

## IX

### ANIMAL PAIN

And whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.

Genesis ii, 19.

To find out what is natural, we must study specimens which retain their nature and not those which have been corrupted.

ARISTOTLE. *Politics*, I, V, 5.

**T**HUS far of human suffering; but all this time “a plaint of guiltless hurt doth pierce the sky” The problem of animal suffering is appalling; not because the animals are so numerous (for, as we have seen, no more pain is felt when a million suffer than when one suffers) but because the Christian explanation of human pain cannot be extended to animal pain. So far as we know beasts are incapable either of sin or virtue: therefore they can neither deserve pain nor be improved by it. At the same time we must never allow the problem of animal suffering to become the centre of the problem of pain; not because it is unimportant – whatever furnishes plausible grounds for questioning the goodness of God is very important indeed – but because it is outside the range of our knowledge. God has given us data which enable us, in some degree, to understand our own suffering: He has given us no such data about beasts. We know neither why they were made nor what they are, and everything we say about them is speculative. From the doctrine that God is good we may confidently deduce that the *appearance* of reckless divine cruelty in the animal kingdom is an illusion – and the fact that the only suffering we know at first hand (our own) turns out not to be a cruelty will make it easier to believe this. After that, everything is guesswork.

We may begin by ruling out some of the pessimistic bluff put up in the first chapter. The fact that vegetable lives “prey upon” one another and are in a state of “ruthless” competition is of no moral importance at all. “Life” in the biological sense has nothing to do with good and evil until sentience appears. The very words “prey” and “ruthless” are mere metaphors. Wordsworth believed

that every flower “enjoyed the air it breathes”, but there is no reason to suppose he was right. No doubt, living plants react to injuries differently from inorganic matter; but an anaesthetised human body reacts more differently still and such reactions do not prove sentience. We are, of course, justified in speaking of the death or thwarting of a plant as if it were a tragedy, provided that we know we are using a metaphor. To furnish symbols for spiritual experiences may be one of the functions of the mineral and vegetable worlds: But we must not become the victims of our metaphor. A forest in which half the trees are killing the other half may be a perfectly “good” forest: for its goodness consists in its utility and beauty and it does not feel.

When we turn to the beasts, three questions arise. There is, first, the question of fact; what do animals suffer? There is, secondly, the question of origin; how did disease and pain enter the animal world? And, thirdly, there is the question of justice; how can animal suffering be reconciled with the justice of God?

1. In the long run the answer to the first question is, We don't know; but some speculations may be worth setting down. We must begin by distinguishing among animals: for if the ape could understand us he would take it very ill to be lumped along with the oyster and the earth-worm in a single class of “animals” and contrasted to men. Clearly in some ways the ape and man are much more like each other than either is like the worm. At the lower end of the animal realm we need not assume anything we could recognise as sentience. Biologists in distinguishing animal from vegetable do not make use of sentience or locomotion or other such characteristics as a layman would naturally fix upon. At some point, however (though where, we cannot say), sentience almost certainly comes in, for the higher animals have nervous systems very like our own. But at this level we must still distinguish sentience from consciousness. If you happen never to have heard of this distinction before, I am afraid you will find it rather startling, but it has great authority and you would be ill advised to dismiss it out of hand. Suppose that three sensations follow one another first A, then B, then C. When this happens to you, you have the experience of passing through the process ABC. But note what this implies. It implies that there is something in you which stands sufficiently outside A to notice A passing away, and suf-

