

THE IN-/COHERENCES OF NARRATIVE
COMMENTARY: COMMENTARIAL FORMS IN THE
ANEGENGE

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From the twelfth century onward a literary motif known as “The Dispute of the Four Daughters of God” evolved in Latin literature and was rapidly adopted by French, English, Dutch, and German narratives.¹ The wide dissemination of this motif seems to have had its origin in a sermon for a Marian feast-day by Bernard of Clairvaux

¹ Several studies consider the origin, distribution and reception of the motif, such as: Richard Heinzel, “Vier geistliche Gedichte. mit einem Excurs über den Mythos von den vier Töchtern Gottes,” *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur* 17 (1874): 12–39, especially 43–51; Eduard Johann Mäder, *Der Streit der ‘Töchter Gottes.’ Zur Geschichte eines allegorischen Motivs* (Bern: Lang, 1971); Henrike Manuwald, “Die ‘Einhornjagd im Hortus Conclusus.’ Ein marianisches Bildmotiv zwischen Narrativierung und Diagrammatisierung,” in *Diagramm und Narration* ed. Hartmut Bleumer (Stuttgart/Weimar: Metzler, 2014), 127–48; Friedrich Ohly, “Die Trinität berät über die Erschaffung des Menschen,” *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 116 (1994): 260–77; Wilhelm Scherer, “Die vier Töchter Gottes,” *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur* 21 (1877): 414–16; Maria Sherwood-Smith, “Selbstgespräch zu dritt: Innertrinitarische Gespräche im ‘Anegenge’ und in der ‘Erlösung,’” in *Dialoge. Sprachliche Kommunikation in und zwischen Texten im deutschen Mittelalter Hamburger Colloquium 1999*, ed. Nikolaus Henkel (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2003), 213–24, (with a focus on the *Anegenge*: 214–19). The theological dogma is discussed in Jean Rivière, *Le dogme de la rédemption au début du moyen âge* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1934), 309–62.

that was frequently copied throughout the Middle Ages. The sermon includes an allegorical narration about a dispute between Truth and Mercy, Peace and Justice that is eventually terminated by Wisdom's judgement that only the incarnation of God himself will solve the aporia of how to be just and at the same time merciful towards man. A *parabola* recounting the allegory independently of the actual sermon must have appeared not long thereafter.² Spreading quickly through Christian Europe, this motif combined the history of creation and salvific history with an account explaining the terms and conditions of human salvation in a dispute of two, three, or four personified virtues, which represent attributes of God.³

The oldest German text that not only alludes to this motif but builds it out to some extent is the *Angegeenge*. Presumably composed somewhere between 1160 and 1180, it is transmitted in only one codex.⁴ The manuscript was written around 1300 by a single scribe. The first texts it holds are two narrations that combine biblical and apocryphal traditions to tell the birth and childhood of Christ as well as his passion and resurrection. In its latter sections, the manuscript is made up of legends, miracles, and several shorter texts that present themselves as sermons, admonitions. All of the texts in the manuscript are written in both the vernacular and in verse. Thus, it has been assessed that the codex must have been compiled according to a recognizable concept to serve the "spiritual

² For Bernard's sermon and the *parabola* see Waltraud Timmermann, *Studien zur allegorischen Bildlichkeit in den Parabolae Bernhards v. Clairvaux. Mit der Erstredaktion einer mittelniederdeutschen Übersetzung der Parabolae "Vom geistlichen Streit" und "Vom Streit der vier Töchter Gottes"* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1982).

³ For an overview of the European tradition of the motif see: Hope Traver, *The Four Daughters of God: A Study of the Versions of this Allegory, with Special Reference to those in Latin, French, and English* (Bryn Mawr, PA: Bryn Mawr College, 1907); for additional material see Matthias Tveitane, "'The Four Daughters of God' in the Old Norse King's Mirror," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 73 (1972): 795–804.

⁴ Vienna, Austrian National Library, Cod. 2696, fol. 89v–111r. Digitization accessed April, 7, 2020: https://digital.onb.ac.at/RepViewer/viewer.faces?doc=DTL_5464963&order=1&view=SIN_GLE. For a description of the Codex see: Karin Schneider, *Gotische Schriften in deutscher Sprache* (Wiesbaden: L. Reichert, 1987), 228–30.

edification and instruction of laypeople” or even as a “poetic compendium of Christian life.”⁵

The 3242 lines of the *Anegenge* describe the creation of angels, of the world, and of mankind, as well as sketch the fall of man and give an account of the creation of a new man to redeem the first one.⁶ In doing so the text forms two sections each of which is opened by a debate of personifications: a Trinitarian council in which Might, Wisdom and Benignity discuss the creation of man introduces the section comprising material from the Old Testament, and a dispute about the salvation of man, which adopts the motif of “The Daughters of God” mentioned above, introduces the section dealing with the New Testament.

For quite some time little research has been done on the *Anegenge*, which is just beginning to gain more attention among cultural historians and philologists. Apart from the commonly acknowledged bipartite structure of the *Anegenge*, scholars have over and over again given the more detailed design of the text a verdict of a “strange formlessness”⁷ and have described it as a cumbersome, tedious, or clumsy attempt to “transfer as much theological knowledge as possible to laity.”⁸ Accordingly, a phrasing that points

⁵ Nikolaus Henkel, “Religiöses Erzählen um 1200 im Kontext höfischer Literatur. Priester Wernher, Konrad von Fußesbrunnen, Konrad von Heimesfurt,” in *Die Vermittlung geistlicher Inhalte im deutschen Mittelalter. Internationales Symposium Roscrea 1994*, ed. Timothy R. Jackson, 1–21 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1996), 16–17; cf. Werner Fechter, “Eine Sammelhandschrift geistlicher Dichtungen des 12. und 13. Jahrhunderts (Wien 2696),” in *Festgabe für Friedrich Maurer*, ed. Werner Besch, Siegfried Grosse, and Heinz Rupp, 246–61 (Düsseldorf: Pädagogischer Verlag Schwann, 1968), 247.

