

MAN VS WILD

Animal "rights" activists have attacked those who would dare use animals for human gain. But an objectivist analysis makes the case against animal "rights" and reveals that these activists are actually anti-man.



Demonstrators in favor of animal research rally during protests on both sides of the heated debate over animal research at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). The rallies followed the unsealing of an indictment of two animal rights activists on charges of stalking and intimidating university researchers. (AP/Reed Saxon)

The animal "rights" movement is alive and well—and as dangerous as ever. Since 2006, animal rights terrorists have made at least seven attacks (including firebombing) on the homes or cars of UCLA researchers who use animals in medical research. This follows decades of criminal activity by members of the movement. They have stolen lab animals and released them into the wild to die (and even killed them), vandalized research labs, firebombed labs and meat-packing plants, threatened lab workers with death, beatings and disfigurement, forcibly disrupted scientific meetings, encouraged murder with chants of "kill, kill, kill," and actually attempted murder. The Animal Liberation Front (ALF) is the main terrorist arm of the animal rights movement but there are plenty of similar groups. These groups also use picketing, boycotting and legislative activism to gain their ends, but these methods have never precluded violence.

The goal of the animal rights movement is to end all human intervention into the lives of animals, which means abolishing factory farms and all farms that have animals, hunting, circuses, zoos, horse-and-buggy rides, horse and dog races, the use of Seeing Eye dogs for the blind, the use of dogs to help police catch criminals and sniff out drugs in luggage, the ownership of pets and fur coats, the eating of meat, the manufacture and use of clothing made of leather or any other animal product, and, most ominously, all medical research that uses animals.

All this is motivated by what? Consider some quotes from representatives of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and their followers. (I focus on PETA, because it is the most active and influential animal rights organization, and it also has supported the ALF. Even those who do not agree with everything PETA says or does typically do support many of its goals. A simple Google search of "PETA Quotes" will return these and many more.):

- "Even if animal research results in a cure for AIDS, we'd be against it."
- "Even painless animal research is fascism, supremacism, because the act of confinement is traumatizing in itself"
- "A rat is a pig is a dog is a boy. They are all mammals."
- "Six million Jews died in concentration camps, but six million broiler chickens will die this year in slaughter houses."
- "Human beings have grown like a cancer. We're the biggest blight on the face of the earth."
- "The life of an ant and that of my child should be granted equal consideration."
- "If abandoning animal research means that there are some things we cannot learn, then so be it. ... We have no basic right ... not to be harmed by those natural diseases we are heir to."
- "If my father had a heart attack, it would give me no solace to know his treatment was first tried on a dog."
- "Foot and Mouth disease is something PETA would welcome in



Above: The Hertford College boat house at Oxford was firebombed by the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) as a protest of a new biomedical building. Robin Webb, ALF spokesman, said the organization has no structure or leaders but consists of individuals who attack the property of anyone they believe harms animals. (AP/Kirsty Wigglesworth)



Right: Fire inspectors examine fire damage to a McDonald's restaurant Belgium, following an arson attack by the Animal Liberation Front (ALF), a militant animal rights group that has claimed responsibility for multiple attacks against McDonald's. (AP/Yves Logghe)

this country for the positive effect on animals.”

► “If the death of one rat cured all diseases, it wouldn’t make any difference to me.”

Animal rights advocates have also compared the lynching of blacks in the South to the lynching of cows and the forced labor of children to the caging of chickens.

The motive revealed in the above quotes is clearly a seething hatred of man—contempt for human life and happiness and indifference to and even enjoyment of human suffering. PETA trivializes human life by claiming that the “chicken holocaust” is equivalent to the Jewish holocaust, that man is no different than an ant or a rat. They are quite happy to see men die of AIDS—a deadly disease which costs millions of lives a year worldwide.

The animal rights movement doesn’t stop there. In recent years, there has been an unholy alliance between these advocates and environmentalists who want species protection at any cost. For example, 37,000 jobs have been lost in California, and the total could reach 80,000, due to the shutting off of water California farmers need to irrigate their crops, which was done to protect a 2-inch-long fish called the delta

smelt—a species that could easily be protected by putting some of them in an aquarium. An overpopulation of bears (which private citizens are rarely allowed to kill) terrorizes Anchorage, Alaska, and has led to maulings and even deaths. Native Intuits are having their livelihoods ruined by polar bears being listed (against the actual evidence) as an endangered species. Parts of Colorado are being overrun by prairie dogs even as the government considers naming them an endangered species. The underlying premise here is crystal clear: Animals have the same rights as, if not more rights than, human beings.

