

## **Ethical Discourse of Medical Science on Animals' Research And Rights**

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### **Abstract**

Scholars vary in their concept and views concerning research and the fundamental rights of animals in the hands of humankind who have the duty to protect rather than maltreat them. If human beings had chosen a hundred years ago to stop using animals in scientific and medical research, the world would be a very different place today. Many of us are here because we did not die as children, or our parents did not die, from diseases that have been controlled through the knowledge gained from animal research. The biological information that has unlocked the secrets of genetics, shed light on the workings of the brain, and made it possible to understand new diseases like AIDS would not exist. Even the animals that we keep as pets and raise for food would live shorter and less healthy lives, because many of the vaccines and treatments that have become staples of veterinary medicine would never have been developed. This research probes into the question of ethical justification of animals' research and how this evokes ethical positions. It engages the ultimate question of what the human ethical responsibility towards non-human animals is, considering that fundamental rights of animals have suffered a great deal in the hands of humankind who rather have the duty to protect them. The research adopted a critical analytic method with which it has evaluated the human treatment of non-humans. Data was collected from the primary source by way of interview and observations and secondary source from text books, journals, internet materials etc. It has discovered that, fundamentally, the true test of human morality consists of the attitudes towards the rights of non-human animal species at our mercy of human. The research engaged critical discourses that bother on the ethical question of relationship and responsibility of human to non-human animal. The research is significant as it could assist in the development of improved animal welfare strategies. This is due to the fact that human health benefits and the tie to human welfare are

considered very important. The research recommends that, human beings should ensure they live up to their deserved moral duty and avoid exploitation of animals as permitted in societal processes.

### **Introduction**

Animals research for hundreds of years ago, because if human beings had chosen to stop using animals in scientific and medical research, the world would be a very different place today. Many of us would have died as children, or our parents would have died from diseases that have been controlled through the knowledge gained from animal research. The biological information that has unlocked the secrets of genetics and shed light on how the brain works, making it possible to understand diseases like AIDS COVID- 19 and proffer solution to them would not have existed. Even the animals that we keep as pets and raise for food would live shorter and less healthy lives, because many of the vaccines and treatments that have become staples of veterinary medicine would never have been developed. Scientists assume two major responsibilities and they take both of these obligations very seriously while carrying out research on animals. The first is to ensure that the use of animals contributes to the advancement of knowledge. The second is to minimize any possible pain or distress that the animals may experience. To this day, researchers and animal welfare advocates have worked to establish standards that ensure the humane care and use of animals while permitting research to proceed, increasing the wellbeing of research on animals as a result with rare mistakes and potentially very great benefits to society. In recent years, a new voice has been heard in animal research discourse. Many of the proponents of this new viewpoint are of the desire to see that research animals are given humane treatment and to eliminate all uses of animals, whether for research or food production.<sup>1</sup> While, some of the individuals deny, despite the good evidence that animal research has improved both human and animal health. Some accuse scientists of routinely mistreating animals and of conducting research that is unnecessary, although they are unable to provide evidence to support these accusations. This piece of work is a contribution to the growing scholarly works in the multidisciplinary fields of animal study. It is motivated by the unprecedented levels of exploitation of the 'welfare' of animals, with grave consequences for the human health, and ethical values. This

research is important because it has worked towards improving medical science research on animal welfare and mitigating the risk of research on animals. The researcher discovered that improved animal welfare would make the animals safer and easier to handle. The research recommends the “One Welfare concept” with a view of establishing the connection between animals and humans. This would help promote unethically guided risk of human research on animals.

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

**Animals Rights:** According to Encyclopaedia Britannica, rights are universal; they are the birthright of every member of the family. No one earns or deserves the rights. Rights are inalienable and losing rights could mean that the beneficiary of such rights ceases to exist. Rights are indivisible, insoluble and inseparable. For Human rights, one cannot be denied a right because someone else decides that it is “less important” or “non-essential.” Human rights are interdependent. They are not granted by any human authority such as a monarch, government, or secular or religious authority. Human rights are not the same as civil rights, such as those in the Nigeria’s Constitutions, which are granted to individuals by virtue of their citizen ship or residence in a particular country. Human rights are inherent and held as attributes of the human personality. They are both abstract and practical, holding up the inspiring vision of a free, just, and peaceful world with set minimum standards for how both individuals and institutions should treat people. These rights are expected to be applicable to all God’s living creatures in totality. The assertion that animals do not have rights does not mean that researchers are free to use them without appropriate concern. In fact, animals are living things; they have evolved with us on this planet; they can feel pain and distress and because of our kinship with living things, animals have a value above and beyond anything that is not living. This value finds concrete expression in the concern for the obligation we have to minimize the pain and distress of animals.

