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The Effectiveness of Logical and Satirical Arguments Regarding Climate Change

There is a climate crisis occurring that is only going to get worse if governments, corporations, and everyday people do not start to take action against it. “World’s Scientists Warning to Humanity: A Second Notice” is a straightforward argument on this topic. The authors rely on statistics and their audience’s emotions to persuade their points. They also provide realistic solutions and steps that can be taken in order to start to remedy global warming. “A Final Warning to Planet Earth” is a satirical paper written in response to “World’s Scientists Warning to Humanity” that seemingly takes the opposite point to them, but in reality is arguing towards the same goal. The authors of that piece caricature and hyperbolize people that either do not believe in climate change or knowingly refuse to take action against it. They also include *reductio ad absurdum* in their over-exaggerations of the ways people behave surrounding these issues. Both these articles argue in favor of fighting climate change, but the impact of their messages vary. While “A Final Warning to Planet Earth” uses caricatures of human behaviors regarding global warming and *reductio ad absurdum* to support its claims, “World’s Scientists Warning to Humanity” offers a variety of statistics and *logos* alongside appeals to human sympathy and fear that enables the authors to more effectively argue for humanity to work towards using less of Earth’s resources and try to combat climate change.

The logical support utilized in “World’s Scientists Warning to Humanity” makes their arguments more convincing, as they can not only prove their claims by providing supporting

statistics, but they can also show what it will take to solve the problems regarding climate change in the world today. Logic is oftentimes the most effective way to convince an audience of one's perspective, and the paper "World's Scientists Warning to Humanity" is no exception. The primary device that is used is logical analyses such as statistics and graphs. Climate change is a polarizing topic in many ways; there are people that do not believe in it or do not want to do anything about it. This paper tries to combat this by showing how humanity is getting dangerously close to using up Earth's resources. They lay out examples such as the fact that the human population "swelled by another 2 billion people since 1992, a 35 percent increase" (Ripple 1) in order to support this claim. By backing up their opinions using heavily-researched statistics, the authors increase the reliability of their paper. They reference multiple sources to show that not only is there a climate crisis occurring, but science and statistics support these ideas as well. They even include an entire page of graphs showing trends in temperature, population, and more. The overall trends contained in the graphs are even more solid proof of the fact that global warming exists, and that humanity needs to do something about it. Besides straight numbers and figures displaying supporting data for their argument, the paper includes logical solutions and steps that people can take towards improvement. They lay out ways to at least start using less resources and become more environmentally conscious such as "revising our economy to reduce wealth inequality," and "developing and adopting adequate policy instruments to remedy defaunation" (Ripple 3). By presenting solutions like these, the paper is able to show that even though global warming is a drastic issue, there are manageable first steps that humanity can take in order to make the world a better place.

If supporting the opinions laid out in this article solely with facts and numbers is not enough to persuade its readers, then the emotional appeals to fear and sympathy present in the

paper help to make their message more impactful. Climate change can be a difficult pill to swallow, and the authors of “World’s Scientists Warning to Humanity” take full advantage of that. They enforce their message and ideals by instilling fear in their readers of the consequences of the path humanity is on in regards to using up Earth’s resources. They write that “we [humanity] have not heeded their warning. Soon it will be too late to shift course away from our failing trajectory, and time is running out” (Ripple 3). Despite the way that society functions, there are limits present as to what resources are naturally available, and this paper tries to get the audience to realize the dire situation humans have found themselves in. By appealing to this underlying worry over the future in its readers, the paper is able to present its argument in a more convincing way. This article is able to appeal to more than just apprehension over global warming; the authors also rely on human sympathy and empathy in order to make their point more persuasive. They attempted to almost make their readers feel bad for not caring as much for the environment and saving it by reminding them “that Earth with all its life is our only home” (Ripple 3). They rely on the fact that sympathy may make the audience either want to take action or at least feel like they have to do something about climate change. In appealing to either emotion, it is important to note that the authors chose to use inclusive first person. This perspective is one of the aspects of the paper that increases its pervasiveness. It establishes a sense of ethos as the authors show that they actively want to work to improve the climate. By not just writing about their audience, the authors not only place the blame on humanity as a whole, but also show that the solutions are something people need to work on together.

The combination of emotional and logical appeals present in “World’s Scientists Warning to Humanity” make the paper much more convincing than its satirical counterpart. Their argument is clearly laid out with supporting information so the audience will be able to see

why they should be convinced. The statistics they use such as the fact that “marine catch has been going down since the mid-1990s, but at the same time, fishing effort has been going up” (Ripple 2) show how dangerous global warming is. Additionally, the graphs they include help the reader visualize the problem present today. This allows the audience to get a better idea of the climate crisis and will be more likely to persuade them to take action. Alongside logic, the appeals to fear and sympathy are effective at making the readers feel bad about the state of the environment and push them towards change. One difference between this paper and “A Final Warning to Planet Earth” is that “World’s Scientists Warning to Humanity” makes the audience feel a sense of guilt only to the point of pushing them towards action. After showing why people should care about the state of Earth’s environment, the authors included solutions to this crisis. By doing that, they are showing to the readers that there are simple ways to improve the environment, making the issue of global warming seem more manageable. Since they are able to make a large issue seem manageable while not minimizing the severity of the climate crisis, their argument to have people use less resources and take care of Earth comes across in a much stronger way. A final aspect of this article is their use of inclusive first person to strengthen their arguments. The fact that the researchers include themselves in the problem and the solution shows that they are holding themselves along with everyone else accountable in regard to global warming.

