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# A Comparative Environmental History of America and China: "Nature" and Climate Change

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**April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

**A Comparative Environmental History of China and America's:  
"Nature" and Climate Change Discourse**

Elaine Lac

Comparative Humanities Department

## **Chapter I – Introduction**

Environmental history is at the most basic level an exploration of changing relationships between people and the environment or nature. Additionally, environmental history observes the human reshaping of nature, which then translates into culture, philosophies, and policies, and vice versa. A close examination of the ecological themes of history uncovers patterns and long-term changes. According to environmental historian Louis S. Warren, “At the beginning of the twenty-first century, as concerns about global warming and other ominous threats trouble many, the discipline of environmental history provides key insights into environmental relations and problems of the past.”<sup>1</sup> Ultimately, these insights can lead not only to a better understanding of current problems but also to better solutions. America has a long history of transforming environmental identities; its wealth of environmental history has been analyzed and extrapolated to have an impact on contemporary culture and beliefs. In contrast, despite a much longer recorded national history, environmental analysis in the People’s Republic of China lags behind. By comparing the environmental histories of the United States of America and the People’s Republic of China through the lenses of philosophy, religion, literature, and art, I will demonstrate that, despite their differences, these two powerful countries share a significant commonality in valuation of nature, and this is crucial to building cross-cultural consensus towards real environmental solutions.

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<sup>1</sup> Warren “American Environmental History” (2003), page 5

The world's environment has experienced rapid degradation by human activities, which, according to scientific consensus, has manifested in global climate change.<sup>2</sup> In this dire state, two countries, the People's Republic of China and the United States of America, have a unique role as two of the most developed and influential global powers. Whether consciously or not, their actions provide examples for the rest of the world to follow. China's rapid economic growth in the past several decades has set a precedent for other developing countries to follow. It is for this reason that it is imperative that a full understanding of China's environmental history is taken into consideration by Chinese and global policy makers. China's extensive recorded history provides an insight to how the country has understood, transformed, and adapted to the environment. This recorded history is the foundation for understanding the country's response to environmental challenges and allows insight into the motivations behind policy decisions. However, this information requires careful analysis. America's developed environmental history has translated into a number of deeply held values and ideals, some of which seem to stand in direct contrast to those of contemporary China. However, differences in historical development do not mean that analysis is impossible. Rather, these provide an opportunity to both further analyze and interpret China's environmental history in light of similar trends in the United States, with an eye to using America's development as guide for China to improve their own process of industrial development.

The current body of environmental history in China is limited. However, there is a wealth of recorded history dating back at least two thousand years available for humanistic environmental analysis. Understanding the shared environmental histories of the two countries gives us insight into motivations that are not primarily economic or political but rather rooted in

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<sup>2</sup> Conway, Erik M. and Oreskes, Naomi. "Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming." (2009).

culture, religion, or philosophy. I have chosen to focus my research on China and the United States because there has never been a comprehensive comparative analysis of the environmental histories of the two countries, and by drawing comparisons I believe this work can facilitate dialogue towards wider environmental solutions and increased cross-cultural understanding. While both countries are making internal efforts to combat environmental degradation, collaboration could have profound impact at the cultural and political as well as environmental levels.

In order to conduct a comparative environmental historical analysis, I will analyze various texts within humanistic disciplines of mainly philosophy and literature. Art will serve to illustrate the complexity of the ideas represented in the present philosophies and literature. My thesis is composed of four chapters. The first is this introduction to the thesis. The second chapter focuses on the complex definitions of “nature” and the valuations of nature. The United States draws from biblical beliefs of stewardship, Romantic ideals of nature, conservation, and utilitarianism or a dominant attitude towards nature. Chinese environmental thought is rooted in ancient traditions such as Daoism and Confucianism. While these philosophies retain some influence, much of the modern Chinese policies have initially had a utilitarian view of nature. The third chapter will investigate the impact modern climate discourse has had on definitions of nature its transformation. Throughout the thesis, I will include selected historical data to provide a fuller understanding of each country’s relationship with the environment, and occasionally as a counter to the way this relationship is depicted in literature, philosophy and the arts. The last chapter, the conclusion, will sum up the major insights from the comparative analysis and conclude that, despite their differences, there are common motivations that unite the two

countries towards better environmental solutions which trace back to a commonality when understanding nature.

In sum, this project is significant in several ways. First, it addresses a lack in comparative analyses of environmental histories. In addition, it points to the possibility of richer moral and cultural frameworks with which to address environmental problems, and potentially new forms of cross-cultural understanding. Both the United States and China have a place as leaders of the twenty-first century world, but together they can have a much greater impact, especially when working jointly on environmental issues.

## **Chapter II - Frameworks of Viewing Nature**

Understandings of nature have taken different forms throughout the histories of America and China. These understandings have transformed due to changes in doctrine, philosophical thought, and religious traditions. Analyzing the changing definitions of nature is valuable and essential when trying to understand human relations to nature and rationale behind environmental actions. Western conceptions of nature are often held as the standard for understanding the environment and its use. Understanding the diversity in human relationships to nature not only provides a point of comparison between America and China, but also a starting point for possible environmental solutions. Of course, it should be noted that for most of their respective histories two countries developed ideas in separation from each other, which means that approximations should not be treated not as correlations.<sup>3</sup> Chapter two is divided between three different conceptions of nature: utility, stewardship, and conservation. These three divisions are not the only ones that exist to define nature nor are they strictly separated in their categories. Definitions of nature are complex and the lines are often blurred; however, it is

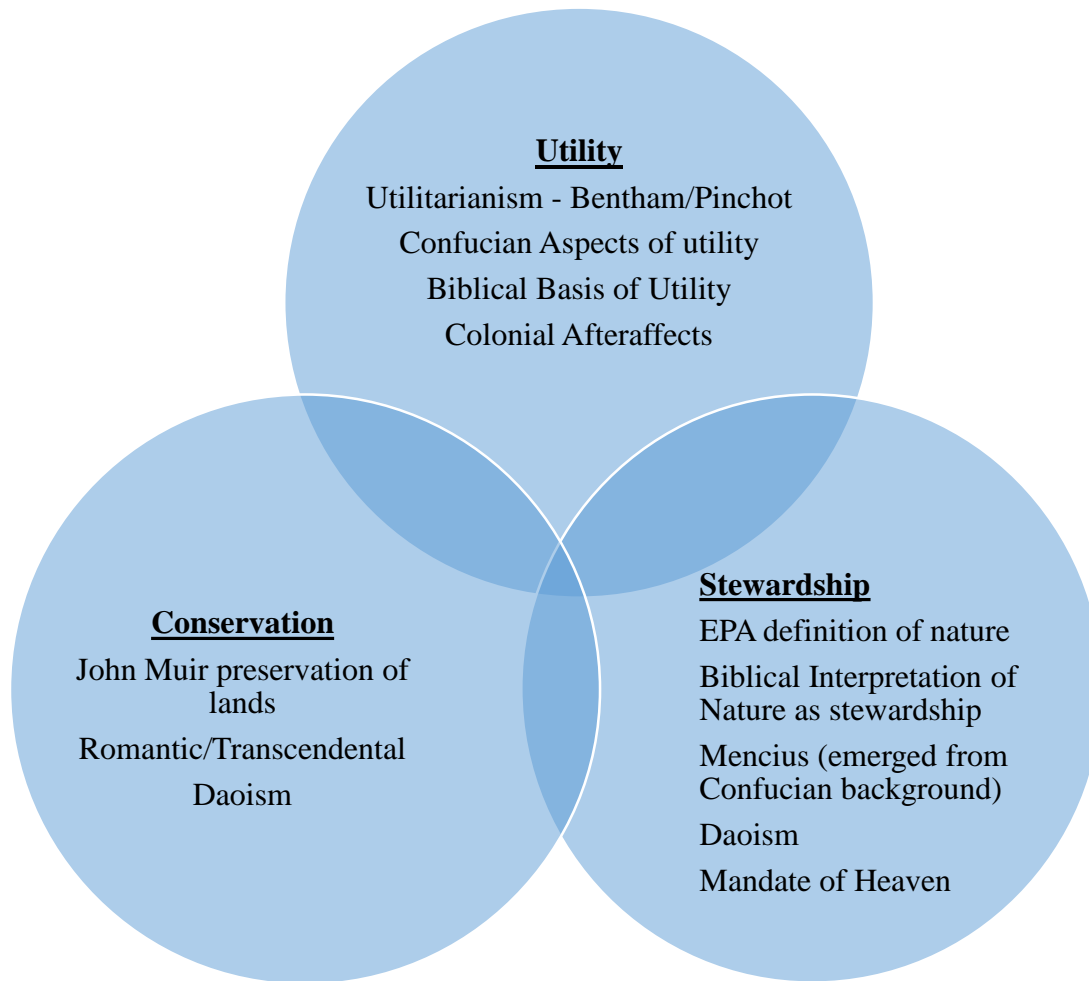
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<sup>3</sup>Elvin, Mark. "The Retreat of the Elephants: an environmental history of China." *Yale University Press*: New Haven and London. (2004). xxi.

important to give some formal structure so that similarities and differences can be drawn from the Western and Eastern traditions.



## The Interconnected Definitions of Nature



The Venn diagram “The Interconnected Definitions of Nature” illustrates the complexity and fluidity when defining “Nature”.

## Utility

The contemporary American utilitarian view of nature prioritizes exploiting the maximum use of resources for human gain and progress. Environmental utilitarianism was introduced by Gifford Pinchot, who was the first Chief of the newly established Forest Service under President Theodore Roosevelt in 1905.<sup>4</sup> Pinchot adopted his principle of utility from English philosopher Jeremy Bentham, who proposed a “utility principle”—later be renamed the “greatest happiness principle”—which stated that actions should be conducted for the “greatest happiness of the greatest number.”<sup>5</sup> Pinchot added a new aspect to this principle in a letter he wrote to himself when first taking his position as the Chief of the Forest Service, which described his personal mission statement: “Where conflicting interests must be reconciled, the question shall always be answered from the standpoint of the greatest good of the greatest number in the long run.”<sup>6</sup>

Jeremy Bentham’s happiness principle was primarily concerned with individual and collective moral action. Pinchot’s addition of the words “in the long run” introduces a focus on the longevity of natural resources and integrates the environment into the framework moral thinking. Pinchot recognized that natural resources were finite if consumed uncontrollably and the maximum use of resources meant a controlled use of nature. It should be noted that Pinchot uses the word “conservation” to describe his approach to nature; however, is an anachronistic

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<sup>4</sup> “Pinchot and Utilitarianism.” *United States Department of Agriculture*. .

<http://www.fs.fed.us/greatestgood/press/mediakit/facts/pinchot.shtml/> Accessed March 7, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Bentham, Jeremy. “An introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation.” *Hafner Publishing Company*. New York. (1948). Ebook. (page xi)

<sup>6</sup> “Pinchot and Utilitarianism.” *United States Department of Agriculture*. .

<http://www.fs.fed.us/greatestgood/press/mediakit/facts/pinchot.shtml/> Accessed March 7, 2016.

word which does not match current definitions of conservation. Instead, Pinchot's conservation ethic should be labeled as utility because despite his "long run" approach, he still believed fundamentally in development. Pinchot states,

"The first great fact about conservation is that it stands for development. There has been a fundamental misconception that conservation means nothing but the husbanding of resources for future generations... Conservation does mean provision for the future, but it means also and first of all the recognition of the right of the present generation to the fullest necessary use of all resources with which this country is so abundantly blessed."<sup>7</sup>

Pinchot characterizes "conservation" under three principles: development, preservation, and the common good. Development of resources refers to cultivating natural resources *to their fullest extent for the present generation*. Furthermore, "preservation" stands for the preservation of waste, and not the complete protection of a swath of land or the non-human species inhabiting it. Pinchot further delineates what preservation means, "We are coming in like manner to understand that the prevention of waste in all directions is a simple matter of good business. The first duty of the human race is to control the earth it lives upon..."<sup>8</sup> Preservation, in Pinchot's definition, more closely means the complete and efficient use of resources so that waste is not generated. And of course, the act of conservation is meant to benefit the "common good." I argue that Pinchot's stance on conservation more closely resembles a utilitarian approach to nature rather than a conservationist approach as one may understand today. Here we see that the terminology that represent definitions of nature are complex and their definitions being somewhat fluid throughout history. Pinchot characterizes his approach as a "promotion of national efficiency," "control of the earth" and "development" all of which are echoed in Chinese thought as well as in biblical stories from *Genesis*.

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<sup>7</sup> Pinchot, Gifford, "The Fight for Conservation", *Doubleday, Page & Company*, New York. (1910).

<sup>8</sup> Pinchot, Gifford. "The Fight for Conservation." (1910).

Confucianism, rooted in the teachings of the sage Confucius (Kongzi) and arguably the foundation of traditional Chinese thought, can be interpreted as having a distinctly utilitarian concept at its core. Confucianism was adopted as the official ideology in the Han Dynasty (206 BCE -220 CE). However, Confucius lived from 551-479 BCE during the Zhou Dynasty and lived during a tumultuous time of political, social, and economic change. He disapproved of the political instability and sought to establish and maintain social order. He believed that a patriarchal family and detailed attention to rules of proper behavior and ritual among all classes would assure social and political harmony and order. He was focused on human behavior, relationships, and moral cultivation. Confucian state functionaries were concerned with strictly controlling everything from clothes, food, and musical instruments to strive towards what might be called “civilization”. The environment was no exception to being subjected to control.

Those inspired by Confucian ideas believed that human nature could be cultivated to be different from those who lacked human morals, manners, and social stratification and be transformed to an “ultimate goodness.” Societies were formed because humans without societies would fall to the animals and wilderness. The process of creating those societies required Man to rid the world of wild things, tame wild animals, and bring vermin under control. The environment was subjected to control and transformation so that it served society’s goal of ultimate goodness and civility. The world that Confucians lived in was entirely determined by how they deemed it most useful to their ends and a reflection of how man’s nature should manifest. Society is thus a creation of man’s nature.

The following excerpts come from Confucius’ *Analects*. It has been argued that the later chapters of *The Analects* were written by Confucius’ disciples. However, Chapters 3-9 are more likely written by Confucius and so these chapters are the ones cited. This excerpt illustrates a

foundational idea of Confucianism, which is that individuals can change themselves if they decide to make the correct moral choices.