**Animals Welfare:** According to Encyclopaedia Britannica, **welfare** is a concept of government in which the state or a well-established network of social institutions plays a key role in the protection and promotion of the economic and social well being of the citizens; it is based on the principles of equality of opportunity, equitable distribution

of wealth, and public responsibility for those unable to avail themselves of the minimal provisions for a good life. The general term may cover a variety of forms of economic and social organization. In the area of animal welfare, a number of groups have been working for many years to safeguard and promote these obligations committed to the welfare of animals, as distinct from the concept of animal rights, and they have made a significant contribution to the well-being of animals especially those that are used for research. This stems on the strength of the conviction that animal research has benefited and will continue to benefit human and animal health; they want to ensure that researched animals are treated as humanely as possible and are used only for important studies. Therefore, humans have an obligation to see that animals are used for productive and meaningful goals. To provide society with an account of how they use animals.<sup>2</sup>

**Ethics-** Ethics as also referred to as moral philosophy, is that study or discipline which concerns itself with judgments of approval and disapproval, judgments as to the rightness or wrongness, goodness or badness, virtue or vice, desirability or wisdom of actions, dispositions, ends, objects, or states of affairs. Ethics concerns itself with establishing or recommending certain courses of action, ends, or ways of life as to be taken or pursued, either as right or as good or as virtuous or as wise, over and above the other ones which are considered as wrong, bad, vicious, or foolish.<sup>3</sup>

### **Ethical Issues Surrounding Research and Animal Rights**

Much of the current opposition to animal research is being fueled by a philosophical position known as “animal rights.” According to the viewpoint of Regan, animals have inherent legal and moral rights, just as humans do. This, for Regan implies that, it is unethical to use animals as pets or for any other purpose, whether for food, clothing, recreation, or research.<sup>4</sup> However, as to whether or not animals have “rights” depends on how the term is defined. If living things are ascribed a “right” to remain living, then animals would have rights. Although, many ethicists do not use the term so broadly, they generally ascribe rights only to members of societies that are capable of applying mutually accepted ethical principles to specific situations.<sup>5</sup> For animals are not

capable of forming or belonging to such societies. In this light, animals cannot be ascribed rights. The animal rights viewpoint also leads to some philosophically untenable conclusions. For instance, in its strongest form, it implies that the lives of all animals, including humans, are equal. But the death of a human being is not equivalent to the death of a mouse. We do not commit an act equivalent to the murder of a human every time we eat meat. In the United States, there are many groups that are concerned with the use of animals in research. These groups have a wide variety of positions, and it is an oversimplification to speak of the “animal rights movement.” But a fundamental distinction can be made between those who believe that animal research should continue, though with various modifications or restrictions, and those who believe that it should simply stop. They have worked assiduously and skillfully in legislatures, schools, and the media to pursue their cause, and in many cases their actions have met with a great deal of success. Animal research has become more costly and difficult, in part because of self-regulation by scientists but also because of externally imposed regulations. Some animal researchers have left the field, and young researchers have chosen not to enter it. Many members of the general public have the impression, based not on facts but on repeated allegation, that too much animal research is done. Some members of the animal rights movement pursue more extreme tactics, often with the implicit backing of more moderate elements.<sup>6</sup> Researchers and their families have been harassed and threatened. The scientific community can find no moral justification for these acts, although they are excused and even supported by leaders and leading organizations in the animal rights movement. Vandalism and harassment have slowed medical research that is dedicated to improving human well-being. Whatever these actions may be, it is also important to note that individuals who vandalize laboratories and harass researchers do not only break the law; they are also harmful to the people who would eventually have benefited from the research. They also deny hope to those who are presently living with incurable diseases.

