ABSTRACT

All Creation Groans: A Theodicy for Suffering Animals

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Philosophers and theologians have long tried to reconcile belief in a perfect God with the fact of widespread, horrific, and seemingly pointless suffering. However, relatively little thought has been given to animal suffering, which, though perhaps less significant than human suffering, nevertheless raises serious questions about God's goodness. Many of the reasons given for why God allows human suffering do not seem to apply to animals. Their suffering (in this life at least) does not teach them any profound lessons, facilitate moral development, or draw them closer to God. Indeed, the thought that God is responsible for the world and all its miseries—that he made a world full of natural disasters, famine, diseases, and predation, that he seems utterly indifferent to the suffering of innocent animals—tends to provoke a sense of moral protest.

This dissertation will develop and attempt to answer two arguments against God, each based on moral outrage at animal suffering. I will discuss some of the commonly-given reasons why God would create a harsh world like ours, rather than a more idyllic one and why God allows particularly horrific evils that do not seem to serve any good purpose. While some of these insights help calm my moral outrage somewhat, I will argue that they

are unsuccessful by themselves. Thus, I conclude that if God is loving and if God is worthy of faith and worship, then there is good reason to think that God will redeem animal suffering in heaven.

All Creation Groans: A Theodicy for Suffering Animals

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DEDICATION

To my wife, Angela, my daughter, Amelia, my puggle, Sophie, and my animal friends who have passed on: Woodrow, Ellen Louise, Ace, Jasmine, Nanners, Morgan, George, and all the rest

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The Problem Stated

I am worried about the problem of animal suffering.[1] The fact of predation, the misery that results from natural disasters and diseases, genetic defects, and human cruelty are profoundly troubling to me—partly because I sympathize strongly with humans and animals, but primarily because the presence of suffering is an affront to how, in my mind, things *ought* to be. Naturally, I am less worried about the suffering of animals than that of humans. Like most people, I take it for granted that humans have a much greater capacity for suffering. We appear to be more sensitive to pain than the lower animals and are subject to emotional and mental suffering that far exceeds the capacities of other creatures. So, while the present project is concerned with animal suffering, it is not because I think that animal suffering is *worse* than human suffering, or even morally equivalent to human suffering.

In another sense, though, I am more worried about animal suffering than human suffering. Philosophers and theologians have been thinking carefully about the problem of evil for millennia, and many of their insights have helped show how the existence of God, who is supposed to be omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly loving, might be compatible

[1] For brevity I will use *animals* to refer to nonhuman animals. Also, I will talk about the problem of suffering, rather than the problem of evil, since evil has moral, and often spiritual, connotations. Thus, some might deny that natural disasters are not evil, because they have no malevolent intentions. However, the fact that earthquakes and forest fires occur in our world and often cause immense suffering is a real problem, whether or not one wants to call them evil. In the present discussion I will generally talk about suffering, though for variety I may use the terms *evil* or *evils*, by which I simply mean *intense suffering* and *events that involve intense suffering*, respectively.

with widespread and horrific human pain.[2] Suffering, it is often claimed, is either the result of the misuse of free will or it results from orderly natural laws, and in either case, since free will and natural order are both very good, the suffering that can result from them are justified. Suffering can also make us better people: Times of hardship and testing can teach us what really matters and encourage us to leave trivial pleasures and comforts behind and strain toward the Good. Suffering might also show us how fragile and contingent we are and can often reveal our dependence upon God. And ultimately, some have suggested, while injustice does prevail right now, God will eventually settle things, and those who have united themselves with God will enjoy eternal happiness in heaven.

The extent to which these claims can account for suffering is debatable, though it is important to note that many of these answers, even if true, are not obviously applicable to animals. Animals are commonly assumed not to have free will, and the history of life on earth contains great suffering that precedes the appearance of moral agents. In fact, many animals *must* kill other animals, or else they will starve to death; so, in the case of predation, at least, pain and suffering cannot be explained in terms of a misuse of free will or a fluke result of the laws of nature. Only humans are known to have any sense of right and wrong, and if animals are not moral agents, then they cannot become morally *better* through suffering. Supposing that they have no awareness of God, they cannot draw close to God and call upon him for comfort in times of trouble. While a few classical theists have granted that animals may be in heaven, only a few have boldly asserted it. It is more common to deny that animals can enjoy an afterlife, on the grounds that they lack something unique to humans—an immortal soul, personhood, a capacity for loving

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[2] Throughout this project, I will use *God* to refer to the God of classical theism, a being that is omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly good, and who created the universe.

relationship with God, or saving faith in Christ—that is a prerequisite for heaven. Thus, even if one can give reasons why God would allow immense human suffering, it would be premature to assume that such reasons can adequately address the problem of animal suffering. Given the extreme pain that animals have endured throughout history, there is a great deal of misery that begs for an explanation.

Although it is certainly possible to approach the problem of suffering from a generally neutral position, I suspect that most philosophers who seriously consider and write about it will identify either with those non-theists who are convinced by arguments from evil, or they will identify with those who believe in God but recognize that the problem of suffering is serious and demands response. I am part of the latter group; I am inclined to believe in God, for various reasons, though suffering is for me the greatest obstacle for belief. At times the thought that the world is the handiwork of an omnipotent and loving God seems outrageous, even repulsive. It is this aspect of the problem of evil that will be the focus of the current project.

The way that suffering confronts an individual and produces deep concern—causing one to worry whether life can have meaning, whether there could be a God who created the world and if so, whether he should be praised or denounced for doing so—is known as the *existential problem of evil*. In what follows, I want to address a species of the existential problem of evil, which can be stated in its simplest form like this: *There is morally outrageous suffering in the world, and I cannot believe in—much less love, worship, and trust—a God who could allow or deliberately cause morally outrageous suffering. Consequently, I must reject God altogether.* My goal throughout this project will be to calm this moral outrage enough to leave room for faith in God.

Overview

My approach in what follows is the result of my personal interests in the existential problem of evil, the relative lack of attention it has received from philosophers, and what has been the clearest and most helpful way for me to think about suffering. In this section I will describe each chapter in turn, though a very quick overview may be helpful here. In the second chapter I will give a rough outline of the various ways of thinking about God and suffering and clarify my own approach to the problem of evil. In the third chapter I will consider various forms of skepticism about the capacity of nonhuman animals to suffer. I will argue that there is good reason to believe that some nonhuman animals can, and often do, experience extreme pain and emotional trauma. The fourth and fifth chapters consider the general pattern of animal suffering in the actual world, what Peter van Inwagen has called the "global problem of evil." The sixth chapter considers instances of suffering that are horrendous and strike us as utterly pointless. In the seventh chapter I will give philosophical and biblical reasons to suppose that animal suffering will be redeemed in heaven.

Approaches to the Problem of Evil

The second chapter will consider various ways to think about the problem of suffering, and I will describe in more detail the approach taken in this dissertation. I will begin by exploring the distinction between moral and natural evils. Moral evils include instances of suffering brought about by moral agents acting in immoral and blameworthy ways, as well as the effects of vicious character traits like lust, cruelty, greed, and pride. Natural evils, meanwhile, include instances of suffering for which no agent is morally

responsible.[3] Whereas moral evils can be blamed on agents other than God, natural evils cannot be accounted for so easily. The problem of natural evils is especially difficult when thinking about animal suffering, for the great majority of animals who have suffered had no contact with humans. Ultimately, while I do not want to neglect the horrors of human cruelty toward animals, I will focus primarily on animal suffering and natural evil, assuming that whatever can be said for God's allowing humans to torture each other can be said for human cruelty toward animals.

Next, I will distinguish the existential argument from evil (also known as the existential problem of evil) from the logical and evidential arguments. According to the logical argument, evil is metaphysically incompatible with the God of classical theism, who is supposed to be omnipotent, omniscient, and morally perfect. In simplest terms, the logical argument from evil says, "Evil exists; therefore, God does not." The evidential argument from evil, meanwhile, claims that suffering counts as strong evidence against theism; thus, given the suffering in the world, God probably does not exist, and belief in God is unjustified. Finally, as described earlier, the existential problem of evil focuses the individual's reaction to suffering and one's attempt to find meaning in, and justification for, suffering.

Because most of the contemporary discussion has been about evidential arguments from evil, the second chapter will give them special attention. Some evidential arguments point to "inscrutable evils," instances of suffering that are especially horrible and do not appear to serve any greater purpose. God may have good reasons to allow some suffering, even intense suffering, but for each inscrutable evil it seems that God could have prevented

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[3]For more on the moral/natural distinction, see Richard Swinburne, "Natural Evil," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 1978, 295–301.

the event without enabling an even greater evil or sacrificing some overwhelmingly valuable good. Other evidential arguments consider the overall pattern of suffering in the actual world and conclude that it is much more likely that our world was not created by an omnipotent, omniscient, and morally perfect being. Put another way, according to these arguments, the actual world is much, much worse than we would expect if we were to imagine a world created by a great and loving God; however, it is just the sort of world that would develop from amoral, intentionless natural laws.

One way to respond to the evidential arguments from evil would be to give reasons why God might allow this or that horrific evil, or some explanation of how God could create a world that has so much suffering in it. However, it is more common among theistic philosophers to question the evidential force of suffering against theism. According to these so-called skeptical theists, the mere fact that an evil is inscrutable does not imply that the event is gratuitous, or even probably gratuitous. Thus, God may be justified in allowing certain horrors even if we cannot imagine how. After all, they continue, God's understanding of the event in question—its causes, its short- and long-term consequences, and the goods and evils involved—far surpasses our own.

Skeptical theists employ a similar strategy against the argument that the overall pattern of suffering renders theism improbable. For, although we can easily imagine a world with much less suffering, it is not obvious that such a world is really better than the actual world. It could be, for instance, that such a world is only possible if God regularly intervened to keep everyone happy, thus introducing the great defect of massive irregularity and perhaps robbing the creatures in that world of genuine and significant free will. In short, according to the skeptical theist, to argue that God should have made a much better

world than the one we have, one must make a series of questionable claims about what is feasible for God, given a multitude of goods and evils that must be optimally balanced.

Despite some objections, skeptical theists have provided valuable insights that will be incorporated throughout this project. However, my primary interest is the existential problem of evil, and I will argue that skeptical theism cannot overcome this problem by itself. It is not enough simply to say that God *may* be justified in allowing horrific evils, or that, for all we know, this world is the best God could do. To be sure, we should always keep in mind that an omniscient being's perspective may be drastically different from our own, and that such a being may have appropriate reasons for doing or allowing things that might horrify us. Even so, if God is truly loving and good, and if we are to praise and love God for his goodness, then we must overcome not only evidential arguments against theism, but also our private concerns about God's actions. We must, in short, have some satisfying way of thinking about suffering, some way of reconciling in our own minds the fact of pain and misery with a God of perfect love.

Whether Animals Suffer

One potential response to the problem of animal suffering is to deny that animals are the types of things that can suffer in a morally significant way. René Descartes is infamous for claiming that since animals lack souls, they cannot have conscious experiences, and thus they merely act as if they are in pain (though, to be fair, it is unclear whether Descartes actually espoused something so extreme). His followers were even more infamous for animal vivisection, and until recently many veterinarians performed surgeries without anesthesia under the assumption that animals cannot suffer. Today, scientists and philosophers who are skeptical about the conscious abilities of nonhuman

animals are often known as *neo-Cartesians*, though their reasons typically have little in common with Descartes'.[4] Instead, neo-Cartesians often appeal to significant differences between human brains and animal brains, or to important differences between human and animal cognitive abilities. In addition, neo-Cartesians often raise doubts about supposed similarities between humans and animals, frequently reinterpreting experiments that purport to show high-level animal cognition or highlighting other experiments that appear to show serious cognitive deficiencies among animals.

Neo-Cartesianism is a species of skepticism, and as such it is extremely difficult to disprove, at least to the skeptic's satisfaction. For this reason I will appeal to the best antidote for skepticism: common sense. Perhaps animal suffering is less apparent than the existence of a mind-independent material world, but I will take it as obvious that when, for example, a rabbit is consumed by fire, or when a cat is tortured, it experiences genuine, excruciating pain. Further, while what is "obvious" may in fact be false, we are justified in believing in the obvious unless and until we are given compelling reasons to think otherwise. With this in mind, I will consider some of the empirical evidence about animal consciousness, especially evidence about pain and suffering. While the data are inconclusive and have their detractors, the weight of the available evidence suggests that at least *some* nonhuman species feel pain and emotional trauma—namely mammals, and to a lesser extent, the corvid family of birds. Next, I will consider several arguments that imply varying degrees of skepticism about animal suffering. I will provide grounds for doubt about many of these positions, but ultimately I will argue that none of them is nearly

[4] It is important to note that neo-Cartesianism is not a single position, but a family of positions related by their skepticism about the conscious experience of nonhuman animals.

as plausible as the claim that animals suffer. Consequently, for the rest of the project I will assume that animals frequently suffer in morally significant ways.

The Global Problem: Death, Pain, and Emotional Trauma

With the preliminary work done, I will begin to consider the existential problem of animal suffering in more detail. Chapters Four and Five pertain to the overall pattern, amounts, and distribution of suffering—commonly referred to as the global problem of evil. As an argument from moral outrage, the global problem may be stated as follows:

g1. The overall pattern of animal suffering in the actual world is morally outrageous to me.

g2. I am convinced that my moral outrage is rational and properly directed (at least in part) at God.

g3. If (g1) and (g2), then I cannot believe in God, let alone love, trust, and worship God.

g4. Therefore, I cannot believe in God, let alone love, trust, and worship God.

The fourth chapter will focus on the general problems of death, pain, and emotional trauma. To begin, I will consider whether mortality itself—the fact that all earthly organisms will eventually die—poses an existential problem. I will give two reasons to think that death is not morally outrageous. First, it is not clear that death is always bad for the dying creature. It may be, for instance, that death is neither good nor bad for a creature; alternatively, there are many cases in which death may actually benefit an individual. Second, to be morally outraged about death, one must be convinced that death *ought* never to occur and, by implication, that life *ought* to be everlasting. However, while immortality may seem preferable to mortality, even for animals, it is not obviously so. There are many goods in the world—stories and songs, for instance—that are good, despite being temporary; perhaps life is similar, good in part *because* it comes to an end.

Although death itself may not pose an existential problem, the reality of overwhelming pain certainly does. I will address two attempts to justify animal pain and argue that both are unsuccessful. The first attempt accepts that animals are capable of painful sensations, but denies that they can truly suffer in a significant way. While I will grant that suffering is quite limited for animals (compared to what a human would experience in similar circumstances), I will argue that this fact alone is insufficient. The second attempt to justify pain claims that pain is biologically necessary for sentient, autonomous animals. According to this argument, autonomy is a great good that outweighs the pain that allows for it. However, while I agree that pain is biologically and psychologically necessary for animals that actually exist, it seems quite possible for God to make creatures (quite different from the sorts of animals who actually exist) who are truly autonomous and yet do not need pain to thrive. Therefore, I will argue, the biological and psychological utility of pain is not enough to justify it.

At the end of the fourth chapter, I will focus on the reality of extreme emotional trauma. The same line of reasoning about physical pain can be applied to this case as well: One can deny that animals are capable of suffering any significant emotional trauma, or one can attempt to justify it by arguing that emotional distress is necessary for an autonomous creature living in a world like ours. As before, I will argue that these attempts are unsuccessful.

The Global Problem: Evaluating the World.

Even if the considerations in the fourth chapter show that the problem is not nearly as widespread and terrible as one might suppose, there is still a great deal of suffering that demands explanation. Likewise, even if pain, emotional trauma, and death can be useful,

it is still unclear why a loving and omnipotent God would create the sort of world where such things are necessary. After all, a utopian world—with the beauty and diversity of the actual world, but without all the pain and violence—seems to be well within an omnipotent being's ability to create, and even if God has good reason to create a world with *some* suffering, we might still wonder whether this world is the best God could do. Chapter Five will be devoted to these problems.

I will begin by developing an argument from moral outrage. I will describe in brief detail some of the most disturbing features of the natural order and then give reasons to think that the moral protest aroused by animal suffering is well-placed. Next, I will discuss some common attempts to justify the general pattern of suffering. Some theists argue that there are many important goods that likely would not obtain without regular natural laws and the potential for harm and suffering. Such goods include the intrinsic beauty and goodness in the universe; many goods of life, including sensations, emotions, and desires; and the great good of free will, which allows for morally significant choices and the opportunity for "soul-making." I agree that such goods outweigh the overall evil in the world and that our world is on-balance a very good one; even so, since animals do not benefit from these goods in the proper way, I do not think these goods fully justify the pattern of animal suffering.

At the end of Chapter Five, I will consider two theodicies that shift the blame for suffering from God to created moral agents. On one account, natural evils are a consequence of the Fall, the initial sin of Adam and Eve as described in Genesis 3. Unfortunately, there are several compelling reasons to doubt the historical accuracy of Genesis 3, and (I will argue) even if the Fall were an historical event, it would not fully

address the outrageousness of animal suffering. The second theodicy blames the pattern of suffering on the influence of evil spiritual beings who are at war with God. I will argue that the warfare theodicy is consistent with Christian scripture and tradition and thus should not be rejected out of hand. Nevertheless, I will once again argue that this theodicy is insufficient.

The Local Problem of Animal Suffering

The sixth chapter will shift focus from the general pattern of animal suffering to individual evils. As an argument from moral outrage, the problem can be stated as follows.

p1. There are instances of animal suffering that are morally outrageous to me.

p2. I am convinced that my moral outrage is rational and properly directed (at least in part) at God.

p3. If (p1) and (p2), then I cannot believe in God, let alone love, trust and worship God.

p4. Therefore, I cannot believe in God, let alone love, trust and worship God.

Chapter Six will focus on the second premise. As I will explain in detail, my moral outrage is based on a complex set of *prima facie* moral judgments about suffering. For one thing, I am troubled by the apparent wastefulness of suffering. A morally perfect God, it seems, would not allow intense suffering without a good reason, and yet the world is full of evils that do not appear add anything good to the world. As far as we can tell, they are pointless. Furthermore, even if we grant that God has good reasons to allow *some* horrific suffering, it still seems as if God could eliminate a great deal suffering without losing any significant goods. Since these judgments are shared by those who pose evidential arguments from evil, I will consider two responses commonly given in the debate. One response questions whether any evils are actually gratuitous. Perhaps, some argue, God

has reasons that our narrow perspective and limited understanding cannot recognize. Another response grants that many evils may be genuinely gratuitous, but argues that God may be justified in allowing them anyway. I will briefly mention some of the objections to both approaches, though in the end I think they raise serious doubts about whether the amount and seeming pointlessness of evil are worthy of moral outrage.

For the second half of Chapter Six I will discuss a different source of moral outrage, which is much more difficult to dismiss: God's seeming indifference toward individual creatures. Following Ivan Karamazov's infamous rebellion, I will argue that universal harmony and the general goods typically mentioned—free will, soul-building, and so on—do not by themselves justify allowing a creature to lead an overwhelmingly bad life. If God truly loves a creature, then he must genuinely desire and promote its flourishing. And while he may be justified in allowing it to have a less-than-optimal existence, there is a minimum quality of life that would make its life worthwhile to it. As I will argue, a loving God must ensure that each creature's existence is a great good to it; in other words, a loving God would not knowingly and willingly produce a creature who is sure to languish profoundly (through no fault of its own) throughout its existence. Unfortunately, however, there are countless creatures who suffer in life-ruining ways, and yet God does nothing in this life to comfort them or redeem their suffering. Thus, I will conclude, the goods of this world are insufficient to solve the problem of animal suffering.

Heaven

Until the final chapter, my ambitions will be rather modest. Rather than arguing that the pattern of suffering is not morally outrageous, I will argue only that things might be better than we think and that we can imagine several reasons why God might create a

world like ours, rather than some more ideal world. Similarly, I will not argue that God has good reasons to allow each horrific evil in the world; instead, I will argue that while we are naturally horrified by suffering, it is never certain that God should have prevented a particular evil. So, while the preceding chapters will give *some* reasons why God may allow suffering, I do not claim that they are sufficient on their own to solve the problem of suffering. In fact, as noted before, I do not think that the goods of this world completely justify every instance of animal suffering.

For this reason, I am convinced that if God exists and is perfectly loving, then the horrendous suffering of animals must be redeemed after they die, most plausibly in heaven. After briefly describing what I mean by *heaven*, I will discuss some ways that heaven may redeem animal suffering. Then, I will give four arguments for animal immortality. The first argument is based on the considerations given in previous chapters: Since earthly goods do not adequately redeem animal suffering, and since God *can* redeem suffering in heaven, there is good reason to think that he will do it. The last three arguments appeal to Christian scripture and tradition and will occupy most of the last chapter. First, animals have a special place in creation, and since the Bible promises that all of creation will be renewed and restored, there is good reason to think that animals will be included. Second, the Bible asserts that humans have a special responsibility for the earth, and thus the fate of the world, including the animal kingdom, is closely tied to the faithfulness of humanity. Since the Bible promises salvation and resurrection for humanity, there is reason to hope that animals will be resurrected as well. Finally, I will argue that Christ's mission was not merely to enable God to forgive sins, but to re-establish the kingdom of God on earth, undo the effects of human sin, and reconcile all of creation to God. Thus, Christ's earthly

mission—his incarnation, atonement, and resurrection—would be incomplete unless it redeems animal suffering as well.

Conclusion

With this overview in mind, we can now turn our attention to the many formulations of the problem of evil, including the existential problem and my own approach for this project.

CHAPTER TWO

Approaches to the Problem of Evil

Introduction

The heart of the problem of evil is the apparent conflict between suffering in the world and the claim that an almighty, all-knowing, and perfectly loving being has created the world and allows or directly causes all that happens in it. But one may think about the problem of evil in a variety of ways. One may consider the different *types* of evil that exist in the world—physical pain, emotional trauma, moral depravity, death, and so on—or one may consider the several *sources* of evil, like natural disasters, human cruelty, or freak accidents. Alternatively, one might focus on the victims of the evil; the present discussion, for instance, concentrates on animal suffering and largely ignores human suffering. Finally, one might consider the different ways in which evil confronts us as humans, challenging our beliefs in God, the value of life, and our place and purpose in the universe.

Given this complexity, the task of reconciling God and suffering is rather like climbing an ominous mountain: there are several routes one might take, each with its own obstacles and pitfalls. In the previous chapter I described the unique route of the current project. I will focus on a version of the existential problem of evil, specifically the moral outrage provoked by senseless animal suffering. The goal of this chapter is to describe the conceptual mountain-scape in more detail, including some of the routes commonly taken. Along the way, I will clarify and justify my own approach, in contrast to the other options.

I will begin with the popular distinction between moral evils, which result from the vices or blameworthy actions of moral agents other than God, and natural evils, instances of suffering for which no non-divine moral agent is responsible. While animals are subject to both moral and natural evils, I will assume that whatever God's reasons may be for allowing humans to suffer from moral evils, many of the same reasons can be applied to animals as well. Consequently, I will devote special attention to natural evils, asking why God would choose to create a world that often appears to be not only broken—with famines, floods, and the like—but downright hostile to the animal kingdom, with predation and competition seemingly built into the natural order.

Next, I will distinguish the existential problem of evil from the logical and evidential problems of evil. Because much of the contemporary debate has focused on evidential arguments from evil, I will devote extra attention to these arguments and the responses from skeptical theists, who question the evidential force that suffering has against theism. Although I am inclined to agree with many of the skeptical theists' insights, I will argue that since faith in God involves more than justified belief in God's existence, there is still serious work to be done on the problem of evil. After all, even if one is convinced that suffering has little or no evidential force against theism, it is impossible to love, worship, and trust in God if the sorts of things that God allows strike us as morally outrageous and reprehensible. With this in mind, I will develop a version of the existential problem and express it as an argument from moral outrage.

Moral and Natural Evils

One way of analyzing the problem of evil is according to the various causes of suffering. Philosophers of religion commonly distinguish *moral evils* from *natural evils* and address each one separately. Moral evils are instances of suffering that result from agents acting in immoral or blameworthy ways, or the effects of immoral character traits. When considering moral evils, we often imagine especially hideous acts of cruelty and depravity, like torture, genocide, rape, or child abuse. Such actions correspond to what most people mean by real *evil*, but moral evils also include more mundane actions that are not evil in the colloquial sense: careless words that harm a friend, petty revenge, deceit, and so on. Moral evils would also include unintended suffering that results from some moral failing. For instance, when an unattended candle causes a house fire, the person who lit the candle and forgot about it would be culpable for being careless, and he would rightly feel responsible for destroying the house, even though he never intended it. One may also consider freak accidents as moral evils even if no one is morally culpable for the event, as when a careful driver kills a small child who suddenly runs into the road.

Whether caused intentionally, through negligence, or by accident, God's permission of moral evils is often justified in the same way. As many theists argue, humans are free to act or refrain from acting, according to their own choice, and this freedom is a great benefit to each person. However, such freedom would be insignificant if God regularly intervened to prevent our actions from producing their intended consequences. Consequently, God allows humans to do what they want, even though their actions are often immoral and sometimes produce terrible suffering. Ultimately, they argue, God is

justified in allowing tremendous moral evil because it is better, on the whole, for humans to be significantly free, even if such freedom leads to great suffering.

Contrary to moral evils, *natural evils* are instances of suffering for which no non-divine agent is morally responsible.[1] Paradigm examples of natural evils include disasters like floods and famine, volcanoes, earthquakes, and tsunamis; genetic defects and diseases; predation and competition for resources. Since natural evils cannot be blamed on immoral behavior, theists must give plausible reasons why God chose to create a world like ours, when it is easy to imagine a much more hospitable world—a world with rain but no devastating floods, a world in which tectonic pressure was released slowly over time rather than suddenly, a world without enormous asteroids that cause mass extinctions and horrible suffering. Following the narrative of Genesis, some theists claim that the world was originally an ideal paradise, but because of human or demonic sin the world is now "fallen" and full of suffering. For such theists *all* evils are moral evils, and what we call "natural evils" are just instances of suffering where no agent is obviously responsible.[2] Others argue that free will demands that nature be orderly and understandable, where events have regular and predictable effects. Thus, God cannot constantly intervene in the natural order without also severely limiting human freedom. Others further argue that pain, when rightly

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[1] See Swinburne, "Natural Evil."

[2] Following Swinburne, I have described moral and natural evils as complementary categories, so that whatever is not a moral evil would be a natural evil. Others may define natural evils as suffering resulting from the natural order, or the natural order gone awry. According to this definition, earthquakes and famines would still count as natural evils, even if immoral agency is ultimately responsible for the natural order and all the suffering it causes.

understood, is useful and perhaps necessary for self-preservation and personal development.[3]

The current project will focus more on natural evils than moral evils, for a couple of reasons. First, I am concerned with the moral outrage we feel in response to senseless animal suffering, and while animals are often victims of unspeakable cruelty, the moral outrage toward such suffering is better directed at the people who cause the suffering than at God. To be sure, if God created the world and knew that humans would do such things, then perhaps God should be held responsible for allowing them to happen. However, the same worry is often raised about human cruelty toward other humans, and many philosophers have discussed such cruelty in great detail. Consequently, I will draw from their insights on moral evils and apply them to animal cruelty, though for the most part I will defer this problem to more sustained treatments of moral evil.

Second, while both humans and animals are subject to natural evils, the problem is more difficult as it concerns animals. Some of the more common claims about natural disasters—that they result from natural laws that allow for significant and effective human free will, for instance—may not be applicable to animals, especially those who live and die far away from any humans or long before any humans existed. Moreover, when considering natural evils, many philosophers mention natural disasters, diseases, and the like, but often ignore questions that are especially relevant for nonhuman animals. Why is it, for instance, that some animals must kill and eat others just to survive? And, assuming modern evolutionary biology is approximately correct, why would God choose to bring about higher-order species through natural selection, a process that depends on competition,

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[3] Michael J Murray, *Nature Red in Tooth and Claw: Theism and the Problem of Animal Suffering* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

genetic defects, and premature death? Isn't such a natural order inherently violent and contrary to what we would expect from a God of love and peace?

The Logical Problem of Evil

Another popular way to consider the problem of evil is according to how it can be used in an argument against theism. In the following sections I will discuss the logical, evidential, and existential problems of evil in turn. For the logical and evidential problems, I will describe some of the most common versions of each problem and the standard replies to them. I will then motivate my own decision to set these two problems aside and focus on an existential problem of evil.

According to the *logical* or *deductive* problem of evil, the presence of evil and suffering in the world are incompatible with the existence of a morally perfect, omnipotent, and all-knowing god.[4] According to the argument, the following statements cannot all be true simultaneously:

I. God created all things distinct from himself and allows (or causes) everything that happens.

II. God is almighty, all-knowing, and morally perfect.

III. Evil exists.

If successful, the logical problem of evil is utterly fatal to theism, and in this sense it is the strongest expression of the problem of evil. However, it is also the most vulnerable, for it

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[4] The most noteworthy formulations of the logical problem of evil can be found in J. L. Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence," *Mind* 64, no. 254 (1955): 200–212.; and H. J. McCloskey, "God and Evil," *Philosophical Quarterly* 10, no. 39 (1960): 97–114. Both "the logical argument" and "the deductive argument" are unfortunate names, because (ideally, at least) *all* statements of the problem of evil will be logical, and many arguments that are formally valid (and hence deductive) would not count as expressions of "the deductive argument from evil." I would prefer calling it the "metaphysical argument from evil," because it claims that evil (or at least *some* evils that exist in the actual world) and the God of classical theism are mutually exclusive: any possible world in which God exists is one in which evil does not, and vice versa.

can be defeated simply by giving an account of how God and evil might *possibly* co-exist. If one can describe a state of affairs in which I – III all obtain and can show that such a state of affairs is possible, then the logical argument from evil fails. This description, known as a *defense*, does not even need to be plausible; it need only show that God, who has the power to prevent each instance of evil, may yet have morally sufficient reason to choose not to.

Alvin Plantinga has given the most influential response to the logical problem of evil. He suggests that the following is possibly true: "A world containing free creatures who are significantly free (and freely perform more good than evil actions) is more valuable, all else being equal, than a world containing no free creatures at all."[5] However, he continues, his creatures cannot be significantly free if God *causes* or *determines* them to always act rightly; therefore, God cannot create creatures capable of significant moral good that are not also capable of moral evil, nor can God give his creatures the freedom to perform moral evils and yet always prevent them from doing so. Moreover, if these creatures do, in fact, perform moral evils, this does not count against God's omnipotence, omniscience, or benevolence, for while God knew about the moral evil and had the power to prevent it, he had a morally sufficient reason for allowing it.

One serious objection to this Free Will Defense claims that there is a possible world in which all free creatures never choose to do wrong, that God would be able to actualize such a world, and therefore he ought to actualize it.[6] In response, Plantinga argues that, contrary to popular assumption, God cannot actualize every possible world. To illustrate,

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[5] Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 30.

[6] Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence," 208–212.

imagine that Mayor Curley Smith accepts a bribe of $35,000 for approval of a highway project from L. B. Smedes, a corrupt official. Now, Smedes wonders what would have happened if he had offered only $20,000: Smedes imagines a state of affairs *S'* in which (1) Curley is offered a bribe of $20,000, (2) Curley does not accept or reject the bribe, and (3) *S'* is as similar to the actual world as possible, other than the amount of the bribe. If Curley is free with respect to the bribe, there are two possible worlds that contain *S'*: in one possible world, *W*, Curley freely accepts the bribe, and in *W'* freely Curley rejects it. Now suppose that Curley would have accepted the $20,000 bribe—that is,

(A) If S' were actual, it would be true that Curley freely accepts the bribe.

God might actualize *S',* but, importantly, God cannot determine Curley to *freely* reject the bribe. Thus, although *W'* is a possible world, God cannot actualize it, because as (A) implies, if God were to actualize *S'* and leave Curley free with respect to the bribe, *W* would be actualized. So there is at least one world that God cannot actualize in which Curley freely chooses to do the right thing. More generally, Plantinga argues, it is possible that Curley suffers from *transworld depravity*: in any world in which Curley is significantly free, there is at least one action *A* that Curley would go wrong with respect to *A*. If so, then God cannot create a world that contains a significantly-free Curley, but no moral evil. Furthermore, it is possible that *every* person suffers from transworld depravity, and if so, then God cannot actualize any world with significantly free persons but no moral evil.[7]

It is commonly accepted that the free will defense shows that the presence of evils that exist in the actual world are neither logically nor metaphysically incompatible with the existence of God, and hence that the logical argument from evil fails. Even so, while it

[7] Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil*, 12–49.

may be possible for God and evil to coexist, many philosophers now argue that the types, patterns, and amounts of suffering make it very improbable that God exists. Arguments of this form are commonly referred to as *evidential* arguments from evil. Such arguments do not claim that belief in God is incoherent, but that the prevalence of evil is strong enough evidence to make belief in God irrational or unjustified. Some further argue that, given the evils of this world, we are justified in believing that God does not exist.

The Evidential Problem of Evil

Although philosophers have pressed several distinct evidential arguments from evil, in this section I will focus on two of the most influential formulations—William Rowe's argument from gratuitous suffering and Paul Draper's argument from the overall pattern of suffering—and describe a family of objections, commonly referred to as *skeptical theism*, that raise doubts about our ability to estimate the evidential force of evil against theism. Although I agree with the skeptical theists' criticisms, and although I believe that the extant evidential arguments are unsuccessful, I will not attempt to justify those conclusions here. Instead, I will argue that even if the evidential arguments are unsuccessful, theists still have work to do on the problem of evil. For faith in God demands more than rational assent, but such faith is impossible if the thought that God chose to create this world—with all its suffering—is morally repellant.

Rowe's Evidential Argument from Evil

Rowe's evidential argument from evil considers tragic events that strike us as gratuitous. One of his illustrations is especially relevant:

> Suppose in some distant forest lightning strikes a dead tree, resulting in a forest fire. In the fire a fawn is trapped, horribly burned, and lies in terrible agony for several

> days before death relieves its suffering. So far as we can see, the fawn's intense suffering is pointless. For there does not appear to be any greater good such that the prevention of the fawn's suffering would require either the loss of any good or the occurrence of an evil equally bad or worse. Nor does there seem to be any equally bad or worse evil so connected to the fawn's suffering that it would have had to occur had the fawn's suffering been prevented.[8]

Rowe grants that the mere fact that we cannot see a point for the fawn's suffering does not entail that it was actually gratuitous. To conclude that the fawn's suffering was gratuitous we would need a reason to move from

P: No good that we know of justifies God's allowing the fawn's suffering.

to

Q: No good justifies God's allowing the fawn's suffering.

The inference from P to Q is an inductive one, depending on an epistemic principle like the following:

> R: If there is an instance, *s*, of extreme suffering for which no one has provided sufficiently good reason to allow the instance to occur, even after long and careful thought by several intelligent and creative people, then there is good reason to believe that *s* is gratuitous.

In other words, the atheologian supposes, if there were good reasons to allow *s*, clever thinkers should eventually be able to identify what they might be. Thus, they continue, given that none of the goods of which we are aware would justify particular evils like the fawn's suffering, and considering how long humans have tried and failed to identify sufficient reasons for allowing such evils, we can conclude that no such reasons exist.[9]

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[8] William L. Rowe, "The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism," in *The Evidential Argument from Evil*, ed. Daniel Howard-Snyder (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 4.

