

DISCUSSION & REVIEW QUESTIONS:

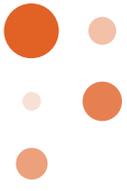
- Towards the beginning of the video, Mr. Prager informs us that, “One of the biggest differences between Judeo-Christian values and secular values concerns this very issue – the worth of the human being.” Why do you think that such a vast difference exists between the two perspectives concerning the depth and type of value given to humans? What do you think influences people to adopt one value system or the other? Explain.
- Later, when explaining why many people claim that they would save their dog over a stranger, Mr. Prager states, “One [reason] is that with the denial of the authority of higher values such as religious teachings, people increasingly make moral decisions on the basis of how they feel.” What do you think Mr. Prager means when using the phrase ‘authority of higher values?’ Do you think that making moral decisions on the basis of feelings is wrong? Why or why not?
- Mr. Prager later shares with us that, “‘Holocaust on Your Plate’ is a campaign developed by the animal-rights group... (PETA) that teaches that there is no difference between the barbecuing of chickens in America and the burning of Jews in the Holocaust. Why? Because a human and a chicken are of equal worth.” Do you think that PETA’s comparison is a valid one? Why or why not? Do you think that humans and chickens should be valued equally? Why or why not?
- Towards the end of the video, Mr. Prager makes his case that the Judeo-Christian value system values humans infinitely more so than the secular humanist value system when he points out that, “Only by rejecting Judeo-Christian values could Nazis declare Jews, Slavs, and others ‘sub-human.’ [and then murder them by the millions] And only by rejecting Judeo-Christian values could Communist regimes slaughter those they call class enemies... Meanwhile, human slavery was abolished only in the Judeo-Christian world.” What do you think the connection is between embracing Judeo-Christian values and the abolishment of slavery? Clearly, PETA also views chickens as being slaves to be liberated, just like Africans were, i.e. secular humanists view these ‘enslaved’ chickens to be the same as Black slaves in America. Do you agree with this view? Why or why not?
- Mr. Prager ends the video by asking, “So, are you more valuable than a dog, or a cat or a tree?” How would you answer his question? Explain.

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

CASE STUDY: Animal Experimentation

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the article “Experimenting on animals,” then answer the questions that follow.

- What are “The Three Rs?” Which argument does the author characterize as ‘consequentialist?’ What is “The basic arithmetic?” What is the ‘acts and omissions’ argument? What did the EU propose?
- Which value system would be against animal experimentation? Explain. Do you agree with the ‘basic arithmetic’ that, “it’s virtually impossible to assign a moral value to a human being?” Why or why not? In the article, the author states, “The issue of animal experiments is straightforward if we accept that animals have rights: if an experiment violates the rights of an animal, then it is morally wrong, because it is wrong to violate rights.” Do you think that animals have rights? Explain. If all life should be given equal value, as the secular humanists argue for, then why do you think that the scientific community tests on animals before testing on humans? Doesn’t that mean that the scientific community values humans more than animals? Further, if it is the case that the scientific community (which does not have a moral authority!) values humans more than animals, then isn’t that a compelling case, in and of itself, for non-scientists to also value humans more than animals? Why or why not?
- Why would Judeo-Christian value holders generally agree with some animal testing under certain conditions? What is the relationship between animal experimentation and Mr. Prager’s question about whether you are more valuable than a dog, cat, or tree? Explain.



QUIZ

VIDEO
TITLE

1. What does secular humanism do?

- a. Elevates the value of humans.
- b. Equates humans with God.
- c. Devalues the worth of humans.
- d. Praises the tenets of Islam.

2. In the Judeo-Christian system, human beings are _____.

- a. only material beings
- b. as valuable as animals
- c. created in the image of God
- d. less valuable than the environment

3. Human slavery was abolished only in the Judeo-Christian world.

- a. True
- b. False

4. PETA believes that experimenting on animals is acceptable in which of the following instances:

- a. Finding a cure for cancer.
- b. Finding a cure for AIDS.
- c. Obtain organs to save a human life.
- d. None of the above.

5. How could Nazis declare Jews and others “sub-human?”

- a. By rejecting secular humanism.
- b. By embracing Judeo-Christian values.
- c. By rejecting Judeo-Christian values.
- d. By embracing Buddhist teachings.



QUIZ - ANSWER KEY

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http://www.bbc.co.uk/ethics/animals/using/experiments_1.shtml

Ethics guide

Experimenting on animals

Animal experiments are widely used to develop new medicines and to test the safety of other products. Many of these experiments cause pain to the animals involved or reduce their quality of life in other ways. If it is morally wrong to cause animals to suffer then experimenting on animals produces serious moral problems.

Animal experimentation

A difficult issue



In 1997 Dr Jay Vacanti and his team grew an ear on the back of a mouse

Animal experiments are widely used to develop new medicines and to test the safety of other products.

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Animal experimenters are very aware of this ethical problem and acknowledge that experiments should be made as humane as possible.

They also agree that it's wrong to use animals if alternative testing methods would produce equally valid results.

