BOOK REVIEW¹

Framing farming: communication strategies for animal rights, by Carrie P. Freeman, New York, Rodopi, 2014, 292 pp.; indices, \$39.99, ISBN 978-9-0-420-38929 (paperback)

Drawing mainly from theories of strategic communication and the framing of social movements, *Framing farming* addresses the challenging dilemma that most animal rights organizations face today: how to send non-speciesist messages to (and from within) a speciesist society and at the same time raise awareness and understanding instead of fear and hostility. Freeman's answer to this question, helpful for scholarly theorists as well as animal rights activists, is no less essential for any individual committed to peace and justice, for it clarifies why the animal rights issue should not be seen as just *another* advocacy sphere, but as a *core* contribution to moral progress.

For those not familiar with the topic, the ethical challenge behind the dilemma addressed by Freeman refers to the fact that while we currently don't need to exploit animals for food, neither to survive nor to have a long and healthy life, we continue using them – a practice that can be carried out only by imposition and violence upon other animals' bodies. It produces harm and suffering to billions of nonhuman animals every year. According to philosophers, psychologists and sociologists, the reasons for this human behavior are many, including tradition, cultural habits, addiction, ignorance, emotional numbing, and fear. All of them are comfortably justified by a mainstream set of ideas that puts the human species at the top of an imagined natural hierarchy. Speciesism – the ideology that assigns lesser values, rights and consideration to other individuals simply because they are members of nonhuman species – remains taboo in mainstream debates, media discourse and political discussion. Western philosophers have pioneered a critical ethical reassessment of this practice since the mid-1970s, and more recently other fields such as psychology and sociology have joined this approach. To date, Freeman's book is one of the very few books addressing this issue from within communication studies and the first to do so for farmed animals from the perspective of strategic and persuasive communications theory. More specifically, she focuses on the communication dilemma which non-speciesist activists most struggle with: is a pragmatic and utilitarian approach, stressing step-by-step reform out of human self-interest, or a more radical and ideological one, emphasizing values such as justice and altruism, more effective in changing the public's view of this issue?

Freeman meticulously examines this dilemma from both a theoretical and a practical point of view. After grounding the debate in the intersection of communication strategies, ethics and social movements theories, she offers an interesting analysis of campaign materials from five major US animal rights organizations, complemented with rich insights from interviews

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conducted with their leaders. Finally, she produces her own recommendation based on what she calls 'ideological authenticity', a pathway that blends the best of both reformist and abolitionist communicative approaches.

Freeman's stated goal is to provide the tools necessary for maximizing impacts on society in order to promote a transformation in not just our behavior, but our worldview, with respect to the cruelty of our treatment of other species. At the same time, she provides ample evidence of the importance of communicative frames that resonate in people's minds. us, her claim for more 'ideological authenticity' is a claim for persuasive messages that increase the 'resonance of transformative frames'. Although for some, this can be regarded as logically impossible in that an appeal to common grounds is needed to achieve resonance, while these same common grounds must be challenged to effect transformation, Freeman traces a way forward. As she shows, some animal rights organizations are managing this by appealing to animal welfare values that the public already holds (i.e. current reforms to alleviate the suffering of exploited animals) while positioning abolitionary values as the final aim of their campaigns. .

Freeman makes a particularly thought-provoking point when arguing that justice is a better value to appeal to than altruism for transforming frames, as this is more likely to confront most animal rights activists' personal approach. While suffering and environmental destruction are also viewed as key frames, she argues that activists should primarily problematize the injustice suffered by farmed animals because this appeals to the unfairness and unnaturalness of exploiting sentient beings. is effectively resonates with some of our most shared values such as the right to life, the avoidance of unnecessary violence and suffering, and the unethical nature of enslavement. Yet these values resonate with the altruistic view as well. In this respect, a discussion on the feminist care tradition focusing on affective connections, such as compassion and empathy, would be of interest and, in my view, a helpful contribution to what is probably the strongest point, the 'ideological authenticity' stance. at said, and from all points of view, the theoretical analysis and practical guidance this volume offers on anti-speciesist advocacy make it invaluable for scholars, students and activists alike, as well as a much needed approach within the strategic and persuasive communications field.

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