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C. S. Lewis as an Advocate for Animals

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Abstract

C. S. Lewis was a magnanimous man and had a love of animals as well as a passion for the advocacy for the ethical and moral treatment of animals. He employs many literary genres to make a case for man's responsibility for the animals, these include his: Letters, Literary Criticism, Fiction, Christian Apologetics, and Essays (especially a specific essay written in opposition of "Vivisection"). It is instructive to see where Lewis is successful in his advocacy and also where he is weak. Furthermore, Lewis provides a model for advocacy on behalf of animals whenever fresh challenges occur, which can be helpful to those who share his concerns. Lewis's method of argumentation is rooted in objectivity pursued and guarded by the checks and balances of authority, reason, and experience.

Introduction: C. S. Lewis as Advocate for the Animals

The Oxford scholar and Cambridge Professor, C. S. Lewis, was deeply concerned about human responsibility for animals. This concern grew out of a general magnanimity that was characteristic of much of his life. Anecdotes about Lewis abound. He was almost bigger than life. I received a letter many years ago from the Oxford Chaucer scholar and friend of Lewis, Neville Coghill, who described his fellow *Inkling* this way:

He [Lewis] was a great medieval and classical scholar who also wrote about Christianity to which he became a convert to the Anglican Communion, he also wrote a number of books about an imaginary country called Narnia, mainly for children, but very readable. He was kind and good and a splendid talker, in many ways rather like Dr. Johnson—in bulk as well as in wit and learning.¹

Certainly, Lewis was much like Dr. Johnson; perhaps this is why people remembered stories about Lewis and wrote them down in the same way James Boswell wrote down stories about Dr. Johnson. And many of these stories reveal that he was magnanimous almost to a fault. He gave away two thirds of all his royalty income which included the money he made from his preaching and Christian apologetic work.² If panhandlers approached Lewis and asked him for money he always emptied his pockets and gave whatever might be found there. Once, this occurred while Lewis was accompanied by a friend. When the warning was sounded, “Why did you give that money to that man? He will just go and drink it.” Lewis respond, “Yes, but if I kept it I would drink it!”³ He was more ready to hold his own motives up to scrutiny than those of others. This kind of good heartedness was seamlessly evident in Lewis’s treatment of animals and his advocacy on their behalf.

The Kilns, Lewis’s home in the Risinghurst neighborhood of Headington just outside of Oxford was virtually a hotel for animals. Cats and dogs were always part of the assembly under that roof. Lewis even confided in one letter that while his neighbors were known to trap the mice in their houses Lewis’s

¹ Personal letter dated 15 February 1974 (a copy is in the Marion Wade Center at Wheaton College).

² HOOPER, Walter. C. S. Lewis: *Companion & Guide*. London: Harper Collins, 1996. Pp. 32, 623, 747. Lewis’s friend, Owen Barfield set up the Agape Trust through which Lewis distributed funds to those in need. This was all done anonymously. Professor Clyde S. Kilby says in the Preface to *Letters to an American Lady* that Lewis gave away two thirds of all his income. Lewis, C. S. *Letters to an American Lady*, Edited by Clyde S. Kilby. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1971. P. 9.

³ LEWIS, C. S. *Letters to an American Lady*. P. 108.

own practice was to feed them. In fact, on one occasion he told a bursar at Magdalene College, Cambridge that the bursar mustn't try to trap a mouse seen in college for it could be somebody's mother.⁴ And, there is one well known story told by Lewis's former student and long time friend and biographer, George Sayer, which summarizes Lewis's compassion for the animals and the lengths he would go, personally to protect them. While on a walk with Lewis in the woods, Sayer recounts that a bedraggled fox bounded out of the thicket right before them looking worn and weary. The energy of the fox was seemingly spent as it staggered away. Moments later mounted fox hunters came galloping up and Lewis asked if they were looking for a fox. When the hunters responded in the affirmative Lewis sent them in a direction opposite to the one the fox had taken.⁵ Lewis was an outrageous lover of animals and, whenever the need arose, advocated on their behalf.

Literary Genres Where Lewis Makes a Case for Man's Responsibility for the Animals

Lewis's breadth as a writer is evident by 73 titles that bear his name and these fall in eleven different literary genres. In many of these genres his interest in animals percolates to the surface whether he wrote letters, literary criticism, poetry, fiction, Christian apologetics, or essays his love of animals and interests on their behalf is evident.

Letters

Lewis's letters contain numerous examples where he is writing to his correspondents about animals, making it clear that he often was observant of the beasts around him and reflected on them in his thoughts.

Letters to Children

In his letters to children Lewis drops his guard and speaks of things almost innocently and childlike himself; this is especially so when it comes to animals. He tells one child of a rabbit in the

⁴ Told to me by Michael Ward, Lewis scholar and author of *Planet Narnia*.

⁵ SAYER, George. "Jack on Holiday" in *C. S. Lewis at the Breakfast Table*, James Como, editor. New York: Macmillan, 1979. P. 207.

gardens at Magdalen College, Oxford he has named Baron Biscuit. Lewis would feed this rabbit from his hand and even wrote a poem about him and sent it to his young correspondent.⁶ Lewis wrote to another child that he had with him at the Kilns a dog named Bruce, and cats named Kitty-koo and Pushkin.⁷ It was in these letters that Lewis confided he never set traps for mice and in fact he had many living in his rooms at Oxford.⁸ He clearly noticed the animals in his world and he loved to tell children about them.

The Collected Letters of C. S. Lewis

In *The Collected Letters of C. S. Lewis* there are numerous references to animals and Lewis's observations of them as well as his thoughts and speculations about them. Representative of these letters is one he wrote to a Mrs. Allen expressing his disdain at the experimentation taking place using monkeys, "I read with interest and indignation your story of the experiment on the monkeys; there seems no end to the folly and wickedness of this world."⁹ He also speculated about animal pain in these letters, "I find however that the problem of animal pain is just as tough when I concentrate on creatures I dislike as ones I cd. [could] make pets of. I loathe hens. But my conscience would say the same things if I forgot to feed them as if I forgot to feed the cat...."¹⁰

Letters to an American Lady

In his thirteen year correspondence with an American Lady, Lewis clarified that he was still holding to a controversial position on animal immortality right up to the months before his own death.

"My stuff about animals came long ago in *The Problem of Pain*. I ventured the supposal—it could be nothing more—that as we are raised *in* Christ, so at least some animals are raised *in* us. Who knows, indeed, but that a great deal even of the inanimate creation is raised *in* the redeemed souls who have, during this life, taken its beauty into themselves. That may be the way in which the "new heaven and the new earth" are formed. Of course we can only guess and wonder. But these particular guesses arise in me, I trust, from taking seriously the resurrection of the body: a doctrine which now-a-days is very soft pedaled by nearly all the faithful—to our great impoverishment. Not that you and I have now much reason to rejoice in having bodies! Like old automobiles, aren't they where all sorts of apparently different things keep going wrong, but what they add up to is the plain fact that the machine is wearing out. Well, it was not meant to last forever. Still, I have a kindly feeling for the old rattle-trap. Through it God showed me that whole side of His beauty which is embodied in colour, sound, smell and size. No doubt it has often led me astray: but not half so often, I suspect, as my soul has led *it* astray. For the spiritual evils which we

⁶ LEWIS, C. S. *Letters to Children*. Lyle Dorsett and Marjorie Lamp Mead, editors. New York: Macmillan, 1985. Pp. 21-22.

⁷ *Ibid.* February 11, 1945. P. 23.

⁸ *Ibid.* June 3, 1953. P. 32.

