

ANIMAL SUFFERING DISPROVES GOD

Christian callousness

Animal lovers are always selective. An animal lover is really just a lover of particular animals. So our compassion for animals in general is always suspect.

It comes as no surprise that believers in God's loving care are not that worried about how animals rip each other to bits and are abused by humankind.

Christians and God believers tend to deny that animals suffer in the personal sense and that animals can love. So because animal suffering is in some way really just pain rather than suffering and because animals are not as valuable as persons as they cannot love the suffering then is fine! Its no big deal.

They celebrate the fact that they think they cannot prove animals suffer. That is a most unbecoming attitude. They should think, "We can only believe that animals suffer or don't suffer. Its a pity we can't prove they suffer." As belief can be wrong, they think God might still be possible assuming a good God does not let animals suffer.

Bethany Sollereeder wrote *God, Evolution, and Animal Suffering* (Routledge, 2018) to help make animal suffering sound as if its no threat to faith in God. She says there is no scientific proof that animals suffer but there are evidences and indications that they do. So it is a matter of belief not knowledge. She admits they show signs of suffering as we do but that is not enough for her. Even the fact that treatments for PTSD work on elephants has gone over her head.

Evolution if there is a God behind it then makes out that suffering is good for it takes away the weak and leaves room for the more adaptable. Even in the Bible God boasts about making the most red in tooth and claw creatures such as lions. But we take the position that evolution is about change not good so there is nothing good about suffering. We can hate it or call it a thing but we will not celebrate it.

Animals can suffer

Animals can feel pain. We discriminate against them and we have always assumed since we first appeared on this earth millions of years ago that just because they couldn't talk and had different brains we had a right to slaughter them for fun and food. Religion encouraged us in our evil. We did not consider that an animal might be a person too but a very different one from us or perhaps one that could be like us if it had the bodily resources and communication abilities we have. An animal can have the same consciousness as we have but just be unable to use it like we do. Consciousness is simply awareness that we exist - that is all.

Animals can suffer. Whoever has witnessed an animal being very sick knows this.

Robots?

Few say that animal suffering does not matter what animals feel for they are not conscious beings but just robots made of flesh that act like they are suffering but which are not. The Bible advocates animal sacrifice some of which was cruel. As God is said to be good, it can be assumed that it is being hinted that animals are robots of flesh. There is something very perverse in saying that it does not matter how we treat animals for they are robots when this cannot be proved. Evidence is what shows something to be likely to be true. When animals scream in pain and seek happiness it means that it is most likely that they are conscious beings. They really can feel pain. They really can be happy. They probably are conscious for they act it. Religionists who are in favour of cruelty to animals on the grounds that it is not really cruelty are accusing their God of deception of having made animals act conscious when they are not. If their God deceives or does not deceive they should still take animals to be beings worthy of good treatment just in case.

Adam was offered animals as companions by God in the Book of Genesis. Robots would be no use for that. So the book teaches that animals are conscious that is assuming that the book is not being foolish. In Genesis 9, we read that animals can sin: "And surely for your lifeblood I will require an accounting; from every beast I will require it; and from man [who spills another's lifeblood] I will require a reckoning" (v5).

John Hick wrote of the lower species that we cannot "even prove demonstratively that they have consciousness. There is, however, sufficient evidence for the presence of some degree of consciousness, and some kind of experience of pain, at least through the vertebrate kingdom, to prohibit us from denying that there is any problem of animal suffering" (Evil and

the God of Love, page 346-7). He presented some evidence. He declared that evolution means that human awareness is just different in degree from animal awareness. The nervous structure of the non-human vertebrates is similar to ours meaning that they can suffer. The higher vertebrates can be trained to avoid pain and go for pleasure.

Believers do not want to suffer the pain of compassion too much

God is supposed to be good and the Church says you need to see some good before you can start to discover God for God is goodness. Human persons assume there is a God just because they were lucky enough to have a fairly good and human life. This is arrogance in the extreme for it ignores the fact that there is more suffering and degradation and evil in the world than life and goodness when you take into account the endless evils that happen to animals. It is thinking, "I am relatively okay in life and that shows me there is a loving God and I take comfort from that and I refuse to see that the suffering of animals and other people proves me wrong." There is callousness in such an attitude. It is the same as, "my lover is kind to me and therefore he is a brilliant person who deserves the best out of life even though he is slaughtering babies every day of the week." It is really trying to get enjoyment while ignoring and refusing to emphasise properly with the suffering of other people and animals. It is admitting that if you suffered enough or saw enough evil it would prove to you that there is no God. But just because you are fine or coping then there is a God. That is really looking upon yourself as the most important thing in the universe. It is putting your own comfort first.

