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Beauty is Pain

Though the old phrase “beauty is pain” has commonly been used to represent the unpleasant beauty treatments women subject themselves to, it would more accurately describe the excruciating pain animals must endure while unwillingly being the experimental subjects of cosmetic testing. Each year, hundreds of millions of mice, rabbits, cats, dogs, and other animals are locked in cosmetic laboratory cages, terrified, and incognizant to their impending doom and probable death. Countries around the world have opposing views on this issue, as some have made efforts to reduce animal cruelty while others actually have legislation that requires all makeup products to be tested on animals. Australian philosopher Peter Singer advocates for the reduction of suffering in the world, both human and nonhuman, in his book *Practical Ethics*. Singer suggests if a creature is capable of suffering, there is no moral justification for the mistreatment of that being; therefore, his principles debunk the common belief that humans are superior to animals, otherwise known as speciesism. As technology and scientific research advances, alternative cosmetic testing methods that do not involve animal suffering whatsoever have been released, which makes it difficult to understand why animal experimentation still exists. Human apathy and insufficient action towards creating a solution for the pressing matter of animal cruelty in the cosmetic industry represents their underlying values that humans feel they are superior to animals.

While it is absolutely necessary to ensure companies are producing safe makeup, using animals to test toxic substances is the absolute wrong way to go about it. When testing occurs, defenseless animals are put through excruciating pain for the sake of human gain. When choosing animals to test on, experimenters like to use smaller animals because they are easier to handle. Rabbits are generally the most popular animal for cosmetic brands to experiment on because of their calm nature and ability to breed rapidly. The most infamous test is the Draize eye irritancy test, where highly concentrated samples of a particular cosmetic product are dropped into the eye of a rabbit. According to Alexis Nava-Martinez's scholarly journal article, "Traditionally, rabbits remain conscious without any form of pain reliever during the test and are locked in a holding device that only exposes their heads so that they cannot claw at their eyes or escape from the pain they endure while researchers drip a solution that slowly burns their skin and eyes" (Nava-Martinez, 58). The rabbits are then observed for anywhere from several hours to three weeks to see the severity of side effects such as swelling, redness, blindness, or discharge.

After the experiment is over, the animals being tested on are killed immediately and tossed away as if they are merely used lab equipment as opposed to real creatures who can fully experience pain. This mistreatment of animals in laboratories is a prime example of humans' feeling of superiority over animals. One of the biggest questions that arises when discussing animal cruelty is why humans should even be concerned with the welfare of animals. Don't humans have enough issues amongst ourselves to worry about? Singer suggests that this type of prejudice reflects the beliefs of slaveowners. To them, they had problems of their own, so they did not have to be concerned about the lives of black slaves. White people believed they had a superiority over black people, just as humans feel they are superior to animals, neither of which

justifies their suffering. According to Singer, “Beings that are not members of our species does not entitle us to exploit them, and similarly the fact that other animals are less intelligent than we are does not mean that their interests may be disregarded” (Singer). Singer is suggesting that despite the fact animals may not be able to experience humanlike thoughts or communicate, they still do not deserve to suffer.

As more attention is brought to the subject, cosmetic companies that continue to test on animals have received extreme backlash. According to The People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, commonly known as PETA, “Pew Research Center polls have found that 52 percent of U.S. adults oppose the use of animals in scientific research, and other surveys suggest that the shrinking group that does accept animal experimentation does so only because it believes it to be necessary for medical progress” (PETA). Cosmetic companies have attempted to justify experimentation on animals by claiming it is only carried out to make discoveries that will benefit humans. The reality is, many animal experiments do not contribute to human health and the side effects seen do not translate to humans. Products that have been seen to be harmful to animals were safe for humans and vice versa. Even if animal experimentation did have a significant impact on the welfare of humans, this is a very flawed justification. If animals are leading to conclusions about humans, it must mean that humans and animals experience pain and emotions in similar ways. Singer provides an example of this, stating “For instance, if forcing a rat to choose between starving to death and crossing an electrified grid to obtain food tells us anything about the reactions of humans to stress, we must assume that the rat feels stress in this kind of situation” (Singer). If it is assumed that animals and humans are similar in certain aspects, animal experimentation should be prohibited just as human experimentation is completely unacceptable.

The responses to the issue of animal experimentation in the makeup industry has varied throughout the world. The Animal Welfare Act was the first law established in the United States that attempted to regulate the treatment of animals in research. As stated in the article “Pain in Lab Animals: How Much is Too Much?” “Each year, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, roughly 820,800 guinea pigs, dogs, cats, and other animals covered by the Animal Welfare Act are used in research in the U.S.; of those, about 71,370 are subjected to unalleviated pain” (Chen). These statistics do not even include the millions of birds, rats, mice, and cold-blooded animals because they are excluded from The Animal Welfare Act. According to the American Psychological Association, “Research groups... claimed USDA's regulation of rodents and birds would have prohibitively increased the cost of routine animal care and maintenance without any effective change in laboratory animal care and treatment” (Monitor). Essentially, legislators have made the decision to exclude rodents from the act because it will cost too much to protect them and will not have a significant impact; however, this does not ring true with statistical facts, as millions of rodents suffer in laboratories annually. Cosmetic researchers have proven that they would rather preserve money than preserve the lives of innocent creatures.

Individual laboratories claim that they have made efforts to minimize pain, but who can truly decide how much pain is too much? Humans will never be able to gauge how much pain animals experience since animals do not have the same capabilities as us. In his book, Singer states “It is true that, with the exception of those apes who have been taught to communicate by sign language, they cannot actually say that they are feeling pain but then when my daughter was a little younger, she could not talk either” (Singer). Singer suggests that since animals lack the capability to communicate and speak for themselves, it becomes humans’ moral responsibility to

take a stand for animals and protect them just as they would for a child. Singer overall wants humans to extend their principles of equality beyond their own species.

While the Animal Welfare Act was a slight attempt at regulating experimentation, it failed in many aspects even after being amended six times. The law was put into place as a response to growing concern about the treatment of animals in laboratories and is meant to oversee and regulate animal experimentation. In the article “Failure of Animal Protection Laws and Regulation,” “The [Animal Welfare Act] regulates the use of animals in research and outlines standards for their care; it does not protect animals from harm during the course of research, nor does it prohibit their use” (Failure). The public was not satisfied with the execution of the law since it inadequately protected animals from harm. As a result, the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic act was put into place so that the Food and Drug Administration, also known as the FDA, could regulate cosmetics sold in the United States. As stated by Nava-Martinez, “The FDA does not require that cosmetics be tested on animals, but it does advise cosmetics companies to use whatever testing is necessary to make sure the products are safe” (Nava-Martinez). The FDA does not require cosmetics to be approved before they hit stores, which leaves the responsibility of safety testing in the hands of the individual companies. By not properly overseeing the cosmetic industry, the FDA is allowing millions of animals to be tormented every year. The only realistic solution that would solve the crisis of animal suffering in America would be to make it illegal for any type of experimentation on animals.

Though the United States does not currently have any legislation that explicitly bans inhumane cosmetic testing on defenseless animals, other countries have already taken that step such as the European Union. According to the *New York Times*, “The European Union banned animal testing of finished cosmetic products in 2004. A second ban, on animal-tested ingredients,

went into effect four years ago” (Kanter). In contrast, China has a law that requires all foreign cosmetic products to be tested on animals before they are sold in the country. China has acquired a negative reputation of fraudulent products being sold on the market, which can be very dangerous for consumers. They decided animal testing was practical because it is less expensive than alternative methods and does not require high certification. To relate back to Singer’s viewpoints, it is interesting to see how these two countries have contrasting views on suffering. Singer is advocating for an end to speciesism and suffering. The European Union has executed these principles by eliminating animal testing in order to minimize suffering both human and nonhuman. China, on the other hand, seems to be making an attempt and ending suffering as well, just in a much different way. It appears that they have chosen to focus on ending human suffering and believe it is necessary to do anything that will ensure the safety of humans. As a country that typically does not regulate their market, China was most likely trying to start testing for safety but did it in a way that actually encourages suffering on another species.

In recent years, the cosmetic brand NARS has been receiving a wave of negative feedback from their customers. NARS made the decision to sell their products in China, which ultimately means their products will have to be tested on animals before they enter the market. According to *Teen Vogue*, NARS responded to the backlash in an Instagram post stating “We have decided to make NARS available in China because we feel it is important to bring our vision of beauty and artistry to fans in the region. NARS does not test on animals or ask others to do so on our behalf, except where required by law” (*Teen Vogue*). By choosing to sell in China, the company has decided to put the profit over the welfare of animals. NARS would rather increase their market than protect the wellbeing of vulnerable creatures. This

furthermore speaks to humans' relationship to nature in general. The lack of effort to decrease animal suffering speaks to humans' disregard and destruction towards nature.

On the other hand, the fact that people have become outraged with companies that perpetuate animal testing is a step in the right direction. While action may not have been taken on a nationwide level, it is certainly good that public opinion has begun to shift. It is inspiring to see humans caring about an issue that does not affect us directly. For example, when handed two bottles of mascara, one that has been tested on animals and one that has been tested alternatively, a person would not be able to distinguish which bottle an animal has had to suffer for. In other words, whether or not animals suffer for cosmetic products, the person would still achieve luxuriously long eyelashes. People are not choosing to support anticruelty brands for their own benefit, but for the sake of animals and their wellbeing. Many individuals who use makeup on a day to day basis have researched companies that still allow animal testing and have boycotted their products. If sales decrease, cosmetic companies may be more inclined to dispose of their old research methods. Additionally, people have advocated by writing and speaking out towards legislators and individual companies.

The most compelling and obvious arguments that advocates continue to make is the fact that there are much safer and inexpensive alternative methods that could easily take the place of animal testing. Forward thinking scientists have rapidly been studying and developing testing methods that do not require suffering whatsoever, which Peter Singer would most definitely support. The most popular alternative method that has already been put into place in other regions of the world is known as the in vitro method. It utilizes human cells and tissues to replicate what a human may experience if, in this case, the cosmetic product had a negative effect on the customer's skin. According to PETA, Harvard Wyss Institute has created 'organs

on chips' that contain human cells grown in a state-of-the-art system to mimic the structure and function of human organs and organ systems. The chips can be used instead of animals in disease research, drug testing, and toxicity testing and have been shown to replicate human physiology, diseases, and drug responses more accurately than crude animal experiments do" (PETA). Not only do these alternatives save money, but they take much less time. This is a happy medium for both companies and anticruelty customers, because it safely tests products without the harm of any animals. Organizations such as PETA fund the research of new types of alternative testing methods.

Often times, those who support animal testing pose hypotheticals questions such as, if a disease that is killing many people could be cured by testing on animals, shouldn't we sacrifice animals for the sake of preventing human from suffering and dying? To this Singer responds, "If experimenters are not prepared to use orphaned humans with severe and irreversible brain damage [to experiment on], their readiness to use nonhuman animals seems to discriminate on the basis of species alone, since apes, monkeys, dogs, cats and even mice and rats are more intelligent, more aware of what is happening to them, more sensitive to pain, and so on" (Singer). Singer's overall principle is to minimize suffering, both human and nonhuman; therefore, the answer to this hypothetical question would be to not carry out the experiment at all. Hypothetical questions such as these tend to be very unrealistic, because singular experiments will not lead to drastic results. Those types of conclusions can only be made over an extended period of time. If cosmetic companies are not willing to do experiments on damaged humans such as those with mental illness or brain damage because they feel it is morally wrong, they should feel that same compassion towards animals. No animal should have to suffer for the sake of a beauty trend.

To conclude, now is the time consumers must band together for the removal of old animal testing methods. While testing on animals does allow for humans to test the safety of cosmetic products, there is no moral justification for allowing these vulnerable animals to be tormented daily. Peter Singer calls for an end to speciesism, as no species should feel they are superior to another. Animals experience pain and emotions in similar ways to humans which further proves they are not just lab equipment for humans to play with. There are much safer alternative methods that can replace animal testing and they have already been put into place in parts of the world such as the European Union. If people do not make it their individual responsibility to speak up for animal rights, nothing will change. The welfare of animals is equally as important as the welfare of humans, and therefore animal testing must be eradicated.

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