



SEALOEEarth
Serene Environment And Life On Earth

A world in which all people participate in the stewardship of planet Earth.

SEALOE Earth in Special Consultative Status with the United Nations ECOSOC since 2017

NEWSLETTER

Earth Day 2024

“The sun, with all those planets revolving around it and dependent on it, can still ripen a bunch of grapes as if it had nothing else in the universe to do”

~ Galileo Galilei

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Just like this picture, we hope all species thrive and shine on our beautiful planet in real life. Photo credit: Dr. Chaitanya Hiremath

We hope that you will enjoy reading this newsletter.

Dialogue between the Philosopher Voltaire and Nature written in 1764



François-Marie Arouet “Voltaire”
Paris, FRANCE

PHILOSOPHER: Who are you, Nature? I live in you; for fifty years have I been seeking you, and I have not found you yet.

NATURE: The ancient Egyptians, who lived, it is said, some twelve hundred years, made me the same reproach. They called me Isis; they put a great veil on my head, and they said that nobody could lift it.

PHILOSOPHER: That is what makes me address myself to you. I have been able to measure some of your globes, know their paths, assign the laws of motion; but I have not been able to learn who you are.

Are you always active? are you always passive? did your elements arrange themselves, as water deposits itself on sand, oil on water, air on oil? have you a mind which directs all your operations, as councils are inspired as soon as they are assembled, although their members are sometimes ignoramuses? I pray you tell me the answer to your riddle.

NATURE: I am the great everything. I know no more about it. I am not a mathematician; and everything is arranged in my

world according to mathematical laws. Guess if you can how it is all done.

PHILOSOPHER: Certainly, since your great everything does not know mathematics, and since all your laws are most profoundly geometrical, there must be an eternal geometer who directs you, a supreme intelligence who presides over your operations.

NATURE: You are right; I am water, earth, fire, atmosphere, metal, mineral, stone, vegetable, animal. I feel indeed that there is in me an intelligence; you have an intelligence, you do not see it. I do not see mine either; I feel this invisible power; -I cannot know it: why should you, who are but a small part of me, want to know what I do not know?

PHILOSOPHER: We are curious. I want to know how being so crude in your mountains, in your deserts, in your seas, you appear nevertheless so industrious in your animals, in your vegetables?

NATURE: My poor child, do you want me to tell you the truth? It is that I have been given a name which-does not suit me; my name is "Nature", and I am all art.

PHILOSOPHER: That word upsets all my ideas. What! Nature is only art?

NATURE: Yes, without any doubt. Do you not know that there is an infinite art in those seas and those mountains that you find so crude? Do you not know that all those waters gravitate towards the centre of the earth, and mount only by immutable laws; that those mountains which crown the earth are the immense reservoirs of the eternal snows which produce unceasingly those fountains, lakes and rivers without which my animal species and my vegetable species would perish? And as for what are called my animal kingdom, my vegetable kingdom and my mineral kingdom, you see here only three; learn that I have millions of kingdoms. But if you consider only the formation of an insect, of an ear of corn, of gold, of copper, everything will appear as marvels of art.

PHILOSOPHER: It is true. The more I think about it, the more I see that you are only the art of I know not what most potent and industrious great being, who hides himself and who makes you appear. All reasoners since Thales, and probably long before him, have played at blind man's buff with you; they have said: " I have you! " and they had nothing. We all resemble Ixion; he thought he was kissing Juno, and all that he possessed was a cloud.

NATURE: Since I am all that is, how can a being such as you, so small a part of myself, seize me? Be content, atoms my children, with seeing a few atoms that Surround you, with drinking a few drops of my milk, with vegetating for a few moments on my breast, and with dying without having known your mother and your nurse.

PHILOSOPHER: My dear mother, tell me something of why you exist, of why there is anything.

NATURE: I will answer you as I have answered for so many centuries all those who have interrogated me about first principles: I KNOW NOTHING ABOUT THEM.

PHILOSOPHER: Would not non-existence be better than this multitude of existences made in order to be continually dissolved, this crowd of animals born and reproduced in order to devour others and to be devoured, this crowd of sentient beings formed for so many painful sensations, that other crowd of intelligences which so rarely hear reason? What is the good of all that, Nature?

NATURE: Oh! go and ask Him who made me.

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Celebration of Earth

Westford, Massachusetts, USA

On April 22nd, 2024, the Earth Flag was hoisted at the home of Dr. Chaitanya Hiremath.

The 12th anniversary celebration of Mother Earth Day took place on April 27th, 2024, at JV Fletcher Library in Westford, Massachusetts. Dr. Hiremath hosted the event, facilitated by Mrs. Shobha Hiremath. Westford Chamber Players performed with Yina Wang on violin and Mia Kuo on cello. It was arranged by Dongchun Wang. Essay contestants shared their works, and awards were presented. Certificates and prizes were subsequently sent out by mail. Sadhika Hiremath captured photos and assisted with the event management.

Global Essay Contest 2024



Around the World

In the early 2024 alone, SEALOEarth’s global reach included countries such as, Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Bangladesh, Belize, Bolivia, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Ecuador, France, Germany, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, Hong Kong, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Ireland, Japan, Kenya, Libya, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, Nepal, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Peru, Republic of Korea, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Somalia, Spain, Switzerland,

Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States, Venezuela, Yemen among others.

We were delighted to receive 73 exceptional essays from across the globe. These essays underwent a meticulous blind-scoring process by our esteemed panel of judges, comprising experts from Australia and the United States. The participation of students was encouraged by dedicated teachers from multiple schools.

Essay Contest Awards

"How can the ethical relationship between humanity and Mother Earth be strengthened in the pursuit of sustainable development?"

Juniors (ages 14-18)

Sahana Chaubal, 15 (MA, USA)	First Place
Julie Lee, 17 (Republic of Korea)	Second

Honorable Mention

Dennis Kim, 13 (Nevada, USA)
Maya Galli, 16 (Massachusetts, USA)
Amey Nayak, 15 (Massachusetts, USA)
Nishka Patel, 15 (Massachusetts, USA)
Valeriia Svyrydova, 15 (Ukraine)
Noor M F Korimbocus, 20 (Mauritius)

Essay prompt for 2025

“Examine select targets and measurement strategies for implementing proposed Earth-centered serene development goals across the domains of air, land, water, light, sound, thermal, nuclear, and space, with the aim of achieving a brighter future for all inhabitants of our planet.”

The deadline is March 1, 2025.

For more information, please visit:
<http://sealoeearth.org/essaycontest.html>







Earth's Ecosystem



Dennis Kim (13)
Nevada, USA

When we think of the environment, we tend to think of trees, oceans, mountains, and rivers. We often fail to consider the animals who call these places home—or if we do, we may just think of them as inhabitants. However, these inhabitants are as inherent to their environments as the plants and rocks around them. Humans may think small things—such as ants—do not matter. But they do matter; all species’ lives have equal value because every creature plays a role in the global ecosystem, has some level of consciousness, and because the planet belongs to all species.

Every plant and animal has a role in their respective ecosystem. These include anything from being food for other animals, pollinating plants, or helping manage other animal populations. If one species is lost, it can drastically impact others (EPA, “Global Climate Change”). An example is how most people hate spiders, but they eat pests. Spiders do good for the ecosystem and humans by maintaining insect populations. A historical example from the 1930s that shows this type of impact is the wolves of Yellowstone Park. They were almost hunted to extinction, which had a drastic impact on the surrounding environment: “Without them, the elk and deer they had preyed upon thrived, and their grazing decimated streamside willows and aspens, which had provided habitat for

songbirds.” (Cho, “Why Endangered Species Matter”). Imagine if this had been the case with spiders. Our future generations would face an increasing number of pests, and there would be fewer creatures with the ability to eat and maintain them. Every species—from wolves to spiders—has an important function in its ecosystem and we should respect them for it.