⁹ LEWIS, C. S. *The Collected Letters of C. S. Lewis*. Volume III. Walter Hooper, editor. 28 December, 1950. San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2007. Pp. 77-78.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 29 Dec. 1961. P. 1308.

share with the devils (pride, spite) are far worse than what we share with the beasts: and sensuality really arises more from the imagination than from the appetites; which, if left merely to their own animal strength, and not elaborated by our imagination, would be fairly easily managed. But this is turning into a sermon!"¹¹

Literary Criticism

Lewis's work on the backgrounds of medieval literature, *The Discarded Image*, reveals once more his attention to the place of animals in the thought and imagination of the middle ages. Lewis discusses the medieval zoology as it comes down to us through the literature of the time. He observes that there is little talk of the animals proximate to the agrarian experience of a person of that age even though everyone in that period was far more familiar with cows and goats and sheep and horses and hawking and stags than we whose domestic life is defined by urbanization. Nevertheless, the *Bestiaries* of the day contained a wider variety of animals more interesting to the medieval imagination. Lewis notes, "The written zoology of their period is mainly a mass of cock-and-bull stories about creatures the authors have never seen, and often about creatures that never existed."¹² These stories and descriptions were often embellishments, "They are usually handing on what was received from the ancients."¹³ Lewis also speculates, had Aristotle's "Genuinely scientific zoology...been known first and followed exclusively we might have had no bestiaries."¹⁴

The classical authors simply passed on to the medieval authors their material. Lewis says that it was Phadrus (1st Century AD) who gave us the dragon of Germanic, Anglo-Saxon and Norse notoriety. "In two thousand years western humanity has neither got tired of it nor improved it. Beowulf's Dragon and Wagner's dragon are unmistakably the dragon of Phadrus."¹⁵ Furthermore, Centaurs, Lewis believed were born out of projecting human characteristics onto the horse. The Unicorns, the Phoenix, and so forth are also derived from classical sources and embellished in the hands of the medieval authors.¹⁶ Some animals more proximate to actual medieval observation and experience, such as the pelican have

¹¹ LEWIS, C. S., *Letters to an American Lady*. Clyde Kilby, editor. (26 November 1962). Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1967. Pp. 110–111.

¹² LEWIS, C. S. *The Discarded Image*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964. P.147.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.* P.148.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* P. 148-49.

attributed to them myths of varying significance. It was believed the pelican plucked at its own breast and gave life to its young by feeding them its own blood. The myth became a symbol for Christ.¹⁷ All of this is mentioned to make two points. First, Lewis is able to underscore the fact that wonder relative to animals (whether mythological or actual) has always leant itself to the lore of literature, it has been part and parcel of human history from time in memoriam. Second, human history has always had its accuracies and its myths relative to these mysterious creatures who share life with us on this planet.

Lewis concludes the section on the beasts in *The Discarded Image* with these words, “If, a Platonism taught...the visible world is made after an invisible pattern, if things below the Moon are all derived from things above her, the expectation that an anagogical or moral sense will have been built into the nature and behavior of the creatures would not be *a priori* unreasonable. To us an account of animal behavior would seem improbable if it suggested too obvious a moral. Not so to them. Their premises were different.”¹⁸ While a close read of Lewis’s corpus reveals he was neither a Platonist nor an Aristotelian, though he borrowed from both, he allowed his borrowing, in this case, to be in the interest of the animals. He makes similar use of fiction to advocate on behalf of animals as well.

Fiction

Lewis saw the value of fiction as a rhetorical tool. Lewis the logician often debated his beliefs propositionally with clear, cogent and coherent arguments still he recognized that some points are likely to be made by other means. Lewis uses fiction in order to persuade as well as logic. He was a lover of stories and he and his friend J. R. R. Tolkien together committed themselves to write the kinds of stories they liked to read, and they made brush strokes on the canvases of their work that clearly supported their personal interests. Tolkien’s love of trees and forests along with a general sense of human responsibility for the environment is woven into the fabric of Middle Earth. Similarly Lewis clearly advocated for the animals in his Narnian books and his science fiction trilogy.

The talking beasts of Narnia are afforded equal rights with the humans of that world; albeit the Narnian animals possess reason and personhood. Lewis allows his fiction to open the eyes of his readers

¹⁷ The crest of Corpus Christi College at Oxford University has the symbol of the Pelican for this reason.

¹⁸ Ibid. P. 152.

that they might see and appreciate the beasts and all they bring even to the discovery of human dignity in the just treatment of these mysterious creatures. In a sense he uses these books to fulfill the longing he expressed in the Epilogue of *An Experiment in Criticism*. In that book Lewis wrote that his own eyes were not enough for him he longed to see what others have seen. Even that was not enough he longed to read what they have imagined. Still, he was not satisfied, he regretted that the brutes could not write books for he wished he could see how the world presented itself to the eyes of a mouse or a bee, or how it came charged to the olfactory sense of a dog. While Lewis's Narnia books cannot give us this precisely, he certainly sets the hearts of his readers to wondering. The books are written to tell specific stories, they are stories where children enter the world of animals. Seeing animals there, with dignity and grace, there are more likely to see better in their own world when they return from the adventure. The great lion Aslan, the Christ figure of Narnia, tells Lucy that he lives in her world too only there he goes by a different name. She has been brought to Narnia to know him in Narnia for a short while that she might come to know him better in her world. Similarly, in seeing the animals of Narnia in a fresh way, every animal in our world is seen with a renewed sense of wonder and awe.

Lewis's science fiction books look at the matter of animals in a different light. The animals are not central to the stories *per se*, though they do play a major role in the conclusion of the trilogy and bring about justice and judgment to that world. Nevertheless, their primary role is one of background, yet the point is constantly (and consistently) made that those who are good in these books have a love for animals and always make room for them. The Manor, where Ransom, the hero of the science fiction books, holds sway, is a menagerie of animals. And they are treated with kindness and make up the hominess of that world. By contrast, the evil characters with their nefarious designs that make up the N. I. C. E. (the National Institute of Coordinated Experiments) are all vivisectionists. While it is not explicitly stated, Lewis makes a clear link in these books between evil characters and the ill-treatment of animals. In fact, perhaps the most evil character in all of his fiction, Weston, whose evil reduces Lewis simply to call him "the unman" is a vivisectionist. The loss of his humanity is seen in his disregard of the animals. This linkage is also seen in other evil characters in Lewis's fiction. Evil Uncle Andrew, in *The Magician's Nephew*, performs experiments on Guinea Pigs and eventually performs experiments on the children Polly and Digory. The Magician, in Lewis's narrative poem *Dymer*, shoots a lark and then, in time, turns

his gun on Dymer. Jadis Queen of Charn, who becomes the White Witch of Narnia, is identified by her characteristic cruelty to animals. In all of this Lewis is making rhetorical points on behalf of the animals. It is a mark of evil to treat animals poorly; it is a sign of goodness to treat them well. A just person assumes responsibility for the animals. But Lewis is not dependant solely on fiction to make this point.

Lewis's Christian Apologetics

Lewis's Apologetic work is where he directs his attention most clearly to the questions of animals. He is sometimes unsuccessful in his rhetoric and sometimes successful. Evident is his love of animals and his sense of responsibility to advocate on their behalf. Lewis wrote *The Problem of Pain* in an attempt to present traditional Christian answers to the problem of suffering and evil. He draws from the tradition of Augustine and Boethius to present a "free-will theodicy" that says evil is the result of the ill-use of free will and that this is the main spring of evil and suffering in the world. Here his approach is predominately a philosophical one. Lewis also draws from the tradition that flows out of Irenaeus and is known as a "soul-making theodicy". Though evil and suffering have been allowed by God in the world, God uses suffering as a means to cultivate virtue in the life of the sufferer. He writes, "Innocence is not goodness; even Divine nature even in her prime cannot make of virtue a gift."¹⁹ This summary of Lewis's argument in *The Problem of Pain* may sound too sparse and underdeveloped—and it is—my reason for giving this brief explanation is merely to situate Lewis's application of this argument to the question of animal pain and suffering.

