



Michael J. Gilmour

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C. S. Lewis and Animal Experimentation

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C. S. Lewis is one of those rare Christian thinkers giving careful attention to the place of nonhuman animals in theology and the religious life. We find this career-long concern for animal well-being across diverse genres, and also in his public opposition to vivisection. This article proposes a particular link between Lewis's reflections on animal cruelty and wartime, and identifies certain theological assumptions informing his ideas.

The Christian tradition is curiously ambivalent about animals and their place in theology and ethics. This is somewhat surprising given the New Testament's high view of nonhuman sentient life, as is evident in Jesus's remarks about donkeys and sparrows (Luke 13:15; Matt. 10:29), and the Pauline tradition's repeated use of the inclusive *ta panta* ("all things," Col. 1:15–20; cf. Rom. 8:18–23) when speaking of the eschatological hope of restoration in Christ. To be sure, there are passages appearing to indicate indifference toward animals and animal suffering (Mark 5:1–20; 1 Cor. 9:9–10), but it is not so obvious that these and other texts devalue nonhuman creation as so often supposed.¹

On the whole, the New Testament affirms the priestly view that all creation, including its endlessly diverse creatures of water, sky, and land, are "good" (Gen. 1:20–25). And not only are they good, but also proper treatment of those animals is a moral obligation imposed on the people of God in the Torah and elsewhere (e.g., Exod. 23:4–5, 10–12; Num. 22:27–34; Deut. 5:13–14; 22:4, 6–7, 10; Prov. 12:10). That God cares for the well-being of animal life is unambiguous: "And should I not be concerned

about Nineveh ... in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons ... and also many animals?" (Jonah 4:11).

So why, in light of this, does Christianity largely ignore animal ethics? Why are the vast majority of churches silent regarding unnecessary, human-caused animal pain? There is not space here to do justice to such important questions though the views of certain highly influential theologians contribute to Christianity's tendency toward anthropocentrism. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, to name just two, argue that humans have no moral obligations to irrational animals, views owing much to questionable assumptions about the meaning of the *imago dei* and the "dominion" language of Genesis 1:26–28.² Yet, despite the enormous sway of thinkers such as Aquinas and many others who ignore animals or minimize their importance for the religious life, there are a few—a very few—who celebrate them, and bring a robust understanding of "love thy neighbor" to questions about animal well-being. C.S. Lewis is among them.

A Soldier and a Poet

Lewis rarely mentions his experiences on the battlefields of World War I, but on one occasion he recalls an incident

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that apparently lingered in memory for almost forty years before he put pen to paper.

Until the great German attack came in the Spring [of 1918] we had a pretty quiet time. Even then they attacked not us but the Canadians on our right, merely "keeping us quiet" by pouring shells into our line about three a minute all day. I think it was that day I noticed how a greater terror overcomes a less: a mouse that I met (and a poor shivering mouse it was, as I was a poor shivering man) made no attempt to run from me.³

The scene shows remarkable tenderness for the plight of a suffering animal, and it is certainly not the only time we find such empathy in his work.

Consider a poem published only a year after that encounter with the mouse. Here again we find Lewis contemplating the mysteries of animal life and its kinship with humanity, building on the premise that all living things are offspring of "earth, our mother." The poem in question appears in *Spirits in Bondage: A Cycle of Lyrics* (1919), Lewis's first book. Though published a decade or so before his conversion to Christianity, he still borrows a theological vocabulary to give expression to his thoughts. His narrator says to a donkey,

"For, brother, the depth of your gentle eyes
Is strange and mystic as the skies,

...

"Can it be true, as the wise men tell,
That you are a mask of God as well[?]"⁴

In the story from *Surprised by Joy*, a terrifying German bombardment reveals the common plight of a poor shivering mouse and a poor shivering soldier in the trenches of France. In the 1919 donkey poem, Lewis's narrator wonders about commonalities among sentient beings, including a shared capacity for distress. The latter ponders:

In a field where the dew lay cold and deep
I met an ass, new roused from sleep.

I stroked his nose and I tickled his ears,
And spoke soft words to quiet his fears.

...

"And do you rejoice in the dawn divine
With a heart that is glad no less than mine?"

...

"What are the thoughts that grope behind,
Down in the mist of a donkey mind?"

...

