demonic represents, inter alia, systems and structures of dehumanisation and oppression in our world. Wink famously wrote *Naming the Powers* in response to his experiences in Latin America: “The evils we encountered were so monolithic, so massively supported by our own government, in some cases so anchored in a long history of tyranny, that it scarcely seemed that anything could make a difference.”⁴⁴⁶ Perhaps it is not too much of a stretch to say that since *Jesus* was written at a time of mass torture and oppression in Brazil, Boff should more readily appreciate the significance of the language of the demonic. Indeed, Aguilar explains, “the most seminal years of Boff’s theological production took place while the Brazilian state was arresting and torturing dissenters and within a continuous political game of considerable violence.”⁴⁴⁷ Boff’s ecological theology robs us of one category of analysis that helps us to make sense of oppression and suffering in our world.

One explanation for Boff’s dismissal of the fallenness of nature is his eco-mystical position. He uses the category of mysticism to bring together his concern for the poor and his ecological concerns. Boff suggests that the key to attaining our peaceable kingdom is nurturing mysticism. He describes this utopia as “a society of brothers and sisters . . . a just society in which all people would share; a society full of tender feeling for the poor and marginalized; a society aware of social consequences of the fact that every human being is a child of God.”⁴⁴⁸ This is not a utopian vision

⁴⁴⁵ See, for example, Houston, *Purity and Monotheism*; and Houston, “What Was the Meaning of Classifying Animals as Clean or Unclean?” In the latter, Houston argues that “the opposition of clean and unclean represents and includes the opposition of wild and tame, of civilization and the desert, of social conformity and unconformity, of the divine and the demonic, of violence and nonviolence, of the people of God and the nations.” Houston, “What Was the Meaning?” 24. See also Douglas, *Purity and Danger*.

⁴⁴⁶ Wink, *Naming the Powers*, ix. See also Wink, *Unmasking the Powers*; and *Engaging the Powers*.

⁴⁴⁷ Aguilar, *History and Politics of Latin American Theology: vol. I*, 124.

⁴⁴⁸ Boff, *Ecology and Liberation*, 140.

separate from Christian theology but rather one built upon it.⁴⁴⁹ In this sense those people living in base communities and opting for the poor are understood as offering “an appropriately contemporary version of the libertarian dimension of the subversive memory of Jesus of Nazareth.”⁴⁵⁰ The struggle to attain the utopian ideal needs to be sustained, and here the force that sustains it is mysticism. The term “mysticism” is used by Boff “to stress the more radiant aspect of things, the dimension that feeds vital energy and the principle of concern, as well as the power to continue through failure as well as success.”⁴⁵¹

Mysticism is a tricky concept to define,⁴⁵² but Boff begins by relating it to mystery: “*mysterion* in Greek is derived from *myein*, which means ‘discerning the hidden, hitherto unspoken nature of reality or an intention.’”⁴⁵³ Thus, mystery concerns revelation and illumination. However, mystery is not ineffable; it is disclosed in experience: “Mystery is connected with ... actual experience, which has a universal frame of reference ... [it involves] undergoing a communitarian religious experience.”⁴⁵⁴ This experiential and practical aspect of mystery gives life to the struggle for liberation. All that is necessary to nurture mystery is encouragement of curiosity and openness towards reality.

For Boff, all those who experience mystery are mystics. Mysticism is not an experience reserved for a few. “It is rather a dimension of human life to which all of us have access when we become conscious of a deeper level of the self, when we try to study the other side of things, when we become aware of the inward richness of the other, and when we confront the grandeur, complexity, and harmony of the universe. All of us, at a certain level, are mystics.”⁴⁵⁵ According to Boff, the experience of the mysterious is where we encounter God. From there is where faith and theology emerge, as a result of that encounter with the divine mystery.⁴⁵⁶ What is required is a

⁴⁴⁹ For a discussion of different utopian visions, see Carey, *The Faber Book of Utopias*.

⁴⁵⁰ Boff, *Ecology and Liberation*, 140.

⁴⁵¹ Boff, *Ecology and Liberation*, 142.

⁴⁵² The classic characteristics of mysticism are defined by Underhill as follows: “Four characteristics of true mysticism—It is (1) practical, (2) transcendental, (3) the mystic is a lover, (4) his object is union with the Absolute.” Underhill, *Mysticism*, 70. Underhill sums up by stating that “mysticism is seen to be a highly specialized form of that search for reality, for heightened and completed life, which we have found to be a constant characteristic of human consciousness” (93).

⁴⁵³ Boff, *Ecology and Liberation*, 142.

⁴⁵⁴ Boff, *Ecology and Liberation*, 142.

⁴⁵⁵ Boff, *Ecology and Liberation*, 147–48.

⁴⁵⁶ For a discussion of mysticism in the Eastern Church, see Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*. Lossky explains the connection between theology and mysticism thusly: “In a certain sense all theology is mystical, inasmuch as it shows forth the divine mystery ... On the other hand,

reclamation of that original experience of mystery, because in the experience of mystery, we encounter both God and ethics. Perhaps it is because Boff is so keen to explore the mystical side of the universe that he is less willing to see creation as fallen, since this conflicts with his perception of God and creation as “good.” However, the two ideas do not need to be mutually exclusive; creation can at once be fallen and still offer glimpses of the “goodness” of God.

Despite the foregoing, it is striking that Boff cannot dispense with the notion of the Fall entirely. Indeed, he offers a new interpretation of it not wholly dissimilar to Paul Tillich’s formulation in his *Systematic Theology*.⁴⁵⁷ Boff writes: “Without going into all the possible interpretations of the original fall, we assume one that seems to shed more light and that is gaining wider acceptance among religious thinkers: *the fall as a condition of all things within an evolutionary process*.”⁴⁵⁸ Original sin now becomes “nature itself in a state of becoming.”⁴⁵⁹ According to this view, God sets in motion an open process “toward ever more highly organized, subtle and better ways of being, of life, and of consciousness.”⁴⁶⁰ Intriguingly, Boff suggests that the first page of the script is actually the “last,” a model of the future yet to be attained. The Fall is therefore replaced by falls “on the way up,” enabling “more complex and rich forms of life to appear.”⁴⁶¹ In order to provide justification for this perspective, he again turns to Romans 8, where Saint Paul envisions creation groaning as in childbirth, awaiting “the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (Rom. 8:21). Boff comments that “nature has not yet reached maturity: it has not yet come to its final abode.”⁴⁶² The creation has been subject to “bondage to decay” (Rom. 8:21) not by its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it in hope.

What is perhaps the most disturbing aspect of this perspective is the resulting doctrine of God. One view, doubtless a caricature, of process theology is that God is getting better. In Boff’s view, the cosmos is getting better, and God with it. It is

mysticism is frequently opposed to understanding, as an unutterable mystery, a hidden depth, to be lived rather than known” (7).

⁴⁵⁷ See Tillich, *Systematic Theology*.

⁴⁵⁸ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 82; my emphases.

⁴⁵⁹ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 82.

⁴⁶⁰ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 83.

⁴⁶¹ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 83. The notion of “falling up” is one discussed in Birch and Cobb, *The Liberation of Life*. Birch and Cobb suggest that as animal life evolved on earth, it opened up “a new level of order and freedom,” but that “fall upward” also brought with it animal suffering (120–21). For a discussion of this process understanding of falling upward and animal suffering, see McDaniel, *Of God and Pelicans*, 35–41.

⁴⁶² Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 83.

moving inexorably towards the end of this open process in which even nature itself will reach some kind of “maturity.” What Boff may think is a fine synthesis of eco-science and theology turns out to be deeply unattractive for multiple reasons.

First, as already noted, it is difficult to see how God can want to liberate us from a system that he himself has willed into existence. To accept that God is directly responsible for the ecological life of this planet is to embrace predation, not as a by-product of the system or a manifestation of disorder, but as God’s actual moral will. Boff explains, “We and all things seem to be governed by the law of *mors tua, vita mea*—your death is the price of my life.”⁴⁶³ He continues, “Beings devour one another. The cat will always hunt the mouse; it is pointless to preach to the cat to show mercy to the mouse. From the victim’s view point, that of the mouse, we have a universe that is dramatic and tragic. The cat, in turn, is the victim of the dog, which is the prey of the tiger, and so forth up the chain.”⁴⁶⁴ But Boff cannot have it both ways. He cannot properly talk of ecology as God-given and the world itself as “sacred”⁴⁶⁵ (with all the overtones of that word) and yet also describe this process as “tragic” and yet to reach “maturity.” Even within Boff’s scenario, then, the world is more deeply ambiguous than he allows—which is arguably the point of the doctrine of the fall of nature.

Second, the moral bearings that result from this inchoate picture of God are deeply troubling from a liberationist perspective. As we have seen, Boff defines the human species as “co-creators”⁴⁶⁶ who are “co-piloting”⁴⁶⁷ the evolutionary system. But again, there is a tension here. If we are co-creators, how do we understand our role in the ecological order in which human and nonhuman beings suffer and die? Are we to accept the ecological world as God-given, or are we to anticipate—even seek to transform, or liberate, the existing order into—something more God-like?⁴⁶⁸ At worst, his ethic could be construed as “the precipice of pessimism,” which Albert Schweitzer

⁴⁶³ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 82.

⁴⁶⁴ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 82.

⁴⁶⁵ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 115.

⁴⁶⁶ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 57.

⁴⁶⁷ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 84.

⁴⁶⁸ For a discussion of this tension within Boff’s theology see Appendix 4, “Excerpts from Professor Jung Mo Sung Interview.” Sung argues that Boff is moving between “two contradictory ideas”: that the world is “set” by God, but also that we are called to bring about “change.”

described as “the fatal resignation into which educated men and civilized humanity in general are too apt to sink and thus die.”⁴⁶⁹

This leads us to the third disconcerting aspect of Boff’s thought here. If God is really compliant with, and indeed a participant in, a self-murdering system of survival that characterises the nonhuman world, how confident can we be that the apparent law of *mors tua, vita mea* should not extend likewise to human beings? From whence then comes the theological grounding of liberation theology itself? Since, according to Boff, we are all part of the one ecosystem, which equally applies to all, why should we be concerned either about the cat who eats the mouse or indeed about the capitalist who exploits the poor? Are they not both manifestations of what Boff calls domination and the will to power? And are they not both sanctioned by the God who is declared to be “in” the process?

If this were really true, then the self-revelation of God in Jesus Christ would surely be quite different in character. The Jesus portrayed in the Gospels would laud the existing systems of dominance and subservience within both the human sphere and the animal one. Linzey half-humorously puts it this way in his *Animal Theology*, in a subsection titled “Jesus Our Predator”:

Instead of healing the sick, the Predator Jesus could only approve of the efficiency of God-given ecological systems. Instead of raising Lazarus from the dead, the Predator Jesus could comment that death is God’s blessing. Instead of preaching the good news of the coming of the kingdom of God, the proclamation would run: “Eat and be eaten.”⁴⁷⁰

In short, if the natural order is God-given and getting better, then we have nothing to be saved or liberated from.

f. Whose right?

In *Ecology*, Boff turns specifically to the question of ethics. He defines ethics as meaning that “human beings not only have responsibility but are concerned to make the world as good as possible. This means that the ethical imperative ... has a clearly

⁴⁶⁹ Schweitzer, *An Anthology*, 120. See also a discussion of Schweitzer’s thought on affirmation and negation in the chapter “The Voyage to India,” in Barsam, *Reverence for Life*, 55–73.

⁴⁷⁰ Linzey, *Animal Theology*, 120.

utopian content.”⁴⁷¹ The “good” here is defined as follows: “deeds are good or best to the extent that they approach or are distanced from the utopian.”⁴⁷²

His ecological ethics, at first glance, seems to have the greatest potential for a discussion of the moral status of animals. Boff suggests that a reorientation towards an ecological—that is, a relational—framework can help “us to understand that the human race is part of nature and the biosphere, not the center of the universe. It exists in profound communion with all other beings.”⁴⁷³ Promisingly, he argues that what distinguishes humanity from the rest of creation is not our superiority but our ability to act ethically: “Indeed we are capable of assuming the responsibility for preserving nature and promoting all forms of life, especially those that are oppressed.”⁴⁷⁴ An ethic that took seriously the responsibility of humanity towards nonhuman animal life would indeed be a positive step forward. He goes further to suggest that “all these beings, therefore, are also citizens, subject to rights, and should be respected as others, in their own otherness, in their own existence, in their own life, and in their own communion with us and with our fate and their future, which may also depend on us.”⁴⁷⁵ Initially, this sounds enticing: other creatures are “citizens” who are “subject to rights”⁴⁷⁶ and should be “respected.” However, despite this eloquent vision, the practical ethical actions that might be assumed to follow from the vision are left unexplored. Boff does not consider what practical steps might be taken to achieve this utopian vision.

His discussion of ethics, like his discussion of domination, builds upon his Franciscan theology. Underpinning his ethical vision is the ideal of fraternity, in which humanity may enter into a fellowship “with the whole of creation in its infinite grandeur, infinite smallness, and infinite variety.”⁴⁷⁷ He states that “human beings live ethically when they decide to stop placing themselves above all others and decide instead to stand together with others.”⁴⁷⁸ This view may be considered problematic because it is based on an optimistic view of human nature and assumes that humans

⁴⁷¹ Boff, *Ecology and Liberation*, 81.

⁴⁷² Boff, *Ecology and Liberation*, 81. Boff is keen on the language of “utopia,” but he maintains that these are not unrealistic ideas but rather things to be strived for in this life: “Through imagination, society and the oppressed dare to transcend their prison and envision a world different from this perverse one that denies them participation and life.” Boff, *Ecology and Liberation*, 104.

⁴⁷³ Boff, *Ecology and Liberation*, 86.

⁴⁷⁴ Boff, *Ecology and Liberation*, 86.

⁴⁷⁵ Boff, *Ecology and Liberation*, 90.

⁴⁷⁶ I will return to the language of rights later in this section.

⁴⁷⁷ Boff, *Ecology and Liberation*, 90.

⁴⁷⁸ Boff, *Ecology and Liberation*, 31.

are capable of such communal behaviour. Of course, the issue of whether fallen human beings can identify what the moral thing to do is, let alone complete that action, is at the very least questionable.

The core of Boff's ecological ethics is given in a paragraph that deserves to be reproduced as a whole:

The fact that every being is formed differently to me also lays an ethical obligation on me. Only human beings can bless this otherness, live freely with it, or wickedly destroy it. This is what grounds our *ethical responsibility*. *The environment has its rights, and there is such a thing as ecological justice*. Everything has the *right to continue to exist*, within the *ecological balance*. This right produces a corresponding *duty* in human beings to *preserve and defend* the existence of *every being in creation*. Today we call this the dignity of the earth (*dignitas terrae*), seen as a whole.⁴⁷⁹

Let us carefully move through his thought. First, Boff locates humans' "ethical obligation" to creation in the human ability to have power and responsibility over creation. This is an extension of his rejection of Christian dominion, understood as domination, discussed earlier in this chapter. He argues on the basis of Genesis 2:15, where man is commanded by God to "till" and "keep" ("serve" in some translations) the garden, that "the human being is a friend of nature, works with the earth (which he or she is to till), and acts as the good angel of the earth, in order to safeguard it."⁴⁸⁰ In short, humans are given responsibility over creation by God, and so we have an ethical obligation to it. This is a marked difference from his exegesis of Genesis 1, discussed earlier, which is understood by Boff in *Cry* as granting humanity "unrestricted *dominium terrae*."⁴⁸¹ Given that Boff wrote *Ecology* before *Cry*, perhaps his position hardened, and he embraced a more critical interpretation towards the creation sagas. Or perhaps, since he does not reject his previous interpretation, this is an example of inconsistency in his thought. In any case, at this point in *Ecology*, he views our ethical responsibility to creation as grounded in the second creation saga.

⁴⁷⁹ Boff, *Ecology and Liberation*, 87; my emphases.

⁴⁸⁰ Boff, *Ecology and Liberation*, 44.

⁴⁸¹ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 79.

His next claim in the previously quoted passage of *Ecology* is that “the environment has rights.” Boff is, perhaps uncritically, entering into the sphere of rights language. The discussion of who has rights—humans, nonhuman animals, plants, the environment—is the subject of a great deal of philosophical literature.⁴⁸² What he means when he uses the term “rights” is unclear, since he does not make an appeal to a particular thinker or philosophical tradition. Moreover, he is vague about the nature of these “rights.” He does not detail what these rights are beyond existence. However, existence as a right in nature is not an unproblematic concept, given the predation and disease that characterise the natural world. How the rights of one being are to be judged against the rights of another being is also unclear. Does a tree have an absolute right to exist, or is its right dependent on other beings, such as humans, and their desire to cut down the tree to build a road or building? Boff leaves these questions unasked and unanswered.

His reference to the existence of “ecological justice” is also somewhat odd. The natural world, as evidenced by classic ecological texts that Boff draws upon, including Aldo Leopold’s *A Sand County Almanac*,⁴⁸³ is full of predation and violence. Leopold’s account of creation is in many ways congruent with Boff’s. Leopold states in his foreword: “Conservation is getting nowhere because it is incompatible with our Abrahamic concept of land. We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect . . . That land is a community is the basic concept of ecology, but that land is to be loved and respected is an extension of ethics.”⁴⁸⁴ The ecological ideal in Leopold, where the world is seen as a community and the environment has to be loved and respected, is echoed in Boff. But what is the nature of this “love” and “respect” for the land that Leopold speaks of? Leopold proclaims the pleasures of hunting and trapping animals, in addition to detailing the lives of predators and prey in Sand County. Loving and respecting

⁴⁸² A full discussion of the language of rights is outside the scope of this thesis, but for a historical introduction to the idea of animal rights, see Linzey and Clarke, *Animal Rights*. For a Christian perspective on animal rights, see Linzey, *Christianity and the Rights of Animals*. For a history of the idea of the rights of nature and the environment, see Nash, *The Rights of Nature*; see especially chapter one, “From Natural Rights to the Rights of Nature,” 13–32. For a discussion of animal rights from different philosophical perspectives, see Regan and Singer, *Animal Rights and Human Obligations*. For a classic opposition to animal rights, see Frey, *Interests and Rights*. For a recent discussion of animal rights, see Engel and Comstock, *The Moral Rights of Animals*.

⁴⁸³ See Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*.

⁴⁸⁴ Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, viii. See also Leopold, *For the Health of the Land*.

creation for Leopold does not consist of caring for creation but instead consists of observing the rule of the jungle: eat or be eaten. What Boff means by ecological justice in this framework is hard to know.

But Boff claims that everything has the right to continue to exist, within the ecological balance. This sounds like an invitation to not kill or harm creation, perhaps even like an invitation to ethical vegetarianism. Yet no such detailed consideration of ethical responsibilities to animals, or creation as a whole, is given. Indeed, on closer inspection, the call for ecological balance, as with Leopold, does not require us to abstain from using animals or the environment at all. At the most it is a call to respect the ecosystems around us, but again no information on how we should do so is given.

Finally, Boff claims that we are called to “preserve and defend ... every being” in creation and that this is known as the dignity of the earth. Again, this sounds promising—“every being” is to be preserved and defended—yet again it is unclear how this might be achieved or what it might practically entail. Should we be defending the antelope from being eaten by the lion? Or is it a call not to destroy rainforests for human gain? Does the preservation of life entail bringing back extinct species through genetic engineering or preserving the species we have? Viruses are living entities—should we preserve and defend them as well?

Returning to the subject of rights, one explanation for Boff’s uncritical adoption of the language of rights may lie in his Brazilian context. During my research trip, Naconecy and I discussed the relationship between animals and ideas of human slavery in Brazil. He observed that Brazil is a country built on slavery and that the practice was abolished only relatively recently, in 1888.⁴⁸⁵ In terms of moral progress, this is a short period of time. He suggests that “The whole idea that a creature serves another creature is not such a strange idea here [in Brazil]. It has a huge impact on the animal issue.”⁴⁸⁶ Rights language is arguably still in its infancy in Brazil and does not have the same resonance as it might in a Western context. This idea was echoed by Silva Mocoés Puppim, who suggested that “when you talk in

⁴⁸⁵ Brazil was the last country in the world to abolish slavery in 1888. For a discussion of the impact of slavery on Brazil, see Roett, *The New Brazil*. Roett argues that despite the abolition, “former slaves remained beholden to their former masters since they had few other employment options” (150). For a comparative history of slavery in Brazil, see Bergad, *The Comparative Histories of Slavery in Brazil, Cuba, and the United States*.

⁴⁸⁶ See Appendix 9. See also the discussion in Appendix 8. Braga Lourenço argues that “the Brazilian people are used to violence in slavery ... so in that sense, violence to animals is more acceptable” (Appendix 8).

terms of rights, it is something completely strange for people here [in Brazil]. It is difficult to talk about humans having rights here. We are not used to that.”⁴⁸⁷ In this sense it is perhaps unsurprising that Boff’s use of rights language should be underdeveloped.

In addition, it may be argued that Boff’s undefined moral position may stem from his largely undifferentiated attitude to creation. Although he rejects pantheism as insufficiently allowing for difference, he himself fails to differentiate between different parts of creation. He sees the whole, with human beings within it, but fails to see the moral and theological implications of the fact that there are other sentient and intelligent creatures in the world who live alongside human beings. It is this *arbitrary* favouring of the human species that has been termed “speciesism.”⁴⁸⁸ To state the obvious, sentient animals are not plants or minerals. They have their own interior lives and their own capacity to feel pain and pleasure; they are blessed by God and in Genesis are given their own living space alongside humanity, after being created on the same day (Gen. 1:24–25). It is therefore inaccurate to speak of creation in an undifferentiated way that fails to recognise the particular God-given characteristics of some species over and against another.

Boff writes in an undifferentiated way about creation when, for example, he claims that “*all* beings in nature are citizens, have rights, and deserve respect and reverence.”⁴⁸⁹ But the philosophical catch is that if “all beings” have rights, none have rights. He fails to see that in claiming rights for all, he devalues both animal rights and human rights, not to mention any special regard for the human poor—for if all have rights, there can be no objective ground for privileging the human species in the way in which he does.

To be more precise, the notion of rights belongs analytically to the concept of wrongs; hence, we talk of the right not to be wronged or harmed. But what does it mean, for example, to speak of the rights of a stone that cannot be wronged? The most that could happen to it, we may suppose, is that it could be split in two, but that does

⁴⁸⁷ See Appendix 10.

⁴⁸⁸ The term “speciesism” was first coined by Ryder in the 1970s and has been the subject of considerable philosophical work. See, for example, Singer, “Speciesism and Moral Status,” 567–81; Regan, “Animal Rights and Human Wrongs,” in Regan, *All That Dwell Therein*, 75–101; and Sapontzis, “Speciesism,” 97–99. See also Ryder’s own expansion on his work in Ryder, *Speciesism, Painism and Happiness*. For a critique of Ryder’s position, see Sapontzis, “Speciesism, Painism, and Morality,” 95–102.

⁴⁸⁹ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 133; my emphasis.

not constitute harm as such. Rights should properly relate only to those beings who can be morally harmed.⁴⁹⁰ It is possible to talk in a general way about ecological harms when one is thinking of a given ecosystem, but even if there is a collectivity that can be harmed, that should not detract from the way in which both humans and animals (certainly mammals and birds) can be specifically harmed as sentient creatures. As already noted, both can be harmed by the infliction of pain, suffering, and death, by the despoliation of their habitat, and by the deprivations involved in captivity or confinement.

The inclusion of sentient creatures within the circle of beings to whom we owe moral consideration is not a matter of special pleading. Rather, as Linzey explains, it arises out of specific considerations, including “the inability of animals to give or withhold consent, their inability to verbalise or represent their interests, their inability to comprehend us, their moral innocence or blamelessness, and, not least of all, their relative defencelessness and vulnerability.”⁴⁹¹ Not only are these considerations the basis for moral solicitude towards animals, but they also are the very considerations appealed to historically to defend the rights of the poor, children, and the marginalised—for are not the poor also unable to articulate their interests in a world that denies them a voice? And is it not also the case that they too are largely morally innocent or blameless in the sense that they are not responsible for the oppression that has been heaped upon them? And is it also not the case that their relative defencelessness or lack of empowerment, and hence their liability to what Boff calls “dehumanization,” is what so especially compels a response of moral generosity?

Instead, therefore, of privileging the human poor (and seeing all theology through that lens alone), Boff should have taken seriously his own forthright rejection of moral anthropocentricity and included within his paradigm all suffering and oppressed creatures, even and especially suffering nonhuman creatures. As Linzey states, “animals and infants constitute paradigmatic cases of innocence and vulnerability ... the issue of animals cannot be divorced from a wider recovery of those considerations that should equally apply to vulnerable human subjects.”⁴⁹² The case is strengthened further when one reflects on the link between animal abuse and

⁴⁹⁰ Regan articulates this as “the harm principle,” which states that “*we have a direct prima facie duty not to harm individuals.*” Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights*, 187; emphases in the original. He discusses the ways in which animals can be harmed in a section called “Harms,” 94–99.

⁴⁹¹ Linzey, *Why Animal Suffering Matters*, 3.

⁴⁹² Linzey, *Why Animal Suffering Matters*, 167.

human violence that was discussed in chapter three. If real justice is attainable for the planet and all those who live on it, the sufferings of animals must be considered as well as the sufferings of humanity.