In Lewis theodicy it is the matter of animal pain that poses the most difficulty for him. Over and over again he notes that his thoughts are speculative due, in part, to the mystery animals are to him. All of his sympathies are with the animals; his good intentions to understand their pain and reconcile their suffering into a coherent apology for the Christian faith go without question. Nevertheless, his work in theodicy seems to lack sophistication when it comes to the animals and all they endure and suffer in this fallen world. If animals have no wills, they cannot be responsible for suffering due to rebellion and sin. Anything relative to a free-will theodicy does not seem to apply to them. That is, animals do not suffer due to evil choices on their part though they do suffer due to bad choices on the part of humans. Furthermore, if animals have no souls they are incapable of virtue and suffering will not improve their character. Soul-

¹⁹ LEWIS, C. S. *The Allegory of Love*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936. P. 60.

making theodicy cannot be used to explain how suffering might benefit the animals. Lewis realizes traditional Christian arguments applied to the topic of human pain and suffering cannot be strictly applied to animals. He seeks a probable explanation for animal pain; it is a subject that matters to him, in part because of his deep love of animals. He concedes the importance of the issue, but stresses it is not a matter about which we can have certainty since "It is outside of the range of our knowledge."²⁰

Lewis does not believe animals exhibit signs of possessing a soul or self consciousness and consequently, pain for animals will be experienced differently than it is for humans. Lewis's argument flows along these lines, he asks his readers to distinguish between sentience and consciousness.²¹ He argues that the feeling of sensations does not imply consciousness. To have sensation (a) followed by sensation (b) followed by sensation (c), and so on, is not to experience these things; it is merely to sense them. The experience of these sensations would demand that we are able to look at them sequentially. In order to do this, there must be something in us outside the sequence of the sensations themselves, which can perceive when each sensation begins and ends. Lewis believes that "this something is...Consciousness or Soul and the process I have just described is one of the proofs that the soul, though experiencing time, is not itself completely 'timeful'."²² If an animal has no soul, then its experience of these sensations will be without a sense of succession. Lewis writes:

The correct description would be 'Pain is taking place in this animal'; not, as we commonly say, 'this animal feels pain', for the words 'this' and 'feels' really smuggle in the assumption that it is a 'self' or 'soul' or 'consciousness' standing above the sensations and organizing them into an 'experience' as [humans] do.²³

What Lewis has written here neglects the fact that animals seem to remember suffering pain and take care to avoid it. Why do animals from dogs to donkeys tend to flinch if a hand moves swiftly near its head? Is this a mere startle or is the animal protecting itself in a way that indicates a possible awareness of a potential for pain? It may be nothing more than startle in which case Lewis may be right. On the other hand, it may indicate a reaction that draws on stored memory and the flinch is an expression of fear and anxiety. If the latter is the case then Lewis's argument begins to unravel.

²⁰ LEWIS, C. S. *The Problem of Pain*. London, Fount Paperbacks, 1977. p. 103.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 105.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

In a response to this argument, philosopher C. E. M. Joad, agreed with Lewis that a robust theodicy must take into account the problem of animal suffering. Nevertheless, Joad disagreed with Lewis on the matter of pain being a less significant matter if the animal has no soul. Joad objected that, “the fact that pain is felt, no matter who or what feels it...that demands explanation.”²⁴ Lewis concedes Joad’s point but responds, “But it surely does matter how far the sufferer is capable of what we can recognize as misery” and Lewis believes that misery is a state that demands soulish, self-awareness.²⁵

Sadly, while Lewis’s overall thesis in *The Problem of Pain* has value within the narrow focus he has carved for himself, the issue of animal suffering is clearly outside the scope of his argument. He drifts towards subjectivism in order to fit animal pain into his system. I do think, however, there is a way Lewis might have brought the animal issue into his argument without having to reconcile it with free-will and still maintain his objectivist commitments.

In *The Problem of Pain*, Lewis mentions that humans experience some pain simply because they come in conflict with “a relatively independent and ‘inexorable’ Nature.”²⁶ Those conflicts do not necessarily signify acts of rebellion against Nature. Certainly we can suffer because we make misjudgments concerning the world around us. We can just as easily drink from a stream where we think the water is good, only to find through the tasting that it is bitter and unhealthy. The relative pain of a bitter taste acts for us as a kind of warning device to move on and avoid grave consequences. Without even bringing up the issue of free-will, we may argue that animals may have been given the capacity of pain for reasons similar to these. If an animal finds that the thicket has thorns that tear at its fur, the animal experiencing pain goes around another way. Pains, in this way, may prescribe limits which, if heeded, can add to whatever quality of life might be available to animals. Lewis might have developed his argument along these lines and still brought it into the realm of his particular focus.

As to the question of justice, Lewis recognizes that though animal pain may not be “God’s handiwork,”²⁷ even so, “if God has not caused it, he has permitted it, and once again, what shall be done

²⁴ LEWIS, C. S. *God in the Dock: Essays in Theology and Ethics*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1970. P. 168.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, P. 168.

²⁶ *The Problem of Pain*, p. 23.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

for these innocents?"²⁸ Here he directs his attention to "animal immortality," and engages in the most highly speculative portion of his discussion of animal suffering. It is his belief that an animal may gain something like self-consciousness in response and submission to its master. Just as man is redeemed in Christ, so too, the animal can be redeemed in man.²⁹ A reader familiar with Lewis's work can only assume that here he is not at his best. Philosopher, Evelyn Underhill, who otherwise liked the *Problem of Pain*, was shocked to read such things in Lewis and thought it her duty to tell him about it. She wrote, "I feel your concept of God would be improved by just a touch of wildness."³⁰ Furthermore, Lewis's friend, Austin Farrer, the Oxford philosopher and fellow *Inkling*, generally liked Lewis's ability to reason and debate; but, on this matter he wrote that Lewis's "Imagination has slipped from the leash of reason."³¹ And, as has been noted, in *Letters to an American Lady*, shortly before he died, Lewis is still holding to the possibility of this position about animals as he originally described it in *The Problem of Pain* some 20 plus years earlier.³²

Lewis does not deny that he writes full of doubts, and acknowledges that all the while, "When we are speaking of creatures so removed from us as wild beasts, and prehistoric beasts, we hardly know what we are talking about."³³ Though he usually writes with clarity, this chapter is full of obscurity. He would have been wiser to have refined his thoughts, in this section of the book, before publication, or left it out completely since it distracts from the strong portions of the book and diminishes Lewis's rhetoric. Since he did not, he must face further problems. Lewis's failure to deal adequately with the problem of animal pain, and the fact that his argument, if properly adjusted, can be strengthened, reveals once again that his argument is a work in progress and not a last word. Even a relatively sound rhetorician such as Lewis does not always argue infallibly. There is always room for further discursive thought.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 111-113.

³⁰ UNDERHILL, Evelyn. *The Letters of Evelyn Underhill*, Charles Williams, editor. London: Longmans, Green and C., 1944. P. 302. Also note Colin Duriez's observation in *Tolkien and C. S. Lewis: The Gift of Friendship*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Hidden Spring, 2003. Pp. 138-39.

³¹ Farrer, Austin, "The Christian Apologist" in Light on C. S. Lewis, Jocelyn Gibb, editor. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1965. P. 42.

³² LEWIS, *Letters to an American Lady*. Letter dated: 26 November '62. P. 110-111.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

Rehabilitating Lewis's Theodicy with Respect for Animals.

Lewis's failure to fit animals into his theodicy in a reasoned way does not mean that a successful Christian defense for the problem of animal pain is impossible. Philosopher Austin Farrer, addresses this issue much more convincingly, and his contribution is helpful in seeing how Lewis might have modified his own argument. Farrer's argument runs something like this: While some suffering among men is certainly justifiable due to guilt, animal suffering could have no such justification.³⁴ Human suffering can produce growth in character such as "heroic endurance," "moral wisdom," and sacrifice for the sake of others; animals cannot benefit in this way, and therefore animal suffering cannot be justified in this way.³⁵ Furthermore, animal irrationality aggravates the problem, for "the power of reason can render physical sufferings endurable."³⁶ Understanding the dentist's motives makes it possible to endure his drill. Animals, lacking reason, do not possess this advantage. Farrer also notes that because animals cannot communicate their pains, they are likely to suffer longer before their needs are tended to.³⁷

Farrer observes that there is a common element running through each of the items mentioned above; it is that animal pain is "sheer pain," and as such, it appears to be "an unmitigated evil, incapable of justification."³⁸ Here, he asks the question: Would animals be better off if they had no pains at all?³⁹ It would seem that they would not be better off if they had no capacity to feel pain, for animal pain is necessary to animal consciousness, and without it they would have no chance for survival. He argues that "the working of animal pain has the rough effect of defending the species and promoting evolutionary development."⁴⁰ And Farrer believes the whole process has been creatively guided.⁴¹ God cares for each individual creature by his providence and compassion. It appears that the Christian argument can be developed much further, and certainly Farrer is more satisfying than Lewis. In fact, Lewis's unsuccessful treatment of animal pain stems from his failure to develop a satisfactory resolution for the problem of natural evil and weakens the effectiveness of his rhetoric.