ficiently outside B to notice B now beginning and coming to fill the place which A has vacated; and something which recognises itself as the same through the transition from A to B and B to C so that it can say "I have had the experience ABC.", Now this something is what I call Consciousness or Soul and the process I have just described is one of the proofs that the soul, though experiencing time is not itself completely "timeful". The simplest experience of ABC as a succession demands a soul which is not itself a mere succession of states, but rather a permanent bed along which these different portions of the stream of sensation roll, and which recognises itself as the same beneath them all." Now it is almost certain that the nervous system of one of the higher animals presents it with successive sensations. It does not follow that it has any "soul", anything which recognises itself as having had A, and now having B, and now marking how B glides away to make room for C. If it had no such "soul", what we call the experience ABC would never occur. There would, in philosophic language, be "a succession of perceptions"; that is, the sensations would, in fact, occur in that order, and God would know that they were so occurring, but the animal would not know. There would not be "a perception of succession". 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 – the bed from the stream – sufficiently to say "I am in pain" it would also be able to connect the two, sensations as its experience. The correct description would be "Pain is taking place in this animal"; not as we commonly say, "This animal feels pain", for the words "this" and "feels" really; smuggle in the assumption that it is a "self" or "soul" or "consciousness" standing above the sensations and organising them into an "experience" as we do. Such sentience without consciousness, I admit, we cannot imagine: not because it never occurs in us, but because, when it does, we describe ourselves as being "unconscious". And rightly: The fact that animals react to pain much as we do is, of course, no proof that they are conscious; for we may also so react under chloroform, and even answer questions while asleep.

How far up the scale such unconscious sentience may extend,

I will not even guess. It is certainly difficult to suppose that the apes, the elephant, and the higher domestic animals, have not, in some degree, a self or soul which connects experiences and gives rise to rudimentary individuality. But at least a great deal of what appears to be animal suffering need not be suffering in any real sense. It may be we who have invented the “sufferers” by the “pathetic fallacy” of reading into the beats a self for which there is no real evidence.

2. The origin of animal suffering could be traced, by earlier generations, to the Fall of man – the whole world was infected by the uncreating rebellion of Adam. This is now impossible, for we have good reason to believe that animals existed long before men.<sup>56</sup> Carnivorousness, with all that it entails, is older than humanity. Now it is impossible at this point not to remember a certain sacred story which, though never included in the creeds, has been widely believed in the Church and seems to be implied in several Dominical, Pauline, and Johannine utterances – I mean the story that man was not the first creature to rebel against the Creator, but that some older and mightier being long since became apostate and is now the emperor of darkness and (significantly) the Lord of this world. Some people would like to reject all such elements from Our Lord’s teaching: and it might be argued that when He emptied Himself of His glory He also humbled Himself to share, as man, the current superstitions of His time. And I certainly think that Christ, in the flesh, was not omniscient – if only because a human brain could not, presumably, be the vehicle of omniscient consciousness, and to say that Our Lord’s thinking was not really conditioned by the size and shape of His brain might be to deny the real incarnation and become a Docetist. Thus, if Our Lord had committed Himself to any scientific or historical statement which we knew to be untrue, this would not disturb my faith in His deity. But the doctrine of Satan’s existence and fall is not among the things we know to be untrue: it contradicts not the facts discovered by scientists but the mere, vague “climate of opinion” that we happen to be living in. Now I take a very low view of “climates of opinion”. In his own subject every man knows that all discov-

---

56 - [Editor’s note] Compromise with evolution inevitably lead to such theological dead ends... In later years (cf. *Is Theology Poetry?* 1944, *The Funeral of the Great Myth* 1945 and *Evolutionary Hymn* 1957) Lewis expressed growing reservations regarding the evolutionary cosmology.

eries are made and all errors corrected by those who ignore the “climate of opinion”.

