

Part V

The Social and Political Philosophy  
of Paradise



## 9

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# In Defense of Animal Universalism

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In folk theology, it is sometimes claimed that non-human animals will join humans in heaven for eternity. Others claim that animals could not possibly join humans in heaven,<sup>1</sup> for they lack souls and are therefore incapable of surviving their deaths. The status of animal eschatology in academic theology is not significantly different. Some, like John Wesley, have implied that animals will be ushered into heaven at some future time and remain there for eternity.<sup>2</sup> Others, like St. Thomas Aquinas, have argued that animals are not made of the right metaphysical stuff such that they can get to heaven.<sup>3</sup> A few contemporary philosophers have argued that animals will enter heaven as compensation for their suffering on earth, and another has argued that heaven, by nature, is no place for animals.

We think that there is good reason to believe that all animals shall be ushered into heaven and remain there for eternity.<sup>4</sup> We therefore defend *Animal Universalism*:

Animal Universalism: All sentient animals will be brought into heaven and remain there for eternity.

By “all sentient animals” we mean all animals who have ever existed or will exist who have the capacity for subjective experience while lacking the capacity

<sup>1</sup> Here and elsewhere, “animals” refers exclusively to non-human animals. We are aware that the common use of the word “animals” to refer only to non-human animals has arisen in large part due to human prejudice, and that it can be and has been used to demean and diminish non-human animals. Here, we cautiously use the word merely as a convenient shorthand.

<sup>2</sup> Wesley (1872).

<sup>3</sup> He writes, “Man is incorruptible in part, namely, in his rational soul, but not as a whole because the composite is dissolved by death. Animals and plants and all mixed bodies are incorruptible neither in whole nor in part. In the final state of incorruption, therefore, men and the elements and the heavenly bodies will fittingly remain, but not other animals or plants or mixed bodies” (*Compendium*, 170).

<sup>4</sup> Our thesis therefore entails, but is stronger than, animal *survivalism* (the thesis that animals survive death) or animal *immortality* (the thesis that animals never permanently cease to exist).

for propositional agency (or the capacity to act on judgments about reasons).<sup>5</sup> We focus on propositional agency as our exclusion criterion because we believe such agency is necessary for the moral responsibility and autonomy that many Christian philosophers believe excludes some humans from heaven.<sup>6</sup> By “heaven,” we mean the location or state of being described in traditional Christian theism as being constitutive of a good afterlife.

Jerry Walls distinguishes between theocentric and anthropocentric models of heaven, the latter of which “would include poetry, pianos, puppies, poppies, and sex, all at their best” (2002: 7). While we are not committed to a view of heaven where poetry, pianos, poppies, and sex exist, we are committed to a view of heaven in which puppies and indeed all animals exist (though it is not clear that this commits us to an “anthropocentric” model of heaven). We mention this merely to show that our view does not contradict any settled orthodox Christian view on the nature of heaven.<sup>7</sup> For as Walls says, “Given the variety of views along this spectrum, it is not easy to identify *the* orthodox or traditional view of heaven” (7).<sup>8</sup>

We argue that Animal Universalism is the natural outflow of divine love and justice. It is an axiom of contemporary Western Christian theology that God<sup>9</sup> is perfectly loving and just.<sup>10</sup> If this is true, we argue, then Animal Universalism is also true.

<sup>5</sup> See Sebo (2015). We leave it open whether non-sentient animals will enter Heaven. In addition, we leave it open whether it is non-human organisms, minds, souls, or other entities that are brought into Heaven.

<sup>6</sup> As Sebo (2015) argues, “if you punch me in the face on the grounds that you think that I deserve to be punched, then it is at least plausible that you deserve praise or blame for your behavior.... In contrast, if my dog bites my arm because he experiences my arm as to-be-bitten, then it is not plausible that he deserves praise or blame for his behavior.” Jerry Walls (2002) discusses at length the fact that “infants and children lack the cognitive and moral maturity” for free will and moral responsibility (88–9).

<sup>7</sup> This is not to say that our arguments are neutral with respect to which classical orthodox model is true. Our arguments may well imply certain orthodox models of Heaven are false. However, our arguments do not entail any obviously unorthodox model of Heaven.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Dougherty (2014: 158–62). Dougherty contends that theological figureheads from all three branches of historical Christian orthodoxy (Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestant) support a view consistent with the thesis that animals can survive death. Indeed, Dougherty argues that passages from these theological figures renders animal survivalism more probable than not. Plausibly, since orthodoxy does not entail that surviving animals are damned or at some point cease to exist, it is consistent with historical orthodoxy that animals (even all of them) remain in Heaven for eternity. Thus, if animal survivalism is consistent with historical Christian orthodoxy, so plausibly is animal universalism.

<sup>9</sup> Some of our authors object to the use of “God,” as they regard it as problematically masculine. However, we could not achieve consensus on an alternate term, so we refer to the divine as the default “God” throughout this chapter.

<sup>10</sup> On God’s perfect love, see 1 John 4; Lewis (1962: 39); Morris (1991: 177–9, 183); Talbot (2007: 279–81); Walls (2002: 67, 81–6); and Walls (2007: 287). On God’s perfect justice, see: Deuteronomy 32:4; Rowe (1986: 244–5); Stump (1985); and Wolterstorff (2008: 323–41). For both, see Aquinas. *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book 1, chs 91–3; Idziak (2007: 298–9); *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, 9–10; and Wierenga (1989: 203).

We begin by arguing that God acts in accordance with moral principles regarding beings with direct moral status, and then offer reasons to believe that animals have direct moral status. Several, but not all, of our remaining arguments depend on God's acting morally appropriately toward animals. Next, we argue that the divine nature entails Animal Universalism.

Our first arguments are *Arguments from Divine Love*. One argument has as its central premises that (1) God perfectly loves animals and that (2) perfect love always aims to promote the flourishing of the beloved. We defend these claims, and argue that they entail that God aims to maximize the well-being of each individual animal when doing so does not harm other individual creatures or violate creaturely freedom. God can only accomplish this aim by guaranteeing Animal Universalism.

Our second divine love argument follows Thomas Talbott's argument for human universalism (but does not inherit its difficulties): namely, that the redeemed cannot be supremely happy if they know that any of their loved ones are eternally lost. Those who have robust relationships with animals care about the well-being of these animals, and would be adversely affected by the knowledge that particular animals have permanently lost their lives. More significantly, the permanent loss of any individual animal would be a great relational loss to God. We argue that if God can prevent the loss of these relationships without sacrificing anything of comparable or greater moral importance, then God will be compelled by perfect love to do so. Since God *can* do so, God will guarantee Animal Universalism.

Next are *Arguments from Divine Justice*, which proceed as follows. Some philosophers of religion have argued that it would be unjust for God to provide humans with unequal opportunities for salvation. As Walls says, "God would not give some persons many opportunities to repent and receive [God's] grace while giving others only minimal opportunities, or even none at all" (2002: 67).<sup>11</sup> According to such arguments, no individual should be deprived of an opportunity for salvation on arbitrary grounds such as time of birth, geographical location, intellectual abilities, sex, or race. We draw on the relevant work on equality found in the animal ethics literature to argue that a plausible criterion of justice further requires that no individual be deprived of an opportunity for salvation on account of that individual's species membership. If humans are offered opportunities to enter and remain within heaven, it is unjust or objectionably arbitrary for God to fail to extend animals the same offer. Thus, God's perfect justice compels God to offer an opportunity for eternal salvation to all animals, which we argue no animal will reject. We then offer an additional argument from justice which further supports Animal Universalism. Finally, we respond to various objections to Animal Universalism.

<sup>11</sup> See also Walls (2002: 81–6).

### 9.1. DIVINE DUTIES TO ANIMALS

We defend the following claims: (1) that God acts in accordance with moral laws regarding those creatures that have direct moral status and (2) that sentient animals have direct moral status. While these claims will strengthen our arguments, few of our arguments will critically depend on God's acting morally appropriately toward animals. Even if God does not act in accordance with moral laws regarding animals, God's perfect love and justice compels God to save all animals.