The Master said, Where gentlemen set their hearts upon moral force (*te* (3)),  
the commoners set theirs upon the soil.  
Where gentlemen think only of punishments,  
the commoners think only of exemptions.<sup>9</sup>

Confucius, who is referred to as “Master” discusses the potential outcomes of individuals seeking moral good which is called “moral force” (the *de* of the *Dao de Jing*)<sup>10</sup>. There is seems to be a moral choice presented when one has made a mistake. The commoners are said to set their “hearts” upon the soil. The analogy for “soil” means the physical compulsions or easy physical desires that commoners easily fall prey to. Commoners are constantly seeking exemptions from their wrongdoings. Gentlemen, on the other hand, fixate on the punishments that deservedly come after an immoral transgression has taken place and are willing to accept this punishment. The commoner and the gentlemen have a choice to be truly moral according to how willing they are to accept their wrongdoings. The only point of separation of becoming a commoner or a gentleman is making the correct moral choice of facing your mistakes and accepting the punishment from one’s mistakes. The concept of malleability would extend to the natural environment as expressed in the passage below.

“The Master said, When natural substance prevails over ornamentation,  
you get the boorishness of the rustic.  
When ornamentation prevails over natural substance,  
you get the pedantry of the scribe.

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<sup>9</sup> Confucius, Analects, Book 4, Chapter 11 (page 104).

<sup>10</sup> The “*de*” refers to the ‘natural virtue’ or ‘power’ present in the universe.

Only when ornament and substance are duly blended do you get the true gentleman.”<sup>11</sup>

Natural substance in this case refers to the “natural state” that people and the world would follow if education, culture, or order were not established. In Confucius’ view, only nature would lead to bucolic ideas. Ornamentation is meant to be culture, but too much culture is undesirable because then the world becomes too clinical and disruptive. The “true gentlemen” is the combination of nature and ornamentation. The “natural state” of individuals is undesirable as is the natural environment as it would lead people to develop into uncouth and uncivilized individuals. However, too much “culture” would lead to individuals being too pretentious. There is an equal ground that favors equal parts of being in a “natural state” and being civilized. One can interpret this as meaning that both natural human behavior as well as the natural environment need limiting in order to create a “true gentlemen. In a historical context, the Confucius practice of shaping the environment certainly came full force.

The Han Dynasty, in which the teachings of Confucius flourished, produced an extensive network of roads, grassland transformation, increased desertification, and water control. Notably, the transformation and varied attitudes towards how the Yellow River was controlled indicate environmental attitudes taking shape in the Han dynasty. The Han state wanted to build a higher dike to confine the river to a narrower course, which was much like the Confucian attempt to define human behavior both with a high level of control and a strict course of flow.

Like the Confucian idea of changing and civilizing the environment, the *Genesis* creations stories place Adam in a similar circumstance. After Adam and Eve consume fruit from the middle of the garden, God proclaims:

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<sup>11</sup> Confucius, *Analects*. Book 6, Chapter 16 (page 119)

To Adam he said, “Because you listened to what your wife said and ate from the tree about which I gave you the order,  
‘You are not to eat from it,’ the ground is cursed on your account;  
you will work hard to eat from it as long as you live. (*Genesis 3:17*)<sup>12</sup>

The sins of Adam and Eve cursed them to be estranged from the Garden of Eden, which can be interpreted as an estrangement of nature after the failure of human morality.<sup>13</sup> The estrangement of humans from nature comes from the curse God places on the ground that places it in opposition to humans.

It will produce thorns and thistles for you,  
And you will eat field plants.  
You will eat bread by the sweat of your forehead till you return to the ground –  
For you were taken out of it: you are dust, and you will return to dust. (*Genesis 3:18-19*)<sup>14</sup>

The original relationship Adam had with the land was focused on cultivation and still involves cultivation, but now it has become work and toil, a curse. The changed relationship forces Adam to see the land more as a resource than a symbiotic relationship. Adam becomes focused on cultivating the land for survival not rather than a mutually benefiting relationship. The relationship of humans and animals is clarified after God floods the earth and orders Noah to build an Arc. After the Flood, God states:

I will never again curse the ground because of humankind,  
since the imaginings of a person’s heart are evil from his youth;  
nor will I ever again destroy all living things, as I have done. (*Genesis 8:21*)<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Genesis 3:17

<sup>13</sup> Tucker, M., Gene: page 10

<sup>14</sup> Genesis 3:18-19

<sup>15</sup> Genesis 8:21

God charges Noah with a new task, “God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them: ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth’.”<sup>16</sup> The end of human existence is to multiply and create progeny. And yet, while the word “replenish” echoes the idea that humans are stewards of the earth and there is a mutually beneficial relationship between the earth and humans, this idea seems to be contradicted by the relationship God establishes between humans and animals, which seems to be characterized by human dominance.

God describes the human relationship to animals as, “The fear and dread of you shall rest on every animal of the earth, and on every bird of the air, on everything that creeps on the ground, and on all the fish of the sea...”<sup>17</sup> This means that wild animals are meant to fear human status as a predator. However, this is strangely juxtaposed by the human fear of wild animals. The writer of *Genesis* suggests that humans are meant to exist without the fear of nature and yet are only without that fear when they have been obedient. God rewards obedience by saying “you shall lie down and no one shall make you afraid; I will remove dangerous animals from the land...”<sup>18</sup> Thus there is a contradictory expectation that humans should be without fear but only when obedient. Ultimately, God is always in control; however, humans are placed on the earth to work the ground for their benefit and “subdue” animals for their benefit.

This biblical utilitarian view of the environment was accepted by the European colonists and affirmed in their treatment of the land and its resources of the “New World.” European colonists arrived in America in numbers the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and brought natural organisms that included disease causing microbes, domesticated animals, and weeds and

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<sup>16</sup> Genesis 9:1

<sup>17</sup> Genesis 9:2-3

<sup>18</sup> Tucker, M., Gene: page 11



plants. This process remade much of America's landscape, and was not limited to changes to flora and fauna, but extended to the indigenous populations. The Amerindians transferred their own diseases such as syphilis, hepatitis, polio, tuberculosis and so on while the Europeans brought smallpox, measles, whooping cough, chicken pox, bubonic plague, malaria, and much more. The Native Americans were immediately susceptible to these infections and their populations dropped by the thousands, which in turn facilitated the Conquest.<sup>19</sup>

Active changes to the environment by the colonists were mostly concentrated in making the countryside a marketable asset.<sup>20</sup> Europeans owned animals for trade and for consumption, defined their animals as property and sought total and year-round control their animals. The ideas of "ownership" and property were foreign to Native Americans. In the seventeenth century, misunderstandings between English colonists and native tribes allowed colonists to encroach and lay claim to land that was once for all to use. In the case of the Agawam Village in Massachusetts, on July 15, 1636 an agreement was struck between the tribe and fur trader William Pynchon, which allowed the purchase of a tract of land along the Connecticut River.<sup>21</sup> However, really the tribe only meant that the colonists had a right to *use* the land but not truly *own* it. But the rights of the native tribes went unacknowledged because the English determined that the native claim to land was unrecognized by the English Crown.

Colonists also introduced a new capitalistic market, which commodified the entirety of America's landscape and natural resources, including fish, timber, and the fruits of mining, farming, and trapping. In the late eighteenth century, these practices expanded to be more ecologically damaging and extensive in the south. Agricultural practices such as growing tobacco

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<sup>19</sup> Warren page 35

<sup>20</sup> Warren page 50

<sup>21</sup> William Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, page 67

and cotton exhausted the soils and increased soil erosion, which would shape the South's environmental history beyond the nineteenth century. The introduction of slavery and monoculture crops pushed investment in continuing exploitation rather than towards land stewardship. The Western commodification of nature is a practice that would be repeated throughout the rest of America's history.<sup>22</sup>

The biblical utilitarian view of the land is centered on ensuring human survival. Confucianism follows a line of utilitarian thinking; however, its focus is more on cultivating a more perfect society. Both the biblical and Confucian implementation of environmental utilitarianism are in the name of human use. Utilitarianism—understood strictly as a policy of making decisions based on the happiness or real needs of the “greatest number”—is not necessarily a negative thing. However, historically utilitarianism has tended towards a focus on immediate gains for individuals or small subsets of people, resulting in massive environmental degradation. Most often the use of natural resources in the modern world is not for “the greatest number” and instead under the industrial capitalist system, for the “benefit” of an elite minority. The idea of seeing resource use in terms of a longer timescale—“in the long run”—would manifest later in American ideals of stewardship. As I will show next, however, stewardship has had a long-standing presence in traditional Chinese thought.

### **Stewardship**

According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, the definition of environmental stewardship is “the responsibility for environmental quality shared by all those

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<sup>22</sup> Sarah T Phillips, Environmental history pg 291

who actions affect the environment.”<sup>23</sup> In the modern definition of stewardship, all individuals who have some effect on the environment must manage themselves and the environment accordingly to protect the quality of the environment. This responsibility for the environment originates from an inherent value placed within the environment. Throughout China’s and America’s environmental history, environmental stewardship has been founded not on an inherent value present in the environment, but rather from religious doctrine or heavenly mandate.

Nature as defined in *Genesis* is the land that has not been cultivated or is otherwise wild.

God blessed them and said to them

‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.

Rule over the fish in the sea, the birds in the air and every living creature that crawls on the earth. (*Genesis* 1:28)<sup>24</sup>

The land, earth, fish, birds, and living creatures or animals are defined as resources to be controlled. This creates a hierarchy of first God, who is transcendent over creation, then humans as the deity’s stewards, and then the rest of the world. This seems to imply that there is a deep interdependence between the land, humanity, and God.

... there was as yet no wild bush on the earth,  
and no wild plant had as yet sprung up; for  
God had not caused it to rain on the earth,  
and there was no one to cultivate the ground. (*Genesis* 2:5)<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>“Environmental Stewardship”. *United States Environmental Protection Agency*. (February 2016). <https://archive.epa.gov/stewardship/web/html/>.

<sup>24</sup> The Complete Jewish Genesis

<sup>25</sup> The Complete Jewish Bible, Genesis 2:5

It seems to be the job of humans to serve the land as a steward, who will till the land to encourage the growth of plants; without this labor of “cultivation,” nothing will arise. Humans additionally seem to be tied to earth as humans were created from the soil, life was granted by God by breathing life into the soil, and it is to the soil that humans will eventually return upon death.<sup>26</sup> Humans are thus made from the same material as the earth, its resources, and animals. However, humans remain essentially different from the land and animals. Humans for one are expected to shape and change the earth because, as we have seen, without humans the earth would be unproductive.

Though the period begins at the very same time as the earliest Israelite kingdoms that gave birth to the Bible, environmental stewardship in the Zhou Dynasty (1045–256 BCE) is very different from biblical stewardship because the Zhou leaders were motivated primarily by the need to maintain control of their kingdom. The Zhou came into power after the fall of the Shang Dynasty, and saw the rise of a new political hierarchy. Confucius lived near the end of the Zhou Dynasty but Confucianism would not be formally instituted into the state until the Han Dynasty several centuries later. The Zhou interpreted the Shang’s fall as a moral failing under the “Mandate of Heaven” which declared that Heaven or “*tian* (天)” mandated the king to maintain order in the universe, but failure to do so rescinded the Mandate and the legitimacy of a King’s rule.<sup>27</sup> It should be noted that *tian* can mean heaven; however, *tian* can also mean sky, weather, natural order, or moral order. Xunxi, a Zhou Dynasty philosopher uses *tian* to represent the natural order which create the principles which provide the context for life and the flow of life.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> The Complete Jewish Bible, Genesis 3:19

<sup>27</sup> Elvin, Mark. “The Retreat of the Elephants: an environmental history of China.” *Yale University Press*: New Haven and London. (2004). page 51

<sup>28</sup> Tianchen, Li. “Confucian ethics and the environment.” *Culture Mandala: The Bulletin of the Centre for East West Cultural and Economic Studies*. 6, no. 1 (2003): page 3

*Tian*'s many definitions combine to mean that Heaven in the manifestation of the world's natural order from the sky and weather to the world's natural order, but also is embodied in something like a deity. Heaven's declaration is a declaration from a higher form, but their declaration is a representation of the world's natural order.

“The Mandate of Heaven,  
How beautiful and unceasing!  
Oh, how glorious  
Was the purity of King Wen's virtue!  
With blessing he overwhelms us.  
We will receive the blessings.”  
They are a great favor from our king Wen.  
May his descendants hold fast to them.”<sup>29</sup>

However, the Mandate must be earned and cultivated. In the *Book of Odes*, the poem “King Wen” warns the King Wen of this possibility.

They (descendants of Yin) became subject to Zhou.  
Heaven's Mandate is not constant.  
The officers of Yin were fine and alert...  
  
....Cultivate your virtue.  
Always strive to be in harmony with Heaven's Mandate.  
Seek for yourselves the many blessings.  
Before Yin lost its army,  
Its kings were able to be counterparts to the Lord on High.  
In Yin you should see as in a mirror  
That the great mandate is not easy [to keep].<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Book of Odes, Ode no. 267 “The Mandate of Heaven”

<sup>30</sup> Book of Odes, ode no. 235, “King Wen”

The Mandate puts forth that heaven places a king in power to maintain the order of the universe. The universe is the cosmic, natural, and human affairs that the king must maintain by fulfilling his duties and only then will the king be mandated to rule. It was believed that the previous dynasty, the Shang had lost the mandate by treating people poorly, which led to a cooling of the climate.

The leaders of the Zhou period began developing an idea that humans should dominate and control nature. The Zhou followed the Mandate of Heaven by driving out tigers, leopards, rhinoceroses, and elephants away from the populace. These wild animals often threatened the safety of the people and trampled farmland and infrastructure. The act of driving out the wild laid out an early Chinese belief and action against the environment that it was meant to be transformed and exploited to be calmed and civilized by their sovereign.<sup>31</sup> The natural order was seen as one that humans dominated the landscape, and drove the wild animals away. The ancient Chinese—at least the elites—were less interested in living harmoniously with nature as they were with humanizing the world.

This phenomena is illustrated in the collection of poetry, the *Shijing*, also known as the *Scripture of Songs* or the *Book of Odes*, an early anthology of poems, scripture, and songs from the later Zhou Dynasty. In the opening lines of the collection is an anthem that affirms the Zhou right to rule.

Majestic indeed was our Lord God Above  
As he gazed down in splendor upon this, our world.  
The four quarters lay under His rule, and His judgement,  
That the people below should live undisturbed.

But neither Xia's state nor successor Shang dynasty.  
Had proven able to govern the empire correctly...

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<sup>31</sup> Marks, pg 66

...He shifted to us (Zhou), in the west, His affection,  
And bestowed on our Zhou---a place we could settle.

We uprooted the trees then! Lugged trees aside  
--Those that, dead, still stood upright, and those that had toppled.  
We pruned back the branches, or flattened entirely  
The stands in long lines and the thick-tangled coppices.

We cut clearings among them. We widened the openings  
Through tamarisk forests and knob-jointed cane-trees.  
We tore from the soil, or else lopped back, groves  
Of wild mulberry bushes and spiny Cudranias...

