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Behemoth and Double Origins in Genesis

Any narration of an absolute origin simultaneously conceals and implies the existence of a pre-history. From this paradox a growing body of scholarship has emerged.¹ One may presume that the questions prompted by the quandary of dual origins and double beginnings in Genesis are already answered. However, the illustrations of the first chapters of Genesis on the frontispiece of a famous late medieval Bible bear a unique feature: an enigmatic creature is placed at the very center of the beginning (fig. 1). The creature sits on the earth, at the heart of the first scene in a series of twelve pictures from the Bible made in Naples for Matteo de Planisio.² As I will show in this contribution, its enigma is owed to a double origin.

The strange little creature is not the only unusual aspect on this page. In the history of Genesis illustrations, the depiction of the divine creator as Trinity is not very common.³ This characteristic detail links a group of illuminators who were

* The author owes many important references, critique and helpful comments to Cornelius Claussen, Ronald Hendel, Eva Horn, Ittai Weinryb and Mario Wimmer.

- 1 A premise for this contribution is Albrecht Koschorke's assertion that »narration needs to be seen as an intelligible principle deeply woven into the rationality of complex knowledge-structures. Identifying the fields of knowledge within which narration can and cannot function as an epistemic operator is by no means a trivial problem«; Albrecht Koschorke, *On the Unavoidability of Narration: The Problem of Two Beginnings in Cultures of Knowledge* (unpublished manuscript). There are zones marked by an explicit taboo on narration, for instance in certain sacral contexts, see Ronald Hendel, »The Poetics of Myth in Genesis«, in *The Seductiveness of Jewish Myth*, ed. S. Daniel Breslauer, Albany 1997, pp. 157-70; See, also, Albrecht Koschorke, »System. Die Ästhetik und das Anfangsproblem«, in *Grenzwerte des Ästhetischen*, ed. Robert Stockhammer, Frankfurt a.M. 2002, pp. 146-163; *ibid.*, »Götterzeichen und Gründungsverbrechen. Die zwei Anfänge des Staates«, in *Neue Rundschau*, 115 (1), 2004 (*Facetten des Heiligen*), pp. 40-55; *Am Anfang war... Ursprungsfiguren und Anfangskonstruktionen der Moderne*, ed. Inka Mülder-Bach & Eckhard Schumacher, Munich 2008; *Übertragene Anfänge. Imperiale Figurationen um 1800*, ed. Tobias Doering, Barbara Vinken & Günter Zöller, Munich 2010.
- 2 Andreas Bräm dates the manuscript to 1352, see Andreas Bräm, *Neapolitanische Bilderbibeln des Trecento. Anjou-Buchmalerei von Robert dem Weisen bis zu Johanna I*, 2 voll., Wiesbaden 2007, here, vol. 1, p. 403, with further bibliography. See, also, *Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana: Liturgie und Andacht im Mittelalter*, Exhib. Cat. (Cologne, Erzbischöfliches Diözesanmuseum, 1992), ed. Joachim M. Plotzek, Katharina Winnekes & Stefan Kraus, Stuttgart 1992, pp. 220-225; Bernhard Degenhart & Annegrit Schmitt, *Corpus der italienischen Zeichnungen 1300-1450*, Berlin 1968, vol. 1, no. 79, pp. 146-154.
- 3 See Johannes Zahlten, *Creatio Mundi. Darstellungen der sechs Schöpfungstage und naturwissenschaftliches Weltbild im Mittelalter*, Stuttgart 1979, pp. 106-109.

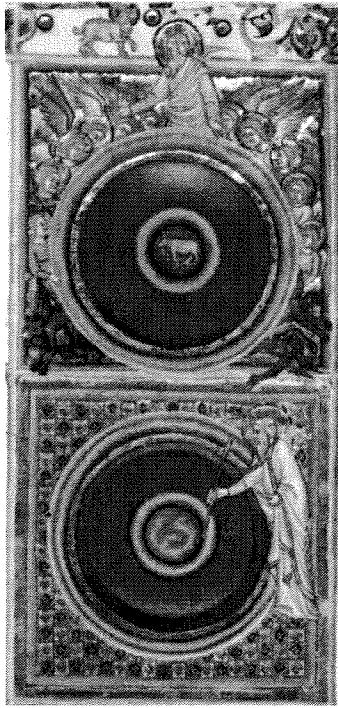


Fig. 1: *First and second day of Creation*, from the *Bible for Matteo de Planisio*, Naples, 1352 or later (?). Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Cod. Vat. lat. 3550, fol. 5r

