

A recent statement by PETA regarding their position on breeders...in case you weren't aware of it:
"PETA's position on "responsible" breeding is that there just isn't any such thing, because every animal that a breeder sells means an animal in a shelter who won't find a home. The harsh reality of the situation is that, with 6 to 8 million animals handled by animal shelters in the United States every year - 3 to 4 million of whom won't make it out alive - deliberately breeding cats and dogs is about as irresponsible (and frankly, cruel) as it gets."

This rhetorical analysis by Sandy Jordan, PhD, is a good insight into AR propaganda. Dr. Jordan lectures on Rhetorical Analysis at a major U.S. university.

A Rhetorical Analysis of "Animal Rights Uncompromised: There's No Such Thing as a 'Responsible Breeder'"

By Sandy Jordan, Ph.D.

"Propaganda is the deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist."

Source: Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell, *Propaganda And Persuasion*, 4th edition, 2006.

Let's take a look at the rhetorical strategies of PETA's propaganda, and how the language is used to deceive the public into giving up their money to a cause that may not be what it presents itself to be.

[PETA - "Animal Rights Uncompromised: There's No Such Thing as a 'Responsible Breeder'"]

The title is uncompromising, and without qualifiers. Not "most" breeders or "some," but every single breeder who ever existed. We know the law of averages nullifies any absolute statement like this. Absolutes are used by persons who are not willing to admit any other point of view than their own. We should as adults realize that there is never any single perspective from which to view a problem.

"No such thing" allows no margin for any responsible breeder, anywhere, to exist. Since those who know the purpose and responsibility of breeders know that they breed genetic imbalances OUT of stock, this takes advantage of those who don't understand things like why white cats are often deaf, or collies have eye problems. If you don't understand the biological reasons for these things, it is easy to posit them in the realm of mythology, as in "ALL white cats are deaf," and "pit bulls are ALWAYS vicious."

What this is saying, literally, is that there is no such thing as responsible BREEDING. But by saying "breeder," it assumes an accusatory stance towards those who breed to improve and strengthen stock as well as those who truly are careless about what animals they breed. Therefore, a negative attitude and suspicion is cast upon everyone who has ever gotten a pup out of two dogs of the same breed.

["Most people know to avoid puppy mills and "backyard" breeders. But many kind individuals fall prey to the picket-fence appeal of so-called "responsible" breeders and fail to recognize that no matter how kindly a breeder treats his or her animals, as long as dogs and cats are dying in animal shelters and pounds because of a lack of homes, no breeding can be considered 'responsible.'"]

By using the term "kind individuals," and the image of "picket fences," the author is hoping to connect the audience, who is reading this article because of their interest and (presumably) affection for animals, with what is actually a condescending term, like "well-meaning." Placing the word "responsible" in quotation marks suggests it means the opposite of what it says. ("So-called" would have done the job as well.) It is an attempt to play on the conscience of the reader the way late night infomercials play on the sympathy of parents by showing starving children in Africa. The implication is that if your children are well-fed, you should feel guilty

that others are going hungry. ("Eat your liver; children are starving in Africa.") There is simply no logical connection between these two things. It is an attempt to make people feel guilty, to use pathos to wring dollars from the "kind individuals" who can be convinced that if they don't give money, this puppy will be killed. It's much like the old magazine cover that had the picture of a cute dog on the cover with a revolver at its head, and the caption, "If you don't buy this magazine, we'll shoot this dog."

"No breeding can be considered 'responsible'" is the actual thesis of the essay. But first the reader has to be convinced that they are in a position to ease the suffering of dying cats and dogs by accepting these animals into their households WHETHER OR NOT THIS IS WHAT THEY WANT. It is false logic.

["All breeders fuel the companion animal overpopulation crisis, and every time someone purchases a puppy or a kitten instead of adopting from an animal shelter, homeless animals lose their chance of finding a home-and will be euthanized."]

Again, this sounds logical on the surface, but examine the statement's implications. What about all the orphans in the United States? Every time you have a child, you are stealing a home from one of these orphans? Technically, this could be true. It's analogous to the spiritual belief that we should give away our belongings to those who need them more than we do. Some agree with this, some do not. But no one should be able to force us to follow a belief system to which we do not ascribe. This is yet another way to try to forcibly milk human kindness from a bull. Orphans will not die if we don't adopt them. Neither will most shelter puppies and kittens, because they are usually in great demand.

Shelter animals are spayed or neutered, by the way. So if everyone just adopted an animal, the dog and cat species could be exterminated from America--in theory. But the author does not want the audience to follow the thesis through to its logical conclusion. The article depends almost entirely on one false premise and heavy use of emotional language.

