

Letters to the Editor

Editor's Note: The Animal Rights Debate

Issues concerning the "rights" of animal research subjects and the rights and responsibilities of both people devoted to protecting the animals and investigators who use them in research were given a sharp boost in visibility to *PS* readers by David Johnson's Washington column on "Animal rights and human lives" (*PS*, 1990, 1, 213-214). Predictably, the column evoked a rather massive response, among the manifestations being submission of several articles on the topic and a flood of "Letters to the Editor."

The Editor's stance is that *PS* should not take a position on any issue that divides its readership but should consider contributions that might promote informed debate. On the topic of "animal rights," *PS* has been receptive to manuscripts that offer new suggestions for alleviating problems of experimentation on animals, that contribute relevant information, or that seek to analyze or clarify divisive issues in new ways. Articles in the last two categories appear in this issue of the Journal. It is only to be expected that the debate will continue, for the optimization problem of allowing maximum benefits from animal research while minimizing the concern of people who sympathize strongly with the animals has not yet been solved.

With respect to continuation of the debate, in *PS*, the principal guideline is that, ordinarily, articles or letters presenting only opinions of the writers are not considered, the one exception occurring when the matter of fairness arises. Most of the letters submitted in response to Johnson were critical of his views, and it may reasonably be felt that the writers deserve a hearing. A practical difficulty here is that, because of the number and redundancy of the letters submitted, judicious use of the Journal's limited space does not allow accommodating all of them. The Editor's solution (not expected to satisfy anyone concerned completely) is to publish a subset of the letters received, taking them in order of submission except for a bit of shuffling designed to maximize the representativeness of those selected, which appear in the following pages (pp. 202-203). The interest and concern of readers who take the trouble to submit letters is greatly appreciated, but on the "animal rights" issue, further letters will be considered for publication only if they meet to some degree the criteria mentioned above for articles.

W.K.E.

I work in a biomedical/human resources research institution. Issues regarding animal versus human rights are of great concern and I agree that a balance must be reached. Therefore I was appalled by the article by Dr. Johnson—it is the most biased point of view I have yet encountered. How can he state that all research is worthwhile and humane, and support the effort of researchers who have not only been charged but convicted of animal cruelty, as in the case of Dr. Taub? Dr. Taub's treatment

of the Silver Spring monkeys—crippling their limbs and burning/shocking them to force use of the crippled limbs—resulted in widespread public outrage and support for regulation. These specific cases were criticized by their peers as unproductive. This irrational defense is counterproductive to ethical research and supports the need for outside regulation.

Dr. Johnson's portrayal of all animal rights supporters as "radicals" bent on destroying all research efforts is ludicrous. Certainly there are some activists who fit that description; however, a far greater number are concerned with the existence of needless excessive cruelty. Thus, the focus of mainstream animal rights efforts has been on repetitive cosmetic testing, the fur industry, and research that has been demonstrated as excessively cruel and unnecessary. To say there is no room for compromise lacks credibility.

I was proud to be a charter member of the APS. I am very disappointed with the one-sided portrayal of a complex issue. Why not include a rebuttal by a group such as Psychologists for the Ethical Treatment of Animals? We need to be aware of the points made by these groups, rather than dismiss them and label all members as "radicals." That stance is no better than the animal rights extremists described by Dr. Johnson.

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David Johnson's article presents a defensive, polarizing approach that can only fuel animosity between researchers and those who question animal experimentation. Using simplistic, sensationalistic arguments, he not only refuses to address the evolving ethical concerns within society but calls for an outright battle against differing perspectives.

Historically, the scientific community has not had well-monitored guidelines to protect research animals from psychological and physical suffering as experimental subjects. Before the animal rights movement came to public attention, there were few advocates for the animal in research. During my own years of graduate training in psychology in the early 1970s, I do not recall any discussion of the ethics of animals research or the basic tenants of humane treatment of nonhuman subjects.

What we discussed in great length was the treatment of human subjects. There had been countless abuses and the time had come for universities to develop stringent controls and ethics committees. Similarly, the time has come for us to fully explore the range of ethical issues concerning the use of animals in research. It is naive to suggest that 100 percent of all researchers exercise irreproach-

able judgment in the use of experimental animals. The fact that a researcher's career may be called into question does not render the ethical concerns less valid. To promote confrontation rather than innovative revision of traditional approaches can only be a step in the wrong direction.