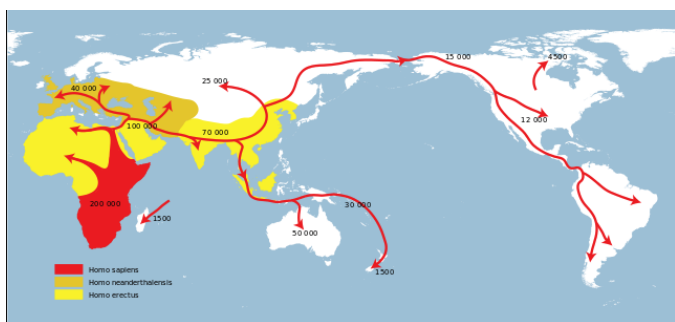


Gray wolf in Yellowstone. Photo credit: NPS/Jim Peaco

Almost all living things have some level of consciousness. Some animals, like monkeys, have even shown awareness of inequality and unfair treatment. While some people may believe humans have superior moral status to animals, others, like Peter Singer and Christine Korsgaard, believe that their capacity to suffer and value their own good should grant them the same moral status as people. (Walker, “Ethical dilemma”). These contradictory viewpoints show the complex nature of defining creatures as full beings. Despite the Kantian view that animals are “objects,” modern law does acknowledge them as “fundamentally different than objects or resources . . . their sentience sets them apart.” (Animal Legal Defense Fund, “How Animals Differ”). That this is acknowledged at a legal level supports the idea that these animals are conscious and valuable simply for that awareness—they are more than objects and resources.

Earth belongs to all living things, not just humans. Species’ lives should be treated equally because they were here on Earth before humans took over the world. All living species share the world in which we live, and common things like food, water, and air. Other creatures have dominated the planet for much longer than humans, as Earth is estimated to be about 4.54 billion years old (National Geographic, “Age of Earth

Collection”). Humans have only existed for about 300,000 years of that time (Khan Academy, “First Humans: Homo Sapiens & Early Life Migration”). Humans may not have even existed without all the species that came before them; we owe them our lives. There could even be new species that arise in the future. Would humans coming before them mean our moral status is lesser? If not, why should the status of animals be any different?



Spread of Homo sapiens. Photo credit: Wikimedia Commons.

All species’ lives have equal value because they all have a hand in shaping our shared environment, express sentience, and evolved beside us. All creatures deserve to be treated with respect and fairness, regardless of one’s views of their moral status. Whether or not you believe humans have a higher moral status than animals, this simply means it is our responsibility to care for beings more vulnerable than us. Their existence has always and will continue to impact ours, and we should be more mindful of how we impact theirs.

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Earth First: Saving Tomorrow



Sahana Chaubal (15)
Massachusetts, USA

"In nature, nothing exists alone." (Carson, *Silent Spring*, 52) This simple yet fundamental truth, quoted by Rachel Carson in *Silent Spring*, underscores that no single species, even humans, exists in isolation on Mother Earth, and every life is interconnected. This life hangs together in a very delicate balance that has allowed it to form and thrive. From Earth's location in the habitable zone to our atmosphere composed of just the right mix of gases, from Earth's magnetic field and the ozone layer that deflects harmful radiations and protects life to the complex biodiversity that produces oxygen via photosynthesis to sustain life, Mother Earth's ability to support life is an extreme rarity in our universe. As the most advanced species on the planet, it is our moral responsibility to protect this miraculous balance. Yet, our unending quest for development and economic growth has placed our relationship with Mother Earth at a pivotal crossroads. In this era of the Anthropocene (National Geographic), our actions are meaningfully influencing our climate and the environment. Hence, it is vital for us to re-evaluate our approaches and place Mother Earth first, above our ceaseless quest for rapid development, so that we can secure our tomorrow. This essay brings together different perspectives to explore how our relationship with Mother Earth can be fortified so that the delicate balance that sustains life on Earth can be maintained

and future generations can continue to thrive in the miracle that is Mother Earth.

Our journey to place Mother Earth first starts by changing our mindset about the value of life. We need to challenge ourselves to look at humans and non-humans alike. This is a quintessential ethical consideration to developing a more profound connection with our planet. Rebecca L. Walker, a philosopher of medicine whose primary focus is on the relationship between moral theories and various biomedical practices, highlights the need for this fundamental shift in our mindset so that we stop treating Earth as a resource that can be exploited but as a circle of life that thrives on reciprocal reliance. This challenge starts with understanding our place in this ecosystem and the intricate interdependencies within nature. Once we start understanding these interdependencies, we will begin to adopt more mindful and accountable ways of interacting with other species and our planet's ecosystem. As outlined by Christopher J. Preston, an award-winning author, public speaker, and environmental philosopher, this ethics and the environmental philosophy will transform us from being overlords of nature to equal members of a large and diverse ecosystem, in turn becoming the stewards of moral responsibility and accountability to preserve this delicate balance that holds together our ecosystem.



Women search for usable clothes amid tons of discarded items in Chile's Atacama Desert — famous as a fast fashion dumping ground — in Alto Hospicio, Iquicio, Chile in September 2021. Photo credit: AFP

Our fast fashion industry is just one example of where this fundamental shift in mindset can be deployed to stabilize

the growing imbalance in nature this industry is creating. As reported by BBC Earth (BBC Earth), the industry produces billions of clothes each year, creating significant pollution and waste and destroying various species' habitats, leading to their endangerment and eventual extinction. If we can value the lives of these impacted species as humans and embrace the environmental philosophy of equality and stewardship, we will start prioritizing eco-friendly materials and sustainable manufacturing. This will pave the pathway towards protecting our environment and putting Earth first. And this change does not need to be reinvented. This wisdom already existed in our ancestral practices, which we need to reinstate. As an example, the Native American farming practices outlined by historical ecologist and scholar Lyla June provide a blueprint for sustainable agriculture and biodiversity conservation that allowed these communities to live in harmony with nature. These techniques and the ability of our ancestors to find this harmony with nature should serve as inspiration for finding sustainable ways to grow food production, which will not only meet our consumption needs but also sustain the health of Mother Earth. This inspiration from our ancestral practices can manifest into policies promoting agroforestry and organic farming subsidies. As individuals, we can consume more locally grown and seasonal products and compost our waste. Similarly, we can regulate the fast fashion industry by using what we learned from our ancestors to use natural and biodegradable materials and hold producers accountable for the entire life cycle of their output. As individuals, we can also learn from our ancestors to care for, repair, and reuse our clothes.

We need to constantly reflect on how our actions align with our moral responsibility to preserve our planet for generations to come. The Ethics Center, a not-for-profit organization developing and delivering innovative programs, services, and experiences designed to bring ethics to the center of personal and professional life, calls to mind that ethics is questioning, discovering, and defending our values and principles, supporting every decision we make. And sustainability in everything we do is the mantra that should

define our every action. Sustainability means “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of our future generations to meet theirs.” This definition, written by The Center for Leadership and Ethics at The University of Texas at Austin, can help us evaluate our every action in order to put Earth first and save our tomorrow. This will compel us to assess the long-term impact of our actions continuously and push us to find the balance so that our tomorrow is secure. A positive step in this direction driving this consciousness and commitment to environmental stewardship is the investor focus and demand on public companies to enhance ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) disclosures and set science-based targets. The new norm around these disclosures and commitments is driving large and small corporations to demonstrate commitment to environmental stewardship and sustainable practices (Dreier). However, this may not be enough, and we need a more fundamental shift in our consciousness and attitude towards planet Earth. In Deep Ecology, Ryan Hubbard, a philosophy professor who works in practical ethics, advocates for making a truthful, unwavering effort to gain a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness and address challenges we have created. This paradigm shift in our approach holds the keys to always putting Earth first and becoming the true stewards of our environment.