When our Lord God Above had examined these hillsides,  
We ripped out oaks whose leaves fall, and those green the year round,  
Clearing spacious expanses amid pine and cypress.  
Here God made our state, and our sovereign, His counterpart.”<sup>32</sup>

From this selection, the act of falling trees, clearing fields, and taming the otherwise overgrown wild is a desirable benefit after bringing the Zhou dynasty to power. It is stated that the Lord God Above (*Shangdi*) cast his affection on the Zhou and as a result created a space for the state. It implies that the place people are meant to live in and most privileged to live in is a space purged of wildness. History shows us that the Zhou Dynasty had a significant affect transforming the environment. Walled towns and garrisons were built, granted lands were cleared, and the Yellow River was diked.

The Zhou’s Mandate of Heaven offers an early example of a type of stewardship. The Zhou worked the land according to an expectation set forth by the Mandate of Heaven that human actions would be judged according to the heavens or *tian*’s pleasure or displeasure. And

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<sup>32</sup> “Classical Chinese Literature” edited John Minford and Joseph SM. *Columbia University Press*: New York and *Chinese University Press*: Hong Kong, 2000.

yet, the motivating for Zhou leadership was maintaining political control of the Dynasty, which gives their stewardship a distinctly utilitarian coloring.



**“Outing to Zhang Gong’s Grotto” by Qingxiang Shitao (Qing Dynasty 1644-1911 CE). 1700 CE. Medium: Ink and Color on Paper. Classification: Handscroll. Dimensions: 18 1/16 x 112 3/4 in. (45.9 x 286.4 cm).<sup>33</sup>**

The *Dao de Jing*’s ideas of nature follows a similar line of thinking to the notion of biblical stewardship in that would-be sages are charged with acting in a way that encourages the universe to manifest its fullest potential. There is often confusion about the implications of “Daoist” activity. The *Dao de Jing* famously uses a metaphor that sages should be like water and flow with the water, which seems to imply a fundamental passivity. But really, the metaphor that sages should be like water is a reference to the idea that individuals should be able to have their actions reflect the flow of the universe. One can infer nature’s flow from the water, and

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<sup>33</sup> Shitao, Qingxiang. *Outing to Zhang Gong’s Grotto*. Ink and color on Paper. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



additionally from other parts of nature. The painting “Outing to Zhang Gong’s Grotto” (above) at first glance is an ink painting of a beautiful and pristine natural scene where a Daoist can escape from the world. However, this landscape painting is only a section of a larger handscroll which comes with the artist’s colophon and a small selection reads,

“No one is in Zhang Gong's grotto,  
But from inside Zhang Gong's grotto a spring breeze comes;  
Born to blow on tens of thousands of men.  
Although it causes the mysterious forces of creation to leak out...

... I must paint both its spirit and its principle.  
The cave is dark and melancholy like a strange person;  
Its restless nature compels the world to take notice.  
Once you escape into the deep mystery of the cave's interior,  
Its features appear like tigers and leopards.  
Do you not see?...”<sup>34</sup>

The term *wuwei* which appears in the *Dao de Jing* implies “actionless action” rather than passiveness. *Wuwei* is deeply related to the concept of *ziran* 自然 or “naturalness” which is sometimes translated to mean “spontaneity” or “self-so-ing.” The “Outing in Zhang Gong’s Grotto” describes a “mysterious forces of creation” which seem to spring from the cave. These mysterious forces are a reference to the *ziran* found in the world. A passage from Chapter 25 of the *Dao de Jing* describes the phenomena of *ziran* as it relates to humans;

There was some process that formed spontaneously  
Emerging before the heavens and the earth.  
Silent and empty,  
Standing alone as all that is, it does not suffer alternation.  
[all pervading, it does not pause.]

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<sup>34</sup> Shitao, Qingxiang. *Outing to Zhang Gong's Grotto*. Ink and color on Paper. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

It can be thought of as the mother of the heavens and the earth.

I do not yet know its name (*ming*).

If I were to style it,

I would call it way-making (*dao*).

And if forced to give it a name...

...Way-making is grand,

The heavens (*tian*) are grand,

The earth is grand,

And the king is also grand.

Within our territories...

...Human beings emulate the earth,

The earth emulates the heavens,

The heavens emulate way-making,

And way-making emulates what is spontaneously so (*ziran*).<sup>35</sup>

This passage can be interpreted as describing the emergence of *dao* or “way-making”.

The word spontaneous in the first line is a translation of *ziran* and states that *dao* is the manifestation of *ziran*. *Dao* is the “predicate” of the world including the heavens, earth, and humans are meant to follow *dao*. Because *dao* is described as *ziran*, humans are thus correlatively meant to emulate way-making and will emulate what is natural or spontaneously manifest from the cosmos. Thus, retreats to places like Zhang Gong’s Grotto are opportunities to understand what the true form of *ziran* is so that people can better follow *dao*.

Though *wuwei* is often used to characterize Daoism as completely passive, *ziran* is better described as the state of naturalness, or the self-soing of the world and the manifold things. Thus *wuwei* is a means to achieve *ziran*. *Wuwei* implies that people are meant to follow the flow of the universe, but the flow of the universe does not manifest without help.

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<sup>35</sup> Laozi, *Dao de Jing*, pg. 80.

The role of people hints at an early idea of productivity in nature. In Chapter 59, husbandry is an exemplary practice to achieve “proper order” and to serve the heavens or *tian*. The term husbandry can be translated to mean agricultural husbandry of growing and harvesting. It’s more modern colloquial definition translates to an economic sense of frugality and stinginess.

“For bringing proper order to the people and in serving *tian*,  
Nothing is as good as husbandry.  
It is only through husbandry that you come early to accept the way,  
And coming early to accept the way is what is called redoubling your accumulation of character  
(*de*).  
If you redouble your accumulation of character, all obstacles can be overcome,  
And if all obstacles can be overcome, none can discern your limit.  
Where none can discern your limit,  
You can preside over the realm.  
In presiding over the mother of the realm  
You can be long-enduring.  
This is what is called the way (*dao*) of setting deep roots and a secure base,  
And of gaining long life and an enduring vision.”<sup>36</sup>

Using husbandry, people develop their characters and work to overcome limits, which are merely constructs. By using husbandry, one creates a solid foundation for following *dao* and achieving a long life. People thus are asked to sow their energy or efforts back into the world and natural environments. In the framework of husbandry, one cannot force growth, but growth should not be squandered. This implies that people must be productive with their time, and seems to hint at possible stewardship if the state of the environment is not appropriately assigned with the flow of the universe.

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<sup>36</sup> Laozi, *Dao de Jing*, pg 169.

The *Dao de Jing* suggests that in following the spontaneity of the world, also known as *ziran*, then the world should naturally manifest into a balanced and equal cosmos. The cosmos, however, still requires sages and people to maintain balance of the world's nature. Interestingly, maintaining this balance can mean that individuals such as the sages are expected to practice husbandry or growth. This implies an expectation that people are to be productive by cultivating the world and themselves. The *Dao de Jing* is not promoting the complete capitalization of nature, but acknowledges that objects can take many forms including that of utility.

Within the vague world of the *Dao de Jing*, there is a surprising mention of utility. The author takes time to describe why utility exists in chapter 11.

The thirty spokes converge at one hub,  
But the utility of the cart is a function of the nothingness (*wu*) inside the hub.  
We throw clay to shape a pot,  
But the utility of the clay pot is a function of the nothingness inside it.  
We bore out doors and windows to make a dwelling,  
But the utility of the dwelling is a function of the nothingness inside it.  
Thus, it might be something (*you*) that provides the value,  
But it is nothing that provides the utility.<sup>37</sup>

This passage about utility focuses on concepts of existence and absence of utility, but this utility is not the same as an exploitation of resources. First, several words are used to describe the state of utility. The word *you* or “something” is represented by “有” which translates as: to have, there is, and to exist and thus refers to a physical state of being. The word *wu* which is translated to “nothing” is represented by the character “無” which can be translated to “nothing” or “to not be present” which can refer to the state of an object. An example of a pot and a cart is used to

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<sup>37</sup> Laozi, *Dao de Jing*, page 91.

illustrate how these states manifest. The cart and the clay pot have the potential of emptiness (*wu*) until the something (*you*) forces the pots or cart to assume a new state of utility. Utility is in itself empty. This utility of resources and objects must be conducted in a moderate and balanced process that reflects the Daoist status quo. The pot and the cart are meant to show that objects do not necessarily have to assume a state of use but if in use, the pot and cart can serve many purposes to people and animals.

The rest of the world though, can still find a “use” in nature that humans do not necessarily see. In an anecdote from the *Zhuangzi*, an early text often connected with Daoism, the “Shu” tree (also called “the Tree of Heaven”) is described by Hui Shi as having utility in the following way:

Hui Shi said to Zhuangzi, “I have a large tree. People call it the Tree of Heaven. Its trunk is so gnarled that it cannot be measured, and its branches are so knotted and twisted that the compass and the square cannot be used. If you stood it up in the road a carpenter would not glance at it. Your words are big, but useless—all will turn away from them.”<sup>38</sup>

From Hui Shi’s point of view, the tree is useless as a resource because its composition renders it useless for a carpenter. However, Hui Shi is looking at the tree from a human-centric and resource-minded point of view. The sage Zhuangzi opens Hui Shi’s point of view.

Zhuangzi replied, “Have you never seen a wildcat or a weasel? Crouching low, they watch for something to approach. They leap east and west without fearing to go high or low, until they fall into the trap and die in the net... Now you have a large tree and regret that it is of no use. Why not plant it in the wild? You might wander about and do nothing by its side or sleep in its shade. An axe will not put an end to its existence; nothing can harm it. What is there to be distressed about its being useless?”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Zhuangzi, translated and introduced by Guorong, Yang and Hochsmann, Hyun. “Zhuangzi.” Pearson Education Inc. 2007. Page 87.

<sup>39</sup> Zhuangzi. 2007. Page 87.

Zhuangzi questions why the existence of something useless has to be a problem to Hui Shi. The wildcat and weasel go on with their lives without considering whether a useless tree has to be a focus of their lives because wild animals are more focused on living their lives. Hui Shi could never come in contact with this tree in his lifetime, thus the tree could have no discernable impact on Hui Shi's life and there is no harm in being "useless". However, in this anecdote, it seems more accurate to call the tree a neutral object and thus not everything in the universe needs to be used, but can just be. While that is true, it is not to say that nature can't be manipulated. Zhuangzi encourages Hui Shi to replant the tree in the wild so it can be of "use" in its new location. While the tree may not be "used" as raw material, it can take on any form of use. This can be interpreted as stewardship because Zhuangzi's encouragement to replant the tree is going to create a "use" but for the long-term.

At least some of China's early philosophers saw the need for state conservation. One of the most prominent Confucian philosophers was Mencius (Mengzi) who studied in the School of Zisi<sup>40</sup> during the fourth century BCE. Mencius accepted the Confucian ideal that social order was achieved when a sage was in power who ruled through virtue rather than coercion, otherwise known as "benevolent government".<sup>41</sup> Confucianism is more concerned with the cultivation of human relationships to create a harmonious society than relationships with the supernatural and the environment.<sup>42</sup> However, Mencius noticed a need for environmental stewardship when the depletion of natural resources was advancing far too quickly.

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<sup>40</sup> Zisi was the grandson of Confucius.

<sup>41</sup> Mengzi. Translated by Bryan W. Van Norden. "Mengzi; With Selections from Traditional Commentaries." *Hackett Publishing Company*. Indianapolis, IN. (2008)

<sup>42</sup> Tianchen, Li. "Confucian ethics and the environment." *Culture Mandala: The Bulletin of the Centre for East West Cultural and Economic Studies*. 6, no. 1 (2003): page 1

It is notable that Mencius believed that human nature was inherently good; however, this good needed to be cultivated, otherwise humans are unable to grow and flourish to full capacity. This is perhaps best described with Mencius's metaphor of a pear tree. All pear trees are able to bear fruit; however, a number of pear trees will not germinate or grow to maturity. Thus, pear trees must be properly cultivated so that they will grow to their full potential.<sup>43</sup> The pursuit of this goodness was one in the same with the treatment of the land. In an advising meeting with King Hui of Liang, Mencius provides this anecdote to the King which advises him to operate so that resources will be "inexhaustible".

If one does not disrupt the farming seasons with building projects, but only waits until after the crops have been harvested, the grain will be inexhaustible. If overly fine nets are not used in the ponds, so that sufficient fish and turtles are left to reproduce, they will be inexhaustible... When grain, fish, turtles, and wood are inexhaustible, this will make the people have no regrets in caring for the living or mourning the dead. When the people have no regrets about caring for the living or mourning the dead, it is the beginning of the Kingly Way."<sup>44</sup>

In this case, King Hui is told that the path to becoming a truly righteous king include operating with conservation mindset so that the people will have grain, fish, turtles, and wood available to them. Mencius makes a connection that the King's moral goodness is the same as his treatment of the environment because that then affects the people whose livelihoods are in the King's hands.

Mencius believed people's relationship with the land was a mutually expected cultivation of the land set by the "Son of Heaven".

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<sup>43</sup> "Mecius." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. (Dec 2014) <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/mencius/#3>.

<sup>44</sup> Mengzi. Translated by Bryan W. Van Norden. "Mengzi; With Selections from Traditional Commentaries." *Hackett Publishing Company*. Indianapolis, IN. (2008): Book 1A3.3, page 4

When the Son of Heaven visited a territory, if the ruler had opened up new lands for cultivation, managed the fields well, cared for the old and esteemed the worthy, and put the distinguished in office, then the Son of Heaven rewards him with more territory to rule. But if he visited a territory and the land lay undeveloped and overgrown, the old were abandoned and the worthy ignored, and the rapacious were in office, then the Son of Heaven punished him.”<sup>45</sup>

Mencius went beyond just philosophical musings and developed land management and conservation practices. He believed the land didn’t have to be controlled with brute force but would be still used in a mutually productive way for both the land and humans. In a dialogue between Mencius and Bo Gui, a state official, Mencius critique’s Bo Gui’s approach to managing flood waters as incorrect.

Bo Gui said, ‘I excel even King Yu in water management.’ [*Under Bo Guid’s guidance, a state had built dams to redirect the flow of rivers*].

Mengzi [Mencius] replied, ‘You are mistaken sir. In water management, King Yu followed the Way of water. For this reason, King Yu had the Four Seas as his reservoir. But you only have neighboring states as your reservoir. Opposing the course of water is what led to the ‘overflowing waters.’ The ‘overflowing waters’ were the flooding waters. This is something hated by benevolent people. You are mistaken, sir.’<sup>46</sup>

In short, Mencius believed that royalty should moderate consumption and housing to manage their use of resources.