[9] See, for example, Bruce Russell, "Defenseless," in *The Evidential Argument from Evil*, ed. Daniel Howard-Snyder (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 193–205.

Rather than identifying the relevant justifying goods for each instance of suffering, many theists raise doubts about our ability to understand God's motives and options. According to these skeptical theists, it is possible and even likely that there are goods that God has in mind that are "beyond our ken."[10] These goods might be beyond our ability to understand or appreciate, or the goods involved may be connected to *s* in ways that we cannot recognize because of our limited perspective. For all we know, they claim, *s* has far-reaching consequences that seem wholly negative to us, but there may be sufficient goods many years in the future, or many miles away, that have *s* as an essential cause. Given these limitations on our understanding and perspective, they conclude, we are not in a proper epistemic position to determine whether or not the fawn's suffering was gratuitous, and importantly, the same can be said for every alleged instance of gratuitous suffering.[11]

Draper's Evidential Argument from Evil

Setting aside the issue of gratuitous evils, Paul Draper prefers instead to focus on the general pattern of suffering in the world. According to Draper, the world is much worse than what one would normally expect of a world created by a loving, omniscient, and omnipotent God. Yet, he continues, the world—with its mixture of pleasure and pain, contentment and anguish—is precisely what we would expect if the world progressed only

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[10] See, for example, Stephen J. Wykstra, "Rowe's Noseeum Arguments from Evil," in *The Evidential Argument from Evil*, ed. Daniel Howard-Snyder (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 126–50; William P. Alston, "The Inductive Argument from Evil and the Human Cognitive Condition," in *The Evidential Argument from Evil*, ed. Daniel Howard-Snyder (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 97–126.

[11] For more on the debate over skeptical theism's success, see Daniel Howard-Snyder, "Introduction: The Evidential Argument from Evil," in *The Evidential Argument from Evil*, ed. Daniel Howard-Snyder (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).

according to indifferent natural laws. In support of this claim, Draper develops a Bayesian argument aimed at finding the best explanation for suffering.[12] The data in need of explanation is O—the amount, type, and distribution of suffering in the world that one has observed, experienced, or received from the testimony of others—and the two potential explanations that Draper considers are classical theism and the "hypothesis of indifference" (HI), which states that "neither the nature nor the condition of sentient beings on earth is the result of benevolent or malevolent actions performed by nonhuman persons."[13] Draper argues that "independent of observations and testimony O reports, O is much more likely on the assumption that HI is true than on that theism is true," that is, $Pr(O|HI) \gg Pr(O|theism)$.[14]

According to Draper, we notice that a great deal of pain and pleasure are "biologically useful," and it is rather easy to give a naturalistic account for why such pleasure and pain would exist. On the other hand, an omnipotent God could meet the same biological goals without intense pain, and God would have good reasons not to allow pain unless he absolutely had to. Thus, he concludes, the biologically useful pain in the world is much more likely given the Hypothesis of Indifference than theism. Draper further

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[12] The argument Draper offers is inspired by Hume's powerful argument, given in Part XI of his David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion: The Posthumous Essays of the Immortality of the Soul and of Suicide*, ed. Richard H. Popkin, 2nd ed. (Hackett Pub Co, 1998)..

[13] Paul Draper, "Pain and Pleasure: An Evidential Problem for Theists," *Noûs* 23, no. 3 (June 1, 1989), 332.

[14] Although Draper's argument is often taken to be an abductive argument, which offers an inference to the best explanation, there is some debate about whether theism is properly considered to be an explanation at all, and even if it is, whether "theism" as Draper generally defines it (rather than a more detailed theistic account of evil), is informative enough to be a genuine explanation for evil. See, for instance, Howard-Snyder, "Introduction: The Evidential Argument from Evil."; and William P. Alston, "Some (Temporarily) Final Thoughts on Evidential Arguments from Evil," both in *The Evidential Argument from Evil*, ed. Daniel Howard-Snyder (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 328-330.

argues that we have reason to believe that the primary role of pain and pleasure appears to be biological rather than moral, and that biologically gratuitous pain and pleasure is "a biological accident resulting from nature's or an indifferent creator's failure to 'fine tune' organic systems."[15] Accordingly, he claims, the presence of such gratuitous pain is much more likely on HI than on theism.

Two significant objections have been given in response to Draper's argument. First, one might question whether we are in a proper epistemic position to judge that, given O, the Hypothesis of Indifference is more probable than theism. As Peter van Inwagen argues, we are not in a condition to judge that Pr(O|theism) is low if there is a *defense* (D) such that (i) O is likely, given the assumption that theism & D are true, and (ii) we are not in an epistemic position to determine how likely D is, given theism.[16] According to van Inwagen, the following three claims, when taken together, constitute a successful defense:

(1) Every possible world that contains higher-level sentient creatures either contains patterns of suffering morally equivalent to those recorded by [O], or else is massively irregular.

(2) Some important intrinsic or extrinsic good depends on the existence of higher-level sentient creatures; this good is of sufficient magnitude that it outweighs the patterns of suffering recorded by [O].

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[15] Draper, "Pain and Pleasure: An Evidential Problem for Theists," 338–339.

[16] This is an application of a more general epistemic principle given in Peter van Inwagen, "Reflections on Chapters by Draper, Russell, and Gale," in *The Evidential Argument from Evil*, ed. Daniel Howard-Snyder (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 228. For convenience, I have stated the argument in terms of likelihood and probability, though van Inwagen presents the argument in terms of proportions of possible worlds.

(3) Being massively irregular is a defect in a world, a defect at least as great as the defect of containing patterns of suffering morally equivalent to those recorded by [O].[17]

Van Inwagen does not claim that (1) – (3) are true*,* just that we have no good reason to think they are false. More importantly, he claims, we simply do not know enough about metaphysical possibilities, extrinsic and intrinsic goods, and the defect of massive irregularity to make any sort of judgment about how likely (1) – (3) are, given theism.

A second challenge to Draper's evidential argument questions whether theism is best thought of as an hypothesis that can be compared to others.[18] As Alvin Plantinga suggests, "Perhaps belief in God resembles certain perceptual beliefs, memory beliefs, certain a priori beliefs and others in being *properly basic* (in the right circumstances.)"[19] If so, then theism and other Christian beliefs may enjoy *nonpropositional* evidence—finding oneself affirming the good news of the gospel, even after carefully considering objections; the witness of the Holy Spirit; Calvin's *Sensus Divinitatis*; and so on—that provide sufficient warrant for a theist's beliefs.[20]

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[17] Peter van Inwagen, "The Problem of Evil, the Problem of Air, and the Problem of Silence," in *The Evidential Argument from Evil*, ed. Daniel Howard-Snyder (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 157.

[18] See, for instance, Peter Van Inwagen, "Is God an Unnecessary Hypothesis?" in *God and the Ethics of Belief*, ed. Andrew Dole and Andrew Chignell (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 131 – 149.

[19] Alvin Plantinga, "Epistemic Probability and Evil," in *The Evidential Argument from Evil*, ed. Daniel Howard-Snyder (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).

[20] Alvin Plantinga, "On Being Evidentially Challenged," in *The Evidential Argument from Evil*, ed. Daniel Howard-Snyder (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).

Concluding Remarks on Evidential Arguments from Evil

Most of the contemporary philosophical discussion about the problem of evil centers on the evidential problem of evil, particularly the Rowe- and Draper-style arguments described above. While the controversy is far from over, I am inclined to agree with many of the objections to their arguments, and I doubt that an evidential argument from evil will successfully show that belief in God is unjustified. Even so, the question of God's existence is more than an epistemic puzzle; it is profoundly personal and has far-reaching implications for how we understand ourselves, the world, and our obligations. If, as theists commonly claim, the God who created all things also cares about us and wants to foster relationships with his creatures, then our whole selves—our will and emotions, as well as our minds—must be reformed accordingly. However, while our emotions and moral sentiments can be tempered by reason and reflection, they are stubborn and demand satisfaction. One's feelings of horror about widespread suffering, and one's sense of moral outrage at acts of senseless cruelty cannot be placated simply by noting that, for all we know, such cruelty may be essentially tied to goods that we cannot recognize. Consequently, even if suffering does not pose an epistemic problem for theism, it still poses an existential one.

An Existential Problem of Evil

In the following chapters I will discuss two specific expressions of the existential problem of evil, arguments against faith in God based on the moral outrage we naturally feel in response to senseless animal suffering. But first it is important to describe the existential problem more fully and precisely, define the version of the problem that will be at the center of this project, and then outline my attempt to address it.

Like "the" evidential problem of evil, "the" existential problem of evil is not a single problem, but rather a family of loosely related problems. However, unlike evidential arguments from evil, which all share the assertion that suffering counts as strong evidence against theism, it is more difficult to say how the various existential problems are related. Some philosophers describe it as the "pastoral" problem of evil, because (they say) the theist's proper response to someone posing an existential argument from evil is not to bring one's full philosophical arsenal to bear on the problem, but rather to give support and comfort to the person struggling with the problem. Thus, one's approach to the existential problem of evil is more akin to therapy or pastoral counseling than rigorous debate.[21] Others treat the existential problem of evil as a proper philosophical problem, in which "theism is questioned and/or rejected on the basis of moral protest, indignation, and outrage at the evils of this world."[22] This is the form of the problem that I want to address.

Expressed as a formal argument, the problem can be stated as follows.

1. The animal suffering in the world is morally outrageous to me.
2. I am convinced that my moral outrage is rational and properly directed (at least in part) at God.
3. If (1) and (2), then I cannot believe in God, let alone love, trust, and worship God.
4. Therefore, I cannot believe in God, let alone love, trust, and worship God.

A few clarifying remarks about the argument are in order. First, the moral outrageousness of animal suffering arises from both *global* and *local* facts about animal

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[21] See, for instance, Ibid., 69. For a similar description, see Peter van Inwagen, *The Problem of Evil: The Gifford Lectures Delivered in the University of St Andrews in 2003* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[22] William Hasker, "On Regretting the Evils of This World," *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 19, no. 4 (1981): 425.

suffering.[23] Global facts about animal suffering include the vast number of creatures who have suffered terribly throughout the history of life on Earth, the prevalence of natural disasters and ecological catastrophes, the scarcity of resources, the instinctual drive to devour and the fact that some animals must kill others in order to survive, and so on. It seems (at least at first glance) that God could have made a much safer and more pleasant world and that he *ought* to have made a much better world. I will consider the global problem of animal suffering in more detail in the fourth and fifth chapters. Local facts, meanwhile, include details about horrific and seemingly gratuitous instances of animal suffering. William Rowe's fawn, which was trapped in a forest fire and lingered for days before finally dying, is a paradigmatic case of a morally outrageous instance of animal suffering. I will address local evils in more detail in the sixth chapter. The seventh chapter will attempt to show how heaven can help solve both the global and local problems of animal suffering.

Second, when I say that animal suffering is *morally outrageous*, I mean that there are facts about animal suffering in the world that are so horrific and extreme that they seem to deserve my thorough condemnation. Accordingly, an event or state of affairs can be morally outrageous even if I don't actually *feel* moral outrage or any strong emotions.[24] It is enough for me to judge that if I were properly sensitive to the situation—if I were fully aware of the details, if I were not desensitized to such horrors, if I were not preoccupied with my own concerns, and so on—I would feel moral disgust and outrage toward those who were responsible.

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[23] The distinction between global and local evils comes from van Inwagen, *The Problem of Evil*.

[24] Similarly, I will often speak of "my moral outrage" about things, even if that outrage is latent.

Finally, the argument is existential because it is based on *my own* feelings of moral protest and my conviction that such feelings are rational and properly directed at God. Unlike evidential arguments, there is no claim that God *probably* could have made a much better world or that a given instance of suffering is *probably* gratuitous. Instead, the argument from moral outrage depends only on how things seem to me personally. Because of this, the criteria for success are straightforward, though perhaps higher than the requirements for rebutting evidential arguments. A successful response must either placate the outrage I feel, redirect it away from God, or convince me that my feelings on the issue are unreliable. Throughout this project I will attempt to give a satisfying justification for animal suffering that amounts to a full theodicy, rather than a defense that may be true "for all I know."

Conclusion

A potentially serious problem with my existential approach is that it may have extremely limited appeal. Since the argument, as I've stated it, is based on my own moral outrage, the answers I give will be bound up with my personal values, as well as my philosophical, moral, and theological beliefs. Because of my personal history I cannot help but think of God in broadly Christian terms, and the sorts of answers I find most plausible will inevitably reflect my upbringing. Someone who has drastically different values and beliefs will likely remain unconvinced, though I will do my best to give responses that will have general appeal, so that if someone who is relevantly like me happens to have the same worries, the answers I give will help address their own existential problem of evil. Beyond that, I hope to convince the skeptic, whose own values and assumptions are drastically different from mine, that *If I (the skeptic) were open to some of Christianity's claims about*

the Fall, Incarnation, and heaven, I could see how this supposed God of love could create a world as bad as this one.

Before getting to these arguments, however, a bit more preliminary work is necessary, for we must first establish that there *is* a problem of animal suffering. There are, after all, many who doubt that animals are capable of suffering. In the next chapter, we will look at some of their arguments in more detail.

CHAPTER THREE

Whether Animals Can Suffer

Introduction

Several philosophers have mentioned animal suffering, and its seeming pointlessness, as evidence against classical theism. William Rowe, as noted earlier, imagines a fawn that is horribly burned and languishes for days before finally dying.[1] David Hume, meanwhile, eloquently catalogs the pattern of suffering endured by humans and animals, and then concludes (through the character Philo):

> [God's] power we allow is infinite: whatever he wills is executed: but neither man nor any other animal is happy: therefore he does not will their happiness. His wisdom is infinite: he is never mistaken in choosing the means to any end: but the course of Nature tends not to human or animal felicity: therefore it is not established for that purpose. Through the whole compass of human knowledge, there are no inferences more certain and infallible than these. In what respect, then, do his benevolence and mercy resemble the benevolence and mercy of men?[2]

Each of these arguments, of course, assumes that animals actually suffer when they are bitten, burned, sick, or otherwise harmed. And while most people find it obvious that animals can suffer, some critics have questioned how much they can suffer, or whether animals can suffer at all.

My goal in this chapter will be to provide good reason to believe that some nonhuman animals can suffer, and that they often suffer greatly. I aim for "good reason to

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[1] William L. Rowe, "The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 16, no. 4 (1979): 337.

[2] David Hume, "Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion," in *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion and Other Writings*, ed. Dorothy Coleman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 73–74.

believe" simply because the claim that animals can suffer is like the claim that there are minds besides my own and that there is an external world outside of my mental experience. Each claim is open to skeptical doubts that are notoriously difficult to disprove. Now, while most find it obvious that animals can suffer, it is much easier to imagine that we are mistaken on that point: the competing skeptical hypotheses about animals—that they are complex stimulus-response machines without genuinely mental experience, that they can feel "pain" but lack what it takes to truly suffer, and so on—cannot be dismissed as readily as one might dismiss its more radical cousins.

In short, I will not try to convince the skeptic that suffering afflicts nonhuman animals. Nor will I try to convince the average reader, for the average reader is already convinced and may even wonder why such an argument is necessary. (Even philosophers generally assume that the miseries of this world afflict more than just humanity.) Instead, my aim will be to evaluate some of the reasons one might give for skepticism about animal suffering and argue that these reasons do not overcome our commonsense reasons for attributing sentience and suffering to several animal species.

Toward this end, the first section amounts to a defense of common sense. I argue that since we have good *prima facie* reason to believe that animals suffer, we are justified in holding that belief unless and until we are given good reason to think otherwise. In the second section, I consider some empirical evidence about animals and pain. While the data are inconclusive and leave room for interpretation, the weight of the available evidence suggests that at least *some* nonhuman species feel pain and emotional trauma, and although there are alternative explanations for the data, these explanations are problematic. In the third section, I address several philosophical arguments that, to varying degrees, imply

skepticism about animal suffering. I will provide grounds for doubt about many of these positions, but ultimately I argue that none of them is nearly as plausible as the claim that animals suffer.

A Commonsense Argument

Apart from a few philosophers and scientists, it is widely taken for granted that animals have sensations and therefore feel pain and can suffer.[3] It is only after confrontation with skeptics that anyone bothers to *argue* for the claim that animals feel pain. When pressed, one might appeal to the anatomical, neurological, behavioral, or evolutionary similarities shared among humans and other animals. Alternatively, one might argue that various animal behaviors are best explained by sentience, desire, and emotion. In their favor, both types of arguments appeal to quantifiable observations and scientific principles, and so they appear to have more force than saying, "It just seems to me that animals can suffer." On the other hand, both of these arguments are weak insofar as the critic can find important dissimilarities between humans and animals, and as we shall see, this is precisely the tack some authors take. Later, we will consider these arguments in depth. For now, however, it is worth noting that almost nobody believes that animals suffer *on the basis* of these arguments. It simply appears to us, in a very strong way, that animals feel pain just as humans do. However, while this appearance gives me a good reason to believe as I do, it is not a conclusive reason. That is, my reason is *defeasible*: if new evidence comes to light that defeats my initial evidence, then my resulting belief would no

[3] Throughout I will focus mainly on physical pain, only because it is easier to discuss than emotional pain and not because I do not believe that animals cannot suffer emotionally. As we will see, there is good evidence that higher mammals like also experience serious emotional trauma, though the extent to which this happens is much more difficult to determine.

longer be justified. At the same time, though, one should not abandon what is obvious for something less obvious. Hence, barring sufficient evidence to the contrary, I am justified in believing that animals suffer.

Formally, the argument may be put like this:

c1. It is strongly apparent that nonhuman animals suffer.

c2. If it is strongly apparent that nonhuman animals suffer, then there is good reason to believe that nonhuman animals suffer unless there is a defeater for my reason to believe that animals suffer that is apparent enough to defeat that belief.

c3. There are no defeaters that are apparent enough to defeat my reason to believe that nonhuman animals suffer.

c4. Therefore, there is good reason to believe that nonhuman animals suffer.

In this argument, I use *is apparent* as roughly synonymous with *seems*, so that a proposition *p* is apparent to a subject to the extent that it seems to him or her that that *p* is true, and something is strongly apparent just in case it seems obviously true. The exact distinction between strongly apparent and merely apparent is rather vague, though there are clear examples of strongly apparent propositions: *3+2 = 5, I (Matt) exist,* and *There is a material world that exists independent of my mind*, to name a few. It is slightly less apparent to me that nonhuman animals can and often do suffer, but I would still count it as strongly apparent.

Note that propositions like *3+2 = 5* seem obvious to nearly everyone, while *I (Matt) exist*, is extremely apparent to me and to a lesser extent people who know me, but not at all apparent to most people on Earth. However, this fact does not make my belief in my own existence unjustified. My existence is not something that I should expect all rational observers to notice, and besides, it is so obvious to me that I exist that it would take an extremely good reason to raise any doubt at all. In contrast, my belief that animals can and

often do suffer is such that I would have good reason to doubt if I learned that for most people it does not appear that animals can suffer, or that it is only somewhat apparent to most people that animals can suffer. As it turns out, however, it is strongly apparent to nearly everyone who has observed animals—especially dogs, cats, and other higher mammals—that these animals can suffer. Indeed, even those who are skeptical about animal consciousness and the capacity for suffering in nonhuman animals do so in spite of the way things appear to them. Thus, while skeptics would accept premise c1, they will deny c3 and give reasons to mistrust appearances when it comes to animal consciousness.

The skeptic's reasons for doubt raises the issue of defeasible reasoning and how strong defeaters must be to make a belief unjustified. Suppose that I form some belief, *q,* and that belief is based on some reason, *p*. Assuming that *p* does not give conclusive reason to believe *q,* it is a *defeasible reason*: there may be other relevant evidence that defeats *p* and makes it irrational to believe *q* on the basis of *p*. Epistemologists describe a variety of defeaters, but here I will focus on *rebutting* and *undercutting* defeaters.[4] If I believe some proposition *q,* a rebutting defeater would be a reason to believe ~*q*. For example, suppose that after noting that the clock on my wall reads 1:47, I form the belief that it is about 1:47 p.m. Because I have an important meeting at 2 o'clock, I double-check the time a few seconds later, but now I look at my wristwatch and notice that it reads 2:15. My new

[4] The distinction between undercutting and rebutting defeaters originally comes from John Pollock, who defined them as follows. "If P is a prima facie reason for S to believe Q, R is a *rebutting defeater* for this reason if an only if R is a defeater (for P as a reason for S to believe Q) and R is a reason for S to believe ~Q." Also, "If P is a prima facie reason for S to believe Z, R is an *undercutting defeater* for this reason if and only if R is a defeater (for P as a reason for S to believe Q) and R is a reason for S to deny that P would not be true unless Q were true." Notice that in these definitions, P, Q, and R are propositions or the contents of belief. Later, Pollock develops his own epistemic theory, in which one's reasons and defeaters are both mental states of the subject. Throughout this chapter I treat reasons and defeaters as propositions, not mental states, primarily for the sake of simplicity. John L. Pollock, *Contemporary Theories of Knowledge*, Rowman & Littlefield Texts in Philosophy (Totowa, N.J: Rowman & Littlefield, 1986), 38–39.

reason, *My watch reads 2:15,* gives me good reason to doubt my original belief that it is 1:47 and thus is a rebutting defeater for my initial reason given by the wall clock.

An undercutting defeater, meanwhile, is a reason to doubt that *p* is a reliable indicator of *q*. For example, suppose that I believe that it is about 1:47 because my wall clock reads 1:47. However, instead of checking my wristwatch I look at the clock again a few seconds later, just to make sure that I read it right. Sure enough, it reads 1:47, but I also notice that the second hand is not moving. This new evidence that the clock is dead would be an *undercutting defeater*. Because the clock reads 1:47 no matter what time it is, the evidential link between *The clock reads 1:47* and *It is about 1:47 p.m.* is seriously weakened.

Both of the defeaters just described would raise enough doubt about the accuracy of my wall clock to make my belief that it is about 1:47 unjustified. But what about beliefs based on what seems to be obvious, like the belief that I have hands? The second premise in the above argument assumes that things are usually as they appear and that we are justified in believing in things as they seem unless there is a strong reason to believe otherwise. The important issue, then, is how strongly apparent these reasons need to be to defeat the evidence of appearances. At minimum, the defeater needs to be at least somewhat plausible, and it must be undefeated; that is, the potential defeater must not itself be defeated by another defeater. Also, the more something seems obvious, the stronger the defeater must be to raise genuine doubt about the original belief.

To illustrate, imagine the following scenario. While walking along a nature trail you notice what appears to be a pair of squirrels chasing each other on a nearby tree. You watch this scene closely for a while and then point it out to your friend, but she decides to

play skeptic and replies, "Perhaps they are animatronic squirrel replicas." You consider this possibility, but because you have no good reason to think it is an animatronic replica, you are still justified in believing that they are living, flesh-and-blood squirrels. Now, if your friend were to remind you that Klarenbeek, famed taxidermist-turned-roboticist, has moved to the area, her suggestion would gain some plausibility. However, you would still be justified in believing that you are watching living squirrels if you are aware of a defeater for your friend's suggestion—perhaps, for example, you have heard from Klarenbeek himself that he only works with coyotes, deer, and other larger animals. Alternatively, if you watch closely and the "squirrels" in front of you are *extremely* life-like, if everything looks and sounds and smells how you would expect it—if, in short, it seems much more obvious that they are real squirrels than animatronic replicas—then you would be justified in concluding that you are watching real squirrels, even if you cannot prove your friend wrong beyond all doubt.

Returning to pain and animals, the fact that it seems obvious that animals can suffer is a good *prima facie* reason to conclude that animals can and often do suffer, but it is a defeasible reason. Some positive reason to think that animals do not suffer—perhaps the testimony of an honest and omniscient being, the self-report of several non-human animals, or strong scientific evidence to the contrary—would serve as a rebutting defeater to this *prima facie* reason. Meanwhile, an undercutting defeater would be a reason to think that anatomical and behavioral observations do not reliably inform us about the mental states (or lack thereof) of nonhuman creatures. In the following sections we will look at some of the skeptics' reasons to doubt that animals can suffer, beginning with some empirical data

relevant to animal pain and ending with the neo-Cartesians, who give more philosophical reasons to doubt that animals can suffer.

Empirical Evidence

Although most people accept that animals are phenomenally conscious as a matter of common sense, and hence not a matter of logical inference, they would likely give a sort of argument from analogy if pressed for justification of their belief. Animals, after all, behave much like humans do in similar circumstances, and they are anatomically similar to humans, with sense organs and central nervous systems. One can't help but think that if an animal has eyes, it can actually *see*. Granted, people are prone to anthropomorphism, especially when their pets are concerned. They often talk to their pets and try to reason with them, and they interpret certain behaviors as signs of a guilty conscience, spite, or love. But such emotions require concepts that house pets probably cannot form, and such behavior can be better explained in terms of instinct and conditioning. Thus, while an analogical argument for animal consciousness is possible, we must be careful in using it.

Fortunately, animal scientists have performed experiments that allow us to develop more sophisticated arguments. Unfortunately, however, a complete summary of current research would take us too far afield, so we must limit ourselves to some of the more suggestive experiments.[5] The weight of the evidence should be enough to convince those who are already inclined to attribute phenomenal consciousness to animals, at least for

[5] For an excellent summary of research on animal consciousness, including pain and suffering, see Collin Allen and Michael Trestman, "Animal Consciousness," ed. Edward N. Zalta, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2014, http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2014/entries/consciousness-animal/. More detailed analysis of pain research in animals can be found in Collin Allen, "Animal Pain," *Noûs* 38, no. 4 (2004): 617–43. Much of the information in this section is indebted to these articles, as well as Temple Grandin and Catherine Johnson, *Animals in Translation: Using the Mysteries of Autism to Decode Animal Behavior* (Mariner Books, 2006).

mammals and other complex vertebrates. Skeptics, meanwhile, will be able to interpret some of the data in ways that do not appeal to consciousness, thus showing that the available data does not *prove* that animals are conscious. However, if the conclusion from the previous section is true, then proof of consciousness is not necessary, and consequently, the skeptics' concerns are not sufficient to cast much doubt on the assumption that animals suffer.

In their hunt for evidence of animal consciousness, scientists look for anatomical, neurological, and behavioral similarities between humans and animals. In 1998, Gary Varner selected six features that he considered "relevant to consciousness of pain in the animal kingdom":

1. The presence of *nociceptors*, nerves that send signals from damaged tissue to the brain and spinal column and generally produce pain in humans;
2. The presence of a central nervous system;
3. A connection between the nociceptors and the central nervous system;
4. The presence of *endogenous opioids*, chemicals produced in the body that generally have a painkilling effect (e.g., endorphins);
5. The effect of analgesics on behavior;
6. Behaviors analogous to human pain behavior.[6]

Investigations into the last two conditions are especially interesting. Mammals and birds exhibit *pain guarding*, behaviors that favor injured body parts, such as limping, reduced movement, or (in birds) reduced pecking with injured beaks. Analgesics have also been shown to reduce pain-guarding behaviors, and animals often choose to take analgesics

[6] Gary Varner, *In Nature's Interests? Interests, Animal Rights, and Environmental Ethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 192–203.

when available. In one study, rats were injected with a bacterium known to cause painful arthritis in humans. When given the choice between a bad-tasting liquid with painkillers and a sugary liquid without painkillers, the arthritic rats consistently chose the painkilling liquid, but once the arthritis cleared up, they began choosing the sugar solution.[7]

After reviewing the available data, Varner concluded that only mammals meet all six conditions. Birds, meanwhile, meet at least five of the conditions, the only question being whether they meet the third. According to Colin Allen, most researchers assume that many species can feel pain; the debate is usually over where to draw the line between conscious and unconscious animals.[8] Researchers generally agree that the higher vertebrates, especially mammals, are capable of conscious pain, while invertebrates are not. The "gray area," it seems, occurs in lower vertebrates like fish, who exhibit pain behaviors but do not have a neocortex, which many researchers consider necessary for consciousness.

Careful studies of the neocortices of various mammals have suggested that the experience of pain is more complex than previously thought. In particular, scientists now believe that the experience of pain depends on two distinct pathways in the brain. The lateral, or sensory, pathway allows the subject to recognize the type, location, and intensity of pain, while the medial, or affective, pathway determines the degree to which the subject finds the pain disagreeable. Researchers have found that when the medial pathway is inhibited in humans, the subjects still feel the sensation of pain but are not bothered by it.

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[7] Francis C. Colpaert et al., "Self-Administration of the Analgesic Suprofen in Arthritic Rats: Evidence of Mycobaterium Butyricum-Induced Arthritis as an Experimental Model of Chronic Pain," *Life Sciences* 27, no. 11 (September 1980): 921–28.

[8] Allen and Trestman, "Animal Consciousness."

The distinction between feeling pain and minding it had been noted since the mid-1900s among morphine patients and in chronic pain sufferers who underwent *leucotomy*, a procedure that disconnects the patient's frontal lobes from the rest of their brain. After the operation, pain that would have once left the patients overwhelmed and unable to function no longer bothered them, and they were able to carry on normal activity without trouble.[9]

Since it is possible to feel pain without suffering, one might speculate that animals that lack frontal lobes are in this position. For higher vertebrates, however, the same should not be said, though some philosophers have tried.[10] Even so, because their frontal lobes are less developed than in humans, it may be that pain is less of a problem for animals than for us. As Temple Grandin suggests, "Injured animals are probably somewhere in between a leucotomy patient and a normal human being. They do feel pain, sometimes intense pain, because their frontal lobes haven't been surgically separated from the rest of their brains. But they probably aren't as upset about pain as a human being would be in the same situation, because their frontal lobes aren't as big or all-powerful as a human's."[11] As an animal scientist and high-functioning autistic, Grandin believes she can understand and relate to animals in ways that most people cannot. Interestingly, Grandin notes that she, like many autistic people, appears to be much less sensitive to pain than most people. In

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[9] Accounts of leucotomy patients can be found in Antonio Demasio, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain* (New York: Grosset/Putnam, 1994).

[10] In *Nature Red in Tooth and Claw,* Michael Murray suggests this possibility in his treatment of the problem of animal suffering, though it seems he only mentions it as a live option available to someone who, for theological reasons, wanted to deny that animals actually suffer. He does not appear to actually endorse this claim, however.

[11] Grandin and Johnson, *Animals in Translation*, 189. Her comment about the "all-powerful" human frontal lobes is, hopefully, hyperbolic.

one particularly amusing story, Grandin describes her experience following a full hysterectomy:

> When *I* was "spayed" […] I acted more like my friend's Lab [who had been spayed but did not show many signs of pain] than a post-surgical human being. The nurses said that I didn't use anywhere near the amount of IV painkiller other patients did. Then when I went home, I took one prescription pain pill and that was it. I didn't need any more.
>
> In the hospital I ran a little experiment on myself. When I was sure the nurses weren't around, I got out of bed and got down on all fours like a dog […] I found out that as long as I held still my pain was a lot less than it was standing up or sitting down. Crawling felt terrible, but not as bad as walking did. Still, even on all fours I didn't feel like jumping on a sofa, so obviously I'm not as impervious to pain as a Labrador retriever. Then again, no *dog* is as impervious to pain as a Labrador retriever, either […]
>
> It's possible there's something about being a four-legged creature instead of a two-legged creature that makes the pain of physical injuries less intense. But even if that turns out to be true, I expect it's going to be only part of the explanation for why animals act as if they have less pain than we do for the same injury. Eventually we'll find out that the real explanation for the difference is a difference inside the brain.[12]

Ultimately, the scientific evidence currently available is interesting and suggestive, but it fails to prove that animals are phenomenally conscious, at least to the skeptic. Indeed, it may be that no amount of empirical knowledge about animals will tell us for sure whether animals are phenomenally conscious. Arguments that appeal to scientific data, after all, will generally take the form of an argument from analogy or an inference to the best explanation, even if they are more sophisticated than the anecdotal arguments given by the average pet owner. As such, any critic who wants to deny their conclusion need only point to important dissimilarities or alternative explanations in order to weaken these arguments.

Another way to weaken the connection between behavior and consciousness is to point to experiments that show how organisms that probably are not conscious can often

[12] Ibid., 188–89.

act as if they are. For instance, Peter Harrison notes that protozoa are capable of "learning" by habituation. Harrison grants that not all learning processes work like those in protozoa, though he concludes that, in general, "learning can take place without the requirement of consciousness."[13] Others have noted that animals are capable of *nociception*—the detection of and reaction to noxious stimuli—without pain. Humans, for instance, reflexively remove their hands from a stove before any awareness of heat, while rats with severed spinal columns can exhibit "a number of pain-related pain behaviors seemingly explained by conscious awareness and memory of pain [that can be] explained entirely by complex neural processing in the spinal column."[14]

Of course, the fact that nociceptive behaviors *can* be explained without reference to phenomenal states does not imply (or, I think, even strongly suggest) that those behaviors are not accompanied by real pain. At best, these studies show that because there is no *necessary* connection between certain behaviors and consciousness, we should be cautious about attributing consciousness without strong evidence.

Skeptics also mention evidence that pain is largely psychological, and thus should be associated with higher-order faculties. Harrison claims that the pain of childbirth "is almost negligible for women in some cultures."[15] He also notes the great differences in pain thresholds for physiologically similar people; the reduced awareness of pain in soldiers, athletes, and hypnotized individuals; and the effectiveness of placebos in pain

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[13] Peter Harrison, "Theodicy and Animal Pain," *Philosophy* 64, no. 247 (January 1989): 91.

[14] Murray, *Nature Red in Tooth and Claw*, 66. The study Murray cites is described in James Grant, "Learning and Memory without a Brain," in *The Cognitive Animal: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives on Animal Cognition*, ed. Collin Allen and Gordon M. Berghardt (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002), 77–88. See also Allen, "Animal Pain," 632.

[15] Harrison, "Theodicy and Animal Pain," 86.

treatment.[16] Thus, despite their physiological similarities with humans, Harrison (among others) concludes that the psychological differences between humans and animals may be so great that we cannot reliably say that animals can suffer in a morally significant way.[17]

Granted, psychological factors are important to the perception of pain and the subject's attitude toward pain, and it may be that animal psychology is so foreign that we cannot imagine what pain is like for another species. Yet neither the wide differences in pain tolerance among individuals and across cultures nor the effectiveness of placebos in pain management imply that pain is entirely psychological. At best, they suggest that animal pain is not as bad as in humans, but they do not imply that animals are completely unaware of pain, or that an injury that would cause agony in a human would not be agonizing for an animal.

To summarize, there is a lot of scientific evidence that further supports the commonsense notion that animals are conscious creatures. Of course, these experiments don't prove conclusively that animals are conscious, because critics can often suggest explanations that are consistent with the data but do not appeal to mental states. Nevertheless, at best these alternative explanations show that the available evidence is inconclusive. But, as I have argued in the previous section, it is insufficient merely to show that the available evidence is inconclusive. Because the belief in animal consciousness is a matter of common sense, a successful rebuttal must give reasons that are at least as apparent as the original belief, but the skeptical arguments we have seen thus far fail to do

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[16] Ibid.