5.2. Eco-holism's incompatibility with concern for animals

Boff ties his later theology explicitly to ecology, and in so doing, he also ties himself to the pitfalls of ecological thinking. In one regard—namely, the significance of individual sentients—his system fails him. The plight of suffering animals simply does not appear on his radar. Not one paragraph is given specifically to their exploitation or to how humans may alleviate the burdens we place upon them. This is why we may properly conclude that Boff is insufficiently attentive to the animal issue. This section attempts to consider why Boff cannot seem to consider animals within his theological thinking.⁴⁹³

a. Ecological ethics versus animal ethics

Boff does not recognise the problem of animal suffering because ecology does not recognise the problem of animal suffering. Ecology is concerned with the whole and with every being within that whole existing in balance. Indeed, the balance of an ecosystem is more important than the suffering of individual sentients. Animals are one part of an ecosystem, and what is important is that each species exists in balance with other species, such that one species does not overwhelm another. This perspective leaves very little room, if any, for concern about individual animals. This problem is not unique to Boff; it is a weakness with many ecological thinkers. It is the “holistic”⁴⁹⁴ approach set against the individual approach. In this sense ecological ethics and animal ethics are frequently in conflict. In my interview with Braga Lourenço, we discussed areas in which ecological and animal ethics are in tension.

⁴⁹³ Although Boff does not make the conceptual move from ecological theology to animal theology, Susin has made this transition. For an account of his conceptual movement, and why he thinks it is problematic for liberation theologians see, Appendix 3. Susin maintains that Boff is “open” towards animal theology since “he is a creator of sensibility, he has the possibility to feel more towards animal life” (Appendix 3). For an opposing view of why Boff’s ecological theology prevents him from embracing concern for animals see, Appendix 8. Braga Lourenço maintains that ecological thinking is not a move towards concern for animals: Boff “is concerned about the stability of the planet and that is good. But I doubt that his environmental ethics or earth ethics is a step to get to thinking about animals. I very much doubt that Leonardo will reach this point” (Appendix 8).

⁴⁹⁴ Boff states that “if ecology is not holistic, it is not really ecology.” Boff, *Ecology and Liberation*, 41. He references Jan Smuts to define holism as “to grasp the whole in the parts and the parts in the whole within another, even higher, whole” (41–42).

Among others he used the example of the choice of material for footwear to illustrate this tension: “Our concerns are very different. He [the environmentalist] is worried about not damaging the environment with plastic, and I am worried about not damaging the individual animal that was killed for the shoe.”⁴⁹⁵ This may seem odd since both expound the value of the natural world and the importance of nonhuman beings; however, that is often where the similarities end. As Linzey argues, “ecologists invariably look upon the whole system of predation as God-given and care more for ‘the whole’ than they do for individual animals.”⁴⁹⁶ Boff argues that only beings who possess all his unique qualities can experience “tragedy or fulfilment, feelings of frustration or of bliss,”⁴⁹⁷ which, as already indicated, remarkably overlooks more than forty years of work by scientists and philosophers demonstrating that animals have interests, beliefs, and desires comparable to human beings.⁴⁹⁸

As an example of his thinking in this area, Boff writes that ecological justice “entails a new covenant between human beings and other beings, a new gentleness toward what is created, and the fashioning of an ethic and mystique of kinship with the entire cosmic community.”⁴⁹⁹ He suggests that we need a new way of engaging with the world, specifically “a new ethics; that is, attentiveness to change and the ability to adapt to what must be done at each moment—and today that means protecting the planet and all its systems, defending and promoting life, starting with those that are most threatened.”⁵⁰⁰ This, I fear, is an example of Boff at his worst—a lot of theological gloss and very little concretisation. He argues that this ethic should be based on two principles: responsibility and compassion. Boff cites Hans Jonas to explain the responsibility principle: “so act that the consequences of your action support the continuance of authentic human life on Earth.”⁵⁰¹ In other words, we should ensure that our actions are in accordance with the continuation of life. Boff says, “Good is whatever preserves and promotes all beings in their dynamic equilibrium, especially living things, and among living things, the weakest and most

⁴⁹⁵ See Appendix 8. This is one example of where ecological and animal ethics are in tension, for others see further discussion in Appendix 8. For reflections upon how environmental concerns compete with animal concerns in Brazil see, Appendix 9.

⁴⁹⁶ Linzey, *Creatures of the Same God*, 49.

⁴⁹⁷ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 60.

⁴⁹⁸ For a discussion of these issues, see Armstrong and Botzler, *The Animal Ethics Reader*.

⁴⁹⁹ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 112.

⁵⁰⁰ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 135.

⁵⁰¹ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 135; referencing Jonas, *Das Prinzip Verantwortung*, 36.

threatened.”⁵⁰² Boff here is directly echoing Leopold, who writes of his “land ethic,” “A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise.”⁵⁰³ This “new ethic” thus promotes and preserves all living beings, so long as everything is kept in ecological balance.

What is missing in Boff’s work is an account of the moral and theological significance of human activity in the world as regards nonhuman creatures. He comes tantalisingly close to endorsing a “special concern” for the weak and the vulnerable, which could include animals, but he falls short. He appeals to notions of co-creator and co-pilot, but nowhere does this practically involve speaking up against the injustices that humans perpetrate on sentient animals. Boff does not refer to the amount of cruelty perpetuated by the human species on other beings capable of suffering and pain. The issue simply is not there on his moral agenda.

This is a terrible lacuna in the work of a theologian who passionately opposes suffering and oppression and who, moreover, sees that human beings are uniquely equipped in creation to alleviate suffering and minimise exploitation. In other words, Boff does not make the obvious link between God-given human capacities for altruism and service and the practical aid that humans can bring to what he otherwise calls the sickness of the world.⁵⁰⁴

His ethics is an attempt to distance his position from the instrumentalist position on creation, which is discussed in chapter one.⁵⁰⁵ Boff argues that ecology is opposed to “instrumental reason,” which has become “a veritable ‘earthly demon,’ because it threatens to destroy nature.”⁵⁰⁶ The goal in his ecological thinking is for “human beings [to] become integrated into the whole ... until they become cultivators of the garden of creation as well as its high-priests.”⁵⁰⁷ Ecological thought is thus opposed to instrumental thought because the former, instead of viewing itself as superior to the created order, sees itself as part of it, living in communion with it. The role of religions in this view, then, is to “help culture to take up this [ecological]

⁵⁰² Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 136.

⁵⁰³ Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, 224–25.

⁵⁰⁴ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 63.

⁵⁰⁵ As a reminder, the instrumentalist position may be summarised in the words of Aquinas. He argued, “By the divine providence, they [animals and plants] are intended for man’s use according to the order of nature. Hence it is not wrong for man to make use of them, either by killing or in any other way whatever.” Aquinas, “Summa Contra Gentiles,” vol. II, 220–24.

⁵⁰⁶ Boff, *Ecology and Liberation*, 76.

⁵⁰⁷ Boff, *Ecology and Liberation*, 76.

position, with, considering the urgency of the matter, dramatic and positive consequences for all humanity.”⁵⁰⁸ However, despite Boff’s critique of instrumentalism, the force of his argument is still directed towards humanity, seeking “positive consequences for all humanity.” Moreover, what he fails to recognise is that he has switched one kind of instrumentalism for another. Ecology has become the new instrumentalism—that is, that which serves the goal of ecology is right, and that which is deemed “un-ecological” is wrong.

In short, Boff cannot include individual animal suffering in his schema because ecology does not consider individual animal suffering. The focus on the whole obscures the individual.⁵⁰⁹

b. Christologically limited

Boff’s ecological theology is insufficiently Christocentric. This is especially odd when one considers the specifically Christological emphasis of his earlier work in *Jesus*. As indicated in chapter two, Boff easily could have expanded his Christological argument to include animals within the special concern that Jesus had for the poor, the oppressed, and the marginalised. Indeed, given that this argument could be extended to include the natural world, it is odd that Boff does not reach for a Christological argument rather than an ecological one. It is worth remembering that the classical definition of “oppress” is to “overwhelm with superior weight or numbers or irresistible power; lie heavily on, weigh down ... govern tyrannically, keep by coercion, subject to continual cruelty or injustice”⁵¹⁰—a definition that applies rather appropriately to our exploitation of billions of animals every year for food, clothing, entertainment, and research.

Boff writes movingly about how liberation theology began by seeing God in the faces of the poor and the outcast; he describes these individuals as “the reemodiment of the passion of the Crucified One, who cries out and wants to arise for the sake of life and freedom.”⁵¹¹ But the obvious must be stated: human creatures are not the only victims of suffering and exploitation in our world. In fact, there are billions of nonhuman beings with faces who are exploited for human gain annually.

⁵⁰⁸ Boff, *Ecology and Liberation*, 76.

⁵⁰⁹ For a discussion of how the good of an individual is related to the common good of the whole see, Remele, “Whose Good? Which Community? The Individual, the Whole and the Common Good,” 288–299.

⁵¹⁰ *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, s.v. “oppress.”

⁵¹¹ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 107.

Even if animals are granted only minimal moral status, their burden of suffering constitutes one of the greatest amounts, if not the greatest amount, of suffering in the world today. Animals also have faces, and it is possible to look into them and similarly see the face of “the Crucified One.”⁵¹² As indicated in chapter three, Saint Francis drew parallels between the suffering of animals and the suffering of Christ. As Saint Bonaventure recalls, he liberated the lambs on their way to slaughter in memory of the Lamb of God, who had already been sacrificed for us all.⁵¹³ In short, freed from moral anthropocentrism, Boff’s thesis could only be strengthened by the inclusion of the faces of suffering animals.

In parts of Boff’s corpus, it seems like he is going to make the necessary link to expound care for animals. But although the framework is there, he does not quite make that leap. For example, he expounds God’s special relationship with the oppressed but singles out only the human oppressed as the object of God’s concern. In his words, “God is father of all, but most particularly father and defender of those who are oppressed and treated unjustly. Out of love for them, God takes sides, takes *their* side against the repressive measures of all the pharaohs.”⁵¹⁴ Boff is here referring to the special place of the human oppressed; however, since God created all creation, this should apply to the rest of the oppressed in creation as well. Indeed, it ought to apply even more so to the other oppressed within creation since they are doubly oppressed by their inability to speak for themselves.

Although Boff is rightly critical of dominance and the will to power, in his thought there is a lack of reflection on the nature of this power and what it means theologically. As Linzey indicates, what we see in Jesus is the exercise of God’s power manifest in service. Indeed, Linzey writes specifically of how in theological terms there can be no lordship without service.⁵¹⁵ If this thought is taken seriously, humans’ God-given power over animals should therefore be interpreted Christologically. The God-given human power in creation is the power to care for fellow creatures and to “till and keep” the cosmic garden (Gen. 2:15). If Boff took

⁵¹² As discussed in chapter one, one clear example of this is given by Newman, who in a sermon on Good Friday in 1842 compared the suffering of animals to the suffering of Jesus on the cross. He orated, “Think then, my brethren, of your feelings at cruelty practiced upon brute animals, and you will gain one sort of feeling which the history of Christ’s Cross and Passion ought to excite within you.” Newman, “The Crucifixion,” 138. For a theological discussion of this sermon, see Linzey, *Why Animal Suffering Matters*, 38–40.

⁵¹³ Bonaventure, “The Life of St. Francis,” 255.

⁵¹⁴ Boff and Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, 51; emphasis in the original.

⁵¹⁵ See chapter three in Linzey, *Animal Theology*, 45–61.

seriously the notion of humans as the servant species, it would enable his vision of a more fraternal and compassionate relationship not only with the natural world but also with animals in particular.

c. Who are the poor?

The option for the poor is a theme that runs throughout Boff's corpus. His arguments for the poor have built upon his arguments presented in chapters one and two of this thesis, except that in his ecological theology he brings together the oppression of the earth and the oppression of the poor. Liberation can never, according to Boff, "be restricted to the material, social, or merely spiritual realm."⁵¹⁶ What liberation theology addresses is not just poverty per se, but the "*inhumanity of poverty*"⁵¹⁷—that is, the interior and exterior restrictions on human beings that result from poverty and oppression. Equally, "it is not only the poor and oppressed who must be liberated but all human beings, rich and poor, because all are oppressed by a paradigm—abuse of the Earth, consumerism, denial of otherness, and of the inherent value of each being—that enslaves us all."⁵¹⁸ In short, the earth and the poor are abused by the same system, which is the will to power, the will to dominate. Boff is keen to stress the link between ecology and liberation theology, and although he sees both the earth and the poor as oppressed, apparently this oppression does not extend to animals.

Boff suggests that the globalised neoliberal capitalist system is "*inhuman*"⁵¹⁹ that the poor have become only commodities in global exchange. But he then goes on to add this rather revealing line: "*hence, the most threatened creatures are not whales, but the poor who are condemned to die before their time.*"⁵²⁰ This line is telling because it falsely suggests that nonhuman creatures, such as whales, have not similarly become commodities treated as means to others' ends. It is purely anthropocentric rather than theocentric to suppose that the most threatened creatures in the world can be only human ones. The facts indicate otherwise. Over two thousand whales are slaughtered every year, and even the recent moratorium (by the International Whaling Commission, which is solely concerned with the preservation of whales as commodities for future exploitation) on commercial whaling has been

⁵¹⁶ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 108.

⁵¹⁷ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 108; my emphasis.

⁵¹⁸ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 113.

⁵¹⁹ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 111.

⁵²⁰ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 111; my emphases.

ignored by countries such as Japan and Korea.⁵²¹ Also, the idea that whales are not “condemned to die before their time” is extraordinary since whales are slaughtered not at the end of their natural lives but whenever they are caught. Boff’s comment can make sense only if he is supposing that somehow their being slaughtered for human use does not constitute death “before their time.” In other words, despite what he may say elsewhere about the need to preserve and defend other beings, Boff actually thinks that unlike human beings, animals are properly classifiable as commodities or means to human ends. Furthermore, whales are not just “condemned to die before their time”; they are killed in excruciatingly cruel ways through use of spears or explosive harpoons that pierce the skin but seldom, if ever, induce immediate unconsciousness. The death of one individual whale takes a minimum of thirty minutes and in the case of larger species up to one and a half hours.⁵²² Moreover, cetaceans are remarkably intelligent and socially complex creatures with a larger brain capacity than human beings,⁵²³ making Boff’s remark even more unfortunate, as he has failed to see that whales are sentient beings in their own right, not just things here for our use.

Boff argues that the human poor are “the most threatened beings in creation.”⁵²⁴ This statement, however, is difficult to reconcile with his consistent rejection of a purely anthropocentric view of creation. Boff’s rejection of that view is emphatic and uncompromising: “An arrogant anthropocentrism is at work, one which lies at the root of contemporary societies. Human beings understand ourselves as being above other beings and lords of life and death over them.”⁵²⁵ Again he exclaims, “Anthropocentrism reveals a narrow, atomized view of the human being, torn away from other beings. It claims that the sole meaning of evolution and the reason for the existence of other beings is to produce the human being, man and woman.”⁵²⁶

But if animals are not here for our use, the question is obvious: How can we justify utilising them as commodities—as merely a means to human ends? If we are

⁵²¹ See Ottaway, “Commercial Whaling,” 41–43.

⁵²² Ottaway, “Commercial Whaling,” 42.

⁵²³ See Simmonds, “Intelligence in Whales and Dolphins,” 43–44. See also Marino et al., “Cetaceans Have Complex Brains for Complex Cognition,” e139. For further discussion of the intelligence of cetaceans in relation to ethics, see White, “Whales, Dolphins and Humans,” 223–45.

⁵²⁴ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 110.

⁵²⁵ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 105.

⁵²⁶ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 21.

not to be “lords of life and death” over animals, then it is odd that the threat to their existence should be deemed less important than a threat to human beings, especially because human beings are not under a threat of extinction, whereas some animals, such as whales, are.

This chapter has focused on Boff’s ecological theology and asked whether it includes within it concern for individual animals. Sadly, the holistic focus of ecology means that despite his attempts to move away from anthropocentrism, Boff still cannot seem to include individual animals within his theological vision. Unfortunately this means there is less scope for developing animal theology from his ecological ideas. His ecological theology thus proves even less fruitful to the discussion of animals than his liberation theology. Yet his ecological theology, as we will see in the next chapter, has helped open the door to concern for animals in the teaching of the Catholic Church. The next chapter will consider the evolving doctrine of the Catholic Church as regards animals, and ask if in the papacy of Francis we are now witnessing the emergence of a new moral sensitivity to animals.

Chapter 6: A New Catholic Moral Sensitivity?

In March 2013, Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio of Argentina became Pope Francis. He is the first pontiff to come from a Latin American country or even from outside of Europe—the first, in his own words, from “the ends of the Earth.”⁵²⁷ Also, he is the first pope to have taken the name Francis, after Saint Francis of Assisi. In so doing, he indicated a new orientation for the Catholic Church. As Boff puts it in his latest work, *Francis of Rome, Francis of Assisi: A New Springtime for the Church* (hereafter cited as *Francis of Rome*), Francis “inaugurates another style of being pope and being the church.”⁵²⁸ Saint Francis’s ministry, as discussed earlier, was concerned with the poor, humility, and fraternity with all creatures. By taking the name Francis, the new pope was not just indicating a solidarity with the poor, though he certainly was doing that,⁵²⁹ but perhaps also was indicating a more creature-friendly orientation to his papacy.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the Catholic Church’s evolving position on animals since Vatican II. I argue that some of Boff’s ideas have been incorporated into the latest papal encyclical, *Laudato Si’*.⁵³⁰ The encyclical is now having its own impact on Brazilian theology, and so some of Boff’s theological ideas are being re-contextualised. When I began focusing on Boff’s work, his theology, although very popular in Brazil, was essentially marginalised in Catholic thought. Given his silencing by the Vatican, this is probably an understatement. Now we have a Latin American pope who shares similar concerns about the poor and the environment. In short, Francis has made Boff’s work current and relevant. Francis’s pontificate represents a new direction for the Church in terms of Catholic thought on animals, the environment, and the poor. As Boff describes it, “the word *break* (*ruptura*) is the most adequate to understand the novelty represented by Pope Francis.”⁵³¹ In order to understand how radical the papacy of Francis is, we must first explore the dominant tradition that he is disrupting. Since Vatican II, there has been gradual movement in terms of attitudes to the environment and animals. This chapter

⁵²⁷ Pope Francis, quoted in Longenecker, “A Pope from the Ends of the Earth.”

⁵²⁸ Boff, *Francis of Rome, Francis of Assisi*, 7.

⁵²⁹ As Pope Francis was elected, Cardinal Claudio Hummes, archbishop emeritus of São Paulo, hugged him and said, “Don’t forget the poor!” It was then that the name Francis, after Francis of Assisi, came to the future pope. This anecdote is well documented, but see Valley, *Pope Francis*, 157.

⁵³⁰ Francis, *Laudato Si’*.

⁵³¹ Boff, *Francis of Rome, Francis of Assisi*, 7.

explores the shifting concern for animals and attempts to understand Boff's role in that shift.

This chapter addresses the third methodological question about whether Boff's work has been a catalyst for greater concern for animals in the Catholic Church. The first part of this chapter explores the Catholic position on animals in the post-Vatican II era. It then considers Francis's teaching on animals and creation, especially in his two encyclicals, *Lumen Fidei* and *Laudato Si'*. I argue that some of Boff's thought on ecology and liberation has been, however unacknowledged, incorporated into *Laudato Si'*. In so doing, Francis has universalised Boff's theology. In order for that now-universalised theology to have an impact in Brazil, it needs to be re-contextualised. The last section of the chapter considers the need for re-contextualisation, examines Boff's role in expounding Francis's thought in Brazil, and uses interviews from my research in Brazil to indicate the ways in which this process is already beginning.

6.1. The tradition on animals post-Vatican II

In the Second Vatican Council documents, there is not a single line on care for animals or the environment.⁵³² Simply put, these topics were not on the theological agenda. In the fifty years since then, the Roman Catholic Church has begun to slowly move away from the once all-dominant scholastic view on animals and towards a position where care for creation and the earth is a central theological concern.⁵³³

As indicated in chapter one, Aquinas's views on animals represent the dominant scholastic ideas on animals, characterised by instrumentalism and dualism, which have held sway over Catholic thought on animals for centuries. In more recent times, we have begun to see the gradual move away from simple instrumentalism and humanism. However marginalised his example is in practice, Saint Francis has always been a challenging, even self-correcting figure within the Catholic tradition.

Preaching in Assisi on March 12, 1982, Pope John Paul II spoke of how "St Francis is before us as an example of unalterable meekness and sincere love with regard to

⁵³² Flannery, *Vatican Council II*.

⁵³³ For a discussion of the Catholic position on animals from Vatican II to the Catechism, see "The Dominant Tradition and the Magisterium," in McLaughlin, *Christian Theology and the Status of Animals*, 21–40. For another discussion of Roman Catholicism and animals, see Gaffney, "Can Catholic Morality Make Room for Animals?," 100–112. Gaffney explores some of the reasons that Catholicism has been slow to embrace moral solicitude towards animals. See also Gaffney, "The Relevance of Animal Experimentation to Roman Catholic Ethical Methodology," 149–70.

irrational beings who make up part of creation.”⁵³⁴ He continued, “We too are called to a similar attitude,” and evoking lines from the encyclical *Redemptor Hominis*,⁵³⁵ he said, “Created in the image of God, we must make him present among creatures ‘as intelligent and noble masters and guardians of nature and not as heedless exploiters and destroyers.’”⁵³⁶

Moreover, Pope John Paul II’s 1988 encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (The Concern of the Church for the Social Order) solidifies this change in perspective. John Paul writes of the need to respect “the nature of *each being*” within creation and states that “the dominion granted to man ... is not an absolute power, nor can one speak of freedom to ‘use and misuse,’ or to dispose of things as one pleases.”⁵³⁷ Notice the movement away from the idea of dominion as domination, and towards the recognition that humans should have limited power over creation. This represents a small but significant step towards de-emphasising the often-presumed absolute power of humans over creation. John Paul is clear that there is no human freedom to “use and misuse” creation at will. It is worth noting that papal encyclicals, unlike ad hoc statements by bishops or even popes, become part of the magisterium and have teaching authority.

It is the Catholic Catechism, commissioned by John Paul and published in 1994, that constitutes authentic and authoritative doctrine. It has a small but significant section on animals, titled “Respect for the Integrity of Creation,” which deserves to be reproduced in full:

The seventh commandment enjoins respect for the integrity of creation. Animals, like plants and inanimate beings, are by nature destined for the common good of past, present and future humanity. Use of the mineral, vegetable and animal resources of the universe cannot be divorced from the respect for moral imperatives. Man’s dominion over inanimate and other living beings granted by the Creator is not absolute; it is limited by concern

⁵³⁴ John Paul II, “To the People of Assisi.”

⁵³⁵ John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis*.

⁵³⁶ John Paul II, “To the People of Assisi.” When John Paul II made this speech in 1982, Boff’s book *Saint Francis* had just been published in Portuguese, and with the making of Saint Francis as the patron saint of ecology in 1980, Boff was perfectly in sync with the papal concern with the teachings of Saint Francis.

⁵³⁷ John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, paras. 34, 64–65; my emphasis.

for the quality of life of his neighbour, including generations to come; it requires a religious respect for the integrity of creation.

Animals are God's creatures. He surrounds them with his providential care. By their mere existence they bless him and give him glory. Thus men owe them kindness. We should recall the gentleness with which saints like St. Francis of Assisi or St. Philip Neri treated animals.

God entrusted animals to the stewardship of those whom he created in his own image. Hence it is legitimate to use animals for food and clothing. They may be domesticated to help man in his work and leisure. Medical and scientific experimentation on animals, if it remains within reasonable limits, is a morally acceptable practice since it contributes to caring for or saving human lives.

It is contrary to human dignity to cause animals to suffer or die needlessly. It is likewise unworthy to spend money on them that should as a priority go to the relief of human misery. One can love animals; one should not direct to them the affection due only to persons.⁵³⁸

Although there are clear echoes of the instrumentalist tradition in the lumping together of animals with plants and minerals and especially in the way animals are seen as legitimate resources for clothing, food, and medical experiments, there is also some movement forward. Animals are acknowledged to be "God's creatures," cared for by God. Animals both "bless" God and give God "glory."⁵³⁹ Of particular interest is the reference to Saint Francis, who is seen as representing a positive tradition within the Church. This section in the Catechism is the first official Catholic statement acknowledging that animals are important to God, and as such it represents a step forward from the idea that they are just human possessions or tools here for our use.

Although it is made clear that animals are here for human use—"are by nature destined for the common good of past, present and future humanity"—this sits in tension with the statement that our use of animals cannot be separated from "moral imperatives." Significantly, animals are included within the sphere of moral duty; for

⁵³⁸ *The Catholic Catechism*, paras. 2415–18.

⁵³⁹ For a discussion on the tensions within the Catechism and significant revisions that occurred in its production, see Remele, "Roman Catholicism," 142–49.

the first time, humans *owe* animals something—namely, “kindness.” It is inconceivable that this emphasis on kindness and gentleness would have been possible without a greater consideration of the figure of Saint Francis. Although there is a freedom to use animals, significantly, there are moral limits placed upon what humans may do to animals. For example, the use of animals for entertainment and sport is notably absent from the list of legitimate uses.