An argument for (1) is as follows. Christians and other theists frequently make evaluative moral claims about God and God's actions. These claims often appear in worship contexts. For example, we claim that God is good and that everything that God does is good. But to make these claims is, minimally, to claim that what God does is morally appropriate, or is in accordance with some moral principles. It is to claim that God does things that a morally good agent would do were that agent in the same relevant circumstances. If it's true that God does not act in accordance with moral laws, then that's because either (a) God is acting in violation of those moral laws, and so fails to be good, or (b) there is no moral standard with which God's actions can be judged as morally good or not morally good, and so God fails to be good. So, if God is good, then, minimally, God's acts are the subject of moral predicates, and are therefore open to determinations about whether they are in accordance with moral laws. Given the standard assumption that God is good, it follows that God acts in accordance with moral laws.<sup>12</sup>

So, God acts in accordance with moral laws. That God acts in accordance with moral laws regarding individuals with direct moral status follows just from God's acting in accordance with moral laws and the nature of moral status. When we claim that *S* has direct moral status, what we mean is that *S* or *S*'s interests matter morally *for their own sake*.<sup>13</sup> So, if *S* has moral status, *S* has some property such that *S* can be benefited and/or harmed *simpliciter*. In light of this, there are moral laws regarding *S*—minimally, laws requiring agents to benefit *S* and/or prohibiting agents from harming *S*. Given that God acts in

<sup>12</sup> As Thomas Morris (1991) argues, this is true even if God is not the subject of moral obligations. He writes, "Because of [God's] distinctive nature, God does not share our ontological status. Specifically, [God] does not share our relation to moral principles—that of being bound by some of these principles as duties. Nevertheless, God acts perfectly in accordance with those principles which would express duties for a moral agent in his relevant circumstances. And [God] does so necessarily" (60–1). Similarly, some divine command theorists claim that God is not the subject of moral obligations. To have a coherent account of divine goodness they, too, should adopt Morris's account. See Alston (1990); Duns Scotus in Cross (1999: 93–4); and William of Ockham in Adams (1986).

<sup>13</sup> Similarly, Jaworska and Tannenbaum (2013) say: "An entity has moral status if and only if it or its interests morally matter to some degree for the entity's own sake, such that it can be wronged."

accordance with moral laws, it then follows that God acts in accordance with moral laws regarding individuals with direct moral status. That's just what (1) claims, so (1) is true.

In defense of claim (2), the claim that sentient animals have direct moral status, we argue that there is no morally relevant property that all sentient humans possess that is not possessed by all sentient animals. If all sentient humans have direct moral status, it follows that all sentient animals have direct moral status. In the philosophical tradition, it has long been thought that only humans have moral status on account of their having the cognitive capacity for rationality, language, or self-awareness (or a combination thereof). But this criterion of moral status is over- and under-inclusive, for some animals possess rationality, language, or self-awareness (like other primates and dolphins), and some humans do not possess these capacities (like infants and some people with profound intellectual disabilities). If we want all and only sentient humans to have moral status (and so no non-human animals) it seems that we cannot capture this by appealing to specific human capacities.

In fact, no matter what property we choose (love, relationality, opposable thumbs, etc.), there are some animals who have that property and there are some sentient humans who lack that property. The only property that all and only humans seem to have in common is their membership in the biological category *homo sapiens*, and there is no good reason to think that a mere biological category could be of moral relevance to moral status.<sup>14</sup> If we want to say, as many do, that all sentient humans have moral status, we should appeal to a property that all sentient humans share, and one which is plausibly of moral significance. We believe that the most plausible such candidate is *sentience*. This is because your sentience appears to be necessary and sufficient for things to matter to you. If you are not sentient, you are not a subject, and it is also plausible to suppose that you do not have interests. If you are sentient, then you can at least experience affective states like happiness and suffering. For these reasons, we believe that sentience is necessary and sufficient for moral status.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Accepting the view that a mere biological category is morally relevant to moral status comes with some significant problems. For a good overview of these problems, see Jaworska and Tannenbaum (2013).

<sup>15</sup> Some philosophers have argued that all or most animals do not have moral status on account of their not being persons, or not being potential persons, or not having the natural capacity for personhood. Arguing against all of these (and other) views would be an extremely ambitious project for an entire chapter, let alone one small part of this chapter. So, due to space limitations, we cannot discuss them here. Readers interested in these views should consult the (vast) literature on the Problem of Non-Paradigm Humans. For further reading, see Singer (1975); McMahan (2002, 2005); DeGrazia (1992, 2002, 2014). See also Kagan (2016). For a Kantian case for the moral status of animals, see Korsgaard (2011). For a contractarian case see Rowlands (2009).

In reply, some may claim that moral status supervenes on a decidedly theological property, namely “made in the image of God.” According to this view, humans have moral status because they are made in the image of God and animals do not have moral status because they are not made in the image of God.

This view is problematic. In order to succeed it must make one of two assumptions: either there is some morally relevant property or properties that “made in the image of God” supervenes upon which make it the case that all and only humans have moral status apart from God’s mere say-so, or there is no such morally relevant property or properties and all and only humans have moral status merely on account of God’s saying so. The former assumption seems false, in light of our argument that there is no morally relevant property that is possessed by all and only humans. On the other hand, the latter assumption seems to make having moral status an objectionably arbitrary matter. We assume that this view is false.<sup>16</sup>

But suppose this argument fails. Even so, it is extremely plausible to think that sentient animals have direct moral status. Sentient animals are subjects that can experience happiness and suffering in much the same way that sentient humans do. Since we think that happiness and suffering have value and disvalue for humans, there is strong reason to think they have value and disvalue for animals. Moreover, the unjustified imposition of pain and suffering upon animals seems clearly morally wrong. For example, it seems clearly morally wrong to kick a dog or mutilate a raccoon for no good reason. Plausibly, this is so because the action harms or wrongs the animal in question without adequate justification. But if this is true, then sentient animals must have direct moral status.

If we accept that both (1) God acts in accordance with moral laws regarding those creatures that have direct moral status, and (2) animals have direct moral status, it follows that God acts in accordance with moral laws regarding animals—laws requiring benefits to them and/or prohibiting harms against them. While few of our other arguments rely upon this conclusion, it will further support our thesis.

## 9.2. ARGUMENTS FROM DIVINE LOVE

Christians often claim that God is *perfectly loving*. Indeed, many Christians claim that love is God’s most *fundamental attribute*. This latter, stronger claim

<sup>16</sup> The charge of arbitrariness here mirrors the charge commonly pressed against divine command theories. See, e.g., Idziak (2007: 298); Zagzebski (2005: 356–7); Baggett and Walls (2011: 207–16); Louise (2009); and Sinnott-Armstrong (2009).



is a plausible way of understanding the Christian scriptures and tradition, but the prior, weaker claim is *clearly* supported by the Christian tradition. In our arguments from divine love, we assume that the majority of Christians in the faith tradition have been correct in claiming that God's love is perfect.

One of the primary motivations for the claim that God is perfectly loving in the Christian faith tradition is Anselmian perfect being theology.<sup>17</sup> Anselmians claim that God is by definition that being than which nothing greater can be conceived. As Thomas Morris (1989: 70) claims, "God is thought of as necessarily exemplifying a maximally compossible collection of great-making properties, properties that, roughly, it is intrinsically better to have than to lack." If any property *p* would make a divine being greater when that divine being possesses *p*, that divine being must necessarily possess *p*. If, for example, *being maximally powerful* is a great-making property, then divine beings are necessarily maximally powerful, for that maximal power makes that divine being greater than they would be if they were not maximally powerful. Following this theological tradition, many claim that *being maximally* or *perfectly loving* is a great-making property. Thus, any divine being is by definition *maximally* or *perfectly loving*, for if that being were not maximally or perfectly loving they would not have maximal great-making properties, and therefore would not be deserving of the honorific title "God." This is one argument for God's perfect love, and having the Anselmian foundation for perfect divine love in the background will be useful for our analysis of the nature of perfect love.<sup>18</sup>

Here is another argument for God's perfect love. It seems very clear that Christians want to insist that God is worthy of our worship and our total, unreserved, wholehearted commitment. As Peterson et al. put it:

In developing our conception of God, it would be foolish to overlook the fact that, above all, God is a being who is the object of worship. God's "worshipability" ... is of primary religious importance, so that a conception of God that is lacking at this point is unacceptable regardless of other merits it may possess. Whatever else may be true of God, it must at least be said that God is worthy of worship. (2003: 60)<sup>19</sup>

There is good reason to think that Christians who want to maintain this view would also want to say that God is perfectly loving. After all, a being that is loving, but not *perfectly* loving, may be worthy of commendation, admiration,

<sup>17</sup> Anselm, while not *explicitly* endorsing perfect love, claims that "all the ways of the Lord are mercy" and that God's mercy is "abundant" and flows from God's "supreme goodness." He also claims that God is perfectly just, "for it is better to be just than unjust." See *Proslogion*, chs 5, 9, and 11.

<sup>18</sup> It is worth pointing out that Christian Anselmians and non-Anselmians alike point to the Christian scriptures to support the claim that God is perfectly loving. Some examples include 1 John 4:7–8, 16–21; Ps 136:26; and Deut. 7:9.

<sup>19</sup> Peterson et al., *Reason and Religious Belief*, 60.

and respect, but it is not worthy of unconstrained, unbridled worship and radical, thoroughgoing commitment. Given that God is worthy of worship, it is quite reasonable to affirm that God is perfectly loving.<sup>20</sup>

In order to see what God's perfect love implies about how God is or behaves, we must first understand the nature of perfect love. Philosophers throughout the Christian tradition have characterized love in general and divine love in particular in various ways, but their different characterizations share commonalities. Consider the following characterizations of love put forward by Christian theologians.