The motivations for stewardship can be diverse. The *Genesis* story and classical Daoist texts recognize a correlative relationship between human actions and world’s own state, thus humans are required to act deliberately to help the world, re-establishing a balance. More explicitly, American proponents of stewardship and Mencius both recognized the limitations of

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<sup>45</sup> Mengzi. (2008): Book 6B7.2, page 165

<sup>46</sup> Mengzi. (2008): Book 6B11.1-11.4, page 168



natural resources and ensuring the longevity of resources led to practices of stewardship. The Mandate of Heaven is an ambiguous doctrine that on one level fits stewardship, but still can be read as utilitarianism in line the treatment of the land by the Zhou, as discussed above. However, this Mandate was leveraged as a tool for maintaining political power rather than as an expectation for the Zhou to treat the land well. Yet the ultimate determining characteristic of stewardship as an approach is a more correlative relationship between people and nature, based on an understanding that human relationships have an important role in the health of the environment.

### **Conservation**

Conservation is perhaps best known in the context of John Muir, a naturalist and conservationist who lived from 1838–1914. Muir advocated for the preservation of wilderness, which led to the establishment of many of America’s national parks. However, the definition of *conservation* has many layers. According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, the term refers to the management of natural resources for public benefit and sustainable social and economic use.<sup>47</sup> The definition of conservation used in this case is by and large an *aesthetic* form of conservation, which aligns more with John Muir’s preservation of land. Because this definition of conservation is focused on aesthetic quality, the land cannot be affected or changed and must therefore be “preserved.” The land thereby assumes the position of an *object* of human appreciation; in this way, it is related to the Romantic “sublime.” Nineteenth-century American writers Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson arguably follow this idea of aesthetic conservation, rooted in a Romantic view of nature. Daoist thought, in some respects, also follows

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a conservation principle, as so some elements of Confucian philosophy; however, here there is not a conservation principle.

John Muir was the first to set a standard of ethical attitude towards nature's "stewardship" which he labeled "conservation". Muir expanded the definition of stewardship, which is often characterized by a motivation to manage natural resources for utilitarian purposes, developing it further to apply an ideal system of ethics for the treatment of nature. His primary ethic is described as: "The wilderness is a temple to be left undisturbed, so man occasionally can experience nature in its purity" by Louis Sahagan, a writer for *The Los Angeles Times* who was reflecting on Muir's legacy near the anniversary of his death.<sup>48</sup> The birth of the American conservation movement came from John Muir's exploration of the mountains in California, Oregon, Washington, and Nevada. He is perhaps most known for campaigning to convert Yosemite National Park into federally protected lands. In his journal *First Summer*, Muir documents his arrival to California, where he is repelled by the noise, poverty, and materialism found in the bourgeois, nouveau riche societies.<sup>49</sup>

John Muir delineates the boundaries of nature and "society" or the non-natural. He believed that wilderness within rocks, streams, plants, and animals were a "divine manifestation, a unique thread in the intricately woven tapestry of life, from which no fibre would be teased without unravelling the fabric."<sup>50</sup> Muir believed natural objects had a divine presence of beauty which was beyond compare. One could describe this as something of a mystical enlightenment.

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<sup>48</sup> Sahagan, Louis. "John Muir's legacy questioned as centennial of his death nears." *The Los Angeles Times*. (November, 2014). <http://www.latimes.com/local/california/la-me-rethinking-muir-20141113-story.html>. (Accessed January 9, 2016).

<sup>49</sup> Muir, John. "Journeys in the Wilderness: A John Muir Reader." *Birlinn*. (April 2013). Page 24

<sup>50</sup> Muir, John. (2013). Page 25.

Additionally, Muir addresses “Nature” as if it is a being within a design. However, man seems to be a deviant in this grand design.

So extravagant is Nature with her choicest treasures, spending plant beauty as she spends sunshine, pouring it forth into land and sea, garden, and desert. And so the beauty of lilies falls on angels and men, bears and squirrels, wolves and sheep, birds and bees, but as far as I have seen, man alone, and the animals he tames, destroy these gardens.<sup>51</sup>

Man is seen as a destructive threat towards “Nature”—which needs to be protected. Muir describes the national parks using religious terms; “temple” to describe the parks, and people destroying the parks as “temple-destroyers” who were ignorant of the “God of the mountains” and had only contempt for Nature.<sup>52</sup> It should be noted that John Muir was a Christian, which may have been the inspiration for the biblical language he used to describe the Sierra Nevada’s and Yosemite Park, but his religion was also a matter of controversy. He has been also called a pantheist and a Zen Buddhist.

John Muir was not wrong in believing that man is destructive as he lived in Yosemite Valley from 1868 to 1874 and saw the destruction caused by logging and sheep grazing as well as the impacts of the tourist industry.<sup>53</sup> He believed that every natural resource would be used to make money, which led him to conclude that complete and unquestionable protection of the National Parks was necessary for their survival. As noted, his legacy established the national park system, and as the first president of the Sierra Club he left behind a legion of people who shared his vision of conserving wilderness.

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<sup>51</sup> Muir, John. (2013) Page 274.

<sup>52</sup> Muir, John. (2013) Page 576.

<sup>53</sup> Muir, John. (2013) Page 574.

However, conservation is not always a boon for all people. In the 1880s the rapid decline of wildlife species due to increasing deforestation and urbanization led to some anxiety in the United States. Congress began passing acts to protect trees, encourage timber growth, and laying aside tracts of lands. Groups were formed such as the Appalachian Mountain Club and the American Forestry Association. The educated and nature-centric individuals of the 1880's came to an agreement that both nature and society needed to be managed to ensure a "traditional abundance" of natural resources. Conservationists though fell under several perspectives of nature and were differently motivated. Sportsmen and recreational hunters were the earliest conservation supporters. But, beyond just an appreciation for wildlife, there were also different and sometimes competing conceptions of nature and animals, which led to conflicts on what type of conservation was best.<sup>54</sup> In general, conservation benefited the urban middle class and the rural elites and disadvantaged the rural poor in the late nineteenth century. One particular group that suffered were the Native American tribes who continued living off the land. In one case, Ben Senowin, a Bannock Indian, and his hunting party were attacked by "twenty-seven white men" who killed and robbed members of his party.<sup>55</sup> One type of conservation favored state regulation of natural resources and management of public lands, which was enforced by national environmental legislation—these people came to be called environmentalists. This term "environmentalist" is specifically used because during the nineteenth century conservation was largely interested in hunting regulations. Of course there were also anti-environmentalists who were "broadly defined as those who oppose state regulation of natural resources and management of public lands."<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Warren, page 180

<sup>55</sup> Warren, pg 210

<sup>56</sup> Warren, page 182

Henry David Thoreau was a transcendentalist; he defined nature philosophically from what he could observe from nature and created his conclusions from his observations. His most influential work *Walden* details the need for separation from society in order to be closer to nature—and as a result closer to reality. He writes that one cannot be equally connected to people and nature, since “those qualities which bring you near the one estrange you from the other.”<sup>57</sup> Thus Thoreau reinforces the separation of human and nature. Furthermore, nature itself seems to be in complete equilibrium while humans seem unable to achieve this higher level of harmony, because human lives are filled with ordinances and directions left by predecessors as “old as Adam.”<sup>58</sup> Human life should not be predetermined because according to Thoreau, “Nature and human life are as various as our several constitutions. Who shall say what prospect life offers to another?”<sup>59</sup> The result of a human life can be highly variable and conclusions should be arrived at without the interference of pre-established schools of thought, religion, and philosophies. Thoreau proposes a stripping down of life’s interferences to the barest necessities in order to gain true knowledge. After all, Thoreau points out, “For the improvement of ages have had but little influence on the essential laws of man’s existence; as our skeletons, probably, are not to be distinguished from those of our ancestors.”<sup>60</sup> This means that the progress man has pursued and achieved has not changed the “essential laws of man’s existence” because our essential being is no different from the essential being of our ancestors.

Thoreau quotes Confucius, “To know that we know what we know, and that we do not know, and that we do not know what we do not know, that is true knowledge.”<sup>61</sup> Gaining true

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<sup>57</sup> Thoreau, D., Henry. “Journal” Vol 4. (April 1852). Page 435.

<sup>58</sup> Thoreau, David, Henry. “Walden”. *Open Road Media*, New York. (2014). eBook. Page 10.

<sup>59</sup> Thoreau, David, Henry. “Walden”. 2014. Page 11.

<sup>60</sup> Thoreau, David, Henry. “Walden”. 2014. Page 13.

<sup>61</sup> Thoreau, David, Henry. “Walden,” 2014. Page 12.

knowledge is like the practice of living life with the barest necessities in that true knowledge is pinpointing the known and unknown and accepting that there are things individuals don't know that they don't know.

It would be some advantage to live a primitive and frontier life, though in the midst of an outward civilization, if only to learn what are the gross necessities of life and what methods have been taken to obtain them; or even to look over the old day-books of the merchants, to see what it was that men most commonly bought at the stores, what they stored that is, what the grossest groceries.<sup>62</sup>

Thus living away from civilization allows one to see what the “essential laws” are because the primitive life allows one to determine the bare necessities of life, which Thoreau determines to be food, shelter, clothing, and fuel. With only these necessities,

Men esteem remote truth, in the outskirts of the system, behind the farthest star, before Adam and after the last man. In eternity there is indeed something true and sublime. But all these times and places and occasions are now and here. God himself culminates in the present moment, and we will never be more divine in the lapse of all the ages. And we are enabled to apprehend at all what is sublime and noble only by the perpetual instilling and drenching of the reality that surrounds us. The universe constantly and obediently answers to our conceptions; whether we travel fast or slow, the track is laid for us. Let us spend our lives in conceiving then.”<sup>63</sup>

Thoreau reiterates that knowledge can come from living in the “outskirts of the system,” and Thoreau believed that this knowledge could be revealed only “by the perpetual instilling and drenching of the reality that surrounds us.” Thus, the reality that surrounds individuals reveals truths of the world and one can spend their entire lives trying to conceive that truth. Thoreau

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<sup>62</sup> Thoreau, David, Henry. “Walden,” 2014. Page 13.

<sup>63</sup> Thoreau, David, Henry. “Walden,” 2014. Page 99.

goes further to describe nature as an experience that instills a spiritual awakening. Thus “Nature” is elevated to being integral to level of spiritual understanding. When taking a walk, he remarks:

This is a delicious evening, when the whole body is one sense, and imbibes delight through every pore. I go and come with a strange liberty in Nature, a part of herself. As I walk along the stony shore of the pond in my shirt-sleeves, though it is cool as well as cloudy and windy, and I see nothing special to attract me, all the elements are usually congenial to me.<sup>64</sup>

Thoreau describes nature with vague and nonspecific terms such as “strange liberty,” and sees himself connected to nature as “a part of herself.” Nature is elevated to the realm of the indescribable and inscrutable. But Thoreau welcomes Nature with joy and he states that “all the elements are usually congenial to me.”

“Nature” is often described in relation to something artificial or constructed—in other words, anthropogenic.<sup>65</sup> However, in Daoist terms, the shaping of the environment is done in a way that recognizes “Heaven’s nature,” as one finds in the phrase *guan tianxing*, which translates to “observing heaven’s nature”. Like Thoreau and Emerson, the Daoist observe nature in order to recognize heaven’s nature. More specifically, “observing heaven’s nature” refers to the speaker’s ability to remove all distractions from her mind, such as selfishness and pride. After focusing on the inherent nature of the world, Nature is not limited to the commonly described Western definition that places nature as the wild “other” outside of human control. Nature, here, becomes synonymous with the flow of the cosmos, and people train themselves to recognize the universe’s true shape and by doing so, achieve true happiness.

The heavens are lasting and the earth enduring.

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<sup>64</sup> Thoreau, David, Henry. “Walden”, 2014. Page 99.

<sup>65</sup> Daoism and Ecology, page vii

The reason the world is able to be lasting and enduring  
Is because it does not live for itself.  
Thus it is able to be long-lived.

It is on this model that the sages withdraw their persons  
from contention yet find themselves out in front,  
Put their own persons out of mind yet find themselves taken care of.  
Isn't it simply because they are unselfish that they can satisfy their own needs?<sup>66</sup>

This chapter reiterates the structure of the heavens and earth always being able to exist because the cosmos doesn't have an end and is not forcing itself into existence. Because the world exists not "for itself" and sages are expected to do the same. Sages are meant to emulate the world's natural process of inclusivity and impartiality. Thus, sages "put their own persons out of mind" and yet they are still able to be "taken care of" if their concerns assume the concerns of the natural processes. The assumed concerns of the natural world are still the concerns of the sage's life and find their needs still satisfied. Sages are thus like Thoreau and Emerson in that they understand the world's truth, and use this truth to assume an active role in this world. Thoreau is noted for his stance on civil disobedience and Emerson for his critique of President Van Buren's treatment of Cherokee Native Americans.

The naturalist Ralph Waldo Emerson is perhaps most remembered for being part of the so-called transcendental movement. His writings conclude that God was found in nature, but also combined his philosophical conclusions with scientific understandings.<sup>67</sup> Emerson and Thoreau agree that people should have the opportunity to reach their own insights of the world,

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<sup>66</sup> Laozi, "Dao de Jing." Page 86-87.

<sup>67</sup> Hall, Dewey, Dr. Page 59. "...Emerson from a theocentric perspective in which nature confirms the existence of God to a science-based view of the natural world."



Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe? Why should not we have a poetry and philosophy of insight and not of tradition, and a religion by revelation to us, and not the history of theirs?<sup>68</sup>

Like Thoreau, Emerson recognized that religions and philosophies too often dictate to individuals what they should think and how they should act. Instead individuals should have reach their own revelations and these revelations become the relationship individuals have with the universe. From these revelations there is no question that cannot be answered by understanding the world.

Undoubtedly we have no questions to ask which are unanswerable. We must trust the perfection of the creation so far, as to believe that whatever curiosity the order of things has awakened in our minds, the order of things can satisfy.”<sup>69</sup>

Emerson believes that because the world is a “perfection of creation”, the questions we have about the “order of things” can be answered by an awakened mind. Thus nature is a reflection of the world and is defined as follows: “Nature, in the common sense, refers to the essences unchanged by man; space, the air, the river, the leaf.”<sup>70</sup> Nature in this definition is more than the physical air, river, or leaf, but is the indescribable “essence” that remains tied to nature no matter the particular physical manifestation of nature. This “essence” strays from the ideas in the *Dao de Jing* and Thoreau because nature gains a specific indiscernible spirit. Emerson also employs science when answering this question, since “All science has one aim, namely, to find a

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<sup>68</sup> Emerson, W., Ralph. “Nature” Page 1.

<sup>69</sup> Emerson, W., Ralph. “Nature” Page 2.

<sup>70</sup> Emerson, W., Ralph. “Nature” Page 3.

theory of nature.”<sup>71</sup> Science, while often seen as a clinical and pedantic field of study, is for Emerson merely the pursuit of understanding nature.