[17] See, for instance, Peter Carruthers, *Phenomenal Consciousness: A Naturalistic Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); David Bakan, *Disease, Pain and Sacrifice: Toward a Psychology of Suffering* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968).

this. In the next section, we will consider some skeptical arguments that point to some important human feature that animals seem to lack and argue that this feature is necessary for consciousness. Once again, I will argue that these arguments fail to meet the standard given in the first section.

Neo-Cartesian Arguments against Animal Consciousness

Though perhaps not the first to deny that animals can suffer, Rene Descartes is certainly the most notorious. For this reason, skeptics about animal consciousness are often described as *neo-Cartesian*, even though most of them reject Descartes' mind-body dualism. They also adopt varying degrees of skepticism about animal consciousness. Descartes is commonly thought to occupy one extreme, the position that beasts have no consciousness whatsoever and that their behavior is entirely reflexive.[18] Others believe that animals have *access consciousness*, while lacking *phenomenal consciousness*. On this view, animal consciousness is analogous to humans who sleepwalk or drive "on autopilot": animals take in and react to stimuli, but without having any awareness of sensation, either because their nervous system is too simple to produce sensations, or because they do experience sensations but are not aware of them.[19] Yet another view grants that animals

[18] While some of Descartes' writing gives this impression, other passages suggest a more nuanced view. For more on this issue, see Michael Murray, *Nature Red in Tooth and Claw*, 49-52. Murray goes on to describe at least four ways of being a neo-Cartesian, which guides the descriptions given here. Murray does not fully endorse neo-Cartesianism, though he argues that despite its unpopularity, "the evidence against the neo-Cartesian position is quite weak." Ibid., 70.

[19] A similar phenomenon is "blindsight," in which patients who have a blindspot in a part of their visual field (a "scotoma") can nevertheless identify objects that are placed in these blind spots. Peter Carruthers once argued that animals behave in ways similar to blindsight patients, but he has since backed off this claim and now accepts a "higher order thought" (HOT) account of consciousness. For more on HOT theories, see, Carruthers 1998a, b, 2000, as well as David Rosenthal, *Consciousness and the Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). A similar view, the higher-order *experience* or "Inner Sense" account, rejects the claim that a creature must form *thoughts* or *concepts* about first-order mental states, but still insists that the creature must have some sort of inner perception of the first-order state in order to be phenomenally conscious. Since this account does not require concept formation in the animal, proponents of this view are

experience pain and are aware of it, but like people with a damaged or absent prefrontal cortex (the leucotomy patients described earlier, for example), they do not think of the pain as undesirable. And finally, some have suggested that animals consciously experience pain, but because they lack a unifying sense of self, they are unable to synthesize successive pains into a single painful experience.

Many of the reasons given for these positions overlap, so rather than deal with each position separately, I want to consider the claims commonly made by neo-Cartesians. Apart from some of the empirical arguments described in the previous section, neo-Cartesian arguments typically highlight some difference between humans and animals and claim that animals lack some feature necessary for consciousness. Stephen Budiansky, for example, asserts that *language use* is necessary for consciousness: "Whether or not language causes consciousness, language is so intimately tied to consciousness that the two seem inseparable."[20] Others promote a *higher-order thought* (HOT) theory, in which an animal is phenomenally conscious just in case there is a first-order mental state that is "available" for a subject to think about directly. For the HOT theorist, colors and sounds may produce visual or audible sensations in an animal, but unless an animal can think about that sensation, it is unaware of the experience. For Peter Carruthers, moreover, the requisite higher-order thoughts are impossible unless the creature has a theory of mind, the ability to attribute mental states to itself and to infer the existence of mental states in others.

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more likely to attribute consciousness to non-human animals. For more on the Inner Sense account of consciousness, see William Lycan, *Consciousness and Experience* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996).

[20] Stephen Budiansky, *If a Lion Could Talk: Animal Intelligence and the Evolution of Consciousness* (New York: The Free Press, 1998), 193. Quoted from Temple Grandin, "Do Animals and People with Autism Have True Consciousness?," *Evolution and Cognition* 8 (2002): 241–48. See also Peter Carruthers, *Language, Thought, and Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

The most obvious objection is that, according to these theories, young children are not conscious, for they generally do not begin using language until they are at least a year old, and they do not appear to have a theory of mind until age four.[21] Now, this does not by itself disprove the language or "theory of mind" requirements—Carruthers, after all, is willing to accept that young children lack consciousness—but the conclusion should strike us as extreme enough to suspect that *something* is amiss.

Temple Grandin argues against the language requirement, using the fact that she thinks in pictures and uses language only to "narrate the visual images that form [her] thoughts," along with the bold assertion that she is fully conscious.[22] The same can be said for some other autistic people, as well as adults who, though not mentally disabled, never learned to use language.[23]

The higher-order thought theories, meanwhile, are similarly weak, for even if HOT theories give an accurate account of consciousness, several experiments suggest that several mammals and perhaps some birds have a theory of mind. Gordon Gallup's famous mirror test of self-recognition suggests that chimpanzees are self-aware, and recent studies have shown that dolphins, orangutans, and elephants also pass the mirror test.[24] Other

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[21] This objection is raised by Colin Allen, based on experiments aimed at determining whether children could attribute false beliefs to other people.

[22] Grandin, "Do Animals and People with Autism Have True Consciousness?," 241. She goes on to argue that animals can form general concepts of "good" and "bad" (i.e., "pleasant" and "unpleasant") and uses her own mental processing to describe how a creature can form abstract categories, reason, and make decisions based on a non-linguistic mode of thought.

[23] In *Animals in Translation,* Grandin describes the case of Ildefonso, "a deaf mute Mexican immigrant who was raised in a town that had no education for deaf children," who was nevertheless fully conscious and even able to get a job and, eventually, learned a few words of sign language.

[24] In Gallup's original experiment, a group of chimpanzees who were familiar with mirrors were anesthetized, and half of them were also marked with dye on their foreheads. Upon waking, the chimpanzees were given mirrors with which to inspect themselves. The marked chimpanzees, it was found, touched their foreheads significantly more often than chimpanzees who were either unmarked or not allowed to look at a

experiments suggest that chimpanzees are capable of deliberately deceptive behavior, which would prove that at least chimps have a theory of mind.[25] Of course, skeptics have alternative explanations for these experimental results that generally appeal to behavioral conditioning through trial and error, and others point to experiments in which "chimpanzees apparently fail to understand the role of eyes in providing visual information to humans."[26] Nevertheless, these skeptical arguments do not give us good reason to doubt that all nonhuman animals lack a theory of mind. They merely suggest that the available experiments have not sufficiently proven theory of mind in nonhuman species.

Conclusion

Recall that my goal in this essay was not to prove beyond doubt that nonhuman animals are phenomenally conscious, can feel pain, or suffer from their injuries. Rather, I began from the assumption that, for the great majority of us, the suffering of animals is an *obvious* fact about the world, and argued that we are justified in accepting the obvious unless and until a convincing counterargument is given. As we have seen, the available empirical evidence suggests that the higher vertebrates possess some form of phenomenal consciousness. And while it is possible to interpret some of the experimental data in ways that do not appeal to consciousness, these alternative explanations are rather implausible. The common neo-Cartesian arguments, meanwhile, are even more implausible. Thus, for

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mirror. Reports of mirror tests with bottlenose dolphins and elephants can be found in Diana Reiss and Lori Marino, "Mirror Self-Recognition in the Bottlenose Dolphin: A Case of Cognitive Convergence," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 98, no. 10 (May 8, 2001): 5937–42. and Joshua M. Plotnik, Frans B. M. de Waal, and Diana Reiss, "Self-Recognition in an Asian Elephant," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 103, no. 45 (November 7, 2006): 17053–57.

[25] Brian Hare et al., "Chimpanzees Know What Conspecifics Do and Do Not See," *Animal Behaviour* 59, no. 4 (April 2000): 771–85.

[26] Allen, "Animal Consciousness."

the great majority of us, the suffering of animals is a sad fact about the world that begs for an explanation.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Global Problem of Evil:
Death, Pain, and Emotional Distress

Introduction

Assuming that animals actually do suffer, we may now address the existential problem of animal suffering in more detail. The next two chapters will focus on what I will call the *global argument from moral outrage,* which states

g1. The overall pattern of animal suffering in the world is morally outrageous to me.

g2. I am convinced that my moral outrage is rational and properly directed (at least in part) at God.

g3. If (g1) and (g2), then I cannot believe in God, let alone love, trust, and worship God.

g4. Therefore, I cannot believe in God, let alone love, trust, and worship God.

In this chapter and the next I will not attempt to solve the global problem of animal suffering, for I ultimately think that all the goods in the present world are insufficient to justify the pain and suffering contained in it. Instead, I will consider some attempts to mitigate the problem, thereby reducing moral outrage about the pattern of animal suffering and raising hope that God may be good after all. In the next chapter I will consider the various causes of suffering, like diseases, natural disasters, and predation. I will give several reasons why God might choose to create such a harsh world, rather than a much more ideal one or even a world that is slightly better than ours. In this chapter, I will consider more general questions. First, does the mortality of earthly organisms—the mere

fact that all living things eventually die—pose an existential problem? In order to be morally outraged about death, one must be convinced that death is always bad for the dying creature and that all life ought to be everlasting. I will give reason to doubt both of those convictions, concluding that the suffering and grief that surrounds death may be problematic, but not the simple fact of death itself. Next, I will consider whether God is justified in creating animals with a capacity for pain. I will address two attempts to justify pain and argue that both are unsuccessful. I will conclude that if pain is to be justified, there must be something about pain that is essential to a very great good, a good that overwhelms all pain and makes it worthwhile. Finally, I will consider the problem of emotional trauma. As in the discussion on pain, I will argue that God could have made autonomous creatures that thrive in a dangerous world yet have no capacity for emotional distress. However, I will argue, it is good for animals to feel negative emotions insofar as they reflect a proper attitude about things in the animal's environment.

Mortality and Death

Death clearly poses an existential problem insofar as it causes suffering. The death of a parent will often leave its offspring unable to find food or protection. The fear of death can be overwhelming, and grief for those left behind can make life seem empty and meaningless. There is also, of course, the pain associated with dying—the constant pain of a terminal illness or the overwhelming pain of a fatal injury—though in this regard, death is actually a relief from suffering and may be considered a good thing. In later chapters I will address the several ways that animals die, as well as the various misfortunes

associated with death. At present, however, I want to focus on death itself. Is the mere fact that animals are mortal worthy of moral outrage? Ultimately, I do not think so.

To be morally outraged about death, one must judge, first, that death itself is bad, apart from the miseries associated with it. Second, one must judge that life ought to be everlasting. Also, to be convinced that this moral outrage is proper, one must be thoroughly convinced that these two judgments are correct. To understand why, consider a parallel case. If you are completely convinced that human personhood begins at the moment of conception, then the practice of abortion (except in rare cases) will be morally outrageous to you. Now suppose, however, that you encounter a strong (at least very plausible, if not thoroughly convincing) argument that personhood does *not* begin at conception. In that case, you might still feel outrage about abortion, and you would rightly note that *if* personhood begins at conception, then most abortions are morally outrageous. However, the stronger the reason to doubt that personhood begins at conception, the less confidence you should have that your moral outrage is proper. The same is true about one's moral outrage about death. If there is good reason to doubt the two earlier-mentioned judgments, then there is good reason to think that death itself is not a proper cause of moral outrage. In the following discussion, I will attempt to give reasons to doubt that (1) death is always bad for the dying creature and (2) life ought to be everlasting.

Is Death Bad?

To be morally outraged about death, one must first be convinced that death is bad, apart from any misery associated with it. While this may seem like a straightforward judgment, several distinctions and clarifications are in order. First, we may consider whether death is bad for the world at large—that is, whether a world with death would be

better, all else being equal, than a world without. Alternatively, one might consider the extent to which death is bad for the creature that dies. For our purposes, however bad death may be in general, it does not seem bad enough to raise an existential problem of evil. It does not seem that God genuinely *owes* the world anything or has any obligation with respect to the world at large. God may be motivated to create one world rather than another, and it is likely that the relative goodness of each world plays a part in God's creative decision. Yet even if the actual world would be better if there were no death in it, any detriment to the world at large does not provoke any moral protest. What *would* cause moral outrage is if death is terribly bad for the dying creatures. For this reason, I want to consider how bad death is for mortal creatures, if indeed it is bad at all.

We might also consider whether death is intrinsically or extrinsically bad for the deceased. According to one common account, death is bad because it deprives the creature of a set of goods that it would have enjoyed if it had not died. The extrinsic goods of life might include pleasant sensations and emotions, meaningful relationships, and development of skills, while the intrinsic goodness of life would involve the good that an organism gains simply because it is alive. Whether life is intrinsically valuable is somewhat controversial. Some philosophers have argued that the goodness or badness of life consists solely in extrinsic things, while for others it seems that life is intrinsically very valuable. For simplicity, I will bypass this controversy and avoid the intrinsic/extrinsic distinction, except when necessary. Thus, when speaking of the value of life and whether life is on-balance good or bad for an animal, I will be referring to the sum of the intrinsic value of life (if there is any) and the extrinsic value or disvalue of that life.[1]

[1] Later, this distinction will become more important. For instance, if the intrinsic value of life is very high, it will be easier to discount the suffering that a creature endures. One might say, for instance, *Yes,*

With those clarifications in mind, let us return to the original question. When considering one's own mortality, it is natural to think of death as bad, especially when one has lived a mostly good life. However, many philosophers have argued that death is not bad at all. For instance, in Plato's dialogue *Phaedo*, Socrates spends the final hours of his life trying to convince his friends that death is actually good. According to Socrates, the body is an impediment to true wisdom and virtue, and therefore one should ignore sensations and bodily desires whenever possible. The proper philosopher, then, desires the soul to be free from the body and lives his life as close to this ideal state as possible. In this way, Socrates continues, "those who practice philosophy in the right way are training for dying and they fear death least of all men."[2] After speculating about what might happen to the soul after death, he concludes, "I think it is fitting for a man to risk the belief—for the risk is a noble one—that this, or something like this, is true about our souls and their dwelling places, since the soul is evidently immortal, and a man should repeat this to himself as if it were an incantation."[3]

The Stoic philosopher Seneca was less confident about the immortality of the soul, but he argued that in either case, death is not an evil. "Death either destroys us or sets us free," he writes. "If we are released, the better part of us remains having lost its burden; if

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the suffering of that creature is very bad, but the fact that it was alive at all was such a benefit to it that it vastly outweighs anything that could have happened to it. Its life is on-balance very good, and thus God has been very good to it. Although I think that life is intrinsically very valuable, I do not think it is overwhelmingly good. Rather, it seems to me that an animal's life might be so miserable that its life is on-balance bad and not worth living. This claim will be crucial for my argument in the sixth chapter.

[2] Plato, *Phaedo,* 67d in Plato, *Five Dialogues*, 2nd ed (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Pub. Co, 2002), 104.

[3] Ibid., 114d (p. 150).

we are destroyed, nothing remains and good and evil alike are removed."[4] This hope for a good afterlife is foundational for many religions and a primary reason to think that even if death is intrinsically bad, it is defeasible. Rather than death representing a victory over life, these religions teach that life will win in the end, either through reincarnation, bodily resurrection, or a loftier, spiritual existence.

Of course, one can deny that death is bad without having any hope for a postmortem existence. According to Epicurus, the only intrinsic values are tied to good and bad sensations, and death is the end of all sense experience. Since, for the Epicurean, one cannot be harmed by something unless it actually *bothers* him, death is not bad at all. "When we exist," Epicurus argued, "death is not yet present, and when death is present, then we do not exist. Therefore, it is relevant neither to the living nor to the dead, since it does not affect the former, and the latter do not exist."[5]

Against the Epicureans, some contemporary philosophers argue that the badness of death lies in the fact that it deprives us of the goods of life. While there are several different suggestions for how to estimate the badness of death, the basic idea is that death is bad for an individual insofar as her life would have been better if she had not died at that time.[6] For instance, the sudden and accidental death of an infant is extremely bad for the infant,

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[4] Lucius Annaeus Seneca, *Dialogues and Letters*, trans. C. D. N. Costa, Penguin Classics (London ; New York: Penguin Books, 1997), 91.

[5] Epicurus, *The Epicurus Reader: Selected Writings and Testimonia*, trans. Brad Inwood and Lloyd P. Gerson (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994), 29. For a contemporary defense of the Epicurean view, see Martha Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), 192–238.

[6] Defenses of this Deprivation Account of death can be found in Thomas Nagel, "Death," *Noûs* 4, no. 1 (February 1, 1970): 73–80; Fred Feldman, "Some Puzzles About the Evil of Death," *The Philosophical Review* 100, no. 2 (April 1, 1991): 205–27; John Martin Fischer, "Epicureanism about Death and Immortality," *The Journal of Ethics* 10, no. 4 (December 1, 2006): 355–81; Ben Bradley, "How Bad Is Death?," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 37, no. 1 (March 1, 2007): 111–27.

because she has been deprived not only of the intrinsic good of being alive, but also a host of extrinsic goods. She will never realize her full intellectual potential, never become successful in life, never fall in love or get married, never have children or grandchildren, and so on. If the intrinsic value of life is not overwhelmingly good, these Deprivation Accounts also allow for death to be on-balance good for an individual, provided that its life would have been on-balance bad if it had not died at that time.

In its favor, the Deprivation Account reflects our commonsense notions about death. It helps explain, for instance, why the death of children seems especially tragic, why we hope that someone died immediately in a car crash (rather than living several minutes longer in great pain), and why we choose to euthanize a suffering pet. In each case, it seems, we are comparing the value of an individual's life when he actually dies to the value of his life if he had continued to live.

Despite its initial plausibility, however, the Deprivation Account faces two objections raised by the Epicurean. First, how can something be bad for a person if it never actually *bothers* him or her? Second, how can death harm an individual that no longer exists? In response to the first question, one can describe scenarios in which something bad happens to someone even though he or she never finds out about it and is never actually bothered by it. For example, if a man cheats on his wife and gets away with it, it seems that he has harmed her, even if she never suspects the infidelity and is completely satisfied with her marriage. Similarly, if a man suffers some brain injury that reduces him to an adult-sized infant, it seems that something bad has happened to him, even if he is happy in his new life and is completely unaware of what has happened to him.[7]

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[7] This example comes from Nagel, "Death."

The second question is more difficult to answer. One may give further examples in which a person appears to be harmed or benefitted even though he is dead and (it is presumed) does not exist. For instance, we try to fulfill the dying request of loved ones. We give posthumous awards and attempt to restore the slandered reputation of the deceased. We consider it bad *for* someone when embarrassing secrets are revealed about him after his death. However, the Epicurean will not be persuaded by such examples and would likely object along these lines: *Perhaps I can be harmed by my spouse's unfaithfulness, even when I never suspect it, but in that case I still exist to be harmed. In these latter cases, however, I do not. It simply does not seem possible to harm something that no longer exists. In fact, the only way to think that I can be harmed after death is to imagine myself as existing somehow, in some nebulous way as an existing subject that can be harmed or benefitted.*[8]

Notice the path of the debate so far. Against the Epicurean, one may give examples of a living person being harmed without recognizing it, but the Epicurean will respond that the examples do not show that *dead* people can be harmed, precisely because the people in these examples are still alive. To make the examples more conclusive, the non-Epicurean could give examples in which a dead person is supposedly benefitted or harmed. However, then the Epicurean will simply note that these examples are question-begging: unless one already supposes that no-longer-existing subjects may be harmed, the examples will be unconvincing. At this point, the two sides appear to have reached what John Martin Fischer calls a *dialectical stalemate,* wherein the disputants fundamentally disagree about a

[8] See Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire*, 192–238.

principle, and any example or argument for or against the principle will either be inconclusive or question-begging.[9]

If Fischer is correct that the two sides have reached an impasse (and I think he is), then the Epicurean view of death is not based on a confusion, but rather a fundamentally different way of seeing the world. And since their views are based on simple, plausible assumptions—namely, that all good and bad and all harms and benefits are based in pleasant or unpleasant sensations, which are impossible when we are dead—it is at least plausible that death is not bad at all. Further, as noted before, even if the Deprivation Account is correct, it does not follow that death is always bad. For if one can be harmed by the deprivation of future goods, then death can be a benefit by preventing further misfortunes (assuming that it is possible to suffer so much that one's life is on-balance bad). If so, then one may be morally outraged by specific instances of death, but it would be improper to be outraged by the fact that death occurs.

In summary, then, we have seen three reasons to think that death is not bad for the dying individual. First, perhaps death is not the end, but rather marks a transition to a different, better existence. And if we suppose that God created the world and all life in it (a natural assumption if one is tempted to be outraged at God), then it is plausible that death is not the end. Second, even if death *is* the end, there is still reason to doubt that death necessarily harms the individual. For, on one hand, if the Epicureans are correct, then death can neither harm nor benefit a no-longer-existing subject. On the other hand, even if death *can* harm an individual, it is also possible for death to benefit an individual by

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[9] Fischer describes dialectical stalemates in more detail in Fischer, "Epicureanism about Death and Immortality," 366–373.

saving her from future misery. If any of these alternatives are true, then the circumstances of a particular death may be problematic, but not the mere fact that living things are mortal.

Should Life Be Eternal?

To be morally outraged by death, one must also judge that death *ought* never occur, which implies the judgment that life ought to be everlasting. However, while there are some reasons to think that life ought to be eternal, these reasons are not conclusive.

One reason to think that life ought to be eternal is that people generally fear death and desire to continue living indefinitely, at least for as long as they can maintain hope that their lives in the future will be on-balance good for them. History and folklore are full of characters who search for the secret to eternal life and youth, and many world religions motivate their followers with promises of an afterlife. In Genesis and throughout Christian Scripture, death is portrayed as an enemy and a result of human sin. The Bible promises eternal life to the faithful, especially in the New Testament, though it is unclear about the fate of animals.[10] Nevertheless, the apostle Paul taught that Christ's resurrection defeated sin, death, and the world's "bondage to decay."[11] If death truly is an enemy and if Christ's atonement defeated death itself, it is natural to suppose that this victory applies not only to humans, but to all organisms.

Having said that, however, none of these reasons are strong enough to conclusively show that life—especially non-human life—should be immortal.[12] For one thing, even if

[10] A few eschatological prophecies mention animals, though they could be interpreted as merely figurative. See, for example, Isaiah 11:6-9, 40:5; Hosea 2:16-20; and Revelation 5.

[11] Romans 8:21.

[12] In fact, according to Bernard Williams, an immortal human life would be meaningless. However, his argument is explicitly based on psychological facts about humans that do not apply to most animals.

our strong desire never to die implied that humans should be immoral (which is itself debatable), that desire does not typically extend to animals. Most animals do not appear to be aware of their mortality, much less desire immortality. Furthermore, while death often seems tragic, it also seems completely natural. Each organism's life follows a progression with a beginning, middle, and end. Animals grow and mature, learn, develop relationships, reproduce, and eventually die, leaving room for later generations. Thought of in this way, life is like a song or story, something that is beautiful and worthwhile even though it is temporary, and in part *because* it is temporary. Likewise, if life is properly temporary, then the mere fact that a life ends is not itself bad.

The Epicurean philosopher Luctretius described life as a fine banquet: good and pleasing while it lasts, but with a definite beginning, middle, and end. Just as revelers enjoy their feast while it lasts and leave sated, one should live life fully, so that when it ends we can die content.[13] Now, a guest might complain that a banquet has ended badly or too soon, but to complain that a banquet ends at all not only misunderstands what banquets essentially are, but also offends the host, who offered the feast graciously. Similarly, if life is good and worthwhile, and if we did nothing to deserve being alive, then life is a gift, and we should be we should be thankful for any measure of it that we are given.

Bernard Williams, *Problems of the Self: Philosophical Papers, 1956-1972* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 82–100.

[13] Titus Lucretius Carus, *On the Nature of Things*, trans. Martin Ferguson Smith (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub, 2001). Lucretius was probably borrowing from Epicurus, who said, "The wise man neither rejects life nor fears death. For living does not offend him, nor does he believe not living to be something bad. And just as he does not unconditionally choose the largest amount of food but the most pleasant food, so he savours not the longest time but the most pleasant." Epicurus, "Letter to Monoecus: Diogenes Laertius 10.121-135," in *The Epicurus Reader: Selected Writings and Testimonia*, trans. Brad Inwood and Lloyd P. Gerson (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994), 29.

To be clear, I do not claim that life is supposed to be temporary, only that such a view of life is plausible. Perhaps life is supposed to be permanent, more like a monument or marble statue than an ephemeral work of art. However, if, like a work of art, life is the product of a creative agent, it is up to the artist, not the artwork itself, to decide what sort of art it is, whether it is a statue carved from marble or from ice, a monument or a short story.

To conclude, earlier I described several reasons to think that death is not always bad for the individual. Here, I have argued that life may be properly temporary and that, therefore, death may not be intrinsically bad at all. And since moral outrage about death requires a firm conviction that death is very bad and that life ought never end, it seems that such moral outrage is unwarranted.

On the Capacity for Pain

What undoubtedly *does* pose an existential problem is the reality of agonizing pain. Leaving aside the overwhelming amount of pain and the numerous causes of intense pain, the mere fact that animals have a capacity for such pain is deeply troubling. In this section I will address two attempts to justify pain. I will begin with C. S. Lewis' attempt to show that the capacity for pain is very limited, and thus the problem is much less significant than we might at first assume. I will grant that the problem of animal suffering is rather limited but conclude that the total amount of animal suffering is still overwhelming. Next, I will consider arguments that pain is biologically necessary for sentient, autonomous animals. I will grant that pain is biologically and psychologically necessary for sentient creatures that actually exist; however, I will argue that an omnipotent God could establish biological and psychological laws that do not require pain. Thus, I conclude, the biological utility of pain

is not enough to justify it. Instead, I will argue, if pain is to be justified it must be defeated by some overwhelming good of which pain is an essential part.

First Attempt: The Limited Significance of Animal Pain

In the previous chapter we looked at some attempts to deny the problem of animal pain altogether. Clearly, if only humans have a capacity for suffering, while animals exhibit behaviors that only *appear* to indicate pain, then there is no real problem of animal suffering. However, if, as I argued, we have good reason to think that at least some non-human animals feel pain, then the problem remains. Even so, one might attempt to mitigate this problem—and, in turn, the moral protest it provokes—by showing that the capacity for pain is quite limited in the animal kingdom.

For instance, while granting that animals may be conscious and experience real pain, C.S. Lewis famously speculated that perhaps their suffering is insignificant. Central to Lewis' arguments are two postulates, what Michael Murray calls the "No-Continuity" and "No-Subject" conditions.[14] According to the "No-Continuity" condition, merely sentient creatures experience a series of sensations, including pain, but they are unable to unite each momentary sensation into a single conscious experience. As Lewis describes the idea, "Their nervous system delivers all the *letters* A, P, N, I, but since they cannot read they never build it up into the word PAIN."[15] This inability to "read" implies, according

[14] Murray, *Nature Red in Tooth and Claw*, 43–47. Lewis' formulation of his view is somewhat muddled and admittedly speculative. I follow Murray's interpretation because it captures two distinct claims that Lewis does not carefully distinguish in his own writing. Lewis describes his view in *The Problem of Pain: How Human Suffering Raises Almost Intolerable Intellectual Problems* (New York: Collier, 1962). C. E. M. Joad's objections and Lewis' replies can be found in C. S. Lewis, *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1970), 161–171.

[15] Lewis, *Problem of Pain*, 138. Peter Harrison develops this possibility in "Theodicy and Animal Pain," *Philosophy* 64, no. 247 (1989): 79–92. This is not to say that the individual pains experienced by such non-self-conscious animals is negligible or morally irrelevant, but it also seems obvious that a succession of

to Lewis, that merely sentient animals cannot think of themselves as individual subjects that endure through time. To illustrate, Lewis compares the enduring self to a river bed along which a stream of sensations flow. For the merely sentient creature there is no permanent bed lying beneath the stream. He continues,

> This would mean that if you give such a creature two blows with a whip, there are, indeed two pains: but there is no coordinating self, which can recognise that 'I have had two pains.' Even in the single pain, there is no self to say 'I am in pain'—for if it could distinguish itself from the sensation—from the bed of the stream—sufficiently to say 'I am in pain,' it would also be able to connect the two sensations as *its* experience.[16]

Murray calls this the "No-Subject" condition and suggests that such an animal might be "like a genuinely Humean bundle" that experiences a series of distinct conscious states.[17] It would be blissfully ignorant of anything but the present moment, oblivious to previous pains and unable to dread any future pains.

One objection to the "No-Subject" condition is that it seems irrelevant. As C. E. M. Joad notes, "Pain is felt even if there is no continuing *ego* to feel it and to relate it to past and future pain. It is the fact that pain is felt, no matter who or what feels it…that demands explanation."[18] Lewis grants as much, but replies that it *is* relevant how much the animal actually suffers, adding, "I still think it possible for there to be a pain so instantaneous (through the absence of all perception of succession) that its 'unvalue', if I

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pain states that happen to occur in a single, oblivious animal is much less worrying than the same succession synthesized into a single experience by a creature with self-consciousness.

[16] Lewis, *Problem of Pain*, 132–33.

[17] Murray, *Nature Red in Tooth and Claw*, 45.

[18] C. E. M. Joad, "The Pains of Animals: A Problem in Theology," in *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1970), 163.

may coin the word, is indistinguishable from zero."[19] Lewis seems to reason as follows: Feeling a finite amount of pain for one second is bad; feeling the same amount of pain for half a second is half as bad, and a finite pain of infinitesimal duration is negligibly bad. Of course, the intensity of pain would be the same, as well as the total duration that the animal feels it, regardless of whether the animal feels a single, ten-second-long pain or countless infinitesimal pains (just as traveling a ten-foot distance is the same whether it is traveled in one leap or in countless tiny steps). Thus, even if each instantaneous pain is insignificant, it does not follow that the entirety of the animal's pain is insignificant.

Even so, it seems that the suffering of a merely sentient creature would be greatly diminished. Because each moment of pain is consciously unrelated, the fact that each individual pain occurs in successive moments does not matter. As far as the merely sentient animal can tell, ten seconds of intense pain endured all at once is no worse than ten seconds of pain spread across its entire life: If I had to endure ten seconds of terrible pain, I would want to spread it out as much as possible. I would much rather endure a half-second of intense pain twenty times a year than to endure ten seconds of intense pain all at once, and I would much rather endure .01 seconds of intense pain a thousand times in a decade than to experience it all at once. And if I could feel countless pains spread across my entire life that are so brief that I immediately forget them (though still adding up to ten seconds of intense pain), that would be even better. It seems, therefore, that the significance of suffering does not add straightforwardly, but rather the subjective duration of intense pains matters much more than total time. Consequently, insofar as there are animals that are

[19] Lewis, *God in the Dock*, 168.

capable of pain but are merely sentient, the problem of animal suffering is greatly diminished.

The problem is that many species appear to be much more than merely sentient. Lewis correctly notes that an animal behaving *as if* it remembers past pains does not prove that it consciously remembers, but, as argued in the previous chapter, a decisive proof of animal consciousness is unnecessary. To be fair to Lewis, his speculations about "No-Subject" and "No-Continuity" are offered as mere suggestions. "All we can say for certain," he writes, "is that if God is good (and I think we have grounds for saying that He is) then the appearance of divine cruelty in the animal world must be a false appearance. What the reality behind the false appearance may be we can only guess."[20] But the moral significance of animal suffering is much more apparent, at least to me, than God's existence, let alone God's perfect goodness. Thus, Lewis' speculations about animal suffering are not plausible enough to deflect the argument from moral outrage.

Nevertheless, Lewis is probably correct that the amount of suffering in the animal kingdom is much less than it initially appears. Recall that invertebrates are generally believed to be incapable of pain, and there is debate about whether reptiles and other lower vertebrates can feel pain. Only higher vertebrates, especially mammals and some species of birds, are widely accepted to experience pain.[21]

If modern researchers are correct, a huge proportion of what seems to be cruelty in the animal kingdom does not actually involve suffering. For instance, the *Ichneumonidae* (a predatory wasp that stings caterpillars and lays eggs in its living flesh, whereupon the

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[20] Ibid., 167–168.

[21] Refer to Section 3.3 of the previous chapter for a summary of the empirical evidence about animals and pain.

newly-hatched grubs feed upon the living, but paralyzed caterpillar) was deeply troubling to Charles Darwin, among others. But if the caterpillars never actually suffered, then perhaps we should be no more disturbed by this predatory wasp than we would be by grubs that devour a plant.[22]

Moreover, given neurological and behavioral differences between humans and lower animals, we do not know enough about the conscious experience of animals to determine how much they are capable of suffering. It would be a mistake to assume that animals that can feel pain and suffer to the same extent that a human would in similar circumstances. Recall, for instance, Temple Grandin's suggestion that highly-functioning frontal lobes make humans especially sensitive to pain, so that while animals can feel pain it might not bother them as much.[23]

It is worth noting that the overall amount of suffering in the world is much less than it initially seems, both because it helps to soften one's moral protest about the prevalence of suffering in the world, and because it makes it easier to think that the good in the world—its beauty and grandeur and order, the complexity and diversity of life, the moral values exhibited among humans, the pleasure and contentment of sentient creatures, and all the other goods—outweigh the bad. On the other hand, many of these goods do not benefit the suffering creature itself, so even though its suffering may contribute to a better whole, it is doubtful whether *its* life is on-balance good. Further, even if a small fraction of all animals are capable of suffering, and even if a small fraction of those animals actually

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[22] Charles Darwin, "A Letter to Asa Gray, 22 May 1860," accessed June 17, 2013, http://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/entry-2814. The Ichneumonidae is also mentioned in Joad, "The Pains of Animals: A Problem in Theology." a response to C. S. Lewis' treatment of animal pain.

[23] Grandin and Johnson, *Animals in Translation*, 188–89.

suffer terribly, there is still an enormous amount of suffering that demands explanation. In short, the limited scope of pain in the animal kingdom may make it more plausible that God is good, but it does not completely answer the problem.

Second Attempt: Pain as a Necessary Evil

Rather than denying the significance of animal pain, one might try to justify it instead, arguing that pain is useful, worthwhile, and necessary for autonomous animals. In this section I want to consider these claims in more detail. While I agree that pain is useful and on-balance good for most animals, I do not think that pain is metaphysically necessary for autonomous creatures. It seems that an omnipotent being could make sentient, autonomous organisms that can thrive in their environments without needing pain to keep them safe. Thus, I will argue, if the capacity for pain is justified, it must be from something other than biological utility.

