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The Anti-Cruelty Society

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History of the Humane Movement and Prospects for the 80s

Robert A. Brown

It was in 1836 that the oldest humane society currently in existence, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, was founded in London. Many others were formed during the nineteenth century, such as the organization I now represent, which was founded in Chicago in 1899. Above all else, there is one distinguishing feature of this period for me: the movement had what is known in Chicago as clout. In marked contrast to the years following the first World War, humane societies enjoyed support from individuals of wealth, influence, and brains. Let me give some examples:

Victoria herself was a patron of that first SPCA before her accession. The first exponent of humane legislation in Parliament was "Humanity Martin," whose dominions in Galway encompassed 200,000 acres. From his front door to his gatehouse he had to drive thirty miles. Here in Chicago, The Anti-Cruelty Society was formed by the wife of one of the city's most illustrious figures, Theodore Thomas. But my point about clout may be better made with examples of the brains behind the movement.

In Eastern Europe we find Leo Tolstoy, an outspoken champion of animals. In Germany — Arthur Schopenhauer and Richard Wagner. In France — Victor Hugo. In England — just about the entire intelligentsia: the poets Blake, Shelley, Browning, and Tennyson; the novelists Charles Dickens, Robert Louis Stevenson, Lewis Carroll, and Thomas Hardy; in the arts John Ruskin. In 1891 Henry Salt formed the Humanitarian League, including no lesser a figure than George Bernard Shaw. In the United States — Henry Thoreau, Walt Whitman, Mark Twain, and the Beechers — Henry Ward and his sister Harriet Beecher Stowe.

These were not simply individuals outraged by certain excesses of their time such as bull baiting, the rat pit, and the bearing rein, an orthopedic nightmare which forced a horse's neck into a painful but supposedly spirited posture. Rather these were individuals who espoused what have been thought of in recent years as the two radical fringes of humanitarianism, namely, vegetarianism and antivivisection.

The question that immediately comes to mind is, "What on earth happened?" for, since the first World War, the pejorative "little old lady in tennis shoes" does often apply. Why ethical movements flourish and wane can be a matter of speculation only, but I offer mine here.

Let us look at what those intellectual giants of the nineteenth century were saying about animals. Tolstoy wrote,

"And there are the ideas of the future, of which some are already approaching realization and are obliging people to change their way of life and to struggle against the former ways: such ideas in our world as those of freeing the labourers, of giving equality to women, of ceasing to use flesh food, and so on (Giehl, 1979).

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Similar quotations can be found in the writings of the others named (Freshel, 1933).

Unlike the stereotype who supposedly pampers poodles while conspecifics starve, these animal rights advocates had broad human concerns. Mark Twain wrote the short story, *A Dog's Tale*, one of the most maudlin of antivivisection tracts, but he also pleaded for civil rights with his depiction of the innate sensitivity of Huck to the runaway slave, Jim, in *Huckleberry Finn*.

Lest the user of laboratory animals gain comfort from the notion that none of these figures were biologists, I should mention that both discoverers of the great unifying principle of biology, Darwin and Wallace, deplored sacrificing animals on the surgical table. Wallace advocated total abolition of vivisection (Freshel, 1933), and Darwin found the practice so odious the thought of it kept him awake at night (Hume, 1972).

Rights for any powerless sentient being were unrecognized in the nineteenth century. In 1800 there were two hundred different capital crimes in England! Slavery prevailed through much of the world during much of the century. The compassionate reformer must have lived in a state of exasperation. But then the lot of the oppressed started to change, at least on a *de jure* basis. Slavery was abolished. The labor movement gained strength. Eventually, even women could vote! In a meat-eating society, with human suffering diminishing from physiological and immunological studies of animals in laboratories, it seems to me small wonder that the animals' cause got lost in the twentieth century rush for rights for laborers, non-whites, and women.

Before we leave the period prior to the first World War, I would like to relate some early trends that may provide clues to the present renaissance of humanitarianism and relate a few anecdotes to dispel any implication in the foregoing that nineteenth century animal advocates (or their opponents) were always wise.