The proof of love is in the works. Where love exists, it works great things. But when it ceases to act, it ceases to exist. (attributed to St. Gregory the Great)

I give you a new commandment: love one another: not as people who pretend to love in order to corrupt one another, nor indeed as people love one another genuinely but in a human way...They share with each other the love with which he leads them to the end that will bring them fulfilment and the true satisfaction of their real desires. For when God is all in all, there is no desire that is unfulfilled. (Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, Tract 65:1)

An act of love always tends towards two things; to the good that one wills, and to the person for whom one wills it: since to love a person is to wish that person good. (Saint Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* 1 Q20 A1)

To tell someone to love his neighbor is, among other things, to tell him to care about his neighbor's welfare, and to give that neighbor's welfare a fairly significant place in his system of priorities. The commandment implies, then, behavior which results, or can reasonably be expected to result, in improvements in the welfare of others. (Howard-Snyder 1999: 391)

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God could be said to...love individual human persons in particular only if God were *good to* each and every human person God created.... At a minimum, God's *goodness* to human individuals would require that God guarantee each a life that was a great good to him/her on the whole. (Adams 1999: 31)

To love is to act intentionally, in sympathetic/empathetic response to others (including God), to promote overall well-being. (Oord 2010: 15)

Necessarily, God loves a person  $S_x$  (with a perfect form of love) at a time  $t_x$  only if God's intention at  $t_x$  and every moment subsequent to  $t_x$  is to do everything within his power to promote the best interest of  $S_x$ . (Talbot 2013: 25)

All of these characterizations share in common the idea that love is focused on making the beloved better-off. While we may mean many different things

<sup>20</sup> It's worth noting that, plausibly, Anselmian perfect-being theology is derivable from this initial postulate that God is worthy of our worship. On this point, see Peterson et al. (2003: 60–1).

when we claim to love something or someone, a concept of love that is central to Christian theology implies that to love someone is, minimally, to pursue their good or well-being. Therefore, for God to love an individual, God must pursue that individual's good or well-being.<sup>21</sup>

*Perfect* love, by contrast, is love that cannot be improved upon. If God is perfectly loving, then God's disposition must be fully and maximally loving, and there must be nothing in God that is not loving. Thus, many have interpreted God's perfect love to be "maximally extended and equally intense" (Talbot 2013: 302).<sup>22</sup> On the traditional, anthropocentric understanding of this claim, this means that merely every individual human being is loved by God to an equal and maximal degree. However, if God's love is truly perfect, we should expect God's love to seek the maximal well-being of all of God's creatures.

In defense of this claim, consider again the two bases offered in this section for God's perfect love, namely, an Anselmian conception of God and God's being worthy of worship. Both claim that God's love is *maximal* and cannot be in any way improved upon. This also falls out of the very nature of *perfection*, which is to be free of any flaws or unsurpassable. Now consider two all-powerful beings, Jack and Jill. Jill loves all sentient individuals. She cares deeply for their sakes, and is perfectly benevolent toward sentient individuals both human and non-human, doing whatever she can to make them better-off. On the other hand, Jack loves only humans. He cares deeply for their sakes, and is perfectly benevolent toward humans, doing whatever he can to make them better-off. However, Jack does not care at all about what happens to animals. He is utterly indifferent to them. Jack never responds to their calls for help, and does not care if they are made worse-off, even though he could easily benefit them without sacrificing anything at all. When we reflect on Jill and Jack, we find that one is more loving than the other. Jill's love appears to be an improvement upon Jack's love; Jill has a *better* love than Jack. What this tells us is that perfect love is *universal*. Perfect love is *omni-sympathetic*, sympathizing with and aiding any individual who has a "sake" that matters to them—any individual who can be subjectively better or worse-off. Far from being perfectly loving, Jack's indifference toward animal welfare appears strongly perverse. This is evidence that animal suffering is an appropriate object of care and consideration—in a word, love. Since God's character—far from being perverse—is perfectly loving, God loves animals, desiring to promote their well-being.

So far, this is compatible with an understanding of divine love whereby God loves animals, but only modestly. But consider another pair of all-powerful beings, Jeremy and Jemima. Jeremy cares about others. Jeremy wants to benefit

<sup>21</sup> What we say here does not commit us to what Bennett Helm (2013) calls "the robust concern view of love." We take no stand here on whether that view is true.

<sup>22</sup> See also Jeff Jordan's (2012) originating article in which he argues against this view.

others and prevent their suffering. However, Jeremy's love is of a *satisficing* sort. That is, Jeremy only cares about getting others to a certain welfare threshold. As long as others are not suffering, Jeremy is indifferent toward their wants and desires. Jeremy does not make others flourish, even though he could easily do so without sacrificing anything at all. Jeremy merely wants to ensure that others are not badly off. Jemima also cares about others, wanting to benefit them and prevent their suffering. However, unlike Jeremy, Jemima's love is of a *maximizing* sort. She is concerned about more than whether others suffer. She desires and sees to it that others flourish. When others are well-off, Jemima desires that they be better-off still, and further promotes their flourishing. When we reflect on Jeremy and Jemima, we find that one is more loving than the other. Jemima's love is an improvement upon Jeremy's love; she has a *better* love than he. What this tells us is that perfect love is *maximizing*. Perfect love is never satisfied with what is good, but is always aimed at what is best. If God's love is perfect, then God wants the best for each creature whom God loves. God's perfect love is universal and maximizing; therefore God desires and aims to promote the maximal well-being of each individual creature.

From this discussion of perfect love, we can see that God's perfect love entails Animal Universalism. We have argued that God's love is universal and is maximizing, and therefore that God desires that every individual creature be maximally well-off. For an individual to be maximally well-off, that individual must have as long and as high-quality a life as possible. Of course, the longest and highest-quality of life an individual can live is a life that includes a never-ending tenure in heaven.<sup>23</sup> So, God desires that every individual creature live a life that includes a never-ending tenure in heaven. Compared to an everlasting, maximally good life, a life that ends in permanent death is not very good at all. Death marks the end of all of our projects, our relationships, and our happiness, and being alive is a prerequisite for having *any* well-being. God's perfect love implies that God does not desire that any creature suffer permanent death, and will keep all animals in God's company forever.

One might object, arguing that this seems to imply a *stronger* form of universalism than we are seeking to defend here: namely, that all animals *including humans* will inherit heaven.<sup>24</sup> But Animal Universalism does not all by itself entail soteriological universalism for humanity. We have argued that God aims to maximize the well-being of each individual creature. Many Christians accept the claim that God *desires* that all humans be saved (which seems supported by 1 Tim. 2:1-4, 2 Pet. 3:9, and Ezk. 18:23), but nonetheless claim that it is not a defect

<sup>23</sup> We are aware of the worries some philosophers have raised about the alleged "tedium of immortality." We do not think that immortality will be tedious for any individual, much less for animals, many of whom likely lack the advanced, future- and past-oriented cognitive capacities required for overall life boredom. Of course, we cannot fully address these worries in this chapter.

<sup>24</sup> For a brief discussion of whether this also motivates "plant universalism," see footnote 40.

in God's love for God to allow some humans to be excluded from heaven in light of their free choice not to enter heaven or because of their sinfulness. If human free will or human sinfulness can do the work that some claim it can do, showing that it is not a strike against God's love for God to dismiss some humans from heaven, then our arguments do not entail human universalism.<sup>25</sup>

On the other hand, animals are *innocent*. No animals (that we know of) have a capacity for propositional moral agency. They cannot rationally reflect on what actions they will perform and therefore cannot be held morally responsible for causing harms. Some political theorists, like Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka (2011: 116–17), have argued that animals do have *some* capacity for moral agency—they can cooperate according to the terms of certain games in their own societies and in trans-species civil societies like ours. Whether that is true or not, it is unlikely that this kind of moral agency is sufficiently robust to ground blameworthiness. Animals are capable of following certain perceptual norms, but are not capable of reflecting on and making judgments about these norms, deciding what kinds of persons they want to be and intentionally cultivating certain virtues. They are therefore no more blameworthy from the moral point of view for their non-cooperation than uncooperative infants who will not eat their food.<sup>26</sup>

One might argue that their limited capacity for moral agency may nonetheless exclude certain animals from heaven. If animals are incapable of cooperating with the rules of heavenly society, they cannot take part in heavenly life. But there are good replies available to this objection. Surely, just as God can and will help many unruly and otherwise uncooperative humans to become suitable citizens of heaven, God can and will help animals to live a peaceful and otherwise cooperative life in heavenly society. Moreover, few contemporary theologians think that profoundly intellectually disabled humans or human infants will be dismissed from heaven because they were uncooperative in this life, so there is no reason to think that animals with similar intellectual abilities will be.<sup>27</sup>

The case of profoundly intellectually disabled humans and young human children also informs what we should say about the capacity for animals to

<sup>25</sup> Due to space constraints, we will not attempt to argue for the antecedent here. But it is worth noting that this objection would almost surely come from those who are inclined against soteriological universalism for humanity, and it seems clear that they would argue forcefully for the antecedent. Of course, this does not show that the antecedent is true; rather, this is merely a comment on the nature of the dialectical exchange.