Thomas Dreier. Photo credit: ReGlobal.org

The future of our planet is not negotiable. We need to all embrace the “Deep Ecology” approach and pathways to work with nature rather than against it. This means ensuring that the affected communities, human and non-human, have a voice in decision-making. The importance of biodiversity, as outlined by Sir David Attenborough, an English broadcaster, writer, and

naturalist, will require us to develop effective and equitable approaches that ensure the diverse needs of different members of our ecosystem are well represented and considered. This is our shared responsibility and requires collective action. From individuals to communities to nations, we all have a role in nurturing our relationship with Mother Earth. We all need to adopt sustainable practices and advocate policies that protect our environment. And here again, we can go back to our ancestors, who put a lot of effort into educating their new generation at a very young age about the importance of the delicate balance of nature and our interconnectedness with everything in this ecosystem. And like we start to learn Math and language very early in our lives, we need to empower young minds with principles of Deep Ecology so that at a very early age, they start to understand the importance of protecting the delicate balance, placing Earth first to save our tomorrow. At a policy level, we can make sustainability and environmental education mandatory in middle schools, including community involvement to heal past damage. At an individual level, we can encourage young minds to enjoy nature through visits to national parks and participation in conservation activities. Even engaging young minds through creating video games where players are saving the environment on various fronts can be a highly effective tool to educate young minds on sustainability. Creating this innate unconscious ability to apply ethics of environmental philosophy of sustainability is not a new frontier. Our ancestors had conquered this frontier long ago. And recent generations have conquered similar yet new frontiers like technology successfully. This requires us to prioritize Earth over everything else we do, otherwise, there is no tomorrow for our generations to come.

As we consider the ethical, sustainable development of our planet, I return to the words of Rachel Carson in *The Sense of Wonder*, "It is a wholesome and necessary thing for us to turn again to the earth and in the contemplation of her beauties to know the sense of wonder and humility." This approach embodies a deep, profound, meaningful notion central to strengthening the ethical relationship between humanity and Mother Earth. Our journey to saving tomorrow starts by

understanding and accepting the importance of reconnecting with nature, both ethically and practically. And while we seek to become consciously capable on this front, we need to train our younger generations early to make it their innate ability. This will allow us to reevaluate our lifestyles and consumption, which often overlook the health of our planet. This reevaluation will lead us to prioritize long-term ecological balance by placing Earth first in pursuit of saving our tomorrow. This shift in our collective consciousness and ensuring inclusivity and equality for every species will help us find sustainable pathways to respecting and nurturing our planet. Becoming stewards of our planet is our moral and ethical obligation towards future generations, both human and non-human. The future of our planet is not negotiable. So, let's find ways to connect more deeply with nature and the ecosystem around us. Let's place Earth first in every decision we make. Let's save our tomorrow for generations to come.

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The Day the World Changed: Ethical Relationships with Nature and People



Valeriia Svyrydova 16)
Poltava Oblast, UKRAINE

How much litter do you see on your street or in your town? Maybe you live in a cleaner area, but let's think about how many cities are constantly struggling with garbage, factories that dump chemicals into the sea, or wars that not only kill people but also destroy nature. Everything that we see in the news or see personally can be called an ecological crisis. In this essay, I want to explain how we can strengthen the ethical ties between humanity and the Earth in order to ensure a sustainable future for us and for nature.

Humanity must realize that we do not exist apart from nature. "The Earth does not belong to us: we belong to the Earth." ("The Earth does not belong to us" 02:00-02:15). Mother Earth is our home, our planet, which provides us with the resources to live. The biggest threat is the many wars that use various weapons that severely damage nature. All my life I live in Ukraine and unfortunately almost every day I see news where the aggressor again and again allows himself to destroy houses and deprive people of life. We cannot even imagine how much infrastructure explosions and fires release hazardous substances into the atmosphere and water bodies. Explosive mixtures from bombs and rockets, rocket fuel and phosphorus munitions can enter the ground through blast craters. Forest fires, destruction of settlements and noise pollution affect ecosystems. And I have only mentioned a few examples of what

happens to nature during war. One of the most memorable and tragic moments was in 2023, during the Russian-Ukrainian war, Russian troops breached the Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant dam. Because of this, the whole city was under water, and not only people but also many animals suffered. It is easier for people to understand what to do in situations when your city is under water, but for animals it is very difficult and dangerous. In this example I showed the first violation of ethical relations between humans and animals. I lead to the fact that not only other people, but also nature and animals suffer because of people's actions.



The decommissioned Chernobyl nuclear power station, Ukraine. Photo credit: Denis Avetisyan/stock.adobe.com

The Chernobyl disaster had a contradictory impact on nature. The explosions and nuclear fire that occurred at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant more than 30 years ago released huge amounts of radiation into the atmosphere and contaminated vast areas of Europe and Eurasia. It is one of the largest catastrophes that have been terrible for our nature. But after time, researchers discovered that the area around Chernobyl, largely closed to humans for three decades, had become a haven for wildlife. The so-called Chernobyl Exclusion Zone, covering 2,800 square kilometers of northern Ukraine, is now the third largest nature reserve in continental Europe and has become, albeit accidentally, a legendary experiment in reforestation. Studies have shown that mammal populations in the reserve are similar to those in other reserves in the region. Wolves, Eurasian lynxes and other animals have

returned to the Chernobyl area. This demonstrates nature's ability to recover from degradation.

It is important to spread knowledge about nature, ecosystems and human impact on them. Environmental education should include not only theoretical knowledge, but also practical skills that will help to preserve nature. If we take from all countries of the world, few people live in clean conditions. An example is India. About 80% of water in India is seriously polluted due to dumping of raw sewage, sediments and garbage into rivers and lakes. India suffers from high levels of air pollution, causing more than 2.5 million deaths every year. And an example with good and clean conditions is Sweden and Norway. Norway and Sweden are known for their clean water resources. They actively take care of conservation of nature and aquatic ecosystems. Norway and Sweden have efficient garbage disposal systems, including recycling and sorting. They strive for zero litter. India faces serious environmental challenges including water and air pollution. While Norway and Sweden are actively working on conservation and sustainable development. I have compared only three countries but it is enough that every place in the world has its own environmental problems that affect the health and life of people and nature.

The next example of a breach in the ethical relationship between nature and humans is climate change. High emissions of greenhouse gases such as CO₂; lead to global warming and climate change. An example is the launching of space rockets into space. The combustion products of rocket propellants can pollute the air, including carbon dioxide and other harmful substances. Incomplete combustion of rocket fuel can create chains of hydrogen and carbon, which also affects the atmosphere. Waste from rocket and space activities can enter natural bodies of water and land, disrupting ecosystems. However, it is worth noting that rocket launches are not the main threat to the environment. A much more serious factor is insufficient combustion of rocket fuel.

My father often told me that in the USSR plastic was very limited and plastic bags only appeared in the late 1970s,

twenty years behind America. The history of the creation of plastic takes us back to the middle of the 18th century. At this time, scientists and inventors began to explore new materials that could replace natural resources. In the 1930s and 40s, Petro chemists obtained polyethylene, which played an important role in World War II. It was used to insulate radar antenna cables. Plastic on the one hand can be useful, but only for mankind. More it causes harm e.g. Some types of plastic contain toxic substances such as bisphenol-A (BPA) and phthalates. These substances can be released from plastic and can be harmful to health. Plastic breaks down into microscopic particles called microplastics. They can enter the food chain through fish and other sea creatures, as well as contaminate soil.

Nature's relationship with nature can also be viewed from the perspective of gender inequality. Ecofeminism is a movement that draws parallels between the exploitation of women and natural resources. It argues that the patriarchal society model and the capitalist system are the cause of environmental problems and gender oppression. The only way to restore ecological balance is to eradicate gender inequality. One of my main ideas is the complete elimination of patriarchy in the world and the inclusion of equality in the world between the sexes. First of all, it will help in increasing the number of scientists among women, which will help in ecology in creating new plans, ideas, materials to create a healthy environment. My second idea is to create as many ecological products as possible for menstruation. This idea will not only help nature but also health. Pads and tampons contain several layers of plastic, which may contain traces of toxins. The cotton used in tampons is grown in fields and treated with pesticides. Traces of pesticides can stay in the tampons and get into your body. Some women may experience dermatitis and allergic reactions to the pads. Therefore, creating new eco-friendly and convenient menstrual products without plastic and hazardous materials can make a difference to the environment because plastic degrades very slowly and its use leads to the accumulation of garbage on land and in water resources. Establishing eco-friendly menstrual products companies in every country will help the environment many times over.

