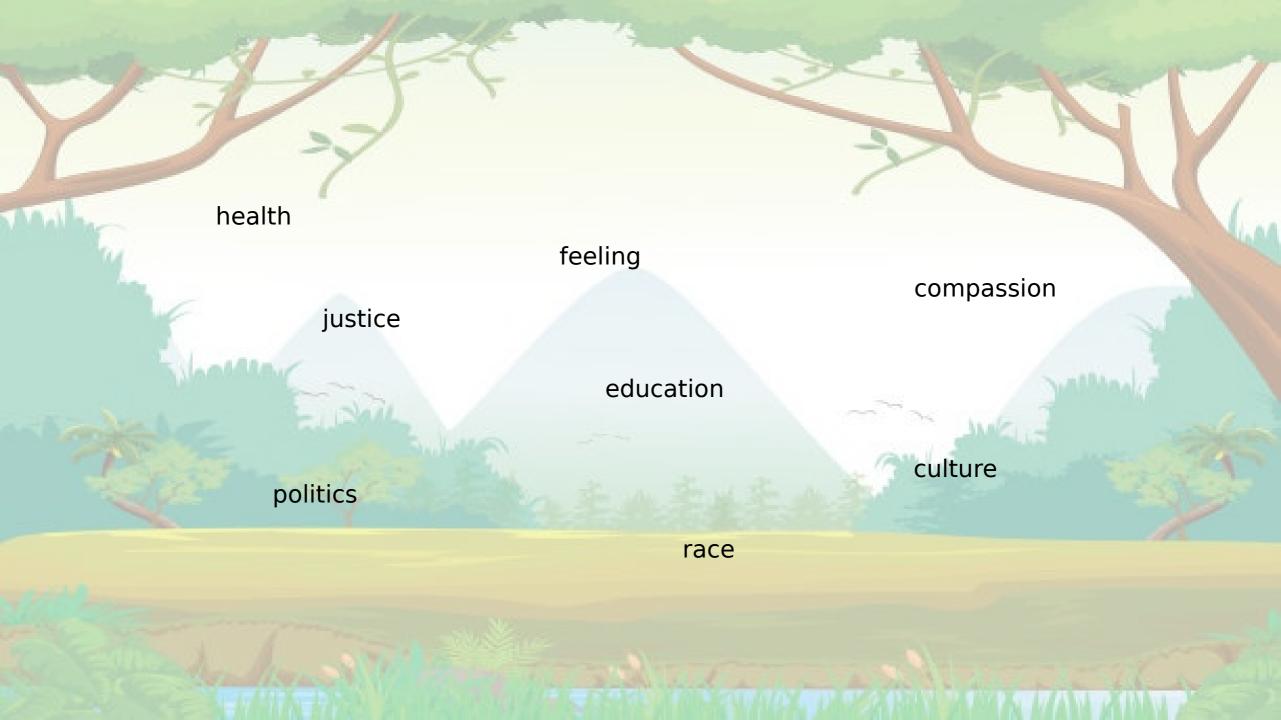


ENGL| ENV M30: Intro to Environment & Cultures 6 April 2023

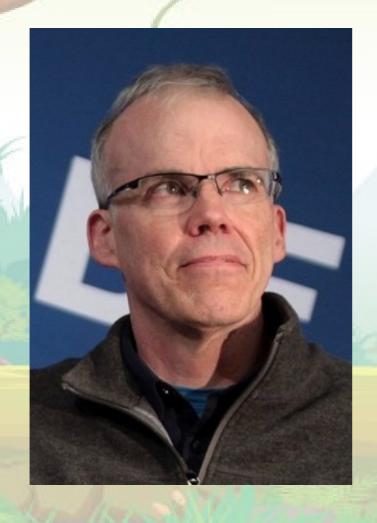
Prof. Heise

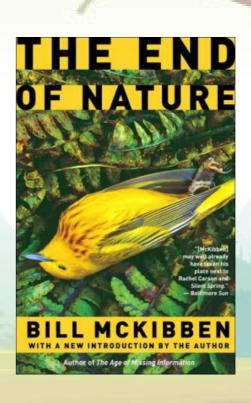
How would you define "nature"? For you, is nature similar to or different from "the environment"?