"God send you peace and delight thereof,
And all green meat of the waste you love,

"And guard you well from violent men
Who'd put you back in the shafts again."⁵

Here a sense of kinship, however mysterious; here an awareness that human-caused suffering of animal life is an undeserved affront to decency; and here a moment of interspecies harmony. A mouse feels no terror for a terrified soldier; a donkey welcomes a tickle of the ear from one not inclined to hurt him, to place him in the shafts again.

So what do mice and donkeys have to do with soldiers and poets? And what is more, do humans have moral responsibilities to nonhuman creatures? Lewis contemplates these and related questions in a variety of diverse contexts, but it is interesting to observe that many of his most explicit and sustained statements on animals and animal ethics occur during times of war and its immediate aftermath: the mouse incident of 1918; the donkey poem of 1919. Jump ahead to a later conflict and we have a chapter on animal suffering in *The Problem of Pain* (1940). In the 1943 novel *Perelandra*, we read of a demonic figure that rips open frog-like creatures but leaves them alive to suffer agonies. The description of "V-shaped" wounds inevitably brings vivisection to mind:

The whole back had been ripped open in a sort of V-shaped gash, the point of the V being a little behind the head. Some thing had torn a widening wound backward... [Elwin Ransom] told himself that a creature of that kind probably had very little sensation. But it did not much mend matters. It was not merely pity for pain that had suddenly changed the rhythm of his heart-beats. The thing was an intolerable obscenity which afflicted him with shame.⁶

In his 1945 novel *That Hideous Strength*, the villains of the tale experiment on living animals, and in a 1947 essay, Lewis articulates explicitly his impassioned opposition to vivisection. The timing is suggestive, though it is difficult to know what to make of it. Perhaps for Lewis there is a connection between war and cruelty to animals, a continuum between disregard for nonhuman life and disregard for human life. Said differently, humanity at its worse during the World Wars offers Lewis a fitting occasion to contemplate the infliction of horrific and wholly unnecessary cruelties toward other living things.

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Human-Caused Animal Suffering and Violence toward Other People

The link between cruelty to animals in childhood and aggression in later life is well established in the present day. "Virtually every serial killer in recent memory had a history of torturing and killing animals," writes Holly Hazard of the Humane Society of the United States, and "the... Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has added cruelty to animals as one of the factors it uses in developing a profile of behavior patterns in violent criminals."⁷ Though I am not sure whether the statistical and scientific data in Lewis's day supported the link, he was at least intuitively aware of a connection between the ill treatment of vulnerable nonhumans and vulnerable humans. More specifically, a willingness to perform torturous experiments on the one is a possible indicator of a willingness to disregard the other.

Lewis wrote the 1947 essay mentioned above for the New England Anti-Vivisection Society, and in it he connects experimentation on living animals and the horrors of war:

The victory of vivisection marks a great advance in the triumph of ruthless, non-moral utilitarianism over the old world of ethical law, a triumph in which we, as well as animals, are already the victims, and of which Dachau and Hiroshima mark the more recent achievements. In justifying cruelty to animals we put ourselves also on the animal level. We choose the jungle and must abide by our choice.⁸

This is not, however, the only place where he articulates the notion of moral regress in these terms, associating cruelty to animals with violence toward people. Consider, for instance, the opening pages to his 1955 Chronicles of Narnia prequel *The Magician's Nephew* in which the creepy Andrew Ketterley explains to Digory and Polly that he is in the middle of a great experiment.⁹ "I've tried it on a guinea pig and it seemed to work. But then a guinea-pig can't tell you anything."¹⁰ Naturally, the children become an obvious solution, becoming themselves the "guinea pigs" with a capacity for speech that he wants.

Recall also the early pages of his Space Trilogy in which the heartless Professor Weston says to his partner in crime, "We ought to have a dog in this place." His friend reminds him that there was a dog

once, and still would be had Weston not killed it in an earlier experiment.¹¹ Like Uncle Andrew in *The Magician's Nephew*, Weston also turns to a human subject as a replacement, but this time there is a particularly dark implication in the scientist's choice of victim. It is a boy earlier described by his mother as "a little simple," and by Weston himself as "incapable of serving humanity and only too likely to propagate idiocy." He is the kind of person, Weston continues, "who in a civilized community would be automatically handed over to a state laboratory for experimental purposes."¹² Like the dog, the boy has no intrinsic value for Weston, and only escapes the scientist because the appropriately named Elwin Ransom takes his place in that villain's murderous scheme, in effect paying the price for the boy's life.