The last paragraph of the section highlights the continuing ambiguity of Catholic thought about animals, seeming to give with one hand and take away with the other. Although “it is contrary to human dignity to cause animals to suffer or die needlessly,” it is also “unworthy to spend money on them that should as a priority go to the relief of human misery.” The paragraph concludes, “One can love animals; [but] one should not direct to them the affection due only to persons.” On the positive side, the Catechism states that it is wrong to cause animals to suffer or die needlessly. This is potentially huge in its implications since so much of our use of animals involves suffering and may be judged unnecessary. A strict interpretation of this sentence would surely mean questioning the institutionalisation of animal farming since it is now well known that we can live healthily on a plant-based diet.⁵⁴⁰ Less positively, though, such actions are deemed wrong not because they are illicit in themselves but because they are considered “contrary to human dignity.” While there is increasing evidence that humans are harmed (and certainly their “dignity” is affronted) by the abuse of animals,⁵⁴¹ it is unclear why infliction of suffering and unnecessary death should not be ruled out as intrinsically unacceptable.⁵⁴²

Most troubling, however, are the two odd lines declaring that it is “unworthy to spend money on them that should as a priority go to the relief of human misery” and that “one can love animals” but “should not direct to them the affection due only to persons.” This seems to reflect the old humanist/anthropocentric tradition that judges humans as the sole objects of proper concern, with the modification that one

⁵⁴⁰ The American Dietetic Association (now the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics) confirmed as long ago as 1997 that an animal diet is not essential to human health: “Appropriately planned vegan and lacto-ovo-vegetarian diets satisfy nutrient needs of infants, children and adolescents and promote normal growth.” Messina and Burke, “Position of the American Dietetic Association,” 1317–21.

⁵⁴¹ See Linzey, *The Link between Animal Abuse and Human Violence*; Gullone, *Animal Cruelty, Antisocial Behaviour, and Aggression*; Akhtar, *Animals and Public Health*; Ascione and Arkow, *Child Abuse, Domestic Violence, and Animal Abuse*; and Arkow, “The Relationships between Animal Abuse and Other Forms of Family Violence,” 29–34.

⁵⁴² John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, paras. 81–83, 124–27. For a discussion of the concept of dignity in Catholic thought, see Remele, *Die Wuerde des Tieres ist unantastbar. Eine neue christliche Tierethik*.

can be concerned about animals but should not care *too* much or rate their suffering as a priority. And as for love—well, this is acceptable, so long as it is not deemed to be the real love that persons can have only for other persons. As Linzey comments, the Catechism “gives the unfortunate impression that even altruistic love of animals is misdirected or disproportionate.”⁵⁴³ The Catechism reveals moral tensions about animals: they are included within the sphere of moral concern, but their instrumental value to humans is also upheld.

John Paul’s encyclical *Evangelium Vita* (the Gospel of Life), published in 1995, sought to provide a consistent ethic of life encompassing a wide of range of life issues, from abortion to euthanasia. Although the text is overwhelmingly concerned with the sanctity of human life, especially innocent life, which is regarded as always inviolable, the role of humans in relation to other creatures receives a small mention. The relevant section runs as follows: “As one called to till and look after the garden of the world (cf. Gen 2:15), man has a specific responsibility towards the environment in which he lives, towards the creation which God has put at the service of his personal dignity, of his life, not only for the present but also for future generations.”⁵⁴⁴ Again, the tensions within Catholic thought converge into one apparently contradictory line. On the one hand, humans have a specific responsibility to care for creation, but on the other, God has put this creation “at the service of his [man’s] personal dignity, of his life.” Although this care is “not only for the present but also for future generations,” one can only assume that the future generations envisaged are human ones. It is difficult to see how this ethic of care can be classed as anything other than a self-serving exercise for humans and for their future generations.

The subsequent line continues in the same vein but seems to include animal life more directly: “It is the ecological question—ranging from the preservation of the natural habitats of the different species of animals and of other forms of life to ‘human ecology’ properly speaking—which finds in the Bible clear and strong ethical direction, leading to a solution which respects the great good of life, of every life.”⁵⁴⁵ Each and every “life” (singular), as well as communities of lives, appears to be included here, but no specific responsibilities to those individuals are detailed. The

⁵⁴³ Linzey, *Animal Gospel*, 60. For a discussion of the Catechism in Linzey, see his chapter “Why Church Teaching Perpetuates Cruelty,” in *Animal Gospel*, 56–63.

⁵⁴⁴ John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, paras. 42, 74.

⁵⁴⁵ John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, para. 42.

section concludes with, again, the re-envisaging of “dominion” as in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, which emphasises the importance of “moral laws” as well as biological ones.

A more positive interpretation of these lines—and of the encyclical as a whole—is provided by John Berkman. In his article “Is the Consistent Ethic of Life Consistent without a Concern for Animals?,” he argues that John Paul avoids two errors: one termed “the instrumentalization of nature” and the other “the divinization of nature.”⁵⁴⁶ Instrumentalism regards creation as simply matter to be manipulated, and divinisation idealises untouched or pristine nature, including, as a corollary, the cycles of predation. The human role in creation is “ministerial,” which should include anticipation of the peaceable kingdom through the limiting of human violence over individual creatures.

While this interpretation is welcome and certainly possible, it does seem to fall foul of the consistent emphasis on humans as made in the image of God, which is regarded not so much functionally as ontologically within the encyclical. This renders humans so valuable that it appears to downgrade all of the rest of creation. For example, moving from creation to human uniqueness, *Evangelium Vita* includes this statement: “Instead we wish to emphasize that God himself is present in human fatherhood and motherhood quite differently than he is present in all other instances of begetting ‘on earth.’”⁵⁴⁷ This attempt to assert human superiority on the grounds that God is uniquely “present” in human parenting seems exaggerated. A more balanced approach would surely acknowledge the commonality of procreation within all mammalian species and seek to celebrate analogous relationships of care and protection. The reason for this special pleading soon becomes clear, though: human procreation transmits “God’s own image ... thanks to the creation of an immortal soul.” Given this uniquely high place for humans, defined as a matter of ontology rather than function, it is difficult to argue that the encyclical does much to avoid an instrumentalist view of animals and creation, especially since God has put this creation “at the service of [human] personal dignity”—indeed the service of “[human] life.”⁵⁴⁸

And yet there are signs that the issue has not been entirely resolved. In an interview, Cardinal Ratzinger (subsequently Pope Benedict XVI) was famously asked

⁵⁴⁶ Berkman, “Is the Consistent Ethic of Life Consistent without a Concern for Animals?,” 240–41.

⁵⁴⁷ John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, para. 43.

⁵⁴⁸ John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, para. 42.

if humans are allowed to eat animals. He replied that we are “not forbidden” to use animals for food but that any use of animals must conform to the biblical directive to treat animals with respect. Continuing, he said that “industrial use of creatures”—the large-scale, confined rearing of animals known as factory farming—violates the idea that animals “are given into our care, that we cannot just do whatever we want with them.” Specifically, he responded,

Animals, too, are God’s creatures and even if they do not have the same direct relation to God that man has, they are creatures of his will, creatures we must respect as companions in creation ... [Man] should always maintain his respect for these creatures, but he knows at the same time that he is not forbidden to take food from them. Certainly, a sort of industrial use of creatures, so that geese are fed in such a way as to produce as large a liver as possible, or hens live so packed together that they become just caricatures of birds, this degrading of living creatures to a commodity seems to me in fact to contradict the relationship of mutuality that comes across in the Bible.⁵⁴⁹

Many animal protectionists seized on these words as indicating a change in Catholic doctrine about animals,⁵⁵⁰ but that, of course, was not the case. Ratzinger was only articulating his personal convictions. Statements by bishops, saints, and even popes do not always constitute statements of Catholic doctrine as such. There is a hierarchy of authoritative statements, which Ratzinger himself spelt out when he was Head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.⁵⁵¹

However, Benedict did in papal office articulate responsibility to creation. In his “Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace” in 2010, he claimed that “the Church has a responsibility towards creation, and she considers it her *duty to exercise that responsibility in public life*, in order to protect earth, water and air as gifts of God the Creator meant for everyone, and above all to save mankind from the danger of self-destruction.”⁵⁵² This not only echoes previous papal utterances that

⁵⁴⁹ Ratzinger, *God and the World*, 78–79.

⁵⁵⁰ See PETA, “Pope Benedict XVI Continues Tradition of Papal Concern for Animals”; and Humane Society of the United States, “The Roman Catholic Church.”

⁵⁵¹ See Allen, *Cardinal Ratzinger*, 290–1. For a discussion on the hierarchy of church statements, see DiLeo, “Church Authority and Assent”; and Henningsen, “Shedding a Light on Church Teachings.”

⁵⁵² Benedict XVI, “Message of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace”; my emphases.

humankind has “a responsibility towards creation” but also adds a new note—namely, a “duty” to exercise this in public. Christians have a duty to publicly try to protect the “gifts of God” on the earth. This echoes the idea that creation is understood in Catholic theology as a “gift” and a “task.” It is a gift from God to humans, but receipt of that gift involves the task of caring for creation.⁵⁵³ Although in this view creation is valued on the basis of what it means for human life rather than valued in its own right, public support by the Church for environmental issues is nonetheless a positive step. It is worth noting how far the Catholic tradition has moved on the issue of the environment and ecology: in just fifty years, the issue has gone from a subject of marginal concern to an issue being advanced by successive popes.

Although, as evidenced here, recent years have seen some movement from a purely instrumentalist view of animals, there was not an in-depth consideration of either animals or the environment in Catholic theology prior to the pontificate of Francis.

6.2. A Latin American pope

a. Francis of Rome’s early teachings

The early indications were that the new Pope Francis would be progressive on the issue of animals and the environment. In his inaugural mass on March 19, 2013, Francis spoke of how “the vocation of being a ‘protector’ [of creation] ... is not just something involving us Christians alone; it also has a prior dimension which is simply human, involving everyone.” And then, in a crucial line of elaboration, he added, “It means protecting *all creation*, the beauty of the created world, as the Book of Genesis tells us and as Saint Francis of Assisi showed us. It means respecting *each of God’s creatures* and respecting the environment in which we live.”⁵⁵⁴ Of course, this is in line with the previous papal statements discussed earlier. But it was at that stage the clearest statement of responsibility for creation in the modern Roman Catholic tradition. Never before had a pope placed such emphasis on “protecting” other creatures, and that it should be done at such an early stage of his pontificate was remarkable. Of course, what is meant by “respect” in this context is not spelled out, and here it may mean something less than how the word is defined by animal

⁵⁵³ The concept of creation as a “gift” and “task” originates in the command to “till” and “keep” the garden in Gen. 2:15. This topic will be taken up again in the discussion of Pope Francis.

⁵⁵⁴ Francis, “Homily of Pope Francis”; my emphases.

protectionists.⁵⁵⁵ Nevertheless, Francis’s invoking of his namesake provided some hope that the legacy of this particular saint would receive greater recognition within the Church.

In his message on the feast day of Saint Joseph the Worker on May 1, 2013, Francis emphasised the “dignity and importance of work” and made clear its ecological dimension. “The Book of Genesis tells us that God created man and woman by entrusting to them the task of populating the Earth and subduing it.”⁵⁵⁶ Taken by itself, the line does little more than reiterate traditional doctrine, but as he continued, Francis made clear in which sense this “subduing” is meant—subduing “*does not mean exploiting [creation], but nurturing and protecting it, caring for it through their work*. Work is part of God’s loving plan, we are called to cultivate and care for all the goods of creation and in this way share in the work of creation!”⁵⁵⁷ This line of elaboration—in fact, correction—represents a crucial modification in doctrine. In one line the tradition of interpreting dominion and subduing in non-moral terms is dispensed with. It is simply redefined.

Francis’s first encyclical, *Lumen Fidei* (the Light of Faith), co-written with Benedict, was published on July 5, 2013. It returns to the theme of humans and creation in a section titled “A Light for Life in Society.” The relevant paragraphs are worth citing in full:

How many benefits has the gaze of Christian faith brought to the city of men for their common life! Thanks to faith we have come to understand the unique dignity of each person, something which was not clearly seen in antiquity. *In the second century the pagan Celsus reproached Christians for an idea that he considered foolishness and delusion: namely, that God created the world for man, setting human beings at the pinnacle of the entire cosmos. “Why claim that [grass] grows for the benefit of man, rather than for that of the most savage of the brute beasts?” “If we look down to Earth from the heights of heaven, would there really be any difference between our activities and those of the ants and bees?”* At the heart of biblical faith is God’s love, his concrete concern for every person, and his plan of salvation which embraces all of

⁵⁵⁵ Regan defines “the respect principle” as meaning that “we are to treat those individuals who have inherent value in ways that respect their inherent value.” Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights*, 248.

⁵⁵⁶ Francis, “General Audience.”

⁵⁵⁷ Francis, “General Audience”; my emphases.

humanity and all creation, culminating in the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Without insight into these realities, there is no criterion for discerning what makes human life precious and unique. Man loses his place in the universe, he is cast adrift in nature, either renouncing his proper moral responsibility or else presuming to be a sort of absolute judge, endowed with an unlimited power to manipulate the world around him.⁵⁵⁸

Here there is a strong reaffirmation of the traditional view that the whole creation is made for humans. But didn't Celsus have a point? What is the point of God creating an entire world of species for only one of those species? Don't other species also have a right to the grass of the field, the warmth of the sunshine, and the Creator's store of good things? It is one thing to argue that humans have a special place in creation by virtue of the *imago dei* and quite another to suppose that the whole creation was made just for them. It is simply untrue that "man loses his place in the universe, he is cast adrift in nature, either renouncing his proper moral responsibility or else presuming to be a sort of absolute judge, endowed with an unlimited power to manipulate the world around him," if he doesn't also suppose that the world is made for him. The overstatement here turns what could have been an effective—indeed, compelling—argument about human's special responsibilities into a needless theological bolstering of human supremacy.

The encyclical continues:

Faith, on the other hand, by revealing the love of God the Creator, enables us to respect nature all the more, and to discern in it a grammar written by the hand of God and *a dwelling place entrusted to our protection and care*. Faith also helps us to devise models of development which are based not simply on utility and profit, but consider creation as a gift for which we are all indebted; it teaches us to create just forms of government, in the realization that authority comes from God and is meant for the service of the common good.⁵⁵⁹

⁵⁵⁸ Francis, *Lumen Fidei*, para. 54; my emphases.

⁵⁵⁹ Francis, *Lumen Fidei*, para. 55; my emphases.

The notion of creation as “gift” requiring our “protection and care” is admirable enough, but for whom is it a gift? Why is it not possible to posit that creation is a gift to all creatures and that humanity’s special role, made in the image, is to care for it as God intended? It is simply not clear why such a gift has to be the exclusive property of the human species; indeed, the reverse argument makes much more sense and avoids the theological special pleading.⁵⁶⁰

The anthropocentric strain of the encyclical is even more problematic when one considers the fresh emphasis on how all creation participates in salvation—for example, in the declaration that “at the heart of biblical faith is God’s love, his concrete concern for every person, and his plan of salvation *which embraces all of humanity and all creation.*”⁵⁶¹ This prompts a notable question: Why would God want to create a world for human beings if his plan in Christ is inclusive of all creation?

In short, some of the ambiguities, even inadequacies, of Catholic thought in relation to animals remain. At the same time, the latest three popes have modified traditional Thomism, effectively redefined dominion, notionally supported respect for animals, and endorsed the human work of protection and care for other species. All this is a long way from Aquinas’s cited views on humans and animals. It seems clear that the world of creatures will not be forgotten, at least under the pontificate of Francis. His first “Urbi et Orbi” blessing on March 31, 2013, included this line: “let us become agents of this mercy, channels through which God can water the earth, protect all creation and make justice and peace flourish.”⁵⁶² Although it is a mistake to read too much into a few papal lines, these words augured well for further

⁵⁶⁰ The notion of creation as gift previously emerged in a dialogue between the future pope and Rabbi Abraham Skorka when the former was Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio, archbishop of Buenos Aires. On caring for creation, Bergoglio says,

We receive creation in our hands as a gift. God gives it to us, but at the same time He gives us a task: that we subdue the Earth. This is the first form of non-culture: what man receives, the raw material that ought to be subdued to make culture like the log that is transformed into a table. But there is a moment in which man goes too far in this task; he gets overly zealous and loses respect for nature. Then ecological problems arise, like global warming, which are new forms of non-culture. The work of man before God and before himself must maintain a constant balance between the gift and the task. When man keeps the gift alone and does not do the work, he does not complete his mission and remains primitive; when man becomes overly zealous with his work, he forgets about the gift, creating a constructivist ethic: he thinks that everything is the fruit of his labor and that there is no gift. It is what I call the Babel syndrome. (Bergoglio and Skorka, “Excerpt from ‘On Heaven and Earth.’”)

⁵⁶¹ Francis, *Lumen Fidei*, para. 54, my emphases.

⁵⁶² Francis, “‘Urbi et Orbi’ Blessing.”

development of Catholic doctrine. It is in this context of shifting thought on animals and the environment that *Laudato Si'* was penned.

b. Laudato Si' (2015)

After the early indications in his pontificate that Francis was concerned with humanity's relationship to the rest of creation, this concern was crystallised in his second encyclical, *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*.⁵⁶³ *Laudato Si'* strikes a different note from *Lumen Fidei* in tone and style. This is probably due to the fact that *Lumen Fidei* was partially written by Benedict before the end of his papacy but it was assumed by, and published within, Francis's pontificate. *Laudato Si'* is the first encyclical written fully by Francis, and it represents the most sustained reflection on the environment of any papal encyclical and deserves to be examined at length. The title of the encyclical is taken from the "Canticle of the Creatures" by Saint Francis of Assisi⁵⁶⁴ indicating the main theme of the encyclical: care for the earth.

The focus of the encyclical is the environmental crisis, and Francis identifies humanity as the cause of this crisis: the earth "now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will."⁵⁶⁵ In short, the environment is in crisis because of humanity's attitude towards the world as something to be used and abused. This encyclical firmly puts environmental concern on the agenda of the Catholic Church. Francis draws on previous papal encyclicals, statements of bishops from around the world, inspiration from Saint Francis, and scientific evidence as his primary resources.⁵⁶⁶ Aside from Church authorities, the encyclical's most frequently cited modern author is the Catholic theologian Romano Guardini (his book *The End of the Modern World* is cited eight times).⁵⁶⁷ Francis draws on Guardini's critique of technology and consumerism in particular. The theme of the encyclical is not just the

⁵⁶³ Francis, *Laudato Si'*.

⁵⁶⁴ Francis gives the following reference: "Canticle of the Creatures," in *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents* (New York: Manila, 1999), 113–14.

⁵⁶⁵ Francis, *Laudato Si'*, para. 2.

⁵⁶⁶ For an examination of the background to the encyclical and the documents drawn upon, see Irwin, *A Commentary on Laudato Si'*.

⁵⁶⁷ Romano Guardini was the subject of Francis's intended doctorate in Germany in 1986. Francis was planning on focusing on Guardini's liturgical and spiritual works but instead opted to return to parish life in Argentina. For more information, see Aguilar, *Pope Francis*, 83–84.

environment, though; like Boff before him, Francis links environmental problems with the problem of poverty.

In addressing the environment, Francis makes some key statements concerning animals, though perhaps not the sustained reflection that might be expected or hoped for. The most positive statement about animals in the encyclical could almost go unnoticed if one were not paying close attention to the tradition, since the statement is couched in a larger discussion of biodiversity. In this context Francis, for the first time in a papal encyclical, states that animals “have value in themselves.”⁵⁶⁸ While this may seem like a small step forward, it is in fact a major advancement in Catholic theology. The Catechism, as discussed earlier, stated that animals “give glory to God,” but nowhere before *Laudato Si’* had the Catholic Church in official Church documents affirmed that animals have inherent value. The discussion of animal value takes place in the subsection titled “Loss of Biodiversity,” where Francis considers the issues of the loss of habitat and species extinction. It is one of the key sections in the encyclical in which animals are considered, and here he discusses the use of animals as resources. He begins by stating that the loss of habitats for animals leads to the loss of species, “which may constitute extremely important resources in the future, not only for food but also for curing disease and other uses.”⁵⁶⁹ Thus, Francis appears to sustain the view that animals are resources for human use, not ruling out their use as food or to advance medical knowledge. However, in the next paragraph he clarifies the use of the word “resource” as follows: “It is not enough, however, to think of different species merely as potential ‘resources’ to be exploited, while overlooking the fact that they have value in themselves.”⁵⁷⁰

The encyclical’s affirmation that animals have intrinsic value, but retention of some permitted use of them as a resource, echoes but goes beyond the language in the Catechism. However, the encyclical goes further, stating that “the great majority [of animals] become extinct for reasons related to human activity. Because of us, thousands of species will no longer give glory to God by their very existence, nor convey their message to us. We have no such right.”⁵⁷¹ Again, Francis directly echoes the Catechism by affirming that animals “give glory to God.” However, by suggesting

⁵⁶⁸ Francis, *Laudato Si’*, para. 33. A discussion of the notion of “value” and animals follows.

⁵⁶⁹ Francis, *Laudato Si’*, para. 32.

⁵⁷⁰ Francis, *Laudato Si’*, para. 33.

⁵⁷¹ Francis, *Laudato Si’*, para. 33.

that we have “no such right” to bring about the extinction of a species, Francis undercuts the idea of human power over animals. Indeed, truly adopting the position that we do not have a right to bring about extinction in other species would require large-scale change in our behaviour and a great deal of international cooperation to bring about that change.

Later in the encyclical, Francis reaffirms the value of creatures in a discussion about ecosystems, in words that seem to echo Boff:

Ongoing research should also give us a better understanding of how different creatures relate to one another in making up the larger units which today we term “ecosystems.” We take these systems into account not only to determine how best to use them, but also because they have *an intrinsic value independent of their usefulness*. Each organism, as a creature of God, is good and admirable in itself; the same is true of the harmonious ensemble of organisms existing in a defined space and functioning as a system.⁵⁷²

The language of “intrinsic value” used here has been emphasised by creation-friendly theologians. For example, Michael Northcott writes, “A second major theme from *Laudato Si’* which makes a distinctive contribution to Catholic social teaching concerns *the intrinsic value of other life to God* as creator and redeemer of all things.”⁵⁷³

However, this paragraph about ecosystems is not as straightforwardly positive as it initially seems. First, there is no distinction between animals and other organisms. “Each organism, as a creature of God, is good and admirable in itself.” This leaves no distinction between animals and plants or sentient animals and non-sentient. Second, the beings’ value is related to their value in the “system.” Although they have intrinsic value “independent of their usefulness,” the discussion is nonetheless contained within a context of their importance to or within ecosystems. This is a holistic approach to creation, rather than a consideration of creatures as individuals. Third, the acknowledgement of “intrinsic value” is made in the context of determining “how best to use them.” As previously seen, the understanding of

⁵⁷² Francis, *Laudato Si’*, para. 140; my emphases.

⁵⁷³ Northcott, “Planetary Moral Economy and Creaturely Redemption in *Laudato Si’*,” 896–97; my emphasis.

creation put forth in the Catechism is maintained, given that creatures are still here for our “use,” however much value they might have. Fourth, Francis clarifies his comments in the following line: “Although we are often not aware of it, we depend on these larger systems for our own existence.”⁵⁷⁴ Again, he reinforces the view that these creatures, regardless of their intrinsic value, are important because humans depend on them for survival.

Building on Saint Francis of Assisi’s understanding of fraternal creation, Pope Francis’s encyclical understands creation as a “family.”⁵⁷⁵ Francis states, “because all creatures are connected, each must be cherished with love and respect, for all of us as living creatures are dependent on one another. Each area is responsible for the care of this family.”⁵⁷⁶ The term “family” is a striking choice because it implies kinship, as well as care and love. However, the understanding of creation as a family does not necessarily mean a relationship free of hurt and pain. Since Francis is far from specific, and in other places in the encyclical eating animals is condoned,⁵⁷⁷ it is hard to be sure what this family relationship entails. But it is a striking metaphor nonetheless. The notion of kinship may well be an extension of the Franciscan idea of fraternity, discussed in chapter three, in which other sentient creatures are to be treated as brothers and sisters. Although the idea of creation as a family is not fully unpacked, it represents a significant step forward in a tradition that previously considered animals to be “things.”⁵⁷⁸

The encyclical continues Francis’s theme of humans as protectors of creation, a theme present in his inaugural mass. In this approach, *Laudato Si’* again redefines human dominion over creation. “If a mistaken understanding of our own principles has at times led us to justify mistreating nature, to exercise tyranny over creation, to engage in war, injustice and acts of violence, we believers should acknowledge that by so doing we were not faithful to the treasures of wisdom which *we have been called to protect and preserve.*”⁵⁷⁹ Understanding our role in creation as one of

⁵⁷⁴ Francis, *Laudato Si’*, para. 140.

⁵⁷⁵ Francis, *Laudato Si’*, para. 42.

⁵⁷⁶ Francis, *Laudato Si’*, para. 42.

⁵⁷⁷ Francis, *Laudato Si’*, see, for example, paras. 40 and 48.

⁵⁷⁸ For a discussion of this, see Gaffney, “Can Catholic Morality Make Room for Animals?,” 100–101. See especially his discussion of moral theologian Rickaby, who considered animals “things.” For further reading, see Rickaby, *Moral Philosophy*.

