UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS PRESS

Ferrater Mora Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics

Review
Author(s): Bernard E. Rollin
The Costs and Benefits of Animal Experiments by Andrew Knight
Source: *Journal of Animal Ethics*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Spring 2013), pp. 110-112
Published by: University of Illinois Press in partnership with the Ferrater Mora Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/janimalethics.3.1.0110
Accessed: 24/04/2013 14:43

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at
http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

University of Illinois Press and *Ferrater Mora Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics* are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Journal of Animal Ethics.*

http://www.jstor.org

This content downloaded from 128.174.138.193 on Wed, 24 Apr 2013 14:43:31 PM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

The Costs and Benefits of Animal Experiments. By Andrew Knight. (London, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. 254 pp. Hardback. £50. ISBN: 978-0-230-24392-7).

Bernard E. Rollin
Colorado State University

Andrew Knight's book *The Costs and Benefits of Animal Experiments* should be required reading for anyone concerned with the ethics of invasive animal experimentation, regardless of what side of the issue one is disposed to defend. The book provides a well-documented account of an inescapable part of the debate that has hitherto been lacking.

Certainly, conditions for and treatment of animals used in research have improved since the passage of new laws in the United States and Britain in the mid-1980s. A recent literature search for "analgesia for laboratory animals" revealed almost 12,000 papers, rather than the zero papers I found in a 1982 search. But it is doubtful that even today animal researchers fully understand societal expectations regarding animal care and use, nor can they provide a well-formed defense of using animals in ways that harm them.

Historically, society did not have a robust ethic for how animals should be treated. The only laws constraining animal use in society historically were the anticruelty laws forbidding sadistic, deviant, purposeless, deliberate, unnecessary infliction of pain and suffering on animals or outrageous neglect. These laws, both by statute and by judicial interpretation, did not apply to socially accepted animal uses, such as research or agriculture. Because the use of animals in society was overwhelmingly agricultural, aimed at providing humans with food, fiber, locomotion, and power, and because the key to agricultural success was good husbandry and good care, enforced by the most powerful sanction—self-interest—the anticruelty laws were only there for society to manage sadists and psychopaths unmoved by self-interest. As society began to worry about animal suffering attendant on "normal" animal use, such as intensive agriculture and animal research, both of which created animal pain and suffering that did not fall under the anticruelty ethic, society was forced to create a new societal ethic for animals going beyond cruelty. This need is evidenced by the fact that in 2004, over 2,100 bills pertaining to animal welfare were promulgated across the United States in state, federal, and municipal legislatures.

Presuppositional to the creation of legislative safeguards for animals used in research is a basic ethical question: What entitles humans to use animals in ways that harm, hurt, kill, and distress them in research for human benefit? The logic of our societal ethic for humans does not allow humans to be used in such a way. We cannot use prisoners, developmentally disabled persons, unwanted children, dangerous psychopaths, or other socially disvalued human beings in invasive ways for the benefit of the majority or of society as a whole. The researchers responsible for the Tuskegee experiments in the United States involving the study of syphilis on black prisoners without informed consent argued that such people were "worth less" than normal citizens, and thus their interests could be sacrificed for the good of the majority. It is well known that these arguments were categorically rejected when the nature of the study was revealed during the 1970s and, in fact, prompted detailed federal restrictions on the use of human subjects in research.

The only plausible argument in defense of such use of human beings is the utilitarian one arguing that such use generates more benefit than cost, a claim that society has unequivocally rejected. But perhaps,

This content downloaded from 128.174.138.193 on Wed, 24 Apr 2013 14:43:31 PM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

in the case of animals, such an argument is socially acceptable. If that is the case, we are led to another level of ethical concern about the use of animals in scientific experimentation. If the only justification for such use is the benefit it provides, which allegedly far outweighs the cost to the animals, then it follows that the only allowable animal use in experimentation would be that which patently and demonstrably provides greater benefit than the cost to the animals. And as Knight clearly shows, this is not the current state of affairs. Animals are deployed in painful ways in myriad experiments that do not provide significant benefit. As I have illustrated in the past, these experiments range from toxicological experiments that only provide some legal protection for corporations from lawsuits regarding product liability to experiments in pursuit of new weaponry, to inflicting learned helplessness on animals, to seeing how many bites an "intruder" animal into an established animal colony suffers, to numerous other experiments augmenting knowledge that appears to be of no practical value. Fully documenting the limited benefits in a systematic way based on the scientific literature is the task of Knight's book, a work that at the very least should prompt advocates of the moral acceptability of animal research on the basis of benefits it provides to rethink their arguments.

