

“To the Thousandth Generation”: Timelessness and the Pastoral Nexus between Green Politics and Republicanism

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NOTE: This paper draws in part on earlier conference papers, but is also the beginning of a book-length project on the theoretical and historical relationship between environmentalism and civic republicanism. The paper in many ways summarizes key sections and thinkers dealt with in the book. Comments and suggestions are most welcome!

In recent decades, political theory has seen renewed interest in civic republicanism. Civic republicans have touted their perspective as an alternative to liberalism, which, they say, fails to promote meaningful self-governance, civic engagement, and/or a strong sense of community.¹ To a significant degree, liberalism has absorbed the civic republican critique – and the associated communitarian critique – by taking more account of republican concerns like the cultivation of civic virtue.² However, the civic republican revival is partly a recovery project. It tries to restore to mainstream political discourse a public philosophy and conception of the good long eclipsed in the United States by liberalism (whether utilitarian or right-based). In the U.S., civic republicanism was most prominent during the Revolutionary and Founding eras and in social institutions like the New England town meeting, archetypes like the yeoman farmer, the pioneer, and the self-employed artisan, and the rhetoric and writings of statesmen like John Adams, George Mason, Benjamin Rush, and Thomas Jefferson. During the nineteenth century, republicanism gave way to a liberal society focused on individual rights, economic growth, consumption, large-scale business enterprises, and a national regulatory state.³ Republicanism flickered on in the early labor movement, the Progressive Era, and the civil rights movement, as well as community organizing movements since the 1960s.⁴ However, there is one important, continuing chapter in the story of republicanism that political theorists have only just begun to consider. This is the role of the environmental movement in updating and articulating republican concerns and values.⁵

In the U.S., at least, environmentalism has appropriated much of the language and ideals of republicanism. First of all, both republicanism and environmentalism are oriented to the pursuit of the common good and even self-sacrifice rather than simply individual rights or interests. Both perspectives tend to valorize simplicity over luxury and consumption, and to

emphasize qualitative conceptions of well-being as opposed to relying on economic growth. Moreover, both republicans and environmentalists have tended to advance a highly participatory, communitarian politics, wherein an engaged citizenry is seen as a prerequisite to promoting the common good.⁶ Both republicanism and environmentalism aim at stability in the face of corruption. Environmental degradation can be seen as a kind of corruption of the biosphere and of society that results from the same vices highlighted by republicans: self-interest, material greed, and the pursuit of luxury. The notion of ecological 'sustainability' reflects an environmentalist concern with the stability both of natural processes and of a human society embedded in and dependent on nature. However, environmentalism has transplanted republican principles into a new ideological context, involving what is in many ways a radically different approach to the relationship between humanity and nature.

This paper offers an investigation into one theoretical nexus between the republican and environmental, or 'green,' traditions: the commonalities between republican and green conceptions of *time*. Republicanism traditionally sought a utopia or good society that transcends history. For republicans, history and change threatened corruption. Republicanism found its suspension of history in the virtuous polity, which for a time would defy the corrupting influences of fortune and, relatedly, of nature. Similarly, environmentalism has sought to arrest change, though not by battling nature but in fact by pursuing a more harmonious relationship with the natural world and embracing nature's supposed timeless stability. Historically, the transition between republican and green approaches to time and corruption lay in the transmutation of American pastoral republicanism into environmentalism in the nineteenth century. The attempt to deny time and history has proven problematic for both republicanism and environmentalism. However, as environmental historian Donald Worster warns, the solution is not a relatively unquestioning embrace of change. One must develop a normative, critical

standpoint on change that does not lapse into anti-historicism. Despite their common flaws, the republican and green traditions may be of use in developing this standpoint.

The Civic Republican Tradition

Civic republicanism has roots in Aristotle and also found intellectual and political expression in Renaissance Florence – particularly in the writings of Niccolò Machiavelli – in seventeenth and eighteenth century England, and in Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s writings, especially *The Social Contract*.⁷ Civic republicanism offers a conception of human flourishing and the good life that emphasizes citizens’ active participation in deliberating on, crafting, and pursuing the common good of their community. Republicanism also emphasizes independent thought and civic virtue on the part of individual citizens, who are to come together to collectively govern themselves and devise and pursue the common good. In J.G.A. Pocock’s words, “the highest form of active life was that of the citizen ... joining with others to direct the actions of all in the pursuit of the good of all.”⁸ Civic activity is the way to human excellence: “the development of the individual towards self-fulfillment is possible only when the individual acts as a citizen, that is as a conscious and autonomous participant in an autonomous decision-taking political community, the polis or republic.”⁹ This idea goes back to Aristotle’s notion of the polis “as a certain sort of partnership,”¹⁰ which “exists for the sake of living well,”¹¹ i.e. with an eye toward human excellence and virtue.

Republicanism aims, through social and political practices, to instill in individuals the virtues conducive to civic engagement, defense of the polity against external foes, and pursuit of the common good through deliberation. Among these character traits and virtues are the ability to think independently when deliberating with others. Though acting in the service of the public

good, an independent citizen is self-determining, or autonomous, and self-motivated in pursuing that good; one knows their own good as the social good and finds satisfaction in seeking it.¹² Pocock says, “The republic could persist only if all its citizens were so far autonomous that they could be equally and immediately participant in the pursuit of the universal good.”¹³ The republican tradition has thus celebrated those having an independent economic base, such as the small, individual land-owner, or freeholder, and the self-employed artisan owning his own means of production: “‘Independence’ in pursuing one’s economic calling and ‘independence’ as a citizen were entwined.”¹⁴ Dependence of some citizens upon others, particularly upon individuals with disproportionate economic or political power, means that citizens seek not the common good, but the particular good of those on whom they depend. In line with this view, republicans have opposed heavy concentrations of corporate or political power.¹⁵ Following Machiavelli, republicans have also traditionally emphasized martial virtues such as courage;¹⁶ the citizen-soldier shows supreme dedication and self-sacrifice in serving the republic.¹⁷

Republican independence and self-government do not mean individualism – citizens must also have a strong sense of civic identity and see in deliberation a common enterprise to further shared ends. Republicanism privileges the pursuit of the common good over the pursuit or protection of private interests or individual rights. “[R]epublican political theory,” says Michael Sandel, “teaches that to be free is to share in governing a political community that controls its own fate. Self-government ... requires ... citizens who sufficiently identify with their communities to think and act with a view to the common good.”¹⁸ In enabling one to think with a view toward the common good, independence becomes more a social obligation than a fence against society.¹⁹

When the citizens of a republican polity became dependent on others rather than independent and self-governing, society falls into *corruption*. Corruption also occurs when individuals, particularly powerful ones, put their own private interest ahead of the common good.²⁰ Society is especially vulnerable to corruption during periods of rapid economic growth and expansion of the private realm. Certain kinds of economic development foster the creation of large governmental or corporate bureaucracies or power structures upon which individuals may become dependent;²¹ moreover, the emphasis on material consumption that accompanies economic growth entails citizens' greater subservience to market forces. Also, such a society "offer[s] an increasing number of opportunities to the individual to prefer private goods to the *res publica*,"²²

Republicans thus see a societal emphasis on economic growth, material consumption, and the pursuit of luxury as fostering corruption and as damaging to human virtue and flourishing.²³ Sandel remarks, "Consumption, when it figured at all in republican political economy, was a thing to be moderated, disciplined, or restrained for the sake of higher ends."²⁴ Luxury, Wood notes, has historically been seen by republicans as "a cause and a symptom of social sickness."²⁵ Skeptical of capitalist values, republicans evaluate economic activities, like work and consumption, more by their impact on the cultivation of citizens' civic characters and virtues than on their impact on economic growth or prosperity.²⁶

During the Revolutionary era, fears of corruption created significant anxiety among the American colonists. They feared that Britain was descending into corruption, marked by an overbearing, despotic government, a standing army, and the rise of a self-interested and powerful moneyed class. Revolution was seen as necessary if the colonies were to escape a similar fate.²⁷

Republican Views of Nature and Time

Like liberalism, republicanism presumes a mastery of nature. Under liberalism, nature must be mastered in order to provide the material resources for individual choice in the pursuit of the good or to promote aggregate social utility. In republican thought, nature must be mastered because of the problem of corruption and *time*.

Ideological and other moral systems often try to enshrine their values by imagining a stable standpoint outside the flux of human affairs and history.²⁸ Christian thought has thus tended to see grace and salvation as existing in a sacred dimension entirely outside of earthly history. Environmentalism has often posited the natural world as an external repository of values. The repository for republican values has traditionally been human society itself, but a society of a special kind. Classical republicans envisioned a kind of earthly political salvation through a virtuous republic embodying universal human values but in a particular time and place.²⁹ This presented a problem. As a particular entity that “existed in time, not eternity,” the republican polity “was therefore transitory and doomed to impermanence.”³⁰

Republicanism faces an especial temporal problem because of its particular conceptions of virtue and corruption. In the republican tradition, says Pocock, “there [is] the presumption that the republic, being a work of men’s hands, must come to an end in time.” And corruption, whether through growing political or economic inequality or through self-serving, privatistic behavior is “an ever-present possibility.” Moreover, republicanism traditionally posited a demanding conception of virtue that is reliant on a number of precarious factors: “If virtue depended on the freely-willed actions of other men, on the maintenance of laws seeking to regulate those actions, and on the continuance of external circumstances which made those laws possible, it in fact depended on a myriad variables.” The republican polity is thus “a structure of particulars seeking to maintain its stability ... in time,” and “the name of the force directing the

variations of particulars was Fortune.” Consequently, “the citizen’s virtue was ... hostage to fortune.”³¹

Republican stability involves regulating and transforming human nature: “By the institutionalization of civic virtue, the republic or polis maintains its own stability in time and develops the human raw material composing it toward that political life which is the end of man.”³² Virtue “impose[s] form ... on the human constituent matter” of the republic,³³ for example by imposing restraint on private appetites.³⁴ This attempt to control human nature must ultimately break down, Pocock argues, as virtuous cooperation among citizens is superseded by the pursuit of self-interest. Again, the more demanding the conception of virtue the greater the threat from eventual corruption.

