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ROMANTIC RECULTIVATING OF SELF AND ENVIRONMENT

by

David R. Schrappe

B.A., Centre College of Danville, Kentucky, 2000

M.A., Kent State University, 2006

A Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Doctorate of Philosophy.

Department of Philosophy
in the Graduate School
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DISSERTATION APPROVAL

ROMANTIC RECULTIVATING OF SELF AND ENVIRONMENT

By

David R. Schrappe

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the field of Philosophy

Approved by:

Douglas Anderson, Ph.D., Chair

Thomas Alexander, Ph.D.

Douglas Berger, Ph.D.

Ryan Netzley, Ph.D.

Kenneth Stickers, Ph.D.

Graduate School
Southern Illinois University Carbondale
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AN ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION OF

David R. Schrappe, for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Philosophy, presented on February 13, 2015 at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

TITLE: ROMANTIC RECULTIVATING OF SELF AND ENVIRONMENT

MAJOR PROFESSOR: Douglas Anderson, Ph.D.

My project discusses the important philosophical role that interacting with nature (as opposed to having limited access to nature preserves and the like) plays in the life of an individual. As such I discuss the biological implications for experiences of real (as contrasted with simulated) nature and, in so doing, also discuss the connection of biology to philosophy. I go on to discuss the sociological and psychological ramifications of this interactive relationship through notions such as love and community and their ties to philosophy. I then close with a discussion of the necessity of artistic expression and how those endeavors can be manifested or realized in and through experience with natural environments.

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CHAPTER 1

BODY AND MIND

Introduction

This project began with a city lover asking the question “Nature, why bother?” As my nature-loving wife continued to drag me into the wilderness and encouraged the same with our children, I began to feel differently about the excursions. I found myself beginning to appreciate not just the ‘pretty’ of the natural (though that is of course an important aspect) but something deeper and more fundamental. This feeling began to find a voice with a particular commercial that states, “Discover the forest, discover the other you.”¹ The notion that there is another ‘you,’ or other aspects of oneself that can be discovered as one discovers and explores nature, seemed to resonate with my own experiences as well. As such, the thesis I will be supporting in this work is that relations to the environment lead to self-cultivation, specifically through the “garden model.”

As I began to do more research, I discovered I was far from alone in attempting to articulate this philosophical understanding of the relationship between self and nature. The aesthetic relationship, which may have been my initial approach to the importance of the environment, will be explored in the final chapter of this work; an aesthetic mindset, however, will be present throughout. I was also struck by the correspondence between a love and care for the environment and a deep connection with God², as articulated by Wendell Berry and others. It seems that both the immanent nature of God, as well as the transcendent nature of God can be typified by a certain relationship to the environment; these are the focus of the middle chapter of this work. By immanent I mean the daily walking along beside, close friend-like nature of God

¹ www.discovertheforest.org

² With Emerson I will leave the relation between “God” and “Nature” ambiguous, though in my own life I am committed to a God of the sort Berry describes.

as contrasted with the transcendent, which is to say the other-worldly, very distant, very different Creator-of-the-universe nature of God. The first chapter focuses on the physical benefits of a relationship with nature. More and more research suggests that those who interact with the natural environment are healthier. Of course there may be other factors, such as the fact that people who grow their own food eat healthier, generally speaking, and are more active on a regular basis. However, there may be a more fundamental connection between the health of the physical body and a relationship with the natural environment.

Nature: What Do I Mean?

To begin, I need to discuss what I mean by “nature,” and will use Emerson’s first “Nature” essay to articulate my position. In short, Nature is that which I am not and also that which includes me. Given this intentionally broad definition of Nature, it will be used in a variety of ways throughout this project. Nature initially is “the circumstance that dwarfs every other circumstance.”³ We are constantly surrounded by it, we are birthed from it; we die and return to it; we’re thrown into it. Yet, precisely because we are surrounded by it, we often take it for granted and do not appreciate it. Our mindset toward it is perhaps not all that it could be. We consume pretty scenes, rather than consuming experiences of places. Berry states, “man cannot be independent of nature. In one way or another he must live in relation to it and there are only two alternatives: the way of the frontiersman whose response to nature was to dominate it, to assert his presence in it by destroying it; or the way of Thoreau, who went to the natural places to become quiet in them, to learn from them, to be restored by them.”⁴ Roderick Nash proposes a third alternative, which affirms that we do not have to live in relation to nature; rather, we can remove ourselves in order to protect the wilderness environment. It is what he calls the “island

³ Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Nature (2nd)”. *Essential Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Ed. Brooks Atkinson (New York: Modern Library, 2000), p. 364

⁴ Wendell Berry “Nature Consumers”. *Long Legged House* (Berkeley: Counterpoint Press, 2012) p. 51

motif.” My project will be highlighting “living with” - not only what that means, but why it matters to us, which is to say the “way of Thoreau.” The reference to Thoreau highlights the romantic approach to nature, which I will be articulating throughout this work. Though Thoreau only occasionally considered himself to be a romantic, I hope to make clear that Thoreau does fit my understanding of a romantic. The notion that natural places can be places where one can learn if one is quiet is a focus of this work.

Initially the frontier was dominated in order for humans to survive and thrive, but we now, I think, have gone too far in that direction. Rather than attempting to live in nature, we are continuing to conquer it and exploit it for merely economic gains and the so-called “quality of life.” I will argue that we should work with nature for philosophical gains, which are more meaningful to us than merely economic gains. We have already demonstrated that we can destroy nature and be victorious, in a limited sense, but how complete must the victory be before we show compassion to the opponent? And how “victorious” will we be before we harm both ourselves and nature?

Perhaps it is akin to running up the score on an inferior opponent, namely: “What does it say about the dignity of the one running up the score?” John McDermott is perhaps right about the fact that while we originally did have to overcome and defeat nature to survive, we should not be too nostalgic about the good old days; they probably were not as good as we think they were. For example, there is research that asks people how happy they are while on vacation. When the question is asked during the vacation, research indicates that people are not very happy. However, in retrospect, after the vacation is over they report having been happier when on vacation.⁵ Primarily, perhaps, it is the case that it is an aspect of our nature that we enjoy complaining and are uncomfortable being happy. But secondly, there is an aspect of nostalgia

⁵ <http://www.independenttraveler.com/travel-tips/travelers-ed/survey-says-travel-makes-us-happier>

attached to the vacation; we forget the bad parts and annoyances. This is also perhaps akin to child rearing, where the parents often only remember the good times. The same occurs with nature nostalgia; we only remember the good parts that are now lost.

It may also be the case that as natural environment becomes more scarce, it becomes more valuable. This harkens back to the days when exotic plants were a sign of wealth and power; the more exotic and rare the plant, the more valuable it is for that place. One can also think about clothes. The more clothing one has, the less valuable or important any one clothing item is, unless it is treasured for other reasons than use. If one only has a few outfits, each outfit may gain in usefulness and value. The same may hold true for other commodities as well. Scarcity drives up not just economic value but philosophical value.

Emerson goes on to foreshadow some contemporary environmental thinkers like Wendell Berry, who writes extensively on the new ideal man—the super-consumer. Emerson states, “to speak truly, few adult persons can see nature.”⁶ This is to say that adults are often too busy with their daily tasks to stop and truly see. This seeing is an enhanced seeing, as evidenced by the fact, as he goes on to say, that it is not the eye but the eye *and* the heart that see, or better that experience fully: “Most persons do not see the sun. At least they have a very superficial seeing. The sun illuminates only the eye of man, but shines into the eye and the heart of the child.”⁷ Adults have a tendency to see nature stripped away of all its meaning; children often attach meaning to events in order to experience them. Meaning is, in part, what the *heart* understands.

The reference to a child-like seeing or child-like experience is an important point. For instance, when children ask to “see” something they actually mean hold it, and experience it, rather than merely see it with the eyes. This connection to children and their “seeing” may also

⁶ Ralph Waldo Emerson. “Nature (1st)”. *Essential Writings*. P. 5

⁷ *Ibid* p. 5-6

be connected to childlike wonder and appreciation, which values an openness to experience. One thinks of faith like a child, for instance. Children, generally speaking, are often connected and holistic beings; it tends to be adults who compartmentalize the world in a more technological fashion. A child often experiences life with a poetic mindset, whereas adults are often overly scientific. However, being scientific and poetic are not mutually exclusive. The child has an inward sense that the adult often ignores, and this inner sense is what is necessary for attunement to Nature/God or others.

Current environmental movements, especially those that encourage children to get outside, more closely echo Emerson's insight. "When you were a kid it was easy to spend time in nature—you didn't need anything except your imagination and the great outdoors."⁸ In nature, one does not need iPads, Wii's, and the like. A child just needs his or her mind and senses and the great outdoors. There, meaning can be so grand or so vast, one can get lost in it. Technology may provide more *information*, but it seems to provide less meaningfulness for our lives. By this distinction I mean that technology often tends to lead one *away* from oneself, and is used to distract rather than to edify. This is not to say that all technology necessarily distracts, but rather the way many people use the technology can be distracting.

Emerson continues with this focus on children, "In the woods is perpetual youth."⁹ There is rejuvenation, or a re-childing available in the woods. In childhood there is an association with youth, vitality, freshness, and newness. One thinks about the search for the fountain of youth, whether that be a physical place, or the medicines and cosmetics that are advertised everywhere. Emerson suggests that to be healed physically, emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually, one should enter nature: "there [in nature] I feel that nothing can befall me...that nature cannot

⁸ www.discovertheforest.org

⁹ Ibid p. 6

repair.”¹⁰ These comments from Emerson set the scene for the future of living with the environment.

The fact that we are surrounded by the natural environment and that it impacts us so directly should lead us to a more mindful appreciation and understanding of it. This is an extension of the romantic interaction with the environment. Nature may be important in itself but it is also important *for us*. As Emerson puts it, “The tempered light of the woods is like a perpetual morning.”¹¹ The morning and the woods are always open to new possibilities. With new days come new hope and new possibilities. Such hope is important for human self-development. Like Thoreau, I am arguing from the perspective of one interested in human self-cultivation. This perspective recognizes our connections and our proper place as one of Nature’s creations. My notion does not maintain that humans are the only ones that matter, but it does maintain that what matters to us goes beyond economic advantage. We must look at meaning or meaningfulness as our guide toward making decisions concerning not only the natural environment specifically, but also the rest of our lives more generally.

Wastelands, Gardens, Islands

In the concluding chapter of *Wilderness and the American Mind*, Roderick Nash offers three options for the future of the environment. First, he gives the wasteland scenario, which is a worst case scenario. In short, the planet is ravaged, and wilderness as we know it is dead. Clearly this is entirely feasible though, of course, not ideal. The second scenario is the garden model, which he believes (and I agree) Wendell Berry and Michael Pollan best represent. Nash contends that wilderness is at risk in this model as well, because it involves a form of control. Though the control criticism is warranted, it does not provide the whole picture. Nash then proposes a third

¹⁰ Ibid p. 6

¹¹ Emerson “Nature (2nd)” Essential Writings p.365

option, island civilizations. In this scenario, which he calls the “island motif”, almost all of the planet would be left alone and boundaries would be drawn around civilization. Rather than being responsible stewards, humans would be neighbors, who like many neighbors today, have very little, if any, interaction with each other. We would not even be fellow community members, as a community implies unity. This third option presents a question: if we cannot or should not go to the natural environment refuges, then why have them? Of course we are protecting the environment, but for what purpose? We would no longer be living in the environment, and we would have found a loophole to Emerson’s earlier statement. We would be missing the importance of our relationship with nature by not actually *experiencing* nature; our only relation would be theoretically knowing that it is out there somewhere. This option assumes some type of intrinsic value to nature and places the values of the wilderness in itself as overriding any of its values of humanity. In Chapter 2, this question will come to the forefront as I discuss the strengths and weaknesses of a wholly transcendent notion of Nature, but it should be obvious that the island motif embraces *disconnection*, as opposed to a continuity between humans and the rest of Nature.

Perhaps we have gone too far in the direction of urbanization and cannot turn back. Perhaps humanity has shown that it cannot be trusted with the responsibility of living in and caring for the natural environment, especially given the fact that this seems to be the direction we are going. Suburbs, for instance, are little islands of civilization, and this becomes more the case as businesses move to the suburbs too. Perhaps what we have now are islands of civilization connected by interstates. As more people work from home, the islands become even smaller. It is possible not to have to leave a four or five block radius. This has its advantages for the environment. For example, perhaps there is an area in those blocks that has a garden or

something of the kind. However, if they are only man-made environments, something may be missing experientially.

It is interesting to point out the irony that as more people work from home, or work in businesses where they are working potentially every moment that they are at home, the place that has historically been a place of rest and refuge has become, instead, an extension of the world of work. When in the past people have attempted to “homeify” their office space, typically including things such as family photos and plants, they have instead begun “officefying” their homes with computer screens in every room or a computer screen they can carry with them in order to be always connected. This connection, though, is to an artificial or virtual environment, rather than to actual nature.

Nash suggests that if we are concerned we are losing something by isolating the natural environment, we can create surrogate wilderness for rock climbers, etc. Although this may be better for the planet, at what cost-- do we miss out on experiences of our natural home? I think of the synthetic putting greens that are appearing on golf courses now. This method is saving the environment by replacing it. Nash states (and accurately so) “we have been efficient in weeding out the stuff of life incompatible with our tastes and needs.”¹²

There is an aspect of the relationship of humans to nature (including the garden motif) about which he is correct, but the “weeding out” need not focus only on our tastes. Our needs (which are more than just economic or even just aesthetic) are important as well. Of course one person’s weeds are another person’s flowers. The connection that Nash misses is between nature and the often overlooked needs of spirit and life, which may best be provided by the natural environment.

¹² Nash, Roderick *Wilderness and the American Mind*. (New Haven: Yale UP, 2001) p. 381

Nash places such confidence in the technological revolution for improving human life that his mindset seems to be only a technological one. I contend that any completely technological mindset will sever the human relationship with the environment. That severing can lead either to the doomsday scenario, where we just destroy nature, or to what may philosophically be an equivalent an impoverished human existence. This separates the natural environment and replaces it with a simulated environment.

Part of the environmental movement may be in favor of the island suggestion, but much of the movement (especially the romantic farming or gardening motif of which I find myself a part) is a reaction against this overly technological outlook. Nash's island motif is predicated on high technology in the same way the consumer motif (which leads to the doomsday scenario) is. Even if we are able to recreate the experience of physically climbing rocks through some surrogate means requiring technology, the claim that we would be able to completely simulate that extra-physical experience seems dubious. The simulation would be complete if it were only a physical exercise experience or a visual experience, because one could replicate what rocks look like. This is incomplete for the rock climber, however. The experience of rock climbing seems to encompass much more that cannot be replicated by technology, such as the vastness of the outdoors, the possibility of death, the smell or feel of the natural and ever changing air. These are, in short, very different experiences.

Given Nash's predilection for technology, he views the garden motif with the same technologized lens. He states that while the garden scenario sounds wonderful to its proponents, what they fail to realize is that in the distant future, this garden scenario would be problematic once we "conceivably control weather, genetic codes, ecosystems, evolution."¹³ For Nash the issue is essentially one of control, and gardeners do make choices, thus controlling the

¹³ Ibid p. 381

environment in similar ways to the non-gardener, which leads to the doomsday scenario. But it seems that Nash is describing a mechanized garden motif, one influenced not by the garden (where we realize we are not in complete control and embrace that) but rather one where we change it if we do not like it. It implies *complete* control rather than shared responsibility. It is still reflective of a consumer mentality, a ‘change it to meet my needs’ mindset, rather than adjusting our needs. It puts us more at the center than a Berryian type of farming or gardening does. The value of the less mechanized gardening or farming, which Pollan and Berry are recommending, is significantly different.

The Berryian gardening and farming method allows us to remember that we are a part of something larger; we are not in complete control but are only co-creators of the world. One aim of the garden motif is to *replace* the consumer mindset. The consumer mindset lends itself to the individualistic mindset, i.e. the isolationist mindset, of which Nash’s suggestion seems to be an extension. His solution is to give up, to isolate and imprison ourselves (perhaps due to our past action toward the environment) and he uses technology to put us literally in our place, that place being technologically created sanctuaries and refuges. This might save “nature,” but for what purpose, since we should not then experience it, enjoy it or learn from it?

Nash does attempt to respond to this concern by stating that we could have some limited exposure to and experience with this nature. “People living on the island habitats could leave them to enjoy minimum impact vacations in the surrounding wild matrix. They could even live out there—for a while or forever. The proviso is they would have to do so as wilderness people.”¹⁴ This seems to defeat Nash’s purpose, however. If there are people who move into the sanctuaries, no matter how wild or low impact, they will change the environment, just as we are doing now. One also wonders why one would feel the desire or need to experience nature in

¹⁴ Ibid p. 383

these low impact ways if we can, as Nash suggests, create the same experience through technology? We would not even know that we were missing anything, and so would not have the desire to even visit these places, because the simulation could just replace nature. Furthermore, if we are so far removed from nature, eventually we would forget about its existence and truly leave it alone. It would become merely transcendent and not immanent for our lives. Eventually we would no longer have even the good feeling that would come from our knowing we were doing something good for the natural environment. We would forget why we were preserving at all. Perhaps then we would start developing the natural environment again. In this way, the island model may be more aligned with the doomsday scenario than the garden model.

Given my focus on the human self-cultivation position, I believe it would be better to teach skills and change mindsets. Perhaps it would be better to give elementary school students a seed to plant, watch grow, and care for; then they could take this experience into their college years or their marriages, etc., rather than removing wilderness from their sphere of influence altogether. This change would be more difficult and time consuming, but I believe it would be worth the extra time and care in order to preserve wilderness for what it is, and to preserve a part of ourselves that would be lost otherwise. Nash's suggestion is to give up, to take the easier road, to get a divorce rather than work through the issues. He is of the same mindset that has caused the problems and is now trying to find a quick solution to a long festering problem, not with the natural environment, or even fundamentally with our relation to the natural environment, but firstly with us.

The problem manifests itself in our relations with the natural environment and with each other. Rather than island isolation, what is needed is responsible gardening. One possible feature of the island motif is that the natural environment becomes so sacred that we cannot and should

not interact with it. Nature may become even more romanticized than the romantics would like it to be. Nash says, “People would not be masters or stewards or even eco-managers but, following Aldo Leopold, plain members and fellow citizens of the community of life.”¹⁵ Being part of a community, however, implies that there is real care and concern for the other members of the community. Care and concern can only arise from interacting with them, and thus knowing them somewhat intimately. This seems to indicate that to be fellow citizens, we would need to interact directly with natural environments and wilderness.

Fellow citizens, as Nash presents them, are not necessarily neighbors in the fullest sense of that word. Fellow citizens are abstract ideas, rather than actual, living people with whom one may visit and converse and with whom one can be vulnerable. The Nash-style fellow citizen, if he is a neighbor, is one who does not want anyone to come over, and if the fellow citizen must come over it is not to visit. One would be encouraged to not touch their stuff or engage in a meaningful conversation. Nash’s island motif fits well with an outlook that places the health needs of the physical environment above all else, but to cultivate the sensual, intellectual and spiritual aspects found in nature, it is important to be in line with the gardeners and farmers. I follow the environmentalists such as Berry and Leopold, who see themselves as stewards or neighbors in this community. All citizens have roles to play. The island motif is perhaps overly bio-centric in the same way that it accuses the other scenarios as being overly human-centric. What seems important is to find a balance that may enhance human life as well as the life of the natural environment.

Perhaps it comes down to the question, “are we citizens, stewards or masters?” The doomsday and island models both suggest mastery. The biotic community model implies that we are citizens. The Christian story states that we are stewards of what God created and gave to us.

¹⁵ Ibid p. 384

It would seem that practically speaking, the difference between a steward and a citizen would be fairly negligible; either choice would require relations between humans and natural environments *and* a link to something like the garden motif.

Perhaps the importance of our relationship with the environment has returned to the forefront because the natural environment is becoming rarer, and as such may also be becoming more sacred. Most people now live in cities, fairly removed from nature, and it does seem to be the case that people want what they do not have, or once had and then lost. There is a sense of nostalgia for nature. It is only once we realize we may not have something that we begin to appreciate it; that which we took for granted gains in significance. Perhaps it is this type of thinking that leads to Nash's island motif suggestion. Merely knowing that nature is being preserved out there somewhere is enough. It is our interaction with the environment, however, that enables us to get the full benefits from the relationship, and to see why the natural environment is important.

We are one important part of nature. According to Pollan, "The wilderness thus can't make distinctions between one kind of intervention in nature and another... all or nothing says the wilderness ethic...thanks exactly to this kind of either/or thinking, Americans have done an admirable job of drawing lines around certain sacred areas...and a terrible job of managing the rest of our land."¹⁶ This, I think, indicates the thinking that leads Nash to his recommendation of civilization islands, and it is a slippery slope from the "wilderness folk" to the "island thinker." If we prioritize what is good for nature at the expense of all else, then we should be separate islands. As Pollan points out, "This old idea [romantic notion] may have taught us how to worship nature, but it didn't tell us how to live with her. It told us more than we needed to know about virginity and rape and almost nothing about marriage. The metaphor of divine nature can

¹⁶ Michael Pollan *Second Nature: A Gardener's Education*. (New York: Grove Press, 1991) p. 188

admit only two roles for man: as worshipper (the naturalist's role) or temple destroyer (the developer's.)"¹⁷ Perhaps the old romantic idea gave us Nature's transcendence without its immanence, though I do not think so. As I read them, Emerson and Thoreau are much more in line with Pollan's approach than he seems to acknowledge. Most romantics want to emphasize the value that the environment holds *for us* as well as the value of its intrinsic virtues.

Rolston III continues, "Nature is a philosophical resource as well as a scientific, recreational, aesthetic or economic one."¹⁸ Of course the economic resource has been emphasized greatly, and while I am not going to argue against economic development (neither did Leopold, Emerson, or Thoreau), I am going to attempt to emphasize the other aspects in order to bring balance to the discussion.

Much of the environmental movement has been focused on the phrase: "Think globally, act locally." I believe that this does a disservice to the importance of the local. The local impacts us on a daily basis as much as does the global. A better phrase may be: "Think locally, act locally." This will have global impact, but the ramifications will also have local impact and will be able to be felt much more immediately. Berry states, "no matter how much one may love the world as a whole, one can live fully in it only by living responsibly in some small part of it...one can become whole only by the responsible acceptance of one's partiality."¹⁹ By living responsibly here he means recognizing philosophical value and giving meaning to our lives.

Holmes Rolston III states, "value is what makes a favorable difference to an organism's life."²⁰ This takes us beyond mere economic value. Rolston adds, "a singular feature of human psychology and morality is how we can value wild things not for ourselves, but for what they are

¹⁷ Ibid p. 188

¹⁸ Holmes Rolston III "Values in Nature" *Philosophy Gone Wild*. (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1989) p. 89

¹⁹ Wendell Berry "The Body and the Earth" *The Unsettling of America: Culture & Agriculture* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1996) p. 123

²⁰ Holmes Rolston III "Values Gone Wild". *Philosophy Gone Wild* (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1989) p. 132

in themselves, estimating our own place in nature when so doing.”²¹ We cannot know what it is like to be a wolf, but we can estimate what it may be like based on our human interested perspective. We, as human experiencers, assign intrinsic value to nature. In doing so, we also indicate that nature is valuable *for us*; it is *we* who *assign* the value.

As Thoreau says, “Nature must be viewed humanly to be viewed at all; that is, her scenes must be associated with human affections, such as an area associated with one’s native place, for instance. She is most significant to a lover. A lover of Nature is preeminently a lover of man. If I have no friend, what is Nature to me? She ceases to be morally significant.”²² This is similar to what Callicott claims Leopold is doing, namely, instilling natural sympathy that extends to nature. Or, given the first line, Thoreau may be making a more profound point about our human perspective on nature. Nature must be viewed humanly to have meaning, because the meanings we can perceive and conceive are ours. And perhaps he is right that it is the lover who can fully appreciate nature, not to dominate and subjugate it, but to work with it. A love that is one of domination is not love but lust, a desire to possess rather than to work with.

When we experience something “other” to ourselves, the “other” can be approached as an opportunity to learn or to be afraid. With respect to nature as other, we have already demonstrated that we can defeat many aspects of it. We tear down trees to build buildings, we re-route water sources, and the like. This defeating is an extension of fear, but what of the opportunity to learn? Berry states that “We have been wrong to believe that competition invariably results in the triumph of the best. Divided, body and soul, man and woman, producer and consumer, nature and technology, city and country are thrown into competition with one another. And none of these competitions is ever resolved in the triumph of one competitor, but

²¹ Ibid p. 140

²² Thoreau from Journal dated June 1852 as quoted by Scott Slovic *Seeking Awareness in American Nature Writing*. (University of Utah, 1992) p. 37

only in the exhaustion of both. For our healing we have on our side one great force; the power of creation, with good care with kindly use, to heal itself.”²³ We hear the echoes of Emerson’s claim about nature being able to heal. Berry emphasizes the concept of at-one-ment, the bringing together of the previously divided, which he claims is the only resolution that results in completion without destruction. This holds true for our relationships with all others (including the environment and including God) as well as with all aspects of ourselves. If we are other from ourselves, there is another “us” that can be discovered (as the “discover the forest” campaign claims). We need a balance; we need to find at-one-ment with those “other” aspects of “us”. I believe that at-one-ment is best achieved through the gardening model, than by way of Nash’s other options.

Furthermore, a large part of Berry’s work is an attempt to overcome these dualities. The garden model dissipates distinctions, because where our creation and Nature’s or God’s creation stop and start becomes blurry. We escape the us/them, self/other mentality, which leads either to the doomsday scenario or the island motif, both of which amplify distinctions, downplay continuity, and keep the parties in question separate. The garden model tries to develop a reciprocal relationship. One of the larger goals of the environmental movement, especially as typified and articulated by Berry, is the importance of community over competition. One can think of the stereotypical grassroots movements; they are counter-cultural, which is to say counter to the Reagan-style economic competition model. These movements, as contrasted with atomic individualism, emphasize the whole over particular parts, which is in keeping with the American philosophical tradition of focusing on holism and continuity. At the same time, though, they do not lose track of the importance of the parts or individuals.

²³ Margins p. 223

Physical

In many ways, one of the archetypal examples of at-one-ment is physical health. When one's body is at-one with itself and working together at its peak, it is healthy. There is a strong correlation between the environmental movement and “holistic” health, whether it be mind and body, or using more natural methods of getting healthier, or preventing dis-ease within the body. When one is sick, there is an unease in the body. Berry states, and rightly so, “our biological roots as well as our cultural roots are in nature.”²⁴ Where else could they have come from?

Notice that today, while we have become more obsessed with physical health, we are more unhealthy than ever. We have become so focused on non-essential things such as entertainment that we have forgotten how to take care of ourselves, and we now spend money to join gyms rather than just being more active. There is a different physical experience to be had jogging in nature, as opposed to jogging on a treadmill; while jogging in nature, all senses are in use and one experiences a physical connection to nature. Current research suggests the best workouts are ones that shock the body and give it something unexpected; a treadmill can only give the same monotonous workout, so exercise is usually better when done outdoors. Exercising outside, due to the changing terrain etc. offers benefits not available from a gym. There are surprises, and therefore the exercise works the muscles more. For instance, running in sand requires six times more energy than running otherwise. Furthermore, the uneven terrain requires the body to adjust in order to remain stable, and therefore the exercise works other sets of muscles.²⁵ This does not even take into consideration the fresher air, natural lighting, and changing scenery, which all contribute to a psychologically and physically healthier workout.

²⁴ Wendell Berry “Ecological Crisis as Crisis of Character” *Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture*. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1996) p. 29

²⁵ http://www.runnerscorner.com/pdf/harper_natural_surfaces.pdf

Research also suggests that rehabilitation is increased if one is charged with taking care of another living thing²⁶; perhaps this is merely physical due to the air purifying quality of a plant, or perhaps it is more psychological; as one is responsible for another living thing, one realizes his or her importance in that living creature's life, and in taking care of the plant one takes better care of oneself as well. This lung metaphor for trees and plants is one that Frederick Law Olmsted used when proposing Central Park. The air outside was much fresher than the air inside factories, but even with the less industrial nature of work, the air is still fresher than inside homes, offices, schools, and the like. Given that so many people are urbanites, and are inside so much of the time at work, and on their way to work in their cars, this need for fresher air may be even more needed today. Of course not all areas have fresh air; smog is a real concern in many areas. But if the trees do purify the air, then one needs not only to be outside, but outside near trees and other vegetation.

Olmsted envisioned Central Park as a break from the work day, not just mentally but physically as well. The trees act like lungs, purifying the air and using our carbon dioxide to sustain themselves, and then give off oxygen as a byproduct, which is precisely what we need to survive:

Air is disinfected by sunlight and foliage. Foliage also acts mechanically to purify the air by screening it. Opportunity and inducement to escape at frequent intervals from the confined and vitiated air of the commercial quarter, and to supply the lungs with air screened and purified by trees, and recently acted upon by sunlight, together with opportunity and inducement to escape from conditions requiring

²⁶ <http://www.nytimes.com/1981/09/10/garden/plants-as-therapy-are-more-popular.html>

vigilance, wariness, and activity toward other men—if these could be supplied economically, our problem would be solved.²⁷

Of course Olmsted was talking about factories, but the same may hold true for office air today.

The fact that it is the same air being recirculated is one theory as to why so many office workers have respiratory illnesses, such as colds, and why they are spread around so much.²⁸

Studies suggest that there may be a connection between cotton lung for factory workers and the recirculated air in offices that could have the same effect on office workers.²⁹ The air also becomes stagnant, which “fresh” air does not. Perhaps this is also part of the reason why children who play outside are healthier and are sick less often.³⁰

Pollan contends that “the lung metaphor puts us in a reciprocal relation with the trees once again. It undercuts romantic notions of their otherness, pointing us toward an existential plane we share.”³¹ I believe that the true romantic position is one that admits we share this plane with others, but they are other enough that we can learn something from them. There are also the statistics about obesity in the United States quadrupling over the past 25 years among boys and girls.³² Obviously there is something to be said about diet, but exercise is a piece to this puzzle as well. Natural environments can play a role for our exercise as well. It is easier to get exercise outside by riding bikes, running, walking etc. than inside, where space is scarce.

With regards to overall improved physical health, which is typically a combination of diet and exercise, there is, of course, the issue of what we eat. There may be the added issue of the connection between the food we eat and the “unnatural” things that are added to the foods--such

²⁷ Frederick Law Olmsted “Public Parks and the Enlargement of Towns” *Civilizing American Cities: Writings on City Landscapes*. Ed S.B. Sutton (DaCapo Press, 1997) p. 70

²⁸ <http://www.epa.gov/iaq/pubs/insidestory.html#SusHealth>

²⁹ <http://www.lung.org/lung-disease/byssinosis/understanding-byssinosis.html>

³⁰ <http://siteinsightnow.com/ohiolnci/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/LNCI-Brochure-after-comments-FINAL.pdf> referencing a 2005 study conducted by the American Medical Association

³¹ Pollan p. 174

³² <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/obesity/facts.htm>

as pesticides and hormones. One can read Pollan's books for this story, but Berry also discusses food as involving a primordial relationship with the land: "we must learn to resist those practices that further isolate us and turn us away from the earth. This can begin practically by cultivating a new relationship with food."³³ Food is one of the fundamental ways in which most folks experience the earth, either directly or indirectly. Much of Berry's point about placedness is that we have become too removed from the land, which is indicative of our relationship with food. Many people now presume that food comes from the grocery store rather than the land. In short, the natural environment may help us with both diet and exercise.

Olmsted, when discussing some of the positive attributes of the park, states:

The park should as far as possible complement the town. Openness is the one thing you cannot get in buildings. Picturesqueness you can get. Let your buildings be as picturesque as your artist can make them. This is the beauty of a town. Consequently, the beauty of the park should be other. It should be the beauty of the fields, the meadow, the prairie, of the green pastures, and the still waters. What we want is to gain tranquility and rest to the mind.³⁴

He quotes physicians, who before would recommend people quit their jobs and relocate to the country, but who now recommend a stroll through the park before and after work. Furthermore, he discusses accessibility. Some families cannot afford to go to the country, but all can afford to go to the park. The park cures illnesses and makes people happier, which then contributes positively to the financial production of the city. Also, Olmsted claims it will make New York City more attractive to visitors, which thus will increase trade, etc. Furthermore, it will help build a sense of community. This happiness may be tied to health, and the different

³³ Norman Wirzba "Introduction" *The Art of the Commonplace* (Washington D.C.: Shoemaker & Hoard, 2002) p. xviii

³⁴ Olmsted p. 81

aspects of health are related and play off of each other. Physically healthier folks are typically also healthier emotionally, and vice versa. Olmsted recognizes that in order to make a case for public green space, one needs to tie it to economics. Though economics is not the primary reason for green space in a city, it is the language that city governments understand.

Artificial lights are not as healthful as natural light; even in winter, artificial lights are on, yet people still suffer from seasonal affective disorder (SAD). There are no nutrients or vitamins in artificial light, though sunlamps are specially designed to provide some of the nutrients missing from standard artificial lighting. These special sunlamps are then recommended to sufferers of SAD to replicate the effects of actual sunlight. Additionally, artificial lights and computer screens can be damaging to our bodies. Our eyes become weaker, and we are encouraged to be more sedentary. As E. O. Wilson says, “it seems that whenever people are given a free choice, they move to open tree-studded land on prominences overlooking water...it has become largely aesthetic, a spur to art and landscaping.”³⁵ Prior to becoming an aesthetic choice, being around natural settings reflected a deeper choice, a biological choice.

Let us consider that *The Ohio Leave No Child Inside* initiative brochure indicates that children with symptoms of ADHD are better able to concentrate after contact with nature. Perhaps this is because nature points the way toward patience in an impatient, fast-paced world. Additionally, children who play regularly in natural environments show more advanced motor fitness, including coordination, balance and agility, and are sick less often.³⁶ This may be due to the fact that interacting with nature requires motor skills, etc. or perhaps it is because those who have developed motor skills are drawn to places where those skills can be utilized, such as the

³⁵ E. O. Wilson *Biophilia* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1984) p. 110

³⁶ Fjortoft, I. & J. Sageie, “The Natural Environment as a Playground for Children: Landscape Description and Analysis of a Natural Landscape”, *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 48(1/2), 83-97 as referenced by <http://siteinsightnow.com/ohiolnci/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/LNCI-Brochure-after-comments-FINAL.pdf>

outdoors, rather than inside on the Wii or a comparable gaming system. Perhaps this is because there is room to run and play outside. This is especially the case if we are considering wilderness, rather than just a backyard. As Leopold states:

By wilderness I mean a continuous stretch of country preserved in its natural state, open to lawful hunting, fishing, big enough to absorb a two weeks' pack trip, and devoid of roads, artificial trails, cottages, or other works of man...first such areas should occupy on a small fraction of the total national forest area, probably not to exceed one in each state. Second, only areas naturally difficult of ordinary industrial development should be chosen. Third, each area should be representative of some type of country of distinctive recreational value, or afford some distinctive type of outdoor life, opportunity for which might disappear on other forest lands open to industrial development³⁷

Wilderness, as Leopold conceives of it, is a place large enough to get lost in, large enough to be free enough to make mistakes in, large enough to know one is in a wilderness setting. Notice the certain degree of distance. While we are interacting with the environment, it is not so large that it becomes overwhelming, since we focus on only one portion at a time; however, it is also not so small that we can grasp it with a camera. What is meant by “getting lost” may be more of a mindset rather than an actual physical getting lost.

While the world may be “beautiful” without us, it would be meaningless without someone to appreciate the beauty. And perhaps beauty would not even be the appropriate term if there were no one to call it such. Leopold takes it a step further: “recreation is not the outdoors but our reaction to it...[and it] depends on the mental eye with which one sees it.”³⁸ We get re-

³⁷ Aldo Leopold. “Wilderness and its place in Forest Recreational Policy” *Journal of Forestry*, 19 (1921) p. 720

³⁸ Leopold p. 291

created based upon our response to the outdoors, not based on the outdoors in isolation from us. This relates to the psychological effects of the relationship with the natural environment.

Gardener Ramon Reyes says “leisure has to be constructive for them [meaning people], which is in order to resolve the tension between work ethic and free time, and it’s a shame because gardening should be an art, pruning and taking your time...it’s come to people making a lot of noise and dust and you’re gone. It’s not a job to be proud of anymore.”³⁹ To receive the benefits of gardening, one should take time and be in relative quiet and solitude, thus allowing it to be a time of meditation. Gardening as art is an activity that transforms both the gardener and the garden.

Psychological

Allowing oneself to get lost changes one’s perspective; it may require a comfort within discomfort. Getting lost can create uneasiness, but uneasiness can be good. Consider “falling” in love, for instance. It is uneasy, yet wonderful. Nature also seems to encourage curiosity. This is recognized by a growing number of recreation departments, as they have begun to have “natural play area” in addition to the more artificial walking and biking trails. “These wooded areas and fields are designed to help people, especially children, discover nature and to develop a lasting affinity for outdoor play. Fun and adventure await you as you wander off-trail to climb a tree, dig in the mud, wade in a stream or scramble over boulders.”⁴⁰ It is more fun and more adventurous than the trails. It is also a matter of developing a lasting affinity, so that both children and adults would be more willing to continue to interact with the environment, and as such, want to preserve more of it. There is also the feel of getting lost, since one is literally off the paved, or at least beaten and well-worn, path. We feel as if we have discovered something others may not

³⁹ Ramon Reyes as quoted by Ted Steinberg *American Green: The Obsessive Quest for the Perfect Lawn*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Co. Inc., 2006) p. 175

⁴⁰ <http://www.metroparks.net/NaturalPlayAreas.aspx>

have, and there is an aspect of our condition that likes being special, knowing something that others do not, being a part of something that not everyone can be, an exclusive club. However, this special thing that has been discovered we would then want to share with others, in much the same way that the successful gardener would share his information with fellow gardeners. This sharing of information and experiences then can lead to a sense of community. Rather than oneness being the result of these “special” relationships, it is the realization that many others have “special” experiences also.

Those types of experiences would probably be too tame for Leopold who, as a hunter, wanted to value the intensity of recreation. “Recreation is valuable in proportion to the intensity of its experiences and to the degree to which it differs from and contrasts with workaday life.”⁴¹ These off the beaten path experiences differ from the workaday life in many respects; however, they do not contrast to the same extent as do canoeing or packing, which are the two types of wilderness recreation he suggests.

This is akin to the psychologist who takes his clients out into wilderness rather than sitting in an office for a fifty minute session. Steven Harper reports that once the group goes through the initial alien phase where they feel like outsiders or visitors, they begin to feel at home in wild nature. A level of comfort is reached in the new surroundings, and the initial discomfort can actually allow one to get enough distance to really assess the self in a new way. Perhaps comfort is not conducive to psychological breakthroughs? He also mentions that the group must first overcome picturesque expectations of nature in order to experience true beauty.⁴²

⁴¹ Aldo Leopold *Sand County Almanac with Essays on Conservation from Round River* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1966) p. 272

⁴² See Steven Harper’s contribution to Ecopsychology

But perhaps this getting lost, this un-ease and dis-comfort, can occur closer to home, in not as vast an area. Thoreau, in his essay “Walking,” states, “I believe that there is a subtle magnetism in Nature, which, if we unconsciously yield to it, will direct us aright.”⁴³ The forest is wooing us and luring us to come and visit. This visitation must be in both body and mind.

