



Putting Humans First: Why We Are Nature's Favorite (Studies in Social, Political, and Legal Philosophy)

By Tibor R. Machan

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Putting Humans First passionately argues for the primacy of human life in the natural world and the corresponding justice of humans making use of animals; it disputes the concept of "animal rights" and "animal liberation." It shows human beings to be very much a part of nature, though not, ordinarily, of the wilds. Given their nature, Machan argues that human beings not only can, but ought to use nature to serve their own needs.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

This cranky manifesto opposes the excesses of animal-rights ideologues with an equally doctrinaire libertarianism. Countering animal-rights stalwarts like Tom Regan and Peter Singer, philosophy professor Machan contends that, as the only beings with the capacity for moral choice, only humans can have rights; "wondrous humanity" should therefore stop worrying about "speciesism" and enjoy guilt-free dominion. Machan scores some points on the concept of animal rights (what framework, he wonders, can encompass the rights of both zebras and the lions who feed on them?), but the link to his laissez-faire politics is murky, and his "private property rights approach to managing environmental problems" seems highly inadequate. Shrugging that he is "not sure" about anti-cruelty laws, he hardly mentions industrial livestock rearing or the other institutionalized abuses of animals that have fueled the animal-rights movement. Larger problems like pollution and ecological degradation are a "tragedy of the commons" best handled by privatization of the public realm and perhaps lots of litigation; private landowners, he assumes, will be faithful stewards of their earth, while polluters will answer in court to those whose property or bodies have been damaged by them. Since Machan doesn't explain how to privatize the upper atmosphere, he allows that there may be a problem with ozone depletion, but he's satisfied to wait for more research. In Machan's exuberant call for individuals to do as they please with their animals, their land and their SUVs, the rights of property seem to overshadow those of humans, let alone animals.

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Review

In *Putting Humans First*, Machan offers an insightful, philosophic, and practical assessment of animal rights and environmental movements. Machan reveals how these philosophies would willingly sacrifice human freedoms by denying basic truths about both man and nature. He shows us that stewardship would be better served by celebrating and employing rather than vilifying mankind's creative and moral nature. (Angela Logomasini, director of risk and environmental policy, Competitive Enterprise Institute)

Tibor R. Machan doesn't like the animal-rights or radical environment movements, and with good cause. Both exhibit anti-human attitudes, he writes, for each rejects the idea that human beings should be the primary concern of human beings. A Chapman University professor, Machan begins his slim volume on a strong note with a cogent critique of the philosophical underpinnings of animal-liberation philosophy. (Wesley Smith *The Weekly Standard*)

Putting Humans First should become the gold standard for warm and friendly human beings endeavoring to understand and explain why, though we may love animals and nature, they are intrinsically inferior to humans. (Jay Lehr, science director for The Heartland Institute)

A defense of human primacy in a hierarchy of nature and a critique of radical environmentalism. (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*)

About the Author

Tibor R. Machan is currently R. C. Hoiles Professor of Business Ethics & Free Enterprise at the Argyros School of Business & Economics, Chapman University, Orange, CA, and a research fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

Users Review

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