Such willingness to turn from animal to human experimental subjects implies a view of creation that sees some life as expendable. Uncle Andrew places knowledge over the well-being of a guinea pig and children. Weston places scientific research that may benefit *some* members of society over the well-being of a dog and one deemed mentally deficient and therefore unable to make meaningful contributions to that society. Different victims, both human and nonhuman, but the same distorted view of creation lies behind the violence. And grounding his concerns in the memories of recent wartime traumas, Lewis connects cruelty to animals for research purposes with the same mindset resulting in Dachau and Hiroshima, the Holocaust and the atomic bomb drops on Japan that represent the grim potential of unbridled human aggression.

For Lewis the storyteller, animals and people alike experience fear (mice, soldiers) and are vulnerable to the abuses and self-serving agendas of the strong (donkeys in shafts, guinea pigs, children, those deemed inferior, Dachau, Hiroshima). By frequently aligning the plight of all animate life in poetry (e.g., "The Ass"), nonfiction (e.g., "Vivisection"), and fiction (e.g., the Space Trilogy, the Chronicles of Narnia), he subtly challenges readers' ambivalence or indifference to animal cruelty, reminding them that what happens to one may happen to the other. Returning to the example of 1938's *Out of the Silent Planet*, a further detail deserves notice. The dog-killer Weston and his partner kidnap Ransom and take him to Mars because the residents of that planet demand a human subject. Owing to their

limited abilities with the Martian languages, they assume they want this human for experimental purposes. Ransom overhears their speculations, and their use of the terms pet, vivisection, and human sacrifice terrify him as he realizes he is soon to be vivisected and sacrificed.¹³ Ransom's short-lived terror at being so abused by the H. G. Wells-inspired bogies of his imaginings—short-lived because he soon discovers the inhabitants of Mars/Malacandra are perfectly benevolent—serves, at the very least, to create sympathy between readers and the living subjects of real-world scientific research. Lewis achieves the same effect when the vivisectionists in his 1945 novel *That Hideous Strength* capture the beloved bear Mr. Bultitude.

Though Lewis offers in these and other stories a fictive approach to animal ethics, he grounds his opposition to vivisection and other cruelties in theological presuppositions. We find in his writings that most-rare convergence of religious faith and concern for animals. On this issue, he is a fascinating, if somewhat lonely, voice crying in the wilderness. To be sure, his position on animal experimentation was not a popular one. As Alister McGrath observes in a recent biography,

Lewis's views on this matter lost him many friends at Oxford and elsewhere, as vivisection was then widely regarded as morally justified by its outcomes. Animal pain was the price paid for human progress.¹⁴

So what was the basis of Lewis's theologically motivated objection to this widespread practice? For the purposes of this brief survey, I highlight just three themes found in his diverse writings, though there is much more to be said about his views on the subject.

Christian Community and Kindness toward Animals

To begin with, we find in Lewis's writings an all-encompassing understanding of community that assumes the Bible's high view of nonhuman creation described at the outset. The heroes and villains of the 1945 novel *That Hideous Strength*, to illustrate, differ widely in their treatment of animals. On the one hand, Elwin Ransom and his friends share their home with a bear named Mr. Bultitude, and they

are hospitable to mice, finding in the arrangement a mutual respect and mutual benefit. Put succinctly, "Humans want crumbs removed; mice are anxious to remove them." On the other hand, the nefarious National Institute for Co-ordinated Experiments, with its ironic acronym NICE, performs tests on living animals. They have "an immense programme of vivisection," in fact, something Mark Studdock discovers while seeking a job with the Institute.¹⁵

By introducing the organization's vivisection program from the perspective of this particular character, Lewis constructs a rather poignant critique of those indifferent to animal pain. Mark is a shallow individual who lacks a moral compass. In this scene, he remains completely unmoved by a medley of animal sounds and whimpers:

As he stood there a loud melancholy howl arose and then, as if it had set the key, all manner of trumpetings, bayings, screams ... which shuddered and protested for a moment and then died away into mutterings and whines. Mark had no scruples about vivisection.¹⁶

At this very moment, in the presence of this cacophony of suffering, all Mark cares about is securing a job with the Institute. "There were all sorts of things in there," the reader learns, "thousands of pounds' worth of living animality, which the Institute could afford to cut up like paper on the mere chance of some interesting discovery."¹⁷ The disconnect between Mark and the suffering all around him is jarring; all that matters to him on this occasion is that he "must get the job."¹⁸ Lewis also juxtaposes the extent of animal suffering in this scene with the experiments' insignificance—the animals suffer terror and unspeakable pain on the "mere chance of some interesting discovery."¹⁹

Mark fails to hear those cries of pain, but Lewis does not allow readers to do so; they likely wince as the author piles up several highly emotive terms in a single paragraph: whimpers, melancholy howls, screams, whines, cutting up living animality. This scene, along with the behavior of the Institute as a whole, contrasts sharply with the community of heroes whose relationship with animal life is characterized by thanksgiving to the Creator who made those creatures in the first place, and an all-inclusive hospitality, generosity, and compassion that encompasses all species.

