EDITORIAL

Science is not the highest good in the world. Life is. Science is good only insofar as it serves life. Even if we place special value on human life, it is clear that human survival depends on the integrity of the biosphere. And if we take seriously the biological continuity of species, then the life and well being of other animals (who are, after all, our cousins, as well as part of the ecostructure on which our own survival depends) should be as important to us as our own survival—indeed, they are one and the same.

Yet we seem never to question our treatment of laboratory animals and the brutalizing effect of some of our practices on ourselves and our students (not so very different from the brutalizing effect of watching television images of people suffering the horrors of war while we enjoy our evening meal). It is only a small step from ignoring the welfare of animals to ignoring the welfare of people in distant places (after all, do they really feel pain as we do?) to ignoring the welfare of our neighbors. But our own survival depends on our neighbors, and on all the life around us. If we do not model a strong moral sense of the sacredness of life, we can hardly expect better of our students.

In the face of a growing "animal welfare" movement, scientists react with a show of contempt for those who "don't understand science." Yes, some in the animal welfare movement appear not to appreciate science's contribution to the welfare of living things, and the necessity to sacrifice a certain number of animals to the welfare of the rest. But that ignorance is exceptional. Most animal welfare proponents *do* understand the value and the needs of science (indeed, many are scientists themselves, speaking from personal experience). They do not want to ban research with animals. Rather, they ask for an end to wanton and unthinking cruelty. They wish us to ask, about *each* experiment we contemplate, whether the harm we will be doing our animal subjects is balanced by the potential contribution to the welfare of the biosphere. Is *this* experiment necessary? Does it needlessly replicate earlier work? Could our students learn from a demonstration rather than a crudely-done experiment of their own? Could the experiment be done with an earlier-evolved species? fewer subjects? a lesser intensity of shock? with appetitive rather than aversive stimuli? with a lesser degree of starvation, social or sensory isolation, confinement, restraint, or mutilation? For how many days, weeks, months or years should one animal be required to serve science with its pain or suffering? Would the results of experimentation have more generality if the experimental conditions were less extreme? Does expedience justify animal suffering?

It is our moral obligation constantly to ask ourselves these questions, and to instill the habit of asking them in our students.

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