FAULTY ARGUMENTS

What are the main arguments in favor of animal rights? The traditional arguments fall into two main categories: the intrinsic and the subjective. And there is a newer argument based on a misuse of the theory of evolution.

The intrinsic argument asserts that all life is intrinsically valuable and all living organisms are intrinsically equal, and thus, no living creature should be harmed. The intrinsic theory is simply arbitrary, because values are not intrinsic. Value implies a valuer and a purpose. Certain creatures are not of

value to man if he wants to live and be free of serious and life-threatening illnesses (e.g., mosquitoes spreading malaria, rodents spreading the plague, mice spreading the Hanta virus, tsetse flies spreading sleeping sickness, ticks spreading lyme disease, poisonous snakes, rabid dogs, etc.). Man properly tries to eradicate such threats in order to protect his own life and health. On the other side of this coin, cows and sheep are valuable to man as sources of meat, milk, wool and leather. Rats and other animals are valuable as a source of medical discoveries. Dogs and cats are valuable as pets.

Now consider the subjectivist arguments. One version is utilitarian: attain the greatest good for the greatest number with all animals being included in the calculations. The fundamental error in utilitarianism is that it provides no definition of the good except what the majority wants. Among human beings, this would sanction dictatorship, if the majority voted for it. If animals are counted in, the rulers of the earth, being the most numerous, would be insects. How exactly one would get insects to vote is never made clear. This theory is totally detached from reality.

A variant of the subjectivist argument is the argument from pain or suffering. I



Alaska Fish and Game biologists walk past a warning sign as they look for a bear along a wilderness trail in Far North Bicentennial Park in Anchorage, Alaska, where a jogger and a bicyclist were attacked by a sow with two cubs. An overpopulation of bears around Anchorage has led to an increased number of such attacks. (AP/Al Grillo)

have put this argument in the form of a syllogism:

All men are beings who feel pain,
All men are beings who possess rights,
Therefore, all beings that feel pain possess rights.

In logic, this is called, as Dr. Harry Binswanger has identified and clarified, the fallacy of the illicit minor. Beings who were not men were smuggled into the conclusion.

Another error underlying the syllogism is the assumption that rights are based on the ability to feel pain. If that were actually the case, it would not be a violation of rights to kill people in their sleep or to kill them painlessly with no warning (e.g., with a fast-acting narcotic).

The mistaken evolutionary argument starts with the correct observation that chimpanzees' DNA is more than 95 percent similar to ours. The percentage difference may be small, but it is vital. Walk down the street and look at the products of human civilization. Then ask yourself: In about 6 million years on earth, what is the sum total of chimps' cultural creations? Zero. This difference does not have to be documented by special scientific studies—it is self-evident to anyone who observes the real world.

Thus, the difference between man and animal is not just quantitative. You do not see chimps building run-down houses, writing ungrammatical books,

founding low-quality universities or making primitive inventions (unless you count sticking straws into termite mounds). They create nothing. The difference between man and the lower animals is so enormous, it must be treated as qualitative. In all his work on evolution, Charles Darwin was off the mark on the issue of the degree of difference between man and animal. One can infer that there was a quantitative continuum between modern man and the various, intermediate species that evolved from the apes, but all those species died out leaving an enormous gap between modern man and the lower animals.

A NEW BASIS

An objective basis for the concept of individual rights was provided by philosopher Ayn Rand. Here are the basic facts that form the foundation of the concept of rights:

1. *Man survives by the use of reason.* He possesses sense organs, as do the lower animals, but cannot survive by using the senses alone. He has to integrate sensory material into concepts and concepts into principles and propositions. He has to validate his knowledge by the use of logic. He has to identify causes and effects and to think long range. He has to discover the nature of his needs and the means to satisfy them. The whole of medical

science (including nutrition) is devoted to enhancing man's physical well-being. Man survives through thinking (which includes grasping abstractions) and guiding his actions on the basis of his thinking.

2. *Man needs to acquire a code of moral values* to guide his choices and actions. Man is not born with any code of values; he has no innate knowledge of what is good or bad beyond momentary sensations. A code of moral values is something that has to be acquired through thinking. (Those who do not choose to think pick up their code at random from others.)