In the republican tradition, the struggle against fortune and human nature has its corollary in a struggle against nonhuman nature. Corruption, as Pocock says, is “part of the mutability and entropy of sublunary things.”³⁵ Part of the republic’s impermanence in fact arises from its material existence: “The republic attempted to realize a totality of virtue in the relations of its citizens with one another, but did so on a footing that was temporally and spatially limited.”³⁶ In *The Prince*, Machiavelli thus naturalizes fortune by presenting it in terms of physical destructiveness. He likens fortune “to one of those violent rivers which, when they become enraged, flood the plains, ruin the trees and the buildings, lift earth from this part, drop in another ... And although they are like this, it is not as if men, when times are quiet, could not provide for them with dikes and dams so that when they rise later, either they go by a canal or their impetus is neither so wanton nor so damaging.”³⁷

Hannah Arendt, also writing in the republican tradition, presents the corrosive aspects of nature even more directly. Nature is a realm of relentless cycles of birth, growth, and decay.

Consuming all of its creations, nature lacks permanence. Consequently, natural “[l]ife is a process that everywhere uses up durability, wears it down, makes it disappear, until eventually dead matter, the result of small, single, cyclical life processes, returns into the over-all gigantic circle of nature herself, where no beginning and no end exist and where all natural things swing in changeless, deathless repetition.”³⁸ In striving to make for themselves a permanent place on Earth, human beings are consequently locked in a “constant, unending fight against the processes of growth and decay.”³⁹ According to Arendt, we master nature and its cycles through work and action. Through work, we master nature by subduing it for its material – a process Arendt describes as inherently violent⁴⁰ – and fashion durable use-objects which resist natural decay long enough to constitute an enduring, built world, the “human artifice.”⁴¹ ‘Action,’ the term Arendt uses for interactions among persons through words and deeds – particularly in the political sphere – creates a web of meaningful human relationships and gives the physical world of the human artifice a lasting meaning to resist nature’s ravages.⁴² Though Arendt’s natural cycles have a repetitive inevitability that seems at odds with the violent capriciousness of Machiavelli’s *fortuna*, in both cases nature and time corrupt the established order created by human beings. A cyclical notion of corruption also appears in the highly influential sixth book of Polybius’ *Histories*. Polybius saw states as inevitably and repetitively going through a cycle six regimes, a process involving oscillation between virtue and corruption. Pocock notes: “To Polybius the cycle was a *physis*, a natural cycle of birth, growth, and death through which republics were bound to pass.”⁴³

Thus, though it existed in earthly history rather than in the sacred dimension of grace, the republic represented a kind of interruption of history, a temporarily stable island of virtue and of internal balance and harmony.⁴⁴ It existed within a timeline that was otherwise marked by

corruption, degeneration, and chaos. For classical republicans, change was therefore problematic, as it brought corruption.⁴⁵

At this juncture, I should point out that contemporary republicans like Sandel do not try to deny historical change or pursue heavily demanding notions of virtue. Much of Sandel's proposals in *Democracy's Discontent*, for example, focus on reinvigorating contemporary politics and civil society with a variety of venues for civic participation and the cultivation of communitarian bonds.⁴⁶ His arguments do not close off historical development or demand the submersion of individual interests. In fact, as we will see, with Thomas Jefferson's pastoral republicanism there was already a move toward a somewhat less demanding notion of individual identification with the common good. However, pastoral republicanism moved from a demanding notion of individual virtue to a rather demanding and ultimately precarious notion sociology and political economy that attempted to maintain a virtuous agrarian society in the face of historical change.

The Pastoral Ideal

In the U.S., republicanism and its battle against corruption were associated with what has been called, most notably by Leo Marx, the *pastoral* image of the New World.⁴⁷ With a wilderness sparsely peopled by those whom Europeans conveniently relegated to the status of 'savages,' America was seen by its new settlers as a "virgin land,"⁴⁸ marked by "the absence of anything like European society; ... a landscape untouched by history."⁴⁹ For Europeans such an 'untouched' landscape was, in Marx's words, "paradise regained,"⁵⁰ "a site for a new golden age."⁵¹ It was an idyllic garden to which the inhabitants of an over-crowded Europe might escape: "Both the wild and cultivated versions of the garden image embody something of that

timeless impulse to cut loose from the constraints of a complex society.” Marx says, “To depict America as a garden is to express aspirations still considered utopian – aspirations, that is, toward abundance, leisure, freedom, and a greater harmony of existence.”⁵² This pastoral image of a garden, which dates back to Classical times, envisions a cultivated, “middle landscape”⁵³ between civilization and wilderness, or, as Pocock puts it, “between the extremes of wilderness savagery and metropolitan corruption.”⁵⁴ The middle landscape eschews both “the repressions entailed by a complex civilization” and “the violent uncertainties of nature.”⁵⁵

The pastoral ideal does not see wild nature as “sweet and pure,” but “admire[d] improved nature, a landscape that is a made thing, a fusion of work and spontaneous process.”⁵⁶ Early Euro-American settlers saw the wilderness as hostile and violent in its unimproved state, but as also offering the emptiness and abundance that, through settlement, could be the basis for a new beginning. The wild continent was to be conquered and transformed: “The wilderness ... is matter to be shaped into form; [one’s] nature as yeoman, warrior, and citizen is not fulfilled until after [one] has formed it [i.e. the wilderness].”⁵⁷ Marx says, the “farmer is enlisted in a campaign to dominate the environment by every possible means.”⁵⁸ Thus, for Europeans, “America was *both* Eden and a howling desert,” he notes, and “the actual conditions of life in the New World did lend plausibility to both images.”⁵⁹

Significantly, the pastoral landscape is a refuge outside of not only the wilderness but also time and history. Marx describes “the whole conception” as having a “static, anti-historical quality.”⁶⁰ Indeed, the pastoral landscape was to be a haven for republican virtue, removed from the degenerating, corrupting processes of Old World history. Richard Price, a British Unitarian minister, thus spoke of the pastoral landscape and life in terms which vividly evoked republicanism:

The happiest state of man is the middle state between the *savage* and the *refined*, or between the wild and the luxurious state[,] ... where the inhabitants consist ... of an independent and hardy Yeomanry, all nearly on a level – trained to arms ... clothed in homespun – of simple manners – strangers to luxury – drawing plenty from the ground ... the rich and the poor, the haughty grandee and the creeping sycophant, equally unknown.⁶¹

Thomas Jefferson's Pastoralism

Jefferson was one of the best-known and influential American articulators of this pastoral republicanism. Of Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Marx says, "Nowhere in our [i.e. American] literature is there a more appealing, vivid, or thorough statement of the case for the pastoral ideal."⁶²

Like Price, Jefferson extolled the small, independent yeoman farmer.⁶³ Reliant on "their own soil and industry," "cultivators of the earth are the most virtuous and independent citizens," Jefferson said.⁶⁴ Jefferson's pastoral celebration of the yeoman farmer was captured in one of the most famous passages from *Notes*:

Those who labor in the earth are the chosen people of God, if ever he had a chosen people, whose breasts he has made his peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtue ... Corruption of morals in the mass of cultivators is a phaenomenon of which no age nor nation has furnished an example.⁶⁵

Jefferson's yeoman was involved in commerce – he sold his surplus for manufactured goods imported from Europe.⁶⁶ However, he was also self-employed, living off the land, and practicing a life of simplicity. The yeoman was dependent on nature; he had a 'real' economic base in land rather than in 'imaginary' forms of property like credit and coin, which are dependent for their value on the market, on creditors, and on public authorities.⁶⁷ He therefore had the independence of character necessary for democratic citizenship. Moreover, agrarian life was also closer to nature's healthy influence. Charles Miller thusly characterizes Jefferson's view of agriculture:

“Agriculture ... is the way of life most in accord with nature. The farmer has at least as much natural sense as those who have been formally educated. He is surrounded by scenes of natural beauty.”⁶⁸ In Jefferson’s view, the life of the yeoman farmer also involved other virtues: industry, frugality and moderation, patience, resourcefulness, a love of order, patriotism, and a sense of equality. The yeoman also had the regular periods of leisure in which to be politically active, and the material security to be generous and civic-minded.⁶⁹

In contrast to this ideal, corruption

is the mark set on those, who not looking up to heaven, to their own soil and industry, as does the husbandman, for their subsistence, depend for it on the casualties and caprice of customers. Dependence begets subservience and venality, suffocates the germ of virtue, and prepares fit tools for the designs of ambition ... [G]enerally speaking, the proportion which the aggregate of other classes of citizens bears in any state to that of its husbandmen, is the proportion of its unsound to its healthy parts, and is a good-enough barometer whereby to measure its degree of corruption.

In opposing dependence and corruption, Jefferson argued against an economy oriented around manufacturing, wage labor, and commerce:

While we have land to labour then, let us never wish to see our citizens occupied at a work-bench, or twirling a distaff. Carpenters, masons, smiths, are wanting in husbandry: but, for the general operations of manufacture, let our workshops remain in Europe.