<sup>26</sup> Should it turn out that some animals do have robust, propositional moral agency, these animals may be subject to further requirements in order to enter and remain in Heaven (plausibly, these would be whatever requirements typical human moral agents must meet). In such a case, our arguments here (insofar as they depend on the assumption that animals are not robust moral agents) would establish something slightly weaker than Animal Universalism (e.g., non-primate animal universalism).

<sup>27</sup> For a reply to an objection along this line from Swinburne, see *The Nature of Heaven Objection* in Section 9.4 of this chapter.

freely reject life in heaven. Many people believe that those who die with limited rational capacities are automatic candidates for a life in heaven.<sup>28</sup> If this is correct, then we should also think the same thing about animals, who all have similarly limited rational capacities.

However, moving from limited rational capacities to guaranteed entry into heaven might be too quick. Disability scholars frequently argue that we must respect the agency of people with disabilities by using a model of shared agency through which surrogates take the preferences, desires, and goals of people with disabilities and empower these people to make fully-informed decisions that align with their subjective interests.<sup>29</sup> Thus, where the preferences and values of those with limited intellectual abilities can be elicited, we have good reason to respect those preferences and values.

We are sympathetic with the claims of disability scholars that there is little if any reason to be uniquely paternalistic toward humans with disabilities and animals, but this does not cause problems for our thesis. For no animals—with the possible exceptions of some non-human primates and cetaceans—have the capacities for becoming sufficiently competent with the concepts of life and death, existence and nonexistence, or heaven to be able to make informed choices about their eternal fates. Moreover, most animals lack even the most basic capacities of practical reason necessary to make autonomous decisions. It is therefore not possible for God to give animals autonomy to make their own decisions about whether to enter heaven. More appropriately, God should take into account whether and to what degree animals will value their rich future heavenly lives if they are brought into heaven, and should take their preferences into consideration when constructing the heavenly city. When it comes to matters of existence and nonexistence, however, animals are simply incapable of making an autonomous decision that God is required to respect.<sup>30</sup>

From all of this, it follows that God will be compelled by perfect love to usher all animals into heaven. In addition to this, consider a second argument from divine love for Animal Universalism.

In several places, Thomas Talbott wonders how the Blessed can experience joy in heaven if friends and loved ones are in hell. He claims that they can't. As he writes:

I could never be happy, for example, knowing that my daughter is suffering or in a miserable condition—unless, of course, I could somehow believe that all will be well for her in the end. But if I cannot believe this, if I were to believe instead

<sup>28</sup> According to Walls (2002), “it is striking that there is a broad consensus today that all who die in infancy are saved.”

<sup>29</sup> See, for example, Donaldson and Kymlicka (2011: 103–8).

<sup>30</sup> Against this, some have raised the possibility that God will enable animals to understand the facts relevant to their decision and become capable of practical reasoning. We argue that this view fails in our discussion of *The Agency Objection* in Section 9.4.

that she had been lost to me forever...my own happiness could never be complete. (n.d.)<sup>31</sup>

Given that the Christian tradition has historically claimed that in heaven each citizen's joy is complete—there is no suffering and no tears—Talbott argues that for God to make good on God's promises God would have to save *all* humans.<sup>32</sup> All of us have such deeply intertwined interests; God could not even save *one* human, Talbott claims, without saving *all* humans.

Talbott's claims are understandably quite contentious and, while powerful, there may be reason to be skeptical of them. For one, it is by no means clear that all humans have such powerfully intertwined interests that God could not save even one human without saving them all. For example, it seems clear that there may be some severely neglected orphans or people with attachment disorders that could be perfectly happy without God bringing anyone else to heaven along with them. Moreover, it seems perfectly clear that God could bring certain remote tribes into heaven—people groups that never made meaningful contact with outsiders—without bringing everyone else in the world into heaven. It may be reasonable to suppose that such people would not experience compromised joy in heaven if some people outside of their tribe were damned or annihilated altogether.

Of course, this kind of a response is unlikely to satisfy the conservative Christian theist, who will surely want to see a defense of a more traditional exclusivist view of heaven. But perhaps there are responses available to conservative theists that undermine Talbott's argument. William Lane Craig (1991), for one, argues that it may not be immoral for God to deceive the Blessed, shielding them from the knowledge that those they love are damned. Furthermore, if the lost freely choose not to enter heaven and if God respects human freedom, it may just be that it is all-things-considered best if God does what is otherwise unfortunate and keeps the ultimate fate of the lost from the Blessed.

These are just examples of approaches that conservative Christian theists might take to resolve the problems Talbott has proposed. We take no stand here on whether those approaches ultimately succeed. It seems fairly clear that God's love for the Blessed and desire that they flourish maximally gives God a reason to rescue the lost and usher them into heaven, but it is arguable that God has overriding reasons not to rescue them (e.g., human freedom or sinfulness), and thus that it is, all things considered, most reasonable for

<sup>31</sup> See also Talbott (1990). Perhaps it's worth noting that Stephen T. Davis regards this universalist argument to be one of the five best arguments for universalism he can think of. He writes: "*How can the Blessed be joyous if friends and loved ones are in hell?* I do not know an adequate answer to this question" (2011: 105).

<sup>32</sup> For a defense of the view that negative emotions are compatible with eternal existence in Heaven, see Pelsler (2017).

God to allow some humans to be damned or annihilated. The parallel case for Animal Universalism from relational love, however, is much less easily avoided.

Just as in Talbott's case for human universalism from relational love, those who have relationships with particular animals care about the wellbeing of these animals, and would be adversely affected by the knowledge that they have permanently lost their lives. Thus, those humans in heaven who had meaningful relationships with animals during their mortal lives could not flourish maximally while knowing that their animal companions had been lost forever. Each of these animals, in turn, would flourish maximally only if they were able to live in heaven with their non-human families, and with those other animals that they had relationships with prior to their deaths. Humans in heaven would be better-off if all of their animal companions lived alongside them, flourishing maximally, and would therefore be better-off if all of their animal companions' non-human friends and families were ushered into heaven—along with *their* respective friends and families, and so on—for eternity as well. Finally, as we argued earlier, each individual animal matters to God. God loves each individual animal, and the loss of these animals would be a great relational loss to God, who looks after each animal and desires their well-being and their companionship.

This profound web of interconnectivity—of God and humans to their animal friends and these animal friends to their own friends, and so forth—gives God strong reason to welcome all animals into heaven. Doing so would satisfy God's desires and would further promote the wellbeing of each human in heaven.<sup>33</sup> Unlike in the human case, however, God could have no overriding reasons not to include each animal in heaven. As we have argued, animals cannot refuse heaven on the basis of their free choice, and they cannot be refused entry on account of their sinfulness. Where animals are concerned, God's choice is simple. God can easily prevent the loss of meaningful relationships without sacrificing anything of moral importance, and God will therefore be compelled by perfect love to do so. It follows that God will ensure the universal salvation of all animals.

### 9.3. ARGUMENTS FROM DIVINE JUSTICE

Many Christians and classical theists claim that God is perfectly just. They may accept this claim on Anselmian grounds or on the basis of biblical passages such as Deuteronomy 32:4, which states that “all of [God's] ways

<sup>33</sup> C. S. Lewis seems to endorse a similar argument in Lewis (1962: 140).



are just.”<sup>34</sup> This seems to imply, minimally, that God never acts in ways that are unjust. The claim that God is perfectly just is also plausibly entailed if, as we have argued, God has moral obligations and never fails to act upon these obligations. For among these obligations are, plausibly, duties of justice, or fairness. We argue that it would be unjust for God to provide human beings with the opportunity to enter heaven while withholding the same opportunity from animals. Because God never acts unjustly, it follows that God will offer animals the opportunity to enter heaven.<sup>35</sup> This furnishes strong support for Animal Universalism.

Our basic argument from justice concerns *moral arbitrariness* with respect to an opportunity to enter heaven. Suppose that two human beings, Antonio and Amanda, differ only with respect to their eternal fates and their sexes: Amanda is female and her eternal fate is bad; Antonio is male and his eternal fate is good. Suppose also that this is the direct result of God’s decision to extend a certain opportunity to Antonio but not to Amanda, and God did this in order to preserve males but not females. This would be an injustice since there is no morally important difference between Antonio and Amanda.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, it would be unjust (for example) for a specified ethnicity, birthplace, or intellectual ability to be required for entrance into heaven, because such properties are altogether morally irrelevant. Where properties are morally irrelevant, it is unjust to use those properties as criteria for whether or which individuals come to suffer significant harm. If God condemns all South Americans to eternal suffering or nonexistence on account of their birthplace, then God treats South Americans unjustly.

Similarly, it would be unjust to deprive someone of an equal opportunity to enter and remain within heaven on account of their *species*.<sup>37</sup> To see why, consider an alien race identical with human beings except with respect to where they originated: Mars, not Earth. These Martians share human subjective awareness, sentience, and other psycho-physical features.<sup>38</sup> They, too,

<sup>34</sup> See also: Psalm 9:7–8 and 36:6, Isaiah 30:18 and 61:8, Job 34:12, and 2 Chronicles 19:7.

