

Who Gave the Monkey a Book?: A Rhetorical Analysis on the Ethics of Animal Studies

Imagine convincing a group of people that the sky is green and that the grass is blue. A task like this seems nearly impossible. In her article, “Animal research: the bigger picture and why we need psychologists to speak out”, Allyson J. Bennett deals with a similar problem. When most people think of experimenting on animals, their minds jump to a bunch of white mice running around in cages being poked, prodded, and tortured. Images of fluffy bunnies being unfairly treated and killed often accompany people’s thoughts. However, animal experimentation extends far beyond that. Animal experimentation has been seen as an alternative to performing procedures on humans when the experiments are seen to be too dangerous to attempt on humans. The reasoning being that often times humans and animals share similar behavior and minds making it possible that the results collected on animals may also transfer over to humans. This way knowledgeable information about the human mind can be obtained. However, the bigger problem is the public backlash against animal studies. Nowadays, any form of animal experimentation is often looked down upon and faces public opposition. Protests groups such as PETA make it their mission to halt animal studies and educate the public on the dangers of it. In her article, Bennett attempts to convince her audience that animal testing is both ethical and necessary. Considering the negative connotation that is received when it comes to animal studies, it is no wonder that this is a hard point to press. Therefore, Bennett must use multiple forms of rhetorical analysis in order to convince her audience that animal testing is the right option. In “Animal Research”, Allyson J. Bennett attempts to change the audience’s mind on the ethics of animal experimentation with her use of credibility, ethos which includes word choice and tone,

refuting counter arguments, and appeals to values and beliefs, and implementing specific keywords that address cultural values.

Bennett uses her credibility as one of the main ways to sway her audience to agree with her argument. Bennett has a P.H. D. and is an Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology at the university of Memphis. She has had many publications and currently is focusing on researching comparative neurobehavioral studies and primate life-span development. This lends Bennett credibility since it shows she is educated and well versed in the field of psychology. The article Bennett wrote is published on the website for the American Psychological Association which is the largest and most prestigious organization of psychologists in the United States. Being associated with such a highly regarded group adds to Bennett's authority. Aside from her resume, Bennett establishes credibility through the way she writes. Bennett employs links to add multiple credible sources to her article. These sources allow her to backup her claims and provide evidence on what she is saying. A couple of the sources that Bennett has included in her article are news stories from reputable sites such as the *Huffington Post* and *The New York Times*, federal legislation such as *H.R.:153 Great Ape Protection and Cost Savings Act of 2011*, and direct links to sites of groups involved in the issue such as PETA and The Humane Society of the United States. On top of the credible sources, Bennett highlights her credibility by adding statistics into the article. All of these things allow Bennett to use the rhetorical strategy that is credibility. By using credibility, Bennett is backing up her authority, which makes it easier for an audience to understand and agree with her viewpoints.

Bennett's use of ethos through the strategies of word choice and tone, refuting counterarguments, and appealing values and beliefs convince the audience to agree with her side of the argument. The first method of ethos that Bennett employs is the use of word choice and tone. She uses these two things to make her points seem very sure and definitive. This gives the reader the impression that Bennett truly understands and believes what she says. Bennett claims that, "All of this matters deeply to the future of research, psychology, and human health. A choice to turn away from all animal research will have consequences. We would lose essential avenues for discovery" (Bennett). Bennett's tone reflects clarity in her thoughts. The word choice "we" makes it clear that she is talking to the audience. She uses the words "consequences" to make it seem as if she is sure of what will happen. Her tone is very forward and forewarning. All of these things make it seem as if Bennett is sure of what she is saying and can predict what will happen if her side of the argument is ignored. Another method of ethos that Bennett uses is refuting counterarguments. This is a method heavily used by Bennett in her article most probably due to the high opposition against animal studies. By pointing out any counterarguments, Bennett is then able to refute them. This benefits her because she is shutting down any counter arguments before the audience gets a chance to even think about them. By shutting down those ideas, it gives Bennett's argument more power and appeal. Bennett effectively refutes these counterarguments by providing statistics as to why what is being said is not right. She even goes as far as to back these up with proof. For example, Bennett provides proof that, "Some [studies] are well-known enough to be core and common knowledge in our society. Consider how Harry Harlow's famous monkey studies contributed broadly to social, clinical, developmental, comparative, and biological perspectives on attachment" (Bennett). By providing proof that goes

against the argument that animal studies are pointless, Bennett is able to be one step ahead of her audience. Lastly, Bennett appeals to values or beliefs of the audience as way of employing ethos. Her word choice helps her to achieve this. The values that Bennett is appealing to are those of knowledge. She is employing the strategy that knowledge is power and that, “animal research plays an integral role in scientific study relevant not only to furthering our basic understanding and knowledge, but also to informing clinical practice and public health policy” (Bennett). Not only does she appeal to the idea of knowledge, but also to health when she mentions how animal studies can then be translated into the field of medicine. Upon an analysis of her article, it is apparent that Bennett is using ethos in order to make her argument more persuasive. Bennett is successful in employing this rhetorical strategy. Bennett’s use of ethos is significant because it helps establish credibility which allows the audience to begin to trust her and her argument. This makes it easier for Bennett to convince the audience of her point.

Bennett’s use of credibility and ethos makes it easier for her to convey her final rhetorical strategy, keywords that instill the cultural values of the audience that she is writing to. The first keyword Bennett uses is the word “misrepresented”. This alludes to the cultural value of misrepresentation and misunderstanding of specific things in today’s society due to mass media. It is essentially that animal studies are misrepresented as unethical due to the mass amount of media and that experimentation is in fact nothing like the public views it. Bennett employs the use of ethos to get this value across as she uses credible sources that give proof of the safety of the animals. The next value Bennett discusses is “ethical”. Once again, Bennett uses ethos through the form of sources and statistics to sell the value. The last value that Bennett sells is the word “value”. She presents the argument that knowledge is valuable and that animal

experimentation is a necessity to enhance our understanding of important fields. This time, Bennett uses ethos in the form of tone and word choice to convince the audience of this cultural value. By using a tone that displays importance and urgency, Bennett makes her argument seem like the only choice. By repeating keywords that instill cultural values, Bennett employs a key strategy to help win her case.

Clearly, convincing an audience that the sky is green and that grass is green is a task that may never be accomplished, no matter how many rhetorical strategies are used. However, this is not true in Bennett's case. Although her argument in "Animal Research" is one that is hard to persuade, her use of credibility, ethos, and keywords make it easier to convince an audience of her viewpoints. Bennett is easily able to convince the audience that her side of the argument is correct by giving herself credibility that later makes it easy to sway the audience towards the cultural values implemented in the article. All of these strategies employed are important because the opinion Bennett has is an unpopular one. Therefore, she must have effective ways to convince people of her argument since it may otherwise remain ignored. Although often times ideas are easy to be persuaded, this is not true in her case. Therefore, to convince her audience that what she is saying is correct, it is imperative that she use the strategies that she employs in her article.

Works Cited

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