Emerson often views nature from a Romantic perspective, as when he writes “The world thus exists to the soul to satisfy the desire of beauty. This element I call an ultimate end. No reason can be asked or given why the soul seeks beauty.”<sup>72</sup> But this “beauty” is not a superficial description of things—it is more profound, closer to the Romantic sublime. Emerson states, “Beauty, in its largest and profoundest sense, is one expression for the universe. God is the all-fair. Truth, and goodness, and beauty, are but different faces of the same All.”<sup>73</sup> Beauty is the manifestation of God’s mark on the world and is designated with “virtue”.<sup>74</sup> In addition to being virtuous, beauty is a relation to thought, “Beside the relation of things to virtue, they have a relation to thought. The intellect searches out the absolute order of things as they stand in the mind of God, and without the colors of affection.”<sup>75</sup> Beauty is a manifestation of God’s affection and thus individuals like Emerson can glean the “absolute order of things” by noticing objects of beauty without the prejudice of affection. Emerson differs from Daoists in this point because he seems to place the world in a hierarchy; however, what this hierarchy is based on is unknown, whereas Daoists see the world without hierarchy. Daoists view the world as a balance and that life can be lived spontaneously and naturally.

Emerson goes on to say that “The production of a work of art throws a light upon the mystery of humanity. A work of art is an abstract or epitome of the world. It is the

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<sup>71</sup> Emerson, W., Ralph. “Nature” Page 3.

<sup>72</sup> Emerson, W., Ralph. “Nature” Page 22

<sup>73</sup> Emerson, W., Ralph. “Nature” Page 22

<sup>74</sup> “Beauty is the mark God sets upon virtue.” Page 17 Emerson, W., Ralph. “Nature” Page 22.

<sup>75</sup> Emerson, W., Ralph. “Nature” Page 20.

result or expression of nature, in miniature.”<sup>76</sup> Art can be a small glimmer of some of life’s answers and is a capture expression of nature “in miniature”. In fact, the paintings of the Hudson River School likely reflect Emerson’s sentiment. The Hudson River School, American’s first “artistic fraternity”, emerged during the nineteenth century headed by the English painter Thomas Cole.<sup>77</sup> This School was marked by idealized naturalism and the theory of the Sublime in nature, as well as an appreciation for wilderness. In the 1830s, American literature was also beginning to acknowledge the theme of wilderness, as seen in James Fenimore Cooper’s “Leatherstocking” novels.



**“View from Mount Holyoke, Northampton, Massachusetts, after a Thunderstorm—The Oxbow” Thomas Cole (American, Lancashire 1801–1848 Catskill, New York). 1836. Medium: Oil on canvas. Classification: Painting. Dimensions: 51 1/2 x 76 in. (130.8 x 193 cm).**<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Emerson, W., Ralph. “Nature” Page 22.

<sup>77</sup> Avery, Kevin J. “The Hudson River School.” In Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–. (October 2004) [http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/hurs/hd\\_hurs.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/hurs/hd_hurs.htm)

<sup>78</sup> Cole, Thomas. *View from Mount Holyoke, Northampton, Massachusetts, after a Thunderstorm—The Oxbow*. Oil on Canvas. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

The above painting can be interpreted in several ways. Cole wanted to represent “a union of the picturesque, the sublime, and the magnificent.”<sup>79</sup> The painting juxtaposes the pastoral settlement across the river with the untamed wilderness and seems to suggest the potential of the American landscape and the future prospects of American expansion or “Manifest Destiny”. The wilderness is depicted with dark gloomy clouds looming in the distance that elicits feelings of fear for the wilderness. This is God’s nature which is untouched and untamed. The right side of the painting depicts the pastoral landscape that has been created by human power. One sees the farms and smoke billowing from various settlements, which starkly contrasts with the untamed landscape. The pastoral landscape is peaceful and the sun shines brightly on the land, giving it a glow. Cole seems to suggest that while the wilderness is God’s untamed nature, but there is a potential for it to be transformed into a “productive” landscape. Cole’s view of nature represented in the painting seems to emphasize the harmony that can be achieved by human cultivation and wilderness. However, this painting can potentially represent what Emerson means by art being a “snapshot” of nature’s truth. This painting though points out the variable roles that nature has played in American history. There is the utility on one side, the preservation of nature on the other side, but as a whole it can show harmony between the utility and preservation to be more like stewardship.

In the history of China and America, conceptions of nature are extremely complex. However, both cultures have manifested similar, overlapping ideas of utility, stewardship, and conservation. Classical Chinese conceptions of nature have been based

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<sup>79</sup> “View from Mount Holyoke, Northampton, Massachusetts, after a Thunderstorm—The Oxbow.” The Met. <http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/10497>. Accessed March, 15, 2016.

on an integrated cosmos or a system of regimented order in order to create a “good” society. Early American conceptions of nature were based on religious interpretations from the Bible, in particular Genesis, which have encouraged exploitation of nature; however, another interpretation focused on stewardship. The Romantic and transcendental movements elicited a strong conservationist reaction, which has been even more pronounced in China; however, there are slight glimmers of conservation even in the *Dao de Jing*. But, there is not a clear singular conservation movement in China’s environmental history.

The resulting conceptions of nature have, in turn, motivated human actions and led to movements of thought and practice. In America, the utilitarian view of nature was the original and most common concept of nature, and it is one that supported the westward expansion and industrial development of America. China’s literature has shown a diversity of approaches towards nature; however, the Confucian *Analects* prioritized the strict control of society, which has included a control of nature. As we have seen, Mencius does promote a sense of stewardship; however, in later Chinese history the ruling powers mostly fell on the side of utility, attempting to control and reshape nature for immediate human ends.

### **Chapter III – Modern Beliefs of Climate Change: Responsibility**

Disagreements over climate change occur because individuals adjust their ideas and practices according to their obligations, religious beliefs, morals, as well as their conception of the world and of others<sup>80</sup>. Definitions as well as evaluations of nature adjust according to these differences. The previous chapter analyzed the relationship between key elements of traditional American and Chinese thought on nature—ideas which have a direct or indirect influence on attitudes, actions, and even politics. This chapter addresses the relationship China and America share with nature in light of climate change discourse.

A question that is often raised when addressing human-induced climate change is who is responsible or to blame. The question of responsibility is guided by the belief systems present in America and China, which sets a basic expectation for how much responsibility should be taken for the world or even whether change can be affected by an individual. Certain frameworks of responsibility can create differences in climate change responses, which can be broadly categorized as individual and systematic responsibility. However, just as definitions of nature are fluid, the responsibility individuals or groups take for climate change can be equally fluid. Individual or personal responsibility refers to the fact that “the world we experience, including our experience of ourselves, do[es] not conform to what intuitively we would like it to be”.<sup>81</sup> This means that one’s inner and outer experience are not in line with the ideals one may hold and follow. Systematic responsibility is a “line of moral reasoning [which] leads quickly into

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<sup>80</sup> Hulme, Mike. “Why We Disagree about Climate Change: Understanding Controversy, Inaction, and Opportunity.” *Cambridge University Press*. New York. (2009). Page 155.

<sup>81</sup> Hulme, Mike. “Why We Disagree about Climate Change: Understanding Controversy, Inaction, and Opportunity.” *Cambridge University Press*. New York. (2009). Page 157.

consideration of the economic, social, and political structures within which individuals live their lives.”<sup>82</sup> These structural injustices can lead to the evils, sin, and moral failures an individual may experience. The state of nature is dependent on individual and systematic actions, thus definitions of nature are inherently tied to how much agency individuals have or could have towards nature. Climate change and global warming have complicated the definition of nature because the idea of climate change is so far displaced from the immediate concerns of most people. It is much easier to conceptualize nature in a landscape, than it is to conceptualize nature within a complex weather and climate system, which is not as obvious or as immediately expressive.

Modernity in the United States has been characterized by technological development, economic growth, material prosperity and urbanization. American modernity has been built on an industrial capitalistic system fueled by the extraction and use of fossil fuels. America, along with developed western countries, has brought about an unintended and accelerated human-induced global warming and thereby climate change. Since its 1979 economic reforms, the People’s Republic of China has opened up to foreign trade and given way to developing business sector, economic development, and industrialization, and as a result is steadily catching up to the prosperity of America.<sup>83</sup> The result of these improvements have been higher living standards, decreased poverty, and longer life expectancies; however, China is still classified as a “developing county” by the United Nations and will remain a “developing country” until it raises its economic status, standard of living, and moves beyond industrialization. It is a matter of

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<sup>82</sup> Hulme, Mike. “Why We Disagree about Climate Change: Understanding Controversy, Inaction, and Opportunity.” (2009). Page 159.

<sup>83</sup> Leiserowitz, Anthony A. and Liu, John Chung-En. “From Red to Green: Environmental Attitudes and Behavior in Urban China.” *Environmental Magazine*, 51:4. (2009): 32-46.

circumstances that have classified China as a developing country; nevertheless, the implication of being classified as such places China in disadvantageous position politically and economically.

Industrialization has played a crucial role in both American and China; however, industrialization in both of these cases is and was fueled by a burning of fossil fuels and the resulting release of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>). Burning these fossil fuels has contributed to human-induced global warming and climate change. According to the 2015 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, some reasons for concern regarding climate change include unique ecosystems and cultures being at risk for climate change, extreme weather events, risks generally being concentrated on disadvantaged, and large-scale singular events such as a large and irreversible sea level rise and a likely near-complete loss of the Greenland ice sheet if global temperatures rise by around 3.5 °C. These are only some of the likely events that will occur if global temperatures rise anywhere from 1 °C to 3 °C. By the year 2100, the global temperature and the associated changes will be irreversible for centuries even if global CO<sub>2</sub> levels cease increasing.<sup>84</sup> The IPCC Synthesis Report is a collaborative report produced by various governments and supporting scientists. Participating IPCC members include Germany, India, USA, and China. The IPCC states that they are “now 95 percent certain that humans are the main cause of current global warming. In addition, the SYR finds that the more human activities disrupt the climate, the greater the risks of severe, pervasive and irreversible impacts for people and ecosystems, and long-lasting changes in all components of the climate system.”<sup>85</sup> Halting global warming and climate change requires global temperatures to decrease 2 °C below pre-industrial levels.

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<sup>84</sup> IPCC, 2014: Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [Core Writing Team, R.K. Pachauri and L.A. Meyer (eds.)]. IPCC, Geneva, Switzerland. Page 72-74.

<sup>85</sup> IPCC, 2014: Page V



The consequences of climate change are dire. It seems obvious that the cause of climate change is human related, and the path to stopping global warming must also be human motivated. However, before taking action to change “business as usual” as the IPCC report puts it, there are tremendous roadblocks. The most fundamental being how “global warming” and “climate change” are understood.

But the existence of global warming and climate change have been acknowledged for years; the first ICC report released in 1995 concluded that human activities were the cause of global warming. By 2007, the IPCC concluded that global warming was “unequivocal”.<sup>86</sup> Scientists around the world as well as major scientific organizations have agreed to the conclusions in the IPCC. The issue of climate change has become increasingly polarized politically and misconstrued due to media misinformation and money from fossil fuel companies. This phenomenon is described in the book *Merchants of Doubt* by Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway, which details the effect of a campaign of disinformation spread by a small group of scientists and scientific advisers who were motivated by political and industrial ties to mislead the public about climate change. The IPCC report states that global warming is unequivocally real. Despite the scientific consensus that global warming is occurring, the public still remains uncertain as to whether global warming is a certain occurrence. From 2008 to 2010, the statistic of Americans who think “that global warming is happening” dropped from 71 percent to 57 percent.<sup>87</sup> This uncertainty is emphasized when the question “How sure are you that global warming is happening” is asked. As of 2010, 24 percent say they are “extremely sure”

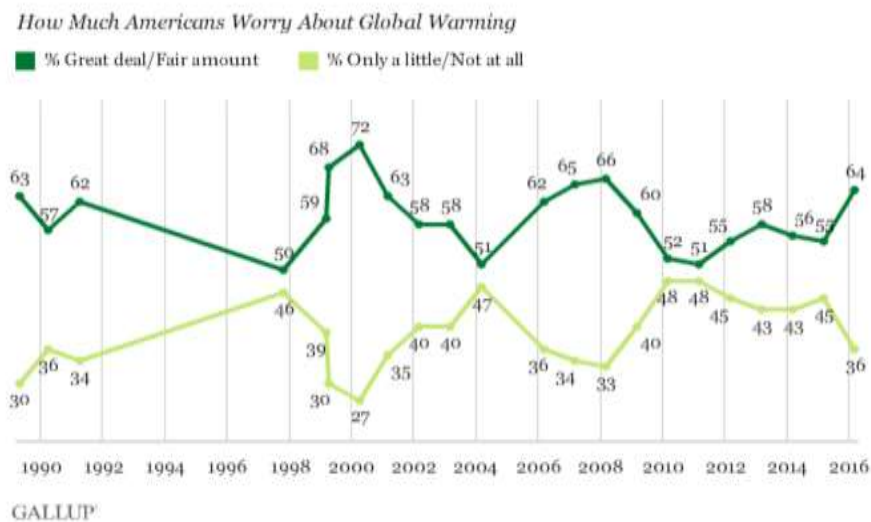
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<sup>86</sup> Conway, Erik M. and Oreskes, Naomi. “Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming.” *Bloomsbury Press*: New York. (2009). Page 169.

<sup>87</sup> Leiserowitz, A., Maibach, E., & Roser-Renouf, C. “Climate change in the American Mind: Americans’ global warming beliefs and attitudes in January 2010.” Yale University and George Mason University. New Haven, CT: Yale Project on Climate Change. (2010). Page 2.

35 percent say they are “very sure”, 37 percent say they are somewhat sure, and 5 percent say they are not at all sure. There is a general consensus that global warming may be happening, but there is not full confidence that global warming is surely happening.

But according to a recent Gallup poll, global warming is of major concern. In 2016, 64 percent of Americans worry about global warming a “great deal or a fair amount” and only 36 percent of Americans worry about global warming a little or not at all. This concern has hit a high where about 55 percent of Americans are concerned a great deal or fair amount regarding global warming.



