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‘The Only Creature God Willed For Its Own Sake’: Anthropocentrism in *Laudato Si’* and *Gaudium et Spes*

Abstract

The Second Vatican Council’s constitution *Gaudium et Spes* stated that man is ‘the only creature on earth that God has willed for its own sake’. Post-conciliar Catholic teaching on the environment largely reproduced this anthropocentric theology. Pope Francis’ encyclical letter *Laudato Si’*, however, appears directly to contradict this well-established tradition with its repeated assertions of the intrinsic value of nonhuman life and its critical approach to the term ‘anthropocentrism’.
Questioning this putative discontinuity, this article challenges the perception that *Laudato Si’* has definitively rejected anthropocentrism. It suggests that the claim for the intrinsic value of nonhuman life, and the traditional assertion that man is the only creature willed for its own sake, can be seen to converge in light of the traditional theological anthropology of the human being as microcosm. On this view, the centrality of the human person in the order of creation is constituted by its gathering up of the sakes of creatures. The distinctive place of the human does not come at the expense of the rest of creation, but rather is the means of creation’s movement towards the unity and harmony to which God calls it. *Laudato Si’* is distinguished not by its rejection of anthropocentrism, but by its refusal to set human and nonhuman over against one another. In contrast, the language of ‘intrinsic value’ is criticised for conceiving created value as a zero-sum game, as though human and nonhuman value are in competition with one another; the language of ‘stewardship’ is criticised for its extrinsicist conception of the human being in the natural order.

I Introduction

In 1897 the *Catholic Dictionary* asserted that

> *Animals have no rights. The brutes are made for man who has the same right over them which he has over plants and stones... [it is] lawful to put them to death, or to inflict pain on them, for any good or reasonable end ... even for the purpose of recreation.*[1]

In saying this, it was in keeping with the trend set by Pope Pius IX, who refused the foundation of an animal welfare charity in Rome on the grounds that human beings have no duties towards animals.[2] Neither the dictionary nor Pius IX’s decision possess any teaching authority

[1] Quoted in Andrew Linzey, *Animal Rites* (London: SCM, 1976), 20.
[2] Andrew Linzey, *Animal Theology* (London: SCM, 1994), 19.

for Catholics. Nevertheless, it is no surprise that the promulgation of *Laudato Si'* in 2015 was hailed as a revolution in Catholic teaching on these issues.

In what follows, I begin by probing and attempting to resolve a seemingly inner-Catholic difficulty—an apparent (and serious) inconsistency in the magisterial tradition—in order to address an issue of universal significance to Christian theology and practice: the place and status of human beings in the natural order. There are a number advantages to this method. Firstly, it takes seriously the specificity of Christian theological traditions. Secondly, the Catholic magisterium represents itself (rightly or wrongly) as a defined body of authoritative teaching developing *self-consistently* through time.[3] This makes it useful lens through which to identify and assess changing Christian sensibilities. It forces the scholar into a particularly stringent answerability to history and precedent, at the same time as allowing her to subject the tradition to a sort of stress-test in a rather precise way. Thirdly, the force and fertility of the position I seek ultimately to defend emerges with special clarity from the theological parameters Catholic teaching has generated during the past century. Finally, it provides an opportunity to show that granting authority to the tradition need not function to undercut the momentum of present-day urgencies and perspectives, but can deepen and illuminate them; and conversely, that to take seriously the concerns of the present can illuminate new or previously unappreciated dimensions of what has been taught before.

So, while the paper opens with what may seem to some to be a rather nit-picking sort of Catholic housekeeping, its end-point is the exploration of a fresh perspective on one of the most sensitive and pivotal terms in contemporary Christian engagement with environmental change: 'anthropocentrism'. It is hoped that the argument which unfolds will be seen to have application and utility across Christian households. While arriving at this argument is the real point of the paper, it is hoped that readers gain something from the method by which it is arrived at: a careful attention to the domestic hygiene of one Christian tradition.

I.a) The Hermeneutic of Discontinuity in Catholic Environmental Teaching

In the contest over the interpretation of Vatican II, there is a phrase which has come to crystallise the divergence in the debate: 'the hermeneutic of continuity'. Benedict XVI used it to express the difference between those who presume a rupture between the pre- and

[3] The word 'magisterium' in Roman Catholic usage refers simply to the Church's authoritative teaching office. The boundaries of this office and the manner of its correct exercise have been subject to considerable debate in the modern period. For two slightly different approaches, see Avery Dulles, *Magisterium: Teacher and Guardian of the Faith* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2013) and Francis O'Sullivan, *Magisterium: Teaching Authority in the Catholic Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2002). My use of the term 'magisterium' in this article is not meant to short-circuit these debates; it functions simply as necessary shorthand, given the demands of a single paper, for 'the Roman Catholic Church's teaching office'. Notably, the self-consistency of the magisterium only precludes significant change in, or reversal of, *irreformable* teaching. Pope Francis' change of the magisterial position on the death penalty is an example of modification of reformable teaching.

post-conciliar church, and those who presume the continuity of the tradition and make that assumption the hermeneutic principle for interpreting the Council. Without implying any commentary on that debate, this paper explores a structurally similar issue in relation to contemporary Catholic teaching on ecology and environment.[4] The putative discontinuity is usually expressed with the claim that Catholic teaching at last rejects 'anthropocentrism',[5] and the celebration of the development, in the pontificate of Pope Francis, of a language expressing the 'intrinsic value' of nonhuman life.[6]

*Laudato Si'*s apparent critique of anthropocentrism accords with the pillorying of that term by those working on environmental issues. Theologians working in this field 'take it for granted that [anthropocentrism] is a problem.'[7] The view that anthropocentrism is a 'significant' obstacle to environmental responsibility commands energetic assent from voices from across the theological spectrum.[8] Given this, it is no surprise that there has been such widespread celebration of Francis' change of rhetoric. One commentator describes *Laudato Si'* as 'the most important text written about animal concern since Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation.*'[9]

While this reception is understandable, it needs to be complemented by a certain circumspection; an attempt to make sense of this seeming innovation in the light of apparently contradictory magisterial teaching.[10] Only six years prior to the promulgation of

[4] Secular commentators especially tend to 'read [Francis'] ascendency to Pope through the eyes of a discontinuity and "pray" for his courage to continue breaking from the past' (Trevor Thompson, 'Probing *Laudato Si'* for a New Spirituality in a Technocratic Culture' (PhD Thesis, Duke University, 2017), 57.

[5] E.g. Bronislaw Szerszynski, 'Praise Be To You, Earth-Beings' (*Environmental Humanities* 8.2 (2016): 291-297), who says that in *Laudato Si'* '[n]ew or freshly reconfigured entities [now] enter the formal teachings of the Roman Catholic Church', including 'the agency and subjectivity of the nonhuman world as worthy of our respect' (292). 'Both Francises, the saint and the pope, are anti-anthropocentric when compared with the theological mainstream against which they define themselves' (295); 'he seeks to hail into being a new geo-spiritual formation through which new, contentious objects can enter politics' (296).

[6] Michael Northcott, for example, celebrates Pope Francis' teaching that nonhuman life cannot be reduced to a merely instrumental value, in contrast to a theological tradition which reserved intrinsic value to human beings, as in Thomas Aquinas ('Economic Magical Thinking and the Divine Ecology of Love', *Environmental Humanities* 8.2 (2016): 263-269, 266). Denis Edwards makes a similar contrast: 'It offers…at least in Catholic Church teaching, [a] new theological view of the natural world, of animals, plants, mountains, rivers, seas', which Edwards connects to three distinct emphases: 'the value of nonhuman creatures in themselves before God, the concept of other creatures as revelatory of God, and the theology of the sublime communion of creation' ('The Theology of the Natural World in *Laudato Si'*' (*Environmental Humanities* 8:2 (2016): 378-391, 380; cf. Denis Edwards, '"Sublime Communion": The Theology of the Natural World in Laudato Si'', *Theological Studies* 77.2 (2016): 377 –391).

[7] John O'Keefe, 'Pope Benedict's Anthropocentrism: Is It A Deal-Breaker?', *Journal of Religion and Society* 9 (2013): 85-93, 88.

[8] O'Keefe, 'Anthropocentrism', 85.