⁵⁷⁹ Francis, *Laudato Si’*, para. 200; my emphases.

protection would have radical consequences and could have a profound impact on our relationship with animals.

Building on the Catechism and the rejection of domination, the encyclical further considers the “ultimate purpose” of other creatures:

The ultimate destiny of the universe is in the fullness of God, which has already been attained by the risen Christ, the measure of the maturity of all things. Here we can add yet another argument for rejecting every tyrannical and irresponsible domination of human beings over other creatures. *The ultimate purpose of other creatures is not to be found in us.* Rather, all creatures are moving forward *with us and through us* towards a common point of arrival, which is God, in that transcendent fullness where the risen Christ embraces and illumines all things. Human beings, endowed with intelligence and love, and drawn by the fullness of Christ, are called to *lead all creatures back to their Creator.*⁵⁸⁰

This paragraph is significant for a number of reasons. First, it declares that the purpose of animals is not to serve as a means to human ends. Animals have their own ends. This is echoed in the next paragraph, where Francis writes that “each creature has its own purpose. None is superfluous. The entire material universe speaks of God’s love, his boundless affection *for us.*”⁵⁸¹ That all creatures have their *own purpose* and value underscores that they are not here for our “tyrannical” use. Second, this paragraph affirms that humans and animals share God as their ultimate purpose and destiny. Third, that the purpose of animals is directed towards the Creator is grounds for “rejecting every tyrannical and irresponsible domination of human beings over other creatures.” If this statement were taken at its full force, the rejection of *all* “tyrannical and irresponsible domination” would have far-reaching implications for how we relate to animals. Fourth, this discussion makes clear that humans are called to “lead all creatures back to their Creator.” This seems to echo Romans 8:19–21, which, as previously discussed, may be interpreted as meaning that humanity has a role to play in liberating creation and returning it to God. This again strengthens our

⁵⁸⁰ Francis, *Laudato Si'*, para. 83; my emphases.

⁵⁸¹ Francis, *Laudato Si'*, para. 84; my emphases.

vocation as protectors and indicates that our role towards creation is to be one “endowed with intelligence and love.”

Fifth, at the end of the quoted paragraph’s first line, Francis includes a footnote referencing Teilhard de Chardin: “Against this horizon we can set the contribution of Fr Teilhard de Chardin.”⁵⁸² A reference to Teilhard de Chardin in a papal encyclical would have been unthinkable just seventy-five years ago. His work underwent a great deal of scrutiny by the Church, leading to his being forbidden to publish or lecture on religious matters, with a great number of his books published posthumously.⁵⁸³ Yet the following line has clear echoes of his thinking: “all creatures are moving forward with us and through us towards a common point of arrival, which is God, in that transcendent fullness where the risen Christ embraces and illumines all things.” Given Boff’s embracing of Teilhard de Chardin’s thinking, this is another indication that Pope Francis and Boff are thinking along the same trajectory.

One critique that could be levied against the encyclical is that, like Boff’s work, it seems to embrace scientific explanations rather than more theological ideas to address the care of our common home. While this is a fair point, this criticism potentially overlooks two important other points. First, the encyclical is not addressed to Catholics, Christians, or even religious people. Rather, it is addressed to “every living person on this planet,”⁵⁸⁴ and as such the use of science may have been chosen specifically to speak to a wider audience. Second, the encyclical is primarily responding to the environmental crisis, the understanding of which perhaps requires some scientific explanations.

What is perhaps most disconcerting in the encyclical is the lack of discussion of animal suffering. Although Francis echoes the Catechism in saying that “every act of cruelty towards any creature is ‘contrary to human dignity,’”⁵⁸⁵ there is no sustained reflection on the topic. Even in his discussion of extinction, Francis refers only to the “disappearance” of species. However, animals do not simply disappear; rather, they die, and often they suffer painful deaths. The suffering of the individual animals who are becoming extinct is not considered a morally relevant issue. This is particularly evident, for example, when Francis discusses the depletion of fish stock,

⁵⁸² Francis, *Laudato Si’*, note 53.

⁵⁸³ For greater discussion on this, see King, *Spirit of Fire*, 104–9.

⁵⁸⁴ Francis, *Laudato Si’*, para. 3.

⁵⁸⁵ Francis, *Laudato Si’*, para. 92.

which “especially hurts small fishing communities without the means to replace those resources.”⁵⁸⁶ In this moral calculation, the greatest harm done by fishing is the lack of fish for people to catch and kill. There is no consideration of the moral relevance of the suffering of the fish.

But Francis emphatically indicates that animal suffering has negative effects on humans, indeed it is: “*the same* wretchedness which leads us to mistreat an animal will not be long in showing itself in our relationship with other people.”⁵⁸⁷ At first sight, Francis appears here to be simply repeating the long Catholic tradition of rejecting cruelty to animals on the basis of its negative effects on humans. This is most clearly seen, as indicated previously, in the line from Aquinas that injunctions against cruelty are designed to: “remove man’s thoughts from being cruel to other men, lest through being cruel to animals one become cruel to human beings.”⁵⁸⁸ However, in indicating that it is “the same wretchedness,” Francis goes further in positing a direct, rather than an indirect, relation between cruelty to animals and cruelty to human beings.

Francis grapples with how much human intervention is wise in attempting to resolve the environmental crisis. On the one hand, he wants to be clear that we cannot go on as we have been going and that we must make changes to address the environmental crisis. On the other hand, “a delicate balance has to be maintained.”⁵⁸⁹ That is, his language speaks of both non-intervention and intervention. He seems wary of encouraging more human intervention, given that this intervention created environmental problems in the first place.

One of the main themes of the encyclical is that humans need to consume less. Consumeristic desires are ultimately stretching the resources of the planet to an unsustainable point. Nowhere is this more evident than in the case of animal agriculture. A large amount of scientific evidence reveals that animal agriculture is the single largest contributor to climate change.⁵⁹⁰ In this context, it is extraordinary that Francis does not call for a reduction in the amount of meat consumed as an essential change for sustaining human life, animal life, and the environment.

⁵⁸⁶ Francis, *Laudato Si'*, para. 40.

⁵⁸⁷ Francis, *Laudato Si'*, para. 92; my emphases.

⁵⁸⁸ Aquinas, “Summa Contra Gentiles,” vol. II, 220–24.

⁵⁸⁹ Francis, *Laudato Si'*, para. 38.

⁵⁹⁰ See the discussion in chapter four as well as Thornes, “Animal Agriculture and Climate Change”; and Poore and Nemecek, “Reducing Food’s Environmental Impacts.”

Despite its advances on animals and the environment, there are some underlying tensions within *Laudato Si'*. Notably, it is hard to resolve the tensions between the idea that animals are a “resource” for food and scientific purposes and the idea that they also “have value in themselves.” As Susin points out,

In the document *Laudato Si'* he [Francis] wrote some things about animals, but it is not sufficient ... there is a contradiction. This contradiction remains in the official Catechism because, on the one hand, animals are creatures of God who have inherent value, not just value for human use. But on the other hand, there is also the tradition of animals being there for our use, for clothes, shoes, food. This is a contradiction that is not deeply reflected upon.⁵⁹¹

This underlying tension is found in the Catechism and continues throughout the encyclical. Although Francis goes further than any pope before him, the resolution of this tension is essential if animals' suffering is to be reduced. Susin comments on another tension within the work as well: as discussed earlier, “Pope Francis speaks about the preoccupation with the possibility of extinction. Here the animal is considered as a species, not in terms of its own individual life. This is an important distinction; all individual [animal] life is important.”⁵⁹² Like Boff and others before him, Francis maintains a holistic approach rather than concern for individual sentients. Movement towards concern for individual animal life is crucial if the Catholic tradition is ever to address animal suffering.

Tensions and limitations aside, *Laudato Si'* represents a step forward for the Catholic Church in terms of animals. That animals are even considered, however briefly, in a major encyclical ensures that they are now firmly on the moral agenda.⁵⁹³

c. Echoes of Boff

A Latin American pope concerned with ecology, the poor,⁵⁹⁴ and even animals has not emerged in a vacuum. This can be seen as part of an unfolding tradition to which

⁵⁹¹ See Appendix 3.

⁵⁹² See Appendix 3.

⁵⁹³ The shift in focus since the encyclical can be seen in the academic discussions now emerging in response. I have already contributed to two conferences on the subject: “*Laudato Si'*: Animals and the Environment”; and “Respondent to Fundamental Arguments for Creaturely Care.” In addition, see Miller, *The Theological and Ecological Vision of Laudato Si'*; and Irwin, *A Commentary on Laudato Si'*.

Boff himself has made a major intellectual contribution, however unrecognised. Ideas, after all, don't come from nowhere. As Michael Northcott suggests, *Laudato Si'* brings together "a close relationship between care for God's creatures and justice for the poor,"⁵⁹⁵ in a manner akin to Saint Francis: "it is not until the publication of an encyclical on the protection of creation, by the first pope to name himself after St. Francis, that this minority position takes a more central stage in Catholic theology, although it had been argued for by other twentieth-century Catholic theologians, including Teilhard de Chardin, Thomas Berry, and Leonardo Boff."⁵⁹⁶ In other words, *Laudato Si'* brings into focus themes of care for the poor and care for the environment. An encyclical such as *Laudato Si'* would not have been possible without the groundwork laid by Boff. This is not to suggest that Francis is influenced only by Boff or that he is not drawing on other strands of thought as well. But there are clear echoes of Boff's ideas, albeit unacknowledged, throughout the encyclical. A few examples may serve to illustrate this.

First, both Boff and the pope identify the will to dominate the earth as the cause of both the environmental crisis and poverty. As previously noted, Francis argues that the earth "now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will."⁵⁹⁷ Compare this to Boff's language in his introduction to *Cry*: "The Earth is also crying out. The logic that exploits classes and subjects peoples to the interests of a few rich and powerful countries is the same as the logic that devastates the Earth and plunders its wealth."⁵⁹⁸ The sense that the will to dominate the earth is at the heart of the environmental crisis and the oppression of the poor runs through Boff's work and *Laudato Si'*. This is not to say that Boff is the only thinker to make this connection or that Francis is drawing only on his work, but it is striking that they use similar language to discuss the same themes.

Second, Francis observes, "Some circles maintain that current economics and technology will solve all environmental problems, and argue, in popular and non-technical terms, that the problems of global hunger and poverty will be resolved

⁵⁹⁴ Francis, "Audience to Representatives of the Communications Media."

⁵⁹⁵ Northcott, "Planetary Moral Economy and Creaturely Redemption in *Laudato Si'*," 901.

⁵⁹⁶ Northcott, "Planetary Moral Economy and Creaturely Redemption in *Laudato Si'*," 901.

⁵⁹⁷ Francis, *Laudato Si'*, para. 2.

⁵⁹⁸ Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, xi.

simply by market growth.”⁵⁹⁹ He refers to this as the “technocratic paradigm”⁶⁰⁰ and argues that “we fail to see the deepest roots of our present failures, which have to do with the direction, goals, meaning and social implications of technological and economic growth.”⁶⁰¹ Compare this argument with Boff’s concerns about “technocratic messianism” and “technological messianism” (terms Boff uses interchangeably). Boff defines the terms as follows:

Science and technology, in particular, nuclear research, avant-garde physics, cybernetics, and biotechnology are capable of such far-reaching interference with the genetic code and in the transformation of nature as to be within reach of solving serious human infrastructural problems. *Consequently, we now have a technocratic messianism that claims it will be possible to give everyone more than abundant food, housing, medical care, and leisure.*⁶⁰²

In short, Boff’s “technological messianism” is the idea that science and technology will eventually provide for everyone. Boff indicates that this kind of messianism will be insufficient to fulfil human needs because it “guarantees survival (providing bread) but does not sufficiently promote life (sharing in the production of bread).”⁶⁰³ Although Francis uses different terms in his analysis to describe the same phenomenon, and though he draws on Guardini as well, the argumentation and conclusions are very similar.

Third, Francis calls for an integrated approach “so as to hear *both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.*”⁶⁰⁴ Here he directly alludes to Boff’s work of the same name. It is one of the few italicised lines of the encyclical. While not a direct citation, it is a clear reference to Boff.

Fourth, although Boff is not directly referenced in the encyclical, the Earth Charter, of which he is a co-author and a commissioner, is directly referenced:

The Earth Charter asked us to leave behind a period of self-destruction and make a new start, but we have not as yet developed a universal awareness

⁵⁹⁹ Francis, *Laudato Si’*, para. 109.

⁶⁰⁰ Francis, *Laudato Si’*, para. 111.

⁶⁰¹ Francis, *Laudato Si’*, para. 109.

⁶⁰² Boff, *Ecology and Liberation*, 75; my emphases.

⁶⁰³ Boff, *Ecology and Liberation*, 75.

⁶⁰⁴ Francis, *Laudato Si’*, para. 109; emphasis in the original.

needed to achieve this. Here, *I would echo that courageous challenge*: “As never before in history, common destiny beckons us to seek a new beginning ... Let ours be a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace, and the joyful celebration of life.”⁶⁰⁵

The citation of the Earth Charter is a direct acknowledgement of Boff’s work. Indeed, the Earth Charter is not just acknowledged but echoed and deemed “courageous.” This comes as close to an endorsement of Boff’s work as is possible without Francis directly naming him.

Let me consider some alternatives to my argument. First, theologian Jung Mo Sung, in my interview with him in Brazil, argued that Francis’s and Boff’s positions are fundamentally different: “It is important to distinguish between Boff and Pope Francis. Leonardo Boff, and others focused on ecology, say that poor people will be the most affected by climate change. But the pope says that climate change and poverty are created by the same process.”⁶⁰⁶ That process is capitalism. As Sung sees it, Francis does not just go further than Boff, but rather his theology is “different,” offering a theological critique of capitalism.⁶⁰⁷ Sung’s analysis seems to be primarily based on his reading of *Cry*. Boff’s *Ecology*, however, spells out the link more clearly:

We also have to understand the perverse logic that justifies the precise degree and type of social order needed to guarantee the production of goods and privileges for only a section of society ... The same power is used to direct and mold nature so that it yields up its goods for unequal distribution. The same logic of domination is used for people and for nature ... Social injustice leads to ecological injustice, and vice versa.⁶⁰⁸

⁶⁰⁵ Francis, *Laudato Si'*, para. 207; my emphases.

⁶⁰⁶ See Appendix 4.

⁶⁰⁷ See Appendix 4.

⁶⁰⁸ Boff, *Ecology and Liberation*, 25.

Of course, this is not the level of economic analysis that Sung, who has pioneered theological accounts of economics, would find adequate.⁶⁰⁹ And of course, the encyclical is more explicit than Boff. However, it is unfair to suggest that Boff does not identify the same capitalist process as the source of both poverty and the environmental degradation.

Second, it must be asked, if Boff had such an impact on *Laudato Si'*, why is he not directly referenced anywhere in the text? As already noted, the Earth Charter, of which Boff is a co-author, is cited, but his name remains conspicuously absent. However, there are actually remarkably few references in the encyclical as a whole that are not taken from other popes, Church leaders, or authorities such as Aquinas and Basil the Great. One possible reason is suggested by Celia Deane-Drummond, who argues that “Pope Francis navigates between more traditional Catholic social teaching on the environment and the more radical suggestions of liberation theologians, such as Leonardo Boff, who ... have been influenced by ecological agendas.”⁶¹⁰ While acknowledging Boff’s influence on *Laudato Si'*, Deane-Drummond suggests that it is Boff’s indebtedness to Gaia theory that causes his name not to be referenced in the encyclical.⁶¹¹ She interprets Francis as resisting because “this controversial holistic scientific theory of the earth’s temperature and gaseous stability set by the sum total of biological organisms gives value to those organisms that contribute to that stability, and so by implication, can interpret human beings as parasitic on planet earth.”⁶¹² However, since Deane-Drummond acknowledges that “Boff does not interpret Gaia in this way, but absorbs Gaian rhetoric uncritically,”⁶¹³ it seems odd for her to claim that Francis is resisting a strand of Boff’s thought that she herself does not think he subscribes to. She only briefly considers why Boff is not referenced, and she provides little to support her argument. As discussed in the previous chapter, Boff does reference Lovelock and Gaia, but it seems odd to suggest he has such an allegiance to Gaia theory that it would prevent his acknowledgement in the encyclical, especially since Gaia is just one of many scientific theories that Boff draws upon.

⁶⁰⁹ See, for example, Sung, *The Subject, Capitalism, and Religion*; and Sung, *Desire, Market, and Religion*.

⁶¹⁰ Deane-Drummond, “*Laudato Si'* and the Natural Sciences,” 393.

⁶¹¹ Deane-Drummond, “*Laudato Si'* and the Natural Sciences,” 394.

⁶¹² Deane-Drummond, “*Laudato Si'* and the Natural Sciences,” 393.

⁶¹³ Deane-Drummond, “*Laudato Si'* and the Natural Sciences,” 393.

Perhaps an alternative explanation might be that Boff is just one of many thinkers who informed the encyclical, and of course, that is correct. However, from an interview with Boff, we do know that while Francis was writing the encyclical, Boff sent him some of his books and gave him “counsel,” and “one day before the publication of the encyclical, the pope had someone call [Boff] in order to thank [him] for [his] help.”⁶¹⁴ Although Boff acknowledges that there might be some of his influence in the encyclical, he remains adamant that “the encyclical belongs to the pope.”⁶¹⁵ What is contended here is that Boff has helped create the intellectual milieu which has made *Laudato Si'* possible. Echoes of his work are contained within the encyclical albeit publicly unacknowledged.

6.3. Re-contextualising Boff in Brazil

Boff's triumph is that of a theologian once silenced by the Vatican now finding his concerns both for the poor and for the environment more prominent than ever in mainstream Catholic theology. I have argued that *Laudato Si'* contains echoes of Boff's thought, and now those echoes are now being re-considered in Brazil through engagement with the encyclical. This section is an attempt to consider how those ideas are being re-contextualised in Brazil, through interviews conducted in Brazil and Boff's own engagement with *Laudato Si'*.⁶¹⁶

I briefly consider three issues raised in the interviews: first, the influence of Boff and his thought, especially in terms of ecology and animals in Brazil; second, the influence of *Laudato Si'* and the revised Catholic position on the environment in Brazilian thought; and third, the changing perception of animals in Brazil and its relation to Boff and the Catholic Church.

Perhaps the first thing to note is that Boff is considered a public representative of liberation theology in Brazil. Claudio de Oliveira Ribeiro, a Methodist liberation theologian, suggested in his interview that in terms of liberation theologians, many people “know, for example, Leonardo Boff because he has a public presence in television and the internet, but maybe [they know] only Boff,”⁶¹⁷ rather than other

⁶¹⁴ Hickson, “Liberation Theologian Boff”

⁶¹⁵ Hickson, “Liberation Theologian Boff”

⁶¹⁶ My research trip to Brazil took place in 2016 just a year after the publication of *Laudato Si'*. As the engagement with the encyclical was just beginning the insights from the interviews are accordingly brief. But I include them as an indication of the beginning of the process of re-contextualisation of Boff's ideas.

⁶¹⁷ See Appendix 5, “Excerpts from Professor Claudio de Oliveira Ribeiro Interview.”

liberation theologians. Indeed, he seems to be more widely known for his liberation theology than his ecological theology in Brazil. Ramos de Jesus, a Catholic and animal legal scholar, remarked, “at least amongst my Catholic friends, they see Boff as a political religious leader: a religious man who has inspired a political approach to religion ... Boff is seen as advancing a duty to fight inequality, to fight dictatorships, to fight every kind of oppression, as a Catholic or Christian duty. My friends see Boff in this way.”⁶¹⁸ Even in Catholic circles then, Boff is not necessarily associated with his ecological thought. Ramos de Jesus remarked, “On the environment and on animals, I have not heard them [Ramos de Jesus’s friends] talk about his views.”⁶¹⁹ Although Boff has been writing and speaking about his ecological theology for over twenty years now, it is his message of liberation for the poor that has really captured the imagination. Those interviewees who were more familiar with Boff’s work (Susin, Oliveira Ribeiro, Jung) were aware of his ecological work, both his theology and his work in the Brazilian government, but they did not comment on public engagement with that aspect of his thought. This suggests that Boff’s ideas on ecology have not yet received the same level of public prominence as his liberation theology. Hopefully in the wake of the encyclical greater ecological thought might be fostered in Brazil.

My research trip to Brazil occurred just one year after the publication of *Laudato Si’*. And yet the ramifications of the encyclical were already being felt in Brazil. There was a sense of optimism about the possibility for change, especially from those involved in the animal movement. For example, Ramos de Jesus told me,

In the last papal encyclical there were some good parts on the environment and on animals. Some friends in my LGBT group, they read and they told me: “there is something interesting here for you.” The pope is also worried about animals and the environment, so that is good. So perhaps if Pope Francis, or if the next pope continues his line of thought, maybe there will be greater Catholic concern for this.⁶²⁰

⁶¹⁸ See Appendix 6.

⁶¹⁹ See Appendix 6. It is unsurprising that Boff is not known for his thought on animals since, as we have seen, he has very little sustained thought on animals in particular. However, this was something considered by most of my interviewees because it was the area about which I was asking them.

⁶²⁰ See Appendix 6.

The encyclical is being read and discussed in ecumenical circles, at least in Brazil, as confirmed by Oliveira Ribeiro:

I organised a book with Protestant views on leadership in Brazil about *Laudato Si'*. I published an article by Olav Fykse Tveit, who is the general secretary of the World Congress of Churches (WCC), with other people from Brazil—Methodists, Lutherans, Pentecostals, and Baptists. Everybody is talking about the encyclical, from the ecumenical perspective and on the ecological issues.⁶²¹

The impact of the encyclical is going further than just the Catholic Church, to other churches in Brazil. Oliveira Ribeiro explains, “The good reception is linked to the good view among Protestant groups about Pope Francis. Since the beginning of his papacy, many church leaders here are excited to see what is going to happen in the Catholic Church with his ecumenical openness. Because of this some groups are trying to follow their lead.”⁶²² So the initial reception of the encyclical seems positive—it is being considered both within the Catholic Church and by other churches in Brazil.

However, Ramos de Jesus also expressed concerns that there is a long way to go: “even people in the Catholic Church who are worried about the environment and environmental law—and there are many; it is very present in the Brazilian Catholic Church—they are concerned with animals as part of the environment, not the animals in themselves.”⁶²³ It is undeniably true that despite *Laudato Si'*, there is still more to do in terms of the poor and animals in Brazil, and especially theologically in advancing the message of care for creation. As Northcott remarks, many will reject the positive message for creation in *Laudato Si'*: “The tenacity of the Latin Christian rejection of the intrinsic value of nonhuman creatures, apart from their use to humans, is deep and enduring precisely because it is rooted in the theology of the most influential Catholic teacher of the second millennium, Thomas Aquinas.”⁶²⁴

The enduring legacy of Aquinas in Latin American thought on animals is one that is hard to escape. This sentiment was echoed in my interview with members of

⁶²¹ See Appendix 5.

⁶²² See Appendix 5.

⁶²³ See Appendix 6.

⁶²⁴ Northcott, “Planetary Moral Economy and Creaturely Redemption in *Laudato Si'*,” 903.

Felinos du Campos. Silva Mocoés Puppim remarked that often other students tell her that “God created man and God created animals to serve man” and that “they [animals] are not as important as humans. They are just animals.” Once again an appeal is made to rationality: “Why humans are important? Why animals are not? We have logic, we are rational, we think.”⁶²⁵ The idea that animals are here for our use is deeply ingrained in Brazilian culture—indeed, in Catholic thought in general—and it will take a great deal to dislodge those views that have been culturally assumed.

Boff is a keen blogger, and since Francis’s election on March 13, 2013, he has written frequently on the new pope and Francis of Assisi, with particular attention given to the poor and ecology. He has been promoting the new theology coming out of the papacy since before it was clear that he may have influenced that theology. A few examples will serve to indicate his promotion of and engagement with the pope’s theology. In one blog entry titled “An Open Letter to Pope Francis: An Assembly for Life on Earth,” he launches a petition calling for a global assembly “in defense of life on earth.”⁶²⁶ The petition asks for Francis to call an assembly to address issues of global hunger, sanitation, war, the destruction of the environment, and “above all, humanity and all forms of life [that] are threatened by astonishing climate changes.”⁶²⁷ The letter ends with an appeal to Saint Francis: “With respect and a fraternal embrace, in the spirit of Saint Francis of Assisi, in communion with all forms of life and all of humanity.”⁶²⁸ This open-letter post was penned in 2013, and given the content of Francis’s second encyclical, it may be thought of as prescient.

In another post, titled “Francis of Rome and the Ecology of Saint Francis of Assisi,” Boff discusses the ecological message of Saint Francis and his hope that Francis will herald a new ecological sensitivity in the Church. One passage in particular is worth noting:

What is our ideal? The one inspired by Francis of Assisi. That Francis of Rome is converted, by his humility, poverty, and joviality, into a lover of Mother Earth and defender of all forms of life, especially of the most threatened, the life of the poor. And that he inspires that consciousness in

⁶²⁵ See Appendix 10.

⁶²⁶ Boff, “An Open Letter to Pope Francis.”

