**Reading for Week 1 of Eco-Theology**

“Having already treated of the celestial world, as far as our conjectures could reach, we proceed to treat of animals, without omitting, to the bestof our ability, any member of the kingdom, however ignoble. For if some have no graces to charm the sense, yet even these, by disclosing to intellectual perception the artistic spirit that designed them, give immense pleasure to all who can trace links of causation, and are inclined to philosophy. Indeed, it would be strange if mimic representations of them were attractive, because they disclose the mimetic skill of the painter or sculptor, and the original realities themselves were not more interesting, to all at any rate who have eyes to discern the reasons that determined their formation. We therefore must not recoil with childish aversion from the examination of the humbler animals. Every realm of nature is marvellous: and as Heraclitus, when the strangers who came to visit him found him warming himself at the furnace in the kitchen and hesitated to go in, reported to have bidden them not to be afraid to enter, as even in that kitchen divinities were present, so we should venture on the study of every kind of animal without distaste; for each and all will reveal to us something natural and something beautiful. Absence of haphazard and conduciveness of everything to an end are to be found in Nature's works in the highest degree, and the resultant end of her generations and combinations is a form of the beautiful.

If any person thinks the examination of the rest of the animal kingdom an unworthy task, he must hold in like disesteem the study of man. For no one can look at the primordia of the human frame-blood, flesh, bones, vessels, and the like-without much repugnance. Moreover, when any one of the parts or structures, be it which it may, is under discussion, it must not be supposed that it is its material composition to which attention is being directed or which is the object of the discussion, but the relation of such part to the total form. Similarly, the true object of architecture is not bricks, mortar, or timber, but the house; and so the principal object of natural philosophy is not the material elements, but their composition, and the totality of the form, independently of which they have no existence.”

* Aristotle, *On the Parts of Animals*

“Having such power and such goodness He willed that there be another who could contemplate that being whom He had made from Himself. Therefore He made humankind to be an imitator of His reason and loving care. The will of God is the greatest perfection since willing and accomplishing are com¬ plete in the same instant of time. Thus He made human beings of His own essence. He perceived that they would not be able to love and care for all things unless He protected them with a material covering. So God sheltered them with a corporeal dwelling place and ordained the same for all human beings, and in just proportion He mixed and blended two natures into one. Thus God formed human beings of both spirit and body, that is, of both eternal and mortal nature, so that being thus formed they could do justice to their twofold origin: they could wonder at and adore the celestial, while they could also care for and manage the things on earth. ‘But in speaking of mortal things, I do not only mean earth and water, two of the four elements which nature has made subject to human beings, but also those things which humans are responsible for doing in, or with, these elements: the cultivation of the earth itself, pasturage, building, ports, navigation, communication, trade. All these constitute the strongest bond between human beings, and between them and that part of the world which is composed of water and earth. ‘This earthly part of the world is maintained by knowledge and practice of the arts and sciences, without which God has willed that it would not be brought to perfection. For what pleases God necessity obeys, as effect follows will; and it Asclepius is not credible that what has pleased God will become displeasing to Him, since He knew long before, not only what would come to pass, but that it would please Him.”

* Hermes Trismegistus, *Asclepius*

“Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this? In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind.’ What does this mean? No creature can be so stupid by nature that it is ignorant of all the causes and relationships which make up its fruitfulness and fertility. And how is this? The sky has light, the light air, the air birds; the earth nourishes the greenness, the greenness the fruit, the fruit the animals; all testify that they were established by a mighty hand – the great power of the Lord of all, who through the force of his strength has worked all things so that none may fail in their usefulness. All creatures live and move in the omnipotence of the Creator, not only those who seek the earth and earthly things as do cattle, which do not have rationality by the inspiration of God, but also those who inhabit human flesh in which they partake of rationality, power of discernment, and wisdom. How is this? The soul encircles earthly matters, at work through the many changes that fleshly customs demand of it. But the spirit raises itself up in two ways: on the one hand by heaving sighs, groanings and desires for God, on the other by seeking as it were through commands to exercise sovereignty, influence and autonomy in various areas, because through reason the spirit has the power of discernment. Therefore, also, the human being contains the likeness of heaven and earth within her. How does this come about? The human creature contains a circle in which there appear the qualities of discernment, breath of life and rationality, just as in the heavens there are stars, air and birds. Likewise, the human creature contains a receptacle in which there appear the moisture of the humours, germination and parturition, just as on earth there is greenness, fruitfulness and animals. What does this mean? Human creature! You are a wholeness in every created thing and yet you forget your creator! All things subject to you obey their creator as they were made to. But only you desire to transgress his commandments?”

* Hildegard of Bingen, *Liber Divinorum Operum*.