[9] Charles Camosy, 'Three Hopeful Signs, Three Missed Opportunities', 'Catholic Moral Theology', 24th June 2015 (https://catholicmoraltheology.com/laudato-si-on-non-human-animals-three-hopeful-signs-three-missed-opportunities/, accessed 16th November 2018).

[10] I offer here no defence of a hermeneutic of continuity *per se*, except the rather anodyne point that if we celebrate the authority of the Franciscan magisterium, it is strange to pay no heed to the pre-Franciscan magisterium on which it builds.

Laudato Si', Benedict XVI warned against any revision to the Church's traditional attribution of superiority to human beings in the order of creation: 'in the name of a supposedly egalitarian vision of the "dignity" of all living creatures, such notions end up abolishing the distinctiveness and superior role of human beings'.[11] This paper examines the putative discontinuity by confronting *Laudato Si'* with a teaching which *prima facie* denies its perspective. The Second Vatican Council's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, states that 'man… is the only creature God willed for its own sake' (*GS* 24.3).[12] Being conciliar, this teaching possesses the highest authority,[13] and is repeated twice in the Catechism.[14] It gained particular prominence during the pontificate of John Paul II, for whom *GS* 24.3 'can be said to sum up the whole of Christian anthropology'.[15] It would be hard to overstate, says one commentator, the importance of this text for the interpretation of the Council that John Paul pursued.[16]

If *GS* 24.3 is considered in the context of environmental ethics, it can be seen as speaking to the question of theological rationale or motivation; as offering an answer to the question of *why* I should bother acting in defence of nature. *For whose sake* is environmental action urged? For a thing to have a 'sake' suggests that the thing is *for-itself* and not *for-another*; that it is morally considerable, a worthy object of moral action in its own right. It maps broadly onto the Kantian distinction, popular in modern ethics, between intrinsic and instrumental value. *GS* 24.3 appears to deny an intrinsic value to nonhuman creatures, and so to corroborate a sentiment of disregard for nonhuman life, and the belief in human superiority over nature that has been widely deplored as the cause of the ecological crisis.[17]

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[11] Benedict XVI, Message for the World Day of Peace 2010, para. 13.

[12] Quoted from *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd Edition (London: Catholic Truth Society, 2016), which cites *Gaudium et Spes* 24.3 in paras. 356 and 1703. This wording differs slightly from the translation given in the authorised English version available at http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html (accessed 28th November 2018), which has '…the only creature which God has willed for itself'. In this article I will prefer the Catechism's translation as more naturally expressing in English the force of the Latin: 'qui in terris sola creatura est quam Deus propter seipsam voluerit'.

[13] While Popes can unilaterally declare infallible dogma, the college of bishops acting in union with the Pope, as in an ecumenical council, represents a fuller exercise of the magisterium than a Pope's teaching encyclical (see e.g. Dulles, *Magisterium*). On this model, *Gaudium et Spes* is more authoritative than *Laudato Si'*.

[14] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paras. 356, 1703.

[15] John Paul II, *Dominum et Vivificantem* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1986), para. 59. The full verse of *GS* 24.3, in the authorised English version, reads: 'This likeness [between the communion of the divine persons and human communion] reveals that man, who is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself, cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself.' The character of 'man' as the only creature willed for its own sake is linked specifically to man's vocation to 'make a sincere gift of himself' and in so doing to 'find himself'. We return to this important specification below.

[16] Douglas Bushman, 'Pope John Paul II and the Christ-centered Anthropology of *Gaudium et Spes*', Ignatius Insight 2008 (http://www.ignatiusinsight.com/features2008/print2008/dbushman_gaudiumetspes_jan08. html, accessed 16th November 2018).

[17] For a review of the literature on this 50 years after Lynn White's opening salvo, see Willis Jenkins, 'After Lynn White: Religious Ethics and Environmental Problems', *Journal of Religious Ethics* 37.2 (2009): 283–309.

The increasing prominence of environmental ethics in Catholic Social Teaching makes it appropriate to frame the putative discontinuity generated by *Laudato Si'* in these terms of 'rationale'. What sort of moral reasoning should drive environmental concern? Why should I care about creation? For the sake of humanity? Or for its own sake? The pre-Franciscan magisterium expresses the logic of *GS* 24.3 in invoking a bluntly anthropocentric rationale.[18] The natural world is to be protected for the sake of human beings. The thrust of the language of *Laudato Si'*, in contrast, is that nonhuman creation should be protected for its own sake. Indeed, in the Franciscan magisterium the term 'anthropocentrism' is used in a purely negative manner.

Inn what follows, I test the integrity of the Catholic magisterial tradition on this point, with the intention of challenging the powerful 'either-or' logic that often characterises conversation about the moral and theological status of nonhuman life. I examine the apparent discontinuity in magisterial teaching, and then explore a structure that would instead show forth a deep consistency: a convergence of cosmology and theological anthropology, centered on a strong account of the human being as microcosm. I suggest that this can resolve some of the impasses faced by environmental ethics, and that the Kantian distinction between intrinsic and instrumental value, and the unilateral rejection of the term 'anthropocentrism', obscures that convergence.

I do not pretend to any kind of completeness in the following account. I simply lay out a trajectory which calls for a more detailed treatment.

II. Nonhuman Creation Is For Our Sake: Catholic Teaching Before Pope Francis

II. a) Resolute Anthropocentrism

Catholic teaching in modern times has not been ambivalent on the question of *whether* the natural world calls for respect and protection, nor whether nonhuman realities are good in themselves. It has consistently called for ecological responsibility, engaging with the issue extensively prior to the promulgation of *Laudato Si'* in 2015. However, the pre-Franciscan magisterium addressed the question of whether the nonhuman world and nonhuman beings are valuable *in themselves* primarily in the mode of denial. There are a few exceptions, where certain magisterial comments implied the *possibility* of intrinsic value of nonhuman life, but these were undeveloped and hedged around by anthropocentric rationales.

[18] I will use the terms 'Franciscan magisterium' and 'pre-Franciscan magisterium' for brevity; no reference to the Franciscan order is intended.

Catholic Social Teaching on this topic prior to Pope Francis is mostly an expansion and elaboration on the theme that the environment must be preserved and protected as an aspect of the common *human* good. It could be summarised with John XXIII's formulation in 1961 that nature is 'to be used responsibly in the service of human life'.[19] Beginning with Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum*, and continuing through Pius XII's *Quadragesimo Anno* in 1931, Catholic Social Teaching first considered the environment in the context of moral questions around property and ownership. It was defined as a common good to be shared by all humanity: 'the goods of nature... belong in common and without distinction to all human kind'.[20] Pope Paul VI's contributions to Catholic Social Teaching expanded this theme in the direction of social justice more generally, considering environmental responsibility as an aspect of human solidarity. He emphasised the importance of environmental welfare to human development.[21] 'The Bible', he says, 'from the first page on, teaches us that the whole of creation is for humanity'.[22]

A growing interest in the environment as an aspect of the common good continued through the pontificates of John Paul II and Benedict XVI. Their social encyclicals expanded this teaching in important ways without altering the fundamental emphasis on human welfare.[23] John Paul's teaching on the environment was shaped by what he called 'the humanistic criterion' as the primary criterion for the assessment of systems of thought and programmes of action. For him, 'the human person is the primary and fundamental way for the Church'.[24] He spoke specifically of *GS* 24.3 as 'the personalistic norm', 'the beginning of the life of persons', the 'royal highway' of Christian anthropology.[25] It is in the context of this 'incomparable' priority of the human person that he frames a Catholic environmental ethic: 'God has put [creation] at the service of his personal dignity, of his life...' [26]

Benedict XVI fairly summarised Catholic Social Teaching on the environment when he defined environmental responsibility as stemming from 'the centrality of the human person' and 'the promotion and sharing of the common good'.[27] As Celia Deane-Drummond put it in 2012,

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[19] John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, in David O'Brien and Thomas Shannon eds., *Catholic Social Thought: Encyclicals and Documents from Pope Leo XIII to Pope Francis*, Third Revised Edition (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2016): 87-134), para. 197.

[20] Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum* (O'Brien and Shannon eds., *Catholic Social Thought*, 14-40), para. 8.

[21] Principally in Paul VI, *Octogesima Adveniens*, in O'Brien and Shannon eds., *Catholic Social Thought*, 280-303.

[22] Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, in O'Brien and Shannon eds., *Catholic Social Thought*, 253-277.