The urbanization associated with industry was also to be eschewed: “The mobs of great cities add just so much to the support of pure government, as sores do to the strength of the human body.”⁷⁰

Urban life involved economic dependence on employers or customers, laziness, inequality, the pursuit of luxury, and attachment to commerce rather than country; moreover, life in crowded cities was physically unhealthy.⁷¹ Jefferson advocated shipping raw materials to Europe for manufacture overseas so that the U.S. might remain agricultural. The benefits to

political society would, he argued, be worth the economic cost: “The loss by the transportation of commodities across the Atlantic will be made up in happiness and permanence of government.”⁷²

In some ways, Jefferson represented a break with the republican tradition. He partly drew on John Locke’s liberal individualism and allowed much more scope for individual rights, self-interest, private life, and commercial activity than did classical republicans. He did not endorse the austere, demanding individual virtue advanced by earlier republicans or even by some contemporaries like Benjamin Rush. It should be added, though, that his republican vision was predicated on what ultimately proved to be a rather demanding and precarious political economy and set of social circumstances. Unlike classical republicans, Jefferson was less concerned about looking to earlier, virtuous governmental forms and practices and avoiding change than he was with looking ahead to national territorial expansion, prosperity, and scientific and technological progress. However, such developments would prove fatal to his pastoral vision.

In contrast to the more pessimistic aspects of the republican tradition, Jefferson also had an optimistic view of universal human nature.⁷³ As Miller says, “By nature, according to Jefferson, humans are social beings, naturally disposed to harmony”; furthermore, people have an innate moral sense.⁷⁴ The realization of human virtue depended on social, political, and economic factors, including education, political participation, and work.⁷⁵ Moreover, Jefferson believed that the particular natural terrain shaped the individuals who arise in it. He saw America’s own natural environment as profoundly and beneficently molding the character of the citizens, especially by cultivating their independence.⁷⁶ For Jefferson, “the frontier, or nature, represented the absence of dominating social institutions such as feudalism and the church and therefore promoted individual freedom.”⁷⁷

Despite his optimism about human nature, Jefferson feared corruption arising if the social and political environment went awry. Corruption could arise from the growth of cities and factory wage labor. It could also arise from developments related to these, including citizens' abandonment of political participation in favor of an overwhelming focus on private life and the pursuit of wealth, excessive centralization of governmental power, and the spread of political patronage and the pursuit of self interest by public officials.⁷⁸

Yet a favorable environment could stave off corruption almost indefinitely.⁷⁹ As noted earlier, for Jefferson and other American republicans, the pastoral landscape provided an escape from the degenerative processes of history. The nation's seemingly boundless land and unspoiled terrain, free of the ravages of urbanization and industrialization, would allow virtually all to farm, with land to spare, and enable a pastoral civilization of virtuous agrarian freeholders to flourish. Says Pocock, "An infinite supply of land, ready for occupation by an armed and self-directing yeomanry, meant an infinite supply of virtue."⁸⁰ In his First Inaugural Address, on March 4, 1801, Jefferson described Americans as "possessing a chosen country, with room enough for our descendants to the hundredth and thousandth generation."⁸¹ The problem of time and its degenerative aspects could be addressed through territorial expansion, which allowed the maintenance of an agrarian society.⁸²

Jefferson's Views on Nature

Jefferson closely associated America with nature. According to Miller, Jefferson believed that "against Europe's monuments of history and civilization, America put forward raw, and often grand, nature. Nature in the New World was a special truth that Americans intended to convert into a special virtue."⁸³ Jefferson was also drawn to nature in its particularity: he was

enamored of his native county, Albemarle, and of his rural estate of Monticello.⁸⁴ Moreover, he appreciated beauty and sublimity in nature. He was especially enthusiastic about the Natural Bridge, a natural rock formation in Virginia's Rockbridge County: "The Natural bridge [is] the most sublime of nature's works ... It is impossible for the emotions arising from the sublime, to be felt beyond what they are here; so beautiful an arch, so elevated, so light: and springing as it were up to heaven, the rapture of the spectator is really indescribable!"⁸⁵ He worked to preserve the Bridge as a public trust. His celebrations of wild American nature took on nationalistic pride. In *Notes*, he devoted considerable pages, replete with tables, to refuting the claims of French naturalist the Comte de Buffon that the natural products of the New World, and particularly the wildlife, are inferior to those of the Old World in terms of stature or diversity.⁸⁶

Yet Jefferson's love for the American wilderness did not entail an attitude of ecological preservation, aside from protection of a few especially spectacular places like the Natural Bridge. Jefferson, Marx observes, began *Notes* with a long description of the "rich, rugged, but largely undeveloped, terrain of Virginia," which "helps to make credible, as no abstract argument could, Jefferson's feeling for the singular plasticity of the American situation."⁸⁷ Jefferson and other republicans celebrated rural living not so much for its wild or natural beauty as for its promotion of virtue,⁸⁸ and the pursuit of virtue entailed that America's wild terrain, however sublime, would be reshaped into an agrarian landscape of yeomen.

Jefferson's approach to nature therefore ultimately entailed mastery over it. Through mastery, a garden could be created, virtue secured and corruption staved off: "[W]e have an immensity of land courting the industry of the husbandman. [It is] best then that all our citizens should be employed in its cultivation."⁸⁹ Jefferson's farmer was attached to nature, but not an uncultivated landscape. Biophysical nature was to be mastered and cultivated so that humanity's

inner nature could be realized; natural influences were salutary, but these influences were ultimately to come via a domesticated countryside.

Access to America's nature would regenerate virtue not only if wild land were cleared and settled, *but also if the frontiersman settled down*. Pocock notes, "The intention of the frontiersman is ideally to become a yeoman."⁹⁰ Jean Yarbrough similarly emphasizes, "The independent yeoman of the *Notes* is not the isolated frontiersman seeking to escape from moral and social responsibilities but a Virginia husbandman bound to neighbors and friends for mutual assistance and cooperation."⁹¹

Indeed, there was in Jefferson, and in pastoral republicanism in general, the fear that wild nature itself might promote its own kind of moral degeneration, a mirror image of metropolitan corruption. The frontiersman might descend into savagery, and become "an ignoble savage, squalidly degenerate rather than barbarously natural."⁹² Maurizio Valsania argues that Jefferson regarded struggle with, and conquest of, nature as central to white Americans' identity.⁹³ Valsania captures not only Jefferson's racism, but how the very sublime nature exemplified by the Natural Bridge was also for Jefferson a dangerous source of disorder; in fact, Jefferson may have appreciated places like the Bridge for this very reason. Jefferson, says Valsania, saw wild nature as a necessary contrast to the civilized white man. One needed "the constant presence of the wildness in the very backdrop of American experience."⁹⁴ The wilderness needed to be there, but as a threat to unite white Americans and goad them further along the route of civilization. Valsania says: "To be human white Americans have to continue with the never-ending struggle against the chaos; they have to gather their own forces to secure a common safety, to define themselves against wildness and chaos. Moreover, since this republic is an island amidst wilderness, wilderness is functional to the American republic. It is the strongest cohesive element."⁹⁵ In a 1787 letter to Madame de Tessé, Jefferson wrote: "I am filled with

alarms for the event of the irruption daily making on us, by the Goths, the Visigoths, Ostrogoths, and Vandals, lest they should re-conquer us to our original barbarism.”⁹⁶ As a negative contrast, wildness was to remind us of the need to cultivate our own innate goodness and our virtue, and of the fragility of this endeavor in the face of natural chaos.

Jefferson’s pastoralism thus did not rule out technological progress. Yet, rather than build a corrupt, over-urbanized society, America and its rural simplicity would purify or redeem technology. Reflecting a more general characteristic of the American pastoral ideal, Jefferson believed that in the U.S., technology could serve an agrarian society rather than transform it. “Assuming that knowledge is inescapably power for good,” Marx says of Jefferson, “he [could] not imagine that a genuine advance in science or the arts, such as the new steam engine, could entail consequences as deplorable as factory cities.” “Once the machine is removed from the dark, crowded, grimy cities of Europe, [Jefferson] assumes that it will blend harmoniously into the open countryside of his native land. He envisages it turning millwheels, moving ships up rivers, and all in all, helping to transform a wilderness into a society of the middle landscape.”⁹⁷ Miller notes that as a farmer, Jefferson was “constant[ly] experimenting with new crops, new breeds of animals, new methods, and new equipment.”⁹⁸

American pastoralism ultimately attempted to embrace industrialization itself, and see it as part of the settlement and mastery of the continent and the creation of a new civilization.⁹⁹ Significantly, it was believed that the availability of land through westward expansion could allow an agrarian society to absorb the pursuit of commerce and industry without urbanization.¹⁰⁰ Jefferson himself, beginning in the 1790s, switched from opposition to domestic manufacturing to embracing it as a source of American independence from Europe.¹⁰¹ By 1805, he was saying that American “manufacturers are as much at their ease, as independent and moral as our

agricultural inhabitants, and they will continue so as long as there are vacant lands for them to resort to.”¹⁰²

The last caveat, though, is important: “as long as there are vacant lands.” The maintenance of a virtuous republic depended on holding at bay two opposite forces, equally dangerous: degenerate, wild savagery and metropolitan corruption. A constant supply of land to civilize enabled the ongoing contrast with, and conquest of, wilderness, and provided a social safety valve to prevent the rise of an over-urbanized, corrupt replica of Europe.

A theme of classical republicanism and its struggle against time was the need to achieve a harmonious balance and stability among society’s diverse parts – traditionally, the monarchical, aristocratic, and democratic elements.¹⁰³ Jefferson, however, suggested two pastoral balances. The first was between manufacturing and technology on the one hand and agriculture on the other. Manufacturing and technology would provide innovation and maintain America’s national independence, while agriculture would provide a constant source of virtue and individual independence. A second balance would be between a settled yeomanry and the chaotic wildness of the frontier and beyond, with the latter providing a negative goad to maintain civilized virtue. In essence, pastoral republicanism would navigate between degenerative time or fortune on two sides: urbanizing civilization and human history on the one hand and chaotic, destructive, wild nature on the other.