<sup>35</sup> Jerry Walls endorses the view that God would give animals an equal opportunity to enter Heaven. See Walls (2002: 85).

<sup>36</sup> One might object that God is under no obligation to extend to anyone the opportunity to enter and remain within Heaven, and so there is no injustice done in this case if God withholds opportunity for salvation from Amanda on the basis of sex alone. In brief, one might reply by arguing that even if God is not obligated to offer anyone an opportunity for salvation, perfect love compels God to offer such opportunities anyway (as an act of supererogation) while perfect justice compels God to offer non-arbitrarily distributed opportunities.

<sup>37</sup> The argument succeeds even if God does not provide animals with an *equal* opportunity. It remains a requirement of justice that God not deprive animals of an opportunity *altogether*, which entails that God will give them some genuine opportunity. Moreover, as we argue in this section and Section 9.4, animals will not reject this opportunity.

<sup>38</sup> It might be objected that direct moral status is fixed by personhood and that only certain species (e.g., humans) or cognitive classes (e.g., agents) have personhood. As argued previously, however, sentience is sufficient for direct moral status. Thus, in the context of general moral

would be harmed by death (including everlasting death) and everlasting existence in a bad state.<sup>39</sup> Plausibly, in such a case, it would be wrong to exclude Martians from the possibility of heaven merely on account of their species. But then it would be similarly wrong to do the same to animals.<sup>40</sup>

Consider a similar argument made by Jeff McMahan (2002), which begins with a discussion of a hypothetical experiment:

If it is possible to insert a single human gene into an animal zygote, it should be possible to insert two or more. We can imagine a spectrum of possibilities. At one end of the spectrum, there is a transgenic animal—say, a chimpanzee—with a single human gene.... Next in the spectrum there is a transgenic chimpanzee with two human genes. And so on, with each animal farther along in the spectrum having one more human gene than the animal before it. Since the overlap between the human and the chimpanzee genomes is high, it may be well beyond the middle range of the imagined spectrum before one reaches individuals that are phenotypically chimerical: individuals that are half-human, half-chimpanzee, with bizarre blends of human and chimpanzee characteristics. At the far end of the spectrum is an individual grown from a chimpanzee zygote from which all of the chimpanzee genes but one have been removed and replaced by human genes. This would, presumably, be a human being with a single chimpanzee gene. (213)

McMahan then inquires,

Is there a point along this spectrum at which the individuals cease to be chimpanzees and become human beings? Is there, in other words, a point at which there is an individual with just enough human genetic material to count as a member of our species? And, if so, is it only at that point that there begin to be individuals with special moral status—for example, individuals whose lives are sacred and inviolable? (213)

He concludes that the answer is “no”:

I suspect that the chimeras near the middle of the spectrum would be neither human beings nor chimpanzees. On either side of these would be individuals whose species membership would be genuinely indeterminate. But these issues, though interesting, need not detain us here. The important point is that it would be absurd to suppose that the moral status of any individual in the spectrum

consideration, discriminating between sentient groups on account of species is objectionably arbitrary. See Section 9.1, “Divine Duties to Animals.”

<sup>39</sup> This should not be interpreted as a tautology. By “bad state,” we simply mean a state the features of which would suffice to make existence in that state bad for their otherwise identical human counterparts.

<sup>40</sup> What of non-sentient entities like plants? Plausibly, all non-sentient entities lack direct moral status and are therefore not proper recipients of direct concerns of justice, such as intrinsic moral consideration. It is also noteworthy that plants do not have a “sake” that matters to them, and therefore are not proper objects of divine love. While the flourishing of animals matters to those animals themselves, and thus matters to an omni-sympathetic God, the flourishing of plants matters to no one except for, possibly, third-party observers that like plants.

would be determined by how many, or what proportion, of its genes were human or were taken from a human being. (213)

Here, it appears that mere membership in a species is insufficient to ground any special moral status. Let us stipulate that an animal with  $n$  number of human genetic characteristics is human, and that an animal with  $n$ -minus-1 number of human genetic characteristics is non-human.

Consider now two of the animals in the genetic line-up: Cigar, who has  $n$  number of human genetic characteristics, and Nocigar, who has  $n$ -minus-1 number of human genetic characteristics. Per stipulation, Cigar is human and Nocigar is non-human. Let us also suppose—following those who hold that mere species membership is both necessary and sufficient for special moral status—that Cigar has the necessary kind of moral status which obligates God to provide an opportunity for Cigar to enter and remain within heaven, and that Nocigar lacks that moral status and, with it, any hope of obligating God to provide Nocigar with the same opportunity. What should be clear is that the difference between Cigar and Nocigar is far too small to justify such vastly different treatments. As Ted Sider remarks, “[T]here will be someone who just barely made it, and someone else who just barely missed out. This is impossible, given the proportionality of justice” (2002: 60). He continues:

What I am calling the proportionality of justice prohibits *very* unequal treatment of persons who are *very* similar in relevant respects. Whatever one thinks generally about the nature of justice, its proportionality should be acknowledged. (59)

Cigar and Nocigar differ with respect to only one genetic characteristic. A basic requirement of justice is that individuals who are radically and relevantly similar not be treated as if they were radically and relevantly different, and thus Cigar and Nocigar should not receive *intensely* different treatments with respect to their eternal destinies.<sup>41</sup> Such a conclusion justifies the more general principle that membership in a species cannot alone justify a special kind of moral status (or moral status simpliciter) because, if it did, it would justify vastly different treatments for individuals like Cigar and Nocigar, which is unjust.<sup>42</sup> We look now to further support for the claim that mere species does not grant special moral status.

<sup>41</sup> This is true even if it is compatible with the demands of justice to treat them *somewhat* differently.

<sup>42</sup> Sider’s argument arguably supports a broader universalism than we defend here. Nevertheless, our arguments do not entail broader universalism. For criticism of Sider’s arguments as they apply to broader universalism, see, for example, Dougherty and Poston (2008). See also Corabi (2011), which develops an account on which mortal sins are a non-arbitrary basis for cutoffs in a binary afterlife. Corabi’s account is significant since it would, were it correct, provide grounds to deny a broader universalism while affirming Animal Universalism, since it might be that some human beings but no animals commit mortal sins.

Mark Rowlands (1997) has offered a contractarian account of how animals come to have direct moral status in virtue of which there are duties of justice concerning animals.<sup>43</sup> He begins by explaining Rawls's claim about properties which are bracketed behind the veil of ignorance:

[I]f a property is *undeserved* in the sense that its possessor has done nothing to merit its possession, then its possessor is not morally entitled to whatever benefits accrue from that possession. Possession of the property is a morally arbitrary matter, and, therefore, cannot be used to determine the moral entitlements of its possessor. (238–9)

Examples of such properties include ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, and one's economic status at birth. It applies also, Rowlands claims, to properties like rationality: a property which animals often lack and, because they lack it (or because they lack it to a sufficient degree), they also lack direct moral status:

However, rationality seems to be an undeserved property if any property is. A person plays no role in deciding whether or not she is going to be rational; she either is or she is not. The decision is not hers, but nature's. Therefore, according to the terms of the intuitive equality argument, it is a morally arbitrary property, and one is not morally entitled to its possession. Therefore, also, one is not morally entitled to whatever benefits accrue from its possession. (242)

That humans are rational (or that humans are rational *in a certain way* or *to a certain degree*) is an undeserved property. If God denies animals a chance to enter and remain within heaven on the grounds that they lack rationality (or lack it as humans have it), then God discriminates on unjust grounds. Such a decision is comparable to a case where God permits a human person of average intelligence to enter heaven but does not so permit a human person of below-average intelligence on grounds of the intelligence differential. We would condemn such a decision, but then we should condemn the criterion which, if used consistently, would permit the injustice.

We can extend this argument to other properties. One's species is, like one's intelligence, a matter not under one's control.<sup>44</sup> Having intelligence is, to use Rowland's phrase, not a decision of ours, but of nature's. We do nothing to merit our intelligence or the species which bestows it, but then any benefits which accrue from our intelligence or our species, like any benefits which accrue from our ethnicity or sex, are undeserved and arbitrary. Therefore, to deny animals entrance to heaven on account of their species would be to deny

<sup>43</sup> See also Rowlands (2009: 118–75).

<sup>44</sup> Should scientific progress introduce the possibility of changing one's species, it would nevertheless be true that one could not determine one's *initial* species. Everything is something or other from the moment of its existence, and the possibility of actually choosing one's species at a given time is therefore impossible without also being a particular species at that given time.

them an opportunity on the basis of a morally arbitrary property. Any criterion which grounds denial of opportunities to others on morally arbitrary grounds is unjust.

The justice argument for Animal Universalism, however, need not depend on a contractarian understanding of fairness. It is sufficient to show that animals have the minimal outfitting necessary to experience various possible afterlives, since it is hard to see how more than that can matter to motivate an obligatory equal opportunity to have (basic) access to heaven.