- "To me nature is all encompassing of what the word implies, whereas environment is more specific. After all, there are different types of environments" (Zaraleen H.).
- "I view nature as being distinct from the environment. Generally, I associate nature with 'the outdoors' and the innate properties of our earth i.e, greenery, the sun, weather, bodies of water, etc. I see the environment as being a more all-encompassing notion, one that depends on the composition of our surroundings. For instance, I believe that prior to mass urbanization, most of the environment consisted of nature, but presently, it is overwhelmed by concrete and brick and mortar structures" (Mallesh D.).
- "I would define 'nature' as the living and nonliving organisms that surround us and affect the atmosphere. This can also include how the weather affects the environment and how humans affect other organisms. I think nature is similar to the environment as it can be the organisms living in the environment that surround us or the atmosphere that affects the environment" (Kamea C.).
- "Nature to me is defined by anything natural and given by the earth. Forests, greenery etc. To me, nature is different from the environment which encapsulates nature and manmade structures as well" (Oluwadara A.).



Can nature end?





1989



"When I say that we have ended nature, I don't mean, obviously, that natural processes have ceased – there is still sunshine and still wind, still growth, still decay. Photosynthesis continues, as does respiration. But we have ended the thing that has, at least in modern times, defined nature for us – its separation from human society" (McKibben 1989: 64; original emphasis).

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For McKibben and many white American environmentalists, nature is what is separate from and - preferably - untouched by humans.





A hymn of love to the world.

—ELIZABETH GILBERT

BRAIDING SWEETGRASS

Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants

ROBIN WALL KIMMERER

2013

• "On one side of the world were people whose relationship with the living world was shaped by Skywoman, who created a garden for the well- being of all. On the other side was another woman with a garden and a tree. But for tasting its fruit, she was banished from the garden and the gates clanged shut behind her. . . . In order to eat, she was instructed to subdue the wilderness into which she was cast.

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Same species, same earth, different stories" (Kimmerer 2013: 7).

• "It is good to remember that the original woman was herself an immigrant. . . . It was through her actions of reciprocity, the give and take with the land, that the original immigrant became indigenous. For all of us, becoming indigenous to a place means living as if your children's future mattered, to take care of the land as if our lives, both material and spiritual, depended on it" (Kimmerer 2013: 8 and 9).