[23] John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens,* in O'Brien and Shannon eds., *Catholic Social Thought*, 380-423; *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, in O'Brien and Shannon eds., *Catholic Social Thought*, 426-470; Benedict XVI, *Caritatis in Veritate*, in O'Brien and Shannon eds., *Catholic Social Thought,* 528-588.

[24] John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1979).

[25] Michael Waldstein, 'Three Kinds of Personalism: Kant, Scheler, and John Paul II', *Forum Teologiczne* 10 (2009): 151-171, 156.

[26] John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1995), paras. 2, 42.

[27] Benedict XVI, Message for the World Day of Peace 2010 (http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20091208_xliii-world-day-peace.html, accessed 20th November 2018).

'Ecology *perceived as an aspect of other social injustices* perhaps marks out the distinctive contribution of Catholic Social Teaching.'[28]

The Catechism of the Catholic Church unambiguously expresses an anthropocentric rationale for our responsibility towards the nonhuman world. 'God', it says, 'created everything for man.'[29] 'Animals, like plants and inanimate beings, are by nature destined for the common good of past, present, and future humanity.'[30] Aware of the need to safeguard against the abuse of nonhuman creatures, the Catechism bases our environmental responsibility on the obligation to promote human wellbeing. 'Man's dominion over inanimate and other living beings granted by the Creator is not absolute; it is limited by concern for the quality of life of his neighbour, including generations to come.'[31] Perhaps the most succinct application of this kind of thinking is the Catechism's only explicit directive regarding ethical action towards animate nonhuman creatures: 'To cause animals to suffer or die needlessly is *contrary to human dignity'*.[32] It is because of what human beings are that we are to act in particular ways towards nonhuman creation, not because of what nonhuman creatures (animate or inanimate) are in themselves.

The notion of 'life', as in 'sanctity of life', 'openness to life', 'culture of life', etc. has for some time been central to Catholic moral rhetoric. Prior to Pope Francis the term was practically univocal in reference to human life. Benedict XVI introduced an important new note by arguing that human ecology and environmental ecology cannot be separated. His pontificate moved Catholic Social Teaching more decisively towards an integration of all life issues, linking concerns about human sexuality, bioscience, social justice and the environment. But the integration of life issues that Benedict XVI pursues underlines the point that there is here no discernible concern for nonhuman life *per se*. Environmental responsibilities are explained and expanded in such a way as to exclude a regard of nonhuman life as having its own 'sake'.

II. b) Anthropocentrism Qualified

Catholic teaching prior to the pontificate of Pope Francis recognised the danger of subordinating the nonhuman world to human purposes, and moved to de-legitimate exploitative use of the teaching. Human supremacy over creation is not a license to abuse it and, in fact, underlines our responsibility for it.[33] '[T]he true meaning of God's original

[28] Celia Deane-Drummond, 'Joining in the Dance: Catholic Social Teaching and Ecology', *New Blackfriars* 93 (2012): 193-212, 197, italics added.
[29] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, para. 358.
[30] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, para. 2415.
[31] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, para. 2415.
[32] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, para. 2418.
[33] Benedict XVI, *Caritatis in Veritate* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 2009), para. 50

command, as the Book of Genesis clearly shows, was not a simple conferral of authority, but rather a summons to responsibility.'[34]

In the magisteria of John Paul II and Benedict XVI, there are three linked ways in which anthropocentrism is practically qualified: through a notion of stewardship, where human beings are given the responsibility to guard and keep the material creation for their own development and flourishing; through a notion of gift, where creation is viewed as an expression of God's benevolence and providential care; and through the notion of the integrity of creation, in which creation's own inbuilt order is invoked as containing principles of responsible use. Environmental responsibility has two moral objects: other human beings, who share in creation and for whose common good it is given; and God, who has bestowed an order on creation, whose gift creation is and who is disrespected if its integrity is violated.

At this point it is useful to advert to three apparently contraindicating texts, in which the pre-Franciscan magisterium used the suggestive vocabulary of a human responsibility '*towards*' the environment; a human '*covenant*' with creation; and a human '*fraternity*' with creation.

Benedict XVI's 'Message for the World Day of Peace' 2010 opens one paragraph with the heading 'The Church has a responsibility towards creation'. It explains: '[the Church] considers it her duty to exercise that responsibility [towards creation] 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.' But he immediately clarifies that this responsibility takes its force from the value of the human person. '*Our duties towards the environment flow from our duties towards the person*, considered both individually and in relation to others'.[35] Our 'responsibility toward creation' is for the sake of human beings.

In his Message for the World Day of Peace two years earlier, Benedict XVI referred to 'that covenant between human beings and the environment, which should mirror the creative love of God'.[36] He gave this expression greater authority and permanence by repeating it in his encyclical letter *Caritatis in Veritate*.[37] In both texts this covenant is connected with the truth 'that we all come from God and that we are all journeying towards him'. Benedict XVI seems to indicate that the source of this covenant with the nonhuman world is our common origin in God. John Paul II alludes to the same idea in a reference to human 'fraternity' with the natural world. Human beings must 'rediscover our fraternity with the earth, to which we have

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[34] Benedict XVI, Message for World Day of Peace 2010, para. 6.

[35] Benedict XVI, Message for the World Day of Peace 2010, para. 12, italics added.

[36] Benedict XVI, Message for the World Day of Peace 2008 (http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20071208_xli-world-day-peace.html, accessed 20th November 2018), para. 7.

[37] Benedict XVI, *Caritatis in Veritate* para. 50. It's also repeated in the General Audience of 26th August 2008 (http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2009/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20090826.html, accessed 20th November 2018).

been linked since creation'.[38] This may be the closest that the pre-Franciscan magisterium comes towards the language of *Laudato Si*', in which a language of fraternity is enjoined upon believers (11).[39] But John Paul II locates his comments about the fraternity of the material creation in relation to the land's service of human beings.[40] Benedict XVI subordinates the notion of a covenant with creation, stemming from the common origin of human and nonhuman creation in God, to creation's role as an instrument of social justice and human flourishing.[41] Nonhuman is not recognised as having a 'sake' of its own; its value, such as it is, never becomes a rationale for ecological responsibility in its own right.

While these specifications exclude abusive uses of anthropocentric understandings, the underlying model of value is unchanged. We are required to protect creation *for the sake of our neighbour*; and, because creation exhibits an order bestowed upon it by God, it requires a 'religious respect', i.e. a respect based on our reverence of the Creator. These rationales invoke traditionally accepted axiological sources and objects: God, human beings, and the natural law. Surveying papal attempts to articulate an ethic of environmental responsibility in 2013, John O'Keefe was correct to argue that '[t]he admonition that humans not abuse the dominion they have been given does nothing to challenge the anthropocentric category of dominion itself'.[42] Human life is the centre and meaning of life on earth and is the only real rationale, beside God, for ecological responsibility. Our responsibility towards the nonhuman creation just is our responsibility to human beings for whom the creation is made and to whom it is wholly given.[43]

In all this, the logic of *GS* 24.3 is neatly carried through. 'Man is the only creature on earth God willed for its own sake'; and so it is natural that 'all things on earth should be related to man as their centre and crown'.[44] To frame this in terms of the Kantian distinction, which so pervades contemporary ethics in this field: '[i]nherent value', says one definition, 'is to have value in and of oneself. It is to be contrasted with instrumental value, in which a thing's value

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[38] He continues: 'This very goal was foreshadowed by the Old Testament in the Hebrew Jubilee, when the earth rested and man gathered what the land spontaneously offered (cf. Lev. 25:11-12). If nature is not violated and humiliated, it returns to being the sister of humanity.' John Paul II, General Audience, 26th January 2000 (https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/audiences/2000/documents/hf_jp-ii_aud_20000126.html, accessed 20th November 2018), para. 5.

[39] References to *Laudato Si'* will appear in the main text; numbers refer to paragraphs.

[40] '[John Paul II] did not move on from a nuanced anthropocentric view to adopt the kind of earth-centred or creation-centred approach that many theologians have now come to recognize as the way forward for Christian theology today.' Donald Dorr, 'Themes and Theologies in Catholic Social Teaching over Fifty years', *New Blackfriars* 93 (2012): 137-54, 143.

[41] Benedict remains firmly committed 'to historical anthropocentric language, even as he sounds increasingly urgent ecological warnings'. O'Keefe, 'Anthropocentrism', 89.