["Many breeders don't require every puppy or kitten to be spayed or neutered prior to purchase, so the animals they sell can soon have litters of their own, creating even more animals to fill homes that could have gone to shelter animals-or who will end up in animal shelters or so-called "no-kill" animal warehouses themselves."]

This is a revelation of one of the true intentions of the article, which is to chastise breeders for not being forced to spay or neuter animals according to the author's belief system that we should eliminate all pet companions. The fact is, if a cat or dog is not neutered when sold, its price usually places it among one of the more valued possessions of the owner, so random breedings are unlikely. The puppies or kittens of these valuable animals will also be sold to those more likely to care for them than someone who gets a puppy or kitten for nothing.

Most newspapers recognize this, and advise people to not advertise puppies or kittens for free, because people tend to not value these pets as much as they do purebred animals. Go to any vet's office and count the number of purebreds taken there for care as opposed to the number of mixed breeds. People tend to care for their valued possessions (and beloved companions) if they pay more for them.

["Simply put, for every puppy or kitten who is deliberately produced by any breeder, a shelter animal dies."]

This is a nifty way to scream at the reader "MURDERER!" if they get a purebred puppy or kitten. It is absolutely ridiculous to even consider this statement as fact. It tries to implant in the reader's mind that for every well

bred puppy they buy, something must die. Note they say "shelter animal." So if I buy a Borzoi puppy from a breeder, an adoptable horse will die? This premise is false.

At this point the author openly reveals her accusations: It is YOUR fault all these animals are in shelters. No, you never bred a puppy or kitten, you never let your dog out of your fenced yard, you never dumped a dog or gave one up, and yet it is YOUR FAULT that these animals suffer and die, because you wanted a puppy that would grow up to be the size your family could handle, or the breed your grandfather raised, your parents raised, and you hope to continue to raise. Shame, shame, shame.

["Producing animals for sale is a greedy and callous business in a world where there is a critical and chronic shortage of good homes for dogs, cats, and other animals, and the only "responsible breeders" are ones who, upon learning about their contribution to the overpopulation crisis, spay or neuter their animals, and get out of the business altogether."]

Off with the kid gloves! Breeders are greedy and callous people. The Monks of New Skete, who produce the occasional litter of carefully bred German Shepherd are greedy and callous. The raisers of certain strains of Labradors and Golden Retrievers for service dogs are greedy and callous.

The author simply allows no room for logic, for choice, for common sense. Breeders, to the author, are evil, callous, greedy, and irresponsible. Some probably are, many certainly are not. The reader at this point may be squirming, but if they look closely at this inflammatory rhetoric, they'll realize how hard the author is pushing this agenda.

Is it because the author is so concerned with the welfare of animals? Much could be forgiven if this author was indeed "well-meaning." But there is always a bottom line agenda for people with this much passion and bile, and it usually boils down to one of two things: power, or money. So look very carefully to see if at the end somewhere this author is trying to get the audience to reach in their pockets and give up some money. He or she is obviously trying to wring something other than emotion from the audience....

["Breeding Trouble

"Producing more animals-either to make money or to obtain a certain "look" or characteristic-is also harmful to the animals who are produced by breeding."]

Let's have a look at this rhetoric, given the clever title, "Breeding Trouble."

["Dogs and cats don't care whether their physical appearance conforms to a judge's standards, yet they are the ones who suffer the consequences of humans' manipulation. Inbreeding causes painful and life-threatening genetic defects in "purebred" dogs and cats, including crippling hip dysplasia, blindness, deafness, heart defects, skin problems, and epilepsy."]

First, although the statement [*"dogs and cats don't care..."*] is probably true, we have no way of knowing what dogs and cats care about. Many people have reported anecdotal evidence that their dogs recognize their own breed. Using the word "manipulation" denotes something negative and bad, and "distorting" (below) echoes this subliminal message that breeders are manipulative and twist animals like clowns shaping balloons - as if Nature had not been doing this for millions of years. The dog has been called the most "plastic" of all mammals, which is in part why it has been such a successful species. If people didn't do it, climate and environmental changes would. That's why the fox and the wolf and the wild dogs of Africa are so different in shape, size, and temperament.

["Distorting animals for specific physical features also causes severe health problems. The short, pushed-up noses of bulldogs and pugs, for example, can make exercise and even normal breathing difficult for these animals. Dachshunds' long spinal columns often cause back problems, including disk disease."]

The breeding of these animals for dog shows may indeed cause deformities that affect the health of individual animals. This is true and should be addressed BY BREEDERS. Dachshunds have been bred for going down holes after vermin, an example of many breeds that have been shaped to serve the needs of human beings for utilitarian purposes. These were selected long before the dogs were shown, for utilitarian purposes. Show animals are indeed stretched beyond function in many cases. The only thing that can restore them to their previous health and vigor are intelligent, careful, planned breedings.