Because animals are sentient, they are capable of being made better-off or worse-off by their eternal state.<sup>45</sup> That is, things would go better for animals if they lived in a good, eternal state than if they did not do so. This is because animals are, to use Regan's terminology, "subjects-of-a-life." Speaking of the children of Willowbrook, who endured horrific experimentation justified on the grounds that they were (like animals) sufficiently unintelligent, Regan (2014) writes:

[A]s important as these differences are, they should not obscure the similarities. For, like us, these children were the subjects-of-a-life, *their* life, a life that was experientially better or worse for the child whose life it was.... True, they lacked the ability to read and to make moral choices; nevertheless, what was done to these children—both what they experienced and what they were deprived of—mattered to them as the individuals they were, just as surely as what is done to us, when we are harmed, matters to us. (101)

We need not join Regan in supposing that being a subject-of-a-life entails rights, but we should concede that this fact about animal psychology commits us to the view that animal afterlives ought to receive moral consideration comparable to what human afterlives receive. The explanation why is simple enough: being eternally dead and being eternally badly off are unfavorable outcomes for both humans and animals. As Peter Singer (1986) points out,

There *are* important differences between humans and other animals, and these differences must give rise to *some* differences, in the rights that each has. Recognizing this obvious fact, however, is no barrier to the case for extending the basic principle of equality to non-human animals.... Many feminists hold that women have the right to an abortion on request. It does not follow that since these same people are campaigning for equality between men and women they must support the right of men to have abortions too. Since a man cannot have an abortion, it is meaningless to talk of his right to have one. Since a pig can't vote, it is meaningless to talk of its right to vote. (217)

<sup>45</sup> It might be objected that sentience alone is inadequate outfitting to enjoy the goods of Heaven. Walls (2002) claims that Heaven, if it is the Beatific Vision only, would not be the sort of good that mere sentient beings could appreciate. Richard Swinburne appears to endorse a view of Heaven wherein the inhabitants of Heaven are those who go about the business of Heaven, the business being such that it requires moral agency. See Swinburne (1989: 190, 195). We consider these objections in Section 9.4, *The Nature of Heaven*.

The passage is instructive. Animals, like human beings, can take pleasure in heaven. They can also be harmed by eternal death and by eternal existence in a bad state. Whereas differences may exist between humans and animals, here there is commonality. This is true even if human beings have an enhanced capacity to benefit or be harmed by the possible afterlife states.

Denying opportunities to others is not always unjust, because they might be denied the opportunity on morally non-arbitrary grounds. Consider a prospective college student, Kay, who applied to Yale but was rejected as a direct result of there being better-qualified applicants and limited space for incoming students. Here the basis of Kay's rejection is non-arbitrary, and thus the fact that she lacks a particular opportunity is the result of applying non-arbitrary criteria. Conversely, if Kay were rejected on account of being (for example) transgender or Native American, such a rejection would be entirely arbitrary and consequently unjust. That animals are not members of our species is entirely morally irrelevant here. What matters is that they can suffer and that their lives will be better or worse depending on their eternal state.

At this point, it might be useful to summarize our *basic argument from justice*. There is no morally relevant property that distinguishes animals from human beings with respect to whether it is good to have an opportunity to enter and remain within heaven. But if there is no morally relevant property that distinguishes animals from human beings with respect to whether it is good to have an opportunity to enter and remain within heaven, then if human beings are offered an opportunity to enter and remain within heaven, then it is a requirement of justice that animals be given an opportunity to enter and remain within heaven. Human beings are offered an opportunity to enter and remain within heaven. Therefore, it is a requirement of justice that animals be given an opportunity to enter and remain within heaven.

The argument offers strong support for Animal Universalism. If the argument is sound, then each individual animal will be offered an opportunity to enter and remain in heaven. Because each individual animal *likes* to be in heaven, and because none of them have the intellectual ability to reflect rationally on the nature of heaven and decide that they do not want to be there, if God presents each animal with an opportunity to enter and remain within the bounds of the heavenly city, they will certainly do so. Moreover, when parents who have children without the intellectual ability to reflect on their own good must make a choice on behalf of their children, they have a *pro tanto* obligation to choose the option that favors the child's maximal well-being. Similarly, if God must make soteriological decisions on behalf of animals because they lack the ability to reflect on their own good, God, being perfectly loving and just, will infallibly opt for their entrance into heaven.

This argument does not exhaust considerations from justice which favor Animal Universalism. While we will not explicate and defend every relevant argument from justice, we offer one more which further supports Animal Universalism.

*The Right to Avoid Harm.*<sup>46</sup> Animals are harmed when their basic creaturely desires are frustrated, setback, or defeated.<sup>47</sup> Starvation, disease, injury, fear, stress, anxiety, isolation, and boredom count as just some of the ways their basic creaturely desires are frustrated, setback, or defeated. Animals aim to avoid harm by seeking shelter, fleeing attackers, avoiding dangerous natural conditions, and the like. Just as it would be a violation of an animal's right to avoid harm to deny that animal the opportunity to flee from attackers or seek shelter from a lightning storm, so also it would be wrong to deny an animal the opportunity to avoid eternal nonexistence or an eternally bad existence. Quite clearly, both eternal nonexistence and entering into an eternally bad state mark the end of any possibility for future desire satisfaction, and counts as the ultimate and final frustration of the animal's basic desires. These are serious harms indeed.

Offering them such an opportunity, while not requiring one to *secure* a safe outcome, would nevertheless require one to "open the gates" to heaven to make room for the possibility that the animal will walk through it. An animal's chance to exercise some measure of control over her wellbeing, therefore, depends (at least with respect to its *eternal* state)<sup>48</sup> on her opportunity to enter heaven. For this possibility to be realized, it must be the case that God grants to animals the opportunity to enter and remain within heaven.<sup>49</sup> As before, it remains implausible that animals would reject such an opportunity. All animals will, therefore, be offered an opportunity to enter and remain within heaven, will not reject that opportunity, and will therefore remain within heaven forever.

#### 9.4. OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED

While animals have not received much sustained attention in theological and philosophical literature on soteriology and heaven, a few arguments have been raised against God's inclusion of animals in heaven. We consider them here.

<sup>46</sup> Here we have in mind what Tom Beauchamp (2011) calls *rights to nonmaleficent treatment*.

<sup>47</sup> The particular details regarding the nature of any animal's basic desires depend upon the contingent psychology of the particular animal, e.g., how well-developed, robust, and sophisticated the mind of the individual animal happens to be.

<sup>48</sup> Animals often have pre-afterlife opportunities to exercise some control over their wellbeing.

<sup>49</sup> Due to the cognitive limitations of most animals, it is implausible to think that they might somehow on their own gain awareness of the opportunity to enter Heaven, or that they even have the cognitive capacity to assent to an opportunity to enter Heaven. Consider a shepherd who desires to give his flock the chance to appreciate a greener valley but, due to the cognitive limitations of the flock, cannot convey to them the nature of the greener valley. In such a case, it appears the best and perhaps only way to give the flock an opportunity to enter the valley is by taking them there and permitting them to decide whether to stay.

*The Survival Objection.* Some lay theologians have argued that animals will not enter heaven because they cannot survive their deaths. This is said to be on account of their not having souls. Our response is twofold. First, the extensive psychological and biological similarity between humans and animals,<sup>50</sup> as well as the details of our species' own evolutionary origins, does not support such a stark metaphysical divide between humans and animals.<sup>51</sup> Second, if God is required (morally or due to God's own nature) to bring animals into heaven, God cannot satisfy this requirement or avoid its normative force simply by programming animals to go out of existence at their biological deaths.<sup>52</sup> Such an act would be wrong or irrational inasmuch as it constitutes God's effectively sabotaging God's own moral pursuits or undermining God's own nature.<sup>53</sup>

*The Nature of Heaven Objection.* Further, more sophisticated arguments are considered by Richard Swinburne and Jerry Walls. Swinburne (1989) argues that some human beings will not enter (or, if they enter for a time, will not eternally remain within) heaven since they will not be about the business of heaven, which includes worshiping God and interceding for the saints.

Since the happiness of Heaven can only be had by those who desire to pursue the occupations of Heaven, the life of Heaven can only be enjoyed by saints. For they alone would have the right desires. If there is a place where those and only those who live that life are located (as I am assuming for simplicity of exposition) what is crucial about being in Heaven is not being in that place but living in circumstances where the ideal desires which I have described achieve their fulfilment in the ways I have described. (190)

In the same vein, Eleonore Stump (1985) explains the predicament of those who are damned to hell:

It seems reasonable to suppose and it is traditional Christian doctrine, that God always wills the good for its own sake. So to will in accordance with God's will, a man must also will the good for its own sake. The assumption behind [certain objections to hell] is that anyone who has once had a taste of hell would

<sup>50</sup> As suggested in the context of the main argument from justice in Section 9.3.