[42] 'Even though it is clear that since the 1990s [the magisterium] has become increasingly aware of the need for the Church to engage ecological issues, the Pope and the bishops have consistently remained staunch defenders of traditional anthropocentric language.' O'Keefe, 'Anthropocentrism', 89.

[43] There may of course have been circumstantial reasons for this emphasis, as Dorr (2012) recognises.

[44] *Gaudium et Spes* para. 12 (http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html , accessed 1st July 2019).

is a function of how it might be used by others or what it might mean to others'.[45] If intrinsic value 'is to have value independent of the interests, needs, or uses of anyone else', then this is denied to nonhuman life, and maintained exclusively of human life.

III. Seeking Continuity in the Tradition

III. a) Laudato Si' and the Development of the Tradition

Laudato Si' marks a change in this trajectory.[46] It stresses the value of nonhuman creation not just in relation to 'man's use', but in itself. Anthropocentrism is referred to only in critical terms. Francis not only refers to nonhuman creation as having '*intrinsic value*' (140), but also '*intrinsic dignity*' (115), a conspicuous move given the loaded connotations of that term—and particularly in light of Benedict XVI's pejorative view of its application to nonhuman creatures.[47] We are admonished to 'cherish' all creatures 'with love and respect', as God does (42). The opening paragraphs invite a regard of the earth as a moral subject: 'the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor' (2). Here creation is personalised in a way which implicitly challenges the exclusive attribution of personal quality to human life. The earth has a 'cry', an articulate voice, which is one with the cry of the human poor (49).

The document presents a radically inclusive eschatology. Quoting Bonaventure, Francis speaks of a 'universal reconciliation with every creature' (66). It is the destiny of 'every creature' to be 'resplendently transfigured' in Christ (243). Contrasting with the generally univocal uses of the term 'life' in Catholic Social Teaching, Pope Francis asserts: 'The Spirit of life dwells in every living creature' (88).

The repetition of the term 'communion' to describe the relationship between humanity and the rest of creation gives new weight to a word which has become pivotal in twentieth-century Catholic theology. Francis calls believers to cultivate a communion not just with God and human beings, but with the earth and its creatures, for we are called together into 'a sublime communion' (89), 'a splendid universal communion' (220). 'When our hearts are authentically open to universal communion, this sense of fraternity excludes nothing and no one (92).' The phrase 'universal communion', applied to all creatures, appears four times in the document (76, 92, 220, V.).

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[45] Joseph DesJardins, *Environmental Ethics: An Introduction to Environmental Philosophy* (Boston: Wadsworth, 2013), 113.

[46] References to *Laudato Si'* will appear in the main text; numbers refer to paragraphs.

[47] Benedict XVI, Message for the World Day of Peace 2010, para. 13.

There is also an insistent repetition of a language of 'fraternity'. For *Laudato Si'*, creation is in the most literal sense 'a universal family' (89), a 'universal fraternity' (228). God has a father's love for every creature; every individual life, the object of his tenderness, is a brother or sister to humanity (77). In contrast to John Paul II's usage, Francis' employment of the term generates a kind of parity between the human and nonhuman, who share a source and end, who are together on a journey to the Father (243, 244). We are 'joined by bonds of affection' to all the world's creatures (11; cf. 89). In the Catechism, by contrast, 'affection' is the term used to describe what should *not* be offered to animals.[48]

Francis displays a certain ambivalence about the trajectory of the teaching which preceded him on this issue. He sees that he is taking a new tack, adverting to a departure from previous teaching (69), while at the same time taking pains to stress an overall continuity.[49] How can we make sense of the combination of a dramatic shift of emphasis with the characteristic claim to magisterial consistency?

We might argue that the change is simply tonal. Pope Francis' extension of *personal* language to the rest of creation—fraternity with all creatures, universal communion, the earth as our mother—may be intended to have not a philosophical but a hortatory function. Similarly, his disdain for 'anthropocentricism' might be less a theological departure from his predecessors and more of a difference in rhetorical style. Whilst, say, the Catechism or John Paul II would use language of personality in quite strictly defined philosophical ways, perhaps we should take Francis as using such language more poetically and pastorally.[50]

This position is attractive for its prompt resolution of any appearance of strain in the development of the tradition. But it is objectionable on a number of counts. Firstly, *Laudato Si'* is not an apostolic exhortation, but an encyclical letter. It is a teaching document, in which a Pope exercises the full authority of the ordinary magisterium. Secondly, a dichotomy of 'pastoral' and 'theological/normative' perpetuates a dualism of doctrine and practice, a dualism which Francis' pontificate as a whole persistently challenges. Such a dualism services a wider rhetoric of suspicion seeking to frame Francis' pontificate as empty of real intellectual

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[48] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2418.

[49] *Laudato Si'* justifies key claims with reference to the Catechism eight times; references no less than 18 teaching documents from bishops' conferences around the world; and extensively cites John Paul II and Benedict XVI.
In a clear claim for continuity in its key critique of anthropocentrism—and no doubt in anticipation of controversy—Benedict XVI is quoted as lamenting the misuse of creation which 'begins when we no longer recognize any higher instance than ourselves, when we see nothing else but ourselves' (*Laudato Si'*, para. 6, quoting Benedict XVI, *Address to the Clergy of the Diocese of Bolzano-Bressanone* (6 August 2008)). Francis asserts that 'The Catechism clearly and forcefully criticizes a distorted anthropocentrism', quoting its stipulation that 'Each creature possesses its own particular goodness and perfection… Each of the various creatures, willed in its own being, reflects in its own way a ray of God's infinite wisdom and goodness. Man must therefore respect the particular goodness of every creature, to avoid any disordered use of things' (*Laudato Si'*, para. 69, quoting *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 339).

[50] Thanks to Francis Stewart raising this question.

content, which has received coherent challenge in recent work.[51] Thirdly and perhaps most importantly, *Laudato Si'* moves to block such an interpretation. The language of fraternity, which underwrites all our obligations towards the nonhuman world, is enjoined precisely *not* as stylistic or sentimental, but as a humble conformity to objective reality: that we share with nonhuman creatures a common origin in God.[52]

If *Laudato Si*'s language about the natural world is not to be explained away but taken at face value, where can we locate the consistency of the magisterial tradition? John Paul II saw *GS* 24.3 as presenting '*a specific kind* of anthropocentrism',[53] a specification which invites a closer look at the way in which *Laudato Si'* uses the term. While Francis employs it only negatively, it is always prefaced by a qualifier. He speaks of a *distorted* anthropocentrism (69); a *misguided* anthropocentrism (118, 119, 122); a *tyrannical* anthropocentrism (68); a *modern* anthropocentrism (115); an *excessive* anthropocentrism (116). Nowhere does he reject anthropocentrism as such. There is in this an implicit acknowledgement that anthropocentrism is not *per se* a negative term. Rather than a misguided anthropocentrism, there could be a correct anthropocentrism; rather than a distorted anthropocentrism, a true anthropocentrism; rather than a tyrannical anthropocentrism, a servant anthropocentrism; rather than a modern or excessive anthropocentrism, an appropriate anthropocentrism rooted in authentic Christian tradition. Anthropocentrism can be narrated in very different ways. It is the kind of anthropocentrism that is defended which is at issue. What would a 'correct', 'authentic', 'servant' anthropocentrism be?

III. b) A Non-Competitive Theological Hermeneutic in *Laudato Si'*

The signature theological motif of *Laudato Si'*, beyond its foregrounding of traditional theological data such as the doctrines of creation and Trinity, is its refusal of the negative contrast between human and nonhuman. Prior Catholic teaching usually stated the contrast in derogatory terms: the nonhuman provided negative traction to generate the exclusive value of the human. In this it was typical in a Western tradition which routinely framed the significance of 'man' by reference to his *not being like* the lowly beasts. Seen against this background, *Laudato Si*'s 'innovation', if we might call it that, is to see a competitive contrast between human and nonhuman as a false contrast. We either value both, or we value neither. Pope Francis' refusal to accept the designation of *Laudato Si'* as an 'environmental

[51] See particularly Massimo Borghesi, *The Mind of Pope Francis: Jorge Mario Bergoglio's Intellectual Journey*, trans. Barry Hudock (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2018).