⁶ I quote the only edition available at present: Dietrich Neuschäfer, *Das Anegenge. Textkritische Studien – Diplomatischer Abdruck – Kritische Ausgabe – Anmerkungen zum Text* (Munich: Fink, 1966). A new edition is currently being prepared by Eva Bauer (Munich).

⁷ Heinz Rupp, *Deutsche religiöse Dichtungen des 11. und 12. Jahrhunderts. Untersuchungen und Interpretationen* (Bern: Francke, 1971), 276.

⁸ Gisela Vollmann-Profe, *Wiederbeginn volkssprachlicher Schriftlichkeit im hohen Mittelalter (1050/60–1160/70). Geschichte der deutschen Literatur von den Anfängen bis zum Beginn der Neuzeit. Bd. I.2*, ed. Joachim Heinzle (Königstein im Taunus: Athenäum, 1986), 188–89; Peter-Erich Neuser, “Anegenge,” in *Verfasserlexikon – Die deutsche*

towards the numerous narrative ruptures effected by shorter or well-nigh tract-long commentaries can be found in almost all older histories of literature – judging the *Anengenge* defective.⁹ The *Literatur-Lexikon* of 2011 still falls into line with such observations regarding its textual coherence – even if the article concedes that the “illogical” relation does not necessarily betray a general incompetence of the poet.¹⁰ To put into perspective such devaluations of premodern texts, historical narratology has pointed toward alternative concepts of textual coherence such as metonymic or paradigmatic narration.

Literatur des Mittelalters, ed. Burghart Wachinger, 2nd ed. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 1:355.

⁹ E.g. Rupp, *Deutsche religiöse Dichtungen*, 259: “Die Dichtung des Mittelalters ruht auf anderen Gesetzen als die moderne Dichtung: das Lehrgedicht ist eine durchaus legitime literarische Gattung mittelalterlicher Poesie. Ein Lehrgedicht in der Art des ‘Anengenge’ aber kann selbst im Mittelalter nicht den Anspruch erheben, Dichtung zu sein. Aus der Umsetzung eines gelehrten Schulwissens in Reimpaare wird noch kein Gedicht. Behandlung von theologischen Streitfragen und Nennung von Autoritäten gehören in den Raum der theologischen Abhandlungen und nicht in die Poesie. Treten aber zu diesen der theologischen Prosa vorbehaltenen Aussagemitteln noch die genannten künstlerischen Mängel, dann wird ein solches Werk auch für die mittelalterliche Dichtungsanschauung zur Kuriosität, und uns bleibt nur die Frage, wie ein solches Werk überhaupt entstehen und aufgezeichnet werden konnte.”

¹⁰ Christine Stridde, “Das Anengenge” *Deutsches Literatur-Lexikon. Das Mittelalter. Autoren und Werke nach Themenkreisen und Gattungen*, ed. Wolfgang Achnitz (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), col. 499–503 (501): “Dieses nach textueller Kohärenz bemessene unlogische Prinzip muss nicht per se für eine grundsätzliche Unsicherheit des Dichters im Umgang mit seinen Quellen sprechen, auch wenn schon die vielen Fehler bei den Bibelziten dafür ein Indiz sein könnten. Berücksichtigt man aber mögliche Gebrauchsfunktionen im Kontext geistlicher Laienbildung, die ja im Kontinuum von mündlicher Vortragspraxis zu denken sind, rücken Kriterien wie bildhafte Anschaulichkeit, Überzeugungskraft durch kommunikative Anschlussfähigkeit und rhetorische Vermittlung durch variierende Wiederholung vor theologischer Präzision und strukturell-logischer Textkohärenz in den Vordergrund.”

A recent article by Eva Bauer picks up this idea and offers a reassessment of the *Anengenge*, by pointing towards a paradigmatic structure of the text that elaborates on aspects of the Trinity and above all reflects on God's will and ability.¹¹ The seemingly disruptive structure is here explained by the rhetorical ideal of *brevitas*. Bauer's reading of the text agrees in several respects with the view of Christian Kiening, who examines the *Anengenge* within the greater context of medieval narratives about Genesis and considers the relationship between divine and poetic creation and theological and poetic speech.¹² Kiening analyses the *Anengenge* under a headline that already points towards its dominant features: "telling and interpreting."¹³ While he shows how *the* beginning ("Anengenge") and God's decision to create is staged within a paradoxical temporal logic, he focuses on the "peculiar polyphony" (eigentümliche Vielstimmigkeit) of the presentation and considers the "blending of theological explanations with narrative and descriptive passages" as characteristic of the text.¹⁴

¹¹ Eva Bauer, "Trinität und Heilsgeschichte: Das 'Anengenge.' Versuch einer Neubewertung," *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 141 no. 1 (2019): 31–52 (34, 35, 45, 49, 51). Jan-Dirk Müller's monograph on vernacular 'epic' narratives of the early Middle Ages focuses on the presentation of space in the *Anengenge* (Müller, *'Episches' Erzählen. Erzählformen früher volkssprachlicher Schriftlichkeit* (Berlin: Schmidt, 2017) 260–62) and the problem of how to narrate what lies before the creation and thus out of time (ibid., 312–13). A paper by Anja Becker ("Eine (widersprüchliche) Figur? Die Trinität im Gespräch mit sich selbst im 'Anengenge' und in der 'Erlösung,'" *Widersprüchliche Figuren in vormoderner Erzählliteratur*, ed. Elisabeth Lienert, BME Special Issue 6 (2020): 205–243, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25619/BmE20203106>) was published after the completion of my manuscript and could not be taken into account here.

¹² See Christian Kiening, *Literarische Schöpfung im Mittelalter* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2015), 69, 73.

¹³ Ibid., 68: "Erzählen und Deuten."

¹⁴ Ibid., 71: "Charakteristisch ist die Durchsetzung der theologischen Erläuterungen mit narrativen und deskriptiven Passagen, die wesentliche Stationen der Heilsgeschichte erzählen oder ausmalen." Cf. ibid., 72–74.

