

Dr John Leah: Valuing Nature

MY BACKGROUND:

1998 - Bristol University MSc Exercise and Health Science – Dissertation in Odense (European - ERASMUS) Impact of urban design on cycling behaviour

1999 – Open University PG Diploma: Environmental Decision Making

2002 – 2005 Senior Lecturer / Course Leader for MSc Health Nutrition and Physical Activity, University of St Mary's, West London

2005- 2011 Lancaster University M.A. Environment Culture and Society / PhD 'The Wellbeing Benefits of Nature and Greenspaces'

JANUARY 2008+ U.W. course leader for BSc Health and Wellbeing / BA Social Welfare

Currently Course Leader for the MSc Public Health – developing an 'ecological' approach to public health – i.e. healthy people / communities need a healthy planet (healthy ecosystems)

**THINK A OF PLACE THAT YOU LIKE TO GO TO
THAT HAS A POSITIVE EFFECT ON YOUR
WELLBEING**

**1. BRIEFLY DESCRIBE IT (write a few notes on
what it looks like, atmosphere etc)**

**2. LIST IT'S QUALITIES IN TERMS OF HOW IT
HAS A POSITIVE EFFECT ON YOUR WELLBEING**

**WAS IT A GREENSPACE? IF NOT WHAT KIND OF
PLACE WAS IT?**

How we think of and value 'nature' is complex, differs with culture and has changed historically



The mediaeval forboding forests – a place of fear and dread



The 19th century Romantic ideal of artists



NATURE TAMED.®

Garden designs to inspire...

PhD 'The Wellbeing Benefits of Nature and Greenspaces'

This thesis draws on evidence gained from focus group discussions and walking interviews collected from 36 male and female participants of low income aged between 25-50 years of age living in three different wards of Bristol in the South West of England. The thesis explores lay perceptions of wellbeing and greenspaces and relates these to the conceptual models used by a range of policy makers and professional practitioners. [The findings suggest that social relationships are of primary importance to lay perceptions of wellbeing and the ways in which greenspaces contribute to its promotion and maintenance.](#) The study revealed that social relationships are complex and nuanced in relation to wellbeing and the use of greenspaces and challenges simplistic models that fail to take this in to account. The thesis presents a more complete framework for understanding wellbeing and the complexities of the relationship between wellbeing and greenspaces, and concludes by suggesting more effective ways of engaging people of this age group and social status in the wellbeing benefits of contact with nature and greenspaces.

HAS OUR RELATIONSHIP TO NATURE EVER BEEN PERFECT?

WHY DOES MOST OF THE WORLD HAVE THE RELATIONSHIP TO NATURE IT HAS NOW?

CONTRAST: TRADITIONAL NATIVE AMERICAN INDIAN RELATIONSHIP TO NATURE (i.e pre colonial N. America)

with

THE POST ENLIGHTENMENT / MODERNIST RELATIONSHIP THAT UNDERPINS INDUSTRIALISATION, CAPITALISM AND THE MODERN ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS

Native Americans

- Nature is something ***we live within and as a part of it.*** No essential separation: no transcendental dualism, no Enlightenment search for objectivity, no Puritan fear of dangerous, chaotic nature, or idealised distant observation in Romanticism.

See [The Value of Traditional Ecological Knowledge for the Environmental Health Sciences and Biomedical Research Finn et al 2017](#)

[More than Stories, More than Myths: Animal/Human/Nature\(s\) in Traditional Ecological Worldview Sepie 2017](#)

Native Americans

- Nature is the location of ***spiritual reality***, both in terms of the place of individual beings (plants, animals) and a more general sense of the sacred.
- Its spiritual value calls for ***reverence, respect, and humility*** in our relationship with nature.

Native Americans

- But nature is also something that is *used*.
- Not in the Enlightenment sense of conquering and controlling for our material gain, with a sense of superiority toward nature.
- “You say that I use the land, and I reply, yes, it is true; but it is not the first truth. The first truth is that I love the land; I see that it is beautiful; I delight in it; I am alive in it.” (N. Scott Momaday)



Native Americans

- **Are/were Indians “ecological saints?”**
- **Did they have a ‘better’ / ‘wiser’ environmental *ethic*?**
- **Or was it the ‘primitive’ nature of their technology that kept them from being more harmful?**

Meanwhile in the western world



**The 1600s in Europe had a very different ideology to today
--one steeped in supernatural politics.**

Alchemy, Angelology, Demonology , The Great Chain of Being, Divine Right of Kings

Worn out by 200 years of political and religious conflict, warfare, dissension, and fanaticism, plagues and famines, Europe was ready for a change by the late 1600s and early 1700s.

THE ENLIGHTENMENT:

- (1) A desire for rationality, logic, consistency.**
- (2) A rejection of emotionalism**
- (3) A preference for evidence, not faith**
- (4) Increased interest in science, mathematics, geometry**
- (5) An admiration for Greece and Rome and an abhorrence for everything medieval.**
- (6) A preference for the artificial over the natural, technology over nature.**

The Enlightenment

(17th Century)

***The belief in progress* - humanity is assumed to be master of its own fate and should approach the future with confidence in its ability to transform the world through the technological power of science and the effective use of reason;**

The assumption that all problems are in principle solvable through the use of reason and technology.

