

Is Judeo-Christian Anthropocentrism Responsible for the Degradation of Global Environment?: Nomadic Pastoralism as the Origin of Civilization and Environmental Destruction

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Introduction: Global Environmental Degradation and Christianity

In 1967, Lynn White, Jr. (1907–1987) wrote that the current global environmental crisis was brought about because God allowed man to dominate nature, according to the account in the Old Testament, Genesis. Therefore, he wrote, “Christianity bears a huge burden of guilt [for environmental destruction]” (WHITE 1967: 1206. [] is added by the author). He was immediately and loudly denounced by the Christian clergy and the public. This statement may have been considered to be unforgivable, for it blasphemed against the religious truth of a monotheistic clergy and believers; they believed that the revealed Words of God were the absolute truth, and devoted their entire lives to interpreting them.

While Christians have continued to level harsh criticism at White for making the statement, it has been persistently believed that Christianity was inescapably responsible, at least partly, for today’s environmental destruction. Christianity was the ideological and social foundation for science and technology in 17th century Europe (MURAKAMI 1993). However, the continuous and long-lasting debate in the West has centered on the interpretation of God’s words in the Old Testament’s Genesis. As a monotheistic religion, Christianity uncompromisingly posits that both man and nature are creatures created by God. If the belief that all human beings, plants, and animals in the world are creatures of the one God is lost, monotheism will cease to exist. Therefore, from the standpoint of a Christian, it is natural that all arguments are based on the belief that the words spoken in Genesis are the original starting point.

It is well known that Judaism, as a religion, was strongly characterized by a nomadic way of life. The economic and social relationship between livestock and humans had existed for no less than 4,000 years from the beginning of pastoralism to the establishment of the Old Testament. It is legitimate for Judeo-Christians to ascertain that the Words of God revealed in the Bible were the origin of everything, but for non-Judeo-Christians, the Words were more a consequence of realities (i.e., in some sense, the livelihood and conception of pastoralism).¹⁾

Followers of Abrahamic religions legitimately insist on the wording of the Old Testament; they believed it allowed them the power to exercise dominion over nature. However, from the perspective of non-Abrahamic religious people, the biblical wording is an afterthought, affirmation, and approval of reality. In this paper, the author will discuss historical facts that occurred before the Old Testament text was edited, namely the importance of nomadic pastoralism, and the dominion over “nature” that had already begun several thousand years earlier, with the domestication of particular species of gregarious grazers, like sheep.

1) When we look back at the history of humanity, which led to the present environmental degradation, we can argue that the modern, scientific civilization, developed and established by Europeans, has had a serious and critical impact. Even if the scientific and technological civilization has brought about the extraordinarily high standard of living that we enjoy today, a large number of people might agree that Christianity has ideologically backed that scientific and technological civilization. To that extent, even Christians may understandably be concerned that Christianity may have fostered a callous attitude toward nature, among its followers, that might be called arrogance. What is the origin of this aggressive attitude, i.e., dominion, of Christianity toward nature? For example, John Passmore assumed that the Old Testament reflected a strong nomadic outlook. He wrote that “There are, of course, problems in talking about ‘the Old Testament’ as if it were a single book with, in all respects, a single point of view. Running through it there is a conflict between the new man-centred agriculture and the old nature-oriented nomadic pastoral life to which so many of the Jews looked back with nostalgia. (Cain’s offer to Yahweh of the fruits of the earth was, it will be remembered, spurned; God accepted Abel’s oxen, only.) The nomadic pastoralist is more conscious than is the agriculturalist that he shares the earth with other living things, which go their own way largely indifferent to his presence; the agriculturalist deliberately transforms nature in a sense in which the nomadic pastoralist does not. The conflict of attitudes persists in later Jewish thought, influenced as it also was by Greek humanism.” (PASSMORE 1974: 12) However, unlike Passmore, I argue in this paper pastoralists have brought about the radical changes in the environment.

1. The Lynn White Thesis: Judeo-Christian Responsibility for Environmental Degradation

1-1 The Book of Genesis in the Old Testament and Environmental Degradation

As revealed in the Old Testament, the doctrine of creation defines the relationship between humans and nature, in a very specific way; the absolute God permitted humans (the Jewish people) to freely use nature as a resource.

And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea. Into your hand, they are delivered. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything.” (Genesis 9: 1-3, *The Old Testament*)

This teaching, originally based on Judaism, has been carried over to primitive Christianity. It became one of the most important beliefs in the later Europeanized scheme of Christian thought. Its influence has been immense and decisive; it extended to later generations as the Europeans placed this belief at the core of their thought.

Lynn White Jr.’s “Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis” (WHITE 1967),²⁾ was presented at an American Association for the Advancement of Science meeting in 1966. It was published in the following year. He pointed out that the Judeo-Christian doctrine was at the historic root of the current environmental degradation, and that Christianity was, therefore, largely responsible for the environmental destruction. According to him, the doctrine symbolized by the Book of Genesis made it clear that every item of God’s material creation had no other purpose than to serve humans and enabled them to exploit nature without concern for nature’s feelings. In other words, the religion that formed the basis of European society was founded on an understanding of nature that would provoke environmental problems. While most of the world’s religions have their origins in animism, i.e., the worship of nature (the primordial religious view that all things have a spirit), mainstream Euro-centric religions were established by rejecting animism.

2) White’s short article is regarded as a classic on Christianity’s responsibility for global environmental degradation. Its overview and academic significance have been reviewed in a number of works, such as PASSMORE (1974), CALLICOTT (1984), NASH (1989), PALMER (2001), and WHITNEY (2015).

What did Christianity tell people about their relations with the environment?

While many of the world's mythologies provide stories of creation, Greco-Roman mythology was singularly incoherent in this respect. Like Aristotle, the intellectuals of the ancient West denied that the visible world had had a beginning. Indeed, the idea of a beginning was impossible in the framework of their cyclical notion of time. In sharp contrast, Christianity inherited from Judaism not only a concept of time as nonrepetitive and linear but also a striking story of creation. By gradual stages a loving and all-powerful God had created light and darkness, the heavenly bodies, the earth and all its plants, animals, birds, and fishes. Finally, God had created Adam and, as an afterthought, Eve to keep man from being lonely. Man named all the animals, thus establishing his dominance over them. God planned all of this explicitly for man's benefit and rule: no item in the physical creation had any purpose save to serve man's purposes. And, although man's body is made of clay, he is not simply part of nature: he is made in God's image.

Especially in its Western form, Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen. (WHITE 1967: 1205)

According to White, this dualistic worldview, with its clear dichotomy between humans and nature, has been the Judeo-Christian tradition. Humans are placed above other creatures (i.e., plants, animals, and minerals); because plants, animals, and minerals exist for the benefit of humans, the latter are allowed to consume them.