working in Naples from the second quarter of the fourteenth century. Furthermore, the illuminators of these manuscripts put particular emphasis on the tool used for the Creation, the *baculum nodus* – a knotted stick – in his hand.⁴ His magic wand resembles the horn of a narwhal, often taken for the horn of a unicorn. These illustrators developed an iconographic formula that presents God operating as *deus artifex* with a *baculum nodus* while creating the cosmos. In pictures of the Creation, the artist's reference to his own drawing device highlights the inspiration and the potential of the model that divine creation provides for the work of the artist. Vice versa, the story of Genesis provided inspirational potential for the artist with parallels between the creational acts.

The idea of the creator as artist, as *artifex divinus*, was repeatedly employed and made explicit in the history of illustrations of the Genesis from the eleventh century, the time when Western artists began again to illustrate the story of Genesis with the creation of the cosmos (Gen 1:1). Most of the earlier pictorial narrations start with the Creation of Man (Gen 1:26-27; Gen 2:7; Gen 2:21-22). However, finding a coherent pictorial narrative for the double account in Genesis remained a challenge for artists. The first three chapters of Genesis not only collapse two dif-

⁴ See Bräm, *Neapolitanische Bilderbibeln* (note 2).

ferent creation accounts, but also intertwine two distinct concepts of the genesis of life.⁵

Such tensions become visible with particular evidence in the accounts of the genesis of mankind. In the first account, the so-called priest-script, both man and woman are generated *ex nihilo*: the word of God, i.e. his idea of humans, takes a form similar to his own likeness. In his translation of Genesis, Jerome employs »create« (*creavit*) to describe the emergence of heaven and earth (first day) and the inception of man (sixth day). Everything else either comes into being (*fiat*), or is made (*fecit*) or is said (*dixit, vocavit* or *ait*). In the second account, ascribed to the Jahwist, God himself sets his hand to the Creation of Man, he uses dust and loam to form the body of Adam (*formavit/produxit*) before he builds the second body (*aedificavit*). For Eve, he reuses matter originating from the first body, Adam. In order to do so, God had put him into a deep sleep again, into a stage of liveliness. In the Priest account, the principle of *simulacrum* is inscribed in the act of creation: bone is generated from bone, flesh from flesh. In this second, Jahwist, account, God first designs the form, the human's gestalt. Only after that he animates it, and then breathes the soul into it.⁶ In the frontispiece of the Bible of Matteo de Planisio (fig. 1), the Creator's *baculum nodus* gives attention to these differences. In the scenes on the left, he is pointing to what is created by him as if underlining in each particular panel how his own words not only take form, but become alive; whereas in the scenes to the right side, his stylus elevates the moment of animation: »and breathed into his face the breath of life, and man became a living soul« (Gen 2:7b).

Twelve scenes are shown in the frontispiece of the Bible for Matteo de Planisio (fig. 2): the five square panels to the left illustrate the creation of the heaven and earth, the separation of darkness from light (1), of land from waters (2), the creation of the plants (3), of the stars, the sun and the moon (4), and of the animals in water and air (5). On the right side, the five panels depict the animation of Adam and the creation of Eve (6), Paradise with God, Adam, Eve and the angels now seen from outside a closed door (7); the following panel depicts God prohibiting the consumption of the fruit from the Tree of Wisdom (8), Adam and Eve's expulsion (9) and their labor (10). The latter four scenes are depicted from a perspective outside Paradise. The beholder is given a terrestrial, partial view of the scenes, standing just beyond the threshold of Paradise. The point of view in these panels is cut off

5 Gen 1:1-2.4a, the so-called Priestly source, probably the younger account, while Gen 2:4b-3, by the so-called Jahwist, is most likely the older account; see Peter Weimar, *Studien zur Priesterschrift*, Tübingen 2008 (Forschungen zum Alten Testament, 56), here esp. pp. 1-145.

6 Aristotle, too, differentiates the animated from the inanimate things – those not yet animated by Psyche – or, as he puts it, with distinction to earlier theories: »The animated being would appear to differ from the inanimate in two primary respects: by motion and by sense-perception. And these two notions are roughly what our predecessors have handed down to us concerning the soul«. (lib. I, cap. 2/403b-24ff.); see Aristotle's *De Anima* in the version of William of Moerbeke and the commentary of St. Thomas Aquinas, trans. Kenelm Foster & Sylvester Humphries, with an introduction by Ivo Thomas, London 1951, p. 60.