As Miller argues, Jefferson would have had trouble understanding the environmentalism, or even resource conservationism. Jefferson’s vision of virtually unlimited resources in America, his enthusiastic embrace of technological progress, albeit in a pastoral setting, and, more fundamentally, his belief that the wilderness was meant for human mastery, settlement, and use all put his perspective profoundly at odds with environmentalism and conservationism.¹⁰⁴

Yet it must be acknowledged that Jefferson's love of rural life, along with his attraction to beauty and sublimity in nature, his interests in good agricultural practice and natural history, his love for small, independent farmers, his opposition to excessive consumption and to urbanization and commercialism, and his desire to protect certain spots of exquisite natural beauty all anticipated environmentalism.¹⁰⁵

The Failure of Pastoral Republicanism

Despite Jefferson's frequent optimism about human nature and the United States, there is also, according to Marx, an element of fatalism or pessimism in his thought. In *Notes*, Jefferson recognized an American love for the commerce which turns citizens away from agrarian life and its virtuous simplicity: "I repeat it again, cultivators of the earth are the most virtuous and independent citizens ... But the actual habits of our countrymen attach them to commerce."¹⁰⁶ Marx believes that Jefferson "recogniz[ed] that the ideal society of the middle landscape was unattainable, [but] kept it in view as a kind of model, a guide to long-range policies."¹⁰⁷

In fact, agrarian America was indeed finite; the hope for a pastoral republican virtue gave way to the claims of time. Says Pocock, "The quest for agrarian virtue was the quest for a static utopia." Yet, "the end of utopia must be reached ... When that point is reached, the process of corruption must be resumed; men will become dependent upon each other in a market economy and dependent on government in great cities ... Even in America, the republic faces the problem of its ultimate finitude, and that of its virtue, in space and time ... There is thus a dimension of historical pessimism in American thought at its most utopian."¹⁰⁸

Industrialization, urbanization, commerce and consumerism, and the rapidity with which the U.S. was settled all proved fatal to pastoral republicanism in the nineteenth century. In fact,

pastoral republicanism was self-defeating, for the very settlement of America meant the end of the reservoir of land that could support a virtuous yeomanry and prevent industrialization and commerce from dominating American society. Ironically, the transition from a sparsely populated wilderness to an industrial and military superpower meant that time moved more rapidly in North America than perhaps anywhere else. A society of fully self-governing, independent farmers, together crafting their own vision of the common good, was predicated on an indefinite, ongoing westward expansion which would free up land for settlement and stave off urbanization and the dominance of commercialism and industrialization. Yet, rather than supplying land for the hundreds, even thousands of years that Jefferson envisioned in his more optimistic moments, the frontier was closed in a little over a century after independence.

Though the pastoral ideal became ever more unrealistic, it persisted in some quarters as what Marx describes as a naïve “sentimental pastoralism” involving a hollow allegiance to idealized rural images – as embodied most notably in the suburbs – without recognition of the difficult choices presented by industrialization and technological progress.¹⁰⁹ However, other Americans – perhaps appreciating the self-defeating, unsustainable character of the pastoral ideal – moved away from their celebration of a settled agrarian life and embraced the very American wilderness that was rapidly being cleared for all those farms. In this transition is the reworking of republican ideals into an environmentalist perspective. The transition took place through an intermediate step, the celebration of the pioneer.

From Garden to Frontier to Wilderness

Though the frontiersman originally intended to become a yeoman farmer, the wild frontier itself, rather than the settled, pastoral landscape, was increasingly celebrated in the nineteenth century. A number of figures, including Washington Irving, James Fenimore Cooper,

Theodore Roosevelt, and Frederick Jackson Turner, saw the American frontier as a crucible of national character.¹¹⁰ The challenges of frontier life were seen as encouraging hardiness, simplicity, martial virtue, personal efficacy, and independence, traits regarded as conducive to democratic self-governance; this view, it should be noted, was often espoused in gendered terms. Irving remarked that “we send our youth abroad to grow luxurious and effeminate in Europe; it appears to me, that a previous tour on the prairies would be more likely to produce that manliness, simplicity, and self-dependence most in unison with our political institutions.”¹¹¹ Roosevelt spoke of Americans’ “hardihood and manly courage” and warned against the emulation of Europe, which leads one to become “over-civilized, over-sensitive, and over-refined.”¹¹² Jefferson had seen the struggle with wild nature as formative of the American character, but in a radical shift from pastoral republicanism, frontier life began to seem even preferable to the life of the yeoman.

Whether or not the yeoman had ever really approximated Jefferson’s ideal, the farmer himself had changed. Yarbrough observes that Jefferson “did not see ... that farmers too might get caught up in the scramble for wealth, indulging in land speculation and deserting their farms for the promise of greater riches in the city. Nor did he anticipate how his faith in progress and scientific technology would transform agriculture by making it difficult for family farms to compete successfully with ever larger and more mechanized enterprises.”¹¹³ Thus, in Cooper’s view, as Miller tells us, “the ploughmen ... become corrupt. Rather it is preagriculturalists like [Cooper’s pioneer character] Natty Bumppo who know and value nature” and “live by [its] purer precepts.” Furthermore, Cooper “is worried that the settlers, from commercial greed or lack of culture, will despoil what nature has provided. [Cooper] saw as much corruption in the countryside as Jefferson had found in the cities.”¹¹⁴ In spite of the “yeoman myth, American

agriculture came to be characterized in the late nineteenth century precisely by what Jefferson feared most. Farmers aimed not at independence but at securing wealth by bringing their produce to market.”¹¹⁵ The American love of commerce, which Jefferson had acknowledged, had festered into corrupt consumerism.

As Roderick Nash and William Cronon each recount (though from rather different perspectives), nineteenth century Americans began to look beyond even the frontier to embrace the wilderness itself, and not just as a canvas for a new civilization.¹¹⁶ Influenced by Romanticism and its esteem of wild nature, Americans increasingly celebrated the beauty and sublimity of the wilderness,¹¹⁷ a view we already saw emergent in Jefferson. Cronon thus argues that the concepts of the frontier and the sublime came together to create wilderness ideology in the United States.¹¹⁸ Nationalist pride in the American wilderness also became increasingly prominent. Such pride, which hearkened back to republican sentiments about America as a refuge from European corruption, saw the American wilderness as representing innocence and godly antiquity in contrast to a European civilization of moldering ruins built on oppression, feudalism, and other aspects of corruption and despotism.¹¹⁹ Valuation of the wilderness, argues Nash, increased as Americans began to perceive its impending loss.

Lament for the passing wilderness was coupled with criticism of civilization. As if in realization of republican fears that European corruption could take root in the New World, defenders of wilderness saw American civilization as greedy, wasteful, and destructive, as well as cramped, oppressive, and over-urbanized.¹²⁰ In other words, republican values and a republican critique of society were repackaged into a new perspective that sought reconciliation with, rather than mastery over, nature. Wild nature now became the repository of social values. The virtuous garden had become the wilderness, or vice versa. Cronon notes, “Wilderness had

once been the antithesis of all that was orderly and good – it had been the darkness, one might say, on the far side of the garden wall – and yet now it was frequently likened to Eden itself.”¹²¹

Recall that pastoral republicanism had attempted to escape the ravages of time, whether in the form of corrupt civilization or chaotic wildness. Pastoral republicans sought a normative standpoint outside of turbulent human history or savage nature. The conception of nature and wilderness that emerged over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries reaffirmed this anti-historicism, but in a way that privileged wild nature. The wilderness ideal, says Cronon, “represents a flight from history.” He elaborates:

Seen as the original garden, [wilderness] is a place outside of time, from which human beings had to be ejected before the fallen world of history could properly begin. Seen as the frontier, it is a savage world at the dawn of civilization, whose transformation represents the very beginning of the national historical epic. Seen as the bold landscape of frontier heroism, it is the place of youth and childhood, into which men escape by abandoning their pasts and entering a world of freedom where the constraints of civilization fade into memory. Seen as the sacred sublime, it is the home of a God who transcends history by standing as the One who remains untouched and unchanged by time’s arrow.¹²²

It should be noted that one of the corollaries of this ahistorical wilderness ideal was – and is – to erase or minimize the pre-Columbian history of the American wilderness, the millennia of American Indian action and influence on the landscape, as well as the continued activity of indigenous peoples in places like the Amazon.¹²³ The implication, remarks Richard White, is that history did not come to the wilderness until “the mythical first white man whose arrival marks not just specific changes but the beginning of change itself.”¹²⁴

Thoreau and Timeless Nature

The idea of a timeless wild nature is found in the writing of Henry David Thoreau. In *Walden*,¹²⁵ Thoreau contrasted a pure, timeless wilderness to the headlong, accelerating, and destructive rush of an industrializing, commercial society. Echoing republican concerns,

Thoreau argued that far from being free, Americans had become shackled to an accumulative, materialistic economy that allowed no time for moral and spiritual cultivation.¹²⁶ In terms of work, the American citizen was reduced to an instrument of production in a technologically advanced but inequalitarian society in which all labored to enjoy the fruits of progress, but a few prospered at the expense of the rest,¹²⁷ and hierarchical workplaces and onerous labor stifled individual autonomy.¹²⁸ Thoreau leveled his criticisms not only at the industrial sector; he indicted commercial agriculture as well: the farming life of his neighbors, burdened by the need to manage land, houses, livestock, and tools, was also oppressive toil.¹²⁹ Regarding consumption, Thoreau criticized Americans' focus on material accumulation. He maintained that such consumerism led to dependence on the favor of others,¹³⁰ burdensome competition to maintain parity with neighbors' possessions, and the corrupting imposition of materialistic cares and luxuries that distract from moral development.¹³¹ Thoreau lamented:

Most men ... are so occupied with the factitious cares and superfluously coarse labors of life that its inner fruits cannot be plucked by them ... [T]he laboring man has not leisure for a true integrity day by day; ... He has no time to be any thing but a machine.¹³²

The nation itself, with all its so called internal improvements, which, by the way, are all external and superficial, is ... cluttered with furniture and tripped up by its own traps, ruined by luxury and heedless expense, by want of calculation and a worthy aim.¹³³

Walden offered a program of material simplicity and self-culture by which Americans might transcend their pointless, oppressive, materialistic life, recover individual virtue and autonomy, and restore their fitness for democratic citizenship.¹³⁴ Thoreau's attempt to recover our connection with nonhuman nature was central to this program. At Walden, Thoreau sought to enact an alternative life of virtuous simplicity. By temporarily withdrawing from civilization, he believed, one could regard one's own life and society from a healthful distance, re-evaluate

conventions and prejudices taken for truths, and break off encrusted norms that impede self-culture. For him, wild nature offered freedom, solitude, and life reduced to its essentials.

