



Must We Love Non-Human Animals?

A Post-*Laudato Si* Thomistic Perspective

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Abstract

Drawing especially on Aquinas and Pope Francis, the paper argues that Christians are indeed called to love non-human animals. Human love (*amor*) for non-human animals follows from the Trinitarian example of divine love (*amor*), and includes affection, dilection, benevolence, and thus charity as friendship. Love for and fraternity with non-human animals constitutes a necessary dimension of Christian conversion. The specific form this love takes depends on the particular natures inherent in different species. So to show love to a dog will be very different from showing love to a wolf, which is in turn very different from how one shows love to a chicken, or to a frog, and so on.

Keywords

Aquinas, Pope Francis, Pope John Paul II, love, *amor*, charity, *caritas*, animals, affection, non-human animals, animal theology, animal rights, *Laudato Si*, *Summa Theologiae*

My starting point in this paper are four key assertions of *Laudato Si*: the creative and sustaining love of God is a gift of God to all creatures; all non-human animals have *intrinsic* goodness as creatures of God; every animal species is worthy of concern for its own sake.; and that human love of non-human animals must reflect God's love. In light of these claims, this paper focuses on the meaning of human love for non-human animals.

The paper proceeds in five parts. In the first two sections, I examine the nature of Divine Love and the derivative human loves as they pertain to the love of non-human animals; in the third section, I examine two common and yet erroneous understandings of God's creation, and how they fail as accounts of God's love for non-human animals; in the fourth section, I put forward a constructive theological account

of how we should understand God's purposes for a particular species of non-human animal. The kinds and degrees of love possible between a human and a non-human animal will depend in large part on the nature and capacities of the particular species we seek to love. Finally, after a brief interlude to address a potential objection, the fifth and final section addresses some ways — in light of God's Trinitarian love of non-human animals — Christians can show love to God's other animal species.

Before I begin, I add two prefatory remarks: First, the reader will notice that in this paper I typically refer not to 'humans' and 'animals,' but to "humans and non-human animals," or to "humans and other animals." I write this way because human beings are also animals. If some readers take offence, it perhaps reveals that such readers are good Cartesians rather than good Thomists. Only in a post-Cartesian world can human beings imagine that they are not also an animal species. Ancient and medieval Christians would find such a claim preposterous. In the *Summa Theologiae*, Saint Thomas' favorite example of a self-evident proposition is that "a human being is an animal!" Aquinas could not imagine that anyone would deny such an obvious fact.

My second prefatory comment is that — at least in parts of this paper — I will endeavour to speak either of an individual animal, or an individual species of non-human animal. For the number of insights that applies to each and every species of non-human animal is very limited. Furthermore, when one speaks of 'animals' generically, one's grammar already presumes a binary between 'humans' and 'animals.' As a result, the incredible variety of purposes given by God to different animal species can only be seen at best to be of relatively minor significance. As I see it, acceptance of this erroneous and typically hidden presupposition makes it difficult for a reader to seriously engage the argument of this paper.

Divine Love and Non-Human Animals

"I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another" (John 13:34). In John's gospel, this command of Jesus is given to the apostles, his twelve primary disciples. However, Christian tradition has understood it to have wider application, as one of two primary commands given to all Christians, namely the command of love of one's neighbour. *Laudato Si* suggests that Jesus' love command be extended to more neighbours in our 'common home,' to all of God's creatures.

To understand how Jesus has loved us, and to understand divine love more generally, we begin with 'relationality.' Relationality is a defining characteristic of the Christian Trinitarian God. The web of relationships within the Trinity is the divine model for creation, and these

relationships are woven into all of creation. What characterizes both the intra-Trinitarian relationships, and those between God and creation, is love.¹ As Aquinas puts it: “Since to love (*amare*) is nothing other than to will some good to some existing thing, it is clear that God loves (*amat*) all things that exist.”² In the act of creation itself, each and every creature in its very existence is a sign of and embodies God’s goodness. Love (*amor*) is for Aquinas the most basic desire or movement, that which exemplifies divine activity, and which ultimately underlies all creaturely desire and movement. *Amor* is not a psychological term, but a metaphysical one. It constitutes the ultimate source of all movement and desire.³

God’s love abundantly flows through the Trinitarian activities of creation, redemption, and sanctification. As humans we are animals of modest intelligence, imagination, and capacity to love. Thus, this plenitude in Divine love is beyond our comprehension, impossible for us to fathom. Such effusive love is a mystery in the true sense. The plenitude of meaning arising from creation is something we can approach, can participate in, and can contemplate, but the greatness of God’s love is not something our minds can ever hope to fully comprehend.