### **Contemporary debates on Scientific Research and Animal’s Rights**

One of the leading contributors to the non-human animal’s rights debates is Peter Singer. Singer believes that Humans thought has

contributed to animal cruelty and suffering. Underscoring this point, Singer laments concerning Thomas Aquinas doctrine of humanity's innate right to control the natural world as holding back progress in animal rights. However, Singer later announced that he had changed his views in part, given the complexity of different views towards animals among different people.<sup>7</sup> Corroborating this view, Andrew Linzey expressed concern for animal rights. According to him; It is right for people to be critical and judgmental especially of the Christian tradition which has been amazingly callous towards animals. Christian theologians have been neglectful and dismissive of the cause of animals and many still are. That Christians and Jews have allowed their ancient texts such as Genesis to be read as license of tyranny over animals. While, all religious traditions have great resources for a very positive ethic in relation to animals. Christian theology has some unique insights fundamental to the value of animals' life. With respect to the role of Christianity concerning animals' rights, contemporary philosopher Bernard Rollin states that "*dominion* does not entail or allow for abuse any more than does the dominion a parent enjoys over a child."<sup>8</sup> He reiterates that the Sabbath requirement promulgated in the Ten Commandments "required that animals be granted a day of rest along with humans. Correlatively, the Bible forbids 'plowing with an ox and an ass together' (Deut. 22:10–11). -According to the rabbinical tradition, this prohibition stems from the hardship that an ass would suffer by being compelled to keep up with an ox, which is, of course, far more powerful. Similarly, one finds the prohibition against 'muzzling an ox when it treads out the grain' (Deut. 25:4–5), and even an environmental prohibition against destroying trees when besieging a city (Deut. 20:19–20). These ancient regulations, "best speak of an eloquent awareness of the status of animals as ends in themselves", a point also corroborated by Norm Phelps.<sup>9</sup>

#### **Justification for the Science of animals Research**

Over the years, human beings have used animals for a wide variety of purposes, including research. In the United States, approximately 260 million people keep about 110 million dogs and cats as pets, while, more than 5 billion animals are killed each year as a source of food. Animals are used for transportation sport, recreation, and companionship.<sup>10</sup> Animals are also used to learn more about living things and about the illnesses that afflict human beings and other animals. By

studying animals, it is possible to obtain information that cannot be learned in any other way. When a new drug or surgical technique is developed, society deems it unethical to first use that drug or technique in the body of human beings because of the possibility that it would cause harm, rather than good. But as an alternative, the drug or technique is first tested in animals to make sure that it is safe and effective. Animals also offer experimental models that would be impossible to replicate using human subjects. Animals can be fed identical and closely monitored diets. As with inbred mice, members of some animal species are genetically identical, enabling researchers to compare different procedures on identical animals. Some animals have biological similarities to humans that make them particularly good models for specific diseases, such as rabbits for atherosclerosis or monkeys for polio. (The polio vaccine was developed, and its safety is still being tested, in monkeys.) Animals are also indispensable to the rapidly growing field of biotechnology, where they are used to develop, test, and make new products, such as monoclonal antibodies. Researchers draw upon the full range of living things to study life, from bacteria to human beings.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, many basic biological processes are best studied in single cells, tissue cultures, or plants, because they are the easiest to grow or examine. But researchers also investigate a wide range of animal species, from insects and nematodes to dogs, cats, and monkeys. In particular, mammals are essential to researchers because they are the closest to humans in evolutionary terms. For example, many diseases that affect human beings also affect other mammals, but they do not occur in insects, plants, or bacteria. Far more animals are used in research than are used for other purposes.<sup>12</sup> For instance, An estimated 17 to 22 million vertebrate animals are used each year in research, education, and testing, of which, less than 1 percent of the number is killed for food. Out of these animals, about 85 percent are rats and mice that have been bred for research. As at the year 1988, research shows that, in the United States alone, about 142,000 dogs and 52,000 cats were used in experimentation, with 40,000 to 50,000 of those dogs being bred specifically for research and between 50,000 and 60,000 of nonhuman primates, such as monkeys and chimpanzees, are studied each year, many of them coming from breeding colonies.<sup>13</sup> Scientists have over the years used animals to do both basic and applied research. While applied research seeks to answer specific questions about a given

disease or condition, usually in the context of a specific prevention therapy or treatment, basic research seeks to build a base of knowledge about living organisms and how they function. Both forms of research are essential to continued medical progress. Basic research provides the foundation on which applied research is built, and without the former the latter would cease.<sup>14</sup> All living things share certain characteristics, and basic research on one organism often produces knowledge that applies to many other organisms. Therefore, both basic and applied research using animals are subject to a number of safeguards that make it very unlikely that the research will be unnecessary or poorly done. Before an experiment using a vertebrate animal is carried out, the protocol for that experiment must be reviewed by an institutional committee that includes a veterinarian and a member of the public, and during the research the animal's health and care are monitored regularly. Researchers need healthy animals for study in science and medicine, because unhealthy animals could lead to error in results. This is a powerful incentive for scientists to be sure that any animals they use are healthy and well-nourished.<sup>15</sup>