In order to be present in mind, there must be a mindset change. Thoreau is clear that “if you are ready to leave father and mother...if you have paid your debts, and made your will, and settled all your affairs and are a free man—then you are ready for a walk.”⁴⁴ It is clear that in the text the change in mindset must take place before walking. However, I am not sure whether this must be the case, or if the walking could lead to the mindset change. Perhaps one must already be truly free in mind to walk properly; perhaps one must already have a mindset that is open to what one may find in nature or in oneself while meditating. Or, perhaps it is the case that the walk can come first and enable - or even force - the mindset change. It may be the case that if one is not open, vulnerable, or attuned properly, then the natural experience will have no real impact. It will be something to check off a list of things to do, or something like therapy, which is supposed to help, but cannot until the recipient is ready.

Perhaps one must be free in order to be attuned to what nature may be able to teach; otherwise one is burdened with all the junk of the world, the troubles, etc. and is unable to see or to experience nature. But it seems that there are at least some instances when one almost forces oneself to take a walk in order to clear one’s head, and nature then is the impetus for the realization of the need for freedom. Thoreau thinks so highly of walking that he gives a possible etymology of the word “saunterer.” Saunterer is either from Sainte-Terre, a “Holy-lander:” one who is going to the holy land and thus needs charity along the trip, or sans terre, meaning

⁴³ Thoreau p. 602

⁴⁴ Ibid p. 593

without a home or without land, which means one is “equally at home everywhere.”⁴⁵ The world is one’s home. As such, “every walk is a sort of crusade...to go forth and reconquer this Holy Land from the hands of the Infidels.”⁴⁶ Saunterers are rootless to a specific place, which presumably should imply rootedness of a different sort to everyplace, but instead seems to lead to rootedness nowhere and all of the ramifications that come with being so. While this etymology has proven to be historically incorrect, it does highlight the aspects of walking that Thoreau wanted to emphasize.

If the world is the place where the saunterer is home, he is then reclaiming the land and nature from those who would seek to downplay or destroy them, or replace them with civilization. Yet today, given the movement away from walking, either as transportation or as exercise, the word “pedestrian” (as Berry points out) has come to mean something lesser.

Thoreau wrote of walking to recreate himself. “When I would recreate myself, I seek the darkest wood, the thickest and most interminable and, to the citizen, most dismal, swamp. I enter the swamp as a sacred place.”⁴⁷ The darkest wood is the most removed and the best chance for wildness of nature and finding a wilder side of our self. It is fearful and therefore a place to face one's fears, the part of self that one often tries to avoid and escape. The experience of finding self can be a religious one, and thus the location for this finding of self becomes sacred. One should therefore enter wilderness as a sacred place, not one removed from self but rather the place where one can find or cultivate true self.

Given Thoreau’s emphasis on wildness, it is not at all surprising that he foreshadows Leopold’s notion of nature as freedom, “absolute freedom and wildness.”⁴⁸ This overly wild is

⁴⁵ Ibid p. 593

⁴⁶ Ibid p. 593

⁴⁷ Ibid p. 613

⁴⁸ Ibid p. 592

the type of wildness that Nash is attempting to preserve with the island motif, but we could gain more and enhance aspects of ourselves, like our sense of beauty and appreciation, by interacting with the wild and highlighting the continuity between wildness and our wild natures, and then reconciling these with our civilized natures. By severing the connection, we eliminate the possibility that natural environments can help us grow as a species; we instead give up hope.

Emerson warns that we may easily hear too much of rural influence. I agree. I do not want to create a scene where we humans are simply against the city. I do want to recognize that there is something of importance in the natural. But the city also has its place, and we must be careful not to prefer one over the other. For example, Leopold prefers pine trees, but there is someone else who would prefer the birch, and thus both get saved. If they do not, then only one person has her aesthetic preference. Preservation, in my view, is about balance.

The ecological movement proponents may have mis-remembered the good old days of frontier life and homesteading. McDermott, in “Nature Nostalgia and the City,” reminds us that nature was not this pastoral image that some want to remember it as being, but rather an obstacle. Man was in conflict with nature, and land was needed for people to settle on and to use for sustenance. Psychologically, the land acts on the imagination as possibility. Much like a blank canvas or blank page, it presents the possibility of something awesome and beautiful, or at least pretty. However, a painting is sometimes better before putting paint and brush to canvas.

McDermott admits, “Spatial claustrophobia turns us in on ourselves, interiorizing the landscape so that it is continuous with our imagination rather than with our vision. Over against this, in a context of open space, there is a possibility of projecting oneself outward and achieving identity as subject to the emerging novelties of space of action.”⁴⁹ Nature, as it is conceived,

⁴⁹ John McDermott “Nature, Nostalgia and the City” *The Drama of Possibility: Experience as Philosophy of Culture*. Ed Douglas R. Anderson (New York: Fordham UP, 2007) p. 173

rather than how it actually is, is only possible in contrast to the city. There emerges a new reverse escapism. Before, many were trying to escape to the city for job opportunities and the like; now many are trying to escape from the city due to this desire for freedom. This desire for escape may only last until we actually get out of the city and its conveniences; then we may realize we want to go back. Even Thoreau went back to the city after his stay at Walden. Here again, rather than recommending a back-to-land mentality, I advocate a balance between city and nature. I am more concerned about a mindset or general attitude than an actual location.

Emerson states, “the lover of nature is he whose inward and outward senses are still truly adjusted to each other; who has retained the spirit of infancy even into the era of manhood. His intercourse with the heaven and earth becomes part of his daily food.”⁵⁰ This speaks to the attunement with heaven and earth, and to one’s own inner and outer senses. Further, “all natural objects make a kindred impression, when the mind is open to their influence.”⁵¹ Obviously, the natural objects impact the senses, but the mind must be prepared, ready to be influenced. The mind is influenced and must be open and attentive to receive the message. One must be still in order to know. These kindred impressions are better recognized by poets and artists, because they are expecting to be impressed upon. They are the ones expecting to be taught something. This is not to say scientists are not also looking to nature for solutions to problems; they are. They are looking to nature as a teacher of physical survival and thriving.

As Chellis Glendinning states, “Nature based people lived everyday of their lives in the wilderness. [They had] a decided sense of ease with daily life, a marked sense of self and dignity and a lack of the addiction and abuse that have become systematic in civilization.”⁵² The overly

⁵⁰ Emerson “Nature (1st)” *Essential Emerson* p. 6

⁵¹ *Ibid* p. 5

⁵² Chellis Glendinning “Technology Trauma and the Wild” *Ecopsychology: Restoring the Earth Healing the Mind* Ed. Theodore Roszak Mary E Gomes and Allen D Kanner (San Francisco: Sierra Book Club, 1995) p. 52

technological world is one of disposal. We use something as fast as possible then discard it; there is no time for growth and development. This is an abusive mindset; one uses and abuses and discards nature, stuff, and quite possibly other people. The belief is that we need it now and need it our way, rather than accepting and working with items and people on their own terms. If all that I am is my buying power and the stuff I have, such a belief would suggest that I have an empty sense of self.

This project is a rejection of the technological mindset that seems predicated upon a fast-paced mentality, which also then has no time for meditation. This project is a recognition that a slower paced and communal life is more healthful on many different levels. Discovering the “other you,” perhaps the “healthier you,” the “not socially pressured you,” the “free and wild you,” requires openness to what one might find. Answers about oneself and who one is, which one can only answer for oneself, can only be answered if one is still enough to ask them, and reflective and receptive enough to receive an answer. For instance, weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning.⁵³ So if there is no night, there is no chance for repentance and thus no chance for redemption in the morning.

Urban life is often fast-paced and sometimes does not serve to enable self-cultivation. Cities that never sleep, for example, are huge contributors to the light pollution problem. This may be because darkness is scary and dangerous and so we try to avoid it, rather than embrace it. The city, in an attempt to please, has seemed to eliminate weeping as a credible option for emotional expression. The need to weep is something we seek to avoid. Weeping is cleansing and is a healthy response; avoiding things that make us weep, or suppressing our emotions so that we do not weep, leads to more problems, both psychological and physical. Weeping will pass, but is a necessary step to health. Furthermore, the city that never sleeps removes itself from

⁵³ Psalms 30:5

the natural rhythms of working hard and then resting. Rather it attempts to work hard constantly, and thus becomes exhausted more regularly, and is ultimately less productive in the quest for a balanced, sustainable life.

As highlighted in *Ecopsychology*, “it is not a new idea that we who live in mass technological society suffer psychological addiction to specific machines like cars, telephones, and computers and even to tech itself.”⁵⁴ As Michael Schwartz says, “we no longer use technology, we live it”⁵⁵ Technology is always changing who we are. The speed with which one can change activities, from searching for how to make dinner, to communicating with others via Facebook, to downloading music may contribute to our lack of attention to any one activity for an extended period of time. This lack of attention has the capacity to reduce the quality of experience and, to speak economically, performance.

The addiction, however, can run even deeper. Some refer to it as a trauma: “the hallmark of the traumatic response is dissociation: a process by which we split our consciousness, repress whole arenas of experience and shut down our full perception of the world.”⁵⁶ The city, like much technology, offers a compartmentalized experience, rather than a full, holistic experience that the rural person experiences. Everything on the farm or in the garden is connected to other features of the rural environment, and this relation is perhaps easier to see in the simplicity of the rural setting.

The modern person attempts to split his consciousness into separate parts of his life, work life/home life for instance, and thus he returns to and lives through dichotomies. The urban method of trying to overcome these dichotomies may be to homeify the office and officefy the home, as I discussed earlier. However, as I have mentioned, this is a connection to virtual reality

⁵⁴ Glendinning p. 44

⁵⁵ As quoted by Glendinning p. 45

⁵⁶ Ibid 52-3

rather than actual reality. The small sustaining farmer or nature-based person is able to live life more fully integrated, and with greater concentration, because she realizes her small part in the large cosmos. She focuses not just on human life, but on human life in relation to its environment. Insofar as it keeps us compartmentalized from other things, the technological world is one of trauma, and the entire urban mindset is one of separation.

These psychological effects of urban or over-civilized life are also related to the notion of rest. There is, of course, the physical dimension of rest and sleep, but these are just as important for our psychological well-being. Berry suggests, “The goal of human life and therefore also its inspiration, must be to attain the peace and rest that marked the climax of creation.”⁵⁷ Rest that comes at the end of work is often more restful; it is the physical and psychological culmination of a *process* of work. After a creative outpouring, because it is also an outpouring of self, one needs to rest to be able to pour out oneself again, especially since it is a full investment into the project, perhaps a type of at-one-ment with the project. Rest, then, is also a respite from the work, much like Olmsted’s park provides a break from work.

Olmsted, writing about recreation, states:

In this study of this question all forms of recreation may, in the first place, be conveniently arranged under two general heads. One will include all of which the predominating influence is to stimulate exertion of any part or parts needing it; the other, all which cause us to receive pleasure without conscious exertion. Games chiefly of mental skill, such as chess, or athletic sports, as baseball, are examples of means of recreation of the first class, which may be termed that of

⁵⁷ Wirzba p. xvii

exertive recreation. Music and the fine arts generally of the second or receptive division.⁵⁸

Non-active participation can still count as re-creation, but of course re-creation of a different sort. A different sort of interaction with nature occurs when one is exerting one's self, versus not exerting. These reflect the different ways to create and cultivate self: physically, emotionally, spiritually, psychologically. The idea is that one can have all of these types of recreation at Central Park and other public green spaces like it.

Olmsted states that the goal with Central Park is:

We want a ground to which people may easily go after their day's work is done, and where they may stroll for an hour, seeing, hearing, and feeling nothing of the bustle and jar of the streets, where they shall, in effect, find the city put far away from them. We want the greatest possible contrast with the streets and the shops and the rooms of the town which will be consistent with convenience and the preservation of good order and neatness. We want, especially, the greatest possible contrast with the restraining and confining conditions of the town, those conditions which compel us to walk circumspectly, watchfully, jealously, which compel us to look closely upon others without sympathy. Practically, what we most want is a simple, broad, open space of clean greensward, with sufficient play of surface and a sufficient number of trees about it to supply a variety of light and shade. This we want as a central feature. We want depth of wood enough about it not only for comfort in hot weather, but to completely shut out the city from our landscape.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Olmsted p. 73

⁵⁹ Olmsted p. 80

Notice here Olmsted refers to a variety of light and shade. This notion of variety is necessary for our sense of beauty. The park also aims to offer freedom, that is, freedom from constraint. The variety of light and the hiding of the city speak to a multi-dimensional removal from and forgetting about the “real” world and the struggles associated with it. Olmsted here refers to many of the issues at stake: pace of life, use of all of the senses, a little wildness, and above all else, freedom from our limited, confined life. The park is a sanctuary or respite that may be even more pronounced now, since it is in the midst of the busiest city in the world, a city that never sleeps and thus never offers time to reflect or to escape the bustle and noise.

Modern persons guard themselves against silence because “there is indeed a potential of terror in it. It raises still all the old answerless questions of origins and ends. It asks a man what is the use and the worth of his life....the experience of silence must be basic to any religious feeling.”⁶⁰ A city that never sleeps is one that is never quiet, and thus neither has to ask itself these questions of existence. In silence or perhaps in quietness, we can realize that we are not the creators and controllers of everything, and we gain a new insight into our place in the larger environment. We realize that even if we stop our activities, the rest of the world does not stop its activities. The world may seem to slow down, but birds still chirp and water still flows. Perhaps absolute silence is not possible nor advisable. But as Berry suggests, it may be important to have silence from the man-made world. The noise pollution of a large city can prevent us from developing an aesthetic appreciation for sounds of nature, because all of those quieter noises are masked by the artificial sounds of cars and other automated noises. These noises, because they are louder, provide a more effective distraction. It has become more comfortable for most people to be surrounded by noise. It seems perhaps that darkness is scary or avoided for many of the same reasons; for example, in darkness one is confronted with one’s own existence. If one is not

⁶⁰ Nature Consumers p. 50

constantly confronted with manufactured images or sounds, perhaps there remain only oneself and reality. Perhaps the lack of images (as contrasted with reality) limits the possibility for distraction from the questions of existence. An excess of light and sound thus may preclude some possibilities for self-cultivation.

Returning to Thoreau, the health benefits of walking go beyond mere exercise or even fresh air; moreover, we, as Thoreau suggests, should “ruminate when walking.”⁶¹ Walking provides a good opportunity to meditate, free from other distractions, such as excessive manufactured light and sound. Part of the danger of not valuing nature is losing the opportunity to be removed from distractions. Distractions have only increased; they are, I think, more constant now than they were in Thoreau’s day. As cities have grown and technology has become more common place, it is almost expected in some professions that employees take work home with them. Life is full of distractions that help initiate lack of focus, real depth of thought and attention. For example, one can think of the difference between the time and attention taken to write a hand-written letter, as contrasted with the seeming lack of care and attention associated with sending most emails or texts. Today it seems that life is noisy, and the silence is merely that interruption of noise. In the woods or in the garden or on the farm silence is a more “natural” state and the noise becomes the interruption. Distractions tend to take us away from the reality and the gravity of silence. Taking our lives in the direction of the quietness of natural environments can help return some balance to them.

Furthermore, in gardening as well as walking, there is a hearkening back to the need for stillness and meditation: “...gardening provides time for contemplation...gardening also provides a basis for socializing, talking with other gardeners about successes and problems.”⁶²

⁶¹ Thoreau p. 596

⁶² Lewis p. 247

While working with one's hands, the mind is free to contemplate the profound, or free to contemplate nothing and merely enjoy the activity. Or, one could be thinking about the future of the activity; the hard work now will result in potentially beautiful flowers and plants later. One is both living in the now and in the future as well, and one is not alone in this endeavor, as there is a camaraderie with other gardeners as well as with nature, to create beautiful life that others can appreciate. Lewis adds, "plants take away some of the anxiety and tension of the immediate now by showing us that there are enduring patterns of life."⁶³ This is reflective of who the gardener is and/or wants to be.

Back to the "Roots" of Human Growth

There is a biological appeal to being surrounded by other life forms, be they trees, plants, animals, or one of the sources of life, water. The biological need for water is satisfied and fears are alleviated if one is close enough to it to see it every day. Of course there are concerns with water as well, such as flooding and drought, but the appeal of water buries those less-than-appealing aspects, and we presume that those aspects will be the exception rather than the norm. However, given climate chaos, those extreme situations may be becoming more the norm now. This may have the impact of making water less appealing, due to disasters (such as hurricanes), or perhaps it will have the opposite effect. If water becomes scarce, one might rather be closer to it. Arizona is an appealing place to which to retire only because they pump the water in from elsewhere. We are natural beings in part dependent on the phenomena of natural settings, both for survival and for growth.

⁶³ Charles Lewis 1985 speech to American Horticultural Society as quoted by Lyndon B Miller "Perennial in urban Areas" *The American Gardener: A Sampler* Ed. Allen Lacy (Macmillan 1990) p. 68

Given this necessary connection between ourselves and our place in nature, “growing away from the soil has spiritual as well as economic consequences.”⁶⁴ Our self-cultivation—physical, economic, social, moral, and spiritual—seems naturally tied to our relations to land, soil, and natural settings. As evidenced in Leopold’s quote, even he does not deny the economic resources of nature, but firstly, and more importantly, Leopold recognizes the spiritual consequences. This recognition, then, hearkens back to the romantic tradition, which emphasized spiritual considerations above all else, and which I will emphasize in the next chapter.

The economic consequences are more obvious. Other benefits from relating to earth features are more hidden, but they may also be more fundamental and more important for the self. The soil itself is a necessary condition for our being “at home.” All flora and fauna require soil. Food comes from soil, houses are built upon soil, and good soil is necessary for good crops. Thoreau states that the “same soil is good for men and for trees.”⁶⁵ A good soil is one rich in nutrients, so that a seed can establish good, strong, deep roots, and the same holds for us as well. We must find good places to plant ourselves; we must find a good location to become rooted. Just as with the soil for seeds, one must be properly attuned to find it. We must find our place, or a place that is good for us, to grow deep roots and grow upward. This may be easier to do if we share the soil with good plants.

E. O. Wilson states that there is a tendency to focus on life, which he calls “biophilia...the innate tendency to focus on life and lifelike processes.”⁶⁶ McDermott claims it is more of a prejudice, that we “harbor a deep conviction [perhaps prejudice is a better word] of the superiority of the organic over the inorganic, of the natural order over the artificial. Nonorganic

⁶⁴ Aldo Leopold *River of the Mother of God* and other essays by Aldo Leopold Ed. J. Baird Callicott (University of Wisconsin, 1992) p. 103

⁶⁵ Thoreau p. 613

⁶⁶ Wilson p. 1

material becomes at best functional and at worst dehumanizing.”⁶⁷ This innate connection to life is precisely what gets broken when we are separated from it or choose to focus on the artificial. This “prejudice” toward the organic seems both natural and useful.

It is no coincidence that manufacturers attempt to make the artificial as life-like as possible, for instance having phones and computers that “talk” to us with human or human-like voices. As Wilson argues, “The mind is biologically prone to discursive communication that expands thought. Mankind, in Richard Rorty’s expression, is the poetic species. The symbols of art, music, and language freight power well beyond their outward and literal meanings. So each one also condenses large quantities of information.”⁶⁸ The world is complicated and the mind must make shortcuts when possible, like symbols that stand in for larger meanings.

If McDermott is right, nature itself does this. The concept of nature stands in for a particular motif, rather than nature itself. Thus we conveniently forget the actual nature that had to be conquered, and instead replace it with a kinder, gentler notion of nature that is defenseless against us. This biophilia may help to explain the healing power of taking care of plants that I referenced earlier, and may also say something about why the death of a plant or animal affects us so deeply. We have such a predilection for the natural that we see faces in the moon, we envision cars as having faces and thus personalities, or we draw the sun with sunglasses. We attempt to, or perhaps cannot help but, give human personality to non-human entities. It is through this biophilic view that we both give and receive meaning.

Pollan admits that “a garden ethic would be frankly anthropocentric.”⁶⁹ But this anthropocentrism focuses on the *relation* between humans and natural environments. Gardening will always include a human element and gardens will have uses for humans. Thus, as I noted

⁶⁷ McDermott p. 179

⁶⁸ Wilson p. 74

⁶⁹ Pollan p. 191

earlier, my defense of the garden model is premised on its enabling a balance between our needs and the virtues of natural settings. A mindset that recognizes the environment's importance for us involves a human perspective. Pollan continues, "an ethic based on a garden would give local answers. Unlike the wilderness idea, it would propose different solutions in different places and time."⁷⁰ Again, an extreme wilderness of the sort Nash suggests might become so isolated from us that it would no longer have any direct relational influence. Such a natural setting would not have a role in the human self-cultivation in which I am interested.

There is an extremely easy answer for the island motif-ers, 'yes' to anything in our realm, 'no' to anything in nature's realm. This type of black and white thinking does not take into consideration particular placedness; rather it presumes the same answers will hold for all places. However, just as no two marriages are alike, so no two places are precisely alike. Thus, in my view, we would need to treat each local natural environment appropriately, according to its features and possibilities. And we would also need to explore ways in which each environment can assist us in our attempts to ameliorate our lives.

William Major, in *Grounded Vision*, states, "Pollan's second nature, for instance, functions as a primer on how to achieve a working sense of place apart from the extremes of romantic nature worship, on the one hand, and the opposing ideology of control of the natural world, on the other."⁷¹ This notion of working implies the necessarily ongoing and continually developing work, as well as the actual work it takes to establish placehood.

The garden motif is not a 'sit on the sidelines' sense of place, as in a place where one happens to live right now; it instead focuses on and works with the very nature of the place. Meaningfulness in our relations to land or place comes as a result of the work that one puts into

⁷⁰ Ibid p. 190

⁷¹ William Major *Grounded Vision: New Agrarianism and the Academy* (university of Alabama, 2011) p. 32

the investment. The garden model is not a nature worship model, which would seem to lend itself to the island isolation model Nash suggests. Berry, in “Home Economics,” discusses the distance needed to recognize nature as other; “human nature,” he says, “partakes of nature, participates in it, is dependent on it and yet is different from it.”⁷² A pure worship model, in the sense that Pollan is describing the romantics, would not be participatory in the sense Berry is implying here.

Instead of focusing on our relations to natural environments, we, as dominators, have created for ourselves:

...an ersatz environment. Of metal, glass, concrete and asphalt; congested automobile traffic; drugs, poverty, homelessness and the street crime they breed—all these seriously compromise our physical, emotional and spiritual wellness. Environmental wellness, in short, is a necessary condition for human health and well-being generally. We cannot pursue personal wellness unless we also work collectively and cooperatively to ensure an improvement in our natural and fabricated environment.⁷³

Callicott here is discussing not just the seemingly obvious physical benefits mentioned earlier, but additionally, what the ecopsychologists, and to a lesser extent Berry and Pollan, would state. We need to tend to our natural settings and our interactions with them, if we wish to develop and cultivate ourselves.

Health

The physical and psychological aspects of our lives must work together for complete wellness. This complete view of wellness stands in stark contrast to views that specialize and

⁷² Wendell Berry “Preserving Wildness” *Home Economics* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1987) p. 141

⁷³ J Baird Callicott “Environmental Wellness” *Beyond the Land Ethic*. (SUNY, 1999) p. 285

focus only on compartmentalized and non-natural phenomena. Life is holistic. There is a natural connection, then, to be found between ‘environmentalists’ and those who advocate more ‘natural’ or holistic eating and remedying of ailments. They emphasize the connectivity of life and its pursuits and endeavors, rather than its disconnections. The disconnections are often man-made, unnatural, and experientially inaccurate.

Such holism grounds deep ecology, the Gaia hypothesis and similar notions. Though these views can be attractive, my focus on human self-cultivation seem to require an in-between outlook. In my view, holism requires us to focus on our relations with natural environments, but resists having those relations swallowed up or made unimportant by an over-emphasis on the whole. What is “local” is related to the whole; but it is also significant as local. Thus, my quest is for balance in our lives and in our engagement with natural environments.

The garden model emphasizes “getting along with nature.” In keeping with the romantic notion, “we go to the wilderness places to be restored, to be instructed in the natural economics of fertility and healing, to admire what we cannot make.”⁷⁴ There is a simplicity of life that we realize anew when we have a relationship with nature. We are born, we live and then we die, just like plants and all other living creatures. If we choose to make life more complicated, then we risk losing sight of who and what we are. Our perspective gets restored when we remember the natural economics of the wilderness. But we must also be attuned to wilderness to understand it and to have our perspectives set aright. Just because nature is teaching, or available for office hours, does not mean everyone is ready to grasp what is being taught. We must be ready, just as in Thoreau’s “Walking” essay; one must be properly prepared to take a proper walk.

Olmsted states, “no one who has closely observed the conduct of the people who visit the park, can doubt that it exercises a distinctly harmonizing and refining influence upon the most

⁷⁴ Wendell Berry “Getting along with Nature” *Home Economics* p. 17

unfortunate and most lawless classes of the city—an influence favorable to courtesy, self-control, and temperance.”⁷⁵ This relates to some of the ecopsychological benefits of a garden:

something of the human spirit is invested in the gardening process. Gardeners make a personal commitment in accepting responsibility for the well-being of their plants...the deeper meanings of gardening may be found in the gardener’s response to its progress. Each sprouting seed, new leaf, or shoot provides immediate proof to the gardener that his nurturing activities have been successful. Such positive feedback serves to entwine him even more closely with his plants... gardening provides connectedness...a sense of humility is gained through a partnership that links mental and physical effort with the wisdom inherent in a living seed or plant⁷⁶

Paul Shepard states, “changing the world becomes an unconscious desperate substitute for changing the self.”⁷⁷ Perhaps it is the case that we do not want to change ourselves. We do not want to grow and mature, so we change the world instead. Perhaps the change in the world is reflective of the way in which we, subconsciously, want to change ourselves. If we are encouraging others to simplify and return to nature, is it because we also want to simplify our inner selves. Perhaps we must simplify to get back to who we really are or want to be. This is a reminder of Thoreau’s experiment at Walden, for instance.

If we are properly attuned, then nature “can symbolize permanence and renewal in an otherwise often chaotic atmosphere.”⁷⁸ Even though one’s job may be fleeting, one can find

⁷⁵ Olmsted p. 96

⁷⁶ Charles Lewis “Gardening as Healing Process” *The Meaning of Gardens: Idea, Place and Action*. . Ed. Mark Francis and Randolph T. Hester, Jr. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990) p. 247

⁷⁷ Paul Shepard “Nature and Madness” *Ecopsychology Restoring the Earth Healing the Mind*. Ed. Theodore Roszak, Mary E. Gomes and Allen D. Kanner. (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1995). P. 32

⁷⁸ Miller p. 64

stability and permanence in Central Park; it will always be there, at least seemingly.

Psychologically, this may speak to the connection one has with nature and the long-view of time that thinking more naturally can instill. This is counter-cultural since, in modern times in the U.S., nothing is valued beyond its economic import. Berry states, “when nothing is valued for what it is, everything is destined to be wasted.”⁷⁹ All things, nature, self, etc. become valued for how much they are monetarily worth when developed and cultivated. One can think of disposable income, disposable cell phones, disposable conversations, and disposable nature. This speaks to the technological mindset that I discussed earlier, and the abuses and addictions that follow; this addiction to money is a psychological dis-ease, and the cure may be the woods, the garden, the park, or the farm.

Death

Gardens can also remind us of death and mortality. Perennials can symbolize death and rebirth, a rejuvenating of self. Annuals are connected to finitude. If Heidegger and others are right, it is our very finitude that forces us to act and forces us to live. Perhaps what one is attempting to control in the garden is death. We attempt to distract ourselves from our finitude, and gardens put it at the forefront. Though we try to give the garden every chance of survival by applying fertilizer, ensuring it has enough water, and more, ultimately we do not control it.

This is analogous to our lives. We try, in varying degrees, to eat right and get proper exercise, realizing that such a lifestyle lends itself to longer, happier life, survival and thriving for as long as possible; but ultimately, we cannot determine when our plants or ourselves die. There are things we cannot control, such as when the first frost occurs, or when a passing animal is hungry, just as we cannot control whether we get cancer or get hit by a drunken driver. This

⁷⁹ A Nation Rich In Natural Resources”. *Home Economics: Fourteen Essays*. (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1987) p. 135-6

connection to death is expressed in part by the fact that many gardeners want their ashes placed in their garden. This is also a symbol of their connection to the earth, their blood, sweat, tears and now ashes are a part of their creation. There is also an aspect of the notion of dust to dust; the gardener becomes fertilizer and a real part of the garden. Even cemeteries are a type of garden, a garden of bodies in combination with flowers and stone. Originally, flowers were used to mask the smell of decaying bodies, but now they bring beauty to death. There may perhaps even be a link to the notion of Eden, a garden where initially there was no death.

Values

If Henry Ward Beecher is right, then “a love of flowers would beget early rising, industry, habits of close observation, and of reading.”⁸⁰ It is similar thinking that has inspired Berry and Pollan to be the authors they are, and has inspired this project as well. Technological or synthetic replication of nature would not beget any of these things, because there would be no need to do any of these things. If we have a technological mindset, we could not have a love of flowers beyond the picturesque, and maybe not even then.

In fully natural settings, early rising is rewarded by the play of the rising sun upon the morning dew or frost, and the labor necessary to work the ground is easier in the morning. One must be somewhat industrious even to attempt a garden and to maintain upkeep of a garden, as it requires commitment. A garden caretaker must be in the habit of close observation if she wants the garden to thrive; she must be aware, through observation, of how wet or dry the ground and land are and need to be. And it is through that close observation that she will be able to appreciate the beauty of the plant. This time and attention that is paid may also extend to other things, for example, reading a book or making a marriage meaningful. In one sense, she is

⁸⁰ Henry Ward Beecher “A Plea for Health and Floriculture” *American Gardener: A Sampler* (Macmillan, 1990) p. 19

reading the health of the plant through close observation. Beecher states, “it would incline the mind to notice natural phenomena and to reason upon them. It would occupy the mind by pure thoughts and inspire a sweet and gentle enthusiasm; maintain simplicity and taste; and in connection with personal instruction.”⁸¹

Berry bemoans the fact that value has come to be equated with the amount of money that would be gained in exchange for a particular item. Other types of value are often overlooked; this is true even in higher education, where humanities degrees are ridiculed for being economically useless. The monetary value is a cheapened sense of value, which leads to misuse not only of land but also of human life. We miss much of what should be valued in us when we reduce ourselves to a dollar amount or to a potential dollar amount. When someone asks what one does, what is invariably meant is how does the person earn money or “make a living,” rather than one’s hobbies, lifestyle, or character.

Additionally, if things are valued only for what they could become (land that could be developed for shopping and people who could become an exploited part of a workforce) then all value from what they currently are is lost. This again is related to the time and attention needed to recognize the value of “resources” as something more than just resources for the future, but rather as something of value now. There may additionally be a connection here between the purely economic mindset and a type of social Darwinism, which would claim that mentally and physically challenged folks are not valuable. Since they cannot contribute as much to the economy of a society, therefore, society does not need to take care of them.

Berry asks, “Are we satisfied? That we live in an economy propelled by dissatisfaction and ingratitude clearly indicates that we are not.”⁸² Economic success is obviously not enough;

⁸¹ Ibid p. 19

⁸² Wirzba xix

one thing the internet seems to have demonstrated is that we do want to be connected. It should be no surprise that we have become the “most unhappy average citizen in the history of the world” whose only concerns are “making money and entertaining himself, [yet] for all his leisure and recreation, he feels bad, looks bad, he’s overweight his health is poor...the average citizen is anxious...because he is helpless.”⁸³ There are both physical and psychological considerations. But the remedy is available, “if one can respond to the quiet of these places [streams and rocky patches] with quiet and with enough attention the woods will reveal its lives.”⁸⁴

As I emphasized throughout this chapter, one must be attuned to be open in order to recognize the other lives, and in so doing, one may realize one’s own place in all of nature. We become both less important (the world would go on without us, we are not the center of universe) but also, more importantly, we may each find a place and a purpose. We fit in nature; nature was created for our enjoyment and education, not to be exploited for financial gain.

Financial stability may be part of the fully realized self, but we miss so much if we focus solely on the economic aspect of life. In “Preserving Wildness” Berry states, “The so called materialism of our own time is...insatiably destructive of the material world.”⁸⁵ We become trained to consume, rather than to appreciate and experience, and the same mindset influences our experience of nature. “What one has (house or job, spouse or car) is only valuable insofar as it can be exchanged for what one believes that one wants—a limitless economic process based upon boundless dissatisfaction.”⁸⁶ These all contribute to the psychological dis-ease that is so often associated with the modern person in the United States.

⁸³ Crisis of Character p. 20-1

⁸⁴ Nature Consumers p. 53

⁸⁵ Wendell Berry “Preserving wildness” Home Economics p. 145

⁸⁶ Ibid p. 145

Leopold echoes this tie between economic-only value and psychological dis-ease: “our bigger-and-better society is now [1948] like a hypochondriac, so obsessed with its own economic health as to have lost the capacity to remain healthy.”⁸⁷ Our health goes beyond just how much money we have.

There may also be something to be said of the connection between genius and the environment. Rolston suggests that “one reason we lament the passing of wilderness is that we do not want entirely to tame this aboriginal element in which our genius was forged.”⁸⁸ Perhaps we need the difficulties presented by nature in order to overcome them through ingenuity. Perhaps we need to preserve nature so that it can present new problems for us to solve, such as how to preserve it, for instance. Or perhaps due to this nostalgia, we need to keep nature around as a cultural artifact of our past.

Everything that has been said about natural environments and about the garden motif changes if the natural environment becomes an abandoned wilderness: “unlike a wild place a human place that has gone wild can be strangely forbidding and even depressing.”⁸⁹ A forbidding nature may be important for a wild place, for it may also be foreboding. With a completely wild place this forbidding is to be somewhat expected, whereas a human place should be welcoming. In essence, the abandoned place has had enough human interaction to mess it up, and not enough to keep it up and keep it beautiful. The place is depressing because of what it could have been, or perhaps what it once was. The place is capable of so much more meaning and beauty. An unkempt garden is too wild by most standards (though perhaps not Thoreau’s) and could be indicative of someone who in general is unkempt and chaotic. Some may claim that an abandoned environment is too foreboding and too scary for any human interaction. This is a

⁸⁷ Leopold p. 21

⁸⁸ Values in nature p. 88

⁸⁹ Wendell Berry “Long-legged House” *The Long-legged House*. (Berkeley: Counterpoint Press, 2012) 154

theme I will discuss more in the final chapter, in my discussion of the beautiful and the sublime.
However, in the next chapter I will move to the Spirit aspect of self-cultivation.

CHAPTER 2

SPIRIT

In this chapter, I will be discussing the potentially transcendent aspect of the natural environment and its connection to Kant's notion of the sublime, before describing a more immanent understanding of the environment, which is also necessary for a potentially self-cultivating relationship with the environment. In the preceding chapter I moved from the outer world, which we experience firstly through the body, toward the inner world of the mind. In this chapter I will continue the discussion of the internal with a discussion of spirit. By spirit I mean what Emerson is talking about in the first Nature essay, an "ineffable essence."⁹⁰ It is the part of the self that cannot be easily described, a part of us where "both language and thought desert us."⁹¹ As will become apparent, "it is the organ through which the universal spirit speaks to the individual, and strives to lead back the individual to it."⁹² Spirit leads us to Nature/God as ideals. Spirit "animates me."⁹³ It is an essential feature of the self's experience.

Our Role in Nature

To begin, Pollan claims that the "romantic metaphor offers us no role in nature except as an observer or worshiper; to act in nature is to stain it with culture."⁹⁴ I think this is a mistaken understanding of romanticism, and it is the same false thinking that leads Nash to his conclusion of islands of civilization. My idea of romanticism does allow for the cultivation of nature without staining it. In fact, the romantic tradition encourages interaction with the environment. Both Emerson and Thoreau see farming as a way of life that can lead to practical *and* spiritual insights. In addition, gardening is acting in nature without necessarily "staining" the natural

⁹⁰ Ralph Waldo Emerson Nature (1st) Essential Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson p. 32

⁹¹ Ibid p. 32

⁹² Ibid p. 32

⁹³ Ibid p. 33

⁹⁴ Michael Pollan *Second Nature: A Gardener's Education*. (New York: Grove Press, 1991) p. 163

environment. A garden or personal farm may be an enhancement of the natural. Without gardens or personal farms, it would not be possible to grow food, except by way of huge industrial farms, which obviously *are* staining the environment. To claim that the romantics offer us no role is to misconstrue the movement and succumb, perhaps, to a nostalgic reading of it. Indeed, Pollan himself is in keeping with the romantic metaphor when he emphasizes cultivation, and warns against both overcultivation and undercultivation. Undercultivation, as Pollan himself admits, is as much of a problem in the garden, for example, as overcultivation. Overcultivation occurs when the gardener “uses large quantities of fertilizer to coax quick growth from his plants [and] will find them more susceptible to insects and disease.”⁹⁵ By trying to circumvent the natural rhythms of the garden, by attempting to make the blooms prettier earlier and last longer, the gardener damages the garden. He or she has done too much and not allowed the garden itself or God/Nature to have enough of a role. This overcultivation can also be clearly seen in lawn “care,” where chemicals are added to make grass greener earlier and to make its greenness last longer into the fall, and also to make the grass more uniform, thus making it only slightly natural. The other main type of failure, undercultivation “usually indicates that the gardener has been reluctant to alter the landscape to the extent his plants require; he has not sufficiently tamed nature... he didn’t do enough to protect his plants from their [animal] incursions.”⁹⁶ Given that gardeners are already making choices to alter the land by growing whatever they are choosing to grow rather than whatever would naturally grow, they are already cultivating the land to some extent. The issue is balancing, so that the natural and the man-chosen can work together for results that are beneficial, both for nature and for human self-cultivation. There is a need for the naturally wild and the civilized, and the in-between, which can be most adequately expressed in

⁹⁵ Ibid p. 123

⁹⁶ Ibid p. 123

the garden. Gardening offers the possibility for a happy medium between undercultivation (all wild) and overcultivation (no wild).

This in-between is exemplified by weeding itself:

Consider what weeding is: the process by which we make informed choices in nature, discriminate between good and bad, apply our intelligence and sweat to the earth. To weed is to bring culture to nature—which is why we say when we are weeding that we are cultivating the soil. Weeding in this sense is not a nuisance that follows from gardening, but its very essence. And like gardening, weeding at a certain point becomes an obligation.⁹⁷

While the person weeding does make choices that nature perhaps would not have made, she is adding some value through her choices. She enters the process of nature by planting and cultivating.

