

Toward a Christian View of Animal Ethics: Earthly Lessons from Unearthly Animals in C.S. Lewis's Space Trilogy

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“We humans share a world and its scarce resources with other intelligent creatures.”¹ With this short sentence, Martha Nussbaum startles us into the realization that the realm of social ethics may be wider than humanity. Living intelligence implies at least some measure of dignity. With dignity comes morality, and it is difficult to deny that many animals have intelligence. I have worded the title specifically “Animal Ethics” rather than “Animal Rights” to convey that we need much more than merely an establishment of certain arbitrary rights to animals; we need an entire ethical framework from which we can then form principles and ethical norms. In contemporary times there seems to be a common thread which runs through scholarly thought, as well as the popular mind—the thought that of all the approaches to animal ethics, the Judeo-Christian view is the least able to offer a satisfactory, coherent, and generous foundation. It is my view that the mindset which underlies most animal abuse is not authentic Christian doctrine, but an unhealthy anthropocentrism: viewing Man² as the sole (or only) created being that ultimately matters in this vast universe. It is not that animals are viewed as useless, and therefore become disposable. In this view they become disposable because they are viewed as being only a “use”—their value lies in their utilitarian usefulness to Man. If animals exist exclusively for our use, then our ends come before any ethical considerations on their behalf, and abuse is not far afoot.

As an answer to this type of destructive anthropocentrism, Christianity presents the paradoxical but refreshing idea of *omnicentricism*, a term I have coined to describe a particular macrocosmic view of life. Omnicentricism does not deny a hierarchy of authority or value between humans and animals; it simply means that “the worlds are for themselves,”³ that the natural world and every being in it were created for their own sake—not merely or exclusively for the purposes of humanity. Omnicentricism enjoins respect for, admiration of, and responsible stewardship over creatures of all types. One man who lucidly explained and illustrated this view was one of the most influential Christian writers in the 20th century: C. S. Lewis. In this essay we will examine a few common objections to Christian animal ethics, and then explore how Lewis portrays an omnicentric cosmology in some of his fictional works. I make no claim to cover this subject exhaustively, comprehensively, or even extensively. I merely wish to expose the incongruity of several popular conceptions of Christian ethics as it regards animals, and paint a vision for an authentic Christian view of animal ethics.

Before turning to Lewis's works I must first narrow my thesis with the intention of preventing an anticipated misunderstanding. In the Christian historical narrative, the paradisiacal harmony between Man and nature was rent not long after Adam and Eve were placed in the Garden of Eden. Man's rebellion against God affected every aspect of the world as they knew it. Many centuries later, the world-wide deluge in Genesis 7-8 further changed the relationship between humanity and the natural world. This essay is not meant to be a commentary on or prescription for the present relation between humans and animals. Nor is it meant to serve as a practical guide to animal ethics. Lewis's particular works which form the subject of this analysis deal with planets yet untouched by the curse of sin. I intend to follow suit (especially in section III). The value of approaching the issue from this vantage point is that emphasis is placed on the original purpose or design for creation. We cannot understand how we ought to treat

animals in the 21st century if we don't understand how humanity and animals originally interacted before there was evil, suffering, and pain.

Those not well acquainted with the Oxford don may only know him as the author of *The Chronicles of Narnia*: a writer of “children’s books.” He was indeed that, but no less an author of adult books because of it. Some of the lesser known of his fictional works are the three volumes commonly known as the “Space Trilogy”. These three books have reshaped my thinking about animals more than any other written work. The first volume, entitled *Out of the Silent Planet*, follows the story of Ransom, a professor of philology at Oxford, who, through various unexpected circumstances, finds himself kidnapped. He was drugged and later awoke as a captive on a spaceship bound for “Malacandra” (Mars) with a renowned physicist and a greedy businessman. The story continues through two more volumes: in the second, *Perelandra*, Ransom travels to the planet of Perelandra (Venus); the third volume is set on our own earth (the “silent planet”). One of the most moving themes in the series is the marked relationship of harmony between different animal species, and between animals and humans on the extraterrestrial planets. But rather than being spotlighted directly, Lewis subtly weaves this theme into the social dynamics Ransom experiences on both planets. Following a brief presentation of objections to Christian animal ethics, we will explore how Lewis presents the Christian ethical view of omniscience.