<sup>51</sup> See also the arguments for animal souls in Dougherty (2014: 155–66).

<sup>52</sup> Swinburne (1989: 196) considers the possibility that human babies who die in infancy will be annihilated since they are not properly retrofitted for Heaven. A similar possibility arises with animals—perhaps animals are annihilated due to their being improperly retrofitted for Heaven. However, what goes for indirect divine action like biological programming for mortality also extends to *direct* divine action like annihilation. Moreover, such an objection simply asserts that our defense of Animal Universalism fails without giving any reasons for thinking it fails.

<sup>53</sup> Michael Murray (2008: 122–9) explicitly follows Keith Ward (1982: 201–2) in claiming that God's goodness would be undermined if animals harmed during their earthly lives were not compensated with eternal existence in the divine presence. If this is true, it offers further evidence against the *Survival Objection* (though only partial, since it might be empirically true that not all animals were harmed in their earthly lives, and therefore divine goodness does not require ushering *those* animals into Heaven forever).



henceforth do whatever he had to do to avoid hell. But then such a person would be willing the good not for its own sake but for the sake of avoiding hell. Such a person's will would thus not be in conformity with God's will, and so it would not be possible for God to bring it about that such a person participate in the union with God which is essential to life in heaven. (402)

Central to this view is a picture in which moral agents whose wills are oriented toward the good belong in a place uniquely suited to their natures. Because the business of Swinburne's heaven requires propositional agency, which presumably at least some animals lack, Swinburne's argument indirectly criticizes Animal Universalism. Similarly, Walls (2002) considers but does not endorse the view that heaven might be nothing more than an eternal beatific vision, thereby excluding individuals who are not propositional agents, and so excluding at least animals.<sup>54</sup>

However, recent claims in disability scholarship imply that excluding animals and people with intellectual disabilities on account of their not being propositional agents is at odds with God's perfect justice. Disability rights activists frequently argue that it is unjust to construct society so that it excludes certain people from full participation only on account of their lacking certain capabilities.<sup>55</sup> For example, it is unjust to intentionally install staircases on public buildings instead of installing ramps if some members of society rely on wheelchairs for their mobility. Similarly, if God were to intentionally construct, structure, or otherwise arrange heavenly society so that it excludes humans and animals who lack the capability to reflect on moral propositions, God would thereby unilaterally bring about a paradigmatically unjust and disablist society.

Furthermore, philosophers of children's rights and disability rights frequently argue that it is a requirement of justice to aid others in social development so that they are not disadvantaged when they enter civil society.<sup>56</sup> This implies that a perfectly just God would aid animals, children, and people with intellectual disabilities so that they can participate in the heavenly community inasmuch as is possible given their intellectual capacities. While we do not have the space to explore these claims further, we think they are precisely right. Surely an infinitely resourceful, perfectly just and perfectly loving God would not construct a fundamentally unjust, disablist society and fail to aid those God loves in fitting in entering into the life of the community. Surely God can find a way to recognize a whole world of creaturely difference in God's own society.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>54</sup> He writes, "If heaven is the beatific vision exclusively, then there may be no meaningful place for animals in heaven" (91).

<sup>55</sup> See, e.g., Donaldson and Kymlicka (2011: 103–22); Wasserman (1998); Calder (2010); and Fraser (2007).

<sup>56</sup> See, e.g., Eekelaar (1986).

<sup>57</sup> A related objection is that children and individuals with intellectual disabilities might be sent to Limbo (or someplace distinct from Heaven) on the grounds that they cannot adequately

Moreover, because (as we have argued) God loves animals and wants them to flourish, it would be strictly irrational for God to design heaven so that its nature requires God to annihilate animals.<sup>58</sup> God's perfect love will compel God to design heaven for the maximal inclusion and flourishing of animals.

*The Agency Objection.* A further objection may be derived from the following. Perhaps God will reincarnate cognitively underdeveloped individuals and, in Swinburne's words, "allow them there the choice of destiny of which they were deprived on this earth" (1989: 195). Trent Dougherty (2014) contends that something like this will occur in the case of animals, though nowhere does he mention reincarnation.<sup>59</sup> The presumed divinely intended effects, however, would be the same, since animals would have their cognitive abilities enhanced to the extent that God would, to use Swinburne's words, "allow them there the choice of destiny." In Dougherty's own words:

[A]nimals...will not only be resurrected at the eschaton, but will be deified in much the same way that humans will be. That they will become, in the language of *Narnia*, "talking animals." Language is the characteristic mark of high intelligence. So I am suggesting that they will become full-fledged persons (rational substances) who can look back on their lives—both pre- and post-personal—and form attitudes about what has happened to them and how they fit into God's plan. If God is just and loving, and if they are rational and of good will, then they will accept, though with no loss of the sense of the gravity of their suffering, that they were an important part of something infinitely valuable, and that in addition to being justly, lavishly rewarded for it, they will embrace their role in creation. In this embrace, evil is defeated. (2014: 3)

At first glance, such a proposal seems friendly to Animal Universalism. Further inspection, however, suggests otherwise. If the cognitive abilities of animals are enhanced to the extent Dougherty argues they will be, then some animals may be able to choose *against* an everlasting life in heaven.<sup>60</sup> Such a possibility would undercut Animal Universalism, since we could not

appreciate certain heavenly goods. But this objection falls prey to our arguments against the divine construction of a disablist society. Moreover, it implies that the friends and family of those with profound intellectual disabilities, as well as people with animal companions, will not be reunited with those that they love in heaven. This is problematic for the reasons cited in our argument from relational love in Section 9.2. See also our response to *The Two Heavens Objection* in this section.

<sup>58</sup> Another possibility is that animals are sent to hell. Swinburne (1989: 196–7) raises this possibility for human infants who died in infancy but rejects it on the grounds that it would be unjust for God to send human babies to hell. The same seems equally true of animals, who would (like human infants) suffer there through no fault of their own. This would be both terribly unjust and profoundly unloving.

<sup>59</sup> Dougherty's purpose is distinct from Swinburne's since Dougherty intends to develop a theodicy for the problem of animal pain, whereas Swinburne is merely aiming to cover certain objections to his account of Heaven.

<sup>60</sup> Dougherty nowhere indicates that they *will* make this choice.

confidently affirm that *all* animals will enter heaven and remain there everlastingly. All we could do is hope for the best.<sup>61</sup>

We offer two replies to this objection. First, whatever we might say about the permissibility of radical cognitive enhancement simpliciter, the claim that God will cognitively enhance some individual animal who will then go on to reject salvation conflicts with a very weak and extremely plausible moral principle.<sup>62</sup>

MP: It is pro tanto wrong to intentionally and radically alter an individual's decision-making capacity if: (1) that individual does not understand or consent to the alteration; (2) the alteration goes against that individual's best interest; and (3) the alteration does not better satisfy the interests of any other individuals.<sup>63</sup>

MP is highly plausible. Any plausible explanation of the general wrongness of deceptive manipulation, or of drugging a person so that they will have sex with you, will appeal to either this principle or an even stronger version of this principle.<sup>64</sup> It is very plausible that *any* act that causes someone harm (thereby violating condition (2) of MP) without their consent and without benefiting others (thereby also violating conditions (1) and (3)) is pro tanto wrong. However, if God intentionally and radically alters any animal's decision-making capacity (as is required for the cognitive enhancement proposed by Swinburne and Dougherty) in a way that causes them to reject heaven, doing so will conflict with each of the three conditions specified by MP.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Dougherty argues that animals will be cognitively enhanced for the purposes of defeating evil, and he does not appear to suggest that animals are enhanced to allow them to exercise choice over the nature of their afterlives. However, as indicated in the main text, the sort of cognitive enhancement Dougherty envisions carries with it the worry that animals equipped with full-fledged personhood will choose badly, thereby misusing their newfound enhanced agency, and this possibility is enough to raise worries for Animal Universalism.

<sup>62</sup> Even more plausibly, and importantly, an act of cognitive enhancement that violates the conditions in MP is not only pro tanto wrong, but also *unloving*. This is important because that is all we need for an effective response against the cognitive enhancement objection. Since God is perfectly loving, God will not act in ways that are unloving. Consequently, since cognitive enhancements that violate the conditions in MP are unloving, and God's cognitively enhancing animals would violate those conditions, God will not cognitively enhance animals as proposed in the objection.

<sup>63</sup> As Matthew Hanser notes, "if it is pro tanto wrong to  $\varphi$ , this is because acts of that type possess some 'wrong-making' feature—some feature that constitutes, or gives rise to, a special sort of moral reason against  $\varphi$ ing" (2014: 139).

<sup>64</sup> For example, one might think that it is generally wrong to deceptively manipulate a person even when that deceptive manipulation doesn't go against that person's best interest (and so condition (2) of MP isn't satisfied), and this is so simply because conditions (1) and (3) of MP are satisfied. In such cases, an objectionable paternalism is on display.

