



## LETTERS

Professor Andrew Rowan  
Tufts Center for Animals and Public Policy

Dear Andrew Rowan:

I've wanted to write to you for some time in response to your review of my book Animal Liberators for the journal Between the Species. Reading the review was, metaphorically speaking, like breathing very fresh air on a hike in the mountains. I appreciate the fair and careful reading you've given the book, and your honesty and candor in relating your revised opinion of it. I can't remember ever before seeing a review that says "I changed my mind." I don't mean to understate your numerous serious criticisms of the book, but to say that I appreciate the high road you took in discussing them.

Before addressing some of your criticisms, I want to also mention how glad I was that you found useful the connections made in the book between technological incursions into the bodies of people and animals and antivivisection thought, and between feminism and antivivisection. These relationships were central for me, but other reviewers of Animal Liberators have not always addressed them. In my reading of both the Victorian and modern periods of protest, a sense of heightened awareness of these incursions and the damaging potential of medical and other technologies seems very important, as well as the interest of feminists in antivivisection and animal rights. Likewise, I was glad to see you mention my discussion of the role of modern animal behavior studies in blurring the boundary between animal and human.

The book is not a comprehensive account of the modern animal rights movement, nor is it an ethnography strictly speaking, but rather a speculative essay on certain connected themes in the

protests of vivisection. All interesting aspects of human behavior are complexly determined, and the animal rights movement cannot be reduced to some symbolic "acting-out" of anxieties about technological invasions of the body and nature. As an anthropologist, I was struck by these connections and thought them worth reflecting on, but I've never for a moment felt that the animal rights movement could be understood as only about "animals as symbols." New and refined ethical discourses, "rising consciousness", improved communication about animal suffering, scientific practices, socio-economic and demographic changes are undoubtedly important causal elements. I agree with you that they need to be further explored.

Animal Liberators looks at one aspect of the movement, its antivivisection stance. Clearly animal rights groups now protest other uses of animals (i.e. factory farming and hunting) nationally and internationally. Yet I contend, as I did in response to Peter Singer's review of the book in The New York Review of Books, that the animal rights issue is most clearly delineated in science's use of animals for experimentation. At the same time, it seems to me that the animal liberation movement has consistently broadened its focus in the years since I did my research and the book did not reflect this wider picture. The unfortunate side of publishing a book is that one continues to develop understanding, but one's book is inanimate in this regard.

Along these same lines, there has been a considerable blurring of boundaries between some groups defined as humane societies and animal rights groups in recent years. You point out as well, that the historical picture is much less neat than I indicate. At the time of my research I relied very heavily on French's (1975) Antivivisection and Medical Science in Victorian Society, in which he discusses the movements as having distinct differences. It also seemed to me that most activists with whom I spoke in the early 1980s carefully differentiated their cause from that of traditional humane societies. Speaking of which, I used pseudonyms for activists in the movement because it was part of routine human subjects protocol at Berkeley, where I did the research. I

submitted all of the quotations from activists to them for review (except in one case in which the individual told me not to), and several activists spent time reviewing and rewording material. I intended no disrespect in changing their names.

You point out that *Animal Liberators* is the first scholarly treatise on the topic, although there have been other more polemical attempts. The book has received a variety of responses, and some like yours involved serious and responsible critical analysis. But the book has evoked (what for me were) surprising reactions from some members of both the animal research and animal rights communities. The professional journal of American physiologists referred to it as a probable tool for recruitment into animal rights groups and advised physiologists to read it in order to arm themselves against upcoming attacks by antivivisectionist hordes. In a similar vein, an eminent and influential man of American scientific letters warned me that he found my treatment of "them" (movement activists) far too sympathetic, that I had strayed from the righteous path, and that the movement could only be understood in terms of "greed" ("they're in it to solicit money from an unsuspecting public").

On the other hand, Ritvo vivisected the book in the *Nation*, calling it "disingenuous", and a thinly disguised (possibly unconscious, but all the worse for it) polemic in favor of animal research, without addressing my ideas about antivivisection and feminism, technological incursions of nature, etc. (I read with near incomprehension her diatribe while miscarrying a pregnancy. This particular concatenation of evil review and physical misfortune made me wonder about some theories of sorcery described in the annals of anthropology!) Invited to speak recently at a symposium on "Animals, Ethics, and Social Policy", my talk was followed by the surprise bombast of a livid retired philosophy professor involved in the academic wing of the movement, who suggested that I improve my teaching salary by working as a "propagandist for the AMA" (well, I'd rather not). And etcetera, etcetera, ad nauseum.