The survival benefits of pain are obvious. Pain directs the subject's attention to injuries and noxious stimuli and forces it to address the problem. The minor pain of a muscle strain compels the animal to favor the injured limb, giving it time to heal properly, though the animal can still choose to ignore the pain if there is enough incentive, as when, for instance, it needs to run away from a predator. More intense pains usually accompany more serious injuries, so that the greater the need to allow for healing or retreat from harmful circumstances, the more difficult it is for the creature to disregard the injury for the sake of some other desire. Even excruciating, long-lasting pains can serve an important purpose. The sudden and terrible pain of a burn, for example, forces an animal to move immediately away from the source of heat, and if the burn caused no permanent tissue damage, the pain quickly subsides, allowing the animal to continue on its way. The long-

lasting pain of a severe burn not only compels the animal to flee from the source of heat, but also to cease all activity related to the injured part so that it can heal. Without the overwhelming, continuous pain the animal would probably not recognize that the injury needs continued care, putting it at greater risk of infection or causing greater damage. Associating pain with particular situations is also a very effective way to teach animals to avoid dangerous circumstances in the future. Humans quickly learn from experience not to touch an open flame or step on sharp glass with bare feet. And, presumably, all other complex mammals similarly benefit from a capacity to suffer.

Clearly pain is biologically useful, but for pain to be justified it must also be on-balance good for the creature. In other words, pain is justified only if the life that helps preserve is on-balance good for that creature. For many animals, life is so full of pain and misery that, arguably, it would have been better for them if they had never lived. However, for most creatures, life is worthwhile. Note, first, that animals are also capable of great physical, mental, and emotional pleasure. Even among animals that have no concept of good or bad, and thus cannot recognize *that* something is good or bad, pleasure and pain often allow the creature to *feel* goodness or badness directly: an animal may not recognize that it is good to eat food, but it can learn to associate eating food with certain pleasant sensations. Aside from pleasure, it is good for an animal simply to have sensations, a mental life, and a variety of experiences. New tastes and smells are good, even if they are not particularly pleasant; it is good to feel warmth, to see colors and hear sounds. We feel sorry for blind and deaf people, not just because their lives are more difficult, but because they are missing out on something valuable. Thus, there is value in the most mundane

moments of an animal's life, when it feels neither pleasure nor pain, but simply listens to, watches, feels, and smells the world around it.

Note, too, that the animals most obviously capable of pain also exhibit the most complex behaviors. They appear to feel emotions and desires, remember past experiences and learn from them, set goals, and decide from an array of options. In short, animals that feel pain also exhibit a level of autonomy that is a great benefit for the creature. The fact that an animal has *chosen* something and acted intentionally to bring it about adds to the value of a pleasurable experience. Even when the experience is unpleasant, there is some added value in it simply because it belongs to the animal that brought it about and that experience helps form its character and personality. Autonomy also allows for many other goods like affection, kindness, noble actions, and, at least in humans, morally significant choices and genuine love.

Briefly put, pain is obviously biologically useful and is an overall benefit for most creatures. But this would not justify pain if the same benefits could be attained in a better way. Many theists have tried to justify pain by arguing that pain is necessary for any organism that acts intentionally and lives in a harsh world like ours. Ultimately, I think these arguments are unsuccessful, but they are worth considering in more detail.

One strategy is to list various alternatives to pain and argue that they would be ineffective as general harm-avoidance mechanisms. Michael Murray argues in this fashion, considering three of the most salient alternatives to pain. First, he notes that animals reflexively react to noxious stimuli, as when we immediately remove a hand from a hot stove before any sensation is felt. However, reflexes would not work as a general

harm-avoidance system, for animals live in complex environments, and reflexes are not sophisticated enough to elicit the proper response in every circumstance. As Murray notes,

> If I step on a tack it is appropriate for me to stop and pull it out of my foot before taking any more steps. But we surely would not want this sort of behavior hardwired into our behavioral repertoire as a reflex. After all, if I am being chased by a hungry grizzly bear and happen to step on a tack, I had better keep running![24]

Second, Murray wonders whether our behavior could be motivated by pleasure instead of pain, but again concludes that this would not work: instead of staying away from danger we would be motivated to expose ourselves to noxious stimuli just so we could feel the pleasure of getting away from it.[25]

Finally, Murray considers avoidance mechanisms that act as a red flag, alerting the animal of the danger so that it can take appropriate action. Ideally, this setup would provide all the benefits of pain, but without the suffering. Against this suggestion Murray argues that without the *painfulness* of pain, we would not be motivated enough to take care of ourselves. To illustrate, Murray describes the experience of Dr. Paul Brand, who worked with leprosy patients. Victims of leprosy often exhibit sores, blisters, and swelling in their limbs. Sometimes their injuries are so severe that they become permanently crippled. It was once assumed that leprosy causes these sores and wounds directly, but eventually Brand discovered that the absence of pain is responsible. Because leprous people cannot feel pain in their extremities, they do not respond appropriately when damage is done to a hand or foot. As a result, minor injuries never have a chance to heal and instead get progressively worse. After identifying the problem, Dr. Brand outfitted his patients with special pressure-sensitive socks and gloves that would emit a loud warning signal when

[24] Murray, *Nature Red in Tooth and Claw*, 118.

[25] Ibid., 120.

excessive pressure had been applied to a hand or foot. Unfortunately, these attempts failed. Brand and his colleagues observed that even their most conscientious patients often disregarded the alarm when they were in the middle of a task, and quickly learned to ignore the alarm altogether. Brand wrote,

> The sobering realization dawned on us that unless we built in a quality of compulsion, our substitute system would never work. Being alerted to the danger is not enough; our patient had to be forced to respond…We tried every alternative before resorting to pain, and finally concluded that…the stimulus has to be unpleasant, just as pain is unpleasant.[26]

Recent studies on animal pain add even more credibility to Brand's conclusion. In one experiment, monkeys were taught to press and hold a button for an extended time in order to get a food reward. But there was a catch. While the monkeys held the button, intense heat was applied to part of their body. They could escape the heat by releasing the button, but in so doing they would also lose the food reward. Researchers found that the monkeys would endure some heat for the sake of a reward, but only to a point. When the heat became too painful, the monkeys chose to escape the heat and give up the food reward. Next, researchers damaged a portion of the monkey's posterior parietal cortex (believed to be essential to the affective pain pathway), hypothesizing that this would allow the monkeys to continue to feel the sensation of pain, but no longer mind it. As expected, they found that the monkeys could still distinguish benign from noxious temperatures, but no longer performed the escape behavior. One likely explanation for this behavior is that without the painfulness of pain, the monkeys' desire for the food reward overwhelmed their desire to avoid injury.[27] Similar studies on other mammalian species produced the same

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[26] Paul Brand and Philip Yancey, *The Gift of Pain: Why We Hurt and What We Can Do About It* (Zondervan, 1997), 194.

[27] Adam Shriver, "Minding Mammals," *Philosophical Psychology* 19, no. 4 (2006): 437.

results. When the affective pain pathway is inhibited, the animal's motivation to protect itself is greatly diminished and is easily overwhelmed by contrary desires.[28]

To this point, one might get the impression that pain is essential for injury avoidance. But is pain really necessary? To be sure, the above considerations strongly suggest that, given the biological and psychological laws that govern earthly animals, pain is essential. However, even if this is right, this seems to be a contingent fact about animals that actually exist, not a metaphysical fact about any sentient organism that might exist. And since an omnipotent being should have power over contingent causal laws, God should be able to create embodied creatures whose psychological makeup is such that pain is unnecessary.[29]

In fact, such a painless creature is easy to imagine. Note that robots can be programmed to avoid dangerous circumstances while carrying out a series of objectives—like *find and conserve fuel, avoid harmful situations, collect flowers and put them in a basket*, and so on—that they prioritize, allowing them to make "decisions" based on extremely complex algorithms. In theory, given enough sensors and sophisticated enough programming, a robot could be designed whose behavior would be nearly indistinguishable from that of an autonomous organism. Now, imagine God bestowing sentience on this robot in the following manner. Its numerous sensors produce real sensations like vision and hearing, and for each pre-programmed objective there is a corresponding desire that varies in strength depending on its relative priority. Again, its behavior would be completely predetermined, though it would *feel* conflicting desires. God could further

[28] See Ibid., 436–439.

[29] This objection is developed in Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence," 205.

establish a causal law such that each behavior is immediately preceded by the feeling of choosing one course of action over the others, along with the feeling that the strongest desire had won over the others. God could even grant the robot feelings of pleasure that correspond to the satisfaction of certain desires. It could get the feeling of a job well done when it picks a flower and places it in a basket; it could feel gratification when it successfully finds and consumes fuel. Indeed, it could have a rich and fulfilling mental life, lacking only the capacity for suffering.

For this sentient machine, pain is obviously unnecessary, for its actions are all predetermined by an exceedingly complex mix of sensory inputs and programming, and none of its sensations or desires have any real effect on its behavior. While the robot may feel as if its desires are driving its actions, those desires are really just along for the ride.[30] Of course, this means that the robot is not truly free in a libertarian sense. But it is commonly assumed that non-human animals also lack libertarian freedom, so the fact that the robot's behavior is completely determined should not be a problem. What might pose a problem is that my imagined robot does not act the way it does *because* of its desires. One might object that even though it feels autonomous and feels as if it is making choices based on its own desires, this is all an illusion. But this is not a serious problem either, for God could alter the causal relationship between the robot's programming and its mental life so that its pre-programmed objectives and priorities give rise to varying desires, which conflict with each other according to divinely-ordained laws, so that the strongest desire

[30] In more technical terms, the robot's mental life is entirely epiphenomenal. Its hardware and software give rise to various mental states, but those mental states have no subsequent effect on its hardware or software.

produces a preference for one course of action (or inaction) over others, and this preference then produces the preferred behavior.

Everything I've described so far seems completely possible for an omnipotent being to bring about. Indeed, programming the robot properly seems to be entirely within the capability of a sufficiently clever and technologically-advanced human. Only the emergence of sensations and desires from unconscious software and hardware seems particularly miraculous—though, given that life and consciousness somehow emerges from non-living, unconscious organic material, it is certainly feasible for an omnipotent being.

One might object that just because something can be imagined without contradiction does not guarantee that it is feasible for an omnipotent God. For instance, it is easy to imagine a world in which every free creature always chooses to do the right thing, though as Plantinga argues, such a world may not be feasible if every moral agent suffers from transworld depravity. However, it is important to note that if something is conceivable without absurdity, we generally assume that it is metaphysically possible and within an omnipotent being’s ability to actualize, especially when the thing in mind is relatively simple. Because my imagined sentient robot is relatively simple—I am only imagining a single entity, after all, not a complex state of affairs—it seems to me that such a creature is feasible. Thus, I must conclude that God could have made sentient creatures who could thrive in a dangerous environment without pain. Consequently, I must conclude that even if pain is biologically useful, this utility is not enough to justify its existence.

How Can Pain Be Justified?

If pain is to be justified, there must be some essential, necessary connection between pain and the good that it enables. That is, it is not enough for the badness of pain to be *balanced off* by the goodness of its biological utility; instead, the badness of pain must be *defeated* by a greater whole, such that the pain itself contributes to that greater whole.[31] For example, the performance of a song may be good overall, despite a few wrong notes. In this case, all the right notes balance off the wrong ones. The wrong notes are still bad and out of place, though the song itself is still good and worthwhile. In contrast, many songs contain disharmony that, when heard in isolation, sound wrong and are even unpleasant, but when heard within the context of the entire song, the discord actually contributes to the song itself. In such cases, the momentary discord is defeated by its incorporation into a good whole.

In a similar way, if an animal's suffering can be incorporated into its life in such a way that the pain actually contributes to the overall goodness of its life, then that suffering would be justified. In the seventh chapter I will argue that the suffering of some animals is never defeated in the course of their lives and that their earthly lives were not worth living. Hence, I will argue, if God is truly loving toward those creatures, it must be that their pain is defeated after death, most plausibly in heaven.

[31] The terms *balancing off* and *defeat* were first defined in Roderick M. Chisholm, "The Defeat of Good and Evil," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 42 (1968): 21–38. Here, I follow Marilyn McCord Adam's description of defeat, in which "a significantly smaller, negatively (or positively) valued part [contributes] to a greater overall positive (or negative) value in the whole." Marilyn McCord Adams, *Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God* (Ithaca, N.Y.; London: Cornell University Press, 2000), 21.

Emotional Trauma

Much of what was argued in the previous section can be applied to the problem of emotional suffering. Again, one can deny that animals suffer significant emotional and mental trauma or one can attempt to justify emotional distress by arguing that it is necessary for any sentient creature that acts according to desires and with perceived goods in mind. As before, however, I do not think these attempts are successful.

Attempts to deny the significance of emotional and mental trauma in animals have more *prima facie* plausibility than attempts to deny that animals suffer intense physical pain. After all, we know even less about animal emotions than we know about their sensations. Thus, while the theist may admit that animals endure emotionally traumatic events, we cannot reliably say how common this is, or how severe and lasting the trauma is. Consequently, skepticism about emotional trauma in animals is much more proper than skepticism about physical suffering. Moreover, the emotional lives of most animals appear to be relatively simple, consisting primarily of emotions that have survival value. So far as we can tell, animals do not hold lifelong grudges, question the value of their existence, or wonder whether God exists. They do not constantly dredge up memories of mistakes and traumatic events, nor are they consumed by self-loathing, regret, or a need to be admired.

Having said that, however, it is also possible that emotional trauma—especially from emotions like fear, panic, and anxiety—is even worse for animals than for humans. Temple Grandin notes, for instance, that fear incapacitates animals much more easily than pain does. A severely injured animal can act as if nothing is wrong, but a panicked animal can be completely paralyzed with fear and unable to function. She also notes that while a

less active prefrontal cortex limits pain it also limits the ability modulate fear.[32] Unlike humans, most animals cannot assess their situation rationally and thus have no way to turn off or ease their fear and panic. Grandin draws a parallel between fear in autistic people (whose prefrontal cortexes are also less active) and animals, especially prey species. She writes,

> Autistic people have so much natural fear and anxiety—I'm almost comfortable saying it's universal—that when they're young they can be like little wild animals […] This is what we have in common with animals. Our fear system is 'turned on' in a way a normal person's is not. It's fear gone wild. In my own case, overwhelming anxiety hit at puberty. From age eleven to age thirty-three, when I discovered antidepressant medication, I felt exactly the way you feel when you're about to defend your dissertation, only I felt that way all day long, every single day.[33]

In short, then, while there is reason for skepticism about the extent to which animals suffer emotionally, it would be unreasonable to completely deny that emotional trauma is a problem for animals.

What about the usefulness of emotional distress? Some negative emotions, like fear and anxiety, help motivate animals to stay away from perceived threats and to be watchful for others. Loneliness, meanwhile, motivates animals to seek safety and security in numbers. As with pain, one might suggest that these emotions are justified because they help keep the animal safe in a dangerous environment. Against this suggestion, I would repeat the same argument from the last section. Since it is easy to conceive of an animal

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[32]Grandin and Johnson, *Animals in Translation*, 190. See also AV Apkarian et al., "Prefrontal Cortical Hyperactivity in Patients with Sympathetically Mediated Chronic Pain," *Journal of Neuroscience Letters* 311, no. 3 (October 5, 2001): 193–197; M. R. Milad, I. Vidal-Gonzalez, and G. J. Quirk, "Electrical Stimulation of Medial Prefrontal Cortex Reduces Conditioned Fear in a Temporally Specific Manner," *Behavioral Neuroscience* 118, no. 2 (April 2004): 389–94.

[33] Grandin and Johnson, *Animals in Translation*, 192–93. Grandin goes on to describe how the frontal lobes help regulate fear and how this might explain why fear is such a problem for autistic people and animals. Her account is interesting and seems plausible, but outside the scope of the present discussion.

that behaves properly in its environment without actually experiencing fear and anxiety, it should be within God's power to make such a creature. Therefore, the biological utility of emotional distress is not enough to justify it.

Instead of appealing to biological utility, one can instead say that psychic distress is inevitable for a creature that has desires, emotions, and autonomy. Michael Murray claims, for instance, that

> It is a conceptual truth that achieving or attaining an intended end is something that the agent regards as good and, as such, will be attended by feelings of pleasure, satisfaction and joy. Correspondingly, when I am thwarted in my attempts to achieve or attain my end, this failure will be attended by frustration or anger or other mental states characteristic of feeling pained. Since my ability to achieve or attain my intended ends is inevitably going to be contingent in a nomically regular world, it is inevitable that there are some intended ends I will fail to secure, and as a result it is inevitable that I will sometimes experience mental states which constituted feeling pained.[34]

Unfortunately, Murray's argument is unconvincing. Judging from experience, it is certainly *natural* for me to experience satisfaction when desires are satisfied and emotional pain when they are not satisfied, but this is not a conceptual truth. Note, first, how often we act toward intended ends and do not feel satisfaction when we are successful. As I type, my fingers press against keys and the appropriate letters appear on my screen. And yet, though I am successful in typing this sentence, I am not at all *pleased* about my success. So far as I can tell, I have no emotional response at all when it comes to the proper functioning of my fingers and the keyboard. And typing is just one of countless mundane activities I carry out during a day, but without any change in my emotional state. I put on clothes, sit in chairs, turn on lights, maneuver my car through traffic, and in each case, I

[34] Murray, *Nature Red in Tooth and Claw*, 121.

act intentionally and with a perceived good in mind, and yet I do not feel satisfaction when I succeed.

Perhaps these examples are too insignificant to count. Perhaps one could instead claim that for more significant actions, governed by stronger desires and aimed at better ends, success will inevitably be accompanied by satisfaction or some other positive emotion. However, this still does not seem correct. After all, we frequently act against certain desires for the sake of some other good, and in succeeding we do not feel pleasant emotions. I kill venomous spiders and snakes because of the risk they pose to people and pets in my house, and although I am successful I generally feel remorse and sadness, not any pleasant emotions. Similarly, parents often make hard decisions—about inoculations, discipline, diet, and so on—for which they often feel pity and guilt rather than satisfaction or joy.

Similar problems arise for Murray's claim that negative emotions inevitably follow from being thwarted intentions. If I am prevented from doing something I should do but would rather not (like mow the lawn or wash dishes), I am likely to feel relief, not disappointment. Or, if I flip a light switch and nothing happens, I am most likely to feel surprise and curiosity, not frustration. Of course, the more I want the lights to be on, and the more I try and fail to get the lights to work, the more likely I am to get frustrated. But, importantly, the fact that there is a point at which frustration begins, rather than appearing immediately whenever I fail to attain an end, shows that failure and frustration do not inevitably go together.

The above counterexamples are meant simply to show that it is possible for an agent to succeed at attaining an end without feeling pleasant emotions and that it is possible to

fail without feeling negative emotions. But an even stronger claim is true. It is easy to conceive of a creature that has desires and tries to attain perceived goods, but that *never* feels frustration when it fails. Perhaps, for instance, its desires are such that they are proportioned to their perceived attainability, and whatever goods seem easiest to obtain are the ones that the creature desires most. Over time, if the creature fails to obtain this perceived good, then that good will seem less and less attainable, causing the creature to desire it less and less. For such a creature, the longer a desired good remains unsatisfied, the less the creature will care, and the sooner its attention will turn to some other perceived good that seems more easily attained.

Alternatively, a creature could be like an agreeable Stoic who sets goals for itself and attempts to satisfy certain desires, yet is also convinced that its life, and every event in the universe, is governed toward some perfectly good end. Thus, when its desires are not satisfied, it reasons to itself, "I once *thought* that *x* was a worthy goal, but since I cannot attain *x*, and because all that happens is for the best, it must be that my desire for *x* was improper and *not* getting *x* is actually what is best for me. Therefore, I am truly *glad* that I did not attain *x*." With this attitude, it will be rightly satisfied with whatever happens because it firmly believes that every event is for the best. Or, again, imagine a divinely-programmed robot with a set of prioritized objectives, each of which produces a desire and satisfaction when they are met, but which cannot feel frustration. Upon failing to meet its highest objective and determining that it would be too costly to continue trying for it, it immediately switches its attention to the next-highest objective, without feeling any frustration or dissatisfaction over failing to attain the first.

Rather than arguing that certain negative emotions are *inevitable* in a nomically regular world, it would be more correct to say that it is *proper* and *good* to feel such negative emotions. After all, if someone does not feel guilt and remorse when he has done something wrong, we do not count him lucky*;* we say that there is something deeply wrong with him: Positive and negative emotions are reactions to what a creature perceives to be good or bad in various ways. Just as it is intrinsically good to have true beliefs, it is intrinsically good to have emotions that reflect a proper construal of the world. It is good for me to believe that people are starving in Africa, because that belief is true. It is also good for me to feel sadness about the plight of these people and to be motivated to help them, because their suffering is worthy of sadness and compassion.

Provided that one's emotions are functioning properly, emotions like fear, disappointment, anger, and sadness all demonstrate that the creature holds proper attitudes toward the world. Even if the creature cannot form the concept *This is bad,* its negative emotional reaction toward that event is still good and proper. In this way, the intrinsic badness of a negative emotion may be defeated by the goodness of feeling that emotion in the right circumstances and to a proper degree. If so, then God would be justified in creating creatures with a capacity for emotional distress. Thus, the problem is not that animals should not be capable of emotional suffering; it's simply that animals appear to suffer *too much* emotional distress, which does not appear to be defeated within the context of that creature's life.

Conclusion

This chapter is one part of a bigger discussion on the global problem of animal suffering. Here, I was only concerned with general questions about the reality of death,

physical pain, and emotional distress. I argued, first, that the mortality of earthly organisms should not pose an existential problem, because there is reason to doubt whether death is bad for each organism and reason to doubt whether each organism's life ought to be eternal. Next, I considered the problem of physical pain. I argued that while the scope and severity of animal suffering may be much less than it at first appears, merely noting this fact is not enough to eliminate problem. I also argued that while pain is biologically useful, God could have made animals that did not need pain in order to adapt to their environments. I concluded that biological utility is not enough to justify the capacity for pain in animals and that some other justification—such as the defeat of an animal's pain—is needed. Finally, I considered the problem of emotional distress. Again, I acknowledged that emotional distress may be quite limited in the animal kingdom; again, however, merely noting that a problem is much less serious than previously thought does not eliminate it entirely. Nor, I argued, does the biological utility of several negative emotions justify animals' capacity for them. Finally, I argued that while emotional trauma is not *inevitable* for animals, it is *proper* for them to experience negative emotions in response to genuinely bad events. Thus, it is actually good for animals to have a capacity for suffering, though perhaps animals endure too much emotional distress.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Global Problem: Evaluating the World

Introduction

The previous chapter focused on the various types of animal suffering in the world. I argued that the mortality of creatures does not by itself pose an existential problem, though the way an animal dies might. I also argued that physical pain and emotional distress are often biologically useful and generally benefit animals more than it harms them. However, because God could have obtained all the benefits of pain and emotional distress without any suffering, I concluded that biological utility cannot justify the reality of pain and emotional trauma. Instead, I argued that pain and emotional trauma must be defeated in some other way.

This brings us to a serious problem that I purposely overlooked in Chapter Four. Even if the utility of pain were enough to justify its existence, it would only be because animals find themselves in a harsh environment. The pain of a burn may ensure that an animal flee from fire and rest its injured parts for long enough to heal, but such pain is only useful because animals are vulnerable to extreme heat; hunger pangs may prompt an animal to eat, but hunger is only useful because animals live in a world where starvation is a real possibility; fear is useful for the prey animal only because there are predators looking to devour them. This chapter will consider the overall pattern of animal suffering and the existential problem it raises. To begin, I will develop the argument from moral outrage, first by describing in limited detail some of the worst features of the actual world, features

that are especially bothersome and likely to provoke moral protest. Then, I will give reasons to think that this moral protest against the actual world is well-placed.

After developing the argument from moral outrage, I will then address some common attempts to justify the pattern of suffering. First, I will consider arguments that claim that there are goods in the world that justify the pattern of suffering as we see it and conclude from this that the world is actually very good, despite initial appearances. Toward this end, I will describe several goods that obtain in the actual world that likely would not obtain if there were not regular natural laws and the real potential for harm and suffering. These goods include the intrinsic beauty and goodness in the universe; the many goods of life, including sensations, emotions, desires, and autonomy; and the great good of free will, which allows for morally significant choices and personal character development (or "soul-making"). Ultimately, I will conclude that while these goods may make the world very good on the whole, they do not fully justify the pattern of animal suffering, since animals do not benefit from these goods in the proper way, at least if we suppose that animals forever cease to exist when they die.

Next, I will consider two accounts that grant that the pattern of suffering is truly evil but attempt to shift blame from God to created moral agents. First, I will consider the claim that natural evils, including those events that cause extreme animal suffering, are the result of the sin of Adam and Eve. I will argue that there is good reason to doubt the historical accuracy of Genesis 3, and, further, that the Fall account does not fully address the outrageousness of animal suffering. Then, I will consider the claim that the pattern of suffering can be blamed on the influence of malevolent spirits. I will grant that the existence of demonic agents should not be rejected out of hand, but again I will argue that

this warfare theodicy does not fully address the outrageousness of the problem of animal suffering.

On the Pattern of Animal Suffering

Recall the global argument from moral outrage stated in Chapter Four.

g1. The overall pattern of animal suffering in the world is morally outrageous to me.

g2. I am convinced that my moral outrage is rational and properly directed (at least in part) at God.

g3. If (g1) and (g2), then I cannot believe in God, let alone love, trust, or worship God.

g4. Therefore, I cannot believe in God, let alone love, trust, or worship God.

In this section I will briefly describe the pattern of animal suffering in order to justify a sense of outrage. Then, I will give some preliminary reasons to think that this outrage is properly directed at God. Because I am presently concerned about suffering that cannot obviously be blamed on humans, I will focus primarily on so-called natural evils and largely ignore instances of cruelty, neglect, and abuse.

Even if we ignore the suffering caused directly by humans, the problem is overwhelming. Animals are prone to terrible accidents, leaving them with broken bones, torn ligaments, lacerations, and infections. They have been trapped in deep pits, mud, quicksand, or tar, or stranded in the wilderness, where they slowly die of thirst or starvation. Animals are frequent victims of widespread and unavoidable natural disasters: they are burned alive in forest fires; drowned in floods and tsunamis; crushed in earthquakes and avalanches; starve in drought and harsh winters; succumb to heat exhaustion or freeze to death; are battered by hailstones; and driven to extinction by loss of habitat, local climate change, and global catastrophes.

Here is one especially horrific example. About 65 million years ago, an enormous asteroid struck the Yucatan Peninsula and is believed to have wiped out most creatures living at the time. The short- and long-term effects of such a massive collision would have been nightmarish:

> The kinetic energy of such an asteroid (more than 6 miles in diameter) would equal the energy of 300 million nuclear weapons and create temperatures hotter than on the sun's surface for several minutes. The expanding fireball of superheated air would immediately wipe out unprotected organisms near the impact and eventually lead to the extinction of many species worldwide.
>
> Immediate effects would include an eardrum-puncturing sonic boom, intense blinding light, severe radiation burns, a crushing blast wave, lethal balls of hot glass, winds with speeds of hundreds of kilometers per hour, and flash fires. Longer-term effects would alter Earth's climate.
>
> The vapor and debris thrust into the stratosphere would block sunlight for months, lowering global temperatures. Organisms that could not adapt to this impact version of a "nuclear winter" would die. Since plants derive energy from the sun, they would be affected first. As plants die, the decreased food supply and oxygen levels would affect the herbivores first, followed by the carnivores and on up the food chain. Birds, fish, mammals, and small reptiles could survive the cold, desolate "winter" if they could burrow underground or live in caves and consume alternate food sources such as seeds, roots, and decaying matter. Most large reptiles would perish.[1]

In addition to accidents and natural disasters, animals frequently suffer as their own bodies seem to turn against them. One might develop ulcers, crippling osteoarthritis, several varieties of cancer, and kidney stones. There are diseases that make it too painful to eat, resulting in starvation; blood clots that cause paralysis and agonizing lactic acid build-up in the affected limbs; allergies and parasites that produce itching that literally drives the sufferer insane; genetic disorders that leave the animal deformed, crippled,

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[1] Maureen Oakes, "Modeling an Asteroid Impact: Did It Kill the Dinosaurs?" Los Alamos Research Quarterly, Spring 2003. http://www.lanl.gov/quarterly/q_spring03/pdfs/larq_4_03_asteroid.pdf

susceptible to disease, and in agony. Neurological diseases often produce chronic and debilitating anxiety, fear, and depression.[2]

Other diseases slowly attack the victim's mind, robbing it of whatever personality and autonomy it once had. Rabies, for example, can afflict any mammal, and once symptoms set in, it is always fatal. Initially, the rabid animal may become anxious and fearful, seek solitude, stop eating, and lose some muscle control. Then, it becomes hypersensitive to stimuli and will attack people, other animals, and any moving object; it may chew on and eat objects that break teeth or lacerate its insides. Eventually, progressive paralysis sets in, leaving the animal unable to swallow and resulting in the characteristic slack jaw and frothy mouth. If the animal does not die from injuries or from drowning on its own saliva, it will eventually slip into a coma and finally, mercifully, die.[3]

As horrific as all of this suffering is, the most troubling fact about the pattern of animal suffering is that a great deal of pain and death appear to be purposely *built into* creation. Predators must kill and devour their prey or else starve to death. Parasites thrive by feeding off other animals, often sickening and slowly killing their hosts in the process. Fierce competition is commonplace in many species: Animals fight over territory, resources, and mating privileges. Males of many species will kill a female's young in order to mate with her, and in several species mating practices amount to rape. Several types of bird, fish, and reptile have evolved to have several offspring, most of whom will die shortly after hatching; the strongest offspring monopolize food and attention, while the weakest

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[2] See the Merck Veterinary Handbook for descriptions of these diseases, among many others.

[3] "Rabies," Merck Veterinary Handbook.

are abandoned by their parents and eventually they die from starvation or some other ghastly thing, thus ending a brief life of great suffering and little happiness.

In his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion,* David Hume cites the widespread suffering in the animal kingdom as evidence either that God is not omnipotent, or else that God is unconcerned with the happiness of his creatures. As he says through the character Demea,

> The whole earth, believe me, Philo, is cursed and polluted. A perpetual war is kindled amongst all living creatures. Necessity, hunger, want, stimulate the strong and courageous: fear, anxiety, terror, agitate the weak and infirm. The first entrance into life gives anguish to the new-born infant and to its wretched parent: weakness, impotence, distress, attend each stage of that life: and it is at last finished in agony and horror.[4]

Even if Demea overstates the problem, we must admit that if we were to imagine a world produced by a perfect deity, we would naturally imagine a world with much less suffering, much less danger and disease, and much more pleasure and happiness than there is in the actual world.

There are, in short, several reasons to be morally outraged about the pattern of animal suffering. There is the sheer amount of intense, prolonged suffering that has occurred, and continues to occur.[5] Also, the distribution of suffering is not fair. Some animals, merely by being born in the wrong place and time, endure much more misery than they deserve, without any benefit to make up for it. And, finally, a great deal of suffering—especially the misery associated with predation, parasitism, and disease—seems to be built

[4] Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, 1998, pt. X.

[5] To be clear, the *sum total amount* of suffering is not in itself problematic. If there were a trillion creatures in the universe, each of whom experienced infrequent minor pains, but whose lives were overwhelmingly pleasant, these minor pains would pose a *puzzle* of suffering, but not a serious problem. What matters is prolonged, intense suffering; even if it is relatively rare in the animal kingdom, there are thousands, perhaps millions of creatures suffering terribly at any given moment.

into creation, as if God purposely designed the world so that pain and misery would be commonplace and an indispensible part of the natural order, even though there is no clear reason for it.

But is this moral outrage properly directed at God? At first glance, there are several reasons to think so. First, it seems well within God's power to create a perfect world, without danger and injury and thus no need for pain, with no predation or sickness. Indeed, heaven is supposed to be like this, and yet for God chose to make this world instead.

Granted, perhaps God has good reasons to create a world that is less than what I would consider ideal. Perhaps, for instance, there are goods in this world that *require* pain, injury, danger, predation, and all the rest. And perhaps these goods are sufficient to outweigh the negatives. Nevertheless, whatever these outweighing goods might be, it still seems obvious that God could have, and should have, made a world that is much better than it is. And even if this is not right, even if this is the best God could do, God had the choice to create or not to create. The world may be on-balance good and the actuality of animal suffering may in some way contribute to the overall good of the world, but it still seems unjust and unloving to submit innocent creatures to intense suffering for the sake of the overall goodness of the world. Thus, at this point it seems that if this is the best God could do, he should not have created anything at all.

The next chapter will consider the second claim—that God could (and should) have made a world just as good as ours, but with *just a little* less suffering. At present, however, I want to consider the other two worries: (i) that for many of the evils just described, there does not seem to be any good reason for God to allow them, and (ii) even if it is true that a world like ours, with its pattern of suffering, is on-balance better than any possible pain-

free universe, it seems unjust and unloving for God to allow individual creatures to suffer intensely for the sake of some goods that the victims do not enjoy.

In the next section, I will develop a common argument that the world is very good overall and that many of the most valuable features of the world would not be possible without the potential for widespread natural evil. I will concede that the world is very good overall, but then argue that many types of animal suffering do not contribute to the goodness of the world in any obvious way, and more importantly, many of the animals who suffer most intensely do not benefit from these goods. Thus, this approach does not adequately satisfy the moral outrage described at the beginning of the chapter. Next, in the fourth section, I will consider arguments that the pattern of animal suffering can be blamed on the evil decisions of created agents. To begin, I will examine the traditional claim that natural evils are a result of the Fall, that is, Adam and Eve's sin in the Garden of Eden. I will argue that there is good reason to doubt that the Fall story of Genesis 3 is historically accurate and that even if it were, it would not successfully deflect moral outrage away from God. Finally, I will consider the warfare theodicy, which claims that natural evils are ultimately the fault of malevolent spiritual beings. I will argue that the existence and activity of demonic agents cannot be dismissed outright, and, in fact, if one has good reasons to believe that God has revealed himself in scripture and tradition, then one must grant that much of what we call natural evil may really be due to malevolent spiritual agents. However, I will conclude that while the warfare theodicy might explain why some of the most senseless evils occur, it does not completely justify the pattern of animal suffering, especially if these fallen angels are allowed to corrupt the earth forever.

How Good is the World?

When theists attempt to justify the pattern of suffering, they often argue that the world is full of goods that we are prone to overlook and that these goods outweigh the evils of suffering. Further, they argue, many of the most important goods in the world would be impossible were it not for the real potential (and often, the actuality) of pain and suffering.[6] In this section, I will discuss many of these goods, in rough order from the most impersonal goods to the most personal. I will argue that when we carefully consider these goods, there is strong reason to think that the world is quite good overall. However, I will argue that this fact alone does not justify the outrageous pattern of suffering, especially when we consider the suffering of animals.

Goods of the Non-living World

First, as many philosophers and theologians have asserted, existence itself seems to be good. If so, then the mere fact that the universe exists is a good thing. More than that, it seems that the immense size of the universe is also good, not just because it can fit more things in it, but because (at least in this case) bigger is better. The vastness of the universe is worthy of genuine awe. What we can observe, a sphere about 27 billion light years in diameter, may be a small fraction of the entire universe. If the actual world—the universe and any other universes that also exist—is the handiwork of God, then the enormity of space reflects a power and creativity that cannot be captured in words.

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[6] In particular, this section draws from William Hasker, *The Triumph of God over Evil: Theodicy for a World of Suffering*, Strategic Initiatives in Evangelical Theology (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2008), chap. 5; Murray, *Nature Red in Tooth and Claw*, chap. 5; Richard Swinburne, “Some Major Strands of Theodicy,” in *The Evidential Argument from Evil*, ed. Daniel Howard-Snyder (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996); Richard Swinburne, *Providence and the Problem of Evil* (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press ; Oxford University Press, 1998), chap. 3–11.