A human being in Judaism is worthy, to a degree only slightly inferior to the Absolute, if not to that of God, and who is permitted by the Absolute to rule all things as he pleases. Here, nature is regarded as an object of deprivation. The religious basis for the resourcefulness of nature had already been established at this stage.³⁾

1-2 The assertion of White was groundbreaking in the Christian world

White stated that Judeo-Christianity took a dichotomous view of humans and nature, and that Christianity itself was the true cause of today's environmental destruction. The reaction to White's article was enormous, because it was perceived as an attack on

3) As Roderick F. Nash also wrote, "Every creature was assumed to be created to serve a human need. Human beings were, quite literally, the kings of beasts; every other being was inferior in the Judeo-Christian hierarchy. In case any doubt remained, God reaffirmed his alleged promise of dominance to Noah after the great flood and the new beginning [...]. Human dominion, in other words, was complete and unqualified. Nature had good reason to fear humankind. As White saw it, this was all the rationale Christians and Jews needed to exploit nature at will. Meaningful change in human-nature relations would not occur 'until we reject the Christian axiom that nature has no reason for existence save to serve man.'" (NASH 1989: 89)

Christianity.⁴⁾ As Passmore stated, “But he [White] is equally convinced, first, that ‘orthodox Christian arrogance towards Nature’ must somehow be dispelled and, secondly, that science and technology are so imbued with Christian or post-Christian ‘arrogance’ that ‘no solution for our ecological crisis can be expected from them alone’. White’s article has become something of a classic, much reprinted in anthologies. How widely his attitudes are shared, it is difficult to say, but widely enough, I fear, and in sufficiently respectable quarters to demand our close attention.” (PASSMORE 1974: 5). This statement should be regarded as the popular position of a majority of Christians.

The deliberations provoked by White’s paper were animated; they remain so even today. It is often called the “Lynn White Thesis.” White’s paper sparked controversy on the historical role of religions in environmental degradation, especially among English-speaking Protestant communities. It prompted the publication of a large number of books and papers on this subject over the past 50 years.⁵⁾

2. The Old Testament, and the Development and Transformation of Christian Anthropocentrism

What responsibility does (or does not) Christianity bear regarding global environmental degradation? How has Judeo-Christianity understood the relationship between man and nature? Furthermore, did the tendency of modern society toward the conquest and dominion of nature by human beings and the exhaustion of nature as a resource according to one’s desires, originate in the Book of Genesis, in the Old Testament? Christianity has regarded such issues as the problem of the exegesis of the first chapter of Genesis in the Old Testament ever since the “Lynn White Thesis” was published. It has accumulated plenty of discourse.

2-1 The desacralization and conquest of nature by the Hebrews

As we saw earlier, according to White, the doctrine revealed in Genesis made it clear to humans that every item of God’s material creation had no other purpose than to serve

4) According to Whitney, “Some proponents of traditional Christianity, however, interpreted ‘Roots’ as an attack on their faith and reacted with hostility. Many of these responses were from individuals professionally affiliated with a Christian denomination who perhaps felt betrayed, given White’s status as the son of a minister and a self-identified Christian himself. According to Bert Hall, White’s student and the author of several biographical memoirs of White, a ‘tide of protest from churchmen flowed across his desk’. White’s long-term impact on Christian environmental activism continues to be assessed as negative by some writers, in part because of sectarian concerns.” (WHITNEY 2015: 400)

5) In addition to works cited in footnote 2, studies surveying this subject are numerous. Whitney, for example, listed over 160 books or papers in his paper’s bibliography (WHITNEY 2015).

humans. This belief scheme enabled humans to exploit nature without any concern for nature's feelings. As long as we recognize and admire divinity in nature, we will have strong inhibitions against conquering and exploiting it. Therefore, it was necessary to strip nature of its divinity. When, and by what process, was divinity taken away from nature?

The first and most important aspect of the doctrine symbolized by Genesis is the "sharp distinction between God and nature".⁶⁾ According to Henri Frankfort (1897–1954), the relationship between man and nature, as conceived by the Hebrews, was peculiar compared to that in other ancient religions. In the epilogue of his *Kingship and the Gods*, Frankfort emphasized the "basic oddness of the Hebrew institution," in comparison with the Egyptians and Mesopotamians:

If kingship counted in Egypt as a function of the gods, and in Mesopotamia as a divinely ordained political order, the Hebrews knew that they had introduced it on their own initiative, in imitation of others and under the strain of an emergency. [...] If the Hebrews, like the Mesopotamians, remembered a kingless period, they never thought that 'kingship descended from heaven.' [...] In the light of Egyptian, and even Mesopotamian, kingship, that of the Hebrews lacks sanctity. The relation between the Hebrew monarch and his people was as nearly secular as is possible in a society wherein religion is a living force. [...] Nowhere else in the Near East do we find this dissociation of a people from its leader in relation to the divine; with the Hebrews we find parallelism while everywhere else we find coincidence. (FRANKFORT 1978: 339, 341)

In short, the Hebrews could not recognize any divinity in the monarchy, because it was nothing but a creation of the absolute God. In Hebrew thought, it seemed not only futile but more foolish to search for harmony with the life of created nature, since nature appeared to lack holiness in the first place. In its place, only obedience to the will of God, the creator, would bring peace and salvation. Above all, the possibility of harmonious integration of society and nature that the Egyptian and Mesopotamian kingdoms had aimed for was denied in Hebrew thought. God was not to be found in the sun, stars, rain, or the wind; these are only God's creatures and His servants. Thus, "in the religion of the Hebrews, and in the religion of the Hebrews alone, the ancient bond between humans and

6) "The view that man in any sense rules over nature inevitably presumes that nature is not itself divine. And the striking peculiarity of the religion of the Hebrews, when we compare it with the middle Eastern religions which surrounded it, is its sharp distinction between God and nature. The Hebrew God, to put the difference technically, is transcendent, not immanent; he creates and rules nature but is not to be identified with it." (PASSMORE 1974: 10)

nature was destroyed" (FRANKFORT 1978: 339–344).

As long as human beings perceive nature as sacred, it would be imprudent to think that they are allowed to turn it into a consumable resource. They should, at least, hesitate to dispose of nature freely, to satisfy their desires. Therefore, the fact that the Hebrews, who codified the Book of Genesis and recognized that "nature has lost its mystery," is undoubtedly an important nodal point in the history of humankind, which later led to the destruction of the environment (PASSMORE 1974: 10). Nature, created by God and separated from Him, is no longer a mystical being and had lost its spirituality. This implies that the ancient Jews made a sharp distinction between God and nature, and parted from the idea that natural things have a holy soul, because only God is holy.⁷⁾

In addition to the "deprivation of divinity from nature," another important aspect of Hebrew behavior toward others, e.g., humans, plants, animals, and minerals, exists. According to Nash, owing to Hebrew linguistic research, the Hebrews had a primordial behavioral pattern of violent assault, expressed in the Book of Genesis, as the idea of conquest and domination of others (humans, nature, and others), which later formed the basis of the Judeo-Christian tradition.⁸⁾ If it is true, the original Hebrew in the Old Testament had an aggressive character regarding conquering and dominating others, including humans and nature. In any case, the Hebrews' attitude of deprivation of divinity from nature, was later inherited by the Christians, who boasted of having the honor of stripping nature of her divinity.