Fig. 2: Bible for Matteo de Planisio, Naples, 1352 or later (?). Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Cod. Vat. lat. 3550, fol. 5r

from the other scenes by the flowing water of the four rivers of paradise, while the first six panels are shown from a universal point of view.

At the bottom of the page a Franciscan monk, several animals and Adam and Eve pray to the Judge of the World surrounded by an angelic aureole. The almond shape is emphasized by colors of the rainbow around its edge; the Lord sits on a throne, framed by a double rainbow. What the panel at the top of the page, above the beginning of Genesis (Gen 1:1-18), actually displays is a matter of scholarly debate. The hypotheses about its content are related to the dating and possible commissioners of the manuscript, and the name of a certain Matteo de Planisio, who is mentioned in the colophon of the manuscript.⁷ Sabina Magrini has suggested various possibilities regarding Matteo de Planisio's origin and background.⁸ The arguments for and against these suggestions depend on the identification of the two saints, dressed in purple and brown, each receiving a book from the Trinity. The saint to the right side is imprisoned and vested in brown cloth; five scholars are lying with five books on the floor in front of the Trinity's golden throne. God's hands reach out to the parchment of two manuscripts held by the two saints.⁹

The very first scene shows the beginning of the Creation of the World; the Divine Creator is depicted as the Trinity surrounded by eleven winged, haloed angels.¹⁰ The mythic origins of demonic forces are visually signaled by the inclusion of four fallen angels. They have lost both their halos and lively complexions as they plunge toward their future existence as beings of darkness and twilight. The world is shown surrounded by spheres.¹¹ Heaven and earth are separated and light and

7 Vat. lat. 3550, III, fol. 720v-721r: »Fecit fieri opus huius biblie frater Matheus de Planisio, monachus ordinis celestinorum, ad laudem et gloriam beatissime Trinitatis Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti, beatissime Virginis Marie gloriosissime genitricis domini nostri Iesu Christi, beatissimi Iohannis evangeliste dominice passionis devotissimi conspensoris, beati Jeronimi catholice fidei doctoris eximii et beati Petri confessoris celestini prefati ordinis incliti fundatoris ac omnium aliorum sanctorum, quid quidem completum extitit. Anno domini MCC-CLXII mensis maii, indictione quintadecima, secundo anno secundi trienni secundi officii abbacie, predicti fratris Mathei in prefato ordine celestinorum. Scriptum autem fuit hoc opus per manus domini Georgii sacerdotis de Neapoli, cuius quidem biblie quantum ad scripturam integra completio concedat superna gratia ut perveniat supradicto fratri Matheo ad salutem conscientie sue predicti ordinis hedificationem et famam et ipsi Deo a quo bona cuncta procedunt laudem et gloriam sempiternam. Amen. Amen. Amen«. Quotation taken from Sabina Magrini, »La Bibbia Di «Matheus De Planisio» (Vat. lat. 3550, I-III): documenti e modelli per lo studio della produzione scritturale in età angioina«, in *Codices manuscripti*, 50/51, 2005, here: p. 3.

8 Various possibilities for his identity, origin and background were recently reconsidered by Magrini, »La Bibbia di «Matheus De Planisio»« (note 7).

9 See *Liturgie und Andacht*, ed. Plotzek, Winnekes & Kraus (note 2).

10 See Zahlten, *Creatio Mundi* (note 3), pp. 106-109; Bräm, *Neapolitanische Bilderbibeln* (note 2).

11 If the blue is read as water in the first panel, and the air in the latter two, one could also read the four elements into the depiction of these creation scenes.

darkness circumscribe the earth at its center. Although the earth at this point should be void and empty, something is visible there.