The stimulus for the birth of humane societies here and abroad was the overloading and abuse of the horse. Except for such as oxen on the farm and a few dog carts, the horse carried or pulled all passenger vehicles and all the products of nineteenth century agriculture and commerce. In the 1860s, Henry Bergh, founder of New York's American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, in top hat and opera cape, used to seize the whip from cruel teamsters and beat them furiously. However, even though the horse was the stimulus for the movement, the activities of the new organizations were often directed elsewhere because reform in treatment of horses was perceived as a bad target. The economy would collapse without horsepower, and besides, it seemed unjust to punish the working-man teamster for carrying out the orders of his employer. In England animal fighting, baiting, and blood sports were the early legislative targets.

The antivivisection movement gained initial strength from Frances Power Cobbe, described as follows by E.S. Turner, "...writer and social worker, who came from a family with five archbishops to its credit... in 1862 she had been ridiculed for advocating university degrees for women... Although accused of being ready to sacrifice any number of men, women, and children to save a few rabbits from inconvenience... she thought the lady of fashion who handed over her child to servants while she lavished her affection on a spaniel was about as odious a specimen of humanity as might easily be found." In contrast we have Dr. Anna Kingsford, who "with passionate energy invoked the wrath of God upon (Claude Bernard)... with the intent to smite him to destruction" (Turner, 1965). Eureka, it worked! Within a few

weeks the arch demon of vivisection was dead, and Dr. Kingsford turned her new found powers on Louis Pasteur, who had to spend some time on the Riviera to recuperate.

The side of science was also ill-represented. One professor claimed that "vivisection was necessary to proclaim the independence of science against interference by clerics and moralists". Dr. Emmanuel Klein, author of the *Handbook of the Physiological Laboratory*, admitted openly in testimony that he disregarded entirely the suffering of the animal in performing a painful experiment. Claude Bernard made good press: "A physiologist is no ordinary man. He is a learned man, a man possessed and absorbed by a scientific idea. He does not hear the animal's cry of pain. He is blind to the blood that flows...." In a poetic moment Bernard described the science of life as "a superb salon resplendent with light, which could be attained only by way of a long and ghastly kitchen" (Turner, 1965).

Thanks to such as these, the UK Parliament passed the Cruelty to Animals Act of 1876. But immediately there were regrets: one MP called it an insult to the medical profession; Miss Cobbe felt it was a measure that would protect vivisectionists. Recently Turner (1965) summed up the dilemma well: "It is still true that not a single prosecution for cruelty has been brought by the Home Office under the 1876 Act. Humanitarian and skeptic alike join in wondering whether any other Act in history has been so scrupulously observed."

As I have already hinted, the humane movement was less distinguished through much of the post World War I period. One highlight, though, was Henry Bergh's founding of the first agency to combat child abuse.

The automobile caused stray dogs and cats to replace horses as the rallying point for most humane societies. Numerous "Dogs' Homes" were established in Britain. In the U.S. many shelters accepted municipal and county contracts to round up unleashed pets. In my opinion this form of financing proved a disaster. It alienated the humane public because these animals were transported to distant and disagreeable pounds where few survived. One of the most widespread concerns was humane slaughter, which by today's standards seems merely a contradiction in terms. For the most part the Antivivisection Societies, despite substantial financial resources, ended up with meager programs consisting of the distribution of tracts to their own members.

There were, however, important voices to be heard. Here is a quote from C.S. Lewis (1979), renowned author of moral essays and allegorical novels:

"Once the old Christian idea of the total difference in kind between man and beast has been abandoned, then no argument for experiments on animals can be found which is not also an argument for experiments on inferior men. If we cut up beasts simply because they cannot prevent us and because we are backing our side in the struggle for existence, it is only logical to cut up imbeciles, criminals, enemies, or capitalists for the same reasons."

The problem is, such voices were not listened to. Between the wars and since, what was once called "vivisection" became known as "biomedical research" and it grew from the use of thousands to tens of millions of animal subjects. But the movement retained its greatest strength of all, extraordinarily broad grass roots support. Fund raising for humane societies proved different from that of other charities. While opinion leaders lost interest, uncounted legions of ordinary citizens remained

ready to part with dollars from nearly empty pockets to support thousands of SPCAs and humane causes.

Coming now to the present, we find vigorous rejuvenation underway in humane thinking. Much of this is coming from persons new to the movement but with a previous concern for the rights and suffering of others. In intellectual circles rights for blacks and women are no longer a matter for debate. Animals provide a focal point for lively discourse.

The most important recent event was the publication in 1975 of *Animal Liberation* (New York Review, New York, NY) by Utilitarian philosopher, Peter Singer. This book has had enormous impact because it is sound philosophically, and it is a forceful call to arms for the general reader on the subjects of factory farming and research animals.

