BONUS ESSAY 2: ON “ANIMAL TESTING”

Animal Testing Should Be Banned

“Animal testing” involves experimenting on animals to try to determine whether drugs and medical treatments are safe and effective for humans. It’s wrong and should be banned.

Why? First, and most obviously, drugs and medical procedures treat diseases, injuries, and other health problems. So, to see if a treatment works, a disease or injury must be created in animals. Understatement: this is often unpleasant. Heart attacks in dogs feel awful; bone cancers in mice are painful; pigs being burned, to test burn treatments, is agonizing. Animals living with the induced conditions is unpleasant also. And they are killed at the end of the experiments to study the treatments’ effects.

It’s now easy to see why animal testing is wrong: it violates basic principles of ethical research: it is maleficent, or harmful to the research subjects; it is not beneficial to them; it is forced on them since they don’t consent; and it is unjust in that animals are burdened with problems not their own. Research – at least with animals who are conscious, and so are able to be harmed or made worse off – is wrong for reasons that comparable human research would be wrong.

Some argue that the benefits to humans justify animal testing. But when one group benefits at the major expense of another group, that’s usually wrong. And how exactly might anyone know that humans benefit more than animals are harmed? And there is scientific evidence that animal testing often is not beneficial for humans and that clinical research, public health research, and

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technology-based research are *more* useful: see the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine and Americans for Medical Advancement for more information.

Some claim there are “no alternatives” to animal testing, that it is “necessary.” But there are alternatives (mentioned above) and it’s not literally necessary that anyone do it: they can refrain. But suppose someone wanted to rob a bank and *needed* a getaway car: there is “no alternative” to a car and so it is “necessary” for the robbery. Does that make using the car OK? No. Even if something is “necessary” and there are “no alternatives” to doing it *to achieve a particular end*, that doesn’t make doing the action right: the end determines that.

Finally, some say that this reasoning is all beside the point: if your child was dying and animal testing would save him or her, wouldn’t you want the testing done? Many would and that’s an understandable feeling. But it’s unlikely that animal experimentation would help their child much: other methods are likely more fruitful. And more importantly, if my child were dying and I tried to experiment on my neighbor’s children to try to save my own child, that would be wrong.

Why? Simply because those children would be harmed and treated as mere things to be used (and abused) for my and my child’s benefit, which they are not. Since those reasons apply to many animals experimented upon, animal testing is also wrong.