This endless goodness and love that emanates from the Trinity is apportioned to each and every human and non-human animal according to the divine Wisdom. At the same time, individual persons of the Trinity are associated with particular types of Divine activity.⁴ First, God the Father loves all creatures into existence. The existence of each porpoise, penguin, parrot, and polar bear is a unique and definitive

¹ “The Divine Persons are subsistent relations, and the world, created according to the divine model, is a web of relationships. Creatures tend towards God, and in turn it is proper to every living being to tend towards other beings, so that throughout the universe we can find any number of constant and secretly interwoven relationships. This leads us not only to marvel at the manifold connections existing among creatures, but also to discover a key to our own fulfillment. The human person grows more, matures more, and is sanctified more to the extent that he or she enters into relationships, going out from themselves to live in communion with God, with others, and with all other creatures. In this way, they make their own that Trinitarian dynamism which God imprinted in them when they were created. Everything is interconnected, and this invites us to develop a spirituality of that Global solidarity which flows from the mystery of the Trinity” (*Laudato Si*, §240. Henceforth abbreviated as *LS*). Similarly, in the previous paragraph – Pope Francis notes that every creature – every pig, every porpoise, every parrot – “bears in itself a specifically Trinitarian structure, so real that it could be readily contemplated if only the human gaze were not so partial dark, and fragile” (*LS*§239).

² Aquinas adds: “All existing things are good insofar as they exist ... God’s will is the cause of all things and wills some good to every existing thing” (ST I 20.2).

³ This is why Aquinas typically refers to God as Love (*Amor*) in the *prima pars* of the *Summa Theologiae*. Metaphysically speaking, without *amor* there would be no creaturely movement at all. All of creation would stagnate and die. All movement specific to sensing (or rational) creatures is caused by desires, which are appetites and passions.

⁴ For a brief account of how the “personal properties” of each person of the Trinity, see *Laudato Si*, §238-240.

expression of God's individuating love. Second, God redeems the world (*cosmos*) through Jesus, who guides each non-human animal to their fullness in their heavenly home. Third, the Holy Spirit's grace – that is, the Spirit's indwelling in each and every human and non-human animal – makes possible the sanctification of each creature.⁵

These divine modes of love lead each and every non-human animal to participate in the love of God. Through their connatural pursuit of their God-given ends and purposes, each non-human animal participates in the universe's song of praise to God. This is the heart and soul of their God-given meaning and purpose.⁶ This perspective is to be contrasted with the anthropocentrism of the majority of Christian theology, which claims (either explicitly or implicitly), that God's good creation exists merely for the service of human beings.⁷ But such a view is simply idolatry, as it usurps the primary purpose of all other animal species – which like the human species – is to love and serve God.

Human Loves and Non-Human Animals

Any discussion of human love is complicated by the fact that in contemporary English 'love' has many different meanings. Our use of 'love' is thus prone to misunderstandings if we intend its use in one way, but the reader interprets our use differently. What in English is only one term is represented by numerous terms in both Greek and Latin. C.S. Lewis writes of the "four loves" we inherit from the Greek.⁸ St. Thomas Aquinas has four Latin terms for what we customarily refer to as love.⁹ Love is first and foremost *amor*, as it characterizes divine love, and is also the primary and most God-like love in all animals, including human beings.¹⁰

⁵ As *Laudato Si* says, the Holy Spirit ensures the growth of each creature, each one "journeying towards its ultimate perfection" (§80, n.49).

⁶ "Every creature is thus the object of the Father's tenderness, who gives it its place in the world. Even the fleeting life of the least of beings is the object of his love, and in its few seconds of existence, God enfolds it with his affection" (*LS* §77).

⁷ "The Bible has no place for a tyrannical anthropocentrism unconcerned for other creatures" (*LS* §68).

⁸ C.S. Lewis's four loves are: *storge*, *philia*, *eros*, and *agape*. See C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (New York: Fontana, 1960).

⁹ Aquinas' four terms are *amor*, *dilectio*, *caritas*, and *amicitia*. In terms of their relation to each other, *amor* is the genus, and *dilectio*, *caritas*, and *amicitia* are species or sub-species of *amor*. In the *Summa Theologiae* alone, *amor* and its variants appear 3873 times, *dilectio* and its variants 1352 times, *caritas* and its variants 3772 times, and *amicitia* and its variants 514 times. In the first (more metaphysical) part of the *Summa* (ST I), the use of *amor* (and *dilectio* somewhat) dominates, whereas when Aquinas discusses the specifics of Christian life (ST II-II), the use of *caritas* (and *amicitia*) dominates.

¹⁰ "Love (*amor*) signifies something more God-like ... especially in so far as it is in the sensitive appetite; ... It is possible for a human being to tend to God by love (*amor*), being

In addition to this primordial form of love (*amor*), there are four aspects of love given their own names, all of which reveal more specifically ways in which human beings can love an animal of another species. The first aspect is affection, which C.S. Lewis considers the most basic form of love. The paradigm example of affection is parental care for offspring.¹¹ Like many other social animals, parents and their children naturally form deep bonds. Our profound need for affection highlights our animality.¹² The fulfillment of our bodily needs and desires profoundly affects our moods and disposition. Human beings seriously deprived of affection typically cannot fully mature as human beings. As bodily beings we require bodily responses to passions such as sorrow, suffering, fear, despair, and anger. For example, with regard to sorrow, Aquinas sensibly speaks of addressing it by tears and groans, by a hot bath, a good sleep, and comfort from friends.¹³ Affection is clearly a form of love, which human beings can and do show for particular non-human animals, and *vice versa*.