Two positions on animal experiments

- **In favour of animal experiments:**
- Experimenting on animals is acceptable if (and only if):
 - suffering is minimised in all experiments
 - human benefits are gained which could not be obtained by using other methods

- **Against animal experiments:**
- Experimenting on animals is always unacceptable because:
 - it causes suffering to animals
 - the benefits to human beings are not proven
 - any benefits to human beings that animal testing does provide could be produced in other ways

Harm versus benefit

The case for animal experiments is that they will produce such great benefits for humanity that it is morally acceptable to harm a few animals.

The equivalent case against is that the level of suffering and the number of animals involved are both so high that the benefits to humanity don't provide moral justification.

The three Rs

The three Rs are a set of principles that scientists are encouraged to follow in order to reduce the impact of research on animals.

The three Rs are: Reduction, Refinement, Replacement.

- **Reduction:**
- Reducing the number of animals used in experiments by:
 - Improving experimental techniques
 - Improving techniques of data analysis
 - Sharing information with other researchers
- **Refinement:**
- Refining the experiment or the way the animals are cared for so as to reduce their suffering by:
 - Using less invasive techniques
 - Better medical care
 - Better living conditions
- **Replacement:**
- Replacing experiments on animals with alternative techniques such as:
 - Experimenting on cell cultures instead of whole animals
 - Using computer models
 - Studying human volunteers
 - Using epidemiological studies

Drug safety

Animal experiments and drug safety

Scientists say that banning animal experiments would mean either

- an end to testing new drugs or
- using human beings for all safety tests

Animal experiments are not used to show that drugs are safe and effective in human beings - they cannot do that. Instead, they are used to help decide whether a particular drug should be tested on people.

Animal experiments eliminate some potential drugs as either ineffective or too dangerous to use on human beings. If a drug passes the animal test it's then tested on a small human group before large scale clinical trials.

The pharmacologist William D H Carey demonstrated the importance of animal testing in a letter to the British Medical Journal:

“We have 4 possible new drugs to cure HIV. Drug A killed all the rats, mice and dogs. Drug B killed all the dogs and rats. Drug C killed all the mice and rats. Drug D was taken by all the animals up to huge doses with no ill effect. Question: Which of those drugs should we give to some healthy young human volunteers as the first dose to humans (all other things being equal)? To the undecided (and non-prejudiced) the answer is, of course, obvious. It would also be obvious to a normal 12 year old child... An alternative, acceptable answer would be, none of those drugs because even drug D could cause damage to humans. That is true, which is why Drug D would be given as a single, very small dose to human volunteers under tightly controlled and regulated conditions.” *William DH Carey, BMJ 2002; 324: 236a*

Are animal experiments useful?

Are animal experiments useful?

Animal experiments only benefit human beings if their results are valid and can be applied to human beings.

Not all scientists are convinced that these tests are valid and useful.

“...animals have not been as critical to the advancement of medicine as is typically claimed by proponents of animal experimentation. Moreover, a great deal of animal experimentation has been misleading and resulted in either withholding of drugs, sometimes for years, that were subsequently found to be highly beneficial to humans, or to the release and use of drugs that, though harmless to animals, have actually contributed to human suffering and death.” *Jane Goodall 'Reason for Hope', 1999*

The moral status of the experimenters

Animal rights extremists often portray those who experiment on animals as being so cruel as to have forfeited any own moral standing.

But the argument is about whether the experiments are morally right or wrong. The general moral character of the experimenter is irrelevant.

What is relevant is the ethical approach of the experimenter to each experiment. John P Gluck has suggested that this is often lacking:

“The lack of ethical self-examination is common and generally involves the denial or avoidance of animal suffering, resulting in the dehumanization of researchers and the ethical degradation of their research subjects.” *John P. Gluck; Ethics and Behavior, Vol. 1, 1991*

Gluck offers this advice for people who may need to experiment on animals:

“The use of animals in research should evolve out of a strong sense of ethical self-examination. Ethical self-examination involves a careful self-analysis of one's own personal and scientific motives. Moreover, it requires a recognition of animal suffering and a satisfactory working through of that suffering in terms of one's ethical values.” *John P. Gluck; Ethics and Behavior, Vol. 1, 1991*

Animal experiments and animal rights

The issue of animal experiments is straightforward if we accept that animals have rights: if an experiment violates the rights of an animal, then it is morally wrong, because it is wrong to violate rights.

The possible benefits to humanity of performing the experiment are completely irrelevant to the morality of the case, because rights should never be violated (except in obvious cases like self-defence).

And as one philosopher has written, if this means that there are some things that humanity will never be able to learn, so be it.

This bleak result of deciding the morality of experimenting on animals on the basis of rights is probably why people always justify animal experiments on consequentialist grounds; by showing that the benefits to humanity justify the suffering of the animals involved.

Justifying animal experiments

Those in favour of animal experiments say that the good done to human beings outweighs the harm done to animals.

This is a consequentialist argument, because it looks at the consequences of the actions under consideration.

It can't be used to defend all forms of experimentation since there are some forms of suffering that are probably impossible to justify even if the benefits are exceptionally valuable to humanity.