What can we really change to save the planet? We need to change our consumer behavior. Reducing the use of single-use plastic products, choosing environmentally friendly goods and supporting renewable energy sources are steps towards sustainable development. Rational use of water, land, forests and other resources is an important task. Implementing efficient technologies and practices will help preserve nature for future generations. Choose products that are made with ecological principles in mind. This can be organic food, natural cosmetics, eco-friendly clothing, etc. Support the use of solar panels, wind turbines and other energy sources that do not harm the environment. These words seem trite and boring to many people, because many have been told these words since childhood at school or by their parents. But if at least every second person adheres to them, nature will change.



COP28 Summit Photo. credit: WION

What can governments do to improve nature? Passing laws to restore nature can help return certain areas, including forests, water basins, and marine spaces, to their natural state. Governments can support sustainable land use to preserve habitat for a variety of animal and plant species. This includes controlling deforestation, protecting wetlands and other ecosystems. Governments can conduct education programs to raise awareness of the importance of biodiversity and nature in general. The most important thing in an ethnic relationship with nature is to realize what exactly man is doing wrong for nature. If people realize their responsibility, they can reduce resource consumption by choosing environmentally friendly goods and practices.

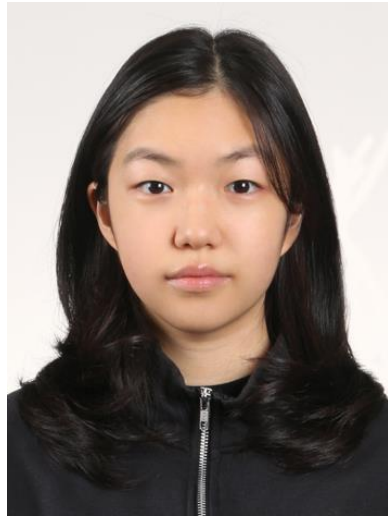
One very important aspect in strengthening ethical relations between humankind and nature is the development of youth organizations. The development of a society aimed at preserving civilization and the biosphere. Non-regressive evolution to ensure security and coexistence. Looking at many teenage organizations related to nature I note that few people have the motivation to develop further to develop the organization. Therefore, my unique idea is to support youth organizations as much as possible in the implementation of their plans and ideas. Such organizations will be able to give a good and confident future.

In conclusion, strengthening the ethical relationship between humankind and nature requires concerted efforts at different levels. Supporting youth organizations, adopting public policies for environmental conservation and promoting green consumer behavior are essential steps. In addition, addressing gender inequality and creating innovative eco-friendly products will contribute significantly to a sustainable future for our environment.

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Rebuilding The Bond Between Humanity And Nature



Julie Lee (17)

Gyeonggido, SOUTH KOREA

“What if I told you that the Earth needs us and that we belong here?”

Why try to control the Earth, when you can work with Her?”

– Lyla June

Some scientists claim that we are currently in the Anthropocene Epoch – the most recent period in Earth’s history when human activity started to have a significant impact on the planet’s climate and ecosystems (National Geographic Society). Whether or not that may have been proven true, it is a fact that our Earth is rapidly deteriorating, questioning the sustainability of human life. Humans have long lost sight of the beauty of nature, viewing it merely as a resource for exploitation and carelessly discarding it when it’s no longer of use. In doing so, the vital bond between humanity and Mother Earth has been severed and amidst the looming global climate crisis, the imperative to rebuild that bond has never been more pressing. In order to advance forward in sustainable development, we first must channel a part of our efforts into reinforcing our relationship with nature. Implementing environmental education that specifically targets youths,

incorporating Native Americans’ teachings, and tackling major but neglected environmental problems such as fast fashion, are ways we can strengthen the bond.



The First Thanksgiving is a painting by American painter Jean Louis Gerome Ferris. While the painting is fanciful and not necessarily realistic it is a compelling tribute to the peace and camaraderie of that early feast. Photo credit: foxrunenvironmentaleducationcenter.org

One of the most effective ways to raise awareness is education, for it provides foundational knowledge and shapes pro-environmental attitudes. Environmental education helps young minds form a strong sense of responsibility for preserving our Earth. In 2018, 79% of students on average across OECD countries have claimed that they were aware of global warming and climate change, and 78% agreed that protecting the global environment is important to them. Even 9 out of 10 schools reported that climate change and global warming were covered in the curriculum (OECD 2). Therefore, this shows that simply realizing the state of our Earth isn’t the real problem; rather the challenge lies in the fact that the majority are not willing to spend their time and money to take action. These findings from OECD that young people are more likely to engage in actions that do not require time or financial commitments, underscore the need for both strong knowledge and positive attitudes (OECD 2). Environmental ethics, with its central focus on understanding our moral obligations to protect and preserve Mother Nature, draws upon fields of philosophy, economics, ecology, and law. By providing a comprehensive guideline for why and how we should act to reestablish the ethical relationship with our Earth, environmental ethics offers a fitting solution to the problem we’re currently facing. Since many seem to lack the motivation to fully commit to environmental conservation efforts, transitioning the education

style to an ethical perspective may have a positive effect. As for myself, environmental ethics have added kindling to my burning passion for Earth protection. It provided a deeper meaning behind my cause and it has become a driving force of my sustainability advocacy. I now act not just to try to save humanity, but for the restoration of the brutally destructed Earth and our connection with it. Studying environmental ethics has led to my belief to prioritize investment in environmental ethics education, that transcends the mere enlightening of students about our global predicament, in hopes of inspiring youths to contribute and take meaningful actions.

Another change that should be brought upon the environmental education system is, adding a variety of forms of knowledge. Erin Redman and Kelli Larson of Arizona State University claimed that “Current efforts are inadequate for achieving transformative action,” partly due to the misconception about knowledge directly leading to action. Including alternative forms of knowledge such as procedural — understanding how to undertake particular actions, and effectiveness — understanding links between actions and their consequences, would be a more effective measure to educate sustainability (Redman and Larson 1). Learning in real-life context would also contribute to students’ development of confidence and determination to apply practical changes in their daily lives. The Earth Kids Space Program — developed by the Goi Peace foundation in 2005 and commissioned by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology — aims to teach students peace, harmony and respect for all life and the environment through cooperative games, interactive workshops and outdoor activities. In 2010, UNESCO evaluated the programme as “demonstrates its success in instilling appreciation for nature among children,” showing the success of alternative learning (OECD 5). As we navigate the complexity of sustainable development, it is important that we implement innovative educational approaches to fully educate our youths and leave a lasting, positive change in their perception of Mother Earth.

Native American communities have long lived in harmony with nature, believing that everything we do as

humans affects the environment in some shape or form. This belief set Native Americans as equals with animals and plants they took as resources and showed their understanding of the impact they have on this earth. It is why they treat nature with a level of respect and admiration that cannot be found in other cultures. John Muir, an American naturalist, said “Indians walk softly and hurt the landscape hardly more than birds or squirrels.” We must implement their unique understanding of the interconnectedness of all living beings and the environment to our sustainable practices and ethical studies. The concept of Self Restraint is often seen within many Native American cultures (Vanorio). It prevents over-consumption of natural resources, hereby minimizing the damage and saving enough for the future generations. Lyla June, a Diné woman, urged us to “work with nature” in her TED speech. She also introduced Native American strategies that she wishes would be applied today, such as intentional habitat expansion — a land management technique. She teaches us a word in her language, Hózhó, which means “the joy of being a part of the beauty of all creation” and “To understand that we belong and that our Mother Earth needs us”. “Instead of being her dominator,” she stated, “we can become her friend.” This aligns with the vision of environmental ethics and its values, further emphasizing its significant role in solving the great crisis.



