
David F. Wallace's Fight for Animal Rights in His Work Consider the Lobster

Animal-rights' is an important, but touchy, subject. No one wants to feel that they are intentionally doing something wrong or harmful; which can possibly include eating an animal that was killed specifically for their consumption. In a *Gourmet* article issued in August of 2004, readers are spiked with controversial, thought-provoking ideas about animal rights. They are provided with the example of how lobsters are cooked alive at a festival in Maine every year. David F. Wallace effectively grasps the reader in *Consider the Lobster* by his use of pathos in his diction, quotes, and thought-provoking structure about how and why it is wrong to treat animals inhumanely, but is ineffective in supporting this idea, and shows logos in his tone, because he does not provide solutions to treating them this way, and changes his diction about his views towards animal's rights.

In an effectively powerful way, Wallace shows how treating animals inhumanely for consumption is wrong by simply posing the question, "Is it alright to boil a sentient creature alive just for our gustatory pleasure?" (Wallace, 60). By providing this question, he makes people really think about the issue of inhumane animal treatment by using examples of pathos. When he poses this question, people are given the image of an animal being boiled alive, and it instantly connects with their emotion and creates mental images. Wallace talks about how the Maine Lobster Festival is a festival that publicly cooks and consumes live animals right in front of people. He appeals to *Gourmet* reader's minds when he compares the Maine Lobster festival to a theoretical one, "Try to imagine a Nebraska Beef Festival at which part of the festivities is watching trucks pull up and the live cattle get driven down the ramp and slaughtered right there..." (Wallace, 62). His premise is very strong and appeals to the readers of *Gourmet* magazine because it compares the Lobster festival in a parallel way with any other animal in a similar situation. He shows us that for some reason it would be a more horrific sight to be able to pick out a cow rather than a lobster, and watch it be slaughtered and cooked right before the consumer's eyes. He adds a quote from an outside source, "Lobsters are extraordinarily sensitive. To me, eating a lobster is out of the question" (Wallace 60). By including this quote stated by Mary Tyler Moore, David Wallace adds power to his argument on why treating even lobsters is wrong. He shows that others support the animal rights aspect of his argument and that it is a big controversial topic amongst most humans.

Using logos, Wallace begins to contradict his feelings about animal-rights, and is ineffective in supporting his fist ideas. He does not give ideas on how to solve problems about how animals are treated wrongly before they are set on the dinner table. In the article Wallace states, "Before we go any further, let's acknowledge that the questions of whether and how different kinds of animals feel pain, and of whether and why it might be justifiable to inflict pain on them in order to eat them, turn out to be extremely complex and difficult" (Wallace, 62). Although his strategy here may be to show that their pain may not be intense enough to hurt them that much when being boiled alive, he shows that he has no proof of the pain they may feel. Here he begins to explain that lobsters may feel pain differently than any other animal, but also that it is unknown what kind of pain they feel or how intense it may be. He is only making the reader think about how animals feel pain in different ways, but no solution to his initial claim on how terrible it must be for that dying animal. Throughout this paragraph, he describes different nerve

receptors they have, and what kind of pain they could possibly feel, as he also does on the following page, "...it's more that they feel it (pain) but don't feel anything about it...There is, after all, a difference between (1) pain as a purely neurological event, and (2) actual suffering" (Wallace, 63). He continues to show how pain could be inflicted on them and what they feel, but no ideas on how to solve the issue of animal cruelty that he rants on about. On the very last page of his rhetoric, he writes, "...I have an obvious selfish interest in this belief, since I like to eat certain kinds of animals and want to be able to keep doing it, and I have not succeeded in working out any sort of personal ethical system in which the belief is truly defensible instead of just selfishly convenient" (Wallace, 64). Here he is even admitting to not showing a real explanation at what could possibly be done to justify the wrong treatment of killing animals for consumption. He is showing that he is ineffective in providing a way to solve the problem itself, and changes his diction to one that is opposite of his original argument.

Throughout David F. Wallace's, *Consider the Lobster*, it is shown that this man obviously cares enough about animals to have written a seven-page rant about it for *Gourmet* magazine. He begins his article using diction that shows that he feels bad for these poor lobsters that are cooked alive. He later changes his diction and shows only possibilities of how they may experience pain. Although he is effective in showing his concern for lobsters and other animals that may be treated inhumanely, he is ineffective in providing any sort of solution to how this problem could be fixed. He is almost ironic in his words because he preaches about why this is wrong. Initially, the article is one that supports animal's rights, and questions if it is savage to treat them wrongfully and intentionally inflict pain on them. By the end of the article, Wallace, it seems, changes his mind on how he feels about this topic by admitting he has a "selfish interest" in eating animals, even considering the consequences they wrongly experience.