I. Objections to the Christian View

Doubtless, there are a variety of reasons people view Christianity in such a negative light as it regards the treatment of animals. One reason may be a view espoused by the great “father of modern philosophy.” Rene Descartes, the 17th century French Rationalist, is probably best known for his proof of personal existence: *cogito ergo sum*. Less well known—though possibly no less influential—was his view on the intelligence of animals. He believed that animals do not have a mind capable of any kind of thought which transcends natural instinct. He observed that animals have the organs necessary for speech, yet do not articulate words like all humans. The obvious conclusion, according to Descartes, was that animals must not have a mind. They are simply “natural automata.”⁴ Since Descartes’ conception of God was very much like the traditional Christian conception of God, “eternal, immutable, independent, supremely intelligent, supremely powerful,” supremely perfect, and the Creator of all things,⁵ his views are often taken as representing the Christian view of animals. Though Descartes did not deny the fact that animals experience sensation and pain, it is easy to see how a view of animals as “natural automata” can lead to disrespect and abuse.

Another reason Christianity is spurned as a legitimate response to animal ethics is due to a particular interpretation of the creation account given in Genesis. It is observed that after God created Adam, he gave the command to “have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”⁶ God was, it is alleged, giving Adam (the human) license to use animals for his own benefit, in whichever way pleased him most. Since we are “children of Adam”, we, too, have the right to take dominion over the animals, to use them for our ends without regard for the animal’s well-being. Martha Nussbaum, the American philosopher known especially for her scholarly work in political philosophy and social justice, interprets the Christian narrative similarly. She believes that one of the reasons animals have been so misused is because the heavy influence of Stoic

philosophy. Due to its emphasis on human virtue, Stoicism “exercised far more widespread influence than any other philosophical school in a world of war and uncertainty.”⁷ But the Stoics denied animals any intelligence, and therefore any moral status. Nussbaum believes that

Stoic views of animals fit better than others with the Judeo-Christian idea that human beings have been given dominion over animals. Although that idea has been interpreted in a variety of ways, it has standardly been understood to give humans license to do whatever they like to nonhuman species and to use them for human purposes.⁸

I have no wish to deny that some Christians may follow this line of thinking. It may be that some abusive actions are simply perceived “to be part of our stewardship over creation.”⁹ Criticism of such attitudes is legitimate. But I believe serious reflection will find that the views expressed by Nussbaum and Descartes are illegitimate deductions from the authentic Christian view of the world as described by C. S. Lewis.

II. Delightful Distinctions

In contradistinction to the Cartesian and Stoic view of animal intelligence (and the anthropocentrism implicit within it), Lewis introduces a cosmos where differences are complimentary, and where uniformity is not the precondition for moral and social tranquility. He finds it unnecessary to raise all animals to a human level of moral dignity, or to lower human dignity to the lowest common denominator of animal dignity. We will examine these inter and intra-species differences in two areas: species and intelligence. The first step toward omniscience lies in recognizing these differences as legitimate yet not letting them become a point of relational dissonance.

Stepping into Lewis’s fictional universe, we find that Maleldil (God) has created numerous worlds, but not all at the same time. With each successive world, there is an increasing distinction between the more intelligent and the less intelligent species. But this distinction is never confused with an accompanying disharmony. It is actually the reverse. Just as greater variation in a musical chord causes greater harmony, so, as some species gain intelligence, they are more able to respect the other species and work together with them in harmony for the good of the entire planet.

Of the two planets Ransom visits, Malecandra is the oldest, and thus Ransom finds at least three native species which are able to communicate among themselves with their own distinct language, and across species with the oldest of the three languages (“Hressa-Hlab”). Contrary to the conclusion that this would draw in some modern minds, to Ransom this linguistic commonality does not suggest common descent; social harmony was not built on ancestry. It rather enforces a certain mindset within Ransom. He finds that only in explicitly acknowledging the difference between the Malacandrian creatures and himself, could he successfully relate to them, respecting them for who they were as intelligent, but very different creatures. For example, the first species Ransom encounters face to face is the *hross*—a shiny, black seal-like creature which walks upright, but has short legs and webbed feet. Ransom was able to establish successful communication with this creature, at first using signs and single words, and eventually piecing together full sentences. But there was something unnerving about the *hross*: “it seemed friendly; but it was very big, very black, and he knew nothing at all about it.”¹⁰ Lewis then gives us a glimpse inside Ransom’s mind:

“It was only many days later that Ransom discovered how to deal with these sudden losses of confidence. They arose when the rationality of the *hross* tempted you to think of it as a man. Then it became abominable—a man seven feet high, with a snaky body, covered, face and all, with thick black animal hair, and whiskered like a cat. But starting from the other end you had an animal with everything an animal ought to have—glossy coat, liquid eye, sweet breath and whitest teeth—and added to all these, as though Paradise had never been lost and earliest dreams were true, the charm of speech and reason. Nothing could be more disgusting than the one impression; nothing more delightful than the other. It all depended on the point of view.”¹¹

In Malacandra, commonality was delightful only when distinction was clearly acknowledged. The various species could communicate and cooperate with each other. They could even share the same ethics. And yet, “each finds the other different, funny, [and] attractive as an animal is attractive.”¹² In Lewis’s purview, to recognize differences does not destroy social harmony; it increases it.

The continuity of this principle continues into Ransom’s journey to Perelandra, with the exception that the emphasis is on the differences between higher and lower intelligences rather than between species. Perelandra, being the newer planet of the two, had a greater distinction between the greater and lesser intelligence of the creatures. There were two persons on the planet much like earthly humans, and the animals on Perelandra were quite different from the type Ransom had encountered in his previous Malecandrian adventure. For example, Ransom’s first experience with the Perelandrian animals was with a small dragon. The dragon’s demeanor faintly resembled an astute but excessively tame family pet. Not knowing whether the creatures on Perelandra speak, Ransom addressed the dragon in the dialect he learned on Malecandra. But “the thing looked at him very hard and perhaps very wisely. Then, for the first time, it shut its eyes.”¹³ Unlike Malecandra, no other creatures on Perelandra had the ability to articulate speech.

But as on Malacandra, difference did not mean social division, or competing interests. The picture painted in Perelandra is much more similar to the Edenic Christian account in Genesis than Ransom’s previous adventure in Malecandra. The first image Ransom saw of Tinidril (figurative of the Christian “Eve”) on Perelandra is characterized by a symphony of color and movement created by the excited animals: he saw her “amidst a throng of beasts and birds as a tall sapling stands among bushes—big pigeon-colored birds and flame-colored birds, and dragons, and beaver-like creatures about the size of rats, and heraldic-looking fish in the sea at her feet.”¹⁴ In another scene, Ransom and Tinidril approach some sheep-like beasts, and “the beasts raced forward to greet her...”¹⁵ It is obvious that in Perelandra, there was nothing of the type of fear inherent in wild animals on our planet.

In yet another example of this mutual respect, Lewis builds on a theme which, judging by the frequency of use in various modern narratives¹⁶ runs deep in the human consciousness. Ransom and Tinidril had decided to leave the floating islands and go to the mainland, but a vast distance of water separated them from the coast. Tinidril “knelt down on the shore...and gave three low calls all on the same note.” Within the minute, “the sea beside the island was a mass of...large silver fishes.”¹⁷ Tinidril and Ransom climbed on the backs of these creatures and rode them as a sort of living speedboat. What was most shocking for Ransom was that all the other creatures followed along beside them. He asked the lady if they always follow:

“Do the beasts not follow in your world?” she replied. “We cannot ride more than two. It would be hard if those we did not choose were not even allowed to follow.”

“Was that why you took so long to choose the two fish, Lady?”

“Of course,” said the Lady. “I try not to choose the same fish too often.”¹⁸

Not only were the animals obedient to Tinidril’s call, they delighted in the interaction; indeed, the delight was mutual.

The first implicit lesson Lewis teaches, then, is that in our world, animals may well differ from us in terms of their intelligence level. But as we approach creatures with which we share some commonalities like consciousness and even environment, we must not respond in abusive domination. And neither need we be anxious to abolish all differences, to establish a “brotherhood,” or perfectly equitable uniformity in all respects. For, such a leveling of differences—often embodied in egalitarian and liberal socio-political philosophies—implies a self-centered view of life, requiring other beings to conform to one’s own social or biological distinctives as a condition for mutual respect. In the purview of Lewis, there is a real distinction of authority between humans and animals. But Lewis argues that this reality ought not to justify the “inferior treatment of animals but rather the reverse.”¹⁹ In the omniscient view of the world, as Lewis delineates, a mutual recognition of and respect for differences is a prerequisite for social harmony.