Additionally, this cultivating requires fertilizer. Good fertilizers are ones that release slowly. If a fertilizer releases too quickly, then it is all flash and not enough substance; there is not enough endurance. Like everything else with respect to the garden, it takes time to really fertilize and nourish the plants. This ‘taking time’ then leads to the psychological benefits I discussed in the last chapter. Later in this chapter, I will explore these benefits in relation to the pace of life that gardening encourages, as well as the deep care and love that can be cultivated in the process. If all that is desired is superficial or picturesque or scenic landscapes, then perhaps the best options would be painting the lawn or installing ProTurf. Those options are all superficial; they cover up the unhealthiness underneath. It is the perfect look that one would like the world to see (as most chemicals, etc. are applied to the front yard as contrasted with the back, which is oft times allowed to be at least, relatively speaking, more wild). One can also relate this

⁹⁷ Ibid p. 115

to a marathon. Running a marathon requires patience. One cannot sprint at the beginning and expect to have enough endurance to last the full 26.2 miles. Consider also the parable of Jesus: “And some [seeds] fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth: But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away.”⁹⁸ This is also analogous to people who lose a large amount of weight through a crash diet, only to gain it back again once the diet is over. A healthier and more lasting method of weight loss is hard work, and this requires lifestyle changes. It takes more time but lasts longer, perhaps in part because the investment of time results in more value to the process and also the result of the process.

While the right amount of cultivation requires interaction among the land, humans, and Nature/God, just as health requires a balance of good food and exercise, having only one without the other will not lead to good overall health. Constant interaction can easily lead to the overcultivating problem. To worship nature as something wholly distant highlights only the transcendental aspect of nature, and by extension only the transcendent aspect of God. This is an aspect of God shared by deists and others, who may believe in a great creator, but one who is now so separate that we cannot know anything about him; since he is so distant, his existence, even if true is meaningless to us. A teacher who is too aloof and is not approachable cannot effectively teach. S/he must be somewhat, if not fully, relatable. If s/he is too relatable, then s/ he will be seen as a friend rather than an instructor. Parents who are best friends are not effective parents. They have overcultivated a particular type of relationship, to the detriment of what is healthiest for both parent and child.

However, even if Pollan is right about the romantic approach to the environment, that we are left being only worshipers of nature, even worship requires some interaction with that which

⁹⁸ Mark 4

is being worshiped, in order for the worship to be meaningful. Analogously, if relatives are too distant, one has no interaction with them. Then, even if they are related by blood, they are not relating. The relationship, though it is objectively the case, becomes so devoid of meaning and value that it does not matter that it is true. For many, even if it is the case that there is a God, if he is merely transcendent, then so what? This holds true for nature as well. Even if Nash gets his wish and has islands of civilization and islands of nature, and we know that the islands exist, so what? It makes little or no difference for our daily lives. There must be an aspect of immanence as well. Nash would need to contend that the mere presence of nature—though separated from us—is meaningful enough for us. Even the sublime, while completely other, is still close enough to assign meaning to the experience, as I will discuss in a moment. So perhaps in reality there are four levels of relationship: 1) so close that the object or other is absorbed by the self; 2) distant enough to recognize its otherness but in a relationship that influences the self (the garden motif); 3) the sublime: more distant and seen as completely other but still in a close enough relationship to recognize it and feel it; 4) so other it is not even recognized, so transcendent that it is not recognizable and thus has no effect whatsoever and no meaning at all.

Sublime

Satisfaction with respect to the sublime refers to indeterminate concepts, “the beautiful in nature is connected with the form of the object, which consists in having boundaries. The sublime, on the other hand, is to be found in the formless object, so far as in it or by occasion of it boundlessness is represented, and yet its totality is also present to thought.”⁹⁹ In having no boundaries, it is too massive to comprehend the object of thought. One thinks of the Grand Canyon or the Appalachian Mountains; all one can experience are parts of each. From our limited perspective, they are boundless and formless, but their vastness is at the same time

⁹⁹ Immanuel Kant *Critique of Judgement*. Trans by J.H. Bernard. (New York: Hafner Press, 1951) p. 82

present to our mind. This sublime then is “incompatible with charms [the pleasant sensory only] ...attracted by the object but is ever being alternately repelled.”¹⁰⁰ By being aware of our unawareness, we are attracted to our unawareness, perhaps like the call of the natural, we are naturally curious and know that while we will be dis-comforted, that is what we need. But we also recognize that it will result in unease, which frightens us, and we are inclined to avoid things that frighten. We are, then, attracted to and repelled by the sublime at the same time.

The sublime may also be related to the concept of death. One thinks especially about John Muir and his experiences in the Rocky Mountains. When one is so close to death, a single wrong step could result in death; being forced to face one’s own mortality is itself a cause for terror and relief. That we will die one day, while it is frightening to face that fact, because it is unknown when, how and what will happen next, is at the same time a feeling of ease. Whatever troubles we may have will be alleviated. There will be no more worrying or sorrow after death, and the world will go on without us. Since we are not at the center of the universe, the work is not all on our shoulders. These encounters could remind us that there is something larger at work, namely Nature/God. Of course it would be a mistake to take no responsibility and expect that things will turn out well regardless of what we do, even though this is one view of God’s work. However, even if all precautions are taken, things may not turn out as expected. We are not in complete control. We are neither all powerful nor fully responsible. Even if we apply chemicals to our lawn, a wild bit of grass may grow that does not fit with the rest. Despite the level of care and love we may give to a plant, it may not grow. We have some control, but not all, and that should be a refreshing reminder of our place in the larger picture of things.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid p. 83

Another reminder of our place is our experience of the sublime: "nature is therefore sublime in those of its phenomena whose intuition brings with it the idea of its infinity."¹⁰¹ Infinity can only be understood in the abstract and not really grasped, because it cannot be apprehended through the senses. The sublime is in this way wholly transcendent. Perhaps this is akin to using the word "God" as a place-holder for things that science cannot yet explain.

But even with this concept of fear and dis-ease, Kant states, "he who fears can form no judgment about the sublime in nature, just as he who is seduced by inclination and appetite can form no judgment about the beautiful....it is impossible to find satisfaction in a terror that is seriously felt."¹⁰² If one is in immediate danger, then quite obviously, he is too interested to be able to contemplate anything other than survival. It is only once the danger is distant enough to be contemplated that one can consider one's place in the universe and so forth, much like having enough distance from the garden to recognize it as other and learn from it.

Bold, overhanging, and as it were threatening rocks; clouds piled up on the sky, moving with lighting flashes and thunder peals...these exhibit our faculty of resistance as insignificantly small in comparison with their might. But the sight of them is the more attractive, the more fearful it is, provided only that we are in security; and we willingly call these objects sublime, because they raise the energies of the soul above their accustomed height and discover in us a faculty of resistance of a quite different kind, which gives us courage to measure ourselves against the apparent almightiness of nature.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Ibid p. 94

¹⁰² Ibid p. 100

¹⁰³ Ibid p. 100-1

Again, if we measure ourselves against nature, we are found wanting, and the terrifying feeling of that should put us in our place, which is out of the center. This de-centering then allows one to be a part of nature without being all of nature.

“Nature [then] excites the ideas of the sublime in its chaos or in its wildest and most irregular disorder and desolation, provided size and might are perceived.”¹⁰⁴ The chaos and wildness of the sublime lead to fear and unease. A certain amount of this may be good for developing a self. There is a strong connection between wildness and fear. This fear may be related to the notion of getting lost, which I discussed in the previous chapter; moreover, the immediacy of death may be an important realization. If one thinks herself to be the center of the universe, perhaps she does not truly think she can die, and coming face-to-face with something greater than herself, to such an overwhelming degree, forces her into a contemplation that is perhaps unfamiliar. The size and might are perceived in part, but since they are sublime, they cannot be grasped in totality. But Kant admits, the sublime is “not nearly so important or rich in consequences as a true concept of the beautiful.”¹⁰⁵ While the sublime is an important thing to experience, the more meaningful and more important features are the beautiful, the close enough to understand, the close enough to interact with, and the close enough to get hands dirty in. These are two different features of experience.

Berry states, “as we transform the wilderness into scenery we begin to feel in the presence of ‘nature’ an awe that was increasingly statistical. We could not become appreciators of the creation until we had taken its measure.”¹⁰⁶ This seems to speak to many of Berry’s themes. The taking of nature’s measure is an attempt to grasp it fully, to consume it, to own and possess it, to make it part of ourselves so that we do not have to deal with its otherness. This

¹⁰⁴ Ibid p. 84

¹⁰⁵ Ibid p. 84

¹⁰⁶ Wendell Berry Body and the Earth

measure may also be primarily an economic measure: how much is the land worth, monetarily speaking? The awe is then reduced to statistical measuring, making it fully graspable by numbers, rather than allowing it to be experienced fully. By making it only a statistical measuring, we remove and distance ourselves from the *experience* of it as an other. This experience may be either a sensory experience or an extrasensory feeling of awe. Since we prefer to be the center of the universe, we would not be able to comprehend or feel awe. Awe can only occur in the presence of something so much grander and vaster, it is beyond our comprehension.

It is only once a place actually exists, once one is still and attuned to it, that it can truly exist. As Berry suggests, “because he could not be still, the place could not exist for him.”¹⁰⁷ It is not a true enough place for him to exist in or for it to exist for him; it is not a full place until he is ready to experience it as such. Perhaps for Berry and the long legged house, there is also something to be said about a hero’s journey. The hero returns home, but both he and the place have changed over time and only now is the hero ready to experience home differently. The hero returns home changed, so that he can change home. This stillness and solitude are necessary both for the experience of a home, as well as for the experience of the sublime, which may be a different type of home: a home where one can dwell more peacefully because one is absorbed. If one does not feel oneself to be the center of the universe, some of the pressure is relieved and one can dwell more peacefully in his/her home.

Contemplation

Olmsted, speaking of parks, says that “scenery [is] to be looked upon contemplatively and... is provocation of musing moods.”¹⁰⁸ But this holds with respect to the sublime places as well. Art and scenery are meant to invoke contemplation. With experience of a natural setting,

¹⁰⁷ Wendell Berry “Nature Consumers” *The Long-legged House*. (Berkeley: Counterpoint Press, 2012) p. 52

¹⁰⁸ Olmsted p. 28

some of the contemplation could center around its vastness. This is especially so if one gets lost, as Leopold and Thoreau suggest. This vastness, then, can remind us once again that we are not the center of the universe, as advertising sometimes indicates that we are. We have power, to be sure: power to buy, power to create or destroy, but these powers do not make us the center of the universe. If we were actually to live life as if we were the center, we could be led to solipsism; we would have no concern for any other, whether it be the natural world or other people. Berry gives the impression, as he recalls walking through the wildflowers of the nearby woods, of being so eager to perceive his surroundings that he cannot take it all in: even all senses are inadequate to fully grasp it. This inability to grasp fully is the key to Kant's notion of the sublime.

When one is in the mood to muse, it is difficult to do so in a cubicle. Rather, one needs space to clear one's head, etc. Perhaps it is the case that nature can force one to ruminate, but one cannot truly escape if one is in nature with a cell phone on. To be fully present and open to what nature may teach, one cannot be distracted by other things; instead, one must be still and know. However, this is not a *merely* intellectual endeavor; the senses must be involved as well, even while admitting that the senses are sometimes inadequate to fully grasp one's surroundings. Additionally the soul must be engaged. It is not a coincidence that in the Bible, for example, people often had encounters with God on mountaintops. Muir himself felt closest to God while hiking. On mountaintops, one is physically far above sea level and figuratively above the mundane routine of everyday life, and from a distance, mountains look as if they touch the sky (or heaven): "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of Heaven and Earth and does not live in temples built by human hands."¹⁰⁹ Rather, He lives in temples that He himself made, the mountains, the trees, etc. This is the starting point for Muir, but he seemingly

¹⁰⁹ Acts 17:24

moved to Nature worship rather than creator of nature worship. Berry, however, keeps his focus on Creator worship as he claims the Bible is firstly an outdoor book:

I do not think it is enough appreciated how much an outdoor book the Bible is. It is a hypaethereal book, such as Thoreau talked about--a book open to the sky. It is best read and understood outdoors, and the farther outdoors the better. Or that has been my experience of it. Passages that within walls seem improbable or incredible, outdoors seem merely natural. That is because outdoors we are confronted everywhere with wonders; we see that the miraculous is not extraordinary, but the common mode of existence. It is our daily bread. Whoever really has considered the lilies of the field or the birds of the air, and pondered the improbability of their existence in this warm world within the cold and empty stellar distances, will hardly balk at the fuming of water into wine--which was, after all, a very small miracle. We forget the greater and still continuing miracle by which water (with soil and sunlight) is fumed into grapes.¹¹⁰

The outdoors, then is a place of constant miracles, if we are attuned to recognize them. Miracles are going to happen whether we are noticing them or not; however, we can only gain insight about them if we are looking for them. Again, this is the importance of the human interested point of view. The importance is placed on our recognizing the miracles and recognizing them as something beyond our power and control.

Berry ties the Bible to a Kantian concept of the sublime by stating, “what the Bible might mean, or how it could mean anything, in a closed, air-conditioned building, I do not know. I know that holiness cannot be confined...Holiness is everywhere in Creation, it is as common as

¹¹⁰ Wendell Berry “Christianity and Survival of Creation”. Art of the Commonplace: Agrarian Essays of Wendell Berry. Ed. Norman Wirzba. (Washington D.C.: Counterpoint, 2002) p. 311

raindrops and leaves and blades of grass...”¹¹¹ Holiness cannot be confined; it is too vast even to be contemplated fully. Mountains are physically massive, and as such figuratively represent solidity, as well as the massiveness of the history they have seen. To think like a mountain is to take the long view. Mountains are places where awesome power may be revealed and where commands may be given. Moses received the 10 commandments on a mountain top, Abraham obeyed God in his attempted sacrifice of Isaac on a mountaintop, Jesus went up the mountain and called to those whom he wanted and they came to him. “And he appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, to be with him, and to be sent out to proclaim the message.”¹¹² In a similar fashion, one can even recall the importance of Mt. Olympus for the ancient Greeks.

Mountains may also be places where one can find solitude and truly be still: “after he had dismissed the crowds he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came he was there alone.”¹¹³ A mountain may, therefore, be a place where one can have *personal* communion with God or, as in Muir’s case, with Nature. When one is removed from the usual, and I am presuming here that a mountaintop is unusual, one is enabled to be in a different relationship with one’s surroundings. When one is alone, it may be the only time that one can truly commune with Nature/God. There is a stillness required for concentration on large issues of life (and death as well). This concentration or focus may be part of what prayer is supposed to be, so that one can hear God’s or Nature’s voice responding. It is difficult to hear God’s or Nature’s voice in the midst of other noises. There is a quietness that comes with being on a mountaintop. Here especially may be places where one is receptive to what God or Nature has to teach.

Perhaps not coincidentally, the other place Jesus went to pray was a garden, the place where he was asking that the Creator choose someone else for the task, a plea that requires a

¹¹¹ Berry Christianity and Survival of Creation Art of commonplace p. 311

¹¹² Mark 3:13-15

¹¹³ Matthew 14:21

certain amount of intimacy and love. But in a garden, rather than on a mountaintop, there is a different connection. The mountaintop may be a one-way conversation from a powerful entity from whom the individual is waiting for a reply; a garden, given the co-operative nature of it, may be a place for a more equal or transactional conversation. In a garden, one is reminded of the level of commitment and care necessary to finish tasks, which are never truly finished. In a garden, there is always something more that can be done and, because of love, is done.

While other types of wilderness and natural environments (other than mountains and gardens) also offer solitude, their purposes may be different than that of the mountains. Wilderness settings may be places of testing. Thoreau himself went to Walden Pond to test himself, to see what was necessary for survival. Perhaps the test is to see if one is humble enough to recognize that one is not the center of the universe, and so the wilderness becomes a place not only of testing but also of becoming humble before the creator of the universe and before Nature itself. “Remember the long way that the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, in order to humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commandments.”¹¹⁴ There is also a long history of experiences with Nature, leading to revelations of or further cultivations of self, perhaps through encounters with others. This is evidenced, for example, in Native American religions, such as the vision quest of the Lakota. These Native American journeys even frequently result in a change of name, thus indicating the rite of passage through which one has gone.

For many, life is a quest for comfort, and thus an attempt to avoid struggle. If there are no paths up a mountain, preferably paved, then many will not forge their own. That is, unless one buys into the consumer mindset that one can purchase a vehicle to forge the path with ease; one can, for example, purchase a TrailBlazer with the promise of somehow having an experience of

¹¹⁴ Deuteronomy 8:2

nature other than dominating it. Or perhaps the dominating of nature is precisely what is intended by “blazing a trail” rather than “finding a path,” even if it is not through the use of a vehicle. But there is a different attitude or mindset behind the intention to blaze a trail in order to experience a new part of nature, as contrasted with the intention to destroy it and to think that driving up a mountain is somehow akin to an authentic experience of nature. Rather than looking to commune with Nature or to hear from God, the intent seems to be to conquer that which is larger than oneself. There is an individuality that comes with the large vehicle mindset. It is an attempt to place oneself at the center of the universe, rather than recognizing that one is not. The mindset that “bigger is better” is connected to the belief that authenticity can be purchased. That having been said, however, at least the driver is attempting to overcome the fear that holds so many others back from an amazing experience, the breathtaking view for instance (though as mentioned in the last chapter this is using but one sense, and thus is not as full as if one were to walk instead). The experience is quite different if one experiences the journey through the windshield rather than feeling and smelling the air. It is the type of mindset that conquers the mountain in order to mark it off a checklist, rather than wanting to appreciate the journey or the final destination.

The Long View

Mountains, again, have longevity. From their elevated perch, they can see below and have the entirety of history within which to place current events in context. The longer one has been around and generally the closer one gets to death, the less excited one gets about every little thing. The child, with his child-like wonder, is fascinated by everything, asks questions constantly, and is excited about new discoveries. The highs are very high and the lows can be very low, but with experience comes tempering. The older person, who has a larger view of

things, can recognize that the exciting new toy will become just another toy soon. There may also be something to be said here for those who rush to get the newest gadget; typically they are 20-somethings, not 70-somethings. Perspective matters and the perspective of a mountain is very different from the perspective even of a skyscraper. The feel of being on a manmade perch is different than that of a non-manmade perch. In a skyscraper, man is at the forefront, safe from danger behind glass and metal, rather than being safe because of good footing found by oneself. Self-importance may accompany reaching the top of a corporate ladder, as represented by a top-floor office, as contrasted with the other-importance or other-recognition of an experience atop a mountain. Even if one finds one's own path or trail, the individual achievement is tempered by realizing that even at the top of a mountain, one is not the center of the universe.

Leopold uses the mountain again as objective judge, when recalling his experience killing the wolf and looking into its eyes, which was the impetus for his biotic community insight: "I was young then, and full of trigger-itch; I thought that because fewer wolves meant more deer, that no wolves would mean hunters' paradise. But after seeing the green fire [in the eyes of the wolf] die, I sensed that neither the wolf nor the mountain agreed with such a view."¹¹⁵ This is speaking poetically, of course, as mountains cannot really agree or disagree with an action, but the feeling is that if Leopold himself had a larger view of things—which he acquires during this experience—he too would now agree that not all wolves should be eradicated. It is short-sighted, a human-only (as contrasted with a human interested) view that the eradication of wolves would allow for more deer to be hunted by humans. Notice also the reference to his youth when this incident occurred. With age comes wisdom, like a mountain. Given what has been said about mountains, it is easy to see then where someone like Muir would begin to worship not who

¹¹⁵ Aldo Leopold *Sand County Almanac; with Essays on Conservation from Round River*. (New York: Ballantine Books, 1966) p. 138

created nature but Nature itself, which is precisely what Berry notices and warns against. Muir is a kind of animist, for whom Nature *is* a living force. This is not to say that one cannot appreciate the work of art itself, or the tree or the mountain, but one must realize that someone, or a combination of someones, created it.

Additionally, there is a connection between artistic expression and freedom. Emerson speaks again of this freedom that we should be inspired to find in nature: “Nature is made to conspire with spirit to emancipate us.”¹¹⁶ Our spirit should be free, emancipated, as should our minds be, even as our bodies may be constrained. But on a mountain, even our bodies feel emancipated. There is a wholeness of mind and body (as I discussed in the last chapter) and spirit. One of the roles of nature, then, is to teach us freedom. Perhaps this is best exemplified by Muir, who escaped to the mountains; he was free, free from the humdrum of the workaday or the bosses, free to be at-one with mountains and the creator. But again, even this freedom must be balanced; freedom without boundaries leads to other types of problems. One can look at many of the youth of today, whose parents wanted to be their friends and as such did not discipline or give boundaries. Psychology suggests that even as adults, we desire a certain amount of boundaries. Having too many choices paralyzes us. For example, one can think of the inordinate number of cereals in the grocery stores and the overwhelming feeling of not knowing which one to choose. If all one has is freedom, then one may not accomplish much; freedom is, in this mode, a freedom from something. The contrasting notion is necessary for health. A balance between freedom and constraint is ideal, much like the balance between natural and artificial. As Wirzba says, “what we need today is a renewed vision, a detailed insight into our own limits and

¹¹⁶ Ralph Waldo Emerson “Nature (1st)”. *The Essential Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Ed. Brooks Atkinson. (New York: Modern Library, 2000) p. 25

possibilities that is informed by the knowledge of our place in the world.”¹¹⁷ Our place is what gives us both opportunity and limits.

The limit aspect on life can, in some ways, also be highlighted by mountains and trees. Like mountains, trees have a connection to history. As Leopold points out,

the saw works only across the years, which it must deal with one by one, in sequence. From each year the rake teeth pull little chips of fact, which accumulate in little piles, called sawdust by woodsmen and archives by historians; both judge the character of what lies within by the character of the samples thus made visible without. It is not until the transect is completed that the tree falls and the stump yields a collective view of a century. By its fall the tree attests the unity of the hodge-podge called history.¹¹⁸

Both we and the tree should presumably view history as stuff happening, just a hodge-podge collection of events that only makes sense as a whole once the entire story is revealed. Perhaps it is like a flip book, which only makes sense once we have seen the whole book, and where one page alone looks ridiculous and needs context. The tree’s rings are the flip book. And just as each ring tells a story, each of our experiences can tell a story---the story is what separates an actual experience from a textbook scientific understanding (a measuring). Furthermore, the interesting stories are the ones that leave marks; one can think about the blemishes on gnarly apples, which, as Thoreau points out, is what makes them more beautiful. To weather a storm and survive says much more about one’s character than never facing a storm. It is when faced with difficulties that the true character of a person is determined. When trees survive storms, the storms become a part of their history. We should be the same. The storms of our life become a

¹¹⁷ Norman Wirzba “Introduction” *Art of the Commonplace: Agrarian Essays of Wendell Berry*. Ed. Norman Wirzba. (Washington D.C.: Counterpoint, 2002) p. xix

¹¹⁸ SCA p. 39

part of who we are and where we've been: "thus he who owns a veteran bur oak owns more than a tree. He owns a historical library, and a reserved seat in the theater of evolution."¹¹⁹ McKibben states, "you can read our desires, our needs, in every cubic meter of the air, and in every upward inching of the thermometer. Our needs for mobility, for elbow room, for never getting too hot or cold or bored, all require the consumption of gas and oil and coal, and that endless combustion fills the atmosphere with carbon dioxide."¹²⁰ While I am here discussing the story as being revealed after the fact, it is still a cultivation tale as the life is being lived or as the experience is taking place. It is in retrospect that one can see how the events cultivated the person and contributed to the developing notion of self.

Trees are not beautiful in themselves, but as part of scenery. Again, to look upon trees contemplatively requires distance. Thoreau, Emerson, and Leopold have informed knowledge about the natural and therefore find more beauty in the natural. There may be something very profound to be said here about placedness, the establishing of roots and becoming part of a community. It is after roots have been established that one may reach for something higher and grander than self. One must be grounded and firmly rooted before ascending. Pollan claims that the romantic tree is "self-reliant, abiding, reaching ever heavenward---we could find an antidote to our mean commercial culture and open ourselves up to the infinite. For the tree stands aloof from history."¹²¹ Perhaps we are reading too much into the success of a tree, but the healthier ones have deeper, better roots, and are more grounded in a place, and this does seem to be the same with people as well. The firm foundation then allows for a stretching upward and growth outward, which provide more shade for more folks. The tree, however, stands as a representative of history, rather than as something aloof from it, as the mountain does; the tree survives history.

¹¹⁹ SCA p. 60

¹²⁰ Bill McKibben "Human Restoration" *McKibben Reader* p. 36

¹²¹ Pollan p. 165

The axeman then becomes a type of historian: “I have read many definitions of conservationist...but I suspect that the best one is written not with a pen, but with an axe. It is a matter of what a man *thinks about* while chopping or while deciding what to chop. The conservationist is one who is humbly aware that with each stroke he is writing his signature on the face of the land (my italics).”¹²² Conservation or environmentalism is an outlook, not an action. One can cut a tree, or perhaps many trees, and be an environmentalist. The questions are: is the axeman contemplating and appreciating the history he is revealing, or is he only focused on the end result and what he can financially get out of the lumber? As he is revealing the history of the tree, he is, at the same time, writing his own story on the land. He is adding his mark to the story of the tree, which is now ending. Rolston states it thus: “wilderness is a living museum of our roots. The experiences humans have there are to be valued because we learn where we came from and who we are.”¹²³ This is much like the tree, where the saw chips away at previous years.

Weather writes its story on trees and societies write their stories upon trees, the ones they choose to allow to stand and the ones they choose to cut down. Therefore, “whole societies he [Leopold] realized write their values on the face of the land as surely as they express themselves in books, paintings and artifacts.”¹²⁴ Perhaps a society’s values can be seen even more clearly on the land than in the books. The books are the ideals, the abstract, whereas the land is the actual, the tangible. The land is what we as a society really are, rather than what we claim to be. It is far easier to be idealistic and express what is best about us in books; for example, we can conveniently forget our worst aspects in writing something that we cannot do in actual living.

¹²² SCA p. 126

¹²³ Holmes Rolston III “Values Gone Wild”. *Philosophy Gone Wild: Environmental Ethics*. (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1989) p. 123

¹²⁴ Donald Worster “Environmental History: Leopold and the Changing Landscape of History” *Essential Aldo Leopold: quotations and commentaries*. Ed. Curt Meine and Richard I Knight (U of Wisconsin Press, 1999) p. 237

How we as a culture actually treat the land and each other indicates who we really are. The story that is to be believed is what we actually do, not what we say we do.

Much of technology, especially in the modern understanding of that term, severs this tie to history and roots. Technology leads to the development or cultivation of a different kind of self. While it would be ideal to establish hard criteria for distinguishing between good technology and bad technology, this is a challenge, as so much of that depends upon the individual using the technology. As I have been indicating throughout and will continue to emphasize, it is more about a world view with respect to technology, rather than the technology being inherently good or bad. Perhaps it comes down to the point at which one becomes too reliant upon the technology, or when one chooses to be distracted rather than edified, or when the technology leads one away from realizing one's place in the cosmos. This is an ongoing process, through which I myself am still working, but at least I have begun asking the aforementioned questions and questions like them, rather than merely accepting that the latest technology is "better."

Berry states, "A computer destroys the sense of historical succession, just as do other forms of mechanization. The well-crafted table or cabinet embodies the memory of the tree it was made from and the forest in which the tree stood. The work of certain potters embodies the memory that the clay was dug from the earth."¹²⁵ With mechanization, there are no earlier drafts retained on a computer; they get overwritten. While it is possible to recover previous versions of a document, it requires a certain amount of expertise or the foresight to save each version with a different name. This is unlike drafts written with typewriters or by hand, which have corrections written upon them. These corrections, then, still allow for the previous version to come through, thus connecting it to the previous versions. To type on a computer is a very different experience

¹²⁵ Berry Feminism p. 193

than writing on a piece of paper, as the paper was once a tree. Only once the document is printed does it use paper, and increasingly, documents are kept as “soft” copies for which no paper is used. While this presumably saves trees from being cut down for paper manufacturing, it also distances the document creation process from the natural setting, meaning the tree that supplies the paper.

Moreover, as Berry says,

The text on the computer screen and the computer printout too, has a sterile untouched, factory made look, like that of a plastic whistle or a new car. The body does not do work like that. The body characterizes everything it touches. What it makes traces over with the marks of its pulses and breathings, its excitements, hesitations, flaws, and mistakes. On its good work, it leaves the marks of skill, care, and love persisting through hesitation, flaws, and mistakes. And to those of us who love and honor the life of body in this world, these marks are precious things, necessities of life.¹²⁶

This human touch is lacking from so much today. The connection with the artist or artisan, as well as the natural material that it is from, is lost. As technology advances, there is more separation from the natural, from others, and from aspects of ourselves. For Berry, a computer is going too far technologically; each person must decide for themselves where the stopping point is. Perhaps we need to ask ourselves how much of our technology is necessary. Is the technology really cultivating the type of self that we want? Is a self that is physically separated from others a healthier self? Is a self that is dis-connected from history and from natural non-factory made things a better self? I think not.

¹²⁶ Ibid p. 194

Highlighting again the connection aspect of the creative process, Berry states, “The best writing even when printed, is full of intimations that it is the present version of earlier versions of itself, and that the maker inherited the work and the ways of earliest makers.”¹²⁷ Perhaps all work hearkens back to earlier work. There are allusions, whether implicit or explicit, to Don Quixote and Shakespeare and the Odyssey, as each generation must re-write the classics and make them their own: “something of this undoubtedly carries over into industrial products. The plastic Clorox jug has a shape and a loop for the forefinger that recalls the stoneware jug that went before it. But something vital is missing. It embodies no memory of its source or sources in the earth or of any human hand involved in its shaping.”¹²⁸ The stoneware jug, unlike the plastic one actually required a person’s hands to shape it.

Furthermore, the very nature of nostalgia is based upon its connection to the past. If there is no connection to history, there can be no nostalgia, whether a genuine nostalgia for the way things really were, or an imagined nostalgia in the longing for things as they never were; both require connection. With no past whatsoever, a mindset of the present is all that remains; yesterday was ancient history and last week is so far removed that it is completely forgotten. If one is concerned only with economic progress, which necessarily lends itself to a "faster is better" mentality, then one is left with the inevitability of the Cree light bulb commercial, which claims, "nostalgia is dumb." This is an overt affront to the very notion of connection to the past, which I am attempting to highlight in this project, and the notion that this connection is necessary for a healthy, garden-inspired, transactional, engaged with the natural, sense of self.

At the other extreme is continuing to live only in the past, a notion that “old-fashioned” is always preferable. Both of these extremes are unreflective, and there is a strong parallel with the

¹²⁷ Ibid p. 193

¹²⁸ Ibid p. 193

notions of overcultivation and undercultivation again. Nostalgia may go back to a desire for things to be the way they were when one was a child (safety, security, remembering it as being better than it really was, like vacations, for example) and may cause one to think that any progress beyond that is too much.

Conservationists?

Even the axeman is interacting with the land, becoming *mindful* that he is co-creator even while destroying; he is a cultivator. The author may not actually be interacting with the land that she claims to love, but rather may take an overly romantic--which is to say only transcendent--view of nature. Some authors may write about nature, but if they do not get their hands dirty, what does that say about their actual relationship with nature? A “conservationist” may just be full of words, whereas the environmentalist (including hunters and axemen) are acting with care. The writer may know why it is good to save nature, but may not have first-hand knowledge. Writers are not always actively engaged, while the axeman is active, as is the gardener.

Perhaps one of the true conservationists again is the farmer. Leopold also speaks of farming, thus foreshadowing Berry. He states, “there are two spiritual dangers in not owning a farm. One is the danger of supposing that breakfast comes from the grocery, and the other that the heat comes from the furnace.”¹²⁹ The lack of connection with and the isolation from larger processes, which Berry talks about, could be overcome by having a garden. In reality, heat comes from wood and Leopold recommends that “if one has cut, split, hauled and piled his own good oak, and let his mind work the while, he will remember much about where the heat comes from...”¹³⁰ Notice that the mind must work too; the connection allows one’s mind to work in a different and more real way, as contrasted with the removed, isolated heat of a furnace.

¹²⁹ SCA p. 27

¹³⁰ Ibid p. 27

The spiritual dangers of not owning a farm that are emphasized by Berry may come to the forefront for Leopold in hunting. The hunter must study and appreciate the prey and, in a sense, become one with it, become like it: “there are cultural values in the sports, customs, and experiences that renew contacts with wild things. I venture the opinion that these values are of three kinds.”¹³¹ Firstly, the contacts “remind us of our distinctive national origins and evolution.”¹³² In short we “reenact American history.”¹³³ If we do what our forefathers have done, tan an animal skin, fell a tree, build a house, etc. there is a connection to our cultural history. This connection may also alleviate McDermott’s concern about romanticizing the past. The contact would serve to remind us of the earlier struggles. But since we only hunt occasionally, and typically it is for pleasure rather than survival, perhaps it is still not possible to really remove the aspect of nostalgia, the longing for an imagined past. Perhaps one would be capable of *imagining* having to hunt to eat, thus connecting to real history instead of imagined history. Perhaps this is part of the back to land movement, a return to the actual hard relationship with the land, instead of the nostalgic interpretation of nature. In short, it seems that practices create proximity, because of course this is not merely a physical proximity but rather an emotional and spiritual proximity. However, if one is not close physically, it is difficult to be close emotionally or spiritually. This is why the immanent aspect of Nature/God is as important (and perhaps more so) than the transcendent nature.

Secondly, the contacts “remind us of our dependency on the soil-plant-man food chain, and of the fundamental organization of the biota. Civilization has so cluttered this elemental man-earth relation with gadgets and middlemen that awareness of it is growing dim.”¹³⁴ This

¹³¹ Ibid p. 211

¹³² Ibid p. 211

¹³³ Ibid p. 211

¹³⁴ Ibid p. 212

hearkens back to the biological discussion from earlier and the warning that Berry gives about being too far removed from our food.

Thirdly, the contacts “exercise ethical restraint collectively called ‘sportsmanship’.”¹³⁵ These restraints and boundaries inform one on how to act when no one is watching. It elevates “self-respect of the sportsman.”¹³⁶ The newly more aware Leopold no longer thinks that more hunting is necessarily a good thing; instead he defends hunting that comes with certain restrictions. This 'sportsmanship' is a relation between the hunter and the hunted. There must be a balance, and that balance is often maintained through boundaries. Nash wants to put up physical boundaries to separate civilization and nature, but what Leopold is talking about are self-imposed psychological boundaries. In order to live a healthy life, there must be boundaries. As I referenced earlier, children subconsciously want boundaries and adults are no different. It seems far more people want job descriptions (which are imposed boundaries) than do not (which allows more freedom to do what one wants or to do what one thinks is necessary). Or better perhaps, people want a balance between rules and freedom to create.

The non-hunter does not need to watch. The hunter meanwhile *must* be observant. The hunter, while killing part of nature, is in many ways much more loving of it than the non-hunter. The hunter realizes and recognizes the connection between himself and the rest of nature, or at least has the opportunity to do so. Leopold is clear that there is a social value that should trump, or at least be considered alongside, economic value:

we have not yet learned to express the value of wildlife in terms of social welfare. Some have attempted to justify wildlife conservation in terms of meat, others in terms of personal pleasure, others in terms of cash, still others in the interest of

¹³⁵ Ibid p. 212

¹³⁶ Ibid p.212

science, education, agriculture, art, public health [Olmsted's primary justification] and even military preparedness [the early use and necessity of public green spaces]. But few have so far clearly realized and expressed the whole truth, namely, that all these things are but factors in a broad social value, and that wildlife, like golf, is a social asset.¹³⁷

Leopold goes on, "a man may not care for golf and still be human, but the man who does not like to see, hunt, photograph, or otherwise outwit birds or animals is hardly normal. He is supercivilized and I for one do not know how to deal with him."¹³⁸ Like Thoreau, Leopold agrees that one must have a little wildness; the supercivilized person does not "deal with," which is to say have a relationship with, nature. Neither Leopold nor Thoreau would be accused of being supercivilized. The golfer is not wild, so if a human does not like golf, that is not indicative of any larger problem, but if he does not have an instinct for hunting, that could be reflective of his overcivilized state. Thus the asset of being a little wild is lost. Notice also that photographs and guns both shoot, both capture an object, and both can do so from a distance, from farther away than arm's length. Again, this goes back to our attitudes; while I have been critical of photography in this work for being part of the consumer mindset, the same could be said of hunting as well. But that would be to judge an act rather than a mindset; the hunter and the photographer may both be attempting to get closer to their subject in order to appreciate it or learn something from it. The hunter, the axeman, the mountain climber, the golfer, the gardener, the mower of lawns may have differing mindsets. Is the task before them one of molding and shaping nature (a co-creative or co-destructive relationship), defeating it (sole destroyer or creator, the power is fully in one's hands, one becomes the center of the universe again), or being

¹³⁷ SCA p. 193

¹³⁸ Ibid p. 227

a part of it (to commune with it, taking one's place as mere fellow member of biotic community)?

Valuable Resources

Job proclaims, "There is hope for a tree; if it is cut down, it will sprout again and its shoots will not cease. Though its root grows old in the earth and its stump dies in the ground, yet at the scent of water it will bud and put forth branches like a young plant."¹³⁹ There is continued rebirth; not only can the tree give new life—which connects it to the future, but the wood itself from that tree can be transformed into many other things-- paper, furniture, and the like-- and as such is given new life. Additionally, from trees come things like fruit (if it is a healthy tree) which contribute to the physical well-being of many creatures, including us. This fruit-bearing tree also indicates not just the connection with the past, but also the necessary connection of eating with any type of environmental ethics specifically, or environmental philosophy more generally. It matters that the wood was once living material; wood is different than marble or metal, there is a different "feel" to a piece of art made from wood.

Berry states that,

The good worker loves the board before it becomes a table, loves the tree before it builds the board, loves the forest before it gives up the tree. The good worker understands that a badly made artifact is both an insult to its user and a danger to its source. We could say then that good forestry begins with the respectful husbanding of the forest that we call stewardship and ends with well-made tables and chairs and houses just as good agriculture begins with stewardship of the fields and ends with good meals.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ Job 14:7-10

¹⁴⁰ Berry "Preserving Wildness" p. 144

Like the hunter who must become the hunted and, in a sense, love the hunted, one must love the product and the labor and the resource that begat the object. Additionally, poorly made tables will result in the need for more trees to be cut to make replacement tables. Care from the beginning can alleviate the need for more consumption later, which is good for both nature and ourselves. If care is taken in constructing an object and in preserving it, then it may not need to be replaced as quickly. Regardless of how great the artist is, she is in a reciprocal relationship with the resources needed for her craft. For example, even the top chef is limited by the ingredients available to her. If a chef knows a place, then she knows the resources of the place; she knows the best tree to make the table she wants to make, or the food she wishes to prepare. The artifact is the culmination and final product of the interaction between self and world, which must begin with good stewardship. As Ellen Davis states,

What it means to be fully human is the subject of the first few chapters of Genesis. In the first instance, it means recognizing that the earth is neither a platform for human activity nor a repository of resources to be mined for our convenience. Far from being inert, the earth is living and responsive to God; it generates life, putting forth vegetation in response to God's command (Gen 1:11)."¹⁴¹

In part, this "living Earth" is what leads to the Gaia movement; the earth does give forth life through interaction with the sun and rain, etc. but it may also be that way because Nature/God designed it to be that way. The Earth is part of the gardening equation; it is not all me, I am co-creator, it is a partnership. "Second, this passage [Gen 1:2] must be understood not in isolation but in the context of the rest of the Bible, which shows that dominion means responsible

¹⁴¹ Ellen Davis "Knowing Our Place on Earth: Learning Environmental Responsibility from the Old Testament" *The Green Bible*(San Francisco: HarperOne, 2008) I-59

stewardship.”¹⁴² We are called to be responsible neighbors with the environment. Given that we are also called to love our neighbors as ourselves, we then must be called to love and care for the environment. “When the metaphor of atonement ceases to lie in our consciousness, we lose the means of relationship. We become isolated in ourselves, and our behavior becomes the erratic behavior of people who have no bonds and no limits.”¹⁴³ If not at one with ourselves, we cannot be at one with anyone or anything else: Nature, community, God. One must be a healthy self before entering into a healthy relationship with something other, or one might possibly destroy the other.