**Figure 1. How much do Americans Worry about Global Warming from 1990 to 2016. Source: Gallup. “U.S. Concern About Global Warming at Eight-Year High.” (2016).**

The factors which have the most influence on “the public perception of threat associated with climate change” are “elite cues” and advocacy groups.<sup>88</sup> The elite cues refer to political or

<sup>88</sup> Brulle, Robert J., Carmichael, Jason, and Jenkins, Craig J. “Shifting public opinion on climate change: an empirical assessment of factors influencing concern over climate change in the US, 2002-2010.” *Climatic Change*. (Feb 2012): 114. (Page 169).

party identifications and the ideologies that are attached to such identifications. The elites of these groups then influence the media ‘to shape aggregate changes in racial attitudes’ and these ideologies overrule scientific information.<sup>89</sup> Figure 1 shows that there was an increase in public concern about global warming from 2006-2008. This can be explained by a period of political cohesion between Republican and Democratic parties in favor of climate change action. This was coupled by the release of the documentary, *An Inconvenient Truth*, in 2006. However, after 2007, this political cohesion would cease and, starting in 2008, Republicans began voting for anti-environmental policies.<sup>90</sup> Americans conceptualize the threat of climate change from people in political power who then influence the media; thus, Americans have little chance to form their own opinions of climate change outside of the influence of politics. This lack of independent opinion is coupled with a lack of agency.

There is strong support environmental action by the government which focus on generating work for outside entities but not for individuals. For example, 65 percent of individuals believe that there should be major research efforts to develop new energy resources. Additionally, 60 percent of Americans believe that government office buildings should begin to use renewable energy sources. In contrast, there is less support for efforts that involve charging more for things, such as imposing surcharges on utilities, which are meant to encourage limited use of resources. These efforts are likely opposed due to the perception of a directly incurred change which is in contrast to efforts like research which do not incur a direct charge from Americans but are instead funded taxation which is perceived as an indirect charge. According to the results of this Gallup poll, there is a tendency for Americans to show higher support of efforts from the government or private research rather than direct regulation, restrictions, or increased

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<sup>89</sup> Bulle et. al. Page 8.

<sup>90</sup> Bulle et. al. Page 15-16.

charges to resources. However, it should be noted that more research is not necessary for action to be taken. This indicates a general support for the mitigation of global warming, but less of an independent willingness to reduce global warming.

	Should be doing	Should not be doing
2007 Mar 23-25	%	%
Starting major research effort to develop new energy sources	65	33
Requiring government office buildings to use renewable energy sources	60	38
Requiring surcharge on utility bills when energy use limits exceeded	46	52
Banning vehicles that do not average at least 30 miles per gallon	44	55
Imposing tough restrictions on U.S. industries and utilities	38	58
Setting land-use policies to discourage suburban sprawl	36	60

**Figure 2. Individual Answer to A Particular Step One Should or Should Not Be Doing to Reduce Global Warming. Source: Gallup. “Americans Assess What They Can Do to Reduce Global Warming.” (2007).**

A poll conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2015 shows a tendency for those who identify as a racial minority to identify human activity as the cause for global warming: Black Protestants (56 percent), Hispanic Catholics (77 percent), and non-Catholic Hispanics (70 percent). The only exception to this tendency is non-religiously affiliated individuals (64 percent) with more individuals that believe human activity is the reason behind climate change. This is in contrast to the low percentages of white Evangelicals (28 percent), white Mainline Protestants (41 percent), and white Catholics (45 percent)—who are less likely to believe human activity is the reason behind global warming. As previously stated the factors that affect these

statistics are to political affiliation and preferred sources of media from which these members of the public receive information.

**More Hispanic Catholics, Unaffiliated Say Earth Is Warming Due to Human Activity**

*% of U.S. adults in each group who say the Earth is getting warmer because of human activity/natural patterns in the atmosphere/or that there is no solid evidence that the Earth is getting warmer*

	<b>Human activity</b>	<b>Natural patterns</b>	<b>No solid evidence</b>	<b>Don't know</b>	
	%	%	%	%	
U.S. adults	50	23	25	2	=100
<b>Religious affiliation</b>					
NET Protestant	40	30	28	1	=100
White evangelical	28	33	37	1	=100
White mainline	41	24	33	2	=100
Black Protestant*	56	24	20	0	=100
NET Catholic	45	19	34	1	=100
White Catholic	45	19	34	2	=100
Hispanic Catholic*	77	15	8	0	=100
NET Unaffiliated	64	13	20	3	=100
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>					
White non-Hispanic	44	22	31	3	=100
Black non-Hispanic	56	26	17	*	=100
Hispanic	70	19	11	*	=100
<b>Attend worship services</b>					
Weekly or more	42	28	28	2	=100
Less than weekly	53	21	24	3	=100

Source: Survey conducted Aug. 15-25, 2014. Q20. Nested figures may not add to subtotals due to rounding. Those saying don't know are not shown. Whites and blacks include only non-Hispanics; Hispanics are of any race. \*N for black Protestants=93; for Hispanic Catholics=94.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

**Figure 3. Respondents are asked to pick three options to best describe their view of why the earth is warming—human activity, natural patterns, no solid evidence, or don't know. Source: Pew Research Center. "Religion and Views on Climate and Energy Issues". (2015).**

There is a rift in American Christian religious communities over whether humans are culpable for global warming. The reason for this disagreement is due to the influence of political affiliations and ideologies overruling religious identities. However, the political conflicts can be reconciled through political mobilization and activism.<sup>91</sup> Which can tie the relationships

<sup>91</sup> Brulle et. al. Page 18.

individuals have nature, whether it be ecological or religiously based, as an argument for activism.

According to the passages of Genesis discussed above, human beings have dominion over nature as evidenced by God's commandment that they work the land so that it may flourish. However, this relationship is only available to those who are righteous and faithful; otherwise, God can choose to smite the earth and wash away all existence as he chose to do when Noah was alive. Thus, humans are culpable to punishment if they choose to leave the expected deeds set by God to go unfulfilled. Because climate change can be read as a punishment, it is possible climate change can be attributed to God's actions.

The expectation of correct course of actions is set by *Genesis*, which provides glimpses of an awareness of resource conservation in regards to pastoralism. The story of Lot and Abraham describes this awareness.

Lot, who was traveling with Abraham, also had flocks, herds, and tends. But the land could not support their living together, because their possessions were too great for them to remain together. Moreover, quarreling arose between Abraham's and Lot's herdsmen.... Abraham said to Lot, "Please let's not have quarreling between me and you, or between my herds men and yours, since we're kinsmen. Isn't the whole land there in front of you? Please separate from me—if you go to the left, I will go to the right; if you go to the right, I will go to the left"<sup>92</sup>

Lot and Abraham are aware of the limits of the earth and act accordingly as stewards of the earth. According to Genesis, humans are responsible for their individual actions and can choose to act in a peaceful and righteous manner; however, the result of mistrust will be retribution set according to how God sees fit. The result is that climate change is merely the appropriate

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<sup>92</sup> The Complete Jewish Bible, Genesis 13: 5-9.

response of God according to the circumstances because while God promised never to send another flood, he did set an expectation for humans to operate in a mutually beneficial relationship with the earth. It should be noted that this is also the functional equivalent of the Mandate of Heaven, where heaven's unrest is being signaled by nature's unrest. Humans had to strike the balance between being "rulers" of the fish, birds, and living creatures which crawl on the earth and cultivators of the land. Failure to do so could be seen as being disobedient towards God; thus, the individual can be culpable for climate change if one has ignored God's wishes.

Instead, according to Genesis, the relationship of humans to nature is one that is reciprocal and if not dutifully reciprocated, the result can be punishment due God's displeasure over human actions. Thus, climate change is the rightful punishment incurred by God. This sentiment has been affirmed recently in Pope Francis's May 2015 encyclical letter, *Laudato Si'*, which rejects the notion that humans are masters of the earth and are given mastery over every creature. Pope Francis alludes to Genesis: "We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. Gen 2:7)" and are therefore made of the earth itself and are part of the earth. Pope Francis goes on to state: "The harmony between the Creator, humanity and creation as a whole was disrupted by our presuming to take the place of God and refusing to acknowledge our creaturely limitations."<sup>93</sup> The steward relationship humans are meant to have with the earth has distorted into a conflict between humans and non-human creatures. Thus, according to Pope Francis's interpretation of Genesis, humans are a part of the earth and should treat the earth as a part of themselves.

However, Pope Francis's correction to the notion that humans are given dominion and mastery over the earth has come during the post-industrial era of America. The original notion of

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<sup>93</sup> Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*

dominion gave the first permissions to early North American settlers to exploit and commodify nature, giving way to ideas of Manifest Destiny, fervent cultivation of land by slave owners and twentieth century industrialization. The overall history of America has shown that nature has largely taken the role as a utility, which was first permitted by the interpretation that humans hold dominion over the earth. However, this view of utility, while effective for the sake of industrialization in the short term, is not effective for long-term utility. If one expects to extract the most from a resource, then that resource needs to be managed for the long term. This awareness is evident in the story of Lot and Abraham when they consider the land's capacity to support two flocks of sheep. According to *Genesis*, the domination of nature for its utility is transformed into one of reciprocity. Thus, the responsibility for the actions that have led to climate change and global warming, lies with the people and aligns with something more like a stewardship approach to human relations with nature.

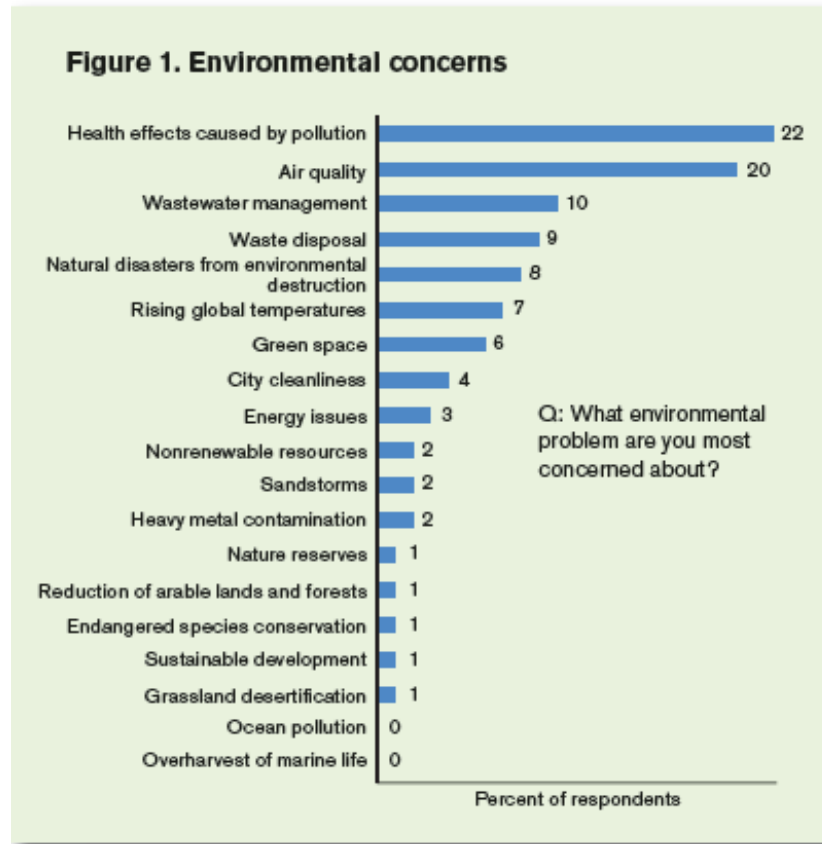
To date, there has been little research on the attitudes and behaviors towards climate change among citizens of the People's Republic of China. The studies of Chinese attitudes towards the environment and global warming have focused on urban areas, where residents tend to have better education, higher incomes, and more exposure to mass media, as well as more direct contact with evident environmental degradation. In 2007, the Horizon Research Consultancy Group, China conducted a survey in ten major cities intended to represent a diverse geographic and economic spectrum.<sup>94</sup> The first question asked by the group was "What environmental problem are you most concerned with?" Respondents selected "human effects caused by pollution" as most concerning (22 percent), followed by concerns over air quality (20

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<sup>94</sup> The ten cities were: Beijing, Chengdu, Dalian, Guangzhou, Jinan, Shanghai, Shenyang, Wuhan, Xiamen, and Xian



percent), while only 7 percent of respondents believed global warming was the environmental problem of primary concern.

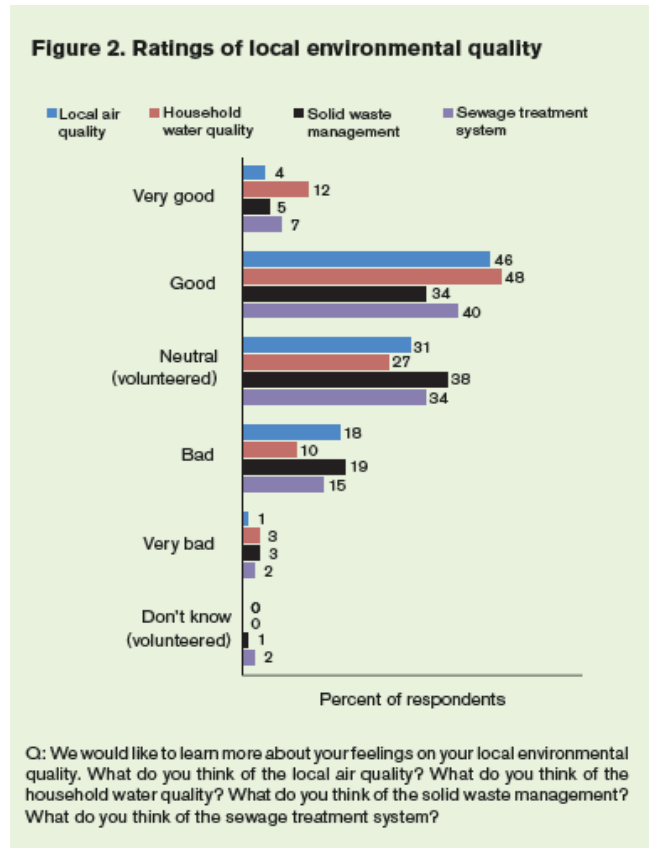


**Figure 4. A survey of the question: What environmental problem are you most concerned about?**  
**Source: Horizon Research Consultancy Group. “2007 China General Public Environmental Survey”. (2007).**

Concerns were very low with respect to nature reserves, deforestation, desertification, species conservation, and ocean pollution (5 percent in total).