This strange little animal is not the Lamb of God, which would be a contradiction to the appearance of the Trinity.¹² Indeed, the painter has placed one directly on top of this scene, as if to explicitly exclude this identification. It holds the flag of salvation with its right hoof and turns its head to the left. So then, what is the creature at the core of the first panel? Its inclusion is a telling example of an illustration that references not only the Mosaic words of the account given in Genesis, but also other texts. Since Wilhelm of Conques, and especially in the debates at Paris, Cologne, Bologna and other scholarly contexts in the 1270s, the Book of Genesis was considered as one among other sources providing information about the creation of the cosmos. However, scientific insights gained from combining ancient Greek, Jewish, Arabic and Byzantine knowledge about the creation and the origin of life did not remain in scholars' ivory towers. The significance, particularly, of the *Historia Scholastica* by Petrus Comestor (died 1178) cannot be overestimated for distributing essential information that went beyond the text of the Genesis. Several of the scenes in the Bible of Matteo di Planisio show a profound knowledge of the *Historia Scholastica*, and especially of what it owes to Jewish legends. One example may demonstrate how the Christian-Jewish hybridity of the *Historia Scholastica* was perceived by the illuminator. At the beginning of the book of Exodus he depicts the youth of Moses: in the bottom-left scene, the young Moses first carries and then tears down the Pharaoh's crown; in the second scene, he touches burning charcoal (*prunas allatas*) and not the onyx stone, an ordeal orchestrated by the Pharaoh (fig. 3). In the third scene, a blacksmith hammers on a sword made of iron while Moses talks to three other men to the right.¹³ Whereas the breaking of the crown is made explicit only in Petrus Comestor and Flavius Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities*¹⁴ (and not in Jewish legends), the third scene points to a profound knowledge

12 The only scholar who has taken notice of the creature is Andreas Bräm, who identifies it with the Lamb of God, see Bräm, *Neapolitanische Bilderbibeln* (note 2).

13 On fol. 32r one sees the scenes of the young Moses carrying and tearing down the Pharaoh's crown, touching with his lips burning charcoal (*prunas allatas*) as described in Petrus Comestor, *Historia Scholastica, Libri Exodus*, cap. 5, ed. Patrologia Latina 198, col. 1144A-B: »Aegyptii enim Moys, aquam, is saluum dicunt. Quem dum quadam die Terimith obtulisset Pharaoni, ut et ipse eum adoptaret, admirans rex pueri venustatem, coronam, quam tunc forte gestabat, capiti illius imposuit. Erat autem in ea Ammonis imago fabrefacta. Puer autem coronam projecit in terram, et fregit. Sacerdos autem Heliopoleos a latere regis surgens, exclamavit: Hic est puer, quem nobis occidendum Deus monstravit, ut de caetero timore careamus, et voluit irruere in eum, sed auxilio regis liberatus est, et persuasionem cuiusdam sapientis qui per ignorantiam hoc factum esse a puero asseruit. In cuius rei argumentum cum *prunas allatas* puero obtulisset, puer eas ori suo opposuit, et linguae suae summitatem igne corripuit. Unde et Hebraei impeditioris linguae eum fuisse autumant«.

14 Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, transl. by William Whiston, London 1897, p. 60, chap. 9: »And she had said this, she put the infant into her father's hands: so he took him, and hugged him to his breast; and on his daughter's account, in a pleasant way, put his diadem upon his head; but Moses threw it down to the ground, and, in a puerile mood, he



Fig. 2: *Bible for Matteo de Planisio*, Naples, 1352 or later (?). Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Cod. Vat. lat. 3550, fol. 5r

of Jewish legends: »At great costs teachers were invited to come to Egypt from neighboring lands, to educate the child Moses. Some came of their own accord, to instruct him in the sciences and the liberal arts«. ¹⁵ If the image of the hammering blacksmith is not a reference to Tubal-cain, it may at least allude to a conversation of Moses and his teachers in the *Artes liberales*. Petrus Comestor included several other sources and ideas related to the Creation, e.g. the theory about the four elements (most prominent in Maimonides' *The Book of Knowledge*). ¹⁶ Further arguments integrated in his thoughts about the creation are relating the creation of angels with the creation of light and the spherical disposition of the cosmos borrowed by theories of earlier and contemporary astronomers. Before the first days are described, Petrus Comestor rejects the three main »errors« of Aristotle, Plato and

wreathed it round, and trod upon his feet, which seemed to bring along with evil presage concerning the kingdom of Egypt«.

¹⁵ Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, vol. 2: *From Joseph to the Exodus: Bible Times and Characters*, trans. by Henrietta Szold, Philadelphia 1909⁶, p. 141.

¹⁶ Maimonides, *The Book of Knowledge: From the Mishnah Torah of Maimonides*, trans. by Helen M. Russell & Rabbi J. Weinberg, Edinburgh 1981 (Publications of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, 55).

Epicurius. After disproving them, he comments on creation in general,¹⁷ and describes the state of confusion that preceded it.¹⁸

Another indication of a Jewish-Christian context is provided by a different manuscript from the Vatican Library, also attributed to this group, whose pictures were intended to be read from right to left and not the other way round. Its illustrations include – like the frontispiece of Matteo's Bible – the fourth day of Creation, the Fall of Man, the punishment and the expulsion as well as the hard labor of Adam and Eve.

So what does the opening image of this manuscript represent? The first scene shows the Creation of the World together with the Trinity, depicted as a three-headed, half-length figure in the top center of the cosmos (fig. 1). The scene also combines the creation of the seven spheres of the cosmos, quite accurately represented, with the Fall of the Angels. As mentioned above, the emphasis on the Trinity as well as on the link between the creation of light and the creation of angels can be traced back to Petrus Comestor. His coupling of these two creation stories (angels and light) draws emphasis to the celestial harmony and its various spheres.¹⁹

Furthermore, the scene also includes a strange, little creature, a kind of animal, and places it right on the newly created, but not yet shaped, earth. This horned

17 Petrus Comestor, *Historia scholastica* (note 13), cap. 1, col. 1056A-B: »Vel in principio omnium creaturarum, creavit coelum et terram, id est has creaturas primordiales fecit, et simul. Sed quod simul factum est, simul dici non potuit. Licet enim hic prius nominetur coelum, quam terra, tamen scriptum est. In initio, tu Domine, terram fundasti, et opera manuum tuarum sunt coeli, hanc creationem mundi praelibata, sub operibus sex dierum explicat Scriptura, insinuans tria, creationem, dispositionem et ornatum. In primo die creationem, et quamdam dispositionem; in secundo et tertio, dispositionem; in reliquis tribus ornatum«.

18 Ibid., cap. 2, col. 1056B-1057A: »Terra autem erat inanis et vacua, id est machina mundialis adhuc erat inutilis, et infructuosa, et vacua ornatu suo. Et tenebrae erant super faciem abyssi. Eandem machinam quam terram dixerat, abyssum vocat pro sui confusione et obscuritate. Unde et Graecus eam chaos dixit. Quia vero dictum est, tenebrae erant, quidam dogmatizaverunt tenebras fuisse aeternas; quae jam, scilicet cum mundus fieret, erant. Alii irridentes Deum veteris testamenti, dicunt eum prius creasse tenebras quam lucem. Sed tenebrae nihil aliud sunt quam lucis absentia. Obscuritas autem quaedam aeris a Deo creata est, et dicta tenebrae. Unde et in catalogo creaturarum dictum est: Benedicite, lux et tenebrae, Domino. Et Spiritus Domini, id est Spiritus Sanctus Dominus, vel Domini voluntas, ferebatur super aquas, sicut voluntas artificis habentis prae oculis omnem materiam domus faciendae, super illam fertur, dum quid de quo facturus est disponit. Praedictam machinam aquas vocat, quasi ductilem materiam ad operandum ex ea. Ideo vero sic variantur ejus nomina, ne si unius elementi nomine tantum censeretur, illi magis putaretur accommoda. Hebraeus habet pro super ferebatur, incubabat, vel Syra lingua, fovebat, sicut avis ova. In quo etiam omne cum regimine nascentis mundi notatur initium. Hunc locum male intellexit Plato, dictum hoc putans de anima mundi. Sed dictum est de Spiritu sancto creante, de quo legitur: Emitte Spiritum tuum, et creabuntur«. (The italicized portions are quotations from the *Vulgata*).

19 Francois Boespflug, »L'harmonie du monde créée«, in *Le monde de la Bible*, 96, 1996, pp. 50-52 and 28-37. Sabina Magrini, »Production and Use of Latin Bible Manuscripts in Italy during the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries«, *Manuscripta*, 51 (2), 2007, pp. 209-257; Magrini, »La Bibbia Di «Matheus De Planisio»« (note 7).

lamb or ram-like creature does not represent the lamb of Christ.²⁰ A similar animal is depicted in two other manuscripts from Naples. Here, too, we spot the strange animal placed in the middle of the earth during the first days of the creation.²¹ Until today, no convincing identification of this creature has been suggested. We do not see a lamb or an unusual representation of Christ's antagonist, the Antichrist, of whom one might think on account of its horn. There is already a Lamb of God prancing light-footedly on top of the frame with twelve scenes, as if the painter or creator wanted to be assured that we would not mistake the animal at the core of the image. Neither is it an animal standing for the living beings who are told to be fruitful and multiply, incorporating the creative power of the *natura naturans*. Such a reference is found in the depiction of the Creator of the cosmos next to humans building a house or city in a manuscript made at Paris around 1260 (Geneve, Ms. lat. 67, fol. 88v) (fig. 4).