### **Contributions of Animals Research to Improve Human Health**

In the past numbers of centuries, good health was much rare compared to what it is today. In about 1870, the leading cause of death in the United States was tuberculosis, while it hit the West African sub-region in about the 1900.<sup>16</sup> Many people died at the age of 25, about half died by the age of 50. Those who survived above 50 years of age had experienced several attacks with diseases like typhoid fever, dysentery, or scarlet fever.<sup>17</sup> Today life expectancy has improved because of better nutrition and sanitation. These diseases could not have been eliminated as significant causes of death and illness without animal research. Animal research has also made people healthier, since it has contributed to eliminating many infectious diseases like polio or rheumatic fever that can be debilitating without causing death. Animal research has helped in the development of vaccines against various diseases and to identify the agents that contribute to good or bad health. Methods of combat infectious diseases have not been the only dividends of animal research. Surgical procedures, pain relievers, psychoactive drugs, medications for blood pressure, insulin, pacemakers, nutrition supplements, organ transplants, treatments for shock trauma and blood



diseases, all have been developed and tested in animals before being used in humans.<sup>18</sup> Indeed in the 20th century, virtually every advance in medical science, from antibiotics and vaccines to anti depressant drugs and organ transplants, has been achieved either directly or indirectly through the use of animals in laboratory experiments.<sup>19</sup>

Though human health has improved greatly over the last 100 years, much still remains to be done as many diseases today, such as COVID-19, cancer, atherosclerosis, diabetes, Alzheimer's disease, and AIDS, debilitating conditions such as traumatic injury, strokes, arthritis, etc, remain inadequately understood. Therefore, Animal research will be no less important in the future than it has been in the past.

### **Animals Research, Arguments from the Religious point of View**

The relationship between Christianity and animal rights is complex, with different Christian communities conveying different conclusions about the status of animals. Many Christian philosophers and socio-political figures hold that Christians should follow the example of Jesus and treat animals in a way that expresses compassion and demonstrates the respectful stewardship of humanity over the non human animal and environment. According to Openheimer, one of such figures that fronts crusade for the prevention of cruelty against animals was William Wilberforce, a co-founder of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.<sup>20</sup> Andrew Linzey on his side, pointedly submitted that, it would be wrong to see Christianity as an inherent enemy of animal rights since Christian theology, like all other religious traditions, has some unique insights to viewing animals' life as having fundamental value. Throughout history, there have been Christian thinkers who have raised tough ethical questions about the moral status of animals.<sup>21</sup> Francis of Assisi, is perhaps, the most well-known example. Various church founders have recommended vegetarianism for ethical reasons, such as; Wesley's vegetarian views inspired a later generation to establish the American Vegetarian Society in 1850 Null, Christian denominations like Seventh Day Adventists. According to Grant, the rise of Christianity, it may be right to say, has put an end to animal sacrifice as this practice is replaced by the grand and more precious sacrifice was offered by Jesus Christ, the prince of peace and that the Christian hope involves

the idea of the Peace, which looks to a peaceful coexistence of animals, such as wolves and lambs.<sup>22</sup> The Bible offers for the concept of animal rights. This is seen in the first chapters of Genesis. On the one hand, Genesis 1:26-28 says that human beings are to have dominion over the non-human animals. Peter Singer believes that this has been used by many Christian theologians throughout Church history to justify the idea that non-human animals exist only to serve or be of use to humans, which has sadly led to much use and abuse of animals at the hands of humanity.<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, many Christian theologians, especially in recent times, are suggesting that a more accurate reading of Genesis 1:26-28 requires reading it in light of the teaching that all of God's creatures were initially given a plant based diet:

Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground everything that has the breath of life in it. I give every green plant for food." And it was so (Genesis 1:29-30).