When ranking the quality of the local environment including air and water quality, waste management, and sewage treatment, 50 percent of individuals said air quality was good to very good, 60 percent rated water quality as good to very good, and 47 percent rated local sewage

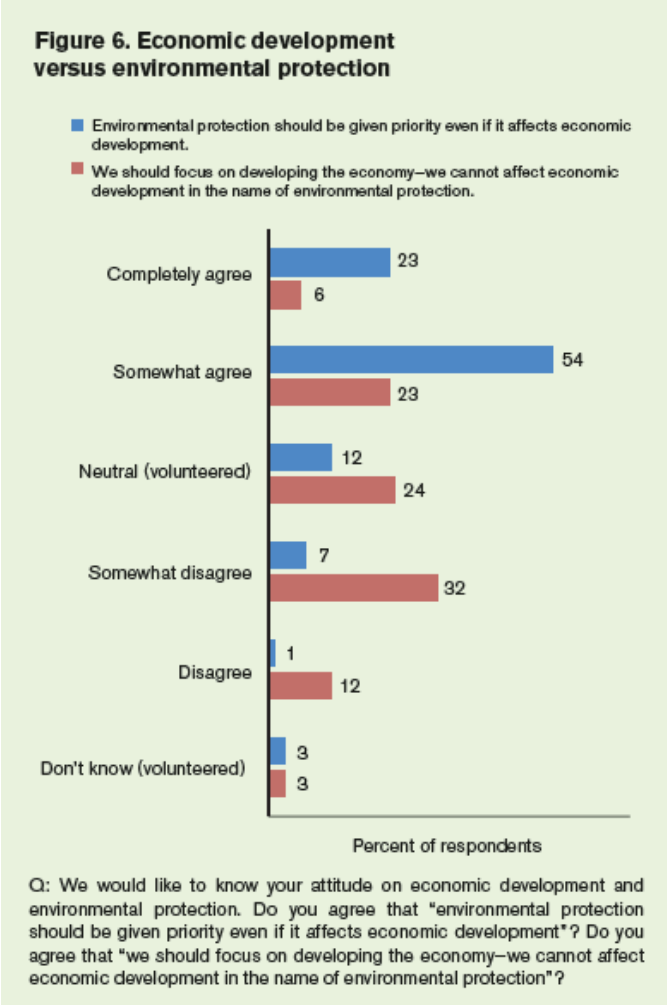
treatment as good to very good (figure 4). In general, a plurality of individuals ranked their local environmental quality as good.



**Figure 5: Survey questions: We would like to learn more about your feelings on your local environmental quality. What do you think of the local air quality? What do you think of the household water quality? What do you think of the solid waste management? What do you think of the sewage treatment system? Source: Horizon Research Consultancy Group, “2007 China General Public Environmental Survey”. (2007).**

When asked whether individuals agreed that “environmental protection should be given priority even if it affects economic development?” or do you agree “we should focus on developing the economy—we cannot affect economic development in the name of environmental protection?” 77 percent of respondents agreed that environmental protection should be given priority event if it affects economic development, whereas 29 percent of respondents disagreed and instead believed that economic development should not be affected in

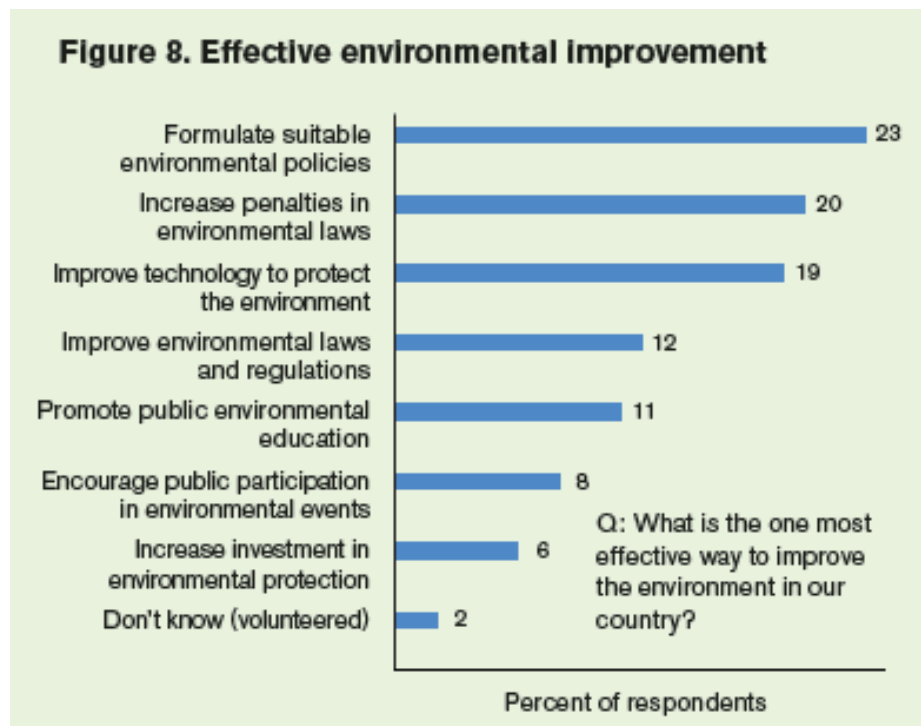
the name of environmental protection (figure 6). Thus, most respondents agreed that environmental protection was more important even if it affected economic development.



**Figure 6. Survey questions: We would like to know your attitude on economic development and environmental protection. Do you agree that “environmental protection should be given priority even if it affects economic development”? Do you agree that “we should focus on developing the economy—we cannot affect economic development in the name of environmental protection?”** Source: Horizon Research Consultancy Group. “2007 China General Public Environmental Survey”. (2007).

Additionally, these surveys indicate that urban Chinese believe the “most effective way to improve the environment” is to a) formulate suitable environmental policies (23 percent), b)

increase penalties for breaking environmental laws (20 percent), c) improve technology (19 percent), and d) improve environmental laws and regulations (12 percent) (figure 5).



**Figure 7. Survey question: What is the one most effective way to improve the environment in our country? Source: Horizon Research Consultancy Group. “2007 China General Public Environmental Survey”. (2007).**

The results of this poll show that many urban Chinese believe that the most effective way to improve the environment is through top-down government policies whereas grassroots activities such as environmental education and public participation are not considered effective. This is part of the Chinese cultural tradition of reliance on public leaders and intellectuals. According to this survey, environmental concern is real, but specific concerns about global warming are on the periphery. This survey implies that the preferred method of addressing these concerns is displaced from individuals and placed upon the government. There seems to be a lack of motivation among the public in China and America and a lack of perceived agency addressing global warming and climate change. In America, this lack of motivation may be due

to the existence of climate denial while in China, this may be due to the public's reliance on the communist government to enact large sweeping changes.

During the China's Cultural Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, much of the teachings of Confucius and Confucianism were deemed old-fashioned and irrelevant by Mao Zedong and the Communist Party. However, since the 1990s, Confucianism has faced somewhat of a resurgence, with the Party leading the way. In *The Analects*, Confucius showed he was a supporter of ritual, structure, and order within the government, which is exactly what the Communist government is attempting to capitalize on.<sup>95</sup> Past President Hu Jintao quoted *The Analects* to "explain his vision of a harmonious society in which an enlightened elite rule on the behalf of the masses."<sup>96</sup> The current president, Xi Jinping, has been working under a slogan titled the "China Dream" which is supposed to be about building a stronger nation and military.<sup>97</sup> In regards to the stronger nation component, the Party aspires to establish a new form of legitimacy, and Confucius is a convenient source of legitimacy that can appeal to a wide range of party members. Ironically, the legitimacy the People's Republic of China seeks seems to echo the legitimacy sought by Zhou leaders who justified their reign via the Mandate of Heaven. Perhaps things have come full circle and Confucian ideals will be the legitimacy needed to strengthen the nation's support and national identity. However, in *The Analects*, this legitimacy is subject to question and change if the society proves to be imperfect. In terms of global warming, there are already murmurs of society's desire for the government to step in and address issues related to global warming;

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<sup>95</sup> Worrall, Simon. "Why is Confucius Still Relevant Today? His Sound Bites Hold Up." National Geographic. (March 2015). <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2015/03/150325-confucius-china-asia-philosophy-communist-party-ngbooktalk/>.

<sup>96</sup> Watts, Jonathan. "China's president borrows from Confucius." The Guardian. <http://www.theguardian.com/guardianweekly/story/0,,1742975,00.html>.

<sup>97</sup> Xi, Jinping. "Full Transcript: Interview With Chinese President Xi Jinping." The Wall Street Journal. (Sept. 2015). <http://www.wsj.com/articles/full-transcript-interview-with-chinese-president-xi-jinping-1442894700>.

however, these seem currently limited to issues of immediate concern such as air and water pollution. However, the government has been heavily investing in clean energy.<sup>98</sup>

Confucius was concerned with shaping human relationships so that society would produce individuals of moral “goodness”. More specifically, *The Analects* emphasizes shaping one’s environment for the sake of improving the circumstances that will bring about the cultivation of goodness. In that circumstance, the cultivation of society is more important than the cultivation of the environment, but they are reciprocal and interdependent. As noted above, the state of “natural being” for Confucius was not the ultimate form of being, but was unsophisticated and required culturing. However, the natural progression of this idea would be that if the environment is threatened enough, it may interfere with the cultivation of the ultimate goodness. Thus Confucius does place some value in the existence of the “natural”.

The Master said, The Way makes no progress. I shall get upon a raft and float out to sea.

I am sure Yu would come with me. Tzu-lu on hearing of this was in high spirits. The Master said, That is Yu indeed! He sets far too much store by feats of physical daring. It seems as though I should never get hold of the right sort of people.<sup>99</sup>

At this point of time in *The Analects*, Confucius is frustrated with the path of society, which has ceased following the Way and seems to be making “no progress”. Thus, Confucius escapes to sea and seeks a disciple to follow him; however, Confucius even seems frustrated by his disciple, Yu, who places much more value on the physical feat of drifting off to sea than recognizing the inherent value of separating oneself from society and plunging into the “natural

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<sup>98</sup> Bloomberg News. “By the Numbers: China’s Clean Energy Investments Show Big Strides.” Bloomberg. (Nov 2015). <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-11-02/by-the-numbers-china-s-clean-energy-investments-show-big-strides>.

<sup>99</sup> Confucius, *Analects*: Book V;6: Page 108

world” that the sea represents. Throughout the text, Confucius references finding value in the “barbarians” that exist outside of the civilized society that Confucius has held so highly as being the pathway to goodness. “The Master said, The barbarians of the East and North have retained their princes. They are not in such a state of decay as we in China.”<sup>100</sup> Confucius proposes settling among barbarians, an act often described with the following maxim: “When the Emperor no longer functions, learning must be sought among the Four Barbarians, north, west, east, and south.” Thus, once again, when society has failed to live up to expectations, a return to nature is required where more learning can be done.

When trying to connect these values to a responsibility to addressing climate change, we are left in a bit of an ambiguous position. Confucius would only value addressing climate change if it contributed to the furthering of cultivating a society’s “goodness.” However, Confucius acknowledges that society is fallible and thus a “return” to the primal or natural state of man is necessary when searching for knowledge or methods to cultivating a “good” society. Thus, for the sake of furthering the cultivation of goodness, addressing the climate (via “returning to nature”) is a necessary act during times of social “failure”. Thus, individuals and social groups can be expected to take some responsibility. However, even Confucius seems to acknowledge that society can be imperfect, and ultimately decisions must be made on an individual level when pursuing goodness if society fails to promote the proper environment. In this case, if environmental conditions continue to degrade in China, according to *The Analects* individuals can (and perhaps should) separate from society. This separating from society additionally aligns with the expectations set by the Mandate of Heaven which gives individuals the right to reject the government that fails to protect its citizens. During the Mandate of Heaven’s conception, the

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<sup>100</sup> Confucius, *Analects*, Book 3:5, Page 95.

weather and climate was not privy to human control, but climate change and global warming can be blamed directly on human influence. Thus, the both the Mandate of Heaven and *The Analects* support the right to separate from society. The Communist Government and President Xi seem cognizant of this possibility and it would seem only appropriate to heed the teachings of Confucius if they are truly attempting to rebuild a Chinese nationalism.

In contrast to Confucianism, the *Dao de Jing* treats the world as a spontaneous or self-soing creation that finds completion within its own processes. While the teachings of the *Dao de Jing* are not integrated into the message of the current Chinese government, its concepts are still rooted within Chinese thought.

The heavens are lasting and the earth enduring.  
The reason the world is able to be lasting and enduring  
Is because it does not live for itself.  
Thus it is able to be long-lived.<sup>101</sup>

This passage describes the limits of the earth as everlasting because the world is merely a reflection of the processes that occur on the earth, thus there is not ultimate or pristine version of the earth and there is no “ideal earth” to strive towards. Instead, the world is described as a moderation of balance and any excess or extremes occurrences must be brought back to moderation.

It is important to note that the efforts to achieve this natural state require the efforts of learned Daoists and sages who understand the world’s natural state to help the world flourish to its fullest extent. Thus, the *Dao de Jing* requires some action on the part of individuals who understand the form of the universe and can act accordingly to encourage the flourishing of the

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<sup>101</sup> Laozi, *Dao de Jing*, Chapter 7, Page 86.



universe. According to these ideas, climate change would be likely classified as an unnatural state of the world and the *Dao de Jing* would argue that some responsibility should be taken to address and fix the trajectory of the world. Thus, responsibility according to the *Dao de Jing* can be placed on the individual to act so that the world remain balanced. However, the question of systematic responsibility for climate change remains. According to the *Dao de Jing*'s description of the universe, the way the world's processes interact are all part of the singularity and the way that the world is meant to act and the systematic parts that have caused climate change are a part of this system; and yet there is an expectation that the world is not a perfect system. Therefore, the *Dao de Jing* places responsibility in individuals when creating change. Ultimately, while the system can or should take responsibility for climate change, it is not a concern because an individual can effectively take responsibility to right the state of the world. Despite the value of the *Dao de Jing*, unlike Confucius teachings, the *Dao de Jing* being a response to Confucius teachings is not valued in China on a national level; however, it still remains in existence; albeit on the margins of society such as the countryside.<sup>102</sup>

Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson seems to follow a similar sentiment as the *Dao de Jing*. Thoreau and Emerson are classified as conservationists because to them nature is held with an aesthetic value that should be appreciated and understood; however, there it is unclear at what level of direct interaction and change Thoreau and Emerson would implement. For one, nature is seen as a representation of the sublime and the sublime is by definition unfathomable and incomprehensible. Due to this inability, it seems doubtful whether Thoreau and Emerson would have confidence in knowing what to do to changing how we conceive nature, and therefore becoming natural. This seems contradictory as specifically Emerson seeks

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<sup>102</sup> Johnson, Ian. "The Rise of the Tao." *The New York Times Magazine*. (Nov. 2010).

to better understand the essential laws of existence and their understandings of these essential laws would seem to make them fit to determine the correct course of climate change actions.

However, Thoreau and Emerson both exhibit a tendency to separate themselves from society. Systematic responsibility states that Thoreau and Emerson would blame society for climate change and that seems accurate. Thoreau in *Walden* and his chapter “Solitude” contrasts the “society of Nature” and the society of his neighbors.