Yet for Thoreau, a relatively wild or undeveloped place like Walden Pond was more than just an escape from society. First, like those who celebrated the frontier, he saw wilderness as a source of individual and collective vigor, inspiration, and strength with which society must maintain contact in order to remain vital. In this “primitive new country,” he advised, one “should come home from far, from adventures, and perils, and discoveries every day, with new experience and character.”¹³⁵

However, Thoreau went beyond the frontier ideology of his day. Connected with his belief in nature’s restorative qualities was a view of nature as a sustaining community which we had wrongfully abandoned. In wild nature, we “begin to find ourselves, and realize where we are and the infinite extent of our relations.”¹³⁶

Nature was an interdependent community to which human beings ought to re-accommodate themselves. Thoreau remarked on nature’s beneficence for its creatures, describing, for example, the seed-bearing weeds that provide the “granary of the birds” and the sun that generously showers the Earth with light.¹³⁷ He described himself as enmeshed in interdependence with the elements: if the rain “should continue so long as to cause the seeds to rot in the ground and destroy the potatoes in the low lands, it would still be good for the grass in the uplands, and, being good for the grass, it would be good for me.” Walden Pond and its environs were depicted in communitarian terms. Claiming not to despair of loneliness at Walden, Thoreau talked of a “sweet and beneficent society in Nature, ... an infinite and unaccountable friendliness ... like an atmosphere sustaining me.”¹³⁸ When Thoreau cultivated a bean-field at Walden, he thus did not try to wholly transform and dominate the land, but accepted nature’s claims on his crop, sharing his land with weeds and his beans with woodchucks.¹³⁹

This natural community was, in Thoreau's view, worthy of moral consideration. The whole of nature, he maintained, dwarfed humanity and made human needs and interests seem comparatively trivial. "We are wont to forget," he noted, "that the sun looks on our cultivated fields and on the prairies and forests without distinction. They all reflect and absorb his rays alike, and the former make but a small part of the glorious picture which he beholds in his daily course."¹⁴⁰

Participation in the natural community meant a kind of exit from history. Thoreau, as Max Oelschlaeger notes, saw himself as partaking of a timeless eternal present.¹⁴¹ "God," Thoreau said, "culminates in the present moment, and will never be more divine in the lapse of all the ages." Thoreau sought not just the present moment, but the eternal: "Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in. I drink at it; but while I drink I see the sandy bottom and detect how shallow it is. Its thin current slides away, but eternity remains."¹⁴²

Oelschlaeger endorses this timeless orientation as evocative of a prehistoric perspective more attuned to nature. The Paleolithic mind, Oelschlaeger maintains, "celebrate[d] an eternal mythical present" in "which humankind [was] bound in an eternal, self-renewing cycle of existence."¹⁴³ The prehistoric unmediated relationship with nature was more ecologically healthy, Oelschlaeger maintains: "Relative to us, and even to early agrarian culture, Paleolithic people had few wants yet lived an affluent and satisfying life in harmony with nature."¹⁴⁴

Agriculture and subsequent developments distanced human beings from an unmediated relationship with the rest of nature. Human beings also took on a more historical, linear view of time. The modern mind thus sees time historically, as "a succession of moments leading *ad seriatim* to the future."¹⁴⁵ For Oelschlaeger, this is clearly a lapsarian moment. In an account that reminds one of Rousseau's *Second Discourse*, Oelschlaeger sees luxury, hierarchy, slavery, and war following on the heels of agriculture.¹⁴⁶ Moreover, beginning with the rise of

agriculture, nature itself became exposed to human history, with negative results: “Although prehistoric people were relatively content in accepting the natural order and sought above all to maintain the integrity of their world, the agriculturists experienced an enormous quickening of the human potential to modify the naturally given. Rather than attempting to live in harmony with wild nature, as hunter-gatherers had done since time immemorial, farmers literally rose up and attempted to dominate the wilderness.”¹⁴⁷

Thoreau himself evoked the linearity of modern life, and its unhealthful, oppressive aspects. For him, modern civilization was symbolized by the railroad, which regimented all society according to its inexorable timetable:

The startings and arrivals of the cars are now the epochs in the village day. They go and come with such regularity and precision, and their whistle can be heard so far, that the farms set their clocks by them, and thus one well conducted institution regulates a whole country.¹⁴⁸

The railroad imposes not only a regular schedule, but also pushes society relentlessly along paths of linear, accelerating progress:

Have not men improved somewhat in punctuality since the railroad was invented? Do they not talk and think faster in the depot than they did in the stage office?¹⁴⁹

Those who cannot keep up, i.e. who don't succeed in the newly industrializing society, simply get run over:

Men have an indistinct notion that if they keep up this activity of joint stocks and spades long enough all will at length ride somewhere, in next to no time, and for nothing; but though a crowd rushes to the depot, and the conductor shouts “All aboard!” when the smoke is blown away and the vapor condensed, it will be perceived that a few are riding, but the rest are run over.¹⁵⁰

At times, for Thoreau, the railroad and all it represented seemed unstoppable:

To do things “railroad fashion” is now the by-word; and it is worth the while to be warned so often and so sincerely by any power to get off its track. There is no stopping to read the riot act, not firing over the heads of the mob, in this case. We have constructed a fate, an *Atropos*, that never turns aside. (Let that be the name of your engine.)¹⁵¹

However, *Walden* also suggested the hope of wilderness preservation – or preservation of relatively uninhabited areas like Walden Pond – as a way of offering a at least temporary respite from the pace of civilization, a theme Thoreau also explored in his essay, “Walking” (1862). One might escape the stultifying and morally degenerate regimen of human society by sojourning in the wild, whether for an afternoon or a couple of years.

In his concern about commerce, corruption, the destructive trajectory of change, and the restoration of virtue, Thoreau reflected earlier republican concerns. However, he united these with an incipient environmentalism, even an early ecocentrism,¹⁵² that saw timeless virtue not in civilized society but in wild nature. While Jefferson sought to transcend both wild nature and corrupt civilization, Thoreau sought a return to wildness and reconfigured the basis for virtue from mastery of fortune and nature to accommodation to nature’s community.

Leopold on Stability in Nature

As environmental historians like Donald Worster have recounted, both environmentalists and ecologists long advanced the notion that nature was fundamentally more stable than human society and that human society should emulate nature’s stability.¹⁵³ Certainly, the natural world is subject to myriad disturbances and abrupt changes – a forest fire can radically alter the landscape, a volcano can create a new island, and a hurricane can change the geography of a coastline – and no one would claim that nature is absolutely static. However, environmentalists and ecologists long tended to unduly privilege stable aspects of nature, focusing on the slow pace of deep time or geologic time, and the notion of a mature, enduring ecosystem. According to this essentialist view, nature was fundamentally an arena of stability rather than history. Worster notes that ecologist Eugene Odum so emphasized notions of ecosystemic maturity and

subsequent equilibrium that he “came close to dehistoricizing nature altogether.”¹⁵⁴ Since the 1970s ecologists have de-emphasized stability in favor of natural change, disturbance, and disruption, a point to which I will return below.

Aldo Leopold contrasted natural stability and anthropogenic change in an explicitly normative fashion in his land ethic, which mandated prudent and respectful treatment of the larger biotic community.¹⁵⁵ The land ethic, said Leopold, “changes the role of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it. It implies respect for his fellow-members, and also respect for the community as such.”¹⁵⁶ In a kind of analogue to the republican polity, the land ethic posited an ecological common good that animated the biotic community and entailed communal obligations, at least on the part of the human citizens.