Labor

Holmes Rolston III states that “valuing is a kind of laboring, more than a kind of knowing.”¹⁴⁴ The more labor one puts into something, the more meaningful it becomes, as with growing one’s own food. Once again, this is a problem for Nash’s island recommendation; if it is set apart, we may gain something by knowing of its existence without experiencing it, but we could also be so removed that we forget it exists and thus gain nothing. Rather than gaining value, it loses value as it gains independent existence and isolation. Berry’s type of farming, since it is on a smaller scale, can be not only more full of care, but also at least has the potential to be more wild, and thus could be more in keeping with a Thoreauvian style of farming. The large, overly technological type of farming (“factory” farming) may not only be undemocratic because it is controlled by a few large companies, eliminates the diversity of crops, and turns farms into large industrial monocultures, but it may also be dehumanizing to the “farmers”

¹⁴² DeWitt, Calvin. “Reading the Bible through a Green Lens” *The Green Bible* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2008) I-26

¹⁴³ Wendell Berry “Discipline and Hope” *A Continuous Harmony* (Washington D.C.: Shoemaker & Hoard, 1972) p. 156

¹⁴⁴ Holmes Rolston III. “Values in Nature”. *Philosophy Gone Wild: Environmental Ethics*. (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1989) p. 76

because they are disconnected from the land, and thus disconnected from all the land has to offer for the cultivation of the self. In much the same way that a drive-by experience of nature is a limited experience, so is a drive-by method of farming. Without the time and attention paid to each plant, none of the plants can become known or meaningful. One would not get the same psychological, emotional, or spiritual outcomes because one had not put the same type of work into the process.

 Laboring helps to make the seemingly abstract more concrete, “whilst the abstract question occupies your intellect, nature brings it in the concrete to be solved by your hands.”¹⁴⁵ There is something to be said for using the hands or the body for concrete problems. It is necessary to use more than just the intellect. This is part of the danger of philosophy falling into the ivory tower stereotype; it becomes too removed from the issues of life that it is supposed to be addressing. The intellectual must occasionally get his or her hands dirty, perhaps in actuality, not just metaphorically. But again, if the purely concrete becomes overly emphasized, it may manifest itself as overcultivation. We have become quite intellectual, though perhaps not particularly reflective, which is part of what has led to our poor environmental track record. But of course as I am suggesting, these are habits that can be changed. We can take a more garden-like or farm-like viewpoint and change not only ourselves, but also the world. Habits may be difficult to change, but it is possible. If it were not possible, then we would be forced to remove ourselves from nature in order to save each. I am not as pessimistic as Nash on this score.

Community

 Even the trees, perhaps, should fit and be proper to their setting [spirit of place]. If they are not indigenous, they may be too hard to upkeep. Furthermore, the idea is not to escape the

¹⁴⁵ Ralph Waldo Emerson “Nature (1st)”. *The Essential Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Ed. Brooks Atkinson. (New York: Modern Library, 2000) p. 39

city and be transported to Florida, but to leave the trappings of the city and be reminded that New York can be beautiful with native New York plants.¹⁴⁶ Maybe what would help one's recognition of the beauty in one's own neighborhood would be to see a beautiful collection of "native" plants. By recognizing the beauty of the particular place where one is, perhaps one would appreciate it more, rather than trying to be somewhere else. This speaks not only to Berry's notion of placedness, but also to the sociological and communal advantages of things like community gardens keeping crime rates down:

Can it be that green spaces hold down crime? The Harvard criminologist Dr. Felton Earls has actually documented this phenomenon. One study based in Chicago found that there were 56% fewer violent crimes and 48% fewer property crimes in public housing apartment buildings when they are surrounded by landscaping as compared to apartment buildings where there was no landscaping. It is not so much the planted spaces but what they stand for. A well-tended area broadcasts to passersby that people care about what goes on in this area. If you litter, it will be picked up. If you engage in negative activity, it will be reported. The last thing a criminal wants is a pair of watchful eyes.¹⁴⁷

Green space builds a sense of community. It shows the inhabitants that they are worth something if they are valuable enough for something beautiful to be invested to them, which is in addition to the care and concern being invested by them. It seems to indicate a different level of concern. There may also be a direct relation between feeling a sense of community with the land and building a human community. As discussed in relation to the building of new professional baseball fields in very urban settings, "The park is the key to turning a seedy area into year-round

¹⁴⁶ Olmsted p. 32

¹⁴⁷ Harry Wiland and Dale Bell. *Edens Lost & Found: How Ordinary Citizens are Restoring Our Great Cities*. (White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Pub Co., 2006.) p. 89

jewel.”¹⁴⁸ In this excerpt, Larry Lucchino is speaking of a baseball park, but it seems the same could be said of a city park. A beautiful park can increase the overall attitude of a community. This tie to a particular place, which is emphasized in the example of ballparks, also pertains to city parks and gardens: “gardens instruct us in the particularity of place.”¹⁴⁹ We must know our place in order to know what of the place has a chance of success. We must pay attention to rainfall, amount of sun, the soil nearby, and the like to know what plants may be able to be successful in that place. And our particular place, as with a child, requires us to be present and to be attentive to meet its needs, to give it the best chance, not just for survival but for success. So, “when people do not live where they work, they do not feel the effects of what they do.”¹⁵⁰ This speaks again to the importance of placedness. We too easily become segmented persons-- there is ‘work me’ and ‘commuter me’ and ‘home me.’ This mentality can also lead to a segmented sense of where I belong: “Where is home?” Perhaps the answer is that home is no place. Whereas if I work and live in generally the same “place” I have more ownership of the place; it becomes home, and perhaps only at home can I be full and complete. This ownership, however, as should be clear, is a more enlightened ownership, where the object being “owned” is respected as an entity in its own right, while still being used to enlarge my sense of being. Additionally, this placedness could be akin to the garden model, which is to say planting down roots, or it could be akin to Nash’s island model, which is to say separating oneself from the surrounding natural environment. The difference lies in mindset.

¹⁴⁸ Larry Lucchino as quoted by Curt Smith *Storied Stadiums: Baseball's History Through Its Ballparks* (Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2003) p. 53

¹⁴⁹ *Second Nature* p. 64

¹⁵⁰ Wendell Berry “Living in the Future: The Modern Agricultural Ideal” *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1996) p. 52

Disjunction

When we lose the sense of awe, when the environment becomes too close, we tend to destroy it. McKibben states, “we didn’t create this world, but we are busy decreating it.”¹⁵¹ We have become so successful at decreating that the planet needs a new name to reflect the change: “Eaarth”. Yet even in this decreation we are creating other things. For example, a tree may be cut down, which is an act of decreation; but it can be made into a table, thus becoming an effect of creation. Because of the enormous influence we have over the environment, “We begin to imagine that things we have not created are not quite real.”¹⁵² The synthetic becomes more real than the natural, and we have more connection to that which we have made than that which is completely outside ourselves. On one hand, there is and should be a connection with the things that we produce (the labors of our hands), but there should also be an appreciation for those things that are not of our hands, the completely other, that which is beyond our scope, the naturally transcendent or sublime. This may be necessary for defeating things such as anxiety and depression, which result from thinking that we are the most important thing in the universe. We become anxious because we are solely responsible for everything and we become depressed because things have not turned out as well as we thought they should or would. This sole responsibility that comes with sole power can even be felt by the environmentalist. This indicates that, again, an extreme position (either extreme naturalism or the reverse) is not ideal. Our extreme positions seemingly have led to the decreation in which we are currently engaged. Given our track record of decreating, “Wilderness areas are first of all a series of sanctuaries for the primitive arts of wilderness travel, especially canoeing and packing.”¹⁵³ If we do not change our habits, the wilderness areas need to be sanctuaries, places safe from us. However, given

¹⁵¹ Bill McKibben *The End of Nature* (New York: Anchor Books, 1989) p. xxv

¹⁵² “Human Restoration” p. 42

¹⁵³ SCA p. 270

Leopold's type of environmentalism, we notice that the sanctuaries are actually primarily places to be *used by us*. They may not be gardens exactly, but they do not rise to the level of Nash's islands, either.

While we find ourselves here on the earth, the earth, like ourselves, is not completely ours. It is to be shared with the rest of creation. From a Christian perspective, for example, we are charged with its care. There must be a balance; we are co-creators at this point. This is meant to be a comfort that the Earth is the Lord's. We are to be held accountable for our level of care but we are not fully responsible. We are tenants; He is the superintendent of the building. We should probably change the light bulbs, but major problems are His and He wants to take care of them; this is why He bought the building. While God is ultimately in control, we do take some responsibility, and we do have a degree of control. We can water or not water, which could get trumped by whether it rains or not, but we also cannot just throw out seed, not care for it and presume that God will make it alright. He of course could, but we cannot expect that He will, in essence, excuse our lack of diligence.

Adding to this is the increasing problem of distinguishing between the natural and the artificial. McKibben points out that we have swung so far toward the artificial that we cannot connect to the natural any more on any level, whether as something completely other, or as something with which to have a more intimate relationship. The "natural world seems to us more abstract"¹⁵⁴ and is not as concrete and real as the created world. This is especially true with respect to food. We expect mint chocolate chip ice cream to be green rather than white. We expect cider to be overly sugary rather than to taste like apples. The artificial *seems* more natural than the natural, in part because the artificial has gotten so good at appearing *natural enough* and we have habituated ourselves to the artifacts. This returns us to the quotation concerning what we

¹⁵⁴ Human Restoration p. 42

mean by “natural.” For instance, is corn syrup natural since it is made from corn, or is it artificial because one cannot find it as naturally occurring? The same holds for blue roses, genetically modified potatoes, and the like. Are they natural because they grow, or are they artificial because they did not occur naturally until we began modifying things? And this is not even to speak of the grafting of apple trees, which is necessary to ensure the “right” tree grows. But again, while some control may be desired and perhaps even necessary for certain reasons, the key is not to go too far one direction or the other, but to retain an ongoing balance.

As science tells us, we have such a profound influence on the earth that we even influence the weather. As McKibben suggests, “by changing the weather, we make every spot on earth man-made and artificial. We have deprived nature of its independence and that is fatal to its meaning. Nature’s independence is its meaning; without it there is nothing but us.”¹⁵⁵ As should be obvious, nature was never truly independent, although nature felt independent. Nature at least had no independent meaning, since it is we who give it meaning. But the larger point is that the feeling that it is independent has been lost, which has consequences for how it can help us cultivate ourselves. The meaning, which comes in part from the feeling, is placed upon it by us, for there is no meaning without us. There again needs to be some distance, some sense of the other as independent. We can experience it as if it is independent. We speak of the natural environment as a thing over which we have no control - the forces of nature against us - though this is not completely the case.

McKibben continues, “the separation is quite real. It is fine to argue, as certain poets and biologists have, that we must learn to fit in with nature, to recognize that we are but one species among many, and so on. But none of us, on the inside, quite believe it.”¹⁵⁶ And we never can

¹⁵⁵ End of Nature p. 58

¹⁵⁶ Ibid p. 55

believe it if nature is something *completely* other, rather than a neighbor with whom we can interact. As we learn more about this 'fitting in with,' we may come to believe it more. As we grow and prepare the food we ingest, we can see and experience the connection of our hands to the land. Perhaps it is the case that the more knowledge and experience one has of a certain aspect of being, the more *appreciation* one gains for that aspect. It is also interesting to point out that McKibben himself acknowledges that poets and biologists, from their particular perspectives, both admit that *we* are connected; this indicates again that science and the arts are not opposed to one another. Furthermore, for this connection to be real, to be actually impactful and meaningful, it must be felt; it must be believed; it must be lived. But of course some do believe it, namely the gardener or farmer or mountain climber. The one who is actually interacting with nature and looking for meaningful experiences does feel the connection. The environmentalist realizes our fitting in with nature. Nature does feel different! Thus McKibben resolves, "the chief lesson is that the world displays a lovely order...part of this harmony, perhaps, is its permanence—the sense that we are a part of something with roots stretching back nearly forever, and branches reaching forward just as far."¹⁵⁷ This lovely order is a topic I will return to in the final chapter of this work, but this notion of rootedness is one which Berry emphasizes with respect to place. And it is one that I addressed earlier. This backward or forward reaching marks its place in the present, namely by reaching back to the past and forward to the future.

So, in spite of the continuing acts of decreation, "we feel the need for pristine places, places substantially unaltered by man. Even if we do not visit them, they matter to us. We need to know that though we are surrounded by buildings there are vast places where the world goes

¹⁵⁷ Ibid p. 62

on as it always has.”¹⁵⁸ This may be connected to our natural instinct toward the natural, as articulated in *Biophilia*. But I think McKibben is wrong and that it *does* matter if we visit these pristine places; if we do not visit we only get the unexperienced other, and as such we receive nothing from the experience. We may initially feel better that we care enough to protect natural settings from ourselves, but eventually that feeling likely would fade unless we actually experience the places.

Rolston tells us that “humans are disjoined from nature not merely because we form cultures and dramatically rebuild our environment. We are still more unnatural creatures when we post boundaries for our cultures and designate wilderness that we resolve not to rebuild.”¹⁵⁹ But this disjointedness would only be increased if we were to take Nash’s island suggestion, especially given his suggestion to supply civilization islands with simulated natural experiences. We would quite literally be building an environment. This disjointedness could lead to more disjointedness with other “others,” such as other people and other dimensions of ourselves.

At first glance, it may seem that hunting contributes to this disjointedness, especially if Leopold is right when he states that “hunters outwit their game primarily to reduce that beauty to possession.”¹⁶⁰ If the hunting is merely to possess, then it is still a practice of the consumer mindset - hunters for sport, for instance. Leopold, however, is really talking about a different type of hunter here. To hunt is to learn, to be like the animal, and then to wait patiently. It requires that one still be in a society that is predicated on movement, where fast and constant movement is better. Furthermore, it requires closeness to hunt in a Leopoldian manner, “without guns or gunpowder, a native hunter must often come much closer to his wild prey if he is to take

¹⁵⁸ Ibid p. 55

¹⁵⁹ Holmes Rolston III “Values Gone Wild” *Philosophy Gone Wild: Environmental Ethics*. (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1989). P. 141

¹⁶⁰ SCA p. 230

its life. Closer, that is, not just physically but emotionally, empathically entering into proximity with the other animals' ways of sensing and experiencing. The native hunter in effect must apprentice himself to those animals he would kill."¹⁶¹ The hunter has a connection to the environment that the non-hunter does not. The non-hunter always keeps the environment farther away than an arm's length, while the hunter must actually interact with it. The hunter cannot ignore or attempt to distract himself. Notice that the type of hunting Leopold is discussing is the type before guns. Guns are easier to hunt with and may not require the same level of interaction. Even with guns, though, hunting still requires patience and placedness. It still requires knowing the place and knowing the animal one is hunting.

Care

This importance of knowing a place is an idea that pervades this project, applying not only to hunting, but also to farming and gardening especially. As Anderson maintains:

The second version of actual wild farming Thoreau intimates is the stewardship and preservation of wildness. In a sense, Thoreau asks us to cultivate, but not tame, nature's own wild features. The trick to this sort of cultivation can be seen through the distinction between agape and eros. A cultivator working from agape will attend to that which is cultivated but allow it to take its own course. One who works from eros will dominate the object of attention.¹⁶²

Notice the farmer is like Leopold's axeman. Rather than focusing on the action itself, one must look inward to the heart and mind of the person. What are they thinking about while cutting... is it for destruction or for cultivation? Cultivating is a cutting away for health, while

¹⁶¹ David Abram *Spell of the Sensuous*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1997) p. 140

¹⁶² Douglas R. Anderson "Thoreau's Wild Farming". *Agrarian Roots of Pragmatism*. Ed. Paul B. Thompson and Thomas C Hilde. (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2000) p. 161

cutting for destruction is cutting to kill. To ameliorate our world, one should not attempt to dominate the natural environment, but to work with it so that it can flourish.

As Pollan points out, “the gardener cultivates wildness, but he does so carefully and respectfully, in full recognition of its mystery.”¹⁶³ This seems a more enlightened ethic, one that Leopold held. Pollan goes on, “the gardener tends not to be romantic about nature.”¹⁶⁴ At least the gardener is not overly romantic, in Pollan’s understanding of that term, but Pollan admits that the garden teaches things, which is a notion rooted in romanticism. Pollan states, “the gardener never fell head over heels for nature. He’s seen her ruin his plans too many times for that.”¹⁶⁵ But again, the romantic in the philosophical sense of the word *does* realize that nature is not all good. The romantic is not necessarily naïve or blind. Sometimes nature is ugly; sometimes the pretty flowers that one plants get destroyed or do not grow. There are so many factors involved in successful gardening and farming, that any one of them may go wrong and the plants will not grow; this again reminds the gardener or farmer of his/her proper place. There is a sense of mystery, then, in this relation with the other.

Consider this in terms of a marriage. A wife, for example, may never fully know her husband, even though she does interact with and learn from him daily. If she did know everything about her husband, then she would grow bored with him, which may be an indication that the husband is owned rather than appreciated. And this, of course, holds for the reverse as well.

Berry states,

We will discover that, for these reasons, our destruction of nature is not just bad stewardship, or stupid economics, or a betrayal of family responsibility; it is the

¹⁶³ Second Nature p. 192

¹⁶⁴ Ibid p. 192

¹⁶⁵ Ibid p. 193

most horrid blasphemy. It is flinging God's gifts into his face, as of no worth beyond that assigned to them by our destruction of them. To Dante, 'despising Nature and her gifts' was a violence against God. We have no entitlement from the Bible to exterminate, or permanently destroy, or hold in contempt anything on the earth, or in the heavens above it, or in the waters beneath it. We have the right to use the gifts of Nature, but not to ruin or waste them. We have the right to use what we need, but no more, which is why the Bible forbids usury and great accumulations of property. The usurer, Dante said, 'condemns Nature. . . for he puts his hope elsewhere.'¹⁶⁶

One could see an analogy here, in terms of a thoughtful gift that someone spent time to create, which is then destroyed purposefully in the audience of the creator. For example, a child who makes a picture for their loved one, having taken time and thought to create it, and the recipient then crumples the creation and throws it back in the child's face. It serves as rejection of both the gift and the love behind the gift. By extension, perhaps this could be perceived as a rejection of the very person who created the gift. Berry's point is that this is what we have done to God's (or Nature's) creation, destroyed it before His very eyes and thus rejected not just the gift but the giver as well.

However, despite this betrayal, the history of Christians and their stewardship of the environment, sadly, is not a good one. The problems that Christianity has had with the environmental movement are multi-faceted. Firstly, the earth is not seen as home. Christians takes themselves to be simply passing through. Their real home is an eternal one in Heaven. However, this does not excuse their behavior while they are here; one still needs to take care of a hotel room one is staying in, one needs to keep it nice for the next people passing through.

¹⁶⁶ Wendell Berry "Christianity and Survival of Creation" *Art of Commonplace* p. 308

Furthermore, considering the world is not ours but God's, should one not take better care of something that belongs to someone else? Secondly, if humans are creatures of God and Nature, doesn't it make sense to develop an environment that sustains their well being and flourishing? A third issue is the connection with science and the inherent skepticism of science by many Christians, due in part to the creation-versus-evolution debate, as well as the fear that science explains away or attempts to explain away miracles. Or perhaps it is that many people who claim to be Christians do not really love God or the gifts that He has given.

If we pay closer attention to Berry's sense of care, we can learn: "but ask the animals and they will teach you; the birds of the air and they will tell you; ask the plants of the earth and they will teach you; and the fish of the sea will declare to you. Who among all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this? In his hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of every human being."¹⁶⁷ Nature can stand as exemplars for knowing that Nature/God is in ultimate control. If we personify, it may appear that nature worships (sunflowers or praying mantis), but it seems unlikely, considering that based on current research, the things of nature do not have free will, nor are they capable of the abstract thought required to worship. Additionally, if we look to nature, we may learn something about ourselves; this is the romantic idea again. If there is a Creator, then it would seem that we should be able to learn from the rest of God's creation something about God, and perhaps even about what He wants us to be. When we think we can handle everything ourselves, we forget our proper place in relationship to God or to the cosmos. Knowledge can lead to more enlightenment, as in realizing how intricate nature is and paying enough attention that it can teach us something, but knowledge can also lead to pride and arrogance, which can have the opposite effect. It can lead to thinking that we can fix problems

¹⁶⁷ Job 12:7-11

through more of our efforts, namely more technology. Care, then, requires an aspect of humility and proximity.

Self-imposed distance from the natural and, by extension, from the creator of the natural, leads in some ways to Nash's island motif. We move toward an artificial world, which we presume can give us the same types of experiences as the natural environment. This move leads McKibben to state: "we live, all of a sudden, in an Astroturf world, and though an Astroturf world may have a God, he cannot speak through the grass, or even be silent through it and let us hear."¹⁶⁸ Even if there is a God, what does it matter, unless He can speak to us and we can be still and attuned to hear Him? God cannot speak through plastic, but can communicate through living creatures, like plants, since He is co-creator with us. God has been rendered inconsequential. We cannot hear Him, nor do we care to try to listen to Him. We live in a human-created world (plastics and ProTurf). This then means that we cannot have the same connectivity to our own cultural past. We cannot even plant seeds in ProTurf. We surely, then, cannot sow or reap anything from the artificial. We cannot cultivate from the artificial. At best we can only glean something of our recent past and our manufacturing capabilities, but we gain nothing of the insight into cooperation with nature. We are more immersed in the consumer attitude, which presumes for any problem there is a purchasable solution. If I want a green lawn I buy something that is always green, because it is plastic.

Leopold claims:

Your true modern is separated from the land by many middlemen and by innumerable physical gadgets. He has no vital relation to it; to him it is the space between cities on which crops grow. Turn him loose for a day on the land, and if the spot does not happen to be a golf links or scenic area he is bored stiff. If crops

¹⁶⁸ End of nature p. 80

could be raised by hydroponics instead of farming, it would suit him very well.

Synthetic substitutes for wood, leather, wool and other natural land products suit him better than the original. In short, land is something he has outgrown.¹⁶⁹

This distance is detrimental to the sense of self. Too many middlemen result in too much distance between the modern man and the land. Unfortunately, the importance of our relationship to the environment may only be recognized once it begins to disappear: “Cottages and tourist roads have all but annihilated wild coasts on both oceans.”¹⁷⁰ In our desire to get closer to the ocean in a superficial way, by driving alongside it, we have destroyed the wildness of the coasts, which probably was what attracted us to the shore in the first place.

This raises an interesting question about love. Does eros always seek to dominate? While it may be the case with the standard way we appropriate ourselves to our world (we love it so much we want to possess, dominate, and ultimately destroy the very thing we claimed to love), this does not seem to be the case in a marriage, which is the motif Berry describes. Agape allows for a certain distance to be maintained; self and other become one, but still retain individual status as well. Perhaps in eros, the other is completely subsumed. Or perhaps it is lust that is the consumptive possession and destruction, rather than love, even of the erotic kind. It seems that perhaps erotic love demands yet another balance between possession (to know it is “mine”) and the allowing it to be free (so that it wants to be with the lover). Nature cannot have that kind of choice or agency, so it is up to us not to go too far. We need to practice self-control, which is the theme of the gardening model, as contrasted with the doomsday and island motifs suggested by Nash. If self-control is not possible, or if we cannot actually change our habits to develop a

¹⁶⁹ SCA p. 261-2

¹⁷⁰ Ibid p. 266

healthier relationship with the environment, then we are indeed left with doomsday (if we do not want to preserve the environment) or the island (if we do want to preserve the environment).

If it is true that we necessarily destroy nature by trying to get closer to it, as is the case with people who build houses on the beach (thus destroying the very beach they *claim* to love), the island motif is the only way to save nature and anything else that we love from us. If we love our spouses, then we should seclude ourselves from them, so as not to damage them. If we destroy that which we love, then there are no other choices. We love nature to death, or we have complete disregard altogether, but both result in the same thing...destruction. Perhaps it is the consumptive love that drives the hunter's need for possession of the hunted. Of course, when I refer to hunters for the purposes of this project, I presume they are hunting primarily for sport rather than for food, but either way, the need to be an apprentice of the animal still holds, regardless of the reason for the hunting. What changes is merely the love aspect, whether it is a consumptive love or a physical need. This distinction hinges upon the attitude of the person hunting.

If there is only dis-placement, then this dis-connectedness with the land where one resides will lead to no care or concern for it. The place where we reside is merely a place, rather than a place *for me*. Caring must be immanent and personal rather than transcendent. It needs to be real care, instead of an idealized type of concern that occurs just because one should be concerned. It is far easier to care if one is familiar with one's neighbors, rather than experiencing them as removed, faceless objects "out there." Perhaps this care requires us to place the "self" back at the center, but with that return comes responsibility. In the twentieth century and early into the twenty-first, we have no problem trumpeting our power, but until recently our responsibility to others and to the environment had been conveniently forgotten. "When our

values go wild, there is the emergence of an utterly new kind of caring.”¹⁷¹ We see again the emphasis on the connection between wildness and caring. If we are too locked into our consumer mindset, then we cannot care for things beyond what they can economically give us, or what they enable us to do, such as showing off to our friends (like photos of where we have been that they have not, or the like). Placement and locatedness require ourselves, not the place itself, to be the center of the relationship. This centering is not at the expense of the place or location, but does place the emphasis on *our* relationship to the place.

Dis-placement or dis-locatedness is what leads to nomadism, where there is no sense of place, belonging, or home. In the absence of feeling “at home,” there is no way to find oneself, so one’s self becomes what others see on Facebook, etc. Do we truly express who we take ourselves to be or who we think the world wants us to be? At home we can be our true selves; in the forest, we are free to discover the other, wilder, untamed self. There may be some advantages to the rootlessness, advantages I will discuss later, but it may also be an extension of the self-important mindset: I am so special I cannot be rooted into a specific place. This place where I happen to be now is just temporary, as is the relationship I am in right now. This place and everything about it is disposable, as is every aspect of my life. I am always looking for newer, which always necessarily means “better.” In this case, there is neither a lasting tie to the place where we are, nor to the people in our lives. If times get hard, I will move on to something easier, because the easiest is the best. This outlook has so permeated our contemporary cultural mindset that the current view of marriage in the United States seems to be based upon the model of divorce, an economy that is based on what I can get out of it, rather than on the growth and cultivation of the whole. Our cultural view is also permeated by the dichotomous relations that Berry warns against and that I mentioned in the opening chapter: “The reason why the world

¹⁷¹ Values Gone Wild p. 140

lacks unity, and lies broken and in heaps is because man is disunited from himself.”¹⁷² This is manifest by the fact that he only uses nature as a resource, or as a tool of the understanding, rather than also realizing the spirit within it and within ourselves. If nature is gone, then we have no chance to realize this spirit. Nature, in its primitive form, is necessary for the realization of part of ourselves. This realization is more than just knowledge and understanding in the philosophical sense; we need to connect the knowledge and understanding to action.

The Marriage Analogy

Berry sees an analogy between our relations to nature and to each other. In assessing marriage he says:

I do not know how exact a case might be made, but it seems to me that there is an historical parallel, in white American history, between the treatment of the land and the treatment of women. The frontier for instance was notoriously exploitative of both, and I believe for largely the same reasons. ...today there seems to me a distinct connection between our nomadism (our social mobility) and the nearly universal disintegration of marriages and families.¹⁷³

One can think of the relation between women and the land as they both give birth to life. These relationships need our attention if we are to improve our lives.

Berry emphasizes marriage to highlight his point about the environment: “marriage is the basic and central community tie; it begins and stands for the relation we have to family and the larger circles of human association. And these relationships to the creation and the human community are in turn basic to, and may stand for, our relationship to God—or the sustaining

¹⁷² “Nature (1st)” p. 38

¹⁷³ “Discipline and Hope” p. 155

mysteries and powers of the creation.”¹⁷⁴ This is it exactly! Self-cultivation’s ultimate concerns are relationship to Nature/God and Nature’s/God’s creation, which includes others and one’s self. This notion of community is what God and Nature are about: relationships with others. The sense of community is one that can be enhanced, according to the garden motif. The garden may be a community garden that beautifies a neighborhood, gives a sense of home, and provides food for people in the community. Moreover, a brotherhood and a sisterhood develop as one is working the ground next to someone else. And a sense of community is felt when one lives as co-creator and shares in seeing a plant succeed.

Just as a marriage involves a harmony between two persons, “conservation is a state of harmony between men and land. By land is meant all the things on, over, or in the earth...the land is one organism.”¹⁷⁵ I am in agreement about conservation’s being a state of harmony between man and the land. This harmony requires us to live together; harmony cannot be achieved by removing one party from the situation. That is escape, not harmony. Lived harmony is a continuing adjustment to ever changing conditions. With gardening, for example, one must continually adjust watering according to the particular plant and the rainfall totals. There is no exact formula for growing good crops, just as there is no exact blueprint for raising children or living life. Gardening, rather, involves constant adjustment and the attempt to reach at-one-ment, which again can only come from actually living together in a community, not from escaping to islands.

Additionally for harmony to occur, there needs to be difference. Harmony cannot come about if there is only homogeneity or monoculture. Harmony comes from different notes sounding good together, rather than all parties putting forth the same notes in unison. Unison is

¹⁷⁴ “Discipline and Hope’ p. 153

¹⁷⁵ SCA p. 189-90

not harmonious. Furthermore, harmony even produces unintended results. For example, ringing a chord in barbershop quartet singing produces overtones. Unison, like perfection, is uninteresting. It is only the synthetic that can be perfect; reality is messy, which may make what is close to perfect all the more beautiful, because it is still imperfect and therefore “real.”

This notion of harmony may be reflected in marriage, as well as many other social institutions. Berry tell us that man

must emulate in one relationship what he knows in another. Thus, if the metaphor of at-one-ment is alive in his consciousness, he will see that he should love and care for his land as for his wife, that his relation to place in this world is as solemn and demanding, and as blessed, as marriage; and he will see that he should respect his marriage as he respects the mysteries and transcendent powers—that is as a sacrament. Or—to move the opposite direction through the changes of the metaphor—in order to care properly for his land he will see that he must emulate the Creator¹⁷⁶

Berry here is not only using a marriage analogy to describe what our relationship the land should be, but is also bringing to the forefront the connection between a partner and the land again. While Berry here is specifically referring to a wife rather than a partner, the love, care and respect for marriage holds for both parties, not just the man.

This connection between women specifically and the land is one that is typically highlighted by feminists, not typically by someone such as Berry, who has been criticized because of his comments about his wife. But those who criticize him ignore the entire body of his work, which is about overcoming dualities and working with the other. He states, “my wife,

¹⁷⁶ “Discipline and Hope p. 154

my critic, my closest reader, my fellow worker.”¹⁷⁷ Given all he has written about having a relationship with earth, not dominating it, it would seem out of place for him to be a dominant, oppressive husband who forces his wife to help against her will. He states that she is his fellow worker, which fits with what he describes as the cooperative nature of the marriage. They have shared goals, shared work. True partnership means his work is her work, and vice versa; it is their work, they are co-creators of their life together. Rather than Berry, it is perhaps his critics themselves who have fallen into old dichotomous thinking by emphasizing the “wife’s” role. This is the same dichotomous thinking that is reflected in Nash’s doomsday scenario. If we keep thinking as we have always thought, that men and women have different roles in a partnership, then we will continue to see nature in an improper relationship to ourselves, and we will continue to see spouses in a marriage relationship in improper relationship to one another.

Furthermore, Berry states, this marriage and this partner as co-worker in his writing is an association which he is “dependent on” and “treasures.” Treasure implies the value of the relationship. She is not a distant secretary, but a wife. She is not a device that can be replaced, but a partner, in a way that could not be had by using a computer as a part of the writing process.

He goes on, “aside from saying that she is my wife and that I value the help she gives me with my work, it says nothing about our marriage.”¹⁷⁸ Notice the key word again is value; there is valuing of a different kind than one would find with merely a secretary. And the valuing of a secretary is more than one would even find with a computer, as a computer can only auto correct the grammar and sentence structure. The computer itself lacks care and concern for its work, whereas a secretary might value the work. It may not be possible to convey what needs to be conveyed using merely the recommendations of Microsoft Word, anymore than Google can

¹⁷⁷ Wendell Berry “Why I am not going to buy a computer” p. 171

¹⁷⁸ Feminism p. 179

always anticipate what I am searching for when filling in the search box. Berry states that “marriage is a state of mutual help.”¹⁷⁹ And as a state of mind, the motives are the meaningful aspect. Again it is not the act of helping the spouse, but it is the reason behind the help. Do I help because I think my spouse will ‘owe’ me in some type of marital economics, or because I have love, care and concern for her and therefore want to help her, and be helped by her?

Given the relationships that Berry emphasizes in his writings, it follows that he would emphasize the writing *process* rather than only the end result. This process is overtly related to relationships between the author and the labor of his work. As such, it is the process that gives meaning to the result. This process is akin to the growing of one’s own food which, because of the added meaning, gives the food a different taste. Again, this does not take into account the presumed lack of pesticides, etc. which may also contribute to better tasting and more healthful food. If the idea is just to produce an object, then a computer may work just fine, but if the idea is to share a life and all that is entailed by it, then that means including the other person in the processes of life, which for Berry, includes the process of writing. Furthermore, it would be inconsistent to see the responsibility and something like a marriage as one-sided. The husband and wife both need to be free and empowered in order for harmony to occur. To return to the music example, if one note is dominant, if the lead is too loud, then the harmony will not be as effective and the overtones will be drowned out by the dominant note.

To continue with the connection between marriage and other social relations, Berry says:

Marriage in what is evidently its most popular version is now on the one hand an intimate ‘relationship’ involving (ideally) two successful careerists in the same bed and on the other hand a sort of private political system in which rights and interests must be constantly asserted and defended. Marriage in other words has

¹⁷⁹ Ibid p. 180

now taken the form of divorce: a prolonged and impassioned negotiation as to how things shall be divided. During their understandably temporary association, the ‘married’ couple will typically consume a large quantity of merchandise and a large portion of each other. The modern household is the place where the consumptive couple do their consuming. Nothing productive is done there.¹⁸⁰

This consuming is of the exhaustive, extinguishing kind. It is quenched and it is over. Nothing like a relationship is produced because the focus is not on what can one give, but rather what can one take. Even in my human interested view on the environment, which emphasizes my self-cultivation (since it is focused on the relationship, the co-creating) it focuses equally on give *and* take. The consuming attitude leads one to a relationship that is one in name only. This is the type of relationship that Nash suggests, for the health of the environment, which is namely a distant or discontinuous relationship. From Nash’s perspective, we tried being married to the land but abused it instead, so we must get divorced for the environment’s protection. Since our mindset is one of consumption at all times or of an economic balance sheet, we are not capable of being in a healthy relationship. A healthy relationship would be one in which each member can cultivate itself.

But for Berry there is hope: “there are still some married couples who understand themselves as belonging to their marriage, to each other, and to their children...to them ‘mine’ is not so powerful or necessary a pronoun as ‘ours’.”¹⁸¹ This is a partnership, and by extension these same people are the ones who understand themselves as belonging to a place. Belonging is indicative of home. These are to be the exemplar. This is not to say that they do not consume

¹⁸⁰ Ibid p. 180

¹⁸¹ Ibid p. 181

also, but they seem to have a better chance of having a better balance, because they realize their place in something larger.

Specialization runs counter to the building of relationships, seeking wholeness, and at-one-ment. If one is too specialized, then one loses the larger connections among everything. The holism gets reduced to dichotomies and smaller distinctive objects, rather than relationships. He states further, “it would be a mistake to imply that two lives can unite and make a life between them without discord and pain.”¹⁸² But that makes the good even better, which harkens back to the tree that survives the storm. Trials are necessary in order to reach higher heights. There is also a connection with mountain climbing, in which the treacherous path leads to a view that is unparalleled. Without the right relationship, one can “love” in a selfish way and leave when it gets hard, and one can do the same with the land. One can do what is easy - strip mining and the like, to get the resources that can be sold, then move on to another location. Without the rooted sense of place that Berry is advocating, one can merely take what one wants from the “relationship” without giving anything to it, and then leave once the goal has been achieved.

Love also requires that we learn to live with a lack of control. Many suburban and city dwellers are trying to achieve or attain control, which is evidenced by their borderline obsession with their lawns. This control and independence are further evidenced by the lack of carpooling. Carpooling results in a lack of control in the area of what the individual wants to do after work, etc. The farmer, by contrast, knows he or she is not in control, and what he or she is responsible for is only a small portion. Aspects such as the quality of seed and the amounts of rain and sun are out of the farmer’s control. Marriage is a good model for this development of patience. In nature, mere minutes may seem like hours, because of depth of experience. Being in a good strong marriage for a few years can sometimes feel like many more years, for the same reason.

¹⁸² Wendell Berry “Long-legged house” *The Long-legged House*. (Berkeley: Counterpoint Press, 2012) p. 148

We can see how easy it is to fall into the dualism of body and soul, when talking about the inescapable worldly dualities of good and evil, or time and eternity, or any of the dualities that may come with the specialization I mentioned earlier. For we are free, if we choose, to make a duality of our one living soul by disowning the breath of God or the gift of Nature.

At-one-ment can eliminate dualities,

but we can make the same duality by disowning the dust. The breath of God is only one of the divine gifts that make us living souls; the other is the dust. Most of our modern troubles come from our misunderstanding and misvaluation of this dust. Forgetting that the dust too is a creature of the Creator, made by the sending forth of his spirit, we have presumed to decide that the dust is 'low.' We have presumed to say that we are made of two parts: a body and a soul, the body being 'low' because made of dust, and the soul 'high.' By thus valuing these two supposed-to-be 'parts,' we inevitably throw them into competition with each other, like two corporations. The 'spiritual' view, of course, has been that the body, in Yeats' phrase, must be 'bruised to pleasure soul.' And the 'secular' version of the same dualism has been that the body, along with the rest of the 'material' world, must give way before the advance of the human mind. The dominant religious view, for a long time, has been that the body is a kind of scrip issued by the Great Company Store in the Sky, which can be cashed in to redeem the soul, but is otherwise worthless. And the predictable result has been a human creature able to appreciate or tolerate only the 'spiritual' (or mental) part of Creation, and full of a semiconscious hatred of the 'physical' or 'natural' part, which it is ready and willing to destroy for 'salvation,' for profit, for 'victory,' or

for fun. This madness constitutes the normality of modern humanity and of modern Christianity.¹⁸³

This speaks directly to the at-one-ment that is necessary in the self, as well as the transcendent (spiritual soul) in combination with the material body. This dualism also points back to marriage. The goal is of marriage unity and at-one-ment with spouse, with others, with land, and with self. Therefore, it is a useful idea in considering how one might best relate to others and to the environment.