His argument does not seem to bother much with physical or natural evil, and when it does,

³⁴ FARRER, Austin, 1966. *Love Almighty and Ills Unlimited*. London: Collins/ The Fontana Library, p. 84. (Hereafter cited as FARRER, *Love Almighty*)

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

Lewis's attempts to address it are unsatisfactory. When natural evils are discussed at all, they are seen as the product of a malevolent supernatural being. Lewis writes of the "Satanic corruption of the beasts," evidenced by "the fact that animals, or some animals, live by destroying each other."⁴² Later, he adds that "it is possible to believe that animal pain is not God's handiwork but begun by Satan's malice and perpetuated by man's desertion of his post."⁴³ Since Lewis believes the Scriptures lack a system of nature, he does not see, as a Christian apologist, that it is incumbent upon him to supply one.⁴⁴ He acts as an apologist charged with the task to defend what he believes is present in Scripture and nothing more. He is the apologist of *Mere Christianity*. Even so, he seems to be inconsistent, picking and choosing when and where he will develop an idea in an imaginative way in order to provide probable solutions to particular problems. As to the problem of natural evil, he avoids doing any imaginative speculation as to what might be helpful in resolving certain difficulties beyond the data supplied by the texts of Scripture. It could even be argued that Lewis misreads the Scriptures here. Certainly enough data can be found in the Bible to begin the work of natural theology, and with it develop probable resolutions to the questions of natural evil, which others have, in fact, done.⁴⁵ It is also odd that Lewis, who is quite successful in the use of his imagination in a host of other places, would neglect the opportunity at this point, to venture an attempt at some kind of explanation.

On a related note, Cambridge scientist and theologian John Polkinghorne has suggested that theology could address the issue of natural evil (what he terms *physical evil*) along the lines of what he calls a "free process defence." God has created the universe unfinished and has permitted the created order to develop over time:

A world allowed to make itself through the evolutionary exploration of its potentiality is a better world than one produced ready-made by fiat. In such an evolving world there must be malfunctions and blind alleys. The same biochemical processes that enable some cells to mutate and produce new forms of life will allow other cells to mutate and become malignant.⁴⁶

While God sustains history in a single timeless act—there is, therefore, only a general providence—"God

⁴² LEWIS, *Pain*, p. 108.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

⁴⁵ See POLKINGHORNE, John, 1998. *Science and Theology: An Introduction*. London: SPCK/ Fortress Press. pp. 93-95. (Hereafter cited as POLKINGHORNE, *Science and Theology*) WARD, Keith, 1998. *God, Faith & the New Millenium: Christian Belief in an Age of Science*. Oxford: One World. Chapter 8. *Creation, Suffering and the Divine Purpose*, pp. 91-108. (Hereafter cited as WARD, *God, Faith & the New Millenium*) FARRER, *Love Almighty*, pp. 77-105.

⁴⁶ POLKINGHORNE, *Science and Theology*, p. 94.

is in the overall necessity, but the detailed happenstance of actual historical process is just how it all chances to work out.”⁴⁷ Polkinghorne believes, perhaps too strongly, that “the integrity of modern science would be breached in an arbitrary way by any other suggestion.”⁴⁸ Polkinghorne’s judgment may be premature. Other suggestions might become necessary by virtue of the fact that science is often developing new probabilities to account for new discoveries. Nevertheless, as a Christian, Polkinghorne seeks to absolve the Divine will for actual evil and suffering in creation, thus relieving Him from responsibility for it. The question still remains: Why did God not take a more active role in the developing creation? To this, Polkinghorne simply replies, “The stronger one’s account of Divine action, the more pressing becomes the problem of theodicy.”⁴⁹ While Polkinghorne does not develop the argument as fully as one might hope, he moves in a direction that Lewis might have taken, but does not.

A similar view is held by Oxford theologian Keith Ward, but he develops it further:

It seems probable, for example, that a universe that is truly emergent is one in which some measure of conflict and suffering will necessarily exist. Old forms have to die away, to make room for new. And it may be partly through competition and conflict that new forms come into existence. In this way, the distinctive values that only an emergent, evolutionary universe can realise—values of courage, tenacity, creative adventure, as well as values of compassion, co-operation and self-sacrifice—will not be able to exist without the existence of some sort of suffering that God does not directly intend.

We might say that God intends the values, the goods, that only such a process can realise. Therefore God does generate the whole process intentionally. Yet God does not intend the suffering and conflict that the process entails, or at least makes unpreventable by God.⁵⁰

Thus, God may have permitted nature to take its own course of development, just as He permitted man to go his own way. If development can be observed in nature even through a process of suffering, perhaps an apologetic can be informed, in part, by natural revelation, as well as through special revelation. In this way, even the Fall of man could be seen as developmentally necessary. Lewis’s argument could benefit from discoveries related to natural development. So too scientists can benefit from theology when it suggests that providence provides an explanation for the good observed by the positive development of species through a process that includes suffering and survival in nature. These insights suggest ways that an apologetic might be developed with respect to natural evil. Lewis is not unaware of these things;

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

⁵⁰ WARD, *God, Faith and the New Millennium*, p. 93.

by the time he writes Miracles, his thinking has progressed along lines such as these. He believes that nature was not created perfectly. He does not believe it to be created evil, thus involving himself in all the difficulties of ascribing evil in creation to the work of a good God. Instead, he believes that God created the universe imperfectly, in the sense that it was immature and undergoing a process towards some kind of maturity. Creation, like man, was made innocent, and like man reveals that it experiences corruption. How does it come “to be in this condition,” asks Lewis?

By which question we may mean either how she comes to be imperfect—to leave ‘room for improvement’ as the school masters say in their reports—or else, how she comes to be positively depraved. If we ask the question in the first sense, the Christian answer (I think) is that God, from the first, created her such as to reach her perfection by a process in time. He made an Earth at first ‘without form and void’ and brought it by degrees to its perfection. In that sense a certain degree of ‘evolutionism’ or ‘developmentalism’ is inherent in Christianity. Her positive depravity calls for a very different explanation. According to the Christians this is all due to sin: the sin both of men and of powerful, non-human beings, supernatural but created.⁵¹

One wonders where Lewis might go with this idea if he would tease it out further. However, he keeps coming back to the belief that all the difficulties of natural evil have for their cause fallen beings, either men or devils, and it appears that this position hinders him from making a fuller development of his contribution to the problem of evil. His failure occurs because he does not accommodate himself, as well as he might, to objective reality; and to the degree that he fails in this regard, he also fails rhetorically.

Lewis’s Essays

Another literary form where one can observe Lewis’s advocacy on behalf of the animals is in his essays, particularly in his essay written against the practice of vivisection. Lewis was an uncompromising antivivisectionist. He had a deep love of animals; nevertheless, his antivivisectionist position was arrived at by conviction not by mere sentiment. Lewis’s views regarding human responsibility for the animals grew as much out of his theological principles as his philosophical conclusions. Lewis’s article *Vivisection*

⁵¹ LEWIS, *Miracles*, p. 146.

reveals careful precision by virtue of his clear definitions, his coherent inferences, and his power to make a solid and convincing argument. What sense can we make about Lewis's views regarding animals? And, does Lewis say anything from a faith perspective that might help us work our way through the complex labyrinth of man in relation with these otherwise mysterious creatures who occupy both time and space with mankind on this wonderful planet?

The Argument of *Vivisection*

In 1947, Lewis published an article for the New England Anti-vivisection Society.⁵² Vivisection is defined as the act or practice of cutting into or otherwise injuring living animals, especially for the purpose of scientific research. I will try to reproduce the skeletal structure of his argument against vivisection.