According to Díez del Corral, deprivation of divinity from nature was the most essential premise established by Christianity for humans and that cannot be compromised. Only

7) "Nothing is sacred, on this [Judeo-Christian] tradition, except God and what, like Sinai, is specifically dedicated to God. 'The Lord is in his holy temple; the Lord's throne is in heaven.' No doubt God owns the earth and all it contains, 'every beast of the forest and the cattle upon a thousand hills'. But man is at liberty, under a special charter from God, to exploit it as he wills — subject only to restrictions specifically imposed by God. He is not, when he kills 'the cattle upon a thousand hills', killing something sacred." (PASSMORE 1974: 10)

8) "The best place to search for confirmation of Lynn White's contention that traditional Christianity opposed an ethical attitude toward nature is in the original significance of the language employed in the Bible. Hebrew linguists have analyzed Genesis 1: 28 and found two operative verbs: *kabash*, translated as "subdue," and *radah*, rendered as 'have dominion over' or 'rule.' Throughout the Old Testament *kabash* and *radah* are used to signify a violent assault or crushing. The image is that of a conqueror placing his foot on the neck of a defeated enemy, exerting absolute domination. Both Hebraic words are also used to identify the process of enslavement. It followed that the Christian tradition could understand Genesis 1: 28 as a divine commandment to conquer every part of nature and make it humankind's slave. Certainly such an interpretation proved useful over the centuries as intellectual lubrication for the exploitation of nature. Indeed, was this not one of the main reasons for its initial appearance and persistence in Christian thought?" (NASH 1989: 89–90)

on this premise can humans, amid the universe, have their freedom, be masters of creation like Adam, and be subject to the rule of the reason and will, as if, as the Psalmist David says, “a little less than the gods”.⁹⁾ Although Díez del Corral’s book was written before the “Lynn White Thesis,” it was the firm conviction of the Europeans that “*la desdivinización de la naturaleza*” (the desacralization of nature), was the most essential and inviolable premise which Christianity had laid down for humans. After all, the starting point was the removal of divinity from nature. In that sense, the Old Testament should be regarded as the origin of environmental destruction, following which the Europeans took over and furthered the Hebrews’ deprivation of divinity from nature.

Moreover, Judeo-Christians believed that human beings were created in the image of God and that it was in human beings that divinity resided. Consequently, in modern times, this view of humans gave rise to the idea of natural rights.¹⁰⁾

2-2 The influence of Greek philosophy on the anthropocentrism of Christianity

In the Jewish culture, we can notice the desire to control nature, and the idea that humans were made in the image of God. In the Old Testament, however, both humans and nature are creatures of God, and there is no definite break between humans and nature, both of whom are His creatures and exist for the sake of His great glory. Since God and nature are entirely separate entities, we do not recognize any sacredness in nature. In this respect, Jews and Christians are in complete agreement. The difference between the two, according to Passmore, is that “Judaism is thoroughly theocentric,” and second, that “the gulf between man and animal is smaller among the Jews than among

9) “Restablecer tal lazo, roto hace ya unos milenios para el hombre occidental, es la aspiración de tantos hombres de nuestros días, deseosos de superar ese utopismo, esa angustia personal irreductible que de una u otra forma renace en el sagrado lugar ocupado por la antigua esperanza en la transcendencia. Pero, ¿no fue la desdivinización de la naturaleza que el hebraísmo produjo, supuesto imprescindible para que el hombre tuviera holgura en el universo, para que se constituyera como Adán en señor de la creación — «un poco menos que dioses», según dice el salmista — y pudiera someter aquélla al dominio de su razón y de su voluntad?” (DÍEZ DEL CORRAL 1954: 235)

10) “Eastern religion and philosophy were notably devoid of the concept of individual rights which underlay much of environmental ethics in the West. The Oriental mind tended to regard nature as imbued with divinity rather than as something possessing rights. One root of the idea of rights in non-Asian cultures was the Judeo-Christian notion that all humans (but only humans) were made in the image of God; therefore every human was sacred, possessed of a redeemable soul, and intrinsically valuable. The natural-rights philosophy of John Locke and Thomas Jefferson secularized this concept. In the East, on the other hand, intrinsic value extended to the limits of the universe. All beings and things, animate and inanimate, were thought to be permeated with divine power or spirit such as the Tao or, in Shinto, kami.” (NASH 1989: 113)

the Christians.” If this is true, then the anthropocentrism in Christianity, which resolutely proclaimed the superiority of humans over animals, was expressed only implicitly rather than explicitly at this stage of the Old Testament. The anthropocentrism that eventually became explicit in Christianity was the “arrogant” attitude toward nature, which argued that humans were different from and superior to animals and therefore could freely consume them.¹¹⁾

Anthropocentrism is the belief in the supremacy of human beings over nature, initiating the further desacralization of nature. Anthropocentrism, as explicitly expressed by Christians, was created under the influence of Greek thought (PASSMORE 1974: 13). Although White argued that this tendency “goes back to the Genesis account”, it was the anthropocentric thought in Greek philosophy that led to the encouraging the idea of nature as a resource, to be consumed as one pleased.¹²⁾

Philosophers in ancient Greece like Pythagoras, Parmenides, Empedocles, Anaxagoras, and Democritus, believed in the immortality of the soul and reincarnation. Among them, Pythagoras (582–496BCE) was illustrative. He organized the Pythagorean cult, which was based on the Orpheus cult that was popular at that time. His doctrines were immortality of the soul, reincarnation, and retribution after death. He believed that the souls of the dead were transferred to animals; so Pythagoras “was the first to bring to Greece the teachings that all living beings that were born are kindred” (KALUDEROVIĆ 2015a: 203). He enforced the practice of abstaining from eating meat and looking at one’s soul in silence.¹³⁾

11) “It is still necessary to insist on the points on which Jew and Christian differed, for they are highly relevant to our theme. These differences derive from two connected facts. First, the Old Testament, unlike so many Christian theologians, does not set up an unbridgeable gap between man and his fellow-creatures. Secondly, it is uncompromisingly theocentric: nature, on its view, exists not for man’s sake but for the greater glory of God. And it will at once be obvious that, in the Christian separation of man from the animals and the Christian view that nature was made for man, there lie the seeds of an attitude to nature far more properly describable as ‘arrogant’ than the purely Old testament conception of man’s dominion.” (PASSMORE 1974: 12)

12) “To sum up, so far as we can yet do so, the critics of Western civilisation are to this extent justified in their historical diagnosis: there is a strong Western tradition that man is free to deal with nature as he pleases, since it exists only for his sake. But they are incorrect in tracing this attitude back to Genesis. Genesis, and after it the Old Testament generally, certainly tells man that he is, or has the right to be, master of the earth and all it contains. But at the same time it insists that the world was good before man was created, and that it exists to glorify God rather than to serve man. It is only as a result of Greek influence that Christian theology was led to think of nature as nothing but a system of resources, man’s relationships with which are in no respect subject to moral censure.” (PASSMORE 1974: 27)

13) “In short, the views of Pythagoreans ranged from the belief in a complete ban on the use of animal meat in the fraternity, through refraining from eating just certain species of animals, to a categorical denial of any bans on meat consumption.” (KALUDEROVIĆ 2015a: 204)

As long as you are Pythagorean, the creed of anthropocentrism does not arise.¹⁴⁾

However, the mainstream European civilization adopted, not the Pythagorean School, but the orthodox Greek philosophy of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. The basis of Plato's philosophy was the setting up of an abstract world called the Idea. The Ideal world, i.e., the Wisdom world, was that of truth and value. The real world in which we live was called the phenomenal world and was considered to exist as a temporary image.¹⁵⁾ True knowledge (*episteme*) is possible only in the realm of ideas. What exists in the phenomenal world is nothing but speculation (*doxa*). Since nature, i.e., the phenomenal world, has become nothing more than a reflection of the Idea, this worldview deprives nature of its sacredness (TURNBULL 1978; DEMIR 2017).