Time and Attention

To be in a true relationship is, in part, to give. Giving is something that communities do, for communities are comprised of people who *care* for one another through the giving of time, resources, and service. If it is not a community but merely a collection of people living in the same proximity, then one would expect things to be sold and bought rather than given as gifts. Berry points out that all technological progress is defended by quantitative methods, and that we presume we are making progress because people are living longer. But we are not asking about the quality of this life: “the goodness of a life could not be determined by its length.”¹⁸⁴ A long, unhealthy (physically, psychologically, spiritually and aesthetically) life is still unhealthy, but superficially it can *appear* to be better. I contend that a longer, *healthier* life is *actually* better. I believe there is sometimes a misunderstanding of health. We are impatient with physical disease; we take medicine to try to reduce the effects of a cold from four days to three because we are concerned about being monetarily productive. This then contributes to the notion that labor should be quick and easy and not be work; neither then (we might infer) should relationships be

¹⁸³ Christianity and Survival of Creation

¹⁸⁴ Feminism p . 186

work. There is no need to work the land or work on the relationship, just move on to one that is easier, less time consuming, and requires less of me and my attention.

A farmer, Emerson says, “is a slow person, timed to nature not to city watches.”¹⁸⁵ This is precisely the point; the farmer is patient and sees the bigger picture in a way that a city dweller might not. While being so locally focused (focused on placedness), he or she is in fact global and historical. This is to say that he or she is connected to the world itself, the land, the Earth as well as all other workers of the land, and as discussed in the case of the axeman, with history itself. As one gardens or farms, one is digging through the years, rather than cutting through the years, as the axeman does. One cannot help but be connected. The key is being aware of this connection, which requires a choice to be aware. The farmer’s pace of life is necessarily slower; she cannot rush the crop or it will not thrive. While, of course, there are times when the farmer must hurry also, in general she is able to live a more patient pace of life. A farmer must sometimes walk around her farm; a farm requires a level of attention and care not possible by simply driving by. This demonstrates to us that there is a connection here with the previous discussion of the term ‘pedestrian.’ Pedestrian again has come to mean something lesser or common and, while it should be common to walk, it in fact is not. Additionally, a pedestrian, because he is closer to the earth and moves slower than a car, can be in a different relationship with his surrounding community or place. This pace of life requires patience, and because it requires patience, it also instills patience: “the farmer times himself to nature and acquires that lifelong patience which belongs to her [nature].”¹⁸⁶ This lifelong patience, it seems, could be adopted by the farmer as well. Additionally, in the city one is indoors much of the time, which could give the impression that all the seasons are the same. If the air is regulated to be

¹⁸⁵ “Farming” p. 674

¹⁸⁶ Ibid p. 674

approximately the same temperature year around, then no difference is felt between winter and summer. Furthermore, indoor time is all regulated by the clock, which does not change depending upon the season. In outdoor time, there is delineation between planting time and harvesting time, for instance. As a consequence, there is little appreciation for change; most urban and suburban dwellers have their routines and they stick to them. This is evidenced by the massive traffic jams in most cities at what we have come to call “rush hour.” This leads to a monoculture. A monoculture of most everyone doing the same thing day after day, from the routine of what they do at their job, to the routine of getting ready for their job and going home from their job, to perhaps even what they do once they get home. These social habits of urban time are pervasive. However, this sameness often does not lead to connection but rather to isolation. Monocultures seem to be unhealthful physically, psychologically, spiritually and aesthetically. As Leopold argues, “The bulk of all land relations hinges on investments of time, forethought, skill and faith...”¹⁸⁷ This exemplifies Berry’s farmer. These investments require close relations; there can be no investment if the other is too distant or separate, like an island. It is a matter of attitude or mindset, as with the axeman. Is the farmer using pesticides to encourage healthy growth or to be superficial so that the crops “look” good? Are farmers using pesticides so that farming requires less work or are they still attentive to what they are growing? Is this a supplement or a replacement for care and concern? These are questions that can only be answered by the person applying them, but they are important questions, both for one’s own life and for the environment.

In highlighting the attribute of patience, The Bible, like Emerson, uses the farmer as the exemplar: “Be patient then brothers until the Lord’s coming. See how the farmer waits for the

¹⁸⁷ SCA p. 263

land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains.”¹⁸⁸ Patience is hard, especially for Christians who are waiting to be with the Lord, whether through death or his return. Patience is also difficult for the world, because if I am at the center of it, I must keep going, or someone else may take my place at the center. One thinks of the world as available to us now through technology, 24 hour news cycles, constant Twitter updates, in short: immediacy. Many feel the need, after going home from work, to keep working from home to “keep up” or “get ahead.” If one has power, there is a great fear of losing it. If one cedes power to one’s master, then one can experience a type of freedom; one may think here about those who join the military, and by being relieved of the ‘what do I do next’ types of questions, can find freedom in knowing they will be doing precisely what their commanding officer tells them to do. One may also think of the Christian who cedes his power to God. Time and again, the result is, as Abram suggests, that “without the oxygenating breath of the forests, without the clutch of gravity and the tumbled magic of river rapids, we have no distance from our technologies, no way of assessing their limitations, no way to keep ourselves from turning into them.”¹⁸⁹

While this connection to something larger than self, which I’ve been discussing, namely, a relation to something transcendent of daily life, may make the most sense in a Christian or religious context, it can also speak to people who are not Christians. The notion that the environment does not belong to us, for instance, or that nature is a place for encounters with other aspects of ourselves and with our place in the larger cosmos, thus providing a type of renewal and change in mindset, can be recognized by many different religious and non-religious people.

¹⁸⁸ James 5:7

¹⁸⁹ Abram p. x

Language

In *Spell of the Sensuous*, Abram discusses the connection between language and nature.

He tells us:

It is not by chance that, when hiking in the mountains, the English terms we spontaneously use to describe the surging waters of the nearby river are words like “rush” “splash” “gush” “wash.” For the sound that unites all these words is that which that water itself chants as it flows between the banks. If language is not a purely mental phenomenon but a sensuous, bodily activity born of carnal reciprocity and participation, then our discourse has surely been influenced by many gestures, sounds and rhythms besides those of our single species.¹⁹⁰

There is also something about the sound of “sh.” It can be a calming sound or a harsh sound, just like water itself may be either calming or more intense. Again, I am not advocating a return to pre-literate times, but I am advocating that we recognize the natural environment as important and related to our well being. Abram states, “in the absence of formal writing systems, human communities come to know themselves primarily as they are reflected back by the animals and the animate landscapes with which they are directly engaged.”¹⁹¹ Also, generally speaking, it seems that those still grounded in the oral tradition are more placed than those with formal writing systems. Not surprisingly, as we evolve to a new dependency on ever changing technology, we are also developing a different type of written language, one that is reflective of the technology. This new language may be best exemplified by the term “text” and the “click clack” of computer keys. There is a harshness with the letters x and k especially, as contrasted with the warmth of o and m. It seems to be the case that this harshness in terminology, perhaps in

¹⁹⁰ Abram p. 82

¹⁹¹ Ibid p. 123

conjunction with the anonymity that can be achieved through technology (or at least seeming anonymity), could be a contributing factor to the harshness of the language often used through these means, especially in regards to cyber-bullying, trolling, and the like.

“Words,” Emerson says, “are signs of natural facts.”¹⁹² The recognition of this fact could point us back to our natural environment roots and lead to the self-cultivating aspects of the environment. There is a connection to nature that the farmer still has that is reflected in his speech, a “piquancy to the conversation” of the farmer or back woodsman. Their speech is direct, blunt, and real; it is not about flattery and appearances. The farmer or gardener says what needs to be heard, rather than what one wants to hear. There is also the necessary connection between speech and breath. There must be the support of breath or of air in order to speak. In order to be audible, to be heard, one must first take in air.

The connection between language and the environment is also manifested in the written word of poets, as I will discuss in the final chapter. There is an attempt, through language, to connect thought with a proper symbol, a connection that is also used by poets. The poet uses nature to reveal poetic, meaningful truths about life; while the farmer may be less flowery, he also reveals truths: “parts of speech are metaphors,” Emerson says, “because the whole of nature is a metaphor of the human mind.”¹⁹³ There are countless connections between language and nature, but additionally, between language and a deeper meaning—ideas take root in a fertile mind, and then get cultivated and grow and blossom into something beautiful. Or one is said to be “well grounded” if one has one’s mind and priorities of life in proper order. These metaphors are rooted or grounded in the natural environment. The process of metaphor yields meaning that goes beyond simply having an idea. The best ideas come to fruition after some time of reflection

¹⁹² “Nature (1st)” p. 13

¹⁹³ Ibid p. 17

(two more words coming from the natural environment). Even the world of business speaks of “seed” money used to begin a business or project.

As eloquently as Emerson talks of nature and its role for self, it is Thoreau who really puts this relation into practice with his excursion to Walden: “Every natural fact is a symbol of some spiritual fact.”¹⁹⁴ Or, at least from our perspective, it could act as such. These natural facts also supply us with the symbols we use to express spiritual facts. Perhaps it is the case that spiritual facts are adeptly put into words by poets, through metaphors drawn from the natural environment.

Connection

“Creation,” Berry argues, “provides a place for humans, but it is greater than humanity and within it even great men are small.”¹⁹⁵ One realizes one’s place in a vast context. This is akin to the feeling experienced by an encounter with the sublime. We are one creature, we are not the whole of nature nor the creator of nature. After McKibben’s experiment of watching everything that was on TV for one 24 hour time period, the message was clear: “You are the most important thing on Earth. You are the center of creation...all things orbit your desires.”¹⁹⁶ This is an unhealthy mindset that gets replaced if one spends time in nature instead. It is a mindset that is psychologically, emotionally, and spiritually unhealthy. One believes that one is solely powerful and thus solely responsible for all of creation. I discussed the biological and psychological effects of this thinking in Chapter 1, and the sociological and spiritual effects are the foci of this current chapter. Perhaps this frame of mind can be obtained if one experiences the sublime, but it can also be attained in a much more tangible way through gardening or farming. Not realizing our proper place has led to a society in which “we have abandoned any interest in the survival of

¹⁹⁴ Ibid p. 14

¹⁹⁵ Berry Body and Earth p. 98

¹⁹⁶ “Consuming Nature” p. 20

anything small. We seem to have adopted a moral rule of thumb according to which anything big is better than anything small.”¹⁹⁷ This is exemplified by the AT&T commercial that asks, “Which is better?” Big or small? Fast or slow, etc? The small requires more careful attention to detail, while the big is obvious. Additionally, if the big is so big that it becomes sublime, perhaps one way of dealing with the dis-comfort of being only a small part of something is to push it to the other extreme, which is so different and so other that it can have no effect whatsoever; the problem is too big for anything to be done about it. Global warming, for instance, or global justice. They are too massive, and I am so insignificant that I cannot do anything on a global scale. But even as these problems and the sublime experience of nature seem too large or elusive to comprehend, they are balanced by an attention to what is small and local. I am only one, but I *am* one and *that* is significant. Paying attention to what is local requires not only a change in habit but also a change in perspective, which is easier to obtain if one has a relationship with the natural environment.

As a remedy, “we need to go now and again into places where our work is disallowed where our hopes and plans have no standing.”¹⁹⁸ We must realize our place in the universe and that it is not only about *our* hopes and plans, so that we remember that we are neither the center of the universe nor in control of everything around us. And while we must project into the future, we must be careful not to think our plans are of utmost importance to the cosmos or God or whomever; rather it is our relations with the rest of creation that are most valuable. Our plans should be with that as the end goal.

Berry opines that a community “is the mental and spiritual condition of knowing that the place is shared, and that the people who share the place define and limit the possibilities of each

¹⁹⁷ Living in the Future p. 76

¹⁹⁸ “Preserving Wildness” Home Economics p. 146

other's lives. It is the knowledge that people have of each other, their concern for each other, their trust in each other, the freedom with which they come and go among themselves."¹⁹⁹ This then addresses some of the potential issues that are of concern to John Daniel, examples being the dangers of like-mindedness and isolation. Berry adds, "community, however, aspires toward stability. It strives to balance change with constancy. That is why community life places such high value on neighborly love, marital fidelity, local loyalty, the integrity and continuity of family life, respect for the old, and instruction of the young....a community cannot survive under the rule of competition."²⁰⁰ The goal for a healthy community is balance, and this, at least in part, stems from love.

Modern Labor and "Community"

The urban, modern consumer mindset also leads to a skewed notion of our own energy: "we must learn again to think of human energy, our energy, not as something to be saved, but as something to be used and to be enjoyed in use...by saving it—as our ideals of labor-saving and luxury bid us to do—we simply waste it, and waste much else along with it."²⁰¹ This consumer mindset, which is to say a wasteful mindset, leads to attempts to escape labor or to be distracted from it. This is perhaps because there is no loving connection to the labor nor to the product of the labor. Labor can be character building, an investment of time and self, as mentioned earlier with respect to small scale farming or gardening. Energy and labor are to be expended and used, and enjoyed in so doing. Why conserve human energy if it is never exerted? We speak of energy saving with respect to ourselves, and this is meant to be in contrast to wasting our efforts (which usually comes with the connotation that there is no economic result from the effort) or more accurately, spending our asset of labor energy poorly, perhaps on frivolous endeavors such as art

¹⁹⁹ Wendell Berry "Loss of the Future" *The Long-legged House*. (Berkeley: Counterpoint Press, 2012) p. 71

²⁰⁰ *Economy and Pleasure* p. 135

²⁰¹ *Margins* p. 219

for art's sake: gardening flowers rather than food for instance, or perhaps spending time reading and exercising the mind for knowledge's own sake, rather than spending that time working. Working, in this case, implies working for a paycheck, which again suggests the primacy that most people place on economic value, rather than on any other value. This implies that for most, the only thing of value is the amount of money one gets paid to perform a specific task. This contributes to a "waste of human energy and ability. Industrial agriculture replaces people with machines; the ability of millions of people to become skillful and to do work therefore comes to nothing."²⁰² The modern person no longer needs to know how to do anything, even to raise his or her own food or prepare it. There may be a connection here to the rehabilitative potential of nature. There are the health benefits and psychological benefits I discussed earlier, but there are also the benefits that accompany learning to do something, acquiring a skill and the accompanying sense of accomplishment.

Without a proper understanding of our own energy usage, we face an issue of waste: "the waste of soil and soil health...the machinery, not the land, becomes the focus of attention and the standard of work"²⁰³ which results in soil damage, etc. Farming becomes about the technology, and how to do more faster, rather than less with great care. It is the industrial model of farming, large corporations that produce quantitatively large yield. The consumer/waster mindset also leads to a "waste of solar energy, not just as motive power but even as growing power. As landholdings became larger and the number of farmers smaller, more and more fields must go without cover crops, which means that for many days in the fall and early spring the sunlight on these fields is not captured in green leaves and so made useful to the soil and to people."²⁰⁴ The wasteful mindset is a "there is more where that came from" mentality, so it becomes acceptable

²⁰² Berry "Energy in Agriculture" p. 132

²⁰³ Ibid p. 132

²⁰⁴ Ibid p. 131

to waste a little, because there is so much more left. Bigger is better because it allows for some waste. In short, waste is indicative of a lack of care. The industrialization of farming is about numbers, not care; it is about quantity rather than quality. One cannot know the land if one is only driving by and has acres and acres of it. This leads to the development of monocultures, because they are easier to maintain: “a healthy culture...clarifies our inescapable bonds to the earth and to each other. It assures that the necessary restraints are observed, that the necessary work is done and that it is done well.”²⁰⁵ Rather than just a job done, we become proud of a job that is done well, one in which we can take pride, such as seeing a plant from seed to bloom, or children from birth to independence and possibly to the birth of their child.

There are three characteristics of a new city 1) dissipation of all stable relationships to local physical and cultural geography, which is to say generic urbanization, 2) obsession with security, manipulation and surveillance and 3) simulations of generic historicity or generic modernity.²⁰⁶ This can be evidenced by the changing faces of baseball parks, which started changing in the first environmental movement of the 1970s. In this movement, the focus was on recycling and reducing our impact, etc., which led to an obscuring of unique placedness. The ballparks, by being multi-purpose and the same everywhere, did not feel unique to a particular place. But the real issue with the urban mindset is that “city persons hide their souls.”²⁰⁷ City people, in short, fear the stuff that they can control, which becomes everything, since they think they can control everything. This in turn leads to the problems with addiction, anxiety, and depression that I mentioned in the last chapter. As such, city dwellers are often much more reserved and removed. In the country, one is much more vulnerable, which in some ways is much healthier. Again this ties into the marriage analogy. Marriage, like any intimate

²⁰⁵ Agricultural Crisis as Crisis of Culture p. 43

²⁰⁶ Michael Sorkin “Introduction” Variations on a Theme Park New York: Hill and Wang, 1992. p. xii-xiv

²⁰⁷ “Glass Without Feet” p. 214

relationship, is rife with vulnerability. Either I am the center of the universe and everyone else should adjust accordingly, or Nature/God is the center and I need to adjust accordingly.

As Berry points out:

The modern city then is in the fullest sense of the word a crowd, a disorderly gathering of people. Loneliness is on the rampage in it—so many separate lives pursuing their own ends among and through and in spite of the lives of all others. And the disease that is destroying the community is destroying the families and the marriages within the community.²⁰⁸

Given the connection between marriage and nature, this loneliness could also be destroying nature. This is the unhealthy modern man of whom Berry speaks. There is a great lack of loyalty to anything-- spouse, place, or work-- because those things require dedication rather than immediacy. The modern city, says Berry, while it has the potential to be a community, is not one. Rather, it is a collection of individuals who are lonely due to their lack of real involvement and interaction with one another. This is exemplified in the place where most city dwellers work, the office building. As Mander points out,

The modern office building is the archetypal example of the mediated environment...the spaces are square, flat and small eliminating a sense of height, depth and irregularity. The décor is rigidly controlled to a bland uniform from room to room and floor to floor. The effect is to dampen all interest in the space one inhabits.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁸ "Loss of the Future" p.71

²⁰⁹ Jerry Mander. *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television*. <http://whitewraithe.wordpress.com/online-book-four-arguments-for-the-elimination-of-television/>

One cannot even engage this place aesthetically (in the Berleantian sense), so one is forced to focus on work instead. However, this environment leads to more health problems, as well as “health of soul” problems, which ultimately decrease productivity and creativity. The employees, since they already have lost a sense of loyalty, take more sick days, whether they need them for physical dis-ease or “mental health.” Mander continues,

The air is processed, the temperature regulated. It is always the same. The body’s largest sense organ, the skin, feels no wind, no change in temperature, and is dulled....the light remains constant from morning through night, from room to room until our awareness of light is as dulled as our awareness of temperature and we are not aware of the passage of time... [and] when we reduce an aspect of the environment from varied and multidimensional to fixed, we also change the human being who lives within it. Humans give up the capacity to adjust...the human being then becomes a creature with a narrower range of abilities and fewer feelings about the loss. We become grosser, simpler, less varied like the environment.²¹⁰

When we subject ourselves to monocultures, we are directly and detrimentally impacted.

The office, as exemplar of the city mindset, is much too controlled; there is a lack of wildness, a lack of danger for the powers that be. The self that is in that “environment” changes. All senses become dulled and bland, as do those of a domesticated animal that could not survive in the wild (nor would want to be in the wild). We could not grow our own food if we needed to, nor do we want to. Again, I am not saying that we would be better if we still had no indoor plumbing or refrigerators, but there is a need for balance and for a realization at least of what our created environments are doing to us. From the modified temperature, to the modified lighting,

²¹⁰ Ibid

to the modified food we eat, the non-natural, the artificial make us less and less attuned to the basic features of nature.

As we have become more technologically based and cityfied, says Abram,

Organic entities—crows, squirrels, the trees, wild weeds that surround our house, humming insects, streambeds, clouds and rainfall—all begin to display a new vitality, each coaxing the breathing body into a unique dance. Even boulders and rocks seem to speak their own uncanny languages of gesture and shadow, inviting the body and its bones into silent communication. In contact with the native forms of the earth, one's senses are slowly energized and awakened, combining and recombining in ever-shifting patterns.²¹¹

There may be an aspect of McDermott's notion of nostalgia at play here, but there may also be something more primordial at work.

In continuing with the same point, Abram states,

As the experiential source of both psyche and spirit, it would seem that the air was once felt to be the very matter of awareness, the subtle body of the mind. And hence that awareness, far from being experienced as a quality that distinguishes humans from the rest of nature, was originally felt as that which invisibly joined human beings to the other animals and to the plants, the forests, and to the mountains. For it was the unseen but common medium of their existence.²¹²

There was a much greater sense of community and less focus on individualism. There was a sense of common existence with the rest of nature, which sometimes eludes the city dweller or more modern man, who thinks of himself as the only one experiencing what he is experiencing.

²¹¹ Abram p. 63

²¹² Ibid p. 238

We think of ourselves as special and unique and unlike everyone else, which then makes us believe we are the center of the universe. This is also connected to the consumer mindset that considers the individual and his or her desires to be the center of the universe. One must consume to feel special. It is not just *that* we consume, but *what* we consume that defines us. This is in contrast to the gardener, who may be defined by what he produces, or co-creates, or learns from his creation.

Given this city ‘dwelling,’ perhaps better described as city ‘housing,’

Most people go through their lives making only very limited demands on their perceptual power. Culture and environment largely determine which of the senses are favored. In the modern world vision tends to be emphasized at the expense of the other senses, smell and touch in particular for they require proximity and slow pace to function, and they stir emotions.²¹³

Sight is not as closely tied to emotions as smell is, which is the first sense we acquire and the last we lose before we die. Not emphasizing smell leads to a further dis-connection of a particular experience from other experiences and other aspects of the same experience, namely the emotional content of experience. One can drive by and see, but cannot drive by and smell, or drive by and touch. One cannot photograph smell, the photograph cannot capture any senses other than sight. As collectors or consumers, we primarily collect visual images such as coins, photographs, books and the like. While we may also collect music, there is a different type of experience between collecting iTunes and collecting albums.

Due to our more technologically based lives and our separateness from nature and its natural rhythms, etc., “human awareness folds and the senses—once the crucial site of our engagement with the wild and animate earth—become mere adjuncts of an isolated and abstract

²¹³ Topophilia p. 245

mind bent on overcoming an organic reality that now seems disturbingly aloof and arbitrary.”²¹⁴

All of nature seems too distant to have any impact on us. There is a connection here with the acceptance of only the artificial.

McKibben, then, echoing Berry, tells us that “in short, we’re less happy than we used to be and no wonder—we are after all highly evolved social animals. There aren’t enough iPods on earth to compensate for those missing friendships.”²¹⁵ Being a Facebook friend is different than being an actual friend, and this relates to the current debate about whether we are becoming more or less isolated through the use of technology, which, while not my focus, is a related issue that bears mentioning. We are dis-eased, physically, psychologically, and spiritually. As Abrams claims,

There is an intimate reciprocity to the senses; as we touch the bark of a tree, we feel the tree touching us; as we lend our ears to the local sounds and ally our nose to the seasonal scents, the terrain gradually tunes us in turn. The senses that are the primary way that the earth has of informing our thoughts and of guiding our actions...for it is only at the call of our direct, sensory interactions with the land around us that we can appropriately notice and respond to the immediate needs of the living world.”²¹⁶ Thus we must be connected to the land and hopefully, like Berry, to a particular place “we can know the needs of any particular region only by participating in its specificity—by becoming familiar with its cycles and styles, awake and attentive to its other inhabitants.”²¹⁷

This familiarity and attention to other inhabitants requires attunement to perceive them.

²¹⁴ Abram p. 267

²¹⁵ Eaarth p. 133

²¹⁶ Abram p. 268

²¹⁷ Ibid p. 268

Nash spoke about Leopold's

...growing awareness of the interrelations of organisms and their environment.

This led him to the realization that protecting wild country was a matter of scientific necessity as well as sentiment. This synthesis of the logic of a scientist with the ethical and aesthetical sensitivity of a romantic was effective armament for the defense of wilderness.²¹⁸

This may be precisely the current debate; is it the scientific view that will force us to save the environment or a more aesthetic view? My contention is that the two are not mutually exclusive; a scientist may have an aesthetic mindset and the artist may have a scientific mindset, but I believe, generally speaking, the aesthetic mindset will force one to interact in a way the scientific mindset may not. The scientific mindset may lend itself toward the island motif, as the natural would still be able to go through its processes without us - and probably better without us -but for nature to have full meaning, the aesthetic outlook is required. The scientific mindset may lead to further isolation, as it seems the growing influence of this mindset has contributed greatly to the modern city and the modern consumer mindset. Science is generally considered to be more valuable (specifically economically) in our society than the arts. The arts are seen as a luxury, while science has more tangible results for everyone.

However, at least at this point and in the foreseeable future, “no matter how urban our life, our bodies live by farming; we come from the earth and return to it, and so we live in agriculture as we live in flesh...it is hardly surprising then that there should be some profound resemblances between our treatment of our bodies and our treatment of the earth.”²¹⁹ Just as we abuse others, we abuse our own bodies. We feed our bodies junk; we drive everywhere; we do as

²¹⁸ Nash p. 182

²¹⁹ Body and the Earth p. 97

little as possible; we treat ourselves just like we treat the land-- abusively. Of course in other respects we care for ourselves and our bodies, but in general we exercise less, eat worse, and are more depressed and more anxious than we need to be. Those who are the healthiest physically, mentally and spiritually usually have a better relationship with nature.

Many of the problems that seem to accompany modern urban life seem insurmountable, due to the continued rise of technology and a continued rise in the sense of self-importance. But it could be the case that this rise of technology could be used to bring about a greater sense of community, namely one that stretches beyond our neighborhood. Through technology a community of like-minded individuals could develop, rather than one of people who happen to live next to each other. For instance, Catholics in Mass all over the world hear a message on the same texts, thus establishing a type of global community. It seems, however, that there is a great struggle involved in connecting through technology. Some connections are merely virtual; avatars, for example, may be only one aspect of a person, or not even that person at all. One can present only parts of oneself online, and as such not reveal all of oneself to one's virtual "friends." It may be more difficult to be vulnerable "online," and thus it is difficult to use the internet to generate the kind of intimacy generated by face to face engagement. However, it seems it is possible to have an online community, but there are more challenges to overcome as well. And as we become creatures who are online more and outside less, these challenges on genuine connection may infiltrate our relationships offline, which include not only our relations with other people, but also with Nature/God and with ourselves.

The idea of dis-connection is connected to our relation with our work as well, and as such, we feel defeated.

We are defeated at work because our work gives us no pleasure. We are defeated at home because we have no pleasant work there. We turn to the pleasure industry for relief from our defeat and are again defeated, for the pleasure industries can thrive and grow only upon our dissatisfaction with them. Where is our comfort but in the free, uninvolved finally mysterious beauty and grace of this world that we did not make, that has no process?²²⁰

For Berry, one should seek pleasure in nature, rather than places such as online. The process of working and laboring with all of our energy and all of ourselves is what will result in pleasure (though perhaps the work is not always pleasant or pleasing), and if it is a farm or garden at home, then one can also find pleasure at home, because the pleasing work is there. But because our work is often not pleasing and not fulfilling, we distance ourselves from it. Our isolation leads to frustration and depression, which leads to further isolation, further depression, and so on. Perhaps we should try to be “married” to our work in the sense delineated above. Perhaps we should find work that is rewarding on a personal level, not just on an economic level. Our work should be enhancing our self.

However, “because of a general distrust and suspicion, we not only lose one another’s help and companionship but we are all now living in jeopardy of being sued.”²²¹ When the community relationships break down, distrust builds up. Life becomes about individuals, rather than community, and we look upon others with suspicion, which again leads to the cycle of isolation and depression. To some extent, the city creates forced isolation. Cubicles at work are used to separate us, to make us each individuals, rather than parts of a whole. It is the ‘I do my job, you do yours’ mentality; our individualization means we have different goals, etc. This

²²⁰ Berry Economy and Pleasure p. 140

²²¹ Work of local Culture p. 157

forces our shared experiences and shared humanity to the background. Perhaps some, if not all, technology is naturally isolating, which is the reason why there is a struggle to make connections online. Or perhaps technology itself is not the problem, but is merely used as an expression of the problem going on internally within the individual. There are, after all, communities built around causes, which find their expression online; there are also communities that revolve around online games. But in each of these we only see certain sides of others, which is not true intimacy; true intimacy involves going through the bad times together and working through the problems together. In a “real” relationship, one is aware of the good and bad parts of the other person and one’s relations to him or her, and chooses to be with the person anyway.

Berry warns us, much as Marx did, “if people are regarded as machines, they must be regarded as replaceable by other machines. They are regarded in other words, as dispensable. Their place on the farm is safe only as long as they are mechanically necessary.”²²² People become objects to be worked until no longer useful, rather than people who are individuals and have their own goals, etc. This is part of Marx’s critique of capitalism: there must be an excess workforce. This also then leads to a lack of loyalty by both employer and employee that is indicative of our age. The lack of loyalty is manifested in other interpersonal relationships as well, such as marriages. When things get tough, I will take my skills and go elsewhere, rather than work at the same place for lifetime or stay with the same partner for a lifetime. Of course no one would consider it wise to stay with one’s first partner just for the sake of staying with him or her, just as no one would suggest one should stay at her first job just because it is her first job; there needs to be a balance of rootedness and rootlessness. One needs the different experiences that come from being away from home. One can think of college, for instance, as being a different experience if one lives at home, as opposed to living in another city or state. One needs

²²² Uses of Energy p. 288

firmly established roots, but those must be balanced with the occasional non-home experience. Of course if one is well grounded, then the trials of the world away from home will not shake him as fundamentally as they may shake one who is not well rooted or grounded.

Country or rural life, on the other hand, involves, perhaps, chosen solitude. But solitude is not necessarily isolation, since we share the experience with others in the same part of the land. In the city, it seems as though each person is an atomic individual, instead of part of a collective or a community. There are of course exceptions to this generalization, but they *are* exceptions rather than the norm. Perhaps this dis-connection from others is due to the removal from the natural; in the city, most of nature is mowed down or built over. Or perhaps there is more constant interaction with others, who are also in random office buildings anywhere else in the country or in the world. But we do not feel a close connection with them, since we do not see them, since we do not experience them. In the country, we may see others at the general store or out working in the field. Even in the city, if on the opposite side of the property line there is someone else on their knees, planting and caring for flowers and vegetables, we feel a connection with them through shared experience, as well as through seeing them at the local nursery at the same times of the year. Connectedness, of course, *can* happen in cities, but it may be more difficult to generate or cultivate, whereas in the rural environment it is a natural fact of life.

This notion of isolation is disconcerting to Leopold, and he is concerned with establishing a biotic community: “A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community.”²²³ The importance is placed on tendencies rather than on hard and fast rules, because a community is about relationships, and therefore the community is always evolving and changing. As Wirzba states, “some forms of specialization are helpful, but we must

²²³ SCA p. 262

not overlook the present reality in which specialization becomes an excuse to be ignorant of and not accountable for the broader contexts in which we work.”²²⁴ Furthermore, in looking at the broader contexts in which we live, the effect is that we “make ourselves frustratingly helpless and ignorant in regard to basic human skills—growing food, maintaining a home, caring for and educating children, promoting friendship and cooperation, facing illness and death.”²²⁵ We become specialists in one field and do not know how to care for the other fields, therefore we rely on other experts to tell us how to care for those fields, which again ignores one’s particular placedness.

As Wirzba suggests, “specialization also leads to the sense of our own isolation from the broader wholes of which we are a part. Isolated, we wonder how what we do matters and perhaps more important we shield ourselves from the harmful and the beneficial effects of what we do.”²²⁶ In order to be healthy, we should be closely tied to the effects of our actions, the effects not only on ourselves but on others as well. We should notice the larger connections our actions generate. The smaller an action is, the larger the impact may be, but the closer our attention must be to notice it. It is easier to see how what we do matters when we value it and can see the effects of it. It is easier, for instance, to experience the importance of the value of growing food when we grow it ourselves and possibly even share it with our neighbors.

This garden or farm viewpoint could also change the education system: “industrial education has abandoned the old duty of passing on the cultural and intellectual inheritance in favor of baby-sitting and career preparation.”²²⁷ Rather than developing, dare I say cultivating, a garden of children (i.e. developing and cultivating a whole person), education contributes to the

²²⁴ Wirzba p. x

²²⁵ Ibid p. xi

²²⁶ Ibid p. xi

²²⁷ Berry Feminism p. 187

specialization of modern culture and separates persons from the cultural legacy of which they are a part. This is a cultural legacy that can be read in the land, the cultural history with which one can be reconnected through a community and a knowledge of place. One ultimately needs to be reflective rather than follow the crowd. This project is again about changing a mindset, which then changes habits. Do I need the newest iPhone, for instance? Do I need an iPhone at all? The object may connect me to others, but for what purpose? Is it to consume better? Do I need it in order to show off how I am at the center of the universe? Do I need it in order to get affirmation from others (do they like the pictures of my pet)? Or do I need it in order to truly learn about others and the world? If I have tons of Facebook friendships, does that indicate they are healthy relationships? To draw the connection to the large industrial farm: is it about numbers and quantity, rather than quality? If the quantity of the crop, for instance, is big enough, perhaps one need not be concerned if the quality of a portion is lacking, because the sheer numbers of the rest will more than make up for it. If I have enough "friends" perhaps I do not need any of them to be good friends. This quantity over quality thinking also means that no crop or friendship is exceptional because none are exceptionally well cared for. All are ok, but none are great, and hopefully none are awful. Perhaps, then, this leads to a mediocrity of self mindset as well. If I am only surrounding myself with many average and conforming people, does that really lead to a good cultivation of self? It could be the case that the friends with which one associates are part of the place where one's spirit resides.

Rootlessness

John Daniel responds to Berry and his emphasis on rootedness to place by agreeing that we need to find a place. But he claims we also need to be cautious about the tendency to become insular and closed-off physically, and thus mentally as well. Daniel is afraid that in a community,

everyone tends to think alike, and any contrary position is scorned or silenced: “I am one of the converted when it comes to the cultural and economic necessity of finding place. Our rootlessness, our inability or refusal to accept the discipline of living as responsive and responsible members of a neighborhoods, communities landscapes and ecosystems, is one of our most serious and widespread diseases.”²²⁸ There is, then, a necessary link between responsibility and being placed. Perhaps there is also a link between rootlessness and adolescent lack of responsibility. As Daniel, the proponent of rootlessness indicates, “I feel at least a tinge of concern that we might allow our shared beliefs and practices to harden into orthodoxy.”²²⁹ That fear is real and needs to be taken seriously. Since a true community is predicated on relationships, it needs to be open to change.

The fear is that the like-mindedness of folk leads to prejudices. While this may sometimes be the case, it could also be the case that like-minded folks are in agreement regarding positive changes and mindsets as well. For instance, like-mindedness could be in agreement with respect to the garden motif I’m putting forward in this work. This concern for like-mindedness may be part of Thoreau’s concern about overly civilized apples and people. Monocultures weed out anything different: “stickers run the severe risk of being sticks in the mud,”²³⁰ so there is still the need to travel and see other places. But it is also important to have a place to which to return, a place for which one cares: “the pernicious pressure toward conformity is strongest in those places where communities are strongest and people live closest to the land.”²³¹ This is a fair point, but does not the conformity also occur in the cities? If urban attitudes tend to be relativistic, perhaps this is still an attempt to fill a void that could be filled

²²⁸ John Daniel “A Word in Favor of Rootlessness”. *The Future of Nature: Writing on a Human Ecology*. (Orion Society, 2007) p. 160

²²⁹ Ibid p. 160

²³⁰ Ibid p. 162

²³¹ Ibid p. 162

with real community and land. Although there is more diversity in the city than in rural areas, and it is easier to be different, or at least to be certain types of different, there are still versions of cultural conformity and exclusion. For example, in some cities it may be tough to be conservative or Christian, just as in others it may be tough to be liberal. Furthermore, in the cities, there are often sub-communities such as Little Italy or Chinatown, because naturally, people with similar backgrounds tend to settle near others like them, in order to have a sense of familiarity. These carry their own versions of conformity. Daniel points out that “all of us, in any place or community or movement, tend to become insiders; we all need the stranger, the outsider to shake up our perspective and keep us honest.”²³²

Daniel adds, “marriage to place is something our land and society need, but not all of us are the marrying kind. Some of us are more given to the exhilarated attention and ardent exploration of wooing—less given to extended fidelity and more to rapture.”²³³ Is this the case, or would society actually benefit if all were the marrying kind? If rootlessness is indicative of adolescence, should we not grow out of that and mature to the settled, marrying kind, even if it is to place instead of to a person? If there is a tie between marriage and other social connections, then we need the responsibility and the consequences that come from belonging to a place. Leopold echoes Berry’s desire to marry a place: “we shall never achieve harmony with land, any more than we shall achieve absolute justice or liberty for people. In these higher aspirations the important thing is not to achieve but to strive. It is only in mechanical enterprises that we can expect that early or complete fruition of effort which we call success.”²³⁴ Since it is a series of constant adjustments, perfect harmony or at-one-ment is never done. “Done” would be if it were a checklist or a blueprint, where all the steps have been followed. A community, an intimate

²³² Ibid p. 163

²³³ Ibid p. 164

²³⁴ SCA p. 210

relationship, is never done, but is always becoming. Harmony, then, is not a stopping point but a goal, which itself would be ever shifting: “the problem then is how to bring about a striving for harmony with land among a people many of whom have forgotten there is any such thing as land, among whom education and culture have become almost synonymous with landlessness.”²³⁵

The distance from the land has become too great and we see it as too “other” to have a close relationship with it. If land is too immanent or too close it becomes part of the self and is not “other” enough. The societal understanding, then, has come to imply that if one is landed or rooted, then one is not educated or not open to new ideas; there is no growth of character or thought. This is the stereotypical myth of the “hick” or the “hillbilly.” This also hearkens back to the earlier discussion of the word “pedestrian.” To many in contemporary time, to be cultured means to be nomadic. To be cultured is to be a consumer of objects. It is to be independent and mobile. The average number of jobs held by people in their lifetime is increasing; there is a lack of commitment on behalf of both employers and employees. There is perhaps a psychological connection with our always wanting that which we cannot have. But true education requires being grounded; the abstract needs the concrete; knowledge needs roots, and these require a place to grow and expand.