North Pacific Garbage Island. Photo credit: mediacenter.hannam.ac.kr

Majority of consumers are not aware of the massive impact fast fashion has on the environment. According to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the fashion industry is the second-biggest consumer of water and is responsible for about 10% of global carbon emissions. It

depletes water sources, pollutes rivers and streams, and each year, a whopping 85% of all textiles go to dumps and 500,000 tons of microfibers — equivalent to 50 billion plastic bottles — are released into the ocean from simply washing clothes (Maiti). To address this issue, UNEP and UN Climate Change designed The Sustainable Fashion Communication Playbook for marketers, brand managers, and beyond. It presents different courses of actions such as countering misinformation and greenwashing, reducing messages perpetuating overconsumption, redirecting aspiration to more sustainable lifestyles, and empowering consumers in their role as citizens to demand greater action from businesses and policymakers, to redirect fashion towards sustainability (UNEP).

While fast fashion is slowly gaining attention through UN's efforts and education, industries are also increasingly working towards manufacturing products that minimize their environmental impact. One being Pleats Mama, utilizes recycled polyester fabric called "regen", extracted from PET bottles, to create knitwear, pleats, shoulder bags, and various other items. Regen is known for maintaining the qualities of common fibers while holding considerable environmental value due to its significant carbon reduction effects. Compared to regular polyester, producing regen results in approximately 67% reduction of carbon emissions, which is equivalent to reducing around 35000 disposable plastic cups. In 2019, Hyundai Motor Company presented its 'Re:Style Collection', featuring clothes crafted through upcycling. Over 300 people participated in this special fashion show and the collection showcased 15 outfits designed with small or contaminated leather scraps, demonstrating a creative approach to repurposing materials that would've otherwise been discarded. (Kang) Fashion upcycling not only addresses environmental concerns but also sets an example for sustainable practices.

We must continually work towards restoring our relationship with Mother Earth, shifting our focus to her not centering humanity. Stop trying to exploit nature; work together. We are to blame for the dire state of our Earth, hence it is our job, our responsibility, to restore the extreme damage we've done. Through a shift in mindset and collective action,

we can advance forward to a future where humanity and nature are holding hands.

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Navigating the Ethical Path Towards Sustainability



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In a world blinded by human greed, unable to see the frail state of nature on the edge of collapse, we stand at the critical intersection of our actions. As the cries of Mother Nature echo through the commotion of industrialization, we stand in front of a mountain; filled up with the sins we commit against the environment. Our very survival relies upon the delicate balance of ecosystems that our actions threaten to destroy. From our reliance on nature's resources to the moral contradictions of our actions, it's evident that we need to have an ethical shift in mindset. If we acknowledge the fragility of our ethical relationship with nature, we can pave the way for a more sustainable future by evaluating the ethical implications of environmental degradation, such as deforestation and air pollution. Subsequently, we can propose solutions such as indigenous farming techniques, government intervention, and promoting public transport. In the face of environmental turmoil driven by human neglect, to fix our damaged relationship with Mother Nature, we need to emphasize the need for an ethical transformation and be held responsible for our actions to secure the future of coming generations.

Acknowledging the ethical relationship between humans and the environment around us is crucial to developing sustainability because as of right now, our ethical relationship

is declining. We rely on nature's resources because our, "forests, rivers, oceans and soils provide us with the food we eat, the air we breathe, [and] the water we irrigate our crops with" (Why it Is Important). Humans are dependent on nature because, without nature and its rich resources, we would not be able to survive and thrive. We think that humans are separate entities that operate on their own; however, that mindset is wrong. We are deeply intertwined with the natural world for our survival and prosperity. Moreover, to maintain sustainability, we need to develop an ethical obligation to be held responsible for the heinous crimes we commit against Mother Nature. Around the world, currently, we are massacring trees and thrashing the atmosphere. To maintain an ethical relationship, us humans need to value each individual's life. However, our moral values contradict that belief. For example, if we kill five monkeys to save one human being, it wouldn't be sustainable but it would be morally acceptable. However, if we kill five humans to save the life of one monkey, it wouldn't be morally acceptable ("Ethical Dilemma" 00:04:00). Developing an ethical mindset enables people to take into account the severe consequences of our actions. Without fully understanding the consequences of our actions, we intentionally harm and deplete Mother Nature's resources. In the long run, respecting the ethical relationship between us and the environment will help us preserve the environment for future generations. Having an ethical mindset to combat modern-day problems benefits us by evaluating the ethical consequences, helping us prioritize the welfare of the present generation and the future generations, and guiding us toward sustainable solutions to tackle problems. Although many individuals and organizations are working towards sustainable development, in many instances, there are numerous times of unethical exploitation like deforestation and air pollution.

In modern times, environmental degradation in the forms of deforestation and air pollution has become an alarming concern because of the unethical implications on ecosystems. We carry out immoral practices in numerous ways to benefit and sustain ourselves. Deforestation, the act of intentional clearing of forested areas, is one of the countless unethical

practices we conduct daily. According to The Amazon Conservation, The Amazon Rainforest serves as a prime example of deforestation. Being the largest rainforest on Earth, it serves as a vital reservoir for biodiversity; harboring millions of species of life forms. However, human exploitation pushed by agricultural development, logging, and illegal poaching has destroyed habitats and led to severe deforestation ("Threats To The Amazon"). Not only are we threatening the survival of species, but we are also undermining the ethical foundation upon which our relationship is established. Systematically, we are executing a mass genocide upon millions of trees; the very gifts that provide us with oxygen. Our unethical practices are not limited to exploiting mother nature's resources but also the contamination of Earth's atmosphere through air pollution. Air pollution, the act of putting dangerous chemicals and gasses into the Earth's atmosphere resulting from factories and vehicles, is another unethical practice we orchestrate every day. In the informative article, "Delhi, controlling air pollution is in your own hands" New Delhi, India is ranked one of the highest in terms of air quality index. In the suburbs of Delhi, residents grapple with the smog of pollution engulfing the whole city. Millions, and millions of cars, "ply on the roads of Delhi every day and emit gasses like carbon dioxide, sulfur dioxide, carbon monoxide, nitrous oxide, ozone, and more" ("Delhi, Controlling"). In addition, industrial activities contribute significantly to the cities' existential crisis. Factories and manufacturing facilities release a mixture of toxic pollutants into the atmosphere. Furthermore, the environmental deterioration caused by air pollution has threatened biodiversity around the city. The loss of biodiversity compromises human wellness by limiting clean water and discarding pollination. In New Delhi, the burden of air pollution affects low-income neighborhoods. These communities lack access to healthcare, clean air, and green spaces, and are exposed to the vulnerabilities of airborne pollution ("Delhi, Controlling"). By engaging in short-term interests such as industrializing, we neglect Mother Nature's cries for help and betray the foundation that the environment is built upon.



Human activity and drought have degraded more than a third of the remaining Amazon rainforest, on top of the impacts of deforestation. Photo credit: Douglas Magno/AFP/Getty Images

Solving the environmental crises caused by deforestation and air pollution is an integrated process however it's achievable by adapting indigenous farming techniques, government intervention, and encouraging the use of public transportation. Restoring indigenous communities to their old habitats and implementing their farming techniques allows us to prioritize long-term sustainability for generations to come. As Lyla Jane said in the TedX video, "3000-year-old solutions to modern problems" by placing farmer's fields at the bottom of the watersheds and catching rain, the nutrients flowing with the rain reach the upland soils. By adapting ancient farming techniques, not only do we restore degraded land and promote effective management systems around the world, but we honor ancient indigenous culture and their ways of living ("3000-year-old Solutions" 00:03:52-00:04:41). Ethically speaking, by considering farming methods and implementing them worldwide, we promote sustainability because instead of harming nature for our greed, we live in a society where we and nature are mutually beneficial. Furthermore, government intervention can play a significant role in addressing deforestation and air pollution. Our governments can enact policies to decrease deforestation and reduce air pollution resulting from industries, transportation, and agriculture. Normalizing ethical land practices, establishing designated conservation areas, and imposing emission standards on vehicles are all ways that our government can enact sustainable policies. Moreover, investing in environmental education is not an option; it is essential for governments seeking to promote the

importance of environmental responsibility in society. State and local governments should work with schools to incorporate vital subjects such as ecology into the curriculum. By advocating for policies that promote sustainability and environmental education, our governments can participate in ethical approaches to preserve the environment for future generations. Opting to use public transportation instead of personal vehicles decreases our carbon footprint on Earth. Indirectly, using personal vehicles as forms of transportation daily not only damages the environment around us but tarnishes the Earth's atmosphere through pollution.