⁶²⁷ Boff, “An Open Letter to Pope Francis.”

⁶²⁸ Boff, “An Open Letter to Pope Francis.”

humanity. Francis of Rome has all the charisma needed for him to become a beacon of ecological and humanitarian reference for all the world.⁶²⁹

Boff's hope of a more "humanised," Franciscan-inspired Church may be coming to fruition. In his post "The Current Relevance of the Spirit of Saint Francis," Boff echoes his earlier work by calling for a "cosmic fraternity," reiterating Saint Francis's ecological concerns: the "posture of cosmic fraternity, seriously undertaken, can animate our ecological concern to safeguard every species, every animal and every plant, because they are our brothers and sisters."⁶³⁰

Boff's latest work, *Francis of Rome*, is written in an informal style similar to that of his blog posts and shares many of the same sentiments. In the chapter "Pope Francis, Promoter of Ecological Awareness," Boff considers what inspiration Francis can draw from Saint Francis. He hopes that Francis will promote "ecological harmony" and a "cosmic fellowship" inspired by Saint Francis.⁶³¹ Given the focus of Pope Francis's second encyclical and the inspiration he takes from Saint Francis, it is fair to conclude that Boff's hope for Francis's promotion of ecology has been fulfilled.

Since the publication of *Laudato Si'*, Boff has promoted not only the encyclical⁶³² but also the message within,⁶³³ and has drawn comparisons with his own work, especially in connection with the Earth Charter.⁶³⁴ Although I have referenced where these posts appear on his blog, he also has published Portuguese-language articles in Brazilian newspapers and journals. Boff particularly emphasises the parts of the encyclical that echo and agree with his own theology, and thus engages in his own re-contextualisation. For example, he praises Francis for going beyond environmental ecology and embracing "holistic ecology," which sees that "all things, knowledge, and events are interrelated."⁶³⁵ Specifically, Boff sees Francis as recognising that "global warming results from industrial excesses, [that] the poverty

⁶²⁹ Boff, "Francis of Rome and the Ecology of Saint Francis of Assisi."

⁶³⁰ Boff, "The Current Relevance of the Spirit of Saint Francis."

⁶³¹ Boff, *Francis of Rome, Francis of Assisi*, 63.

⁶³² A few examples should serve to illustrate this point: Boff, "The Magna Carta of Integral Ecology"; Boff, "To Preserve Pope Francis' Singular Perspective"; Boff, "Pope Francis: A Church Emerging"; and Boff, "Pope Francis: Zealous Guardian of the Common Home."

⁶³³ See, for example, Boff, "How to Care for Our Common Home."

⁶³⁴ See, for example, Boff, "Similarities between the Encyclical 'Caring for the Common Home' and 'the Earthcharter, on Our Home'."

⁶³⁵ Boff, "To Preserve Pope Francis' Singular Perspective."

of large portions of humanity is related to the means of production, distribution and consumption,” and that “anthropocentrism is a consequence of the illusory belief that we own all things and that they only have meaning to the degree that they serve our pleasure.”⁶³⁶ It is, of course, true that holistic ecology is a theme in *Laudato Si’*, but it also is to be expected that Boff would promote Francis’s theology when it is in accord with his own.

In his piece “The Magna Carta of Integral Ecology: Cry of the Earth—Cry of the Poor,” Boff indicates in three places where the encyclical draws on or agrees with the Earth Charter. First, both highlight “the intrinsic value of each being” yet maintain a holistic approach (that is, neither considers individual sentient animals, though Boff does not point this out directly). Second, he sees Francis as echoing the charter when he argues not for “reform” but for a “new beginning.” Third, as noted previously, Francis directly quotes the charter towards the end of the encyclical.⁶³⁷ This argument is expounded more fully by Boff in another piece, where he argues,

The encyclical, *Laudato sí’*, [sic] *Caring for the Common Home*, and *The Earthcharter*, are perhaps the only two documents of worldwide relevance that have so much in common. They deal with the degraded situation of the Earth and of life in its many dimensions, departing from the conventional vision that is limited to environmentalism. They subscribe to the new relational and holistic paradigm, *the only one*, it seems to us, that is still capable of giving us hope.⁶³⁸

In drawing these parallels between his own work and that of Francis, Boff is contributing to the furthering of his thesis that an ecological paradigm is the “only” theory capable of alleviating the current environmental crisis.

Pope Francis reaffirmed his commitment to integral ecology and humanity’s role in protecting creation at a conference marking the third anniversary of the encyclical. “Humanity has the knowledge and the means to cooperate in responsibly

⁶³⁶ Boff, “To Preserve Pope Francis’ Singular Perspective.”

⁶³⁷ Boff, “The Magna Carta of Integral Ecology.”

⁶³⁸ Boff, “Similarities between the Encyclical ‘Caring for the Common Home’ and ‘the Earthcharter, on Our Home’”; my emphases.

‘cultivating and protecting’ the earth.”⁶³⁹ He again evoked Saint Francis to provide inspiration and guidance to help humanity move towards greater care for our common home. Hopefully the encyclical will continue to inspire greater concern for the poor, the environment, and even animals. As *Laudato Si’* is more widely discussed, hopefully a greater understanding of the importance of our relationship with creation will be fostered in Brazilian theology. Perhaps as the life of Saint Francis becomes more prominent, through his adoption by Pope Francis, we might finally begin to see the decline of the influence of Thomistic thought, especially with regard to animals. Although still focused on the holistic ecological approach to the environment, Boff’s work has helped move Catholic thought towards a greater consideration of the moral status of animals, a move that will soon hopefully be felt in the lives of Brazilian animals.

This chapter has argued, in answer to my third methodological question, that Boff’s work has been a catalyst for greater concern for animals in the Roman Catholic Church. It has considered the post Vatican II Catholic statements on animals in order to assess how far the papacy of Francis has moved us in regard to concern for animals. Pope Francis has embraced concern for the environment, but there is still some way to go in terms of moral solicitude for animals. Nonetheless his papacy, and especially his encyclical *Laudato Si’*, represent a significant shift in Catholic thought towards animals. I have argued that Boff’s ecological theology has been a part of an intellectual milieu that has enabled this shift. The last part of this chapter focused on the re-contextualisation of Boff’s ideas in Brazil through the reception of *Laudato Si’*. I now turn in my next chapter to offer an animal-inclusive Trinitarian liberation theology based upon a reconstruction of Boff’s ideas.

⁶³⁹ Francis, “Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to Participants at the International Conference Marking the 3rd Anniversary of the Encyclical *Laudato Si’*.”

Chapter 7: Towards a Trinitarian Theology of Animal Liberation

Although it has not previously been discussed in this thesis, Boff is a dedicated Trinitarian liberation theologian. His first major work on the subject, *A Trindade, a Sociedade e a Libertação*, was published in Portuguese in 1986 and subsequently in English in 1988 as *Trinity and Society*.⁶⁴⁰ Shortly after, in 1988, he published *Santíssima Trindade é Melhor Comunidade* in Portuguese, which was later translated into English as *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community* (hereafter cited as *Holy Trinity*).⁶⁴¹

This chapter begins with a brief exploration of Boff's social analogy Trinitarian theology and general critiques of social analogy Trinitarian theology. I then propose a more animal-friendly and creation-friendly theology inspired by his work. Ideas and themes from Boff discussed throughout this thesis are woven together with my own ideas to suggest a Trinitarian animal-inclusive liberation theology of my own. I begin by offering original theology inspired by Boff – a Trinitarian liberation theology conceiving of the Trinity as Gentleness, Solidarity, and Fraternity – widening Boff's theology beyond its anthropocentric focus. I argue that through my refashioning of Boff's Trinitarian starting point, his theology can be opened up to include animals. Then I offer a sketch of the fundamental insights of a Trinitarian theology of animal liberation by developing three of his ideas: (a) communion as being “for” creation, (b) entering into the Triune sight, and (c) a Trinitarian model of our relationship with animals.

The last two sections of this chapter touch first on why animal theology matters in Brazil and on the unfinished journey of both Boff and the Catholic Church in relation to animals.

7.1. Boff's Trinitarian thought

By the name of God, Christian faith expresses the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in eternal correlation, interpenetration and love to the extent that they form one God, Their unity signifies the communion of the divine

⁶⁴⁰ Boff, *Trinity and Society*; originally published as *A Trindade, a Sociedade e a Libertação*.

⁶⁴¹ Boff, *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community*; originally published as *Santíssima Trindade é Melhor Comunidade*.

Persons. Therefore, in the beginning there is not the solitude of One, but the communion of three divine Persons.⁶⁴²

These lines contain the central message of Boff's Trinitarianism: God in community, unity through community. His Trinitarian theology is a form of social Trinitarianism in that it stresses the individual persons of the Trinity, over the oneness of the Godhead. He does this to highlight the community of the Godhead - the more the persons of the Godhead are individuated, the more capable they are of being in community with one another. He does not however neglect the unity of the Godhead, since unity in and through community is the central message of his Trinitarianism. The unity of the Godhead is expressed by the concept of *perichoresis*: the "cohabitation, co-existence, interpenetration of the divine Persons by one another."⁶⁴³ In short, the heart of the divine mystery of the Trinity is expressed in community.

He offers a communitarian analysis of the divine at least in part to be able to stress the human socio-political message of liberation contained throughout his corpus. He rejects the monarchical conception of Trinity, in favour of a more egalitarian communitarian model. "Strict monotheism can justify totalitarianism and the concentration of power in one person's hands, in politics and in religion."⁶⁴⁴ He understands patriarchy as a political derivation of monotheism and a monarchical conception of the Trinity, "the socio-historical domination of fathers over their families, males over females, masculine attributes over feminine ones, found its theological-ideological justification in a one-sided representation of God."⁶⁴⁵ The tendency towards patriarchy and domination are the product of a misrepresentation of the divine. A communitarian vision of God is required as a corrective to these tendencies. The communion of the Three in Trinity "destroys the figure of the one and only Monarch, the ideological underpinning of totalitarian power."⁶⁴⁶ Furthermore, the goal of human community is to emulate the communion found in the Trinity. "Only a human community of brothers and sisters, built on relationships of communion and participation, can be a living symbol of the eternal Trinity."⁶⁴⁷ In stressing this Boff pushes his social analogy far enough to suggest a transformation of

⁶⁴² Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 9.

⁶⁴³ Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 93.

⁶⁴⁴ Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 20.

⁶⁴⁵ Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 21.

⁶⁴⁶ Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 22.

⁶⁴⁷ Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 22.

the socio-political order. This is the good news of the Trinity: “Society is not ultimately set in its unjust and unequal relationships, but summoned to transform itself in the light of the open and egalitarian relationships that obtain in the communion of the Trinity, the goal of social and historical progress. If the Trinity is good news, then it is so particularly for the oppressed and those condemned to solitude.”⁶⁴⁸ The liberation theology message of Boff’s Trinitarian theology then is clear, the Trinity is to liberate us from oppression in human societies and move us towards communitarian egalitarian living. Indeed the telos of existence will be the reconciliation of our world with the communal vision of the Trinity. Boff sees humanity as undertaking “a journey through change and liberation processes that make creation progressively more like its ultimate goal of communion in the Trinity.”⁶⁴⁹ All of existence then is orientated back to its Creator with the goal of eventual union with God through communion.

Let me now consider some objections to Boff’s form of social Trinitarianism. Since I hope to avoid the pitfalls of these critiques they are worth briefly exploring. The first is the classical objection to the social analogy, that the individual persons of the Trinity are so stressed that the unity of the Godhead is lost, and it ends up in Tritheism. In order to have community, the individuality of each person of the Godhead is stressed, which can undermine the oneness of the Trinity. Although, Boff does not fall into Tritheism, it is easy to see how this might be a charge against him since he states, “We believe that God is communion rather than solitude. It is not a ‘one’ that is primary but the ‘three.’ The three comes first. Then because of the intimate relationship between the ‘three’ comes the ‘one’ as expressing unity of the three.”⁶⁵⁰ However, Boff is clear that he avoids Tritheism through the stressing of perichoresis, “Perichoresis (circumincession – the interpenetration of the Persons) is not added to the constitution of the divine Persons; it is at their origin, simultaneous with them and constitutive of them.”⁶⁵¹ It is his stressing of the community and his rejection of the monarchical hierarchy of the Godhead that leaves him open to this charge.

The second critique is why just stop at three persons? If community is the focus of the doctrine, would not the community be even greater if there were more

⁶⁴⁸ Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 158.

⁶⁴⁹ Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 212.

⁶⁵⁰ Boff, *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community*, xvi.

⁶⁵¹ Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 49.

persons? Boff specifically addresses why there are three Persons of the Trinity. He states, “through the Trinity, the solitude of the One is avoided, the separation of the Two (Father and Son) is also overcome, and the exclusion of one from the other (Father from Son, Son from Father) is overcome . . . The Third Figure reveals the opening and the union of the opposites.”⁶⁵² There are three because it allows for perfect community. However, he does not consider whether that community would be more perfect if there were more Persons in the Godhead. He would probably argue that no more are needed, because perfect community has been achieved in the Three, but an exploration of this might have been helpful.

The third is that the danger of social Trinitarianism is that it ends up building a conception of the divine based, not on divine attributes, but on a perfectly imagined human community. In short, it reads from humanity to God, rather than from the divine to the human. There are hints of this in Boff’s work, when he says “*So human society is a pointer on the road to the mystery of the Trinity*, while the mystery of the Trinity as we know it from revelation, is a pointer toward social life and its archetype.”⁶⁵³ Although Boff is clear he is working from the divine to the human, it is easy to see how a social conception of the Trinity could be seen as a sort of wish fulfilment: God is the very best of human community. It is here where humans may once again mistake themselves for the Creator: The best version of human society as divine. Further, it could also be suggested that this projection of human community overlooks the fallen and ambiguous nature of created human society. The very best of human society may reflect some divine inspiration, but there is much of human social living that does not. To rephrase Boff, it could be just as easily said that human society is a pointer on the road to the mystery of the demonic as the divine.

Whether or not Boff’s Trinitarian theology overcomes the objections to social trinitarianism is a subject for another work. But I hope this exploration might serve to indicate its potential limitations and pitfalls.

From an animal theology perspective, one flaw in Boff’s Trinitarian work is his failure to consider the ramifications for the nonhuman creation. Boff understands the Godhead as creating to be in communion with other beings who can be in communion with the divine. Although Boff sees “traces” of the Triune God within all of creation, it is the human creation that God is fundamentally interested in: “Mystery,

⁶⁵² Boff, *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community*, 6.

⁶⁵³ Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 119; my emphases.

truth and communion live together in each [human] individual; they are interwoven realities that together make up the unity of life. They provide a reflection of trinitarian communion and are the ultimate foundation for humanity being the image and likeness of the Trinity.”⁶⁵⁴ What communion with all creation might look like is reconceived later in this chapter. I hope in my Boff-inspired Trinitarian animal theology, to address the deficiencies in his theology by including the non-human creation.

7.2. A Trinitarian theology of animal liberation

Before I begin my reimagining of the Trinity, I will first offer some thoughts on terminology. Boff retains the traditional language of persons within the Godhead. The language of person is problematic from an animal theology perspective as it has become so associated with the idea of individual human beings. As Catherine Mowry LaCugna indicates, “we in the West today think of a person as a ‘self’ who may be further defined as an individual center of consciousness, a free, intentional subject, one who knows and is known, loves and is loved, an individual identity, a unique personality endowed with rights, a moral agent, someone who experiences, weighs, decides and acts.”⁶⁵⁵ This is not how the term was originally understood by the Church Fathers,⁶⁵⁶ but it is how the term has subsequently evolved. Boff does briefly discuss the problems of the modern connotations of the word “person,” but opts to retain the language because alternatives leave little space for adoration of the divine.⁶⁵⁷ From an animal-friendly theological perspective, the word person has its own set of particular problems. In human legal terms, the idea of person is juxtaposed with property. Humans, and indeed corporations, are legal persons, but animals are classified as property. Whether this should be the case has been subject to a large amount of philosophical, legal and theological debate.⁶⁵⁸ In order to avoid such problematic connotations, I will instead return to the language of the Fathers: Opting to use *hypostasis* and *ousia*, rather than person and substance. This language of

⁶⁵⁴ Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 224.

⁶⁵⁵ LaCugna, *God for Us*, 250.

⁶⁵⁶ For a discussion of how “person” was understood by the Church Fathers see, LaCugna, *God for Us*, 243-250.

⁶⁵⁷ In considering alternatives proposed by Karl Barth and Karl Rahner, Boff concludes “No one can adore ‘a distinct mode of subsistence’; only Father, Son and Holy Spirit can be adored.” *Trinity and Society*, 118.

⁶⁵⁸ For a discussion of the language of “persons” in relation to animals see, Beaudry, “Are Animals Persons? Why Ask?”

hypostasis and *ousia* contains the original intentions of the doctrine without the modern day connotations.

As theologian Colin Gunton once remarked, “the doctrine of the Trinity is ... the means by which we conceptualise God as love.”⁶⁵⁹ Inspired by insights from Boff’s corpus, and with the model of Saint Francis in mind, I suggest a creative reimagining of the Trinity based on the unique attributes of God, namely, Gentleness, Solidarity, and Fraternity.⁶⁶⁰ Each attribute represents a different way of conceiving God’s love for the world. Divine attributes are understood in the traditional sense discussed by Roger Olsen and Christopher Hall, where “The functions of the Trinity must be wholly unified so that all persons are involved in each, but individual persons of the Trinity may be *said to be* especially at work in certain activities of creation, redemption, and sanctification.”⁶⁶¹ In conceiving the Trinity as Gentleness, Solidarity and Fraternity I am highlighting different conceptions of divine love in which each *hypostasis* of the Trinity is particularly at work, while not denying the unity of the *ousia*. My model of the Trinity will build on traditional ideas of the Godhead, to stress a creation- and creature-friendly understanding of the divine. In renaming the Trinity as Gentleness, Solidarity and Fraternity, I am attempting to highlight the different ways in which we experience God’s love. Yet, this should not result in a confusion of the immanent Trinity (God beyond the world) and the economic Trinity (God within history), since God in Trinity who acts in history is a reflection of who God is beyond the world. God the Father is conceived as Gentleness, God the Son as Solidarity, and the Holy Spirit as Fraternity, and they all come together as one in community. Let us take each one in turn.

The first *hypostasis* of the Trinity is Gentleness. Out of gentleness God begets and creates to be in community with others—first to be in community with the other members of the Godhead and second to be in communion with the creation she creates. Creation is the overflowing of divine Gentleness and a desire to be in communion. Thus, the heart of God’s very being is Gentleness, the drive that has enabled creation to be formed. Gentleness is expressed in and throughout creation, in

⁶⁵⁹ Gunton, “The Christian Doctrine of God,” 21.

⁶⁶⁰ In so doing, I am following in the work of theologians, such as, John Macquarrie. Macquarrie reconceives the Trinity as “primordial Being,” “expressive Being,” and “unitive” Being (Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology*, 182–185).

⁶⁶¹ Olsen and Hall, *The Trinity*, 58; original emphases.

the delicate beauty found in the world. This is not to deny the ambiguity of creation, but to acknowledge the touches of the divine witnessed in creation, left by its Creator.

The conception of God as Father has been critiqued by liberation and feminist theologians for seeming to endorse patriarchy and oppression.⁶⁶² Indeed, Boff is one of those theologians who lays more emphasis on community than on a monarchical patriarchy.⁶⁶³ The terminology of God the Father is retained here but recast in the light of Gentleness. If God's fatherhood is envisioned as characterised by gentleness, it cannot be construed as upholding oppression. God's gentleness consists in the freedom of the creature to be itself. Indeed, it is the conception of fatherhood as domineering and oppressive, in a caricature of masculinity, that need challenging. True fatherhood is characterised by a father's gentleness towards his children. In an extension of the metaphor from Pope Francis, Gentleness sees all creatures, human and nonhuman, as his children. Our truly apprehending other creatures as part of the same family, as brothers and sisters, would involve our seeing them through the eyes of Gentleness. When we act with gentleness towards our fellow children, we demonstrate the fullness of the *imago dei*. We are made in the image of a gentle God, and when we exhibit that behaviour towards others, it brings us into communion with the divine. This behaviour is at once made possible by the divine and sustained by it, but it also brings us into closer communion with the divine. Saint Francis is the best exemplar of this, as his gentleness towards creation brought him closer to God and closer to the world.

The second *hypostasis* of the Trinity may be conceived as Solidarity. Externally begotten from Gentleness, the Logos exists first in solidarity with the other persons of the Godhead. Solidarity through the incarnation embraces materiality and fleshly existence in particular. The incarnation is the divine love affair with the world. But Solidarity is more than the embrace of the world; it is through solidarity that God demonstrates that she is on the side of her creation.

God is in solidarity with fleshly existence, both human and nonhuman, through the incarnation, passion, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. In the incarnation especially, Solidarity embraces fleshly existence. In the passion God

⁶⁶² For a discussion of this, see LaCugna, *God for Us*. See especially the section "Persons Oppressed: The Trinity and Liberation Theologies," 266–78.

⁶⁶³ See especially the section "Political Dangers of an A-Trinitarian Monotheism," in Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 20–23. He sees the emphasis on community as removing the Trinity from patriarchy and machismo.

suffers in solidarity with fleshly beings, culminating in solidarity with them in death. Wherever there is suffering in creation, God is there, suffering in solidarity. In the resurrection, God brings creation into true solidarity with herself through redemption. Not only is God with us in our pain, but through that presence God redeems our pain on our behalf.⁶⁶⁴ Redemption is then the greatest act of solidarity, as God takes our place in suffering. It is not just human suffering that God is in solidarity with; it is *all* creaturely suffering. God is in the abattoir, suffering with the animals, suffering with the people who are forced by their socio-economic circumstances to work there. Solidarity is there with and supporting the cetaceans in captivity, the primates in laboratories, the minks on fur farms, and the bull in the bullfight. Solidarity is there in all suffering, suffering with creation, taking it upon himself, and redeeming suffering creation.

This is a renaming of the Trinity, moving beyond the human to embrace all creaturely suffering. It is more than solidarity with the oppressed, although that certainly has an important place. Solidarity hugs and encompasses creation. Wherever there is oppression, suffering, depression, loneliness, or despair within fleshly existence, Solidarity is there with creatures, suffering with her creation. And wherever there are people working to oppose these forces, Solidarity is with them, strengthening their resolve and giving them hope and light.

The third *hypostasis* of the Trinity is Fraternity.⁶⁶⁵ Of one being with Gentleness and Solidarity, Fraternity delights in perichoretic union and exists in a fraternal dance. The Spirit is God's fraternal outpouring in and through the world. Throughout creation the Spirit invites all beings into a fraternal dance. Fraternity works to bring us towards Solidarity and Gentleness, to see the divine dance within creation. Through Fraternity, God reaches out and creates community in creation, as she begets communion in the Godhead.

God pours out Fraternity onto the world, bringing the world into communion with her. Fraternity is God's great friendship with the world. He invites the world to dance with God, to delight and enjoy his creation. Whenever we wonder and awe at the beauty of his creation, Fraternity is there, inviting us to see the wonder, and Gentleness is there, creating it. But Fraternity is not only present in joy and

⁶⁶⁴ For an impressive account of divine passibility see, Fiddes, *The Creative Suffering of God*.

⁶⁶⁵ Sorority could have been used instead of Fraternity to indicate sisterhood. But Fraternity has been retained to echo the language of both Saint Francis and Boff.

amazement; Fraternity is also there, bringing us towards Solidarity, in times of desperation and suffering. Fraternity brings the light of Solidarity, offering a divine hand of love and Gentleness.

Fraternity is not present just to awaken us to Gentleness and Solidarity, though. Fraternity works to bring the spark of moral awakening. Boff rightly sees the world as suffused with God's Spirit, but he sadly confines the work of the Spirit to humanity. As we have seen, Boff repeatedly tries to move beyond anthropocentric thinking throughout his corpus and yet never entirely succeeds. In order to fully remove oneself from anthropocentrism, one must embrace theocentrism, rather than eco-centrism. We must ask: How does the Triune God see her creation? Of course, such a reorientation is possible only if it is willed and enabled by Fraternity. The role of Fraternity, then, is to lead us into God's sight, to help reveal to us the glory of God's creation. John 16:12 speaks of this: "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth." Fraternity leads us into truth—leads us into moral discoveries. Moral awakening is a spiritual awakening. Fraternity brings us into the light of how God sees the world and lets us glimpse part of that reality. It is the moral and spiritual awakening of Fraternity that allows us to enter into divine communion, or the divine dance. Fraternity brings us into communion with each other, with other beings in creation, and with creation as a whole, and it is that communion that brings us to divine communion. In whom, through whom, by whom, God enables and sustains the potential for communion in, through, and with her creation.

Doubtless, there may be many limitations to my conceiving of the Trinity as Gentleness, Solidarity and Fraternity. But, hopefully, it avoids the straightforward charge of anthropomorphic projection. My hope is that, inspired by Boff and the biblical witness, it may attempt to help us glimpse something of the divine in relation to all creation.