There seems to be a greater lack of commitment in dis-placed persons. Perhaps as knowledge grows, so does commitment, as well as a desire to be committed, which leads to more learning. To have no place to call home is not good. In the Bible, being homeless is a punishment. Adam and Eve are thrown out of their home. Cain is driven away from the soil: “Cain said to the Lord ‘My punishment is greater than I can bear! Today you have driven me

²³⁵ Ibid p. 210

away from the soil.”²³⁶ He is cast out from home, to become a rootless wanderer. The upright will abide in the land, and the innocent will remain in it; but the wicked will be cut off from the land, and the treacherous will be rooted out of it.²³⁷ Being placed is an important part of maintaining one’s identity and sense of self, and as such, being dis-placed leads to a loss of identity. To use non-Biblical examples, one can think of an eviction; one is cast out from one’s home. Or in the case of a fire or natural disaster, one can become dis-placed and literally homeless.

As Tuan states, “loyalty to home, city and nation is a powerful sentiment. Blood is shed in their defense.”²³⁸ But one must have a home in order to feel that sentiment. On the flip side are all the problems that John Daniel points out in his words for rootlessness: “the city liberates its citizens from the need for incessant toil to maintain their bodies and from the feeling of impotence before nature’s vagaries.”²³⁹ The city offers freedom, perhaps. We do not, for example, have to count on the crops for survival; we have grocery stores, and therefore also the freedom to pursue other careers and fields of interest. Many give up freedom, though, by becoming slaves to their gadgets, or by becoming slaves to the jobs for which they have no passion, in order to afford the gadgets. For Berry, “if we do not live where we work, and when we work, we are wasting our lives and our work too.”²⁴⁰ This drive-by mentality is the reason why most people must rely upon the recognition of the big and obvious to recognize that there are problems. We at best only notice our impact on big things and at worst do not recognize our impact at all. Deforestation, for instance, is easy to see because trees are big and obvious. Tuan further points out that all of the ideal places of nature share a lack of excesses of geography

²³⁶ Genesis 4:13

²³⁷ Proverbs 2:21-2

²³⁸ Topophilia p. 102

²³⁹ Daniel p. 162

²⁴⁰ Living in the Future p. 79

(none are too hot or too cold or too dry or too wet) and in all of them, plants and animals are useful and friendly to man. Places that experience four distinct seasons and a relative lack of severe weather are becoming more sparse, which may mean that more people will be dissatisfied with their place and will not make it their home. They may not take care of their place, and they may not enjoy the peace and security that come with the sense of home.

Leopold states, “there is much confusion between land and country. Land is the place where corn, gullies, and mortgages grow. Country is the personality of the land, the collective harmony of its soil, life and weather...it is calmly aloof to the petty exigencies of its alleged owners.”²⁴¹ Country, in short, has an aura, something intangible that is particular to place. Country is more than a place. Country is an idea. So, “in country as in people, a plain exterior often conceals hidden riches, to perceive which requires much living in and with.”²⁴² The importance of placedness is tied to finding the riches of the country, which requires patience, time, and attention. Hobbies are also like this, in that they require time, attention, and a slowing down, especially in the face of fast-paced, mass-produced society. For Leopold we can learn by “making something by hand which machines can usually make more quickly and cheaply, and sometimes better.”²⁴³ Working “by hand” gives the learner “a real and personal satisfaction.” Value is not merely what an object is monetarily worth, but rather what one gets out of the effort and the process of producing an object. This is of course true with things like gardening; it is the effort one puts into the growing of the potato that makes the potato seem to taste better. Or in the case of food preparation, homemade food seems to taste better than store bought, because of the value one has brought to it. There is a sense of accomplishment, a re-weddedness to labor and its product: “a hobby is a defiance of the contemporary. It is an assertion of those permanent values

²⁴¹ SCA p. 177

²⁴² Ibid p. 180

²⁴³ Ibid p. 182

which the momentary eddies of social evolution have contravened or overlooked.”²⁴⁴ A hobby runs contrary to the monetary consumer mindset; it is not produced for consumption, nor is it purchased. It also means that we have enough time away from our contribution to the capitalistic system that we can produce something simply because we want to.

Leopold states that the

ability to see the *cultural* value of wilderness boils down in the last analysis to a question of intellectual humility. The shallow minded modern who has lost his footage in the land assumes that he has already discovered what is important...it is only the *scholar* who appreciates that all of history consists of successive excursions from a single starting point to which man returns again and again to organize yet another search for a durable source of values. (my italics)²⁴⁵

The focus should be, perhaps, not so much on the scholar but on a scholarly attitude, or on being an Emersonian American scholar. With scholarship comes humility (one does not know everything there is to know), and this leads to the scholarship necessary to learn more. The scholar is a scholar not just of books, but also of anything that can lead to knowledge or understanding, including nature itself. This ability to see the cultural value comes from being attuned to it. This scholarly attitude, then, is the opposite of the usual understanding of pedestrian. A similar point may be made about the word “common,” which has come to mean something lesser. Common has come to mean “like everyone else,” which is understood to be a bad thing. Since I am or should be the center of the universe, I need to be special, not just unique, but better. And I need others to recognize that specialness, through outlets such as Facebook. Humility, on the other hand, can be felt most especially in the wilderness, or on a mountaintop,

²⁴⁴ Ibid p. 182

²⁴⁵ Ibid p. 279

or even on one's hands and knees gardening. Perhaps humility must accompany being a member of a true community or finding one's true home.

Berry, like Tuan and Daniel, is concerned about like-mindedness and its possible connection to closed-mindedness, which may accompany communities, especially if they become too insular (as Daniel is concerned they may), but this insular aspect is what he warns against in all of his writings. Being at home could lead to isolation. The insular comes about as a result of dichotomous thinking, which the garden motif seeks to overcome. Therefore, the like-mindedness and closed-mindedness are products not of true community, but of a breakdown of community. Berry argues: "what we have as a result are not communities but fragment-communities, the fragments communicating by means that can only be institutional" rather than personal. For Berry, "The failure of modern cities is that they have become, not communities, but merely crowds of specialists and specializations."²⁴⁶ This specialization is what leads to more like-mindedness. We become like-minded within our own specializations, rather than seeing the larger picture and how our specialization fits with more general ends. This is in contrast to a true community, in which everyone realizes their more deeply cultivated self and ways in which that self fits within the community of other cultivated selves. This seeks to address Daniel's worry about the insular nature of rural communities and placedness leading to monotony. Since communities are composed of individuals who are open to communicate and to listen to others, communities could help alleviate the possibility of closed-mindedness. Additionally, since the placed person, the farmer or the gardener, is open and vulnerable to what nature may have to teach, presumably this openness to teaching can extend to include other people as well. This, at least, is Berry's hope.

²⁴⁶ Loss of Future p. 70

Callicott, whose thought is Humean in origin, states “all ethics so far evolved rest upon a single premise that the individual is a member of a *community of interdependent* parts.”²⁴⁷ This notion of community is integral to Berry’s vision and to Leopold’s vision of a biotic community. A true community is not insular or individualistic, but interdependent. This is in part why such a notion of community runs so contrary to the current culture, which emphasizes individualism. To admit dependency (whether healthy or unhealthy) is seen as weakness. This is a version of the frontier value of “rugged individualism.” To be in an intimate relationship, which requires vulnerability and a level of dependency, is seen as something for weak losers. Thus, “the land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community.”²⁴⁸ As Callicott says, it is an expansion of community to include the environment, not a replacement for a human-centric ethic: “a land ethic changes the role of homo sapiens from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it.”²⁴⁹ We become one part of a whole that must be balanced and harmonic. The community is interdependent, (like the food web, for example) and we recognize our place in the community.

Perhaps this is the reason why Leopold is an early critic of globalization, or “world-wide hybridization of cultures through modern transport.”²⁵⁰ Globalization can lead to a loss of a sense of place. This “global” mindset can come to believe that all problems can be solved the same way. This way then becomes a blueprint or checklist for problem solving everywhere. This has the effect of creating one large monoculture, both agriculturally and socially.

If we were all to become farmers, perhaps that too would lead to a monoculture, and thus defeat some of the advantages to farming. Or perhaps farmers would each be different enough so

²⁴⁷ J. Baird Callicott *In Defense of the Land Ethic: Essays in Environmental Philosophy*. (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989) p. 197

²⁴⁸ SCA p. 171

²⁴⁹ Ibid p. 171

²⁵⁰ Ibid p. 171

as not to succumb to sameness. Wirzba states, “It is imperative that we not understand Berry to be saying that we must all become farmers. This is neither practically feasible or desirable, since there is not enough land, nor does everyone have the appropriate temperament for farming. What is possible, however, is that people, urbanites included, adopt agrarian responsibilities and concerns.”²⁵¹ Again this agrarianism is an *outlook*, not an *occupation*. While Berry may not be encouraging everyone to be a farmer, perhaps like Pollan he would suggest that we could all become small scale farmers; if we do not have the temperament yet, we might acquire it. What better way is there to do this than through small scale personal farming or gardening? As pointed out in “Why Mow?” one could take more and more of one’s yard for growing things other than grass, which one then cuts routinely. This is especially so if we consider that the lawn is only somewhat natural and “the land yields a cultural harvest.”²⁵² Very much a precursor to Berry, who continually points out that agriculture is *agri-culture*, Leopold states that the land ethic is an attempt to weld the ideas of land and community; land is to be loved and respected and it yields a “cultural harvest.” What is meant by “cultural harvest?” Culture can be reflected in the way its members interact with the land. The land then reflects the culture and can provide a harvest. Does it produce good fruit (because people are planting good cultural seeds and taking care of the land properly) or producing bad fruit (because people are focusing only on economics or the like). As Berry states, “it is impossible to divorce the question of what we do from the question of who we are”²⁵³ which is to say that if we treat the land with care and compassion, we are probably caring and compassionate people. Conversely, if we rape it and take advantage of it, then that is the type of people we are. Are we a placed, caring people -- the marrying types -- or are we the alternative?

²⁵¹ Wirzba p. xvii

²⁵² SCA p. 21

²⁵³ Living in the Future p. 79

Home

As Berleant argues,

In an authentic environment people not only belong but are at home, joining in a domestic attachment of affection and fulfillment. It reflects and encourages individual personality and collective culture. It reduces destructive feelings and responses and carries forward human aspirations, assisting us in directing our energies in productive ways...it recognizes instead that environment does not lie around us but is continuous and integrated with the human person.²⁵⁴

This powerful notion of home as community, of being placed again as Berry discusses, well describes an authentic relationship with the environment. Genuine connection highlights both the connection and individuality, whereas the modern man is mostly aware mainly of his individuality; separateness from the environment leads to separateness in other aspects of life as well. We can be cultivated by the natural even as we cultivate the natural. In short, our relation to nature is crucial for our personal relations.

The notion of intimacy and connectivity in relation to community should extend to our dwelling places as well: “their form [of a house] should be so in tune with the setting as to appear that they were growing from their site, like a tree grows from the ground.”²⁵⁵ This recalls Berleant and his discussion of the relation of architecture to the landscape. The architecture should “fit” the surroundings. One’s home perhaps should not be an escape from everything, not a refuge from nature, for instance, but a sanctuary from the overly “connected” world, a refuge from the world that seeks to encourage individualism and consumer mindsets. Perhaps, “when

²⁵⁴ Arnold Berleant “Cultivating and Urban Aesthetic” *The Aesthetics of Environment* (Temple, 1992) p. 93

²⁵⁵ Lynda Waggoner ‘Introduction’ *Fallingwater* (New York: Rizzoli) p. 16

inside, one should experience a sense of protection from nature but not feel cut off from it.”²⁵⁶ In short, one should feel connected; one should be a part of the place where one chooses to have a home. Why choose a beachfront property if one cannot perceive and experience the beach from the home, for example? The goal should not be to be cut off and isolated. Frank Lloyd Wright, in his Robie House, employs an open floor plan, as opposed to little rooms cut off from one another. It is a cohesive whole, both inside and outside. The floor plan is reflective of the family who were to dwell there, open to each other and open to the community. The home, generally, was seen as a gathering place, rather than a place where one can escape to loneliness and isolation, which of course is not really escape, as it leads to an unhealthy outlook on the world. There is a connection between isolation and depression. One who is depressed prefers isolation, which leads to greater depression.²⁵⁷ While it may be healthful to retreat to rejuvenate for a short time, we are social animals designed to be with others. Depression and isolation feed off one another. To feel connected to others and to the environment, as I pointed out in Chapter 1, is physically and psychologically healthier. Cultivating ourselves requires an overall attitude of connectivity and community.

Consider further the connections among the notions of home, a dwelling place, and a place of comfort. If one is comfortable in one’s home while surrounded by nature, then perhaps one may love nature more. Most folks vacation in Gatlinburg or “slower” places like it in order to experience a slower pace of life. While away on vacation, one is able to escape from the workaday routines of getting up, commuting, coming home, watching TV, and going to bed, only to do it all again. One is freed from the chores of keeping a home. This notion of freedom comes to the forefront yet again here. It will also be a major aspect of the creative drive I will

²⁵⁶ Ibid p. 16

²⁵⁷ <http://www.lifewithoutdepression.org/isolation-and-depression>

discuss in the last chapter. People typically do not escape to more bustle, unless that is in contrast to their own everyday lives. An accountant in Boise may escape to Las Vegas; the native of Las Vegas might rather escape to Boise. There may be an aspect of the “city mouse, country mouse” story at play here. The city mouse likes visiting the country, but would not want to live there (though prior to going, he thinks he may prefer the country life, until he realizes that that life has its own issues). Furthermore, he begins to miss the life that he has established for himself. The escape is nice, but it seems better than it would be in actuality. There is a notion of home as a sanctuary from the cruel, bitter (as in man-made bitter) world outside of home. Since one has the freedom to make the choices in one’s home, perhaps that is the reason why the old American dream included home owning, rather than renting. There is more responsibility, but also more freedom, just as in a healthy relationship with the environment. Thus, thinking of our natural place as “home” may be better for us and for the environment itself.

Berry, again emphasizing the importance of being placed, states: “whereas most American writers—and even most Americans—of my time are displaced persons, I am a placed person.”²⁵⁸ For Berry, to be dis-placed is bad; to be placed is good, because one gets to know the land, and one must know the land before one can care for it. This recalls the marriage metaphor; a marriage requires attention for the partners to draw closer to each other. Berry also argues for a close relation between writing and being placed, in terms of the level of commitment necessary for each endeavor. But what of the issue of mobility and writing? Writing, like thinking, can be done on the go, regardless of where one is, perhaps even while one is lost. However, computers and typewriters, until most recently, could not be taken everywhere. We now have smart phones, which can be taken anywhere, but they are not conducive to writing essays or stories; the only handheld portable device fully conducive to the writing process is paper and pencil or pen. While

²⁵⁸ Wendell Berry “Long-legged House” *The Long-legged House*. (Berkeley: Counterpoint Press, 2012) p. 158

this does not condone rootlessness per se, it does allow for walking in the Thoreauvian sense (as discussed earlier), especially if one then returns home.

When we consider Berry's notion of home and the importance of that concept, we might also realize we are not home, or at least not comfortable in our home; we may have a place to live, but we may not have a home. This may contribute to a notion of homesickness, which is connected to the psychological unhealth I discussed in the last chapter: "looking at monocultures of industrial civilization, we yearn with a kind of homesickness for the humanness and the naturalness of highly diversified, multipurpose landscape, democratically divided, with many margins."²⁵⁹ Monocultures are bad for crops and for people. Diversity is both healthier for crops and for communities of people, but diversity is also more beautiful. Given Wright's penchant for openness and wanting to be one with nature,

by the time he designed Fallingwater, Wright had developed a repertoire of design details and approaches to connect his buildings to nature. Large trees were treated as revered ancestors, and in deference to their exalted position when one was in too close proximity to a building, he chose either to build around it or to incorporate it into the design rather than cut it down. Rock formations also became integral features within his buildings. At Fallingwater they rise out of the floors and meld into the walls in ways that defy any effort to separate house from site.²⁶⁰

The connection he speaks of is not just a connection, but an appropriate "fitting in." Wright ensured that he not overcultivate, but that he cultivate; placing a house in wilderness is already a cultivation of sorts, but to destroy all the trees, or to level all of the rock formations,

²⁵⁹ "Preserving Wildness" p. 151

²⁶⁰ Fallingwater p. 11

would be to destroy the reason the location was appealing. He ensured that a home would fit without destroying the sense of home that was there to begin with before the cultivation began.

Leopold is also neither against cultivating nor some sense of civilization. He states:

What I am trying to make clear is that if in a city we had six vacant lots available to the youngsters of a certain neighborhood for playing ball, it might be development to build houses on the first, and the second and the third, and the fourth and even on the fifth, but when we build houses on the last one, we forget what houses are for. The sixth house would not be development at all but rather ...stupidity.²⁶¹

Even Leopold is not against urbanizing per se, just over-urbanizing, over-cultivating, making the environment fit the house instead of the other way around. Leopold is articulating the need for balance and harmony within the biotic community, a place for both human wants and needs, as well as for the more natural. He seeks a balance, which is what I am also suggesting.

This appeal to balance is in contrast to the trophy-hunter, who is the “motorized ant who swarms the continents before learning his own back yard, who consumes but never creates outdoor satisfactions.”²⁶² We must learn our own backyard before venturing out; we must know home before we can know anywhere else. One must be able to help himself before being able to help others. One must know some possible ways before showing “the way” to others. This is why apprenticeship is important with regards to something like gardening or farming. In this way, a different type of community is built, one in which experienced farmers and gardeners help the less experienced to be successful. The mentor can help the mentee overcome the fear of

²⁶¹ Leopold, Aldo: *A Plea for Wilderness Hunting Grounds*, *Outdoor Life*, November 1925. Reproduced in *Aldo Leopold's Southwest*, edited by David E. Brown & Neil B. Carmony, University of New Mexico Press, 1990, pg. 159.

²⁶² SCA p. 294

failure and embrace the philosophical effects of working the land. Perhaps there are many who would like to enjoy the benefits of working the land on a small scale, but do not have the proper training to be able to do it well, and as such, they get discouraged and see only the struggle, rather than the potentially positive results from such effort. The effort may only be valuable if there is a meaningful end result. While the experienced gardener may gain something from failure as well as success, the beginner needs to learn that lesson, and learning takes place best with someone who has been through what one is going through, the failures as well as successes.

Eating

Of course the hunter who hunts for food, while still needing to watch and learn from the animal being hunted, has a different attitude. Perhaps he recognizes his relation to what he is hunting and approaches the hunt as a circle of life and death. Or perhaps he is merely focusing on the prey as food. But as Callicott points out, “what we eat and how we eat is by no means an insignificant ethical concern... nothing [is] more intimate or more symbolic of the connection of life than eating.”²⁶³ This statement may have vegetarian ramifications, but even for my purposes, it is enough to point out that eating is consuming of a type. It seems this is a different type of consuming than the consuming type of love I discussed earlier. Eating is the consummation of a process of food preparation at least, and possibly of food cultivation as well (both of which contribute to the meaning or value of a meal). Being too separated from the food source is a symptom of the problem I have been discussing throughout. Separation excludes “caring” about sources of and kinds of food. Not knowing where our food comes can lead to unhealthy, overly processed food being consumed, which is unhealthy from a physical perspective as well as the more important emotional, psychological, sociological and spiritual dimensions on which I am focusing. If we grow at least some of our food, we would be necessarily connected to the land,

²⁶³ Callicott p. 34

which adds meaningfulness to the food we then prepare. This is not to mention the possible artistic expression that comes with choosing how to prepare the food. Without eating, there is no life; it is one of the most basic things that we as humans do, and perhaps the most basic actions are the most reflective of a general attitude.

Even in the Christian tradition, food is at the forefront of a relationship with the environment very early on: “the first human sin... is an eating violation. God sets the limit and humans choose to override it.”²⁶⁴ Perhaps eating has always been an ethical decision; for example, Adam and Eve ate the wrong thing. For Pollan, eating is the most intimate connection we have to the earth, and one act of eating severed our relationship with it and with its creator. Due to that one violation, the work of the land will be hard, not to speak of all of the other consequences. We are still trying to reestablish the relationship with earth, with Nature/God and with others. Eden is synonymous with idyllic perfection. That striving to reach connection is the reason why the image of the Garden of Eden, for Christians, is such a powerful one, and it may be much of the impetus for the connection that gardeners seem to have with the Earth, with each other, and with themselves.

This emphasizes again the importance of balance. Berry and Pollan are not suggesting that everyone can or should grow all their own food, but even if everyone grew just a little, they would benefit from the self-cultivation that I am discussing in this project. Even a failed attempt at growing some flowers, or vegetables, or herbs may be beneficial. In addition to receiving the benefits I have been discussing and will continue to discuss, one may also gain an increased appreciation for individuals who grow things successfully. These moments of “failure” could even be a teaching moment amongst neighbors. For example, an established farmer/gardener

²⁶⁴ Ellen Davis. “Knowing Our Place on earth: Learning Environmental Responsibility from the Old Testament” *The Green Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2008) p. I-61

could apprentice the beginner, and in some way, build real community. There would also be quite a bit to be said for trying, failing, then trying again, like the gradual development that leads to greater meaning. Any relationship grows through the trials; the gnarly apple is the one with the interesting story to tell. Gardening and farming both encourage and enhance patience. Of course, gardening and farming require time, which many people do not have; perhaps, then, a garden would force them to re-prioritize, to make time for the garden.

Leopold echoes Emerson when he states, “wildlife once fed us and shaped our culture...reaping it by modern mentality would yield not only pleasure, but wisdom as well.”²⁶⁵ He seems here to be referring not only to actual physical feeding of the body, but also to metaphorical feeding of the mind and spirit. This is precisely the issue in this work; can the nature metaphors teach us anything about improving our lives? The connection to the land that results in feeding us both physically and spiritually has in many ways been broken, and as such, unless we re-attune ourselves, we will miss the lessons that nature may be able to teach, and it will not matter if it is gone or replaced with facsimiles.

But as with many other things, the line between natural and unnatural, man-made and nature-made is blurred, and perhaps it is not that farfetched to imagine that there is no completely natural food anymore. This is another important point in the ecological debate, and it is exemplified by the importance for some eaters of chicken to ensure that the chickens are free range, or for beef eaters to ensure that their cows be grass fed. As Stewart Brand suggests,

The great ecological win with GE (genetically engineered) herbicide tolerant crops is that they encourage what is called no-till agriculture. Farmers do not have to plow. The stubble from last year’s crop rots in the field, turning into compost and habitat for small wildlife and the soil is held in place instead of eroding away.

²⁶⁵ SCA p. 222

Farmers use a method called direct seeding to inject seeds each with a shot of fertilizer into the soil through the stubble then just when their crops begin to emerge they spray the field with glyphosate and wipe out all the weeds with no effect on the glyphosate-tolerant crop plants. The result is a high-yield crop and intact soil that grows in richness from year to year, full of life, with a lovely crumb structure. 'With no-till' says Jim cook, a plant pathologist and sustainable agriculture evangelist at WSU, 'you improve soil structure, stop erosion, sequester carbon, improve water filtration rather than letting it run off the land and store more water in years of drought.' There are major climate benefits. Soil holds more carbon in it than all living vegetation and the atmosphere put together. Tilling releases the carbon...plowed land is the source of gigatons of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Cultivated soil loses half of its organic carbon over the decades of plowing, but sequestered no-till farming can bring the carbon content back to a level the equal of wildland soil...²⁶⁶

The advances in science have alleviated some of the problems with modern farming, which would suggest that perhaps Nash is right in placing his confidence in technology. However, the issue may be not with GE foods specifically, but with the large corporate farm instead, because corporate farming removes care from what one is growing and then eating.

For Leopold, "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away, but he is no longer the only one to do so. When some remote ancestor of ours invented the shovel he become a giver: he could plant a tree. And when the axe was invented he became a taker: he could chop it down."²⁶⁷ The challenge then becomes knowing when to use which. Care involves balance. Pruning, which

²⁶⁶ Stewart Brand *Whole Earth Discipline: An Ecopragmatist Manifesto* (Viking, 2009) p. 135

²⁶⁷ SCA p. 72

contributes to overall health of the plant, requires cutting away; letting nature run wild is not ideal for the particular plant. The axe is necessary, even if focused only on the plant. As Berry, Pollan, Leopold and I are considering balance as ideal, we must also focus on the axe as a balancer with the shovel. We have become far too anxious to use the axe rather than the shovel, and the shovel cannot replace the years and history and shade of the otherwise healthy tree, even if we plant a new tree to provide shade for future generations.

As part of a community and as part of history, one must acknowledge that, as Emerson states, “I am not alone and unacknowledged,”²⁶⁸ rather I am a part of something larger than myself. And this connection can be felt, if we allow ourselves to feel it and we expect it to impact us; “yet it is certain that the power to produce this delight does not reside in nature, but in man, or in a harmony of both.”²⁶⁹ It is not merely nature nor merely us, but the two together, which leads to these feelings of rejuvenation, etc. that I will continue to highlight in this project. But the emphasis does need to be on us. This is about self-cultivation, and eating is as crucial to it as is finding a home.

Peace

As discussed earlier, with homelessness or homesickness comes anxiety. At home, in the truest sense of the word, one can find peace. In a garden, the worker is on his or her hands and knees, just as in prayer; it is a submissive position, either submissive before God or before the earth, or both. This physical, close contact is helpful in seeing the detail and noticing the small features of the world. It is difficult to feel at-one with creation if one is six feet above the ground, literally looking down on it rather than being down on the ground, at eye level with it. To be effective, parents are advised to stoop to look into their child’s eyes, rather than make

²⁶⁸ “Nature(1st)” p. 6

²⁶⁹ Ibid p. 7

declarations from on high. Otherwise it becomes tough for either to relate to the other because, perhaps, one is too distant or transcendent.

Tranquility can also be associated with the garden. As in the garden of Eden and in many of Jesus' parables, gardens are places that stand for peace. Even His prayer at Gethsemane, which began with anguish, ended with peace. Gardens are also places of growth, and the flowering of the bloom is the result of that growth, just like seeds that grow once they are rooted and then taken care of.

Jesus, for instance, said:

This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.²⁷⁰

He does not know how it is that the seed grows; he is not fully responsible. If he were fully responsible, he would need to know how it happens. One can read a textbook to describe the process, but that is not the same as being a part of it and watching the miracle as it happens. Actual experience trumps reading about it, with regards to knowing. The seed has life; it grows by itself. And it is the case that there are seeds that grow, regardless of our involvement.

Some suggest that “ecology is now teaching us to search in animal populations for analogies to our own problems. By learning how one small part of the biota ticks, we can sometimes guess how the whole mechanism ticks. The ability to perceive deeper meanings and to appraise them critically is the woodcraft of the future.”²⁷¹ Leopold, like Rolston, Berry,

²⁷⁰ Mark 4:28

²⁷¹ Whole Earth Discipline quoting Biomimicry p. 222

Emerson, and Thoreau, is concerned about deeper meanings that can be found in nature, if we are willing to look. But finding these is not a matter of merely accepting whatever we think nature is attempting to show us; it still requires critical reflection about it. A good student does not merely accept what the teacher says, but critically reflects upon the information given and appraises it, determining what can be used for future growth of the self. For instance, there are “nine basic principles of nature that we can learn from and thus mimic in our design: Nature runs off sunlight. Nature uses only the energy it needs. Nature fits form to function. Nature recycles everything. Nature rewards cooperation. Nature banks on diversity. Nature demands local expertise. Nature curbs excesses from within. And, nature taps the power of limits.”²⁷²

The current environmental movement is focusing on reduction, firstly. This reduction runs contrary to the large industrial farming mentality, as well as to the consumer mindset. Reducing comes before reusing and recycling. Recycling is a last resort; if one has chosen not to reduce or reuse, then, at the very least, one can recycle. But it has become the easy way to ‘do something;’ it is the least I can do and indeed it is. I am not suggesting we all become esthetes, but, like Thoreau, I am suggesting that we reflect upon the necessities of life, including meaningful relationships, such as marriage and community. This is contrasted with focusing on the newest gadget-- the fastest iPhone so I can use more time to find out about what celebrities are doing-- or speeding up my productivity so that I can do more for the same pay, and spending the same amount of time at work that I always have, but be expected to be available whenever needed, and always able to be reached through my phone. There is a tendency to rush to get a project done, rather than taking the time to get it done well. One can consume and still help the environment; recycling is a way to feel good without having to really invest anything of myself, as would be necessary if I were to connect with my place (both people and land) and reduce

²⁷² Ibid p. 222-3

consumption. It comes back to an attitude change, which brings about changes in habits. Our actions may or may not be different once our attitude is different. Like the axeman from earlier, it is sometimes difficult to determine attitude by looking only at actions; the axeman may be decreating and merely destroying, or he may be taking the first step of creating, perhaps a wood carving or a piece of furniture, for instance. Again, we may use the iPhone to genuinely communicate with others, or we may be use it to distract ourselves. If it is true that urbanites have their focus “on acquisition rather than disposal”²⁷³ then ‘reduce and reuse’ is a message that, while coming first, is often ignored by the urbanite, who meanwhile may feel great about recycling so much. This is reflective of the same consumer mindset; it is acceptable to consume as long as one recycles, so a product can be reproduced into something else I can consume.

There is also a growing movement to turn products into art: re-purposing. Notice the term alludes to the fact that old products or artifacts are given a new and different purpose, a new value. In part this is good; at least it takes what is consumed and creates something with it through an act of artistic expression. However, if the attitude remains the same, namely one of consumption first, then it still downplays or ignores the reduction step, which is the real issue. We should reduce so that we can give time, attention, and care to the things that we do hold onto. These things include relationships and “home.”

Encounters

Additionally, in order to avoid Daniel’s concern about being too rooted, we must not just be at home and have the same experiences all the time, especially if the experiences are of the purely technological kind. Of course if Berry and others are correct, it would not be possible to have the same experience in the garden as one had previously, anymore than one can have the same experience of one’s spouse. Every entity in the relationship is changing. Terry Tempest

²⁷³ Wirzba p. xi

Williams points out, “how can we begin to understand what wilderness is if we have never *experienced* a place that is unadulterated and unagitated by our own species?”²⁷⁴ And what does that say about our own self-importance? When we leave the man-made office, we need to encounter wilderness, whether that be Central Park, our garden at home, or a new “wild” walk. Modern humans are attempting to become the center of the universe again. I am not suggesting that every piece of nature should be cultivated to a tamed or gardenized state; there should still be some parts of nature that are largely left alone (though it requires great work and effort to maintain the untamed natural) so that the sublime may be experienced. But unlike Nash’s suggestion, they should not be separated into islands we rarely if ever visit. Rather, we must “take care” in establishing balance between the civilized and the wild, and maintaining a healthful relationship.

As McKibben states, “show me an environmentalist who did not start with an encounter with the more-than-human world, and I will show you an exception to the rule.”²⁷⁵ Leopold, for example, had the encounter with the wolf. One must have an encounter with the more-than-human to realize that there is more than human to be encountered. This happens less easily in cities or in overly urbanized areas because they *are* human interested. Also, no encounter occurs while reading a biology textbook. It is part of why Central Park is important to the city of New York. Even though one cannot usually experience wild creatures there, one can experience the more-than-human world. Though this more-than-human world was designed by humans and taken care of by humans, the humans are only co-creators. It may be an overly tame experience of nature, but it is nature nonetheless. These encounters must take place in a place; one must

²⁷⁴ Terry Tempest Williams “Wilderness a Place of humility” Essential Aldo Leopold: Quotations and Commentaries. Ed. Curt Meine and Richard L. Knight. U of Wisconsin Press, 1999.p. 100-1

²⁷⁵ McKibben Reader p. 39

know the place to experience it. And being acquainted with the more-than-human is key to beginning to care about it.

Furthermore, this care, again, requires proximity. Something such as charity is only abstract because it is so removed from the person receiving it, not our neighbor whom we know, but a stranger. Berry states, “when charity is possible only through institutions it becomes indifferent...”²⁷⁶ Additionally, it becomes impersonal; thus it becomes difficult to experience the real effects of the charity. We cannot see the person being fed, for instance; it is too abstract to be real or tangible. This is like what nature would be if it were islandized; the good feeling we get from knowing it is safe might be lost, and we might become indifferent. The natural might become so abstract as ultimately to be forgotten. We do not receive any of the benefits I have been discussing in this project and so, while nature is safe, the question becomes, so what?

A bad harvest may result if there is not enough faith, not enough water, not enough sun, “bad” seed, not enough work, too much water, too much sun, too much work, too much faith (which is probably hand in hand with not enough work) or even the wrong seed for soil (suitedness for place), or simply bad soil. There are so many variables, it is amazing that cultivating ever works successfully. Conditions have to be just right to reap a good harvest. Like success, it is partly based on the individual striving for it, but there are many other factors that one cannot control. We see in the combination of us and nature that sometimes nature overrides what we want; we then realize humans are not in charge, instead this all points to something greater. We do all we can and a garden may still fail; the power is not in our hands only. Additionally, this speaks to Berry’s comments about the Bible being an outdoor book.

One of the questions, then, is does cultivating result in a real connection to wildness? To the untamed? Perhaps we were too tame before, and now through technology, we can rediscover

²⁷⁶ Berry Loss of Future p. 67

our wildness. But all wildness with no responsibility is not good for a relationship, if we can even call it a relationship. Some taming is necessary in order to enter into a partnership. One is no longer completely free to do what one wants if others are impacted or involved. Love and care come with some self-imposed restrictions. However, if one is too tame, then life and the relationship become routine, which is also detrimental to the relationship's health.

This care must be renewed daily. There is a daily re-commitment that is necessary, whether it is a relationship with a spouse, with the Earth, or with God. Relationships require continual wooing, continual loving of the other and of the partnership, which is greater than the combination of the individual selves. This is relevant for my current project, in that it is a realization of the self as part of something larger than self. It is akin to thinking like a mountain. This, again, requires a balancing act. There must be a degree of distance to recognize the other as other, but not so much that the interactive nature of the relationship gets lost. A purely transcendent relationship may not be much of an actual relationship. Conversely, if the other is too close, then it could easily become merely an extension of self, rather than something else that can be learned from, in order to better the self. It may become so immanent that it becomes too familiar. A relationship, then, requires a balance between transcendence and immanence. Highlighting the necessary component of immanence, "we can be ethical only in relation to something we can see, feel, understand, love or otherwise have faith in."²⁷⁷ This is to say that to be ethical towards the environment or other people, they must be tangible and real for us; they should not be too abstract. This, again, is one of the major disadvantages to the island motif put forth by Nash, namely that the islands of nature become abstract and forgotten. We would still be left with the problem of monocultures on the civilization islands. And what is to prevent the people on the islands from creating monocultures themselves?

²⁷⁷ SCA p. 251

Monocultures must almost always be artificially determined. For example, apples, like people, contain a variety of traits, so in order to ensure we attain a particular apple tree, we must graft it or clone it. Thoreau, in his “Wild Apples” essay, warns against the removal of gnarly apples, which is really a warning against genocide, against monocultures. Pollan speaks of the importance of having a variety of plants. Through this variety, each plant can help the others to thrive, each can provide different nutrients, etc. to other plants, and some are natural defenders against predators and disease. Monocultures (like growing all red delicious apples) are more susceptible to annihilation because one pest could destroy them all. Due to our genetic modification of the apple, it is no longer evolving to build natural immunities, so we must instead spray the apples with pesticides to fight the pest problem. In some ways the cloning/grafting necessity is a very real link to history...the same red delicious tree we have today is a clone of a red delicious tree from the past. So, while grafting may adhere to some of the notions that I am suggesting with respect to interaction with nature, since all trees of the same type are derived from the same type of tree, we have selected which apples we prefer and are setting about eliminating the rest. We are creating an apple monoculture, which is precisely what Thoreau warned against in “Wild Apples.”

These issues of monocultures and variety will, in some ways, be the focus of the following chapter on art as well. To summarize, spirit is influenced by many factors, such as placedness and a sense of home, the transcendent concept of the sublime, and the immanent relationships that we have. If one’s place is primarily the city office, then that will have a negative effect on the cultivating of one’s self, whereas interaction with the natural environment will have a positive impact on one’s spirit. This cultivation could then be reflected in the art that one produces, which will be the focus of the final chapter.

CHAPTER 3

ART

This chapter, as the preceding ones, will be written from a romantic position. While the previous chapters have moved from the outward to the inward, this chapter is outwardly focused. Once the internal self has changed, then it becomes necessary to express that change of self outwardly. This expression of self can take place within nature, thus using nature for one's self-cultivation. But nature can also be the model for artistic expression, which could further contribute to self-cultivation.

Perhaps it is the case, then, that everyone requires some artistic outlet, whether that be painting, writing, cooking, woodworking, tending a garden, or merely keeping the lawn pristine. This artistic creation requires freedom, especially given the demands of the work-a-day lifestyle to which so many have become subjected; the freedom from workplace demands is even more important for a wholly healthy individual. In "The Poet," Emerson states "all men live by truth and stand in need of expression. In love, in art, in avarice, in politics, in labor, in games, we study to utter our painful secret."²⁷⁸ Emerson is stating that each of us requires an artistic outlet, though he also admits that "adequate expression is rare."²⁷⁹ This might help to explain why the classics of art and literature endure. They are capable of adequately expressing not only the artist's inner self, but also an inner self to which others can relate, but which they cannot express as beautifully or truthfully. Perhaps it is the special artist who is able to make an individual experience speak for and represent the universal human condition.

The primary difference between artistic freedom, with respect to organic nature and other artistic endeavors, is that the natural artist's (gardener, farmer, mower of lawns) freedom

²⁷⁸ Ralph Waldo Emerson "The Poet" *Essential Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson* Ed. Brooks Atkinson (New York: Modern Library, 2000) p. 288

²⁷⁹ *Ibid* p. 288

necessarily imposes itself on an unwilling natural entity. This is to say that in embracing the artistic freedom that comes along with gardening, for instance, the gardener imposes her will (at least in part) upon the natural world. This seems to have different implications than the artist, who puts paint to canvas, or even one who cuts a piece of artwork from marble or ice. The natural world is living, whereas the canvas or marble is not. The fact that nature is unwilling implies that it has some will of its own, which may in fact be the case, at least partially; for without the gardener to tend the garden, growth would still occur; conversely, the canvas with no artist to paint on it would remain an empty canvas. This is not to suggest that Nash is right about the garden model's being about control, however, as I pointed out in the first Chapter.

Beauty

In order to discuss art, we first must get clarity on the notion of beauty, for it seems the goal of all art is to make something beautiful. Beautiful artwork, as I consider it, need not be pretty. Rather it must be meaningful. This then raises the question of how things become “full of meaning,” which brings us back to the questions of human interest; an endeavor or product gains meaning by the investment of ourselves into the endeavor. We give meaning. We define meaning. We interpret and find meaning. Meaning with the depth that I am discussing is necessarily a human phenomenon. Furthermore, the meaning increases when we put part of ourselves into the work. The potato that I grow has much more meaning for me than does the one that I purchase from the store. It is difficult, though, to determine whether the potato actually tastes better, or if I just think that it *should* because it is more meaningful to me. I think I should be able to taste the hard work it took to grow it, my sweat, my tears, perhaps even my blood, as I am co-creator of the potato, in a sense. As such, I *think* it should taste better, and so it does. My self has cultivated this potato and is now expecting it to affect my self differently. This notion

that my co-creation of the food contributes to the meaningfulness of the food is directly related to the notion of provenance, which will be addressed later in this chapter.

