

# Animal rights a human dilemma essay

[Environment](#), [Global Warming](#)



Abstract Medical research conducted in scientific laboratories utilizing certain animals and tissue for the purposes of biomedical research is critical to the continued health of society. Utilizing animals for medical research is a legal and allowable method under specific restrictions placed by law. This research over time reveals methods for cures, treatments, medical devices and the ultimate eradication of disease for humans and animals alike. However, it also presents an argument and ethical dilemma for animal rights activist groups who believe medical research using animals is cruelty to animals and must be discontinued. Conversely, medical scientists have a duty to society to protect the world from environmental factors that would cause illness and mass death unnecessarily. For this reason, it is essential that a common ground or balance of needs be determined between these two groups so that the continuation of life is uninterrupted by disagreements in the ethics of right and wrong. Animal Rights: A Human Dilemma The ills of society extend the continuum from overpopulation to obesity and global warming to the extinction of life, as we know it.

To that end, some would say that it is at society's own hands that would bring about the extinction of life. As a result, when the use of animals in medical research is the subject the ability of the top two life forms becomes an ethical debate. A debate that asks the question, has a progressive faction of the civilized society turned its back on the value of a human life to take up the fight for the rights of non-human animals? Because of this conflict in ideology, the use of animals in medical research ignites a dilemma that causes society to make a choice for the rights of animals over human life.

This paper will examine whether the use of animals in scientific medical research is abuse and cruelty to animals as defined by animal rights groups or is it carefully planned life saving science. The rights of animals have become a mass social and economic issue fueled by a ground swell movement that is shaking up the collective conscience of society. Animal rights groups such as the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) and the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) are all proponents for animal rights. They gain strength in numbers and via charitable funding by staying visible through media outlets, public protests, and lobbying in the halls of the White House in order for their political opinions to be heard. For instance, PETA a non-profit organization, chiefly funded through its membership of more than three million supporters actively campaigns for the rights of animals and is one of the most visible of these organizations.

In fact, they can be very effective and persuasive because of their outrageous techniques and stunts. They carry placards with pictures of slaughtered animals on them in their protest lines, using shock and awe to garner the attention of anyone within eyeshot of this activity. In an ironic approach, since this act itself appears to be cruel to the animals they profess to be protecting. Would it be right, proper or acceptable to demonstrate publicly against the abusers of a child by using a picture of that child to get the message across? No, it would not, because the rights of humans and animals are not the same. However, animal rights activists would lead society to believe the rights of both are equal. This activity also sheds a negative light on their own credibility and contradicts their mission.

However, there are those who believe their use of shock and awe campaigns, attention seeking protests and distortion of the facts, is damaging to the advancement of medicine. Their attention seeking protests are only antics to exert their self-indulgent agenda; yet, powerful enough to garner millions of supporters and constituencies.

Conversely, the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry (CSI), a scientific inquiry and critical investigation organization, released a feature article in their June 2008 periodical by authors, P. M. Conn and J. V. Parker commented, “ animal extremists are foot soldiers in a quiet war—one that could restrict the ability of researchers to develop drugs urgently needed for the treatment of new and emerging diseases” . Furthermore, in the same article the authors report, “ PETA killed 2, 981 dogs, cats, puppies, kittens, and other animals—an astonishing 97 percent of the animals left in their care, according to the group’s own records supplied to the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (2006).

’. This is astonishing and clearly a contradiction to PETA’s own mission and vastly dissimilar to what scientist and doctors are doing in controlled environment laboratories for the sake of medical research. Additionally, they are suspected of misusing charitable contributions for purposes other than the mission to protect animals. On the HSUS website, the organization purports in their mission they desire, “ to reduce suffering and to create meaningful social change for animals by advocating for sensible public policies .

. . and confront national and global cruelties through major campaigns like the suffering of animals in experimentation, including chimpanzees and pets”. For a pet lover this claim would have a significant impact on their feelings by the use of the word “ pet” in their mission statement.

These types of groups use ambiguity and spin facts by using statements to entice, incite violence towards people and exploit the vulnerabilities in people. Citizens across the developed and industrialized world are becoming more and more concerned with animal rights issues. New laws against animal cruelty are created through legislation consistently and old laws are being enforced vigorously by the justice system routinely.

Those caught in the act of violating one of the animal protection laws will be prosecuted swiftly to the fullest extent of the law. However, this strong movement to change how humans think about animals and accept the ideals promulgated by animal rights activists conflicts with human conditioning, values, ethics and in some instances religious beliefs. However, federal laws are in place to protect domesticated animals from misuse, abuse and cruelty, the Animal Welfare Act of 1996 is one of those laws. The Animal Welfare Act under the oversight of The Animal Welfare Information Center is the federal agency held responsible for providing the public with information on the law. On their website the act as amended in 2008, states in summary, “ the law sets requirements in place that imposes a minimum standard of care and treatment must be used for specific animals for the purpose of medical research” . The U. S.