The second and third of these four significant senses of love are dilection (*dilectio*) and charity (*caritas*). Dilection and charity are both rational loves, involving acts of will. Dilection is concerned with human goods, moving us towards the goods of our human nature and thus to our earthly happiness (*beatitudo imperfecta*). Charity is concerned with the divine good,¹⁴ moving us to a supernatural happiness (*beatitudo perfecta*).¹⁵ This supernatural happiness is movement towards union with God, toward enjoyment of God for God's own sake. Charity also directs us to the love of our neighbours, both human and non-human.¹⁶

as it were passively drawn by God, more than a human being can possibly be drawn thereto by reason, which pertains to the nature of *dilectio*. Consequently, love is more Godlike than *dilectio*" (ST I-II.26.3.ad.4).

¹¹ Lewis, *The Four Loves*, 32, 40.

¹² For an extended discussion of human animality, see John Berkman, "Toward a Thomistic Theology of Animality," in *Creaturely Theology: On God, Humans and Other Animals*, eds. David Clough and Celia Deane-Drummond (London: SCM Press, 2009), 21-40.

¹³ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, 38.

¹⁴ "The love (*amor*) called charity (*caritas*) is the love (*amor*) of the Divine good" (ST II-II 23.4). Acts of *caritas* are acts of *dilectio* because humans are rational creatures (ST II-II 27). Since our ultimate end is complete union with God, there is no limit to the possibility of charity, though there are barriers in our lives which we must overcome if we wish to participate in charity at all, and continue to grow and develop in charity.

¹⁵ For Aquinas *beatitudo* may refer either to earthly happiness, which he calls imperfect *beatitudo*, or heavenly happiness, which he calls perfect *beatitudo*.

¹⁶ That is, for the sake of goodness, the very nature of Divine love. As Aquinas puts it "The Divine Essence Itself is charity ... as It is wisdom and goodness. We are ... good with the goodness which is God, and wise with the wisdom which is God (since the goodness whereby we are formally good is a participation of Divine goodness), so too, the charity whereby formally we love our neighbour is a participation of Divine charity" (ST II-II 23.2 ad.1).

The fourth of these significant senses of love is friendship (*amicitia*). Since charity is the pursuit of union with God, Aquinas considers friendship (*amor amicitia*) the paradigm of charity. While charity is directed foremost towards God, we come to understand it analogously to our notion of earthly friendship. Earthly friendship is founded on communication and has three key characteristics. The first key characteristic of true friendship (*amor amicitia*) is benevolence (*benevolentia*), wishing for the friend's good and perfection for God's sake.¹⁷ Second, friendship requires *affection* for the other.¹⁸ Third, friendship requires mutuality. Both friends must feel affection for and act benevolently towards the other.

Thus, *caritas* is to be understood as the love of others for God's sake. We act towards our neighbour in ways that encourage and support their authentic flourishing as God's beloved creatures. If we understand friendship according to these three characteristics — wishing the good for the other, affection for the other, and mutuality — there is no reason to deny that we can act with charity for, and receive charity from, a variety of non-human species.

Two Theological Misunderstandings of God's Creation

In the Catholic theological tradition, and Christian theology more generally, there has been a profound failure adequately to address the God-given ends and purposes of the various species of non-human animals.¹⁹ This failure arises in large part from two problematic readings of God's created order.²⁰ Thus I present a genealogy, through which I open up the necessary conceptual and theological space for my alternative.

Various theological traditions have fallen prey to one of two problematic theological viewpoints concerning non-human animals and God's creation more generally: some *unduly exalt* creation; others

¹⁷ *ST* II-II 23.1.

¹⁸ Affection is essential for friendship, because, as Aquinas puts it, one can have benevolence for one's enemies.

¹⁹ As I wrote almost thirty years ago, one factor that has made it difficult is because of existing eating practices with regards to so many non-human animals. In an analogous way to the difficulty of speaking of the morality of slave-owning with a slave owner, so too it is practically futile to discuss God's love for non-human animals with someone who runs a factory farm, or someone who is in the middle of eating veal or foie gras. But I will leave that particular difficulty aside.

²⁰ I have provided more extensive analyses of these two errors in John Berkman (with Stanley Hauerwas) "A Trinitarian Theology of the Chief End of All Flesh", in *Good News For Animals?*, ed. Jay McDaniel and Charles Pinches (New York: Orbis Press, 1992) 62 – 74; and with particular reference to Pope John Paul II's *Evangelium vitae* in John Berkman, "Prophetically Pro-Life: John Paul II's Gospel of Life and Evangelical Concern for Animals," *Josephinum Journal of Theology* (6:1, Winter/Spring 1999), 43 - 59.

purely *instrumentalize* it. The *undue exaltation* viewpoint idealizes the natural order, failing to appropriately distinguish it from God's creation.²¹ There are two main variants of the undue exaltation of creation viewpoint: the first equates the created order with the divine (i.e., it *supernaturalizes creation*); the second viewpoint equates the created order with nature (i.e., it *naturalizes creation*).

