

How Did We Get Here? :



The Roots of Environmentalism

Two main beliefs about nature in Western philosophy

1. Humans are separate and superior to nature (Biblical Tradition)
2. Nature only has value as it is useful to humans (John Locke)

These are examples of ethics that are **anthropocentric**, or human-centered.

Dominion Thesis

"Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the Earth, and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the Sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the Earth"

(Old Testament, Genesis, 1:28)

Does this mean humans should control nature and use it how they wish?

OR

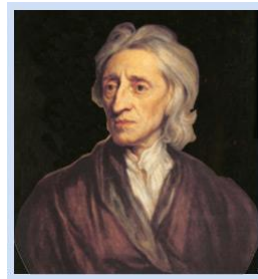
Do humans have a responsibility to **stewardship** over nature and to care for the environment?

The Theory of John Locke

Locke is writing in the 1600s

Nature only has value if it is useful to humans

- Freedom = ability to acquire and possess **property**, including one's body, labor, and nature
- Inspires a **utilitarian** view of nature in which anything that is left unused has no value and is wasted



- *Locke's philosophy is: anthropocentric & utilitarian*

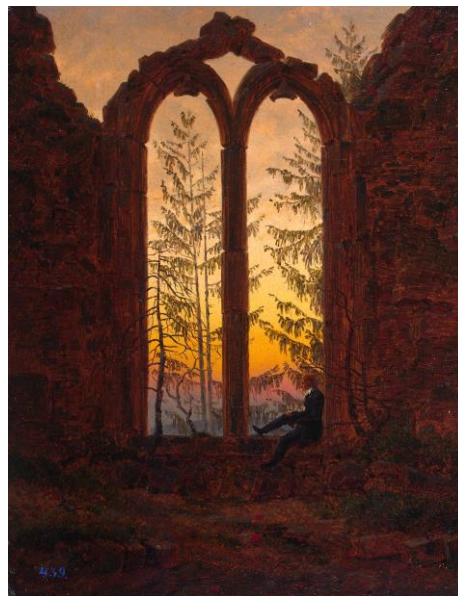


Describe this image. How does it make you feel? What values can you draw from it?

Oath of the Horatii - Jacques-Louis David

Romanticism

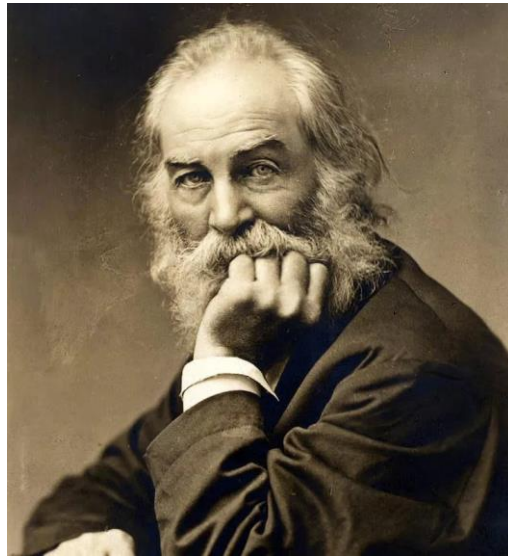
- Europe (1770 – 1840s)
- America (1820 – 1892)
- Reaction to Neoclassical Period and the emerging Industrial Revolution
- Changing attitude toward nature and the human place in the world
- "I love not Man the less, but Nature more"



The Dreamer (1840)
Caspar David Friedrich

Walt Whitman (1819 – 1892)

- *Leaves of Grass*
- Nature Poet?
- City Poet?
- Poet of the Universe?
- Environmentalism?
- Equality



Henry David Thoreau (1817 – 1862)

- Transcendentalism & Romanticism
- Dissident
- Naturalist
- Poet
- Philosopher

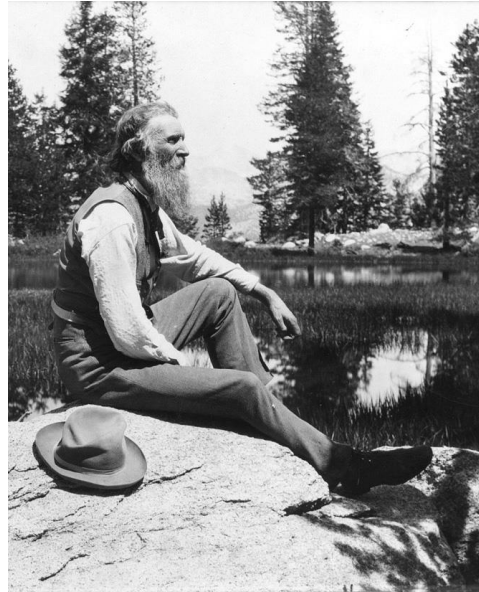


John Muir

(John of the Mountains)

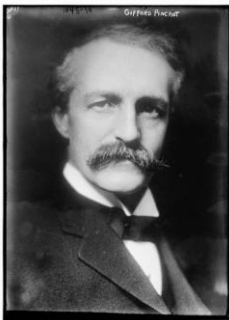
1838 - 1914

- "Father of the National Parks"
- Founded The Sierra Club
- Yosemite National Park
- Naturalist & Writer
- Preservationist (Vs. Conservationist)
- Inventor
- Immigrant



Environmental Battle Royale: Conservation Vs. Preservation Split

GIFFORD PINCHOT – FIRST CHIEF OF THE
FOREST SERVICE



- Conservationist
- Favored damming Hetch Hetchy, arguing that it would be "the highest possible use which could be made of it."

JOHN MUIR – FATHER OF THE NATIONAL
PARKS

- Preservationist
- "Dam Hetch Hetchy! As well dam for water-tanks the people's cathedrals and churches, for no holier temple has ever been consecrated by the hearts of man."

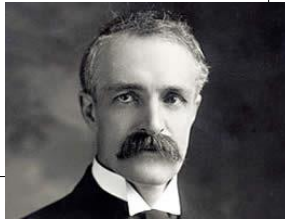


Gifford Pinchot vs. John Muir Yosemite, California

Gifford Pinchot

Utilitarian, Conservationist, Anthropocentric

- Resources can be used as long as they are used sustainably
- Best thing is to do the greatest good for the greatest number of people



John Muir

Preservationist, Ecocentric, Intangible/Intrinsic value of nature

- Nature should be left alone as much as possible
- **Wilderness** areas that have had little human impact should be protected



The Debate over the Fate of Hetch Hetchy Valley

Pinchot & the conservationists:

- The river should be dammed to provide a steady water supply for the residents of San Francisco
- Leaving the area wild serves fewer people



Muir & the preservationists:

- The landscape should remain unaltered so that people may enjoy it
- The natural landscape has **intrinsic value**



Group Discussion Questions:

1. What do you think Walt Whitman contributes to environmentalism?
 - What is his perspective and how does he demonstrate that (example)?
2. What does Thoreau mean when he says his townsmen are misfortunate who have inherited farms and houses etc?
3. Why do you think Thoreau says that it would be better to “be born in the open pasture and suckled by a wolf, that they might have seen with clearer eyes what fields they were called to labor in”?
 - What field should we be “laboring” in, according to Thoreau?
4. What does Muir mean when he says that, in acquiring wealth, “the wool is drawn close down over the poor fellow’s eyes, dimming or shutting out almost everything worth seeing”?
 - What does Muir think is more important than acquiring material wealth? Why?
5. What are some differences between these authors? What are the similarities?