The creature is Behemoth, which is mentioned in the Bible (Job 4, 15-24).²² Considered to be one of the devil's guises in Patristic sources, the creature is named in the same breath as Satan, Belial, the Nemean Lion, Leviathan and Thaninim.²³ For Gregory the Great, in his commentary on the Book of Job, the creature of Behemoth touches on the problem of Creation of Man. He wonders how an animal-like creature could be made together with man, considering the dictum that we are all made of the same substance, but have different appearances.²⁴ This results in his questioning if

20 As suggested by Bräm, *Neapolitanische Bilderbibeln* (note 2).

21 Another animal, but without a clear horn is found in the Bible of Andreas of Ungarn/Alife bible, Leuven, Ms. 1 and in the Bible of Robert of Tarent, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. lat. 14430 (here, as Initial, the following 5 scenes (Second to Fourth Day of Creation, Creation of Adam, Fall of Man, Admonition, Adam and Eve working) are read from right to left. A series of details and even full scenes could not yet be identified. A fascinating sequence of apocryphal episodes from the story of Moses on fol. 32r, in which the crown is thrown to earth and the child holds glowing coals at his lips, which are also known from a painting by Giorgione and probably go back to Jewish Midraschim. The source seems to be Petrus Comestors' *Historia Scolastica*, depending on Flavious Josephus' *Antiquitates Judaicae*. The episode with a smith making a sword for Moses is not told in Petrus Comestor, see: Jonathan J. G. Alexander, in *Liturgie und Andacht im Mittelalter*, ed. Plotzek, Winnekes & Kraus (note 2), p. 220.

22 Job 40:15-24: »Behold now the behemoth that I have made with you; he eats grass like cattle. Behold now his strength is in his loins and his power is in the navel of his belly. His tail hardens like a cedar; the sinews of his thighs are knit together. His limbs are as strong as copper, his bones as a load of iron. His is the first of God's ways; [only] his Maker can draw His sword [against him]. For the mountains bear food for him, and all the beasts of the field play there. Does he lie under the shadows, in the cover of the reeds and the swamp? Do the shadows cover him as his shadow? Do the willows of the brook surround him? Behold, he plunders the river, and [he] does not harden; he trusts that he will draw the Jordan into his mouth. With His eyes He will take him; with snares He will puncture his nostrils«.

23 Jerome, *Epistolae ad Damasum de duobus filiis*, here: *Epistola* 21, 11.

24 Gregorius Magnus, *S. Gregorii Magni Moralia in Iob*, ed. Marci Adriaen, 3 voll., Turnhout 1979-1985 (Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina, 143), vol 1, lib 32, cap 12: »Omnia creata sunt simul secundum substantiam, non secundum speciem«.



Fig. 4: *Creation of the world and of a house/city*, Paris, 1260, manuscript with writings by Aristotle and Maimonides. Geneva, Bibliothèque de Genève, Ms. lat. 76, fol. 88r

man and angels are made at the same time. In seeking an answer he draws on the two sources and concludes that the similarity does not include the appearance.²⁵

However, the Behemoth is an even more prominent figure in the Jewish apocrypha and pseudepigrapha, such as the *Book of Enoch* (2nd century BCE). In the Jewish apocrypha, three primordial monsters are responsible for the chaos on earth: Behemoth is the unconquerable monster of the land; his opponent is Leviathan, the monster of the waters of the sea; while the third primordial monster, Ziz, inhabits the heavens (fig. 5).²⁶ In the *Book of Enoch*, two antagonists are fighting each

25 Ibid.: »simul per acceptam imaginem sapientiae, et non simul per conjunctam substantiam formae. Scriptum namque de homine est: *Faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram* [Gen 1:26]. Et per Ezechielem ad Satan dicitur: Tu signaculum similitudinis, plenus sapientia et perfectus decore in deliciis paradisi Dei faisti«.