The existence of things within the universe is also good, both for the existing things and for the universe as a whole. Accordingly, worlds with many things in them tend to be better than things with just a few, all else being equal. A world consisting of 10,000 pebbles would be better than a world with just one, and since there is positive value in variety and complexity, it would be better for all 10,000 pebbles to have slightly different colors, shapes, and textures than for all of them to be the same. It would, of course, be even better, to have things besides pebbles—lumps of clay and chunks of ice, and much more complex things like stars and planets as well—and in this regard our universe certainly excels. It is also worth remembering that each of these things adds aesthetic value to the world as well, both in themselves, and by the way each thing is situated into the entire world. Mountains and streams and meadows are beautiful things individually, but when they are situated in a certain way the whole scene gains a beauty greater than the sum of its parts.

Just as the size, complexity, and beauty of the universe testifies to God's immense power, creativity, and artistry, the regularity in the universe testifies to God's rationality and ingenuity.[7] Insofar as each thing is granted causal powers according to its unique physical attributes—its mass and momentum, electromagnetic properties, temperature, and all the rest—it mimics God's own power. A world that operates on its own, according to its own power, is better than if it were completely chaotic or completely dictated at each moment by God's direct intervention.[8] Natural order itself seems to be intrinsically very

[7] The intrinsic value of natural order has been used to defend theism against the problem of animal suffering. In his discussion of animal suffering, Peter van Inwagen suggests that, for all anyone knows, any world with higher-level sentient creatures will have a pattern of animal suffering morally equivalent to the actual world or else be "massively irregular," and, for all we know, the defect of massive irregularity is at least as morally bad as the pattern of animal suffering in the actual word. van Inwagen, *The Problem of Evil*, 113–134.

[8] I use "on its own" in a loose sense. I follow the tradition that God establishes the natural laws and grants causal powers to each thing in the universe, but that God must also constantly sustain the natural order.

good, and more specifically the natural laws that obtain in our universe are especially good. Physicists frequently marvel at how mathematically elegant our natural laws are, how astounding it is that immensely complex processes can be described with simple equations. Our laws are so elegant—both at the microscopic domain of quantum mechanics and the macroscopic domain of relativity—that physicists often use elegance and simplicity as ideal criteria for natural laws.[9]

It is particularly awesome that all the beauty, complexity, and order in the universe developed from an extremely hot and dense singularity, which exploded about 14 billion years ago. From this initial state, the universe progressed according to physical laws that somehow produced habitable planets on which conscious, rational creatures could evolve. The development of life, many would argue, is so unlikely that it is convincing evidence for God's existence.[10] Supposing that God did create the world, this process of order arising out of chaos, according to simple natural laws displays God's glory, power, and wisdom much more than if God had created a fully-formed world with a single command.[11]

Since the natural laws and the things in the universe are contingent, they do not have it in their power to continue existing without God's sustaining power. Thus, nothing in the universe truly operates on its own, though it is more independent than if God directly caused each action himself, in such a way that things in the world only appeared to have causal powers.

[9] Note, for instance, Theo A. F. Kuipers, "Beauty, a Road to the Truth," *Synthese* 131, no. 3 (June 1, 2002): 291–328.; Brian Greene, *The Elegant Universe: Superstrings, Hidden Dimensions, and the Quest for the Ultimate Theory* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000).

[10] See, for example Robin Collins, "The Teleological Argument: An Exploration of the Fine-Tuning of the Universe," in *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*, ed. William Lane Craig and J. P. Moreland, n.d., 202–81; Paul Davies, *The Mind of God: The Scientific Basis for a Rational World* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993); Martin J. Rees, *Just Six Numbers: The Deep Forces That Shape the Universe* (New York: Basic Books, 2000).

[11] For a defense of intrinsic value of a universe featuring a chaos-to-order development, as well as a brief summary of pre-Darwin Christians who hold similar views, see Murray, *Nature Red in Tooth and Claw*, 180–192.

When evaluating the world, it is natural to imagine all the bad things in the world—the wickedness of humans and what Charles Darwin poignantly described as "the clumsy, wasteful, blundering, low and horridly cruel works of nature!"[12]—on one side of a scale, with the goods of the universe, like those mentioned above, on the other. When we think in these terms, it is easy to see how one could judge that the world is not just on-balance good, but very good. After all, if the existence of something as mundane as a pebble has positive intrinsic value, one can imagine adding more and more pebbles to a possible world until the evils in this world our outweighed.[13] And, given that the universe is bigger, more complex, and full of more beauty than we can ever observe or imagine, it is quite plausible—perhaps likely—that the sum total of goods in the world vastly outweighs the bad.

There are several problems with thinking this way, however. First, given our limited understanding of how intrinsic value operates, it may be that the goods and bads that we imagine weighing against each other are actually incommensurate. One might ask, How many pebbles (or beautiful sunsets or whatever) would it take to outweigh the agony of a child dying of cancer? Or, again, how beautiful must a forest fire be for its aesthetic value to outweigh the suffering of an animal caught in the blaze? And yet, people often judge that these sorts of goods are sufficient to outweigh suffering. Actors and artists often endure physical and emotional suffering for the sake of their art, and an athlete will play

[12] Charles Darwin, "Letter to J. D. Hooker, No. 1924," July 13, 1856, www.darwinproject.ac.uk.

[13] I use pebbles for simplicity, though in actuality, there may be an upper limit to the benefit of adding more and more pebbles to a world. It could be, for instance, each successive pebble adds less and less value to the universe. Or, perhaps there is a point at which there are too many pebbles, and adding more actually makes the world worse (just as a little rain is good for a farmer, but way too much is worse than none at all). The greater point is that a vast enough universe, with enough beautiful things in it could, in theory, outweigh the suffering in the world.

through pain for the sake of winning; for them, the pain and sacrifice are worth it. So, maybe the problem is not that goods like beauty and ordered complexity are incommensurate with the evils of suffering, but rather that the moral justification for allowing suffering requires more than simply outweighing the bads involved. It seems, for instance, that the goods in question must be relevantly tied to the situation. If so, the problem is not that the aesthetic value of the world is incommensurate with the disvalue of animal suffering, but rather that many of these goods could have obtained without the suffering. And because the elegance of our natural laws, the beauty of galaxies and nebulae, and the sheer size of the universe and variety of non-living things in it could have obtained without any suffering at all (and, in fact, did obtain for billions of years before sentient life emerged), these goods do not adequately justify the pattern of suffering.

The Goods of Life

Since the goods of the non-living world cannot adequately justify the pattern of animal suffering, let us consider some of the goods closely associated with life, beginning with those goods that primarily make the world better and finishing with goods that primarily benefit the creatures themselves. The goal will be to give reasons to think that for most creatures, life is actually quite good. Because of this, the problem of suffering is less about why God would make a world in which horrendous suffering is the rule, but rather why God would allow so much suffering in the world, even though it is relatively rare.

Goods of life that make the world better. A world with living creatures in it is better than a world without, all else being equal, and it is plausible that a world with a variety of

creatures is better than a world with a single exalted species. According to several ancient and medieval philosophers, especially in the Christian tradition, every existing thing is a part of a vast "chain of being," with the most perfect being (God) at the top, and all contingent things arranged in a hierarchy below God, depending on the degrees of perfection each thing has. Importantly, these philosophers argue that the chain itself, consisting of all possible degrees of perfection, is complete and perfect.[14] Thus, it is better for all sorts of beings to exist than for only the most perfect being(s) to exist.[15] Further, because existence itself is good, and because it is better for all sorts of things to exist, despite their imperfections, the lowest things on the chain of being are good, just to a lesser degree than higher things. Hence, there is no such *thing* as evil; rather, what we commonly consider to be evil is simply a privation of good, much like darkness is an absence of light or coldness is an absence of heat.[16]

Setting aside these metaphysical arguments, there remains a strong attraction to the thought that a world with a variety of life is better than one without. When I imagine an ideal world, it is populated by many different types of organisms, each with their own unique abilities and appearances. It has creatures that can fly, some that swim, others that burrow underground; some are enormous and powerful, some are light and agile, still

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[14] Benedictus de Spinoza, *Ethics*, trans. E. M. Curley (New York: Penguin Books, 1996), pt. 43.7 (I.16 cor.1), 56.2 (I.33 sch.2), 56.8 (I.35), 62.5 (App. to Part I), 66.9 (II.7 cor); Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics and Other Essays*, trans. Daniel Garber and Roger Ariew (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991), sec. 3.

[15] René Descartes, "Meditations on First Philosophy," in *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. Donald A. Cress, 4th ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub, 1998), sec. 111.8, 117.3. See also Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), bk. VII. xiii.

[16] Descartes, *Meditations* 110.4. Spinoza, *Ethics* 37-38 (I.11.3d proof), 38.7 (I.11 sch).

others small and meek. Some creatures in my ideal world would be little more than biological microprocessors who follow simple rules individually, but in large groups they would exhibit complex social behaviors. Some creatures would be solitary, others would live in small groups, and others would live in complex societies, with its own rules and even languages. All these creatures would serve a role in a vast, complex ecosystem. And this world, with all its diversity, would not appear all at once, but would slowly develop on its own. In short, my ideal world would be very much like our own, except for the fact of predation, the prevalence of natural disasters, and the wasteful and haphazard course of evolution. Thus, if the actual world is on-balance good, and if the overall best way to bring these goods about entails something like the pattern of suffering in the world, then the mere fact that such natural evils happen might be justified. (Though, to be sure, specific evils may yet be unjustified.)

Goods of life that are a benefit to the living things themselves. Life itself seems intrinsically good for each creature, though it is impossible to estimate how valuable it is. One might suppose that life is extremely good, enough to outweigh any misfortunes an organism might experience. Even a horrible life, one might think, is a life worth living. Or, one might suppose that life has very little intrinsic value, in which case a creature's life would be good on the whole only if it experiences more good things throughout the course of its life than bad. I tend to think that life is quite good intrinsically, though (as I will argue in the final chapter) it also seems that for many creatures, if their existence forever ends at death, it would have been better if they had never been born. In any case, because there is wide room for reasonable disagreement, it would be difficult—from a logical or evidential standpoint—to convincingly argue that many animals led lives that were not

worth living, for (as far as we know) the intrinsic value of life may be enough to outweigh any suffering that an animal has actually experienced.

From an existential standpoint, however, this concession gives little comfort, especially when considering some of the most horrific cases of animal suffering. Thus, we should try to find extrinsic goods associated with life that might serve to outweigh pain and suffering. To begin, possessing a variety of physical abilities is very good—to be able to run, fly, slither, swim, and crawl; to digest food or convert sunlight into chemical energy; to breathe oxygen from the air or underwater, or to respire carbon dioxide; to grasp, lift, and carry things; to reproduce sexually or asexually. Reproduction is especially good, both because it produces more life and because it mimics God's creative activity. Every phase of gestation seems miraculous—the union of cells and sharing or genetic information from two different parents, the gradual development of specialized cells to form organs, and limbs. It is astonishing that the genetic information required to make a fully-formed creature, capable of many of the abilities described above (and countless more besides) is present at the moment of conception.

It is also good for a creature to have unique abilities, to be better at certain things than other creatures, to be able to do things that other creatures cannot. Of course, this would entail that many creatures would lack certain abilities. But this in itself is not a bad thing, but only the absence of a good thing. A dog that cannot fly is not harmed by the fact that it cannot fly, for flying is not essential to a dog's proper function, and they never miss it. Besides, dogs have an especially good sense of smell, much better than in most other species, and this special ability is a great benefit for that creature.

It is also very good for an animal to have a mental life. Having sensations is a great good for animals, even if those sensations are not particularly pleasant. It is a great good for creatures simply to have experiences, to see and hear and smell, to receive stimulation that produces awareness in the creature of the world around it. Added to that, of course, are feelings of pleasure, satiety, and comfort, which for many (perhaps most) creatures outweigh the pain and discomfort they may feel.

As for pain itself, while I have argued that God could have made animals who could survive in a dangerous environment without a capacity for suffering, it is at least plausible that such a creature would miss out on other important goods that actual animals (who, because of their psychological make-up, need pain) enjoy. For instance, if it is good to have a variety of experiences, then perhaps it is better to have experienced pain (within limits) at some point in one's life, even though the individual pains are bad in themselves. Headaches are certainly unpleasant at the time, but having experienced headaches in the past seems to make my life more full. I am oddly thankful to have had headaches, for my life would somehow seem impoverished without them. Also, perhaps it is better for an animal to become excellent in various ways by overcoming pain, or perhaps the honor a creature gains for stoically enduring pain (whether this honor is from God or from human witnesses) outweighs the pain itself. Or, again, perhaps experiencing pain is the best way to produce appropriate attitudes in the creature about the things happening to it. To have an injured limb is truly a bad thing, so perhaps the pain of an injured limb produces an attitude in the creature that is appropriate to the situation, which would be impossible for a creature who could not suffer. Similarly, our lives are richer for having a capacity for

sadness, fear, and grief, and they are good insofar as they promote the proper attitude to certain states of affairs.

Furthermore, it is good for animals to interact with the world—to respond appropriately to one's environment, either by adapting to it or by altering it to fit one's needs; to use parts of the environment for fuel, as a tool, for entertainment, comfort, or shelter. It is even better to interact with other creatures within that environment, to be helped by others and to be a benefit to others, to ally with some creatures for mutual protection and prosperity, to establish norms of behavior and develop complex social relationships. Complex ecosystems are a good feature for the world at large, as well as for the creatures in those ecosystems. Apart from the survival advantages of living in a complex ecosystem, it is good for an organism to be incorporated into an organization, to function properly in that organization and to aid its continuation.

To interact with the world is especially good when this interaction is carried out autonomously, and the mental qualities that allow for autonomy—desire, emotions, intentions, and beliefs—are very good in their own right, both intrinsically and instrumentally. Desires generally incline the creature toward what it perceives as good (or away from what is bad), and in most cases, what a creature desires (things like food, water, a specific environment, and so on) is, in fact, good for it. Also, desires for better things—like friendship, as opposed to a pleasant sensation—is especially good. Some of the highest desires are those shared by more than one individual: the desire to cooperate and the desire for mutual protection and satisfaction. The highest desire of all, I think, is to desire the best for another creature. For one thing, if I desire happiness for another and they are, in fact, happy, then there is clearly the good of happiness for that creature, along with the

good of having my desire satisfied. But beyond this, to desire the well-being of another is an essential feature of love, and in that way creatures that share desires and desire good things for others become more like God in a significant way.

It is not only good to have desires, but it is also good for those desires to be satisfied, so long as the desires are for good things. If, for instance, I desire people to speak well of me when I am not around, that is good for me, even if I am never aware of it. But, of course, it is good to be aware that desires have been satisfied, for in that case I experience happiness, contentment, satisfaction, and so on. To be precise, the positive emotions occur because I *believe* my desires have been satisfied, and so this emotion itself, while good in itself, is better when my belief is correct.

We should note, though, that feelings of happiness, satisfaction, and pleasure are not always good. For instance, it is bad to take pleasure in the pain of others, though for most lower animals (who seem unaware of the mental states of others), this is impossible. Thus, in most cases animals only *appear* to be cruel. The cat that captures and maims a bird is not pleased by the bird's pain and fear; it is merely excited by the chase and the satisfaction of catching its prey. Insofar as it is good for a cat to be able to catch and kill prey, it is good for it (though obviously not for its prey) to feel pleasure at its success.

In summary, life is good in several ways that we might not appreciate if we focus too narrowly on the pattern of suffering. Contra Hume, then, it does not seem that "the whole world…is cursed and polluted." Granted, there is a shocking amount of suffering, waste, and futility in the world, but there is also great beauty, happiness, and purpose in it as well. And, given how little we understand these goods, we cannot say for sure that the world is a terrible place.

In fact, we have several reasons to think that the world is overwhelmingly good and that the lives of most creatures are worth living. Since most creatures are incapable of suffering, it is much easier for the good things—the intrinsic value of being alive, having an ability to move and interact with the world, and so on—to outweigh the bad. As for the rest, who have the capacity for pain and distress, the normal life is not full of suffering and hardship, but is rather mundane and uneventful.

Having said all of that, it would be a mistake to think that all of these goods give enough reason to think that any moral outrage is improper or misplaced. For one could still protest that there is way too much suffering in the world and this suffering serves no obvious purpose. We still have not encountered reasons why specific types of evils—predation or the agony of rabies, for instance—are allowed, nor is it clear why some of the most horrific evils are allowed. At this point in the discussion, one can still complain that even if most animals have good lives, this still does not explain why so many unfortunate (though relatively rare) creatures must endure so much suffering. For if God is perfectly loving, he should guarantee a worthwhile existence for all creatures, not just most of them.

Nevertheless, while it is not enough to list all the goods of the world and all the benefits of being alive, it is still worth recognizing that such goods exist. For one thing, they help to mitigate the outrage we might feel against God. We can now recognize that the world is not entirely bad, and in fact may be overwhelmingly good; likewise, it is now plausible that the lives of most creatures are not as miserable as some would have us believe, and in fact perhaps the lives of most creatures are very good on the whole. If so, then there is some evidence that God cares about the welfare of his creatures. The pattern of suffering thus becomes a surprising phenomenon that begs for an explanation, rather

than incontrovertible proof that the God of love does not exist. Further, to recognize that life is overwhelmingly good for most creatures gives us reason to think that there might be an explanation for suffering, and gives us hope that we might understand what that explanation might be, at least in part.

Free Will

Free will is another significant good that covers a multitude of evils, but for most of the evils that presently concern us, it is not obvious that they have anything to do with free will.[17] Many of them, after all, occurred long before humans appeared on Earth or in areas far removed from human influence. Even so, some theists have attempted to use the value of free will to justify even these sorts of evils. They argue that in order for free will to be as valuable as it is, humans (or any embodied free creature) must live in a world with regular natural laws that is neutral with respect to individual creatures. Consequently, God cannot regularly interfere with the world to prevent evils without seriously damaging free will in the process. At present, I want to focus on these attempts to use free will to justify natural evils. First, I will consider the argument that in order to have significant and effective free will, agents must live in a neutral world with regular natural laws, where harm and suffering are real possibilities. I will argue that while this account may address

[17] Typically, defenders of the free-will theodicy have *libertarian* freedom in mind, which asserts that at least some of our choices about how to act or not to act are up to us—they are not causally determined, whether by our current brain states and the laws of nature, or by God's sovereign will, or by a combination of the two. On this view, since God cannot compel an agent to *freely* choose right, God must either allow free agents to go wrong when they choose, or else actively prevent them from choosing wrong, thus harming their freedom. Compatibilists, who believe that human freedom is compatible with determinism, cannot assert that God must allow moral evils, for their position entails that God could determine each person to choose to do right without harming their freedom. Since the most plausible free will defenses assert that God's hands are somewhat tied—that he must allow moral evils in order to preserve human freedom—I will be using *freedom* and *free will* in a libertarian sense. However, much of what I say about the goods associated with free will (self-sacrifice, genuine concern for the other, and so on) can be affirmed by a compatibilist as well.

many of the natural evils that afflict humans, it does not justify the suffering of animals, who do not directly benefit from the goods of free will. Then, I will describe Hick's soul-making theodicy, which describes the world as an environment ideally suited for encouraging personal development of human agents. After raising some of the standard objections and responses to the soul-making theodicy, I will again argue that because animals do not benefit from the soul-making process in this life, this theodicy does not adequately address the problem of animal suffering—unless, perhaps, animals can experience soul-making in heaven.

Significant and Effective Freedom

Many theists argue that free will is itself a great benefit to those who have it.[18] However, they are quick to point out, merely having free will is not itself very valuable, but only if we have a wide array of significant options, and only if our choices have their intended effect. For instance, free will would have little value if I could only choose from among mundane, inconsequential options, like which uncomfortable wooden chair to use as I study in the library. Clearly free will is more valuable when I have the option to bring goodness into the world intentionally. To have the option of doing good is beneficial to me, even if I do not choose to do good, though of course it is better (both for me and the world) when I choose to do good. Similarly, the option to do something morally praiseworthy (not simply good) is a great good for me. And, again, to actually choose the right thing is a source of great honor for me, particularly when I know that I could have done the wrong thing. Furthermore, the praiseworthiness of my morally good choices are

[18] Here, I am drawing from several sources, especially Swinburne, *Providence and the Problem of Evil*; Hasker, *Triumph of God over Evil*; Murray, *Nature Red in Tooth and Claw*.

proportional to the strength of the temptation to do otherwise. For example, it is praiseworthy for a teacher to put an end to schoolyard bullying, but it is even more praiseworthy for a young schoolboy to try to stop the bullying, because his fear of retaliation and his desire to fit in is much greater. Similarly, my ability to remain sober on the job is not especially praiseworthy, because I have not developed a taste for alcohol, but for a recovering alcoholic, the choice to remain sober despite strong temptation is a great good for him.

It is also good for a creature to have the ability to shape one's surroundings according to one's own desires and intentions, and in this way to become partly responsible for how the world is. In this way, humans are honored with God's trust in us; we reflect God's own greatness and thereby become greater themselves. But this responsibility and authority would be an illusion if God constantly intervened to keep us from making mistakes or from damaging the world. Imagine living in a holographic world, where you are allowed to move your body however you want but you cannot change the world around you. You try to push against a holographic wall, but feel no resistance. You kick at a ball, but it does not move. You speak to holographic people, but they do not respond. No doubt you would quickly become frustrated, and rightly so. One of our most basic desires is not simply to make choices, but for our choices to have an effect on the world around us. And it seems that this desire is proper, for it is very good to have responsibility for the world and shared authority over how the word will be.

It is plausible, then, that our free will is worthwhile insofar as it is significant and effective. And, of course, the more significant and effective our freedom, the more potential we have to cause enormous suffering. This gives us an obvious explanation for

why a loving God might allow extensive and horrific moral evils: given the great value of free will, it would be even worse for God to systematically intervene to prevent moral evils than it would be to allow the suffering that results from those evils.

But what about natural evils? Some theists have argued that a world with a consistent natural order, one in which natural evils are not only possible but frequent, is a necessary precondition for worthwhile free will. For instance, Richard Swinburne has argued that free will (of the sort described above) requires a world like ours, with regular natural laws and in which creatures can be harmed or helped in a variety of ways. Thus, he concludes, "If the free-will defense works with respect to moral evil, it also has the force to defeat an argument from natural evil."[19] At the heart of Swinburne's argument is the claim that "there must be natural evils if men are to have the *knowledge* which they need to have in order to bring about moral evils."[20] For to make morally significant choices (whether to bring about certain states of affairs or to allow certain states of affairs to come about on their own), we must be able to reliably predict what the effects of our choices will be. We must be reasonably certain, for instance, that if I give food to a hungry person, she will be nourished, and if I give arsenic to an enemy, he will likely get sick and possibly die. Now, we actually gain knowledge of the future by experience and inductive inference. The more that I see that ingestion of arsenic is followed by sickness and death, the more confident I will be that arsenic is poison. And the wider the variety of circumstances under which sickness and death follows ingestion of arsenic—for instance, if I notice that

[19] Swinburne, "Natural Evil," 295. For a similar account, which assumes open theism, see Frank J. Murphy, "Unknowable Worlds: Solving the Problem of Natural Evil," *Religious Studies* 41, no. 3 (September 1, 2005): 343–46.

[20] Swinburne, "Natural Evil," 296.

ingesting arsenic is followed by sickness whether the person ingesting it is young or old, male or female, has been given it accidentally or on purpose, mixed with other liquids, and so on——the more confident I will be that giving arsenic to an enemy will have the desired results in my situation.

If we are to learn about how the world works from experience, then we must live in a world that operates regularly, with very few exceptions, and without apparent favoritism for some individuals or species over others. And since right and wrong are closely tied to helping and harming other people, we must live in a world in which benefit and harm are not only possible, but happen frequently to all sorts of creatures. If humans are to have great moral responsibility (and the great freedom that is required), then there must be widespread instances of intense suffering, so that we can learn how to bring about, prevent, or mitigate such instances ourselves. And if humans are to have great influence over the world, not just our immediate surroundings, but profound and long-lasting effects on the environment, then there must be major natural events—earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, forest fires, and so on—that humans can learn to avoid, prevent, or bring about.

Swinburne goes on to note how much knowledge humans gain from observing the misfortunes of animals: "seeing the fate of sheep, men have learnt of the presence of dangerous tigers; seeing the cows sink into a bog, they have learnt not to cross that bog, and so on."[21] On a larger scale, humans can learn from evolutionary history how changes in environment produce changes in species, as well as how to manipulate genetic mutations to improve humanity or create new species; and, again, humans can use this knowledge to prevent catastrophic changes to the environment before it's too late, or to intentionally

[21] Ibid., 300.

transform the world to meet our desires. (Incidentally, it is worth noting that animals also learn from experience, and if it is good for animals to take responsibility for their lives, to learn to protect their lives and the lives of their offspring in an intentional, non-instinctive way, then, again, natural evils serve an important purpose.)

One potential objection to Swinburne's account is that learning from experience may be unnecessary. Instead, perhaps humans could be constituted so that whenever we are about to make a decision, we hear a voice or have an unmistakable gut feeling that convinces us that if we act in a certain way, a particular state of affairs would result. According to Swinburne, if this direct knowledge came from God, we would quickly realize that God exists and would rob us of our freedom to choose whether to do right or wrong, since we would know for certain that God is just and will punish us for our sins. It seems to me, however, that God could give us direct knowledge in such a way that conceals the source of this knowledge, though perhaps such reliable non-inferential knowledge would be defective for some other reason. (Perhaps, for instance, it would rob us of the choice to pursue one line of inquiry over others, or choose to remain ignorant, or to develop certain intellectual virtues.) In any case, though, even if we grant the need for inductive knowledge and the need for regular natural laws, this fails to justify the pattern of animal suffering. First, there is overwhelming evidence that animals were suffering by the billions long before any humans appeared on Earth. We might learn about the effects of a giant asteroid striking earth but we could learn the same lesson if it had struck at a time when the only animals alive could not suffer in a morally relevant way. Second, it does not explain many of the different types of animal suffering. It does not, for instance explain why God chose to create predators, nor does it explain why animals are subject to painful

diseases that do not affect humans. Third, there is the problem of natural selection and the wastefulness of evolution. One might contend that the ends justify the means, that evolution is the best process to bring about a variety of higher-order creatures, including humans. Perhaps there is intrinsic goodness in a process that goes from chaos to order, especially when it leads to humans. Thus, perhaps it is better, on balance, for evolution to occur rather than for God to create humans outright, much as young earth creationists suggest. But, if the animals themselves do not benefit from the process and if the process is almost entirely bad for them, then it seems that they are little more than grist for the mill. God is using them merely as a means to some other end, and not an end in themselves—which is inconsistent with a God who loves all creatures perfectly.[22]

Finally, even if all the animal suffering that has occurred is somehow necessary for significant free will, the animals themselves do not benefit from this free will, except for the few who have benefitted from the care of generous humans. If the answer to *Why is there so much animal suffering?* is *so that humans can have significant free will,* then, again, God is simply using animals as means to an end and not as an end in themselves. Thus, while the value of significant and effective human free will may explain, in global terms, why God allows a variety of often horrific evils, it does not fully justify address the suffering that individual creatures endure as a result.

[22] I am assuming here that part of the essence of love is to show concern for the well-being of the beloved in such a way that the beloved is not treated merely as a means. I will discuss the nature of love in more detail in Chapter Seven, where I will argue that, at minimum, if God loves a creature, he must see to it that its life is on-balance worth living.

Soul-making

Closely related to the classical free-will theodicy is John Hick's assertion that the world is a "vale of soul making," designed to encourage the spiritual and moral development of humans.[23] According to the soul-making theodicy, God's ultimate goal for humans is that each person would become morally perfect and freely enter into an intimate relationship with God. However, Hick continues, it is logically impossible for God to create humans that are already in this state, for two reasons. First, if humans are created with an innate consciousness of God—the source of all goodness, happiness, love, and wisdom—humans "would have no freedom in relation to God."[24] For if a person has such full awareness of God, she will have no inclination to disobey God or reject a relationship with God. And if there is no inclination to reject God, then she has no real choice in the matter. It follows, Hick claims, that if humans are to be free to love God, there must be some "epistemic distance," including ignorance (and hence room for doubt) about God's existence and nature. In other words, God must be hidden somewhat in order to preserve human freedom. And this is what we experience. The world we inhabit is "religiously ambiguous, capable of being seen either as a purely natural phenomenon or as God's creation and experienced as mediating his presence."[25] Therefore, we have the option to draw closer to God or to ignore him altogether.

[23] Hick's account is spelled out most completely in John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966). For a summary of his view, see John Hick, "Soul-Making Theodicy," in *Philosophy of Religion: Selected Readings*, ed. Michael L Peterson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 301–14.

[24] Hick, "Soul-Making Theodicy," 305.

[25] Ibid.

Second, Hick argues that God could have created free, yet morally perfect agents (in contrast with Plantinga's free will defense), but he further claims that it is intrinsically better for an agent to develop his own character in the face of hardship and temptation than to be given a morally perfect character from the start. Thus, for humans to develop in this way—for humans to become morally perfect through their own effort—they must begin as morally imperfect and immature, subject to temptation, and prone to moral failures. Again, Hick notes, the actual world provides an environment in which such development is possible.

> As animal organisms, integral to the whole ecology of life, we are programmed for survival. In pursuit of survival, primitives not only killed other animals for food but fought other humans being when their vital interests conflicted. The life of prehistoric persons must indeed have been a constant struggle to stay alive, prolonging an existence which was, in Hobbes' phrase, "poor, nasty, brutish, and short." And in his basic animal self-regardingness humankind was, and is, morally imperfect. In saying this I am assuming that the essence of moral evil is selfishness, the sacrificing of others to one's own interests. It consists, in Kantian terminology, in treating others, not as ends in themselves, but as means to one's own ends. This is what the survival instinct demands. And yet we are also capable of love, of self-giving in a common cause, of a conscience which responds to others in their needs and dangers.[26]

Thus, Hick continues, humans have a dual nature, at once selfish and selfless, beastly and spiritual, and through struggling with our innate selfishness we can gradually become more like God.[27]

According to Hick, the same requirements for soul-making—epistemic distance from God and an environment full of hardship, temptation, and challenge—explain why God must tolerate natural evils. We can easily imagine a world without disease or pain,

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[26] Ibid., 307.

[27] Ibid.

where any potentially harmful event, like falling from a high building, would fail to harm us. But, since morally significant choices presuppose the possibility of harm or benefit, there must be a real possibility of harm.[28]

Hick's soul-making theodicy is plausible in general. It seems better to become mature and develop a good and loving character than to have a rigidly pre-formed disposition or a character that is always arbitrary. There is great good in not only choosing how to affect the world around me, but also in choosing how to affect myself. To be sure, we cannot be born as completely blank slates, with no inclinations whatsoever. Even so, the more it is up to me what sort of inclinations to satisfy and what sort of person I become, the more honor or shame I deserve for how I am. Hick also seems right that God must be epistemically distant from us, so that we have enough room to make our own choices and mistakes.

However, once we consider the soul-making theodicy in detail, several problems arise. One problem is that the distribution of suffering is unfair. There is no obvious reason why some people must endure much more suffering than others. Rather, the hardships one experiences has more to do with when and where one happens to live than with what sort of hardships are required to elicit moral growth. And it is obvious that some people experience much more hardship than is necessary to make them good people. In response, Hick argues that in order to allow us the freedom required for soul making, the distribution of natural evils must be haphazard. If they were more fairly distributed, so that the amount of misfortune one suffered was directly related to one's misdeeds, it would soon become evident that doing good would bring about comfort and happiness, while doing bad would

[28] Ibid., 310.

bring about disaster. In that case, it would be impossible to do what is right *because* it is right.[29] Thus, Hick concludes, "the very mystery of natural evil, the very fact that disasters afflict human beings in contingent, undirected and haphazard ways, is itself a necessary feature of a world that calls forth mutual aid and builds up mutual caring and love."[30]

Another objection is that although suffering can sometimes produce moral development, this is not always the case. Just as often, it seems, suffering makes people even more selfish and cruel, or the trauma of suffering leaves them unable to function in the world. And, of course, many people are killed at a young age and thus never have an opportunity to develop. Indeed, if the process of personal development is supposed to end in Christian perfection, a state of perfect love for others and close intimacy with God, then we must admit that almost no one successfully becomes who they are supposed to be. Thus, while the world as we know it is conducive for some soul-making, ultimately it is not fully effective. Hick recognizes this problem, but argues that if people are not made perfect in this world, then they must have the opportunity in the world to come. Because the final chapter will consider in depth the possibility of heaven, we will delay this aspect of Hick's theodicy for now.

Another problem is that there seems to be way too much suffering. Even if we grant that natural evils are necessary for soul-making, it seems as if soul-making could be accomplished with much less suffering. In response, one could note that if every evil obviously served a purpose, then it would be clear to us that God exists and cares for us and there would not be the epistemic distance necessary to make morally significant

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[29] Hick seems to be overstating the point. Certainly it would still be possible to do the right thing *because* it is right, even if one knows that one will benefit from choosing to do the right thing.

[30] Hick, "Soul-Making Theodicy," 312.

choices. In other words, the reality of seemingly pointless or excessive evils provides the ambiguity required for us to be free moral agents. In addition, Hick argues that if we accept that some natural evils are required for soul-making, there will inevitably be evils that we will find intolerable. We might judge, for instance, that God could achieve his ends without allowing the agony of cancer. But, if God prevented the agony of cancer, there would be some other evil that would be the worst evil, and we would again suppose that God could achieve his ends without that evil, and so on. We could continue this process until every form of natural evil was eliminated from the world, but in doing so, the need for personal growth and mutual care would also be eliminated. Hick concludes,

> Having accepted that a person-making world must have its dangers and therefore also its tragedies, we must accept that whatever form these take will be intolerable to the inhabitants of that world. There could not be a person-making world devoid of what we call evil; and evils are never tolerable—except for the sake of greater goods which may come out of them."[31]

It seems like the problems mentioned so far have plausible responses, and the soul-making account is one of the most promising theodicies available. However, one serious problem remains. The theodicy gives an account of human soul-making, but does not take animals into account. The process of soul making, as Hick describes it, moves humans from an animalistic state, where our main concern is for our own pleasure and well-being, to a God-like state, where through self-denial we learn to love God and others. Yet animals do not have any awareness of God, and their suffering does not (at least in this life) do anything to draw them into a more intimate relationship with him. Moreover, animals are incapable of morally significant choices. They cannot choose to do good because it is the right thing to do or to choose to develop virtues for their own sake.

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[31] Ibid.

In response, one could argue that although animals cannot develop virtuous characters, the hardships of the world allow animals to become excellent in significant ways. For example, individual animals become faster and stronger through exertion, but they would likely not exert themselves as frequently or to the same extent without some sort of real threat or drive. Many of the higher animals can learn from the success and misfortunes of others as well. Prey animals develop vigilance and caution, and many species have even developed communities and ways to communicate information about predators, other dangers, and the location of food. Predators, meanwhile, develop patience, perseverance, and self-control. More complex hunters even coordinate with each other in order to capture and kill large prey.