The artistic relation to the natural environment is also related to environmental ethics. In short, it is easier to be ethical to pretty, natural things. For example, beautiful humans are given greater opportunity than are others. Callicott, following Leopold, admits: “historically however, many more of our conservation and preservation decisions have been motivated by beauty rather than duty.”²⁸⁰ Given the close connection between ethics and aesthetics, one wonders does it matter that we save the only the pretty? Of course it matters, unless we can get to the point where we are conserving not just the picturesque but also the actually beautiful, in the romantic understanding of beauty, which includes finding beauty in the ‘ugly.’ For example, apples with blemishes can be, overall, as “beautiful’ as a perfectly polished store apple. Relying upon people’s predilection to act more ethically toward the ‘pretty,’ however, is what drives much of the marketing of the environmental movement. We are asked to look at the poor, cute, lonely polar bear, or go explore the pretty woods. It is much easier to convince others they should care for a cute bunny than a ragged, gnarly rabbit. For Thoreau especially, and Emerson and Berry to some extent, it is precisely the gnarly rabbit that we should not only protect, but come to see as beautiful. He discusses apples rather than rabbits, but the concept remains the same; wild people are only appreciated by other wild people, not by the establishment. Thoreau goes on to state that “almost all wild apples are handsome. The gnarliest will have some redeeming traits even to the eye.”²⁸¹ True beauty is found in what is commonly considered ugly. Character, then, is what makes it beautiful, not shininess or sameness or lack of blemishes; blemishes tell stories, as do people’s scars. The wild is interesting and unique; its diversity is what breaks the monotony of

²⁸⁰ J Baird Callicott “Land Aesthetic” *Companion to Sand County Almanac* (Madison: U of Wisconsin Press, 1987) p. 158

²⁸¹ Henry David Thoreau “Wild Apples”

the uniform. Beauty requires both diversity and similarity, as will be discussed later. The blemishes, which tell a story of survival, imbue living beings with meaning. Diversity is born from different meaning; sameness and monotony, while perhaps pretty, may not be beautiful. It is worth noting that of course the pretty could also be beautiful, but the point is that being pretty does not *necessarily* make something beautiful.

Even Aldo Leopold wants to be clear that there is a distinction between “pretty” and “beautiful.” The goal is to move from one to the other: “our ability to perceive quality in nature begins, as in art, with the pretty. It expands through successive stages of the beautiful to values as yet uncaptured by language.”²⁸² The beautiful, then, is not the stopping point; our perception advances to poetic values yet uncaptured by language. While language may begin with nature, as Abram states, it does not mean that every experience of nature can be captured by language. Language, like other art, attempts to capture experience, but it inevitably falls short.

Thoreau further states, “all good things are wild and free,”²⁸³ otherwise, they are just conforming. This does not necessarily mean that all things that are wild and free are good; many viruses are wild and free, and that does not mean they are good. It is easier for the wild and the free to be good, because they are not overly cultivated and thereby mechanized. There is, however, the other danger of not being cultivated enough, of being merely feral. Thoreau himself, though he emphasizes the wild, did not spend the rest of his life on Walden Pond.

Thomas Cole makes the same connection between men and trees as Thoreau does with men and apples, and not surprisingly, praises America for its variety of trees and of men; man, for example, can make of himself what he will. As Cole states it,

²⁸² Aldo Leopold *Sand County Almanac with Essays on Conservation from Round River* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1966) p. 102

²⁸³ Henry David Thoreau “Walking” *The Portable Thoreau* Ed. Carl Bode (New York: Viking, 1982) p. 618

Trees are like men, differing widely in character; in sheltered spots, or under the influence of culture, they show few contrasting points; peculiarities are pruned and trained away, until there is a general resemblance. In exposed situations, wild and uncultivated, battling with the elements and with one another for the possession of a morsel of soil, or a favoring rock to which they may cling--they exhibit striking peculiarities, and sometimes grand originality.²⁸⁴

Cole is worried about the wildness being cut out and cut away, leaving us a monoculture of trees and men alike. This is the same concern Thoreau has for apples: “For variety, the American forest is unrivalled: in some districts are found oaks, elms, birches, beeches, planes, pines, hemlocks, and many other kinds of trees, commingled--clothing the hills with every tint of green, and every variety of light and shade.”²⁸⁵ American people are also among the most diverse. This fact fits nicely with Thoreau’s desire to emphasize the uniqueness of the American project and Americans. This championing of uniqueness also holds for Whitman and Emerson as well, both of whom proclaim it time in their day to announce our intellectual independence from England and Europe. Additionally, given Emerson’s belief that each generation must write its own stories, he may also be encouraging a kind of historical independence, while at the same time recognizing the connection we have to our history. For Thoreau, it seems that dominant colonial cultures are too civilized, and thus become all the same. If culture cultivates and makes everyone the same, as Thoreau believes it does, it is a strength of the culture that wildness remains in America. This preservation of wildness is what makes us, in some ways, exceptional. Cole again: “There is one season when the American forest surpasses all the world in gorgeousness--that is the autumnal;--then every hill and dale is radiant in the luxury of color--

²⁸⁴ Thomas Cole "Essay on American Scenery". *American Monthly Magazine* 1, (January 1836)

²⁸⁵ Wild Apples

every hue is there, from the liveliest green to deepest purple from the most golden yellow to the intensest crimson.”²⁸⁶ It is not a coincidence that this seems to be a popular time to take scenic drives. People want to experience the *diversity* of colors. American people, in fact, are of all different hues, and thus exemplify diversity and variety.

Thoreau states in his journals that “there is just as much beauty visible to us in the landscape as we are prepared to appreciate - not a grain more,”²⁸⁷ because of course beauty, or recognition of beauty, depends more upon us than on the object. We need to be prepared to witness beauty; it may not and probably will not *appear* beautiful immediately to our sense of sight, because we are often attuned to recognize only the picturesque, and the picturesque may be precisely that which is not beautiful. The picturesque may involve homogeneity and not diversity, not enough scars and blemishes and stories. “Picturesque’ is certainly not what Emerson and Thoreau mean by beautiful; rather it is the raw, wild and “real” that is beautiful. Not surprisingly, then, it is the walker and the wild child who have the appreciation that the civilized person tends to lose. The over-civilized person looks only for sameness—confusing sameness for beautiful, or even confusing picturesque with sameness. The examples range from covered bridge paintings, to Hollywood actors, to our penchant for mass-produced prints and posters. This perhaps also explains why one might prefer fake flowers, which appeal only to the sense of sight and are superficially perfect, whereas, on the other hand, one might overlook the unique, the ‘ugly,’ the wild.

There seems to be a connection not just with sameness and beauty, but also with diversity and beauty. Part of what makes something beautiful is its uniqueness, such as with gardens. Sometimes the more exotic the plants, the more beautiful they seem, because of the rareness and

²⁸⁶ Cole

²⁸⁷ As quoted by David Robinson in *Natural Life: Thoreau’s Worldly Transcendentalism* (Cornell UP, 2004) p. 190

uniqueness. As Callicott argues, “It is possible in certain theoretical contexts, to enjoy and appreciate dissonance in music or the clash of color and distortion of eidetic form in painting. Similarly in natural aesthetics, it is possible to appreciate and relish certain environment experiences which are not literally pleasurable or sensuously delightful.”²⁸⁸ In short, one can be trained or habituated to see beauty in the ‘ugly,’ or in the raw and unique. Beauty then becomes subjectively conceived as objectively true. Thoreau, for instance, states that the wildest apples are more beautiful, not just subjectively to him, as he is a wild apple himself, but that they objectively are more beautiful; as such, we could learn from them. With more stories come more opportunity to pass on knowledge to others. The gnarliest apples have “lived” the most interesting lives and therefore have the capacity for teaching more, especially with regards to teaching about the wild, which leads to the scars of real living.

Thoreau states:

Every wild apple shrub excites our expectation thus, somewhat as every wild child. It is, perhaps, a prince in disguise. What a lesson to man! So are human beings, referred to the highest standard, the celestial fruit which they suggest and aspire to bear, browsed on by fate; and only the most persistent and strongest genius defends itself and prevails, sends a tender scion upward at last, and drops its perfect fruit on the ungrateful earth. Poets and philosophers and statesmen thus spring up in the country pastures and outlast the loss of unoriginal men.²⁸⁹

The wild child has a better chance of being something special, like an artist, than the overcultivated child, who has no wildness. Just as one does not know what type of apple may spring from a wild apple shrub, and thus the shrub and the forthcoming apple are all full of

²⁸⁸ Callicott p. 16-5

²⁸⁹ Wild Apples

expectation and possibility, every child is full of expectation and possibility as well.

Furthermore, it is the poet and philosopher who were sprung from wildness who can outlast those who were birthed out of civilization; they are more original and have suffered more; they have led more interesting lives, which then leads to more interesting thought and expressions of those thoughts.

Perhaps this is because genius cannot be concerned with being popular, but with being true to self. The non-wild fruit is popular, but it has not endured hardships, hardships that would cause it to become beautiful because of its uniqueness. The true poet and philosopher are unique, wild, beautifully ugly apples that survive beyond the current conception of 'beauty.' They are lasting. Thoreau also specifically talked of the farmer as having a special role in humanity and its progression. He states, "they [wild apples] belong to children as wild as themselves...and, moreover, to us walkers. We have met with them and they are ours."²⁹⁰ The walker and the wild child have an appreciation of life and nature that the civilized person does not. The civilized person is looking for sameness and therefore overlooks the unique, the 'ugly,' and the wild.

The walker is open to experience in a way the non-walker is not. Part of the appreciation of the beauty of the non-picturesque is based upon the uniqueness of the individual experiencing it. The unique, wild person may be able to recognize the beautiful, whereas the 'normal' person may only be able to recognize the picturesque. Perhaps the 'normal' person has not been trained properly or maybe he is too concerned with being and seeming 'normal.' He may only like the pretty because most people like it. Thoreau states, "It takes a savage or wild taste to appreciate a wild fruit."²⁹¹ Here he is discussing not only appreciation of the beautiful fruit, but also of the

²⁹⁰ Ibid

²⁹¹ Ibid

taste and smell, etc. Again, this hearkens back to the need to use all of the senses, not just the visual. It also speaks of the appreciation of other ‘wild fruits.’

This appreciation is a cultivating, a culturing, not in the extreme way that Thoreau is bemoaning, but rather in the remembering that we are at least partly wild creatures; this appreciation cultivates the wild side of us. In Leopold’s article “Role of Wildlife in a Liberal Education,” he states that “the objective is to teach the student to see the land, to understand what he sees, and enjoy what he understands.”²⁹² This enjoyment is in part a beautiful appreciation, an enjoyment of beauty. This seeing and then understanding is part of Thoreau’s journey; the more he understood the science behind what he was observing, the more he appreciated it and saw it differently. It is in part why even the ugly came to be beautiful for him, once it was understood in the proper way. In short, it is a fuller understanding of beauty. This is echoed by Wilson, who says, “Our sense of wonder grows exponentially: the greater the knowledge, the deeper the mystery and the more we seek knowledge to create new mystery.”²⁹³ The more knowledge we have of nature and its workings, the more fascinating and amazing it is to us, and the more beautiful it can then be. Though neither Thoreau nor Wilson would want to go this far, given the intricacies that occur naturally, these intricacies could be an indication to us of a grand designer and appreciator of beauty.

At this point, it is enough to say that the beautiful must be accessible. One must be able to be close enough to see the intricacies, yet retain enough distance to recognize it as other, at least an other that is not completely self, though there is a necessary connection. It must be distant enough that we can appreciate it, rather than just find it pleasing; but if it is too distant, we cannot interact with it or engage in a relationship with it. It becomes sublime. Merely pleasant or

²⁹² Aldo Leopold “Role of Wildlife in Liberal Education” *Essential Aldo Leopold* Ed. Curt Meine and Richard Knight (U of Wisconsin Press, 1999) p. 265

²⁹³ E. O. Wilson *Biophilia* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1984) p. 10

picturesque (pleasing to the eye) is too much about us and not enough about our engagement with the other. This is a distinction I will continue to emphasize in what follows.

Even the great proponent of the sublime and its importance admits “the first purpose of nature would be man’s happiness, the second his culture.”²⁹⁴ Notice the romantic undertones here; nature’s purpose is educative and aesthetic. So nature aims firstly to please the senses, but then there must be another step, where nature can be used to access the mind or the soul/spirit. This is the step where cultivation takes place. It is at this place that one attains more mindful appreciation of the natural, a full, more enlightened sense of aesthetics. This culturing may be what I am referring to here as aesthetic, but I have been pointing toward the other aspects of culturing throughout this project as well.

McKibben is concerned that we have become too closely entangled with nature and cannot get enough distance to recognize it as an other that could educate us in any way: “we have deprived nature of its independence and that is fatal to its meaning. Nature’s independence is its meaning; without it there is nothing but us.”²⁹⁵ This is also part of the issue with the ever blurring line between what is natural and what is artificial. We are natural creatures, but as we lose touch with our natural inclinations and our place within all of nature, we become more man-made, more artificial. We then become uncomfortable with nature and attempt to make it as artificial or man-made/man-controlled as possible. It raises questions about whether our artifacts should be considered natural or artificial, for instance. But given that they are artifacts, that is distinction enough for my present purposes.

The fact that we are necessarily part of nature is echoed by Berry: “man cannot be independent of nature. In one way or another he must live in relation to it [unless man adopts

²⁹⁴ Immanuel Kant *Critique of Judgement* Trans by J.H. Bernard (New York: Hafner Press, 1951) p. 279

²⁹⁵ Bill McKibben *The End of Nature* (New York: Anchor Books, 1989) p. 58

Nash's island motif] and there are only two alternatives: the way of the frontiersman whose response to nature was to dominate it, to assert his presence in it by destroying it; or the way of Thoreau, who went to the natural places to become quiet in them, to learn from them, to be restored by them."²⁹⁶ One can choose to live out the doomsday scenario or the romantic, gardening ideal. It is Nash who offers us a third option: removal from nature. The frontier has been dominated and subdued. We can destroy it and be victorious, but how complete must the victory be before we show compassion for the opponent? Perhaps the garden motif was exemplified by the 'settler,' one who became rooted to a place and worked with the land, rather than one who viewed the land as something to be 'civilized.' Again, maybe it comes down to a mindset, rather than a particular action; both the settler and frontiersman attempted to make wild nature more livable; the difference may be what 'livable' means.

Perhaps this livability requires a good soul, which is to say a spirit that is open to what nature may have to teach. Kant states that "to take an immediate interest in the beauty of nature is always a mark of a good soul...it at least indicates a frame of mind favorable to the moral feeling if it is voluntarily bound up with the contemplation of nature."²⁹⁷ Perhaps the Thoreauvian walker is a "good soul," as opposed to the person who is a consumer - or what Berry calls a super-consumer. This is reflective of what the contemporary environmental movement discusses, namely that the consumer and the consumer mindset are not conducive to growth or self-cultivation, in contrast to the do-it-yourself producer mindset that one should have. This DIY (Do it yourself) attitude, while seemingly focusing on the individual self, may actually be more in keeping with the necessarily universal human need for expression. One also sees again the connection between aesthetics and ethics, insofar as care about nature equals or

²⁹⁶ Wendell Berry "Nature Consumers" *Long Legged House* (Berkeley: Counterpoint Press, 2012) p. 51

²⁹⁷ Kant p. 141

requires a moral inclination that is similar to what Leopold describes. What then does it say about those who do not care about nature? Are such souls lacking in an appreciation of beauty? Given Emerson's connection between doers and godly people, does a soul lacking in appreciation indicate a less than godly soul? The growth of our selves seems to require engagement with beauty.

This enlarged or enhanced sense of beauty is what Leopold refers to when he states, "A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and *beauty* of the biotic community."²⁹⁸ This further brings out the connection that exists even between science and beauty. He does not mean we should preserve that which is necessarily the prettiest, but that which preserves the meaningfulness for the community of which we are a part. This meaning, again, is something that only we can determine from an anthropocentric position.

Arnold Berleant discusses what others have called "the picturesque" as being detached and separate, and therefore, it is "static" and "often so is the observer."²⁹⁹ Too many people today have this static detachment; they are detached from other people and themselves. This, then, could be contrasted with an engaged landscape. The observational landscape is "not the world of the poet nor is it the world of those peoples who live harmoniously with the earth and with each other."³⁰⁰ Both the poet and the community member must live engaged, rather than merely observationally. The world is there to be engaged with by everyone, not just the poet. It just so happens that the poet or the one living harmoniously with the earth is living with an engaging mindset toward the natural environment. Notice also that the observational deals with only one sense, the sense that can be accessed from the greatest distance. "The difference

²⁹⁸ Aldo Leopold *Sand County Almanac: with essays on Conservation from Round River* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1966) p. 189

²⁹⁹ Arnold Berleant "Two Ways in the Landscape" *The Aesthetics Beyond the Arts* (Ashgate Publishing, 2012) p. 63

³⁰⁰ *Ibid* p. 63

between objectifying nature and engaging with nature is more than a contrast of traditions or alternative philosophical understandings, it is a difference of basic ways of experiencing the world.”³⁰¹ This is an experience that the overly civilized seem not to understand. This observational way of experiencing the world is precisely what Tuan bemoans in the appropriately titled “Scenic Consumption of Landscape” from his book *Topophilia*. The pretty scene gets consumed, captured, owned and possessed rather than experienced; it is a consumer mindset of sightseeing:

Much of modern sightseeing seems to be motivated by the desire to collect as many National Park stickers as possible. The camera is indispensable to the tourist, for with it he can prove to himself and to his neighbors that he has actually been to Crater Lake. A snapshot that failed to register is lamented as though the lake itself has been deprived of existence. Such brushes with nature clearly fall short of the authentic.³⁰²

Notice the very term ‘sightseeing’ again places emphasis not on the experiencing of a place, but of only seeing the popular sights of a place. The sights, it seems, could even be ripped out of their place and the sight might still be the same. This touches on the notion of aura, which will be discussed later. This also extends to the TV screen, for a show or a photograph would serve just as well as actually being in a place. But the engaged mindset would require that one must travel not just to see the sights, but also to smell the smells, and to feel the aura of a place, in order to actually have an experience. Much like the term ‘beauty’ needs to be expanded to include the seemingly ugly, perhaps the term ‘seeing’ needs to be expanded to include a more refined ‘seeing.’ This is like ‘seeing’ in the way children mean, which I discussed in the first

³⁰¹ Ibid p. 65

³⁰² Yi-Fu Tuan “Scenic Consumption of Landscape” *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perceptions, Attitudes and Values* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1974). p. 95

chapter. If we want to continue to use the word ‘see’ as a stand-in for experience, let the word ‘see’ actually stand in for experience, rather than cheapen it.

Consumerism and Experience

Not surprisingly, Berry in his essay “Nature Consumers” states that the “superconsumer- which is to say a waster, a ruiner, a benefit to ‘the economy,’ a burden to the world has become the new ideal man in our society.”³⁰³ The consumer has become the ideal; only the consumer can be constantly sold new, shiny, meaningless objects. Even college students are called customers or consumers. “Scenery as we speak the word” says Berry, “involves the over-simplification and falsification of nature. It is landscape with all the vital details excerpted.”³⁰⁴ ‘Checking off’ that we’ve seen this sight, rather than actually enjoying the site and experiencing it, adds to our consumer nature. Even with respect to the scenic drive to view the pretty leaves, we frequently drive-by without actually noticing. The scenic drive becomes an activity to be done in autumn, instead of an experience to be had, which can only occur in autumn. ‘Driving by’ does not allow us to see in the child-like way. We are, at best, experiencing a view rather than a place. We might as well just look at a picture of it.

Are photos an attempt to capture the experience or the scene? One cannot photograph smell, one cannot capture senses other than sight. One cannot capture the experience; at best, one can only remember it. This is much like a journal; the key is to write just enough to be able to recall the experience, but not so much that it replaces the experience. If the photograph serves as a starting point to remember the experience, then that is a completely different mindset than having a photograph as an attempt to possess a scene or to replace an experience. Perhaps there is a hearkening back to the early days of photography, when it was thought to capture the soul,

³⁰³ Wendell Berry “Nature Consumers” *The Long-legged House*. (Berkeley: Counterpoint Press, 2012) p. 49

³⁰⁴ *Ibid* p. 49

since it was a likeness. Perhaps this is also part of the collecting mindset of a boy and his baseball cards; the fan tries to possess part of the person. A photo can of course be artistic, but the scene and the time spent there itself cannot be recreated.

The consumer mindset, with respect to nature, is also pointed out by the therapist Stephen Harper, who deals with anxiety issues that in no small part are related to the consumer way of thinking. In “Way of Wilderness” from *Ecopsychology* he states,

The feeling has a lot to do with breaking down the emphasis on the Disneyland sense of ‘beauty.’ The look of the land often determines that response. Many tourists, for example, confronted by a scene that is ‘pretty as a picture’ react to natural beauty by rushing for their cameras. But sight is only one of our senses. I try to encourage letting the wilderness in through all the senses: touch, hearing, smell, and taste. Above all, I try to make the experience whole and honest. It must include what happens and what you feel when night falls...³⁰⁵

This ‘when night falls’ is the time when one is still, and perhaps therefore more receptive to the experience of nature and its effects.

Perhaps one of the most obvious examples of the consumer mindset and the cheapened experience of nature is that of flowers. Most people purchase rather than grow flowers, and the only part of the flower that is attractive is the bloom. In Victorian flower shows, only blooms were submitted, so only the bloom mattered. While it may be the most superficial part, which is to say that it is the part that is beautiful only as a result of the good soil, the good seed, the right amount of rain and sun, the good strong stem, etc.; the bloom is the end result that everyone sees and appreciates. It is the final product. That having been said, it may also be the most

³⁰⁵ Stephen Harper “Way of Wilderness” *Ecopsychology: Restoring the Earth Healing the Mind*. Ed. Theodore Roszak, Mary E. Gomes and Allen D. Kanner. (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1995) p. 187

meaningful, since it is an end product of the good fortune of everything else. But only if people experience the rest of the aforementioned *in* the bloom. It is through the bloom that the gardener, as an artist, is choosing to express himself. Could it be then that the most meaningful part of the self is the end result?

Even if one were able to move beyond the visual spectrum, one could very well get stuck in the auditory realm of experience. This sense allows one to be almost as distant as the visual, but not quite. One can think about the distractions of television and the internet, which are visual first and foremost, but which bear an aspect of auditory distraction as well. Many people, whilst driving, biking or walking, rather than risk hearing nature, turn on the radio or iPod to be in control of the sounds they hear. The biker and walker give the illusion of wanting to be outside and experiencing the outdoors as they exercise or get from place to place, but they limit themselves to man-made aural experiences.

Even more damaging to our less cultivated sense of self is the lack of sound entirely. In silence one can also notice an aspect of fear. Modern man guards himself against silence because “there is indeed a potential of terror in it. It raises still all the old answerless questions of origins and ends. It asks a man what is the use and the worth of his life....the experience of silence must be basic to any religious feeling.”³⁰⁶ One can recall here the experience of night, mentioned earlier by the therapist, or one can think of the Christian who is called to “be still and know,”³⁰⁷ or the Zen Buddhist. This requires no distractions, no movement. One may also think of the original Buddha and his enlightenment under the Bodhi tree, presumably hearing only the sounds of nature.

³⁰⁶ “Nature Consumers” p. 50

³⁰⁷ Psalm 46:10

This being silent and immersed in nature allows for a type of aesthetic engagement. Berleant states, “an aesthetic engagement not only connects people to the landscape; it awakens a magnetic attraction between them. A landscape that is fully engaging does not consist of set pieces that we should view respectfully as tourists.”³⁰⁸ Furthermore, it should not be viewed as one may view a landscape painting, which necessarily is framed and thus is to be experienced as something outside the bounds of time and space. The landscape should not even be viewed as one may view a photograph, which captures only a moment. This *connection* with the landscape is precisely what Berry is talking about, with regards to being placed peoples. A tourist does not get involved with the land the same way as a dweller upon the land does. The land dweller typically does not attempt to capture her connection to the land through a photograph. Rather than show other people photographs of their garden, for instance, gardeners bring the person to the garden for the visitor to experience the garden fully, instead of merely visually. Furthermore, perhaps the “magnetic attraction” to nature is indicative of the soul that is prepared to appreciate the beautiful; it is properly attuned. For Berleant, as for many of the others mentioned in this work, a garden seems to be a good model for engaged interaction with the environment: “gardens are more difficult than most landscapes to keep at arm’s length.”³⁰⁹ Although he is talking about formal gardens, the same may be said about working gardens as well. The ‘keeping at arm’s length’ is the problem that must be overcome to get the full philosophical and transformative power from the environment. At arm’s length may be too distant; within reach or at one’s fingertips is probably the appropriate distance for the engagement and interaction in question. If it is too distant and too transcendent, it is then ungraspable and does not help the self to be cultivated.

³⁰⁸ <http://www.autograff.com/berleant/pages/recentart8.html>

³⁰⁹ Ibid

A garden, then, becomes the most obvious example of an entity that is part nature and part art, because we cultivate it to create something we deem beautiful. Often farms are cultivated for usefulness rather than aesthetics, though there may be a greater connection between those ideals than is immediately apparent. As regards the garden, perhaps only what we deem beautiful is what can matter, because just as we are the only creatures who can be moral, we are also the only ones who can consciously be artistic or think of abstract concepts of art. And even if we were not, we are the only creatures to whom we have access. The artistic realm, then, is again (and necessarily so) a human realm.

Engagement

This engagement, therefore, obviously requires more than just sight: “The appreciation of an environment’s Natural beauty can involve the ears (sounds of rain, insects, birds or silence itself) the surface of the skin (warmth of the sun, chill of the wind, texture of grass, rock, sand) the nose and tongue (fragrance of flowers, odor of decay, taste of saps and waters) as well as the eye. Most of all it can involve the mind, the faculty of cognition.”³¹⁰ This notion of cognition, then, is perception plus intellect. It follows, then, that true engagement goes beyond all the senses, which is part of the issue with the artificial or the merely picturesque, and is more in keeping with the romantic conception of beautiful as requiring engagement and interaction. The faculty of cognition, from the intellect side, may include the scientific knowledge that Thoreau discusses or the realization of nature’s connection to history. This level of experience again requires time and attention: “For Leopold the Kansas plains are aesthetically exciting less for what is directly seen (or, indeed otherwise sensuously experienced) than for what is known of their history and biology.”³¹¹ This connection to history may be linked to the notion of

³¹⁰ Callicott p. 161

³¹¹ Ibid p. 162

provenance, which I will discuss later in this chapter. This knowledge of the history is an intellectual knowing that enhances the experience of the natural in a much more meaningful way than a mere visual perception

This meaningful interaction, this knowledge of the history of a place is connected to the love and attention given to a place. There is a necessary connection between art or an aesthetic attitude and love. Conversely, in keeping with Dewey (and Berry), love and attention frequently give rise to artistic engagement. Dewey states “the intelligent mechanic engaged in his job, interested in doing well and finding satisfaction in his handiwork, caring for his materials and tools with genuine affection, is artistically engaged.”³¹² Or as Rolston states, “when our values go wild, there is the emergence of an utterly new kind of caring.”³¹³ This type of care and affection would include the farmer that Emerson mentions, as well as the farmer that Berry is. Berry states that we go to nature not only to be restored but also to “admire what we cannot make.”³¹⁴ So while nature may be an exemplar of beauty, we also realize that what nature can make, we cannot. At best, we are left with a representation or imitation of what nature can actually make.

Emerson, in his first “Nature” essay, says “art ...must work as...sequel to this original beauty.”³¹⁵ Art is that which man creates in an attempt to match the beauty of nature. It is no surprise, then, that Berry and others note the connection between artists and nature appreciators. The main thinkers highlighted in this present work are philosophers and poets. Given that each person has the need for artistic expression, each person, then, is connected to this original beauty

³¹² John Dewey *Art as Experience* (Penguin, 2005) p. 4

³¹³ Holmes Rolston III “Values Gone Wild”. *Philosophy Gone Wild: Environmental Ethics*. (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1989) p. 140

³¹⁴ Berry “Getting along with nature” *Home Economics* p. 17

³¹⁵ Emerson “Nature (2nd)” *Essential Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Ed. Brooks Atkinson (New York: Modern Library, 2000)p. 366

by being copiers of it in some way. This notion of copying is also one to which I will return later in this chapter, in considering forgeries. In “Glass Without Feet,” John McDermott states “space of nature is aesthetically rich but it is never art unless rendered so by human ways.”³¹⁶ Art requires cultivation, as it were. Even ‘found art’ requires someone to perceive it and call it art.

Art is produced by humans with the aid of artifacts rather than by the artifacts themselves. For example, it would be strange to imagine a museum of art produced by artificial intelligence (AI), or a CD of Beethoven’s 5th played by electronic equipment rather than humans. It would be too precise to be real. This notion of being overly precise may be analogous to the concept of the “uncanny valley,” with regards to computer game programming and robot design, which suggests that humans want their avatars and robots to be likenesses, but not exact likenesses. If one cannot tell a physical difference in the representation, then the representation becomes creepy and alienating. There is a beauty in mistakes, in the imperfections. For instance, the gnarly apple’s blemishes make it real. If an apple were too shiny, too round, too perfect we may question whether it was a “real” apple or a wax or plastic representation. Even the “perfect” apple that one purchases at the store is not so perfect that we question whether it is a “real” apple. If a photograph is too vivid, we presume it was digitally enhanced and thus not a real representation of a real event. A robot may play Beethoven perfectly but not beautifully; beauty is in the human expression of the piece, and expression involves ‘mistakes’ or at least the possibility for mistakes. As we will see, there may be a connection with Emerson’s ‘doer,’ in that perhaps the space of nature may include a field that could be rendered art by a farmer or a gardener.

³¹⁶ John McDermott “Glass Without Feet” *The Drama of Possibility: Experience as Philosophy of Culture*. Ed. Douglas R. Anderson. (New York: Fordham UP, 2007) p. 213

Self-Expression

In “The Poet,” Emerson claimed that there are three types of people: the knower, the doer and the sayer. The sayer is the person who represents beauty, “for the world is not painted or adorned, but is from the beginning beautiful.”³¹⁷ The sayer is not creating beauty, but revealing the world’s inherent beauty. This emphasizes the romantic view of the world and of nature as inherently good, beautiful, and worthy of being our teacher. This also emphasizes the role of a poet, who says what the rest of the world cannot say or does not even recognize, until uttered by someone else. The notion that nature is inherently good is a bit extreme, for we recognize that the world can also be ugly and evil, at least from our finite perspective. Of course, it could be argued that this ugliness is only a seeming ugliness, given my human prejudice, which is in part what I should be trying to overcome in order to see that nature is beautiful, and perhaps even moreso in the seemingly ugly moments. However, I am not convinced that there is a beauty to viruses, even though they may lend themselves to some scarring (emotional or psychological, even more so than physical) and thus add a bit of the gnarly to the pristine. Nevertheless, I do think that the person with a scar can be beautiful, in spite of the ugliness of the virus.

Nature, then, is at least somewhat necessary for our expression, both as the exemplar for what is beautiful (and possibly lasting) and also as a resource for expression. If Abram is right about the origins of language coming from nature, and even Emerson himself alludes to that in *Nature*, then we must look at our connection to our past and to nature itself in order to express anything, whether artistically or not. However, a case could be made that even in the act of speaking, there is artistic creation taking place: the order of the words, the words that are chosen, and so on. This could be said of all speech, not merely of the overtly “poetical” or “artful.” The great poets can express that which is part of the human condition in a way that others cannot,

³¹⁷ “The Poet” p. 289

requiring a connection to the human condition and to others who are participating in it, or have in the past. The history of the human species is a part of who we are now. This is, in part, why Nash and others are so concerned about the doomsday scenario coming to fruition; Our past relationships with nature have typically not been good ones. That is a part of who we are. However, given that past and the awareness of that past, it would seem as reasonable to suggest we can approach nature in a new way, namely as a gardener, farmer, or artist.

Much like his Man Thinking is available to all, Emerson's appreciation of the beautiful in nature is also available to all if they will only look: "Who loves nature? Who does not? Is it only poets and men of leisure and cultivation who live with her? No; but also hunters, farmers, grooms and butchers, though they express their affection in their choice of life and not in their choice of words."³¹⁸ The life of the doer demonstrates his love. For instance, the hunter, whom Leopold discusses, cares in order to hunt effectively. This connection of loving and doing should also remind us of the talk of love that I discussed earlier. Specifically, we must recall the connection among love, commitment, and the land, and additionally, the difference between a consuming lust and a genuine love. The lover of anything must demonstrate this love through committing loving actions. But just doing the actions is not enough. If one gives hugs out of obligation, one does not show love. Love must begin as an attitude.

Emerson seems to indicate that the doer is also a sayer of sorts. She merely 'says' through her work, rather than through her words; "words are also actions and actions are a kind of words."³¹⁹ This means, then, that the farmer could be seen in a similar vein to the poet, whom Emerson applauds in other essays. He goes so far as to state explicitly that the farmer is called to

³¹⁸ Ibid p. 293

³¹⁹ Ibid p. 290

create: “the glory of the farmer is that...it is his part to create.”³²⁰ This indicates that there should be glory in creating, not shame or mere necessity. Perhaps this hearkens back to the fact that this essay is designed for the urbanite. The urbanite would gain the things I’m discussing by having a small garden that he can care for. There should be glory in any type of creation, and this is directly related to the freedom to create. The small farmer creates not only food, but also something potentially beautiful, and more importantly the farmer creates a different part of the self. The farmer, by cultivating his or her relationship with the land, has cultivated aspects of the self that are often suppressed. This now cultivated self is attuned differently to its surroundings, both internally with respect to the self, and externally with respect to the rest of the world. This echoes the commercial that asks one to discover the ‘other you’ in the forest, except in this case it is the ‘other you’ that can be discovered in the garden.

Emerson goes on to say that it is the doer who is a lover of God. Perhaps this is due to the care and science that I previously discussed (namely the need for something other than the farmer alone to ensure a good crop); additionally, it may suggest the connection with living, dying and mortality. As one observes and experiences the death and rebirth of one’s garden, one can think of the metaphorical death and rebirth of self, which occur at various points through one’s physical life. After one endures a difficult time, one is changed, for instance. Furthermore, experiencing the death of one’s plants may remind the farmer of his or her own mortality and encourage a more meaningful living in the present, given that the farmer is no more immortal than his or her plants. Additionally, the farmer, as a doer, like God, supplies the things necessary for life itself. If the crops do not succeed, there is no food, and thus life ceases. Additionally, God Himself is a doer as well as a sayer; saying and doing are inextricably linked for God. If the

³²⁰ Ralph Waldo Emerson “Farming” *The Essential Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Ed. Brooks Atkinson. (New York: Modern Library, 2000) p. 673

Christian story is to be believed, He literally spoke the world into existence. Not surprisingly, the artist gains in importance as the “beauty of things becomes a new and higher beauty when expressed.”³²¹ The artist, then, becomes co-creator, and the act of co-creating becomes more valuable and meaningful than the act of simply appreciating nature.

Uniqueness

There is the necessity of harmony in order to achieve balance between uniformity and diversity. This notion of balance is one of the major themes of the work and one to which I will return again later in this chapter, in considering urban environments. Part of the natural sense of beauty that we all seem to share is this combination of order and diversity. For example, tulips may be viewed as more beautiful if they are more exotic to the location, if they stand out amidst the other ‘normal’ flowers of the area. This is also related to the connotation of gardening’s being a feature of the upper socio-economic class. One thinks of the stereotypical English garden or French garden, which was a sign of status. This may date back to the hanging gardens of Babylon, for instance, where a man’s wealth could be measured by how exotic (and thus beautiful) his garden was. One could take this to be a political statement, that the garden was considered beautiful because standards of taste are set by the elite, but I would like to emphasize that a “beautiful garden” is beautiful because its contents are unique to, while still fitting in with, the locale. For instance, one may not want all of the houses of a neighborhood to be the same, but if they were all unique and did not “fit” with the other houses, or with the natural environment of the area, then it would be difficult to have a connection to one another or the aforementioned environment. One would be replacing placedness rather than embracing it. Again, the key is balance between order and diversity, between “fitting” and uniqueness. One must express self within a larger context.

³²¹ “The Poet” p. 292

This may also be the case with golf courses and their exotic natures, despite their locales. For example, a lush course in the desert, rather than the standard desert style, may be more attractive to play and probably costs more, perhaps making the experience more meaningful, or more unique. However, that uniqueness does not “fit” with the natural environment. It is “unnatural.” Lack of variety is monotonous; if there is no sameness, however, the experience is too jarring. Again there needs to be balance between an experience being different enough that it can be meaningful, but not so different that there is no way to comprehend it or experience it as meaningful. Furthermore, there must be balance between sameness and difference. Diversity must take place in the midst of sameness, in order to recognize the uniqueness of this or that flower, for example. Perhaps it is also the case that one can only appreciate or recognize uniformity against the backdrop of difference.

If all the trees of a forest were not merely the same type of tree, but all looked exactly the same, the forest would not be as beautiful, though it may be more picturesque. It would be uninteresting to our senses. Diversity excites our senses, it focuses our attention to notice differing details. These differing details are the issue for those who are uninitiated in a particular field; to them, the subjects all look too similar; they cannot recognize differences, and therefore cannot appreciate the field. It is difficult to differentiate between good reggae and bad reggae if one is unfamiliar with reggae; it all sounds the same, the differing details cannot be recognized.

Kant states that “all stiff regularity...has something in it repugnant to taste.”³²² There is a need for variety; monocultures, all unity and no variety, are boring, thus not aesthetically interesting, in addition, monocultures are unhealthy for plants and unhealthy for the aesthetic part of the self. An example of this stiff regularity may be suburban housing. Though monocultures may please some people’s senses, they are not beautiful. In fact, “regularity will

³²² Kant p. 80

not entertain for long rather it will impose a burdensome constraint upon the imagination.”³²³

The variety, then, “can provide constant food for taste.”³²⁴ It is variety of foods and food preparation that excite people about culinary experiences. Leopold himself states that not all trees are created equal, or at least not seen as equal by us, the valuers of things like trees. Some of it may have to do with the scarcity of a particular tree in our area, which again brings to mind the appeal of the exotic. “The birch is an abundant tree in my township and becoming more so, whereas pine is scarce and becoming scarcer; perhaps my bias is for the underdog.”³²⁵

There is also, however, a need for order as well. It is the reason why a wild field may not be beautiful to most, but a well kept or well tended garden is beautiful. Total chaos is just that; it is nature gone wild. But the garden or the farm requires both nature and the individual working in cooperation for the needs of each to be met adequately. Perhaps what we recognize as beautiful is beautiful because we appreciate the work and care taken to ensure a well maintained, though not overly cultivated, piece of land. Diversity and order, in conjunction with one another, help constitute beauty. However, is it not the case that any type of tending is overcultivation? Is not any type of decision making by human agents a type of overcultivation? I think not. I continue to maintain that there can be a balanced position. Of course the difficulty lies in finding that balance, and I would say that each one has to determine that for oneself. This is to say that the balance may be achieved in a variety of ways; there is no one perfect balancing point. As such, I cannot, unfortunately, give a prescription on how to balance. For me, a smart phone and Facebook are too technologized, but for others, they are not. I do, however, recognize the potential tendency toward overcultivation, which would lead us to the doomsday scenario Nash suggests, or to the overly civilized man that Thoreau warns against. Especially given my overtly

³²³ Ibid p. 80

³²⁴ Ibid p. 80

³²⁵ SCA p. 128

human-oriented perspective, I am subject to that criticism in much greater degree than more eco-centric thinkers.

