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BEYOND WILDERNESS: WILDNESS AS A GUIDING IDEAL

By

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Thesis

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Introduction

Wilderness can be understood in several ways. As a place, it was historically understood in the Western tradition as a region beyond the realm of the polis or the principally human realm. Wilderness today is primarily understood as either Wilderness Act (legal) wilderness, or what some have called de facto wilderness, the former containing the bulk of remaining wilderness in the United States. This paper will commonly refer to wilderness in a more general sense than legal wilderness and will clarify when a specific sense of the term is being used. As an idea however, wilderness has deep and complex implications. Max Oelschlaeger in The Idea of Wilderness,¹ for instance, is focused not on the modern, fragmented, politicized concept, but on the “more general wild ground of our being.” Both the place and the idea of wilderness will be considered in this paper.

Wilderness has functioned as a crucial component of the environmental movement, serving in many respects as its core. Relatively recently, however, the idea of wilderness has become problematized. It has been criticized as being, for instance, a socially constructed illusion, a theme park, or a prison. A major source of criticism of wilderness is found in The Great New Wilderness Debate. I will consider two essays from this debate: William Cronon’s “The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature” and Thomas Birch’s “The Incarceration of Wilderness: Wilderness Areas as Prisons.” Additionally, I will discuss Eric Higgs’ Nature by Design. Wilderness has also become problematic practically, especially in terms of self-sufficiency and sustainability. We have come to realize that our protected areas are too small and

disconnected to sustain themselves in a robust form, especially in terms of wildlife. Preserved areas have thus come to resemble isolated islands.

Largely in light of these shortcomings of wilderness, many have suggested that the quality of wildness ought to be focused upon rather than the ideal of wilderness. I will thus continue by considering wildness as a guiding ideal, both in terms of wilderness and in terms of the human inhabited world. I will use Jack Turner's The Abstract Wild as the primary work when wildness is addressed in terms of wilderness and for wildness as a guiding ideal more generally I will use 'flow' as a metaphor. The term is taken from Csíkszentmihályi's Beyond Boredom and Anxiety and is an implicit part of Heidegger's thought on technology and human habitation.

A core component of my thesis is the insight that there is a reciprocity between us, the human inhabitants of this planet, and our material environment. The meaning of environment here goes beyond the often-used sense of the term as the natural world, to additionally include all of our inhabited and visited spaces in their various forms, from the shopping mall to the national park. This reciprocal relationship between us and our environment is well captured in Winston Churchill's statement that "we shape our buildings, and afterwards our buildings shape us." There is a matter that runs deeper than Churchill's concerns, however. What about that which is *not* shaped by us and yet shapes us? Since the Neolithic Revolution 10,000 years ago, the dominant pattern shaping the world and all of its inhabitants has been the increasingly pervasive impact and rearrangement of the earth by human beings. We now stand at a point where the human-shaped threatens to totally subsume all things including the human being. This is what

inspired Thoreau's stronger and more disturbing insight that “men have become the tools of their tools.”²

Yet we must not overestimate ourselves. Barring the most extreme forms of annihilation, like those that could result from the worst consequences of nuclear or nanotechnology, wild nature on earth can and will persist. It may very well outlast us. Individual species may depart, as indeed many have in what some have called the sixth great extinction event, but life and the universe will in most respects continue on as it always has, with or without us, though certainly in a form such that human impacts will be felt for some time. Gary Snyder writes, “Wilderness may temporarily dwindle, but wildness will not go away. A ghost wilderness hovers around the entire planet. The millions of tiny seeds of the original vegetation are hiding in the mud on the foot of an arctic tern, in the dry desert sands, or in the wind.”³

Further, my thesis is not primarily concerned with the intrinsic value or right of nature to exist apart from us, nor am I advocating (nor necessarily opposing) a biocentric or ecocentric perspective, but I am rather taking the human being as the starting point. I am not, however, advocating a shallow ecology that construes nature as mere resource, nor is this to say that we do not have moral duties to nature (since of course we do), but that we must first focus on ourselves and our place on the earth. My thesis is written in the tradition and spirit of Thoreau; thus the concern is first and foremost with the human being and the hope of a free existence, but in terms that directly relate us to nature. I take as a premise that as the world stagnates in reservoirs of all kinds, we stagnate with it, or as Thoreau puts it: “Our village life would stagnate if it were not for the unexplored

forest and meadows which surround it. We need the tonic of wildness.”⁴ My concern is thus about our freedom, and our finding a home. However, this cannot be done in human terms alone. In the process of finding our own place on earth we will leave a place for all things. In the process of freeing ourselves, all things shall be freed.

I will begin by examining several criticisms of wilderness in Chapter 1. Chapter 2 will look at Jack Turner’s The Abstract Wild and the quality of wildness, especially in terms of wilderness. Chapter 3 will consider our homelessness and homecoming. Chapters 4 & 5 will consider the quality of wildness as it relates to the everyday world, with Chapter 4 on wild being and Chapter 5 on wild building.

Chapter 1: The Trouble with Wilderness

The Trouble with Wilderness

One of the key critics of wilderness has been William Cronon, most notably in his essay, “The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature.” Cronon states that his criticisms are not meant to undermine the preservation of ‘wild’ land, but rather to question the idea of wilderness itself – the meaning behind it and thus its implications and context. His critique is wide in its scope but can be reduced to several major themes, namely that the idea of wilderness is a socio-historical construct, it is freighted with excess ‘baggage,’ it represents a flight from history and an evasion of responsibility, it is a symptom of urban alienation, and it reproduces this alienation by leaving no place for humanity. These will be briefly summarized, but in this thesis I will focus mainly on the criticism that wilderness is a symptom of, and thus embodies, alienation.

Cronon first critiques the idea of wilderness by arguing that ‘wilderness,’ both as an idea and as a place, is a product of civilization. It pretends to be outside of history, but is rather a human creation born out of a specific time and place, and is thus merely a ‘construct.’ Besides being historically and culturally contingent, wilderness is a construct because much of what we now call wilderness was long occupied by indigenous peoples, thus “‘uninhabited wilderness’ [is] uninhabited as never before in the human history of the place – [it] reminds us just how invented, just how constructed, the American Wilderness really is.”⁵ This criticism will come into play later on as it relates to alienation.

Cronon also critiques wilderness by claiming that it is 'freighted' with "moral values and cultural symbols,"⁶ namely the "sacred grandeur of the sublime [and] the primitive simplicity of the frontier."⁷ According to Cronon, the sublime is such that the supernatural lies just below the surface, where one can catch a glimpse of 'God's face.' The meaning of the sublime changed over time, however, from the original Romantic conception, which was bound up with terror, to the 'domesticated sublime' of John Muir that is largely predominant today. The frontier ideal is an extension of the primitivism of Rousseau. The wilderness combines the glorification of simple, primitive living with America's "most sacred myth of origin."⁸ Cronon's critique on this account is no more than an explication of this conception of wilderness and does little (or nothing) to counter that conception.

The conception of wilderness that Cronon critiques is of a place that is totally unpeopled, untouched, and outside of human intention. This is equivalent to Bill McKibben's conception of nature in his work, The End of Nature. This idea of nature has been interpreted, by Eric Higgs for instance, as being captured in the terms of Wilderness Act wilderness. This act defines wilderness as a place that is untrammelled by man and is preserved such that man is a visitor who does not remain, etc. Cronon claims that such a conception of wilderness is a symptom of urban alienation. Only well-to-do city folks without any grounded conception of how goods and land are connected have the "dream of an unworked natural landscape,"⁹ while country people are too wise to hold unworked land as the ideal. All that the land holds for these alienated individuals is recreation and consumption. At its heart this conception of wilderness is a dualistic notion that leaves no place for humans to live and make a living, and thereby separates humans from nature.

For Cronon, this is the heart of the matter. He states, “This, then, is the central paradox: wilderness embodies a dualistic vision in which the human is entirely outside the natural. If we allow ourselves to believe that nature, to be true, must also be wild, then our very presence in nature represents its fall. The place where we are is the place where nature is not.”¹⁰ He goes on to state that if taken to its ‘logical extreme’ wild nature preservation requires suicide. It is largely McKibben that Cronon has in mind here. According to McKibben, nature has died because it is globally affected by humans, most notably in the form of climate change. This is so if “nature to be natural, must also be pristine.”¹¹ Though McKibben is right that the global impact of humanity is unprecedented and unique in history, his conclusion that the world is completely humanized and artificial, and thus nature is dead, is problematic. This is so for several reasons, according to Cronon. The first is that environmental history reveals that indigenous people have long impacted the environment. However, Cronon does not address the fact that our impact now is far deeper and more pervasive. Second, humans are placed outside the realm of the natural. This will be addressed in chapter 2. Third, wilderness is still present despite human impact.

Not only is this conception of wilderness problematic but, Cronon argues, it becomes even more so if it is used to judge civilization, since this reproduces the dualism between nature and humanity and is thus contrary to a good relationship with nature. Cronon is correct about this if the notion that human presence represents nature’s fall is taken as a metaphysical hypothesis. However, this is not the case for all humans throughout all time. Given present circumstances, however, namely that modern humans are agricultural/industrial humans, it is in fact true that we are unable to live our current

form of life without grossly disrupting nature's order, thus we are barred from living within nature or wilderness. We are fallen in this sense.

Cronon mentions Dave Foreman's idealization of indigenous humans living within and as a part of wilderness (more broadly conceived), such that they had no conception of 'wilderness' in the narrower meaning that Cronon critiques. Foreman attributes the separation, or fall, of people from wilderness to the advent of agriculture, which subsequently gave rise to civilization. Here wilderness is used to judge civilization with the meaning of wilderness altered to allow for human habitation, and yet Cronon critiques even this. He allows neither unpeopled nor peopled wilderness to serve as the judge of civilization. The vision of living within wilderness which Foreman idealizes includes wide open spaces, a relative degree of self-sufficiency, and virgin land (meaning flourishing, intact ecosystems), where such a landscape and the life lived on it are taken as the bastion of authenticity, how things ought to be, and where one is truly at home, in contrast to fallen, artificial, ghastly civilization. Cronon hints at a critique of this vision itself, but his primary critique is that this idea has the supposed consequence of ignoring more mundane environmental problems related to the disenfranchised people of the world. I will consider the issues of fallenness and wilderness being used as the judge of civilization later on in this essay.