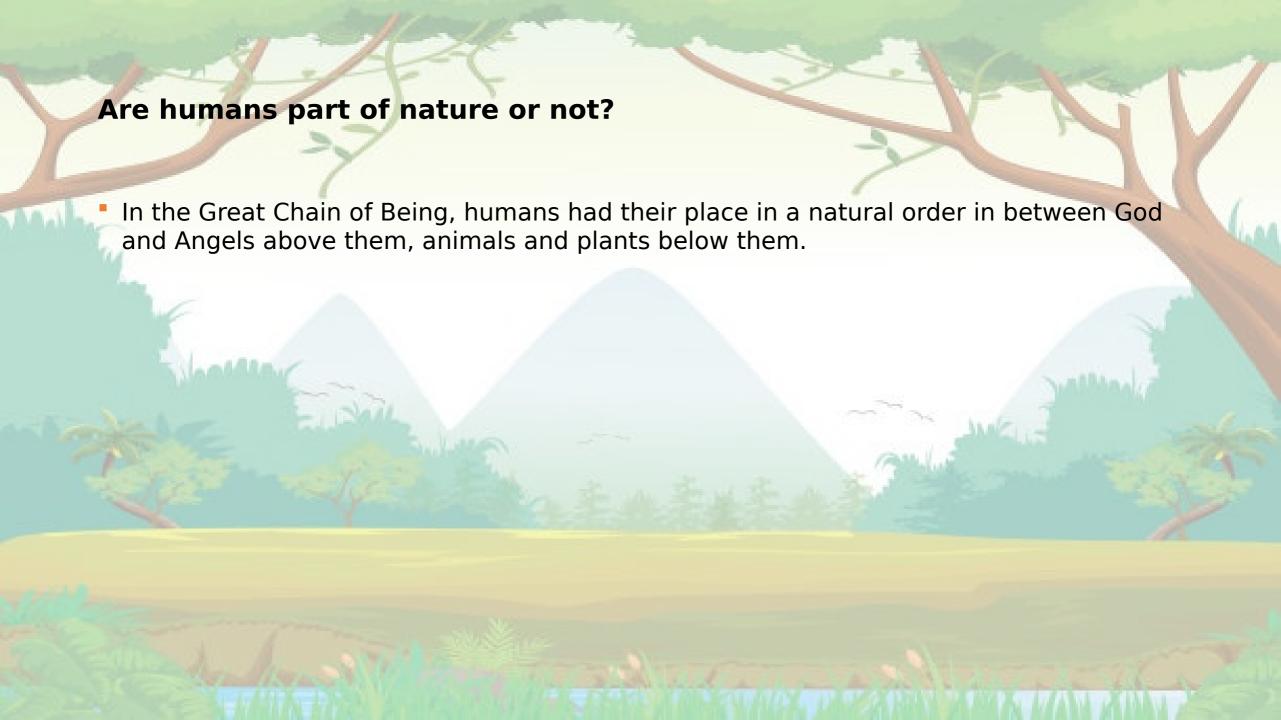
Bruce King (Oneida): Skywoman – Moment in Flight (2003)

- "Children, language, land: almost everything was stripped away, stolen when you
 weren't looking because you were trying to stay alive. In the face of such loss, one
 thing our people could not surrender was the meaning of land. In the settler mind, land
 was property, real estate, capital, or natural resources. But to our people, it was
 everything: identity, the connection to our ancestors, the home of our nonhuman
 kinfolk, our pharmacy, our library, the source of all that sustained us" (Kimmerer 2013:
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- "The Potawatomi Gathering of Nations reunites the people, an antidote to the divideand conquer strategy that was used to separate our people from each other and from our homelands" (Kimmerer 2013: 21).

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For Kimmerer and many Native American people - as well as indigenous peoples on other continents - humans are part and parcel of nature aka "the land" or "country" (in Australian Aboriginal language).







- In the Great Chain of Being, humans had their place in a natural order in between God and Angels above them, animals and plants below them.
- In evolutionary theory, humans have a place in nature through their biological descent from other organisms.

Are humans part of nature or not?

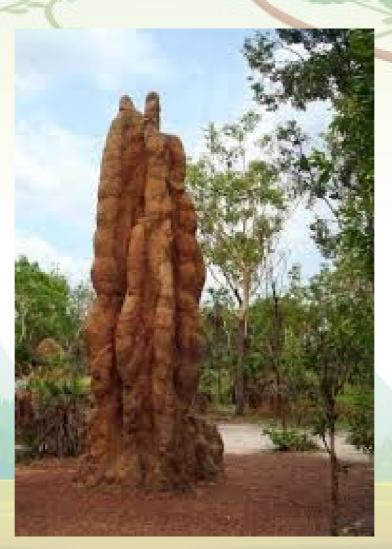
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- In some pagan and Christian narratives about humans and nature, culture, society and civilization helped humans overcome their status as mere animals, to get past savagery, ignorance, deprivation.