First, Lewis argues that emotion may make it difficult to enter into a rational discussion about vivisection.⁵³ On the one hand: those who oppose experiments on animals may be accused of having their reason clouded due to sentimentality towards the animals. But, Lewis argues, on the other hand, those in favor of vivisection may be equally accused of sentimentality. Their arguments may be caught up in sentimentality directed towards human suffering and therefore their advocacy for practices in favor of animal experimentation may be driven by emotion on behalf of the sufferings endured by humans. When arguments for either side drift towards sentiment the matter becomes clouded. Lewis, seeking to be fair, notes: "The one appeal, quite as clearly as the other, is addressed to emotion, to the particular emotion we call pity. And neither appeal proves anything. If the thing is right—and if right at all, it is a duty—then pity for the animal is one of the temptations we must resist in order to perform that duty. If the thing is wrong, then pity for human suffering is precisely the temptation which will most probably lure us into doing that wrong thing. But the real question—whether it is right or wrong—remains meanwhile just where it is."⁵⁴

⁵² Lewis's argument on *Vivisection*, can also be found in *God in the Dock: Essays in Theology and Ethics*. Part II, Chapter 9 "Vivisection" (originally published by the New England Anti-Vivisection Society in 1947, and later republished in *C. S. Lewis: The Grand Miracle and Other Selected Essays on Theology and Ethics from God and the Dock*. New York: Ballantine, 1983. Pp. 137-141 (from which the excerpts for this paper were taken).

⁵³ LEWIS, "Vivisection" P. 137.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

Second, Lewis argues that “A rational discussion of this subject begins by inquiring whether pain is, or is not, an evil.”⁵⁵ If pain is not an evil, the case against vivisection falls. To be fair, Lewis also recognizes that if this is the case the argument for vivisection also fails: if the practice of animal experimentation is not defended as a means to reduce human suffering then by what means can vivisection ever be defended?⁵⁶ No right thinking, or right feeling, individual would ever inflict pain on another creature unnecessarily. Furthermore, Lewis also recognizes that if pain is not evil *per se*, then why should we seek to reduce human suffering in the first place? At this moment in his argument Lewis begins with what he considers an assumption necessary to the whole question that is, that pain is an evil.⁵⁷

Third Lewis argues, “If pain is an evil then the infliction of pain, considered in itself, must clearly be an evil act. But there are such things as necessary evils. Some acts which would be bad, simply in themselves, may be excusable and even laudable when they are the means to a greater good.”⁵⁸ Examples to support Lewis’s contention are readily available. Suicide is considered bad not only for the taking of life but also for the grief caused to those who are left behind; nevertheless, a soldier who muffles a hand grenade with his own body in order to save his fellow soldiers does something heroic. Furthermore, starving oneself is bad; but, a mother’s willingness to deny herself food in order to make sure her children are fed is heroic. Therefore, Lewis writes, “In saying that the infliction of pain, simply in itself, is bad, we are not saying that pain ought never to be inflicted.”⁵⁹ Surgeons apply scalpels to the bodies of their patients in order to cut away tumors that could end life; dentists apply their drills to cavities; coaches and physical therapists may drive those committed to their charge to real physical pain in order to achieve maximal results. Some pain inflicted may produce great good and can be compatible with good intention. Nevertheless, Lewis rightly argues, whenever pain is inflicted it requires justification.⁶⁰ This is, in fact, a point Lewis is constantly making in his critical essays regarding ethical acts; that is, *all judgments imply a standard*.⁶¹ If a standard is self-referential it will often become utilitarian, that is, it

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* P. 138.

⁶¹ LEWIS, C. S. “De Futilitate” *Christian Reflections*, Walter Hooper, editor. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans. 1967. Pp. 65-66.

operates without an overarching rule or governing principle that applies to the one inflicting pain as well as the one who is injured. If a standard of judgment can be found that is objective and has universal application—that is a transcendent standard—how would one know he had arrived at a proper understanding of that which is fundamentally rooted in something outside of himself? The epistemological questions must always be addressed and we will see how Lewis addresses these later.

In his argument against vivisection Lewis continues, “If we find a man giving pleasure it is for us to prove (if we criticize him) that his action is wrong. But if we find a man inflicting pain it is for him to prove that his action is right. If he cannot he is a wicked man.”⁶² A bad act in itself may not be an evil act, *per se* unless it is a knowing evil. Lewis has already argued that inflicted pain is bad if it cannot be soundly justified. In the case where inflicting pain cannot be reasonably justified the person inflicting pain commits an evil act.

Fourth, Lewis explores what might be considered by some as a possible Christian support for vivisection. He argues, “Now vivisection can only be defended by showing it to be right that one species should suffer in order that another species should be happier.”⁶³ At this point a divide in the argument occurs and two strains of thought are considered. I will call them point 4a and point 4b.

Point 4a says that a Christian defender of vivisection may argue for the practice because animals have no souls.⁶⁴ Lewis believes this may well be the case; nevertheless, he considers it a matter of opinion. While opinions are not certainties they must be based on probability or they are reduced to mere prejudice. Therefore, opinions are subject to doubt, and reasonable people may differ on matters of opinion. Furthermore, a point is not established by an opinion. Probability is significant but without conclusive proof one must remain open to further considerations. Opinions keep one engaged in dialogue while searching for the truth of a matter, and must never be dismissive of an opponent. Lewis asserts that there are some things about the animals that simply remain a mystery to us; one of these is that we cannot assert with certainty whether or not animals have souls. Therefore, he argues that in the absence

⁶² LEWIS, “Vivisection” P. 138.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* P. 138.

of certainty we must exercise restraint when it comes to inflicting pain on animals.⁶⁵ Furthermore, if by the absence of a soul one means that animals have no moral responsibilities—that is they are not morally responsible for their acts—then they should not be punished for their behavior. If animals are not able to develop morally then they should not have to suffer in a process that leads to maturity and moral development. Nevertheless, Lewis asserts that, “animals cannot deserve pain, nor profit morally by the discipline of pain, nor be recompensed by happiness in another life for suffering in this.”⁶⁶ If anything, Lewis argues, the animals’ lack of moral responsibility must awaken in man the moral responsibility to protect and care for them.

When the argument diverges towards what I am calling point 4b then the Christian defender of vivisection is reduced to one line of reason: “That the superiority of man over beast is a real objective fact, guaranteed by revelation, and that the property of sacrificing beast to man is a logical consequence. We are ‘worth more than many sparrows’ (Matthew 10:31).”⁶⁷ But, Lewis notes, this position is more complex than it appears on the surface. The argument for vivisection which appeals to conformity with “a hierarchical order created by God” is precarious.⁶⁸ If hierarchy is used to justify the human act of inflicting pain upon animals then, argues Lewis, what counts against the angelic order inflicting pain on humans simply because of hierarchical privilege?⁶⁹ In fact superiority of hierarchal position may demand that those above protect those dependent upon them. Of course, again, much of this discussion is within the realm of opinion and must operate within those limits. Nevertheless, Lewis acknowledges that within the limits of opinion it might be probable to suggest that a Christian pathologist could find it necessary to vivisect and do so “with scrupulous care to avoid the least dram or scruple of unnecessary pain, in a trembling awe of the high mode in which human life must be lived if it is to justify the sacrifices made for it, then (whether we agree with him or not) we can respect his point of view.”⁷⁰ But Lewis acknowledges most vivisectors do not come from those who operate out of Christian assumptions about the universe

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* P. 139.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

and the created order. Most, he believes come from the realm operating from naturalism and Darwinian assumptions.⁷¹