In light of his critiques, Cronon offers several alternative paths for 'environmentalism' that go beyond wilderness. First, it should give an ethic of using and not using, a middle ground (though this seems to be what environmentalists have always said), such that we have an "ethical, sustainable, *honorable* human place in nature."¹² Further, it should bring the positive values of wilderness home while wilderness should be

realized to be everywhere, even in the most humble, accessible places. Finally, we should realize that we cannot leave nature completely untouched and thus we should decide and take responsibility for what marks we leave. What is crucial here is Cronon's critique of (peopleless) wilderness as a 'guiding ideal.' The problem is holding up as the model for all places (including our home) "a wilderness we ourselves cannot inhabit."¹³ Despite Cronon's broader objections, wilderness as a guiding ideal is not wrong, per se, except in so far as it excludes humanity and denies its (sometimes nasty) history, namely the previous use of what are now wilderness areas, especially by displaced indigenous peoples. However, given the material reality of our circumstances where a massive population relies on industrial production, the dream of living within wilderness is largely unattainable.

Cronon's critique of a stance where "the place where we are is the place where nature is not" should be taken seriously. Given the previous presence of humans in many wilderness landscapes and the continued presence of wildness within peopled landscapes, a more viable position is to see a continuum between unpeopled and peopled landscapes rather than a drastic discontinuity. I will take up this theme further in the next section.

Cronon's Influence on Eric Higgs

Eric Higgs addresses ecological restoration in his book Nature by Design. He seizes upon Cronon's criticisms in order to defend his conception of good restoration practice. He agrees with Cronon that wilderness is a symptom of alienation, that it has a history of human involvement, and that it is a construct that is freighted with cultural values. In terms of the Wilderness Act, Cronon's influence on Higgs can be seen in his

statement that “the US definition of wilderness is so restrictive that it precludes an understanding of how and where people have lived and evolved alongside wild processes.”¹⁴

Higgs takes Jasper National Park as an example for what would be considered wilderness largely because it has had “modest human involvement with ecosystems.”¹⁵ However he points out that the valleys have historically been and still are heavily used. Furthermore the park has a history. There were traditional uses that involved continuity between the more hospitable valleys and the rugged mountainous areas. What is important here is that, on a practical level, humans have been and still are involved, at least to some degree, in the constitution of wilderness, thus a radical conception of completely untouched wilderness is an illusion (except for truly unpeopled [and historically unaffected] places like Antarctica). This does not mean that wilderness is a totally constructed, controlled environment akin to a mall or video game, rather “it is at once a remarkably wild place and a place that has been marked and shaped by human activities for thousands of years.”¹⁶ Higgs believes that “wilderness is simultaneously constructed and real.”¹⁷ He believes it is constructed in the ways argued above by Cronon, and to show the reality of wilderness, Higgs quotes David Strong, “a transcendent encounter with wilderness and wild things is possible in our time, now and then, because we have voluntarily not brought everything under control.”¹⁸

However, Higgs fears that technology and artifice threaten to overrun nature, especially in terms of restoration. In a telling analysis, Higgs compares Jasper National Park to Disney’s Wilderness Lodge. The latter is a theme hotel in Orlando, Florida built to resemble the famous national park lodges of the western United States. The lodge,

unlike wilderness, is totally constructed, designed completely for human ends, and bends or betrays reality. Higgs worries that the Disney model threatens to destroy the wild and leave only a 'programmed experience.' This occurs via what Higgs calls the "colonization of imagination." Disney's appealing imagery, coupled with an undermining of personal, direct experience and context, becomes so widespread and deeply ingrained as to become accepted and confused with reality, such that people begin to expect the world to resemble Disney. This is nothing short of a takeover of imagination and reality. Higgs relates this to wilderness by giving the example of Disney's depiction of wild animals where there is a breakdown of any meaningful distinction between wild and tame. A key point is that the wilderness lodge and, for instance, Disney's Animal Kingdom are completely about us, not wilderness or animals. The ultimate result of all of this is the commodification of nature.

Higgs is concerned that restoration in particular could succumb to Disney-like colonization or technological subversion. He defines ecological restoration as "the process of assisting the recovery of an ecosystem that has been degraded, damaged, or destroyed."¹⁹ Restoration involves deliberate human action, much more so than preservation, for instance, thus it is clear why Higgs is particularly worried that it is susceptible to bending nature to our will. Higgs notes that some have accused restoration as being necessarily artificial, such as Eric Katz who calls it "the big lie." This accusation stems from the idea that for nature to be nature, it must necessarily be self-regulating and autonomous, and thus cannot be restored. Higgs nevertheless believes that, though restoration can certainly be subverted, good restoration is about assisted recovery rather than artifact creation.

Higgs' criticisms and worries go further than the topic of restoration, and I will return to Higgs again later in this thesis to address both these and his potential solutions in terms of their reach beyond restoration. What is to be taken from Higgs and Cronon at this point is that there is continuity between wilderness and more humanized, developed landscapes. What is most crucial is not the mere presence of humans, though this is important, but rather the way that we approach landscapes. For instance, Higgs mentions the possible argument that if people have long been historically involved in what are now wilderness areas, then why not remake wilderness to contemporary desires. However, he notes that the context, intensity, and scale of impact were far different and that there are other standards to appeal to such as ecological integrity. Both Higgs' and Cronon's critiques are misguided in some ways, but also reveal certain failings in the common conceptions of wilderness, namely the failure to recognize human involvement, both conceptually and practically, historically and currently, in protected areas – areas that are typically considered wilderness.

Islands in a Sea of Humanity

I will now turn to a practical issue that further emphasizes the continuity that runs from wilderness to the world beyond. Within the last few decades it has been increasingly recognized that many protected areas are too small and disconnected to preserve the wildlife within their boundaries. Many wildlife species like bears, wolves, and bison wander huge areas in the course of their lives, often far larger than any given protected area. Wild creatures do not know our boundaries and many species have gone extinct within protected areas due to their small size and isolation. Karsten Heuer describes the

attempt at creating a game reserve in South Africa surrounded by ten-foot high electric fences. The isolated reserve required captive breeding programs, mandatory inoculations, and engineered migrations, while the confines left no escape from disease.

This issue is crucial for animals, but even more so for vegetation. Warming temperatures may kill off vegetation in protected areas where it has historically existed. If the protected area is an ‘island,’ then there may be nowhere for the vegetation to migrate (though it could simply die off faster than it is able to migrate). One example is Joshua Tree National Park’s Joshua trees. It has been predicted that these could someday disappear from the namesake park.

While most parks in North America are not isolated to so extreme a degree as the South African game reserve Heuer describes, human encroachment is shifting things in this direction. Jack Turner writes, “If we wander out of this narrow ‘wilderness zone,’ we walk straight into clear-cut forest, logging roads, and oil wells.”²⁰ In his Travels in the Greater Yellowstone he refers to the Yellowstone ecosystem as Island Yellowstone due to its isolation. Not only is it surrounded by natural features like mountains, but increasingly by human development.²¹

This problematic has inspired Y2Y – the Yellowstone to Yukon initiative. The challenge it presents is to think of the whole area from Yellowstone to the Yukon as a unified ecosystem. A primary conservation aim is to establish wildlife corridors in order to “connect isolated populations of animals and prevent local extinction.”²² These would mostly pass through what are the least densely populated regions of western North America. This is an excellent beginning to seeing the world as a continuous, interconnected landscape. Yet, there is still far to go.

The Incarceration of Wildness

Another way of interpreting this fragmentation of wilderness into islands is as a locking up of wildness. Thomas Birch, in his essay “The Incarceration of Wildness: Wilderness Areas as Prisons” lends yet another perspective on the shortcomings of wilderness and the necessity to view a continuity from wilderness to places of human inhabitation, and as will be shown, this continuity is best seen as one of wildness. He begins by agreeing with Roderick Nash that wilderness preservation is in fact a significant achievement of western civilization, but that it is also problematic in some regards. Birch argues that legal wilderness areas (reserves as he calls them) are a kind of prison in which the wild is locked up in a symbolic gesture demonstrating the totalizing control of Western imperial power. The imperium must lock up wildness because it has assumed an adversarial view as a starting premise.

But what is this wildness? Birch writes, “By definition wildness is intractable to definition.”²³ In order for the wild to remain wild, it can have no final identity. Rather it is the source of sheer spontaneity and the continuous emergence of novelty. Wildness is thus at the heart of any living self or society. And while there are only manifestations of wildness, like bison and Indians, which may be controllable, wildness itself cannot be “ostracized, or exterminated, or chastened into discipline.”²⁴ Thus, “Wildness itself, to the mind of the law-bringing imperium, is lawless; it is the paradigm of the unintelligible, unrepentant, incorrigible outlaw.”²⁵ However, the imperium claims total power, therefore, Birch argues, preserving wilderness areas is necessary to supply an ‘other,’ or a simulation of an other, which justifies the power of the ‘imperium’ as imposing law and order on wildness.

He argues that, though official wilderness areas can be managed, the wildness within them is real and is therefore beyond systematization and laws, and thus management. In spite of the imperium's demonstration of control, the wild speaks to us with its own voice and reveals the limits of power. Simply setting aside wilderness areas is just a step in reconciling ourselves with wildness. Wilderness is a window onto the wildness that must come to penetrate and infuse the everyday, practical, lived-in world. "The point, then, is that even the preservation of wilderness as sacred space must be conceived and practiced as part of a larger strategy that aims to make all land into, or back into, sacred space, and thereby to move humanity into a conscious reinhabitation of wildness."²⁶

Only when wildness is released from its cell and allowed to inform and pervade our human world will we subvert the imperial roots of the imperium and come to terms with our 'bad faith' - our illusion of control. Construing these areas as mere resource is an example of just such an imposition because wilderness is far more than a production center for raw materials meant to serve us. The belief in total control is an illusion insofar as nature both makes human existence possible and is always wild in that it cannot be controlled - it is far larger and more powerful than we are (as is obvious when we consider, for instance, that we inhabit a "smote of dust" in the universe), thus human lawgiving is inappropriate to the point of absurdity.

I have shown in this chapter that wilderness, both as an idea and as a place, is deficient in several respects. The core of the trouble stems from a failure to see the continuity between wilderness and the human world at large. This failure manifests itself

in the glorification of an uninhabitable wilderness as the ultimate ideal, and as an increasingly shattered ecosystem – islands in a sea of humanity. We have also seen from Birch that wildness is locked up in wilderness reserves such that the wild and the sacred are barred from the everyday human realm. Not only is this the case, but the wildness within the reserves themselves is assaulted with attempts at control. Wilderness is thus further problematized by Jack Turner in The Abstract Wild.