In this paper, I intend to explore the commentarial Gestalt of the *Anegenge* as merging forms of incoherence and coherence and as a poetic means which we have only begun to discover. My working hypothesis is the assumption that practices of commentary not only shape the way a cultural or sacred text is treated by Latin elites but that such practices can play a vital part in concepts of vernacular textuality as well.¹⁵ I will start by taking a closer look at the shorter commentaries that are scattered among the more narrative sections, to see how they support a specific self-fashioning of the text. Second, I will try to show how commentarial forms enable and legitimate a special perspective on salvific history that is developed in the two allegorical disputes – and hence in parts of the text that are neither sacred nor juridical but very obviously fictional.

II

The narrative *I* of the *Anegenge* wants to explain the things it narrates. It wants to tell “grozǐv dinc” (great things, l. 34), give “wunderlichǐv maere” (miraculous reports, l. 35) of the creator, and at the same time it promises to “dig deeply” (l. 49) – to fathom the plan of salvation. Hence, the “stupid” (die tumben), who are in danger of “drowning” in the “deep” thoughts like in a well (ll. 45–56), are

¹⁵ Concerning the medieval classroom as a place of transfer of textual practices, see: Nikolaus Henkel, *Deutsche Übersetzungen lateinischer Schultexte. Ihre Verbreitung und Funktion im Mittelalter und in der frühen Neuzeit* (Munich: Artemis, 1988), 49–56; Nikolaus Henkel, “Text – Glosse – Kommentar. Die Lektüre römischer Klassiker im frühen und hohen Mittelalter,” in *Lesevorgänge: Prozesse des Erkennens in mittelalterlichen Texten, Bildern und Handschriften*, ed. Eckart Conrad Lutz (Zürich: Chronos, 2010), 682–84; Nikolaus Henkel, “Glossierung und Texterschließung. Zur Funktion lateinischer und volkssprachiger Glossen im Schulunterricht,” in *Die althochdeutsche und altsächsische Glossographie: ein Handbuch*, ed. Rolf Bergmann (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), 1:468–96. Linden, *Exkurse im höfischen Roman* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2017), 25–28 considers the commentary as part of the prehistory (“Keimzelle”) of the narrator of Middle High German epic. Regarding the so called ‘gloss song’ see: Christina Lechtermann “Commentary as Literature. The medieval Glossenlied,” *Theories and Practices of Commentary*, ed. Christina Lechtermann and Markus Stock, *Zeitsprünge* 1/2 (2020), 160–80.

excluded from the audience. According to this plan, numerous shorter or longer commentaries interrupt the narration. Three of them are expanded to the size of small treatises: The first, positioned at the beginning right after the allegorical council about the creation (ll. 88–279), dwells on the unity of the Trinity (l. 280–1058). The second, positioned right between the sections dedicated to *materia* from the Old Testament and “The Dispute of the Daughters of God” that opens the second part of the *Anegenge*, discusses the invisibility of God (ll. 2044–2292). The third, positioned at the end of the text, offers a reflection on how to balance out the original sin (ll. 2657–3125).

Narration and commentary fall back on different sets of sources: on the one hand, biblical and apocryphal texts are translated or adapted, on the other hand different explicative and argumentative metatexts on the Bible have been used. Making considerable efforts to identify the commentaries’ sources, scholars have come up with very different results: while early scholarship highlighted the role of the *Elucidarium* (Honorius Augustodunensis) and the *Historia Scholastica* (Peter Comestor), later Hugh of St. Victor was considered the main source. More recently, Bernhard of Clairvaux, Rupert of Deutz, and others followed.¹⁶ Thus, surveying

¹⁶ See Helmut de Boor and Richard Newald, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1964) 1:165–66; Dagmar Gottschall, *Das ‘Elucidarium’ des Honorius Augustodunensis. Untersuchungen zu seiner Überlieferungs- und Rezeptionsgeschichte im deutschsprachigen Raum mit Ausgabe der niederdeutschen Übersetzung* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1992), 65; Johann Kelle, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur von der ältesten Zeit bis zum 13. Jahrhundert*, 2 vols. (Berlin: W. Hertz, 1892–96), 141–53, 342–56; Kiening, *Literarische Schöpfung im Mittelalter*, 70–71; Mäder, *Der Streit der ‘Töchter Gottes,’* 46–51; Neuser, “Das Anegenge,” 352–56; Friedrich Ohly, “Der Prolog des St. Trudperter Hohenliedes,” *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur* 84 (1952/53): 198–232 (207–208); Rupp, *Deutsche religiöse Dichtungen*, 216–260; Felix Scheidweiler, “Studien zum Anegenge,” *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur* 80 (1943): 11–45; Edward Schröder, *Das Anegenge. Eine litterarhistorische Untersuchung* (Strassburg: Trübner, 1881), 39–68; Edward Schröder, “Das ‘Anegenge’ in der ‘Kindheit Jesu’?” *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur* 66 (1929): 141–47; Stridde, “Anegenge,” col. 499–503; Valentin

the scholarship reveals a considerable diversity of more or less probable sources. Resulting from a debate that extended from the early 1880s to the 1970s, the impression remains that the influence of early scholasticism on the theology of the *Anegenge* that some of these studies posited cannot really be proven. Rather, the text falls back on common topoi of Bible interpretation and soteriology.¹⁷

The contents of the commentarial passages have at best been characterized as unsystematic and eclectic.¹⁸ Rupp even goes so far to call the comments on the Genesis section as “insignificant”.¹⁹ The roundup of animals prior to the Flood and its commentary might illustrate how this impression came about. The narration of how God instructed Noah to gather the animals is interrupted as follows:

nv lifet man vnf an ein[er] letzen.
Daz div rede gefchæhe.
vor dem fint wæge.
Siben tage vor vnd nicht mer. (ll. 1859–63)

They read to us in a (school)lesson [or liturgical *lectio*, chrL], that this speech (of God) was given only seven days before the Flood and not longer.

