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A Comparison: Two Approaches to Sustainability

Michael Pollan and Robinson Meyer, in their essays, ‘An Animal’s place’ and ‘The Oceans We Know Won’t Survive climate change’, shared some common concerns about environmental sustainability and the use of resources by humans respectively. Pollan in his essay stated that animals have their own rights as us humans do and that they deserve better treatment. However, Meyer in his essay explained the threats of climate change to our environment. He said that due to increased carbon pollution, the sea level rises, and the ocean becomes warm. Although Pollan and Meyer both shared their concern for animal welfare in their essays, Meyer focuses more on the aftereffects of climate change on our overall environment. Pollan tried to balance both the concepts of environmental sustainability along with the protection of animals in an effort to show that both of these issues are equally important.

Meyer in his essay repeatedly mentioned the importance of water for human beings. He then shifted the focus of the readers to carbon pollution, which is increasing day by day and has devastating effects on the sea level. However, Pollan, on the other hand, focused on preserving and offering the basic rights to animals. Pollan said that in order to make our environment more stable and sustainable, we must provide the animals with the basic protection they deserve. Killing and hunting of animals merely for pleasure must be avoided.

Meyer, while explaining the dangerous effects of climate, stated that “If our water-related problems are relatively easy to manage, then the problem of self-government is also easier.” (Meyer) He explained here the fact that we human beings are highly dependent on water for our survival and to ensure the proper water conditions on the planet, all we have to do is to reduce this carbon pollution. Meyer also stated that “But if carbon pollution continues rising through the middle of the century, then sea-level rise by 2100 could exceed 2 feet 9 inches. Then the job will be too big, it will be an unmanageable problem.” (Meyer) Here again, Meyer specified the importance and necessity of keeping the environment pollution free. He said that if carbon pollution is not controlled now, and continued to increase at the same rate, then it will make the environment unsustainable. Pollan in his essay said that “Half the dogs in America will receive Christmas presents this year, yet few of us pause to consider the miserable life of the pig–an animal easily as intelligent as a dog–that becomes the Christmas ham.” (Pollan) In this statement, Pollan explained the unfair treatment animals receive from human beings. Pollan tried to change our perspective of how we differentiate animals. In this case, for example, both pigs and dogs deserve the same kind of treatment. If the dog is being gifted on Christmas, then the pig deserves a gift too. At another point in his essay, he stated, “[John Berger](http://www.johnberger.org/) wrote an essay, ‘Why Look at Animals?’ in which he suggested that the loss of everyday contact between ourselves and animals–and specifically the loss of eye contact–has left us deeply confused about the terms of our relationship to other species.” (Pollan) Now in this statement, Pollan is referring to an essay written by John Berger, in which he explains the loss of contact between humans and animals in the last decades. He said that the main reason for the poor relationship between humans and animals today is the loss of eye-contact between the two.

Both Meyer and Pollan shared their own concerns for one common objective, which is to make the overall environment sustainable. According to Meyer, climate change takes place due to increased carbon pollution by human beings that result in the rise in ocean temperatures. This increase in temperature of the water makes it difficult for the animals underwater to survive. Also, the safety of seafood will be at risk and bacteria will become more common. The survival of people living in the Arctic, who rely on seafood, will become difficult. Similarly Pollan, in his essay, explained this sad and cruel action of humans killing and hunting animals. Here, in this case, we are doing it intentionally, and in Meyer’s case, we are indirectly putting the lives of animals to extinction.

The important thing here, which both Pollan and Meyer want us to realize is that for a healthy and stable environment, both the survival of animals as well as a clean environment are necessary. We must not compromise on either of these things. We must provide the animals fundamental rights and must take some necessary measures to control the increasing pollution to ensure that they have a safe, healthy and sustainable environment to live in.

**Works Cited:**

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