The belief that people are emancipated, autonomous individuals.

The most important factor in the development of the Enlightenment was the Scientific Revolution of the 16th and 17th centuries



Francis Bacon and the Scientific Method

- The scientific method
- Observation and experimentation
- Testable hypothesis



Isaac Newton and the Scientific Method

- Used the scientific method to make a range of discoveries
- Newton's achievements using the scientific method helped inspire Enlightenment thinkers



**‘NATURE NEEDS TO BE , EXAMINED,
DISSECTED, TESTED, TAMED AND
IMPROVED’**

**The “messiness” of the
natural world must bow
before pure geometry. In
such a garden, the chaos of
nature is tamed to match
the orderly design of
human intellect.**

**Once nature was understood in a way that made it possible to
change and manipulate it, it could be harnessed for human
progress, it was therefore redefined and re-made for its
usefulness to humans.**

**Its value was therefore one of ‘utility’ – an extrinsic value –
rather than having an ‘intrinsic’ (spiritual value) in its own right**

See [The Enlightenment and Nature: Open University](#)

Intrinsic Value

- Intrinsic value is value that a thing has in and of its self.
- Often valuable as an 'ends' (where you want to get to) rather than a means to an end (how you might get there)
- Examples:
- Happiness, Love, Honor, Family, Health, and Freedom are 'ends' –
money, developing skills, dating sites, meditation might provide the means to these ends

Extrinsic Value

- **Something has extrinsic value if it is valuable as a means to acquiring or attaining something we value in virtue of itself.**
- **For example money has little or no intrinsic value, it's just bits of paper or metal, but it has great extrinsic value in that it can be used to acquire other items which we do value.**

William Baxter

- In his book “People or Penguins” (1974) Baxter argues that people have intrinsic value, but that penguins do not.
- In Baxter’s words, “ Every human being should be regarded as an end rather than as a means to be used for the betterment of another.”
- This means that people have intrinsic value and should not be used.
- Baxter is considered by some to be a ‘speciesist’. He maintains that non-human animals have no moral consideration (value) on their own. Any moral consideration of animals is in relation to humans. Moral consideration is a uniquely human affair.



So do you think Penguins have intrinsic value?

- Penguins only have value, if people find them valuable. If they make us happy or we enjoy watching them (or eating them!?)

Or

- Penguins have value irrespective of whether people find them valuable in terms of enjoying watching them etc or not



What value do whale's have today?

- **Instrumental?**
(a means to an end – e.g. whale oil)
- **Aesthetic?**
- **Moral?**



Synthetic vs. Natural

- “There is nothing in the body of a whale, which is of use to us, for which we cannot find equivalents elsewhere.”

(whalewatch campaign)

Whale Products

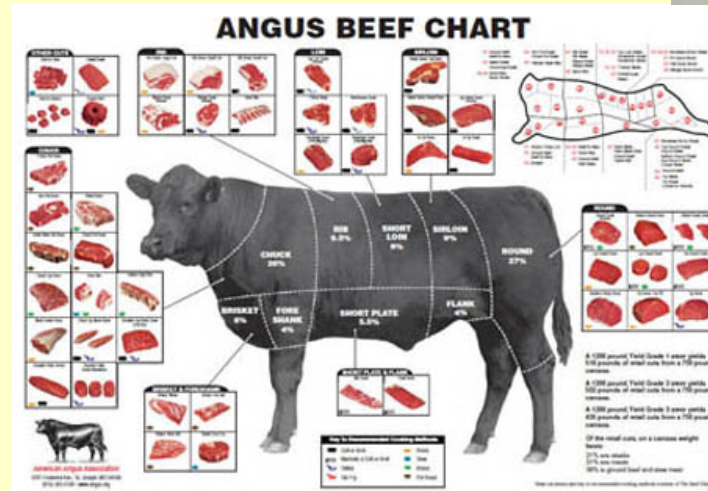


Fertilizer	Bone	Grinding	Seaweed, Various Organic and Composted Materials
Medicines and Pharmaceuticals	Spermaceti	Refining and Filtering	Domestic Animal Sources
Bicycle Saddles, Handbags, Cases, and Shoes	Whale skin	Tanned	Hides or Skins of Domestic Cattle, Petroleum Products
Floor Coverings	Sperm Oil, Whale Oil	Polymerization	Linseed Oil, Jojoba Oil
Oil Dressing for Animal Hides Preparation	Sperm Oil	Sulphurized	Acids from Plant Materials
Cold Creams, Lipstick, Shaving Cream, Hair Oil, Ointments	Sperm Oil, Blubber	Saponification	Lemon, Orange, Jojoba Oils, Cactus Cream, Avocado, Cucumbers