It seems to me, therefore, a reasonable supposition, that some mighty created power had already been at work for ill on the material universe, or the solar system, or, at least, the planet Earth, before ever man came on the scene: and that when man fell, someone had, indeed, tempted him. This hypothesis is not introduced as a general “explanation of evil”: it only gives a wider application to the principle that evil comes from the abuse of free-will. If there is such a power, as I myself believe, it may well have corrupted the animal creation before man appeared. The intrinsic evil of the animal world lies in the fact that animals, or some animals, live by destroying each other. That plants do the same I will not admit to be an evil. The Satanic corruption of the beasts would therefore be analogous, in one respect, with the Satanic corruption of man. For one result of man’s fall was that his animality fell back from the humanity into which it had been taken up but which could no longer rule it. In the same way, animality may have been encouraged to slip back into behaviour proper to vegetables. It is, of course, true that the immense mortality occasioned by the fact that many beasts live on beasts is balanced, in nature, by an immense birth-rate, and it might seem, that if all animals had been herbivorous and healthy, they would mostly starve as a result of their own multiplication. But I take the fecundity and the death-rate to be correlative phenomena. There was, perhaps, no necessity for such an excess of the sexual impulse: the Lord of this world thought of it as a response to carnivorousness – a double scheme for securing the maximum amount of torture. If it offends less, you may say that the “life-force” is corrupted, where I say that living creatures were corrupted by an evil angelic being. We mean the same thing: but I find it easier to believe in a myth of gods and demons than in one of hypostatized abstract nouns. And after all, our mythology may be much nearer to literal truth, than we suppose. Let us not forget that Our Lord, on one occasion, attributes human disease not to God’s wrath, nor to nature, but quite explicitly to Satan.<sup>57</sup>

If this hypothesis is worth considering, it is also worth considering whether man, at his first coming into the world, had not already a redemptive function, to perform. Man, even now, can do wonders to animals: my cat and dog live together in my house

<sup>57</sup> - Luke 13: 16.

and seem to like it. It may have been one of man's functions to restore peace to the animal world, and, if he had not joined the enemy he might have succeeded in doing so to an extent now hardly imaginable.

3. Finally, there is the question of justice. We have seen reason to believe that not all animals suffer as we think they do: but some, at least, look as if they had selves, and what shall be done for these innocents? And we have seen that it is possible to believe that animal pain is not God's handiwork but begun by Satan's malice and perpetuated by man's desertion of his post: still, if God has not caused it, He has permitted it, and, once again, what shall be done for these innocents? I have been warned not even to raise the question of animal immortality, lest I find myself "in company with all the old maids".<sup>58</sup> I have no objection to the company. I do not think either virginity or old age contemptible, and some of the shrewdest minds I have met inhabited the bodies of old maids. Nor am I greatly moved by jocular enquiries such as "Where will you put all the mosquitoes?" – a question to be answered on its own level by pointing out that, if the worst came to the worst, a heaven for mosquitoes and a hell for men could very conveniently be combined. The complete silence of Scripture and Christian tradition on animal immortality is a more serious objection; but it would be fatal only if Christian revelation showed any signs of being intended as a *système de la nature* answering all questions. But it is nothing of the sort: the curtain has been rent at one point, and at one point only, to reveal our immediate practical necessities and not to satisfy our intellectual curiosity. If animals were, in fact, immortal, it is unlikely, from what we discern of God's method in the revelation, that He would have revealed this truth. Even our own immortality is a doctrine that comes late in the history of Judaism. The argument from silence is therefore very weak.

The real difficulty about supposing most animals to be immortal is that immortality has almost no meaning for a creature which is not "conscious" in the sense explained above. If the life of a newt is merely a succession of sensations, what should we mean by saying that God may recall to life the newt that died to-day? It would not recognise itself as the same newt; the pleasant sensations of any other newt that lived after its death would be just as much, or just as little, a recompense for its earthly sufferings (if any) as those

58 - But also with J. Wesley, Sermon LXV. *The Great Deliverance*.

of its resurrected – I was going to say “self”, but the whole point is that the newt probably has no self. The thing we have to try to say, on this hypothesis, will not even be said. There is, therefore, I take it, no question of immortality for creatures that are merely sentient. Nor do justice and mercy demand that there should be, for such creatures have no painful experience. 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. And all animals may be in that condition.