Free will excuse for God letting evil happen

God supposedly has to tolerate man doing evil because God wants man to love him and he cannot force this love. They say love from a puppet would not be love at all. You feel love for others when you drink and the drink is causing it. Do we really care that much if love is voluntary or not? If you love others because you are programmed to does it really matter? The love is not love in the sense that it is not chosen voluntarily but in other respects it is love. It is not true that a puppet's love is not love at all. It is love up to a point. Love is not all about the voluntary. If you need free will otherwise you are a puppet then this is degrading to creatures that do not have free will. No decent person thinks a dog is a mere puppet though the dog cannot love voluntarily.

Believers say that God allows suffering because of free will despite babies and animals suffering though they don't, according to the religions, have free will.

Believers callously ignore this to believe in God. We need to realise how odd and contradictory it is to say that free will explains why there is so much evil and why God can let this evil happen and still be perfectly loving when most living beings do not have free will. What if God made a universe populated only by animals? What if he made a world in which no creature has free will? The believers are in effect saying, "When creatures suffer in this world though they have no free will, there is no problem if creatures suffer in a world where nobody has free will". They do not believe in the free will defence at all. They do not have a problem at all with calling God good when he lets evil happen gratuitously. The free will defence is only a cover-up to get people to think that a loving God can make sense in the face of pure diabolical evil. No matter what evil happens, believers are set on saying God has the right to let it happen.

If evil doesn't disprove God then it follows that if I were the only grown-up in the universe and there were billions of babies suffering beyond belief all around me, I may, and perhaps should, believe. If God exists and is good I am bad if I don't believe. The God belief is protected by believers from any refutation from evil. Nothing is bad enough to disprove God. The God belief is pure vile hypocrisy. A decent person has to be open to the fact that at least some people's suffering might be totally inexcusable and that no power therefore has the right to let it happen. That would mean that if it has no right then we have no right saying it agrees with a divine plan.

The amount excuse

An animal suffering terribly next to how much a human suffers counts for virtually nothing in the eyes of the Godly. But with that kind of thinking you insult suffering by making it about the amount. It is not. Believers in God know that human suffering dwarfs animal suffering to an unimaginable degree. The religious concentration on the problem of there being a God while people suffer is cruel and shameful. By the fruit you tell how bad the tree is. Faith in God is selective and a bad fruit that comes from the concept of God. Suffering is bad not because of how severe it is but because of how it removes dignity from the existence of the creature and the life of the creature. Existence and life are not the same thing. The argument is ended - you cannot condone the suffering without hardening yourself and degrading the victim.

No answer

The Church admits that it has no answer to the problem of a good God letting animals suffer (Question 17, Radio Replies, Vol 3). It has been said that we should be grateful that animals are animals for they are better off like that than being flowers (ibid, Question 17). That is a callous answer. Its like saying to a rape victim, "you should be glad that he could rape

you for better to be able to be raped than to be a flower". Would you say that to a rape victim? It is argued too that animals have stronger senses in many ways than us which means they have more pain. But they could have their stronger senses and be less affected by pain. They only need a certain amount of pain for their own good. But they can suffer horrendously. God believers usually deny this and say the general state of animals is a happy one with little pain for they don't know what they are doing. As always, cruelty has to be whitewashed over for the sake of God. They know fine well that only a person who knows what it is like to be an animal should say that.

Jesus said, "Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father keeps feeding them. Are you not worth much more than they?" (Matthew 6:34. The error in this is that birds might not reap but they have to look for food just as we do. Birds not sowing and reaping and still getting food then does not prove what Jesus tried to use it to prove. (He is a God who makes mistakes then!) Also, even if we have to or prefer to regard human persons as more important than animals it does not follow that we should believe we are better. Jesus wants us to believe it. That is bad enough. But it is worse when he wants us to believe it as if he were a speaker for God and knows things others do not. He uses that for us to listen to him and obey him. Just because animals don't have the same bodies as us doesn't mean they are deprived of the knowledge that they exist and sense things just as well as we do. If abortion is killing unborn babies and if we feel we have to allow it or just prefer to allow it we only make things worse by encouraging or asking people to believe the babies are not people. See the point?

Nature set up cruelly

God is so evil that he makes animals prey on one another. So many do it and it is terrible. John Stuart Mill, thinking of nature or God's design, wrote that God made animals impelled by their instincts to kill and torment each other and made them unable to survive any other way. God forces them to be cruel so God is definitely cruel.

FINALLY

It is disingenuous to say that the reason God is right to let suffering happen - which admits that he shouldn't unless he has - is that God wants us to have free will when animals suffer on the whole more than us and they have no free will. To make it even possible that animals are just machines and only act like they suffer is a terrible thing to make a possibility. God belief opens up the door to that possibility therefore God belief is evil. Its too serious a thing to even hint at.