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## ART OF MEDICINE

### Does It Make Sense to Say Humans “Protect” Nonhuman Animals While Using Them to Promote Human Health Interests?

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#### Abstract

Nonhuman animal research has contributed to human health advancements but raises questions about the extent to which humans protect nonhuman animals during such endeavors. This series of drawings explores several ethics and empirical questions from a visual point of view.

Figure 1. *Animal Heart*, 2017



**Media**

Ink on mixed media paper.

**Caption**

Multiple animal skulls are assembled into the shape of a human heart, offering a visual interrogation of whether and to what extent potential benefits to human health of nonhuman animal research can express respect for the value of nonhuman animal life.

**Figure 2.** *Man & Animal No. 1*, 2023



**Media**

Graphite and pastel on mixed media paper.

**Caption**

The head of Aesculapius, the Greek god of healing, is represented as half human on the left and as half dog skull on the right. This drawing invites consideration of whether and when human health benefits outweigh nonhuman animal suffering that might promote them.

**Figure 3.** *Man & Animal No. 2*, 2023



**Media**

Graphite, ink, and watercolor on mixed media paper.

**Caption**

A half-human and half-dog skull is at the center of the drawing. Multiple history of art references (eg, the hand of man and God from Michelangelo's fresco *The Creation of*

*Adam* in the Sistine Chapel, the Monument to the Laboratory Mouse, the Aesculapian snake, and flowers in the style of *Día de Los Muertos*) and syringes radiate from the skull. Empirical questions, in addition to ethical questions, prompt our consideration about whether and when nonhuman animal models accurately reflect human physiology and diseases and enable scientifically valid research. Is adherence to federal animal use and care guidelines<sup>1</sup> **ethically sufficient** to promote transparency and human stewardship accountability?

### References

1. National Research Council. *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*. 8th ed. National Academies Press; 2011.

**Christopher Lau, MD** is a second-year pulmonary and critical medicine fellow based in Phoenix, Arizona, who is interested in visually exploring health care ethics via multimedia art. He takes inspiration from the classic sculptures of Rome, surrealism, and contemporary graphic artists, particularly Yoji Shinkawa.

#### Editor's Note

This is a co-winning artwork of the 2023 John Conley Art of Medicine Contest.

#### Citation

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#### Conflict of Interest Disclosure

Author disclosed no conflicts of interest.

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