If, nevertheless, the strong conviction which we have of a real, though doubtless rudimentary, selfhood in the higher animals, and specially in those we tame, is not an illusion, their destiny demands a somewhat deeper consideration. The error we must avoid is that of considering them in themselves. Man is to be understood only in his relation to God. The beasts are to be understood only in their relation to man and, through man, to God. Let us here guard against one of those untransmuted lumps of atheistical thought which often survive in the minds of modern believers. Atheists naturally regard the co-existence of man and the other animals as a mere contingent result of interacting biological facts; and the taming of an animal by a man as a purely arbitrary interference of one species with another. The “real” or “natural” animal to them is the wild one, and the tame animal is an artificial or unnatural thing. But a Christian must not think so. 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. The tame animal is therefore, in the deepest sense, the only “natural” animal – the only one we see occupying the place it was made to occupy, and it is on the tame animal that we must base all our doctrine of beasts. Now it will be seen that, in so far as the tame animal has a real self or personality, it owes this almost entirely to its master. If a good sheepdog seems “almost human” that is because a good shepherd has made it so. I have already noted the mysterious force of the word “in”. I do not take all the senses of it in the New Testament to be identical, so that man is in Christ and Christ in God and the Holy Spirit in the Church and also in the individual believer in exactly the same sense. They may be senses that rhyme or correspond rather than a single sense. I am

now going to suggest – though with great readiness to be set right by real theologians – that there may be a sense, corresponding, though not identical, with these, in which those beasts that attain a real self are in their masters. That is to say, you must not think of a beast by itself, and call that a personality and then inquire whether God will raise and bless *that*. You must take the whole context in which the beast acquires its selfhood – namely “The good man - and - the - goodwife - ruling their children - and - their - beasts - in - the - good - homestead”. That whole context may be regarded as a “body” in the Pauline (or a closely sub-Pauline) sense; and how much of that “body” may be raised along with the goodman and the goodwife, who can predict? So much, presumably, as is necessary not only for the glory of God and the beatitude of the human pair, but for that particular glory and that particular beatitude which is eternally coloured by that particular terrestrial experience. And in this way it seems to me possible that certain animals may have an immortality, not in themselves, but in the immortality of their masters. And the difficulty about personal identity in a creature barely personal disappears when the creature is thus kept in its proper context. If you ask, concerning an animal thus raised as a member of the whole Body of the homestead, where its personal identity resides, I answer “Where its identity always did reside even in the earthly life – in its relation to the Body and, specially, to the master who is the head of that Body”. In other words, the man will know his dog,” the dog will know its master and, in knowing him, will *be* itself. To ask that it should, in any other way, *know* itself, is probably to ask for what has no meaning. Animals aren’t like that, and don’t want, to be.

My picture of the good sheepdog in the good homestead does not, of course, cover wild animals nor (a matter even more urgent) ill-treated domestic animals. But it is intended only as an illustration drawn from one privileged instance – which is, also, on my view the only normal and unperverted instance of the general principles to be observed in framing a theory of animal resurrection. I think Christians may justly hesitate to suppose any beasts immortal; for two reasons. Firstly, because they fear, by attributing to beasts a “soul” in the full sense, to obscure that difference between beast and man which is as sharp in the spiritual dimension as it is hazy and problematical in the biological. And sec-

only, a future happiness connected with the beast's present life simply as a compensation for suffering – so many millenniums in the happy pastures paid down as “damages” for so many years of pulling carts, seems a clumsy assertion of Divine goodness. We, because we are fallible, often hurt a child or an animal unintentionally, and then the best we can do is to “make up for it” by some caress or titbit. But it is hardly pious to imagine omniscience acting in that way – as though God trod on the animals' tails in the dark and then did the best He could about it! In such a botched adjustment I cannot recognise the master-touch; whatever the answer is, it must be something better than that. The theory I am suggesting tries to avoid both objections. It makes God the centre of the universe and man the subordinate centre of terrestrial nature: the beasts are not co-ordinate with man, but subordinate to him, and their destiny is through and through related to his. And the derivative immortality suggested for them is not a mere *amende* or compensation: it is part and parcel of the new heaven and new earth, organically related to the whole suffering process of the world's fall and redemption.