I should also mention my friend and colleague Henry Spira, a self-educated merchant seaman with a background in union reform and civil rights. This modern day David has brought the methods of social activism to humane reform. As a result certain experiments were actually stopped in the Goliathan research establishment. You are probably aware of a case at The American Museum of Natural History in New York: the observation of copulatory behavior in cats after surgical denervation of the senses and the penis and after creating lesions in the brain (Wade, 1976). Spira's investigation and the resulting public outcry caused 121 Congressmen to ask the National Institutes of Health (the funding source) for an explanation and ultimately forced NIH to revise its guidelines for animal care (NIH, 1978).

Less well-known is the fact that Spira caused Amnesty International to stop conducting experiments on electric shock torture using pigs as models for human prisoners (Spira, 1978). The objective was to determine if painful shocks could be given without leaving telltale scars. Spira's successful argument pointed out that no matter what the outcome of the study, it would not help prisoners. If torture could be done in this way without scars, then this knowledge would encourage the practice. If scars were produced, then other methods would be employed and prisoners with any telltale scars would be executed to destroy the evidence. While such practical considerations might curtail serendipitous findings in science in general, they seem particularly relevant to many of us if the experimental plan causes suffering to another sentient being.

Many old and new humane societies are caught up in the current rebirth of humanitarianism. Several American societies have new and more vigorous directors. The Humane Society of the United States established the Institute for the Study of Animal Problems in Washington, DC. In Washington there is also now a Scientists' Center for Animal Welfare.

While Tolstoy appended animal abuse to a list of human wrongs, Nobel Prize winner Isaac Bashevis Singer speaks directly of animal rights problems and refers back to human problems: "There is only one little step from killing animals to creating gas chambers à la Hitler and concentration camps à la Stalin—all such deeds are done in the name of 'social justice.' There will be no justice as long as man will stand with a knife or with a gun and destroy those who are weaker than he is" (Giehl, 1979).

Now for the future, my personal view of the 80s, particularly as they relate to the laboratory animal sciences. For the user of laboratory animals I foresee good news and bad news. First the bad. The current extent of the use of laboratory animals—at least 75 million per year in the United States, perhaps 200 million per

year world wide, the numbers growing fast, and many procedures involving intense suffering—necessitates that the new breed of rational humanitarian will be far more concerned about what goes on in laboratories than, for instance, in the Canadian Harp Seal hunt which has claimed the lives this year of 180,000 pups by a relatively quick death.

One can argue that lab animals are small game for humane reform as compared to the three and one-half billion chickens raised by American agribusiness each year under conditions not unlike Dante's Inferno. But like direct attacks on horsepower a century ago, this extraordinarily cheap means of animal protein production may not be a vulnerable target in the coming decade. Furthermore, laboratory animal scientists themselves are no longer unified in their conviction that theirs is the ultimate tool.

The following is from the meeting last December of the International Program for the Evaluation of Short-Term Tests for Carcinogenicity:

"The major impetus for the development of the present study is that traditional methods for identifying carcinogens by using chronic animal studies cannot satisfy our need for rapid identification and control of carcinogens. I think we all agree on that point. We also realize that need for rapid identification and control of carcinogens cannot be met with rodent studies. These rodent studies, because of various resource limitations, cannot be carried out on a large enough scale to identify all carcinogenic chemicals in the environment within a reasonable period of time" (NIH, 1979).

The modern day counterpart of Claude Bernard may be Harry F. Harlow, whose studies on maternal deprivation and solitary confinement with resulting psychoses in primates have continued for decades. Says Dr. Tony Pfeiffer, now at Chicago's Field Museum of Natural History, "We know that a group-living animal, as shown by field study, is in pain when isolated from its kind. Harlow received a lot of press attention, but one has only to observe that the most ubiquitous social bond in the mammalian kingdom is the mother-infant bond, and its importance for normal growth and development is abundantly clear. Earl Count noted this in the fifties. Jane Goodall made the case as strongly as Harlow for the mother-infant bond when she observed chimpanzee infants orphaned by contact with a human-induced polio epidemic. She was able, moreover, to document how other group members, most interestingly blood relatives, helped or failed to help these infants" (NAS, 1977).