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Christian “Dominion” and Kindness toward Animals

Second, we find in Lewis’s writing a generous understanding of the notion of human dominion over creation. There is a telling scene in *The Magician’s Nephew* when Aslan charges the newly appointed King and Queen of the newly created world to “rule and name all these creatures, and do justice among them, and protect them from their enemies when enemies arise.”²⁰ This unambiguous allusion to the biblical creation story (i.e., the naming of the animals, cf. Gen. 2:19²¹) also offers an interpretation of the subdue-and-have-dominion language of Genesis 1:26–28. Lewis clearly reads that Genesis mandate in the direction of stewardship and protection, not despotism and tyranny. To be sure, there are ambiguities in the Chronicles on this point because Lewis distinguishes the talking animals of Narnia from those without speech, and the instructions to the new King and Queen concern the former category: “Can you rule these creatures kindly and fairly,” Aslan asks them, “remembering that they are not slaves like the dumb beasts of the world you were born in, but Talking Beasts and free subjects?”²² There are references to eating meat in the Chronicles of Narnia as well.²³

It is worth noting, however, that Aslan does not say that the treatment of animals in King Frank and Queen Helen’s world (i.e., London of the early twentieth century) is morally acceptable, or that non-speaking animals in Narnia—those Aslan does not touch with his nose²⁴—do not deserve kindness as well. Aslan’s instructions refer to the talking animals specifically because they are the creatures that fill the Narnia stories. Still, it is clear that Lewis maintains a generous understanding of “dominion.”

Consider, to illustrate, his correspondence with an American woman in 1956. She confesses feeling “like a murderer” because she had her cat Fanda euthanized. Lewis’s comforting response offers a brief hint of his understanding of human power over powerless animals:

No person, animal, flower, or even pebble, has ever been loved too much—i.e. more than every one of God’s works deserve. But you need not feel “like a murderer.” Rather rejoice that God’s law allows you to extend to Fanda that last mercy which (no doubt, quite rightly) we are forbidden to extend to suffering humans.²⁵

This unequal power between human and non-human, this God-granted dominion over sentient life, is an extension of God’s grace and mercy. It is a sobering responsibility as well, as he makes clear in *The Problem of Pain*:

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.²⁶

His comforting letter to a woman grieving the death of her cat illustrates that care for animal well-being is theologically consequential. “I will never laugh at anyone for grieving over a loved beast,” he writes in the same letter. “I think God wants us to love Him *more*, not to love creatures (even animals) *less*. We love everything *in one way* too much (i.e., at the expense of our love for him) but in another way we love everything too little.” He closes this letter asking God to “bless you —and Fanda!”²⁷

Christian Humility and Kindness toward Animals

Third, Lewis’s theological reflections on animals and their sufferings are cautious and tentative, and he remains wary of overreaching claims. He acknowledges in *The Problem of Pain* (1940) that firm conclusions on some matters are out of reach:

... 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.²⁸

Echoing those remarks in a 1962 letter, he acknowledges that

The animal creation is a strange mystery. We can make some attempt to understand human suffering: but the sufferings of animals from the beginning of the world till now (inflicted not only by us but by one another)—what is one to think?²⁹

There is a paradox, he finds, observing how strange it is that

God brings us into such intimate relations with creatures of whose real purpose and destiny we remain forever ignorant. We know to some degree what angels and men are *for*. But what is a flea for, or a wild dog?³⁰

But herein lies an idea important for Lewis's reflections on animals and their treatment. Since we do not know what animals are *for*, it is presumptuous to claim them as our own and use them with reckless disregard for their well-being. Said differently, inflicting pain on God's creatures for any reason—including scientific experimentation—is a serious matter. If we do not fully understand God's purposes in creating animal life, how much more should we proceed with caution.