The satire “A Final Warning to Planet Earth” is also arguing that climate change is an issue that should be addressed, but through rhetorical appeals that on the surface seem like they are trying to convince the audience of the opposite. The first device that is used in the paper is caricatures, specifically regarding the way that humanity acts towards taking care of the Earth. They express the fact that “We do not care about planet Earth. We care about our next devices

and their latest cool features. We want more stuff” (Chapron 1). They are over-exaggerating humanity’s greed regarding Earth’s resources in order to prove why this is an issue. The entire article is written as if every person on the planet does not care about the Earth and uses up the limited resources. They even say “The universe is like our ambition: limitless” (Chapron 1), to further show how ridiculous people sound when they talk as if Earth is expendable. By caricaturing these behaviors, the authors attempt to show the flaws in human logic. This is done in order to further prove their claims that humans are using up Earth’s resources at a dangerous rate. They are taking the way that many people act regarding climate change, specifically those who either refuse to believe that global warming exists or refuse to act on it, and pushing it to an extreme to show how it is wrong. In doing this, they should be able to prove to their audience that these behaviors are wrong and call them to action. In writing they act like Earth is just a tool to be used up, but their true message is something much deeper.

The paper also utilizes *reductio ad absurdum* to emphasize their views that people should want to do more about climate change. They exaggerate the argument that Earth is expendable and humans do not need to be taking care of it. By agreeing with what they are trying to satirize, they are able to show why those ideas are wrong, especially when pushing them to the extreme. While there are people who do not care about global warming, there are few who would actually go as far as to say “Planet Earth: consider yourself warned” (Chapron 1), which is why the authors in “A Final Warning to Planet Earth” use that as the final line of their paper. They are agreeing that humans do not need to worry about global warming in order to show why they should. These arguments such as the fact that humanity refuses “to accept any type of limits” (Chapron 1), allow the audience to see why those ideas are wrong because they seem so ridiculous written down. The use of *reductio ad absurdum* can be a powerful way to convince an

audience of something, but there is a danger in the fact that the readers may miss the fact that the writing is satire. If the authors of a satire cross that line, as they did in “A Final Warning to Planet Earth,” much of the effectiveness of their argument is lost.

While the rhetorical and satirical devices used in this article could have been effective, they often crossed the fine line between making a joke to prove a point and actually offending their audience. For that reason, this satire’s argument comes across as weaker than the straightforward argument in the other article. There are many situations in “A Final Warning to Planet Earth” where their jokes and devices become too extreme. In alluding to JFK’s speech by saying “ask not what more you can do for planet Earth, ask what more planet Earth can do for you” (Chapron 1), the authors are making humans seem more greedy and power-hungry than they actually are. This may come across as offensive to the readers, which will make them less likely to support their claims. It is important when writing a satire to leave room for the audience to realize that they need to change their actions without becoming uncomfortable. If they feel as if the paper is calling them out or trying to offend them, they will be less inclined to listen to the presented argument. The issue with their use of *reductio ad absurdum* is that the audience may miss the message that they are trying to persuade them of in the paper because the claims and references are over-aggressive and hit a little too close to home. This paper is also written using inclusive first person which in the straightforward paper was one of the most effective parts, but in this one it just leads to more of a chance that a reader will feel insulted or uncomfortable from their words because the authors are saying that all people feel a certain way when many do not. Despite the good intentions of the authors of “A Final Warning to Planet Earth,” their argument is weaker because their points and arguments are written in a way that their readers may be offended or less inclined to support them.

The use of logical and emotional appeals in “World’s Scientists Warning to Humanity” are able to make the paper have a much stronger argument about working against climate change than the one used in “A Final Warning to Planet Earth.” The first paper relies on statistics and graphs coupled with appeals to human sympathy and fear to show why humans should take action. It also is written using inclusive first person so the audience is able to see that this problem affects everyone. All these aspects of the paper together make it more effective than a satirical article arguing the same thing. The satirical paper uses *reductio ad absurdum* and caricatures to show that the way that some people act in regard to climate change is ridiculous. They attempt to show how the fact that some people do not believe in climate change or refuse to help it get better is wrong and why people should work towards making the world a better place. Their arguments, while well intended, can come across as offensive to their readers. They are making it so that the audience can see themselves in their writing, but they push it to an extreme that people can feel uncomfortable or called out. Because of this, their argument is not as powerful and there is a smaller chance that people will want to take action after reading it. Being straightforward about the dire situation that Earth’s environment is in will have a better chance of calling people to action than satirizing it. Since there are still many people who will not take action against climate change, in the future authors need to come up with new ways of persuading people to do something about it.

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