

The Practical Usage of Scapegoating (Revised)

Scapegoating is often thought of as the easiest way to blame others for someone's own faults and mistakes - to most people it has no other purpose. *Animal Farm* by George Orwell proves otherwise: that it actually can be used for other reasons besides getting someone in trouble; and the book itself is a lesson in the form of a warning against falling into its trap. In the novel, a shadowy character named Snowball takes the blame for any trouble on the farm, for any action as ridiculous as a sheep urinating in the drinking pool; but this does not only take the blame off of the sheep, but has other side effects. Through Napoleon's cunning use of blame, *Animal Farm* teaches its readers that scapegoating does not only place blame on an innocent person or group, but can also be effectively used to unite an audience and promote oneself, only if the audience is uneducated.

Napoleon's lies about Snowball have one great effect: they create a sense of unity among the animals. During the executions of the supposed traitors of Animal Farm, "the three hens who had been the leaders in the attempted rebellion ... stated that Snowball had [told them to rebel] ... a goose came forward and confessed to have secreted six ears of corn ... a sheep confessed to having urinated in the drinking pool - urged to do this, so she said, by Snowball" (Orwell 84). The animals all blame Snowball for troubles that he certainly did not do, making him the unfortunate scapegoat. The animals, however, are fed so much misinformation about him being evil by Napoleon that they really believe that Snowball was the cause of all the terrible actions caused against Animal Farm; even actions done by themselves they believed to be under the influence of Snowball and they blame on him. Orwell exaggerates this blame to warn us against being too gullible - to the reader, the blames are so irrational and so easy to prove wrong that the

reader can easily see how a little bit of rational thinking and education could help the animals. The result of this feeling is that “the animals were thoroughly frightened. It seemed to them as though Snowball were some kind of invisible influence, pervading the air about them and menacing with all kinds of dangers” (Orwell 79). This quote also shows the overall sense of fear and hatred towards Snowball that was created by Napoleon to create one thing that all the animals can relate to. By doing this, he is also creating amongst them a sense of unity and comradeship against a single cause; thus they are *all* strictly anti-Snowball and pro-Napoleon, which would be impossible if Snowball was still on Animal Farm to reason against Napoleon and help them distinguish between right and wrong; if he were there, then the animals can see before their own eyes whether or not Snowball is the actual culprit. However, Snowball is absent, the animals all feel frightened, and they will work harder together. This is what Napoleon wants. This shows that blame can result in a beneficial, but false, sense of togetherness.

The pigs become even worse than the humans had been, but are not antagonized by the animals; instead they are looked up to. The pigs’ artful blaming of the humans for all of their troubles take any blame off of, and even promote themselves. Old Major says, “Our lives are short, miserable, and laborious ... Man is the only real enemy we have. Remove Man from the scene, and the root cause of hunger and overwork is abolished forever” (Orwell 6). Man is being blamed here, but it is only partially their fault. To live well generally also means to work hard. However, the animals believe that they are living well even after the pigs take most of their foods because they believe that only Man is evil, and that the pigs are *helping* them by ridding them of Man - they do not understand that Man did not cause all of their troubles, because they are not taught to think for themselves. To show this, the book states, “The animals worked like slaves.

But they were happy in their work, ... well aware that everything that they did was for the benefit of themselves and those of their kind who would come after them, and not for a pack of idle, thieving human beings" (59). This, along with the fact that the pigs and the dogs did not work nor produce anything, shows that the pigs had become just like the non-producing humans. However, unlike the humans, they had convinced the other animals that *they* had been helping them by showing them the cause of their troubles, and therefore the other animals believe Napoleon and trust him. Again, Orwell is trying to give a lesson here, because obviously more work for less food (as it was under Napoleon's rule) is better in all cases than less work for more food (as it was in Jones' time) - but the animals are so brainwashed into believing otherwise. Therefore, some education for the animals would have helped them in this situation, because then they can distinguish between the obvious right and wrong, even if it is not told to them, and the animals will be able to reason independently; therefore, Orwell is also teaching us that education is the solution to elude propaganda by scapegoating. This also applies to his scapegoating of Snowball, which he uses skillfully to maintain his leadership and support.

The farm and its concept of Animalism would never turn out so tyrannical but unified without the use of falsely blaming others, and without the education of the animals. Animalism would not been created without the hate for the humans, who take all the blame for both their faults and the pigs' faults; the unity and the overall support for Napoleon to lead would not have been without the blame of Snowball. But Orwell also shows that this form of persuasion is only helpful to Napoleon, and warns against it, showing that the lack of education among the animals is a major cause. Orwell's *Animal Farm* is a lesson to us: that scapegoating can have practical and even beneficial uses for the one who blames, at the expense of the scapegoat.