26 Ginzberg, *The Legends* (note 15), vol. 1: Bible Times and Characters from the Creation to Jacob, pp. 28-30. In a final duel commanded by God, in other versions, during their act of copulation, Leviathan and Behemoth kill each other; Behemoth by a blow of Leviathan's fin, Leviathan by a lash of Behemoth's tail. They were considered to be male (Behemoth), living in the proximity of the paradise on the land, and female (Leviathan), living in the depth of the sea. See Enoch 60:7-10. In 4Ezra 6:49-52, an attempt is made to explain how it happens that



Fig. 5: *Behemoth, Leviathan and Ziz and the Blessed*, Southern Germany, 1236-1238. Milan, Bibliotheca Ambrosiana, Ms. B 32 inf, fol. 136r

other; Leviathan lives in »the Abyss«, while the Behemoth's territory is located in an invisible desert East of the Garden of Eden (1 Enoch 60:7-8). Controversial information is found in the Jewish apocryphal literature about when these beings were actually created. They are either considered relics of earlier creations or, more frequently, related to the Creation of Man and of the water creatures at the fifth day, and to be eaten at the eschatological banquet.²⁷ According to the *Midrash*, Behemoth supposedly keeps the wild beasts (lions, leopards and bears) from the offspring of the more gentle animals nurturing their young.²⁸

the male monster Behemoth lives on the dry land while his mate, Leviathan, is in the water. For further literature and illustrations, see John Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea. Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament*, Cambridge 1985; Lois Drewer, »Leviathan, Behemoth and Ziz: A Christian Adaptation«, in *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 44, 1981, pp. 148-156; Michael A. Knibb, *Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigrapha: Essays on the Book of Enoch and Other Early Jewish Texts and Traditions*, pp. 136-137 and f. Boston 2008 28.

27 In the apocryphal texts, 4 Esra 49-51, 2 Baruch 29:4, Leviathan and Behemoth are created by God on the fifth day. He later separated them and gave to the Behemoth the land (dried up on the third day) and to the Leviathan he gave the water. In the Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch, XXIX, 4, the time is announced when the Behemoth will come forth from his seclusion on land and the Leviathan out of the sea.

28 In rabbinic literature, according to a midrash, the Leviathan was created on the fifth day (Yalk., Gen. 12). Originally God had produced a female and a male Leviathan, but lest in multiplying the species should destroy the world, He slew the female, reserving her flesh for the banquet that will be given to the righteous on the advent of the Messiah (B. B. 74a). Some apocalyptic accounts pick up on the primordial beasts, and let them creep forth out from the sea and the lands on the Day of Judgment. In the Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch, XXIX, 4, the two gigantic monsters will serve as food for the elect who will survive in the days of the Messiah.

[for the readability?]

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The biblical account is most relevant for the linkage of the beasts' destruction to the moment of the Creation in the Bible of Matteo di Planisio.²⁹ Job demonstrates through the extinction of Behemoth and Leviathan the futility of questioning God, who alone has created these beings and who alone can capture them.³⁰ Both beasts are monsters of chaos destroyed by the deity at the time of creation. In the divine speeches in Job, Behemoth and Leviathan are composite and mythical creatures with enormous strength – beasts that humans like Job could not hope to control, and yet are tamed by God, as signified by the rings through their noses (Job 40, 24).

These mythical conflicts have led Christian scholars to relate the primordial monster's destructive power with devilish forces, and last but not least with the Antichrist. On the beginning to Chapter 40 of the *Liber Floridus*,³¹ the Canon Lambert of saint Omer sets the devil on top of Behemoth (fig. 6). The reader encounters the Antichrist riding the Leviathan as the frontispiece to the next chapter (41).³² Lambert describes Behemoth just as one of the quadrupeds in his bestiary. His collection includes several creatures at the threshold of the realm of imagination or living in foreign territories, e.g. the rhinoceros, the cameleopardis, the unicorn, the hyena and the crocodile. In the way that the ray-shaped snail pokes into the Antichrist's backbone with the dunce cap, one could see a reminder of the paradoxical power buried in veiled origins, as Behemoth's origins had been until then.

However, what is depicted at the core of the Neapolitan Bible gives evidence to a different thought, less eschatological than evolutionary, elaborated in Jewish legends: »Nor is this world inhabited by man the first of things earthly created by God.

