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Most people who oppose vivisection do so on moral grounds either through well considered philosophical arguments or by an instinctive revulsion to the suffering and death inseparable from animal research. In fact, the case against animal experiments is strongly reinforced by scientific arguments: animals are different from us both in the way their bodies work and in their reaction to drugs. If animal research were really a valid scientific method, people would surely visit their veterinarians when feeling ill! The truth is that animal experiments tell us about animals, usually under artificial conditions, when in medical research we need to know about people.

The scientific case against animal research was summarized, although perhaps unintentionally, by an article in the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*. The writer stressed that knowledge of differences between the species is crucial to the rational use of drugs in veterinary practice. For instance, doses of aspirin used in human therapeutics actually poison cats while having no effect on the treatment of horses; unlike dogs and cats, mice, rabbits and horses are physiologically unable to vomit; the body chemical serotonin raises the blood pressure in dogs but reduces it in cats (humans react like dogs in this case); the LD50 of heart drug digitoxin in the rat is 670 times as great as that found in the cat; anticancer drug azauridine is comparatively well tolerated by people but causes lethal bone marrow depression in dogs after only 7-10 days; phenol-based disinfectants are particularly toxic to cats because they only slowly metabolize the chemical, and, the article might have added, dogs, cats, rats and mice do not need vitamin C added to their diet but, like us, guinea pigs do. The writer concluded that "It is unwise to extrapolate information concerning drugs from one species to another."[1]

Why then have animal experiments become so much a part of scientific practice that any criticism is considered heresy? Much of today's obsession with animal models of human disease can be traced to the 19th century physiologists who transformed vivisection from an occasional method into the