[52] 'Saint Bonaventure tells us that, "*from a reflection on the primary source of all things*, filled with even more abundant piety, [St. Francis] would call creatures, no matter how small, by the name of 'brother' or 'sister'"… *This cannot be written off as a naïve romanticism*' (*Laudato Si'*, 11, italics added). In this key text Francis indicates how he wishes the Encyclical's title to be read: as a recognition that Francis' Canticle of the Creatures possesses a theological authority; and that the language of fraternity is above all a necessary reflection of theological truth.

[53] John Paul II, *Sources of Renewal: The Fulfilment of Vatican II* (London: Harper & Row, 1980), 75.

encyclical' is significant in this regard. Rather, he said, it is a 'social encyclical'.[54] There cannot be a simple externality between the human and the natural.

For *Laudato Si'*, an authentic anthropocentrism rooted in the tradition rightly understood—a tradition outlined in Chapter 2's theology of creation—would be one which is so formulated that the good of all creatures and the human good cannot authentically be stated in competitive terms. This non-competitive hermeneutic is most clearly expressed in a somewhat neglected feature of the document: the theological teleology which governs the shape and content of the letter.

Some commentators see *Laudato Si'* as lacking a historical teleology. One claims that the document contains no 'arrow of time';[55] another that it entirely rejects narratives of progress.[56] There is certainly a critique of utilitarian and utopian conceptions of progress in the document. But it does contain an 'arrow of time', and far from denying 'progress' *per se*, it questions construals of 'moving forward' which frame that movement in terms other than the theological teleology of history. The text is governed by vector terms which indicate the common destiny of all creatures in God. We are all 'moving forward… towards a common point of arrival, which is God' (83). 'In union with all creatures, we journey through this land seeking God' (244). Indeed, the text reframes its eponymous subject, 'our common home', in terms of that teleology. 'Even now we are journeying towards the sabbath of eternity, the new Jerusalem, towards *our common home* in heaven' (243). 'Creatures tend towards God' (240), and so the teleology is radically non-competitive. All have the same end. This generates a true and not merely sentimental fraternity, an impossibility of separating the good of one from the good of another.

This is borne out by a related aspect of the encyclical's contribution to the tradition: its development of the meaning and scope of key terms of Catholic Social Teaching. This begins with the concept, fundamental to the social teaching tradition, of *common*—for now '*common good*' emphatically includes the good of all creatures. This change in the application

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[54] Reported in e.g. Paul Vallely, 'The Pope's Ecological Vow', *The New York Times* (28th June 2015). The inseparability of the social and the ecological is at the heart of the concept of 'integral ecology' which captures the insistent holism of Catholic Social Teaching on the environment, its insistent option for *both-and* and its refusal of *either-or.* See Vincent Miller, 'Integral Ecology: Francis's Moral and Spiritual Vision of Interconnectedness', in Vincent Miller ed., *The Theological and Ecological Vision of Laudato Si': Everything is Connected* (London: T&T Clark, 2017), 11-28.

[55] Wolfgang Sachs, 'The Sustainable Development Goals and Laudato si': varieties of Post-Development?', *Third World Quarterly* (2017), 8. '[T]he chronopolitics of development are conspicuously absent from the encyclical… Progress, and other promises for the future, are non-existent in the document and one gets the impression that the arrow of time that has shaped historical perception for two centuries has simply been done away with… in *Laudato Si'* the rejection of the arrow of time is… extreme.' Puzzlingly, Sachs describes the encyclical as 'decidedly space focused'; it 'replaces the arrow of time with spatial consciousness'. The theological teleology we are describing here testifies against this judgement.

[56] R. R. Reno, 'The Return of Catholic Anti-Modernism', *First Things* 18th June 2015. Reno describes *Laudato Si'* as 'anti-progressive', the most anti-modern encyclical since the *Syllabus of Errors*.

of the term is at the heart of the document's purpose. Its title sets forth that challenge implicitly: 'common' is no longer to be defined in an exclusionary way, for the 'us' of *Our Common Home* is not just humanity, but all creatures who share this home with us. Other pivotal terms are expanded in their scope to non-competitively include nonhuman alongside human creatures. The moral purchase of concepts of poverty, marginalisation and suffering is no longer exclusive to human subjects, for the earth is one of the poor and her cry is heard alongside the cries of the human poor. Notions of 'salvation' and 'redemption' are repeatedly applied to all creatures, whose destiny is to be transfigured in Christ. We share not only *this* home with all other creatures, but also the renewed earth of the *eschaton*, where 'each creature, resplendently transfigured, will take its rightful place' (243). As though flagrantly refusing the contest between this vision and the tradition's emphasis on the creation's service of human beings, the feature of this 'resplendent transfiguration' Francis chooses to advert to at the conclusive point of the letter is that finally, at the *eschaton*, each creature 'will have something to give to those poor men and women who will have been liberated once and for all' (243). The goods of the human and the nonhuman are once again not contrasted but united.

The precise point of discontinuity, then, between Pope Francis and the teaching of his predecessors is that the assertion of human value then came in a framework of implied competition between human and nonhuman. *Laudato Si'*, in contrast, refuses to set human and nonhuman over against each other. This non-competitive hermeneutic exposes the condition that is required for *Laudato Si'* to be consistent with the apparently opposed formulation of *Gaudium et Spes*. *GS* 24.3 can be true only if 'man' in some way contains within himself the sakes of all creatures. Not so as to replace, exclude or supersede them, but precisely as the way in which their good is attained. Francis adopts this position when he describes creation's *telos* as being through and with human beings to reach God: 'All creation is journeying *with us and through us* towards a common point of arrival, which is God' (83).

On such a view, the 'sakes' of creatures simply could not, logically, come into competition, for all have one and the same 'sake', one and the same end. The human distinctive is to be the means and, in a very comprehensive sense, the actual context in which that end is attained. The sakes of creatures are not related as slices of pie in a pie-chart, where what space one takes another has to give. This is a zero-sum game in which, where one wins, another must lose. (In *GS* 24.3, this model means that the human must take all.) Rather, the relation is more like the way the strengths of different horses become, through the agency of the driver of a cart, a coherent team which pulls together towards a goal. It is the presence and persistence of the driver which gathers and directs the team in such a way that they travel in one direction together, a single vector with a common momentum.

Reading *Gaudium et Spes* and *Laudato Si'* side-by-side draws us in this kind of direction. It clarifies, *contra* anxious critics, that Francis' personalising language about the earth and

nonhuman creatures is very different from affording the status of person to *particular* nonhuman animals. Francis' personalising of the earth does not contradict the idea that 'man' is the creature in whom the cosmos takes on its true meaning. On the contrary; it suggests that the centrality of the human person in the order of creation is constituted by this gathering up of the sakes of creatures. *GS* 24.3 is consistent with *Laudato Si*''s priority of non-competition with respect to the human and the nonhuman only on this condition: if the human good, the human sake, actually contains the 'sake' of all creation. There is no trumping of the nonhuman with the human. There is no negative traction in the framing of the human priority. Rather the human priority is seen to contain, express, carry—to actually *be*—the good of all creatures.

IV.c) The Human Being As Microcosm

What would make this true? Only if the human being in some way recapitulates in her own person the whole of creation; which is to say, only if human beings are true microcosms.

> Man is in some way the compendium of all the worlds. 'For he has *esse* in common with stones, living in common with trees, sensing in common with animals, and understanding in common with angels. If man, therefore, has something in common with all creatures, then *in a sense man is every creature*.' For this reason man is called a microcosm, a small world…[57]

On this view, the human person sums up, is co-extensive with, the whole, in such a way that the constitution of human beings can be seen to be wholly overlapping with that of the cosmos itself. The origins of *GS* 24.3 exhibit the influence of this thinking. The text derives from *Summa Contra Gentiles*, in which Aquinas explains why rational creatures alone are made for their own sake. 'Now, intellectual natures have a closer relationship to a whole than do other natures', says Thomas; 'indeed, *each intellectual substance is, in a way* [quodammodo]*, all things*.'[58] Here he is leaning on Aristotle, who says that 'the soul is in a way all things'.[59] Aristotle's use of the concept is primarily epistemological; the soul's identification with all things is through its *knowing* of all things. To explore the extent to which Aquinas pushes this insight beyond Aristotle's usage towards an ontological purchase for this *quodammodo* would take us beyond the scope of this paper. It is sufficient for the present argument to point out that the reconciliation between the 'sakes' of human and nonhuman creatures is not foreign to the intellectual substrate of *GS* 24.3.

