

Amy J. Fitzgerald

*Animal Advocacy and Environmentalism: Understanding and Bridging the Divide*

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In *Animal Advocacy and Environmentalism*, Amy J. Fitzgerald examines ways to overcome perceived tensions between animal advocates and environmentalists. She traces the history of the tensions and suggests places where overlapping concerns make space for shared theoretical approaches and practical actions. She argues that both groups ‘articulate challenges to anthropocentrism and are confronted by common sources of resistance’ (p. 6). They also shared strategies such as ‘direct mail fundraising, using the legal system, and direct action techniques that garnered a lot of free publicity’ (p. 27). This is also where some of the tensions arise, however. Fitzgerald thinks most people identify the animal advocacy movement, but not the environmental movement, with the more radical direct action techniques. While there are well-known direct actions by groups such as Greenpeace, people who reject such techniques still identify as part of the environmental movement. Fitzgerald doesn’t think this holds true for the animal advocacy movement which is seen as more radical and fringe (p. 52).

The animal advocacy movement’s push for rights for species and individual animals can come to be an obstacle for the environmental movement’s desire to focus on the health of an ecosystem. Using the example of non-native fish introduced to a water system, environmentalists may advocate killing the invasive fish while some animal advocates might argue ‘that such a cull is unethical because it violates the rights of the individual fish that will be killed’ (p. 50). Fitzgerald objects to collapsing the animal advocacy movement into animal rights. Such shorthand language confuses important theoretical differences and masks the fact that taking a utilitarian approach, or following Nussbaum’s capabilities approach to ethics, provides grounds for prioritising the health of the system (pp. 50–51).

To make her case that animal advocates and environmentalist can find common cause, Fitzgerald examines the particular issues of sport hunting, zoos and aquaria, fur, and industrial animal agriculture. Conservation of species for the sake of hunting has been central to the U.S. environmental movement. This creates a tension with the animal advocacy movement, which often prioritises animal lives over ecosystem health and which often outright opposes the concept of sport hunting. Fitzgerald notes that hunting does indeed provide funds for conservation, but also that this does not necessarily ensure ecological health as the focus is on the species sports hunters want to hunt (p. 79). Since more people identify as environmentalists than as animal advocates she believes animal advocates would gain more ground by focusing on critiques of hunting that demonstrate environmental harms caused by hunting. At the same time she notes that hunting is a more sustainable and more ethical way to procure meat than industrial animal agriculture and she encourages animal advocates to come to terms with that reality and see hunting for food as one way to challenge the 'treadmill of production' (pp. 80–82).

Like hunting, zoos and aquaria have often been justified on the grounds that they are part of larger conservation efforts. Fitzgerald notes that the rise of zoos is closely tied to imperialism, colonisation and slavery, but that they have gone on to have educational and conservation purposes. Given that more people visit a zoo in the U.S. every year than 'attend professional baseball, football, basketball, and hockey games combined', (p. 89) zoos can be sites for social and environmental changes if the whole story is told. This includes the animalising of marginalised humans who were at one time also put on display, the limited impact of zoos and aquaria on conservation efforts, and the role of the profit. She wrestles with the fact that zoos and aquaria are 'irredeemably speciesist', but that they aren't going away any time soon. Rather than an all or nothing approach she argues for greater regulation and limiting the species kept. Some species' welfare is severely compromised by captivity. These include carnivores with large territories (e.g. polar bears), migratory birds, and species

which experience high death rates in captivity, e.g. marine mammals (pp. 105–106).

Additionally, zoos and aquaria could move to a sanctuary model that both environmentalists and animal advocates might support (p. 108).

Fur provides an interesting case study, as Fitzgerald begins the discussion by tracing the rise of the notion of fur as ‘green’. On this view, fur is a ‘natural’, renewable and biodegradable resource. While coyote kills are promoted, no mention is made of less popular fur hunts such as of seals, and the only mention of fur farming is to say that this industry supports local communities (pp. 111–112). Using environmental reasons to promote killing animals for fur is a prime example of how the divide between the environmental and animal advocacy movements can be exploited and exacerbated. Most animals used for fur, though, are farmed and Fitzgerald suggests that focusing on fur farming can bring the two movement together (p. 123). Fur farming comes with many of the same environmental and animal welfare concerns as other forms of intensive animal agriculture and supports the treadmill of production model. A further important issue is the problem of animals who escape from such farms and then threaten local ecosystems through disease and predation (p. 126).

Finally, industrial agriculture is seen as an obvious place for common cause between the two movements. In fact, this issue has already built coalition around a variety of issues. Deforestation, biodiversity loss, pollution, water use and global climate change just get the ball rolling. Here Fitzgerald also calls on arguments that make use of self-interest and anthropocentrism: eating less meat is better for the health of human individuals as well as for the planet and other animals. She sees this as a way to open up space for ‘ecofeminist arguments about how the interests of those grouped together on the nature side of the constructed culture/nature dichotomy are intricately connected’ (p. 156). This kind of dropping in of a sentence or two about ecofeminism occurs throughout the book. While I applaud the inclusion of an ecofeminist perspective, it is never explained or used enough to be effective. This is disappointing as I think it is just this perspective that could ground

Fitzgerald's call to find room for common cause between groups that have been divided in much the same way as the other dichotomies criticised by ecofeminists. Perhaps is it my leanings as a philosopher, but I would have preferred more use of ecofeminist theory to ground the move to find common cause in the first place.

That said, this book provides succinct histories of four complicated areas where the environmental and animal advocacy movements intersect, fight, and can work together. For this reason, I think it would be a useful addition to courses that try to tackle both environmental and animal welfare issues. I also think it would be useful in environmental ethics and animal ethics courses as it challenges some of the more insular perspective and approaches that are often found in readings for such courses. Fitzgerald has provided us all with a useful nudge to begin difficult conversations and work across perceived divides.

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