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Rhetorical Analysis

In the essay “An Argument Against Veganism from a Vegan”, author Rob Greenfield puts a spotlight on meat-eaters. The title is slightly misleading as the argument is not against vegans, but rather it is giving vegans and non-meat eaters a different, somewhat sympathetic viewpoint about meat eaters. The essay is well written and gives both sides of the “meat vs.no-meat” argument a viable platform. Ultimately, the paper is designed to encourage a meatless diet, but it does so in a fair, logical, non-aggressive way.

Rob Greenfield is from San Diego and is an environmental activist who enjoys a vegetarian diet. He therefore has credibility to educate and enlighten others about this lifestyle, thereby employing the technique of ethos to give himself authority on the subject matter. Even though the title says “from a vegan”, he will sometimes go to the pier and catch a fish to eat. True vegans do not eat fish, so technically he consumes a vegetarian diet. This actually is another method of ethos, displaying his character and integrity. He has been through the conversion from eating meat to eliminating meat from his diet. Therefore, although his perspective is slightly skewed, it is still valid. In his words, “I eat an almost completely plant-based diet myself, about 95-99% of what I eat is plant based” (Greenfield 1).

Greenfield’s argumentative essay uses pathos in a way that makes the reader sympathetic to the animals’ treatment in industrial farming. He states: “many of the horrifying practices are taking place in our current industrial agriculture system. There is factory farming with complete

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disregard to animals being a living being. Cows never get to graze in the field and barely see the light of day. (Greenfield 2). This is an important point to make, and effectively uses pathos as a convincing technique for those people who might not share a natural compassion for animals. This stance is also supported in an article by PETA which states “every vegan saves nearly 200 animals per year” (*Why Going Vegan Should be Your New Year’s Resolution 1*)

Throughout the essay he provides genuine wisdom to both sides. He is able to convey an understanding and a consideration for both carnivores and vegan/vegetarians. His use of logos by articulating both sides of the issue displays a sincere open mindedness, makes the paper easier to read and may help sway some cynics. This may make one want to attempt that eating lifestyle, rather than just immediately disparaging it.

He uses logos when offering excuses for the people that live in certain areas where eating meat is environmentally friendly. As an example of this, he writes of a group of people in Louisiana who eat alligator, deer, and rabbit. There’s no packaging, all of the food is free range and they’re hunting the animals in the wild. This portrays a much more environmentally friendly narrative, as it keeps the herds from over populating and ultimately starving to death, which also employs a bit of pathos in the argument. Using pathos to elicit the emotions of the reader is an effective tool when talking about animal cruelty.

He continues: “There’s the exploding wild boar population in Texas that is causing serious environmental problems. ...devouring crops, and tearing up the land they roam. I think that hunting and eating these boars has a much smaller environmental impact (and likely even a positive impact) than just about any vegan food you can buy at the supermarket” (Greenfield 3). Using logos again, he mentions the Inuit people of Canada and Alaska. Their food is locally trapped and caught which has been sustainable for the people in those communities. His point is that it would be environmentally detrimental for them to go on a vegan diet since the climate does not support that lifestyle. Therefore, veganism would entail their having to get all of their food shipped from a

warmer climate where these foods are grown easily. Packaging and shipping which carries a substantial environmental threat. This is supported by other researchers as well, “The problem lies in the fact that we have become used to the ease and efficiency offered by single used plastic while not yet being able to solve its polluting properties, particularly when it comes to plastic pollution of the sea” (Wright 1). This pathos angle could easily sway a reader that is concerned about the health of our oceans and aquatic inhabitants.

There are several reasons why Greenfield’s ultimate argument is sound. One reason is its structure and the authors use of logos. The paper flows well from one subject to the next, connecting ideas using logic. His technique of using pathos gives the reader a sense of understanding and compassion from the author. The author understands that this is a big change in anyone’s life and suggests small steps instead of one big, sudden change. He suggests: “If you do eat meat or animal products do it in moderation. A few times per week is plenty. If you eat a lot of meat currently, start by eating one animal free day per week (such as Meatless Monday) or one animal free meal per day” (Greenfield 5). Greenfield seems to understand that different paths of life and different circumstances can lead to different diet choices. In doing so, he uses logos to get the reader to think logically about how he could make small changes. His essay includes: “To say that everyone should be vegan I think would discredit many of the societies and cultures that are living in coexistence with the earth to a far greater extent than many of the urban vegans of today's current culture” (Greenfield 3). The author even gives excuses for those who hunt for their own food conceding that that is more environmentally friendly and sustainable than people who get vegan products shipped from around the world. And for those whose main concern is the environment, he also touches on that aspect of eating meat “the rainforest deforestation that takes place to raise soy and grains to feed the animals that we eat” (Greenfield, 2). This environmental angle is another example of both ethos for those whose ethics lead them to environmental

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concerns, but also to pathos for those readers concerned about the impact to wildlife of deforestation.

The argument successfully uses the rhetorical devices of ethos, pathos, and logos throughout. It uses logos to give a well-structured argument that is substantive and factual. In addition, it uses pathos by giving alternatives rather than admonishing the reader for their chosen eating lifestyle. There are suggestions as to how one might modify their eating habits. Lastly, Greenfield uses ethos by addressing cultural and geographical differences, and is not completely close minded as to how other people live their lives. This argumentative essay could easily convince a person to attempt a non-meat diet.

Work Cited

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