The world and its risks promote more relational excellences as well. To be loyal to one's family or group is truly a good thing. The care and protection that a parent shows toward its young is truly admirable and would be pointless in a world without any risk. It is also good for a parent to teach her young how to swim, fly, find food, or hide from danger. To defend one's young from threats is also a good and praiseworthy thing. And, of course, these traits are also good for the animals who benefit from the care, protection, and guidance of others. To depend on others is good for the animal, perhaps not least because it reflects the dependence of every creature upon the care, love, and protection of their Creator, just as it is good for the animal to reflect the divine nature by caring for others.

As good as these things are, one question is whether they are good enough to justify the pattern of animal suffering in the world. It seems to me that they are not. Given the great goods of love, morally significant action, and soul-making, there is at least some pull

to the claim that these goods make up for the suffering one might experience. But the goods available to animals seem like pale imitations of the goods available to humans, while their pains (though perhaps less intense than human pain) are very real and very bad. Consequently, to fully account for the problem of animal suffering, the soul-making involved would have to be more like what is available to humans—with real moral growth, development of genuine love for others, intimacy with God, and so on—than is available in this life.

The Fall

As we have seen, one way to address the pattern of animal suffering is to argue that there are important goods in the world that could not obtain without significant moral and natural evils. Thus, the argument goes, the moral outrage we might initially feel about the pattern of suffering is improper, for we can see why a good God would allow suffering to occur. Another possible response is to concede that the pattern of suffering is morally outrageous but argue that God is not to blame, because some evil agents are responsible. According to these accounts, the world is supposed to be free from suffering and needless violence, but because of moral evil, the world is fallen and corrupted. In this section we will consider two of these treatments, beginning with the claim that human sin is responsible for the pattern of animal suffering and ending with the claim that demonic agents are to blame.

A Human Fall

A common explanation for natural evil is that when God first created the world, it was ideal, but because of human sin, the world is now cursed and fallen. Genesis 1:1 – 2:3

describes God creating the world in stages, divided among six days, and at the end of each day's work, God reflects on each stage and declares it to be good. Finally, at the end of the sixth day, "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good."[32] Genesis 2:4 begins a second creation story, focusing on the first humans. Adam and Eve were then placed in a beautiful garden, of which the couple was supposed to be stewards. However, they fall into temptation and eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, which God had forbidden them to touch. When God confronts the couple, he delivers this condemnation:

> Because you have listened to the voice of your wife
>   and have eaten of the tree
> of which I commanded you,
>   'You shall not eat of it,'
> cursed is the ground because of you;
>   in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;
> thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;
>   and you shall eat the plants of the field.
> By the sweat of your face
>   you shall eat bread,
> till you return to the ground,
>   for out of it you were taken;
> for you are dust,
>   and to dust you shall return.[33]

If we accept Genesis 1 – 3 as an accurate, literal depiction of historical events, the reason for all suffering, including both moral and natural evils, is no mystery. This first sin introduced death into the world, cursed the whole ground, and perhaps even created strife among the animals.[34] If so, then what we normally consider natural evils are actually moral evils that can be blamed on the misuse of free will.

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[32] Genesis 1:31.

[33] Genesis 3:17-19.

[34] In Genesis 1:29-30, animals are given plants to eat, suggesting that the world was originally peaceful and free from predation. Humans were also originally meant to eat vegetation, and although humans were eating meat soon after the fall, it is not until Genesis 9 (when Noah and his family left the ark) that God explicitly gives the animals as food for humans.

However, there are several problems with this account. Most obviously, there is strong evidence, and nearly unanimous consensus among scientists, that the universe and the earth are billions of years old and that animals were suffering long before the advent of humanity. Assuming that scientists are correct, then, apart from retroactive causation or an especially imaginative, and viciously *ad hoc*, account of the Fall, Adam's sin cannot be responsible for all suffering and evil in the world.[35] Along these lines, it is now clear that the ancient Hebrew cosmology described in the Old Testament—consisting of "waters above" and "waters below," separated by the firmament, a solid dome with gates through which the waters above could fall down as rain, hail, or snow—is inaccurate.[36] In light of this, many theologians read parts of Genesis either as poetry, allegory, or as an accommodation (God's revelation of himself in terms that the original recipients of the revelation could understand and accept).[37]

[35] In a blog post, Alexander Pruss playfully offers one such non-standard account, in which Adam and Eve sin in Paradise—a separate, perfect universe, and are then removed from Paradise. "In the process," Pruss continues, "[God] destroys their bodies (i.e., he stops sustaining their existence) and puts their souls in stasis. But in Paradise, there was a law of nature that when the forbidden fruit is eaten, a Big Bang will occur (this could also be a miracle), initiating a 14 billion year process leading to some pretty clever apes in a universe better suited to sinners like Adam and Eve. God then takes the matter of two of these clever apes…and instills Adam and Eve's souls in this matter. And so all the science as to what has happened in the material universe since the Big Bang is right." Quoted from Alexander Pruss, "A Defense of Genesis 1-3," *The Prosblogion*, April 30, 2013, http://prosblogion.ektopos.com/2013/04/30/a_defense_of_ge/.

[36] See, for instance, Genesis 1:6-8, 1:14-17; 7:11; Isaiah 40:22, Job 37:18, 38:22; Ezekiel 1:22, Enoch 72:2-5. Paul Seely argues that, like other ancient Near East cultures (and several pre-scientific societies), the Hebrews imagined the sky to be a solid dome, not simply an expanse of sky, as some have recently suggested. Paul H. Seely, "The Firmament and the Water Above," *The Westminster Theological Journal* 53 (1991): 227–40.

[37] For a brief summary of these approaches, particularly the accommodation approach and its role in the Copernican and Galilean debates, see Alister E. McGrath, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to the History of Christian Thought* (Wiley, 1998), 177 – 181. For an in-depth study of the history of the concept divine accommodation, see Stephen D. Benin, *The Footprints of God: Divine Accommodation in Jewish and Christian Thought*, SUNY Series in Judaica (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993).

Also, modern biblical scholars have combined archaeological evidence, (especially discoveries of the religious beliefs, practices, and stories of other ancient Near Eastern cultures), with a variety of exegetical methods to argue that the primeval history in Genesis was never intended to be a literal account of how the world was made, but instead was intended to show God's relationship with the created order, the role of humanity within that order, and humanity's relationship with God.[38] To be sure, non-literal interpretations of Genesis 1-11 have gained popularity with the development of modern science and archaeology; however, it is important to note that non-literal approaches can be found in both the Jewish tradition and among the early Church fathers, including Philo, Origen, St. Augustine, and perhaps Clement of Alexandria.[39] Most famously, St. Augustine argued that God created the universe and everything in it in a single instant, and that the six days of Genesis 1 describe a logical (rather than temporal) ordering of creation.[40]

Finally, even among theists who accept Genesis 1-3 as literally true there is wide disagreement about what exactly the text asserts. There are, for example, young-Earth

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[38] See, for instance, John H Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2009); Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1997); Bill T. Arnold, *Genesis* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

[39] For a summary of the various treatments of Genesis 1-11 in the early Church, see Peter Bouteneff, *Beginnings: Ancient Christian Readings of the Biblical Creation Narratives* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008). See also Jack P. Lewis, "The Days of Creation: An Historical Survey of Interpretation," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 32 (December 1989): 433–55.

[40] Augustine's more mature reflections on Genesis can be found in *The Literal Interpretation of Genesis*, in Augustine, *On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees, Unfinished Literal Commentary on Genesis, the Literal Meaning of Genesis*, ed. Edmund Hill and John E Rotelle (Hyde Park, N.Y.: New City Press, 2002). A summary of these views appears in Davis A. Young, "The Contemporary Relevance of Augustine's View of Creation," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 40, no. 1 (1998): 42–45. It should be noted that while Augustine considered his interpretation to be literal, his use of *literal* is quite different from how we use it today. "For example," Young says, "he concludes that in Genesis 1 the terms 'light,' 'day,' and 'morning' bear a spiritual, rather than physical, meaning. Yet for Augustine, spiritual light is just as literal as physical light, and the creation of spiritual light is just as much a historical event or fact as the creation of physical light. What is literal for one person may not be literal for others." Ibid., 42.

creationists who attempt to interpret the geological, astronomical, and biological evidence in a manner consistent with a 6,000-year-old universe. In contrast, old-Earth creationists accept that the Earth is billions of years old, but argue that this is consistent with a literal interpretation of Genesis. Some, for instance, suggest that there is an enormous "gap" between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2, which would account for much of the evidence that the Earth is very old. Others argue that the Hebrew word *yom* is best translated as *age* in Genesis; according to this view, the world was not created in six 24-hour days, but rather in six eras of indeterminate duration.[41] On any of these interpretations, but especially for old-Earth readings, it is possible that among the animals that existed before Adam and Eve, some may have been predators, or subject to diseases and accidents. Thus, even literalist interpretations of Genesis do not demand that all animal suffering is the result of human sin.

Hence, there is ample reason to doubt that the Genesis accounts of creation and the Fall are historically and scientifically accurate. Yet even if the Bible unequivocally claimed that all suffering is the result of human evil, this would not erase the outrageousness of animal suffering, but would actually aggravate the problem. For one thing, the severity of the supposed punishment—all of the horrific evils described above—far outweighs the apparent magnitude of the first sin, especially since it is likely that Adam and Eve could not fully understand the full implications of their sin. They are simply told not to eat from the Tree, "for in the day that you eat of it you shall die." No mention is made of the corruption of all creation, the hostility that would arise among living creatures,

[41] For a summary of these views, see Gregory A. Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil: Constructing a Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 309–317; Gregory A. Boyd, *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 100–140.

or any other horrors. And, while the original couple is described as innocent, it is clear that they lacked wisdom; otherwise, there would have been no temptation to gain wisdom by eating from the Tree, and they would have recognized the serpent's deception for what it was.[42]

More importantly, it seems unjust for God to curse the entire earth and all the animals in it because of the sins of two creatures. Perhaps one could respond that because humans were given authority and stewardship over creation, their moral failure naturally resulted in the world's bondage to death and decay. After all, according to Genesis the first humans were tasked with tending the garden and having dominion over the animals. On this conception, God punished Adam, Eve, and the serpent for their sins, but the rest of the natural order fell as an inevitable consequence of human failings. Unfortunately, this response does not help. For there is no logical connection between human moral failing and the length of a leopard's claws or a bat's vulnerability to rabies. Thus, if the idyllic nature of the world depends on the moral perfection of its inhabitants, this dependence is contingent. But in that case, God should have created a more stable world, where the effects of moral evil are much more limited, especially if God knew in advance that humans would inevitably fall. Of course, this is not to suggest that human moral agency can never result in natural evils. In our attempts to alter the environment to suit our immediate needs, humans have destroyed ecosystems, pushed species toward extinction, caused famines, and even changed global weather patterns. And even more unfortunate is the amount of

[42] Genesis 3:4-6 says, "But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.' So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, *and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise*, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, and he ate." (Emphasis added.)

suffering that could be eliminated if well-intentioned humans would do more to prevent it. However, even granting all of this, it is unreasonable to suppose that *all* suffering can be blamed on human choices.

Demonic Fall

Instead of blaming human evil for suffering, many theists defend a warfare theodicy, which blames the state of the world on the evil choices of demonic agents. According to this view, a significant portion of the angels, led by Satan, rebelled against God and has been actively working against God's original plan for creation. Prominent Christian defenders of the warfare view include Alvin Plantinga and C. S. Lewis who, in his discussion of animal pain, suggests that perhaps a "mighty created power" had been actively corrupting animal nature, in a way "analogous…to the satanic corruption of man."[43] It should be noted that Plantinga and Lewis suggest the existence of demonic powers merely as possible entities, in order to defend the goodness of God. However, others have been more forceful. They note, for instance, that both the Old and New Testaments attest to the existence of demons and their malevolent activity in the world. Some have also argued that, given the severity of the problem, only the existence of demonic agents can adequately account for the pattern of natural evils we observe.[44]

In its favor, the warfare theodicy is straightforward and simple. As Gregory Boyd claims, "All other things being equal, in the trinitarian warfare perspective we may assume

[43] Lewis, *Problem of Pain*, 135.

[44] For a sustained argument, see Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*. See also William Robinson, *The Devil and God* (New York; Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1945); Clement Charles Julian Webb, *Problems in the Relations of God and Man* (London: James Nisbet, 1911); Terence Penelhum, *Religion and Rationality: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Random House, 1971); and Wallace A. Murphree, "Can Theism Survive Without the Devil?," *Religious Studies* 21, no. 2 (1985): 231 – 244.

that the source of what appears to be good in creation is a good agent and that the source of what appears to be evil is an evil agent(s). Things are as they appear. The world *looks* like a war zone because it *is* a war zone. In attempting to account for all the evil in the world, no theodicy could be simpler."[45]

Despite its apparent simplicity, the view faces a number of challenges. First, many people will reject the existence of demons out of hand as a ridiculous notion. Yet this fact alone does not prove the idea false. As Plantinga notes,

> Many people find it preposterous; but that is scarcely evidence against it. Theologians sometimes tell us that this idea is repugnant to "man come of age" or to "modern habits of thought." I am not convinced that this is so; in any case it does not come to much as evidence. The mere fact that a belief is unpopular at present (or at some other time) is interesting, no doubt, from a sociological point of view; it is evidentially irrelevant. Perhaps, we do have evidence against this belief, but if we do, I do not know what it is.[46]

But does this reasoning cut both ways? Is the fact that belief in demons was once popular in a pre-scientific religious group "evidentially irrelevant"? Fortunately for Plantinga, the logical and evidential problems can be deflected simply by, respectively, showing that demons could possibly be responsible for natural evils and that we are in no position to estimate the likelihood that demons are influencing the world. However, from an existential standpoint, the moral outrage I feel toward God for the pattern of animal suffering cannot be redirected at Satan and his cohorts unless I have good reason to think that they really are responsible.

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[45] Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 307. (Emphasis in the original)

[46] Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 195. Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil*, 58.

On one hand, it is worth noting that the Abrahamic scriptures and tradition have long affirmed the influence of spiritual forces. In the story of Job, for instance, God allows Satan to bring calamities upon Job's family and, later, upon Job himself.[47] The gospels frequently describe Christ exerting authority over demonic forces, and in Acts this authority is granted to the apostles. John, meanwhile, claimed that "the whole world lies under the power of the evil one."[48] And Paul wrote, "Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."[49] If one is already has good reasons to accept that God created all things *ex nihilo,* that God acts in history and reveals himself through miracles and prophecy and scripture, that Christ was born of the Virgin Mary and was resurrected from the dead, then it would be unreasonable to reject the existence and influence of demonic powers as preposterous or superstitious.

On the other hand, it must be admitted that there is little independent evidence that demons exist, and many argue that there is not any room for demons to affect the world in a significant way.[50] Climate- and weather-related disasters—hurricanes, tornadoes, drought, flood, and the rest—may be impossible to predict exactly, but the more we learn

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[47] Job 1:11-21; 2:4-8.

[48] 1 John 5:19. See also Hebrews 2:14.

[49] Ephesians 6:11-12.

[50] Quentin Smith rejects Plantinga's demon defense on the grounds that since there is no evidence that demons exist, he is justified in believing that they do not. Quentin Smith, "An Atheological Argument from Evil Natural Laws," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 29, no. 3 (1991): 159. On this point, Smith cites an argument from P. J. McGrath, "Atheism or Agnosticism," *Analysis* 47, no. 1 (January 1, 1987): 54–57.

about them, the more natural they seem. The same is true for earthquakes, tsunamis, and volcanoes, as well as diseases, genetic mutations, and the wasteful course of evolution. As terrible as these things are, and as much as we may want to say that they are *evil*, there is no direct evidence demonic powers were involved. (We call them *natural evils*, after all, because they appear to follow from natural laws, not moral agents.)[51]

To summarize, then, while there is not enough evidence to claim with confidence that demonic agents are responsible for natural evils, it is not a claim that we can dismiss outright. Both religious tradition and the natural order (how nature is at once excellently suited for living creatures and yet produces a shocking amount of seemingly pointless suffering) give us some reason to think that the world is a battleground for good and evil forces. Consequently, there is some reason to doubt whether it is proper to be outraged at God for the pattern of animal suffering in the world.

Conclusion

In this chapter I developed an argument from moral outrage at the pattern of animal suffering in the world. After describing in brief detail some of the most troubling facts about animal suffering, I gave several preliminary reasons to think that moral outrage is both proper and rightly directed at God. For the remainder of the chapter, I considered two distinct ways to think about the pattern of suffering in the world, particularly as it affects animals. First, one can attempt to mitigate the problem by noting how the conditions that

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[51] Although he grants that demons exist, Richard Swinburne notes that demons have typically been understood to tempt humans into wrongdoing, rather than causing suffering directly. Thus, Swinburne concludes, "it would seem *ad hoc* to attempt to explain too much of the bad in the world as due to their operation; there is not enough independent evidence to suppose that any bad angels have very much power." Swinburne, *Providence and the Problem of Evil*, 108. For arguments that the warfare theodicy is not *ad hoc,* see Gregory A. Boyd, *God at War : The Bible & Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1997), chap. 1; Murray, *Nature Red in Tooth and Claw*, 100.

allow for intense suffering are necessary to allow for many of the great goods that our world also has. Second, one can argue that the world is genuinely fallen, that there are powers (either human or demonic) that are in rebellion against God and corrupting the natural order in ways that result in the horrific suffering we observe. Both approaches have marks in their favor. It is worth noting, for instance, that the world is full of good things—like moral goodness, love, courage, personal development, and so on—that would not be possible in a risk-free world. And upon careful reflection, it seems that even with all the terrible things that happen, the lives of most creatures are worthwhile and the world is quite good on the whole. At the same time, the warfare account has the advantage of matching the way the world naturally appears to us. As good as the world is for the most part, we must admit that it seems that something is deeply wrong with it.

At the same time, both approaches have their limitations. The first approach attempts to address the overall pattern of suffering, but it does not account for individual instances of suffering that do not seem to serve any specific purpose. One might grant, for instance, that the goods of free will (or whatever) require a world with natural laws, and that these natural laws might produces instances of intense animal suffering. But at the same time, it seems that these justifying goods would obtain even if particular evils were prevented. Imagine, for instance, some remote animal that suffers from a painful birth defect for a while and finally dies. It seems that the world would not lose any noticeable good if God were to prevent that animal's suffering; in fact, it seems that if God had prevented that suffering (perhaps by preventing that animal's conception), the world would be noticeably better, for it would have one less instance of seemingly pointless suffering. Meanwhile, the second approach is incomplete if one simply blames horrific evils on

demonic agents without promising future hope. On an existential level, the outrage I feel about injustice and pointless suffering comes not just from sympathy for the victim, but also from the fact that (in the case of moral evils) the perpetrators are never brought to justice and that (in the case of natural evils) the natural order itself seems broken and in need of repair.

In conclusion, both of the approaches described in this chapter are helpful for understanding why, in general, there is so much suffering in the world. Note, too, that the approaches are compatible with each other. We could suppose, for instance, that the world is harsh and full of danger because of the many goods they bring about, but at the same time accept that some of the most horrific evils have a supernatural origin. And, despite their weaknesses, they give reason to think that there is a solution to the problem of animal suffering, even if we have not yet encountered it. In the final two chapters I will attempt to address some of the issues that remain unresolved. In Chapter Six, I will consider whether God could have secured all the goods described in this chapter, but with just a little less suffering. I will also consider the problem of local evils, individual instances of suffering that provoke moral outrage because they seem to serve no good purpose. I will describe some possible responses to these problems but ultimately conclude that they are insufficient. Finally, in the seventh chapter, I will argue that the doctrine of heaven, if expanded to include animals, best answers the global and local problems of suffering.

CHAPTER SIX

The Local Problem of Animal Suffering

Introduction

The fourth and fifth chapters focused on the overall pattern of suffering in the world, and the sense of moral outrage that it provokes. In those chapters, I tried to soothe this moral outrage somewhat by giving reasons why a good and loving God might create a world in which living things are vulnerable to injury, suffering, and death. I argued that these reasons are good enough to give us hope that God *might* be good and loving, but they are insufficient by themselves. In this chapter I will turn my focus to the suffering of individual creatures. As an argument from moral outrage, the local problem may be put like this:

p1. There are instances of animal suffering that are morally outrageous to me.

p2. I am convinced that my moral outrage is rational and properly directed (at least in part) at God.

p3. If (p1) and (p2), then I cannot believe in God, let alone love, trust, and worship God.

p4. Therefore, I cannot believe in God, let alone love, trust, and worship God.

In what follows, I will explore several *prima facie* judgments that give rise to this moral outrage. In the first part, I will discuss the moral outrage that arises over gratuitous and excessive evils: If God were good and loving, he ought to eliminate as much evil as possible. However, there are many horrific evils that do not seem to serve any purpose at

all. And while there may be good reason to allow *some* evil, it seems obvious that God allows too much. At the very least, it seems that all of the important goods in the world could have been obtained with just a little less evil. In the next section I will briefly discuss these judgments and discuss important objections to them. While these objections are inconclusive, they are strong enough to raise doubts about this aspect of my moral outrage.

In the second part I will argue that if God loves all creatures, then he cannot use some creatures' suffering merely as means to God's plans for the world. Consequently, if an animal suffers horrifically, it is not enough for that suffering to contribute to worldwide goods. Instead, if a creature suffers innocently, a loving God should do everything within his power and authority to defeat that suffering and make it worthwhile for the creature itself. Unfortunately, for many creatures, this defeat of suffering never happens during their earthly lives, and this, to me, is morally outrageous. Thus, if we consider only the goods of the world as it is now, the argument from moral outrage stands.

Gratuitous and Excessive Evils

Recall that one of the evidential arguments of evil considers inscrutable evils, instances of suffering that are both horrific and do not appear to serve any good purpose. Such evils, some atheists claim, give us good reason to think that at least some evils are *gratuitous:* God could have prevented them without sacrificing a greater good or allowing an evil equally bad or worse. In simple terms, the argument goes like this:

e1. There are instances of gratuitous evils.

e2. If God exists, he would not allow gratuitous evils.

e3. Therefore, God does not exist.

Against this argument, theists most commonly reject the first premise and argue that for all we know, God may allow horrific suffering for reasons that are beyond us. More recently, though, some theists have raised doubts about the second premise, arguing that God may be justified in allowing evils even when that particular evil is not necessary for God's overall plan. Let us consider each of these strategies in turn.

An Objection to e1

Let *h* represent a particularly horrific instance of suffering, like William Rowe's imagined fawn, who is trapped in a forest fire, horribly burned, and suffers terrible agony before finally dying.[1] Nontheists often point out that intelligent, thoughtful people have tried to discern reasons why God would allow suffering like this. Their failure to find any reasons, they continue, gives us good reason to think that these evils are truly gratuitous. Consequently, they claim, the inference from

P: We can see no reason for God to allow *h*

to

Q: There is no reason for God to allow *h*

is justified.

In response, skeptical theists claim that the inference from P to Q—sometimes called a "noseeum inference"—is justified only if we have good reason to think that if there were such reasons, we would be likely to see them.[2] However, they continue, God is

[1] Rowe, "The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism," 1996.

[2] Wykstra, "Rowe's Noseeum Arguments from Evil." To be more precise, skeptical theists differ somewhat about what epistemic principle is required to justifiably infer Q from P, though they agree that because of our cognitive limitations, the required principle (whatever it is) is unsatisfied. For similar treatments of the argument from gratuitous evils, see Alston, "Some (Temporarily) Final Thoughts on Evidential Arguments from Evil"; Michael Bergmann, "Skeptical Theism and Rowe's New Evidential Argument from Evil," *Noûs* 35, no. 2 (2001): 278–96; Daniel Howard-Snyder, "The Argument from

immeasurably more intelligent than us, and may have justifying goods in mind that we are unable to recognize.

Skeptical theists often claim that the relationship between God and humans is like the relationship between a parent and an infant. Note, for instance, that a one-month-old infant does not know why her father would allow her to be poked with a needle; for her, the needle is bad, and nothing good ever comes from being poked by it. However, because of her limited cognition, if there were good reasons for her father to allow the needle prick, she would be unable to recognize them.

In fact, the father does have a good reason. He hopes that by vaccinating his daughter, she will be less likely to suffer from potentially lethal diseases like smallpox. But the child cannot grasp these reasons. For one thing, the situation is much more complex than she realizes. She is allowed to experience pain *now* in order to save her from suffering much further down the road. Indeed, if the vaccination is successful, her life would continue as it always had, and as far as she could tell, the needle poke would be a completely isolated, pointless event. What's more, the infant cannot recognize the goods of vaccination because her grasp of the goods and bads involved is extremely limited. For her, *good* consists of immediate comfort, pleasure, and satisfaction, while *bad* consists of discomfort, pain, and need. She simply has no concept of health or a lack of illness, and so she cannot appreciate that the needle prick is worthwhile.

Many skeptical theists argue that human cognition is similarly limited, either because the circumstances surrounding a particular horror—its causes and consequences and the balance of all the myriad goods and bads involved—are too complex for us to

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Inscrutable Evil," in *The Evidential Argument from Evil*, ed. Daniel Howard-Snyder (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).

appreciate, or because the goods that God has in mind are beyond our understanding. It could be, they argue, that because of these limitations there are reasons for God to allow horrors that we fail to recognize.

It is certainly *possible* that God allows evils for reasons that we cannot recognize, but are there any positive reasons to believe that such reasons actually exist? Two arguments are commonly put forward: the argument from complexity and the argument from progress.

Argument from complexity.[3] We know that the world is extremely complex. Very slight changes to the initial conditions of the universe (the distribution of mass, the strength of gravity, and so on) might have resulted in a world in which life could never develop. Also, very small alterations in the state of the world at any given moment can have drastic consequences far into the future. For example, each person's existence depends on an immensely complicated series of events, and even tiny changes in the circumstances surrounding one's conception would very likely result in some other person's conception, or even no conception at all. And since this is true for *every* person, extremely small changes in the distant past would wipe out entire family trees and drastically change the course of history. Similarly, consider how many people die because of freak accidents or narrowly avoid death and serious injury, all because of seemingly insignificant choices or coincidences. So, if extremely slight changes in circumstances can multiply in ways that we cannot imagine, more noticeable changes—like preventing a forest fire, or preventing

[3] Daniel Howard-Snyder offers an "argument from complexity" that is quite different from the complexity argument described here. According to Howard-Snyder, there are many goods that we fail to appreciate because they are too complex for us to understand. For instance, a young child may appreciate the aesthetic value of a catchy tune, but cannot appreciate the value of a masterpiece of classical music. Howard-Snyder, "The Argument from Inscrutable Evil," 301.

an animal from injury and death—would have far greater effects. Because of this extreme complexity, it is impossible for us to know the full consequences of allowing or preventing a particular horror. Thus, for all we know, God allows horrific evils because in preventing them, there would be much worse evils in the long run.[4]

Arguments from progress. Another reason to think that God has beyond-our-ken goods in mind is given by arguments from progress. As humans develop mentally, they are able to appreciate more and more goods. Infants can at first only understand immediate, physical goods and bads, but as they develop, they learn to appreciate more long-term goods and abstract goods like beauty, kindness, and fair play. Only later do many people recognize the value of developing virtues, learning things and acquiring skills, and so on. As we grow older, our mental development slows considerably, and it is much rarer to discover new goods that one had previously overlooked. But the fact that we no longer discover new goods does not imply that there are no other goods worth appreciating. Analogously, as I grew, I was able to reach higher and higher things. Now my growing has stalled, and there is a limit to things I can touch—about ten feet, if I jump as high as I can. But, of course, the fact that I can only reach things less than ten feet high does not imply that nothing exists above that height. Likewise, I have stopped discovering new goods, even after mentally "jumping" as high as I can. But it seems quite likely that if I fail to recognize new goods, it is because I've reached the limit of goods my mind can grasp, not because no other goods exist.

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[4] An argument from complexity similar to this one is developed in Kirk Durston, "The Consequential Complexity of History and Gratuitous Evil," *Religious Studies* 36, no. 1 (2000): 65–80.

Along these lines, consider the history of human progress. In many fields of inquiry, progress is not steady, but rather punctuated by periods of rapid growth, followed by periods of relative stagnation. In fact, historians often name these periods of stagnation or growth: the dark ages, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and so on. Now, progress over a very long time suggests that there may be future progress, and thus there may be goods yet to be discovered. And if human appreciation for intrinsic goods is like other fields of inquiry, with periods of rapid growth and periods of relative stagnation, then the fact that no new values have been discovered for hundreds of years does not imply that humanity has reached its limit. We may only be in a period of relative stagnation.[5]

What these arguments show. Skeptical theists are careful to note that these arguments do not prove that there *are* beyond-our-ken goods, and they certainly do not prove that God has these beyond-our-ken goods in mind when he allows horrific suffering. However, they continue, they give us good reason to think that there *may* be such goods, and that it would not be surprising if there were such goods. And this, they claim, gives us good reasons to doubt the inference from P to Q.

Rejecting Premise e2

While most of the debate over the argument from gratuitous evil has focused on the first premise, Peter van Inwagen has said that given the great number of inscrutable horrors, it is almost certain that at least *one* of those events was gratuitous.[6] Rather than rebutting the first premise, then, he focuses on the second, which he restates as follows:

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[5] Howard-Snyder, "The Argument from Inscrutable Evil," 301.

[6] van Inwagen, *The Problem of Evil*, 98–99.

> If a morally perfect creator could have left a certain horror out of the world he created, and if the world he created would have been no worse if that horror had been left out of it than it would have been if it had included that horror, then the morally perfect creator would have left the horror out of the world he created (assuming he was able to leave it out).[7]

According to van Inwagen, this premise is based on the following moral principle:

> If one is in a position to prevent some evil, one should not allow that evil to occur—not unless allowing it to occur would result in some good that would outweigh it or preventing it would result in some other evil at least as bad.[8]

As a counterexample to this principle, van Inwagen offers the following scenario. Suppose you have the authority to release anyone from prison at any time. Blodgett has been sentenced to ten years in prison for assault, but requests that his sentenced be reduced by a day. He reasons that whatever goods obtained by a ten-year sentence would be obtained if his sentence were one day shorter. And, according to the moral principle above, if you can ease Blodgett's hardship without sacrificing some good or allowing a greater evil, you should do it. If you agree with Blodgett and let him out of prison a day early, you have just as much reason to reduce his sentence by two days, for, again, you can reduce Blodgett's prison sentence by one more day without sacrificing any goods. Continuing this reasoning to the end, it would follow that Blodgett ought to spend no time in prison at all.[9] The lesson, according to van Inwagen, is that the duration of prison sentences is a clear case where morally arbitrary lines are necessary: If some time in jail is a proper punishment for assault, the authorities must draw a line somewhere, and this line must be

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[7] Ibid., 98.

[8] Ibid., 100.

[9] The argument, of course, is not that spending (say) 99 days in jail is no different from spending ten years in jail. Rather, at every point in the argument, reducing the sentence by one day will have no effect. Any goods obtained by a 3,000-day sentence could be obtained by a 2,999-day sentence. Any goods obtained by a 100-day sentence would be obtained by a 99-day sentence, and so on.

arbitrary. The duration of the sentence must be such that adding or subtracting a small amount of time would make little difference to the goods aimed at by the punishment. This result, for van Inwagen, is a *reductio ad absurdum* of the original moral principle in question. It fails, he claims, "precisely *because* it forbids the drawing of morally arbitrary lines."[10] By analogy, then, just as human authorities must draw morally arbitrary lines about the duration of prison sentences, God must draw a morally arbitrary line regarding how much evil to allow.

To be clear, when van Inwagen claims that God must choose how much evil to allow in the world, he is not suggesting that evil is somehow good for the world when allowed in the right amounts. Rather, as I understand him, he is thinking along the following lines. There are a number of goods that can obtain only if God allows the world to operate on its own to a large extent. (For brevity, I will refer to them as "hands-off goods.") God cannot intervene every time someone is about to choose to do something wrong without sacrificing the goods of free will, nor can he suspend natural laws without thereby sacrificing the goods of a regular natural order and all the goods that follow from it. To be sure, God can intervene *sometimes* to prevent horrors without sacrificing these hands-off goods in any significant way, but God cannot intervene every time an evil is about to occur without losing important hands-off goods. Thus, God is in a position similar to that of the prison official. Just as there is no optimal prison sentence for assault, there is no perfectly optimal balance between hands-off goods and the goods brought about (or evils prevented) by his intervention. God must draw the line *somewhere*, and that line must be arbitrary. Thus, however many times God intervenes, he could have intervened one

[10] van Inwagen, *The Problem of Evil*, 102.

more time without sacrificing hands-off goods in any significant way. And no matter how much horrific evil God prevents, he could have prevented slightly more evil without sacrificing any important goods in the process.[11]

If this reasoning is correct, it would also follow that wherever God draws the line, there will be gratuitous evils and that innocent creatures will suffer needlessly. So, when we ask why God allowed (for instance) a fawn to be burned in a fire, van Inwagen's response would be that there are reasons for God to allow *some* horrific evils, but that there may be no non-arbitrary reason why *this* creature suffered rather than *that* one.

And yet, he continues, God is justified in allowing some creatures to suffer gratuitously, so long as God is fair in selecting whom to help. On this point, van Inwagen offers another illustration. Imagine one thousand children suffering from a fatal disease. There is a medicine that will treat the disease, but only if a sufficient dose is given. Unfortunately, one-thousandth of the available medicine is certainly not enough, so distributing the medicine evenly to all one thousand children will do no good. No matter what is done, at least one child will die from the disease. It has therefore been decided to divide the available medicine into N equal units, and lots have been drawn to determine who among the children will receive a dose.

Suppose that a medical expert (or some other reasonable method) has determined that N should be 100, and accordingly the available medicine has been divided into one

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[11] The obvious objection is that God should have allowed the absolute *minimum* amount of horrific evil that is consistent with his overall plan for the world. But van Inwagen denies that there is any minimum, because the region between "too much divine intervention" and "not enough intervention" is vague. "To ask what the minimum number of horrors consistent with God's plan is, is like asking, What is the minimum number of raindrops that could have fallen on France in the twentieth century that is consistent with France's having been a fertile country in the twentieth century?" So, to claim that there is an absolute minimum number of horrors, one would also have to also claim that there is a number of raindrops such that, if one fewer drop had fallen over France, it would not have been a fertile country. But that, he claims, would be absurd. Ibid., 106–107.

hundred equal units. Now consider Charlie, who was not selected to receive one of the 100 doses of medicine. Charlie's mother suggests that if 1/101 of a dose were removed from each unit, one more dose could be obtained without significantly affecting the 100 children's chances of survival. In this way, she reasons, we can (and should) save 101 lives instead of just 100. Her argument is convincing, but the problem is easy to see. If the authorities grant the request of Charlie's mother, they could just as well accept the argument that they ought to make 102 doses out of the available medicine, thereby saving Alice as well, without affecting the other 101's chances of survival. But this reasoning applies just as well to each subsequent child, and yet it is clear that if *all* children receive one-thousandth of a dose, all of them will die.[12] The conclusion, van Inwagen claims, is inescapable. Since it is impossible to save *all* the children, they must save some of them and not others. No matter how many doses they choose to make, they must permit at least one child to die who could have been saved without achieving any good by allowing that child's death.[13] Likewise, van Inwagen concludes, God, who has good reasons to allow some suffering, must decide how frequently he will intervene, and consequently how much suffering he will allow. But since there is no absolute minimum amount that will do the job, God must draw the line somewhere, and that line must be arbitrary. Inevitably, then, there will be instances of suffering that God justifiably allows, even though he could have prevented it without sacrificing any greater goods or allowing any worse evils.