With the phrase “Nv habent genvge den freit” (l. 1870), opposite views claiming that the order must have been given much earlier are refuted and the amazing effort of Noah, namely to round up the animals in only seven days, is explained with the assertion that God must have been his “wæide gefelle” (companion in herding the animals, l. 1877) and helped him to gather them. In a similar way, the *Anegenge*’s commentarial passages explain Eve’s name as *virago*

Teuber, “Über die vom Dichter des *Anegenge* benützten Quellen,” *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 24 (1899): 249–360.

¹⁷ Rupp, *Deutsche religiöse Dichtungen*, 250–60, esp. 255: “Nebensächliches – auch im mittelalterlichen Sinn Nebensächliches – wird wichtig genommen, wichtige Probleme sind mit einer Handbewegung übergangen.”

¹⁸ Brian Murdoch, *The Fall of Man in the Early Middle High German Biblical Epic. The ‘Wiener Genesis,’ the ‘Vorauer Genesis’ and the ‘Anegenge’* (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1972), 80–88.

¹⁹ Rupp, *Deutsche religiöse Dichtungen*, 255.

(created from the man, *vir*), justifies the presence of the devil in Paradise, and the answers the question why God utters the ban on the forbidden fruit not only once but twice. In addition, the commentaries justify why Eve, who actually must have been ignorant of the ban because she was absent when it was given, first tries to obey it nevertheless, and discusses wherefrom Cain might have gotten a wife. Later on, the text briefly discusses the questions of why God chose a virgin that was engaged to be married to bear Christ, why the shepherds received a message differing from the one sent to the three kings, and how astonishing it is that the pigs did not try to eat the child in the crib.

Murdoch has stressed that the lowest common denominator of these diverse explanations is that the commentaries – in contrast to those of the *Genesis* of the Voral or Vienna manuscripts for example – emphasize a historical perspective instead of offering a tropological or allegorical interpretation.²⁰ They explain conditions, try to come up with motivations, and verify what is unbelievable. In view of this seemingly meagre substance, it has been proposed that their common source might have been notes that were taken in the course of a school lecture.²¹

While the commentaries exhibit a more or less indeterminable profile regarding their theological contents, the practice of commenting nevertheless stands out as a dominant habitus of this text, which continually switches from telling to explaining by inserting formulas of textual deixis.²² Using such formulas, the practice of commentary in the *Aneenge* is staged – albeit in the vernacular – like any textual “institution of reappropriation” typically accompanying a sacred or cultural text.²³ Thus, although

²⁰ Murdoch, *The Fall of Man*, 63–65, 137–139.

²¹ Rupp, *Deutsche religiöse Dichtungen*, 256; Murdoch, *The Fall of Man*, 112.

²² For example: “Daz vlt ir alfo verftan” (l. 12,19); “wie fol difiv rede zefsamme chomen./ daz ír von vnf habt vernomen” (ll. 1269–70); “wir ver ften daz dí rede wære./ Gefprochen ín fchímf weife.” (ll. 1483–84); “dar an mvq wir verftan./ Daz er def nicht enwil.“ (ll. 1629–30); “ane fache daz nicht ergie” (l. 2549); “daz mvget ir dar an verftan” (l. 2558).

²³ Jan Assmann, “Text und Kommentar. Einführung” in *Text und Kommentar. Archäologie der literarischen Kommunikation IV*, ed. Jan

the prologue stresses that the mediation takes place separate from any institutional safeguarding and hence at the risk of a narrator digging too deeply and a recipient drowning in the ditch of misunderstanding, the text simulates a communicative figure, which – from a mediological perspective – seems to be determined by the concurrence of the material and institutional aspects.²⁴ The text frequently presents itself accordingly and points back to things that just have been said to discuss them:

Difiv rede ift wunderl[ie]ch
fift iedoch der warhæit gel[ie]ch
Jedoch hat einer der von gefchriben.
ern werde wider getriben
von etwem feiner worte.
[...]
daz gît dirre rede einen michel archwan
Die wîr da vor haben gefagt.
fwer den Streit habe behabet.
So volge wîr dem buchftabe. (ll. 1191–1205)

This report seems dubious but it accords with the truth. Yet, if someone has written about it he will anyhow be contradicted by someone [...] this bestows these words, we have said before, with great distrust. But whoever sticks to the dispute – we follow the letter.

This passage, like several others in the *Anegenge*, reviews what is (allegedly) written elsewhere, to which others can also refer and what is only repeated by the narrative *I* in pointing to the “buchstabe” –

Assmann and Burkhard Gladigow, 9–33 (Munich: Fink, 1995), 22; Glenn W. Most, Preface to *Commentaries – Kommentare*, ed. Glenn W. Most (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), 8–9.

²⁴ Basic considerations concerning the interaction of material and institutional aspects of mediation can be found in Régis Debray “Die Geschichte der vier ‘M,’” in *Mediologie als Methode*, ed. Birgit Mersmann and Thomas Weber, 17–39 (Berlin: Avinus-Verlag, 2008), 24–29; Régis Debray, “Der doppelte Körper des Mediums,” *sinn-haft* 17 (2004): 14–29 (18–19); Régis Debray, *Einführung in die Mediologie*, trans. Susanne Lötscher (Bern: Haupt Verlag, 2003), 144–62.

the literal and especially authoritative text.²⁵ Phrasings like these allude to a pre-text which they in fact generate themselves – or to be more precise, whose existence they *claim* through the gesture of reference. In fact, the salvific history as told in the *Aneenge* can neither be found in the Bible (there are, for example, no reports of the presence of pigs at the birth of Christ) nor can it completely be deduced from the apocrypha. Rather, the commentaries themselves constitute their own point of reference in pointing to the pre-text (“disiv rede,” this speech). In referring to this pre-text they represent their own explanatory relations as secondary, as metatext vis-à-vis a larger *textus* to which the narrative passages belong and which can be “followed” by the narrator. Thus, the commenting *I* does not account for the narration, but explains it. The commentarial gestures make sure that the passages to which they refer are not mistaken as being authorized by the narrator, but rather that they are set up as parts of a pre-text from which the transmission – albeit in the vernacular – draws citations to use as lemmas.