Just as God created value in Judeo-Christianity, the Idea created value in Plato's philosophy. In other words, it is the Idea of the Good in Plato that played the role of God in Christianity, leading to the analogy between the Idea and God. The real world corresponded to the earthly present world in Christianity, and the world of the Idea as the absolute ideal of truth, goodness, and beauty corresponded to heaven in Christianity. The assumption of the duality of the phenomenal world and the world of Ideas in Platonism corresponded to that of the earthly world and the heavenly world in Christianity. In short, the notion of Idea, advocated by Plato, was transfigured into God in Christianity.¹⁶⁾

Thus, anthropocentrism in Christianity has the same root as the theory of Ideas in Plato's philosophy: an ideology found the basis of human existence, not in nature, but an

14) "Empedocles' (and Pythagoras') followers repeat that people are kin not only to each other or with the gods, but with living beings who do not have the gift of speech." (KALUDEROVIĆ 2015a: 208)

15) "Some ancient philosophers, Plato most notably, and some early modern philosophers, especially Leibniz, posited the existence of an objective, impersonal Good from which value flowed." (CALLICOTT 1984: 302)

16) "We have dealt with the negative side in Greek thought at the time of the *kairos*. But there were also some positive elements. First we will take up the Platonic tradition. The idea of transcendence, that there is something that surpasses empirical reality, was prepared for Christian theology in the Platonic tradition. Plato spoke of essential reality, of 'ideas' (*ousia*) as the true essences of things. At the same time we find in Plato, and even stronger in later Platonism and Neo-Platonism, a trend toward the devaluation of existence. The material world has no ultimate value in comparison with the essential world. Also in Plato the inner aim of human existence is described—somewhere in the *Philebus*, but also practically everywhere in Plato—as becoming similar to God as much as possible. God is the spiritual sphere. The inner *telos* of human existence is participation in the spiritual, divine sphere as much as possible. This element in the Platonic tradition was used especially by the Cappadocian Fathers of the church to describe the ultimate aim of human existence." (TILLICH 1968: 6). However, not all the arguments claim for a homogeneity between Christian theology and Platonic philosophy; Sokolowski, for example, emphasizes the dissimilarities between the two (SOKOLOWSKI 1995).

absolute existence. This was the beginning of the anthropocentric notion that humans are ideologically separated from nature. Above all, the Greek philosophy's assumption of a world of absolute and universal value disconnected from nature decisively changed the relationship between humans and nature. In any case, Plato's philosophical theory of the Idea reversed the position of nature and humans. Consequently, the worldview of reincarnation in Orphism and Pythagoreanism was reversed and overcome. This ideological reversal of subject-object was eventually adopted by Europeans, who further strengthened anthropocentrism.¹⁷⁾

On the other hand, Aristotle (384-322 BCE) presented a clear-cut hierarchy based on reason:

Hence it is evident that the state is a creation of nature, and that man is by nature a political animal. [...] Now, that man is more of a political animal than bees or any other gregarious animals is evident. Nature, as we often say, makes nothing in vain, and man is the only animal whom she has endowed with the gift of speech. And whereas mere voice is but an indication of pleasure or pain, and is therefore found in other animals [...], the power of speech is intended to set forth the expedient and inexpedient, and therefore likewise the just and the unjust. And it is a characteristic of man that he alone has any sense of good and evil, of just and unjust, and the like, and the association of living beings who have this sense makes a family and a state. (ARISTOTLE 1957: 8)

This ability to perceive good, evil, just, and unjust distinguishes humans from other animals and makes it possible to build sophisticated organizations like cities and states. Therefore, humans are placed above other animals.¹⁸⁾ Since humans stand at the top of all animals, plants exist for animals and animals exist for humans. Consequently, it is natural that humans should use animals for food, for service, and as materials for clothing and other tools. This path is a human-centered ethical thought that assumes

17) "We find the foundation of metaphysics in the classical Greek philosophers' reversal between the sensible and the intelligible, reaching its completion in Plato; the phenomenal world reflected as shadows against the dim wall of the cave and true reality existing in the sunlit world of ideas and forms" (DE VILLIERS 2018: 4).

18) "The principles of the more and the less and analogy confirm that nature is conceived by Aristotle as a continuous order, where animals belonging to different genres are compared by analogy and those belonging to the same genus vary in gradual quantitative aspects. This idea is confirmed in the different contexts in which Aristotle compares the human being to other animals: for Aristotle there is a gradualness not only in the possession of physical characteristics such as connate heat and earthy material, but also in the possession of psychical qualities (cf. HA VIII.1, 588a18-b3) and 'social' features (cf. Pol. I.2, 1253a7-8)." (MINGUCCI 2021: 219)

that animals are subordinate to humans and that humans can do as they please with them.¹⁹⁾ This has become a consistent tradition in European thought and defined the current relationship between humans and animals.²⁰⁾

In the worldview transition from reincarnation to the hierarchical structure, the idea of the spirit became a mediator. Socrates first proposed the hierarchical structure of the soul; Plato later asserted that the soul was immortal. At the base of this hierarchy lies the vegetable soul (which governs the most basic functions of life, such as nutrition, growth, and reproduction); on the upper level rests the animal soul (which, in addition to the functions of the vegetable soul, governs movement and the senses); and on top of the hierarchy stays the human soul (which, in addition to all the functions of the vegetable and animal souls, has the special function of reason). Aristotle believed that plant and animal spirits are transmitted from parent to child by reproduction, but the human spirit “comes from outside.” Christian theologians seized on Aristotle’s words and easily rephrased them to say that humans were specially created by God. Eventually, by the 12th century, the Aristotelian view of life became widely accepted by Christians in Western Europe, and Christian theologians came to regard the spirit, so to speak, as the watcher of the natural order (ROGER 1986: 277–295).

Thus, the ideological work that Europeans accepted when they adopted Christianity was not the Pythagorean worldview of reincarnation, but the anthropocentric thought of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. In later times, this philosophical lineage exerted a decisive influence on the intellectual traditions of Christianized Europe.²¹⁾

19) “In these treatises, as we have seen, man is singled out as a ‘divine’ animal; above all, it is in them that the ‘man alone of animals’ motif occurs so often. Accuse Aristotle of some inconsistency, if you will; there is no doubt of man’s special status in all Aristotle’s thought. Moreover, he taught explicitly that plants and animals existed for man’s benefit, *Politics* 1256^b15 ff [...]” (RENEHAN 1981: 253)

20) “[...] his [Aristotle’s] hierarchical ontology is basic to his view of the world. Stars, composed of an indestructible, weightless element not found of earth, are superior to sub-lunar beings. Inanimate objects like rocks are inferior to living ones like plants. Plants, which have no sense perception at all, are inferior to animals, which in turn also can be hierarchically divided. At the top of the list of animals, of course, comes human beings, the animal that think.

Such a hierarchical view of reality came to be known as ‘the great chain of beings,’ or the *scala naturae*, and is closely associated with medieval philosophy. It is often visually depicted as a triangular structure that puts God on top, with angels just below, followed by human beings, animals, plants, and rocks.” (ROOCHNIK 2013: 67–68)

21) “In a remarkably short period of time Plato and Aristotle, building upon - and departing from - the foundations of their predecessors, were to work out the concept of an incorporeal deity, a concept which remained fundamental in Western theology for over two thousand years.” (RENEHAN 1981: 258); “After Plato and Aristotle the concepts incorporeality and immateriality became, once and for

2-3 The Scientific Revolution in the 17th century

Aristotle culminated in a teleological view of nature, where the existence and occurrence of nature were defined by purpose. This view has been dominant in the European spiritual world since antiquity and throughout the Middle Ages until the early modern period, as it was in harmony with the Christian worldview.