Boff lays the foundations for my proposed reconstruction in his conception of the Trinity as community and communion.

a. Communion as being "for" creation

Human communion with the divine is the focus of Trinitarian action in Boff's work *Trinity and Society*. He has a larger section on communion with creation in his *Holy Trinity*. In this latter text "creation is pervaded, within most variegated differences, by

a drive toward union, convergence, and communion that mirrors the internal reality of the Trinity.”⁶⁶⁶ However, as in his other works, Boff’s conception of creatures and creation contains little regard for sentience. When he discusses communion with creation, animals are listed in the same breath as stars, rivers, and stones.⁶⁶⁷ He makes no distinction between creatures in creation.

Without denying that the divine is immanent throughout creation, it is possible to lay special focus on God’s sentient beings within creation. As is written in Acts 2:17, “God declares, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh” (Acts 2:17 is quoting Joel 2:28)—*all* flesh, human and nonhuman. Indeed, although Boff focuses on human communion with the divine, a less anthropocentric perspective on what constitutes divine communion in creation is possible. The emphasis on humans is, at this point, to be expected in Boff and may well be connected to the previous discussion on the neglect of materiality in chapter two. For example, he writes as if communion is a quality that only humans share with the divine. “To commune” is to “share one’s intimate thoughts or feelings with,” to “feel in close spiritual contact with.”⁶⁶⁸ Communion in the sense of sharing thoughts and feelings is not something unique to humans. God as Fraternity sees the world through multiple eyes and multiple communions. This means that we must not limit communion in creation to human communion. For example, evidence of the emotional lives of animals suggests they are capable of experiencing a wide variety of emotions, feelings, and social relationships.⁶⁶⁹ For example, elephants have sophisticated communal relationships within their herds, and their practices include performing funerals⁶⁷⁰ and mourning dead elephants.⁶⁷¹ The natural world has been classically characterised as “red in tooth and claw,” but biologist Frans de Waal has challenged that perspective and details how empathy in the animal kingdom is more common than self-interested practices.⁶⁷² Indeed, the idea that some animals may be able to enter into a direct

⁶⁶⁶ Boff, *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community*, 104.

⁶⁶⁷ “This entire universe, these stars above our head, these forests, these birds, these insects, these rivers, and these stones, everything, everything, is going to be preserved, transfigured, and made temple of the Blessed Trinity. And we will live in a grand house, as in a single family, minerals, vegetables, animals, and humans with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” Boff, *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community*, 110.

⁶⁶⁸ *The Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “commune.”

⁶⁶⁹ Bekoff, *The Emotional Lives of Animals*.

⁶⁷⁰ Parker, “Rare Video Shows Elephants ‘Mourning’ Matriarch’s Death.”

⁶⁷¹ See King, *How Animals Grieve*. King details how a range of animals mourn, including elephants.

⁶⁷² De Waal, *The Age of Empathy*.

relationship with the divine was suggested at a conference on *Laudato Si'* in Rome by theologian Oliver Putz, to whom I was a respondent.⁶⁷³

The idea of divine communion belongs theologically with Boff's idea of Jesus as a "being-for-others" and the idea of "fraternity" in his Franciscan theology. All of these notions share the idea of going outside oneself—of relating to the divine, to other humans, and to creation. The importance of communing with others is at the heart of Boff's worldview. We become most ourselves when in communion, when we are for others or in fraternity with them. This may be considered the foundation of a theology of otherness—that is, a theology that sees the divine and humans as fundamentally oriented towards "others" in an attitude of service. These ideas can be easily rescued from Boff's humanocentric focus to encompass other sentient beings. If we start with the premise that humans should be "for" other sentient beings, this could shift our theological focus, allowing us to see ourselves as part of creation with responsibility for it.

What would it mean to be "for" creation? Following Boff's Christology, the more being-for-creation we become, the more we see ourselves as part of, even as a servant of God in, creation. Most importantly, being for creation entails being inspired by Fraternity to recognise other creatures, especially sentient animal beings. Being for creation would entail being against animal suffering and death—in short, being on the side of creation.

If we understand communion as the goal of the Triune creation, we should re-envision our relationships with other creatures, human and nonhuman. This may sound like a small point, but so much of human relations is driven by other desires: greed, jealousy, ambition, material gain. Such a radical realignment of attitudes would be so all-encompassing that it is impossible to even consider without divine help and intervention. If communion became the governing idea of human living, this would mean seeing other creatures not as a means to our ends, but as other beings with God-given and sustained lives and value of their own.

Living in community with God's other sentient creatures would enable a fuller sense of the God-given glory of creation. What is more, from a Franciscan perspective, it would reinforce the concept of communion with the divine. Saint Francis, as previously discussed, entered into communion with creation, but

⁶⁷³ Putz used Rahnerian ideas to suggest that some animals may be capable of being *Dasein*—beings directed towards the divine. Putz, "All Creatures Great and Small."

especially with God's sentient creatures. He treated birds, lambs, and wolves as brothers and sisters. Perhaps by emulating Saint Francis's compassion to God's other sentient creatures, we may come to appreciate God's creation more and so grow in communion with the divine. Francis's companions reportedly said, "We who were with him have seen him take inward and outward delight in almost every creature, and when he handled or looked at them his spirit seemed to be in heaven rather than on earth."⁶⁷⁴

What is needed, then, is a radical re-visioning of creation as a God-filled community and family. The Triune God is on the side of her created beings and wills to be in community with them. It is thus possible to see work for, and on behalf of, God's other creatures as the outworking of God's fraternal Spirit in us. Being for other creatures means allowing the Spirit to work through us as agents of God's Trinitarian wish for creation to be in community.

b. Entering the Triune sight: To see as God sees

In *Jesus*, Boff writes of Jesus as "a person of extraordinary creative imagination."⁶⁷⁵ By "imagination," he does not mean the creative thought usually associated with the term, but rather something closer to what might be termed perception: "Imagination is a form of liberty ... it is the capacity to see human beings as greater and richer than the cultural and concrete environment that surrounds them; it is having the courage to think and say something new."⁶⁷⁶ It is this act of seeing and perceiving that is the focus of this section. What Boff terms "imagination" is the ability to see beyond the context, to see more than the immediate reality before us. In the epilogue of *Jesus*, he makes clear that the task of theology is to begin by seeing the context: "Theologians do not live in the clouds. They are social actors with a particular place in society."⁶⁷⁷ In the context of his writing, this meant seeing the reality of the poverty and oppression in Brazil. Accordingly, in the twenty-first century we must ask ourselves, what are the realities that we should be seeing?

A theology of sight enables us to perceive the Triune vision of the world. Use of the language of "sight" and "seeing" could be interpreted as being constructed

⁶⁷⁴ "The Mirror of Perfection," in Habig, *S. Francis of Assisi*, 1257, quoted in Allechin, *The World Is a Wedding*, 85.

⁶⁷⁵ Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 90.

⁶⁷⁶ Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 90–91.

⁶⁷⁷ Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 265.

upon a negative binary in which the physical disability of blindness is juxtaposed negatively with the positive physical ability to see. This discussion in no way means to suggest a negative view of people who are blind or of the physical inability to see. Rather, it is the larger notion of perception that blind and non-blind people share that is being explored. However, the language of sight is retained for three significant reasons.

First, the language of sight has specific political connotations when it comes to animals. Animals often represent an intellectual “blind spot” for many academics—they may be progressive in many other areas but do not see the issue of animal suffering.⁶⁷⁸ A change in perception is necessary to help move us beyond that so-called blind spot. As Linzey explains, “at the heart of the animal rights movement is a change of moral perception, simple, yet profound: Animals are not our property or utilities but living beings with dignity and rights.”⁶⁷⁹ The change in moral perception is a moral awakening. It is an awakening that in theological terms is made possible only by the Holy Spirit. As Linzey has elaborated elsewhere,

animals are not just machines, commodities, tools, resources, utilities here for us, or means to human ends; rather they are God-given sentient beings of worth, value, and dignity in their own right. This is a *moral and spiritual discovery* as objective and important as any other fundamental discovery, whether it be the discovery of stars and planets or the discovery of the human psyche.⁶⁸⁰

God awakens in us this moral perception or conversion. Indeed, Boff writes in *Jesus* of how conversion is an important step towards the kingdom.⁶⁸¹ What is required here is Spirit-filled moral conversion, beginning with a change in moral perception.

⁶⁷⁸ This issue is discussed in relation to Catholic Worker Movement thinker Dorothy Day in Linzey and Cohn, “Blind Spot,” v–vi. Linzey and Cohn write, “Day is a telling example of how many people, including those who pride themselves on being ‘progressive’ (a not-unambiguous term) or ‘humanitarian,’ have yet to see the killing and suffering of animals as a moral issue” (vi). Indeed, the majority of thinkers in the Christian tradition have not seen the moral value of animals. For examples of thinkers who have seen the moral issue, see Linzey and Linzey, *Animal Theologians*. Specifically, see chapters on Tryon, Wesley, Primatt, Bartram, Lewis, and Moltmann.

⁶⁷⁹ Linzey, *Animal Gospel*, 40.

⁶⁸⁰ Linzey, Foreword, xi; my emphases.

⁶⁸¹ Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 64.

The ability to see animals as more than tools, machines, or things that are here for our use has been the subject of extensive discussion in animal literature. For example, in his article “Can We See a Moral Question about Animals?,” Brian Klug is “concerned, in particular, with a certain kind of tunnel vision in science which subverts the question altogether, preventing it from being seen for what it is: a *moral* question about *animals*.”⁶⁸² Klug suggests that the problem with some scientists is a belief that the moral question about animals “does not concern them.”⁶⁸³

Henry David Thoreau writes, “A man sees only what concerns him,”⁶⁸⁴ and it is in this sense that the animal movement is focused on helping others see that animals concern them. The issue of “seeing” animals is illustrated by this anecdote from Linzey:

The university where I used to work was situated amid acres of eighteenth-century parkland. Wildlife abounded. From my study window I observed families of wild rabbits. Looking up from my word processor from time to time, I gazed in wonder, awe, and astonishment at these beautiful creatures ... Occasionally I invited visitors to observe them. Some paused in conversation and said something like, “Oh yes,” as though I had pointed out the dust on my bookshelves or the color of my carpet. What they saw was not rabbits. Perhaps they saw machines on four legs, “pests” that should be controlled, perhaps just other “things.”⁶⁸⁵

This anecdote has remained with me over the years. The ability to “see rabbits” is the capacity to recognise those rabbits as remarkable sentient beings in their own right, with their own lives, concerns, relationships, and value. Indeed, in discussions with Linzey, the ability to “see rabbits” has become a shorthand term for whether someone understands the moral relevance of animals. The language of seeing is central to ideas of moral perception.

A second but related reason for the language of sight is that so much of what is done to animals is unseen that part of developing an animal theology naturally

⁶⁸² Klug, “Can We See a Moral Question about Animals?,” 206; emphases in the original. A further discussion of Klug’s views on moral perception can be found in Linzey, “Enemies of Human Beings,” 23–34.

⁶⁸³ Klug, “Can We See a Moral Question about Animals?,” 214.

⁶⁸⁴ Thoreau, “Autumnal Tints,” 709.

⁶⁸⁵ Linzey, *Animal Gospel*, 40–41.

involves bringing the unseen into the light, making the invisible visible. Take, for example, the issue of animal agriculture. It is not only that we are removed from the farming and slaughtering of animals⁶⁸⁶—by the distance of modern urban living, by the ability to go into supermarkets and purchase animal products that no longer resemble the animals they came from, and by the language we use concerning those products to create emotional distance (“pork” rather than “pig,” “beef” rather than “cow”)—but also that we are specifically kept from seeing the realities of the lives of farmed animals. One illustration of this is the passing of so-called ag-gag laws in America. These laws, which have already been passed in Iowa and Utah, make it illegal to photograph or create sound recordings of any farm in those states without the permission of the owner of the farm. There are several moral issues with these laws, but for the sake of this discussion, they are most succinctly described by Linzey and Priscilla N. Cohn:

What we see, or are allowed to see, affects our moral judgement. That so much of industrialized farming is, as a matter of course, hidden from view hinders full moral evaluation. There is a complex and not easily defined interrelationship between the physical act of seeing and moral perception. Not all sight leads to moral insight, of course, but it is at least one way in which we can see differently.⁶⁸⁷

In short, the language of seeing is important because often we are not allowed to see and judge for ourselves. Timothy Pachirat, in his book *Every Twelve Seconds: Industrialised Slaughter and the Politics of Sight*, discusses at length the way society at large and slaughterhouse workers are separated from what happens in a slaughterhouse and the impact that seeing and not seeing has on moral thought. He argues,

Where distance and concealment continue to operate as mechanisms of domination, a politics of sight that breaches zones of confinement may indeed be a critically important catalyst for political transformation. This politics of

⁶⁸⁶ As Pachirat comments, “distance and concealment shield, sequester, and neutralize the work of killing.” Pachirat, *Every Twelve Seconds*, 9. In his work he discusses four types of distancing techniques employed: physical, social, linguistic, and methodological (9).

⁶⁸⁷ Linzey and Cohn, “Entitled to Know,” vi.

sight, however, must acknowledge the possibility that sequestration will continue even under conditions of total visibility. And, it must also remain alert to the ways in which distance and concealment provide the historical conditions of possibility for its effectiveness.⁶⁸⁸

Here Pachirat reminds us that although concealment and distance play a key role in allowing animal agriculture practices to continue in society relatively unconsidered by many, total visibility may not enable the ideological transformation many animal advocates wish for. Seeing does not necessarily bring about moral transformation. Indeed, in some cases seeing violent acts can either increase insensitivity to violence or increase violent acts themselves.⁶⁸⁹ How the unseen can be brought to light such that it produces moral transformation is a key question for animal advocacy.

Third, retaining the biblical language of sight enables us to ask key theological questions that can help guide our moral and theological perception. Let us begin by exploring three: (1) Who matters in Gentleness's sight? (2) Who matters in Solidarity's sight? (3) How do we begin to see with Fraternity in our own context? Here follows a tentative attempt to sketch out some potential answers to these questions.

First, in considering the sight of Gentleness, we may begin with God as Creator. In Genesis 1, God creates the heavens and the earth, the night and day, the water and sky, the land and seas, the plants and trees, the stars, the animals in the seas and birds in the sky, the animals on the land, and finally, humans. At the end, "God *saw* all that he had made, and it was very good" (Gen. 1:31; my emphasis). In the beginning, then, God created and *saw* all his creation. In answer to the question "Who counts in God's sight?" we may venture to say, "All of his 'very good' creation." It is not merely the humans in the Genesis narrative who are considered "very good" but rather "all that he had made." Of course, this is before the Fall in Genesis, and one may not consider the post-Fall creation "very good" in the same way as the Edenic paradise. We therefore need to distinguish creation as originally given, which was "very good," from creation subject to the Fall, which should properly be called nature.

⁶⁸⁸ Pachirat, *Every Twelve Seconds*, 255.

⁶⁸⁹ For reflections on how cultural inequalities affect moral sight in Brazil see, Appendix 9. Naconecy argues that "The problem with this [inequalities] is the lack of moral visual sensitivity; you are used to seeing violence, inequality and vulnerability, much more than in other countries. This is bad for animals."

What God calls “very good” at the end of the first creation saga is a peaceful creation wherein every creature has its own place and dignity, with humans made in the image of God and holding a vegetarian—vegan, even—dominion over the world. It is when these aspects are fulfilled in the sabbath experience that creation is deemed “very good.” What is important is that in creation the Triune God creates, sees, and values all creatures, not just human creatures. The first challenge of a theology of sight, then, is to see ourselves as God does, as one part of her creation.

Second, in considering who matters in Solidarity’s sight, we may venture to answer with liberation theology—the poor and the oppressed. As previously discussed, during Jesus’s ministry on the earth, he sought out the poor and the marginalised, those who could not speak for themselves. In Matthew 25, we see his direct identification with the poor, the sick, the naked, and those in prison: “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me” (Matt. 25:40). Liberatory theology begins with Jesus, with seeing with Jesus: “We see with our eyes the figure of Christ and reread the sacred texts that speak of him and had him as a starting point.”⁶⁹⁰ Thus, the second challenge of a theology of sight is to *see* with Jesus those at the periphery and the margins.

Third, how do we begin to see with Fraternity in our own context? As Boff comments, “the themes and emphases of a given Christology flow from what seems relevant to the theologian on the basis of his or her social standpoint. In that sense we must maintain that no Christology is or can be neutral.”⁶⁹¹ Given that theology is then born of a context, the first task of the theologian must be to open her eyes to the reality around her, the reality for the marginalised, including the marginalised in God’s nonhuman creation. This is possible only with the help of Fraternity guiding our sight.⁶⁹² In terms of animals, we ought to begin first by seeing them as God’s creatures and second by seeing the reality of their lives.

A Triune theology of sight, while an excellent starting point, would be deemed insufficient by liberation theologians generally and Boff in particular, for theology demands more than perception; it calls for action or praxis. What some of these initial

⁶⁹⁰ Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 43.

⁶⁹¹ Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 265. This perspective remains consistent throughout Boff’s corpus: he writes with the context as it changes, which is in part what leads him to later write about ecology.

⁶⁹² For a discussion of how perception relates to companion animals in Brazil see, Appendix 8. Braga Lourenço argues that “We see an abandoned animal and nobody worries about them, it is normal. It’s a way of seeing things.”

actions might be will be briefly considered in the next subsection, but let us begin by truly seeing the reality of animal suffering.

c. A Trinitarian model for our relationships with animals

The Triune God of Gentleness, Solidarity, and Fraternity wills to be in community with creation. God moves outside of the Godhead in creation and communes in, and with, that creation. The communal life in creation is willed and sustained by the fraternal Spirit that moves within it. This is classically expressed by Saint John of the Cross: “To behold [all creatures] and find them very good was to *make them* very good in the Word, His Son.”⁶⁹³ The Triune God makes all creatures good through Solidarity. This is not to say that creation is now unambiguously good, which is obviously false, as our previous discussions of predation, entropy, and death in the natural world illustrate. But with Fraternal guidance and enlightenment, we may move closer to communion with creation and with the God who wills and sustains that creation.

How would it change our way of being in creation if we modelled our relationships on a communitarian vision of the Trinity: Gentleness, Solidarity, and Fraternity?

Saint Francis oriented himself to the world with an attitude of gentleness towards all creation, but especially towards the poor and animals. The first step, then, is to model our behaviour on Gentleness. Mahatma Gandhi famously argued, “If we could change ourselves, the tendencies in the world would also change”⁶⁹⁴—a remark often misquoted as “Be the change you want to see in the world.” We must, with the help of Fraternity, begin by examining our attitude to the world and reorienting ourselves towards gentleness towards all creation. How would our actions in the world change if we began from a place of gentleness? One answer is that this reorientation would bring us in closer solidarity and compassion with creation.

In the words of Boff and Boff, “underlying liberation theology is a prophetic and comradely commitment to the life, cause, and struggle of these millions of debased and marginalized human beings, a commitment to ending this historical-social iniquity.”⁶⁹⁵ Solidarity with the poor in this context has, in practical terms,

⁶⁹³ John of the Cross, *The Completed Works*, 48–49; my emphases.

⁶⁹⁴ Gandhi, *The Collected Works of M. K. Gandhi*, vol. 13, ch. 153, 241.

⁶⁹⁵ Boff and Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, 3.

entailed living with the poor and struggling alongside them. This is what Boff and Boff term “com-compassion, ‘suffering with.’”⁶⁹⁶ The notions of “com-compassion” and solidarity are borne out of recognition of the massive socio-economic inequalities in the world and the dire realities of global poverty.

Attitudes of compassion and solidarity resonate in the Brazilian consciousness. Brazilians, as my interviewees explained, are excellent at coming together in a crisis: “When you have great tragedies like flooding, landslides, etc. Then you have lots of people losing their houses and dying; then people exist in solidarity.”⁶⁹⁷ Community action in times of difficulty is a uniting force in Brazilian culture. It is most often seen in times of human tragedy, but there are also instances of solidarity with animals. The largest animal shelter in Rio de Janeiro recently sent out a large appeal, and “people donated tons of cat food, dog food, medicine, and everything.”⁶⁹⁸ Actions of solidarity are borne out of an attitude of compassion. As Naconecy explained, compassion fits more easily within the Brazilian outlook: “We look to the weak in a different way, with a special inclination, so we say ‘poor man’ or ‘poor animal.’”⁶⁹⁹ This is not to say these attitudes are applicable only to the Brazilian context; rather, I add this discussion here to demonstrate that given the suffusion of liberation theology in Brazil, it may be a good place to start in terms of moral concern for creation.

What, then, would solidarity with animals look like? It would spring from the theology of sight, or from recognising the suffering of billions of animals worldwide. However, it would not necessarily require humans to go and live with those oppressed animals (although it might be possible to alleviate some animal suffering by sharing our homes with uncared-for companion animals). Rather, solidarity begins first with the commitment to live less violently and without cruelty, to embody more gentleness in our relations with all other beings. Living without violence and cruelty may then be seen as an anticipation of and participation in the peaceable kingdom of God.

There are steps all of us can take to move towards greater solidarity with animals. Linzey has termed this “a program of progressive disengagement from injury

⁶⁹⁶ Boff and Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, 2.

⁶⁹⁷ See Appendix 10.

⁶⁹⁸ See Appendix 10.

⁶⁹⁹ See Appendix 9. Naconecy argues that “the concepts of compassion and solidarity are more familiar to us than respect and rights.”

to animals.”⁷⁰⁰ This programme begins with acknowledgement that the world is in a mess: that we are all, wittingly or otherwise, engaged in systems that institutionalise the use and abuse of animals. Solidarity begins with committing to taking steps to disengage from animal cruelty in our lives. Animals need to be liberated from human control, manipulation, aggression, and confinement—indeed, from all practices in which animals are used as a means to human ends. If we can take steps to disengage from these abusive practices, we can move towards recognising the value of animals to the Triune God.

If we can embrace gentleness towards and solidarity with animals, then we may enter into a genuine fraternity with other members of creation—a fraternity based not on exploitation or domination but on gentleness and compassion. If we can allow Fraternity to guide us into these new relationships, then we may be able to move into closer communion with the Triune God, as we come to see the wonder of creation as she does.

7.3. Why animal theology matters in Brazil

I end where I began, by returning to the context for animals in Brazil. The image of the emaciated horse and child on the rubbish heap returns to my mind. Human suffering, animal suffering, and environmental degradation are three parts of the same problem: a failure to love and care for God’s creation. Poverty and animal suffering are not separate issues; rather, they are both examples of the need for moral solicitude—for greater gentleness, solidarity, and compassion in the world.

One might ask, how is any of this relevant to the lives of animals (and people) in Brazil? One answer involves acknowledging again the power of Thomistic thought as regards animals. In the interviews I conducted, all of the interviewees indicated that religious views hold great sway in Brazil in terms of the treatment of animals. I hope this has become clear during the contextual discussions in this work. Importantly, then, thinkers such as Boff and encyclicals such as *Laudato Si’* have the potential to make an enormous impact for animals.

During my trip, I was frequently asked, “Why continue to research religion if it is so bad for animals? Why not just forget it?” The answer to that is twofold. First, religious attitudes towards animals underpin general ideas about animals.

⁷⁰⁰ Linzey, *Animal Gospel*, 86.

Instrumentalist and anthropocentric thinking about animals cannot be overcome without confronting the underlying Thomistic theology that grounds that thinking. Second, as I hope to have shown, Thomism is only one theological interpretation of animals. It can, and should, be replaced with a Trinitarian model for understanding our relationship with animals: a model based on a Triune God who loves and delights in creation, in other sentient beings especially, and who wills to be in communion with her creation. Of course, humans cannot do this alone; it is a change that has to be willed and enabled by the Triune God. But enabled Fraternity, we may be able to grow in greater communion with God's creation and with God as well.

7.4. An unfinished journey

I have attempted to sketch the progression of both Boff and the Roman Catholic Church in their attitudes to creation. It is remarkable to see the shift that has occurred in such a relatively short period of time. However, both journeys are unfinished. Though he has acted as a catalyst for greater concern for creation, Boff has yet to fully embrace moral solicitude towards animals. Despite the animal agriculture industry's power in Brazil, its contribution to deforestation, and the appalling human rights abuses in the industry, Boff has yet to make any sustained theological reflection on the moral issue of eating animals. Indeed, he has yet to offer any deep theological reflection on the issue of animals, despite the fact that world hunger could be dramatically reduced if the world embraced vegetarianism.

Arguably, the Catholic Church has gone further than Boff. In *Laudato Si'* animals are proclaimed to have "intrinsic value," to give "glory to God," and to have a right to existence. However, Francis has yet to demonstrate any sustained theological reflection on the moral status of animals. The Church could make greater progress by resolving the tensions that remain in *Laudato Si'*—namely, the tensions between the intrinsic value of animals and the human use of them as resources. In addition, a thorough consideration of the moral problem posed by animal suffering would advance theological thought in this area. To aid this theological thinking, still more inspiration can be taken from the model of Saint Francis to help restore our relationship with creation and animals.

Of course, change is slow, and moral change is the slowest of all. What is important is that we are hopefully on the path to change, and Boff has helped us make it here.

Chapter 8: Conclusions

This thesis has sought to develop animal theology through an engagement with Boff's liberation and ecological theology. I hope to have found new insights in Boff's work that help to build a fully satisfying theology of sentient creation, building on the foundational insights of animal theology explored in chapter one. I posed three methodological questions throughout the thesis:

1. What, if any, consideration does Boff give to animals as a theological concern?
2. What aspects, if any, of his theology could help the development of animal theology?
3. Has his theology been a catalyst for greater concern for animals in the Roman Catholic Church?

