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Eds. Nocella, A.J., Bentley, J.K.C., & Duncan, J.M. (2012). *Earth, Animal, and Disability Liberation: The Rise of the Eco-Ability Movement*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing. ISBN 978-1-4331-1507-3.

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Earth, Animal, and Disability Liberation is a foundational text for the emerging field of eco-ability, which seeks to explore and challenge the interwoven oppression and domination of disabled humans, nonhuman animals, and the environment. The editors follow the lead of ecofeminism and critical works on eco-racism and eco-colonialism, by bringing ecocriticism together with disability studies in order to “challenge the domination of normalcy, competition, and individualism” (XII-XIV). The book consists of 15 chapters, contributed by a variety of academics and activists from different backgrounds and areas, and is divided into five sections: pedagogy; identity constructions; a challenge to oppressive relationships; policy and practice; and inclusive world. Such a diversity of perspectives allows readers to see the application of eco-ability to many different topics, though it also leads to some lackluster chapters and others that are directly contradictory to each other in problematic ways.

The three editors each contribute a chapter to make up the pedagogy section. It is the most cohesive section of the book, with the chapters sharing a clear vision for what eco-ability is and what it looks like in practice. In the Introduction, written by all three together, they stress the importance of interrelationships, interconnectedness, and interdependence as being central to an eco-ability approach, drawing on an ecological understanding that “all are unique with differing abilities” (XIV), which must be respected and valued. From that perspective, they critique the concepts of normalcy and normal bodies, which are used to measure and control the deviance of disabled and nonhuman bodies. This understanding of how bodies that deviate from Western

colonial ideals of capitalist producers are surveilled, controlled, and erased is one of the strongest themes running through the book. Further, they argue for the need to approach beings, whether disabled people or nonhuman animals (or the environment for that matter), with an assumption of presumed competence that respects their needs and recognizes them as capable. Lastly, they address the ableist rhetoric that runs through environmentalist discourse, which hinders the involvement of disabled activists in environmental movements.

Despite the uneven quality of the chapters, many of them provide powerful arguments and demonstrate the valuable insights eco-ability can bring forward. Several chapters are particularly focused on interrogating the way Western colonialism and modern capitalism creates standardized norms and punishes those that fall outside them. In Chapter 4, Robin M. Smith and Jack P. Manno look at how energy and material flows shape societies, and how our modern society, focused on economic expansion, creates an overproduction of commodities and an underdevelopment of relationships. They argue this commodification leads to disabled people and nonhuman animals being viewed as markets, rather than beings deserving of compassion and dignity. In Chapter 6, Sarat Coling connects the concepts of normal to current neoliberal capitalism and the striving for the ideal productive worker. She also brings an important acknowledgement of why disability and post-colonialist scholars have been wary to challenge the human/animal binary, given the long history of denying many marginalized humans, particularly racialized and disabled people, access to humanhood. Deanna Adams and Kimberly Socha, in Chapter 10, focus on how these conceptions of normal are enforced upon disabled humans, nonhuman animals, and the environment. They explore the ways in which suppressive practices are used to modify behaviour deemed deviant and outside of mainstream expectations, and how the denial of self-consciousness is used to justify these unethical treatments.

Other strong chapters highlight the value that eco-ability brings to more grassroots work and activism. In Chapter 7, A.J. Withers does a wonderful job pinpointing and addressing the ableist rhetoric that often arises in animal rights/liberation work, environmentalism, environmental justice, and anarcho-primitivism. They critique environmental campaigns and messaging that erase the existence and needs of disabled people and challenge these movements (except anarcho-primitivism which Withers concludes is inherently antithetical to disability liberation) to rethink and reshape their politics in more inclusive ways. Lynn Anderson, Vicki Wilkins, and Laurie Penney-McGee, in Chapter 11, describe their work in creating the Inclusive Recreation Resource Center (IRRC), which is based on principles of universal design. Through their Inclusion U workshop program, they provide education and training to empower people in the recreation sector to reduce barriers and ensure that all people are able to engage in play. And in Chapter 12, Carrie Griffin Basas provides an in-depth comparison of animal rights and disability rights laws. She traces the similar ways in which the social and legal separations between the private and the public are used not to protect disabled people or nonhuman animals, but rather to hide abuses or injustices they experience.

Given that eco-ability is such a new area, it is perhaps not surprising that there is a lack of consistency amongst the chapters. For example, there are three chapters that rely upon the same harmful rhetoric that Withers addresses as disableist. Withers shows how disability is “used as a cautionary tale” (112) in order to motivate people to action, positioning disability as an undesirable outcome of environmentally harmful practices. They follow the logic of such rhetoric to its disableist conclusion that the number of disabled people should be reduced to zero. Unfortunately, Chapter 8, by Bill Lindquist and Anna Grimm, claims “the absence of unstructured free play in nature has played a significant role in the onslaught of obesity, attention

disorders, and depression” (132), in order to show that exposure to nature can reduce these undesirable conditions. David Nibert, in Chapter 14, does the same when pointing to the contribution of malnutrition to developmental disabilities as a main motivator for addressing global food security issues.

Chapter 13, written by Norm Phelps, is strikingly at odds with the values and aims of eco-ability. He argues that society must “prevent, ameliorate, and, if possible, cure” (218) disabilities. He dips into deeply speciesist rhetoric by arguing for the forced sterilization of all companion animals in order to prevent the supposed suffering of their future offspring who are apparently pre-destined to a life of misery. His “lesser harm for a greater good” (219) is actually identical to the justifications made for the forced sterilizations of disabled people, the history of which is explored and critiqued for its harm in other chapters. Lastly, he posits that “beings that are not conscious—plants and minerals—are aware of nothing and...can and should be treated as resources for conscious beings” (216). Not only does he rely on a questionable conception of consciousness in order to create such a binary, he explicitly rejects the ecocentric perspective that eco-ability is rooted in, in favour of an anthropocentric view. The chapter ultimately feels out of place in the book.

Overall, the book makes a convincingly strong case that the marginalization and liberation of disabled people and nonhuman animals are closely tied together and depend on changing the fundamental notions of normalcy, standardization, and commodification. However, the broader environment does not end up receiving as much attention and analysis, partially because the environment is not so easily and directly paralleled with the experiences of disabled people. Though that does not mean that the connections do not exist, as many chapters do demonstrate promising linkages that deserve greater exploration. In particular, the suppression of

deviant behaviour with nature, such as the confining and controlling of green spaces, presents a huge potential for inquiry.

One of the perhaps most intriguing and valuable contributions that eco-ability provides in the unique focus on bodies and the ways in which they are, and are not, able to move, exist, play, and shape the space around them. Disability studies brings a deep interrogation of what “normal” bodies are and what is expected of them, directly challenging capitalist productivity and ability in ways that absolutely have relevance beyond the human. Further, bringing together concerns over barriers and dependence with understandings of ecological systems puts greater emphasis on the reality and importance of ecological interdependence; eco-ability has the potential to dissuade people of the idea that any of us are, or should strive to be, self-sufficient. The pedagogy the editors lay out is based on compassion, assumed competence, and celebration of difference, and many of the chapters successfully demonstrate how that pedagogy put into practice can uncover new insights. As a foundational collection, *Earth, Animal, and Disability Liberation* gives readers a number of useful tools and conceptions with which to engage, apply, and expand.