Thus, while the same Old Testament is used as the Bible, Christianity is more anthropocentric than Judaism, partly due to the influence of Greek philosophy. Although the desacralization of nature was an essential condition for the development of science and technology, anthropocentrism is further intrinsically conveyed when it went through the development of science in modern Europe. In the 17th century, the so-called scientific revolution took place owing to the development of modern science by eminent scholars, such as Galileo, Descartes, and Newton. In contrast to the aforementioned traditional teleology, a mechanistic view of nature, where the existence and occurrence of the natural world were all defined as physical phenomena by the laws of physical causality, emerged as the new paradigm. This mechanistic view of nature, which explained all natural phenomena mechanically and chemically, overwhelmed the teleological view of nature in Western Europe.

René Descartes (1596–1650) strictly excluded the teleological view because he considered it impossible, and impious, to discern God’s intentions as human reason is finite.²²⁾ According to Descartes, teleological explanations had no validity over physical phenomena. Therefore, we should henceforth no longer use the cause of purpose (*causa finalis*) but the cause of physical movement (*causa efficiens*) in the explanation of nature.²³⁾ Descartes’ mechanistic view of nature was asserted clearly in his famous

all, regular items in the philosopher’s inventory.” (RENEHAN 1980: 108)

- 22) “Considering this more attentively the first thing that occurs to me is the reflection that I must not be surprised if I am not always capable of comprehending the reasons why God acts as he does; nor must I doubt of his existence because I find, perhaps, that there are several other things besides the present respecting which I understand neither why nor how they were created by him; for, knowing already that my nature is extremely weak and limited, and that the nature of God, on the other hand, is immense, incomprehensible, and infinite, I have no longer any difficulty in discerning that there is an infinity of things in his power whose causes transcend the grasp of my mind: and this consideration alone is sufficient to convince me, that the whole class of final causes is of no avail in physical [or natural] things; for it appears to me that I cannot, without exposing myself to the charge of temerity, seek to discover the [impenetrable] ends of Deity.” *Descartes’ Meditations. Meditation III: Of Truth and Error*, paragraph 6. (DESCARTES 1901)
- 23) “The rule—that we must never argue from ends—should be carefully heeded. For, firstly, the knowledge of a thing’s purpose never leads us to a knowledge of the thing itself; its nature remains just as obscure to us. Indeed, this constant practice of arguing from ends is Aristotle’s greatest fault. Secondly, all the purposes of God are hidden from us, and it is rash to want to plunge into them. I

“Animal machine”. He considered the human body as a machine, and the heart as a heat engine, in an attempt to explain the mechanical movements of life. The theoretical basis of Descartes’ mechanistic view of nature is object-mind dualism (hence body-mind dualism). According to it, the world consists of a spiritual world whose attributes are thoughts (*cogitatio*), and an object world whose attributes are extensions (*extensio*). They both have a substantial distinction (*distinctio substantialis*) in principle. Theoretically, the interaction between two heterogeneous entities cannot be established. Therefore, mental phenomena should always be explained by the same spiritual thing, and similarly, physical phenomena should be explained only by the same material thing. Thus, natural phenomena have a physical basis to be explained in the natural sciences as sensuous tangible phenomena, and therefore, as quantifiable physical phenomena.²⁴⁾

Descartes was explicitly critical of Aristotle’s teleology and against the anthropomorphic view of God’s intentions. The mechanistic view of nature, constructed from this rejection of such teleology, conversely produced technologies that could dominate and utilize nature. As a result, humans assumed the position of master of the natural world and acquired God-like powers. Descartes hit the nail on the head when he stated that mechanistic philosophy showed that humans could be masters and owners of the natural world.²⁵⁾ In ancient Christianity, humans and nature were separated, and

am not speaking here of the purposes which are known through revelation; it is purely as a philosopher that I am considering them. It is here that we go completely astray. We think of God as a sort of superman, who thinks up such and such a scheme, and tries to realize it by such-and-such means. This is quite clearly unworthy of God.” (DESCARTES 1976: 19–20)

- 24) “Ces hommes seront composés comme nous, d’une Ame et un Corps; Et il faut que je vous décrive premièrement le corps à part, et puis après l’ame aussi à part: Et enfin que je vous montre comment ces deux Natures doivent être jointes et unies, pour composer des hommes qui nous ressemblent.

Je suppose que le Corps n’est autre chose qu’une statue ou machine de Terre, que Dieu forme tout exprès, pour la rendre la plus semblable à nous qu’il est possible : En sorte que non seulement il lui donne au dehors la couleur et la figure de tous nos membres, mais aussi qu’il met au dedans toutes les pièces qui sont requises pour faire qu’elle marche, qu’elle mange, qu’elle respire, et enfin qu’elle imite toutes celles de nos fonctions qui peuvent être imaginées procéder de la matière, et ne dépendre que de la disposition des organes.” (DESCARTES 1677: 1–2)

- 25) “Mais sitôt que j’ai eu acquis quelques notions générales touchant la Physique, et que commençant à les éprouver en diverses difficultés particulières, j’ai remarqué jusques où elles peuvent conduire, et combien elles diffèrent des principes dont on s’est servi jusques à présent, j’ai cru que je ne pouvais les tenir cachées, sans pécher grandement contre la loi qui nous oblige à procurer autant qu’il est en nous le bien général de tous les hommes: car elles m’ont fait voir qu’il est possible de parvenir à des connaissances qui soient fort utiles à la vie; et qu’au lieu de cette Philosophie spéculative qu’on enseigne dans les écoles, on en peut trouver une pratique, par laquelle connaissant la force et les actions du feu, de l’eau, de l’air, des astres, des cieux et de tous les autres corps qui nous environnent, aussi distinctement que nous connaissons les divers métiers de nos artisans, nous

humans were allowed by God to dominate and rule nature. In the structure of God-humans-nature, God disappeared and humans took his place through the development of science after the 17th century to become the absolute ruler. The removal of God from this hierarchical structure by modern Europeans gave rise to radical anthropocentrism. This shift led to the rapid acceleration of environmental destruction in modern times.²⁶⁾

3. The Stewardship as an Application of Mediators

3-1 The rise of the stewardship theory

Reflecting on the destruction of the environment by humans and the Genesis account leading Christians to be arrogant toward nature, an argument has emerged in Christian communities: that humans should behave as caretakers of nature and not the rulers. So, humans were recommended to act as stewards of nature. A steward is “one employed in a large household or estate to manage domestic concerns (such as the supervision of servants, collection of rents, and keeping of accounts)” (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/steward>).