The chapters of the thesis have explored the following in answer to the above questions. In chapter one, I outlined the foundational insights of animal theology and provided a methodology and overview of the thesis. In chapter two, I explored Boff's context, the place of animals in Catholic thought and Brazil. Chapter three focused on the place of animals in his liberation theology and considered ways in which it could become more animal-friendly. Chapter four considered his work *Francis*, especially his neglect of concern for animals in the example of Saint Francis. It suggested ways in which Saint Francis' care for creation, and especially animals, could be incorporated into Boff's thought.

The fifth chapter explored Boff's turn towards ecological theology. It argued that Boff is overly dependent on the concept of ecology and resulting holism, such that the importance of individual animals is ignored. It concluded that Boff does not include concern for animals within his moral vision, perhaps because ecology itself is not concerned for the suffering and death of individual animals.

Chapter six considered the teachings of the Catholic Church on animals since Vatican II. It demonstrated how far the Church has moved in including concern for animals within its teachings. It argues that Boff has been a catalyst for greater concern for the poor and the environment. These ideas, however unacknowledged, now occupy a central place in Catholic moral theology through Francis' *Laudato Si'*. The central conclusion of this thesis is that Boff's ecological theology has formed part of an intellectual milieu that has helped move the Catholic Church towards greater

concern for the poor, the environment, and even animals. Although Boff's own theology remains insufficiently attentive to the animal issue, perhaps paradoxically, he has been a catalyst for more creation-friendly, and even animal-friendly, thought within the Church.

In chapter seven, I offered some original theology, inspired by my engagement with Boff. It suggested reconceiving of the Trinity in terms of Gentleness, Solidarity and Fraternity. Then I developed three of his ideas – communion as being “for” creation, entering the Triune sight, and a Trinitarian model for our relationships with animals – to suggest a more creation-friendly and animal-friendly reconstruction of his work.

8.1. An Agenda for the Future

Further avenues for research in this area could address four areas. First, an exploration into the place of animals in Brazil's other religious traditions could be undertaken. Although Catholicism is still the largest religion in Brazil, there is a great deal of cultural exchange between the other smaller Christian denominations and other religions, for instance, Protestants, Mormons, and Spiritualists. For example, during my research trip, I was asked about the practice of animal sacrifice that still continues in Brazil.⁷⁰¹ Research into the theologies that support the use of animals in sacrifice could help illuminate the reasons behind its enduring practice.

Second, further research could be undertaken to explore the ways in which *Laudato Si'* is being received in Brazil. Although it is clear that the encyclical is having an impact in the academic community, it would be interesting to explore what impact it might be having within congregations. One way to explore this would be to conduct some fieldwork in Brazil within different religious communities and to assess what meaningful impact the encyclical is having.

Third, in terms of the animal movement, Brazil is undergoing a shift in its understanding of animals, evidenced by the rise of vegetarian and vegan businesses and changing laws on animal related practices. Because of this, Brazil would make an interesting case study to explore shifting cultural norms in relation to animals. For instance, Brazil has a complex situation regarding companion animals. They are kept not only in domestic arrangements, but also they exist in liminal spaces, such as

⁷⁰¹ For a discussion of this in relation to cats, see appendix 10.

parks, and are cared for by groups dedicated to their welfare (such as Felinos du Campos at PUC).⁷⁰² Further interviews could be conducted with people within Brazil's animal movement to understand the changing perception of animals, the obstacles still remaining, and the further opportunities for deepening moral concern for animals. As regards the Church in Brazil, animals are currently a non-issue, but it is not inconceivable that *Laudato Si'* might at least help put animals on the theological agenda alongside concern for the human poor, and the environment.

Fourth, there is still a great deal more to be done in developing animal theology. Specifically in depth work in the areas of Christology, redemption and soteriology should be undertaken to consider ways in which the Christian faith can become less anthropocentric, and more inclusive of all of God's creation, especially animals.

⁷⁰² For a discussion of issues surrounding companion animals, see Appendix 8.

Appendices

1. Questions to Professor Leonardo Boff
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Appendix 1. Questions to Professor Leonardo Boff

Questions in English and below in Portuguese as they were sent to Professor Boff.

1. As you know, Vatican II said virtually nothing about care for creation, and yet now we have a major papal encyclical on our responsibility for creation. Are you gratified by this change of direction in the Catholic Church?

1. Como o senhor sabe, o Vaticano II não disse praticamente nada a respeito do cuidado pela criação e, no entanto, agora nós temos uma importante encíclica papal sobre nossa a responsabilidade pela criação. O senhor está satisfeito com essa mudança de direção na Igreja Católica?

2. Not all liberation theologians have turned their attention to eco-theology, what specifically made you move in this direction?

2. Nem todos os teólogos da libertação voltaram sua atenção para a ecoteologia. O que especificamente fez o senhor virar para essa direção?

3. Is there anything specific about the Brazilian context that should necessitate care for creation?

3. Há algo específico ao contexto brasileiro que deveria demandar o cuidado pela criação?

4. Your work is rightly critical of the way humans use and abuse the earth, does that extend to humanity's use of animals?

4. Seu trabalho, com toda razão, critica o modo pelo qual os humanos usam e abusam da Terra. Isso se estende ao uso dos animais por parte da humanidade?

5. You are one of the very few liberation theologians who write about the rights of animals. What sort of rights do you think animals have?

5. *O senhor é um dos poucos teólogos da libertação que escrevem sobre os direitos dos animais. Que tipos de direitos o senhor acha que os animais têm?*

6. You write about the need for humanity to address climate change. Given that animal agriculture is one of the main causes of climate change, do you think humanity needs to change what it eats?

6. *O senhor escreve sobre a necessidade da humanidade em tratar das mudanças climáticas. Dado que a pecuária é uma das principais causas das mudanças climáticas, o senhor acha que a humanidade precisa mudar o que ela come?*

7. Your writing often distances itself from the scholastic tradition, in favour of a more Latin American approach, yet you seem to implicitly accept a Thomistic version of rational hierarchy within your work, why?

7. *Frequentemente, seus escritos se distanciam da tradição escolástica em favor de uma abordagem mais latino-americana, no entanto, em sua obra, o senhor parece aceitar implicitamente uma versão tomista da hierarquia racional. Por quê?*

8. How do you see the relationship, if any, between eco / liberation theology and animal theology?

8. *Como o senhor vê a relação, se é que há alguma, entre a ecoteologia / teologia da libertação e a teologia animal?*

Appendix 2. Sample Interview Questions

Below is a list of sample questions used as a starting point for the interviews. Not all questions were asked to all interviewees, rather they were selected based on their expertise.

1. What do you think liberation theology has to say on the subject of animals?
2. Why is liberation theology important in the animal context in Brazil?
3. Why do you think liberation theology in general has been slow to embrace animals?
4. Is liberation theology still important for Brazil today?
5. What influence, if any, has Leonardo Boff had on your work [in relation to liberation theology, the environment, or animals respectively]?
6. What are the main challenges for the animal movement in Brazil at the moment?
7. What successes has the animal movement achieved in Brazil so far?
8. Brazil is the largest Catholic country in the world. How has Catholicism affected the animal movement in Brazil?
9. There is a strong environmental movement in Brazil, has this helped the animal movement?
10. How do you see the future of the animal movement in Brazil?
11. How do you see the relationship between the poor and the environment in Brazil?
12. How is *Laudato Si'* being received in Brazil?

Appendix 3. Excerpts from Professor Luiz Carlos Susin Interview

September 12, 2016

Porto Alegre, Brazil

Q: Please can you explain your intellectual movement from liberation theology, to ecological theology, to animal theology.

We have gradually, softly moved our position and conviction to pass anthropocentric ideas to ecological thinking, and now to see that animals are the relationship in the centre of this. It was for us a slow movement this way. It began with the challenge from vegetarian and vegan students. On a research trip to the United States in 2011, I began to read [Andrew] Linzey and to look at the animal issue.

In the Catholic Church, it is very strange for a theologian in the tradition of liberation to invest some thought on the issue of animals. So I read Linzey to help explain this path of conversion.

Q: Why is it strange for liberation theologians to consider animals?

Because liberation theology began also with an anthropocentric vision. Now it has moved not just to consider social questions, but also gender and ecology. But it is slow to embrace animal theology.

Q: Do you think Francis' pontificate is a turning point for animals in the Catholic Church?

In the document *Laudato Si'* he wrote some things about animals, but it is not sufficient. Our critique is in the same direction as Linzey because there is a contradiction. This contradiction remains in the official Catechism because, on the one hand, animals are creatures of God who have inherent value, not just value for human use. But on the other hand, there is also the tradition of animals being there for our use, for clothes, shoes, food. This is a contradiction that is not deeply reflected upon. Pope Francis speaks about the preoccupation with the possibility of extinction.

Here the animal is considered as a species, not in terms of its own individual life. This is an important distinction; all individual life is important. This is an important lesson from your father to me. I use the rights language of Linzey to bring liberation theology something more in this direction.

Q: In terms of the Brazilian context, what are the challenges for animals here? Or what are the challenges in Brazil for people having a better relationship with animals here?

Concrete challenges in Brazil. We have a big crisis here, because the exportation of meat is the most important export in our economy. Meat is very important economically, and it is the centre of our international commerce. The production of meat is linked to the problem of environment. We need food for animals, and so there is a lot of deforestation. There is a culture of meat. For example, here in the south of Brazil we have the culture of the *gaucho*. Gaucho is a traditional figure here and in the north of Argentina—the gaucho's clothes are typical in these regions. There is also *churrasco*—cowboy culture. Meat is fundamental for feasts and celebrations—without meat it seems we cannot celebrate. It is a culture of meat. It is a very wide problem.

Q: You were first an ecological theologian. Many people see a tension between ecological theology and animal theology, do you see the tension? Ecology focuses on the whole, the ecosystem, but not the individual species. Did ecological theology help you embrace animal theology or not?

It is a problem because, for example, when we approach ecology with holistic categories, it is not easy to arrive at the individual, to the fragile individual life. It is possible, but it is easier to remain in the bigger categories of the whole. And Leonardo [Boff] began with the holistic. As a Franciscan, he knows well the tradition of respect for individual life, but it is not sufficiently clear.

Q: How do you see Boff's work relating to your work?

I was a student of Leonardo's, he was a young professor, and after we worked together. And now, we meet two or three times a year, we meet as a group of theologians in Rio de Janeiro. Then we speak about the situation, about the churches. I know well his work and I presented to him our book last year. We have collaboration.

Q: What does Boff think of your book? Is he receptive?

Yes, yes.

Q: Do you think Boff is open to the idea of animals?

He is open. I think he can go in this direction. In his theology he is a creator of sensibility, he has the possibility to feel more towards animal life.

Appendix 4. Excerpts from Professor Jung Mo Sung Interview

September 15, 2016

São Paulo, Brazil

Q: Do you think Boff's theology has room to embrace animals?

A: The one problem I have with Leonardo Boff [is that] he has a notion of totality that has no internal distinction. Every part of the holistic world has the same rights and there is no priority. Priority depends only on what is the most important at that time. Since there is no priority you cannot create political action, because you cannot do everything at the same time ... There is a direct tension between what is possible and what is desirable.

I don't think that Leonardo Boff can help you because he does not distinguish between cosmos, galaxies, and concrete persons. He is influenced by Teilhard de Chardin's mystic view of the world. This is good for a romantic vision because we are all part of the universe and the energy of the universe and the experience of the universe. According to this view, God leads us into the Christification of the cosmos. In that case, why do I need to worry about this? Everything is set. God has planned everything. At same time, Boff says "if you don't do anything, don't change, the world will go into chaos situation." Is God in control or not of the evolution of the world? Boff is always moving between these two contradictory ideas. We need to go further. We need a new vision of totality that includes everything but has internal distinction in relationship. You have to understand what is the most important relationship and what is the least. Leonardo would say, "we are all connected." Yes, but what happens now in a star that is ten million light years from us? I don't care because this doesn't affect us and I will be dead ten million years from now. The whole human species will not be here anymore. We need to make distinctions within the universe.

Maybe there is something that can be helpful in *Laudato Si'*. I think in terms of ecology it is nothing new, but it is new for the Christian Church. There is something new, a new ontology: Everything is in relationship. This is a new ontology that there

is no individual substance that can stand by itself, that everything is in relationship. This is a good idea as an alliance is created in the notion of life. Within life there are distinctions of levels, for instance, distinctions between vegetable life and human life. Leonardo used to say that, I am not sure if he still does, that all life is sacred. But if it is right, I cannot struggle against bacteria that can kill someone. Life is important but we have to establish distinction. You have to use biology and other sciences.

Q: Boff and the pope are clear about the relationship between climate change and poverty, that it has an adverse effect on the poor. What are your thoughts on this?

A: It is important to distinguish between Boff and Pope Francis. Leonardo Boff, and others focused on ecology, say that poor people will be the most affected by climate change. But the pope says that climate change and poverty are created by the same process. It is not only about the consequences. So we cannot solve the climate change problem without solving the problem of poverty because the source is the same. So the problem with Al Gore's solution to the ecological problem is that it would potentially solve the climate change problem without solving the problem of poverty and social exclusion. Because for them, that is not their problem. Their problem is the sustainability of their life, their style of life, their group. Not other groups. That kind of change is not possible because climate change is produced by capitalist society, which at the same time produces poverty and exclusion. This is something that Leonardo Boff does not see, the economics behind the climate change, he does not analyse this.

Chapter five of Boff's *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor* is on liberation theology and equality. If you take this chapter out, the whole book is based in first world theology and theories on ecology. The logic is human beings against nature. It is a critique of anthropocentrism. When he tries to discuss ecology and liberation theology he focuses on capitalism, in chapter five. He criticizes capitalism, using Latin-American liberation theology, as a system that kills millions of people in the name of the accumulation of capital. Then it is not anthropocentric, it is capital-centric or market-centric. Chapter five speaks of how capitalist society kills poor people and because of that you have to listen to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor people. But he

cannot see that he is using not only different, but opposite theories, in relation to ecology. So he has two books in one.

Q: I heard that Pope Francis has read Leonardo Boff's ecological work.

A: Yes, but I don't see Leonardo Boff's theology in Pope Francis' work. The basic, God is in favour of the poor, yes. But money as idolatry is not present in Leonardo Boff. It is not Leonardo Boff's theology.

Q: Yes, I agree Pope Francis' encyclical goes beyond Leonardo Boff's work.

A: Not only beyond it, it is different. The idea is that poverty and ecology are created by capitalism. He talks about the spirit of economics. This is liberation theology. This is theological critique of economics.

Appendix 5. Excerpts from Professor Claudio de Oliveira Ribeiro Interview

September 15, 2016

São Paulo, Brazil

General discussion and introduction

Claudio: I organised a book with Protestant views on leadership in Brazil about *Laudato Si'*. I published an article by Olav Fykse Tveit, who is the general secretary of the World Congress of Churches (WCC), with other people from Brazil—Methodists, Lutherans, Pentecostals and Baptists. Everybody is talking about the encyclical, from the ecumenical perspective and on the ecological issues.

Q: How do you think Laudato Si' is being received generally in Brazil?

A: The good reception is linked to the good view among Protestant groups about Pope Francis. Since the beginning of his papacy, many church leaders here are excited to see what is going to happen in the Catholic Church with his ecumenical openness. Because of this some groups are trying to follow their lead. So in the case of *Laudato Si'* this is important. In Pope Francis's first encyclical there is a special section on economy and theology. It is very similar to liberation theology. It is the same with *Ladauto Si'*, there are many overlapping concerns, of course the encyclical is not a part of liberation theology, but there are many aspects that we can see are linked.

Q: How do you see liberation theology in Brazil now?

A: Many people do not know what liberation theology means, they may have heard about it, but if you ask them they either don't know anything or they only know a few things about liberation theology. ... many people are [now] asking about liberation theology. They know for example Leonardo Boff because he has a public presence in television and the internet, but maybe only Boff. Young people do not know for example that there are thousands of people who in the last five decades are working very hard in liberation theology—working hard, publishing books, trying to reflect.

Appendix 6. Excerpts from Dr Carlos Frederico Ramos de Jesus Interview

September 18, 2016

São Paulo, Brazil

Q: How do you see the animal movement as it stands in Brazil?

A: Brazil has a very meat-centred culture, our culture has many events concerning meat, so the rodeo, the *churrasco*—the barbeque—which is very popular, so it is not exactly an ideal place for animal rights because meat is very entrenched in society. But lately there has been an increase in people wanting to know about vegetarianism and veganism, and the animal rights issue has begun to gather momentum in the media, and in the judicial system. For example, the rodeo, the kind of rodeo we call *vaquejada* (we have the regular rodeo as well). This ability rodeo called *vaquejada* is under consideration by the Supreme Court because many states have brought in laws to consider whether it can be considered a cultural heritage. These laws have been questioned in the Supreme Court and we are awaiting the judgement, the court is currently tied four to four. So the court is considering whether those laws are unconstitutional—whether it violates the Brazilian constitution, specifically the clause that prohibits cruelty to animals. If they decide it is unconstitutional, then it will become illegal, as we can't have a cultural heritage that condones cruelty to animals. It could be considered against the spirit and the letter of the Brazilian constitution, and if it is it would be a good victory for the animal rights movement.

Q: What stage of the process is the Supreme Court in with the vaquejada decision? When can we expect a final decision?

A: It is already in the final decision stage, and it is tied four to four and three Justices are still to vote. One of the Justices has suspended the process to consider the issue further, and probably in this semester they will un-suspend the process and the three remaining Justices will vote. It is really unclear how these three judges will vote. One of them will probably be against *vaquejada*, but the other two it is still unclear. So it is very suspenseful. Previously the Supreme Court had prohibited state laws about cock fighting, and they also prohibited state laws on another animal issue. I think the

pro-animal Brazilians expected this rodeo ruling to be easier because there are these precedents in the Supreme Court regarding cock fighting, and it is essentially very similar. But it is said that in the rodeo, *vaquejada*, there is not as much cruelty as cock fighting, which is arguable, because the oxen usually do not die after *vaquejada*, but they might, because they are pulled by their tail to make them fall. It usually does hurt them, but it might not kill them, like it does with the cocks in cock fighting. But it certainly hurts, and our constitution forbids cruelty to animals. It should be the same grounds, but it seems like things may not be as easy in this case.

Update [added by interviewee]: Supreme Court has deemed *vaquejada* unconstitutional, by 6-5. Congress has enacted a constitutional amendment, trying to protect *vaquejada*. The amendment protects social practices with animals which, among other requirements, are considered a cultural heritage. This amendment is under scrutiny in the Supreme Court.

Q: Are there any precedents for winning this kind of case on the basis of cultural heritage?

A: No. That is quite new. The argument that cock fighting was considered a cultural heritage was not even considered by the court as it was considered too cruel. This rodeo is a bit less cruel, so people think that perhaps it can be considered a cultural heritage. We know that this is not the case, but the Justices are considering it.

Q: Animal law in Brazil seems to be a growing movement, when did animal law begin here and how do you understand its growth?

A: I would say it has been a topic for discussion in the last ten to five years. Before this there were some researchers who cared about animal law, but there weren't as many people studying animal law as there are now. Our first important animal law dates back to 1934. It was a really progressive law in the context of the time in which it was created because it gave animals standing in justice. Up until then animals did not have standing in justice, but this law gave them that. There is a great debate about this law and whether it was in keeping with our constitution. But the real concern in society and in the university about animal law, with researchers writing pieces on the

issue, this has only happened in the last ten or five years. There was a habeas corpus case in 2005, when a prosecutor from Bahia, Heron de Santana Gordilho (an animal rights professor and researcher) sued for habeas corpus in favour of a chimp. The habeas was accepted but not judged because the chimp died in the middle of the process. I believe that was really the first time an animal issue had become a matter of such large national interest. It was in every newspaper. Some people said this was ridiculous, habeas corpus for a chimp, and some thought he has a point because the chimp is really suffering in that cage. So in recent times, it was the first time. Even though there are many other researchers before Professor de Santana, Sonia Felipe from Santa Catarina, for example, started researching this issue of habeas corpus in the 1980's and 1990's. But the question has grown in importance in the last ten or five years. There are many people writing about this now, which is really exciting.

Q: Is the link between eating meat and climate change being made in Brazil and if not why do you think not?

A: Not at all. People see the agro-business as a source of revenue, even though there might be cruelty to animals in the agro-business. There was recent footage in farms that sells meat to the two main agro-business companies in Brazil, which are JBS and Friboi. This footage showed cruelty to animals and that the agricultural ministry recommendations are not followed on their farms. These recommendations do not deliver high animal welfare standards. But even when it is clear the standards are not being met, people mostly see that this is an important economic activity, which should be helped, especially in a time of crisis. You can't get rid of agro-business. This was really strong even in Dilma Rousseff's government, and Rousseff is undoubtedly centre leftist. But she had as her agricultural minister, one of the biggest agro-business women in Brazil, Katia Abreu. She was the president of the agro-business association in Brazil before she became a minister. Ironically she was one of the most loyal allies of Rousseff, she was with her until the last vote, when Rousseff was impeached (Katia Abreu is also a senator). So it is really bad, that not even the left sees the agro-business, and the scale of it, as something dangerous for the survival of the planet and the environment. One of the ministers of India, I don't remember her name, but she was very active in environmental law. I saw her speak at an animal rights congress, and she said, "when we talk about animals, we are not talking about love for animals

necessarily, but we are talking about us. If we treat animals badly, if we continue to breed animals for agro-business without necessity because we don't need to eat them to survive, the world will be a much worse place in a very short period of time." Of course, I think when we are thinking about animals we are thinking about them as well, but politically that discourse makes sense. But few people think this way in Brazil. Only some more leftist parties have a point of not accepting donations from agro-business people. But even the environmental party—Marina Silva, even her, she is very closely connected to the agro-business. She is not as connected as the other two parties, the labour party and the social democrat party, but she is also connected. In the last elections, even her government proposal did not have much about animals. The three main candidates did not say a word about animals. It is very sad.

Q: Please can you say a little more about the power of the agro-business in Brazil.

A: The agro-business is very strong. The last point demonstrates their power. In a centre-leftist government the agricultural minister and senator, used to be president of the agro-business association. So already their power is clear. In the last campaign, they were one of the largest donors for the two main candidates for president, Rousseff and Neves (from the social democrat party, Cardoso's party). So they retain their power no matter who wins, because they give money to everyone. Now hopefully, it should be modified because firms have now been prohibited from donating to candidates, only individual persons can do this. We are seeing now in the mayoral election that people who own firms are giving large donations. So it has improved a little bit, but they still have financial influence on candidates.

The agro-business has started a massive media campaign claiming that meat is necessary, meat is good, that everyone should eat meat. They have hired many popular actors, actresses, singers—some of them were even vegetarian before—and they have paid them to taste meat and say how delicious it is. I don't remember having such advertising for meat on television before. The three and a half leftist governments we have had, they have spent public money from our development public bank (BNDES) to increase their activities to be "national champions" to export meat all over the world. So Brazil can become a standard for meat in the export industry. Public money is being directed (because money from the public

development bank is public) and given to these industries at a very low interest rate, for them to create great exports for Brazil. But they are consuming something that we cannot necessarily refuel—water, trees, and the suffering of animals and workers involved in the production. There is a recent documentary about the poor labour conditions in these industries. It is bad for humans, bad for animals, bad for everyone. Nonetheless they are very powerful. Every government thinks that they should give these industries a central role in our economy. I don't think that any of them are thinking about animal rights, or even environmental rights. It is really a distant thought. Civil society has many good movements on these issues, but it has not entered the hard core of politics, except for some sparse laws.

Q: Brazil is the largest Catholic country in the world. What relationship does Catholicism have to animals here? And do you think that has a general influence on ideas about animals?

A: People here usually do not relate Catholicism and the protection of animals. People do not see it that way, even though they should. It is really divorced. The dominant idea is of man having dominion, and “might means right” dominion, not a purely functional dominion. So the lessons of love of Catholic writings and the Bible do not have a decisive influence in terms of encouraging people to treat animals better. I believe that they are against direct cruelty, but eating meat is fine. In my LGBT Catholic group, I know only one who is vegetarian. So even those who think I should study animal rights, who see that it is important, they still eat meat. It is not surprising because it is so entrenched in the culture. I have heard all the arguments for eating animals as a Catholic-based permission. One friend of mine told me, “but Jesus ate fish, and even multiplied the fish, and that is why we can eat animals.” I replied: “but the context is so different. The fish were already dead, and there were five thousand people to be fed. What they had was fish and bread, which are symbols of food.” So it is not really a permission. The other parts of the Bible are much more emphatic in favour of respecting animals. For me it is very simple, if we do not need them, we should not use them. If we need it okay, and if we happen to live in a forest in a very exceptional situation, we should do it. But if we don't need to, which is really the common situation, we should not cause damage to them. But this connection is really not present. In the last papal encyclical there were some good parts on the

environment and on animals. Some friends in my LGBT group, they read and they told me: “there is something interesting here for you.” The pope is also worried about animals and the environment, so that is good. So perhaps if Pope Francis, or if the next pope continues his line of thought, maybe there will be greater Catholic concern for this. But even people in the Catholic Church who are worried about the environment and environmental law—and there are many; it is very present in the Brazilian Catholic Church—they are concerned with animals as part of the environment, not the animals in themselves.