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[12] Ibid., 109–111. If the example is unconvincing as he puts it, van Inwagen suggests that we imagine one billion children and the best guess at the ideal N to be about 100 million. In this case it is would be obvious that if a certain amount of medicine would have the desired effect, reducing that dose by $1/10^8$ would make no difference.

[13] For a similar argument, see Howard-Snyder, "The Argument from Inscrutable Evil," 288–289.

Responses

We have, then, two strong objections to arguments from gratuitous evils, and thus some reason to doubt that my moral outrage is properly directed at God. Of course, detractors dismiss these arguments for a variety of reasons.[14] It is commonly argued, for instance, that skeptical theism leads to skepticism in other areas of inquiry and potentially leads to widespread skepticism about everything.[15] Others balk at the moral judgments assumed by skeptical theists or worry that consistent skeptical theism hinders moral knowledge and deliberation.[16] Another worry is that skeptical theism makes it impossible to trust God, for in order to trust someone, we must be reasonably sure about the other's motives and reasoning.

Van Inwagen's argument against e2 has received less attention, but the primary objection to it is that even if there is no exact minimum of suffering that God must allow, it is clear that the actual amount of suffering vastly exceeds any reasonable threshold. To use Bruce Russell's example,

> Suppose a farmer strikes his mule 100 times. It can be reasonable of me to believe that the farmer should have struck his mule at least one less time even if it would also have been reasonable for me to believe he should have struck it one less time

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[14] For an in-depth discussion of the many varieties skeptical theism and debates surrounding evidential arguments from evil, see Trent Dougherty, "Skeptical Theism," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring 2014, 2014, http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/skeptical-theism/.

[15] For epistemological objections to skeptical theism, see Bruce Russell, "Defenseless," in *The Evidential Argument from Evil*, ed. Daniel Howard-Snyder (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 193–205; Richard M. Gale, "Some Difficulties in Theistic Treatments of Evil," in *The Evidential Argument from Evil*, ed. Daniel Howard-Snyder (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 206–18.; Trent Dougherty, "Epistemological Considerations Concerning Skeptical Theism," *Faith and Philosophy* 25, no. 2 (2008): 172–76.

[16] Jeff Jordan, "Does Skeptical Theism Lead to Moral Skepticism?," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 72, no. 2 (2006): 403–17; Mark Piper, "Skeptical Theism and the Problem of Moral Aporia," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 62, no. 2 (2007): 65–79; Scott Sehon, "The Problem of Evil: Skeptical Theism Leads to Moral Paralysis," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 67, no. 2 (2010): 67–80.

> had he struck it only 99 times. And that will be true even if I do not know exactly how many fewer times the farmer should have struck his mule.[17]

In other words, if a mule deserves to be struck at all, one or two or perhaps even ten blows would do the trick. One need not know exactly how many blows are needed to know that 100 blows is excessive. The same, Russell thinks, can be said for the amount of evil in the world.

My goal at present is not to decide whether skeptical theism or van Inwagen's arguments are successful. I think skeptical theists are right to note that our understanding and perspective is extremely limited, and that for any given horror there may be some good tied to it that we fail to recognize. So, when I learn of some tragic event and am inclined to be angry with God for letting it happen, that anger should be tempered somewhat by the knowledge that there may be more to the situation that I do not see. At the same time, though, I agree with van Inwagen that given the vast amount of suffering in the world, it is quite likely that *some* of that suffering could have been prevented without negatively affecting the world. And if van Inwagen is correct that there is no minimum amount of suffering necessary for the goods God has in mind and that God must draw a morally arbitrary line, then however much evil God allows, it will seem plain to us that God could (and should) have allowed much less evil. And, given our limited understanding of the goods that God has in mind and of what God must do or refrain from doing to obtain those goods, it is likely that my estimation of how much evil God should allow will be inaccurate.

In short, then, there is good reason to think that at least some of my moral outrage against God may be improper. However, even if we grant the reasoning of van Inwagen or the skeptical theists, the primary cause of moral outrage remains unaddressed. For

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[17] Russell, "Defenseless," 202.

God is supposed to love every creature perfectly, and if God truly loves a creature, then he should be genuinely concerned about its well-being and should actively promote its flourishing. But instead, it seems as if God utterly abandons some creatures, overlooks their basic rights, and is indifferent to their suffering. To be sure, good can often come from evil, but so far we have focused primarily on general goods that benefit the world at large or on goods that benefit creatures other than the victim. At some point, the victim's suffering should be justified *for the victim*, and God's love for the victim must be vindicated. Unfortunately, though, it seems clear that the suffering of countless animals is never defeated or balanced off during their earthly lives, and this, for me, is deeply troubling.[18]

Divine Love and Horrific Suffering

The moral outrage I have in mind is most eloquently and poignantly expressed by Ivan Karamazov in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*. While Ivan's outrage is sparked by the abuse of innocent children, much of what he says can be applied to the problem of animal suffering. Like children, animals suffer innocently and cannot understand what is happening to them or why. Also, assuming that a perfectly loving God would love all creatures, the sorts of decisions God would make with respect to his creatures will be motivated by love, in much the same way that a father's decisions are motivated by love for his child.

Out of love for humanity, and children in particular, Ivan Karamazov rejects God's plans for the world. For him, however good the world might become, it is not worth the suffering of innocent children. Ultimately, I do not join in Ivan's rebellion, but this is only

[18] A similar objection is raised in Adams, *Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God*, 17–31.

because I disagree with what Ivan imagines to be God's plan for the world. I think that God can redeem suffering for the victim, if not in this life, then in an afterlife. Even so, as I will explain in this section, it is only this hope in an afterlife that pacifies my outrage about animal suffering.

Ivan's Rebellion

In the "Rebellion" chapter of *The Brothers Karamazov*, two brothers—the rationalist Ivan and the saintly Alyosha—discuss the suffering of innocent children. Ivan, it turns out, has collected numerous accounts of horrific child abuse and recounts, in graphic detail, many of his "favorites" to his brother. While these cases demonstrate the cruel depravity of grownups and rightfully incites outrage against the perpetrators, Ivan is also outraged at God for allowing these things to happen.

Surprisingly, while Ivan thinks of himself as a rationalist with a "Euclidean mind," he never offers a deductive argument against belief in God. Instead, his rejection of God is unapologetically emotional and based on a value judgment. As Ivan puts it, "I'm a flea on the face of the earth, and I admit in all humility that I cannot understand in the least why things are the way they are."[19] And although Ivan grants that God might have a grand plan in mind, some future harmony where mankind will be happy, he cannot see how the suffering of innocent children can be justified. He continues,

> Listen: if everyone has to suffer in order to bring about eternal harmony through that suffering, tell me, please, what have children to do with this? It's quite incomprehensible that they too should have to suffer, that they too should have to pay for harmony by their suffering. Why should they be the grist to someone else's mill, the means of ensuring someone's future harmony? … I understand how the universe will shake when heaven and earth shall unite in a single paean of praise,

[19] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Karamazov Brothers*, trans. Ignat Avsey (Oxford: Oxford Paperbacks, 1998), 305.

> and all that lives and has lived will cry out, "You are just, O Lord, for your ways are revealed to us!" … But here's the snag; that's just what I can't accept. And while I'm still on this earth I resort to my own methods….While there's still time I want to guard myself against this, and therefore I absolutely reject that higher harmony. It's not worth one little tear from one single little tortured child, beating its breast with its little fists in its foul-smelling lock-up, praying to "Dear Father God!" …I don't want harmony; for the love of humankind, I don't want it. I would rather that suffering were not avenged. I would prefer to keep my suffering unavenged and my abhorrence unplacated, *even at the risk of being wrong*. Besides, the price of harmony has been set too high, we can't afford the entrance fee. And that's why I hasten to return my entry ticket. If I ever want to call myself an honest man, I have to hand it back as soon as possible. And that's exactly what I'm doing. It's not that I don't accept God, Alyosha; I'm just, with utmost respect, handing Him back my ticket."[20]

With this, Ivan, out of love for humanity, becomes a rebel against God. But, importantly, Ivan presses further, inviting his brother to join him.

> Tell me honestly, I challenge you—answer me: imagine that you are charged with building the edifice of human destiny, whose ultimate aim is to bring people happiness, to give them peace and contentment at last, but that in order to achieve this it is essential and unavoidable to torture just one little speck of creation, that same little child beating her breast with her little fists, and imagine that this edifice has to be erected on her unexpiated tears. Would you agree to be the architect under those conditions? Tell me honestly![21]

Swept along by Ivan's outrage, Alyosha joins Ivan's rebellion, at least initially. This is significant because Alyosha is depicted as the most Christ-like of nearly every character in the novel. He is modest and humble, compassionate and forgiving, honest and trustworthy, and full of child-like faith in God. He loves all people, especially children, and has profound concern for their well-being. His emotions are moved by sympathy and a strong sense of justice that produces outrage at the thought of injustice. Ironically, then, it is precisely Alyosha's Christ-likeness that Ivan uses to entice Alyosha to his side.

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[20] Ibid., 307–308.

[21] Ibid., 308.

Put differently, Ivan's challenge exploits a tension between a theist's head and heart. To mentally reconcile the reality of evil with the existence of God, the theist must think rationally and clearly and must often imagine that God's decisions are motivated along similar lines. It is not surprising, then, that the answers one comes up with provide cold comfort to the victims involved in evils.

The problem with such answers is not so much that they are wrong, but that they are incomplete, since faith involves much more than rational assent to certain propositions. Faith is supposed to be transformative, reorienting not only one's mind, but also one's emotions, desires, and values. Thus, a faithful theist must somehow avoid Ivan's rebellion without setting aside the sorts of feelings and judgments we ought to have when encountering suffering and injustice.

In the end, I part ways with Ivan Karamazov, though I am quite sympathetic with his moral sentiments. In particular, it seems to me that it would be unloving for God to create a creature whom God knows will suffer horrifically and through no fault of its own. If God is perfectly loving, God must show special care and concern for each creature, which means, at minimum, that God cannot use that creature's misery for the sake of some tangential plan. I also agree with Ivan that some evils are so horrendous that no good external to the victim can be sufficient to justify it; they are so bad that they must be redeemed for the victim. Otherwise, we should return our tickets along with Ivan Karamazov and conclude, Better nothing at all than horrors like *this*.

The above qualification bears repeating—Better nothing at all than horrors like this, *unless the suffering is redeemed for the victim*—because this is where Ivan's challenge is defective. Ivan imagines a future harmony fertilized by the suffering of innocent children,

but he does not imagine that this future harmony can redeem the evil for the victim. As I will argue in the next chapter, the Christian doctrine of heaven includes not only "future harmony," but also the defeat of evil and the redemption of suffering. In this way—and, in my mind, only in this way—the problem of animal suffering can be finally answered only if their suffering is redeemed.

Three Scenarios

Although I do not join in Ivan's rebellion, I want to approach the problem of suffering in a similar manner. Toward this end, I have developed some thought experiments aimed at producing some of the same emotions and value judgments that Ivan's challenge produces. And although my present concern is with animal suffering, I will describe scenarios involving children. In doing so, I hope to emphasize the fact that God is supposed to love each creature perfectly, at least as much as a parent loves his child (or potential children). By imagining potential children, I want to focus on what the most loving decision would be in each situation. Also, because I want to focus (for now) on the quality of existence before death, I have bracketed off the possibility of heaven. In this way, I want to motivate the judgment that *without* an afterlife, the terrible existence of many actual creatures would be unjustified, and Ivan's rebellion would be warranted.

Scenario 1. Suppose that you knew for sure that if you were to reproduce, any of your biological offspring would suffer constant, unending agony throughout their lives, with no hope of improvement. These children would be mentally handicapped and horribly deformed, unable to move on their own, unable to learn to speak or understand language, unable to appreciate beauty or moral goodness, doomed to a life of isolation, blind and

deaf, able only to feel intense pain. Suppose, finally, that your children's conditions would be utterly hopeless. No cure will come about to save them, no medication will ease their suffering, no lessons or inspiration will be gained from their ordeal, and when they die, they will forever cease to exist. Under these conditions, would you choose to reproduce?

As difficult as it is for any parent to watch her child in pain, even temporarily, it would be unbearable to watch a child suffer in this way. Add to this the feelings of helplessness, wanting desperately to ease the child's pain, but unable to do so, along with feelings of guilt for being at least partly responsible for the child's agony. But these are all selfish reasons not to create these unfortunate children. Certainly the real reason not to reproduce under these circumstances pertains to the children themselves. To know in advance that a child would have such a terrible life and yet choose to create her anyway would be morally outrageous. For, like any parent, I have a duty to love my children, and although I may not be able to genuinely love someone who does not and may not ever exist, it is possible to act in a loving way toward potential children. Note, for instance, that it is common (and proper) for people to wait until they are financially secure, mature enough to care for children, and in stable relationships before they decide to have children. Hopeful mothers-to-be are encouraged to take prenatal vitamins before they ever become pregnant in order to increase the chances that their future children will develop properly. These decisions, I think, are correct and motivated by love, even if the potential parents do not genuinely love the potential children. I also think that many of these decisions are not only proper, but morally obligatory. That is, it would be immoral for someone to do things that they know could harm a developing embryo—to abuse drugs, or expose oneself to high levels of radiation—and then attempt to conceive a child.

Because I have a duty to love my children, love ought to motivate any decisions that might affect my future children. Now, if I love someone, then at minimum I desire and promote her well-being and happiness. When I think of my future children, I would certainly prefer that they will be athletic, talented, beautiful, intelligent, and so on. But my primary concern is that they are healthy enough—physically, mentally, and emotionally—to be happy and fulfilled and to eventually become good people. Simply put, I want my children to flourish and to lead lives that they appreciate. And although it is unreasonable to expect that my children will flourish completely in all respects and at all times, I still have good reason to think that if I do my best to raise them, protect them, and teach them, they can have good lives.

It is this chance for a good life that justifies (at least in part) my having children. But this is not what Scenario 1 describes. Instead, it describes a situation in which any potential child would be doomed to profound languishing, so deformed that she can never learn to talk, read, eat on her own, or do anything that healthy people can do; she would endure such pain and hardship that no happiness or moral development would be possible for her; and (on the assumption that no afterlife awaits her), there is no hope that her suffering will be made worthwhile for her. If I were in this situation, where I knew for sure that any potential children I have would languish profoundly and that I could do nothing to ease their suffering, then it seems to me that the loving decision would be never to have children. And since I have a duty to love all people, especially my own children (actual and potential), it would be downright immoral for me to reproduce.

From the scenario above, I suggest the following moral principle: *(α) It would be immoral to knowingly and willingly produce a morally significant creature who will live a terrible life, through no fault of its own.*

The principle is true, I believe, but at this point a potential objection arises. "Perhaps," one might say, "it only seems to us as if it would be better if these unfortunate children never existed. However, our estimates about the intrinsic value of life may be unreliable. For all we know, it could be that the intrinsic value of life is so great that it outweighs anything that might happen during one's life. If so, then perhaps God is justified in allowing these unfortunate creatures to exist, provided that he has overriding reasons to allow their suffering."

In reply, I am willing to grant that my value judgments may not be reliable, especially when considering abstract goods like the intrinsic value of life. And there is at least some attractiveness to the claim that human life is intrinsically very valuable. However, the same does not seem true for animals. Note that even no-kill shelters will euthanize animals whose suffering cannot be managed. More to the point, it is standard practice for animal shelters to sterilize stray animals on the assumption that since it is highly likely that the offspring of stray animals will suffer tremendously, it would be better to prevent this suffering altogether. Presumably, these shelters are motivated by a concern for the welfare of animals, even those animals who do not yet exist.

In any case, to truly love a creature, it is not enough simply to guarantee that its life is on-balance more good than bad. One must also genuinely desire and promote the sorts of goods that are proper to that type of creature. Of course, any living creature flourishes to some degree: its body is functioning properly enough to keep it alive. And one can be

blind or deaf, or be born with a mental disability and still have a good life. Nevertheless, there is a minimum quality of life below which one cannot be flourishing in any significant sense, and it is clear that a child born in the condition described above falls well short of this minimum. Whether or not the child's life is on-balance good or bad, it is clear that she is languishing profoundly. Her life is much worse than the sort of life that is proper to her, and to willingly produce a creature whom I know would be doomed for a life of profound languishing would be *pro tanto* immoral.

In short, I propose the following moral principle: *(β) It would be unloving and pro tanto immoral to knowingly and willingly produce a morally significant creature who is certain to languish profoundly (and through no fault of its own) throughout its existence.*[22]

Again, I think that *(β)* is true, but one might object along these lines. "The intuition behind *(β)* seems true, but it is too simplistic. Perhaps if the creature involved was isolated from all other creatures, God ought to guarantee that it flourish in a robust way. However, just as God may justifiably allow horrific suffering in order to obtain greater goods or to prevent even worse evils, God could allow a creature to languish profoundly throughout its existence, provided that in so doing he obtains sufficient goods or prevents even worse evils." Against this sort of objection, I offer the following scenarios.

[22] Although I feel strongly that *(β)* is true, I grant that my moral intuitions could be unreliable even on this matter. Perhaps there is no minimum quality of life that God must guarantee before God is justified in making a creature. In this case, the scenario I describe above would lose its force, along with the scenarios I will describe below. Consequently, one of my primary reasons to believe in heaven for animals—my belief that only heaven can fully address the problem of animal suffering—will be neutralized. However, even then, there would still be reason to expect that animals would be in heaven: Because of the nature of heaven, God can redeem the innocent suffering of animals. And, supposing that God loves all creatures and that there is no overriding reason not to redeem their suffering, God will likely choose to redeem animal suffering in heaven.

Scenario 2 (The Unfortunate Firstborn). Suppose that you knew for sure that you could have as many healthy and happy children as you like, but before any of these children could be born, you must first have a child who suffers as in Scenario 1. Again, under these circumstances, would you choose to reproduce?

As in the first case, I think it would still be immoral to ever reproduce under these circumstances. For if it is immoral to reproduce in Scenario 1, the only justification I might have for reproducing in Scenario 2 would be that my subsequent children would have happy lives. But in that case, I would be having the Unfortunate Firstborn *for the sake of the others*, and not for her own sake, which would violate my duty to love that child and is thus immoral. Similarly, if I knew that the child's suffering would inspire an artistic masterpiece or would in some other way add positive value to the world, it would be unloving to have that child solely for the sake of those greater goods. So far, then, *(β)* seems true, even if the child's suffering somehow contributes to a greater good. This leaves us with one final question. What if the unfortunate child's suffering prevents even worse evil?

Scenario 3. Once again, imagine that you know for sure that your firstborn child would suffer terribly as in Scenarios 1 and 2, but this time, the child's suffering would lead to the development of a cure for a horrific disease. Thus, if you choose to allow your own child to suffer horribly, you know that many other people who would have suffered terribly would instead have good lives. Under these circumstances, would you choose to have children?

The decision would be more difficult, but even in this situation, I think it would be unloving and immoral to have the child, just as it is immoral to kill an innocent person in

order to donate her organs to dying patients. As in the previous case, the problem is that if I give life to some person simply so that I can prevent future suffering for others, then I am using her primarily as a means and not as an end in herself. And this, I think, is contrary to the essence of love.

But even if I am wrong on this point, God would not be exonerated. For unlike the first two scenarios, where I have complete control over what children, if any, will come into existence, Scenario 3presumes that other people already exist and that there is a disease that threatens to cause great suffering in the world. Because of this, my options in this situation are too limited. Unlike God, I cannot choose to prevent *all* suffering simply by choosing not to create anything at all. Thus, Scenario 3 is disanalogous in an important way. The purpose of each scenario is to put ourselves in the approximate position of God before he created anything. But, if faced with the choice of producing a child whose suffering would prevent terrible evils and simply avoiding all this suffering altogether by not creating anything, I would choose the second option.

In summary, the case against God can be put like this. Before creating anything, God was in a position similar to the first two scenarios. God had a range of possible worlds that he could have actualized, but he also had the option not to create anything at all. He knew that if he actualized a world with the natural laws and initial conditions like ours, there would be creatures who, through no fault of their own, would suffer horrifically. In fact, depending on the nature of divine omniscience, he perhaps knew exactly which creatures would suffer horrifically and knew them in advance better than any mother knows her own child. Even worse, God foreknew that many creatures would not only suffer horrifically at some point in their lives, but also that their *entire lives* would be miserable

and characterized by profound languishing. For whatever reason, these unfortunate creatures would be unable to flourish in any significant sense. Nearly every good of life would be impossible for them, they would suffer in ways that ruin their lives, and nothing good for them would ever come of it. They would not develop other skills or virtues, they would not learn to appreciate times of comfort, and they would not feel closer to God. These creatures would be such that, if I knew in advance what their lives would be like, I would consider it merciful to prevent their conception. Yet God, knowing all of this, chose to create this world anyway. And now that the world exists, God knows that unless he intervenes, countless animals will suffer in life-ruining ways, but he does not do anything to help them. All of this, to me, is morally outrageous.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I posed an existential argument from evil based on outrage at the suffering of individual animals. Specifically, I focused on the second premise, *I am convinced that my moral outrage is rational and properly directed (at least in part) at God*. As it turns out, my moral outrage is multi-faceted, arising from distinct sets of *prima facie* judgments about suffering. First, there is outrage at the wastefulness of suffering. It seems that a morally perfect God would not allow suffering without a good reason. And yet the world is full of suffering, much of which does not appear to add anything of value to the world. These evils, as far as we can tell, are completely gratuitous. Moreover, the overwhelming number of creatures who suffer for no apparent reason is also morally outrageous, for whatever God's plans for the world might be, it seems obvious that the world would be just as well off if God prevented just a little less evil.

Second, there is outrage at God's seeming indifference to individual creatures. Supposedly, God is perfectly loving, but if so, then God should be concerned about and promote the well-being of every creature. Perfect love also implies that God should not use individual creatures' suffering as means to ends that have little to do with the victims themselves. Outrage arises because so many creatures languish profoundly throughout their lives. For whatever reason, their quality of life is much less than what is proper to them, and yet God does not do anything to help.

In the first part of this chapter, I focused on outrage at the wastefulness of suffering. Because this outrage closely parallels the evidential argument from gratuitous evils, I considered two possible responses. The most common response raises doubts about whether there are, in fact, any truly gratuitous evils. The other response argues that God may be justified in allowing evils that do not directly contribute to any greater goods or prevent any worse evils. Although neither strategy is beyond reproach, I think they are strong enough to raise doubts about whether this aspect of my moral outrage is proper.

In the second part, I focused on my outrage at God's apparent indifference toward his creatures. In this section, I set aside the possibility of heaven for animals and considered only the quality of their earthly lives. I argued that the sorts of goods that are normally mentioned—goods like free will, natural order, soul-building, and the like—are not sufficient to address the suffering of individual creatures when those creatures do not benefit in any relevant way from these goods. Following Ivan Karamazov's challenge, I described two scenarios aimed at showing that a loving God cannot allow a beloved creature to suffer simply for the sake of these goods, and that if God loves a creature, he must guarantee that innocent suffering is redeemed for that creature.

The problem—and thus the reason that my moral outrage remains at this point—is that none of the goods of the world as it is and none of the goods of life as we know it are adequate to address every instance of suffering. For this reason, I suspect that if there is a solution to the problem of evil, it does not lie in the here-and-now, but in the world to come.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Heaven

Introduction

To this point we have considered two arguments from moral outrage, a global argument focusing on the overall pattern of animal suffering, and a local argument, focusing on especially horrific instances of animal suffering. In an attempt to address these arguments, we have considered several possible reasons why God might create a world like ours, where animals have a capacity for pain and emotional trauma, where diseases and genetic defects and natural disasters are common, and where predation is necessary for survival. The purported reasons for making a world like ours typically appeal to greater goods that could not be obtained without many of these troubling features. While these goods—like free will, moral goodness, aesthetic goods, and so on—are extremely valuable, and while they may effectively outweigh the disvalue of pain and suffering in the world, I have explained why these goods by themselves do not completely pacify my moral outrage over animal suffering. However great these goods are, if God is perfectly loving, he cannot be indifferent to the suffering of individual creatures. To echo Ivan Karamazov, if the price of universal harmony is the unredeemed torture of even one innocent creature, that price is too high. Consequently, I argued, if there is a solution to the problem of evil, God must somehow make it up to the creatures who suffer innocently. And since animal suffering is not redeemed during their earthly lives, I concluded that God must somehow redeem their suffering apart from their earthly existence.

In more formal terms, the argument may be put like this. If God is love, then God loves all creatures to the extent that they can be loved. And if God loves all creatures in this way, then God desires that all creatures flourish to a significant degree. Yet it would be unloving for God to knowingly and willingly produce a creature whose existence (through no fault of its own) is characterized by profound languishing. Unfortunately, there are countless creatures who fail to flourish to any significant degree during their earthly lives; if their existence were limited to their lives from birth to death, their existence would be characterized by profound languishing. It follows, therefore, that if God is love, then the existence of these unfortunate creatures must extend beyond their earthly lives and that they flourish to a significant degree apart from their earthly lives.

As stated, the above argument is quite modest. It implies only that God must redeem animal suffering somehow, and given God's power and ingenuity, this could happen in any number of ways. Moreover, the above argument only applies to those creatures whose earthly lives are overwhelmingly terrible. And since the lives of most animals (as far as we can tell) are actually quite good on the whole, it would follow only that a small portion of animals must have their suffering redeemed outside of their earthly lives.

Strictly speaking, then, my moral outrage over unredeemed animal suffering can be pacified if there are good reasons to believe, first, that God *can* redeem suffering for the creatures, and, second, that God will actually do it. Throughout the remainder of this chapter, however, I will argue for a bolder claim, that animals will be resurrected and enjoy blissful immortality in heaven. Toward this end, I will briefly describe what I mean by the word *heaven* and some ways that heaven may redeem animal suffering. Then, I will argue

that animal resurrection is quite plausible, given standard assumptions about God and the authority of Judeo-Christian scripture.

A Brief Description of Heaven

Before describing how heaven might redeem animal suffering, it would be helpful to explain what I mean by suggesting that animals will be in heaven. One difficulty is that the Bible uses the word *heaven* in a variety of senses. Sometimes (as in 2 Corinthians 5:1 and Matthew 5:3, 12), heaven is the eternal dwelling place of the saints after they die. Throughout the Old Testament, *heaven* vaguely refers to the space above the earth and could include the sky, the firmament that holds back the "waters above," or the dwelling place of the sun, moon, and stars. Elsewhere, *heaven* refers to the realm of God and the angels, and is thus thought of in purely spiritual terms, in contrast with the "earthly" or physical world. These different uses of *heaven* invite a variety of confusions. Popular depictions of heaven, for instance, suggest that heaven is a purely spiritual "place" somewhere above the Earth and that "to go to heaven" is to leave one's body behind and to be with God and loved ones in some sort of entirely spiritual (entirely non-physical) existence.

As widespread as this notion is, the Bible and Christian tradition give a different account. In 1 Corinthians 15, for instance, Paul argues forcefully that "Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died," and that those who have died will also be raised from the dead and receive imperishable, immortal bodies. Scripture also

promises a general renewal and restoration of the cosmos, often called "the new heavens and new earth."[1]

Scripture is rather vague about what heaven will be like, and a fully-developed doctrine of heaven has failed to emerge in Christian tradition. For this reason, I will not speculate too much about what heaven will be like, apart from some general, mostly uncontroversial, features. First and foremost, the righteous in heaven enjoy immediate knowledge of God (the beatific vision) and a perfect, intimate relationship with God. And since God is the ultimate source of life and joy, this union with God results in everlasting bliss. In addition, the righteous in heaven will be reunited with their loved ones and all the saints will live in community with one another. There will be no evil in heaven—no pain and suffering, no sadness, no sin or injustice of any kind. Sicknesses and deformations that afflicted people during their earthly lives will be healed, and their bodies will be made perfect.[2] Finally, the suffering that one endures during one's earthly life, no matter how horrific, will be redeemed and, if possible, defeated.[3]

I do not suppose that animals will enjoy the blessings of heaven, particularly the beatific vision, to the extent that humans will. Even so, in suggesting that animals will be in heaven, I mean that animals will be resurrected and will live forever with humans in the presence of God, free from pain and misery, at peace with each other, and enjoying everlasting happiness and contentment.

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[1] Isaiah 65:17, 66:22; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:21. These passages, and several others like them, will be discussed in the next section.

[2] For more on traditional Christian beliefs about heaven, see Colleen McDannell, *Heaven: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

[3] Recall that it is the redemption of suffering for the victim that distinguishes heaven from the "higher harmony" that Ivan Karamazov rejects.

How Heaven Might Redeem Animal Suffering

My hope that animals will be in heaven is based on beliefs that (i) God must redeem animal suffering, at least for those creatures whose earthly lives are overwhelmingly bad, (ii) heaven can redeem their suffering, and (iii) animal resurrection is consistent with (and even strongly suggested by) the Bible. I have already given reasons for (i), and I will develop (iii) in the next section. At present, I want to consider how the joys of heaven can redeem animal suffering.

The redemption of suffering involves two requirements.[4] First, it is necessary to mitigate or end the lasting effects of a traumatic event—to ease pain, calm emotional anguish, to restore proper function, recover what has been lost, and so on. As I have already described it, heaven can obviously satisfy this requirement. Second, it is necessary to make it up to the victim somehow. And this, I will argue, can be accomplished either by defeating the evil, or failing that, by compensating the victim for their suffering.[5]

It is clear that heaven would be sufficient to compensate a creature for the suffering it endures. For however much pain a creature may experience, God may grant at least as

[4] For more on the redemption of suffering, see Patrick Sherry, "Redeeming the Past," *Religious Studies* 34, no. 2 (1998): 165–75; Jerry L Walls, *Heaven : The Logic of Eternal Joy* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 113–32.

[5] Throughout this project, I argue for sufferer-centered requirements on theodicy, similar to those developed by Marilyn McCord Adams and Eleonore Stump. Recently, Dustin Crummett has raised serious objections to Adams' and Stumps' accounts. While similar to theirs, my account does not require that God defeat every evil (as Adams seems to require), nor do I demand that every evil be aimed at the victim's good (as Stump requires). Instead, I grant that God's reasons to allow an evil may not pertain to the victim itself. While God has good reason to defeat suffering as much as he can, I argue below that God may compensate the victim for their suffering (i.e., balance off their suffering) when it is impossible to defeat it. Because of these distinctions, my account avoids Crummett's concerns. Dustin Crummett, "Sufferer-Centered Requirements on Theodicy and All Things Considered Harms," in *Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Jonathan Kvanvig, vol. 6 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). See also Adams, *Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God*; Marilyn McCord Adams, *Christ and Horrors: The Coherence of Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Eleonore Stump, "The Problem of Evil," *Faith and Philosophy* 2, no. 4 (1985): 392–423; Eleonore Stump, *Wandering in Darkness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

much joy and pleasure in heaven. And since earthly pains are temporary, they would pale in comparison to the everlasting joy of heaven. Thus the existence of every creature in heaven would be exceedingly good on the whole, no matter how bad their earthly lives might have been. Even so, it would be preferable to defeat evil, not just compensate a creature for past suffering. Recall that to *defeat* an evil is to incorporate it as an essential part of a good whole.[6] For example, a discordant note or an ugly patch of color is bad in itself, but when incorporated into a song or painting in such a way that it contributes to the beauty of the entire composition, that ugliness is defeated. Similarly, dark times in stories and in our own lives can be defeated and seen in a new light when considered in retrospect. While the suffering itself was bad, we later recognize that the goods that came out of it—forgiveness, compassion, intimacy, courage, gratitude, and so on—make the initial suffering worthwhile, and may even cause us to be glad about the initial tragedy.

Clearly, defeating evil is better than mere compensation, but suppose that some evils are such that they cannot be defeated for the creature. Would it be sufficient for God simply to compensate the creature by balancing off or outweighing such horrors? There are cases in which mere compensation would not be adequate. For instance, it would be immoral for me to abuse my daughter or to allow her to suffer for no reason, no matter how much ice cream I may give her afterward. Similarly, the joy of heaven would not justify God for allowing evils if he had no good reason to allow it in the first place. However, as discussed earlier, perhaps God does have sufficient reasons to allow suffering, even if those

[6] The notion of *defeat* was first defined in Chisholm, "The Defeat of Good and Evil," 21–38. As in chapter 4, I follow Marilyn McCord Adam's description of defeat, where "a significantly smaller, negatively (or positively) valued part [contributes] to a greater overall positive (or negative) value in the whole." Adams, *Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God*, 21.

reasons do not always pertain to the suffering creature. In fact, in light of the last chapter's discussion, God may not need to have reasons for each specific horror, only more general reasons to be "hands off" with respect to the world. Provided that God is truly justified for allowing suffering, it seems to me that if there is no way to defeat a given evil for the creature, then it would be sufficient for God to compensate a creature for their suffering.

General Defeat of Evils

Having said that, however, the goods in heaven may be sufficient to defeat most, if not all, earthly evils. Marilyn McCord Adams, for instance, argues that the beatific vision "not only balances off but engulfs participation in horrendous evils,"[7] and perhaps in their resurrected states, animals would be able to appreciate it. Other goods in heaven are essentially tied to each creature's earthly experience. Divine comfort, for instance, is a direct response to the lasting effects of actual traumas. Honor from God and others is honor for what the creature accomplished or endured during its life. And if one's suffering somehow contributed to a greater good, God and others could express gratitude for the part that one played in that good. To receive honor and gratitude from our earthly peers is a great good, to receive them from all the creatures in heaven would be exceedingly good, and to receive them from God would be even greater still. And since these goods are essentially tied to each creature's earthly lives, they may jointly defeat their suffering, no matter how terrible.

In addition to these general goods, heaven might also redeem some of the most common and troubling features of horrific evil: pain, seeming pointlessness, and injustice. Let's consider each of these in turn.

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[7] Adams, *Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God*, 147.

Pain

The problem of pain is not just that God sometimes allows prolonged, overwhelming pain; the more basic problem is that pain exists at all. For, as I argued in the fourth chapter, however pain might benefit an organism, these benefits could have been obtained without the painfulness of pain. Because of this, biological utility does not itself justify the capacity for pain, and given that organisms often experience much more pain than is appropriate in their situation, their pain must be redeemed in heaven.