Turning now to his fifth point, Lewis's gives a stern warning against the assumptions of naturalism and Darwinianism as a means to justify vivisection. He calls attention to this alarming fact: "The very same people who will most contemptuously brush aside any consideration of animal suffering if it stands in the way of "research" will also, on another context, most vehemently deny there is any radical difference between man and the other animals."⁷² In light of this Lewis makes the following inference, "We sacrifice other species to our own not because it has any objective metaphysical privileged over others, but simply because it is ours."⁷³ Lewis warns against this view on three counts. First, lacking in any objective standard it is nothing more than sentimentality. We have an emotional allegiance and loyalty to our race, our party, or our creed, is only valid if our race, party, or creed is in the right. If it is not such loyalty is unjustifiable. Second, lacking any objective standard Lewis notes this "sinister" feature of such a justification for vivisection: "If a mere sentiment justifies cruelty, why stop at a sentiment for the whole human race?"⁷⁴ Lewis notes that such an allowance as this—a position rooted in sentiment to one's particular party without doing the hard work of analysis as to whether or not our party's position is right, justifiable, and can stand up to scrutiny—can be used to justify the strong against the weak, the majority race against the minority, the ruling class or party against others, "superior men" against their "inferiors" and we might even add here, the living against the unborn. Third, Lewis goes so far as to say the reason we do not hear an outcry against the ethics of naturalism and Darwinianism is because he believes these assumptions have already won in our culture and they are held unthinkingly as to their validity or their applications.⁷⁵

Lewis concludes his essay with this prophetic warning: "The victory of vivisection marks a great advance in the triumph of ruthless, non-moral utilitarianism over the old world of ethical law; a triumph in which we, as well as animals, are already the victims, and of which Dachu and Hiroshima mark the more recent achievements. In justifying cruelty to animals we put ourselves also on the animal level. We chose

⁷¹ *Ibid.* P. 139.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* Pp. 139-40.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* Pp. 140-41.

the jungle and must abide by our choice.”⁷⁶ Lewis’s conclusion is a searing one, made like a prophet crying in the wilderness to a world grown deaf through its rationalized behaviors. Nevertheless, Lewis makes his points as if to say, “Let him who still has ears to hear, hear.”

This essay on Vivisection reveals Lewis, the logician making a robust and fair-minded argument on behalf of the animals. If, however, he believes there will be more battles to fight, then those who would seek to craft convincing arguments in the midst of fresh challenges might also benefit by a quick course in Lewisian epistemology which informs his homiletics. For the shaping and making of arguments that appeal to reality, as best it can be known, was very much a part of Lewis’s academic life as well as his public one.

Lewis as an Objectivist

Lewis was an objectivist and believed all convincing arguments must begin with an appeal to reality. When the appeal is false, reality is the corrective. Perhaps a story might clarify the point. During his later years at Oxford University, Lewis was the president of the debating society appropriately called the Oxford Socratic Club. The late Princeton University Professor Erik Routley, a student at Oxford at the time, recalls an evening where Lewis was confronted by one who was deeply affected by Positivist Philosophy. Lewis was asked, “Well, how can you prove anything? I mean, how can you prove there isn’t a blue cow sitting on that piano?” To which Lewis replied, “Well, in what sense *blue*?”⁷⁷ Nothing can be confirmed without objects to which one might refer (either a material object, or an object of thought contained within a definition and developed with inferential care and precision). I once came out of a stall in the men’s lavatory only to find a woman fixing her make up at the mirror. When she saw me she chided me for being in the women’s rest room. In response I simply pointed to objects in the room and uttered a single word, “Urinals”. She screamed and left the room. It was a debate simply won. Clarifying reality ended all discussion. Of course not all reality is as easily established as that, nevertheless, these examples do make clear what is necessary to argue any point well. Lewis believed that judgments have

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* P. 141.

⁷⁷ ROUTLEY, Erik, “A Prophet” C. S. *Lewis at the Breakfast Table*, James Como, editor. P. 35

no meaning without a standard; they must be tethered to: something transcendent; something defined; or some material object.

Lewis's Guidelines for Making Any Kind of Sound Argument

In *The Abolition of Man* Lewis argues that reality exists independent of those who have the capacity to know about it. He uses the word *Tao* as a kind of shorthand for what he calls, "The Doctrine of Objective Value, the belief that certain attitudes are really true, and others really false, to the kind of thing the universe is and the kind of things we are."⁷⁸ This is not a matter of whim or wishful thinking. All thought, feeling, and volition, ought to conform to reality. Lewis, unapologetically and narrowly asserts that the *Tao*, "is the sole source of all value judgments."⁷⁹ In words that echo his argument in *Vivisection*, he wrote "Only the Tao provides a common human law of action which can over-arch rulers and ruled alike. A dogmatic belief in objective value is necessary to the very idea of a rule which is not tyranny or an obedience which is not slavery."⁸⁰ In *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis asserts there is an objective universe which is inexorable. He suggests that it is incumbent upon men and women to adjust the scoliosis of their thinking, and their moral and emotional selves to this objective reality. Seldom do we understand our world exactly as it is, so we do well to benefit from the perspectives of others in dialectically safe community. This objective world, and the wide range of ways to express what can be known about that world, guides Lewis in making aesthetic judgments, moral judgments, literary critical judgments, as well as judgments concerning man's responsibility to nature and the animal world. With respect of this, Lewis seeks to reason in ways that are integrated and coherent. Furthermore, due to human limitation Lewis recognized some form of check and balance was necessary for human thought if one was to reason well.

Lewis's Epistemological Checks and Balances: Authority, Reason, and Experience

⁷⁸ Lewis, C. S. *The Abolition of Man* San Francisco: Harper Collins Edition, 2001. P. 18.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* P. 43.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, P. 73.

The finite as well as morally flawed condition evident in human thinking and experience will require some kind of device to minimize the hazards of thought and maximize attempts at better approximations to know and understand. Some kind of system of checks and balances on all levels of human thinking is necessary to get somewhere near success in the endeavor. Lewis certainly recognizes this, and his belief that truth is objective encourages him in the effort to find checks on his own thought processes. Drawing on the conventions of Classical and Scholastic thought Lewis found these checks in: Authority, Reason and Experience. He writes, "Authority, reason, experience; on these three, mixed in varying proportion all our knowledge depends".⁸¹ He sees this triad in use throughout history and employs it himself with confidence, encouraging his readers to do the same.

Authority

Regarding *Authority*, Lewis writes, "Believing things on authority only means believing them because you have been told them by someone you think trustworthy."⁸² He believes that ninety-nine percent of the facts with which our reason works come to us by means of some kind of authority,⁸³ and that "few of us have followed the reasoning on which even ten percent of the truths we believe are based."⁸⁴ Therefore, Lewis recognizes, "A man who jibbed at authority in other things as some people do

⁸¹ LEWIS, *Christian Reflections*, p. 41. The use of authority, reason and experience to confirm a matter occurs, not infrequently, in Lewis's work. His essay, *Why I Am Not a Pacifist*. *The Weight of Glory: and Other Addresses*. New York: Touchstone/Simon and Schuster. 1996. pp. 53-71 (Hereafter cited as LEWIS, *Weight of Glory*), is developed throughout on a practical application of authority, reason and experience. Lewis writes that affirmations in literary criticism come from history, i.e., authority; scholarship, i.e., reason; and experience. They are aids to "Enable the reader to enter more fully into the author's intentions." LEWIS, C. S., 1969. *The Anthropological Approach*. *Selected Literary Essays*. Walter Hooper, ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 307. (Hereafter cited as LEWIS, *Selected Literary Essays*) In *The Discarded Image*, he writes, "In the Middle Ages, there are three kinds of proof: from Reason, from Authority, and from Experience. We establish a geometrical truth by reason; an historical truth, by authority, by *auctours*. We learn by experience that oysters do or do not agree with us." p. 189. In the portion of *The Discarded Image* on "The Seven Liberal Arts," specifically the section on *Dialectic*, Lewis clarifies that *Dialectic* in the Medieval sense of the word has nothing to do with "The modern Marxist sense...Hegelian in origin." p. 189. Lewis clarifies that the *Dialectic* he speaks of "is concerned with proving," and sets forth three kinds of proof: reason, authority and experience. p. 189. Certainly one of the most well known applications of this triad by Lewis grows out of his development of the *aut Deus aut malus homo* argument for the Deity of Christ. LEWIS, *God in the Dock*. p. 101. In *Mere Christianity*, Lewis supports the argument with authority, reason and experience. First, Jesus claimed to be God (authority); second, his life and teaching appeared to confirm it (experience); third, it appears that he couldn't be mad or evil (reason). p. 42.