How we value nature. Photo credit: Karsten Würth

Recognizing the ethical implications of our relationship with Earth and taking the necessary steps to solve them is imperative to address the hurdles ahead of us. By prioritizing sustainable practices such as using public transportation, we can promote a deeper understanding of our connection with nature. If we lose any more time in addressing and taking action, the consequences will be dire. The fate of our planet and our future generations is at stake; it's our job to act decisively in safeguarding Earth's resources for millennia to come. Every minute of inaction inches us closer to irreversible damage to our beloved planet. Together, let us rise to the challenge and overcome the mountain plagued with sins. As we look over the horizon, we see a world filled with endless possibilities; a world where our collective efforts have paved the way for a greener, more sustainable future.

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Learning From Indigenous Populations



Maya Galli (16)
Massachusetts, USA

John Hollow Horn, a member of the subtribe Oglala part of the Lakota Nation once said, “Someday the earth will weep [...] she will beg for her life [...] You will make a choice, if you will help her or let her die, and when she dies, you too will die” (qtd. in Bivens). He explains that one day Mother Earth will suffer and it is our actions that will impact whether we both will continue to thrive or if we both die. As almost anyone knows, climate change and destruction to the planet is an active battle Mother Earth is fighting every day. However, if we take a step back and look at the history of land in the U.S. before European Colonization, we can observe that at a time when Mother Earth was healthy before atrocities such as deforestation and hunting species into extinction were popular, it was Indigenous people who inhabited the land. They kept it thriving for as long as they could before they were stripped of it. For humanity and Mother Earth’s relationship to flourish we must engage in conversations of reparation and incorporate indigenous sustainable practices to our farming methods.

Centuries before Europeans came to settle in the United States, many indigenous groups inhabited the land, and used many sustainable practices regarding their food sourcing. They were known as a keystone species or “a species upon which entire ecosystems depend” (“3000-year-old Solutions” 00:02:20). They used several sustainable agricultural methods to protect and feed their people in a way that also helped and protected the planet. Four main methods explained in the

YouTube video “3000-year-old Solutions” were aligning themselves with nature to work with her and not against her, intentionally expanding habitats for the benefit of all, decentering humans, and designing for perpetuity (“3000-year-old Solutions” 00:03:50-00:07:20). These methods and others allowed the land to prosper and kept indigenous populations healthy and connected to Earth. Unfortunately, when European settlers arrived, indigenous tribes were forced to negotiate treaties for relocation of their homelands (DeFrees). One example of this forced relocation was the Cherokee tribe who felt a strong connection with their land which they called home; however, there was a small group of Cherokee people who supported the relocation and the federal government had them sign a treaty of removal for the whole tribe (DeFrees). The government then forced the devastated Cherokee tribe to move westward in a torturous trek known as “Trail of Tears”. During this treacherous journey, over 4,000 Cherokee people perished from disease and the unforgiving weather conditions (DeFrees).



Indian Wars And Westward Expansion (1800-1830). Photo credit: The Granger Collection, New York

Not only did European settlers have a negative impact on the flourishing relationship indigenous populations had with Mother Earth, but also the land they had stolen. When European settlers arrived, they took land from indigenous populations in order to plant cotton (DeFrees) and unfortunately, they did not use any of the sustainable methods the tribes had used. Over time as more infrastructure was built and agriculture became more industrialized, Mother Earth began to die. Although much of this relocation happened in the 17th and 18th centuries the indigenous populations are still impacted presently. As Allison DeFrees writes: “Today there are about 2 million indigenous

people in the U.S. however most live on reservations and are concentrated in the Southwestern states”. Because of European settlers' actions, Mother Earth has been dying as we are destroying and suffocating her. To reverse this destruction, we must learn from and integrate agricultural methods used by indigenous people prior to their relocation.

And there is hope. There are several organizations out there led by indigenous people aiming to re-introduce their past sustainable practices to help heal the world. One of these groups is the Tohono O'odham Nation of Southwest Tucson Arizona. They have been farming in the Sonoran Desert for hundreds of years and have been working to bring back practices that help their people as well as the Earth (Gilbert). In fact, “...many O'odham people understand that in order to be healthy, they have to return to the heritage of health of their ancestors” (“Rediscovering Traditional Tohono O'odham Foodways”). A group from the Tohono O'odham Nation is doing just that. They have managed the “San Xavier Cooperative Farm and grown traditional desert cultivars since the 1970's” (Gilbert), and done this in a way that honors their ancestral values which includes respecting natural resources such as land and water. Additionally, all food they grow is stored and preserved (“Rediscovering Traditional Tohono O'odham Foodways”). This way, the Nation has enough food to feed their people for as long as they need. Another example of an organization working towards growing food using indigenous ancestral values is the Ajo Center for Sustainable Agriculture. They are “A Native American governed food justice organization” (Gilbert) and they have successfully founded their own seed bank that “has distributed over 10,000 seeds to farmers” (Gilbert). The organization is focused on using what nature is already providing to them. The center also grows “60-day corn, a fast-maturing desert adapted vegetable, and the Tepary bean, a high protein legume which leaves fold to shade itself” (Gilbert). Sterling Johnson of the Tohono O'odham Nation describes a sustainable water conservation practice used during the summer monsoon season where he captures the precipitation to help crops that are in the desert. This method is sustainable as Sterling describes it as a way of “using the

contour lines, using your environment and nature to grow food” (Gilbert). Another way this Nation has been reestablishing a strong connection with nature has been through ceremonies, songs, and games which allows the Nation to feel connection with the cycles the desert naturally goes through (“Rediscovering Traditional Tohono O'odham Foodways”). These methods focus on using indigenous values and using what is already available in nature without destroying it further and connecting with the land. In this way Mother Earth can help us and we can help Mother Earth.



Bethany Fackrell (right), a member of the Snoqualmie Tribe in eastern Washington, harvests cedar according to traditional sustainable practices in May 2020. Photo credit: Sabeqwa de los Angeles/Snoqualmie Indian Tribe Communications & Multimedia Design Dept.

Not only is Arizona implementing and incorporating indigenous sustainable practices back into their lives but so is the Onondaga tribe located in New York. There lies “The Onondaga Nation Farm, a 163-acre plot of reclaimed land” (Maillard). The farms of this Nation focus primarily on the indigenous food sovereignty movement which aims to celebrate the agrarian traditions of planting and harvesting all while building a sense of identity and community (Maillard). As Ms. Ferguson, the supervisor of the Nation Farm says, “You have to have a connection with the place where you are growing” (Maillard). The main part of this farm is the seed bank in which Ms. Ferguson has amassed more than 4,000 varieties of corn. Some of these seeds have been returned to their tribal homes after generations (Maillard). As the article declares, “In the seed bank, those cultures live on” (Maillard). The Nation also has a reservation water system and a healing center (“Food”) which

plays an important role in saving water for future generations. An important message passed down in the Onondaga Nation is to take only what you need “it is a lesson to learn not to deplete all of your resources and leave none for the people following you tomorrow” (“Food”). These efforts help the land by growing food in a healthy way to feed many people while also building a relationship with Earth by not depleting her of her beauty. Advancements are not only being made locally but also through the government. U.S. Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland and the National Parks Service Director Charles F. Sams III are the first in their positions to be of indigenous descent and they are working towards having more tribal involvement in overseeing federal public lands (Aadland). The movement of indigenous populations reclaiming land is sometimes referred to as “Land Back” (Aadland). Through this restoration of land indigenous populations can focus on alleviating trauma created by past mistakes and reviving traditional hunting, gathering, and cultivation methods while protecting the species that inhabit the land (Aadland). These efforts demonstrate the balance supported by the indigenous as a keystone species.