Lewis takes the title of his 1945 novel *That Hideous Strength* from a sixteenth-century poem by Scottish writer Sir David Lindsay of the Mount (ca. 1490–ca. 1555). In *Ane Dialog betwixt Experience and ane Courteor* or *The Monarchie*, Lindsay refers to the biblical Tower of Babel in an excerpt that Lewis takes for his novel's epigraph: "The Shadow of that hydd-eous strength / Sax myle and more it is of length." This directs us, naturally, to principal concerns of the novel, which include humanity's hubris and an overreaching contrary to divine instructions. Recall the biblical story:

Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. And as they migrated from the east, they came upon a plain ... and settled there. And they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly." And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves; otherwise we shall be scattered abroad upon the face of the earth." (Gen. 11:1–4)

This expression of concern about scattering across the world is significant because it is a rejection of God's twice-repeated instruction to multiply and fill the earth (Gen. 1:28; 9:1).

The biblical tower builders are afraid to be scattered, so the construction of cities and towers, forms of technological advancement, are exercises in self-preservation. They employ their knowledge—their ability to make bricks and mortar—and cast aside the religious injunctions they believe make them vulnerable. Self-preservation at all costs is also the goal

of those in the National Institute for Co-ordinated Experiments in *That Hideous Strength*. They are unencumbered by financial limitations, red tape, morality, superstition, and tradition. They reject all such restraints, using every technology and research tool (including vivisection) available to them to secure their self-interested objectives.³¹ This nefarious organization also rejects what they consider outdated religious beliefs. They prize only science, technology, and the well-being of a select few. They take steps toward systematically eliminating the weak and marginalized, and reject ways of being and ways of knowing that offer no obviously pragmatic benefit. This is the hideous strength. Lewis's target is a humanity so hell bent on self-preservation, and a science so driven by that objective, that it rejects everything that is humane.

There is more to the biblical story of the Tower of Babel, of course. The grandiose scheme of the tower builders ultimately comes to naught. Their hubris and ambition knows no bounds, so God confounds them by confusing their language so they cannot understand one another, and then scatters them (Gen. 11:7–8). The story is etiological on one level, providing a mythical explanation for the world's diverse languages and cultures; however, in the novel, it becomes a key plotline, which Lewis uses to great comic effect. One of the more memorable scenes in the book occurs during a banquet when the magic of the awakened Merlin confuses the speech of the story's villains in what is a kind of re-enactment of Genesis 11. Lewis's theological point is that a reckoning for Babel-like behavior is in the offing.

The story of the Tower of Babel is a widely used symbol of the breakdown and misuse of language. That "the whole earth had one language and the same words" is part of the problem, according to Genesis, and so it is not surprising that the NICE manipulates and abuses words. They hire Mark Studdock to write propaganda, and we see examples of his ability to twist words in the press with destructive consequences. Lewis wrote the novel during World War II, so echoes of Nazi propaganda with its obfuscation, selectivity, and efforts to foster violence against unwanted and vulnerable institutions and people is inevitably in the background. To give but one example, Lord Feverstone explains to Mark that part of the NICE's agenda is humans taking charge of humans, which includes, in his words, "sterilization

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of the unfit, liquidation of backward races ... [and] selective breeding."³² Allusions to the Nazis are hard to miss. This is the setting for Lewis's reflections on animal experimentation in *That Hideous Strength*. As noted above, the NICE has an aggressive vivisection program and for Lewis, this torture of animals in the name of science and human advancement is a Babel-like overreach, both hubristic and a defiant rejection of the creator God. Some knowledge is an ill-gotten gain.

C. S. Lewis, Animal Experimentation, and the World Wars

Lewis is an unlikely resource to address the topic of animal experimentation in Christian perspective for at least four reasons. First, though his opposition to animal experimentation is clear, he never produced a comprehensive statement of the issue, so reconstructing his ideas is somewhat piecemeal. Second, much of this reconstruction appeals to his creative writings, which no doubt strike some as an odd vehicle for commentary on ethical questions, perhaps especially so for those working in the sciences.³³ Third, he was not a professional theologian, and with respect to his views on animals no less than other subjects, his remarks are an exercise in "creative theology."³⁴ And fourth, he was a layperson so not in any sense a representative of the church or its official doctrine.³⁵ All of that said, Lewis remains a colossus among English, Christian thinkers a half century after his death, and he is one of those rare writers whose work has broad appeal in both the academy and the church, among scholars and laypeople. As the issue of animal experimentation remains a pressing ethical question in the context of contemporary scientific work,³⁶ Lewis's creative, and at times insightful, reflections on the subject remain relevant, and they warrant at least some consideration by those Christians who insist vivisection is morally defensible.

