

ZOOPHILY VERSUS HOMOPHILY.

PIERRE A. FISH, D. SC., CORNELL UNIVERSITY, ITHACA, N. Y.

The onward march of events, accompanied by new conditions and new methods, has given a much wider significance to the term vivisection than was formerly attached to it. It is quite commonly regarded, by those opposed to the practice, as a method of inflicting, by dissection upon a living conscious animal, excruciating pain for the gratification of the operator's curiosity, or for the exhibition of some experiment already demonstrated and thoroughly familiar.

Technically a man or animal is vivisected when a hypodermic needle is thrust into the skin for the purpose of alleviating the pangs of disease by this form of medication ; while if any part of the body be crushed or mangled by a blow, as from a club, resulting in serious injury, there is infinitely more suffering but not literally vivisection, since the tissues are not cut but bruised. Nor is the condition of the victim taken into account ; a serious and prolonged operation upon an anaesthetised animal may result in as little discomfort to it as the blows or accidental injuries received by any dog on the streets as an incident in his career ; or, in the former case, if the operation result in death, the end is without pain.

But the issue that now seems to be nearest the surface, under this really comprehensive term of vivisection, is whether it is justifiable to utilise, even to their destruction, animals for the real or probable benefit of mankind, and with this as the issue, there would be the natural classification of those who, influenced by genuine sentiments of mercy and a desire for the alleviation of suffering, band themselves together for its suppression, especially in animals, on account of the inability of the dumb beasts to make known certain existing

abuses and because of their helplessness in competition with men. This class of persons would encompass the animals with so many and rigid safeguards that if really put into practice many lines of progress would be materially restricted. For our present purpose let such persons be classified as Zoophiles—antivivisectionists—and the vivisectionists as Homophiles, the latter advocating not only the essential doctrines of the former but something more. Actuated by the same sentiments of mercy and regard for suffering they would, when obliged to inflict pain for the general good, minimise it to the greatest possible extent, by the use of anesthetics or otherwise.

The practice of vivisection, like the theory of evolution, does not appeal to the finer esthetic qualities of mankind ; it is not intended to ; it would appeal rather by an array of self-evident facts to the importance and necessary usefulness of the practice.

Is it justifiable to sacrifice an animal from a lower level in the zoological scale for the preservation or benefit of another animal in that same scale ? Nature has already decided that question by the creation and maintenance of the order of carnivorous animals, which live on flesh alone, and others which subsist on mixed diets. If the zoophiles understood and were enabled to trace the preparation of their animal food from the living creature to the time it is ready for eating, would they still exercise as much pertinacity in their denial of the right to use lower forms for the benefit of the higher, or is Nature again at fault in fashioning the human digestive apparatus so that a mixed diet may be enjoyed ? Would not a logical adherence to their cardinal principles preclude anything but a vegetable diet, and extend even to the matter of clothing and personal adornment ?

But the answer is made that it is not the aim to legislate against animal inoculations for the determination of disease, but to supervise and to eliminate the promiscuous and unnecessary use of it. Much stress is also laid upon the tortures which have been inflicted upon animals in the past, and these remote

instances, although exceptional when the vast number of experiments are considered, are resurrected and represented as being in common usage at the present day. There is no practice that may not be abused. Are the principles of the Christian religion, upon which so large a portion of the civilised world depends for encouragement and support during the battle of life, to be undermined because long years ago there were certain enthusiasts whose zeal permitted them to inflict the most excruciating, cruel and unparalleled tortures upon their fellow-beings "In His Name"? Is the future saving of human life, the saving of vast sums of money by the preservation of the lives and eradication of disease in domesticated animals, and the search for the truth which elevates to a higher plane of civilisation to be retarded by the misdeeds of past offenders? Will statistics confirm the generalised statement that vivisection tends to brutalise the operator? Such an accusation is not brought against a surgeon in the performance of his duties. Wherein lies the great difference in the degree of vivisection? How many of the antivivisectionists have really gone beyond the first shudder at the thought of the existence of pain and appreciated the fact that life itself is a struggle for existence, and that the perception of a greater or less amount of pain, under ordinary conditions, is a circumstance in the career of every living creature?

The vivisectioning experiments of Galvani have illumined not only the scientific world, but the material world as well. Out of the crude apparatus of a vivisector have been developed the wonderful electrical appliances of today. Galvani's experiments were the keys which unlocked the doors of ignorance, not only as to certain physiological phenomena, but the manifold mysteries of the uses of electricity, many of which are still unsolved.

The fact that mature and deliberate judgment may be exercised in a question of such vital interest has been recently exemplified in one of the Cantons of Switzerland, where a measure for the total prohibition of vivisection was submitted

to the population *ad referendum*, with the result that 40,000 votes were cast against such prohibition and only 17,000 for it.

In the District of Columbia, it has been proposed to legislate against vivisection, or, at least, to regulate it by the maintenance of certain inspectors, who shall at intervals visit the laboratories or other places where the practice is carried on.

The bill as arranged is unnecessary, unreasonable, retrogressive and reactionary in its tendency.

It is unnecessary, because the great majority of vivisectors are intelligent, earnest and humane gentlemen, whose object in animal experimentation is to suppress and prevent the occurrence of disease, or to add some new fact for the welfare of mankind.

It is unreasonable, in that it advocates a system of espionage in which the inspector may be a person ignorant, unskilful and unappreciative of the object to be investigated or of the methods employed therein. It is manifestly unfair to permit such a person to officiate as censor, and is a malicious insinuation against the integrity of the investigator.

It is retrogressive, because it prevents further research; medical and biological sciences can progress only through experimentation.

It is reactionary, because in the effort to encompass the animals with so many safeguards their use for the real benefit of mankind is lost sight of, and one should be reluctant to assume that the antivivisectionists love animals more and their fellow-beings less.

Pain is an adjunct of life, and its merciful infliction upon lower forms is not only justifiable but necessary when it may alleviate human suffering. Humanity is above animality and as long as Nature endows living animals with sensitive tissues, just so long will pain exist.



Fish, Pierre A. 1897. "Zoophily versus Homophily." *Transactions* 18, 142–145.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/84906>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/90883>

Holding Institution

University of Toronto - Gerstein Science Information Centre

Sponsored by

University of Toronto

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: Not provided. Contact Holding Institution to verify copyright status.

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.