Views that *supernaturalize creation* (or some part of it) are the much older view, seemingly a constant impulse through human history, with almost every culture having its own version of the golden calf. Here nature becomes the ultimate good. Extreme versions of this thesis give ultimate priority to maximal expansion of untouched nature, going so far as to suggest severely curbing the human population, since a large human population is incompatible with maximizing untouched nature. More moderate views that tend towards divinizing nature are various eco-theologies and creation spiritualities. At their worst, theological approaches that supernaturalize creation seem to want resurrection without the cross, redemption without a redeemer, and sanctification without sin.²²

Views that *naturalize creation* reject the classic theological view that nature as we know it is not the same as God's created order.²³ Such theologies — typically mesmerized by an evolutionary 'scientism' — affirm a normative status to predation and parasitism in nature. However, once nature as it currently exists is considered the ideal, it follows that the continuous cycles of predation, death and decay are not only necessary, but good. Only a kind of naiveté on the part of some of these theologians keeps them from affirming a 'survival of the fittest' ethic or a 'Lion King' theology with its 'circle of life.'

So the fundamental problem with theological approaches which naturalize creation is that their views are implicitly Deist, with an attendant survival-of-the-fittest ethic. And evolutionary slogans such as "pro-sociality" do not help. They may critique aspects of modern

²¹ Similarly, according to *Laudato Si*, creation is not divine. Since it is not divine, therefore there is a fundamental human responsibility for creation (§78). However, unlike most Christian accounts of responsibility that call for human intervention and agency, *Laudato Si* demurs from this viewpoint. Rather than connecting responsibility with human power to control and manipulate, *Laudato Si* emphasizes the human responsibility to limit human power with regard to God's creation (§78). The importance of limiting human power in *Laudato Si* is closely connected with its account of modernity's 'techno-economic' way of thinking, discussed below in footnote 24.

²² A paradigm is Matthew Fox's *Original Blessing* (Santa Fe: Bear, 1983). Unfortunately, the magnitude of its arrogance and vacuity has been matched by its popularity.

²³ For an influential example of the latter, see Christopher Southgate, *The Groaning of Creation: God, Evolution, and the Problem of Evil* (Louisville, Westminster John Knox, 2008). Another example is James Nash, *Loving Nature: Ecological Integrity and Christian Responsibility* (Nashville: Abington Press, 1991).

individualism and remind us that humans are social animals, but they leave the survivalist ethic in place at a communal level.

In contrast to the exaltation of nature viewpoint, the *instrumentalization* viewpoint assumes that the world is a stage on which human beings are the only actors. Non-human animals (and the rest of creation) are at best the backdrop for a purely human drama. Charles Taylor has referred to this view as part of the ‘disenchantment’ of the natural world in modernity.²⁴ In a disenchanted world, other animals can be completely instrumentalized. Non-human animals are mere material to be used, which human beings can treat as any other commodity. They are to be bought and sold, bred or destroyed, and endlessly manipulated for any purpose or even for no worthwhile purpose.²⁵ At its worst, no thought or concern for the well-being of individual animals or species is required.²⁶

This pure instrumentalization of domesticated animal species has only been fully developed and routinized in the last fifty years, with the advent of factory farming. This is an example of the pure commodification of God’s creatures, and a prime example of what Pope John Paul II calls structural sin. The structural sin by owners and directors of factory farming lies in the routinization of almost unimaginable cruelty on an enormous scale towards animals such as cows, pigs, chickens, and geese.²⁷ This structural sin also operates in the ways owners

²⁴ Taylor summary of the problem of disenchantment in the modern world, and his direction for how this is to be overcome, is similar to the argument of this paper: “Despite the widespread loss of the magical world and of the metaphysics of the Great Chain of Being – even despite the widespread loss of belief in God – a strong evaluation of meaning is still possible in the modern world, even if it is a world painted by a reductive and mechanistic science, so long as this reductive language doesn’t swallow the self-perceived integrity of the evaluating agent, so that it cannot be said to truly evaluate the wonder of the world and be so motivated, by this evaluation, to respond in love.” Charles Taylor “Disenchantment-Reenchantment” in *Dilemmas and Connections* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 302.

²⁵ Pope Francis speaks of this instrumentalization as a “techno-economic mindset.” This avaricious power-seeking mindset, typically serves “particular interests and ideologies” (§188, §198). Its preoccupation with financial gain and the maximization of profit is simply “collective selfishness” (§194, §195, §204). In this diagnosis of our contemporary ills, Francis is solidly in the tradition of Catholic social thought, and quotes from Paul VI’s 1970 address to the United Nations: “the urgent need for a radical change in the conduct of humanity,” inasmuch as “the most extraordinary scientific advances, the most amazing technical abilities, the most astonishing economic growth, unless they are accompanied by authentic social land moral progress, will definitively turn against man” (§4).

²⁶ This attitude to non-human animals (or something presuming it) can be found in almost all contemporary introductions to moral theology and even many introductions to environmental ethics. For example, post-Vatican II works in moral theology have had nothing to say about non-human animals. They are simply left out of the picture, as if they simply do not exist and are not a subject of moral theology.

