W. Jean Dodds and F. Barbara Orlans, editors,
Scientific Perspectives on Animal Welfare
(New York: Academic Press, Inc.), 1982

It is of crucial importance that scientists examine the issue of the ethics of experimentation on nonhuman animals. If those involved in research can participate in critical examination and reform, the potential for serious conflict between those seeking reform and researchers fearful of loss of academic freedom will be reduced. This volume, which arose from the first conference sponsored by the Scientists Center for Animal Welfare (SCAW), represents a cautious first step in this direction. Recommendations for improving the review of proposed experiments, the education of scientists in animal welfare issues, and communication with the public emerged from these papers. A number of the most pressing and fundamental issues were avoided, however, and the failure to examine controversial assumptions constitutes the chief shortcoming of the volume.

A fundamental assumption shared by the participants was, not surprisingly, that the vast majority of research performed on animals is useful, necessary and ethical. In his summary of the workshop on investigator responsibilities, Harry Rowsell

writes:

> Is the animal welfare issue the result of misconceptions, or is it a real problem? It was generally agreed that there is a problem and that it stems from lack of communication between scientists and the public. (p. 46)

The chief recommendation stemming from this view was that researchers should adopt an 'open door' policy. Since the investigators concurred that research is necessary, the question whether entire categories of research might be superfluous was eclipsed. The issue of replacement was beyond the scope of the conference (p. 126).

Given the posture of the ethicality and necessity of experimentation, the issue of animal welfare becomes the issue of improving care and handling, providing for the accreditation and inspection of laboratories, and screening research proposals to determine that they employ appropriate animal models in appropriate numbers. The question of ethical treatment is reduced to the question of regulation to prevent or detect the 'occasional investigator who is careless, callous or inhumane.' (p. 29) Following this tack, Frank Golley remarks,

> One might expect mistreatment of research animals to be as widespread as the mistreatment of horses in the days of horse transport. Yet I know very few instances of unethical behavior of this sort among scientists. (p. 100)

However, the fear that some researchers are callous or cruel is *not* the central issue of the ethics of experimentation on animals. As Tom Regan has made clear, cruelty and kindness are attitudes, and as such they may or may not result in actions which are in the interests of animals.[1] The central issue is: What constitutes ethical action in light of the often conflicting interests of science and laboratory animals?

Denial of this fundamental conflict between the interests of science and those of its animal models constitutes one of the chief presuppositions, and chief failings, of this volume. The harmony between good science and humane treatment of animals is repeatedly emphasized. Perrie Adams claims,

> Abuse of laboratory animals is inconsistent with good and meaningful scientific practice. Regardless of the experimental manipulation, humane treatments are available to minimize the suffering and pain involved. (p. 39)

Harry Rowsell quite correctly points out that rough handling can lead to poor results since, for example, fear can induce physiological changes. He suggests that information be collected on the effects of improperly handled animals on the outcome of experiments (p. 44). Of course, good husbandry is necessary for good science, and any procedure which adversely affects the outcome of an experiment is no doubt 'mishandling', by definition, from the researcher's point of view. Similarly, it can be argued that good husbandry is necessary for efficient pork and veal production; but it is quite another issue whether, either in the case of laboratory animals or farm animals, it is ethically sufficient. Since the participants in this conference have implicitly defined 'abuse' narrowly, to include only violations of procedures they presume are ethical, they fail to address this issue. While I suppose that the first SCAW conference cannot be faulted for failing to address all such issues, it is counterproductive and evasive to imply that they do not exist.

In spite of its limitations, the volume offers some valuable proposals, and the beginnings of a crucial dialogue among scientists. Following a

brief history and overview, the volume includes four sections devoted to an examination of four groups involved in animal experimentation: the investigators, the institutions in which research is conducted, the funding agencies, and the journals which publish such research.

A number of useful recommendations arose from the "Workshop on Investigator Responsibilities", including courses on the ethics of animal experimentation and training programs for both scientists and technicians in the proper handling of animals.

The most interesting and valuable suggestions were offered in the section on "Institutional Responsibilities in Animal Experimentation." Karl Obrink described the Swedish Law on Laboratory Animals, which requires the establishment of ethical committees to advise the research worker at the planning stage of an animal experiment. These committees consist of equal numbers of scientists, technicians and laymen. Their role is advisory, and they "... act as an extended conscience of the scientist to help him or her determine whether the intended experiment is justified in relation to the expected experimental outcome." (p. 55) The establishment of similar committees in the United States was recommended.

The "Workshop on Funding Agency Responsibilities" also offered some useful suggestions. For example, in most systems one committee reviews both for scientific merit and for animal concerns. Committee members are chosen for their expertise in the appropriate scientific subdiscipline. Such committee reviewers may lack experience in addressing animal experimentation concerns (and, I might add, are not likely to perceive ethical problems in areas of research in which they themselves are often involved). The system adopted by the Veterans Administration addresses this problem by establishing two separate committees; one reviews for animal concerns, and subsequently another committee reviews for scientific merit. Such separate review procedures were recommended by the participants in the Workshop. The Workshop on Editorial Responsibility provided a similar suggestion for the separation of committees judging scientific merit and animal welfare issues.

The recommendations arising from this volume, while useful, presuppose the correctness of existing codes of conduct regarding laboratory animals. The justification for the profound differences in protection accorded to human subjects (as reflected in the Nuremberg Code) as opposed to non-human subjects (as provided in the Federal Animal Welfare Act) is never articulated. Those looking to this volume for a serious treatment of the ethical issues surrounding animal experimentation will surely be disappointed. Nevertheless, this was but the first in a series of proposed SCAW conferences; it is to be hoped that the members of SCAW will come to recognize the need for a deeper analysis.

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NOTE:

[1] Tom Regan *All That Dwell Therein: Animal Rights and Environmental Ethics*, University of California Press, 1982.