III. The Great Divide

The second key component of refuting an anthropocentric view of Man and Nature lies in contrasting the relationship between humanity and nature (represented in this paper by animals) in its present state with the same relationship in its original or edenic state. An important detail Lewis consistently portrays in the account of Ransom’s time on Malacandra and Perelandra serves to elucidate this relationship. This detail I will examine following a brief description of humanity’s current relationship with nature, for the omniscient Christian ideal can be most clearly seen by way of contrast.

Literature, mythology, history, experience, theology, and many other areas of study reveal a fundamental rift in the relation between humanity and the natural world. Dr. Boria Sax, in his book *The Serpent and the Swan*, notes that “the [very] concept of nature presupposes some sort of prior unity before man was separated from his environment.”²⁰ The reason for this is that nature has traditionally been viewed as that which is “out there,” or “other,” or the “primal condition”²¹ of Man *before some event*. Different belief systems describe this event in different ways. Quoting Baring and Cashford, Sax submits this idea: “Humanity’s act of becoming aware that it is a creature distinct from animal and plant ruptured the wholeness of the divine order by splitting consciousness into a duality.”²² Sax believes that this process of division “left experience fragmented and incomplete.”²³

The Christian tradition agrees with the symptoms but relocates the source and cause of the rupture. Contrary to Baring and Cashford’s analysis, God created Adam in the Garden of Eden apparently already knowing his distinctness from the animal and plant kingdom. Upon the realization that it was not good for Adam to be alone, God brought all the animals to see what he would name them. By giving them specific names, and by realizing there was no creature that could join him as a suitable mate, Adam consciously identified the animals as being distinctly different from himself: “there was not found a helper fit for him.”²⁴ It was only after God created a female counterpart of his own kind that he conferred the name “Woman, because she was taken out of man.”²⁵ And throughout this search for a partner, Adam existed in a state of perfect communion with God and nature. Thus, the original distinction between Man and animal or nature does not intrinsically engender a sense of alienation or “fragmentation.”

Yet, the Christian narrative clearly describes an event which caused a dramatic change in how Man related both to God and to nature. The third chapter of Genesis documents The Fall of man into sin (by rebelling against God's stated conditions for life) and subsequent cursing by God and expulsion from the Garden of Eden. The curse was comprehensive covering humans, animals, as well as the plant realm. It affected the relationship between animals and humans, plants and humans, and humans and other humans in a way that brought both physical and psychological fragmentation.²⁶ Man's harmony with nature was broken. Several chapters later, after God brought a flood on the world to destroy all life except Noah and the others in the massive ark, the curse was levied even further in a sort of divine irony. Noah was told by God that all the animals were now given for food, and that the animals would now dread humans.²⁷ This, in effect, made Man an agent of the curse which he brought upon himself by thoroughly eliminating any vestiges of harmony between Man and animal which remained after the first curse in Genesis chapter three. The fragmentation was complete.

The effects of this division (regardless of its real cause) have permeated every part of life throughout history. Dr. Sax believes that mythology "emerged in a response to a sense of terror and disorientation created by this rupture."²⁸ Certainly many abuses have resulted from this division being interpreted by some as a "natural" superiority of Man over beast. Industrialization and urbanization have further distanced a large majority of humanity from nature. These two phenomena have also necessitated the mass production of animals in "computer-operated factory farms."²⁹ Highly concentrated populations require mass-produced food. Modern society has effectively turned many animals into utilitarian tools or objects to sustain and even bring greater satisfaction to life. Regardless of all the manifestations it takes, it is clear that the chasm between humanity and nature is very deep and very wide.

IV. Before the Great Divide

The point of drawing this rather gloomy picture is to show by contrast that it has not always been this way. When Ransom penetrated the atmospheres of Malacandra and Perelandra, he encountered many new experiences—experiences which, though commonplace to the native creatures, were new to him. One experience which was completely commonplace to Ransom back on earth, but was completely absent from both Malacandrian and Perelandrian culture was his carnivorous eating habits. Lewis does not intentionally draw attention to this fact. But it is at the same time so pervasive (especially in the second title) and so congruous with the creation account in Genesis that it is a prime example of a specific manifestation of the other side of the contrast, the side of wholeness and harmony. And it is this manifestation which most clearly develops the theme of Christian omniscience. In this section, I will unpack the development of the herbivorous theme by analyzing Ransom's Malacandrian and Perelandrian experiences with food, show its inherent parallels to the Christian account of paradise before it was lost, and conclude with this theme's relevance as a manifestation of an omniscient cosmos.