It is this dynamic dimension of commentary, its ability to create its pre-text via deictic gestures, that is essential for the design of the *Aneenge*. This dimension can only be grasped if one complements the usual functional and ontological modelling of commentary (i.e. that it is a secondary text, explaining a precursory one) with modelling that highlights the operational aspects of commentary. Focusing on the latter, commentary can be described as a gesture dividing textual worlds into commenting and commented-upon, or to be more precise, it is a gesture which – in a sort of “transcriptive” act – *produces* those textual qualities by relating them to one another.²⁶ Phrases of textual deixis (“disiv rede,” this speech) that

²⁵ E.g.: “waz folde fant Augustín./ Dene mæinen da míte” (ll. 260–61); “etwer nv mæchte./ fragen wa wære dannoch daz weip. [...] der buoch ift ouch vil./ Die der zal nicht enhabent./ als vnf die buchstabe sagent./ Daz hat nv dírre Buch ftab.” (ll.1643–60); “Daz hat vns gefchriben da./ Matheus ewangelifta” (ll. 2581–82).

²⁶ I borrow the concept of ‘transcription’ from Ludwig Jäger, “Transkriptivität. Zur medialen Logik der kulturellen Semantik,” in *Transkribieren. Medien/Lektüre*, ed. Ludwig Jäger and Georg Stanitzek (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2002) 19–41 and Ludwig Jäger, “Intermedialität – Intramedialität – Transkriptivität. Überlegungen zu einigen Prinzipien der kulturellen Semiosis,” in *Sprache*

structure commentarial speech acts are the implement of this relation and thus of the emergence of *textus* and commentary.²⁷ Under the condition of premodern scriptural communication, it seems to be of little interest whether the *textus* referred to is really there as a coherent entity or only alluded to by picking and choosing lemmas. As we can see in the diverse options of mise-en-page of *textus* and commentary, the *textus* can be either present or absent; the marginal gloss embracing a text completely represented in the codex is just one option, as the recently published article of Jan-Hendryk de Boer or Lesley Smith's work on the *glossa ordinaria* show.²⁸ Other common options were commentaries breaking up the *textus* to present it as a shattered mosaic, or commentaries that only quote certain lemmas of a text, representing only fragments to substitute for a whole passage or to stand in for a complete paragraph.²⁹ Here, the *textus* is evoked as an entity existing beyond

intermedial: Stimme und Schrift, Bild und Ton, ed. Arnulf Deppermann and Angelika Linke (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 301–21.

²⁷ Meinolf Schumacher (“...der kann den text und och die gloß. Zum Wortgebrauch von ‘Text’ und ‘Glosse’ in deutschen Dichtungen des Spätmittelalters,” in *‘Textus’ im Mittelalter. Komponenten und Situationen des Wortgebrauchs im schriftsemantischen Feld*, ed. Ludolf Kuchenbuch and Uta Kleine (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 207–27) who analyzed the vernacular terminology, has shown how this relational and reciprocal constitution of text and commentary has influenced the semantic scope of both terms.

²⁸ Jan-Hendryk De Boer, “Kommentar,” in *Universitäre Gelehrtenkultur vom 13. bis 16. Jh. Ein interdisziplinäres Quellen- und Methodenhandbuch*, ed. Jan-Hendryk De Boer (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2018), 265–318.; Lesley Smith, *The Glossa Ordinaria: The Making of a Medieval Bible Commentary* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2009), 91: “Commentaries made lemma by lemma, with the exegesis as continuous text following on from a word or phrase from the Bible, were the most common format for the exposition of Scripture, and we know that Anselm himself produced commentary in that form. [...] In these books, the lemmata did not necessarily contain the whole text of a biblical book, but only those parts the commentator chose to expound.”

²⁹ Andrew Hicks demonstrates with regard to William of Conches’ *Glosulae super Priscianum* how heavily the commented text is abbreviated. Here as well the text referred to is not present as an

the commentarial text. The *Anegenge*, I posit, utilizes this mode of constituting a textual relation: while leaving the *textus* an undetermined entity – “grozív dinc [...] vnd wunderlichiv mære” (‘great things and marvellous novelties,’ ll. 34–35), the *textus* is evoked as some absent text that nevertheless determines the Gestalt and design of the text that is present.

While the *textus* is thus objectified as a (coherent) entity, the commentary focusses on individual aspects, problems, notions, and words that derive their authority and consistency from the textual object they constitute. The commentary can attend to a multiplicity of topics, proceed highly selectively if not eclectically, and can allow for incoherencies, while it somewhat “borrows” the notion of textual coherence from the *textus*.³⁰ In this way, the *Anegenge* uses the commentarial gesture to enable the incorporation of a diversity of topics that have puzzled research ever since. Hence, incoherence and coherence merge to allow for an alternative textual structure.

The *Anegenge* evokes the notion of a *textus*, a complete narration of the creation and of salvific history that is absent and present at once, by treating the narrative passages as if they were lemmas selected to be explained. Without doubt, vernacular biblical narration is always selective, but as scholars have stressed, the *Anegenge* offers a selection that is almost vexingly sparse:³¹ In the first part, referring to the Old Testament, we hear about the creation, the fall of man, Cain and Abel, the lineages of Cain and Seth, the Flood,

entity, but as small pieces that substitute complete passages commonly known or findable in another codex (“Reading Text within Texts. The Special Case of Twelfth-Century Lemmata,” *Glossator* 12 [2021]: 76–90).

³⁰ Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, “Fill up Your Margins! About Commentary and Copia,” in *Commentaries – Kommentare*, ed. Glenn W. Most, 443–53 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), 446, speaks of the abundance (*copia*) of commentary, that tends to the unlimited and is enclosed mainly by the limited margins of the page – which of course only holds true if one thinks of an embracing layout of text and commentary.