Leopold’s biotic community was partly predicted on a notion of temporal stability. Stability in fact formed one of three cardinal virtues of a healthy biotic community: “A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise.”¹⁵⁷ Leopold emphasized the notion of relative stability in nature when contrasting natural processes with the impacts of human action. “Land,” he said, “is a fountain of energy flowing through a circuit of soils, plants, and animals.” This “is a sustained circuit, like a slowly augmented revolving fund of life.” Left to itself, this energy circuit tended to be self-equilibrating: “When a change occurs in one part of the circuit, many other parts must adjust themselves to it.” Leopold acknowledged the central importance of evolution and long-term change in nature, but with a key qualification: “Evolutionary changes, however, are usually slow and local.”¹⁵⁸

In a reversal from the destructive fortune and nature described by Machiavelli and Arendt, humanity acted as an agent of disorder in contrast to natural stability: “Man’s invention

of tools has enabled him to make changes of unprecedented violence, rapidity, and scope.” The effects of human action “are seldom intended or foreseen; they represent unpredicted and often untraceable readjustments in the structure.” Leopold mentioned predator eradication, the alteration of food chains, the introduction of invasive species, soil depletion, and the pollution or damming up of waterways.¹⁵⁹ Oelschlaeger thus remarks that according to Leopold, “[h]umanity was a remarkable agent of change in the biotic pyramid, exceeded in consequence only by such cataclysms as volcanic eruptions or ice ages.”¹⁶⁰

Leopold thus described ecological problems as amounting to an “almost world-wide display of disorganization in the land.” He compared this phenomenon to “disease in an animal, except that it never culminates in complete disorganization or death.” Instead of complete environmental destruction, humanity caused a corruption and degradation of natural conditions: “The land recovers, but at some reduced level of complexity, and with a reduced carrying capacity for people, plants, and animals.”¹⁶¹

The solution was for human beings to adopt a higher level of moral consciousness, one involving both enlightened self-interest and respect for the natural community. The role of conqueror of nature, Leopold suggested, has been short-sightedly self-interested, disrespectful, and destructive; embracing the biotic community would carry on the moral evolution that has led many human beings to abandon brutal behaviors like slavery and adopt more democratic forms of government.¹⁶² Leopold thus saw the land ethic as a culmination of a historical process of moral evolution. Yet though the land ethic would be a product of a process of normative change, it would achieve a kind of slowing down and stabilizing of our impacts on the Earth. In arriving at the land ethic and a virtuous relationship with the rest of the biotic community, humanity would begin to spare nature the degenerative impacts of human history.

Significantly, we would also stabilize our own historical experience. “Many historical events, hitherto explained solely in terms of human enterprise, were actually biotic interactions between people and land,” Leopold argued, anticipating the field of environmental history. Elevating the importance of nature in human affairs, he asserted, “The characteristics of the land determined the facts quite as potently as the characteristics of the men who lived on it.”¹⁶³ However, for Leopold, the original motive force for disruptive historical events still seemed to be humanity, which, as we saw earlier, could “make changes of unprecedented violence, rapidity, and scope.” A land ethic would thus presumably stabilize not just the biotic community, but human society as well, by lessening our propensity for inflicting destructive change on our own physical environment. In adopting Leopold’s view, a long-lived, virtuous polity would be achieved not by a self-defeating subjugation of the American wilderness – “the conqueror role is eventually self-defeating,” Leopold noted¹⁶⁴ – but by seeing ourselves as part of the biotic community and upholding nature’s beauty, integrity, and stability.

Images of Timelessness in Environmentalism

The rhetoric of environmentalism is replete with appeals to a timeless, unspoiled nature threatened by human misdeeds. The federal Wilderness Act of 1964 defines wilderness “in contrast with those areas where man and his own works predominate the landscape.” It is “an area where the earth and the community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain.” The Act further defines wilderness to mean “an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions.” A “primeval character and influence” – read: “timeless” – are contrasted with the condition of being “trammelled,” and thus negatively altered, by humanity.

The rhetoric of unaltered, timeless nature, often contrasted with a destructive human history, frequently characterizes discussions of forests imperiled by logging. Christopher Manes, a former member of Earth First!, describes a threatened old-growth forest in Oregon:

“Undisturbed by the icy assaults and retreats of glaciers, these stands of Douglas fir, cedar, and sugar pine are thought to have held their peaceful vigil over the area since the Pliocene Epoch some five million years ago.”¹⁶⁵ A description of the Pacific Northwest ecoregion on the Sierra Club’s website leads off with the following comment: “Where the forest was king and salmon queen for millennia, the works of humans have brought down the monarchy in a few sad decades.”¹⁶⁶ A stable, mythical, and purely natural landscape, a kind of biotic fairytale kingdom, was done in by the rapid changes inflicted by human beings.

Worster on Natural and Human History

The notion of a relatively timeless or fundamentally stable nature has not been borne out by ecologists, as mentioned earlier. Worster notes that “the field of ecology has pretty well demolished Eugene Odum’s portrayal of a world of ecosystems tending toward equilibrium.”¹⁶⁷ By the 1970s, “scientists were out looking strenuously for signs of disturbance in nature – especially signs of disturbance that were not caused by humans – and they were finding them everywhere.”¹⁶⁸ Though many environmentalists may still be loath to admit it, the idea of resorting to nature as a refuge from history and destructive change seems as untenable as the pastoral republican dream of a virtuous agrarian utopia lasting “to the thousandth generation.”

Worster himself is reluctant to fully embrace the newly historicized nature. He seems, initially, to hold on to the notion of a dehistoricized nature and to an arbitrary distinction between stable nature and dynamic culture: “Compared to the changes coming over the radio, [the] shift in the landscape seems soothingly slow. Nature moves in new directions, but its

rhythms of change are quite different from those in politics or economics or the recording industry.”¹⁶⁹

However, his view turns out to be more subtle and instructive. Worster suggests that the current historicization of nature is itself an essentialist move, in that it attempts to define nature solely in terms of change. There are aspects of the natural world that involve interdependence and stability, not just change. Moreover, one must be cognizant of types and degrees of change: “All change is not the same, nor are all changes equal ... Some changes take an afternoon to accomplish, some a millennium ... The fact that ice sheets once scraped their way across Illinois does not provide any kind of justification for a corporation that wants to strip coal from the state.”¹⁷⁰ In addition, some changes are more appropriate to some systems than others: “The pace of innovation in computer chips may be appropriate to competitive business community, but it is not appropriate to the evolution of a redwood forest.”¹⁷¹ To accept change without any distinction is to fall into a relativism wherein all change is equally acceptable.¹⁷² As Worster and countless other commentators have noted, we live in an era of rapid change brought on in part by technological advances and globalized capitalism. The current focus on change in ecological science is in many ways a reflection of this prevailing ethos, he argues.¹⁷³ To distinguish different types and rates of change not only gets us away from relativism, but it enables a critical standpoint on an era that seems to accept change with little question.¹⁷⁴

Indeed, the valorization of stability by republicanism and environmentalism cannot be dismissed outright. There is a kernel of validity here, in that not all change is acceptable. Some change is disruptive of important political and/or ecological goods or values. In fact, this is where Worster seems to be going. In the end, he concludes, “We can no more take any particular kind of change as absolutely normative than we can take any particular state of equilibrium as normative.” We must decide “which changes are in our more enlightened self-

interest and consistent with our most rigorous ethical reasoning.” Making such a determination in part entails “always remembering our inescapable dependence on other forms of life.”

Environmental protection “becomes ... an effort to protect certain rates of change going on with the biological world from incompatible changes going on within our economy and technology.”¹⁷⁵

Coming Full Circle: Republicanism, Environmentalism, and Time

Worster thus seeks to readmit history to environmental ethics and policy, while distinguishing among rates and types of change. Yet how are we to make such distinctions? This is a particularly urgent question today, given debates over how to address climate change – those who oppose reducing greenhouse gas emissions often resort to the notion that nature changes anyway.¹⁷⁶

Neither nature nor politics can or should rule out all change. Furthermore, nature obviously cannot provide us with normative standards to evaluate change – one must be alert to essentialist constructions of Nature.¹⁷⁷ Worster offers three guidelines for evaluating change: appreciation of natural and social interdependence; awareness that some forms of adaptation to natural and social conditions are more successful than others; and, as we discussed, awareness of different rates and kinds of environmental and societal change and of how some forms of change are more appropriate for some aspects of nature or society than others.¹⁷⁸

However, there is still intellectual and political work to do here. Some forms of interdependence, adaptation, and change may be more desirable from one normative standpoint or another. Which standpoint do we adopt? On what basis? On what grounds do we distinguish acceptable rates and kinds of change and, we might add, acceptable degrees of stability? What goods might be affected positively or negatively by change or stability? Ought one to consider

only human goods or also goods pertaining to the biosphere or individual habitats? Such questions emerge at the intersection of ecological science, environmental ethics, and political theory and their answers are as much moral and political as scientific. The natural world can supply us with data but it cannot provide ready-made notions of beauty, integrity, stability, etc. to normatively evaluate change.

At the same time, our embeddedness in nature inevitably shapes how we will approach these questions. As John Meyer notes, we are “inescapably natural beings, whose thought, actions, and potentialities are inextricably interdependent with and embedded within the world.” Under what Meyer calls a *constitutive* conception of nature, the natural world is not a source of direction for politics; rather, “our relationship to the natural world is ... constitutive of who we are.”¹⁷⁹ Our embeddedness in the world helps to shape our political behaviors, choices, and ends, and our political activity in turn shapes the nature in which we are embedded. Consequently, in evaluating change, we need to consider how environmental and social change not only impacts natural and human systems, but also how various types of change affect us as moral and political beings, and how change fundamentally alters relationships between ourselves and the rest of the natural world. Moreover, it is not enough to protect different types and rates of change; one must also consider the interactions between different forms of change. Importantly, within this complex of relations, there is no timeless standpoint external to society, to biophysical nature, or to the nexus of society and nature.

