

Letters

Journal Editorial Vindicates Vivisectionists

M.W. Fox's editorial, "The 'Show Dog' Syndrome" (*Int J Anim Prob* 3(1):3, 1982) cannot help but be extremely upsetting to any person who wants to see the particularly sadistic and useless experiments involving sentient beings recognized as such. I am referring to Fox's reference to Overmeier's "learned helplessness" experiments involving intense unavoidable electrical shock administered to dogs. Through reference to these kinds of experiments, Fox lends credibility to them; it would seem there is no other way to understand the "show dog" syndrome from a scientific perspective. Fox therefore validates Overmeier's research and others who engage in similar research.

Surely more accurate, applicable results should be derived from studies that occurred "in situ": studies which looked at show dogs, at the adaptability of dogs that go through a lot of handlers versus that of dogs that always go to shows with their owners. (For anyone who attends dog shows, the difference is marked and obvious between dogs that are shunted about and dogs that are always attended by someone who cares about their interests.) Certainly, an "in situ" project is not as convenient as a lab setting and, I suppose, such a project would not even call for a vivisectionist. In fact, it appears that the "show dog" syndrome calls for an observation of "anthropomorphic" kinds of responses, that is, responses that we can recognize as having similar emotional roots as our own. Vivisectionists are not "into" observing and recognizing the sentience of sentient beings.

A further objection I have to Fox's use of such research, apart from lending credibility and validation to questionable work, is that I don't think Fox has demonstrated how Overmeier's experiments are anywhere near applicable to the "show

dog" syndrome. The "dependency" that a dog forms upon its human owner is surely not similar to a situation in which dogs of unknown origin (often unwanted dogs abandoned to the dog pounds) cannot avoid intense electrical shock and ultimately succumb to it. Can this even be called "dependency"? And does it have anything whatever to do with "relating" to other sentient beings?

I have been subscribing to *International Journal for the Study of Animal Problems* since its inception. As long as the *Journal* questions the most fundamental issues regarding the whole concept of vivisection (which ultimately question the "scientific principle" itself), I shall continue to subscribe. But, if the *Journal* becomes simply yet another vehicle for vivisectionists to publish and conclude with the usual "more research in this area is needed," I would not be able to, in conscience, contribute my money toward such goals. This magazine has appealed to both sectors (vivisectionists and anti-vivisectionists) thus far—but I am alarmed by the fact that Fox's editorial suggests that the magazine is taking a new and disturbing direction.

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