I close with a return to Lewis's 1947 pamphlet on vivisection in which he laments the victory of ruthless, nonmoral utilitarianism over "the old world of ethical law." Referencing Dachau and Hiroshima in support of his point is striking and laden with emotive force, perhaps especially at the moment he wrote these words, with the unimaginable scale of the Holocaust and atomic bomb horrors creeping slowly into the consciousness of post-war England.

Though it is pure speculation, I find the timing of Lewis's reflections on animal cruelty conspicuous. It is striking that the bulk of this commentary occurs during World War II and its immediate aftermath (i.e., *The Problem of Pain*, 1940; *That Hideous Strength*, 1945; "Vivisection," 1947; "The Pains of Animals: A Problem in Theology," 1950). As a soldier himself in an earlier conflict who witnessed firsthand "the horribly smashed men still moving like half-crushed beetles, the sitting or standing corpses,"³⁷ and as the brother of a lifelong soldier, he was no stranger to violence. Lewis was not a pacifist either,³⁸ and though he was not obligated to do so owing to his Irish birth, he still volunteered to fight in the Great War. To simply dismiss his concerns about animal suffering as mere sentimentalism is not convincing.

There was something more theologically profound at play, giving rise to his views. Though he does not use the exact term, Lewis presupposes a theological kinship between humans and nonhumans. (We even find a hint of this in his pre-conversion 1919 poem). By implying that the practice of vivisection is a symptom of the same disease resulting in Dachau and Hiroshima, he signals that we abdicate our God-given roles as image bearers, charged to subdue and have dominion, every time we treat other living creatures—human or nonhuman—cruelly or with indifference.

There are ambiguities in Lewis's writings. For one, given his attention to animal suffering in lab experiments, his silence about killing animals for food is surprising, and perhaps suggests a double standard. Maybe his high view of the Bible explains this since Genesis includes explicit permission to eat meat (Gen. 9:3). If so, perhaps it follows that the use of animals in some situations is justifiable for Lewis, even though the infliction of excessive pain is not. And so it is that when the upright Ransom rides a dolphin-like creature in the waters of Perelandra, it is morally appropriate, but when Weston does the same, it is evil because he urges it forward, despite the creature's exhaustion, by means of "torture." He is willing to push it to the point of death.³⁹ Lab experiments involving the sustained infliction of pain on innocent beings—keep in mind his particular target is vivisection—are unambiguously evil in Lewis's view. He would no doubt say the same for all forms of animal cruelty given biblical injunctions against it (e.g., Prov. 12:10). Lewis may have felt free to eat

a steak on occasion, but this does not mean he condoned kicking the cow.

Second, Lewis the academic does not oppose the pursuit of knowledge, including scientific inquiry, but only methods used to achieve it that inflict pain. So, does this rule out all research involving animals? What about experiments that do not inflict physical pain or emotional distress? How about the confinement of animals for observation?⁴⁰ I do not know for sure. His scattered writings on animals do not address these questions directly, as far as I am aware, but my suspicion is that he would urge all those in positions of power over animals to proceed only with great caution. The “problem of animal suffering” is both “appalling” and confounding, and Christian explanations of human pain do not apply because “as far as we know beasts are incapable either of sin or virtue: therefore they can neither deserve pain nor be improved by it.”⁴¹ Animal suffering thus presents us with a mystery; “it is outside the range of our knowledge.”⁴² At the same time, he maintains that there is some intellectual advancement that is ill-gotten gain. In *That Hideous Strength*, Lewis does not distinguish lab experiments involving vivisection from other uses of animals in scientific inquiry. Here the presence of animals in laboratories is insidious, without such qualification. Perhaps this is telling. As with the biblical story of the Tower of Babel, which informs that novel about a despicable research facility, human capabilities and human interests do not justify all actions. ◇

Notes

¹For an analysis that finds in these passages a high view of animal life, see Michael J. Gilmour, *Eden’s Other Residents: The Bible and Animals* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2014), 28–36, 83–87.

²On Aquinas’s views regarding animals, see Andrew Linzey, *Animal Theology* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 12–19. For commentary on Augustine’s writings on the issue, see Gillian Clark, “The Fathers and the Animals: The Rule of Reason?,” in *Animals on the Agenda: Questions about Animals for Theology and Ethics*, ed. Andrew Linzey and Dorothy Yamamoto (London: SCM, 1998), 67–79.

³C.S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life* (1955; Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012), 195.

⁴Clive Hamilton [C.S. Lewis], “The Ass,” in *Spirits in Bondage: A Cycle of Lyrics* (London: William Heinemann, 1919), 76.