If you can't take the heat, get out of the kitchen, the saying goes. I don't mean that there were no decent reviews of the book, nor do I think everyone

should agree with my ideas. But on this subject I've too often found myself involved at a level of discourse that is truly depressing. I too hope for more analysis of these issues, and particularly for more sophisticated and interesting social science research into the animal rights movement. But I'm not sure that I want to continue to participate in the current discourse; it's just too damned nasty, non-self-reflective and non-self-critical (that goes for both "sides" of the debate). I'm currently writing a very gory mystery, located at a famous research university, involving nefarious goings-on among scientists and their antagonists, and culminating in a number of gruesome murders. The animals emerge as the only innocents.

Best Wishes,

Susan Sperling  
Division of Social Science  
Chabot College



To The Editors:

I have followed the progress of BTS with interest and have found many of the articles both interesting and provocative. As an editor myself, I know how difficult it can be to encourage new ideas and so-called 'fringe' arguments without compromising one's standards of scholarship and argument. Unfortunately, I believe you have seriously compromised those standards with the publication of the paper by Catalano.

Catalano purports to demonstrate that animal research is pseudoscience by claiming (I think) that it fails Popper's Falsifiability Criterion for true 'science'. However, it seems to me that he argues that some results of animal experiments can be falsified -- hence demonstrating that animal research falls into the category of science, rather than pseudoscience.

However, when one investigates the supposed arguments and facts used by Catalano one finds the

usual bag of pseudoscientific tricks. The facts are selective and the cited sources are themselves not representative of the most rigorously critiqued sources of scientific argument. When I want to know what percentage of people bitten by a rabid animal contract the disease, I do not turn to Der Spiegel for my information, but to carefully performed epidemiological studies. Also, when citing diabetes mortality statistics, I would like to see citations from national disease incidence statistics, not from Slaughter of the Innocents by Hans Reusch (Reusch gives no source for the diabetes statistics he cites in the book).

To take one of the examples cited by Catalano -- namely, the polio vaccine statistics. The data cited apparently come from a 1977 article in The A-V Magazine authored by Owen Hunt (at least Catalano's argument is remarkably similar to that presented by Hunt). It is not clear why Hunt only used the statistics from New York from 1922 to 1962 when his article was published in 1977. Perhaps it was because the later statistics undermined his claims about the uselessness of the polio vaccine. For example, U.S. national statistics for poliomyelitis cases from 1951 to 1980 (for five year periods) are set out below (Mortality & Morbidity Weekly Report, 1982, 30(54), 12-17).

1951-55	258,000
1956-60	61,000
1961-65	5,200
1966-70	508
1971-75	143
1976-80	162

If Hunt (or Catalano) had followed through on their research, perhaps they would have been more enthusiastic about the usefulness of the vaccine for poliomyelitis. Finally, one of the main reasons why the Sabin vaccine became the vaccine of choice in this country (there are some countries where the Salk vaccine has always been favored), was because it was a live virus vaccine and therefore children who had not been immunized would be infected by those who had. Therefore, in theory, one did not have to vaccinate everybody in order to immunize

nearly all the children.

There are numerous other holes and suspected weak spots in the article and the argument is so full of logical non sequiturs and flaws that I am surprised that BTS would publish it. If someone wishes to make the argument that animal research is scientifically invalid, I would hope that we could expect a more scholarly piece of work than Catalano's attempt, especially in the pages of BTS.

Sincerely,

Andrew N. Rowan  
Director  
Tufts Center for Animals and Public Policy

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## BUFFALO

THE THUNDER IS GONE FROM THE PLAINS  
THE PRAIRIE HAS LOST HER RUMBLINGS  
THE ROBE THAT STRETCHED FROM THE MIGHTY  
MISSISSIPPI TO THE ROCKIES ITS FRINGES  
REACHING THE WESTERN SHORE  
WAS RENT DESTROYED AND WASTED  
ALL THAT REMAINS IS A REMNANT  
OF THE GARMENT THAT CLOTHED THE NEW WORLD

*buffalo spirit awakens  
the bulls are in rut  
the cows bellow for children  
we deny them at our peril*

-- Paulette Callen

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Information needed for research on the literature of philosophic vegetarianism in 19th-century England. Contact Karen Davis, Dept. of English, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742.