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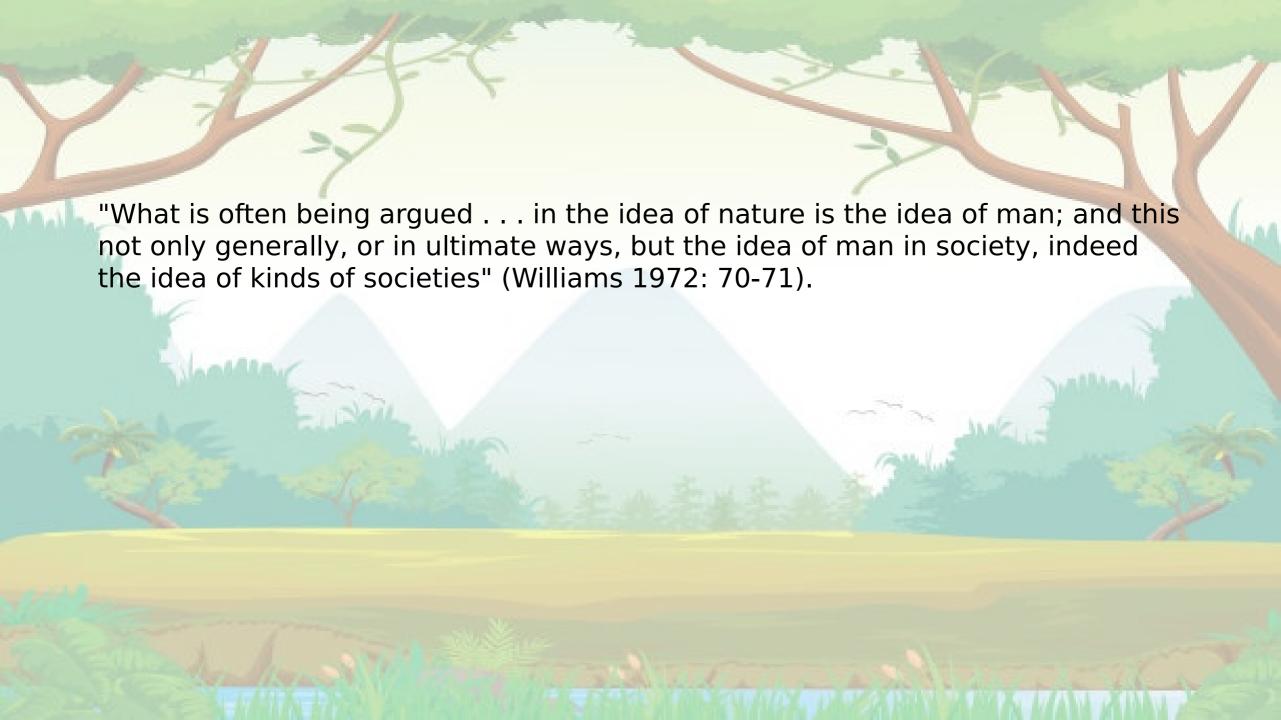
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- Why does a human intervention into nature make that nature less valuable or less natural, when that's not true of other species?







"I would define nature as basically anything that is 'outside,' anything that exists in our world is part of nature even if it doesn't look like it (e.g. skyscrapers). I don't really differentiate between nature and the environment; I think they might have different meanings in the mind of society but that is just a matter of how each of these words has been used over time" (Jovana Mahho).





- Nature is peaceful and good for you (hiking, climbing, swimming, birdwatching) vs.
 - Nature is dangerous (fires, floods, earthquakes, droughts, viruses, predators)

Ideas about Nature and their Contradictions

Nature is peaceful and good for you (hiking, climbing, swimming, birdwatching)
 vs.

Nature is dangerous (fires, floods, earthquakes, droughts, viruses, predators)

Nature resembles an elderly mom ("Mother Nature") or a terminally ill patient that needs to be taken care of vs.

Nature can destroy us (see above)

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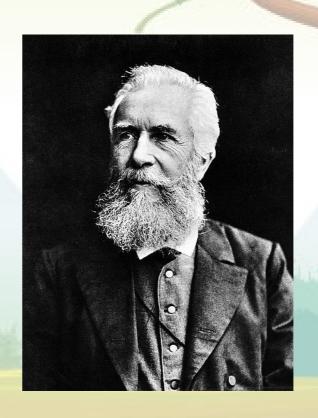
Nature is balanced and harmonious vs.

