

EEP
BROTHER ELK

Out of the dark and winter night,
through the storms and pains of youth,
you came.
Another mind,
within the skin
of another kind.

More than your intelligence,
I beheld
that command
for my respect.

Eep, ye who strove for dominance over me.
Ah, but we did battle.
Our thunder shook the earth.
And then we laughed,
and together slept
upon the mountain side.

Old friend, fellow being
looking out through animal eyes.
I bear your scars,
as you bear mine.
Across the years that pass,
I heed your cry,
seeking other minds
within the skins
of other kinds.

Steve Stringham
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Reply to Stephenson on Biomedical Research

Sidney Gendin
Eastern Michigan University

Look, I've had enough. Frankly, I'm tired of polite bullshit. Be forewarned. If you want only calm, dispassionate discussion of the sorts you are used to, you may as well not read the rest. I'm going to lay it out to you as I honestly feel it. I don't generally aim to be as negative as I know how to be, but Stephenson's paper inspires it. I know we are supposed to be studying the rights and wrongs, the permissible and the obligatory, *ad nauseum*. The fact remains that the old cliché about things not being black and white is garbage. Things are black and white. The people on the side of the animals are the good guys, and the other side is not made up of a bunch of deluded but well-intended people but a bunch of malicious bad guys who know they are up to no good.

In the preceding paper, after going on for awhile on the topic of animal care and use committees, the author declared he should say something "philosophical". This turned out to be that incredible, hackneyed cliché that he'd rather have a bunch of rats die than have his son die. If medical research can do that, WHOOPIE! Now, could anything be more boring than to have that proclaimed one more time? I don't know about the truth of the old saying that if you've heard it once, you've heard it 10,000 times. But this you can be sure of. If you've heard it 9,999 times, it's as good as hearing it 10,000 times. So, please, spare us that final performance. Where has Stephenson been these last 20 years? We've heard this junk so often that it's coming out of our ears. How many times must we answer this?



DISCUSSION

Must we go on with this for the rest of our lives? Are we so stupid that we haven't been able to articulate the deficiencies of this "What will it be? the rats or your baby?" line of baloney? On the other hand, are we dealing with retarded people who need to have us bang away at this stupidity endlessly? Or isn't there a third possibility—in fact a probability: that those who employ this "argument" know it is worthless but thrust it on the uninitiated in the slimy attempt to brainwash them into accepting their foul deeds?

I have no wish to enter into this moronic debate about the rights and wrongs of biomedical research. It is moronic because all the hard thinking has already been done. People like Regan, Sapontzis and Singer have steeped themselves in the arguments in favor of research and have painstakingly refuted them. Meanwhile, precious few of the semi-retarded practitioners of this research have so much as heard of these gentlemen, much less grappled with their critiques. Smugly wallowing in their ignorance and howling loudly about "anti-scientific types", they are like a demolition expert who, since he knows how to blow up buildings, thinks the decision to blow them up ought to be left to him. In any case, it is indisputable that the research is mostly evil and worthless junk.

What shall I do? Do I need to document the claim that the research is evil junk? Must this be done for the thousandth time? For heaven's sake, the literature is out there. Besides the philosophical works alluded to before, let us remember the carefully documented collections of nonfiction horror stories. Why doesn't Stephenson read them? Let him read Jeff Diner's books. Dallas Pratt's books. Let him read the periodic updates produced by the Physicians' Committee for Responsible Medicine. Let him consider, as a typical case, what is in the October, 1989, issue of PCRM. I'm not going to summarize it for him. Stephenson won't come away thinking that poor Michael Carey of the LSU Medical School, who is doing brain research on cats, is deluded. No, let us have no more of this nonsense: "Honest man, surely not cruel, merely wants to save mankind—nothing wrong with that; we must reason with him, we must not antagonize him, we must show him in a nonhostile spirit the errors of his ways." CRAP, ALL CRAP. Read the damned thing. You will have no doubts that Carey is a cruel man bent on hurting animals partly for the sake of hurting them but mainly for the sake of the millions of dollars the Department of Defense has given him since 1983, and which Carey knows he

doesn't deserve. Once you read it, you won't think as you now may, "Well, Carey is of a different opinion than you, Gendin. He believes, maybe wrongly, that he is doing something worthwhile." No such thing. Come down from the clouds. And stop trying to be charitable where charity isn't due.