Q: How much influence does Leonardo Boff, as a public figure, have in terms of ideas on the environment and animals?

A: I have seen many people talking about Leonardo Boff, and some interviews with him in papers. I have never really read Boff, but I know that he is a big influence. But I sense, at least amongst my Catholic friends, they see Boff as a political religious leader: a religious man who has inspired a political approach to religion. A religion-based approach to the political. In that sense he is seen as different from the traditional positions. Boff is seen as advancing a duty to fight inequality, to fight dictatorships, to fight every kind of oppression, as a Catholic or Christian duty. My friends see Boff in this way. As one who regained the original sense of Christianity as not only a spiritual religion, but a spiritual religion with a political message, so the political cannot be separated from the religious. But on the environment and on animals, I have not heard them talk about his views. That is why your research is important, as it will make this connection, which is needed and perhaps Boff will see it as a continuation of his thought. It is a logical continuation of liberation theology as animal rights are a logical continuation of human rights.

Appendix 7. Excerpts from Dr Bruno Garrote Interview

January 18, 2017

By email

Q: What are the main challenges for the animal movement in Brazil at the moment?

A: The agribusiness is one of the great resources of the wealthy in Brazil. It has an enormous power, not only with the media, but actually in our legislative and executive powers. Most people elected have connections with agribusiness. They are owners of some company, or large portions of land, or indirectly were financed by agribusiness—it is scary. So a lot of laws are made to protect them, to provide legal protection and subsidies, and tax facilitations (e.g. paying less for water consumption). In Brazil there is a BBB happening nowadays in the legislative branch of government specifically. These are the 3Bs: *Boi*, *Bala* and *Bíblia* (cattle/bull, bullet and Bible, respectively). These people and their influences usually come together here in Brazil.

So, another challenge is to get people elected that are more concerned with animal movement issues. There are already a few, but the financial investment to become a politician in Brazil is high.

Q: Brazil is the largest Catholic country in the world, how has Catholicism affected the animal movement in Brazil?

A: As I said, in our legislative power, usually the politicians linked with cattle, bullet and Bible work together. So this is already a big thing. Besides that, I don't think we have had (yet!) a strong speech or position from priests in favour of the animal movement. I have already talked to some Catholic people who say that the Bible says that animals are inferior to men, and we shall rule and, therefore, may eat them etc. Maybe that is in the Brazilian collective subconscious and may impact upon some prejudice against vegetarianism as a whole, but that is not usually explicit. But we really have a strong idea that eating meat is a sign of health and wealth here in Brazil. The poor are happy when they have money to buy meat of better quality or even buy

meat at all. And when they say “meat” here in Brazil they mean “red meat”, which is more expensive than chicken (not everyone here likes to eat fish, specially when you are not from a beach or river region).

Appendix 8. Excerpts from Professor Daniel Braga Lourenço Interview

September 21, 2016

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Q: How do you see the state of the animal movement in Brazil at the moment?

A: Like the Bryan Adam's song—we are young, wild, and free. We are really young in the sense that we are immature, we have only existed for a short period of time. I would say that animal activism really started in the 90's in Brazil. Of course there have always been people concerned about animals. But as a movement, I would say that we really started in the 90s. So we are a new thing, and new things generate good and bad things. We have energy. Some people have time. But they don't have the resources, and they don't usually have the information on how to act and react to the problems.

For instance, to give you a sense about Brazilian reality in terms of the law, which is mainly my field. In the UK the first law concerning animals was the Martin's Act in 1822 (something like that). Here in Brazil the first federal law concerning animals, for all Brazilian territories, was only passed in 1934. So you see there is a gap of more than a hundred years in terms of the difference in the movement. And so that reinforces my sense that we are very new to the field, even in the legal sense of protecting animals against cruelty. The first animal association here in Brazil was formed in 1895, while in the UK it much earlier with the SPCA in 1824. It is called UIPA, the International Union for the Protection of Animals. It still exists in São Paulo. It is an important organisation. These are just some things to demonstrate how we are still young to the issue of animal protection.

For example, the main references on animal ethics, like Andrew Linzey, Tom Regan, Steve Sapontzis, we don't have them all translated into Portuguese. So that is a huge problem in terms of information. There is a big gap, and many people who are activists don't think it is important to study the issue. They think it is important to act. This is a worldwide problem, but here it is very intense. We need to act, but we also need to think strategically, and reflect on how to act to get the best results. People

don't have access to that material. For instance, Peter Singer's book *Animal Liberation* was published in 1975 [in English]. Here it was published in 2004. It is almost forty years late, and so the discussion is late. We are still beginning to read those works. So that reflects on how we are immature. We haven't had the time to digest all that information on the complex issues. The fact of that immaturity makes the debate on animal welfare and animal rights behind in Brazil.

Q: What are the challenges for the animal movement in Brazil?

We are a big country, as you know, and that is a problem because we are very diverse. The south of Brazil, is not very far away, but still it has some traditions that are different from São Paulo and Rio. As São Paulo and Rio are different from the north of Brazil, and the north east of Brazil. So each part of Brazil has its particular problems, specific animal problems. For example, the Amazon jungle has specific wildlife problems. The north east of Brazil has some animal husbandry traditions that are problematic, like the *vaquejada*, which the Supreme Court is currently deciding if it is against our constitution or not. We had a problem in the nineties's in the south part of Brazil, they had the tradition of the *farra do boi*. It is a cultural tradition mainly brought to Brazil by people who emigrated from Portugal that has a religious aspect. They call it *malhação do Judas* (Judas party). Some communities have the symbolic tradition of, at particular times of the year, making a doll that represents Judas. Then they go with sticks and beat Judas. So in the south part of Brazil, instead of a doll they would use a cow. They would place a cow in the streets, and people would start chasing the cow, and throwing stones at the cow, cutting the cow until the cow dies very painfully. It is similar to Spanish blood fiestas. Our Supreme Court said it was against the constitution to do this. It was a big decision in terms of cultural heritage. It was a good decision for the animals. But now we are facing the *vaquejada*, which is a little different, but the decision is not made. It is currently tied with four judges saying it is okay, and four saying it is not okay. And there are just three judges left to give their opinion.

So each part of Brazil has its own problems. Here in São Paulo and Rio we have a lot of problems relative to animals inside the cities, stray cats, stray dogs. We have a lot of places with feral cats and feral dogs. The forest of Tijuca has a problem with feral

dogs. We have a lot of problems relative to using horses for work and carrying. In some parts of the city they still use horses. The favelas use a lot of horses, including the drug dealers.

Q: Can you say more about how you see those problems with the stray cats and dogs?

A: There's a big cultural problem relative to slavery—this is connected to that. Slavery was abolished in Brazil in 1888. It's historically yesterday. In that sense, (of course this is a very broad statement) the Brazilian people are used to violence in slavery. We had slaves only very recently, so in that sense, violence to animals is more acceptable perhaps in comparison to other societies that have abandoned slavery a long time ago. It's not the only justification of course, but that is an interesting issue. For example, in Brazil there are a lot of people who work inside the house, who are domestic employees. We still have a system here, that is not slavery as they work and receive salaries, but there is a culture of service and we are used to that. So when we use an animal to transport things, it is more natural to us. We see an abandoned animal and nobody worries about them, it is normal. It's a way of seeing things.

Another problem is poverty. We are a poor country and of course we don't have the resources and political agenda to do good things for animals or to deal with the problem. For instance, we don't have public shelters, so whenever anyone tries to deal with the problem they have to bring the animal to their home. If it is one cat or one dog, yes we can handle that, but with a big problem it is more difficult. Where are the animals going to go? And here in Rio we have a private association called SUIPA. It is similar to the São Paulo organisation (UIPA). It is a very old important animal protection association and it is the biggest here in Rio. It is very sad as it has become a deposit of animals and the association doesn't really have the money to take good care of the animals. So the animals fight, eat themselves, have diseases that spread and so on. I went there five times and then I decided not to go again as it is really depressing. Perhaps, sometimes I think it would be better for the animals to stay on the streets. It is really incredible that we don't have a serious public policy to deal with the problem. The animal issue from the political parties it is a minor question. Nowadays politicians are starting to see that many people worry about the problem,

and there are some politicians that use that to capitalise on votes. But they are not really worried about the problem.

Q: Are the animal shelters here kill shelters?

A: No. There is a clear statement from SUIPA that they don't kill the animals. They only kill for euthanasia if an animal is very sick. But if they are not adopted for one month, one year, two years, they are still there. They just live in bad conditions.

Q: Could you tell me a little bit about the relationship between animal ethics and environmental ethics?

A: There is a debate about whether animal ethics is a branch of environmental ethics or if it is completely separate. I think it is separate. Here in Brazil many people think that animal ethics is a branch of environmental ethics. The main reason I think this is not the case is because the fundamental question of environmental ethics is relative to the stability, to the integrity, as Aldo Leopoldo said, to the beauty of the system, of the whole. That really strikes me as something completely different from the worry about the individual's preference and interests. So there are conflicts and tensions between these thoughts. For instance, we can see this in the problem that we are facing about the over-population of some species, and how to deal with this kind of situation. The problem of the wild boar, the *javali*. It is a European animal that some people from the south of Brazil imported. They brought in a number of wild boars to raise, probably for meat and leather, and some escaped from the farms and reproduced in the wild. So there are very large numbers of wild boars. It is argued that they need to kill them to reduce the numbers. In Brazil, we have a law called the Law of Environmental Crimes, which deals with which acts are crimes to the environment. In this law cruelty to animals is a crime in Brazil. But it is argued that it is not a crime when the environmental authority gives permission to do controlled hunting—to eliminate a number of animals that are considered to be over-populated. So there is a big discussion here about whether this should be the case with wild boars. Should we hunt and kill them as environmental ethicists might perhaps assert as they worry about the stability of the ecosystem. Or perhaps as an animal ethicist, we cannot do that, let's try to do other things, such as move some of the animals to another place or

sterilise the females if that is the only option that we have. That is just one example about the tension between those lines of thoughts.

Some time ago, I was talking about that issue with a student, and he said “Well, I think that you should wear leather shoes because leather is more biodegradable than plastic.” Because I was wearing a fake leather shoe, a plastic shoe, we entered into this discussion. Fake leather shoes are bad for the environment as whenever you stop using the shoes, the plastic will decompose very slowly. Our concerns are very different. He is worried about not damaging the environment with plastic, and I am worried about not damaging the individual animal that was killed for the shoe.

In Brazil, we use animals a lot for transport to collect cans or trash. There is also an island here in Rio, Ilha de Paquetá, which is a traditional touristic spot that people go to on the weekends to ride horses on the beaches. The horses are in a very bad condition. I was telling the students that we should think about substituting the horses for electric cars, so that people can ride but they don’t pollute the environment or hurt the horses. But a student objected, “We shouldn’t do that, it’s tradition, it is better that we should abandon cars and ride horses because it is better for the environment.” The argument goes that we should go back to using more horsepower instead of cars, because cars are bad for the environment, and horses are better for the environment. It is more ecological in that sense. These are some examples of this tension between environmental and animal ethics.

Q: What is your perception of the influence of Leonardo Boff in Brazil in terms of ecological and animal thought?

A: I don’t know him personally. My impression of him is that he has importance in Brazil, in South America. People respect him a lot. He is politically more to the left, of course. For instance we are now facing the elections for mayor, and he is supporting a candidate from a very left wing political party, which is coherent with his position. From the point of view about the worries about nature and animals, I have read some of his books—and he has a lot of books! He has three or four directly thinking about nature, or more than that perhaps. I did not like his books. Thinking about the ecological point of view they are very superficial from my perspective. But

I think he is obviously attached to the environmental ethics side, Aldo Leopold, Arne Ness. More Leopold, I would say. He is concerned about the stability of the planet and that is good. But I doubt that his environmental ethics or earth ethics is a step to get to thinking about animals. I very much doubt that Leonardo will reach this point.

Q: Please explain why you don't think it is a step.

A: I read a lot about Aldo Leopold when I was writing my PhD thesis and I read his biography, it is very clear. For instance, one turning point for Aldo Leopold was when he killed a mother wolf with kittens. He said he was transformed from that point. He said that from that point on he turned his mind to the mountains. But the main issue was not the problem of killing the wolf. The problem is that killing the wolf was eliminating the wolf from the country, and would bring bad consequences with it. He used to hunt with bows because he thought bows were more primitive than guns. His whole life he hunted and he didn't see a problem with hunting. I think it is very difficult to move from ecological thinking to animal ethics. He was attached to that idea that hunting leads you to a more natural, more primitive man, and that this is good. That it is good to enter that kind of relationship with prey. It is really entrenched in Leopold's work. I don't know if Leonardo is so attached to those same ideas. But broadly speaking, this kind of line of thought really does not necessarily lead to concern for individual animals. I think that is a different story. Environmental law is more attached to the ecological side of it than to animals. That is an interesting point too, as I also teach environmental law. The place to study animals in Brazilian law is inside environmental law. I strongly disagree with this because animals are seen as a natural resource inside environmental law. It is really attached to ideas of species conservation. Whereas I think animal ethics and animal rights is nearer to the human rights discourse. That the place to study animals in Brazil is inside environmental law—I think that is a problem. It is in the wrong place, because in environmental law, you always think about the collective point of view.

Appendix 9. Excerpts from Dr Carlos Nacone Interview

September 22, 2016

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Q: How do you see the animal movement in relation to Brazilian culture?

A: As I see it, the Brazilian people are more emotive and spiritualised than people from Anglo Saxon countries like Britain and the US, and that makes it different. The concepts of compassion and solidarity are more familiar to us than respect and rights. Respect and rights are not part of our moral vocabulary in the strong sense. Of course we talk about respect and animal rights, but not so strongly as I can see in other countries. The reason, I think, is the strong Catholic influence and politically speaking the tradition of left wing governments. So we have other moral vocabulary to deal with moral problems.

Q: So how do you understand the concepts of solidarity and compassion? What work do they do in moral terms?

A: We look at the weak in a different way, with a special inclination, so we say “poor man” or “poor animal.” In contrast to an analytical, pragmatic, and logical approach that you can see in Anglo Saxon countries, we see them as weak. It happens in other countries in South America, not just Brazil. This explains why we don’t have a lot of direct action tactics or strategies, because we don’t have the same ideas of rights, respect, and justice. “Oh poor rabbits, let’s help them,” is different from “they have rights, let’s go and get justice for them.”

Q: What do you see as the major challenge in terms of changing the way we use animals for food in the Brazilian context?

A: The meat industry here is very powerful. The number one financial contributors to the presidential elections here were the meat industry. We have seen some kind of reaction against vegetarianism here in the media. This is good. Some years ago they did not care about vegetarianism or what was happening in the animal movement.

Now they are starting to react. They buy advertising space in magazines, with adverts that say: “Doctors say eating meat is good for you.” They are starting to recognise the vegetarian movement here, and this is only very recently in the last two or three years.

Q: How do you see the challenges for animals in Brazil?

A: We have the biggest commercial cattle industry in the world (India is the biggest, but it is not commercial). Most of this farming is not intensive farming, but extensive. If you speak about animal suffering, people would say they are not in factories they are in fields, in contrast to countries in Europe and the US. This is one of the problems for animal activism, because if you import materials, reflections, campaign strategies, they are not so effective as it is a different context here. This is a good thing that the animals are in extensive rather than an intensive regime, but the bad part is that it is destroying natural resources, because you need room to keep cattle. Natural resources are being devastated because of this. So it is good for the animal welfare aspect but bad for the environmental aspect.

Brazil has strong social inequalities. The problem with this is that we are exposed to vulnerabilities much more than other countries. The problem with this is the lack of moral visual sensitivity; you are used to seeing violence, inequality and vulnerability, much more than in other countries. This is bad for animals. This is a huge cultural difference.

Q: When we were talking the other day, you likened this issue to slavery. Can you say a little more about that?

A: Yes, this country was built upon slavery. You can see the presence of the logic of the slavery everywhere. Slavery was abolished just about one century ago, which is like yesterday in terms of historical perspective. We have people who put gasoline in your car, who are probably black, and who serve you in your house. This is a hang over from slavery times. The whole idea that a creature serves another creature is not such a strange idea here. It has a huge impact on the animal issue. In the UK, the anti-vivisection movement began in the nineteenth century. In the nineteenth century here, we had human slaves.

Q: I know Brazil has a strong eco-movement, how do you see the tensions or the differences between the two movements?

A: We have huge environmental problems and they compete with animal problems. We have huge natural resources. We have so much to damage, compared to other countries. We have seemingly more urgent environmental problems to deal with. Animals are part of the environmental issues, but they are not the focus. It is a huge task and the challenge of the animal movement here is to try and link and show that both issues are connected. But it is not intuitive. You have to show people this connection.

Q: What do you see positively in the Brazilian culture that could help the future of animal here?

A: The positive is that it is a new movement, so we have room to grow. That is why international animal organisations are coming. Everything has to be done here. We have a huge animal agriculture here. We have a huge amount of victims. We have a mission here. This is the beginning of our animal ethics history.

Appendix 10. Excerpts from Felinos du Campus, PUC Group Interview

Interview with members of Felinos du Campus at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (PUC)

- Patricia Österreicher, faculty member at PUC
- Thaissa da Silva Mocoos Puppín, student at PUC
- Maria Teresa Barcellos, volunteer with Felinos du Campus

September 25, 2016

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Q: Why is it so problematic rehoming black cats?

Thaissa: In general, people do not like black cats I think because they are considered unlucky. It is a superstitious thing. They are not good luck.

Patricia: They are used for black magic. So when it is close to Friday 13th or Halloween, people who work to have animals adopted do not give up for adoption any black animals around those dates. We had a few volunteers that knew about the African religious practices, I don't. What people say is that those are the religions that use black animals for rituals, but that is not true. In Europe it happens too and there are people who practice European black magic and white magic. So here we have problems with the adopting of black animals as we have to be very, very careful. People go on Facebook and they ask for black animals. Generally they ask for kittens because when they are neutered they cannot be used for magic. So that is why we promote continually that all the cats on campus are neutered because they are not good for black magic. Cats who are completely white are used also.

Q: Is this related to animal sacrifice?

Patricia: Yes. It is precisely that. It is awful. But every time I see it in the news, I always post it on Facebook for the people who do not believe it happens. It happens. Black hens, black roosters, black goats, but cats and dogs are easier to find.

Thaissa: Goats in general. These ideas are present in the imagination of the general public. So when they see a black cat, even if they themselves do not practice the rituals, they see in them a sign of bad luck.

Q: So you have pedigree animals, then you have rescued animals, and then you seem to have liminal space animals, who are around but are not completely feral because some people care for them.

Patricia: You have plenty of places in Rio where cat colonies have started. You have the trees and the vegetation, and so people abandon the cat because they think they will be okay there. He can find food, he can hunt, or there are people who will take care of him. The groups were established taking care of these specific places where the colonies have formed.

Q: How many groups are there in Rio de Janeiro taking care of the cat colonies?

Patricia: For each place there is a group, or two groups. Thank God. For each area you have a different group.

Q: How are animals viewed in Brazil?

Thaissa: Animals are not cared for, they are not seen as beings that need neutering and caring for. They are still things, objects. It is thought that they will just take care of themselves. There is this idea, with cats specifically because they reproduce so fast, and there are plenty of them. They are not controlled. They are not neutered. They are not considered to be as good as plants. They are not seen as deserving beings who need care.

Patricia: They are not seen as living, sentient beings who have a right to life and dignity. Just like objects. Even less than objects as an object belongs to you and you can sell it. An animal it is just seen as a nuisance.

Thaissa: They are just good for barbeque. We have here in this country kitten barbeque.

Q: People eat cats here?

Patricia: Not officially. But they do.

Q: Does the fact that your University is Catholic have an impact on your work?

Thaissa: We have a lot of different views here. I can talk about the students' view. How they view us, how they view the group. In general, we are very well seen. The issue is really important and the group is important. In general the students think it is cool, it is good, because it is politically correct. We have to respect all forms of life. But when you ask them about animals rights or if you see them as living beings, they say no, they are not as important as humans. They are just animals. That is one of the issues I am addressing in my final project—what is so important about humans and how do we define that. Why humans are important? Why animals are not? We have logic, we are rational, we think. God created man and God created animals to serve man.

Q: What language do you use in your work to talk about animals?

Thaissa: Compassion. I used language that appeals to religious or spiritual people. They have souls. They need to be cared for. They suffer just like us. Because when you talk in terms of rights, it is something completely strange for people here. It is difficult to talk about humans having rights here. We are not used to that.

Maria: Some people have rights and some people do not.

Thaissa: Yes, we still have that here. This in-between situation. So when you talk about rights in terms of animals it is completely alien. Brazilians do not understand themselves as having rights. We are just taking baby steps. Imagine thinking about that with animals.

Patricia: There are some people in the judicial area that are starting to consider this. This is very good because people still believe in laws, more than in religion. Simple

compassion. You see someone suffering and you do something for that being. Like rescuing birds. I have rescued birds, and they recuperate on my terrace and then they fly away when they are better. Every time that I carry a bird home, people stop me and ask what I am doing?

Thaissa: When I rescued a hamster, people said, “what are you doing? This is a sewage animal, it is not supposed to be in a home.” But this is not a sewage animal. People do not think any form of life beyond humans deserve to have rights.

Q: Can you say something about the different ways that animals are viewed in the country as opposed to in the city?

Thaissa: Some of my mother’s family lives in the country on a small farm. They view animals as a product. We are going to feed them and use them. They provide something that will be used.

Patricia: They are resources. Dogs are for shepherding; cats are for keeping mice away from grain, and horses.

Q: Why don’t you like to talk about being a vegetarian or vegan?

Patricia: You are called a radical, or an extremist. People suddenly want to talk to you about B12, iron, protein. I have been a vegetarian my whole life, and I have been a vegan for many years. But when you go out with people you don’t know, they immediately notice that you are not having meat. So they always try to trick you into arguing about it. So I think that is why, not only here in Brazil, but generally people can be reluctant to talk about it.

Thaissa: Especially in Brazil because people are so willing to argue with you.

Patricia: They make fun of you. They are very quick to make fun of everything and they turn your views into a joke. It is very hard because they are aggressive, and they make fun of you.

Thaissa: It is a form of humiliation. It is not directly, but they will make fun of you. You become a sport.

Q: Are there Brazilian qualities that you think might enable the animal movement?

Maria: Solidarity. I think it is a good characteristic.

Patricia: Yes, that is true. When you have great tragedies like flooding, landslides, etc. Then you have lots of people losing their houses and dying; then people exist in solidarity. Lately, in the last ten years, you have a lot of people organising groups to save the animals. At the beginning it was not very well seen, “why are you saving the dogs or the cats or the horses, when you have children dying?”

Thaissa: Every time here when you want to make a point about animal rights, they bring up children. Think about the kids.

Patricia: Recently, the biggest animal shelter in Rio, SUIPA was in a terrible situation. The president of SUIPA died, and the little money they had was blocked, and their bank accounts were suspended. So there was an appeal for people to help SUIPA and people donated tons of cat food, dog food, medicine, and everything. So when I see that, I think why don't people do that all the time? Why only when there is a tragedy?

Thaissa: I think in Brazil there is a very strong characteristic. You don't prevent the situation. You solve it once it has happened.



10 June 2015
Ms Clair Linzey
Divinity

Ethics Reference No: <i>Please quote this ref on all correspondence</i>	DI11551
Project Title:	Interview with Leonardo Boff
Researchers Name(s):	Clair Linzey
Supervisor(s):	Professor MI Aguilar

Thank you for submitting your application which was considered at the School of Divinity's School Ethics Committee meeting on the 29 May 2015. The following documents were reviewed:

- | | |
|--|-------------|
| 1. Ethical Application Form | 28 May 2015 |
| 2. Participant Information Sheet | 28 May 2015 |
| 3. Consent Form | 28 May 2015 |
| 4. Debriefing Form | 28 May 2015 |
| 5. External Permissions | N/A |
| 6. Letters to Parents/Children/Headteacher etc... | N/A |
| 7. Questionnaires | N/A |
| 8. Enhanced Disclosure Scotland and Equivalent
(as necessary) | N/A |

The University Teaching and Research Ethics Committee (UTREC) approves this study from an ethical point of view. Please note that where approval is given by a School Ethics Committee that committee is part of UTREC and is delegated to act for UTREC.

Approval is given for three years. Projects, which have not commenced within two years of original approval, must be re-submitted to your School Ethics Committee.

You must inform your School Ethics Committee when the research has been completed. If you are unable to complete your research within the 3 three year validation period, you will be required to write to your School Ethics Committee and to UTREC (where approval was given by UTREC) to request an extension or you will need to re-apply.

Any serious adverse events or significant change which occurs in connection with this study and/or which may alter its ethical consideration, must be reported immediately to the School Ethics Committee, and an Ethical Amendment Form submitted where appropriate.

Approval is given on the understanding that the 'Guidelines for Ethical Research Practice' <https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/utrec/guidelines/> are adhered to.

Yours sincerely,

Margot Clement, Secretary, School Ethics Committee, for
Convenor of the School Ethics Committee

Copy: Supervisor; File; SEC

Add School Ethics Committee Contact details

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