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Humanities

21 December 2020

The Animal Rights Movement and How Its Ideas are Communicated

Today, people all around the globe use animals in their daily routine, whether they know it or not. Perhaps they use animals when they put on a wool sweater or when they use a product that has been tested on animals. Perhaps they use animals when they eat lunch or feed the fish in their tank. The use of animals has evolved and become normalized across many cultures over the millions of years that humans have been on Earth. Nevertheless, the debate of how humans should treat animals has grown. Some argue that it is justifiable to use animals to improve the condition of humans, while others assert that people should treat animals as they would treat their own kind. The satire “Babycakes” by Neil Gaiman and the *BBC* article “Ethics - Animal Ethics: Animal Rights” both proclaim the latter, but present their arguments in very different ways. Targeting the general public, “Babycakes” proposes a ridiculous idea: to replace animals with babies if the world runs out of animals for a food source, clothing, and testing products. Meanwhile, the *BBC* article presents direct reasons for the argument. Between these two readings, “Babycakes” is far more effective in communicating the argument that animal rights should be respected than the *BBC* article “Animal Rights” because the appeal to pathos in “Babycakes” using imagery, an indifferent tone, and *reductio ad absurdum* is much stronger than the appeal to logos and ethos in “Animal Rights.”

The appeal to logos and ethos in “Animal Rights” helps to argue that animals should have respect; however, “Babycakes” is far more effective in doing this. The *BBC* article has a section

for the reasons to support animal rights and another for rebuttals against anti-animal rights ideas. The latter section, which makes up most of the article, uses logical reasoning and quotes from experts to refute the anti-animal rights ideas. The author uses bullet points to show the progression of ideas and their thought process directly and coherently. This appeals to logos because the reader can easily understand the points of the argument. Also, the author references author C. S. Lewis, primatologist Jane Goodall, and philosopher Mary Warnock, who have great accomplishments in their vocations. The use of quotations of respectable, accomplished adults appeals to ethos because it makes the article more credible. The effect of the appeals to logos and ethos in “Animal Rights” works to help show its theme; however, the use of pathos in “Babycakes” is much more effective. This is because while the *BBC* article gives a lot of reason directly to convince the reader that animals should be treated with respect, it has no means to intrigue the reader and keep them interested. Readers feel nothing when they read the article; they merely gain knowledge. The appeal to pathos in Neil Gaiman’s story, however, not only keeps the readers interested but even insults them personally and makes them feel guilty. His technique using imagery, an indifferent tone, and *reductio ad absurdum* is much more effective in getting the theme across to the readers because it convinces them that supporting animal rights is simply morally correct by showing it, not stating it, through a parallel example. Thus, the appeal to pathos in “Babycakes” shows that animal rights should be respected in a way that reaches the audience much more effectively than the appeals to logos and ethos in “Animal Rights.”

The imagery in “Babycakes” appeals to the pathos of the audience because it causes the feelings of guilt, adding to why it is more effective than the *BBC* article. Gaiman uses vivid, gruesome language such as “tap[ing] open their [the animals’] eyes” and “dripp[ing] detergents

and shampoos in, a drop at a time.” He goes on to mention “scarr[ing] them and scald[ing] them” as well as “clamp[ing] them and plant[ing] electrodes into their brains” (Gaiman). This imagery gives readers a visual of testing on human babies or reminds them of animal testing. The gory and pitiful nature of both images contextualizes the suffering of animals and allows for readers to empathize with them. The readers feel guilty for using something that caused either a baby or an animal to feel pain, and thus the appeal to pathos adds to the effectiveness of Gaiman’s message. Gaiman’s piece is so much more effective than the *BBC* article in displaying the theme to readers because the use of imagery targets the readers’ feelings rather than telling the reader logical facts that do not stick with the reader in the same, meaningful way. Therefore, Gaiman’s use of imagery and appeal to pathos is more effective in communicating the animal rights message.

Next, the indifference in Gaiman’s tone in his short story causes readers to repent their actions and adds to the appeal to pathos and therefore makes it the more effective writing piece. Throughout the story, the author uses short and simple sentences with language that is not extravagant, such as when he describes the emotions of humans at the beginning of the story: “We were all alone. We didn’t know what to do” (Gaiman). Additionally, he never mentions emotion; he allows for the reader to feel it rather than stating it. He describes baby rights activists as “some people [who] complained.” He follows up stating that “they always do. And everything went back to normal” (Gaiman). He describes the feeling of baby rights activists, parallel to animal rights activists, as merely dissatisfied with the situation. He brushes aside the moral obligation that these people may have and mockingly ignores their opinion as many people do with animal rights activists. To the general public reading this piece, the use of indifferent tone mocking the apathetic attitude that they may feel towards animal rights causes shame and sadness, especially when put in the perspective of harming babies. The appeal to pathos here

through the lack of emotion in his tone is much stronger than the bullet-pointed list of facts in the *BBC* article since the former communicates to the reader on a personal level. The use of a tone lacking emotions in “Babycakes” causes the feeling of humiliation for the reader and adds to the appeal of pathos and the story’s effectiveness over the *BBC* article.

Gaiman’s use of *reductio ad absurdum* in “Babycakes” strengthens the appeal to pathos and makes his argument more compelling than “Animal Rights.” The author sets up an imaginary world with no remaining animals left and proposes a ridiculous solution to it: to treat human babies as people treat animals today. He describes babies as creatures who “can’t talk” and “can hardly move.” He states that “a baby is not a rational, thinking creature,” all to justify testing on babies as people would justify testing on animals (Gaiman). He satirically claims that the justification for causing harm to living creatures is because compared to adults, babies and animals are inferior and thus do not deserve rights. When the argument of those against animal rights is broken down to reveal the lack of morality, the animal rights theme is strengthened. Panging the hearts of the audience with shame for feeling superior and inconsiderate of others as a human species, Gaiman is able to add to the appeal to pathos. Compared to the *BBC* article, the appeal to pathos in “Babycakes” connects the animal rights theme with the readers’ emotions, causing the guilt formed while reading to stick in the readers’ minds whenever animals are mentioned. Meanwhile, the logical argument in “Animal Rights” does not have the same long-lasting and deep imprint on the readers’ minds because it just states credible facts rather than connecting them to the reader on a personal level. The use of *reductio ad absurdum* in “Babycakes” causes guilt and appeals to pathos, making the story more effectively communicate the message about animal rights than the *BBC* article.

Overall, the idea that animals should have rights is better supported in Neil Gaiman's satirical piece rather than in the *BBC* article because the former uses imagery, an indifferent tone, and *reductio ad absurdum* to appeal to pathos more strongly than the appeal to logos and ethos in the latter. The rhetorical choices made in "Babycakes" cause readers to feel guilty for treating animals poorly and empathetic towards them, while "Animal Rights" just communicates facts to the audience rather than emotionally engaging them. The descriptions of babies being treated as animals, the lack of emotion in Gaiman's voice, and the absurdity presented in "Babycakes" help to add to the pathos by causing the readers to feel empathetic towards the animals and think about their actions. All of these reasons make it much more likely for the readers to truly understand the reasons for the animal rights movement and to feel the moral obligation to join it. The examples that Gaiman describes leave an imprint on the readers' mind and remind them about how they felt while reading his short story when they see or use animals in their daily life.

Works Cited

“Ethics - Animal Ethics: Animal Rights” *BBC*,
www.bbc.co.uk/ethics/animals/rights/rights_1.shtml.

Gaiman, Neil. “Babycakes.” 1993.