²⁷ For an extended discussion of the inherent cruelty in and structural evil of factory farming, and why it is sinful to support this industry by eating meat products of factory

of factory farms co-opt poor and powerless workers. These typically migrant and/or undocumented workers are made to carry out this routinized cruelty in extremely dangerous and degrading conditions.²⁸

What generates this logic of pure instrumentalism with regard to God's created order? According to Pope John Paul II, it occurs when nature is no longer accorded its God-given integrity and dignity: "Nature itself, from being 'mater' (mother), is reduced to being mere matter, subjected to every kind of manipulation."²⁹ The logic of pure instrumentalism "rejects the very idea that there is a truth of creation which must be acknowledged, or a plan of God for life which must be respected."³⁰ He finds this characteristic of "a certain technical and scientific way of thinking, prevalent in present-day culture."³¹ In contrast, John Paul II maintains that humans must observe moral laws with regard to non-human animal species.

In *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis provides a similar diagnosis. Our society - with its particular kind of scientific mindset - is *prone to see creation as mere nature*. It arises from the cultural authority of what Michel Foucault's call a particular 'gaze,' a clinical or scientific gaze.³² It objectifies that upon which it gazes, and is typical of those with intellectual authority and/or positions of power. Vivisectionists and abattoir employees exemplify the Foucaultian gaze. How can those in such jobs possibly see the God-given goodness and beauty of all creatures? As Pope Francis puts it, the attitude of those who take on the scientific gaze with regard to non-human animals "will be that of masters, consumers, ruthless exploiters, unable to set limits on immediate needs."³³ To look upon a mink or a bear or leopard, a cow, a pig, or a chicken,

farming, see John Berkman, "Are We Addicted to the Suffering of Animals? Animal Cruelty and the Catholic Moral Tradition." *A Faith Embracing All Creatures: Addressing Commonly Asked Questions about Christian Care for Animals* eds. Andy Alexis-Baker and Tripp York (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012), 124-137.

²⁸ Classic works on the oppression of factory farm workers include Gail Eisnitz, *Slaughterhouse: The Shocking Story of Greed, Neglect, and Inhumane Treatment Inside the U.S. Meat Industry* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1997) and Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2000).

²⁹ Pope John Paul, II, *Evangelium Vitae*, §22. Henceforth *EV*.

³⁰ *EV*, §22.

³¹ *EV* §22. On this see also Mary Midgely, *Science as Salvation: A Modern Myth and its Meaning* (London: Routledge, 1992).

³² See Foucault's *Birth of the Clinic* (1963). For Foucault, a paradigm example of the 'gaze' is clinical diagnosis. In medicine, this may be seen as to taking to its logical conclusion William Osler's *aequanimitas*.

³³ *LS* §11. Thus Pope Francis says that the gaze of scientists "benefits from faith. Faith encourages the scientist to remain constantly open to reality in all its inexhaustible richness. Faith awakens the critical sense by preventing research from being satisfied with its own formulae and helps it to realize that nature is always greater. By stimulating wonder before the profound mystery of creation, faith broadens the horizons of reason to shed greater light on the world which discloses itself to scientific investigation" (*LS* §199 n. 141). Alasdair MacIntyre has argued this philosophically, that new scientific insights and innovations are

a chimpanzee, a dog, or a mouse through a 'biological' lens, or to calculate their worth in terms of our economic or medical benefit, is degrading and 'disintegrating.' This disintegrating gaze is the exact opposite of Pope Francis' vision of 'integral ecology.'

Christians are called to a very different kind of gaze, to seek knowledge of various species of non-human animals of a different kind and by different means. It is a gaze of love, which involves entering into a personal relationship with the object of one's gaze. Our gaze upon minks and leopards, sheep and goats, rats and rabbits, must be as objects of wonder, with whom we seek fraternal relationships "through bonds of affection."³⁴ Our gaze upon other animals is to mimic God's gaze upon human and non-human animals.

From the above critique of both the undue exaltation viewpoint and the instrumentalization viewpoint, it should be clear that a faithful understanding of creation is not self-explanatory. Rather, it can only be rightly understood when seen in Trinitarian perspective. The Christian affirmation of creation must be an affirmation that the God who in Jesus Christ has saved us, and who intends for us to share in the peaceable kingdom of God, has been a saving and peaceable God from the beginning. Without redemption and sanctification, there is no *Christian* doctrine of creation. Contra those who seek to naturalize creation, nature as it presently exists is "creation in bondage" (Romans 8:21). Contrary to evolutionary scientism, the original created order of Genesis cannot be seen as synonymous with our present 'natural' world.³⁵

God's good creation is a work of Divine Love. Creation must be affirmed as essentially peaceable, in sharp contrast to the violence characteristic of our broken and fallen natural world. As John Milbank notes, it is a set of modern heresies which seek to replace the classic Christian view of the created order as one of ontological peace, with one where the created is viewed as ontologically violent.³⁶ Without a theological account of our inherently tragic situation, which Saint Augustine bequeathed to the West 1600 years ago, we wind up with the 'Lion King theology' discussed above.

inherently beyond the scope of natural science methodology, cannot be accounted for in terms of natural science itself.

