

## BY WHAT RIGHT?

**W**HEN a murder is committed—when a man or woman takes the life of another—it is regarded as a crime against the state, which also means a crime against society. It is The State versus John Doe, and he is tried by a jury drawn from the people. Life is not to be taken lightly. To deprive one of it is a capital offense.

Curiously enough, little thought is given to the murder of animals, or to the excruciating tortures to which they may be subjected in the process. The tendency on the part of many people has been to regard them as insensate, or even as little more than inanimate objects. If, like Walt Whitman, you looked upon them as fellow beings, you might be regarded as a sentimentalist but hardly as the realist which you actually are.

Or again, if you are a person who has not been conditioned to witnessing pain or torture, if you do not wear the cold exterior armor that reveals neither concern nor compassion, or the chilling interior indifference that has become a part of your nature because of innumerable slayings at your hands, then you could know only horror at the atrocities performed upon animals in experimental laboratories. These creatures are defenseless, innocent of wrongdoing, unable to understand what is being done to them and why, but their nerves shriek and their bodies tremble or they sicken and retch with injected or ingested poisons, and sometimes they expire in agony. To them a speedy bullet and oblivion would be welcomed. But that is not the purpose of their murderers who wear the holy mantle of science, though they perform their rites much as an Aztec priest at a human sacrifice. The priest

was placating the gods; the scientist courts the demons of disease. Like the Aztec, the scientist defends his acts on holy grounds. His god is his own invention; it is called Science, and everyone is supposed to bow down to it and to him as its prophet. See how alike they are. He executes his experiments, his torture and his murder of animals in the name of this god, and he cunningly justifies his acts not with a promise of abundant harvests but with a promise to cure disease—a promise, incidentally, less often fulfilled than that of abundant crops, though there is a striking similarity—both are more often the achievements of nature than of the efforts of priests or vivisectionists. Nevertheless there was, and is, much prestige and often wealth attached to both vocations.

Yes, prestige and wealth attached to murder. You see, it depends on by whom, and by what right, the murders are committed. An army, organized by the state and supported by taxes exacted from its citizens, is paid to murder, and held guiltless. Vivisectors form their own army of self-righteous butchers and many of them also are paid by the state with tax dollars running into the billions, and held guiltless.

For years, the vivisectors and related groups have promoted themselves as the high priests of medicine whose judgment is beyond question. However, over the past decade, there has been growing interest in the philosophy of animal rights and the morality of animal research. The litany of concerned voices comes from members of the academic community as well as from the lay public.

One of the principal areas of controversy is whether different species should have equal consideration and treatment in research. Richard Ryder in the introduction to his book *Victims of Science* states:

*The most important qualities that men share with the other animals are life and sentience. There is as much evidence to believe that another animal can suffer as there is*