A storage room at the Onondaga Nation Farm holds thousands of seed varieties and preserved food, enough to feed every tribal citizen for four years. Photo credit: Tahila Mintz for The New York Times

We can learn from sustainable methods and solutions being implemented in Arizona and New York and try to incorporate them into mainstream agriculture. Arizona's Tohono O'odham Nation's practices have helped the Earth regarding food security and also using the Earth, by working with her and not against her. This connects back to the ancient practice that Lyla June mentioned as aligning and connecting

yourself with nature. This nation has also focused on respecting the land and resources provided to them by Mother Earth aligning with Lyla June's method of decentering humans. Lyla June describes this with an important question, “Why hoard for your own species when you can live to serve all life around you?” (“3000-year-old Solutions” 00:06:04). In New York, the Onondaga Nation Farm has brought back cultivation practices that help the Earth and also give them food. Furthermore, the “Land Back” movement has helped reintroduce indigenous people as a keystone species by helping the Earth as she helps them. If we learn and apply these practices to farming while restoring as much land as possible to Native populations, the connection between us and Mother Earth will be strengthened. With this strong bond, we can ensure that Mother Earth will live on. As John Hollow Horn says we have a choice and our choice is for humanity and Mother earth to live on for generations to come.

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Redefining Value



Lael Gebregziabher (16)
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As humanity approaches the brink of disaster, with a climate crisis that only seems to continue to spiral out of control ... maybe it's time to take a step back. It is, of course, only natural to instinctively want to jump headfirst into this issue, as it appeals to that desire inside all of us to keep ourselves alive. There's no escaping it, and an urgency is born out of that feeling that arises out of feeling trapped in this crisis, with the way out offered to us through emissions reductions policies to turning the light off as you leave the room.

Though climate change will inevitably affect us all, there are still limits on what you experience. Some countries are at much higher risk of bearing the brunt of climate change; say, if their economy highly relies on the output of crops dependent on weather patterns, or a majority of their population lives at lower lying coastal areas. However, we can all bond over our species, over our identities as people – that is, if I want “we” to refer to the human population. But that certainly isn't where climate change's effects will end; species of animals are losing habitats and key parts of their food and environmental systems, and deforestation and the shifting climate continue to desecrate rainforests and glaciers around the world. There is a sense of affinity, there, between the citizen and any animal, and the common suffering at the hands of climate change. And yet, it is

not enough for us to share our sympathies with these other species and populations, and to more seriously consider their role in our approach to climate action. This is yet another natural feeling in us all, to use our humanity as a sense of superiority and pride. But maybe climate change is an opportunity for another kind of change: a chance to reconsider these moral rankings, and to let this reshape how we approach climate policy into the future.



Climate Change. Photo credit: Bruno Camargo on Unsplash

Moral status is a tool often used to approach the question of how we might prioritize the lives of animals and humans in different, dire situations. An example shared in a TedEd video by the name of “Ethical Dilemma: Whose Life is More Valuable?” questions how many monkeys could be sacrificed ethically in the name of studying and curing a potential threat to humanity (Ted-Ed). Though the question of a “potential threat” might give us some pause, there is a tendency to prioritize the humans in this situation. As you increase the number of monkeys affected, this stance might grow weaker, but the initial alliance with your fellow human is still a major factor in this ethical dilemma. Moral status asks if a species' interests matter for its own sake. Answers could fall into a binary or across a spectrum, but either way, humans are usually given the highest priority. This tool has been used by many philosophers and thinkers to prioritize humans in situations similar to the monkey versus the human first posed.

Though moral status is offered as a way to more objectively value a living being's life, it is still undoubtedly

biased towards humans. We often pride ourselves on our awareness of ourselves, others, and the situations we are in, and it is often paraded about as a quality best found in humans, even when defining consciousness and awareness is a very difficult and vague task. Though this trait is certainly an interesting and helpful one, it's odd to immediately value ourselves more based on this thing we are born with.

A fairer approach could be an individual's actual actions. Using moral status, you could argue that a tiger that has hunted down and eaten prey is less valuable than a person who works as a CEO and approves of their company's practices that put more emissions into the climate. While animals act based on instinct, we can evaluate someone's character by seeing how they put their self-awareness into action in their lives. However, allocating value based on natural-born traits that we've self-identified to be more superior than others is much less justifiable.

This perspective is important in assessing how we can ethically lead a relationship with the Earth. We are all fundamentally made from the same stuff as everything and everyone else on Earth, and if we wish to sustain ourselves through this climate crisis, we must recognize that this involves appeasing the ecosystem and balance the Earth has undergone for thousand and millions of years. As Lyla June, a musician, scholar, and historian, said in her Ted talk, "Humanity is an expression of the Earth's beauty," and we will all benefit if we accept our roles as small parts within the Earth's grand systems and dynamics. Lyla had described in her Ted talk the strategies of tending to the land as if you were working with it, not against it, and the very real and measurable benefits that arose from them (June).

On the subject of climate change, we will all submit to it eventually if it continues progressing as it does now. The current system that has been fueling climate change for decades is built on a capitalist system that appeases to corporations. These corporations define value based on the constant demand of consumers as Earth's population continues to grow, and certain areas and people grow much wealthier than others. This

supply and demand back-and-forth prioritizes monetary value over all else, including the health of the environment that its pollutants and emissions feed back into. Though most people aren't a part of the group that controls these large corporations and has say in their practices, it can feel like this system that has been in place for so long is necessary to play into for survival, as many goods and services must be accessed through businesses that don't practice sustainability. Current climate policies want to allow these systems to stay in place if they promise to slowly phase out emissions, which isn't guaranteed to happen without strict regulation, and these promises are usually still less than what's needed to reach the Paris Agreement goal of 1.5 degrees Celsius. There's also much room for corruption and loopholes within these emissions reductions systems.



1.5°C target. Photo credit: iStock

If we instead placed more value on preserving our environment as well as the economy, greater change could take place. As mentioned by Christopher Preston in the video "Environmental Philosophy," there is no aspect of the environment we haven't affected, so it makes sense to always consider it in our future action and policies (Preston). However, after so long with current practices in place, it will be hard to get politicians and CEOs to prioritize climate action, especially when these policies could hurt their booming businesses in the short term (though climate change stands to hurt the economy in the long term). This is why we must approach policies with both short term and long-term goals in mind.

In the short term, it is important that we take private funding within these companies – the funding that allows them to take over markets, forcing consumers to buy their products and contribute to their polluting practices – and then divert them to initiatives to grow clean energy technologies, such as electric cars, solar panels, batteries, and heat pumps. These efforts need to be happening at a much faster, larger scale, according to the International Energy Agency, and these funds would greatly help to quicken the process (International Energy Agency). If this were monitored at the federal level, it would allow for much less corruption and skirting of responsibilities within these companies. These funds could also go to managing forests, combating desertification, and halting biodiversity loss, which all fall under one of the UN’s Global Goals to protect life on land. The UN is also a body that could handle specific and swift allocation of funds to initiatives; urgency and organization is of utmost importance in this case (UN).



How can we implement education for climate action and climate justice? Photo credit: Christina Kwauk/Brookings

Concerning the long-term goal, one of the most important pieces of my entire proposal is to gradually shift our mindset to prioritizing the environment around us, and seeing the inherent value in biodiversity and greenery prevalence in communities. This would include new programs at community levels to encourage involvement and connection on local levels, to more personally invest citizens in their environment. Reports on green education, such as the one by Brookings, outlines an agenda that prioritizes nurturing an understanding that the planet’s health is intrinsically tied to human health, and that

developing green skills across a lifetime increasing our collective resilience and adaptability (Kwauk). This shift would take a long time, but as generations went on to continue to learn these things, a cultural change could take place in the future. Climate action is always about trusting certain seeds to take root, and in trusting people’s drive for action and connection.

