Why Not Eat Insects?

Western civilization has the idea that eating insects is for poor people who don’t have access to livestock. Where did our idea of what is right to eat become so wrong? “Why Not Eat Insects,” by Marcel Dicke talks about the many benefits of consuming insects. He thinks that in twenty years, the whole world will be eating insects as if it is normal. Marcel describes the reasons that countries eat insects and the many ways that this could help the world. There are a lot more than you would think. Even though a lot of the developed world thinks that only people who have no access to livestock eat insects, almost everyone has access to it and insects are actually considered a delicacy. In a few years, we might have to turn to insects due to a shortage in livestock.

Dicke mostly appeals to logos, or logic, to send his message. One of the first things he talks about is that 80% of animals walk on six legs. This is an obvious message that it is better to eat the six-legged insects. He also names four particular reasons that insects should be eaten. First, eating insects will dramatically affect human health. We can share diseases with livestock. Think of the swine flu epidemic that happened only a few years ago. Many people died during this incident and not a lot of people were well informed on exactly what caused the swine flu. It’s kind of obvious though. It was the pigs we eat for meat. Insects are so distantly related to humans so we know that this won’t happen. Second, we have to think about the conversion factor. Ten kilograms (22 pounds) of feed will produce one kilogram (2.2 pounds) of meat. Now, you may
think this is quite a bit, but there is more to this statistic. That same ten kilograms (22 pounds) of feed will also produce three kilograms (6.6 pounds) of pork, five kilograms (11 pounds) of chicken, and nine kilograms (19.8 pounds) of locusts. If we switch to insects, we will have a lot more food. Third, eating insects will drastically affect our environment. If you look at insect waste compared to cow manure, you’ll find that the cow produces a lot more. Insect waste also emits, per kilogram, less ammonia and fewer greenhouse gasses. Fourth, the food value of insects is comparable to other livestock. Their protein and fats are comparable to beef, pork, and chicken. One of the most shocking facts is that one kilogram (2.2 pounds) of grasshoppers have the same amount of calories as ten hot dogs or six big macs. “So that’s four points for insects.” (Dicke 10:39). There was also an estimation done on how eating insects effects the US economy. It was found that the US benefited by 57 billion dollars per year. Then, Dicke researched how much the US was paying for the war in Iraq. payed 80 million dollars in one year to the war in Iraq. “So insects, just for free, contribute to the economy of the United States with about the same order of magnitude, just for free” (Dicke 1:39).

Marcel Dicke appeals to ethos, or ethics, with all of his knowledge about insects. He has traveled the world meeting people that agree with his teachings. He met many people that agreed with his philosophy. One of the first pictures shown is of Dicke eating a salad with various bugs as toppings. He got this at a restaurant in a town in China called Lijiang. “If you go out for dinner, like in a fish restaurant, where you can select which fish you want to eat, you can select which insects you would like to eat. And they prepare it in a wonderful way.” (Dicke 2:22). This actually proves that he has eaten bugs and that he’s not just saying rubbish. He eats what he preaches. Dicke also talked briefly about some entrepreneurs he met in the Netherlands that produce insects. He wants to show this to let his audience know that insects are readily available.
You can find people that eat insects in every part of the world, even America. Dicke did research on the subject so you know that you can really trust him when he is talking about the subject.

There are many ways that this Ted Talks video appeals to pathos. Dicke likes using humor to associate insects with. He shows a Dutch chocolate maker that turns bugs into something pretty. One of the things he makes is a chocolate lollipop with the top dipped in maggots to look like hair. Then, a smiley face is drawn onto the pop. Now, of course this isn’t the only thing he makes. There are chocolate dipped strawberries with grasshoppers on the stem, some pastries, and other delicious desserts. Dike wanted the audience to be grateful when he brought up how insects help us with the foods we eat. They remove dung, pollinate crops, control pests, and they are food for the animals that we eat. They are the bottom of the food chain. During the presentation, everyone is grossed out when they find out that we actually consume around five hundred grams of insects per year. How can this be? Most processed foods have insect parts in them. “As long as they meet the requirements of the food agency, there can be all kinds of things in there, no problem” (Dicke 3:46). Whether it be from an insect crawling into the machine or smashing up a tomato with a worm in it. Many people do not know this statistic and it might gross them out to eat some foods now. If you think about it, it is no different than putting a meatball in your food. Insects are just meat so the fact that there is meat in processed food just means that you are getting some of the protein you need in your daily diet. The FDA (Food and Drug Administration) put a requirement on all factories that produce food limiting that amount of insect parts it contains. You might not be eating as many insects as you think you are when consuming factory made food. We are also eating insects on purpose. If you eat pink cookies or surimi sticks, the dye used is actually natural. It comes from cochineal which is an insect found
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in cacti. This is a very prized bug that costs a lot of money. In fact, one gram of cochineal cost around 30 euros. One gram of gold also costs roughly 30 euros. “So it's a very precious thing that we're using to dye our foods” (Dicke 5:02). Who knew that an insect could be so important. A lot of people don’t know where the color used in dyeing foods comes from. Well, now you know that some of it comes from bugs.

Marcel Dicke thinks that in twenty years every country will think of insects as normal food. “And some might think, well they're not yet available. Well they are” (Dicke 13:40). In some countries it is even a delicacy. So who not eat insects? There’s no reason not to. “80 percent of the world already eats insects, so we are just a minority -- in a country like the U.K., the USA, the Netherlands, anywhere.” (Dicke 11:10) People even turn them into delicious desserts. We already eat insects and soon insects might be in our real food labeled as meat protein. True, many people might not realize that if the meat protein in their food is labeled as meat protein, but who cares as long as you’re getting that protein. It’s not like it’s a bad thing that you’re eating bugs.

The world might also be forced into eating insects. This is because if we continue just eating livestock, we will need to expand our agricultural production by 70 percent. This is to keep up with the expected population growth. The population is expected to grow by around 2 billion people by 2050. This means that we have to find alternative ways to feed our families. Eating insects is the perfect solution to all of our meat shortage problems. They give us our needed protein, help our crops grow, and there are so many of them it would be crazy not use them to replace livestock. “So why not eat insects? You should try it yourself.” (Dicke 14:58).

Work Cited