3. *Life is the standard of value in ethics.* It is only to a living being, a being whose existence is conditional, that something could be a value or a disvalue. The issue of value arises only for entities that face the alternative of life or death. In her 1964 book, "The Virtue of Selfishness," Rand writes, "It is only the concept of 'Life' that makes the concept of 'Value' possible." In ethics, therefore, life is the ultimate, objective standard: That which is pro- man's life is good; that which is anti- man's life is evil.

4. This implies an *egoistic ethics*—meaning that man must be the beneficiary of his own moral code. By egoistic I do not mean acting on the feelings of the moment or acting amorally, but rather acting on the basis of reason. What is in one's self-interest must be discovered, and that cannot be done by following one's emotions. Egoism means that the individual is the unit of moral value, because only individuals exist (groups or societies are abstractions referring to a number of individuals).

It is a contradiction to claim that man needs a moral code in order to live and then to assert that his moral code should be altruism—the sacrifice of the self to others. By the standard of man's life, altruism is anti-life—a contradiction of the very purpose of morality, which is to promote each individual's life and happiness on earth. Sacrificing our own well-being to that of the lower animals, to the subhuman, is even lower morally than sacrificing it to other people. Men, at least, have the capacity to create an entire civilization with all the incredible discoveries that implies. Animals create nothing.

5. *The use of the rational faculty is volitional*: The faculty of reason operates by choice. It is self-evident to introspection that one can choose to focus one's mind at the conceptual level or let it drift passively at the level of sensations or choose to evade facts and arguments that one does not wish to deal with. As Binswanger and Dr. Leonard Peikoff, objectivist philosophers and longtime Ayn Rand associates, have written, man is not determined by genes or environment to think or to make correct or incorrect choices. In contrast, animals are stuck at the level of the senses and cannot choose to rise to the conceptual level.

6. *Reason can be negated only by physical force*. As Rand said, force and mind are opposites. When someone says to a man, "Obey me, or I will shoot you and put you in jail," one has negated the rational faculty. The victim is forced to act without his own consent—against the judgment of his own mind.

Man needs a rational moral code in order to live—including to live successfully with other men. The key moral concept here is that of individual rights. To quote Ayn Rand's "The Virtue of Selfishness," "A right is a moral principle, defining and sanctioning man's freedom of action in a social context." To preserve man's freedom of action in society, the initiation of physical force by other men must be prohibited. This leaves each individual free to think and to act on the basis of his thinking—to trade freely with other men, to deal with others through voluntary exchange. The failure to recognize and apply the principle of individual rights leaves men at the mercy of any gang, thug or dictator who chooses to substitute a gun for a syllogism (e.g., Cuba, North Korea). The concept of rights is this: to protect men from other men (including from governments).

The concept of individual rights—the principle on which our country was founded—was a momentous *human* discovery, the greatest discovery in the history of political philosophy. It took centuries get from ancient Greek thought to John Locke's "Second Treatise on Civil Government" published in 1690. Up until this time, dictatorship in some form—oligarchy, theocracy, aristocracy, monarchy, etc.—was the norm. The

United States was the first country founded on the principle of individual rights—a principle still not grasped by most of the world today.

Rights are objective; they are based on man's nature as a rational being and a requirement of his survival in society. This is why the concept of rights does not apply to animals:

- Animals do not survive on the basis of reason (chimpanzee "language" experiments notwithstanding);
- Since animals do not possess the faculty of reason, they do not possess free will;
- Thus, animals do not need and could not form or choose to act on a code of moral values.

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In short, rights are a distinctively human concept and have no applicability to the world of animals. Is this view of rights "speciesist"? Yes, and properly so. It is precisely because man is a certain type of species, with particular attributes and characteristics, that the concept of rights is both necessary and applicable. The concept is simply irrelevant to other living species, which do not share man's capacity to reason.

(One might ask: How does all this apply to people such as babies or the mentally impaired—people who, at a given time, cannot reason? The key point here is that the concept of rights was formulated in relation to normal human adults. If only babies and impaired adults existed, the human race would have become extinct long ago. Babies are the developing form of the human adult; the capacity to reason emerges gradually as a function of experience and the development of the brain. To claim that humans have rights but not the right to develop as humans is a contradiction. As to the mentally impaired, such people can often reason to a limited extent, might once have been fully functional, and could conceivably be cured by some new discovery. They properly belong in the category of "sick humans," not in the category of lower animals.)