Chapter 2: The Abstract Wild

In The Abstract Wild Jack Turner writes that our protected lands are simply not wild and that the wild itself has become a mere abstraction, thus leaving the word an abused, empty shell. Turner begins the chapter “In Wildness is the Preservation of the World” by noting the mistake made by some of thinking this says ‘in *wilderness* is the preservation of the world.’ This is Turner’s way of drawing our attention to the quality of wildness, rather than simply the place called wilderness. While traditionally wildness was always present within ‘wilderness,’ such that wildness could have been defined as the qualities of wilderness, it is currently necessary to draw the distinction. Turner thus asks, “How wild is our wilderness?” His answer is that due to a combination of size, outside and inside pressures, etc., most wildernesses, particularly Wilderness Act wilderness, is not very wild at all. This loss of the wild and the loss of direct experience of the wild are the central themes of his book. Turner says the heart of the matter is that “wildness [is] objectified and filtered through concepts, theories, institutions, and technology.”²⁷

The Wilderness Experience

The wild has become abstract due to a loss of ‘gross contact.’ This loss stems from the fact that the wild is either severely diminished or mediated. We have well-visited national parks, wilderness areas, zoos, and a myriad of nature media - magazines, books, t-shirts, etc., but these are only “extensive experience of a severely diminished wilderness animal or place – a caricature of its former self. Or we have extensive indirect experience of wild nature mediated via photographic images and the written word. But

this is not experience of the wild, not gross contact.”²⁸ Both of these result in an endangerment of intimate, direct personal experience with the wild - what Turner calls the ‘wilderness experience,’ and it is this experience that is central for Turner.

Eric Higgs echoes Turner’s sentiments. The commodification and Disneyfication of wilderness is largely a result of a loss of unmediated experience (as noted in chapter 1). He writes, “I fear that we are becoming endlessly proficient with geographic information systems, the maps, and in the process becoming progressively estranged from the places to which they refer, or even reality itself.”²⁹ Higgs’ concern is with restoration, thus he calls for engagement and participation in restoration, especially at the community level. He believes it is in this way that restoration will resist being subverted by technology. While his call for participation may have problematic consequences for wilderness, as active manipulation within a group setting is less likely to give a sense of the wild, Higgs’ diagnosis is nevertheless potent.

The wilderness experience is central for Turner in several ways. He argues that we only value what we know and love, and only what we value will we preserve. The loss of the wilderness experience results in a loss of emotional identification with and knowledge of the wild, which thus furthers its diminishment. When we enter the wild we become “full of care,” not due to principles, but to “something very old.”³⁰ There is a knowledge specific to the wild, and principles and philosophy (notably “the most obscure ruminations of...Heidegger”) cannot serve to “move the will.” This stems fundamentally from the experience itself. Finally, the big wild wilderness experience reminds us of our connection to nature, reminds us of “the reciprocity between the wild in nature and the

wild in us, between knowledge of the wild and knowledge of the self.”³¹ True wilderness is a place to see our place in nature, taken to its extreme, as a “part and parcel of nature.”

Turner claims that a true wilderness has certain qualities, for instance, it is keenly sensual, it involves “discovery, surprise, the unknown, and the often-dangerous Other,”³² and space and time reassert themselves. It also has certain effects on us, such that we become alert and careful, very much like the deer or bear. True wilderness is thus defined by the experience it produces. This does not mean that wildness is a ‘construct’ or ‘subjective’ in that it depends on human experience for existence, but that it is a quality that is known only by engagement. Echoing Birch, Gary Snyder writes that wildness is everywhere, for instance in the “ineradicable populations of fungi, moss, mold, yeasts, and such that surround and inhabit us.”³³ While this is undoubtedly true and an important observation, the wildness at issue for Turner is the wildness we can engage with such that it can be reciprocated and touch us. For instance, by Snyder’s logic, a shopping mall, being full of germs, is therefore a wild place. This is absurd and trivially true.

Cronon makes a similar observation as Snyder when he argues that the tree in the garden is very much like the tree in the wilderness in terms of the wildness they both manifest. One again, this is an important point that I will return to later in this paper, but it is shallow in many respects. Paralleling the tree in the garden, Turner considers an animal in a zoo. The animal is removed from its natural, wild, original home and placed in a fake, controlled habitat. It is fundamentally the context that makes the animal wild rather than tame or captive. Thus, an animal in a zoo is *not* a wild animal, though there will always be *something* ‘other’ about it that deserves wonder and awe. We could just as easily point to a wooden desk and say that the wood in it is ‘other,’ therefore it is wild.

This is absurd. Like a piece in a museum, “Our artifice fundamentally alters their order, extracting them from the larger context of interconnectedness that created that order.”³⁴

While wildness reigns at the micro level and in the vastness of space, this wild is not one that can be engaged with, as is the case with wilderness. What is crucial is the importance of being *a part of* something unhumanized and uncreated, especially in a bodily manner. As discussed above, it is the experience that is the primary indicator of wildness (the wildness at issue for Turner). Consider the wilderness of space versus the more commonly used sense of earthbound wilderness. Usually space is known via instruments like telescopes and mathematical formulas, but even when entering space an astronaut is completely encapsulated and confined. It is a fully mediated experience. This is also true of the microscopic level. In contrast, in a true wilderness one is fully submerged. The landscape is open, it can be approached in so many ways, the senses are fully awakened, one is completely seized by the wildness therein. What is lacking in the realms of space and the micro-world is the wilderness experience. The importance of the wilderness experience has been shown, but what is the state of wilderness and other protected lands?

The State of Protected Lands

Turner is critical and claims that true wilderness is quite rare. National parks are not meant to be the same thing as Wilderness Act wilderness, but they are meant to protect similar features, notably wild nature. National parks are an easier target. For instance, Turner calls Yellowstone a mega-zoo where to some degree “everything is exploited and managed.” This is largely a product of its island-like isolation:

The buffers of undeveloped land - forests and ranch lands that have so far protected it - faced an alarming rate of real estate and energy development. Further isolation of the park would lead to a bleak dialectic, for species loss leads to aggressive human manipulation of natural processes, the very thing that parks were supposed to protect. Preservation and conservation became artificial, human constructs masked as natural systems. Yellowstone National Park would survive, but it would become a cross between a zoo and a prison.³⁵

Yet both wilderness areas and national parks are described a charade, a reduced category of experience, a semblance, degraded, gutted, fake. Both have succumbed to organization and commercialization. Wilderness in particular is rife with artifice, is too known, administered, managed, and controlled to be wild. Any meaningful distinction between ‘in the wild’ and ‘in captivity’ is eroding as zoos are increasingly built to mimic natural environments and wilderness becomes a managed ecosystem.

Turner lists several reasons for the lack of wildness in wilderness and the subsequent lack of the experience of wildness: 1) Insufficient size in space and time – large size and length of stay is required in order to leave the fully human realm and join in the order of nature, but these are usually not available. 2) Lack of predators, which he calls, “perhaps our most accessible experience of the wild”³⁶ – as it can drastically alter perception, attention, etc. 3) Our current model for appropriate human use, which is a broad range of things such as intensive recreation, bridges, signs, rescues, maps, books, etc. which “diminish the discovery, surprise, the unknown, and the often-dangerous Other - the very qualities that make a place wild.”³⁷ 4) Surveillance, control, and a technical approach which treats wilderness as a problem to be solved and involves intensive human intervention such that wilderness becomes “increasingly evaluated, managed, regulated, and controlled. That is tamed.”³⁸ Altogether these factors convert wilderness into a dead relic, which ultimately leaves only commodified tourism. Wilderness is losing its wild character, but in order to understand what is being lost it is now necessary to more explicitly ask, what is the wild?

A Closer Look at the Wild

It would be a betrayal of Turner's central thesis to profess to offer a full account of the wild, as this can only be found in concrete, experiential terms. The following is thus little more than a conceptual analysis, though one that is far from complete. It is largely Thoreau who transformed conceptions of the wild for the 'Western' mind, to some extent in Walden, but most notably in the essay "Walking, or the Wild." It is here that Thoreau gives his fullest, and perhaps the most radical account of wildness there is. He opens by calling Nature absolute freedom, and he differentiates between man as civil and man as part of Nature. Famously he states, "All good things are wild and free."³⁹ For Thoreau and those influenced by him, such as Turner, freedom is close to the essence of the wild, though this is not the freedom of "rights and liberties, but the autonomous and self-willed."

Turner points out that Thoreau made the following note to himself in his fact-book: "Wild - past participle of to will, self-willed,"⁴⁰ thus the wilderness is self-willed land. That which is self-willed is autonomous, but this is not radical separation and complete independence, though it is incompatible with external control. Autonomy is in fact strengthened by "interconnectedness, elaborate iteration, and feedback."⁴¹ The wild is such that "order is created according to its own principles of organization."⁴² Jay Griffiths in Wild: An Elemental Journey thus notes that for indigenous peoples the law is in the land.⁴³

Another of Thoreau's most famous quotes is, "in Wildness is the preservation of the World."⁴⁴ The 'world' is best understood here as the harmonious order of the cosmos, thus, in light of his conceptions of the wild and the world, Thoreau's quote describes "the

relation of free, self-willed, and self-determinate ‘things’ with the harmonious order of the cosmos.”⁴⁵ As an aside, it is important to note that Thoreau says wildness *preserves*, rather than that we must preserve wildness. Max Oelschlaeger interprets this in even stronger terms when he states that wildness *is* the world – “the self-organizing order out of chaos.”⁴⁶

It is in light of this understanding of wildness that Thoreau distinguishes between the wild and civilization and is critical of the latter. The freedom he praises relates strongly to that which is beyond civilization and society, for in their current shape these are a form of external compulsion and thus antithetical to self-will. But this need not apply to all society throughout all time. It only applies to culture that has been set apart from wild nature. That which is civilized and domesticated has had the wildness trained out of it, yet occasionally “original wild habits and vigor” return, much to Thoreau’s delight.

I rejoice that horses and steers have to be broken before they can be made the slaves of men, and that men themselves have some wild oats still left to sow before they become submissive members of society. Undoubtedly, all men are not equally fit subjects for civilization; and because the majority, like dogs and sheep, are tame by inherited disposition, this is no reason why the others should have their natures broken that they may be reduced to the same level.⁴⁷

Thoreau writes about the walker, one who is untamed – unsubmissive and unbroken. Part of what makes the walker free is his ability to get beyond the bounds of power and money, politics and commerce. Thoreau says the walker is “a sort of fourth estate, outside of Church and State and People.”⁴⁸ It is in this region ‘beyond’ (the truest sense of wilderness) that his wildness is able to flourish. The walker who is continuously engaged with the wild is thus able to see civilization in its context as ‘merely’ in the landscape. Hence Griffiths application of the term, ‘the anarchic will,’ to that quality manifested by wild land and wild people.

To be a part of absolute freedom and wildness is to be “an inhabitant, or a part and parcel of Nature.”⁴⁹ But how is freedom found in being a part of nature? It is helpful to appeal to Max Oelschlaeger’s distinction in The Idea of Wilderness between the mechanistic and organismic conceptions of nature. The former sees nature as “a gigantic clockwork whose character and destiny are prefigured according to strict, unchanging causal laws” whereas the latter sees nature as a “spontaneous and naturally organized system in which all parts are harmoniously interrelated,”⁵⁰ as an “open-ended, novelty-producing process,”⁵¹ yet simultaneously as a rhythmic order, one that is ‘vast and old.’