[57] Edouard Hugon, *Cosmology* (Germany: Editiones Scholasticae, 2013), 28-29, quoting Gregory the Great, italics added. This is '[f]or the sake of beauty', for 'it is fitting that there be a certain world that is a sort of compendium or recapitulation of others'.
[58] Book 3 chap. 112 section 5 (https://dhspriory.org/thomas/ContraGentiles.htm, accessed 1st July 2019).
[59] *De Anima* 3.8 (http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/soul.3.iii.html, accessed 1st July).

The philosophy and theology of 'man as microcosm' extends, of course, well beyond Aquinas. While a lengthier exposition would be required to illuminate in full its application to the problem at hand,[60] a brief observation of some of features of its use in the tradition indicates its salience to concerns about the applicability of 'anthropocentrism'. Probably the most significant expositor is Maximus the Confessor, whose treatment of the theme specifies it in terms not of epistemology, but of ontology and Christology.[61]

Maximus' theological anthropology stresses an analogy between the human being as 'little world', *microcosmos*, and the cosmos as an 'enlarged humanity', *macanthropos*. This analogy indicates an ontological solidarity and co-inherence. The human being is a microcosm by virtue of her ontological constitution as containing all the elements of the created order, spiritual and material, and also by virtue of being made in the image of God, who is Christ the *Logos*, through whom and in whom are all things.[62] The human place in the order of creation is Christological in shape. The Maximian approach is particularly apt to the problem at hand because for Maximus the human being's character as a microcosm is connected to the human *task*, which is a task of mediation. The human being is 'the bond of unity', who draws into a unity the multiplicity of created things without extinguishing their difference. Humanity's task of mediation is cosmic in scope. In its performance, all the divisions of creation are reconciled.[63]

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[60] Maximus' theological anthropology has drawn a good deal of attention in the context of ecological and environmental questions. For an authoritative example see Elizabeth Theokritoff, 'The Salvation of the World and Saving the Earth: an Orthodox Christian Approach', *Worldviews* 14 (2010): 141-156. Theokritoff places the Maximian account in strong contrast with Protestant (referencing Ernst Conradie) and Catholic (referencing Willis Jenkins) approaches. The present treatment hopes to show that the Catholic tradition is not only hospitable to a Maximian account, but directly begs such a model.

[61] Hugon's scholastic exposition employs the Christological dimension to somewhat different effect; in his account, Christ is microcosm in a way that is structurally unique. 'There would need to be some world that is both body and God, man and God, spirit and God. Now, that world is not only an ideal, but a reality: Jesus Christ. In Him, as the Apostle testifies, God renewed all things, or as the Greek text has it, God made a recapitulation of all things. He first recapitulated the material world. The human body is the ideal among inferior bodies; but the exemplar of the human body is the body of Jesus Christ. In the body of his Son, therefore, God renewed all things. Now, in the soul of Christ are recapitulated both the human world and the angelic world: for his most holy Soul has all the perfections of all men and gathers within itself greater knowledge and grace than all the angels together. In Christ, therefore, the three worlds are summarized; they are, in fact, joined together with the divine and archetypal world itself, and form one world with it through the hypostatic union. For, in Christ, Divinity, soul, and body subsist in one Person. Christ, therefore, is the most perfect world, in which all the worlds are made one—one, that is, in the Person' (Hugon, *Cosmology*, 28-9). Hugon's approach is less salient to the argument pursued here, which depends on the attribution of microcosmic status in a real sense to the human being *per se*.

[62] Lars Thunberg notes that Maximus' treatment of the term seeks to reconcile the tension between these two aspects of the theology of 'man as microcosm' as he inherits it from the Greeks via the Cappadocians (Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor* (Chicago: Open Court, 1995), 137). See Thunberg, *Microcosm*, 132-42, for an overview of Maximus' approach to the term.

[63] Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua* 41, PG 91: 1308C-1312B; see also Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor* (London: Routledge, 1996), 72-4.

The connection between the status of the human as microcosm, the task that this implies, and the consequent orientation of creation towards the human, is clarified particularly by Nemesius, a key intellectual predecessor to Maximus. For Nemesius 'man's divine task [is]… *to act as a microcosm*'; it is '*[f]or this reason he has been placed at the centre of the universe*'.[64] The character of the human being explicates the nature and destiny of the cosmos; the argument is made from human being to world, rather than the reverse. It is the nature of the human that gives the clue, as it were, to the nature of the whole. Importantly, this leads Nemesius to claim that nonhuman creatures 'exist for man's sake'.[65] It is in light of the human that the meaning of creation comes into view. Here we see the theological tradition represented by *GS* 24.3 being used in such a way as to order the centrality of the human person in creation towards the good of the cosmos as a whole. The distinctive place of the human does not come at the expense of the rest of creation, but rather is the means of creation's movement towards the unity and harmony to which God calls it.

By constitution and by calling, then, human beings are at the cosmic scale. This is the most important reason (among a number of others) to question those who take science's discovery of the vast physical size of the created universe as a rationale for opposing the Church's traditional anthropocentrism. 'Given what we know about the size of the universe, its expansive character, and given the possibility that there may in fact be a multiverse… the idea that creation exists entirely for humans is highly implausible, even silly.'[66] The objection is misconceived, for it is not size, power or ratio that makes the human being central, but ontology. Creation is *for* human beings not in a limitedly utilitarian sense, but in the sense of an ontological ordering: the universe is *toward* something, is gathered up *in* something, gains its perfection *by* something; and that something is Christ and, in their participation in Christ and their constitution as creatures both spiritual and material, human beings. To deny anthropocentrism at the cosmological level is thus a curious kind of physicalism, in which the invisible order in which the human being participates is occluded. Further, the denial of anthropocentrism in the absolute sense arguably commits one, *ipso facto*, to subscribe to a merely local Christocentrism.[67]

To return to *GS* 24.3 and *Laudato Si'*: placing the texts in this tradition harmonises them. If '[man] was brought into being as *an all-containing workshop, binding all together in*

[64] Thunberg, *Microcosm*, 136, italics added.
[65] Thunberg, *Microcosm*, 137, italics added.
[66] O'Keefe, 'Anthropocentrism', 91. He continues: 'If the cosmos—the sum total of reality—is infinite, or an infinity of finitudes, as it seems to many scientific observers, then traditional anthropocentric readings of Genesis are even more removed from what we know from other areas of human inquiry. Even if we limit the cosmic scope of the claim and say that the earth, but not the rest of the universe, was created for humans, the implausibility asserts itself. Were the dinosaurs really created for us? What about those strange worms that live around volcanic shoots at the bottom of the ocean? Were they also created for humans?'
[67] 'Only an understanding of man as the centre of the created universe does justice to the cosmic implications of Christ's position and work of reconciliation' (Thunberg, *Microcosm*, 142).

himself',[68] then there is no contradiction in asserting simultaneously that human beings are the only creatures God willed for their own sake, and that every creature has a 'sake' of its own. It is simply that the latter can only be coherently read within the former. John Paul II's cherished 'humanistic criterion' is then not only respected but ontologically embedded. But crucially, rather than this criterion coming at the expense of other creatures, it appears as a service to those creatures' destiny. This has significant consequences for the way in which we frame 'value' in the nonhuman world.

If John Paul II saw *GS* 24.3 as presenting 'a specific kind of anthropocentrism',[69] it is the *kind* of anthropocentrism the magisterium articulates that *Laudato Si'* modulates. In light of *Laudato Si'*, we might charge *GS* 24.3 with being misleading by omission. Its formula neglects to state that this 'only' is the most inclusive 'only' there can be. The salvific role of the human being in creation is by analogy to God and by means of the 'fixity' of the divine image in the human being.[70] Misleading by omission it may be, but *GS* 24.3 seems 'primed' for such a reading. 'This [divine] likeness reveals that man, who is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself, *cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself*.' To be for one's own sake is to be for the sake of others. Being 'the only creature God willed for its own sake' just is to *exist for* something other than oneself; to have a vector in one's being, a vector towards self-gift. The apparently exclusive structure of the claim thus turns out to be oriented toward a radical inclusion, a laying-open of the self. Reading *GS* 24.3 in light of *Laudato Si'*, this self-gift is now seen to be integrally linked to the human service of creation's end. In our likeness to God converge our orientation to self-gift with our vocation to serve the transcendent destiny of all creatures. In this self-gift alone, now seen in cosmic perspective, the human being 'finds himself'.