29 Hermann Gunkel suggested that Behemoth and Leviathan were the two primeval monsters corresponding to Tiamat (= »the abyss«; comp. Hebr. »tehom«) and Kingu (= Aramaic »akna« = serpent) of Babylonian mythology; see Hermann Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos*, Göttingen 1895, p. 62. This has been revised by the more recent scholarship; see Pieter W. van der Horst, s.v. chaos, in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, 2nd intensively revisited edition, ed. Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking & Pieter W. van der Horst, Leiden 1999, pp. 185-186; Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, Darmstadt 1972 (Erträge der Forschung, 7); Ronald Hendel, »Genesis«, in *Harper Collins Study Bible, new Revised Standard Version*, rev. ed. Harold W. Attridge, San Francisco 2006, pp. 1-11.

30 Leviathan is identified with the primeval sea (Job 3:8; Ps 74:13), and in apocalyptic literature describing the end-times, as that adversary of the deity before creation will finally be defeated. The two monsters are depicted in the Leipzig Machsor, Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek, Ms. Vollers 1102 II-181b. See Joseph Gutmann, *Leviathan, Behemoth and Ziz. Jewish Messianic Symbols in Art*, Cincinnati 1968.

31 Albert Derolez, *The Autograph Manuscript of the Liber Floridus: A Key to the Encyclopedia of Lambert of Saint-Omer*, Turnhout 1998 (Corpus Christianorum, Autographa Medii Aevi, 4), pp. 82-84; *Liber Floridus* (c. 1120), Gent, Universitätsbibliothek, Ms. 92. For later receptions see forthcoming dissertation by Hanna Vorholt, *Tradition and Transformations. The Illustrated Manuscripts of the »Liber Floridus« by Lambert of Saint-Omer*.

32 See Jessie Poesch, »The Beasts from Job in the Liber Floridus Manuscripts«, in *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 33, 1970, pp. 41-51. The Inscription next to the pair reads: »DIABOLUS SEDENS SUPER BEEMOTH ORIENTIS BESTIAM SINGULAREM ET SOLAM, ID EST ANTICHRISTUM«.

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[full quotation
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Ronald S. Hendel, [Introduction and Commentary on Genesis], *HarperCollins Study Bible Fully Revised and Updated* (Harold W. Attridge, general editor, revised edition; Wayne A. Meeks, general editor, original edition; Jouette M. Bassler, Werner E. Lemke, Susan Niditch, and Eileen M. Schuller, associate editors; James Luther Mays, consulting editor; New Revised Standard Version with the Apocryphal / Deuterocanonical Books. New York: HarperSanFrancisco [a division of HarperCollins] 2006) 3-82.

Fig. 6: *Devil seated on Behemoth*, from the *Liber Floridus*, autograph of Lambert of St. Omer. Ghent, Bibliothèque de l'Université, Ms. 92, fol. 62r



He made several worlds before ours, but He destroyed them all, because He was pleased with none until He created ours.³³ Only a view including Jewish and Christian culture and thought could reveal the identity of the primordial creature in the middle of the first panel. The Behemoth is placed at the center, like a last relic of the former world.³⁴ The beast had contributed significantly to the primordial chaos and is now contributing to the moment shown here: the creation of the new world.

33 Ginzberg, *The Legends* (Anm. 15), vol. 1: Bible Times and Characters from the Creation to Jacob, p. 4. In the Bible of Matteo Planisio, there are traces by Jewish readers in the glosses, the inscribed comments on the pages. Furthermore, also several of the still unidentified scenes point to sources of a Jewish background. While the *Antiquities of the Jews* were widely read in Christian contexts, too, the knowledge of the Haggadah and the Midrash would clearly point to a background that included a Jewish education. See *Liturgie und Andacht*, ed. Plotzek, Winnekes & Kraus (note 2); Sarit Shalev-Eyni, »Purity and Impurity. The Naked Woman Bathing in Jewish and Christian Art«, in *Between Judaism and Christianity. Art Historical Essays in Honor of Elisheva (Elisabeth) Revel-Neher*, ed. Katrin Kogman-Appel & Mati Meyer, Leiden 2009, pp. 191-214.

34 Such a thought might have been the motive for Thomas Hobbes to entitle his lesser known study on the causes of the English civil wars around the middle of the seventeenth century: Thomas Hobbes, *Behemoth: or an epitome of the civil wars of England from 1640 to the year 1660*, ed. William Molesworth, New York 1679 (1968); *Behemoth. Or the long parliament*, ed. Paul Seaward, Oxford 2010 (1681).