³¹ Rupp, *Deutsche religiöse Dichtungen*: “Alles, was nach dem Sündenfall erzählt ist, scheint keinen Sinn im Rahmen der Dichtung zu haben. Der Dichter wollte kein Bibelepös schreiben. Was soll dann diese Erzählung, und warum führt sie nur bis Noah? ...” Cf. Bauer, “Trinität und Heilsgeschichte,” 33–34.

and Noah's drunkenness. The second part, referring to the New Testament, tells about the annunciation and proclamation to Mary, Joseph's doubt, the shepherds and the kings, and the narration ends when Herod is informed about the birth. Thus, this is less of a representation of salvific history, but rather its abbreviated assertion. Nevertheless, the *Anegenge* conceives of that history as an existing coherent and underlying pre-text. Accordingly, it ends with the hint that it is "uns allen offen" (l. 2662) – that it is widely known what happened in the thirty-three years and twenty-six weeks before the Passion, as well as what the prophets have foretold.³² Equally, the passage dealing with the Old Testament begins with the remark that narration will be sparse to avoid redundancy and waste of time:

def ift dehæin not.
daz wir daz allez gefagen.
wan wir der ceit nicht enhaben.
Daz wir fo verre chomen dar ín.
níwan daz wir mít difem begín.
Iv ermanen eín tæil.
wie fich hûp vnfer hæil. (ll. 220–26)

³² ll. 2657–66: "swaz er wunderf da./ vnt ouch feit ander fwa./ In drin vnd drizec iaren begie./ [...] daz ift uns allen offen./ wie ærmchlich er hie was./ vntz er erfulte allez daz./ Daz die prpheten./ von im geweißfaget heten." – In this passage the commentarial gesture overlaps with a narrative strategy that Müller has labeled "Memoriales Erzählen." In referring to a coherent background that is commonly known or in fabricating such common background by simply claiming it, "memoriales Erzählen" produces connections and secures understanding. Müller, *'Episches' Erzählen*, 59: "Memoriales Erzählen setzt 'Erinnerungsräume' voraus, in denen die erzählten Geschichten zusammenhängen und aufeinander Bezug nehmen. Diesen Gestus nimmt episches Erzählen auf indem es auf einen Anspielungshintergrund verweist, dessen Kenntnis für das Verständnis des Erzählten unerlässlich ist. [...] Dabei verweisen memoriale Gesten häufig ins Leere. Sie dienen dann weniger tatsächlich der *memoria*, als dass sie einen memorialen Hintergrund fingieren."

It is not necessary that we tell it all. Because we have not got the time to narrate it at length. Only that we remind you with this beginning how our salvation began.

Salvific history is evoked, but it is only alluded to so that it can be commemorated.³³ The commentarial gesture implies an absent (albeit well-known) authoritative text that is claimed to be intersubjectively accessible to the implied recipients, that is “uns allen offen”. Thus, the design of the *Anegenge* is silhouetted against this authoritative background.

In a similar gesture, the three larger commentaries at the beginning, middle, and end of the *Anegenge* also structure the narration while speaking about the unity of the Trinity, the invisibility of God, and reconciliation of the original sin. More than the other two, the commentarial treatise in the middle of the *Anegenge* highlights this narrative structure since it offers examples to prove God’s invisibility first from the Old, and then from the New Testament.³⁴ With these examples, the commentary accentuates the chronology of the text as a whole and demonstrates its relatedness to salvific history, whose *ordo naturalis* is thus positioned – albeit again with sparse quotation – in the centre of the *Anegenge* to legitimate its own very complex *ordo artificialis*.

Inasmuch as the commentaries mark their reference-object as a well-known authoritative pre-text, that is to say as *buochstabe* and *schrift*, they can derive their own claims to validity from it. In this way, the vernacular text itself gains authority by mediating and explaining the *textus* whose presence it evokes and asserts. Rupp and Kiening have both emphasized the bold and self-empowering pose of the narrator, who – although he seeks divine inspiration in the prologue – once and again seems to parade his superior competence in front of his readers, even when he only alludes to further

³³ I think the ideal of *brevitas* could be understood in this context as well, cf. Bauer, “Trinität und Heilsgeschichte,” 34–37.

³⁴ Bauer, (“Trinität und Heilsgeschichte,” 36) comes to a similar conclusion concerning the “name-dropping” in this passage: “Die Namen reflektieren dabei die bereits selbst genealogisch strukturierte Heilsgeschichte und verdichten sie in den genealogischen Bezügen ihrer Signifikanten, woraus sich ein referentielles Verweissystem ergibt, das die Heilsgeschichte sozusagen in Kurzform zitiert.”

explanations without actually giving them.³⁵ In a paradoxical entanglement, the *textus* that bestows validity onto the commentaries, because it conveys “wunderlichiv dinc” and “grôziv mære,” is at the same time subject to their interpretative dominance and to the delving of an agent digging deeply to bring about its true meaning.

II

While the shorter commentaries that accompany elements of salvific history and the longer commentary in the middle of the text discuss topics transmitted by *buochstabe* and *schrift*, the first little treatise (ll. 280–1058) is related to the “theological myths,” to the allegorical and therefore very obviously poetic representations of the beginning of “our salvation.”³⁶ Although both allegorical scenes present dialogues between personifications of God’s names and attributes, they differ in the way they are staged. While the dispute of the daughters of God is offered as an elaborate scene of some length, this heavenly council collaborating on the planning of creation is presented with hardly any direct speech. Instead, the *Anegeuge* displays it in a way that makes it very hard to distinguish who said what.³⁷ Furthermore, it is closely interwoven with the first longer commentary passage, which makes sure that the dispute of the three

³⁵ Kiening, *Literarische Schöpfung im Mittelalter*, 73–74; Rupp, *Deutsche religiöse Dichtungen*, 217, 218, 223, 254–56. In trying to define basic features of the commentary, Most (Preface, vii, xiv) emphasized the act of “empowerment” that is inherent in it.