The bad news for laboratory animal scientists is that laboratory animal use looks like a good target for a significant reduction in present animal suffering. And, while we may be amused at the arrogant statements of Claude Bernard and other nineteenth century physiologists, they have their present counterparts. When the American Museum protest erupted, its Director, Dr. Thomas D. Nicholson, said: "If anything has distinguished this museum it has been its freedom to study whatever it chooses without regard to its demonstrable practical value. We intend to maintain that tradition" (*New York Times*, 16 February 1976).

Many scientists state in various ways the thought that dogs and cats in their colonies are better cared for than in some homes, and exotic animal subjects are better off than in the wild. Benign experimental procedures are relatively uncommon, and this argument is about as valid as defending slavery on the grounds that there are advantages to a civilized diet.

Harlow, like Bernard, makes great press. In explaining how he creates a depressed state in monkeys, he says, "Subsequently an improved total social isolation apparatus was created with true cunning and connivance by Rowland, and this became and remains our standard total social isolation chamber. Rowland's apparatus was designed so that monkeys could be raised from birth onward without seeing any other animal or part of any other animal except the experimenter's hands and arms which assisted the neonate up a feeding ramp during the first fifteen days of life... Exploration and even simple play were nonexistent. Torn by fear and anxiety, aggression was obliterated in these monkeys, and even the simple pleasure of onanism was curtailed. They sat huddled in the corners or against the walls of the room" (Harlow *et al.*, 1971). Once in Pittsburgh he told a reporter, "The only thing I care about is whether the monkeys will turn out a property I can publish. I don't have any love for them. Never have. I really don't like animals. I despise cats. I hate dogs. How can you like monkeys?" (*Pittsburgh Press*, 27 October 1974). I can only hope Harlow enjoys his experiments less than he enjoyed making outrageous statements as President of the American Psychological Association, Editor of *Journal of Comparative and Physiological Psychology*, and George Cary Comstock Research Professor at the University of Wisconsin.

By this time I think we may all need some good news for laboratory animal science. First of all, it is becoming clear that the most objectionable experiments result from ineffectual government-mandated safety testing and unnecessary industry-promoted product testing, areas far removed from the forefront of science. Also the behavioral experiments alluded to apparently account for a significant number of the painful experiments reported to the USDA (Diner, 1979). Would Harlow's chambers of horror be missed?

Spira's question to Amnesty International, 'How will the prisoners benefit when the results are in?', applies to other experiments and could save millions of research dollars for worthwhile studies.

While I am obviously a biased observer, I can see enormous advantages in scientific discovery from adoption of a humane orientation. Laboratory animals are turned to on a kind of knee-jerk basis. Considering the success of this approach in the past, this is not surprising. But real breakthroughs in science come from persons who have a new, outside-of-the-establishment perspective: Charles Darwin, the theology student; Francis Crick, the crystallographer. I feel strongly that biology and medicine can benefit from turning away from a rote compulsion for repeating everything on laboratory animals.

The International Program for Evaluation of Short-Term Tests for Carcinogenicity now employs thirty-five different assay systems of which the well-known Ames test is only one. Some of these tests can be read in only twelve hours (Devoret, 1979). Here is a gold mine for improved public health, but scientists continue to worry about false negatives and false positives. If you join the humane bandwagon, however, and really want to make these tests work, it doesn't take much imagination to see that false negatives could be drastically reduced by use of test batteries and that there may be no such thing as a false positive. Let me explain this last notion, since it may be new. A positive to the Ames test, for instance, is a substance which causes a significant mutagenic effect in a special strain of *Salmonella typhimurium* cultured with live microsomes. The positive is called "false" if the test substance is believed to be noncarcinogenic in animals. But do we really want to be able to spread, via supermarket shelves, chemicals that cause mutations in colon

bacteria? Personally, I don't see the need to contract traveller's sickness without the privilege of buying an airline ticket. This attitude toward so-called false positives should certainly apply to components of unessential products. Clarification and adoption of this notion could save millions of laboratory animal lives annually and improve public health. It could also reduce new product development costs for industry, as the only reason that DuPont might continue with a false positive for floor wax is the fear that Dow is doing so.