There is a good deal to untangle here and as yet no substantive answers about desirable and undesirable sorts of change. In some measure, the answers depend on the needs and conditions of social and biological systems at particular times and places. Stability, just like change, should not be considered a defining aspect of any social or biophysical system, but a good or quality that can at times promote the flourishing of a particular system. In fact,

republican and green notions of a politics of the common good involving active political participation and the exercise of requisite virtues can help us to evaluate change and stability and see the importance of each, even as we dispense with overly demanding, anti-historical notions of virtue and static conceptions of nature. If we consider politics as at least in part a collective enterprise oriented to the flourishing of social communities and natural systems and also consider that an engaged citizenry endowed with certain types of character traits or virtues is best equipped to pursue common ecological and social goods, then we might privilege some forms of change over others and might in certain instances favor stability over change; elsewhere, I pursue a similar argument regarding the desirability of both change and preservation in the politics of place.¹⁸⁰

Environmentalism, at least in the U.S., has carried on many aspects of the republican tradition even as political theorists have sought to more directly revive republicanism. A reinvigoration of both republicanism and environmentalism, without the anti-historical baggage, might help us to evaluate different types of social and ecological change.

ENDNOTES

¹ See, for example, Michael J. Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent: America in Search of a Public Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996); Sandel, "The Procedural Republic and the Unencumbered Self," from Shlomo Avineri and Avner de-Shalit, eds., *Communitarianism and Individualism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992 [essay originally 1984]); Philip Petit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Governance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Benjamin Barber, *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

² See, for example, Peter Berkowitz, *Virtue and the Making of Modern Liberalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999); William A. Galston, *Liberal Purposes* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Stephen Macedo, *Liberal Virtues: Citizenship, Virtue, and Community in Liberal Constitutionalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

³ See J.G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), p.523; Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1969), pp.562, 606-615; William E. Forbath, "The Ambiguities of Free Labor: Labor and the Law in the Gilded Age," *Wisconsin Law Review*, 1985, p.787-791 (770); Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent*; Sandel, "The Procedural Republic"; Russell L. Hanson, *The Democratic Imagination in America: Conversations with our Past* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985); and Richard Hofstadter, "What Happened to the Anti-Trust Movement?: Notes on the Evolution of an American Creed," in Earl F. Cheit, ed., *The Business Establishment* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1964).

⁴ On the republican tradition in the U.S., see Wood, *Creation of the American Republic*; Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*; J.G.A. Pocock, "Civic Humanism and its Role in Anglo-American Thought" (1968), reprinted in Pocock, *Politics, Language, and Time: Essays on Political Thought and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989); Joyce Appleby, *Liberalism and Republicanism in the Historical Imagination* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992); Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Enlarged edition) (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992); Paul A. Rahe, *Republics Ancient and Modern, Volume Three: Inventions of Prudence: Constituting the American Regime* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent*.

⁵ One of the few explorations in mainstream political theory of the affinity between environmentalism and republicanism is found in Petit, *Republicanism*, p.135-138. Green political theorists have more fruitfully explored the connection with republicanism. See, for example, Andrew Dobson, "Citizenship," in Andrew Dobson and Robyn Eckersley, *Political Theory and the Ecological Challenge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp.216-231; Andrew Dobson, *Citizenship and the Environment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); John Barry, "Resistance is Fertile: From Environmental to Sustainability Citizenship," in Andrew Dobson and Derek Bell, eds., *Environmental Citizenship* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2006), pp.21-48; and John Barry, *Rethinking Green Politics: Nature, Virtue, and Progress* (London: Sage, 1999).

⁶ See, for example, Wood, *Creation of the American Republic*, p.56; Robert C. Paehlke, *Environmentalism and the Future of Progressive Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), pp.144, 174-175; Robyn Eckersley, *Environmentalism and Political Theory: Toward an Ecocentric Approach* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), p.24.

⁷ On the roots of republican thought, see Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment* and *Politics, Language and Time*, pp.80-103; Rahe, *Republics Ancient and Modern, Volumes One and Two* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

- ⁸ Pocock, *Politics, Language and Time*, p.85.
- ⁹ Pocock, *Politics, Language and Time*, p.85.
- ¹⁰ Aristotle, *The Politics*, translated by Carnes Lord (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), Book 2, Chapter 1 (1260a), p.55.
- ¹¹ Aristotle, *Politics*, Book 1, Chapter 2 (1252b), p.37.
- ¹² Wood, *Creation of the American Republic*, p.69.
- ¹³ Pocock, *Politics, Language and Time*, p.87.
- ¹⁴ Forbath, "Ambiguities of Free Labor," p.775.
- ¹⁵ Wood, *Creation of the American Republic*, p.73; Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, pp.208-211.
- ¹⁶ Anne Phillips emphasizes this aspect of republicanism. See Phillips, *Engendering Democracy* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), pp.45-46.
- ¹⁷ Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, p.201.
- ¹⁸ Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent*, p.274.
- ¹⁹ Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, p.75.
- ²⁰ Pocock, *Politics, Language and Time*, p.88.
- ²¹ Pocock, *Politics, Language and Time*, pp.93, 97.
- ²² Pocock, *Politics, Language and Time*, p.89.
- ²³ Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent*, p.224.
- ²⁴ Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent*, p. 224.
- ²⁵ Wood, *Creation of the American Republic*, p.52.
- ²⁶ See Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent*, p.123-200; Forbath, "Ambiguities of Free Labor"; John F. Kasson, *Civilizing the Machine: Technology and Republican Values in America, 1776-1900* (New York: Penguin, 1976).
- ²⁷ Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, especially pp.506-510, and *Politics, Language and Time*, pp.96-98.
- ²⁸ On this point, see Neil Evernden, *The Social Creation of Nature* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).
- ²⁹ This is a central theme of Pocock's *Machiavellian Moment*.

³⁰ Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, p.53.

³¹ Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, pp.75-76. It should be noted that Machiavelli did consider *virtù*, the virtue of new princes, to itself be a disruptive force. However, he saw *virtù* as ultimately imposing order and stability on a state riddled with corruption or disorder. See Machiavelli, *The Prince*.

³² Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, pp.183-184.

³³ Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, p.207.

³⁴ Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, p.486.

³⁵ Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, p.211.

³⁶ Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, p.185.

³⁷ In the same chapter of *The Prince*, Machiavelli, in a blatantly misogynist passage, also personifies fortune as a woman who must be violently subordinated. Machiavelli counsels that one must “hold her [i.e. fortune] down”, “beat her”, and “strike her down.” Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr., transl. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), Chapter XXV, pp.98-101. As Carolyn Merchant notes, early modern thought often equated the feminine and the natural and counseled the conquest of both. Though Merchant focuses on Francis Bacon, Bacon’s imagery of feminized nature as an object of domination is remarkably similar to Machiavelli’s treatment of fortune. See Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1980).

³⁸ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958).

³⁹ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p.100.

⁴⁰ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p.139.

⁴¹ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p.136.

⁴² Arendt, *The Human Condition*, pp.183, 236.

⁴³ Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, p.77; on Polybius, see pp.77-80.

⁴⁴ Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, p.75.

⁴⁵ Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, pp.78-79, 466.

⁴⁶ See pp.317-351.

⁴⁷ Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).

⁴⁸ Marx, *Machine in the Garden*, p.43.

- ⁴⁹ Marx, *Machine in the Garden*, p.36.
- ⁵⁰ Marx, *Machine in the Garden*, p.36.
- ⁵¹ Marx, *Machine in the Garden*, p.37.
- ⁵² Marx, *Machine in the Garden*, pp.42-43.
- ⁵³ Marx, *Machine in the Garden*, p.71.
- ⁵⁴ Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, pp.539-540.
- ⁵⁵ Marx, *Machine in the Garden*, p.22.
- ⁵⁶ Marx, *Machine in the Garden*, p.112.
- ⁵⁷ Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, p.539.
- ⁵⁸ Marx, *Machine in the Garden*, pp.115-116.
- ⁵⁹ Marx, *Machine in the Garden*, p.43.
- ⁶⁰ Marx, *Machine in the Garden*, p.117.
- ⁶¹ Quoted in Marx, *Machine in the Garden*, p.105.
- ⁶² Marx, *Machine in the Garden*, p.118.
- ⁶³ Wood, *Creation of the American Republic*, p.52; Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent*, p.137-150; Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1787), in Merrill D. Peterson, ed., *The Portable Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Penguin, 1975).
- ⁶⁴ Jefferson, *Notes*, Query XIX, p.217; Query, XXII, p.227.
- ⁶⁵ Jefferson, *Notes*, Query XIX, p.217.
- ⁶⁶ Yarbrough, *American Virtues*, p.74.
- ⁶⁷ Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, p.464; Pocock, *Politics, Language and Time*, pp.91-92.
- ⁶⁸ Charles A. Miller, *Jefferson and Nature: An Interpretation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1988), p.215.
- ⁶⁹ See Jean M. Yarbrough, *American Virtues: Thomas Jefferson on the Character of a Free People* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1998), pp.64-70.
- ⁷⁰ Jefferson, *Notes*, Query XIX, p.217.

⁷¹ Miller, *Jefferson and Nature*, p.210.

⁷² Jefferson, *Notes*, Query XIX, p.217.

⁷³ For contrasts between Jefferson and classical republicanism, see Yarbrough, *American Virtues*, and Joyce Appleby, "What Is Still American in the Political Philosophy of Thomas Jefferson?," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., Vol. 39, No. 2 (April 1982), pp.287-309.

⁷⁴ Miller, *Jefferson and Nature*, p.87, 92; Jefferson to Peter Carr, August 10, 1787, in Peterson, ed., *The Portable Jefferson*, p.424-425.

⁷⁵ See Yarbrough, *American Virtues*.

⁷⁶ Marx, *Machine in the Garden*, pp.109-110; Miller, *Jefferson and Nature*, pp.12, 58, 60.

⁷⁷ Miller, *Jefferson and Nature*, p.265.

⁷⁸ Yarbrough, *American Virtues*, pp.106-112.

⁷⁹ Pocock, *Politics, Language and Time*, p.100.

⁸⁰ See Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, pp.527, 533-534 and *Politics, Language and Time*, p.100.

⁸¹ Jefferson, "First Inaugural Address," March 4, 1801, in Peterson, ed., *Portable Jefferson*, p.292.