<sup>65</sup> One possible position on divine foreknowledge, open theism, complicates this argument. For, according to open theism, God does not know what decisions libertarian-free agents will make. Thus, God does not know whether cognitively enhanced animals with libertarian freedom will choose for or against Heaven, and cannot know *ex ante* whether cognitively enhancing a

It is clear that any radical animal cognitive enhancement meets condition (1), since no animal has the intellectual ability to understand the nature of radical cognitive enhancement or its consequences for her life and therefore cannot consent to it.

Because heaven is uniquely good for animals, it follows that if an animal permanently rejects heaven, that animal acts against their own best interest. Therefore, if God radically cognitively enhances some animals such that they will then choose against heaven, this goes against their best interests. Thus, any act that cognitively enhances an animal and thereby makes it the case that they choose against heaven meets condition (2).

Let's now consider condition (3). For an act of animal cognitive enhancement to avoid (3), that act must satisfy some number of individuals' interests, where these individuals' interests in that enhancement are stronger (individually or in aggregate) than the enhanced animal's interest in not missing out in heaven. But as argued in Section 9.2, God and other inhabitants of heaven have their interests *frustrated* if particular animals miss out on heaven, rather than having their interests satisfied. God loves each animal and desires that the animal flourish, as does (at least for many animals) each animal's companions and family. For any given animal, therefore, others' interests are satisfied if that animal enters heaven, and others' interests are frustrated if that animal fails to enter heaven. No act of radical cognitive enhancement that causes an animal to choose against heaven satisfies the interests of any other individuals. It follows that no such act *better* satisfies the interests of some number of individuals than failing to perform that act satisfies the animal's own interest in eternal life. That's identical to condition (3). Swinburne's cognitive enhancement account of animal salvation runs afoul of MP. If there are some animals who will reject heaven if they are cognitively enhanced, it would be wrong for God to enhance these animals. And so we have good reason for rejecting the cognitive enhancement objection to Animal Universalism.

This concludes our first reply to the cognitive enhancement objection. Here is our second reply. Swinburne's (and Dougherty's) invoked account of enhanced agency seems implausible. According to Swinburne (1989: 195), it is important to enhance the cognitive capacities of animals and allow them to

given animal violates condition (2). Therefore, God must employ a model of risk and uncertainty to decide what to do. On such a model, cognitively enhancing animals could be permissible only if the expected value of respecting their newly acquired enhanced autonomy outweighed the actual disvalue of violating conditions (1) and (3) along with the immense expected disvalue of allowing animals the possibility of choosing against Heaven. It is not at all clear that it does outweigh such actual and expected disvalue. Moreover, if our second reply to the *Agency Objection* succeeds, then cognitively enhancing animals does not respect their autonomy. Cognitively enhancing these animals could therefore not outweigh the (actual and expected) disvalue associated with cognitively enhancing a given animal. We conclude that there is no good reason to think that open theism undermines our reply.

make decisions about their eternal fates so that they can be made the authors of their own destinies. In this way, animal salvation is decided not merely on account of what improves each animal's welfare, but on account of each animal's individual considered judgment. They therefore seem to operate with an account of enhancement similar to the "mental prosthesis" account of trusteeship devised by Leslie Francis and Anita Silvers:

[A]s a prosthetic arm or leg executes some of the functions of a missing fleshly limb without being confused with or supplanting the usual fleshly limb, so, we propose, a trustee's reasoning and communicating can execute part or all of a subject's own thinking processes without substituting the trustee's ideas as if it were the subject's own. (2009: 485)

In these terms, then, the cognitively enhanced animal functions as a trustee, or mental prosthesis, for her previous pre-enhanced self. As Francis and Silvers point out, however, any such cognitive enhancement requires some "standard of authenticity." If an individual's judgments and values after cognitive enhancement are radically disconnected from the values and judgments of that individual prior to enhancement, it cannot rightly be said that that individual has been decisionally empowered or that she has had her autonomy advanced, and she cannot rightly be said to be the ultimate author of her later values and judgments.

If, for example, a scientist were to unilaterally cognitively enhance Donald Trump (a process not involving Trump's own rational agency and deliberation) and after the enhancement Trump wanted nothing more than to concoct a genius plan to resolve the world refugee crisis whilst opening up the US border to all immigrants, a value utterly disconnected from his prior values and judgments, Trump cannot rightly be said to have authentically decided to open the US border. Rather, it is more plausible to suppose that the scientist who enhanced Trump is the author of this decision, and Trump's autonomy has been imposed upon.<sup>66</sup> Similarly, the ideas and deliberative process of a radically cognitively enhanced individual cannot truly be said to be authored by that individual "except where the subject is the sole inspiration for the conceptualization the trustee advances" (Silvers and Francis 2009: 493).

Further, as Jeff McMahan and David Wasserman argue, an individual's *mere* inspiration of some decision is not sufficient to establish that individual's agency over or authorship of that decision (Wasserman and McMahan 2012: 331). To use McMahan and Wasserman's analogy, "a suit, however closely fitted, is made by the tailor, not the wearer. Even if the wearer indicates where the fit is too tight or loose, her role is far too passive to make her a co-creator" (331). In order for mental prosthesis or radical cognitive enhancement to truly

<sup>66</sup> We thank David Wasserman for this example, which was proposed to one author in conversation.

make an individual animal an author or co-creator of decisions about her eternal destiny, that animal must first have the requisite ability to see herself as a temporally extended being and engage in simple practical reasoning. She must have certain values and judgments about reasons that can be extended and improved upon through the process of cognitive enhancement if she is to be the ultimate origin of her later values, rather than being the subject of a kind of imposition or manipulation. Thus, for most animals—those without any capacity for propositional agency—using radical cognitive enhancement to promote authentic judgments is not a genuine possibility. Judgments made by radically cognitively enhanced animals would be no more (and perhaps less) authentic than the judgments of a sympathetic third-party observer. Given this, it makes most sense for a perfectly loving and just God to do what is in each animal's best interests rather than giving them a counterfeit form of agency which could ultimately cause them harm by resulting in their non-existence or continued existence in an eternally bad state.

*The Two Heavens Objection.* As a final reply, one might object that the arguments from divine justice and divine love only entail that God will guarantee that all animals live in a perfectly good, eternal state. This does not entail that these animals must inhabit *heaven*, which might be reserved for human, propositional agents alone. God might simply place all animals, infants, and profoundly intellectually disabled people in a separate heaven far, far away.<sup>67</sup>

But such an arrangement would be incompatible with God's perfect justice and love. First, as argued in reply to the *Nature of Heaven Objection*, perfect justice is incompatible with systematically excluding individuals from society merely on account of their lacking certain capabilities. This is true even if the two heavens (or three or four, etc.) are "separate but equal," such that individuals in each heaven will live a supremely good life. Just as it would be unjust for God to set up two heavens for white people and people of color, or men and women, or cisgender and non-cisgender people, it would be unjust for God to set up two heavens, one for propositional agents and one for those lacking propositional agency. It's hard to see how such a segregationist heavenly arrangement could constitute the ultimate and final restoration of the created order.

Second, as argued in our second argument from divine love, many humans with different talents and capabilities, children, and animals share rich and meaningful relationships that add value to their lives. Dividing the citizens of heaven without extremely compelling reason would surely be unloving, as it would end meaningful relationships between citizens of different heavens and would prevent the citizens of each heaven from forming new, meaningful

<sup>67</sup> Swinburne (1989: 196) raises this possibility for human infants who died in infancy.

relationships. In some, but not all, ways this sort of arrangement bears a striking resemblance to the imposition of the Berlin Wall, effectively separating family members, friends, and neighbors from one another.

We conclude, therefore, that the *Survival Objection*, the *Nature of Heaven Objection*, the *Agency Objection*, and the *Two Heavens Objection* fail to defeat our case for Animal Universalism.

## 9.5. CONCLUSION

We have defended Animal Universalism, the thesis that all sentient animals will be brought to heaven and remain there for eternity. We began by motivating the views that animals have direct moral status and that God has duties to beings with direct moral status. We continued with *Arguments from Divine Love*, according to which God loves each individual animal perfectly, and therefore maximizes each individual animal's well-being. Because God would fail to maximize each individual animal's well-being if any animal failed to be in heaven for all eternity, Animal Universalism follows.

We then provided *Arguments from Divine Justice*. These arguments show that God ought not to withhold opportunities from animals on any morally arbitrary grounds, including degree of intelligence or species. We then showed how animals possess all that is necessary to reap the benefits of heaven (or of some possible afterlife): sentience. Thus, animals have all they need to qualify for the basic demand of justice to have an equal opportunity to enter and remain within heaven. Furthermore, animals will not decline such an opportunity, which entails that they will be ushered into heaven and remain there forevermore. As this is true of all animals, Animal Universalism follows. We then offered another argument from justice which also supports Animal Universalism.

Far more could be said in defense of Animal Universalism. Our case motivates the two central defensive pillars for Animal Universalism: love and justice. The nature of divine perfect love and divine perfect justice strongly supports Animal Universalism.

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