

The Problem of Pain

C.S. Lewis

Week Six

Chapter Nine – Animal Pain

- The Christian explanation of human pain cannot be extended to animal pain. Beasts are incapable of sin or virtue, so they can neither deserve pain nor be improved by it. (p. 132)
- The problem of animal suffering can't be the center of the problem of pain because it is outside the range of our knowledge. We don't know why they were made or what they are. (p. 133)
- Life has nothing to do with good and evil until sentience appears. Vegetable lives don't really "prey" upon one another and aren't really in a state of "ruthless" competition. (p. 133)
- Three questions when we turn to beasts (p. 134)
 1. What do animals suffer?
 2. How did disease and pain enter the animal world?
 3. How can animal suffering be reconciled with the justice of God?
- Answer to No. 1 – we don't know, but we can speculate. We don't need to assume that lower animal forms have sentience (or feel pain). (p. 134) The nervous system of a higher animal presents successive sensations to the animal, a succession of perceptions, but not a perception of succession. Pain may take place in the animal, but it might not be right to say the animal feels pain. (pp. 134-136)
- Apes, elephants and higher domestic animals may have a self or soul that connects experiences, but a great deal of what appears to be animal suffering need not be suffering in any real sense. (p. 137)
- Answer to No. 2 – We have reason to believe that animals existed before men, so the Fall of man is not a good answer to how suffering entered the animal world. Carnivorousness is older than humanity. (p. 137)
- There is a story in the church that man was not the first creature to rebel against the Creator, but some older and mightier being did and is now the Lord of this world. (p. 137)
- It's a reasonable supposition that some mighty power had already been at work for ill on the material universe, or the solar system, or at least Earth, before man ever came on the scene. And when man fell, someone had tempted him. (p. 138)
- It's a wider application of the principle that evil comes from the abuse of free will. This evil may have corrupted the animal kingdom before man appeared. (p. 138)
- If this is worth considering, then it's also worth considering that man might already have had a redemptive function to perform – to restore peace to the animal world. It might have happened if man had not fallen. (p. 140)
- Answer to No. 3 – Lewis doubts that there is immortality for creatures that are merely sentient, and for them, justice and mercy have no meaning. (p. 142)
- For higher animals, their destiny demands a deeper consideration. As man is to be understood only in his relation to God, beasts are to be understood only in their relation to man and, through man, to God. (p. 142)
- Everything a man does to an animal is either a lawful exercise, or a sacrilegious abuse, of an authority by Divine right. (p. 142)
- A tame animal is the only "natural" animal (just as an obedient person to God, not a rebel, is the highest form of humanity). (p. 143)

- Beasts that obtain a real self are in their masters as we are in God. God may raise and bless such beasts and be immortal in their masters. (p. 144)
- How about wild animals? Their immortality, if it happens, would also be related to man – not individuals, but to humanity. Maybe Lionhood has shared in the travail of creation and will enter into the restoration as well. (p. 147)
- The lion, when he has ceased to be dangerous, will still be awful (awe-full). (p. 147)

Chapter 10 – Heaven

- No solution of the problem of pain without a discussion of heaven can be called Christian. (p. 148)
- Pie in the sky? Either there is, or there isn't. If there is not, then Christianity is false. (p. 149)
- It is safe to tell the pure in heart that they shall see God, for only the pure in heart want to. (p. 149)
- In our hearts, have we ever desired anything else? The books you love are bound together by a secret thread. The landscape you love is special to you but not the one next to you. Hobbies have a secret attraction. Your lifelong friendships are born when you meet another human being who has some inkling of that which you were born desiring. (p. 150)
- What we're looking for is the secret signature of each soul. While we are, this is. If we lose this, we lose all. (p. 151)
- God makes each soul unique. Your soul has a curious shape because it is a hollow to fit a particular swelling in the infinite contours of the Divine substance, or a key to unlock one of the doors in the house with many mansions. (p. 152)
- God will look to every soul like its first love because He is its first love. You alone are made for your place in heaven. (p. 152)
- You have experienced the want of it. If you will not go out of yourself to follow it, if you sit down to brood on the desire and attempt to cherish it, the desire itself will evade you. (p. 153)
- The seed dies to live, the bread must be cast on the waters, he that loses his soul will save it. (p. 154)
- Each of the redeemed shall forever know and praise some one aspect of the Divine beauty better than any other creature can. If all experienced God in the same way and returned Him an identical worship, the song of the Church triumphant would have no symphony. (p. 155)
- A soul's union with God is a continual self-abandonment. There may be pleasures in hell (God shield us from them), there may be something not all unlike pains in heaven (God grant us soon to taste them). (p. 157)
- In self-giving, we touch a rhythm not only of all creation but of all being. From the highest to the lowest, self exists to be abdicated and, by that abdication, becomes the more truly self. (p. 157)
- What is outside the system of self-giving is simply and solely hell. (p. 158)
- The first rule of the holy game – touch the ball and then immediately pass it on. (p. 158)

Appendix

- It is easier to say "My tooth is aching" than to say "My heart is broken." But if the cause is accepted and faced, the conflict will strengthen and purify the character, and in time, the pain usually will pass. (p. 161)
- Pain provides an opportunity for heroism; the opportunity is seized with surprising frequency.