The 'only' of *GS* 24.3 must therefore be taken by analogy with the 'only' of God, which is radically inclusive with respect to creation. To be for one's own sake is to resemble God. All that is exists 'for God's sake', but this is no denigration of the all; on the contrary, it is the only way in which creation could exist. Existing for God's sake is the ground of creation's worth and dignity. This inclusivity is apparent if we articulate the good of nonhuman creatures in the terms of the human good—which is really their good—and vice-versa, for both converge in God.[71] When this is neglected, the good of the human is made to come at the expense of

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[68] Thunberg, *Microcosm*, 139. An important contemporary representative of this tradition is Dumitru Staniloae. See Charles Miller, *The Gift of the World: An Introduction to the Theology of Dumitru Staniloae* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 30-1.

[69] John Paul II, *Sources of Renewal: The Fulfilment of Vatican II* (New York: Harper Collins, 1980), 75.

[70] A view common to Maximus and the Cappadocians (Thunberg, *Microcosm*, 135, 138).

[71] *Laudato Si'* moves easily from the affirmation of human uniqueness to the solidarity of the natural order. Pope Francis defends the incomparable value of the human ('This is not to put all living beings on the same level nor to deprive human beings of their unique worth and the tremendous responsibility it entails' (90)) immediately after observing the deepest human solidarity with the earth—solidarity in suffering ('God has joined us so closely to the world around us that we can feel the desertification of the soil almost as a physical ailment, and the extinction of a species as a painful disfigurement' (89)).

the non-human; or, from the other direction, the good of the nonhuman is made to come at the expense of the human. John Paul II points towards such an interpretation when he observes that the anthropocentrism of *Gaudium et Spes* is in fact a Christocentrism.[72] This requires an account of the human being as microcosm, for Christ is the true and final microcosm, the first-born of all creation in whom all things hold together.

This brief argument can be summarised as a proposal that the integration of the pre- and post-Franciscan magisterium on this issue depends on the convergence of cosmology and theological anthropology. Such a convergence is suggestive of two further developments.

Firstly, it emboldens us to recover the analogy between the role of God and the role of human beings in creation. This is a controversial recovery because it points back to the 'dominion' of Genesis which many are anxious to leave behind, even when parsed in terms of the sort of dominion God exercises over creation. But it need not be a pernicious analogy, if correctly understood. Analogy is not identity, but simultaneous similarity-in-difference. For Maximus, this analogy 'never violates the basic principle of the gulf between Creator and creation', for creation's movement towards unity comes about 'according to one simple and immutable principle', which is the creation of all creatures from nothing.[73] The point of the analogy is not to insulate the human from the extra-human, but to generate an axiomatic resistance to seeing the good of nonhuman and human creatures as external to one another. It is a setting apart of the human so as to stress the way in which the human embraces and gathers up all creatures. It follows the principle of 'distinguish in order to unite'.

The contrast between 'stewardship' and 'priesthood' as normative framings of the human role in creation comes into view here.[74] This sort of reasoning suggests an important deficit in the former model. 'Stewardship' remains extrinsic in picturing the human relation to the world as obtaining primarily 'outside' of ourselves. In a model of 'priesthood', in contrast, human beings represent God to the world and the world to God, because of their ontological constitution. They stand as 'little Christs' in the created order, bringing creation to fulfilment. 'The human being is related to nature not *functionally*, as the idea of stewardship would

[72] John Paul II, *Sources of Renewal*, 75.
[73] Thunberg, *Microcosm*, 139.
[74] For a defence of 'priesthood' over 'stewardship', see John Zizioulas, 'Proprietors or Priests of Creation?' (http://www.orth-transfiguration.org/proprietors-or-priests-of-creation/, accessed 25th February 2019). Also John Zizioulas, 'Priest of Creation', in R.J. Berry ed., *Environmental Stewardship: Critical Perspectives, Past and Present* (London: T&T Clark, 2006): 273-290. Zizioulas argues that 'stewardship' has managerialist overtones. In the terms we are discussing here, a managerialist approach is extrinsicist in its implications: nature remains something 'over there' to be looked after from without. For a general critical exploration of stewardship models, see Clare Palmer, 'Stewardship: A Case Study in Environmental Ethics', in Ian Ball et al., *The Earth Beneath: A Critical Guide to Green Theology* (London: SPCK, 1992): 67-86. A more recent treatment is Chris Southgate, 'Stewardship and its Competitors: A Spectrum of Relationships Between Humans and the Nonhuman Creation', in R.J. Berry ed., *Environmental Stewardship: Critical Perspectives, Past and Present* (London: T&T Clark, 2006): 185-98.

suggest, but *ontologically*: by being the steward of creation the human being relates to nature by what he *does*, whereas by being the priest of creation he relates to nature by what he *is*.'[75]

Secondly, the meaning of the 'intrinsic value' defended in *Laudato Si'* is significantly affected. Returning to the formulation of 'intrinsic value' stated earlier, we can see that the notion as described in that definition is denied by Pope Francis. ''Intrinsic value' is to have value independent of the interests, needs, or uses of anyone else. [It] is to have value in and of oneself. It is to be contrasted with instrumental value, in which a thing's value is a function of how it might be used by others or what it might mean to others.'[76] But for *Laudato Si'* read alongside *GS* 24.3, there is no value of nonhuman creation 'independent' of human beings, for there is no 'independence' of nonhuman from human—either practically or ontologically. 'Intrinsic' indicates a sort of self-standing dignity. In a universe in which—as Francis never tires of repeating—'everything is connected', there is no self-standing value; or rather, one alone is self-standing, and that is God. And God is not outside of, or in competition with, any created value. This might act as a gentle call to self-examination on the part of movements which celebrate *Laudato Si'*s proclamation of the intrinsic value of nonhuman creatures. It warns that 'intrinsic value' may be in key respects a questionable terminology for expressing the immense and, ultimately, eschatological meaning and dignity of the life of every creature, to which Pope Francis draws attention.

To the extent that *Laudato Si'* indicates a deficit in the pre-Franciscan magisterium, it is this: it presented the human and the nonhuman as in some way competing for the same space of value. The impression was given that created value is a zero-sum game. This presumption is at work in much of the Christian response to movements in secular animal ethics, whether it is by hastily embracing those movements and performing public penance for historic anthropocentrism, or by rejecting them out of hand because they threaten human value. Both responses resemble the failure of the pre-Franciscan magisterium's neglect of the unity of the good of nonhuman and human creatures. It is this that *Laudato Si'* corrects.

IV. c) Revisiting our Terms

Such an approach invites us to revisit the terms we use in framing these issues. Firstly, the term 'non-human' itself becomes problematic, for there would on this kind of account be nothing 'nonhuman' anywhere at all. 'Extra-human', an obvious alternative, is perhaps worse. If cosmology and theological anthropology converge, everything is, in a specific sense,

[75] Zizioulas, 'Proprietors or Priests', italics original. On nature's fulfilment by means of human beings, Zizioulas stresses that this is for nature's own sake: 'nature itself stands in need of development through us in order to fulfil its own being and acquire a meaning which it would not otherwise have… [this is a] development which treats nature as an entity that must be developed *for its own sake*… [through] taking care of its fragility and its 'groaning in travail'' (italics added).
[76] DesJardins, *Environmental Ethics*, 113.

intra-human. The problem is that at this point we have no uncontroversial way of distinguishing between human and nonhuman animals that we can trade on to name them. One major interest that is served by the present considerations is that the proposal may save us from the fate of hanging our ambitions to specify human uniqueness (where that is understood as a difference of kind rather than merely a difference of degree) on the discovery of a 'golden barrier' between humans and other species.[77] This kind of project is *per se* oriented to defining human uniqueness by identification of the absence of some specifiable property in nonhuman creatures. It commits those who seek to articulate a 'human difference' to an unhappy pursuit of empirical criteria of distinction—criteria which become ever-more precarious the more we learn about evolutionary history and the lives of nonhuman species—while at the same time begging a value-question it cannot on its own grounds answer.[78]

The proposal here gives a different content to the 'human difference', content which is metaphysical rather than 'scientific', and which has the particular advantage of stressing that human uniqueness is not purchased at the price of doing-down other species.[79] Human beings are distinguished among animals by containing and recapitulating the good of all creatures in a way that is simply asymmetrical, i.e. is performed by no other creature (including, for what it's worth, spiritual creatures such as angels); but in that very difference it is inclusive of all.