³⁴ *LS*, §11.

³⁵ For an extended discussion of the original created order in Trinitarian and eschatological perspective, see John Berkman, 'Prophetically Pro-life: John Paul II's Gospel of Life and Evangelical Concern for Animals,' in *The Josephinum Journal of Theology* (6:1) 1999, 48-51.

³⁶ John Milbank notes that to the extent that modern liberalism has abandoned the Christian meta narrative of ontological peace for one of original violence, it serves as one of the great heresies of modernity. See John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990).

The Purposes of Non-Human Animals in Theological Perspective

So how should we see the place of the multitude of non-human animal species which are an expression of God's good creation? What is God's story with regard to the other species that God has created? God's story about all animals is first and foremost a story of God's providential love and concern for each species of animal, including the individuals of each species. According to *Laudato Si*, God, the author of all creation, loves ALL creatures. Each and every creature glorifies God *in its very mode of existing*. Every creaturely species contributes to the perfection of God's world.³⁷ Central to God's providential love is that God gives each species — including the human species — *its own divinely ordained ends*.³⁸ Like us as human animals, each species created by God manifests God's goodness. Each non-human animal gives praise to God — and manifests God's goodness — in flourishing as a creature of a specific nature. Thus, an appropriate love of another species requires an understanding of that species' particular mode of flourishing, both individually and as a member of a species. If we are faithful to God's animal creation, we must support their praises of God by supporting their flourishing.³⁹

Furthermore, the flourishing of each animal species - their existing towards the perfection of their natures — necessarily contributes to the

³⁷ For Aquinas, all species by existing according to their own degree of goodness make a necessary contribution to the perfection of the universe, "since the universe would not be perfect if one grade of goodness were found in things" (ST I.47.2). In other words, Aquinas' view is that "the perfection of the universe is marked essentially by the diversity of natures, by which the diverse grades of goodness are filled up" (*quia perfectio universi attenditur essentialiter secundum diversitatem naturarum, quibus implentur diversi gradus bonitatis.*) (I Sent 44.1.2 ad. 6). *Laudato Si* echoes this view repeatedly, for example, "Each creature possesses its own particular goodness and perfection...reflects in its own way a ray of God's infinite wisdom and goodness" (section 69).

³⁸ I see this account as having no problematic relationship with accounts of evolution. For my account of this question, see John Berkman, "The Evolution of Moral Wisdom: What Some Ethicists might learn from Some Evolutionary Anthropologists," in Deane-Drummond and Fuentes ed., *Evolution of Wisdom: Major and Minor Keys* (Notre Dame: Center for Theology, Science and Human Flourishing, 2019). Available at ctshf.pressbooks.com/chapter/the-evolution-of-moral-wisdom/.

³⁹ As St. Thomas puts it, God guides other species of animals connaturally to their end. God gives each species its own form of knowledge, which allows non-human animals to do such things as learn skills of survival, raising offspring to maturity, finding mates, avoiding predators, finding food, and foremost solving various sorts of problems that enable various 'perfect' animals to do all these things. As Aquinas puts it, the perfect animals are guided by the estimative sense, a quasi-cognitive power that allows many species to develop skills. As modern ethological studies have definitively shown, some of these skills may be particular to only some members of a species, or developed by a particular individual from whom other individuals learn the skill. Furthermore, a particular group within a species (e.g., the chimpanzees, macaques, dolphins, or ravens only in a particular geographical area) typically develop practices or 'cultures' that are unique to them.

perfection of God's world. - For Aquinas, the entire physical world (including plants, birds, non-human and human animals) is ordered towards 'ultimate perfection.' Their connatural pursue of their ends is both their happiness and their praise to the goodness of God.

Interlude - Is Love of Non-Human Animals Compatible with Loving Human Beings?

Early in the paper, I spoke of the uniquely human aspects of flourishing. Nothing in this paper denies the uniqueness of the capacities of the human animal, nor the special significance of the human person in relation to salvation. No serious account of Christology could fail to see the special and unique significance of the human species. However, the unique significance of human beings is not the topic of this essay. Rather, my focus is the human failure to recognize the theological significance of God's other creatures. My project — unlike some animal ethics or theologies - is not a zero-sum game. We must overcome the temptation to see any recognition of God's love for all God's creatures as an affront to the significance of human beings in God's eyes. For this is a temptation to the misguided and "tyrannical anthropocentrism" that *Laudato Si* repeatedly condemns (sections 68–69; sections 115–122). Once one gazes upon the plenitude of divine love, this fear should be overcome.

How Are We To Love Non-Human Animals?