The mechanistic conception is modeled on Newtonian physics while the organismic conception takes the living world as its model. Life is understood here as indeterminate in principle and infinitely creative. This is reminiscent of Birch’s definition of wildness as, by definition, indefinable. In the mechanistic conception, humankind considers itself apart from wild nature, has the illusion of control, and has thus “believed itself compelled to impose order on nature.”⁵² We impose order for gain, prediction, efficiency, and ultimately control - much of this stemming from the use of economics as the model for all things, including preservation.

Several of the thinkers considered thus far have attributed environmental devastation and our overall poor relationship with nature to seeing ourselves as beyond the natural. Whether or not there is something unnatural or ‘beyond the natural’ about humans, such as a soul or mind is a metaphysical question I am not seeking to answer in this thesis. Another possibility offered by Oelschlaeger is the position that there is something unnatural about humans because culture and design are always interspersed

between us and the environment. Alternatively he suggests, in accordance with the organismic conception, that we are "manifestations of a complex universe; we are not apart, but are moments in the open-ended, novelty-producing process of cosmic evolution."⁵³ Regardless, what is crucial to realize is the reciprocal relation we have with our material environment and that we are inescapably bound with nature.

Understanding the relation of freedom and nature requires realizing that as we treat the world, so we treat ourselves; and as we conceive the world, so we conceive ourselves. We envisage the world as a machine and create assembly lines, for instance. We then become integrated into these assembly lines - our world becomes a machine and we become cogs in said machine. This is one of the themes of the film *Koyaanisqatsi*: "‘Koyaanisqatsi’ shows us how masses of people are channeled and processed like inanimate particles in an automated mechanical system. Their behavior suggests that they do not act under the command of their own free will and reason, but by the prompting of external impulses and forces."⁵⁴ Thus to believe we can stand apart from and control the world is a delusion. We are always and already within the material ecology that is the world. This is the paradox of modernity – to attempt to stand apart and control is to be enslaved, but to realize oneself as a part is to be free. This is what part of what Jacques Ellul means when he states that "[man] is most enslaved when he thinks he is comfortably settled in freedom."⁵⁵ Freedom and its relation to the material environment will come into play later in this thesis. First, however, I will return to further considering the wild, starting with a look at what I call ‘the radical wild.’

The Radical Wild

Wildness has been described as the preserver of the world and in terms of a harmonious cosmos. However, "the wildest acts of nature...[are] earthquakes, wildfires, the plagues, people being killed and eaten by mountain lions and grizzly bears, our lust, the open sea in storm"⁵⁶ and it seems difficult to accept these as part of the harmonious order. The wild is often thought of as indifferent to human existence - as harsh, brutal, "red in tooth and claw," and the like. This is a wild well captured by Jack London.

London's best-known novel, The Call of the Wild, has deeply shaped our conceptions of wildness. The story focuses on Buck, a dog who is kidnapped from a plush estate in soft and sunny southern California. He is taken to the northland (the Yukon). Some time after his arrival, Buck is the victor in a dogfight and thus becomes marked "as fit to survive in the hostile Northland environment...It marked, further, the decay or going to pieces of his moral nature, a vain thing and a handicap in the ruthless struggle for existence. It was all well in the Southland, under the law of love and fellowship, to respect private property and personal feelings; but in the Northland, under the law of club and fang, whoso took such things into account was a fool."⁵⁷ London paints a picture of a brutal, merciless, wild domain, ruled by the law of club and fang, or by the survival of the fittest, whose law is "kill or be killed, eat or be eaten."⁵⁸

London emphasizes the distinction between the civilized and the primal. He refers to civilization as the soft Southland, versus the wild Northland. At one point in Buck's progression through various owners, he and his team are purchased by some chekakos, two men and a woman from the south. They attempt to make a journey with no experience and an overloaded sled. They are wasteful, poor planners, and are constantly

complaining. They run out of dog food, and most of the dogs die, before they themselves fall through obviously weak ice and perish. This reinforces to us, both the superficiality and ease of civilization, and simultaneously the harshness of the wild, “it was the masterful and incommunicable wisdom of eternity laughing at the futility of life and the effort of life. It was the Wild, the savage, frozen-hearted Northland Wild.”⁵⁹ Yet life does survive in these conditions. Much is required though: muscles hard as iron, the ability to withstand pain, the ability to eat anything, remarkably keen and acute sensation, a general toughness, and an internal and external economy – an elimination of the superfluous.

Though insightful, London’s account is flawed in some respects. The wild is sometimes harsh and unforgiving, but it also makes life possible. In a sense the wild *is* life. Thoreau unites these when he states that, “Life consists with wildness. The most alive is the wildest,”⁶⁰ though “not mere existence, but vitality and life-force.”⁶¹ London begins to recognize this at times, such as when Buck, after making his home in the wild, becomes “mastered by the sheer surging of life, the tidal wave of being.”⁶² Further, London is mistaken in that there is nothing ‘savage’ about the land. Its coldness and harshness stems from the facts of its nature, not from any malice.

Turner compares the purported savagery of the wild to that of human savagery. The savagery of the wild is like nothing compared to the savagery of the civilized. He notes that the most civilized peoples on earth slaughtered around sixty five million of their own in the twentieth century. Others have noted that humans are unique in that they will inflict suffering motivated purely by sadistic pleasure. Medieval Europeans used to flay wolves alive. The wolf, on the other hand, kills as swiftly as it can, not motivated by cruelty but by hunger. The surest way to incite cruelty in a creature is to cage it, writes

Griffiths, perhaps explaining human cruelty. The brutality of the wild is true in some respects, as death can come in many ways, but the wild has also been described as kind. Griffiths considers the Inuit people of the Canadian Arctic. They have an intimate, direct, practical knowledge of their world - of every type of ice, every geographic feature, and all of its inhabitants. It is this knowledge of the wild world in addition to living in a community of kindness which enables them to see the kindness of the wild and thus to live. The wild is thus both brutal and kind, neither contradicting the other.

The wild that goes far beyond the human is the radical wild, “a wildness that is far larger and more powerful than they can ever be.”⁶³ As seen in the instances above, this wild is such that humans, along with all other life, must adapt to it. The radical wild is the incomprehensible, uncontrollable, and uncared for, though all three qualities need not necessarily be totally fulfilled. This is not meant in absolute ontological terms for any given manifestation of the wild. That is, the radical wild is like the wildness Birch describes that can be manifested in the bison, for instance, and is such that any particular thing can over time become known, controlled, and an object of human care. In some respects, the radical wild is a matter of degree. Wilderness Act wilderness is usually very well known and often subject to a fair amount of control, but the radical wild can still occur. For instance, a bolt of lightning hits a tree in the depths of the Bob Marshall Wilderness and perhaps starts a fire that burns freely. The converse would be if a bolt of lightning were to hit a house in Condon or in the Lolo National Forest near Missoula. The ‘problem’ thus arises when the wildest acts of nature confront human care.

While it may be more obvious what it means for something to be incomprehensible and uncontrollable, to be ‘uncared for’ is less clear. The radical wild spells the limits of the human world. Extreme examples might be an earthquake in Antarctica or a supernova too far away to be observed. No one knows and no one cares. As an object of care, something becomes an object of inquiry and control. As human interest pervades the entire planet, the radical wild is literally being pushed off the face of the earth. But this is unique in history. Indigenous peoples often had totally unpeopled places, such as the mountaintop. These places were usually considered exceptionally sacred. Examples include Qomolangma (Mount Everest), which was thought of as a holy place or a goddess, and Mount Kilimanjaro, which was considered by the Masai as the house of God. Other examples of historically unpeopled areas are much of the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness and nearly the entire state of Kentucky, which was used as a hunting ground by several tribes.

The Western world has had its share of confrontation with the radical wild. Such confrontation is found in the sublime and in Thoreau’s writing on Ktaadn, for instance. Thoreau traveled to Maine during his stay at Walden Pond. During his visit he climbed Mt. Ktaadn. Oelschlaeger interprets his climb as a turning point in Thoreau’s thought - as “a death blow to the Emersonian notion that the world existed for humankind.”⁶⁴ During the climb, Thoreau becomes disoriented, such that prior conceptualizations failed him, notably Emersonian Transcendentalism. Thoreau states that that he confronts “Vast, Titanic, inhuman Nature,” and “we have not seen pure Nature, unless we have seen her thus vast and drear and inhuman...Here was no man’s garden...[it was] not for him to tread on.”⁶⁵ In confronting the radical wild, one feels one’s limitations, especially one’s

mortality. It is in the fullness of such an experience that one loses oneself in the sublimity of the cosmos.

The radical wild is a powerful and important phenomenon. Surely this is part of the wildness Thoreau meant as the preserver of the world. But can the radical wild be preserved, especially as an experience to be confronted? Turner offers such a proposal: set aside vast areas where we limit *all* forms of human influence as much as possible. Some examples would be no management, no invasive data collection, no maps, no flyovers, no manmade electromagnetic signals, no rescues, no trails, (though people would be allowed to enter) – letting a place return to being a blank on our maps. Such an ideal, though commendable, seems foredoomed given the current state of the world. In contrast to the radical wild is the (for lack of a better term) limited or everyday wild. This is the wild that is to some degree known, cared for, and affected by humans, but not controlled, for then it would cease to be wild. Perhaps our conservation ideals and our culture more generally can be revised in such a way as to preserve wildness in a limited form. For instance, part of what would be involved would be the preservation of process rather than things. Though there is more hope for this than for the radical wild, this wild is also threatened. Both of these aspects of the wild must thus be considered in terms of preservation.

Preservation

Jack Turner asks, “What, exactly, is the ‘it’ we are trying to save in all the national parks, wilderness areas, sanctuaries, and zoos?”⁶⁶ He then compares the justification of saving the wild with artifice to the reasoning used in Vietnam for leveling

a village, “we had to destroy it in order to save it.” The wild is being left at the wayside and in the process we are losing nature. There are two fundamental issues involved. The first is wildness as a goal for conservation versus other potential standards, such as biodiversity or naturalness, while the other is the problem of preserving wildness at all.