Every claim made in this book is exhaustively documented. In one very timely chapter, the issue of using chimpanzees is examined. The United States is one of the few countries that continue to allow invasive use of these highly evolved animals, humans' closest relatives, a policy that is extremely controversial. Once again, supporters of such use claim that it is essential to making progress in the battle against major human diseases. Yet in his own research examining 95 papers reporting experiments on chimpanzees, Knight found that fully half of them had never been cited in other scientific papers. (Number of citations is a standard indicator of the importance of research reports.) And because a significant number of research reports are never published at all, one can obviously question the value of the majority of work done on chimpanzees.

A proponent of research on chimpanzees could always respond that Knight is ignoring the fact that in some cases invaluable results emerge from a given piece of such research. But this is a non sequitur. After all, his point is not to deny that on certain occasions valuable information comes out of such experimentation. Rather, he is responding to the claim that *in general* the benefits of such research exceed the costs to the animals.

In his discussion of toxicity and carcinogenicity testing on animals, Knight again levels devastating criticism against relying on such tests. In particular, he shows that animal work of this sort generates many *false positive* results, rendering such animal testing unsuitable to serve as a basis for creating regulatory standards.

In a later chapter, Knight details some inherent general limitations to animal studies that render such studies of limited value for extrapolation to human health. He points out that in many cases the animals differ significantly in numerous biological characteristics from the humans they allegedly model. Routes of exposure to toxicants may and do differ greatly between humans and laboratory animals. Subtle (and not-so-subtle) stressors can markedly affect animal responses. (Small changes in ambient temperature, for example, can make a large difference in toxicity of certain substances.) And as I have pointed out in some of my writings, too many people doing experiments on animals know virtually nothing about the

This content downloaded from 128.174.138.193 on Wed, 24 Apr 2013 14:43:31 PM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

animals they use, save that they model a particular disease or syndrome.

Other sections in this book are equally valuable—for example, Knight's lucid and realistic accounts of alternatives, discussing all three of Russell and Burch's classic accounts of replacement, reduction, and refinement. As is the case with the rest of Knight's book, he writes in a crisp, clear, and approachable style that can be read with profit by experts and laypeople alike but that at the same time does not oversimplify or patronize.

One of the most important chapters of this book deals with the use of animals in education. In many cases, the alleged need to hurt or kill live animals is less a pedagogical necessity than it is a rite of passage wrapped in an ideological carapace that implicitly affirms, "I was trained that way, and I am perfect," coupled with the belief that there is no room in science for morality, sensitivity, or compassion. This was vividly illustrated to me during my first year of teaching in a veterinary school curriculum. At that time, students were taught surgery through use of the same animals for nine successive surgical procedures over three weeks, with no provision for analgesia or aftercare. As Knight skillfully relates, such brutal approaches to teaching can and often do have lifelong traumatic psychological effects on students.

In sum, this is a very brief but very comprehensive book primarily directed at the utilitarian benefits argument that attempts to justify invasive animal research. But it is a good deal more than that and should be required reading for all animal advocates hoping to speak with an informed voice and, ideally, for all nascent animal researchers as well.

Animals and Social Work: A Moral Introduction. By Thomas Ryan. (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. Hardback. $85. ISBN: 978-0-230-27250-7.)

Christina Risley-Curtiss
Arizona State University

Thomas Ryan, a social worker who has worked in rural communities in Australia for 18 years and who is an associate fellow of the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics, has written a groundbreaking book on the moral right of "other" animals (humans are also animals) to be included in the conceptualization and practice of the social work profession.

Animals and Social Work: A Moral Introduction is a book that will be met with both profound agreement and disagreement. With that said, it is important to note that I am a social worker from the United States, and I strongly concur with Ryan's premise about a social work profession that is inclusive of other animals. I especially agree that we "*owe* it to animals to treat them in ways that respect their inherent value, individuality and subjectivity, as something due to them" (p. 160). I have been long swimming against the strong current in social work that Ryan aptly describes as being inextricably human-centered. I have been told by a fellow social work professor that social work is not about animals but about humans, have had my manuscript submissions to social work journals labeled as unconventional or irrelevant, and have had master of social work students criticize in course evaluations my inclusion of other animals in my social work practice class (e.g., "less dog, more people"). Therefore, I welcome Ryan as a fellow social worker who "gets it" and applaud the publishing of this book as a step forward in the struggle to move the profession forward in considering other animals as part of its moral purview.

This content downloaded from 128.174.138.193 on Wed, 24 Apr 2013 14:43:31 PM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions