



Don't Kill It

"Don't kill it! Don't kill it!" seventh-graders cried, but the biology teacher dropped the frog into a vat of chemical, then proceeded to the dissection. A second frog had escaped and was hopping under the seats. "Let him go," most of the students pleaded, but a big boy caught the frog, handed him over to the teacher, and he too was killed and cut up.

What did the children learn from this experience?

They learned that a teacher can be utterly ruthless when it comes to helpless life within his power, brushing aside children's pleas as sissified. They learned to stifle their best impulses and harden themselves to go along with tradition. They learned that only grades matter — not character, not pity, nor fellow-feeling.

Those with sadistic tendencies learned that killing of an innocent animal is okay whenever the incantation of "science" is muttered over the process.

Communities where these things go on in the classroom, with approval of teachers, school boards, churches, law-makers and parents, are aghast when students become juvenile delinquents. They flare up if a group is found burning a cat; if an older boy picks on a younger one; if a man beats a dog. Where were these people when the boys' natural kind impulses were squelched and their worst inclinations cultivated?

A high school biology teacher recently complained that he could not leave live animals in his room. Students (or teachers?) poked them with pencils, rulers or instruments, sometimes killing them. Yet he is trying to teach about life with bottles of pickled animals and the cut-up bodies of frogs. Need he wonder if his students decide to carry on similar experiments

on their own? Isn't it "scientific" to observe a rabbit's reaction when speared with a sharp instrument, and to find out how long it takes him to die?

The scientific approach is a questioning way of thinking. Science is the search for knowledge. But in this search, let us preserve the soul of the child. Any normal child loves animals. He feels sympathy for them, and seeing them hurt, he is hurt too. Since such feeling is the foundation on which civilization rests, it should grow with the child, not be ridiculed as a babyish trait to be outgrown.

In China it used to be fashionable for women to have small feet. To implement this craze, baby girls' feet were bound and crippled while still pliant, and the women hobbled the rest of their lives on deformed stumps. This ugly custom was stopped, partly through protests from the West.

Isn't it time to look closer home and put a stop to another deplorable custom — the murder of small animals in the name of science? When an animal dies, something is killed in the heart of the child. His soul dies, or becomes misshapen.

A child's soul is his most precious possession. Don't kill it.

— Hope Sawyer Buyukmihci.

