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EU SOCRATES/ERASMUS Programme

IP Project

« BIOETHIQUE EN SCIENCES DE LA VIE  
ET DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT »

*Animal experimentation*

Timisoara 2007

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# Introduction

**Animal testing, or animal research**, refers to the use of animals in experiments.

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→ “Science sans conscience n’est que ruine de l’âme”  
(*Pantagruel*, chapitre VIII), Rabelais

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# Objectives:

- different European countries



reflection about animal experimentation

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- historical and ethical aspects
  - relations between humans and nature
  - the biological approach of animal suffering
  - legislation regarding animal experimentation
  - the three R`s
  - alternative methods



in order to obtain enough tools for discussion.

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# Practice Case

- Debate between a scientist and a citizen.
  - The discuss will be conducted by a mediator
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# Study Case

- ➔ 20th anniversary of the first kidney transplant -Thomas Starzl.
- ➔ his first series of kidney transplant operations left the majority of his subjects dead.
- ➔ He figured out what enabled the minority to survive and started a second serie of operations.  
The majority of these subjects survived.
- ➔ A third group of subjects received kidney transplants and only two died.
- ➔ In his fourth group all subjects survived.  
His first three groups of subjects were dogs, while the fourth group was coumponed by baby humans.

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# Questions

Do you approve animal experimentation?

Scientist: Yes

Person: No

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# In this case should the researcher stop at the first stage?

- **P:** Since the majority of the dogs died, I think he should have stopped the research at the first stage.
  - **Sc:** But was he supposed to experiment and refine technics on humans, or was he expected to abandon a promising line of research that has saved a huge number of lives?
  - **P:** Shouldn't animals have the same right as human?
  - **Sc:** This is not a question of who has more rights. All living beings have the right to live, but in this case the scientist made a choice to put human lives above the animal's.
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If this research was nowadays what would happen in your opinion according that there are laws which protect animals, that control animal experimentations, and people who work with animals have to make special courses about animal welfare and ethics (at least in some European countries)

- **P:** I think there aren't enough law, they aren't very precise and they should be more controlled to avoid scientists doing whatever they want.
  - **Sc.:** These things may also be considered as an obstacle for the evolution of research. And they can also lead to other questions such as why don't the other people dealing with animals like farmers or pet owners, transporters or zook need these courses? Sometimes people use false arguments about the conditions and the ways things are done because they aren't well informed.
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# What about public opinion?

- **Sc:** Today there is a lot of pressure from public opinion, from media and with sensationalism the activists groups manipulate people`s opinion, and even use illegal experimentations as an argument. Internet is one of the main causes of it, it`s really easy to impress people and to shock them in that way. We can notice the example of activists who burned a laboratory containing animals and killed them just for the idea of being against animal experimentation!
  - **P:** This kind of act is really extreme... As a common person, I would like to say that scientists should say what they do and how and also why, because people can understand if it`s explained to them.
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# What about predictivity in your experimentation?

- **Sc:** Of course we do not have a 100% guarantee that it will work on humans, but we use animals because of their similarity with us in DNA and physiology. Differences exist between humans and animal (for example kidneys are a bit different between these 2 species) and this can lead to problems for humans even if tests are made on animals.
- **P:** So, the first time it is applied on humans is a test as well. If there are these problems due to a lack of predictivity, why don't we try to find another ways? Why do we keep using animals? I mean, you do several years of cruelty on animals with a good intention to help the humanity but you are not sure about your work and you are working with animals not with stones. And if the results are not applicable on humans?
- **Sc:.** If we stop using animals because of lack of predictivity we will lose lots of information. It's true, there are alternative ways. But only a few are applied yet and moreover they don't cover the whole experimentations. The European centre which control these alternative methods only approved 16 techniques in 1997 and among them 6 were used in 2006.
- **P:** Serious? It's wonderfull!!!! It's the end of animal experimentation! Yeaaaahhh!!!!!!
- **Sc:** Unfortunately we are far from this.

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In 1959, William Russel and Rex Burch published a book which suggests the 3 Rs as the basic principal code of scientific investigation. How do you feel about this?

- **Sc:** Because of the pressure of the public opinion, scientists have to justify their work, and find ways to be accepted. It's obvious that scientists want to **Reduce, Replace, and Refine**. But we do need researches on animals and anyone would put their life before as animal's. There is also an other thing to consider : Scientists make efforts to give the best conditions possible (for example lack of pain) to animals so as not to interfere with the experiments and the conditions in a lab have to be as strict as human hospitals.
  - **P:** During the experiments on these dogs, have the animals received used anaesthetics?
  - **Sc:** Of course they used anaesthetics!
  - **P:** But how could scientists know the effects of the anaesthetics treatment?
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- **Sc:** Several experiments have been performed on animals to set some parameters to describe the physiological aspect of pain in order to be able to reduce it as much as possible. Thanks to that we understood how anaesthetics treatments work. For example by applying this treatment, molecules linked to a huge pain are not present in the blood.
  - **P:** So you had to inflict huge pains to understand pain! That's so cruel, don't you agree?
  - **Sc:** Yes I do, but I made the choice to place human life upon animals life. The question is, how far we are willing to go to protect our own interests and to improve our knowledge about life, environment and animal. We can help the humanity with this.
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# Final Considerations

- **Ethically and scientifically** - it is in everyone's interest that animals used for experimentation lead as normal lives as possible, and suffer as little as possible.
  - We hope and are confident that **alternative methods** will one day come to replace the use of all/most of the animals in testing
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- the creation of a **deontological code** seems to be the safest and best solution.

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- It is easier to justify the use of animals for experiments when we consider medical research, much less so (if at all) when it comes to cosmetics.
  - This whole debate proves that **we give a different value to things**, and this is what makes it so difficult.
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According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, animal research has helped extend our life expectancy by 20.8 years.

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## Students:

France:

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Italia:

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Portugal:

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Ramalho Patrícia

Romania:

Vizman Marius Ioan

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Thank you  
Merci  
Obrigado  
Grazie  
Multumesc  
Dziekuje  
Blagodarya  
Aligato

Now is time to  Applause!!

