

Reports

MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

As part of the annual meeting of the Modern Language Association of America in Houston, December 27-30, 1980, a session will be held entitled "Animal Rights and Welfare, and Human Ethics, in Twentieth Century Literature." The session will meet in the Arbor Room at the Hyatt Regency in Houston on December 29, from 3:30 - 4:45 p.m. Chairperson will be Richard Morgan, coordinator of Writers for Animal Rights. For further information, contact Dr. Morgan at: English Department, Box 19120A, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN 37614.

THE ETHICS OF THE USE OF ANIMALS IN RESEARCH

Bates College hosted a conference on March 21-22, 1980, entitled: "The Ethics of the Use of Animals in Research." The gathering, held in Lewiston, Maine was made possible through an anonymous gift by a Maine philanthropist. The symposium met in two sessions, one on philosophic and one on practical considerations.

After critically reviewing several positions on the ethics of our treatment of animals, philosopher Tom Regan, of North Carolina State University, argued his own evolving thesis based on concept of rights. Launching from Dworkin's *Taking Rights Seriously*, particularly the notion that "individual rights 'trump' the rights of the group", Regan described several alternative principles where that trumping ought to give way. These would provide practical guidelines for the resolution of conflicting claims, instances where an individual's rights would be sacrificed for the sake of the group. An individual, human or non-human, possesses rights if he is "the subject of a life, for better or for worse." The primacy of individual rights over those of the group, Regan asserts, places the burden of justification on those who would abridge an individual's rights. The researcher must show why the subject of an experiment, if he is an individual with rights, must give them up for the sake of a group.

In his formal response, Mark Okrent, of the Philosophy Department at Bates College, charged Regan to further unpack his criterion for possession of rights. He argued that "being a subject" implies self-consciousness, a criterion that would exclude a most non-human animals--Washoe's "me Washoe" notwithstanding. Agreeing that this was a critical problem for his position, Regan referred to an ability to remember as a further tentative explication of "subject." Memory is not yet self-awareness, while it is more than sentience.

In a second formal response to Regan, David Kolb (Philosophy Department, Bates College) suggested that we "stop talking about animal rights and start talking about animal values." Rights are the wrong foundation, in part because they are either possessed or not. Values come in degree and allow us to "move down the hierarchy of animals" in a search for alternative methods of research.

Speaking more directly to the question of practice, Tom Wolfle (National Institute of Health) offered the weight of a brief history of biomedical breakthroughs to assert the indispensability of animals to research. Given that this role for the animal is critical to contemporary science, Wolfle is concerned with the adequacy of animal care. As a veterinarian and an animal behaviorist, he systematically assesses their species-specific needs. Distinguishing between stress and distress, and holding the former to be a necessary part of life, he attempts to control the animal's distress. Partly based on a reading of Hans Selye, he would achieve this by "providing well-defined controlled stress so that the animal is better equipped to cope with his later life in the laboratory."

In a carefully argued response, Deborah Mayo (Philosophy Department, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University) demonstrated the incompatibility of this adaptation training to the laboratory, with concern for the animal's natural needs. Socialization to the stress of the laboratory begs the ethical question of the limits of the conditions to which the animal should be required to adapt. Mayo also offered a number of arguments against the "scientific justification of animal experiments." She held that invalid research arises from the artificiality of laboratory conditions and of laboratory-bred animals, from the presence of interspecies differences, and from the confusion of background with experimental variables.

Providing high contrast to Wolfle, both substantively and stylistically, Emmanuel Bernstein delivered an evocative and impassioned plea that we lessen the amount of pain to which we subject animals in research. Bernstein's position is that much research is redundant and inapplicable; and, hence, that the pain involved is unjustifiable. Taking the research paradigm of learned helplessness as an example, he tried to show that, while the suffering of the dogs is considerable, the phenomenon induced is not a valid analogue to human depression. A clinical psychologist in private practice (Saranac Lake, New York), Bernstein proposed the formation of groups within research disciplines to act as animal advocates.

An animal requires "a world to be what it is", offered John Cowgell, a doctoral candidate in the Zoology Department, North Carolina State University, with a background both in psychology and the philosophy of biology. The harm that comes from our denial to the

animal of its peculiar world is a broader and more morally relevant criterion of abuse than pain. All animals deserve such consideration, independent of any positive prejudice toward those "star species" apparently more like us. Our ethical obligation to them ought not be founded in human interest and empathy, but in our recognition of their reality, integrity and otherness.

Dr. Kenneth J. Shapiro