Michael Murray suggests that God grants sentience and consciousness "because they will allow the animals to experience fully the goodness available to them in the divine presence. But for other reasons," he continues, "animals were needed to participate in the prior earthly life."[8] Specifically, perhaps soul-making and human freedom (among other goods) require that humans live in a world with regular natural laws and a variety of sentient nonhuman animals. "On this view," Murray concludes, "animal pain and suffering really serves two goods which might be seen as jointly outweighing: the good of an eternal life of bliss, and the good of allowing human beings to live in an appropriately nomically regular environment during their earthly life."[9]

I agree with Murray that these two goods could jointly outweigh extreme pain, though it would be better if heaven could defeat it for each animal. One way to at least partially defeat pain is to create animals in such a way that their suffering on earth allows them to appreciate the joys of heaven better. This is not to say that pain is necessary to appreciate heaven, for obviously God could have created beings who fully enjoy heaven

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[8] Murray, *Nature Red in Tooth and Claw*, 128.

[9] Ibid., 128–9.

without prior suffering. Nevertheless, God can (and has) created beings whose appreciation of goods can be heightened by their perceived contrast with various evils. Consequently, for such animals, their experience of heaven is at least slightly better because of prior pains than it would have been otherwise. This slight improvement, when compounded forever, could eventually outweigh their suffering, thereby defeating it.

Seeming Pointlessness

Another common feature of horrific evils is their seeming pointlessness, but as far as we can tell, animals do not expect things to happen for a reason. Thus, the seeming pointlessness of their suffering does not add anything to the miseries they experience. Even so, recognizing a good purpose behind some event—or at least understanding the causes of an event if there is no good purpose behind it—often helps us cope with tragedy. And for those who trust in God, it is often helpful to tell oneself that God's wisdom far surpasses our own and that God has a good plan for the world, even if we cannot recognize it. In their present state, however, animals have no awareness of God and are cut off from this source of comfort.

Perhaps, then, the seeming pointlessness of evils can be redeemed by elevating animals' understanding so that they can see God's entire plan for creation, or at least the parts of the plan that involve their suffering. In this way, they might recognize that God loves them and has been good to them. And if their minds are elevated to the extent that soul-making is possible—so that they can learn from their hardships and become more like Christ—then perhaps animals can develop Christ-like, sacrificial love for others. In this way, they would be glad to play a part in God's plans, glad that their sacrifice was

beneficial to others, and perhaps even thankful to be worthy of suffering for God's sake and the sake of others.

Injustice

Finally, the suffering inflicted out of sheer cruelty, and the fact that the perpetrators get away with it, is especially troubling. How might heaven redeem *for the victim* the injustices they've suffered?

According to Christian Scripture and tradition, the establishment of heaven will be preceded by the defeat of the wicked and the establishment of justice. The Psalmist describes this day of reckoning in joyful terms:

> Say among the nations, "The Lord is king!
> The world is firmly established; it shall never be moved.
> He will judge the peoples with equity."
> Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice;
> let the sea roar, and all that fills it;
> let the field exult, and everything in it.
> Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy
> before the Lord; for he is coming,
> for he is coming to judge the earth.
> He will judge the world with righteousness,
> and the peoples with his truth.[10]

It is natural to think of final judgment and the restoration of justice in terms of punishment. One might imagine the wicked, who have taken advantage of others and gotten away with it, finally receiving their due. Now, what exactly is due to them is debatable. Perhaps the unrepentant deserve annihilation, to cease to exist after death and to be excluded from the joys of heaven; perhaps they must endure a temporary existence in purgatory, where they can either atone for their sins or endure a purifying process that makes them worthy of heaven; or, perhaps they deserve eternal banishment from God's

[10] Psalm 96:10-13; See also Psalm 98.

presence and eternal misery in hell. Whatever the wicked deserve, it is safe to assume that God can fulfill such demands in the age to come.

Nevertheless, the question persists: how would punishment redeem injustice for the victim? If a wrongdoer truly deserves punishment of some sort, then their punishment would be good on the whole. Accordingly, even if one would prefer that the wrongdoer had never sinned at all or had repented, it would be proper to be glad, given the circumstances, about the punishment of the wicked. Moreover, if the guilty party had wronged *me*, then the gladness I feel about their punishment would at least partially defeat the sorrow they had inflicted. In this way, then, punishment may serve not only to give the wicked what is due to them, but also redeem the suffering of their victims.

At the same time, however, Jesus emphasized forgiveness and reconciliation over condemnation and punishment. In the gospel of John, for instance, Jesus declared that "God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."[11] Again, Jesus taught his disciples to pray, "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors…For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."[12] Most importantly, even on the cross, Jesus desired mercy for the Roman soldiers, pleading, "Father, forgive them, for the do not know what they are doing."[13] Therefore, insofar as the beasts in heaven have any concept of justice and punishment, and insofar as they are made Christ-like, they will also prefer mercy and

[11] John 3:17. Note, also, 2 Peter 3:9, "The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance."

[12] Matthew 6:12, 14-15. In Matthew 18:21-35, Jesus reiterates this lesson with the parable of the unforgiving servant.

[13] Luke 23:34.

reconciliation. And since the goods of mercy, compassion, forgiveness, and reconciliation are exceedingly good, the satisfaction a creature (conformed to the pattern of Christ) would gain from making peace with its tormentor would outweigh its initial suffering. Consequently, if the perpetrator seeks to reconcile with his victim—by admitting his guilt and repenting of his actions, pleading for forgiveness, and attempting to make restitution—then the injustice they've committed could be defeated.

To summarize, immortal bliss is one way that God might redeem an animal's earthly suffering. Everlasting bliss would outweigh any prior suffering and would guarantee that a creature's existence was on-balance very good, no matter how bad its earthly life might have been. More than that, in heaven many (if not all) of the most troubling aspects of suffering can be incorporated into the creature's life in such a way that they are defeated. Since, therefore, heaven can redeem animal suffering, it remains to show that there is good reason to hope for animal resurrection.

Biblical Arguments for Animal Immortality

One of the primary objections to animal resurrection is that the Bible does not explicitly state that animals will be in heaven, and Christian tradition has largely been silent about, or even hostile to, the notion of animal immortality. As Michael Murray points out, Catholic tradition since Aquinas has held that animals lack an immortal soul and thus cannot be in heaven. However, as the Protestant reformers rejected Catholic tradition, they were willing to entertain the idea of animal immortality. In fact, Murray notes, Martin Luther, John Calvin, and John Wesley all affirmed animal immortality on the basis of Scripture.[14] More recently, C. S. Lewis defended animal immortality as necessary to

[14] Murray, *Nature Red in Tooth and Claw*, 122–25.

redeem animal suffering, at least for those beasts who are self-aware and are genuinely capable of suffering.

In this section I will develop three biblical arguments for animal resurrection. First, I will argue that animals have a special place in creation, and since the Bible promises that all of creation will be restored and renewed, there is good reason to think that animals will be restored and renewed as well. Second, I will argue that throughout the Bible, the fate of animals is closely tied to the obedience or disobedience of humans: Animals are frequently the recipients of divine judgment and mercy along with the people who own them, and since the Bible promises salvation and resurrection for humans, there is reason to hope for animal resurrection as well. Finally, I will argue that the mission of Christ was not limited to winning forgiveness for human sin. Rather, Christ's mission was to re-establish God's kingdom on earth by undoing the effects of human sin, overcoming all opposition to God's authority, and reconciling all of creation to God. Thus, I will argue, if Christ's incarnation, atonement, and resurrection did nothing to redeem animal suffering, then Christ's work would be incomplete.

Cosmic Renewal

One reason to hope for animal resurrection is based on the following overarching biblical story: In the beginning, God created everything, and it was very good. In its ideal state, the world is God's temple; his presence and authority would be apparent everywhere, and there would be no moral or natural evils. However, the world falls far short of this ideal and is bound to sin, death, and decay. Even so, God has worked throughout history to reconcile himself to the world, especially through the incarnation, atonement, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is through Christ that God has defeated the wickedness and

brokenness of the world, though the proof of this victory has yet to be fully seen. Sin and death are still present in the world, though God is establishing his kingdom on earth through the Church. One day, the Bible promises, the present, fallen order of things will be undone and the world will be made new.[15] Since animals play an important part in the original creation, I argue that they may also be included in God's plan for the renewed creation.

Creation and re-creation: Genesis 1-9. The opening hymn of Genesis 1:1-2:3 describes creation as the establishment of a kingdom. God commands all things into existence, bestows names and titles, establishes domains, and assigns functions to various created things. According to the hymn, humans are created last, the pinnacle of God's creation. Even so, God has special concern for the beasts as well. He blesses them and commands them to "be fruitful and multiply" and fill the earth. Significantly, the animals in Genesis 1 are at peace with each other; they are not told to eat flesh, but (along with humans) are given "every green plant for food."

Animals are also prominent in the creation story of Genesis 2:4-25. In this story, Adam is the firstborn of all living things, formed from the dust of the ground and installed in a holy garden. Animals were formed from the ground as well, as potential helpers for Adam, though none of them were suitable. Adam was responsible for the animals, giving names to each, and ruling over them. Unfortunately, Adam and Eve failed in their divinely appointed task, and their sin proved to be disastrous for all of creation. Following the initial sin, Genesis describes a downward spiral from Adam to Cain and Seth and to their

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[15] The overarching narrative as I have described it is widely assumed in biblical scholarship. Accessible, yet thorough discussions of this narrative can be found in Sandra L. Richter, *The Epic of Eden: A Christian Entry into the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2008); N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope : Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York: HarperOne, 2014).

descendants, until the days of Noah. At that time, humanity was thoroughly wicked, and "every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually."[16]

As in Eden, human wickedness in Noah's time infected the whole world, filling the world with violence. The narrative that follows shows both God's judgment of wickedness and his mercy for Noah and the animals in his care. More than this, though, the flood narrative is significant because it both recapitulates the creation hymn of Genesis 1:1-2:3 and foreshadows the new heaven and new earth described in the Old and New Testaments. Note, for instance, the parallels between the flood narrative and the creation hymn. The refrain, "and God saw that it was good," repeated throughout Genesis 1, has been completely perverted by the time of Noah: "And God saw that the earth was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth."[17] God's response to this corruption is, first, to undo what he had originally done in creation. The waters that God had separated on the second and third days are allowed to return and cover the earth,[18] and "all flesh died that moved on the earth…everything on dry land in whose nostrils was the breath of life died."[19] Next, God re-enacts his original creation. The waters recede, leaving sky and dry ground, and God brings forth living things from the ark to inhabit the new world. Once again, God blesses humans and commands them to "be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth,"[20] and gives Noah's family dominion over all living things. Finally, God establishes a new

[16] Genesis 6:5.

[17] Genesis 6:12. Note, also, Genesis 6:5, 6:11, and 7:1.

[18] Genesis 1:6-10; Genesis 6:11, "All the fountains of the great deep burst forth and the windows of the heavens were opened."

[19] Genesis 6:21-22.

[20] Genesis 9:1; see also 9:8.

covenant with Noah, his future descendants, "and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark," promising never to curse the ground because of humanity and never to destroy the world again by flood.[21]

While the flood story describes destruction and re-creation, notice that it is not a *complete* destruction, nor a *complete* re-creation. God could have completely annihilated creation and spoken all new things into existence. Instead, God preserves remnants from each species in order to repopulate the new earth. Thus, we see that God does not completely abandon the world he has made, but chooses instead to transform it into something new.

This point is especially important because the Flood story foreshadows the new heaven and new earth promised elsewhere in Scripture. For example, Hosea's promise to restore peace to Israel echoes the covenant established with Noah: "In that day I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, the birds in the sky and the creatures that move along the ground. Bow and sword and battle I will abolish from the land, so that all may lie down in safety."[22] Meanwhile, 2 Peter predicts that just as "the world of that time was deluged with water and perished…the present heavens and earth have been reserved for fire," which will set the heavens ablaze and melt the elements.[23] "But," the author

[21] Genesis 8:20-22; 9:8-17.

[22] Hosea 2:18. The New Testament authors, and subsequent Christian theologians, typically interpreted Old Testament eschatological prophecies as being inaugurated with Christ and brought to completion in the end times. (See especially the book of Revelation, which borrows extensively from Jewish apocalyptic literature, especially Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel.) Accordingly, it is common to interpret such prophecies about "Israel" as including the church and all of the righteous.

[23] 2 Peter 3:6-7, 3:10-12.

continues, “in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.”[24]

All creation groans: Romans 8:18-25. Other eschatological passages describe the coming age as an undoing of the effects of sin. According to these texts, the effects of the Fall will be reversed and the world will be like Eden, only better. One of the clearest and most compelling expressions of this hope occurs in Paul’s letter to the Romans, where he writes,

> [18] I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. [19] For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; [20] for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope [21] that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. [22] We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; [23] and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. [24] For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? [25] But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.[25]

The passage quoted here continues a line of reasoning begun in Romans 5, where Paul says that “we boast in our sufferings” because they produce endurance, character, and hope. The cause for this hope, he continues, is Christ, through whom “we” (the righteous) have been justified, reconciled to God, and freed from sin. Whereas Adam’s sin introduced death into the world and enslaved humanity to sin, Christ’s death and resurrection bring life, freedom, and ultimately adoption into God’s family. In chapter 8, Paul pulls together these ideas of suffering, hope, bondage, freedom, and adoption, and extends them to the created world. *We* should have hope and wait patiently for the redemption of our bodies

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[24] 2 Peter 3:13.

[25] Romans 8:18-25.

because *all of creation* waits in eager anticipation, both for its own redemption and for God's children to be revealed.[26]

Verses 20-22 give further reason for this hope, namely, that since the redemption of creation has been part of God's plan from the very beginning, we can be sure that God will bring the plan to completion. "Creation was subjected to futility," Paul writes, implying that the material world is not inherently futile and corrupt, as some might have argued. Rather, futility has been imposed on it, "*in hope* that the creation itself will be set free," and since God is the one who subjected it, we can be sure (according to Paul) that God has a plan for the world.[27] In the meantime, the world is full of suffering, violence, and tragedy, though like labor pains, they are signs of impending deliverance and new life.

A New Heaven and New Earth: Revelation 21, 22. At the conclusion of his apocalypse, John describes the renewal of creation as the union of heaven and earth:

> [1]Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. [2]And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. [3]And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,
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> "See, the home of God is among mortals.
> He will dwell with them;
> they will be his peoples,
> and God himself will be with them;
> [4]he will wipe every tear from their eyes.

[26] There is some debate about the scope of "the whole creation," particularly whether it includes unrepentant humans and Satan and his cohorts. John Murray argues that "the whole creation" refers to non-rational (i.e., non-moral) creation, both animate and inanimate, and further claims that this view is "the one most widely maintained by commentators." John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 1968), 301, 302. I tend to agree with Murray's interpretation. "The whole creation" may have a limited scope, but unless there is good reason to think that animals are excluded (and I am unaware of any such reasons), we can assume that they are included. Moreover, in this passage Paul seems to have Genesis 2-3 in mind, which, as noted above, explicitly includes animals as an important part of creation.

[27] It is generally assumed that God is "the one who subjected it," for neither Satan nor humanity would subject it in hope. See, for instance, Ibid., 303–304.

> Death will be no more;
> mourning and crying and pain will be no more,
> for the first things have passed away."
>
> [5]And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new."[28]

John's description of the new heaven and new earth draws from the prophecy of Isaiah, in which God promises to end the futility and misery of the present world, bring joy to his people and dwell with them, and establish peace, even among the animals.[29] G.K. Beale argues that *new* (*kainos*) in Revelation 21 should be interpreted figuratively to describe a new creation that "will be an identifiable counterpart to the old cosmos and a renewal of it, just as the body will be raised without losing its former identity."[30] The surrounding context of the passage further supports this reading. In 21:2, the holy city does not destroy and replace the earthly city, but rather descends from heaven and unites with the earth, as if in marriage. Similarly, the announcement in 21:5, "Behold, I am making all things new," suggests a renovation of what presently exists, rather than the creation *ex nihilo* of a completely different world.

Note, further, several connections between the new creation and the first chapters of Genesis. God's declaration in 21:6, "I am the Alpha and the Omega" emphasizes that the one who began creation is the one who will consummate it, and the description of the

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[28] Revelation 21:1-5a.

[29] Isaiah 65:25, quoted above. Interestingly, the next line reads, "but the serpent—its food shall be dust!" This is a clear reference to the serpent's deceit in Eden, suggesting that the new Jerusalem will reverse the effects of Adam's sin.

Note, also, Isaiah 43:19-21: "I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. The wild animals will honor me, the jackals and the ostriches; for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people, the people whom I formed for myself so that they might declare my praise."

[30] G. K Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, Mich.; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans ; Paternoster Press, 1999), 1040.

holy city in 22:1-5 combines Edenic imagery with Ezekiel's vision of the temple.[31] In Ezekiel's vision, a river flows from the temple, and on either side of it are a variety of trees that provide healing. John's vision, meanwhile, takes the several trees of Ezekiel's prophecy and identifies them with the single tree of life that grew in Eden: "On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit…and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations."[32] Mitchell Reddish suggests that although John imagines an avenue of trees along the river, "he retains the singular to reinforce the reference to the primeval tree of life." Reddish continues, "The eschatological 'garden,' is vastly superior, then, to the first Garden of Eden. The latter had only one tree of life; in the new Jerusalem, the street is lined with trees of life."[33]

Noting how Revelation merges the temple imagery of Ezekiel 47 with the garden imagery of Genesis 2-3, Beale argues that Revelation describes a "paradisal city-temple" that encompasses the whole earth. According to Beale, the Old Testament temple was a microcosmic model of the whole of heaven and earth, and "the Garden of Eden was the archetypal temple in which the first man worshipped God."[34] Adam, then, acted as the first priest of God's temple, with the task of subduing the earth and extending the boundaries of the Garden until it covered the whole earth. According to Beale,

> This meant that the presence of God, which was initially limited to Eden, was to be extended throughout the whole earth. What Adam failed to do, Revelation pictures Christ as finally having done. The Edenic imagery beginning in Rev. 22:1 reflects

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[31] See Ezekiel 47, which also makes extensive use of Edenic imagery.

[32] Revelation 22:2; cf. Ezekiel 47:7-12; Genesis 2:9, 3:22-24.

[33] Mitchell Glenn Reddish, *Revelation*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, Ga: Smyth & Helwys Pub, 2001), 421.

[34] Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 1110.

> an intention to show that the building of the temple, which began in Genesis 2, will be completed in Christ and his people and will encompass the whole new creation.[35]

To be sure, Revelation does not explicitly state that animals will be resurrected when the new heaven and new earth are united, nor do any of the eschatological writings of the New Testament. Even so, it would be consistent with the promise of a renewed creation. For if the new earth is like Eden but better, and if Eden was characterized by peace among animals and a healthy relationship between them and humanity, then there is good reason to believe that animals will also be resurrected in the age to come.

The Close Relationship Between Humanity and Animals

Another theme that appears throughout the Bible is that the fate of the world, and especially animals, is closely tied to the fate of humans. For instance, the wickedness of humans often provokes God's judgment, which often falls on animals as well. We have seen two obvious examples already. In Genesis, Adam is given dominion over all things and commanded to cultivate the earth and rule over it. Adam and Eve's sin, however, brings a curse not only on themselves, but on the ground and upon all flesh. Later, the Flood destroys the wickedness of humanity, along with all of the beasts, except for those who were saved by Noah's obedience.

This theme is especially prevalent in the book of Exodus. Because of Pharaoh's refusal to release the Israelites and their animals, God curses Egypt with ten plagues. Four of these plagues—the disease of livestock, boils, hail, and the death of the firstborn—afflict

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[35] Ibid., 1111. For more on the temple as a microcosmic model, see C. H. T. Fletcher-Lewis, "The Destruction of the Temple and Relativization of the Old Covenant: Mark 13:31 and Matthew 5:18," in *"The Reader Must Understand": Eschatology in Bible and Theology*, ed. Kent Brower and Mark Elliott (Leicester: Apollos, 1997), 156–62. For more on Eden as archetypal temple, see Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue : Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2006), 31–32, 54–56.

both people and animals throughout Egypt, though the Israelites and all of their animals are saved. In fact, before the plague of hail, God warned the Egyptians, so that all who feared God could protect their livestock, while the livestock of those who did not fear God were killed.[36] The last plague finally convinced Pharaoh to release the Israelites and all their animals, but he soon changed his mind and sent troops after them. One last time, God's judgment upon the Egyptians affects their animals as well: "When the horses of Pharaoh with his chariots and his chariot drivers went into the sea, the LORD brought back the waters of the sea upon them; but the Israelites walked through upon dry ground."[37] Notice that the means of destruction closely parallels the un-creation and re-creation of the Flood narrative. The waters that were divided are allowed to return; the wicked and their animals are destroyed, but the righteous are saved, along with the animals in their care.[38]

The Bible also describes how God's mercy toward obedient humans benefits their animals as well. There are, again, the animals who are saved by Noah's obedience and the Isrealites' livestock, whom God spared from the plagues. A particularly noteworthy example appears in the book of Jonah. In this story, the reluctant Hebrew prophet finally agrees to warn Nineveh about God's decision to destroy the city. Upon hearing Jonah's prophecy, the king of Nineveh decrees that all inhabitants of the city, including the livestock, must abstain from food and water and be covered with sackcloth as a sign of contrition. Because of their repentance, God relents and spares the city. Interestingly, the

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[36] The ten plagues are described in Exodus 7-12.

[37] Exodus 15:19.

[38] See also the story of Achan in Joshua 7:10-26. In addition, some of God's commandments in the Old Testament applied to both humans and animals. For instance, when God descends upon Mt. Sinai the Israelites and all of the animals are forbidden to touch the mountain (Exodus 19:12-13). Animals are also forbidden from working on the Sabbath (Exodus 20:8-11).

book of Jonah does not end with God's forgiveness, but with a curious episode. God's mercy toward Nineveh enrages Jonah, who sits outside of the city, waiting to see what would happen to it.[39] So God appoints a bush to shade Jonah while he sits, but then appoints a worm to attack the bush and cause it to wither. When Jonah becomes angry over losing the bush, God responds,

> You are concerned about the bush, for which you did not labor and which you did not grow; it came into being in a night and perished in a night. And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also many animals?[40]

With this question, the book of Jonah abruptly ends, making explicit the moral of the story: God is merciful to anyone who repents and his love extends to all people, including Israel's bitterest enemies, and even to the animals.

According to these stories, humans are responsible for the welfare of the world. When humans are wicked, the world suffers as a result; when humans are obedient, the world is improved and even saved. Recall Romans 8:19-23, which declares that just as creation was bound to decay through sin, it waits for the children of God to be revealed—as if the liberation of creation is preceded by, and even accomplished through, the salvation of humanity.[41] John Wesley interpreted Romans 8 as a promise that animals would be resurrected along with humans, partly because of the relationship between humans and the animal kingdom:

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[39] Jonah and the Jewish audience hearing his story had good reason to hate the Ninevites. Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian empire, which had conquered Israel, nearly destroyed Jerusalem, and were notoriously cruel to their enemies.

[40] Jonah 4:10-11.

[41] Romans 8:18-23.

> As all the blessings of God in paradise flowed through man to the inferior creatures; as man was the great channel of communication, between the Creator and the whole brute creation; so when man made himself incapable of transmitting those blessings, that communication was necessarily cut off. The intercourse between God and the inferior creatures being stopped, those blessings cold no longer flow in upon them. And then it was that "the creature," every creature, "was subjected to vanity," to sorrow, to pain of every kind, to all manner of evils.[42]

C. S. Lewis argued for animal immortality along similar lines:

> The error we must avoid is that of considering [animals] in themselves. Man is to be understood only in his relation to God. The beasts are to be understood in their relation to man and, through man, to God…Man was appointed by God to have dominion over the beasts, and everything a man does to an animal is either a lawful exercise or a sacrilegious abuse, of an authority by divine right.[43]

From this, Lewis suggests that as humans are *in Christ,* there may be an analogous sense in which a tame animal is *in its master*. Its personality and "real self" derives from its relationship with its master and it is this entire context—the masters ruling over their beasts in a good home—that domestic animals may gain immortality. Meanwhile, Lewis suggests, if wild animals will be resurrected, it will be in relation to humanity in general, and insofar as any wild animal has an *ego* or transcendent nature, "then it is in *that* capacity or principally in that, that the beast may be expected to attend on risen man and make part of his train."[44]

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[42]John Wesley, "The General Deliverance," *The Wesley Center Online: Sermon 60 - The General Deliverance*, accessed August 22, 2014, http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/sermon-60-the-general-deliverance/. Wesley gives several other arguments for animal resurrection, which are quite similar to the arguments of the present chapter. In particular, Wesley argues both that animal resurrection is taught in Scripture and that immortal bliss is necessary to vindicate God's justice and love for all creatures.

[43] Lewis, *Problem of Pain*, 126.

[44] Ibid., 130. This relationship between humans and beasts is vividly depicted in Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia* series, as well as *Perelandra,* the second book of his *Space Trilogy*.

Making Peace Through the Blood of His Cross

To this point, I have stressed two themes that give us reason to hope that animals will be resurrected along with humans in the age to come—the redemption and renewal of creation and the close connection between humanity's faithfulness to God and the welfare of animals. I would like to add a final, more theological, argument that focuses on the scope and effectiveness of Christ's redemptive mission.

In one of several messianic prophecies, Isaiah foretells that "A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse," on whom the Spirit of the LORD rests. He will judge the earth and establish peace. Isaiah continues,

> The wolf will live with the lamb,
> the leopard will lie down with the goat,
> the calf and the lion and the yearling together;
> and a little child will lead them.
> The cow will feed with the bear,
> their young will lie down together,
> and the lion will eat straw like the ox.
> The infant will play near the cobra's den,
> and the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest.
> They will neither harm nor destroy
> on all my holy mountain,
> for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord
> as the waters cover the sea.[45]

The gospel writers took great pains to show that Jesus was the promised messiah, and the early church soon came to believe that Jesus was God incarnate. In his epistle to the Colossians, the apostle Paul includes a hymn that beautifully ties together important doctrines about Christ—his divinity and incarnation, his preeminence over the church, the resurrection, and the atonement:

> [15] He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; [16]for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether

[45] Isaiah 11:1, 6 – 9.

> thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. [17] He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. [18] He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. [19] For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, [20] *and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.*[46]

Note that in verse 20, "all things" are reconciled to God, followed by the clarification "whether on earth or in heaven," which parallels verse 16—"in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers." Thus, the hymn appears to equate those things that were made through Christ and those things that will be reconciled to God. And since every created, contingent being was created through Christ, it would follow that all created things, without exception, will also be reconciled to God through Christ.

It is somewhat unclear what *reconcile* means in this hymn. The word for *reconcile* (*apokatallassō*) appears only three times in the New Testament—in Colossians 1:20 and 1:22, and also in Ephesians 2:16. In each instance, the context is about establishing peace, ending hostility, and bringing back what has been alienated from God. In the passage above, for instance, reconciliation is achieved by "making peace through the blood of his cross." Many commentators argue that verse 20 should be read in light of Colossians 2:15, where Paul writes that through the cross Christ triumphs over hostile rulers and authorities. If so, then reconciliation may partially involve pacification through the conquest and subjugation of rebellious powers. And, as Peter O'Brien notes, the original audience lived under Roman authority in the first century AD, so this notion of pacification would have

[46] Colossians 1:15-20, emphasis added. Compare Ephesians 1:9-10, "[God] has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth."

been very familiar.[47] At the same time, though, *all* of creation must be reconciled, but not all of creation is actively hostile toward God. So, it is reasonable to assume that reconciliation can also be achieved by God "putting things right" and freeing creation from its bondage to decay.

How exactly the Cross makes peace and why it was the best means of reconciliation is never fully explained in Scripture. Instead, the apostles used a variety of metaphors that theologians have subsequently used to construct full theories of atonement. For the early church fathers, both the redemption of creation and the conquest of opposing powers were of central importance, and neither would be possible without the Incarnation, Atonement, and Resurrection of Christ.[48] Through the Incarnation, they believed, Christ becomes like us so that we may become like God. In the words of Gregory Nazianzen, "That which He has not assumed he has not healed; but that which is united to His Godhead is also saved."[49] Likewise, St. Athanasius argued that Christ has "become the Deliverer of all flesh and of all creation,"[50] and again, "the coming of the Saviour in the flesh has been the ransom and salvation of all creation."[51]

And Irenaeus, following 1 Corinthians 15, writes

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[47] Peter T. O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, vol. 44, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1982), 53–57.

[48] Gustaf Aulén, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of Atonement* (New York: Collier, 1979), 4–7, 16–60.

[49] Gregory Nazianzen, "To Cledonius the Priest Against Apollinarius (Letter 101)," in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: A Select Library of the Christian Church*, trans. Charles Gordon Browne and James Edward Swallow, vol. 7, 2 (Hendrickson, MA: Peabody, 1999).

[50] Athanasius, "Letters of Athanasius, Ad Adelphium," in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Volume 4, St. Athanasius: Selected Works and Letters*, trans. Archibald Robertson (Hendrickson, MA: Peabody, 2004), pt. 5.

[51] Ibid., pt. 6.

> For by no other means could we have attained to incorruptibility and immortality, unless we had been united to incorruptibility and immortality. But how could we be joined to incorruptibility and immortality, unless, first, incorruptibility and immortality had become that which we also are, so that the corruptible might be swallowed up by incorruptibility, and the mortal by immortality, that we might receive the adoption of sons?[52]

Somehow, according to the church fathers, the entirety of Christ's redemptive mission—his incarnation, sinless life, death, resurrection, ascension, and eventual return—reconciles God with the world, overcoming everything that separates them.

Importantly, animals are at odds with God in many of the same ways as humans. They are mortal, weak, and frail; they are prone to sickness, pain, and misery; they lack wisdom and awareness of God. And if God loves animals, then God desires to overcome these limitations and be reconciled to animals as well. Indeed, insofar as Christ's redemptive mission overcomes everything that is wrong with the world, and animal suffering is certainly something wrong with the world, then Christ's atonement would be incomplete if their suffering were not redeemed as well.

Conclusion

In closing, I should reiterate that what I have argued on the basis of Scripture and tradition goes much further than what I would argue on more philosophical grounds. Since my moral outrage over animal suffering is limited to those creatures who are actually capable of suffering in a morally significant way, the existential problem (as I have posed it) merely requires good reason to think that God can redeem suffering for these relatively few creatures, and that he will do it.

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[52] Irenaeus of Lyons, "Against Heresies," in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, trans. Alexander Roberts and William Rambaut, vol. 1 (Hendrickson, MA: Peabody, 2004), bk. III.19.1.; cf. bk. IV.28.

Surely there are countless ways that God might redeem suffering, though animal immortality is the most promising option, for two reasons. First, as I have argued, the joys of heaven are sufficient to redeem every creature's earthly suffering, no matter how terrible it might have been. Second, animal immortality is consistent with the redemptive story of the Bible. Indeed, on biblical grounds, it is at least plausible that all life—not just animals, but plants and even simpler organisms—will be resurrected and glorified. It is easy to imagine flowers and bees in the new heavens and new earth, though whether they will be the *same* flowers and bees that lived on earth, I would not venture to guess. I do not object to the notion, though on theodical grounds I argue only that those beasts who have a sense of identity, who could recognize their resurrected lives as a continuation of their former lives, will have everlasting joy in heaven.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Recapitulation

I am inclined to believe in God for a variety of reasons—my upbringing in a Christian home, moments when it feels like I am close to God and God is close to me, as well as a few persuasive theistic arguments. In addition, I sincerely *hope* that the gospel is true, for it seems to me that the doctrines of Incarnation, Atonement, and Resurrection are profoundly beautiful and worthy of allegiance. And yet the problem of suffering is for me the most serious obstacle to faith. It is very difficult for me to pray to God when he remains stubbornly silent and distant in the midst of deep anguish. It is difficult for me to believe that God has special concern for me and will answer my prayers when God does nothing to relieve the pain of countless creatures. And it is difficult for me to worship God when I am outraged by so much that happens in his world.

Although many philosophers try to bracket off our emotional responses toward suffering, thus distinguishing the "philosophical" and "pastoral" problem of evil, I have tried to address these emotional reactions head on. Because of this, my approach has been unusually personal and confessional. I have tried to analyze my own feelings of moral protest and come up with answers that are both philosophically rigorous and existentially satisfying. One concern is that this approach greatly limits its appeal, though I hope that the arguments I've given are compelling enough that someone in a similar position as me—someone for whom Christian theism is a live option but is deeply troubled by suffering in the world—can find room for faith. For those who do not share some of my basic intuitions

and value judgments, I hope that I have shown how Christian theism may address the problems raised by widespread animal suffering.

In conclusion, then, it would be good to collect some of these arguments into a general theodicy:

God could have made a world without any pain or suffering whatsoever, but such a world would lack several important goods. It is plausible, for instance, that a God of love would want to populate the world with creatures who could know him and choose to develop loving relationships with him and with each other. It is also plausible that God would want to make creatures who would add moral goodness to the world. They would, for instance, remain faithful to each other despite temptation, comfort and support each other in times of distress, overcome daunting challenges to reach their goals, and so on. For goods like these to obtain, the world must be a certain way. It must have regular natural laws and genuine risk of harm. Because of this, suffering will inevitably result. Often, we can recognize how some evils are worthwhile in the long run, but not always. It is important to remember that our human perspective is limited, and thus God may have reasons to allow some evils that do not appear to serve any good purpose. In particular cases it may be that God has reasons that we cannot recognize. Or, perhaps God has general reasons to limit his interactions with the world and thus God may sometimes allow evils that could have been prevented without leaving the world worse off.

Even so, what about the countless creatures who suffered long before any moral agents evolved on Earth? Why, for instance, would God choose to produce humans through an evolutionary process that is wasteful and cruel? One partial reason could be that there is something good about a world that is allowed to develop on its own, producing

variety, complexity, life, and consciousness, and perhaps those goods are enough to outweigh the suffering that results from the process. It is very tempting to say that God could have designed an evolutionary process that is much less violent and random. However, it is worth noting that relatively few creatures are actually capable of suffering and thus the overall pain and misery inherent to evolution is probably much less than we might at first suppose. It is also worth noting that the world is astoundingly complex, and our understanding of it is extremely limited. So, while it is easy to *claim* that God should have done a better job, it is not clear whether such a claim is justified. It might be, for instance, that the evolutionary process is, all things considered, the best way to produce free moral agents like humans, or perhaps there are evil spiritual forces who are responsible for some of the suffering and futility we observe.

Again, the goodness of a world that develops on its own only partially justifies natural selection, predation, and the rest. Nor is it sufficient to point out that the evolutionary process led to humanity, the pinnacle of physical creation, for then it would seem that God is willing to use widespread, horrific animal suffering for reasons that have nothing to do with the creatures themselves. Such answers, while rightly highlighting the goods that come from the natural order, do not adequately show how God can be perfectly loving toward each creature and yet allow them to suffer so severely. As good as the world may be, if the world could not have been this good without the unredeemed suffering of countless animals, it seems to me that God should not have made this world at all.

It seems to me that if God truly loves all creatures (and Scripture affirms that God's essence is love), then each creature's undeserved suffering must be redeemed for them, either in this life or the next. Scripture promises that the whole creation will be set free

from its bondage to corruption and decay and will be reconciled to God through Christ, that heaven and earth will be united and glorified, and that evil and misery will finally and forever be annihilated. It is my hope that these promises extend to those creatures who have suffered in this life, and it is through this hope that I can love and trust in God despite the horrors of this present world.

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