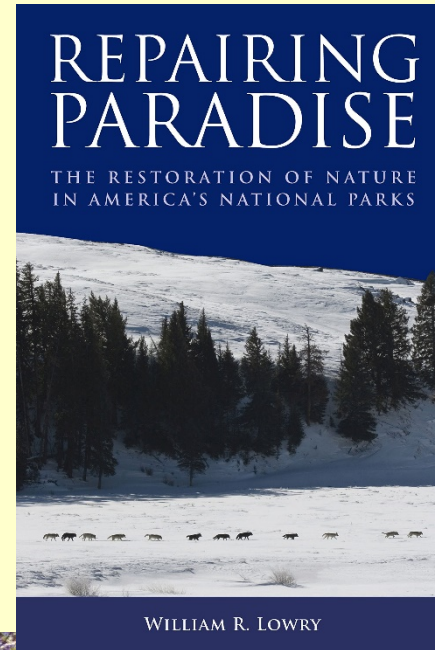
If it applies to whales & penguins then why not to sheep and cows? (or conversely why don't we eat dogs!?) We give our own specific personal and cultural values to the rest of 'nature' – mostly extrinsic value



炸鸽子 - Chim quay	90.000
Cooked bird with lotus seed	
鸽子炒蓮花 - Chim om hạt sen	90.000
Cooked bird with mushroom	
鸽子炒蘑菇 - Chim om nấm	
Dog meat - 狗肉 - Chó	
Grilled dog meat	69.000
烤狗肉 - Chả chó	
Boiled dog meat	69.000
蒸狗肉 - Chó luộc	
Frog - 青蛙 -Ếch	
Roasted frog	79.000



RETHINKING HOW WE DEFINE 'PROGRESS' AND QUALITY OF LIFE AND OUR RELATIONSHIP TO NATURE:



[Rethinking Human Development in an Era of Planetary Transformation Khoday 2018](#)

**UNDERPINNING VALUES ARE A KEY FOUNDATION AS PART OF OUR COMPLEX
RELATIONSHIP WITH NATURE**

**CAN WE SHIFT FROM VALUES DOMINATED BY UTILITY AND EXTRINSIC
WORTH**

TO

**VALUES THAT ARE BASED MORE ON INTRINSIC INTEREST – THAT THE REST OF
LIFE IS VALUABLE IN AND OF ITSELF – NOT JUST FOR HOW WE CAN USE IT**

**WE'VE DEVELOPED INCREDIBLY FAST RATIONALLY, SCIENTIFICALLY AND
TECHNOLOGICALLY**

**CAN WE ALSO (EVEN MORE QUICKLY) DEVELOP THE EMOTIONAL,
PSYCHOLOGICAL, MORAL AND SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE TO SAVE AND LOOK
AFTER THE PLANET?**

What about our own internal wildness?

“What is wild cannot be bought or sold, borrowed or copied. It is unmistakable, unforgettable, un-shameable, elemental as earth and ice, water, fire and air, a quintessence, pure spirit, resolving into no constituents. Don't waste your wildness: it is precious and necessary.”

— Jay Griffiths, *Wild: An Elemental Journey*

VALUES AND 'NATURE'

Some questions we could ask:

ARE WE ALSO NATURE?

PART OF NATURE BUT A 'SPECIAL' CASE (INTELLIGENCE!?)

SEPARATE FROM THE REST OF NATURE – DIFFERENT ENOUGH TO BE SOMETHING ELSE COMPARED TO THE REST OF LIFE? OR DO WE SHARE MORE IN COMMON WITH THE REST OF LIFE? JUSTIFICATION FOR EXPLOITING OTHER SPECIES?

IS THERE ANY REAL NATURE LEFT?

MOST NATURAL ENVIRONMENTS IN THE UK HEAVILY INFLUENCED BY HUMAN ACTIVITY – DOES THIS MATTER – IS THERE A NEED FOR 'PURE NATURE' / WILDERNESS

Is Nature of value for itself intrinsic value – or is it only valuable in relation to how we need / want to use it instrumental or extrinsic value

See McNaghten and Urry (1999) *Contested Natures*

Reading and Resources:

Does Wilderness Have Intrinsic Value?

YES: Rick Bass, from "On Wilderness and Wallace Stegner," Tlze Amicus Journal (Spring 1997)

NO: William Tucker, from "Is Nature Too Good for Us?" Harper's Magazine (March 1982)

http://data.naturalcapitalproject.org/natcap/ES281_What%20is%20Nature%20Worth/ES281_What%20is%20Nature%20Worth/Readings/Intrinsic%20vs%20Instrumental%20Value/Does%20wilderness%20have%20intrinsic%20value.pdf

Does nature have value beyond what it provides humans?

<https://theconversation.com/does-nature-have-value-beyond-what-it-provides-humans-47825>

A Critical Analysis on the Intrinsic and Instrumental Value of Nature: Beyond Valuing Nature

<http://www.art-xy.com/2011/09/beyond-valuing-nature.html>