This shows that, whatever 'dominion' means, it must be compatible with the idea of not eating any animals.<sup>26</sup> This suggests that 'dominion' be understood in terms of 'looking after', 'ruling over', 'being responsible for', or 'guiding'. Therefore, humanity's attitude towards non human animals should be of caring responsibility, these include:

- i. care for any oxen and donkey they come across belonging to their enemies (Exodus 23:4-12). Because God rejoices in all his works, in everything he has created (Psalm 104:31).
- ii. a "righteous man cares about his animal's health" (Proverbs 12:10).
- iii. Jesus identifies sparrows as animals which are not valued by humans, but which God still knows and remembers (Matthew 10:29).
- iv. Jesus comparing his love and care for Jerusalem and its inhabitants to the care a mother hen provides for her chicks (Matthew 23:37).

There are, however, passages which ignored the use of non-human animals in various ways, especially in religious sacrifices and as food. Specifically, meat-eating and other forms of animals used for human

benefit received explicit approval by God after the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the garden of Eden to the end of the flood, as it states: “Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything” (Genesis 9:3). At every stage of creation in Genesis account, God said the creation was good, suggesting that God values everything He has created providing the basis for a very positive view of animals and their worth. In the New Testament, Jesus Christ existed not just as a theological figure in Christianity but also as an inspirational moral icon of Christian ethics. Jesus ate the Passover meal which included meat (Matthew 26:17-20). He associated with his followers who went fishing. Jesus rode on a donkey on entry into Jerusalem (Mark 11:7, Matthew 21:4-7, John 12:14,15). The teachings of Christianity ended animal sacrifice, as Christians believe Jesus died for all the sins of humanity and is often portrayed as the last sacrificial lamb in the New Testament.<sup>25</sup> It is therefore incumbent on Christians to express kindness to the world’s creatures, they have a moral obligation to avoid causing unnecessary suffering to animals, while, meat eating in the context of nourishment is permitted. However, having respect for the rights of animals given that, in Christian terms, God deliberately created and proclaimed them all as good. Looking at the way non-humans are “reconciled to God in Jesus Christ and will be redeemed by God in the new creation” has accorded a caring duty for mankind.

#### **Ethical Role of Mankind in the Prevention of Animals Research**

- i. Advocate and support legislation that promotes kindness to animals. Strong animal welfare laws and harsh penalties will lead to fewer cruelty cases.
- ii. Be an example of kindness to animals. Foster those that have suffered abandonment. Sadly, many pet animals are relinquished to shelters for various reasons. Foster homes help these animals to recover and prepare them to move onto a new permanent loving home.
- iii. Intervene if you witness animal rights abuse or neglect. Do your best to stop someone from mistreating an animal without putting yourself in danger.
- iv. Report animal abuse or neglect to the police or other authorities so as to prevent further abuse.

- v. Teach your children to have respect for animals and treat them with love and consideration. Help them to grow up to become the next generation of advocates for animals rights.
- vi. Bear in mind also that neglect of animals can be closely linked to domestic violence. Animal abuse and domestic abuse are often closely connected. By reporting suspicions, you may also be helping both the animal in need and the family concerned.
- vii. Create awareness to people around you about the issue to help them understand that animals have a right to live without fear or pain, and we have a responsibility to step in if their rights are not respected.

### **Conclusion**

People clearly want the benefits that derive from animal research. They also want animals to be well treated and to undergo a minimum of pain and distress. These desires result from our values, from the importance we ascribe to both human and animal life. But decisions about the use of animals should be based both on reason and values. It makes no sense to sacrifice future human health and well being by not using animals in research today. In fact, it would be unethical and selfish not to use animals in research today, given the harm that could accrue to future generations, if such researches were halted. Animals are sentient creatures that deserve our respect and protection. They are not aggressive toward human beings unless they are threatened, and human beings have stolen much of their wildlife space and habitat to our own advantage, which has added to their suffering. However, we owe our good health to past investigators and the animals they studied. As we decide on the future of animal research, we should keep in mind the future generations, who will look back at us and ask if we acted wisely. Animal rights abuse can be real pervasive, because people see animals as less valuable than humans and atrocities committed against animals have continued to happen over and over. Though it happens to different types of animals in the various corners of the world, it is also unnecessary and preventable.

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