Supposing, as I do, that the personality of the tame animals is largely the gift of man – that their mere sentience is reborn to soulhood in us as our mere soulhood is reborn to spirituality in Christ – I naturally suppose that very few animals indeed, in their wild state, attain to a “self” or *ego*. But if any do, and if it is agreeable to the goodness of God that they should live again, their immortality would also be related to man – not, this time, to individual masters; but to humanity. That is to say, if in any instance the quasi-spiritual and emotional value which human tradition attributes to a beast (such as the “innocence” of the lamb or the heraldic royalty of the lion) has a real ground in the beast's nature; and is not merely arbitrary or accidental, 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”. Or if the traditional character is quite erroneous, then the beast's heavenly life<sup>59</sup> would be in virtue of the real, but unknown, effect it has actually had on man during his whole history: for if Christian cosmology is in *any* sense (I do not say, in a literal sense) true, then all that exists on our planet is related to man, and even the creatures that

59 - That is, its participation in the heavenly life of men *in* Christ *to* God; to suggest a “heavenly life” for the beast *as such* is probably nonsense.

were extinct before men existed are then only seen in their true light when they are seen as the unconscious harbingers of man.

When we are speaking of creatures so remote from us as wild beasts, and prehistoric beasts, we hardly know what we are talking about. It may well be that they have no selves and no sufferings. It may even be that each species has a corporate self that Lionhood, not lions, has shared in the travail of creation and will enter into the restoration of all things. And if we cannot imagine even our own eternal life, much less can we imagine the life the beasts may have as our "members". If the earthly lion could read the prophecy of that day when he shall eat hay like an ox, he would regard it as a description not of heaven, but of hell. And if there is nothing in the lion but carnivorous sentience, then he is unconscious and his "survival" would have no meaning. But if there is a rudimentary Leonine self, to that also God can give a "body" as it pleases Him a body no longer living by the destruction of the lamb, yet richly Leonine in the sense that it also expresses whatever energy and splendour and exulting power dwelled within the visible lion on this earth. I think, under correction, that the prophet used an eastern hyperbole when he spoke of the lion and the lamb *lying down together*. That would be rather impertinent of the lamb. To have lions and lambs that so consorted (except on some rare celestial Saturnalia of topsy-turvydom) would be the same as having neither lambs nor lions. I think the lion, when he has ceased to be dangerous, will still be awful: indeed, that we shall then first see that of which the present fangs and claws are a clumsy, and satanically perverted, imitation. There will still be something like the shaking of a golden mane: and often the good Duke will say, "Let him roar again".

## X HEAVEN

It is required  
You do awake your faith. Then all stand still;  
On; those that think it is unlawful business  
I am about, let them depart.  
SHAKESPEARE, *Winter's Tale*.

Plunged in thy depth of mercy let me die  
The death that every soul that lives desires.  
COWPER out of *Madame Guion*

I reckon", said St. Paul "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." If this is so, a book on suffering which says nothing of heaven, is leaving out almost the whole of one side of the account. Scripture and tradition habitually put the joys of heaven into the scale against the sufferings of earth, and no solution of the problem of pain which does not do so can be called a Christian one. We are very shy nowadays of even mentioning heaven: We are afraid of the jeer about "pie in the sky", and of being told that we are trying to "escape" from the duty of making a happy world here and now into dreams of a happy world elsewhere. But either there is "pie in the sky" or there is not. If there is not, then Christianity is false, for this doctrine is woven into its whole fabric. If there is, then this truth, like any other, must be faced, whether it is useful at political meetings or no. Again, we are afraid that heaven is a bribe, and that if we make it our goal we shall no longer be disinterested. It is not so. Heaven offers nothing that a mercenary soul can desire. It is safe to tell the pure in heart that they shall see God, for only the pure in heart want to. There are rewards that do not sully motives. A man's love for a woman is not mercenary because he wants to marry her, nor his love for poetry mercenary because he wants to read it, nor his love of exercise less disinter-