⁸² LEWIS, *Mere Christianity*. Book II. 5, p. 49.

⁸³ "Of every hundred facts upon which to reason, ninety-nine depend on authority." LEWIS, *The Weight of Glory*, p. 54. He also writes, "Ninety-nine percent of the things you believe are believed on authority. I believe there is such a place as New York. I have not seen it myself. I could not prove it by abstract reasoning that there must be such a place. I believe it because reliable people have told me so. The ordinary man believes in the Solar System, atoms, evolution, and the circulation of the blood on authority—because the scientists say so. Every historical statement in the world is believed on authority. None of us has seen the Norman Conquest or the defeat of the Spanish Armada. None of us could prove them by pure logic as you prove a thing in mathematics. We believe them simply because people who did see them have left writings that tell us about them: in fact, on authority." LEWIS, *Mere Christianity*. Book II. 5, p. 49.

⁸⁴ LEWIS, *The Weight of Glory*, p. 55.

in religion would have to be content to know nothing all his life.”⁸⁵ Ultimately, Lewis believes that Authority is vested in the God who reveals Himself and his purposes. In this regard Lewis believes that the Christian faith is an objective faith for it accounts for a revealed and objective world. Furthermore, if creatures are ever to know their creator, the initiative⁸⁶ can never rest on the side of the creature. The creator will have to reveal Himself (or creaturely knowledge of Him will be impossible), and these revelations will have authoritative value. Lewis believes that God reveals Himself several ways: generally in Nature and in the Laws of Nature,⁸⁷ in human conscience and the Moral Law,⁸⁸ and also in other human beings.⁸⁹ Natural revelation also presents itself for human speculation in what can be known about creatures other than man; that is in the animals something of the creativity and purpose of God can be studied. Furthermore, God reveals Himself specifically in several ways also: the Word of God Incarnate; in the Word of God written; and, in some ways, through individual inspiration.⁹⁰

Even though Lewis believes that God has revealed Himself in many ways, he also believes it is possible for the revelation of God to be abused. Anyone can attach the words “Thus saith the Lord” to his own opinions, invoking divine authority to sustain his own views and produce a kind of tyranny.⁹¹ This cannot be held as an objection against authority *per se*, but only to the misuse of authority. Lewis often quoted the maxim from Plato’s Laws, “An abuse does not nullify a proper use.” Abuse occurs when Divine authority is used to buttress the opinions of manipulators and power mongers. Thus, though authority is of vital importance in knowing, to be of value it must be checked by reason and experience.

Reason

⁸⁵ LEWIS, *Mere Christianity*. Book II. 5, pp. 49-50.

⁸⁶ LEWIS, *Surprised By Joy*, p. 227.

⁸⁷ LEWIS, *Christian Reflections*, pp. 78-81.

⁸⁸ LEWIS, *Mere Christianity*. Book I. 4-5, pp. 19-25.

⁸⁹ LEWIS, *The Weight of Glory*, p. 40. Lewis writes, “Next to the Blessed Sacrament itself, your neighbour is the holiest object presented to your senses. If he is your Christian Neighbour, he is holy in almost the same way, for in him also Christ *vere latitat*—the glorifier and the glorified, Glory Himself, is truly hidden.”

⁹⁰ Of Bunyan’s particular genius Lewis observes, “‘It came’. I doubt if we shall ever know more of the process called ‘inspiration’ than those two monosyllables tell us.” LEWIS, *Selected Literary Essays*, p. 147.

⁹¹ Lewis writes, “On those who add ‘Thus saith the Lord’ to their merely human utterances descends the doom of conscience that seems clearer the more it is loaded with sin. All this comes from pretending that God has spoken when He has not”. Meditations on the Third Commandment. LEWIS, *God in the Dock*, p. 198. Lewis also recognizes, “Even for adults, it is ‘sweet, sweet, sweet poison’ to feel able to imply ‘Thus saith the Lord’ at the end of every expression of our pet aversions.” LEWIS, *Christian Reflections*, p. 31. He adds, “The danger of mistaking our merely natural, though perhaps legitimate enthusiasms for holy zeal, is always great”. LEWIS, *God in the Dock*, p. 198. It is a kind of borderline blasphemy. I say borderline because when this is done, I hardly believe that it is done as an act of intentional blasphemy. Nonetheless, it is done all too often, and has its own kind of negative consequence in both the doer and the one done by.

Lewis recognizes that “all possible knowledge...depends on the validity of reasoning.”⁹² He thinks that there is a rationality existing in the universe from which all human rationality is derived; it is objective, not merely a consequence of projecting onto the universe what is not there intrinsically.⁹³ For Lewis, *Reason* involves three aspects: 1) the reception of facts; 2) the perception of self-evident truths and axioms; and 3) “the art or skill of arranging the facts so as to yield a series of such intuitions which linked together produce a proof of the truth or falsehood of the proposition we are considering.”⁹⁴ This last aim is a rhetorical one, for it employs invention and arranges the argument for persuasive ends. Furthermore, Lewis believes, for instance, that “primary moral principles on which all others depend are rationally perceived.”⁹⁵ “We ‘just see’ that there is no reason why my neighbour’s happiness should be sacrificed to my own, as we ‘just see’ that things which are equal to the same thing are equal to one another.” Lewis adds, “If we cannot prove either axiom, that is not because they are irrational but because they are self-evident and all proofs depend on them. Their intrinsic reasonableness shines by its own light.”⁹⁶ This leads him to conclude, “It is because all morality is based on such self-evident principles that we say to a man, when we would recall him to right conduct, ‘be reasonable’.”⁹⁷ He believes that wrong conduct has something in it that is unreasonable. Therefore, it is a precursor to that form of subjectivism which is untethered from objective reality.

Lest he be misunderstood, it must also be noted that, for Lewis, moral failure is not synonymous with utter moral blindness or rational lapse, as he explains:

As regards the Fall, I submit that the general tenor of scripture does not encourage us to believe that our knowledge of the Law has been depraved in the same degree as our power to fulfill it. ...our perceptions of right...may, no doubt, be impaired; but there is a difference between imperfect sight and blindness. A theology which goes about to represent our practical reason as radically unsound is headed for disaster.⁹⁸

⁹² LEWIS, *Miracles*, p. 19. Lewis also writes, “We may state it as a rule that *no thought is valid if it can be fully explained as the result of irrational causes.*” *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

⁹³ “Unless all that we take to be knowledge is an illusion, we must hold that in thinking we are not reading rationality into an irrational universe, but responding to a rationality with which the universe has always been saturated.” LEWIS, *Christian Reflections*, p. 65.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

⁹⁵ LEWIS, *Miracles*, p. 35.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ LEWIS, *Christian Reflections*, p. 79.

If we are utterly blind, morally, we can never be judged for our moral lapses. The blind man must be treated with sympathy when he stumbles, not with contempt. He cannot help himself. However, if one can judge the moral failures he observes in others, he is not in the same condition as the blind man. Our own failures are without excuse, especially when we find ourselves doing the very thing we have condemned in others. Of course, it may be that our judgments against others are not as refined as we first suppose. If we can be blind to our own lapses and misunderstand how morally short-sighted we are, then it is possible that we might misjudge the actions and intentions of others as well. We might condemn a relatively innocent behavior simply because we misunderstand it or find ourselves inconvenienced by it. If this can be the case, then we will have to admit the possibility that cosmic activity can also be misunderstood and misjudged.