I shudder to think of the time and money that will be channeled into a battle against the animal rights movement, resources that could be used far more constructively developing alternative research strategies. The concept of replacement, refinement, and reduction of animal experimentation is not a new one, and certainly would reap more positive returns than the defensive campaign David Johnson and his kind are advocating.

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I would like to reply to an article by David Johnson that appeared in your July 1990 issue. I write with the full expectation that you will be willing to print opposing viewpoints in the hope of breeding diversity of thought and opinion. There are many members of the profession of psychology who have feelings similar to those expressed below.

I believe it is very important that scientists are made aware of the serious human health problem posed by animal experimentation. The sanctity of human life is the primary reason for wanting to abolish animal testing. I would like to summarize some comments that come directly from the medical and psychological community regarding animal research (references can be provided upon request).

The dogmatic approach that without animal experiments there would be no medical progress presumes much. For example, with a shift toward preventive medicine we could see a marked reduction in the top ten killing diseases such as cancer, stroke, and heart disease. This could affect hundreds of thousands of lives annually versus the "magic cure" approach of saving far fewer people with artificial heart valves and new surgical techniques costing millions of dollars more. Uncontrolled animal experimentation depletes resources for research that could be beneficial.

It is unconscionable that hundreds of millions of dollars are used to fund research to find a way to block drug addiction in animals. This kind of waste of our tax dollars continues while none of the underlying social, cultural, and psychological causes of drug addiction in humans gets addressed by such research.

For example, documented studies show that half of the

NIH experiments performed on animals have been repeated sometimes hundreds of times, costing taxpayers billions of dollars that could have been spent on the homeless, school lunch programs, public mental health funding, etc. Such research is often performed simply to maintain a grant or as a result of the "publish or perish" dictum. When researchers have been conditioned to ethical blindness towards animals, a certain desensitization inevitably occurs.

Humanity is in grave danger if it places complete confidence in scientists who consider themselves above moral and ethical values. Trying to save human dignity and health requires a perspective that encompasses respect and empathy for all living things.

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Your article on research animals (July 1990) asserted that "The animal rights movement is not about achieving humane treatment for animals. It is about ending all human uses of animals." I consider myself an advocate of the rights of nonhuman animals, and it is my moral belief that nonhuman animals still do not receive sufficient consideration. To argue that all those people concerned about the rights of other species are committed to ending all human use of other animals is to oversimplify a very difficult issue.

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After reading your article in the July 1990 issue of *Psychological Science*, I must sadly concede that the only thing we agree on is the lack of common ground between your version of scientists and the advocates for humane animal rights. Your one-sided portrayal of all supporters of animal rights as extremists and your seeming certainty that no animal research is needlessly painful or needlessly duplicative is quite discouraging to those of us who would have hoped to establish a dialogue. I can only hope that eventually you might see that it is this perceived arrogant attitude of the research community that coalesced the animal rights people into the community they are today.

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Letters to the Editor

In his interesting study of circadian variation in use of stereotypes, Bodenhausen (1990) presents two studies indicating that "morning people" use stereotypes more in the evening, whereas "night people" use stereotypes more in the morning.

It is worth noting that the second study is relevant to the question of whether judges ignore base-rate information when individuating information about the target is available (Locksley, Borgida, Brekke, & Hepburn, 1980; Krueger & Rothbart, 1988; Lynch & Offir, 1989). Subjects were given inconclusive evidence about the guilt of an individual accused of either cheating, physical assault, or drug selling. The accused was or was not identified as a member of a group stereotypically associated with the offense (campus athlete, Hispanic, African-American). Only subjects judging at nonoptimal hours showed the stereotype effect, that is, judged the accused more likely guilty when identified as a member of the stereotyped group than when not so identified.

The stereotype effect here is the use of base-rate beliefs linking group membership (probabilistically) with offense (McCauley, Stitt, & Segal, 1980). The surprise is

that it is the subjects operating under suboptimal conditions who succeed in attending to base-rate predictions. Is it possible that subjects at their peak of attention ignore their stereotypes because of apprehension about using them in front of psychologists who define stereotype effects as discrimination and bias?

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