I have argued in this paper that we are to love our fellow creatures as they are loved by God. I have further argued that appropriate love of non-human animals takes a Trinitarian shape. In this final section I draw on a Trinitarian dynamism as I examine aspects how we can love wild animals, farmed animals, and companion animals.⁴⁰

Wild Animals and the *Amor* of God

We have already discussed God's love in creating non-human animals, that God's love brings all creatures into existence and sustains them at every moment of their existence. Furthermore, all non-human animals have intrinsic goodness and worth. Their ultimate purpose is not the

⁴⁰ I am aware that this categorization of non-human animals itself betrays anthropocentric assumptions. In utilizing these common categorizations I am not intending to give them any inherent theological legitimacy. My thanks to Wycliffe College doctoral student, Hannah Scanlon, for alerting me to this important point.

service of human beings, but the praise of God. Although one of the tasks of human love to non-human animals will be to come to know them as species, and understand their flourishing, this proves most difficult when it comes to animals that are truly wild.

There are of course extremely important things that can be done. Most important of all is habitat protection. The continuous destruction of forests and wetlands for temporary and modest human gain is leading to mass extinction:

“Each year sees the disappearance of thousands of plant and animal species which we will never know, which our children will never see, because they have been lost for ever. The great majority 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.”⁴¹

Besides habitat protection, there is the continued problem and tragedy of poaching. Poaching - e.g., in National Parks - is integrally connected with poverty. In this case, Pope Francis' integral ecology requires a solution that includes the people who live in the vicinity of such National Parks. A shining example of an integral ecology is Gorongosa National Park in Central Mozambique. After being largely abandoned for 20 years because of a civil war, its rebirth has involved a commitment to all those persons living both in and around the park. The mission of Gorongosa National Park has been not only to restore the park, but also to bring opportunities for education, and healthcare to the communities surrounding the park. Another part of its mission is to protect Mount Gorongosa from deforestation, which is of particular importance because the rainforest atop Mount Gorongosa is the primary source of water for central Mozambique. Areas of Gorongosa National Park are devoted to growing coffee and cashews, and making honey, and these products bring economic revitalization to that part of central Mozambique, as well as the numerous jobs related to the functioning of the park. Finally, the park has been committed to training young Mozambiquan scientists, who work in the large scientific research station in the park, and who will have the opportunity to become leaders in their field within Mozambique and beyond.

Because of the successes in providing education, healthcare, and economic opportunity to the areas surrounding the park, those living around the park are committed to its success. As a result, poaching has not been a major problem. When poachers have entered the park, the park rangers are informed by community members. Where there exists an integral ecology for all of those in and around the park, there is a

⁴¹ LS §33.

concern for the good of all, the community becomes committed to the success of the park.⁴²

With regard to wild animals, all this work can only be sustained if our gaze upon non-human animals that live in the wild is a loving gaze, seeing their beauty and majesty as Divine artistry. The beauty we see in a parrot, the wonder that a lion or lemur inspires, is all purposed by God. Each and every one of these creatures is infused with God's wisdom. Part of ongoing Christian conversion is to develop an ever-increasing "awareness that each creature reflects something of God and has a message to convey to us."⁴³ As noted above, unlike nature, which can be merely 'studied,' creation can and must inspire the gaze of wonder. For only when we gaze upon creation as gift, and gaze upon it with love, is the reality of creation and its beauty truly illuminated.⁴⁴

When we gaze upon creation with this God-inspired wonder, we not only act with love, but we also taste God's love for us.⁴⁵ An attitude of wonder and openness to beauty gives us not only a taste of God's glory, but is also how we ourselves enter into relationship with God. An authentic encounter with God cannot begin with an attitude of control, but requires a receptivity to a relationship with One who is infinitely greater and wiser. Furthermore, only "to the extent that [we] enter into relationships, going out from [our]selves to live in communion with God, with others and with all other creatures," can we "grow more, mature more, and be sanctified more."⁴⁶ As we grow in these ways, we increasingly take on the Trinitarian dynamism which God has imprinted on us in our very creation.

The Affection and Charity of Jesus for the Least of These Animals

A striking aspect of *Laudato Si* is that when speaking of salvation, it focuses less on the need for salvation, and more on the nature of the salvation that is given to all the different species of non-human animals. Francis continues his trinitarian theme in that salvation lies in integral relationality on the journey of life. So *Laudato Si* repeatedly emphasizes God's presence to and friendship with each and every animal on its life journey.⁴⁷ Furthermore, Francis calls human beings to a key dimension of their conversion in this life.

⁴² My knowledge of Gorongosa National Park is based upon a visit in August of 2016.

⁴³ *LS*, § 221.

⁴⁴ *LS*, §76.

⁴⁵ *LS*, §12. For when we contemplate God's creation, we come to see God's plenitude, a most joyful mystery.

⁴⁶ *LS*, §240

⁴⁷ Francis insists that God holds with deep affection even creatures that live only a few seconds (*LS* §76).

In this discussion of salvation, the focus turns to Jesus. “We read in the Gospel that Jesus says of the birds of the air that “not one of them is forgotten before God” (Lk 12:6). How then can we possibly mistreat them or cause them harm?”⁴⁸ The attitude evoked here could not be further from the dystopian world we currently inhabit with regard to how most Christians treat non-human animals. The dystopian world — already briefly mentioned earlier — is most evident in the inherent and structurally required animal cruelty that makes factory farms possible.