³⁶ Ohly (“Die Trinität berät über die Erschaffung des Menschen,” 242) coined the wording “theological myths” (“theologische Mythen”) when discussing their sources and compared their adaptation with regard to the *Anegeuge* as well as the *St. Trudperter Hohelied* (ibid.). See also Ohly, “Der Prolog,” 208–209; Christine Stridde, “faciamus hominem. Wie der Mensch mit Gott vor der Schöpfung spricht,” in *Sprechen mit Gott. Redeszenen in mittelalterlicher Bibeldichtung und Legende*, ed. Nine Miedema, Angela Schrott, and Monika Unzeitig, 15–30 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 22–23.

³⁷ Maria Sherwood-Smith, “Selbstgespräche zu dritt: Innertrinitarische Gespräche im ‘Anegeuge’ und in der ‘Erlösung,’” in *Dialoge. Sprachliche Kommunikation in und zwischen Texten im deutschen Mittelalter Hamburger Colloquium 1999*, ed. Nikolaus Henkel, 213–24 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2003), 214–19.

personifications, Might, Wisdom and Benignity, is not misunderstood as conflicting with the unity of the Trinity.³⁸ But the almost tract-like insertion does not content itself with only the three “names” of God used in this council. Rather, it elaborates an indissolubly interwoven system of names and attributes, and stresses that there are several more and even some which cannot be named in the vernacular at all.³⁹ In this way the first commentarial treatise puts into perspective not only the council of creation but also the dispute of the daughters of God which will later involve Truth and Mercy, Might and Wisdom, Peace and Justice (ll. 2255–2394). The extensive first commentary thus engages with the semantic scope of both allegories, delimiting the possibilities of how they are to be understood.⁴⁰ Through this, the allegories gain legitimacy to represent the salvation of man in their own particular way. Being closely connected to each other through their Gestalt as well as their position in the structure of the text as a whole, the allegories seem to offer their own vantage point for an interpretation of salvific history. Complementing the overall emphasis on the Trinitarian will,⁴¹ they accentuate divine right and justice.

Mäder showed in his comparative study on European adaptations of the motif of “The Daughters of God” that its treatment in the *Anegenge* is considerably different from that in later adaptations – such as the Middle High German *Erlösung* or the *Sunte Marien Wortegarde* by Kōnemann of Jerxheim: on the one hand, the motif is put in conversation with the council of creation, which neither of the latter includes; on the other hand, the *Anegenge* abstains from using a trial as a narrative setting, which is characteristic for its later use and was already used in Bernhard’s sermon.⁴² Instead of a controversial lawsuit that would risk the unity of the Trinity, the

³⁸ See Rupp, *Deutsche religiöse Dichtungen*, 220–25; Bauer, “Trinität und Heilsgeschichte,” 38–40.

³⁹ ll. 339–89.

⁴⁰ Michel Foucault, “The Order of Discourse. Inaugural Lecture at the Collège de France, given 2 December 1970,” in *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, ed. Robert Young (Boston: Routledge & Paul, 1981), 56–58; Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of Human Sciences* (London: Routledge, 2001), 72–75, 114–11; Assmann, “Text und Kommentar,” 30–31.

⁴¹ Cf. Bauer, “Trinität und Heilsgeschichte,” 40–44.

⁴² Mäder, *Der Streit der Töchter Gottes*, 46–52.

Anegenge presents a consensual council that plans the salvation without the need of an austere magisterial authority. Nevertheless, the discourse on divine right and justice remains an argument in response to the question of whether and how man can be saved. This discourse is even extended to the council of creation and beyond, to the creation of angels, who were – as Benignity and Wisdom explain – created in the first place because Might (God) wishes to share his splendor and make the “wunne gemeine” and “sin lop breit” (ll. 142–143). Answering the question of “how” the angels are created, the arguments for divine right and justice quickly fall into place: they must be created free and hence able to fall:

wan het got die engel geschaffen alle.
daz fi nicht moech ten chomen fein zdem valle.
So het er wider die gitan.
die ím dannoch bei wolden feín gitan.
Durch der verzagten fiechtuom.
wold er ín nicht vnrech tef tuon.
[...]
ê wolde er dulden difen val.
vnt ouch feín felbef tot.
ê er durch dehæíner flachte not.
Den guten bræche ír recht. (ll. 165–177)

Because if God would have created all angels so that they could not fall, he would have acted against those, who still wanted to stay with him. Because of the weakness of the despondent (angels) he would not want to be unjust to the true and loyal [...] Rather he was willing to suffer this downfall and even his own death, than to break the right of the good (angels) – come what may.

This claim that free will is a question of divine justice towards the loyal angels is further supported by a passage from the Bible stating that a servant who willingly serves his master should be loved by him and not be restricted in his freedom.⁴³ If God had created the angels in such a way that they could not have fallen, the just treatment of the “good servants,” that is to say those angels who did not follow Lucifer, would not have been guaranteed. The

⁴³ Ecclesiasticus 7:22.

righteousness of God thus becomes the final reason for the fall of the angels and hence for the fall of man and hence for the incarnation of God and his own death. Therefore, when Might, Wisdom, and Benignity meet to give advice on how the tenth choir of angels is to be replaced, the need to create a new “servant” (chnecht) who will also be able to fall is justified by the same argument:

Got het ím felben gítan vnrecht.
 het er fo geschaffen feínen chnecht.
 daz er nicht moechte feín gevallen.
 wider den engelen allen.
 Het er verre gítan. (ll. 879–883)

God would have been unjust against himself if he had created his servant so that he could not fall; he would have acted very much against all angels.

The Trinity of the *Aneenge* cannot be unjust towards itself, nor towards the legal principles that are – as we know from the first commentary – one of its names and attributes.