⁵*Ibid.*, 75–76.

⁶C.S. Lewis, *Perelandra* (1943; London: HarperCollins, 2005), 132. For the full episode, see 131–34.

⁷Holly Hazard, “Humane Education,” in *The Global Guide to Animal Protection*, ed. Andrew Linzey (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 286. One important work on this topic is Andrew Linzey, ed., *The Link between Animal Abuse and Human Violence* (Eastbourne, UK: Sussex Academic Press, 2009). Research continues in this area. Commenting on recent studies, Eleonora Gullone observes “an increasing acceptance of the link between human anti-social behaviour and animal cruelty” (*Animal Cruelty, Antisocial Behaviour, and Aggression: More Than a Link* [London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012], 137).

⁸C.S. Lewis, “Vivisection,” in *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*, ed. Walter Hooper (1947; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1970), 228.

⁹Though written after the Second World War, the stories in the Chronicles of Narnia involve conflict and violence. Alan Jacobs argues that “more than any other single thing, the story of Narnia concerns an unacknowledged but true King and the efforts of his loyalists to reclaim or protect his throne from would-be usurpers” (“The Chronicles of Narnia,” in *The Cambridge Companion to C. S. Lewis*, ed. Robert MacSwain and Michael Ward [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010], 274; italics original). In light of this, the Narnia novels are loosely consistent with the general hypothesis put forward here, namely, that Lewis contemplates violence against animals in the context of wartime.

¹⁰C.S. Lewis, *The Magician’s Nephew* (1955; New York: HarperCollins, 1994), 15–16.

¹¹C.S. Lewis, *Out of the Silent Planet* (1938; London: HarperCollins, 2005), 8. The term “vivisection” appears in the near context with reference to the residents of Malacandra (Mars), possibly hinting at the fate of the unfortunate dog (p. 38).

¹²Lewis, *Out of the Silent Planet*, 3, 17.

¹³*Ibid.*, 37–40.

¹⁴Alister McGrath, *C. S. Lewis: A Life* (Carol Stream, IL: Tynedale, 2013), 237. See, too, pp. 275–76 for various remarks on Lewis and animals. As far as I am aware, there is no book-length study of the topic.

¹⁵C.S. Lewis, *That Hideous Strength: A Modern Fairy-Tale for Grown Ups* (1945; New York: HarperCollins, 2005), 129–30, 198.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 130.

¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁸*Ibid.*, (italics original).

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰Lewis, *The Magician’s Nephew*, 151. For another reference to a son of Adam naming creatures, see C.S. Lewis, *Prince Caspian: The Return to Narnia* (1951; New York: HarperCollins, 1994), 79.

²¹This verse serves as the epigraph to Lewis’s chapter on animal suffering in *The Problem of Pain*, in *The Complete C. S. Lewis Signature Classics* (1940; New York: HarperOne, 2002).

²²Lewis, *That Hideous Strength*, 151. Cf. Lewis, *Prince Caspian*, 70–71, where the hunting of Talking Beasts as opposed to “dumb, witless creatures” is a serious ethical matter.

²³On the nonvegetarianism of Narnia, see Michael C. Morris, “Middle Earth, Narnia, Hogwarts, and Animals: A Review of the Treatment of Nonhuman Animals and Other Sentient Beings in Christian-Based Fantasy Fiction,” *Society & Animals* 17, no. 4 (2009): 349.

²⁴Lewis, *The Magician’s Nephew*, 124. Those Aslan does not touch, who do not receive the gift of speech, “wander away,” presumably in fulfilment of the divine mandate to

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be fruitful and fill the earth (Gen. 1:22). For various reflections on the distinction between talking and nontalking animals in the Narnia books, see Morris, "Middle Earth," esp. 351. Responding to Lewis's view that carnivorousness is evidence of corruption in both animals and humans, Andrew Linzey finds it remarkable that he does not consider "one obvious way in which humans can reverse the effects of their sinfulness [namely] by becoming vegetarian or at least by consuming as little sentient life as possible" (Linzey, "C.S. Lewis's Theology of Animals," *Anglican Theological Review* 80, no. 1 [1998]: 76). Instead, as Morris points out on page 349 of "Middle Earth," the one mention of vegetarianism in the Chronicles of Narnia (on the opening page of *Voyage of the Dawn Treader*) involves ridicule. See, too, note 34 below.

