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The Ethics of Animal Testing

With an ever-increasing trend towards consumerism, animal testing and consumption have surged exponentially over the last several decades. Animal testing is the cruel and inhumane practice of experimenting with potentially toxic drugs and chemicals on various animal species to ensure the safety of those products for human use. The creation of thousands of brand new products from vitamins to cosmetics to alleviate human pain or enhance leisure has come at the expense of torturing animals senselessly, without the fear of consequences on the ecosystem and the environment. Two works of writing, “Babycakes” by Neil Gaiman and “Animal Testing 101” by PETA, call our attention to this inhumane treatment of animals and highlight the lack of human empathy for other species. “Babycakes” is a Juvenalian satire based in a dystopian world where humans have killed off all the animals on the planet and are repeating the vicious cycle with their own offspring. On the other hand, “Animal Testing 101” is an informational article educating readers about the crude practice of animal testing and the measures being taken against it. The satire “Babycakes” proves to be much more effective than the fact-based article “Animal Testing 101” in evoking intense feelings of disgust, remorse, and regret in the reader by using various rhetorical devices such as hyperbole, pathos, and stark imagery. Furthermore, the satire appeals to the inner morals of human beings and calls the reader

into personal action more effectively than the informational article, even though it does not provide any explicit measures that people can take against animal testing.

The satirical piece effectively elicits emotions of extreme guilt, shame, and abhorrence in the reader through the use of hyperbolic statements, dark imagery, and inclusive language, whereas the informational article remains largely disconnected from the reader as it does not directly blame the reader for the existence of inhumane animal testing practices. The persona presented in the satire “Babycakes” likens the taste of animals to the taste of human children, claiming that “baby flesh is tender and succulent” (Gaiman). This extreme and grotesque description incites feelings of disgust and repugnance as eating human flesh goes against the basic ethics and morals of human beings. This description also makes people sensitive and angry that humans could potentially come to such a precarious position of consuming their own babies. In addition, Gaiman makes use of inclusive language in conjunction with certain actions that are taken on animals to incite feelings of guilt and shame and place direct blame on the reader. He says that “[w]e flayed their skin and decorated ourselves in it” (Gaiman), making an indirect reference to the human use of animal fur, teeth, and skin as decorations. By using the personal pronoun “we,” the author makes the reader feel even more regretful for being ignorant of the horrid animal cruelty practices. Gaiman uses these rhetorical techniques to insightfully bring out feelings of disgust in the reader to hopefully push them towards positive change and take an offensive stance against animal testing practices.

Although the article “Animal Testing 101” uses some imagery to depict the issue at hand, it does not place direct blame on the reader; it instead blames non-personal organizations for the cause of the cruel practices of animal testing. The article states that millions of animals “are

locked inside barren cages in laboratories across the country” and “languish in pain” (PETA).

Although the article uses visual imagery to incite an emotional response from its readers, it is not as effective as Gaiman’s satirical piece as it does not blame the reader directly for the suffering of the animals. As the piece is written in the third person, there is a disconnect between the reader and writer, which prevents the reader from completely understanding the point of view of the author. In addition, the author of the article briefly mentions that “a number of countries have implemented bans on the testing of certain types of consumer goods on animals, such as the cosmetics-testing bans in the European Union, India, Israel, New Zealand, Norway, and elsewhere” (PETA), falsely consoling the reader there is no need for panic or worry. By mentioning that several countries already ban the practice, the article implies that the reader should not be obligated to act against animal testing, as it will be only a matter of time before the US government follows with a similar ban. The article also explicitly blames various US government agencies such as the Environmental Protection Agency and the Food and Drug Administration for conducting toxicity tests on animals and subjecting animals to “crude, painful tests” (PETA), further absolving the reader from any responsibility.

While “Animal Testing 101” explicitly lists the practices that people can adopt to spread awareness, it does not call the reader into personal action as persuasively as “Babycakes,” which employs indirect inference to the maximum. The satire treats people as part of the problem of animal cruelty whereas the article treats people as part of the solution, which only leads to feelings of false content and satisfaction in the reader. The final part of the article presents a list of efforts that could be taken by the reader. The author says that “[e]ach of us can help prevent animal suffering and deaths by buying cruelty-free products, donating only to charities that don’t

experiment on animals, requesting alternatives to animal dissection, [and] demanding the intermediate implementation of humane, effective non-animal tests by government agencies and corporations” (PETA). If all that was required to solve the problem were to follow these directions, the issue of animal testing would not have been escalated in the twenty-first century. People still perform these inhumane experiments because they do not foresee the terrible impact of abuse. The article provides the reader with a false sense of security as it shines an unintended positive light on the issue of animal testing and theorizes that it can be solved. In contrast, the satire incites strong emotions in the reader and pushes him or her to take an opposing stance on animal testing. Gaiman states that there is no reason to change one’s diet and stop testing products as babies are not “rational, thinking creature[s]” (Gaiman), mocking the compulsive human habit of animal consumption. This statement elicits emotions of disgust and repugnance in the reader as it makes the reader feel like a central part of the problem.

The impact of the satirical piece stretches far and wide as it spurs thousands of people into personal action through its effective use of hyperbole, stark imagery, and inclusive language. Anyone who reads this piece cannot go unaffected. If people take personal action and stop buying animal products such as leather jackets and consuming excessive meat, it will automatically weaken the demand for animal-based products and reduce the inhumane treatment of animals to a great extent. The satire assumes that human beings are intelligent and can connect the dots without telling them explicitly what to do, and therein lies the immense convincing power of “Babycakes” by Gaiman.

Works Cited

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