While in the creation council Might, Wisdom, and Benignity act in complete unity and their individual positions – presented in reported speech – are hard to distinguish, the dispute of the daughters of God is carried out in the close up dramatic mode, in direct speech and makes the differences between them blatantly obvious (ll. 255–2394). However, Truth and Mercy hardly address human restitution as a controversial question of “whether” man can be saved. If, as Mäder emphasizes, later narratives of the dispute of the daughters use the motif to express the “inner divine tension as a result of the opposite claims of divine justice and mercy,” such tension is not evoked in the *Aneenge*.⁴⁴ Accordingly, the *Aneenge* discusses salvation first of all as a common problem of Truth and Mercy concerning the “how” – how can a new man be made from frail and weak material (“broeden erde,” l. 2325) and nevertheless be strong enough to carry the burden of mankind. And how can this come about when he, just like the angels, has to be created free, in order to compensate for the guilt of a “vrî geslehte?” The crucial question is again “how” to solve the problem without being unjust – and therefore Justice itself enters the scene:

⁴⁴ Mäder, *Der Streit der Töchter Gottes*, 51.

ob er fo gefchaffen wurde.
Daz er gevallen nīne moechte.
fo wære daz frī geflæchte.
Da mīt nicht vergolten.
ezn wære daz wīr wollten.
Dem tível vnrechte tuon.
dane chom ez nīmmer zuo.
Sprach daz hæilige rechte.
welle wīr im nehmen feīne chnechte.
Daz fol mīt rechte werden gītan. (ll. 2334–43)

“If he was created in such a way, that he would not be able to fall, the free lineage (of man) would not be saved (through him), if we would not accept to be unjust to the devil.”- “That will never be,” said holy justice, “if we take his servant from him (i.e. the devil), it should be done just.”

Justice does not fail to remind the interlocutors of this claim, “Nv fvl wir behvtēn daz recht,” (l. 2369), and even invokes it as the legal basis for God’s reign: “Daz recht deīnef rechtes./ Ift eīn gerte deīnef reiche[s]” (l. 2380).⁴⁵ Accordingly, the Incarnation, and Passion is the only acceptable solution. Finally, Peace joins the others to seal the solution with a kiss that was very probably the point of departure for the motif in the first place: “Misericordia et veritas obviaverunt sibi; iustitia et pax osculatæ sunt” (Psalm 84,11, ll. 2386–87). But still Justice watches closely: “daz fach von hīmel daz recht./ vil dicche her an die erden.” (ll. 2392–93). The legal discourse described in the theological myth of “The Dispute of the Daughters of God” is, I think, no less important in the *Anegegne* than it is in other adaptations of the motif. Although not tangibly in the form of a formal juridical controversy of the personifications, its relevance actually seems heightened since it now affects the history of creation and salvation as their ruling principle. The premise of a “just” creation determines the narration and gives it a coherent and logical structure – a

⁴⁵ Neuschäfer, *Das Anegegne*, 223, proposes a correction: “diu gerte dīnes rehtes/ ist ein gerte dīnes riches” (l. 2380–81): The rod of your justice ist the rod of your reign. Cf. Psalm 44,7: “virga directionis virga regni tui.”

mechanism of justice that unfolds with unstoppable consequence to which even God subjects himself, since the principle partakes in the unity of the Trinity: “Owe sprach der gíwalt./ waz hab wir an vns gízalt. [...] mvg wir den stouf nicht ver varen?” (“O,” said strength, “what a sentence have we passed on ourselves ... can’t we evade this chalice?” ll. 2357–62; cf. Mt 26,39). But of course the cup cannot pass because the text subordinates the salvific history to a logical consistency founded in justice.

While the allegorical scenes open up this perspective of a “just” creation and keep it on display throughout both parts of the *Anegenge*, the third, tract-long commentary closing the text puts this perspective on display in a very concise image: this third commentarial insertion reconstructs in detail how the Incarnation, Passion, and Crucifixion compensate for the original sin by elaborating the image of a scale balanced out meticulously. This scale measuring guilt and atonement is again found in the hands of the already well-known personifications:

feín erbarmde vnt feín weíftuom.
die gedachten eíner wage.
fam ob dar vf læge.
Elliv div schulde.
da mít fi verluren gotef hulde.
Darzu chom daz recht gefezzen.
ez begunde vlæizchlichen mezzen. (ll. 2794–2800)

His mercy and his wisdom devised a scale, on which they
imagined all guilt through which they lost God’s grace.
Here justice sat down and industriously started to
measure.

The closing passage of the *Anegenge* by and large follows this idea of measuring and balancing under the eyes of Justice. Fall and redemption are negotiated in detailed oppositional pairs: for example, by balancing the serpent’s greeting to Eve, which is understood as a curse, with the blessing of preaching, or by weighing Adam’s hand gripping the apple – according to a logic of *lex talionis* – with the piercing of Christ’s hand during the crucifixion. The image of the balanced scale, which closes the text, accentuates conventional typological aspects of the ‘history’ of salvation and – in continuation of the personification allegory – intertwines them with

the theological myth that makes justice the driving force of the narration, and thus subdues the narration to a coherent structure of its own.⁴⁶ The commentarial forms legitimate this account of “grôziv dinc” and “wunderlichiv mære” not only in securing the semantic scope of the allegorical scenes and preventing, that they might be misunderstood concerning e.g. the unity of the trinity, but also in connecting them to an authoritative gesture in which a salvific history documented in *buoch* and *schrift* is cited to be explained over and over. Of all things, the practices of commentary that make the text look incoherent thus allow for a coherent report of God’s plan.

⁴⁶ Cf. Christian Kiening, “Arbeit am Absolutismus des Mythos. Mittelalterliche Supplemente zur biblischen Heilsgeschichte,” in *Präsenz des Mythos. Konfigurationen einer Denkform in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, ed. Udo Friedrich and Bruno Quast (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2004), 35–57. Even Rupp recorded several allusions to the semantic field of law and justice and emphasized causal logic related to it (*Deutsche religiöse Dichtungen*, 227, 237, 244–47). Comparable evidence could be found throughout the *Aneenge*, e.g. ll. 40–47, 2480–87. Against this background, the *Aneenge* would perhaps be particularly suitable for questions relating to the area of law and literature.