When Ransom first arrived on Malacandra, the first task was to unload the spacecraft. Work naturally makes men hungry, and eventually Weston, Devine, and Ransom had to take a brief lunch break: "a tin of beef and some biscuits were produced, and the men sat down on the various boxes" which were scattered around the spaceship.³⁰ It is no coincidence that this meal, consisting of bovine meat, was shared with Weston and Devine. It is natural that Ransom's association with Weston and Devine—who symbolize both sophisticated and barbaric dissonance with goodness and with nature—would lead to a shared meal of animal flesh. Once Ransom escapes from his captors and encounters the Malacandrian (and later the Perelandrian) creatures, he never again uses the meat of a sentient animal for a meal.

Ransom's next experience with food was brought about through his interactions with the *hross*. First, the *hross* offered Ransom a small quantity of water spiked with some sort of alcoholic concentrated liquid. Ransom found this drink to be quite delightful. Following the watery appetizer, and a crude sign-language request for some food, the *hross* "produced an oval platter of some tough but slightly flexible material, covered it with strips of spongy, orange-colored substance and gat it to Ransom."³¹ It was not decadent, but it was sufficient, and even a little tasty. Later, Ransom found that the *hross*'s diet consisted almost completely of "vegetable fare [which] they had in great plenty and variety."³² The only exception to this vegetarian diet was an oyster-like creature, the shells of which they used for drinking vessels. Ransom grew quite accustomed to this difference in dining, and used his reformed palate on his next adventure.

When Ransom landed on Perelandra, a newer world untouched by evil, he found himself predominantly surrounded by massive floating islands. Ransom was able to climb onto one of them after a bit of swimming exertion. Once again, after learning how to walk on the ever-changing wavy surface of the island and conducting a brief exploration, he found himself hungry and thirsty. He came to a wooded part of the island where "globes of yellow fruit hung from the trees—clustered as toy-balloons."³³ Lewis richly describes Ransom's experience of eating the fruit—an overwhelming, indescribable pleasure which almost overload the senses. All is well and paradisiacal on the floating islands of Perelandra. The animals were much more like the beasts of our earth than like the rational, communicative creatures on Malacandra. Yet, because the two human-like people who inhabited Perelandra ate fruit and not meat, there was no violent death, and no suffering. Indeed, it is only after Weston (one of Ransom's captors in the first book) arrived on the scene that Lewis gives the first example of suffering. And it is gruesome.

Not long after Ransom arrived in Perelandra, Weston dropped into the Perelandrian ocean. Weston's mission was to dissuade the Perelandrian Lady of her unwavering obedience to Maleldil (God). However, this Weston is much different than the man who had previously captured Ransom. Several seizure-like fits and a long discussion later, Ransom concluded that Weston had so given up his mind up to the dominating evil forces from his home planet that he no longer controlled his own mind: Weston was possessed. The direct link between satanic influence and animal suffering is graphically illustrated by Ransom's first encounter with the hitherto nonexistent Perelandrian suffering.

Ransom awoke one morning after trying to verbally protect the lady from Weston's unrelenting evil influence. The lady and Weston were nowhere in sight. Ransom arose and began to meander around the perimeter of the island. Suddenly, a completely foreign site brought him up short:

It was a damaged animal. It was, or had been, one of the brightly colored frogs. But some accident had happened to it. 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. Something had torn a widening wound backward... along the trunk and pulled it out so far behind the animal that the... hind legs had been almost torn off with it. . . . On earth it would have been merely a nasty sight, but up to this moment Ransom had as yet seen nothing dead or spoiled in Perelandra, and it was like a blow in the face.³⁴

Ransom continued around the island, finding a trail of mutilated frogs which finally led him to the perpetrator. Weston was systematically goring and ripping apart each frog with his long, sharp fingernails. What is important to note for our purposes is Lewis's analysis of this gratuitous evil. Ransom contemplated the situation:

He 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. It would have been better, or so he thought at that moment, for the whole universe never to have existed than for this one thing to have happened.³⁵

This, then, is the stark contrast seen in the previously pure Perelandra. Though the comparison with herbivorousness is not direct in that Weston was not actually eating the frogs, the contrast is clear in this sense: suffering was absent from Perelandra because there was no need for death (even for the practical purpose of food). It was the disruption of this pure perfection which inaugurated the first instance of suffering. The consumption of food was natural. But the consumption of animals for food was unequivocally unnatural because death and suffering were atypical of Perelandrian existence. Indeed, Lewis personally thought predation to be not a natural (in the sense of original) occurrence, but a Satanic corruption or distortion.³⁶