In the midst of a gentle rain while these thoughts prevailed, I was suddenly sensible of such sweet and beneficent society in Nature, in the very pattering of the drops, and in every sound and sight around my house, an infinite and unaccountable friendliness all at once like an atmosphere sustaining me, as made the fancied advantages of human neighborhood insignificant, and I have never thought of them since.”<sup>103</sup>

Thoreau describes the society of Nature as “sweet and beneficent” and this is in contrast to the “human neighborhood” which is called insignificant when compared to the company of Nature. It seems that Thoreau would not care very much about what occurs within his neighborhood and places higher importance in Nature. Thoreau sees the human neighborhood as insignificant because there is higher understanding that can be gleaned from Nature. Thoreau takes personal responsibility to gain a higher understanding of the world, but he seems to have little confidence that his neighbors pursue the same praces. Emerson expresses that one needs “to go into solitude” and retire from society to understand the universe. Both Thoreau and Emerson seem to place more stake in personal responsibility than systematic responsibility as there is a deliberate rejection of society being a positive influence intellectually. Instead, Thoreau and Emerson exhibit their

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<sup>103</sup> Thoreau, David, Henry. “Walden”. 2014. Page 133-134.

commitment to personal responsibility in their political activism taking the form of independent action against government policies. It would seem that Thoreau and Emerson as Romantic conservationists would expect individual responsibility to be the more effective course of action, as opposed to relying on systematic responsibility to improve the circumstances affecting climate change.

Another conservationist, John Muir, represents someone who takes an individual responsibility for preserving portions of the country's natural beauty; however, he implements this preservation by relying on structures and systems. Muir thus uses systematic responsibility for nation's reserves to better protect these areas. Muir is perhaps an example for how individuals can act towards climate change by taking personal responsibility for parts of the world and leveraging that motivation to place systematic responsibility on influential individuals. However, the current impact of Muir's work in combination with the relatively individually focused actions of Emerson and Thoreau characterize the current status of conservation work in America. Much of the conservation work in America is not the focus of the large decision making body of America (i.e. Congress) and instead has been concentrated in non-profits and special interest groups. These groups include the Earthjustice, the National Wildlife Federation, and the Sierra Club, established by Muir himself. The United States Environmental Protection Agency is one government entity dedicated to conservation; however, their efforts, laws, and attempts at enforcement have been ignored and overturned by Congress.

The efforts of conservation have been fairly niche and have focused on areas such as protecting national parks from legislation intended to weaken their protections and open them up to resource extraction, maintaining the "endangered" or "critically endangered" status of species in need of conservation, protecting the health of the waterways, and so on. Many of these groups

have only recently begun to focus on climate change and working towards solutions to mitigate global warming. But ultimately, the victories of these conservation groups have been in the smaller niche issues, which naturally are easier to address than something as expansive as global warming. True conservation, which is preserving natural resources completely for their aesthetic utility or their sublime quality has moved towards the fringes of mainstream concern. Current climate change discourse focuses on solutions, innovation, or technology while ideas of “preservation” are reserved for idealistic figures such as Thoreau, Emerson, and Muir. It is not that the “conservation” ideal of pristine and sublime nature no longer exists, as evidenced by the existence of interest groups and the numerous number of tourists who engage in outdoor activities and visit national parks. However, within the context of climate change, the conservation view of nature has little clout in a period in which economic utility is more important than aesthetic utility.

However, the amount pull that conservation has is complicated when looking at China’s “conservation” efforts, which are closely aligned with central government efforts. Work being done in China has included protecting the ecosystem of specific charismatic megafauna such as the Yunnan golden monkey and the giant panda. Other future efforts have included assessing the Yangtze River Basin, creating national parks and 32 priority conservation areas.<sup>104</sup>

Looking at giant pandas as a case study of China’s conservation, it is similar to the conservation efforts seen in America. The panda, which has become “symbolic of progress in conservation and research,”<sup>105</sup> is an interesting case study because it has been capable of garnering frenzied emotion in China as well as overseas. The panda have “acquired a reputation

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<sup>104</sup> “China: making big plans. The plan promises to guide conservation for years to come.” The Nature Conservancy. <http://www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/asiaandthepacific/china/explore/making-big-plans.xml>

<sup>105</sup> Baragona, Karen and Lindburg, Donald G. “Giant pandas: biology and conservation.” University of California Press. Berkeley. 2004. Page 2.

as being difficult to breed in captivity and to keep alive...<sup>106</sup> However, the panda has received a high level of support in terms of research grants, but also policies dedicated to conserving this “unique biotic heritage”.<sup>107</sup>

Fu Ma, China’s Vice Director of the State Forestry Administration and Vice President of the China Wildlife Conservation Association, gave a key note address during the 2000 International Symposium on the Giant Panda and the language used to describe the giant panda seems to echo the romantic language Thoreau and Emerson employ when they describe “nature”. Ma states, “The giant panda, a beautiful, affable, and docile creature, is an invaluable heritage, which Nature has left to us human beings.”<sup>108</sup> Ma places human beings outside of the existence of Nature and implies that human beings should be grateful for what Nature gifts us. The panda is described as “a darling of the world” and has become a symbol of China as “an ambassador”. The pandas is preservation in this manner matches the aesthetic utility which defines conservation. Additionally, the panda is an effective political tool to create preliminary conservation policies and expanded research efforts for the protection of species. However, the impact these conservation efforts have had on climate change is none.

The conservation efforts in China have the potential to appeal to the individual and systematic responsibility for climate change. The panda for instance appeals to the individual national identity of the Chinese citizens, and appeals to the national government as a political tool and a symbol of nationalism. Individual and systematic responsibility are integrated to preserve a single species that is aesthetically appealing. However, these efforts have a limited focus which place more value on specific parts of nature. If the view of nature is expanded to

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<sup>106</sup> Baragona, Karen and Lindburg, Donald G. 2004. Page 2.

<sup>107</sup> Baragona, Karen and Lindburg, Donald G. 2004. Page 4.

<sup>108</sup> Ma, Fu. “Keynote Address.” 2000 International Symposium on the Giant Panda. San Diego, California. 2000. Keynote.

that value all parts of the nature, then climate change efforts would be more effectively promoted as stewardship rather than simple conservation. That is not to say that conservation has no value. Conservation can preserve cherry-picked sections of nature; however, these efforts would be unsustainable when climate change irreversibly changes global temperatures. Thus, a more expansive vision which sees nature as integrated would more effectively preserve species such as the panda and vulnerable ecosystems. As conservation stands, attempting to maintain the romantic utility of nature is unsustainable especially in the face of the climate change which is the result of the whole of human impacts.

Climate change exists on the periphery of individual concern and responsibility for its occurrence is often hoisted onto other systems and governments. Still, discourse from both American and Chinese traditions expect individuals to assume a certain amount of responsibility towards nature. Some of the discourses additionally place systematic responsibility on governments for nature as well. The exception may be conservation which views nature as an aesthetic utility rather than a reciprocal relationship of give and take.

## Chapter IV- Conclusion

The meaning of “Nature” or “nature” throughout Chinese and American history has been fluid. And yet, these understandings create expectations for the relationships individuals share with nature. With the onset of climate change, the relationship individuals share with nature becomes all the more important as it can define how much responsibility for climate change one takes. As shown in Chapter I, the relationship with nature throughout Chinese and American history has gone through various stages as a resource, an exchange, and a revelation.

In terms of utility, nature has been seen as a commodity and resource, which has most often led to its exploitation. The motivation to treat nature as a commodity has been based on prioritizing human “happiness” for the present generation, as stated by Gifford Pinchot. American utilitarian approaches to nature are focused on ensuring the material comfort and happiness of individuals, with roots in the creation stories of Genesis. The classical Confucian *Analects* also place the control of nature as an essential practice; however, this is in order to cultivate the perfect society and human nature. Thus Chinese utilitarian approaches prioritize the cultivation of an individual’s character over material comfort. But in all of these utilitarian views of nature, human needs—whether material or intrinsic—are the first priority, and nature serves to fulfill human goals.

That is not to say that stewardship is not motivated by human goals. The Zhou Dynasty’s Mandate of Heaven made stewardship necessary because the state or health of nature became a direct reflection of the Dynasty’s legitimacy. However, in the case of Genesis, it is God who requires, after the curse of Adam is lifted, that individuals cultivate the earth so that the earth will flourish. Thus the stewardship present in Genesis originates from an expectation set forth by

God. Within the *Dao de Jing*, there is an expectation that sages who have understood the true form and flow of the world will take it upon themselves to help that true form manifest. This is similar to Genesis in that humans have a role to encourage the fertility of the earth. The difference is that the *Dao de Jing* indicates that people can come into this role independently. The *Dao de Jing* also specifically recognizes that complete control and using nature is not necessary. This attention to restraint is more pronounced than in other “stewardship” discourses. It can almost be read as conservation; however, the difference is that objects can at any point take a new form to become of “use.” The *Analects* do not speak much to stewardship; however, Mencius, a student of Confucianism does recognize the need for stewardship. Mencius’ view of human nature is that it needs to be able to grow and flourish, and he applies this principle to natural resources, which also need to be able to flourish in order to reach their full potential. This more closely resembles the idea that resources should be used with the future in mind. Mencius also leverages similar ideas to the Mandate of Heaven with regard to the king, arguing that the king has a responsibility to his people part of this responsibility involves care of the the environment. Stewardship ultimately is the recognition that humans have agency towards the environment. In some cases of stewardship, it is also brought on for the purpose of extending utility into the long term.

Conservation is in simplest terms the preservation of nature; approaches of this sort often have a “Romantic” element, elevating nature to the mystical and incomprehensible. John Muir’s relationship with nature is experiential and he imagines nature as a “divine presence” due to its beauty, which implies that nature has an *aesthetic* utility. Muir focused on preserving specific areas that he found particularly wild and beautiful through legislative action, and did so for the enjoyment of individuals in years to come. Conservation was conceived by educated, middle to



upper class individuals who could take vacations to areas of beauty as an escape, but frequently displaced indigenous and other peoples who relied on subsistence living. Muir's political action is distinct and involves a somewhat different approach from other conservation discourses that largely focus on metaphysics or experience. Henry David Thoreau emphasizes the experiential process of living a simple or natural life in nature, and his process involves reflection and introspection. Like Muir, Thoreau elevates Nature to the level of the inscrutable and thus creates a conceptual separation between humans and nature. This is unlike the *Dao de Jing*, which employs a process called *guan tianxing* (observing heaven's nature) to describe the process that will allow an individual to understand the flow of the cosmos. The *Dao de Jing*, explains that at first nature may be inscrutable, but with the correct practices one can "understand" nature—through *being natural*. Ralph Waldo Emerson differs from Thoreau in that he believed that nature was a reflection of the "order of things" which could be answered by an awakened mind or through science. Emerson describes nature as being beautiful as do Thoreau and Muir; however, this nature is the manifestation of God's affection and values more highly things marked with beauty. The utility of beauty becomes inherently tied to American conservationism and nature becomes an object to be viewed, an object for introspection, or a manifestation of the sublime. The *Dao de Jing*; however, is an exception to this as nature is not held to a hierarchy of beauty; more like Thoreau, nature can be a vehicle for introspection; a means to a more natural way of being.

When relating these views of nature to climate change, we first encounter the still-frequent denial and polarization of views that accompanies the issue. Thus, the question of responsibility of action towards mitigating climate change becomes more important because dealing with climate change will need collective action and individual responsibility will lay the

foundation for collective action. Climate change itself is difficult to conceptualize because it is a slow change and involves peripheral phenomenon. Individual responsibility for climate change becomes less apparent, and instead much of the effort is placed on larger government and scientific research to address the problems. Analyzing the discourse, religious discourse, and traditional texts that have shaped many of the ideas that have become ingrained in the minds and habits of many people living in America and China can help us think further about the question of the extent to which individuals feel responsible for addressing the problem of climate change. In American discourse, Genesis creates an expectation that individuals and the earth share a reciprocal relationship. The result of climate change is the response of God's displeasure towards humanity ignoring the responsibilities of stewardship. The *Analects*, on the other hand, takes an ambiguous position on how much responsibility an individual should take when relating to climate change. Judging by the logic of the *Analects*, Confucius would seem to place that responsibility on those organizing society. Thus, climate change can be interpreted as a failure of society and thus it is the responsibility of the state to right the wrongs so that individuals will not decide to leave nature. It is notable that the current President of the People's Republic of China, Xi Jinping, has begun to integrate Confucius teachings into his messaging and various political efforts. Thus, the responsibility of climate change can conceivably fall to the state. In contrast, the *Dao de Jing* emphasizes that individuals—particularly those on the path towards sagehood—are responsible for the encouraging the flourishing of the universe. Things like climate change can be interpreted as a deviation from the ideally balanced form of the cosmos, and thus it is the individual's responsibility to combat things like climate change at the personal and sociopolitical level.

In conservation, it is unclear in both Chinese and American discourse as to how much responsibility an individual should take towards climate change. Thoreau is far more interested in his own experience and relationship to Nature; however, he seems to have held himself to a certain level of responsibility to respond to ideas he found disagreeable, but he and Emerson did so mainly in the form of writing rather than action. Muir on the other hand takes a personal and systematic responsibility for preserving nature as seen in his work protecting large tracts of land. Muir shows that conservation can produce enough individual responsibility, which will instill responsibility within a system to create action; however, it is noted that the current influence on modern conservation groups is limited to niche efforts due to the higher valuation of economic utility over aesthetic utility in America. However, conservation efforts in China have been closely tied to government efforts, which have been dedicated to preserving vulnerable ecosystems and species. Specifically, the Giant Panda has become a symbol of successful conservation and national mascot which has spurred research, habitat restoration, and species breeding. It has garnered both an individual and systematic responsibility for its survival because it has become closely integrated to national identity. Despite this garnering of individual and systematic responsibility, the panda represents a marginally part of nature valued due to high aesthetic appeal. It effectively separates and focuses attention towards more “likeable” parts of nature and thus an issue such as climate change would unlikely become important in the context of climate change. Thus conservation is not an effective framework for the mitigation of climate change due to its limited scope.

The relationship with nature put forth by American and Chinese discourses create the expectations that define actions and attitudes towards the environment as demonstrated in Chapter II. The expectation of nature simply as an immediate, economic utility has created

environmental degradation to the point that the world faces the serious problem of climate change and global warming. However, there is more than one view of nature. Addressing the dilemma of climate change requires a recognition of individual and systematic responsibility. The stewardship views of nature within Genesis, the *Analects*, the Mandate of Heaven, and the *Dao de Jing* establish expectations for individual and systematic responsibility towards nature and by extension climate change. Some views of conservation share this view; however, they are often limited by their focus on the aesthetic parts of nature.

Thus, stewardship is the more effective relationship with nature that can create the motivations and framework that will motivate people on both America and China to take an active role in solving the problem of climate change. Stewardship enables individuals to view their actions as more than one that affects the entirety of the world and instills a responsibility for the world. This argument is hashed out through different lenses of religion, philosophy, and literature throughout both American and Chinese environmental history which establishes a narrative which, while having their distinctions, shares many similarities which can lay a foundation for future concerted efforts to mitigate climate change.

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