White himself had already recommended stewardship of nature, using St. Francis of Assisi as an example (WHITE 1967:1206). Palmer wrote, “White’s proposal, then, is to rethink Christianity and to focus on the possibility of an alternative message about human-nature relationship, a message of stewardship. White ends his essay with a tribute to St Francis of Assisi, who, White claims, was not only the ‘greatest radical in Christian history since Christ’, but who delivered the required nature-sympathetic message of stewardship.” (PALMER 2001:203-204)²⁷⁾

The above exegesis of the Genesis account, making humans stewards of earth instead of rulers, had the effect of denying them the right to consume nature and making Christians aware of the need to prevent environmental degradation.²⁸⁾ This is because,

les pourrions employer en même façon à tous les usages auxquels ils sont propres, et ainsi nous rendre comme maîtres et possesseurs de la Nature.” (DESCARTES 1900: 115-116)

26) “In some respects, the emergence of such an idea was one of the results of the Secular Revolution above-mentioned. During the process of the Secular Revolution, God, the Creator and the Dominator of this world, was gradually put aside and eventually killed in every aspect and field of European society. Once a solid triad hierarchy of God-Man-Nature was retained. Now this hierarchy was substituted by another binominal hierarchy of Man and Nature. It means Man takes the place of God, the dominator, over Nature. Nature should be dominated by man. Man is the master of Nature.” (MURAKAMI 1993: 183)

27) Nash also argues that God did not command humans to dominate nature, but to delagate and manage it. He discussed stewardship in detail as well (NASH 1989: 95-102).

28) “The stewardship interpretation, all things considered, seems to have the most textual support and to be the most plausible. Most appealingly, from the point of view of the theoretical

based on this interpretation, Christian communities were greatly transformed and had a significant influence on environmental protection practices.²⁹⁾

Christian communities have responded to Lynn White's criticism with the stewardship theory described above. A steward is entrusted by the property owner with the management and maintenance of the property. The position of man in this theory is that of a steward between God (i.e., the property owner) and nature (i.e., the property). Most commentators avoid explicit use of the term *mediator* in this theory and use a variety of expressions, such as steward, administrator, trustee, guardian, agent, servant, and so on. However, in essence, he is nobody other than an "intermediary" (i.e., mediator) between God and nature. According to the basic understanding of Christianity, when the mediator is referred to, we think of Jesus Christ. For Christians, the position taken by Jesus is particular and unique. As a result, he has been regarded as the true mediator.³⁰⁾

Since the content of the stewardship theory is nothing but the mediator, this discussion, consciously or unconsciously, reflects the conceptual framework of Christianity. From the perspective of Jesus Christ as the mediator, German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) emphasized the intermediary role of human beings, recommending that Christians should treat nature in terms of agents of God in environmental issues. According to Bonhoeffer, the concept of agency proposed in his *Ethics* was most profoundly demonstrated by Jesus Christ. Jesus lived on the behalf of Christians, as the Son of God who became a man. Therefore, all human life is vicariously lived by him. From here, he says, we must further live as agents of others in our power to live. He argued that instead of the dominant nature of Christianity (Constantine system),

requirements of non-anthropocentric environmental ethics, the theistic axiology of the Judeo-Christian tradition provides intrinsic value less for individuals than for the more permanent and persistent forms of nature and for the natural world as a whole. It is clear, for example, when God is creating plants and animals, that He is establishing species, and it is understood that individuals naturally come and go. Thus in fulfilling our role as stewards, i.e., in dressing the garden and keeping it, our task is not primarily one of preventing individual animal suffering or looking out for the interests of individual plants and animals, but of preserving species, maintaining the integrity of natural communities, and insuring the healthy functioning of the biosphere, the garden, as the whole." (CALLICOTT 1984: 302)

29) A study (DE GROOT et al. 2011) attempts to show statistically that public opinion among Christians has evolved from stewardship to partnership and finally to participation.

30) In terms of 'The Access to God theme', the mediator is described as follows: "For believers, Christ is their divine Mediator (or 'broker' in terms of the patron-client relationships that existed in the first century world). In the patronal society of the ancient Mediterranean world, 'those who dispense second-order resources [i.e., strategic contacts or access to patrons] are brokers.' Seen in the capacity of a 'broker,' Jesus secures favor from God on behalf of those committed to Him. Believers have access through Christ, their Mediator, to God, greatest of all patrons." (SCOTT 1998: 208)

an agency was presented as its original character or positioned as a servant.³¹⁾

Bonhoeffer, who was executed in 1945 just before the German surrender due to his anti-Nazi activities, had no way of knowing about the “Lynn White Thesis.” It does not appear that he spoke directly about environmental issues. Bonhoeffer, however, told Christians to live vicariously, as Jesus lived for others. As we have seen, the position of Jesus in Christianity is that of the mediator between God and believers. Bonhoeffer’s suggestion regarding Jesus being the mediator between God and humans and that humans should follow his example and serve nature, is a straightforward Christian interpretation.³²⁾

3-2 Descent of the Human Position through Stewardship Theory: From the Position of God to the Position of Mediator

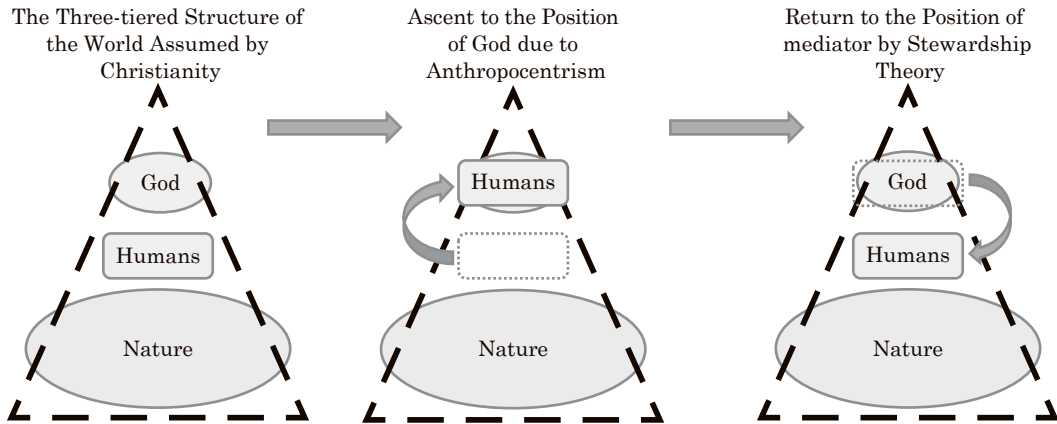
The world, as envisioned by Christianity, is based on a three-tiered structure: God, humans, and nature. In Figure 1, the triangle on the left side represents the three-tiered structure of the world assumed by Christianity. In this three-tiered structure, the three

31) “To reach this new synthesis of faith and world, Bonhoeffer constructed his theology on a fundamental Christocentrism. According to Feil, Bonhoeffer’s christology takes shape first in *Act and Being* rather than in the prior dissertation, *Sanctorum Communio*. It is in *Act and Being* that Bonhoeffer fully declares for the first time that Jesus is the center from whom all theology develops. In the ecclesiocentric *Sanctorum Communio*, on the other hand, Bonhoeffer depicts Jesus more as the mediator of redemption (*Mittler der Versöhnung*) while still allowing for the ‘immediate relationship’ with God through conscience. Feil notes that this same ‘conscience’ is described by Bonhoeffer in *Act and Being* as an effort at an immediacy with God which, without the mediation of Christ, would only circumvent God’s word in Christ and in the church. This ‘word’ is God’s word of his freedom and the only word which can free man from his egocentric hubris. Faith, to maintain its dialectic with church and world, must be an *actus directus*, an intentionality solely toward Christ. Bonhoeffer’s concentration on Christ in his theology is even more clearly brought out in the christology lectures of 1933 which provided him with a groundwork for handling the problems of sociality, of the concrete command and the question of how Jesus is center and mediator, having a proper relationship with man at both the limits (*Grenze*) of life and at life’s center.” (KELLY 1976: 283–284)

32) “Second, a Christian comes to others only through Jesus Christ. Among men there is strife. ‘He is our peace,’ says Paul of Jesus Christ (Eph. 2: 14). Without Christ there is discord between God and man and between man and man. Christ became the Mediator and made peace with God and among men. Without Christ we should not know God, we could not call upon Him, nor come to Him. But without Christ we also would not know our brother, nor could we come to him. The way is blocked by our own ego. Christ opened up the way to God and to our brother. Now Christians can live with one another in peace; they can love and serve one another; they can become one. But they can continue to do so only by way of Jesus Christ. Only in Jesus Christ are we one, only through him are bound together. To eternity he remains the one Mediator.” (BONHOEFFER 1954: 23–24)

essential parts form a hierarchical structure consisting of vertical positions in order of their value. God is higher than humans and humans are higher than nature. The place of humans in the three-tiered structure was changed as the stewardship arguments evolved.