["Adoption: The Only Compassionate Option

"There is no excuse for breeding or for supporting breeders."]

This makes the reader feel they are facing an ultimatum. But it is as illogical as saying, "There is no case in which killing someone is defensible." It infers that any compassionate human being could not possibly support a breeder by buying a puppy. The two things, compassion/purebred puppies, are not mutually exclusive terms. But it forms the major premise: "All breeders are evil." If this is true, the conclusion is true. If it is false, as shown in the rebuttal, then the conclusion must also be false. (see bottom of page)

["If you love animals and are ready to care for a cat or a dog for the rest of the animal's life, please adopt from your local animal shelter, where there are dogs and cats galore-tails wagging and hearts filled with hope, looking out through the cage bars, just waiting to find someone to love."]

The imagery of this wrings the tender hearts of animal lovers - lovely touch "tails wagging and hearts filled with hope." It really is effective, imagining those poor animals behind bars. But the implication is that they are there because YOU PUT THEM THERE by getting a purebred pup is simply too far reaching to make sense. Unless you really did put them there, you can be absolved of guilt for their sad little faces. And because there is so much truth to this particular part of the propaganda - all propaganda MUST have some basic truth to it - there's nothing to keep people from adopting an animal as a companion while at the same time raising purebreds.

Again, it is absolutely false that the two things are mutually exclusive.

["Shelters receive new animals every day, so if you don't find the perfect companion to match your lifestyle on your first visit, keep checking back. When you find your new best friend, you'll be glad that you chose to save a life-and made a new best friend as well. ']

It would be very hard to find the perfect companion if you had no idea what the puppy would grow up to look like. People base most life decisions on looks. Most of the time, we are attracted to our life partners originally by the way they look to us. But the basic point here is that many people want to start with a puppy because their purpose is not to save a creature from death row, laudable as that action would be, but to find an animal that will more or less perform the way they need it to in order for it to adapt to their lifestyle. Placid, quiet people can't tell from a shelter encounter if their dog will grow up to be a couch potato or an obsessive herder, or a quiet dog that will match their lifestyle. Responsible breeders can give them a much better chance of finding that companion that is so satisfying they will not be tempted to dump it at a shelter for turning out to be too big, too wild, too lazy, etc.

"Save a life" is a very, very persuasive lure. What fish does the author hope to catch with such powerful bait? Power? Money?

["If you know anyone who is considering purchasing an animal instead of adopting from a shelter, please forward this article to them, and please consider making a donation today to support PETA's vital work to save lives."]

Ahhhhh....Translated, this means "GIVE US MONEY." As previously mentioned, the object of propaganda is to get the audience to do something that serves the agenda of the author, couched in language that will use the most tender mercies of that audience to fork over some cash.

Whenever ANY letter ends in a plea for money, it should be read and reread very carefully with a great deal of suspicion. Then, challenge the statements, such as "PETA's vital work to save lives," which can be checked out online. Has PETA ever saved an animal's life? When? Where? Ask questions. Do they have a facility where animals can be adopted? What else has been written about PETA, not in blogs or opinion articles, but in statistical facts that can be proven? And finally, if you are convinced that you should give money, thoroughly investigate the shelter you give money to. Make sure it doesn't go to lobbyists, advertising, or administration.

REBUTTAL:

The fact is that purebred animals have been around for thousands of years, not by accident, but because people need different kinds of dogs for different kinds of tasks. Dog shows are beauty contests that many breeders do not participate in. How successful the breeding for tasks has been can be determined by performance activities - animals breed true in mental characteristics as well as in physical conformation. Some people, probably most, want a dog as a companion animal, a family member. For this purpose a shelter animal is wonderful, and saving its life, while incidental to the needs of the adopter, still is a noble and kind thing to do.

But hunters want dogs to hunt and retrieve, the blind need dogs of a certain size and temperament to guide them, the police and military need dogs with a certain size and drive, people who are retired and live in apartments often need a tiny dog that loves to be held and treated like a baby. Breeders attempt to provide these animals by careful selection, and any breeder that wants to continue with a good reputation is going to try as hard as they can to breed out diseases and deformities of their animals.

The article by PETA, simply translated, says that you are a cruel, callous person lacking in all compassion if you ever buy another purebred puppy, and that for every puppy you buy, you are murdering another puppy that is staring big-eyed and sad from the bars of a shelter.

Don't believe it!

Syllogism:

Major premise: All breeders are evil.

Minor premise: Buying a purebred puppy makes you a supporter of breeders.

Conclusion: If you buy a purebred puppy you are evil.

False premise: All breeders are evil.