Ethical arithmetic

Animal experiments and ethical arithmetic

The consequentialist justification of animal experimentation can be demonstrated by comparing the moral consequences of doing or not doing an experiment.

This process can't be used in a mathematical way to help people decide ethical questions in practice, but it does demonstrate the issues very clearly.

The basic arithmetic

If performing an experiment would cause more harm than not performing it, then it is ethically wrong to perform that experiment.

The harm that will result from not doing the experiment is the result of multiplying three things together:

- the moral value of a human being
- the number of human beings who would have benefited
- the value of the benefit that each human being won't get

The harm that the experiment will cause is the result of multiplying together:

- the moral value of an experimental animal
- the number of animals suffering in the experiment
- the negative value of the harm done to each animal

But it isn't that simple because:

- it's virtually impossible to assign a moral value to a being
- it's virtually impossible to assign a value to the harm done to each individual
- the harm that will be done by the experiment is known beforehand, but the benefit is unknown
- the harm done by the experiment is caused by an action, while the harm resulting from not doing it is caused by an omission

Certain versus potential harm

In the theoretical sum above, the harm the experiment will do to animals is weighed against the harm done to humans by not doing the experiment.

But these are two conceptually different things.

- The harm that will be done to the animals is certain to happen if the experiment is carried out
- The harm done to human beings by not doing the experiment is unknown because no-one knows how likely the experiment is to succeed or what benefits it might produce if it did succeed

So the equation is completely useless as a way of deciding whether it is ethically acceptable to perform an experiment, because until the experiment is carried out, no-one can know the value of the benefit that it produces.

And there's another factor missing from the equation, which is discussed in the next section.

Acts and omissions

The equation doesn't deal with the moral difference between acts and omissions.

Most ethicists think that we have a greater moral responsibility for the things we do than for the things we fail to do; i.e. that it is morally worse to do harm by doing something than to do harm by not doing something.

For example: we think that the person who deliberately drowns a child has done something much more wrong than the person who refuses to wade into a shallow pool to rescue a drowning child.

In the animal experiment context, if the experiment takes place, the experimenter will carry out actions that harm the animals involved.

If the experiment does not take place the experimenter will not do anything. This may cause harm to human beings because they won't benefit from a cure for their disease because the cure won't be developed.

So the acts and omissions argument could lead us to say that

- it is morally worse for the experimenter to harm the animals by experimenting on them
- than it is to (potentially) harm some human beings by not doing an experiment that might find a cure for their disease.

And so if we want to continue with the arithmetic that we started in the section above, we need to put an additional, and different, factor on each side of the equation to deal with the different moral values of acts and omissions.

Other approaches

Other approaches to animal experiments

One writer suggests that we can cut out a lot of philosophising about animal experiments by using this test:

“...whenever experimenters claim that their experiments are important enough to justify the use of animals, we should ask them whether they would be prepared to use a brain-damaged human being at a similar mental level to the animals they are planning to use.” *Peter Singer, Animal Liberation, Avon, 1991*

Sadly, there are a number of examples where researchers have been prepared to experiment on human beings in ways that should not have been permitted on animals.

And another philosopher suggests that it would anyway be more effective to research on normal human beings:

“Whatever benefits animal experimentation is thought to hold in store for us, those very same benefits could be obtained through experimenting on humans instead of animals. Indeed, given that problems exist because scientists must extrapolate from animal models to humans, one might think there are good scientific reasons for preferring human subjects.” *Justifying Animal Experimentation: The Starting Point, in Why Animal Experimentation Matters: The Use of Animals in Medical Research, 2001*

If those human subjects were normal and able to give free and informed consent to the experiment then this might not be morally objectionable.

Proposed EU directive

Proposed EU directive

In November 2008 the European Union put forward proposals to revise the directive for the protection of animals used in scientific experiments in line with the three R principle of replacing, reducing and refining the use of animals in experiments. The proposals have three aims:

- to considerably improve the welfare of animals used in scientific procedures
- to ensure fair competition for industry
- to boost research activities in the European Union

The proposed directive covers all live non-human vertebrate animals intended for experiments plus certain other species likely to experience pain, and also animals specifically bred so that their organs or tissue can be used in scientific procedures.

The main changes proposed are:

- to make it compulsory to carry out ethical reviews and require that experiments where animals are used be subject to authorisation
- to widen the scope of the directive to include specific invertebrate species and fetuses in their last trimester of development and also larvae and other animals used in basic research, education and training to set minimum housing and care requirements
- to require that only animals of second or older generations be used, subject to transitional periods, to avoid taking animals from the wild and exhausting wild populations
- to state that alternatives to testing on animals must be used when available and that the number of animals used in projects be reduced to a minimum
- to require member states to improve the breeding, accommodation and care measures and methods used in procedures so as to eliminate or reduce to a minimum any possible pain, suffering, distress or lasting harm caused to animals

The proposal also introduces a ban on the use of great apes - chimpanzees, bonobos, gorillas and orangutans - in scientific procedures, other than in exceptional circumstances, but there is no proposal to phase out the use of other non-human primates in the immediate foreseeable future.