One final thing and then I'm done with my ridiculous tirade. IACUCs exist for no other reason than to appease the public. Without them, the world might suppose animals are kept in dungeons where things are done that would make the Marquis de Sade green with envy. Not that they aren't kept in such dungeons, but the world now thinks otherwise. The dungeons are kept, for the most part, antiseptic, and the so-called guidelines for decent care and housing are adhered to. The National Institutes of Health and the Department of Agriculture puff up their collective but still scroungy chests with pride over the documents they have produced to ensure that all is well.

My own IACUC experiences are limited to what goes on at Eastern Michigan University and the University of Michigan. Both of these are fraudulent operations, and I have no reason to think they are atypical. Recently, we, the members of the EMU IACUC interviewed two persons to fill the post of the outside member, a post required by law. One of these was a sweet young woman in her late twenties. She had an M. S. in horticulture and had worked for five years as a volunteer in a shelter in Lubbock, Texas. She told us she liked animals. She held no views about euthanasia, none about the propriety of behavioral research, nor about the use of animals in classrooms. She declared she had an open mind and no prejudices. My fellow committee members adored her, and she was endorsed by all but me. Her rival was a woman about forty years old, with fifteen years background in animal-related work and eighteen years background in scientific work. This woman, fluent in Russian, Czech, and two or three other eastern European languages translated, for several years, mathematical and scientific articles into English for a major American journal. She had reviewed more scientific protocols than all our committee members put together. She is currently, and has been for about five years, the associate director of the Michigan Humane Society. She made it plain that, philosophically, she was opposed to behavioral research, dubious about the use of animals in basic studies classes for the non-science major and sceptical about the worth of much biomedical research although she would not

venture a guess as to any percent. She was as familiar with the guidelines of NIH and DoA as we were and made a point of stating that she did not believe her role, if appointed, would be to engage in philosophic dispute with committee members, that she understood her job would be to help ensure that research was conducted in accordance with mandated guidelines. Only an idiot, which nobody in the committee is, or a dishonest person could believe that the Lubbock shelter woman was better qualified. Case closed.

Several years ago, the VP for Research at UM, one Alan Price, called me on the phone and asked whether I'd be interested in being interviewed for the post of outside member on their IACUC. I said I'd be delighted. We chatted for half an hour or so, and, if I may say so, he said he was personally impressed. I received a form to fill out. I never heard from him after returning it.

Of course, I have my spies on that campus, including one well-placed person who told me what happened. When Carl Cohen, that pompous individual who likes to present himself to the world as a great champion of democratic process, heard I was an applicant, he almost had an apoplectic attack. He declared I was absolutely unfit to be on the Committee and that there was no point in having the other committee members interview me. A person was appointed, someone I know and know to be a total jerk. I waited several months and called Price. I asked him when I'd be interviewed. Like most other distinguished administrators he told me a lie only an administrator would be stupid enough to think I might believe. He said that they were sorting out the candidates and composing the short list for interviews. This, despite the fact that almost half a year had gone by and that anyone who knows anything about IACUCs knows, too, that the total number of candidates, good or bad, is unlikely to exceed four. Finally, to top it all off, I got a letter from Price saying that the Committee understands I have deep convictions about the wrongfulness of animal research and does not feel it wants to put me in a compromised position. What idiots!

Meanwhile, at my university, silly experiments continue. The fact is that my university is nothing else but a pre-retirement home NOT for has-beens but for never-weres. This is true not just for the scientists but across the board—the philosophers, the historians, the home economists, etc. My university is not especially bad. There are about 2,000 colleges in the USA, and only about 100 of these are uncontroversially superior to mine. Research goes on at most of the other 1,900.

Fourth-rate minds engaged in WHAT THEY KNOW to be a waste of time. Nothing will ever come of what they do. They know it. Yet they pigheadedly march on, ever killing rats and cats and whatever else they can get their grubby hands on. It's all in the name of the noble cause—furthering the well-being of some absurd group called MANKIND.



BOOKS RECEIVED

Charles Bergman
WILD ECHOES

Encounters with the Most Endangered Animals in North America

Bothell, WA: Alaska Northwest Books, 1990

Introduction, 248p, appendices, bibliography, index
\$12.95 paperback

Zoe Weil

ANIMALS IN SOCIETY

Facts and Perspectives on our Treatment of Animals

Jenkintown, PA: Animalearn (AAVS), 1991

97p, appendices, index

\$4.95 paperback (bulk rates available)