Turner argues that the focus of conservation has shifted from what was originally wildness for Thoreau, to wilderness, to habitat and species, and finally to biodiversity. He equates this with a reductive, ‘materialist’ move from quality to quantity, from the particular to the general, from the concreteness of experience to the abstractions of classical science and mathematics. This does not mean that biodiversity is not worth preserving, but rather that wildness ought to be the primary, or at least an additional, aim. Turner rebukes modern conservation practice. He claims that ‘human’ goals are primary in management, including scenery, resources, wilderness, and biodiversity. Some have argued that biodiversity ought to be the objective because it is a nonhuman end, but this would be subsumed in the human if, as is often the case, artifice and control are used or required to preserve it. It is also important to note that wildness is not equivalent to biodiversity - in fact they could be opposed. An obvious dichotomy is between that ultimate bastion of biodiversity - the zoo, versus the wild desert. Finally, Turner argues, “despite the rage for conserving biodiversity, I am inclined to think conservation’s primary importance remains what the founders of the conservation movement thought it was: a basis for an important kind of human experience. Without big, wild wilderness I doubt most of us will ever see ourselves as part and parcel of nature.”⁶⁷

Besides biodiversity, another major focus, or criteria, of conservation has been naturalness. Some common traditional meanings of naturalness have been, stable, self-

regulating, and equilibrating, having a high degree of historical fidelity, and not being affected or controlled by humans.⁶⁸ What is crucial to note here is the distinction between affected and controlled. A distinction might be made here between naturalness and wildness, where wildness allows for some degree of human effect and naturalness allows for none, while neither allows for control. If this is the case, then naturalness is no longer an option since human effect is inescapable, especially by way of climate change and invasive species, though to take naturalness to mean a total absence of human effect may be too extreme. The distinction between naturalness and wildness in some ways parallels that between wildness and wilderness. Until recently, the two were tied together and still are to a large degree. What is natural is wild, and wildness is natural. Regardless, wildness offers a more robust and clear focus of conservation than naturalness.

Beyond why we ought to preserve wildness, perhaps bigger and more disturbing is the problem of saving it at all. There seems little hope for the wild as long as globalized “overpopulation, urbanization, and pathological social structures”⁶⁹ are the rule. But even assuming that brute facticity will permit meaningful preservation of the wild, a crucial issue is that we simply do not know how to preserve it. The wild is a quality and as such cannot be described or saved by classical science and mathematics. Not only do these fundamental keystones of our culture fail in this regard, but so do some of our basic institutional structures, namely the museum and the laboratory. These are notable in particular because they are often used as models for preserved areas (though their likeness is highly pervasive beyond such areas). Yet both are contrary to autonomy and vitality, and thus the wild. The laboratory ideals are sterility and control. It is an

environment designed to conduct ‘controlled experiments’ where causes and effects are isolated. It is thus in total opposition to the wild interconnectedness of ecological reality...“We murder to dissect.” And as the ideal of classical science infiltrates more and more into all realms of existence, the world is seen as, and thus becomes transformed into, a laboratory. This is already prevalent. Conservation biology is the reigning paradigm in preservation and takes as its paradigm more technological control, especially in the way of surveillance. Turner claims that information and control are indivisible, thus the destruction of nature must be addressed in new terms of the information age.

The museum is an equally disturbing model. The quality of the museum is what Adorno called ‘museal.’ This term describes “objects to which the observer no longer has a vital relationship and which are in the process of dying.”⁷⁰ Museums and current forms of land preservation testify to the neutralization of culture and nature. In terms of preservation, the museum and its likenesses are in opposition to wildness. This is so because the museum can only preserve things, whereas the wild is a quality that cannot be collected, and thus cannot be put into a museum. Land museums, like national parks, preserve only collections of things. An ironic blow comes when what is meant to be preserved cannot be kept there. Some striking instances are Glacier National Park’s disappearing glaciers and pikas, and Joshua Tree National Park, which could someday lose all of its Joshua Trees. This again relates to the fragmentation of ecosystems into islands. These island ecosystems, these museums of land types might be salvaged, but preservation will require killing the ecosystem’s self-organization and wildness.

Another possible model, similar to the laboratory is that of the hospital. When the environment is seen like a sick patient it becomes dependent, a problem to be solved, and

thus open to technical infiltration. All of this is not to say that the museum and laboratory do not have some positive benefits, but that, as these become models for much of the world, especially the natural world, the result is a loss of vital relationships and autonomy, such that the world itself is transformed into a dead relic, a remnant “left behind after destruction or decay.”

Both of these models lead to the end of nature. Turner interprets the end of nature to mean, not simply the ubiquity of human effect, as Cronon interprets McKibben to be arguing (and Cronon rightfully rebukes), but the totalization of artifice – the virtually *complete* loss of self-ordering nature. Though wildness cannot be totally eliminated, it can be so diminished as to be effectively lost to us and to have tragic consequences for the nonhuman world. Turner notes that some have argued that we cannot preserve wildness and thus nature must be the nature we make; the only question is if we will like the outcome. Those same people thus construe the aim of preserving wild nature and its order as neglect. Turner is in radical opposition to such thinking, but his criticisms of wilderness go further by awakening us to the necessity of facing the uncomfortable reality that in its current form wilderness does not serve as a “sanctuary from artifice.”

Total humanization is paradoxical. It has two meanings, total socialization and total technification. This distinction is important in a discussion of the wild for we are creatures with a wild heart. Insofar as the wild is eliminated, something central about us is thereby eliminated, thus dehumanizing us in the process. Paradoxically then, the current human world, and what would be the totalization of that world, is an inhuman world - a world built on the model of the machine, for machines.

A further consequence as humanity totalizes all relates to Thoreau's walker. There comes to be nowhere outside the bounds of power and no longer a contextualization for human affairs. Humanity's ultimate values thus become constrained into human categories. The only worth of things and people becomes social worth. What this means is that as the social invades and remakes everything, there comes to be no standard beyond the social. For instance a rancher has 'resistance' from the world upon which he builds himself – it is the world itself that provides him his worth and substance. Similarly, the elk has its own values totally apart from human society. This loss might be called the spiritual consequence of the end of nature. Turner notes that a lack of substantive spiritual life is part of the disease that feeds the destruction of the wild. The war on the wild is thus a symptom and cause of spiritual sickness.

A New Conservation Ethic

Thus far several reasons have been given for why wildness ought to be preserved. Turner has shown that there is a need for the wilderness experience, Birch has argued that it is bad faith and repressive to attempt to control the wild, Thoreau and Turner have shown us the reciprocal relationship between the wild and humankind, and finally wildness was considered in relation to biodiversity and naturalness. However, I do not intend for this thesis to be a full explication of all reasons for preserving wildness. Another powerful argument that is not being considered is given by Holmes Rolston III who defends the wild as intrinsically valuable apart from us and thus worthy of preservation.⁷¹ All of these suggest that the wild as a substantive phenomenon is too

important to be allowed to dwindle into practical oblivion. They also support Turner's position that what we need is a new conservation ethic based on wildness.

However, I will consider a final argument from Turner that comes from a different direction, one that mirrors Birch's in some respects. Turner states, "The limits of our knowledge should define the limits of our practice."⁷² The question thus shifts from 'should we manage nature' to 'can we?' or 'does it help?' The heart of the argument is that long term quantitative prediction is not possible (in science and ecology) and that in many cases management simply does no good, therefore preservation as management in the tradition of Aldo Leopold is bankrupt. This is largely due to chaos and complexity – and it is here, 'at the edge,' that life evolves. The consequence is that the mechanistic conception of nature fails reality at the practical level. Poor managers and predictors though we may be, it is still within our power to impose and destroy. We therefore need to admit our limits and regain a sense of humility. The heart of the matter is that we must "face a choice, a choice that is fundamentally moral. To ignore it is mere cowardice. Shall we remake nature according to biological theory? Shall we accept the wild?"⁷³

Wildness as a Guiding Ideal

Turner's analysis of current preservation and our relationship with the wild is accurate and biting. Due to the fact that Turner's focus is on wilderness, he in some respects falls prey to some of Cronon's criticisms. One instance where this seems to be the case concerns the wilderness experience. Cronon critiques Dave Foreman's version of the wilderness experience, what he calls the 'Big Outside.' This includes such qualities as being wide-open country with few people, allowing for self-support, and requiring

hardiness. Cronon critiques this vision as ignoring more mundane environmental issues related to non-wilderness areas and causing us to be dismissive of more 'humble' landscapes. But it is not really the wilderness experience itself that Cronon critiques; it is rather a failure to see the continuity of the world. Cronon writes that we ought to see a full continuum of the natural and cultural that runs from the city to the wilderness. This again relates to his discussion of the tree in the garden and in the wilderness, where Cronon claims that we need to see wildness everywhere – the tree in the garden is wild, just as the tree in the wilderness. This is problematic in that there is a difference in wildness, thus the trees are not equal, but he is right that we ought to see a continuum.

The primary weakness of Turner is that his concern is largely only with wildness in wilderness and other preserved areas. He ultimately fails to fully address the continuity between wilderness and the world beyond though he comes close in some instances. One instance where Turner falters is his statement that a line should be drawn at any and all wilderness inside which the operations of the biological sciences would be excluded.⁷⁴ Certainly there ought to be differences between wilderness and the world beyond, but the sharp distinction Turner draws here is largely untenable. For instance, animals move in and out of boundaries, and genetically modified organisms interact with all other organisms. What the biological sciences do outside of wilderness will thus affect what is inside wilderness.

While Turner's focus is primarily on wilderness, he does see that we must turn our attention towards ourselves. At one point he notes that current conservation practice aims at symptoms and not sources. Control is directed at the 'other,' while we ignore our own pathologies.⁷⁵ What is actually needed is a transformation of western civilization.

Another instance where Turner addresses the continuity of the world is when he states that wildness does not equal a total lack of humans or human influence (though he sometimes wavers on this point), and that in fact the quality can apply to humans.

Another related issue which Cronon raises that is not fully attended to by Turner is the issue of home. Once again, because Turner's focus is on wilderness, it is not his intent to give an environmental ethic that applies to 'home.' It is nevertheless an important insight that needs to be pointed out as lacking in Turner. Cronon claims that the idea of wilderness distances us from what it teaches us to value. What wilderness teaches us to value is, for instance, the autonomy of nature. It distances us in so far as if a sharp distinction exists between wilderness and the world lived in and affected by humans, then the autonomy of nature, for instance, is dismissed or overlooked at home. He thus asks, "How can we take the positive values we associate with wilderness and bring them closer to home?"⁷⁶

Cronon is right that we need to reconsider home, and he is also right that wilderness, as he understands it, ought not be the guiding ideal for the whole of the world. This conception of wilderness (or nature as McKibben calls it), understood as being totally devoid of humanity and human influence, is problematic. Cronon's criticism of McKibben's position that mere human influence 'kills' nature is well founded. McKibben is nevertheless on the right track, more so than Cronon in some respects. Turner refines McKibben's position such that not mere affectedness, but rather total, or overtly dominating, artifice means the end of nature. This totalization of artifice comes when nature "loses its own self-ordering structure, hence its autonomy, hence its wildness."⁷⁷

McKibben has shown us that some artifice is inescapable everywhere, even if only in the form of affected climate. We are thus involved everywhere, like it or not – the question is in what way. Cronon affirms this position, especially as it applies to home. He argues that some artifice is inescapable – that there is no escape from manipulating, working, and killing some of nature in the place where we live and make a living. Cronon then says we need an eye for the wildness everywhere, including wildness at home. Turner’s conclusion that wildness ought to be a guiding ideal for wilderness is right, but fails to address this. What is thus needed is a guiding ideal of wildness for the whole continuum from wilderness to home. However, many (like Foreman) take wilderness, understood in part as the place where wildness reigns, but without the harsh dichotomy between it and themselves, as a guiding ideal because they see wilderness as home. In the next chapter I will discuss our homelessness in the world in light of wildness and wilderness.