Not surprisingly, the parallels between Lewis's account of Ransom on Perelandra and the Christian creation narrative are strong and deep. The story of paradise lost through the deception of the serpent is widely known. Less well-known is the fact that Genesis presents a picture of creation very much like the Perelandrian social landscape. First, there was a real distinction between humans and animals. After God created the animals, He paused before forming the body of man and said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness."³⁷ This privilege was conferred upon no beast; it was the sole blessing of Man. Thus, we see the distinction of both intelligence and species. In addition, God told Adam to take "dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth,"³⁸ clearly establishing a hierarchy of authority and stewardship. Thus, we see a distinction of leader and follower.

A second important parallel is that of diet. After granting Adam authority and stewardship over the animals, God gives Adam all plants and fruit as food. Directly following, God tells Adam that He has also given all the plants to be food for the animals. It is very important to notice that God never gives the animals to Man for food. To do so would be to permit death, and that was a foreign concept in Eden just as it was in Perelandra. In the pre-fall state of existence, man and animal coexisted in social harmony unaware of the evils of suffering and death. As noted earlier in this essay, it was only many centuries later, after Adam's rebellion had resulted in pervasive and perverse wickedness and the subsequent deluge, that the Edenic curse extended to the suffering and death of animals by human hands.

V. Concluding Synthesis

What do the themes of clear species and intelligence distinctions as well as herbivorousness in Perelandra and the Christian creation story tell us about omniscience in particular, and a view of Christian animal ethics in general? Very much indeed! The main conclusion we can draw is that the intellectual distinctions and distinct diet in both narratives reflect the fact that every being has value in itself, and was created to exist for itself and for God—not merely as an instrument for Man.

We can see this omniscience first in the fact that God not only created humans in His own image, he created animals which were not made in His image. Humans are unique in that sense, but that does not make animals valueless, or dependent upon Man for their value. Though God set Adam in stewardship over the animals, it is impossible that Adam would have seen or experienced every species of every genus. Why do certain fish exist in the depths of the ocean which for millennia have lived unobserved until machines were developed to travel underwater? Adam couldn't have seen these creatures, or even exercised any kind of meaningful stewardship or control over them. Why did God create gazelles and panthers to run on the plains and in the forests of landscapes upon which Adam and Eve never walked? It could not have been to provide enjoyment for Adam and Eve, for it was impossible

that the first couple could enjoy every creature in the entire world. And many animals today are born, live, and die without ever so much as seeing or smelling a human. The only reasonable answer is that God created creatures for themselves. “The waters you have not floated on, the fruit you have not plucked, the caves into which you have not descended and the fire through which your bodies cannot pass, do not await your coming to put on perfection,”³⁹ writes Lewis in the final pages of Ransom’s stay at Perelandra. Nothing was created with only an instrumental function. Inasmuch as the center of the cosmos is any created thing, it is everything: “each grain is at the centre ... the beasts are at the centre. The ancient peoples are there... Where Maleldil is, there is the centre. He is in every place, ... in each place the whole Maleldil, even in the smallness beyond thought.”⁴⁰ This is Lewis’s omniscience. And this is the Christian response to the accusation of domineering abuse. In the beginning, every being existed in its own right; every being had a value independent of its relation to humanity. And that value deserves and obligates respect.

The second lens through which the theme of omniscience grows starkly clear is that of carnivorousness and its relation to suffering and death. For Lewis, pain and death are basic evils.⁴¹ It is obvious, then, why in a pure and perfect world there would be no consumption of meat. But the connection between omniscience and our extensive discourse on diet lies in the *reason* pain is evil. It is true that when a person inflicts pain on another creature, that action not only affects the inflicted, it also affects the inflictor. And it could be surmised that the significance of animal pain received at human hands is what it says about humans, not animals. Some historic thinkers even believed that the greatest problem with animal abuse is that it is an indicator of cruel and even murderous tendencies within a particular person.⁴² Though abuse of any kind certainly reflects distorted tendencies in the abuser, in an omniscient cosmos, the primary evil of inflicting pain as Weston did to the frogs on Perelandra is not its power to reflect the human heart. The primary evil of pain is exactly that: pain—in the afflicted one. As Gail Melson, professor of Child Development and Family Studies at Purdue University, writes: “humane treatment is not justified because it edifies children’s characters, but because it prevents needless animal suffering.”⁴³ Animal suffering is bad primarily because of what it does to the animals, not because of what it does to people. But it is only bad if the opposite is a legitimate good! The entire reason animal suffering can be conceived as evil is because animals have *value*. If they have no value in their own existence, their physical suffering has no moral import. Because the moral connection is catalyzed by the fact that animal suffering resulted from evil (rebellion against God), the Christian has yet another basis for recognizing intrinsic value in animals.