As Pollan points out, over-cultivation is as much of a problem as under-cultivation, and given man's nature and history, over-cultivation is more prominent and less recognized. This may be tied to other experiences as well. If a culture becomes overly cultivated or overly civilized with something like the arts, for instance, it may reduce the significance of any of the art. The overly civilized also becomes pretentious, as with the Super Bowl and like events. The good or meaningful art may all get lost in the midst of all the rest of the art. Oversaturation of communication seems to reduce the impact of any of it. Think of the information age in which we now live. It is difficult for any message to have an impact, because of the thousands of messages that inundate us. There must be a balance between enough exposure so that there is diversity and variety, but not so much that whatever surrounds us becomes jumbled and chaotic, whether that be art, communication, or nature itself.

Thoreau, Anderson claims,

saw an overcivilized dimension in farming that made it routine and enslaving and he saw in it the possibility of a wilder dimension through which human freedom might be lived. The farm thus constituted, for Thoreau, a borderland or midworld between the wild and the tamed. Both actually and figuratively, the farm stands between the city and the wilderness. As such, it marks a place through which one must travel when moving in either direction.³²⁶

Perhaps even the farm, when worked for sustenance, may be too wild for some; a garden is a tamer place to start since it is for enjoyment; it provides a more relaxed atmosphere and

³²⁶ Douglas R. Anderson "Thoreau's Wild Farming". *Agrarian Roots of Pragmatism*. Ed. Paul B. Thompson and Thomas C Hilde. (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2000) p. 154

process, and there is no pressure to grow enough food to eat. The over-civilized farm would be one that encourages monocultures, so we can take care of many at a time and in the same way, and if some do not thrive, then there will be enough to make up for it. The individual farmer, like Berry, can take time with and pay attention to each plant and get to know each plant's needs, to develop an intimate relationship with the plants, rather than to employ a 'drive by' mentality.

As Rolston states, "if you have seen one mountain or redwood, you have not seen them all."³²⁷ Each particular tree is a variation, just as each human is an individual. Taking the mountain or redwood example a step further, if one has *experienced* one mountain, one has not *experienced* them all. Berry and Tuan, among others, are concerned with the consumption mentality affecting our experiences of landscapes and the like. For them, if we must be consumers, we should be consumers of experiences. This experiencing, again, is more holistic than merely seeing the landscapes; one must hear them, smell them, touch them, feel them, be open to them, so that the landscape or any natural occurrence may change the person experiencing them. The goal should not be merely to see them all; that would be a cheapening of nature. Rather we should experience them all, but even the notion of 'all' may lead to too much checklisting. So, rather, we should attempt in general to experience variety, beauty, and so forth. Furthermore, every experience of nature is a different experience. Every journey into the natural world is a different journey, even if one is returning to the same geographic location. This is in much the same way that Heraclitus famously stated we cannot step in the same river twice, because the water in the river will be different, and because we will be different. Moreover, every river will be different and every part of a river will be different; each will have its own feel or aura about it, based upon the surroundings. I can read the same text twice, but it will not be the same 'I' doing the reading, so the story will have something different to say to 'me' at each

³²⁷ Rolston p. 140

reading. My storehouse of past experiences is constantly expanding and impacting the next experience. The same holds for viewing a piece of art as well.

If we are only concerned with seeing (in the cheaper, usual understanding of the term) an artwork or a natural environment, then we may think that virtual mountains are just as good; but if we truly experience the mountain, then we will want to experience other mountains as well. To hearken back to the scientific viewpoint, as contrasted with the artistic viewpoint, Rolston states that nature gives us particulars. Additionally, “there is no narrative in a biology text, but a trip into wilderness is always a story. One comes back with tales to tell.”³²⁸ And most folks would much rather tell or listen to stories than read textbooks. Stories are the application of meaning to an event; textbooks are usually merely facts or theories.

Balance

The best stories are the ones where there is a transition of some type. Whether it be plot development or character development, there must be an evolution or change that takes place in order to be interesting or meaningful. That being said, perhaps part of the reason that spring and autumn seem to be the most commonly referenced favorite seasons is because they are the times of transition or balance. The transition is both pretty and beautiful. This may mirror our own lives, as we are constantly in transition, which may be both pretty and beautiful. Unlike with our transitions, however, there is a sense of certainty; even in the midst of the seasonal transitions, there is a consistency or order to the diversity. We may not know to what we are transitioning or who we are becoming, but with fall, for instance, we know that the season is transitioning towards winter. Perhaps this is what allows us to enjoy the time of transition much more with regards to the seasons, than with regards to our own transitions. Our own are often fraught with uncertainty, and as such, cannot be appreciated until the transition is complete. The real tragedy

³²⁸ Ibid p. 140

is that it is just these seasons that are disappearing in this new (to use McKibben's term) Eearth. Summer is becoming hotter and drier and is lasting longer, and winter is becoming colder and wetter and lasting longer, thus eliminating the two transitional seasons. In this new Eearth, the extreme becomes the norm and the moderate becomes the exception. It becomes an Earth of juxtaposed extremes, rather than gradual changes that prepare our bodies and minds for the coming change. The dry places will become drier and the wet places will become wetter. Again, balance is the key, and balance is what is disappearing as a result of climate change.

The notion of balance can be exemplified by rain. With regards to rain, the necessity of water is obvious, even though as mentioned earlier, we are solar powered creatures. Despite this fact, there is, not surprisingly, a natural connection between happiness and water. One thinks of the happiness of the people of Scandinavia or Japan.³²⁹ It seems most people prefer to vacation near water. But too much water, especially rainfall, becomes depressing-- one thinks of London or Seattle. Rain or fog is a part of the very culture of the city. But, there is also a type of re-freshment that can occur during a rain in the midst of the dry hot summer months. Nature, in that season, feels oppressive and sticky, like an enemy who is not only attempting to defeat us, but is successfully doing so. Think of the smell and feel of the first spring rain. Not a downpour or a storm, but the calming, all day, steady rain of spring. It can be seen in the larger context of what has been (winter dreariness), this being a re-freshing of nature, a washing away of winter, as well as harbinger of what is to come-- the necessity of the beautifying process of flowers and other natural growth, in which rain plays a part. As we say, April showers bring May flowers. Even in our daily lives, most of us bathe or shower pretty regularly in order to wash away the dirt that has accumulated, and to look forward to a new, more beautiful or better day. We are made newly fresh or re-freshed by the water. Beginning or ending a day with a bath or shower washes off dirt

³²⁹ <http://www.forbes.com/sites/christopherhelman/2013/01/09/the-worlds-happiest-and-saddest-countries-2/>

and grime; it washes and prepares us for a new day, or it washes away the past day, making us fresh again. Even if one is depressed by rain, the realization that beautiful flowers will be the result helps to keep that in check. Too much sun results in a feeling of being physically drained. The rain, then, reminds us of the alternative. In some ways, this could be seen as part of the larger issue of the balance between nature preservation and destruction in general. Just as the rain takes on heightened significance when it is lacking, during droughts or the dog days of summer for instance, perhaps it is the case that nature seems to have taken on heightened importance as we become more technologically removed from it. It is the absence that reminds us of the importance of its presence. Even the appreciation for the sun can occur only in light of the rain, and the appreciation for rain can only occur in contrast to the experience of the sun. Just as plants need both water and sun for physical survival, there seems to be not only a physical need for both on the part of humans (the need for sun and water) but also a meta-physical need on the part of humanity that requires both for proper health.

It seems difficult even to describe rain without waxing poetic. There is a connection between poetry, farming, and expression, and it is not at all surprising that some of the earliest environmentalists were also poets, specifically Emerson and Thoreau. Perhaps it is fitting, then, that Earth Day and Arbor Day are merely two days apart in April, which is also National Poetry Month and National Lawn Care month. It is also fitting that April is the prototypical Spring month (in the Northern Hemisphere), the transition from the darkness and natural slumber of winter into the life and vibrancy of spring. The mornings are often still brisk, while the days are warm, but not yet hot. There is a level of appreciation for the warmth, which would not be the case, had the preceding months not been as cold. There is a type of inherent connection to history that gives more meaning to the present. We remember the preceding cold.

The close relation between lyrical expression and the natural world is noted by Berry. He states that the vast majority of all poetry is either about the natural world or uses the natural world as a metaphor for self, politics, etc.: “most poets, even the least interested in nature, have found in the natural world an abundant stock of symbols and metaphors.”³³⁰ Due to its abstract nature, poetry, like the environment, can easily be interpreted to mean multiple things to multiple people. Again, we see the connection to language. Language is, in part, a series of symbols and metaphors that attempt to express ideas and experiences, but never can do so fully. This is another reason why the poetry of Berry, Emerson and Thoreau is not as ‘clear’ on these issues as their prose. Or perhaps it is the case that less clarity can be more accurate or true.

In his “Essay on American Scenery,” Cole echoes this sentiment:

Poetry and Painting sublime and purify thought, by grasping the past, the present, and the future--they give the mind a foretaste of its immortality, and thus prepare it for performing an exalted part amid the realities of life. And rural nature is full of the same quickening spirit--it is, in fact, the exhaustless mine from which the poet and the painter have brought such wondrous treasures--an unfailing fountain of intellectual enjoyment, where all may drink, and be awakened to a deeper feeling of the works of genius, and a keener perception of the beauty of our existence. For those whose days are all consumed in the low pursuits of avarice, or the gaudy frivolities of fashion, unobservant of nature's loveliness, are unconscious of the harmony of creation.³³¹

Art, then, is capable of getting at the essences of things and reality, everything from death to the deep feelings of our existence. By getting at the essential, art allows the poet and perhaps,

³³⁰ Berry “A Secular Pilgrimage” *Continuous Harmony* Essays Cultural and Agricultural (Counterpoint, 2012) p. 1

³³¹ Cole

also the appreciator of nature to rid themselves of the frivolous distractions that consume so much of our lives.

The Lawn

Given the fact that those who have lawns far outnumber those who have gardens or farms, perhaps turning to lawns would be more illuminating, and I believe the basics still hold. As Steinberg states in *American Green*, lawns are the first things that a visitor to a house sees, and the first impression is a lasting one. Seeing a front lawn that is well maintained, one expects the same from the home itself. If the lawn appears to be a work in progress, then perhaps so is the house and by extension, the dwellers of it. If the lawn is ‘perfect,’ it is possible that it is superficial/artificial, and the maintainers of it may place an emphasis on appearances, perhaps at the expense of substance. The lawn probably has been chemically altered or even replaced with synthetic grass. This may also reflect the inhabitants of the home. They may also care more about what the neighbors think about them than about expressing their true selves. This is connected to the disappearance of porches, which became vacant due to air conditioning; the front lawn was no longer “the locus of community activity, it [the lawn] evolved into something for show, into a reflection of personal identity.”³³² Or perhaps more accurately, the lawn becomes a reflection of who we *want* the community to think we are. Tabor states,

We must be...what we want our gardens to make us seem. Happily, this works both ways; for the garden itself is the best means of becoming genuine—of getting right oneself. Just why this is so does not always appear on the surface of things—but I suspect it is because everything dealt with in the garden is so genuine, and because it is in itself such an elemental occupation. There is virtue in

³³² Ted Steinberg *American Green: The Obsessive Quest for the Perfect Lawn*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Co. Inc., 2006) p. 26

earth contact and there is inspiration in the observation of plant unfoldment, whether we are mystical, empirical, or rationalistic in our temperament³³³

Tabor is stating that regardless of whether one's attitude is mystical, rationalistic, aesthetic, scientific, or any other attitude that is open to real genuine interaction and experience, virtue can be found in the garden. The authenticity of the experience in the garden then can lead to authenticity of the self.

Pollan, in *Second Nature*, is concerned about over-cultivation, as exemplified by the lawn: "the lawn holds great appeal, especially to Americans. It looks sort of natural—it is green; it grows—but in fact it represents a subjugation of the forest as utter and complete as the parking lot. Every species is forcibly excluded from the landscape but one, and this is forbidden to grow longer than the owner's little finger. A lawn is nature under totalitarian rule."³³⁴ A garden, in contrast, should be "a place that admits of both nature and human habitation."³³⁵ Without the alternative of farming and gardening, we may be left with the usual American choices of "either raping the land or sealing it away in a preserve where no one can touch it."³³⁶ These correspond to the doomsday and island scenarios offered by Nash. But perhaps the other option is the lawn. Does one treat it as an opportunity to be a co-creator with this natural entity, or as an inert canvas that should remain pristine and uniform? Should the lawn look natural but remain pretty, uniformly green as long as possible, uniformly cut at the same length, and be designed to fit in with the rest of the neighborhood? This latter lawn mentality may be the motivating factor behind golf courses. They look sort of natural, but are often (if not always) cases of over-cultivation.

³³³ Grace Tabor "The Garden's Place in Civilization" *The American Gardener: A Sampler* Ed. Allen Lacy (Macmillan 1990) p. 38

³³⁴ Michael Pollan *Second Nature: A Gardener's Education*. (New York: Grove Press, 1991) p. 48

³³⁵ *Ibid* p. 49

³³⁶ *Ibid* p. 49

But, on the other hand, taking control of the lawn may be seen as a “way of taking control over one small aspect of their lives in a world hanging under the threat of nuclear catastrophe”³³⁷ or as a response to a job that does not allow for much freedom or control. There is also the fact that we are made to be creative creatures, with a desire for creative outlet, so the lawn may serve as an outlet for our creativity. However, Pollan states, “If lawn mowing feels like copying the same sentence over and over, gardening is like writing out new ones, an infinitely variable process of invention and discovery.”³³⁸ The gardener can change the color or type of plant she is cultivating; she can change from food gardening to flower gardening. There is only so much creativity one can express with one’s lawn. While the lawn care is more creative and allows for both more freedom and more control than work, lawn care does not allow for as much artistic freedom or choice as a garden does. One can change the direction that one mows, or maybe the height of the grass, but that is about it. Mowing can become drudgery and routine, it can become a chore, rather than an opportunity for creation or engagement with the natural environment. Or worse, the lawn may become the place where “[men] head out into the yard every week and act out their male fantasies for self-assertion, rooted in an earlier tradition of competitive individualism, by firing up the power mower and cutting down the grass.”³³⁹ This is the doomsday scenario that Nash describes, writ small, every week. However, even this routine, if the mindset is correct, may still give the opportunity (temporally and spatially) for engagement. It may at least provide the opportunity and location for meditation.

While the lawn may be the place where one typically over-cultivates nature, as I mentioned earlier, under-cultivation of nature is also a problem. Given that “we are one of only a handful of creatures with the capacity to deliberately alter our environment. To simply renounce

³³⁷ Ibid p. 57

³³⁸ Second Nature p. 64

³³⁹ Ibid p. 57

that power—is not that in some sense to renounce our humanity? Our nature?”³⁴⁰ It seems that either raping the land completely or sealing it away is to renounce that power, by either taking advantage of the power and allowing the strong (that is, us) to survive, or by realizing that we do not have the capacity to place our power of domination in check and instead interact in a healthy way, so it is better to remove ourselves from the possibility of interacting. To state this in another way, we are in an unhealthy relationship, and it is better to remove ourselves from the situation than to attempt to make it better. There is some parallel here with the marriage theme I discussed earlier, in which it is better to ‘cut and run’ than work it out, and Nash’s suggestion is an attempt to carry that mindset to our environmental ‘marriage.’

Perhaps the two most obvious large scale examples of the gardening motif would be golf courses and public parks. These two examples demonstrate nature and man working together to create a work of art. Part of the important need for public parks, public gardens and public spaces is the need for beauty: “the question remains whether the contemplation of beauty in natural scenery is practically of much value in counteracting and alleviating these evils [exhaustion, depression, irritation, lowness of spirit, the things by which ‘life is made, to some questionable worth the living’] and either it is possible at reasonable cost to make such beauty available to the daily use of great numbers of townfolk?”³⁴¹ Of course, there is also the need for public spaces because of the physical and communal aspects, as we have already seen. Perhaps it is the case that part of the beautiful aspect is an extension of the other aspects. It is difficult to find beauty in things, whether they be artwork, nature or life, if we are not content with our place within a community, or if we are not healthy.

³⁴⁰ Ibid p. 49

³⁴¹ Frederick Law Olmsted “A Consideration of the Justifying Value of a Public Park” *Essential Texts* Ed. Robert Twombly. (New York: Norton, 2010) p. 308

Part of the necessity of public green space is the recreational value, which means creating oneself anew. This often occurs through sport, which itself may be another form of artistic expression. One may be able to create oneself in much the same way that artists can re-create themselves through their artwork. Rolston states in “recreational value: (value as nature) nature as “field for skill and joy” can be one of two things: “a place to show what they can do; for the other, values are reached as they are let in on nature’s show.”³⁴² The field of play (notice the language used to describe the area for sport) is like the artist's canvas, not only for the designer of the field of play, especially in the case of baseball and golf, (where the dimensions are not as fixed) but also for the athlete.

Fit

As Tom Fazio, a golf course designer, discusses: “technology allows us to do many things we could not have imagined doing 2 or 3 decades ago.”³⁴³ For example, two different courses can be built in America’s southwest, one attuned with the environment and the other not, one taking advantage of the local, natural terrain, the other looking like a course in the eastern United States. He goes on to say that “when designing a golf course in severe, mountain terrain, I think of building the flattest course possible, of course the reverse is true when building a course where the terrain is basically flat.”³⁴⁴ This reinforces the notion that part of what is beautiful is that which is unique. There are probably many golf courses in the southwest that fit in with the terrain of the southwest. None of them, therefore, can stand out as unique and different, and thus as beautiful, but a course that uses technology to recreate a non-southwest feel is special. The challenge, it seems, is to create something that both fits the surroundings and is still unique. This same challenge may confront the individual gardener. How does one express oneself uniquely

³⁴² Rolston p. 78

³⁴³ Tom Fazio. Golf Course Designs. (New York: Harry Abrams, Inc., 2000). P. 77

³⁴⁴ Ibid p. 21-2

within the context of “fitting” with the natural environment, rather than overcultivating or becoming too technologically dependent? This balance is perhaps the real strength of Wright’s Fallingwater. It is unique, in part, because it “fits” with the natural environment as an intentional extension of the surrounding nature.

Fazio recognizes the temptation to overcultivate, even by golf course standards, and he claims that it is better to take what the land gives: “in most cases the natural environment is better {aesthetically} than man-made environment, so the more of it we have the better the golf course will look.”³⁴⁵ The mystique surrounding the Old Course at St. Andrews also emphasizes the connection to history, as well as to nature. It is not what anyone would describe as picturesque, it is boring rolling Scottish seaside land that is not suitable for growing any crops, but it has a connection to the past that is unrivaled, and as such, has a feel that cannot be replicated. Additionally, the course is so old that one is competing not against an architect, but a series of modifiers, and ultimately against the natural history of the land: “the old course wasn’t planned, it evolved. So you’re not matching wits against some architect. It is nature you’re taking on there and that’s what’s fascinating about it.”³⁴⁶ In some ways, the golfer is competing against everyone else who has ever played there; one is even walking the same links that were once walked by literal kings of old. This connection, then, is what enhances the *meaning* of the experience. This is also a particular example that demonstrates the placedness of a particular course, a course that fits with its surroundings.

This situatedness, or fitting into a place, is also the case for the 'retro' ballparks in baseball. These baseball fields typically include a lot of brick in the design. Perhaps it is the case that these are a reaction to concrete construction, which was all the rage in the 1970s, due to the

³⁴⁵ Ibid p. 54

³⁴⁶ Geoff Shackelford quoting Peter Thomson in *Grounds for Golf: The History and Fundamentals of Golf Course Design*. (Macmillan, 2003) p. 22

rise of the multipurpose stadium. While building concrete, multipurpose stadiums does encourage reusing (as the stadiums are multipurpose), and it saves money and space for other things, it does not matter where the stadium is; there is no consideration given to its situatedness, its *fit* with its surroundings. Considering multipurpose stadiums' ability to be reused for a variety of events, it is probably not coincidental that many of them were built during a previous 'green' explosion, around the time of the first Earth Day.

Retro parks, on the other hand, at least imply a degree of human touch, as bricks are assembled by hands, whereas concrete-- the preferred material of the multipurpose stadium-- is poured by machine. Additionally, like the discussion of golf courses' including the natural environment, the retro movement of ballpark design has consciously tried to make location a part of the design. For example, designers made the large bridge in Pittsburgh visible from the ballpark and the Ohio River visible from the ballpark in Cincinnati. These features make the ballparks more distinctive to place; they are an attempt to incorporate unique aspects of those cities into each ballpark, rather than to build a cookie cutter stadium that could be anywhere. It is not a coincidence that golf and baseball are much more tied to the past than the other major sports, and as such, are much more romantic in inclination than the others; they are typically spoken of with a type of poetry of language, which seems out of place in many other sports.

Urban

This leads to a discussion of the urban, with respect to this nature of place. Berleant, in "Cultivating an Urban Aesthetic" states that

we sense an identity, the distinctive character of a locale to which its inhabitants belong and which even the casual visitor can apprehend. As with trees of great age, there is an awareness of the conjunction of a present place with its past, and

such urban communities possess the precious quality of human continuity. It is not surprising that these are the very qualities we recognize and seek to preserve in the remaining old buildings of modern cities, where so much tends to be obliterated through shortsightedness, personal gain, narrow economics, and the false expedience of standardization.³⁴⁷

It seems more than likely that once one is attuned to experience life in a more engaged way, such an engaged mindset can lead to an aesthetic appreciation and engaging experience of the urban as well. It may be easier, though, to have an aesthetic mindset with regards to non-urban nature because it is easier to experience nature itself. By contrast, the urban is such an extension of humanity, and thus of self, that it is difficult to approach the urban environment differently. Given the interaction between nature and self, and the fact that the urban should also work in continuity with the natural, the urban should be able to be experienced as beautiful as well.

John Dewey, in *Art as Experience* states, “this task is to restore continuity between the refined and intensified forms of experience that are works of art and the everyday events, doings, and sufferings that are universally recognized to constitute experience.”³⁴⁸ Nature may be that unifying thing, the opportunity for continuity. Since Dewey also admits that part of the human condition is being part of an environment, and specifically a natural environment,

the first great consideration is that life goes on in an environment not merely in it, but because of it, through interaction with it. No creature lives merely under its skin...at every moment the living creature is exposed to dangers from its surroundings, and at every moment, it must draw upon something in its surroundings to satisfy its needs. The career and destiny of a living being are

³⁴⁷ Urban Aesthetic p. 85

³⁴⁸ Dewey p. 2

bound up with its interchanges with its environment, not externally but in a most intimate way.³⁴⁹

This also suggests that nature may be the locus for continuity. The immediacy with which we interact must then be a clue of some sort to our being. There is also a more than passing connection to Emerson's first nature essay here. Nature surrounds us, is our first other, and is the place where our language must originate. Given that over half of the world's population now lives in cities, the urban has also become an environment that surrounds us:

In this respect [active human presence in a living environment] the city may be a model of all art. And in an insistent way the aesthetic of the city is an aesthetic of engagement. It is a condition of perceptual activity and response that so captures sensibilities of its participants that we have continuity rather than separation, involvement rather than isolation and silence. Each becomes the complement of the other: the city of its inhabitants, its people and their city.³⁵⁰

This at least might be the ideal.

As Berleant notes, "Some cities are pedestrian cities, where people crowd the streets at most times of the day and night, producing a rich mixture of movement and sensation. Indeed, most important for understanding the urban aesthetic are the sensory qualities that cities generate."³⁵¹ Notice then that this sensory experience pertains to all the senses, not merely the visual. Cities have certain sounds, smells, feels, etc.: "The city then whatever else it may be, is an aesthetic environment."³⁵² But it can only be recognized as such once this shift in mindset has occurred, which allows one to be attuned to the aesthetic in all experiences. Perhaps, then,

³⁴⁹ Ibid p. 12

³⁵⁰ Berleant "Cultivating an Urban Aesthetic" *Aesthetics of the Environment* p. 97

³⁵¹ Ibid p. 85

³⁵² Ibid p. 85

through this aesthetic engagement, one can avoid Berleant's (and McDermott's) concern about overly emphasizing the natural environment. Thus a type of balance can be struck that is neither overly-cultivated, which leads to the doomsday scenario, nor the overly-romanticized, overly-wild and untamed, which may, at best, lead to the island scenario. In its place is the garden motif, which emphasizes authenticity and relationship.

Fake Nature

What then may be said about the authenticity of simulated or created nature, such as synthetic grass, chemically enhanced lawns, and the like, which have become popular in urban places? The fact that so much of our lives, and even more so the lives of subsequent generations, are spent in virtual or simulated realities, has something to say about the developing human species, namely that our experiences are becoming more of only one type, rather than varied types. Elliot's article "Faking Nature" comes to the fore here. Could we, in fact, fake nature and get the same benefits from it, or must the natural be real or authentic? One could, of course, re-create or fake nature if one were only going for a scientific or technological view of nature, but because the romantic perception is fundamentally an artistic one, it seems that nature is more akin to a work of art, where a forgery is different than the authentic. "Fakes lack a value possessed by the real thing. It is why provenance to piece of artwork is so important, it connects the piece to the artist."³⁵³ The history adds to the livingness of the art. It is 'alive' in part because it can be connected to the living creature who created it, though it does seem to have a life of its own. In much the same way that actual nature is a connection to the artist (God or Nature), if one were to encounter a recreated, simulated or faked nature, then there would be connection to a different artist. There should be an *awareness* of that artist, so that one can appreciate the artist's ability. There is also the connection to purpose, which Kant discusses when discussing the

³⁵³ Robert Elliot "Faking Nature". Environmental Ethics. Ed. Robert Elliot. (Oxford UP, 1995) p. 79

difference between the beautiful and the sublime. The natural is seemingly purposeless, because the artist is greatly unknown, and even if the artist is known, the reason for the art is unknown. There is no artist statement that can be read; perhaps this air of mystery also adds to the “livingness” of the work; it is still alive because there are puzzles about it. There is also the connection to a larger context, in the natural cases. The farmer realizes he is a part of something larger than himself, (such as all of nature or all of history), but if nature is merely re-created, then it does not go beyond the recent past to reach back for what came long before. “There is a difference and it is one which affects my perception, and consequent valuation, of the painting. The difference of course lies in the painting’s genesis. If one is given a replica of a Vermeer rather than an actual Vermeer the object is not of the kind that one values.”³⁵⁴ But it is clearly not enough to say that because the natural is valuable, it must derive its value from something else. I claim that this value must be something that it does for us. Value must necessarily be human interested.

Olmsted states, “when working with the environment, it must still appear to be spontaneous and thoroughly wild (to an unlearned visitor) otherwise it is experienced as artificial and the artist takes center stage instead of the nature.”³⁵⁵ If the environment does not at least appear to fit with the larger environment surrounding it, or be a part of what one could actually encounter in that place, then the experience becomes no different than visiting an art museum. However, the experience cannot be completely wild, or it may lead to a sense of foreboding, as one experiences with nature that was once taken care of and is no longer. Perhaps given our urbanized culture, we presume all nature has someone to care for it; even the preserves have people ensuring they remain pristine. If it is out of control or overly wild, we presume poor

³⁵⁴ Ibid p. 81

³⁵⁵ Olmsted p. 39

caretaking, and it becomes experienced as such. There is, of course, a place for the overwhelming, to remind us that we are not the center of the universe. Perhaps we even need a brush with death in order to realize our finitude, which is connected to the concept of sublime.

To go even further, since so much of the world has been archived 'online' and elsewhere, unless there is some value to the original, then why retain or maintain it? For instance, since all the works of The Louvre can be found on the museum's website, cannot the actual Mona Lisa be allowed to deteriorate? Online we have enough pictures of wooded areas and the Grand Canyon that perhaps we can now develop those areas for business. This would seem to be a possible consequence of Nash's suggestion to keep islands of nature. Since we are to have very little contact with the natural refuges, we would be limited to experiencing them virtually and experiencing simulated nature actually, which does succeed in preserving the truly natural. But the question must then be asked, preserved for what purpose? Is the knowledge that there is some beautiful nature somewhere out there enough? Would not we want to experience it, rather than just know about it? And without experience, what would we actually know? So perhaps Nash's suggestion really ends up looking much like the doomsday scenario. Furthermore, how does one decide which areas to preserve?

McKibben makes an interesting point with regards to natural beauty: "for it is not natural beauty that is ended; in fact, in the same way that the smog breeds spectacular sunsets, there may appear new, unimagined beauties. What will change is the meaning that beauty carries, for when we look at a sunset, we see, or think we see, many things beyond a particular arrangement of orange and purple and red."³⁵⁶ We presume it to be purposeless, and we presume its history to be natural, rather than man-made. The meaning is what we assign, based upon our preconceived

³⁵⁶ Bill McKibben *The End of Nature* (Anchor Books, 1989) p. 53

notions. The meaning would change, though it might still be classified as beautiful, if its true history were known. This is also the case with works of man-made art and provenance.

The concept of provenance connects with the concepts of continuity. Berleant discusses this connectivity: “the continuity that characterizes each context is what allows us to identify it as engagement”³⁵⁷ which, when known, changes the meaning. One has a different experience if one knows from the start that the grass is synthetic, as opposed to being told later. One may be able to appreciate a well done forgery if told beforehand that it is a forgery, but the meaning and thus the experience changes if it was initially thought to be the original, for the continuity is different. As Kant states, “it is noteworthy that if we secretly deceived this lover of the beautiful by planting in the ground artificial flowers...or by placing artificially carved birds on the boughs of trees and he discovered the deceit, the immediate interest that he previously took in them would disappear at once though perhaps a different interest...would take its place.”³⁵⁸

The interest in the item as a product of art would replace the interest of it as natural. The continuity and connection would be completely different, and we could appreciate it for what it actually is, rather than what it pretends to be. With respect to the environment, there is a certain aura associated with the natural that is 'untouched' by human hands, as opposed to 'arranged' by human hands. There is also the issue of provenance again, for if it has been arranged or re-created, then it is like the art forgery or a copy; it is not worth as much in terms of meaning or money.

As well as holding true in the natural world, this notion of continuity holds true for the urban environment: “In an architectural aesthetics of engagement, a building is not set apart as a massive, monumental edifice, imposing and everywhere. Rather, it joins the landscape in some

³⁵⁷ <http://www.autograff.com/berleant/pages/recentart8.html>

³⁵⁸ Kant p. 145

way...”.³⁵⁹ This continuity, however, should not be confused with homogeneity; rather, it becomes the variety against the backdrop of order. Additionally, “the regenerated environment does not have the right kind of continuity with the forest that stood there initially; that continuity has been interfered with by the earlier devastation. (In actual fact the regenerated forest is likely to be perceivably quite different to the kind of thing originally there).”³⁶⁰ This uniformity hints at re-created nature. For example, if it 'fits' too perfectly, then it was probably re-created. The beauty may lie in the imperfection (like a piano piece played by a human rather than a robot, there is feeling and fermata and variation in the length of time a half note is held...) since the imperfect adds to the variety and diversity. We think again about Thoreau and his gnarled apples.

Pollan discusses the need for balance, given that two of the three main types of failure in the garden are under-cultivation and over-cultivation. Under-cultivation “usually indicates that the gardener has been reluctant to alter the landscape to the extent his plants require; he has not sufficiently tamed nature. Perhaps because of his romantic notions about animals or weeds, he didn’t do enough to protect his plants from their incursions.”³⁶¹ Over-cultivation occurs when the gardener “uses large quantities of fertilizer to coax quick growth from his plants [and] will find them more susceptible to insects and disease.”³⁶² This need for balance and for compromise between the self and nature is precisely the antidote to the current problem. Nash’s doomsday scenario is akin to over-cultivation; we over-cultivate to the point of destruction. The island motif is the under-cultivation, in which we under-cultivate to the point of 'no cultivate' and let nature take its course, in a location secluded from us. This balance may also be seen in the necessary balance between the rural with the urban. As has hopefully been clear throughout this

³⁵⁹ Arnold Berleant “Engagement in the Arts” *Art and Engagement* (Temple, 2010) p. 92

³⁶⁰ Elliot p. 85

³⁶¹ *Second Nature* p. 123

³⁶² *Ibid* p. 123

work, I am not suggesting we go back to the land and begin homesteading; rather I think we need a balance and a continuity between a natural environment and an artificial one. Even the artificial environment may be artistic if aesthetically encountered, but we must remember that it is in balance with the natural, rather than a replacement for it.

Coming out of the last discussion, then, it seems clear that a natural environment has some quality that cannot be captured by a replica. It seems that this could very easily be the “aura” that Benjamin refers to in his classic text on philosophy of art. He was writing in response to the mechanical age, but his argument, I think, has even more power in light of our technological age. A mechanical reproduction, while good, pales in comparison to the reproduction abilities of today’s technology. This point has been lurking in the background of much of the previous chapters, the fact that real nature is somehow special and our relationship with it matters deeply and profoundly. If nature were to change, then we also would change, just as in the past, nature would change and in response, we would too. Our selves and our surroundings are intertwined. In some ways, we are linked to each other through the environment.

The lastingness of photos and of the written word, then, allows for a connection to history in a way that speech perhaps does not. Furthermore, this connection allows the photograph or the word to gain importance. While Benjamin focuses on the work of art and its connection to history, nature is even more connected to history and its creator. The painter, as opposed to the photographer, attempts to capture that uniqueness and placedness: “The painter maintains his work a natural distance from reality, the cameraman penetrates deeply into its web. There is a tremendous difference in the pictures they obtain. That of the painter is a total one, that of the

cameraman consists of multiple fragments which are assembled under a new law.”³⁶³ The cameraman, by penetrating deeply, is too close; again, some distance is necessary, and the painter has the right distance. The painter attempts to capture the aura, or presents a new aura (impressionism may be the best example) whereas the photograph is merely a snapshot, something that represents an instant, rather than a moment. A moment is more lasting, has more duration than just a split second, perhaps something like Dewey’s description of “an experience.” A viewer, then, can enter into the work of art in a way that one cannot enter into a photo. The photo, because it is only a moment, and namely a moment captured by a particular person, does not have the same depth of experience for all viewers. There is, of course, a difference between an artistic photo and an image-capturing photo. The artistic photo is an attempt to capture the aura in a different medium, rather than simply to add to a collection of photos. The non-artistic photo is merely an attempt to reproduce the scene, rather than to express it in a new and meaningful way. “Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be... The technique of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition... substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence.”³⁶⁴ This attempt at reproducing the scene may very well be the consumer mindset of collecting coming to the forefront again. Connections are severed, much like the replicated or re-created nature of the golf course, or the building that does not fit with the surrounding environment.

Benjamin goes on to state that “process reproduction is more independent of the original than manual reproduction.”³⁶⁵ A manual copy requires the original piece and some skill to

³⁶³ Walter Benjamin “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” *Illuminations* Trans Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968) p. 233

³⁶⁴ *Ibid* p. 221

³⁶⁵ *Ibid* p. 220

replicate it; mechanical reproduction requires neither. Forgery, then, is more authentic than reproduction. Reproduction, however, does allow greater access to the arts and to natural spectacles like the Grand Canyon, but this is at the expense of aura. Furthermore, with ease often comes apathy. Everyone can go to The Louvre's website, but few do. The age of mechanical reproduction has been replaced by technological reproduction, which can be even faster. The danger is in thinking that watching The Travel Channel can replace the experience of actually traveling.

Benjamin himself refers to natural environments and the notion of aura: “If while resting on a summer afternoon, you follow with your eyes a mountain range on the horizon or a branch which casts its shadow over you, you experience the aura of those mountains, of that branch.”³⁶⁶ It would be a different type of experience, a different aura, if the branch were a created branch rather than a natural branch, and a different aura if the branch itself were a different branch.

He further states, “every day the urge grows stronger to get hold of an object at very close range by way of its likeness, its reproduction.”³⁶⁷ This act of bringing too close may cheapen the experience of the object; one can dissect it, but if one can hold the object, it loses some power, and unless we shift our mindset to be more like that of Thoreau, this dissection does not lead to more wonder, which is a loss, for wonder is the starting point for learning and for loving.

Conclusion

In conclusion, then, this dissertation is not particularly groundbreaking in its suggestions. Rather, it is a reminder about the importance of the natural environment as an object for philosophical reflection, and beyond that, the natural environment as fundamental for the development of a whole self. I have discussed the relationship of the physical body to the

³⁶⁶ Ibid p. 223

³⁶⁷ Ibid p. 223

environment, which, in essence is, “get outside to exercise!” I have discussed the role that the natural environment plays in developing a healthy mind and spirit. I have pointed out the connections between psychological and sociological health and the natural environment, through analogies such as marriage. I have also indicated ways in which, through interactions with the natural, we may gain insight into the transcendent and immanent aspects of Nature/God. Through activities such as gardening, we can eat more healthfully, and have a meaningful experience of eating as well. Through continued work in nature, we can realize our place in a history, a present and a future larger than ourselves. We can even confront the issue of our own mortality. I have also made some initial comments about the relation of art to self cultivation and the connection of nature to that enterprise. I have suggested that aspects of self can all be cultivated “in the garden.” This emphasis on getting back to our roots is not of the nostalgic sort that suggests all of our problems will be solved by living the simple life. I have perhaps suggested a simpler life, if by simpler, what is meant is less reliant upon gadgets. However, by emphasizing balance, I have not succumbed to the danger of becoming too enamored with all things natural. The key is self reflection upon use, whether it be gadgets or nature. Self reflection is necessary for self cultivation.

I have said very little that is new either to the field of philosophy or to the field of nature studies; rather I have attempted to combine them in a way other than straightforward environmental ethics. Additionally, I have done this from an anthropocentric position, which may not be as unique as it would seem at first glance. For it seems that the romantic tradition, as exemplified by Emerson and others, is more human-oriented than it would appear at first glance. Nash leaves us with three possibilities: doomsday, garden, or islands. He claims that the island

model is the only way for nature to survive. I disagree; the garden is the best way for the survival and thriving of both nature and ourselves.

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Essential Aldo Leopold: Quotations and Commentaries. Ed. Curt Meine and Richard L. Knight.
U of Wisconsin Press, 1999. P. 237-254

VITA

Graduate School
Southern Illinois University

David R. Schrappe

drschrapp@hotmai.com

Centre College of Danville, Kentucky
Bachelor of Arts, Philosophy and Religion, May 2000

Kent State University
Master of Arts, Philosophy, May 2006

Dissertation:
Romantic Recultivating of Self and Environment

Major Professor: Douglas Anderson, Ph.D.