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Nature is most valuable in its wild state vs.

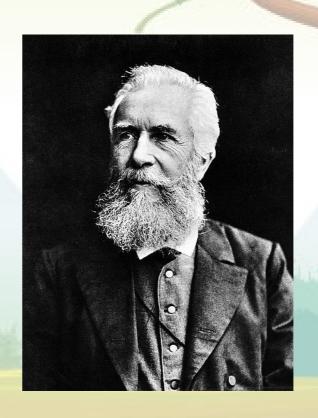
Nature worthless unless improved by humans vs nature

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- The word originates from the Greek root oikos, "at home," and *ology, "the study of something."
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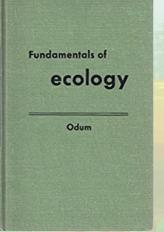
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- Ecology is technically speaking the scientific study of organisms in their habitats, in partial overlap with biology.
- Ecologists study how organisms are distributed in space and time, why they are distributed that way, and what the consequences of their distribution and abundance are. They study how species collaborate and compete with each other, and how organisms and species interact with the abiotic components of their habitat (air, water, soil, weather).
- Ecology is one of the life sciences and uses the usual methods of the sciences: empirical data collection, hypothesis building, hypothesis testing, analysis, quantification . . .

- With the rise of the environmental movement In the 1960s and 70s, ecology started to be conceived of as a different kind of science: holistic and synthetic rather than analytical.
- That wasn't really true in the 1960s and certainly isn't now. But some ecological scientists emphasized a holistic approach – for example, Eugene and Howard Odum, authors of the classic Fundamentals of Ecology (1953).
- In the 1960s, it became common to talk about ecology as a kind of philosophy and about an "ecological worldview" (aka environmentalist worldview) as much as a science like other sciences. So "ecology" came to mean "environmentalism" for some people and in some contexts (not a science but a way of approaching and interacting with the world), while in other contexts it meant/means one of the sciences.







Example: The "Deep Ecology" Movement (1980-90s)

- Rejection of mainstream environmentalism (Sierra Club, Nature Conservancy)
- Radical part of the environmental movement in the 1980s-90s that adopted a biocentric/ecocentric philosophy: that is, nature has value in and of itself and needs to be preserved for its own sake, not just because of its uses for humans.
- Idea that humans are not more valuable or important than any other species. Christopher Manes: "in the observation of nature there exists not one scrap of evidence that humans are superior to or even more interesting than, say, lichen" (1996: 22-23).
- Really: deep environmentalism rather than deep ecology



Environmentalism: one of the "new social movements" that arose in the middle of the 20th century, especially the 1960s (along with the Civil Rights movement, feminism, and anti-colonialism, among others). Environmentalists think that humans are degrading – sometimes destroying the natural environment – and aim to halt/reverse that degradation.

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- Predecessor movements since Romanticism (1800s): with industrialization, first realization that humans threaten nature rather than the other way around.

Ecosystem

- Coined by the British ecologist Arthur Tansley in 1935
- Definition: A community of living organisms (plants, animals, and microbes) in conjunction with the nonliving components of their environment (air, water, and soil), interacting as a system.
- Biotic and abiotic components are linked together through nutrient cycles and energy flows.







Environment

- Very broad term that can include natural and built environments, or refer to nonmaterial qualities ("hostile work environment")
- Connection to nature conservation since the 1960s
- Using "environment" frees us from some of the difficulties with the concept of "nature."
- The breadth of "environment" is a strength: it brings together people fighting for nature conservation, better forms of agriculture, improvements in working conditions, better health, better food, and social justice.
- The breadth of "environment" is a weakness: It means so many different things to different people that their goals are sometimes at cross-purpose more urban parks or more low-income housing? Solar panels or tortoise habitat in the Mojave desert? More wildlife refuges or more farmland for poor people? Less pollution or more jobs?