Figure 1 Shifting of the human position through anthropocentrism and stewardship theory



Source: Author

As we have already seen, anthropocentrism's development began with the stripping of divinity from nature by the Hebrews and continued through decisive periods, such as the Scientific Revolution of the 17th century. Whether they are called stewards, trustees, watchmen, agents, or servants, the essence of humans is that of intermediaries. In the first place, the setting of the intermediary presupposes the existence of a three-tiered structure: God, human beings, and nature (including animals). It is only when a three-tiered structure is formed that the intermediary can exist. If, after the 17th century, God disappeared and human beings took his place, anthropocentrism would ascend human beings to the position of God, as illustrated by the triangle in the center of Figure 1.

At the same time, it would mean that the three-tiered structure has dissolved, paving the way for a two-tiered structure, i.e., humans-nature. Here, human beings are located at the top, but the two-tiered structure, i.e., God-creatures, was still a comfortable form for Jews and Muslims. In this two-tiered structure, the absolute God reigns over the world, and creatures, including humans, are under the providence of the absolute God.

For Christians, however, the two-tiered structure, based on the dichotomy of the absolute God (here replaced by humans) and His creatures, arouses some anxiety. Why do Europeans, especially European Christians, feel dissatisfied with the two-tiered structure and settle on the three-tiered one?

This is because there is no true mediator, in the two-tiered structure; only leading figures are active among their peers. European Christians seem to feel uncomfortable in

a form in which there is no genuine mediator. They feel at a loss, when confronted as creatures, with an absolute God who is omniscient and omnipotent. This is probably because, in such a two-tiered structure, they cannot have room for human or individual freedom.

In any case, the stewardship theory, proposed as a solution to the environmental destruction discussed above, is tantamount to suggesting that humans, who have become God, should descend to the second position and become the intermediary. Since it assumes a three-tiered structure, it is nothing more than a return to the position of mediator for human beings. The stewardship theory is, therefore, an attempt to return humans, who had temporarily assumed the position of God, to the position of the mediator, as shown by the triangle on the right side of Figure 1.

3-3 Two Types of Mediators Gave Rise to Two Types of Governance

Why the mediator was considered decisively important in Christianity and was Jesus positioned as the unique and true mediator? To find out, we must know the characteristics of the early nomadic organization, especially the role played by dogs.³³⁾

I argued in a paper (NAKAGAWA 2021b) that the animals assisting shepherds and managing herds helped to construct early nomadic organizations. These animals are commonly referred to as mediators. There were two types of mediators. The first species was castrated sheep, selected from a flock of sheep, and the second was dogs.

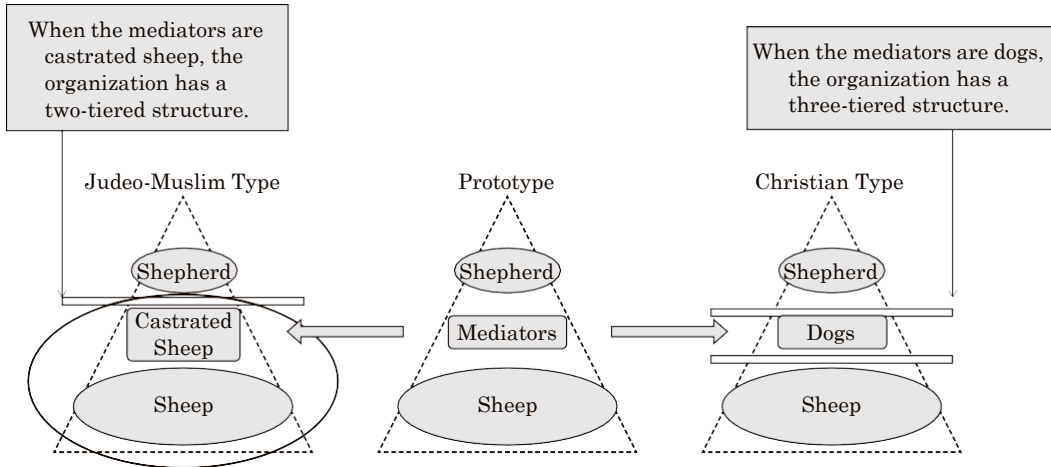
The mediators being castrated sheep or dogs made a vital organizational difference in the structure of the herd. If the castrated sheep were mediators, the organization formed a two-tiered structure of the shepherd and flock of sheep. Even if castrated, the sheep were sheep. Moreover, if mediators were dogs, who were predators of sheep, they could not belong to the same category. Thus, in this case, the pastoral organization formed a three-tiered structure consisting of shepherds, dogs, and sheep.

As shown in Figure 2, the existence of active mediators, i.e., dogs, separated the three-tiered structure from the two-tiered one. Active mediators were under the absolute power of shepherds but could exercise coercive violence toward the flock. Active mediators had a certain degree of freedom and autonomy in action and had the freedom to leave the organization at will. The flock of sheep was under the absolute control of shepherds and dogs. Furthermore, in a two-tiered structure, mediators were passive and merely

33) Dogs were probably the first animals domesticated in the Paleolithic period. Some mammals of gregarious, ruminant grazers, such as sheep, were domesticated much more recently in the Neolithic period in the hills of the Middle East around 6,000 BCE. These gregarious grazers were domesticated because they were consumed as resources, unlike companion animals, such as dogs, cats, and service animals. With the exception of those used for textiles, livestock must be killed to achieve the desired goal of resource extraction, such as for food or leather.

members of the flock. In this two-tiered organization, the relationship of power was composed of the absolute authority held by the herdsmen and the flock of sheep staying at the mercy of the dictators' absolute will.

Figure 2 Passive Mediators and Active Mediators in Nomadic Herding: Castrated Sheep or Dogs



Source: NAKAGAWA 2021a: 83

Humans emerged about seven million years ago and have lived in bands as hunter-gatherers for the majority of that period. Human organizations began to expand approximately ten thousand years ago, with the onset of permanent settlements and the commencement of agriculture. However, even then the expansion of organizations was continually conducted on the ties-based principle.

In terms of organizational principles, the decisive conversion of this situation was produced by the raids and conquests of agricultural settlements by nomadic pastoralists. In contrast to the ties-based principle that has dominated most of human history, the function-oriented principle is characterized by artificial and man-made organizations, which originated with the early nomadic tribes. As long as the ceilings imposed by kinship remained, it was difficult to expand the scope of tribes. Tribes that adopted the function-oriented principle, however, removed these restrictions imposed by kinship ties and began creating artificial organizations (NAKAGAWA 2022a).