Food and Drug Administration (FDA) the federal authority held responsible by Congress for regulating and ensuring the safety of all pharmaceuticals and medical devices placed on the market for human and animal use and consumption requires all pharmaceuticals to meet their rigorous application criteria and processes before approval can be granted. One of the processes performed in clinical studies occurs during in vivo or testing in a living organism. For that reason, animals are used for the necessary testing of medical devices and drugs biological effects on tissue. The FDA is aware of its scientific responsibility to support the welfare of the human population as well as seek alternative methods to reduce testing in animals. Efforts are underway by the FDA to reduce the need for testing using animals. The disease diabetes can be traced back thousands of years ago to ancient Hindu writings illustrating the signs of this fatal disease.

In that time in history, there was no cure for this disease that killed children and adults alike. Fast forward to the late nineteenth century and the discovery of diabetes in dogs initiated research and experimentation of a dog's pancreas, ultimately diabetes would be linked to that organ in humans as well. Had it not been for the foresight of scientist and researchers who conducted the experiments on the animal's organs the isolation of the protein insulin would not have been discovered. To that end, the treatment for diabetes would be insulin extracted from a dog's pancreas. However, the use of recombinant DNA technology is currently used to create synthesized human insulin and is the treatment method of choice This example enforces the ethical use of medical research to advance cures and treatments to facilitate continued life in both animals and humans.

Animal rights groups' claim that science used for the advancement of human life is cruelty to animals. In particular they submit that animals feel pain and suffering and therefore should be treated according to a set of legal and ethical rights similar to those of humans. There is no question that animals feel pain; however, are they capable of the feeling of suffering? In Michael Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma* (2006) he asserts, The animal people claim that there are neo-Cartesian scientists and thinkers who argue that animals are incapable of suffering because they lack language. Which does not seem unreasonable, because human pain differs from animal pain by any order of magnitude? As humans contemplating the suffering or pain of animals, we do need to guard against projecting onto them what the same experience would feel like to us (315-316).

This sound information provided by Pollan applies reasoning to the ethical dilemma humans are up against by the use of animals in medical research. Unlike animals, humans do possess the cognitive ability to project feelings onto things. Within society morals, values and beliefs guide people towards what is right and wrong. Within our society, certain people, such as scientists and physicians, hold to these characteristics of their positions within society as being their moral authority and responsibility to all of humanity. In the Hippocratic Oath, the code of ethics that all new physicians must swear and abide by states, " I will use those dietary regimes which will benefit my patients according to my greatest ability and judgment, and I will do no harm or injustice to them" (National Institutes of Health, 2012). It is a code of ethics created by physicians for physicians essentially charging them

through their advanced knowledge with protecting the world against illnesses and disease.

Equally, the ethics of duty as expressed in the writings of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) is as relevant today as it was in the 18th century and can be applied here. Kant believed in the ethics of duty, in an excerpt taken from *Thinking Critically About Ethical Issues*, 7th Edition (2007), “ Kant argued that moral judgments are not expressions of feeling but imperatives (commands) and can be dealt with by reasoning. Furthermore, according to Kant, “ the basis of moral action is duty. People’s good will is what makes them act for duty, and acting for duty gives their action moral value. The central thesis of Kant’s ethical system is that there is a categorical imperative binding on all people because it is affirmed by reason, and every rational person accepts his or her obligation to follow reason (145).

Under society’s rules, it is an inalienable right to make decisions on the best and highest utilization of life, it is a right declared in the United States Declaration of Independence which states, “. . . with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness”. In light of that fact and as the identified higher form of life, humanity controls the biological system within the realm of society. Yet, countless ethical dilemmas and feelings conflict around the issues that separate the rights and welfare of animals and the rights and welfare of humans regarding the use of animals in medical research. To this end, the benefits outweigh the adversities and opinions of extremists groups when the survival of the world is at stake. As a result, the use of animals in science laboratories for the



discovery of treatments, cures and the eradication of diseases is critical to the continued public health of the world.

The values people use to separate right from wrong; good from bad is in direct conflict with the fight for better treatment of animals, the other life shared on earth. It is clearly symbolic of a mirror placed by human's ability to project, reflect and feel for other things. This outcry for protection of animals is humanity's call to be protected from harm and cruelty from a society that has turned its back on the whole condition of life.

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