This, again, is Lewis’s omniscience. The shredded frog was a horrid evil, not because it was reflective of Weston’s demonic possession, but because the frog was valuable in itself. The effectual answer to the charges of Christian anthropocentrism, then, is that value is found outside of humans; that animals are not only significant inasmuch as they are related to humans: they are significant in themselves; that humans are not the measure of value in the universe. Humans are different creatures who stand in a unique relationship to God compared with the animals,⁴⁴ but animals do not need interaction with humans to have value imputed to them. The universe exists for them just as much as it exists for us.⁴⁵ The exact nature of an ethical framework upon which our interactions with animals can be based is not completely clear. But its general nature is very clear. And no one can charge the authentic Christian view with the crime of ignoring it altogether. Christianity, rather, has a solid foundation for acknowledging the value of nature, for Christianity acknowledges that it has been created by the same hand that created us.

 Endnotes

¹ Martha Nussbaum, “The Moral Status of Animals,” in *The Animals Reader: The Essential Classic and Contemporary Writings*, ed. Linda Kalof and Amy Fitzgerald (New York: Berg, 2007), 30-36.

² Throughout this paper I use this term in the generic sense to denote all humanity.

³ C. S. Lewis, *Perelandra* (New York: Scribner, 2003), 185.

⁴ Rene Descartes, “From the Letters of 1646 and 1649,” in *The Animals Reader: The Essential Classic and Contemporary Writings*, ed. Linda Kalof and Amy Fitzgerald (New York: Berg, 2007), 59-62.

⁵ Rene Descartes, “Meditations,” in *Central Readings in the History of Modern Philosophy: Descartes to Kant*, ed. Robert Cummins and David Owen (Boston: Wadsworth, 1999), 15, 23.

⁶ Genesis 1:28. Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

⁷ Nussbaum, 32.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Sean Connolly, “Animals and the Kingdom of Heaven,” *The Ark*, No. 194 (Summer, 2003): 1. Available from: <<http://www.all-creatures.org/ca/ark-194-animals.html>> (accessed 16 July 2008).

¹⁰ C. S. Lewis, *Out of the Silent Planet* (New York: Scribner, 2003), 59.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*, 154.

¹³ Lewis, *Perelandra*, 41.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 48.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹⁶ See its incorporation in many Disney movies such as Pocahontas, Snow-white, Cinderella, and even the new “Enchanted.”

¹⁷ Lewis, *Perelandra*, 66.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹⁹ Andrew Linzey, “C. S. Lewis’s Theology of Animals,” *Anglican Theological Review*, (Winter, 1998): 3. Available from: <http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3818/is_199801/ai_n8802633/> (accessed 16 July 2008).

²⁰ Boria Sax, *The Serpent and the Swan: The Animal Bride in Folklore and Literature* (Blacksburg, VA: The McDonald & Woodward Publishing Company, 1998), 19.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid, 20.

²⁴ Genesis 2:20.

²⁵ Genesis 2:23.

²⁶ Genesis 3:14-19.

²⁷ Genesis 9:2.

²⁸ Sax, 19.

²⁹ Gail Melson, *Why the Wild Things Are: Animals in the Lives of Children* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 183.

³⁰ Lewis, *Out of the Silent Planet*, 45.

³¹ Ibid., 59.

³² Ibid., 67.

³³ Lewis, *Perelandra*, 37.

³⁴ Ibid., 93-94.

³⁵ Ibid., 94.

³⁶ Linzey, 2.

³⁷ Genesis 1:26.

³⁸ Genesis 1:28.

³⁹ Lewis, *Perelandra*, 185.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ C. S. Lewis, *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*, ed. Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970), 224.

⁴² Melson, 168.

⁴³ Ibid., 171.

⁴⁴ Connolly, 2.

⁴⁵ Since all creation (including humans and animals) is ultimately for the Creator (Col. 1:16).

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