⁸² Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, p.535.

⁸³ Charles A. Miller, *Jefferson and Nature: An Interpretation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1988), pp.3, 9.

⁸⁴ Miller, *Jefferson and Nature*, pp.10, 13.

⁸⁵ Jefferson, *Notes*, Query V, p.54. See also Jefferson's description of the confluence of the Potomac and Shenandoah rivers at what is now Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, *Notes*, Query IV, pp.48-49.

⁸⁶ See *Notes*, Query VI.

⁸⁷ Marx, *Machine in the Garden*, p.119.

⁸⁸ Wood, *Creation of the American Republic*, p.50.

⁸⁹ Jefferson, *Notes*, Query XIX, p.216.

⁹⁰ Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, pp.539-540.

⁹¹ Yarbrough, *American Virtues*, p.68.

⁹² Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, p.540.

- ⁹³ Maurizio Valsania, “‘Our Original Barbarism’: Man vs. Nature in Thomas Jefferson’s Moral Experience,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 65, No. 4 (October 2004), pp.627-645. For a different perspective on Jefferson’s view of nature, see Lee Quinby, “Thomas Jefferson: The Virtue of Aesthetics and the Aesthetics of Virtue,” *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 87, No. 2 (April 1982), pp.337-356.
- ⁹⁴ Valsania, “Original Barbarism,” p.634.
- ⁹⁵ Valsania, “Original Barbarism,” p.637.
- ⁹⁶ Quoted in Valsania, “Original Barbarism,” p.637.
- ⁹⁷ Marx, *Machine in the Garden*, p.150.
- ⁹⁸ Miller, *Jefferson and Nature*, p.221.
- ⁹⁹ Discussion of this point takes up much of the second half of Marx’ *Machine in the Garden*.
- ¹⁰⁰ Pocock says that with westward expansion it was thought that “a predominantly agrarian society could absorb commerce without essential loss of virtue.” Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, p.527, 533-534.
- ¹⁰¹ See Miller, *Jefferson and Nature*, p.214.
- ¹⁰² Quoted in Marx, *Machine in the Garden*, p.159.
- ¹⁰³ Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, pp.74-80.
- ¹⁰⁴ Miller, *Jefferson and Nature*, pp.266, 272.
- ¹⁰⁵ Miller, *Jefferson and Nature*, p.266, 271.
- ¹⁰⁶ Jefferson, *Notes*, Query XXII, p.227.
- ¹⁰⁷ Marx, *Machine in the Garden*, p.143.
- ¹⁰⁸ Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, p.541.
- ¹⁰⁹ Marx, *Machine in the Garden*, pp.5-11.
- ¹¹⁰ For celebrations of the frontier and frontier life, see, for example, James Fenimore Cooper’s ‘Leatherstocking’ novels, including *The Pioneers* (1823), *The Prairie* (1827), and *The Deerslayer* (1841); Theodore Roosevelt, “True Americanism” (1904), in Mario R. DiNunzio, ed., *Theodore Roosevelt, An American Mind: Selected Writings* (New York: Penguin, 1994); and Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt, 1920). For a discussion of the American frontier ethos, see Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, Third Edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), esp. pp.67-83. On the relationship between republicanism and the frontier, see Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, pp.534-542 and *Politics, Language and Time*, p.100; Sandel, *Democracy’s Discontent*, pp.139-140; and Kasson, *Civilizing the Machine*, pp.6-8.

- 111 Quoted in Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, p.73.
- 112 Roosevelt, "True Americanism," p.169.
- 113 Yarbrough, *American Virtues*, p.80.
- 114 Miller, *Jefferson and Nature*, p.260.
- 115 Miller, *Jefferson and Nature*, p.264.
- 116 See Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, and William Cronon, "The Trouble With Wilderness, or Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," in William Cronon, ed., *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1995), pp.69-90.
- 117 Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, p.44-83.
- 118 William Cronon, "Trouble With Wilderness," pp.72-79.
- 119 Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, pp.69, 73-74.
- 120 Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, pp.96-107.
- 121 Cronon, "Trouble With Wilderness," pp.71-72.
- 122 Cronon, "Trouble With Wilderness," p.79
- 123 Cronon, "Trouble With Wilderness," pp.79, 82.
- 124 Richard White, "'Are You an Environmentalist or Do You Work for a Living?': Work and Nature," in William Cronon, ed., *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature*, New York: W.W. Norton, 1995, pp.171-185 (175).
- 125 Citations refer to the following edition: *Walden and Civil Disobedience*, Owen Thomas, ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1966). *Walden* was first published in 1854.
- 126 On Thoreau's criticisms of commercial society and its anti-democratic aspects, see also Brian Walker, "Thoreau's Alternative Economics: Work, Liberty, and Democratic Cultivation," *American Political Science Review*, Vol.92, No.4 (December 1998), pp.845-856.
- 127 Thoreau, *Walden*, p.36.
- 128 Walker, "Thoreau's Alternative Economics," p.848.
- 129 Thoreau, *Walden*, p.2.
- 130 Thoreau, *Walden*, p.4.
- 131 Thoreau, *Walden*, p.9.

- ¹³² Thoreau, *Walden*, p.3.
- ¹³³ Thoreau, *Walden*, p.62.
- ¹³⁴ Thoreau's program is detailed in Walker, "Thoreau's Alternative Economics."
- ¹³⁵ Thoreau, *Walden*, p.139. See also Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, p.88.
- ¹³⁶ Thoreau, *Walden*, p.115.
- ¹³⁷ Thoreau, *Walden*, p.111.
- ¹³⁸ Thoreau, *Walden*, pp.88-89.
- ¹³⁹ Thoreau, *Walden*, p.111.
- ¹⁴⁰ Thoreau, *Walden*, p.111.
- ¹⁴¹ Oelschlaeger, *Idea of Wilderness*, pp.154-155.
- ¹⁴² Thoreau, *Walden*, pp.65-66.
- ¹⁴³ Oelschlaeger, *Idea of Wilderness*, p.24.
- ¹⁴⁴ Oelschlaeger, *Idea of Wilderness*, p.25.
- ¹⁴⁵ Oelschlaeger, *Idea of Wilderness*, p.24.
- ¹⁴⁶ Oelschlaeger, *Idea of Wilderness*, pp.28-29.
- ¹⁴⁷ Oelschlaeger, *Idea of Wilderness*, p.28.
- ¹⁴⁸ Thoreau, *Walden*, p.79.
- ¹⁴⁹ Thoreau, *Walden*, p.79.
- ¹⁵⁰ Thoreau, *Walden*, p.36.
- ¹⁵¹ Thoreau, *Walden*, p.79.
- ¹⁵² For an ecocentric interpretation of Thoreau, see Oelschlaeger, *Idea of Wilderness*.
- ¹⁵³ Donald Worster, "Nature and the Disorder of History," in Michael E. Soulé and Gary Lease, eds., *Reinventing Nature: Responses to Postmodern Deconstruction* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1995), pp.65-85; Donald Worster, *Nature's Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas*, 2nd Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).
- ¹⁵⁴ Worster, "Nature and the Disorder of History," p.70.
- ¹⁵⁵ See Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1949), especially pp.201-226.

- ¹⁵⁶ Leopold, *Sand County Almanac*, p.204.
- ¹⁵⁷ Leopold, *Sand County Almanac*, p.225.
- ¹⁵⁸ Leopold, *Sand County Almanac*, pp.216-217.
- ¹⁵⁹ Leopold, *Sand County Almanac*, p.217.
- ¹⁶⁰ Oelschlaeger, *Idea of Wilderness*, p.231.
- ¹⁶¹ Leopold, *Sand County Almanac*, p.219.
- ¹⁶² Leopold, *Sand County Almanac*, pp.201-205.
- ¹⁶³ Leopold, *Sand County Almanac*, p.205.
- ¹⁶⁴ Leopold, *Sand County Almanac*, p.205.
- ¹⁶⁵ Christopher Manes, *Green Rage: Radical Environmentalism and the Unmaking of Civilization* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1990), p.84.
- ¹⁶⁶ See www.sierraclub.org/ecoregions/pacnw.asp (accessed August 13, 2007).
- ¹⁶⁷ Worster, "Nature and the Disorder of History," p.72.
- ¹⁶⁸ Worster, "Nature and the Disorder of History," p.72.
- ¹⁶⁹ Worster, "Nature and the Disorder of History," p.65.
- ¹⁷⁰ Worster, "Nature and the Disorder of History," p.81.
- ¹⁷¹ Worster, "Nature and the Disorder of History," p.82.
- ¹⁷² Worster, "Nature and the Disorder of History," pp.67-68, 77-78.
- ¹⁷³ Worster, "Nature and the Disorder of History," pp.75-77.
- ¹⁷⁴ Worster, "Nature and the Disorder of History," pp.77-78.
- ¹⁷⁵ Worster, "Nature and the Disorder of History," pp.81-82.
- ¹⁷⁶ For example, in a recent screed against climate science and concern about global warming, columnist George Will pointedly noted that "the Earth is always experiencing either warming or cooling." Will, "Let Cooler Heads Prevail," *Washington Post*, April 2, 2006, p.B7.
- ¹⁷⁷ See the warnings to this effect articulated in two classic collections: William Cronon, ed., *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1995), and Jane Bennett and William Chaloupka, eds., *In the Nature of Things: Language, Politics, and the Environment* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).
- ¹⁷⁸ Worster, "Nature and the Disorder of History," pp.78-82.

¹⁷⁹ John M. Meyer, *Political Nature: Environmentalism and the Interpretation of Western Thought* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2001), pp.6, 125.

¹⁸⁰ See Peter F. Cannavò, *The Working Landscape: Founding, Preservation, and the Politics of Place* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2007).