SACRIFICING MAN FOR ANIMALS

Given that the concept of rights is not applicable to the lower animals, what is the real motive behind the claim that they have rights? The motive is altruism. Altruism does not mean kindness or benevolence, but the sacrifice of the self to others. Animal rights advocates want to sacrifice man's health, happiness and well-being to that of the lower animals—to prevent man from benefiting in any way from animals.

Animal rights advocates do not even really care about animals. In their own shelter in Norfolk, Va., PETA has put to death as much as 85 percent of the animals they take in per year, a much higher figure than in normal animal

shelters, according to *America's 1st Freedom*.

Two North Carolina counties have stopped turning shelter animals over to PETA because the organization killed most of them instead of trying to find them homes. Animal rights advocates hate man so much they would rather kill animals or let them die rather than to allow men to interfere with or benefit from animals in any way.

It is notable that animal rights advocates do not oppose animals eating or killing one another. They do not parade with placards in front of prides of lions on the African plain, saying, "Don't eat meat." They know this would be absurd, since animals cannot grasp moral concepts.

Further, they are indifferent to the fact that wild animals normally live longer in zoos than in the wild and receive better nutrition and medical care—they want to abolish zoos. They do not care that pets would live very short and painful lives in the streets and would get no care by veterinarians—they want to abolish pets. They do not care that animals themselves benefit from medical research on animals—they want to abolish such research.

Observe the double standard here: In the animal rights advocates' view, animals do not have to be concerned with morality because they can't understand it, but we must be—to our own detriment. *We are to use our rational faculty to harm ourselves.* No wonder Ayn Rand, in "The New Intellectual," viewed altruism as an anti-life morality.

In short, the main concern of animal rights advocates is not animal welfare—it is the undermining of human welfare. The most morally revealing example of this is their opposition to the use of animals for medical research. Observe that they do not want a cure for AIDS or cancer or heart disease or other deadly afflictions, which will come only from research based in part on the use of animals. They want people—millions and millions throughout the world—to suffer and die. In short, they want us to sacrifice our right to our own lives.

To support their opposition to medical research, they like to resort to re-writing medical history. They deny, in the face of mountains of evidence, as revealed by the Council on Scientific Affairs of the American Medical Association, that animal research has ever had anything to do with any non-trivial medical discoveries such as the development of insulin to treat diabetes, the development of the Salk vaccine to prevent polio and the use of dogs to develop methods for doing heart operations.

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Animal rights advocates often ask: If animals are so different from men that they do not possess rights, then how can they be useful for medical research? The answer is that although men and animals differ enormously in the cognitive realm, they have many similarities in the physiological realm. It is a scientific question to determine which particular animal species are suitable for studying which particular diseases or processes or determining which particular drugs will work



Members of Pro-Test, an organization that promotes animal testing for scientific research, demonstrate in favor of a controversial research center at Oxford University. (Reuters/Stephen Hird)

similarly in animals and men. There is still ongoing controversy about this issue. In the past, all our knowledge of this had to be discovered by trial and error. Now, with increasing knowledge about DNA and genes, human genes can be injected into mice and computer programs are being developed that can help compare human and animal systems. But developing the correct programs may require the use of even more animals than in the past.

If animals do not possess rights, does it follow that one should be totally

indifferent to animal suffering? No. Pain hurts. We know this from our own experience and can validly infer that animals, too, can feel pain since they possess pain receptors and a nervous system, and we can observe that they suffer when injured.

So what should be our attitude toward animal suffering be? Compassion, which means not causing unnecessary or gratuitous pain—pain for the sake of pain (sadism), as opposed to for a legitimate human

purpose. Even here, it would be benevolent to minimize suffering, for example, in laboratory animals unless it is unavoidable. But compassion is not the same as granting animals rights. Granting them rights, illogic aside, means sacrificing our own rights to the sub-human. This, I submit, is not just mis-guided, but profoundly immoral.

It is a reflection of the low state of our culture and the bankrupt state of our philosophy (which, as Rand wrote, is the cause of the low state of our culture) that the issue of animals having actual rights could even arise. In a rational society the issue of animal rights (as opposed to simply trying to prevent unnecessary cruelty as the old American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, or ASPCA, did) would not even be considered worthy of debate.

The cultural antidote is a new philosophy, Ayn Rand's Objectivism—a philosophy that is objectively provable, that is pro-reason, pro-man, pro-virtue, pro-life, pro-happiness, pro-this earth and pro-America at its best (in terms of its founding principles). •

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