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PSY 495

January 29, 2004

Taking Sides #4

In many cases, where you fall on the food chain will determine where you stand on the use of animals in research. Many humans agree that there is some benefit in using our less sentient quarry for scientific gain. However, if you spoke Rodent, you'd probably find very few lab rats that believe the benefits outweigh the costs. Peter Singer and R. G. Frey don't theorize that they can talk to animals, but they do speak on their behalf.

Singer opens his discussion with examples of research projects that he considered cruel and inhumane. Noted most often are studies that involve aversive stimuli such as electric shock. He also refers to studies that are repetitive, such as conditioning experiments that have spanned several decades. Singer states the reason humans engage in this type of educational endeavor is speciesism, which he likens to racism. Singer further states that if researchers are willing to experiment on animals than they should also be willing to experiment on humans that have a similar quality of life, for example an infant with severe brain damage. In Singer's opinion, if you reject the possibility of a human subject, you are a speciesist.

Singer does not hold an abolitionist's view on animal research. He believes there are rare cases in which the use of animals would be defensible because of the benefits to humans. He suggests stricter use of an ethics review board, but states that speciesists

hold positions on such committees and make it difficult for those who are concerned with animal rights.

R. G. Frey agrees with Singer that abolishing all animal research is unrealistic because of the benefit of knowledge. Since benefit is not a matter of contention, Frey asserts the debate lies in answering the question: why animals and not humans?

Frey's first explanation is the similarities found between animals and humans. He uses a characteristic claim and postulates that relevant characteristics found in humans can often be found in animals. He also presents a counterargument that some characteristics are not seen across the two species and therefore the use of both animals and humans is justified.

Frey's second defense is quality of life. His position is that there is an appreciable difference between animals and humans with animals on the low end of the scale. He agrees with Singer that if the quality of life for a human was to fall below that of an animal, than human experimentation would be reasonable.

The authors are using similar arguments to defend opposite positions. Both use quality of life and the benefits gained to include the possibility of human subjects. However, in Singer's case he is expecting you to find the notion reprehensible. And since you are aware that all species have a right to expect fair and just treatment, you will find animal research equally offensive. Frey believes experimenting on humans is a logical conclusion. When he justifies the use of animal research, he applies the same arguments to humans and says rationally, there is little difference.

I am a speciesist, a right-handedist, a heightist, and a host of other -ists that do not appear in any dictionary, but can be used to explain my attitudes. Although Singer

creates his own vocabulary, he is right in saying humans believe in superiority over animals. It is evident in everything from our diets to our clothing. And is the reason I agree that animals should be used for research. Despite my position on the food chain, I also agree humans should get their fare share. I agree with Frey that it is only logical. One day, sooner than we think, Do Not Resuscitate paperwork will include a box you can check if you want to volunteer for experimentation.