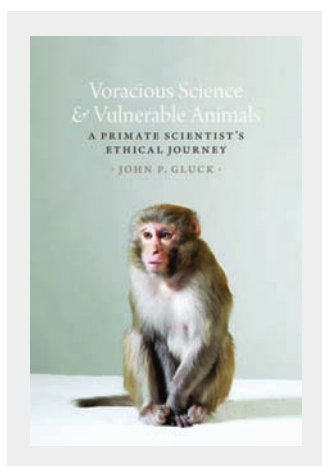


# Book Review: *Voracious Science and Vulnerable Animals: A Primate Scientist's Ethical Journey*

**Leah Poffenberger**

John P. Gluck. Chicago: University of Chicago Press; 2016. 360 pages. ISBN: 9780226375656.



There is no research more valuable than our own integrity and ethical coherence, and our treatment of animals is a direct reflection of our values towards life and one another," wrote John Gluck, PhD, in an essay in the *New York Times*. His essay, "Second Thoughts of an Animal Researcher," summarized his ethical journey from an enthusiastic animal researcher to passionate bioethicist.

A month after his essay appeared, on October 26, 2016, Gluck's book *Voracious Science and Vulnerable Animals: A Primate Scientist's Ethical Journey* was published. An expansion of his essay's content, this book is a courageous project that seems aimed at righting the wrongs of indiscriminate animal research he conducted in his early career. Gluck takes his reader to his childhood in New York, where his first love of animals was formed, and to his college

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years, where compassion for animals was considered a hindrance to science. Ultimately, as a senior professor, Gluck comes to value animal research subjects as more than mere tools and becomes a champion for their welfare.

Each chapter of *Voracious Science and Vulnerable Animals* is named for a stage of Gluck's attitude toward research animals and their welfare. Like signposts, these chapter titles guide the reader through Gluck's journey, from "Erosion"—where his ingrained feelings about animals are challenged—to "Awareness," and finally, "Reformation." Through each step, Gluck maintains an admirable honesty about his internal struggles and, at times, his own shortcomings.

Gluck began his career in animal research as a psychology student at Texas Tech University in 1964, two years before the passage of the Animal Welfare Act, which attempted to regulate the treatment of animals in research. Psychology research in animals was a new frontier that promised to teach psychologists about the human brain. Gluck worked with mice—the first study he worked on required removing part of a mouse's brain and observing its behavior afterward. With no prior training, Gluck was required only to watch a procedure before he got to try his hand at brain surgery. His first few subjects didn't survive.

One summer, Gluck had an internship at the University of Wisconsin, where he became passionate about primate research. Gluck describes the atmosphere of the lab group as a "family," an environment that was welcoming and encouraging of creative research techniques—creative often equating with *extreme*. Returning as a grad student to Texas Tech, where there was no primate research center, didn't excite Gluck, and he later transferred to the University of Wisconsin for graduate school.

At the University of Wisconsin, Gluck worked under Harry Harlow, who is known for social isolation experiments with primates. Gluck writes of the distressing scene of pulling an infant monkey away from its mother to place it in isolation, subjecting it to a life of painful solitude. Often, however, the language used when speaking of these monkeys attempted to remove any human emotion—a practice Gluck attempted to adhere to rigidly. Reports were sterilized, and justifications

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were made: the research will benefit humanity and therefore it's acceptable.

After earning his PhD at the University of Wisconsin, Gluck accepted a position at the University of New Mexico to start his own primate research lab. He saw it as following in the footsteps of mentors such as Harlow, but he began to lose his enthusiasm for animal research. Bret Snyder, an outspoken veterinarian, was instrumental in changing Gluck's outlook.

After completing a fellowship in clinical psychology, Gluck developed an interest in working with humans in a clinical setting, and his distaste for animal research grew. He began questioning his graduate students extensively as they developed experiments, challenging them to assess both the necessity of their research and the harm involved. He was criticized by his colleagues for this "therapy"—his questions perceived as scientific coddling.

Gluck began to struggle in secret with his ethical dilemma—he finally saw the primates in his research center as more than just research tools. Although reluctant to let down his mentors and give up his status as a primate researcher, Gluck could no longer justify keeping his lab open. He found a study for half his primates and a home at a National Institutes of Health facility for the others and dedicated himself to bioethics. After a year-long fellowship at Georgetown University, where Gluck was surrounded by bioethicists, he returned to the University of New Mexico to start the Research Ethics Service Project, dedicating himself to furthering the welfare of animals in research.

In some ways, Gluck's journey deep into primate research serves as a cautionary tale about allowing the

pressure of mentors, peers, and our environments to cloud our own judgment. In writing about his time as an animal researcher, Gluck shares the moments he felt something was wrong with his area of research but chose not to speak out. For Gluck, whenever he began to have misgivings, a desire for success and approval assured him he was on the right path.

Gluck's honesty about his own shortfalls as an animal researcher—like the time he forgot to feed a young monkey for several weeks—adds a level of credibility to his writing. Rather than point fingers at his mentors or his peers as unethical scientists, he frankly discusses his own role in a research environment that regarded animals as products instead of thinking, feeling creatures.

The narrative of Gluck's journey through the ethical pitfalls of primate research is poignant and refined. He tells a well-crafted, detailed story, bringing his readers into his emotional conflict. When he mentions particularly disturbing lapses in animal welfare standards, he doesn't dwell on the emotional aspects: he permits his readers to simply observe and allow their own ethics to guide their feelings.

However, in the final chapters of the book, the narrative seems to unravel as Gluck pours his efforts into debunking ethical arguments favoring unrestricted animal research. He makes well-crafted arguments, but the number of opinions he attempts to address might overwhelm his reader.

In *Voracious Science and Vulnerable Animals*, Gluck increasingly encourages his readers to consider the ethics involved with our relationships with animals. His journey—and willingness to admit his own mistakes—creates a meaningful dialogue for researchers and other citizens alike.