Chapter 3: Homelessness and Homecoming

Fallenness

Dave Foreman sees the wilderness as a lost home from which humans have become fundamentally alienated. Cronon quotes Foreman:

Before agriculture was midwived in the Middle East, humans were in the wilderness. We had no concept of ‘wilderness’ because everything was wilderness and *we were a part of it*. But with irrigation ditches, crop surpluses, and permanent villages, we became *apart from* the natural world. . . Between the wilderness that created us and the civilization created by us grew an ever-widening rift.⁷⁸

Cronon derisively calls this the “fall from natural grace.” As mentioned in chapter 1, Cronon critiques Foreman’s ideal of wilderness as representing a flight from history in so far as it is an attempt to escape the historical wake of civilization by upholding a hunter-gatherer Eden as the ideal, where wilderness is seen as “the ultimate hunter-gatherer alternative to civilization.”⁷⁹ What bothers Cronon about this is his belief that it causes the ‘fallen’ world to be ignored and thus substantive social and environmental problems to be ignored as well:

To the extent that we live in an urban-industrial civilization but at the same time pretend to ourselves that our real home is in the wilderness, to just that extent we give ourselves permission to evade responsibility for the lives we actually lead. We inhabit civilization while holding some part of ourselves – what we imagine to be the most precious part – aloof from its entanglements.⁸⁰

This approach to wilderness is indeed flawed if, as Cronon claims, it ignores real issues, but Cronon’s critique in no way undermines the alienation from wild nature that civilization has produced and which Foreman laments.

In contrast, Cronon critiques wilderness itself as being a symptom of alienation in an entirely different sense. He states that the ideal of an unworked landscape is a symptom of urban alienation insofar as the urbanite does not see the meaningful connection between the food that comes from a supermarket and the farm, or between the

wood that makes up a house and the forest. While this may be true, it once again ignores the deeper sense of alienation that Foreman addresses and Cronon critiques. This alienation is revealed more fully by examining the deep past.

The Hebrew concept of the Fall has had deep resonance within Western society. Judeo-Christian civilization has long been haunted by precivilized existence in the idea of ‘fallenness.’ Such a fall was from a garden not of our own making to a state where “in toil you shall eat of [the cursed ground] all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you; and you shall eat the plants of the field.”⁸¹

It turns out that there is an anthropological basis for such a feeling of alienation by those enclosed within the civilized world. Jared Diamond’s article “The Worst Mistake in Human History” shows that the transition to agriculture that began 10,000 years ago in the Neolithic Revolution (it was not all at once and in fact hunter-gatherers exist to this day) was likely forced upon hunter-gatherer societies and the result was rather dismal. Prior to agriculture and for most of human existence, humans hunted wild animals and gathered wild plants. This is often viewed as an endless struggle for existence, as “nasty, brutish, and short.” Diamond argues, however, that agriculture, rather than being a “decisive step toward a better life, was in many ways a catastrophe from which we have never recovered.”⁸² Toil, disease, famine, environmental degradation, lower life expectancy, higher and ever increasing population density, gross inequality, poverty, less free time, and (debatably) more war, all resulted from the transition to agriculture (and thus civilization). In many respects, this trend continues, excepting, in some ways, ultimately self-destructive fossil-fuel-dependent nations like

our own. It has taken all this time for us to have even begun a corrective process, which may prove not to be sustainable.

Oelschlaeger states similarly that Paleolithic people lived comfortably in the wilderness. Not only this, but he goes on to say that in terms of intelligence, innovation, and creativity, our ancestors were not far from us arrogant moderns. What primarily separates us from them is the advent of writing, which allowed for a new way for combinatory culture to develop. Oelschlaeger states that the Fall marks the transition from a hunter-gatherer way of life to agriculture, and that it is a “workable metaphor for recovering the deep past so that a Paleolithic idea of wilderness might inform our own.”⁸³

Assuming that the worst effects of transitioning to agriculture will be addressed by technology and that a fairly comfortable, sustainable existence is possible, still at issue is our alienation from wild nature. For what vastly distinguishes the pre-agricultural world from our own is the shift from a minimally modified world to a nearly all-encompassing urban-industrial civilization. Deep within us lies the Paleolithic mind – a part of us that remembers and longs for reunification with wild nature. Part of what makes wilderness so powerful is that it serves as a reminder of the wildness that once defined our existence.

Concerning animals, Jack Turner writes, “the wild is the original, the wild is their home. The bigger and more naturalistic the mega-zoo, the better the mask that conceals its reality as a prison for wild animals. Liberal sentiment just demands bigger and nicer cages.”⁸⁴ The same can be said for us in many respects – that as our world has become a cross between a zoo and a prison, we have become homeless and imprisoned, and it is us and our homelessness that causes the homelessness of other creatures. We have become

foreigners to the wild and to “an experience that once grounded [our] most sacred beliefs and values.”⁸⁵ Turner believes that what we are trying (rather poorly) to save in preserved areas and what we look for when we travel abroad is, in a word, home.

This seems an odd conclusion coming from Turner who is a mountaineer, something of an explorer, and an advocate for blank spaces on the map. His conception of the wild seems to equate more with the remote, exotic, and adventurous than with home. This brings up a fundamental tension between two senses of the wild. In Wild, Jay Griffiths describes her experiences living with different indigenous groups all over the world. She makes the comparison between the sense of wild as home and the Euro-American sense of wilderness as a place of mere exploration and recreation. She voices her frustration at how the Euro-American tradition has interpreted wilderness - ignoring the fact that indigenous people think of it as a wild home.⁸⁶ Both senses of the wild are meaningful and important and hopefully a place can be found for each.

This primal alienation is obviously difficult to address. The interval of 10,000 years and a radically transformed earth will not allow us to bridge this gap so easily. Before returning to this fundamental homelessness, some more recent and more easily addressed accounts will be considered.

Alienation

Perhaps the most well-known description of alienation, or estrangement, comes from Karl Marx.⁸⁷ Marx’s concept of alienated labor is, simplistically stated, that the worker gives his time and energy, and thus life, to a factory he does not own to create a product he cannot use, and thus the core of his life, his economic activity, is held over

and against him, all for the sake of profit for the capitalist class. Marx thus envisioned a classless society where the worker would be reunified with his labor. The weakness of Marx's analysis is that even in the classless society, factory labor will remain factory labor. Marx did realize that industrial labor was in and of itself unrewarding, but failed to pursue this insight very far. Some have attributed the failure of Marx's envisioned revolution to worker conservatism. From the perspective of the work itself, not much changes after the revolution. The worker tends to be conservative in the hopes that he or his progeny will be able to rise above his current circumstances. Rather than a lack of exploitation in the abstract terms of ownership, he sees it as worth the gamble for the slight chance to advance. Marx's analysis is thus true, but only describes the most superficial form of alienation.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi also considers alienation in Beyond Boredom and Anxiety, though not in the Marxist terms of ownership, but rather in terms of the motivation to work at all. The exploited worker in Marx's day was forced to work for barely living wages, hence the term wage slavery. This is still evident today, for instance in third world sweatshops, thus the question of the motivation to work was and often is rather mute, but is nevertheless still important in considering the actual content of work. Csikszentmihalyi distinguishes between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Both the capitalist and the communist economic forms rely on extrinsic motivation. The classless society merely shifts the external rewards from wages to the supposed satisfaction of communal ownership and social benefit. In both cases the work itself is often meaningless. Csikszentmihalyi's analysis cuts deeper in some respects than Marx's in

that he attributes the alienation of workers in industrial nations to the condition where work and leisure are split, such that work is dull and meaningless activity that must be done, and leisure is useless, guilty pleasure. As it stands now work relies on extrinsic rewards, notably money, “to compensate people for the empty drudgery of life” which causes us to “exhaust the planet and each other.”⁸⁸

The alienation Csíkszentmihályi describes comes closer than Marx in addressing our primal alienation because it deals with the actual content of human existence, rather than an abstract (though nevertheless important) egalitarianism. I will return to Csíkszentmihályi’s ideas later in this paper in chapter 5 on wild being, but now I will discuss another perspective on human displacement.

Homelessness

Heidegger first addresses homelessness in Being and Time⁸⁹ as hectic, restless curiosity. To explicate this it is necessary to briefly dive into the world of his specific terminology. Heidegger considers the existential structure of Dasein’s Being-in-the-world thus giving what he calls the ‘existentials’ of discourse, sight, and interpretation. These correspond to idle talk, curiosity, and ambiguity respectively in Dasein’s irresolute everydayness. Curiosity is a kind of sight that is seeing just to see, is purely outward, devoid of understanding, and distracted. An essential feature of curiosity is what Heidegger calls ‘never-dwelling-anywhere.’ Here Dasein is everywhere and nowhere and constantly uprooted.

Heidegger continues the theme of dwelling in “Building, Dwelling, Thinking.” Here he asks: “What is it to dwell?”⁹⁰ He tells us later that: “Dwelling is the manner in

which mortals are on the earth.”⁹¹ Heidegger writes that man’s homelessness stems from his lack of dwelling and especially from the lack of thought he gives to his dwelling. We erect our buildings presumably with the goal of dwelling and yet so much of our building is not conducive to dwelling. Heidegger wrote in response to a massive housing shortage in the wreckage of World War II, yet he notes that solving the housing problem will not address the deeper issue of our lack of dwelling.

The problem is that one can live in buildings but not feel at home or be near to them. The heart of dwelling is being near to, or at one with, the world. “‘World’ is the clearing of Being into which man stands out.”⁹² Homelessness results from a loss of this nearness to the being of the world. Heidegger goes on to state that not only are we made homeless in our lack of dwelling, but that language also becomes homeless when it is unhoused and apart from Being. “Homelessness so understood consists in the abandonment of beings by being. Homelessness is the symptom of the oblivion of being. Because of it the truth of being remains unthought.”⁹³ Heidegger understands truth in the Greek sense of *aletheia* – revealing or unconcealment. In dwelling the truth of being is revealed as the fourfold. “Mortals dwell in the way they safeguard the fourfold in its essential unfolding.”⁹⁴ The fourfold is the oneness of earth, sky, divinities, and mortals. Divinities is the most difficult of the four and can be understood, at least in part, as how the earth is revealed poetically to man. Homelessness results when we lose a sense of nearness and relation to the fourfold. This nearness is found in ‘things,’ or non-technological material presences, as things are sites that gather the fourfold. Hence, part of our homelessness results from the absence of things in our lives. I will consider things further in terms of David Strong in the next section.

