

Ignorance can no longer be used as an excuse.

An Awesome Responsibility

Members of Congress have an awesome responsibility to protect the weakest, most vulnerable members of society. Members cannot fulfill this charge without first learning of ongoing situations of abuse or predatory exploitation.

For those unfamiliar with the literature demonstrating the profound similarity between humans and other primate species, a lack of concern for these victims of Congressional decisions may be understandable. Nevertheless, the literature is compelling.

It Just Makes Sense

Charles Darwin pointed out there should be a continuum of attributes throughout all

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species, with the most similar being found in the nearest relatives. We should be able to recognize the emotions experienced by chimpanzees and monkeys precisely because we are all so closely related. This close relationship means that much about us, about the way we perceive and feel, is the same.

So Much Evidence

As early as 1958, the similarity between the emotions and psyches of humans and other primates was being reported:

*"The macaque infant differs from the human infant in that the monkey is more mature at birth and grows more rapidly; but the basic responses relating to affection, including nursing, contact, clinging, and even visual and auditory exploration, exhibit no fundamental differences in the two species. Even the development of perception, fear, frustration, and learning capability follows very similar sequences in rhesus monkeys and human children."*¹

According to senior researchers at the NIH Washington Regional

Primate Research Center (WaRPRC): *"The behavioral repertoire of nonhuman primates is highly evolved and includes advanced problem-solving capabilities, complex social relationships, and sensory acuity equal or superior to humans. Nonhuman primates are capable of advanced behaviors that share important and fundamental parallels with humans. These parallels include highly developed cognitive abilities and binding social relationships."*²

The cognitive characteristics of monkeys and apes are strikingly like those of humans. Scientists uncovering these traits have realized that there is an implication to such discovery: *"To be sure, the stakes are high. What is at issue is no arcane point, but the very distinction between the minds of human beings and nonhuman animals."*³

The similarities between the primate species' minds, emotions, and social behaviors are being used as justification for modern experiments on the brain of awake, usually restrained, monkeys. Commonly, the monkeys are required to perform some cognitive task

in order to receive a small food reward or a few drops of liquid. It is a standard procedure in these types of studies to deprive the monkeys of food and/or water in order to motivate them to perform for the vivisector.

Explanations and Responsibility

Those wishing to maintain a sharp ethical distinction between humans and all other species must explain what it is that keeps us apart.

Are compassion, sympathy, concern, and justice concepts we should reserve for humans alone? Why should each of these terms be redefined when speaking of humans or other animals? When we speak of humane

care, why should this term be differently applied to human children and monkeys?

How like us do they have to be before the evil we do to them should be termed criminal? *How like us need they be?*

Members of Congress bear a responsibility to the nearly 60,000 monkeys and apes used annually in the nation's labs and to the citizens concerned for them. It is time to acknowledge the body of evidence that has accumulated and declare an immediate moratorium on the use of all primates in harmful experimentation.

Notes

¹ Harlow H. 1958. The nature of love. Address of the President at the sixty-sixth Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association, Washington, D. C., August 31, 1958. First published in *American Psychologist*, 13, 573-685.

² Burbacher TM, Grant KS. 2000. Methods for studying nonhuman primates in neurobehavioral toxicology and teratology. *Neurotoxicology and Teratology*. Jul-Aug; 22(4): 475-86. Review.

³ Fagot J, Wasserman EA, Young ME. 2001. Discriminating the relation between relations: the role of entropy in abstract conceptualization by baboons (*Papio papio*) and humans (*Homo sapiens*). *Journal of Experimental Psychology and Animal Behavioral Processes*. Oct; 27(4): 316-2