²⁵From a letter dated August 8, 1956, in *The Collected Letters of C. S. Lewis*, vol. 3, *Narnia, Cambridge, and Joy 1950-1963*, ed. Walter Hooper (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2007), 781-82.

²⁶Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, 634.

²⁷Lewis, *Collected Letters*, 782.

²⁸Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, 628-29.

²⁹From a letter dated October 26, 1962, in Lewis, *Collected Letters*, 1376.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 1377 (emphasis original).

³¹For example, Lewis, *That Hideous Strength*, 15.

³²*Ibid.*, 44.

³³For a robust statement on the potential of literature to deepen discussions on this subject, see Tzachi Zamir, "Literary Works and Animal Ethics," in *The Oxford Handbook*

of *Animal Ethics*, ed. Tom L. Beauchamp and R. G. Frey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 932-55. Zamir argues that

literary interventions can deepen action-oriented moral approaches as well as character-oriented ones. The emphasis on suffering and the capacity to identify it (consequentialism) or the plausibility (or implausibility) of limiting the applicability of virtues such as mercy or justice to humans alone (virtue ethics) exemplify how the literary imagination can extend and sharpen moral sensitivities couched in all of the dominant moral frameworks. (pp. 952-53)

³⁴Linzey, "C.S. Lewis's Theology," 65. Linzey has various reservations about Lewis's conclusions but commends him for raising the issue of animals in theological reflection when most do not, particularly since, in Linzey's view, "The paucity of serious theological reflection about animals has become a moral scandal" (p. 78). He also welcomes Lewis's attempt to grapple with theodicy and animal pain (pp. 78-79), and willingness to vocalize opposition to animal cruelty in his support for the antivivisection movement, even though it was an unpopular position to take (pp. 79-80). For a response to both Lewis and Linzey, see Ben Devries, "Andrew Linzey and C.S. Lewis's Theology of Animals," *Journal of Animal Ethics* 3, no. 1 (2013): 25-40.

³⁵In this respect, Lewis is typical of the British Christian antivivisection movement of the nineteenth century and later in that it was for the most part a grassroots opposition, operating independently of official denominational backing. As Chien-Hui Li puts it, antivivisectionists, despite the lack of institutional support from churches, took the initiative upon themselves in turning to the Christian tradition in their attempt to make sense of and deal with the moral issues posed by new developments in the field of physiological science. (Li, "Mobilizing Christianity in the Antivivisection Movement in Victorian Britain," *Journal of Animal Ethics* 2, no. 2 [2012]: 157)

Lewis is atypical of the movement in that he brought a scholarly perspective to the issues involved, whereas many of the activists Li considers are not among "the best of theologians or the most gifted thinkers of their time" (p. 157).

³⁶For a wide selection of articles touching on animal experimentation in religious perspective, see Paul Waldau and Kimberley Patton, eds., *A Communion of Subjects: Animals in Religion, Science, and Ethics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

³⁷Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, 196.

³⁸Stanley Hauerwas examines Lewis's views on war in his chapter, "On Violence," in *The Cambridge Companion to C. S. Lewis*, ed. Robert MacSwain and Michael Ward (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 189-202.

³⁹Lewis, *Perelandra*, 196, 204.

⁴⁰For philosophical and ethical perspectives on the confinement of animals in various contexts, see David DeGrazia, "The Ethics of Confining Animals: From Farms to Zoos to Human Homes," in *The Oxford Handbook of Animal Ethics*, ed. Tom L. Beauchamp and R. G. Frey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 738-68.

⁴¹Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, 628.

⁴²*Ibid.*

A Cognitive Sciences Challenge

Justin L. Barrett, Thrive Professor of Developmental Science and Program Director for the PhD in psychological science at Fuller Theological Seminary, will be posting soon, on the ASA and CSCA websites, an intriguing description of the latest developments in the cognitive sciences. What insights and challenges do they raise for Christian faith?

The essay will be intended as an invitation. Readers will be encouraged to take up one of the insights or challenges, or maybe a related one that was not mentioned, and draft an article (typically about 5,000-8,000 words) that contributes to the conversation. These can be sent to Barrett at staroffice@fuller.edu. He will send the best essays on to peer review, and then we will select from those for publication in a cognitive science theme issue of *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith*.

The lead editorial in the December 2013 issue of *PSCF* outlines what the journal looks for in article contributions. For full consideration for inclusion in the theme issue, manuscripts should be received electronically before March 30, 2016.

ASA Members: Submit comments and questions on this communication at www.asa3.org→FORUMS→PSCF DISCUSSION.