Heidegger, following in the pastoral tradition, looks to the transition from agricultural peasant life to technological urbanization as a 'fall' that has left us homeless. In this sense his analysis, like Marx's, falls short in failing to address our more primal alienation. However, Heidegger's considerations of being and the fourfold, and his consideration, like Csíkszentmihályi's, of the content of existence, brings him closer than Marx. I will return to Heidegger's thoughts on building in chapter 6 on wild building. In the following section I will begin by considering our homelessness in the midst of technology, which will then lead into considering technology in terms of wilderness, before ultimately arriving at the possibility of homecoming.

Crazy Mountains

David Strong considers the relationship of technology and wilderness in Crazy Mountains, subtitled: "Learning from wilderness to weigh technology." Strong's central concern is with homelessness and homecoming. He sees technology as leaving us homeless. Technology relieves us of burdens and presents controlled commodities. Its manner of presentation is "heedless power and availability where everything is our way."⁹⁵ This mindless consumption "leads ironically to disengagement, diversion, distraction, and loneliness. In short we become not-at-home in the universe."⁹⁶

In addition to our homelessness, Strong, like Higgs and Turner, sees a subversion of wilderness. Strong's book focuses on a de facto wilderness, in this case the Crazy Mountain Range northeast of Bozeman, to illustrate the nature of technology and its inherent shortcomings. Portions of the book are dedicated to demonstrating the value of the Crazy Mountains and explaining why they ought to be protected, yet he states "these

mountains may well be protected and yet do little to challenge the overall trajectory and vision of our present technological culture.”⁹⁷ Strong sees a continuum between our world and wilderness, such that wilderness itself is threatened by the technological framework. Technology delivers a wilderness veneer – an impoverished encounter, narrow contact, a consumable package, and is completely on our own terms, so that nature no longer requires skill and attention. Considering the technological threat to wilderness reveals that a vision of simply setting aside blocks of ‘untrammled’ land does not get to the heart of preserving wilderness in so far as it does not address our relationship to wilderness and nature - this being technological.

Strong states that “lack is instructive only together with longing, we must have a home to long for.”⁹⁸ In other words our sense of homelessness must have an objective correlative, a corresponding material reality, in order to make it meaningful. Wilderness still offers a vision of a wild home. Strong considers the lesson of the Fall in Genesis whose account states that humans and nature fell together. Thoreau writes of Walden, however, that it “had not heard of the fall.”⁹⁹ What makes the grip of wilderness so strong on the American mind is living in the place of its so recent presence and loss. It feels to many, like Thoreau and Foreman, that an ancient home has haplessly slipped from their fingers.

In this sense wilderness is invested with a unique and tremendous depth and meaning. However, genuine places and things are always invested with some degree of depth and meaning. Strong thus focuses on the ‘thing’ in the Heideggerian sense of the term, as a contrast to the all encompassing framework of technology. Strong calls the

world of things a 'wilderness of things.' He differentiates between wild things and familiar and commonplace things. He notes Henry Bugbee's position that properties of wilderness are to be found everywhere in all things, "awakening to reality as wilderness is always awakening to things in their here and now importance."¹⁰⁰ Reminiscent of Cronon, this means that the fundamental meaning of wilderness is accessible in the everyday. Whatever truth this may contain, Strong notes that it is inappropriate in the technological context due to our encasement in a realm of commodities. Thus Strong turns to 'literal wilderness' and wild things. Wild things are expectedly described as neither designed nor intended, and altogether other. His description of wild things is rather flat, however. It should be noted that wild things are also to some degree unknown, unpredictable, and dangerous. What binds wild things to commonplace things is that they both 'gather' the world and bring the world near.

However, technology cuts us off from things and from the wild. Technology construes the wild in terms of resources and thus dominates and controls it so as to convert it into commodities. The wild is destroyed to serve consumption, which cuts us off from the world, leaving only the vacuous, unfulfillable promise of technology. Nevertheless the seductive power of technology is powerful and offers a legitimate threat to wilderness and things more generally. Strong reveals technology's allure and threat, but ultimate emptiness, in an example of a time he went fishing:

I once made the glamorous choice to go salmon fishing from a charter boat off the Pacific coast. All that was demanded of our party for preparation was a phone call for reservations, showing up at the dock at 7 am, and having our money in hand. The boathands set up, baited and let out the complicated gear for us. A device kept the bait at just the right depth while radio contact with other boats and a fish scanner on our boat searched out schools of salmon and indicated the right depth at which to troll our bait. A rod holder held the rod for the clients - the others grinned at my sentimentality at holding my rod. The largest fish of the day, the only king salmon, was caught by someone who had never fished before and who had fallen asleep; he nearly wasn't allowed to reel it in himself. His seasickness from having fallen asleep was taken care of with a pill. This was the device-procured fishing: easy, quick, safe, and almost guaranteed. And, aside from our being on

the ocean, it was much like watching television for hours. I have never been back, and I am sure that the others in our party would acknowledge that such an experience is not what they live for. It was merely consumed.¹⁰¹

In the description above, despite the presence of the ‘untrammelled’ ocean and the ‘wild’ fish the experience was certainly not one of wilderness. Thus, not only is there a loss of the wild, as previously considered in this thesis, but there is also a loss of direct experience of it, these losses stemming from both the current state of wildlands and by other threats such as technological mediation.

We misunderstand technology and wilderness when we expect technology to procure for us the wilderness experience. Until this is addressed at its root, the technological threat will continue to nibble at the essence of wilderness. Strong notes that environmentalism is largely subverted by technology because environmentalism offers “no greater challenge on a deeper level.¹⁰²” The technological threat to wilderness reveals to us the deeper challenge presented by technology. Simply setting aside areas is not enough to challenge technology. What is required is that the dream of technology must be shown to be empty, and ultimately what is required is that “we need to be another way” and we need to learn “to build again.”

Homecoming

Strong argues that wilderness allows for a homecoming experience. He presents this in a strange way however. We have become foreigners to wilderness, and this lack of familiarity allows wild things in their farness to stand out, and thus to be brought near, and thus wilderness provides a homecoming experience. Yet after leaving the wilderness the homecoming is separate and forgotten. Strong seems to falter in seeing the world as continuous when he states that “we need islands of wilderness in our lives” – special

times and places where the rule of technology does not prevail. Yet later he admonishes us to bridge this gap, “As long as this experience exists merely side by side [with] the technological order and is not somehow integrated with it, the experience does not inform our life...we must do more. Our entire age is adrift in a state of homelessness and this homecoming in a broader sense is needed for the technological society.”¹⁰³ Simply legally preserving wilderness will not make a difference. It will be little different than Brave New World’s reservations. We must put things, like wilderness, ahead of consumption. It is when we can say no to heedless consumption without it being felt as a sacrifice that our coming home will begin.

Homecoming from the homelessness of technology comes from the power of things. But does Strong’s sense of homecoming answer the homelessness described by Diamond and Oelschlaeger? Such a distant and deep-seated homelessness cannot be fully answered in our age since we cannot go back into the ‘unfallen’ wilderness. Strong wants wilderness to be more than side by side with our world. He states that we cannot live in wilderness, but we can live for it. His notion of ‘doing more’ is considering the consumption in our everyday lives with the thought of wilderness motivating us to alter our lifestyles. Bringing both everyday and wild things into our lives will further motivate us to alter our lifestyles and to challenge the technological paradigm. However, in Strong’s account, though wilderness motivates and challenges us in our everyday lives in the human world outside of wilderness, we are nevertheless separate from it and from wild things. Wilderness is still distant. Strong does, however take a step forward by opening the door to coming home to a wild world by emphasizing the importance of wild

things in our lives and by challenging us to be and to build another way. This challenge will be considered in the final chapters on wild being and wild building.

Chapter 4: Wild Building

Thus far in this paper I have looked at wilderness as a place and as an idea where I showed that wilderness is troubled in several respects. From William Cronon, we have learned that the particular conception of wilderness as totally unpeopled, untouched, and outside of human intention is problematic in that it implies a radical dichotomy between people and nature and does not take into account the historical effects of indigenous people. Eric Higgs' criticisms largely overlap with Cronon's but add that a threat exists from commodification and 'Disneyfication.' Birch thinks of wilderness in terms of a prison where wildness is locked up and assaulted. Wilderness is also problematic in that it is fragmented, and hence caged in as islands. Finally, Jack Turner argues that the wilderness is losing its fundamental wildness and that the term 'wild' is becoming emptied of its meaning. Given the troubles with wilderness, I concluded that the world must be seen as continuous from wilderness to the inhabited, humanized realm. Furthermore this continuum should be seen as one of wildness, which ought to be the focus or guiding ideal for the entire continuum, so that the wild can be accepted as a part and come to pervade throughout.

I also argued that we are homeless in our world, both in a primal sense related to the 'fall' from wilderness, and in more modern senses related to industrialization and technology. This adds to the importance of wildness as a guiding ideal in so far as such an ideal is required in order for us to come home to a wild realm. However, if wildness is to be sustained at all, in any substantive way, then society must be addressed at its root. Not only must the world be seen as continuous, but it is also necessary to address such

elements as the overriding vision of technology, the suppression of wildness coupled with the obsession with information and control, and the modern conception of the world as machine where humans are seen as detached controllers. Such a reform requires, at least in part, that wildness be allowed to flourish in and simultaneously be ‘let out’ of wilderness and be brought into the world as a whole - into the peopled, lived-in, everyday world.

However, it is difficult to see how the wild can come to be a part of our everyday lives. It is with this difficulty in mind that I introduce the term ‘flow’ as a general metaphor that can guide and clarify what it would mean for the wild to be a part of our everyday world in relation to both building and being. In this chapter and the following I will respectively address wild building and wild being, two fundamental aspects of our lived world as reformed by wildness. This is not meant to be a comprehensive picture of what the ‘everyday’ wild is or should be, but is rather meant as a workable metaphor and a raw beginning.

Flow

The term ‘flow’ is taken from Csíkszentmihályi’s psychology. My usage of the term will for the most part vary considerably from Csíkszentmihályi’s. His use of the term is loosely akin to wild being, while Heidegger implicitly addresses flow in terms akin to wild building. Flow is of course a common term in ordinary language. It sometimes has connotations that resonate with wildness, where flow often exemplifies the idea of process. The idea of flow also has deep roots in Taoist thought, notably as

brought to the English-speaking world by Alan Watts. This will also be considered in terms of wild being.