Catholic critiques of factory farming are not new with Pope Francis. Twenty years ago, prior to his elevation to the papacy, Benedict XVI gave a similarly harsh critique of the inherent cruelty and commodification of non-human animals in factory farming:

“That is a very serious question. We cannot just do whatever we want with them. Animals, too, are God’s creatures 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 living 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. Animals, too, are . . . creatures of God’s will, creatures we must respect as companions in creation.”⁴⁹

In this passage Benedict not only decries the *cruelty* to these geese, but also their *degradation* as creatures of God. Factory farming decisively rejects the truth that all non-human animals have divinely given purposes and embody a Trinitarian dynamism. Furthermore, Benedict advocates all the conditions required to show charity to non-human animals as it is defined by St. Thomas. Benedict advocates benevolence to them and sees them as companions both worthy of affection and capable of mutuality.

Nothing could be more opposed to this desecration of God’s creation than Francis’ language of Jesus accompanying every cow, every chicken, on its journey through life.⁵⁰ The risen Christ “is *intimately* present to each” non-human animal, “surrounding it with his affection and penetrating it with his love.”⁵¹ As we have seen above, Francis’ focus on relationships and intimacy signifies deep and healing friendships.⁵²

⁴⁸ *LS*, § 221.

⁴⁹ Pope Benedict XVI. *God and the world: a conversation with Peter Seewald*. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2002), 78.

⁵⁰ *LS*, §238.

⁵¹ *LS*, §221.

⁵² Intimacy is the term Pope Francis employs repeatedly to speak of Jesus’ relationship with individual non-human animals.

The Holy Spirit and Love of Companion Animals

“And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field” (Genesis 2:20). Naming non-human animals involves two discoveries, two revelations: beginning to know a particular non-human animal as part of a particular species; and beginning to know a particular non-human animal as an individual:

On the one hand, naming a species is an initial effort (or perhaps the culmination of an effort) to know in general the nature and character of that species. It is a key aspect of what it means to love another species. It is so because in order for humans to love a particular non-human animal species appropriately, if we are to help them realize their multifarious ends, we must understand their nature and purposes. But the knowledge necessary is not merely ‘clinical,’ but must be ‘love’s knowledge,’ wanting the good for that particular animal with the knowledge of its purposes and ends given by God.

Just as growth in love of another human person involves understanding his or her true good and seeking to help him or her realize his or her ends, so, too, growth in love of a particular dog involves coming to better understand the good and ends involved in being a dog. This task, to understand other species as God understands them, to help other species realize their God-given ends and purposes, is the task of a new discipline which I call theological ethology.⁵³

On the other hand, naming a particular animal is part of coming to know the particular character of that animal within its species nature. For example, to name a dog is to enter into a new kind of relationship with that animal. In the summer of 2018, we got a Newfoundland puppy whom we named ‘Dr. Jones.’ Even among his litter-mates, we had already seen distinct aspects of his personality.⁵⁴ Once Jones became a part of our family, we saw Jones differently. We began to love Jones. And this is what Pope Francis calls on us to do. As he puts it, we should look upon Jones through the lens of love, seeing ourselves as being united to Jones “through bonds of affection.”⁵⁵ This is not nature romanticism. This love must animate our family’s actions in relation to Jones.⁵⁶

⁵³ I have elaborated on the call and meaning of theological ethology in John Berkman ‘From Theological Speciesism to a Theological Ethology: Where Catholic Moral Theology Needs to Go’ *Journal of Moral Theology* 3:2 (2014), 1-10.

⁵⁴ For example, among his seven siblings, Jones already knew where he stood, knew his place in the hierarchy. The two dominant puppies were the two females.

⁵⁵ *LS*, §11.

⁵⁶ Analogously, we can say that as I should not gaze upon my brother merely through the eyes of appreciation of his talents (he’s a great hockey player and elevates my status) or my sister in light of her economic potential for my well-being (she’s a doctor so can support me if I’m hard up), so, too, I must not gaze upon Jones (or a lemur or a pig or a penguin) in this way.

So how do I love Dr. Jones? By seeking the best for him, that which is his authentic good. In many ways, it is the simple and mundane practices of a devoted dog owner, taking him for walks and to visit with other dogs, taking him to a veterinarian, keeping him safe, providing him with proper food and lots of love - dogs are made happy by touch. But it also involves thinking clearly and deeply about the authentic goods for a dog.⁵⁷ One of the terrible things that humans can do to a dog (or another animal) is to try to treat it as a human, and this almost always turns out to be a disaster, both for the human and the dog. As I come to a deeper understanding, I will be better able to make concrete proposals about promoting the good (or at least avoiding continued egregious harm) of the, e.g., dog species – and my particular dog – in relation to Dr. Jones’ and other dogs specific ways of honouring God in their being.

In seeking to love individual species of non-human animals in ways suggested in the final section, “we will help nurture that sublime fraternity with all creation which Saint Francis of Assisi so radiantly embodied.”⁵⁸

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⁵⁷ A particularly insightful book on the purposes of dogs is Vicki Hearne, *Adam’s Task: Calling Animals By Name* (London: Heinemann, 1987).

⁵⁸ *LS* § 221.