Nomadic decedent states commonly placed an omnipotent sovereign power over the majority of subjects. However, just as there are two types of nomadic organizations, there are two types of governance. The first is a three-tiered structure inherited by Western countries, in which the aristocracy in the middle has historically played a major role. The second is a two-tiered structure, often inherited by despotic states. The most prominent modern examples of these are China and Russia.

For Proto-Indo-Europeans, active mediators were the bastion of their identities of

freedom and autonomy. That is why, when they converted to Christianity, they accepted the Trinity theory, and defined Jesus as the only and unique mediator (NAKAGAWA 2021a: 80–84). In the succeeding European civilization, such active mediators were extolled and greatly valued as a source of individual freedom and national identity. Mediators are of decisive significance in European countries' governance because Jesus is seen as the true mediator. The fact that stewardship was exalted is evidence that European Christian civilization has potentially retained a primordial form of nomadic pastoralism in its deep-rooted saga.

Conclusion: The Emergence of Nomadic Pastoralism was the Watershed in the History

Judeo-Christian anthropocentrism and the environment

Is Judeo-Christian anthropocentrism responsible for the degradation of the global environment? To an extent, yes. Starting with the account of Genesis in the Old Testament, ancient Greek philosophy developed anthropocentrism, placing plants and animals, i.e., nature, under human control and allowing for their exhaustion. Furthermore, the scientific revolution of the 17th century elevated man to the status of God. Humans were promoted to the position of God through anthropocentrism. As a result, human beings took their freedom to consume resources for granted and no longer felt shame.

However, to respond to harsh criticism against such anthropocentrism, Christianity has been putting forward the concept of stewardship and moderate rampant resource consumption attributed to its theological framework. Why is Christianity rediscovering stewardship and recommending it as a moderating measure?

This is because the mediator perfectly matches the essential principle of Christianity. The Trinity, in which Jesus is the true mediator, is the fundamental pillar of Christianity. Therefore, stewardship, as the real value of the Christian civilization, is being tested to see if it can take effective measures to deal with today's environmental problems.

Dominion originating in nomadic pastoralists

Environmental degradation was brought about by arrogant supremacy and reckless consumption of nature, i.e., dominion over nature. In short, humans have freely exercised dominion over nature until recent years. However, humans did not arbitrarily begin to consume nature. For a long time, since the emergence of humankind, there was a strong sense of prohibition against the human free use of nature. This is why the biblical account of Genesis was useful in dispelling it. Up to a certain point, the notion of dominion did not exist. If we now take a distance from the interpretation of the account of Genesis, we

must question where the historical and real origins of environmental degradation lie, and what the historical reality of pre-biblical times is. Who, when, and where was the way of controlling and managing nature that existed as an object outside ourselves developed? In short, by whom, where and when does the dominion begin?

In the hunter-gatherer lifestyle that has occupied most periods since the emergence of humankind, humans were decisively dependent on nature. While they were able to relativize nature after the onset of agriculture, they had not yet reached the point of dominion. If dominion is the act of subjugating outside beings, i.e., humans, plants, animals, etc., and exhausting them to satisfy their desires, factors requiring dominion did not exist for the majority of human history where the ties-based principle was prevalent.

The notion of dominion is related to the domestication of certain animals. The management of large herds of animals by herdsmen was the prototype of dominion in history. Among even-toed ungulates, very few gregarious grazers, e.g., sheep, goats, and cattle, had very specific characteristics for humans. This has been useful for humans as resources and otherwise. The domestication of some gregarious grazers was different from the domestication of companion animals, such as dogs and cats, as these grazers were bred to be killed and consumed in the end. These few gregarious grazers were the first animals domesticated to be killed as a resource. Thus, humans began to assume a position of absolute power, i.e., dominion, for the first time in history by taming, breeding, and ultimately killing such herds. Thus, the domestication of these gregarious grazers was a pioneering act of complete domination over others, that of seizing the right to breed and kill them and exhausting them on a large scale. The act of dominion over nature for the satisfaction of one's desires has its origins in the act of domestication of particular species of gregarious grazers.³⁴⁾

However, dominion did not stop at the domestication of gregarious grazers. The dominion that began over sheep was extended to both nature and humans. An artificial

34) An example of keeping animals alive for resource intake is, of course, milk. The development of milking technology was an important achievement in the history of pastoralism, especially for nomadic people who did not depend on agriculture for their livelihood and were able to establish nomadic pastoralism in the steppes and other grasslands. In milking, livestock is not killed; cattle are slaughtered for meat when they no longer produce milk. In any case, companion animals like dogs, cats, and racehorses may live to old age, but gregarious grazers will not live to the fullest. Therefore, as far as gregarious grazers are concerned, the term "domestication" expresses the first half of the process of domestication, i.e., taming and habituation. It does not explicitly express the second half of the process of domestication, i.e., killing (or consuming) the domestic animal to achieve the desired goal for humans. The hypothesis that immediately comes to mind is that people who were forced to kill large numbers of gregarious grazers for their survival (i.e., the early nomads) regarded this as their fate and came up with the description in the Book of Genesis in the Old Testament (permission by an absolute God) to dispel their sense of guilt.

organization called a “State” was formed when nomads raided and subjugated the peasantry of the plains. These nomadic states were characterized by a dominion that, having once been developed for sheep, was applied to other tribes and ethnic groups (TOYNBEE 1948: 396).

Environmental destruction in the dictatorial states is the present critical issue

Environmental destruction is a global phenomenon; the environmental destruction carried out in despotic regimes is threatening particularly the global environment today. Specifically, the environmental destruction in socialist countries under former communist regimes was notorious and became known globally after their collapse. Today, the enormous environmental destruction in the People’s Republic of China is the greatest threat to the earth.³⁵⁾ Power is concentrated in the hands of a few dictators in despotic regimes. They are characterized by a two-tiered structure, i.e., despot-subjects, as they lack the intermediate power of mediators such as in Christianity. Despots prioritize maintaining their power and accumulating their wealth. Consequently, they tackle environmental issues only within this scope. Everything, including environmental issues, depends only on the goodwill of the dictator. The Chinese Empire as a whole has historically been a typical succession of despotic regimes composed of a two-tiered structure: the emperor and his subjects. The idea of stewardship does not exist in the first place, nor does the empire take measures through stewardship like in the Western countries. Despite the serious environmental degradation in China, there is effectively no check against the tyranny of dictatorship.³⁶⁾ This is because China is currently ruled by a tyrannical system of governance, as seen in the one-party dictatorship of the Communist Party. Our biggest concern lies in this status quo.

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- 35) “Satellite data has revealed that the city [Beijing] is one of the worst environmental victims of China’s spectacular economic growth, which has brought with it air pollution levels that are blamed for more than 400 000 premature deaths a year. According to the European Space Agency, Beijing and its neighbouring north-east Chinese provinces have the world’s worst levels of nitrogen dioxide, which can cause fatal damage to the lungs.” (WATTS 2005: 1761)
- 36) “Using our newly updated global emissions data through 2019, we estimate that in 2019, for the first time since national greenhouse gas emissions have been measured, China’s annual emissions exceeded those of all developed countries combined. China’s emissions were less than a quarter of developed country emissions in 1990, but over the past three decades have more than tripled, reaching over 14 gigatons of CO₂-equivalent in 2019.” (LARSEN et al. 2021).

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