The behavioral sciences might benefit as well. In a stainless steel environment we eliminate variables such as weather changes, distracting odors, contact with other animals. But as you compile a list like this it is evident that what is really eliminated is a normal environment. Do we really care how animals behave in a state of partial sensory deprivation? Isn't this state a new variable? The new variable that is purposely introduced more often than not is the painful electric shock. It is well suited to experimental use because it can be quantified in terms of intensity (how many milliamps) and duration (how many tenths of a second). It also has the benefit of giving rise to a new industry—the manufacture of Skinner boxes, shuttleboxes, and Pavlovian slings and myriad electronic accoutrements. Let's look at one of the procedures carried out with this new technology:

At the University of Minnesota, Dorworth and Overmeier (1977) published "On 'Learned Helplessness': The Therapeutic Effects of Electro-Convulsive Shocks." The paper reads: "The question posed by the present experiment was whether ECS (electro-convulsive shock) administered to dogs showing maximal learned helplessness would be effective in alleviating the behavioral impairment." Nineteen dogs were placed in a hammock which "had holes in it through which the dog's legs were extended and were secured... 5 x 8cm brass electrodes could be attached to the hindfeet for the delivery of inescapable, uncontrollable electric shocks."

I could continue to quote the paper in detail, but let's be as brief as possible, so we can go on to less disturbing matters. "Sixty-four unsignalled, uncontrollable, inescapable electric shocks were delivered through the hindfeet electrodes... shocks were scheduled totally independent of behavior... session length was 105 minutes." The dogs were then tested in a shuttlebox. "Ten of the preshocked dogs never escaped (from the electrified side of the shuttlebox), showing maximum helplessness." Half of these were subject to ECS "every ten to fourteen hours until a total of six treatments had been given." Later the five treated dogs and the five controls were retested in the shuttlebox.

Can this study of a different disorder in a different species possibly tell us more about electro-convulsive shock therapy than a careful follow-up on some of the thousands of humans who have and have not received this treatment for depression?

Turning now to medicine, why isn't epidemiology enough in many cases? An extreme example is provided by the case of cigarette smoking, where the industry position is that not only is epidemiology not enough but legions of smoking primates and beagles in government-sponsored studies are not enough either. According to the tobacco industry, what are really needed are *their own* animal tests. And, of course, if they don't turn out right, one can always say that animal tests don't necessarily apply to man! Similar considerations apply to the current saccharine controversy (Smith, 1980).

Now for some more good news. I have found the humane public a reasonable lot; Anna Kingsfords are not that common. There is a high occurrence of euthanasia

in large urban shelters, but we enjoy wide support not because euthanasia has been eliminated but because we are successful in reducing it. A little progress by scientists may be very deeply appreciated.

A final bit of good news. The new breed of humanitarian may not want government regulation that only means more paperwork. This goes back to the dilemma of the British Cruelty to Animals Act of 1876. It is not at all clear that the Act has helped animals at all; learned helplessness is widely induced in Britain too (Evans, 1979). The American counterpart, the Federal Animal Welfare Act, enforced by a national task force of regulatory veterinarians, produced in its first ten years a total of \$600 in fines, none against research establishments (Brown, 1977). During the last two years, the U.S. Department of Agriculture finally decided to issue cease and desist orders to three research institutions among the many that haven't bothered to send in the required annual reports (Diner, 1978). Cease and desist, that is, from not sending in reports. What the new breed of humanitarian wants is to work with scientists to develop alternatives to the use of animals.

What I am trying to suggest is that real progress, which can only be measured in declining use of animals, may come primarily from a new attitude on the part of scientists, an attitude that regards the animals not as models but as feeling beings whose desire for life counts for something. With such an attitudinal change animal use could plummet. This may not be entirely far-fetched. At a conference on the ethics of the use of animals in research (Bates College, Lewiston, Maine, March 1980), Dr. Emmanuel Bernstein reported that J.B. Overmeier, co-author of the study in which 'unsignalled, uncontrollable, inescapable electric shocks' were delivered to the hindfeet of dogs, is the owner of two pet cats! He also has been a member of the American Psychological Association's Committee on Precautions and Standards in Animal Experimentation. Furthermore, I learned that when asked if he owned a pet dog he replied that he is away from home too long during the day (presumably getting through all the regimens of "marked intensity"), and he believes it would be unfair to leave a dog alone for so long.

The point is that most scientists are not cruel. Cruelty implies deliberate infliction of suffering of sadistic enjoyment. Scientists seem to have been conditioned by their training and the history of their discipline to disregard the suffering of their animal subjects. They may have a blind spot not unlike the one the RSPCA had with respect to fox hunting. I believe that science could benefit from a change to a humanitarian perspective during the 1980s.

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