Lewis observes, “Unless we allow ultimate reality to be moral we cannot morally condemn it.”⁹⁹ He understands that “our very condemnation of reality carries in its heart an unconscious act of allegiance to that same reality as the source of our moral standards.”¹⁰⁰ Consequently, “The pell-mell of phenomena, as we first observe them, seems to be full of anomalies and irregularities; but being assured that reality is logical we go on framing and trying out hypotheses to show the apparent irregularities are not really irregular at all.”¹⁰¹ Lewis writes, “The process whereby, having admitted that reality in the last resort must be moral, we attempt to explain evil, is the history of theology.”¹⁰² Reason, despite its deficiencies in its work with available and ever expanding data, allows for approximate answers to the problem of evil (whether it be evil of man against man, or man against animals), and should constantly be used for better and better approximations. Reason, as helpful as it is, cannot give a final word on any matter because of the limitations under which it operates. There are too many variables. Good attempts at dealing with the issues of evil generally, and animal suffering specifically, may be judged by their scope and the degree to which they account for the complexities involved. It is enough for some critics to see evidence in the problem of evil and suffering to conclude that God (at least the Christian God) cannot exist. One wonders if the complexities of knowledge, generally, and the issues relating to the limits of reason, justify such a

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 70-71.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 71.

definitive position on the matter. Furthermore, one wonders if the numbers of problems created by denying the existence of God, as well as the problems that occur in attempts to try and explain the phenomena of evil and suffering without a belief in God, can be surmounted. It would appear that the most substantial work done on this matter (with the most reasonable approaches) has been done by those who take the existence of God as valid, and the many problems of evil, including the matter of animal suffering, as matters which must be tackled. Lewis is among those who believe that reason is necessary for working through issues essential to these problems, but reason cannot properly function in isolation from authority and experience.

Experience

Lewis believes that experience, despite all of its benefits, should not be trusted on its own. It needs the checks of authority and reason. Hume argues, “The *ultimate* standard by which we determine *all* disputes...is *always* derived from experience and observation [italics mine].”¹⁰³ Lewis takes issue with this kind of thought. He writes, “We never start from a *tabula rasa*: if we did, we should end, ethically speaking, with a *tabula rasa*.”¹⁰⁴ The *tabula rasa*, like a movie screen, cannot retain any of the images projected on it unless it has some power to retain those images. It can never make sense of the images retained unless it has some capacity to sort, classify, compare, and contrast those images. The power to retain and to sort must be a power that precedes the experience itself. Thus, to make any sense of experience *a posteriori*, there must exist something *a priori*. As William James observes, “Without selective interest, experience is an utter chaos.”¹⁰⁵ Experience must operate with the checks and balances of reason and authority, or it seems destined to fall into various forms of subjectivism or skepticism.

¹⁰³ HUME, David. *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. Sec. X. Of Miracles. Part I. p. 490

¹⁰⁴ LEWIS, *Christian Reflections*, p. 53.

¹⁰⁵ *Psychology*. William James. XI. Mark Twain writes, “We should be careful to get out of an experience only the wisdom that is in it—and stop there; lest we be like the cat that sits down on a hot stove-lid. She will never sit on a hot stove-lid again—and that is well; but also she will never sit down on a cold one anymore.” *Pudd'nhead Wilson's New Calendar*. XI. Lewis writes, “consciousness is, from the outset, selective, and ceases when selection ceases...not to attend to one part of our experience at the expense of the rest, is to be asleep.” LEWIS, *Preface to Paradise Lost*, p. 136.

Lewis writes, "The senses are not infallible."¹⁰⁶ While he sees the risks of emphasizing experience over reason and authority, he also recognizes the value of experience as part of a whole epistemological operation. In his autobiography, Lewis notes the valuable part that experience played in his own thinking. "What I like about experience is that it is such an honest thing." Then he adds, "You may take any number of wrong turnings; but keep your eyes open and you will not be allowed to go very far before warning signs appear. You may have deceived yourself, but experience is not trying to deceive you. The universe rings true wherever you fairly test it."¹⁰⁷ The fair test, for Lewis, includes the checks and balances of authority, reason, and experience. In his attempts to resolve the problems of objectivity, Lewis, whether successful or not, sought to respect this balance. Those who seek to advocate on behalf of the animals in the face of every fresh challenge would do well to benefit from Lewis's approach.

The fundamental soundness of Lewis' epistemology can be tested and applied not scientifically but by virtue of its internal coherence and reasonableness. His system holds water. The potential for leaks can be plugged by virtue of its checks and balances and its capacity to eliminate self referentialism. Why is this important in the manner of considering man's responsibility to the animals, nature, the environment, the unborn, matters of social justice, the education of children, and so forth? Because if one's arguments fail at the point of objectivity they lose the power to convince. This does not mean all arguments classified as truly objective will convince. Other variables may be at play in the hearts and minds of one's hearers. Nevertheless, if an argument hopes to persuade and maintain the capacity to remain convincing it must be rooted in objective reality. This approach of Lewis's then must be of significant interest to all who would persuade others of man's responsibility for animals.

One potential objection to Lewis's approach must also be considered due to a present contempt for objectivity that is grossly misinformed. Some wrongly suppose that all interest in objective thought is associated with the Enlightenment rationalism used to support Western conquest, colonialism, and even vivisection. Lewis's source for objectivity was older, more robust than anything suggested by the Enlightenment. His sources are Classical, Scholastic, Eastern and Western. Lewis was deliberate to use the word *Tao* to describe objective value. He wanted an Eastern word. The Appendix of *The Abolition of*

¹⁰⁶ LEWIS, *God in the Dock*, p. 25. He says further, "Experience by itself proves nothing." *Ibid.*, pp. 25-26. And, "Experience proves this, or that, according to the preconceptions we bring to it." *Ibid.*, p. 26.

¹⁰⁷ LEWIS, *Surprised By Joy*, p. 177.

Man is full of sources both Eastern and Western to illustrate that Lewis's thought on the matter of objectivity has a life that transcends anything suggested by the Enlightenment.

Conclusion

Lewis was persuasive when it came to advocacy on behalf of human responsibility for the animals. Where his arguments are strong they reflect a mind skilled in argument and persuasion. Furthermore, he wrote significantly about reality and the description of things as they are rather than how we might long for those things to be. He also wrote with a relative interpersonal security that did not become defensive when bested in an argument. He stayed engaged and grew stronger in his understanding of various matters as well as in his rhetorical skill. This material is also useful for all who would engage in crafting fresh arguments whenever new challenges arise; much can be learned from Lewis by contagion as well as by instruction. Nevertheless, in this article it was discovered that Lewis's writing about animals is uneven. Some places he seems to be more concerned with emotional features surrounding the question and at other times his reason appears to be scintillating and very convincing given the precision of his reason and his capacity for rhetorical clarity. The principles that guide his thinking reveal a man well trained in classical and scholastic logic. Nevertheless, though there are rules to reason as there are rules to the game of chess, knowing the rules is no guarantee a contestant will win every time he or she sits down to play the game. So too, the best of thinkers, whose knowledge of the game of reason and rhetoric is well honed and disciplined may at times reason poorly. This is not stated as a critique merely a reminder lest we too should begin to think we will reason flawlessly every time we sit down to consider seriously some matter put before us. Issues may be at play in each of us that can blind us to deep seated inclinations that feed our assumptions and predispose us to see only what we want to see. Philosopher John Locke once observed, "Whatsoever credit or authority we give to any proposition more than it receives from the principles and proofs it supports itself on, is owing to our inclination that way."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ KER, Ian and Alan Hill, editors. *Newman after a Hundred Years*. John Locke quoted by Basil Mitchell in "Newman as Philosopher" Oxford: Clarendon, 1990. P. 223.

Something can be said about Lewis, helpful for all who wrestle seriously with the matter of animals, he kept working on deepening his grasp of this theme he considered so important. The matter of the mystery of animals, the matter of sharing life with them on this planet, the matter of animal pain, and human responsibility for the animals are all topics that call for serious attention; certainly Lewis thought so. Some of his earliest work in Christian apologetics concerned itself with the matter and some of his last letters are still addressing the topic. This is a subject of great importance and the time given to wrestling with each feature of it is well worth the investment. Consistent with a major theme running through all of his writing, "Reality is Iconoclastic" Lewis acknowledges that no last word on any matter is likely to be discovered, nevertheless, sure words are accessible. Working from the known, Lewis is always willing to employ both reason and the imagination to push the envelope of understanding further and further along into the regions of the yet unknown but hopefully accessible. Whatever one may think of his conclusions Lewis, as a scholar of his stature, must be taken seriously. Perhaps the most convincing feature of all he wrote about animals was his willingness to stay with the topic. In this regard he is an ally to all who feel the moral responsibility to concern themselves with the welfare of the animals and to engage in rhetoric for their defense and care.