All in all, a shift from looking intrinsically, at our own experiences as humans, caught between polluting corporations and our own worsening guilt, to looking outwards at the value of life on Earth and how a shifted mindset to community and future change – it can make all the difference. It reminds me of Lyla June’s story in her Ted talk, about how a forest’s burning soil actually allowed it to grow for centuries. If we trust in radical and upheaving change, it will allow for us to continue to strive and enjoy Earth’s bounty for millennia to come.

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Can Mother Earth and Humanity Coexist?



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Mother Nature, sometimes known as Mother Earth or the Earth Mother is a personification of nature that focusses on the life-giving and nurturing aspects of nature by embodying it, in the form of a mother. It symbolizes the interconnectedness of all living beings and the importance of preserving the environment for current and future generations [1]. Humanity, on the hand, is the human race which includes everyone on Earth. It is also a word for the qualities that make us human, such as the ability to love and have compassion. As sentient beings, humans have the capacity to think, feel, create and make conscious choices that impact the environment and each other [2].

The relationship between Mother Earth and humanity is complex and symbiotic. Humans rely on the Earth for resources such as food, water, and shelter, while Earth provides the necessary conditions for life to thrive. Mother Earth provides the plants, animals, birds, and fish who give their lives to feed and clothe human beings, while the trees, plants, and soil provides us with shelter, warmth, and a way to grow some of our foods. Water, a vital part of all life on Mother Earth, has been abundant and fresh for centuries for all beings in need of the life-giving substance. However, human activities like deforestation, pollution, and overconsumption have led to

environmental degradation and climate change, threatening the delicate balance of nature [3].

Throughout the ages, human civilization has thrived by exploiting the bounties of nature, shaping the world to suit its needs. However, in recent times, this exploitation has reached unsustainable levels, leading to environmental degradation, climate change, and a looming sense of crisis. The question arises. Can Mother Earth and humanity coexist harmoniously, or are we destined for a collision course that will result in irreparable damage to our planet?

To answer this question, we must first understand the current state affairs between humanity and the environment. Human activity is causing environmental degradation, which is the deterioration of the environment through depletion of resources such as air, water, and soil; the destructions of ecosystems; habitat destruction; the extinction of wildlife; and pollution. The rapid industrialization and urbanization of the past few centuries have taken a heavy toll on the Earth s ecosystems. Deforestation, pollution, overfishing, and the burning of fossil fuels have led to widespread habitat destruction, loss of biodiversity, and climate change. These impacts not only harm the planet but also endanger the very existence of the human species [4].



Rio Tinto in Spain presents an acid drainage of both natural and artificial origin (mining). Photo credit: Wikipedia

In spite of these challenges, there is hope for a more sustainable future. In recent years, there has been a growing

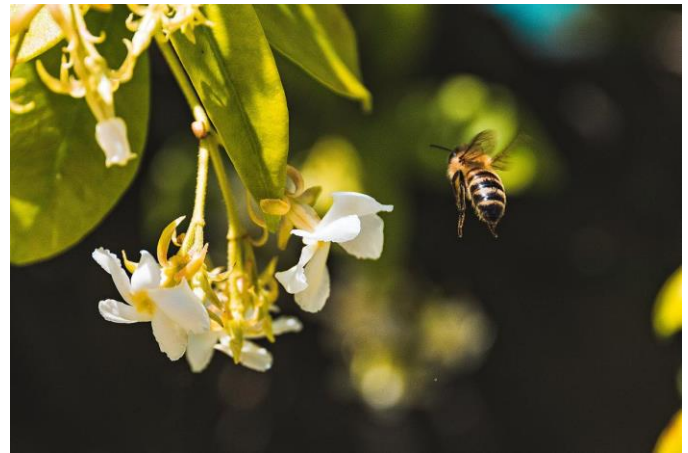
awareness of the need to protect the environment and mitigate the effects of climate change. Governments, businesses, and individuals around the world are taking steps to reduce their carbon footprint, conserve natural resources, and promote renewable energy sources. International agreements such as the Paris Agreement demonstrate a global commitment to combating climate change and protecting the environment for future generations.

One of the key ways in which humanity can coexist with Mother Earth is through sustainable development. This can be done by using less energy, water, and other resources. Using fewer resources can help reduce the strain on the environment, preserve resources for future generations, and reduce our carbon footprint. Reducing, recycling, and reusing are essential components of a successful sustainability strategy [5]. Promoting sustainability helps create the better environments in which we can thrive, while also conserving resources for future generations, so social justice and a high quality of life can be enjoyed by people in the future. By adopting sustainable practices in areas such as agriculture, energy production, transportation, and waste management, we can reduce our impact on the environment and create a more harmonious relationship with the planet [6].

Education also plays a significant role in fostering a relationship between humanity and Mother Earth. By teaching people about the interconnectedness of all living beings and the importance of preserving the environment, we can instill a sense of responsibility and stewardship towards the earth. Education should focus on promoting sustainable practices, such as reducing waste, conserving resources, and protecting diversity. By raising awareness about environment issues, teaching sustainable practices, and instilling a sense of respect for nature in future generations, we can create a more environmentally conscious society that values the Earth as a precious and irreplaceable resource [7]

Another crucial aspect of coexisting with Mother Earth is respect for nature and indigenous wisdom. Many traditional cultures around the world have long understood the

interconnectedness of all living beings and the importance of living in harmony with the Earth. Since the 16th century, human activity has impacted nature in practically every part of the world, wild plants and animals are at risk of extinction, deforestation and land degradation are causing water scarcity and erosion, and climate change leads to acidification of oceans. It is important for us to recognize our role in the degradation and take responsibility for preserving the environment. By incorporating indigenous knowledge and practices into modern environmental policies, we can learn valuable lessons about how to protect and preserve the natural world and by embracing sustainable living practices, supporting conservation efforts, we can reciprocate the love and care we receive from Mother Earth [8].



In the spirit of nature, everything is connected. Photo credit: Andrea Sonda

Furthermore, fostering a sense of humility and gratitude towards the earth is essential in strengthening the ethical relationship between humanity and Mother Earth. Recognizing the inherent value of the environment and expressing gratitude for the resources it provides can help shift our perspective from one of exploitation to one of respect. By cultivating a deep reverence for the earth and all its inhabitants, we can develop a more harmonious relationship with the natural world and adopt a mindset of abundance rather than scarcity.

Lastly, another way in which humanity can coexist with Mother Earth is through environmental ethics: deep ecology. Deep ecology is the theory and environmental ethics that undertakes the relationship between humanity and Mother

Earth. Deep ecology, environmental philosophy and social movement based in the belief that humans must radically change their relationship to nature from one that values nature solely for its usefulness to human beings to one that recognizes that nature has an inherent value. Why is ecology important? Ecology enriches our world and is crucial for human wellbeing and prosperity. It provides new knowledge of the interdependence between people and nature that is vital for food production, maintaining clean air and water, and sustaining biodiversity in a changing climate [9]. Tree-planting and man-made forests are examples of deep ecology. Humans may plant trees to conserve the environment, prevent soil erosion, and providing habitat for other organisms. Aquaculture including fish farming allows for the conservation of aquatic species and may be seen as an example of deep ecology. Deep ecology and ecofeminism are strong philosophies, emphasizing the need to change the overall human-nature relationship. Without this revolution our natural world will continue to be exploited and the rate of degradation will continue to decrease [10].



What is ecology? Photo credit: British Ecological Society

To conclude, the question of whether humanity and Mother Earth can coexist is not a simple one. It requires a fundamental shift in our attitudes, behaviors, and priorities to prioritize the health and well-being of the planet. It is essential for humanity to acknowledge its interconnectedness with Mother Earth and take responsibility for the well-being of the planet. By embracing sustainable development, promoting environmental education, respecting nature, incorporating indigenous wisdom, fostering humility and gratitude towards

the earth, and prioritizing environmental ethics, we can work towards a more harmonious coexistence with the Earth. The future of humanity and the planet depend on our ability to coexist and thrive together.

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