Secondly, the term 'use', which since Kant is correlated to the absence of intrinsic value, needs to be restored to its Augustinian stature. The unity of the pre- and post-Franciscan magisteria

[77] Stephen Jay Gould, 'The Human Difference', *The New York Times*, 2nd July 1999 (*https://www.nytimes.com/1999/ 07/02/opinion/the-human-difference.html*, accessed 30th November 2018). For this reason I am uncomfortable with the sort of reasoning pursued by Zizioulas when he locates human priesthood in creation pre-eminently in human freedom ('Proprietors or Priests').

[78] David Abram, a notable opponent of the rhetoric of human uniqueness, clarifies the value-problem: 'Our opposable thumbs, our ability to balance and ambulate on our hind legs, our capacity for reflection, and our slyness with tools and ever-more-complex technologies entail that we are a pretty unique bunch. But then again, that hawk soaring overhead is able to fly without any of the contrivances that we depend upon, and the apple tree over there is able to squeeze apples directly out of its limbs, which in itself is pretty damn unique, and a far cry from anything that I can muster with my own body. …Perhaps you could say that the compelling stories we two-leggeds regularly concoct could be called an efflorescence, or even a kind of fruit, like those apples. But still, the way that some whales dive to a depth of six thousand feet, holding their breath for over ninety minutes, seems another kind of astonishment, as is the journey of monarch butterflies. … Are we humans unique? Sure we are. But so is everyone else around here.' (David Abram, 'On Being Human in a More-Than-Human World', https://www.humansandnature.org/to-be-human-david-abram, accessed 30th November 2018.)

Abram's claim is a pertinent one. Why is it that the sort of difference human beings possess is a qualitatively different sort of difference? The present proposal addresses this question in another key. The human difference includes, gathers up, creaturely differences, at an ontological level. Making such an account credible will depend on underlining the connection between the human status as microcosm, and the human task as mediator and priest. The human difference is a task for human beings to live up to, in failing which their 'difference' becomes a pernicious and exclusive one.

[79] This sort of approach does not entail that certain empirical features of human beings cannot be *indexed* to this unique role, simply that human uniqueness is not reducible to those properties.

is obscured by these Kantian overtones, overtones which would make 'use' and 'intrinsic value' opposed, as in the remarks above where 'intrinsic' and 'instrumental' are opposed. If we are going to stick with the terminology of intrinsic and instrumental value—which is now so embedded we probably can't rewind the script—there needs to be an articulation of the compatibility, indeed the active synergy, between the two kinds of value. This can come via a recovery of the Augustinian sense that to be 'used' is not in itself an insult to dignity, for only one thing cannot be used—only one thing is *for-itself*—and that is God.

Some fears which may have arisen in the course of this enquiry could in this way be laid to rest. We could safely say, for example—perhaps pacifying anxious ecotheologians—that in a certain sense human beings are the *most* 'instrumental' of all creatures, for it is by them that God fulfils his ultimate purpose, which is to bring creation to fulfilment. We could boldly propose that 'dignity' and 'use', often conceived as being in inverse proportion to one another, are actually in direct proportion to one another. We could say that not only is creation ordered towards the good of human beings, but that human beings are ordered towards the good of creation; by their faithful performance of their priesthood, creation attains its final good. Crucially however, there is no symmetry here, and so none of that 'flattening' of nature to which biotic egalitarianism gives rise. This sort of approach would also contribute to applied environmental ethics. Debates over 'ecosystem services' as a model of environmental value, for example, trade on the opposition between intrinsic and instrumental. It is only in this sort of context that key magisterial claims become intelligible, such as John Paul II's assertion that it 'in the Creator's plan, created realities, which are good in themselves, exist for man's use'.[80] This kind of thinking prompts us to waste no further time worrying about *whether* we are to use the nonhuman creation for human purposes—about which we don't, realistically, have a choice—and focus our energies on discerning what kinds of use are appropriate, by identifying criteria for distinguishing between use and abuse.[81]

Thirdly, a care needs to be taken when the term 'anthropocentrism' is used *per se* to designate those cosmologies which are hostile to environmental and ecological concern. The stigmatisation of the term actively promotes the zero-sum narrative, by generating the impression that the priority of the human necessarily implies the devaluing of the rest of the created order. I have argued that the opposite is the case. At the very least it needs to be noted that the term is capable of being parsed in very divergent ways.

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[80] *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 255. (http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html, accessed 30th November 2018).

[81] The view, which occurs in but also beyond the bounds of what is now called 'radical environmentalism', that human beings are a regrettable intrusion on an otherwise harmonious natural order, simply carries the protest against 'use' to its logical conclusion. In contrast, Catholic teaching has invested a good deal of energy in developing criteria, generally based in natural law, for discerning principles of *correct use*.

I recognise in this context the power of compelling theological investigations of the nature and destiny of nonhuman life which identify 'anthropocentrism' as the culprit in the diminishment of the nonhuman.[82] The trajectory laid out here is intended to support the momentum of such work, and it is certainly arguable that the term 'anthropocentrism' itself has become pernicious beyond rescue. Terminology matters, and never more so than when powerful cultural forces need to be harnessed for good. In seeking an alternative, however, on the conception defended here that term is not simply replaceable by 'Christocentrism' or 'theocentrism'. The object of the microcosm argument is humanness as such—all human beings *qua* their humanity—not simply 'God' or 'Christ'. 'Christocentrism' and 'theocentrism' by themselves let us off the hook too easily. The Christian cosmology I have defended places a demand of Christ-shaped mediation and servanthood upon every human *qua* human. It foregrounds the dependency of the natural order on human holiness. It makes it impossible to evade the grave responsibility that is inherited in human nature as such. This has the particular advantage, in the present context of ecological crisis, of avoiding any facile accounts of Christian hope which evade the difficult fact that in the divine economy, humanity bears an ineluctable responsibility for creation's fulfilment. *Laudato Si'* clearly indicates that this pulls together with, rather than coming at the cost of, the fundamental theocentrism of Christian cosmology.[83]

Whatever term is used, it needs to capture the concrete implications of Christology *for all human beings*. This kind of thinking can support and underwrite the impressive new work in the theological articulation of the specific dignities of nonhuman creatures by showing more clearly that strenuously to emphasise such dignities is in no necessary discontinuity with historic Christian cosmology.[84]

V. Conclusion

I have argued that *Laudato Si'* can be interpreted consistently with *Gaudium et Spes* if contextualised in terms of the unity of cosmology and theological anthropology, focused on an account of the human being as microcosm. Needless to say, our present situation makes it gravely urgent that the kind of project I have pursued here is specified so as to definitively and unambiguously exclude destructive practices towards the natural world. A radically inclusive anthropocentrism, an anthropocentrism which is defined so as to include the good of all creatures, calls for a practice which will have as its standard God's own inclusivity of creation's good. Our ecological ethics will then be marked by the confession both of our

[82] E.g. Elizabeth Johnson, *Ask the Beasts: Darwin and the God of Love* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014); Denis Edwards, *Jesus and the Wisdom of God* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005).

[83] 'All creatures are moving forward with us and *through us* towards a common point of arrival, which is God… Human beings, endowed with intelligence and love, and drawn by the fullness of Christ, *are called to lead all creatures back to their Creator*' (83, emphasis added).

[84] In, for example, David Clough, *On Animals, Vol 1: Systematic Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2014) and Christopher Steck's forthcoming *All God's Animals* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2019).

vocation to practice this inclusivity, and of our failure to do so. The formulation of such an anthropocentrism should manifest the impossibly daunting implications of the practice that will be entailed. It points to an inclusivity so total that it enshrines our continual inadequacy to its perfect performance.

This kind of reasoning provides no recompense for the lamentable reluctance of the Catholic magisterium to deliver an unambiguous declaration of the dignity of every creature as an object of God's saving love. The jarring discordance between the sort of sentiments expressed in the Catholic Dictionary of 1897 and those of *Laudato Si'* remains a painful one. But joining the dots of magisterial teaching to show a deeper consistency in the tradition can reassure those distressed by its failures that it remains a fertile resource for reflection.

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