Flow is a good metaphor due to its common usage, deep roots, and the fact that life and life systems are water based. The most obvious connotation of flow is the flow of rivers. Notable examples are Heraclitus' ever-changing river, the immortal Yangtze, and the Sacred Ganges:

The Ganges is quite clearly a mother in a deep sense in the Indian cultural heritage. We bring the ashes of our people to this river when they die. Until those ashes touch the river their spirits and souls are not considered to have had salvation. When a child is born we put a drop of Ganges water in their mouth. When someone dies the last rite is a drop of Ganges water. It is considered purifying in a very deep spiritual sense, that it cleanses and is the place where humans return to become more human. It's the river that gives us our humanity. Its very life is under threat and with the lives of the Ganga [Ganges] what is threatened is the belief of a billion Indians. This water's flow is being interrupted. This Ganga is being [halted by] the Tehri Dam and the tragedy of it is that it's being done for the most base, crude greed of one of the world's biggest water companies. Suez is then going to get the water – 635,000,000 liters a day to be sold to Delhi citizens at ten times the price they are paying today.¹⁰⁴

However, flow reaches beyond rivers. Thoreau saw all the operations of Nature in a flowing, thawing bank of multicolored sand:

Few phenomena gave me more delight than to observe the forms which thawing sand and clay assume in flowing down the sides of a deep cut on the railroad...When the frost comes out in the spring...the sand begins to flow down the slopes like lava...innumerable little streams overlap and interlace one with another...as it flows it takes the forms of sappy leaves or vines...you are reminded of coral, of leopards' paws or birds' feet, of brains or lungs or bowels... You find thus in the very sands an anticipation of the vegetable leaf...I am affected as if in a peculiar sense I stood in the laboratory of the Artist who made the world and me...It is wonderful how rapidly yet perfectly the sand organizes itself as it flows, using the best material its mass affords to form the sharp edges of its channel. Such are the sources of rivers. In the silicious matter which the water deposits is perhaps the bony system, and in the still finer soil and organic matter the fleshy fibre or cellular tissue. What is man but a mass of thawing clay?...Thus it seemed that this one hill-side illustrated the principle of all the operations of Nature.¹⁰⁵

It is thus clear why Abbey proclaimed, "I love all things which flow" and why Henry Miller wrote the same, "I love everything that flows, everything that has time in it and becoming, that brings us back to the beginning where there is never end." However, flow is perhaps epitomized by John Muir:

Contemplating the lace-like fabric of streams outspread over the mountains, we are reminded that everything is flowing – going somewhere, animals and so-called lifeless rocks as well as

water...Rocks flow from volcanoes like water from springs, and animals flock together and flow in currents modified by stepping, leaping, gliding, swimming, etc. While the stars go streaming through space pulsed on and on forever like blood globules in Nature's warm heart.¹⁰⁶

In this chapter I will consider Heidegger's implicit conception of flow in terms of his more general consideration of technology in "The Question Concerning Technology."

First, however, I will return to David Strong as to his thought on how our material environment shapes us. Eric Higgs will then also be reconsidered. His idea of wild design will lay the foundations for wild building, before turning to Heidegger for a more explicit account. Finally I will turn to a broader look at wild building, notably as it compares to sustainable or green building.

Correlational Coexistence Building

Strong uses the term correlational coexistence to describe the reciprocal relationship between us and our material environment. This is largely a continuation of his discussion of things. Strong states that we are always correlated with the material world such that our very being is tied to things, "the quality of our lives corresponds to things so that the flourishing of our lives is bound together with the flourishing of things."¹⁰⁷ Thus if we dominate things we are diminished in the process. To differentiate what is 'in the thing' and what is 'from culture' is a mistake, rather they are correlated in correlational coexistence. "We can account for feelings in two ways - by giving an account of the feeling or by giving an account of what evokes the feeling."¹⁰⁸

Considering this reciprocity in terms of the wild, Strong speaks of animating nature. This refers to the way nature takes hold of us and affects us. He states, "the tonic of wildness must be anchored in wild things...without these things and events, our lives will not be

animated. Without that animation, our lives will stagnate, go dead, become soulless, be unawakened.”¹⁰⁹

Strong later states that we must build correlationally according to what he calls correlational coexistence building. He reminds us of Heidegger’s observation that not all building is dwelling. Building according to the technological pattern does not allow for dwelling. Wilderness, however, reminds us what it is to dwell. It is a place where we can pause and linger and want nothing more, where there is no distracting consumption. Wilderness reminds us that we should preserve things and not let technology insulate us from them. To build correlationally is to build so as to make room for things that affect us in a manner akin to wilderness. To build correlationally also means to cultivate wildness, which Strong believes can stem from a culture built around things. Cultivating involves listening and openness. Strong calls for the cultivation of wildness because wilderness alone is not sufficient to challenge the rule of technology. A beginning to cultivating wildness will be seen in Higgs’ conception of wild design.

Wild Design

As mentioned in chapter 1, Higgs concern is with ecological restoration. Given Higgs adoption of Cronon’s critique of wilderness and his relatively narrower concentration on restoration, Higgs proposes that the primary question should be “can wildness be restored?” He further justifies turning to wildness rather than wilderness so that the power of meaning is in process rather than place, where process is understood as a continuous coming into being.¹¹⁰ He defines wildness as “the condition of being unconstrained and unconventional, perhaps wayward” and as not easily predicted, while

wildlands are places where one must be a part of, reciprocally engage with, and listen to wildness.¹¹¹ Otherwise put, it is a place where the wild is predominant. Wildlands would roughly correspond to what we now call wilderness.

Restoration stands at a strange place between human will and nature's autonomy. In light of this, Higgs introduces the term 'wild design.' In Nature by Design, Higgs defines this as design "in sympathy with the vitality of life,"¹¹² involving human intention "working with and within natural processes."¹¹³ He introduces this as a keystone concept of ecological restoration and chooses this terminology since it addresses both the wild and the responsibility involved in restoration. His definition is good in that it addresses both vitality and respect for autonomy. The principles of wild design are clarity, fidelity, resilience, restraint, respect, responsibility, and engagement. He lists engagement as the quality he wants to emphasize the most because he believes participation is crucial. He states "pure consideration of wildness will miss critical participation."¹¹⁴ Participation is critical because widespread public understanding and support is necessary to prevent wilderness from being exploited or destroyed. It seems that Higgs is drawing a clear limit on how wild an ecosystem can be in the midst of our current model. Without public support gained from participation, wild places will be commodified or subverted by technology. However, participation is a practice of intentionally manipulating ecosystems and is thus, as Higgs admits, to some degree contrary to wildness.

In a later article entitled "Wild Design: Interventions and Ethics in Protected Areas," Higgs modifies his definitions. He defines design as the intention and planning behind any action, and wild design as any "intentions and plans that recognize and

support free-flowing ecological process.”¹¹⁵ His use of ‘free-flowing’ in the definition is wonderfully pertinent and coupled with design denotes the wildness that can be integrated into the principally human realm. What is troublesome, however, is the criteria that wild design ‘supports’ these ecological processes. It is not clear whether support differs from ‘making-room-for.’ Is feeding Yellowstone’s elk, for instance, ‘supporting’ ecological process or is it simply undermining their wildness? Higgs sees the conflict here when he states that “there is a critical tension between unrestrained process (wild) and human intervention (design) in wild design.”¹¹⁶ Human intention is involved in choosing what and where to preserve and how to go about doing this, but this is all meant to make-room-for wild process, not necessarily to support it. In the context of restoration support seems more appropriate but, as Higgs himself professes, wild design is not appropriate everywhere because it is bound up with the quality of intentionality, so it would not be appropriate in areas where human intention is meant to be minimized, such as the ‘backcountry’ or ‘wilderness.’ He also points out the necessity of humility - we must realize that “nature...[is] greater than our capacity to understand and manipulate.”¹¹⁷ Humility should guide both how and when we choose to design.

Part of what motivates Higgs’ suggestion of wild design is the issue of when and where to intervene in ecosystems. A common perceived need for intervention is halting invasive species and restoring native ones. Design is evident in these cases, much as in a garden where weeds are continuously pulled. Ultimately, however, nature does not need us to restore it. Invasive species and past human devastation will of course not allow for an ecosystem to return itself to identical historical conditions, but an intact living

ecosystem will be reestablished in time. Higgs realizes this and distinguishes between recovery and restoration. Recovery is unintentional and unaided; while restoration is assisted recovery in order to bring an ecosystem back to predisturbance conditions.

It would seem that we have a duty to undo the destruction caused by us in our ignorance. In a large respect though, restoration is really about us. Higgs admits that restoration is about us when, as noted above, he states that it allows us to participate in nature and thus offers the hope of us learning to exist within natural systems. However, restoration is about us even when its criterion is wildness. This is so because, as noted, truly wild recovery does not need us, though it may take thousands or millions of years for a new equilibrium to be reached. We are looking at things in our time frames and according to our standards of integrity, historical fidelity, or biodiversity. The predisturbance equilibrium or historical condition no longer exists in nature. It is as though an asteroid struck and permanently altered the ecosystem. From nature's perspective, what was there is gone forever and nature has no memory of it. The memory exists only within the human mind. In this sense restoration is about us and is another form of control, especially if it is ongoing. This is not to say that restoration is wrong or that it should not be done, but it is an honest admission of where we stand in relation to nature.

Regardless of the efficacy of restoration, the thought Higgs has given it is a good place to begin thinking of the possibility of living within the wild. Wild design is not appropriate for all places, but it is an excellent conceptual starting place to consider our existence and to explore what it would mean for wildness to be 'let out' and to become a part of our building. Wild design is proposed in terms of restoration which is more

obviously suitable to a minimum of human artifice and an allowance of wild process. Yet it is less evident how this could apply in a larger context. Higgs uses as an example the Kissimmee River restoration.

The Kissimmee River runs from Orlando, Florida into Lake Okeechobee. It was transformed by the Army Corp of Engineers from a “biophysically diverse, braided river channel” with “irregular and unpredictable flow” that often flooded a huge area, into a simplified, impounded, and channelized river. The reshaping of the river caused massive ecosystem damage and reduction in biodiversity. Now it is being restored by moving the canal back into historic meanders and back channels.

In the case of the Kissimmee River we can see how converting it back from a canal into an entity like its former self returns the river over to the wild and in this sense the act of initial restoration ‘supports’ the wild (though the canal would eventually deteriorate on its own if allowed to). This kind of supporting is only applicable in a place where the wild has been destroyed. A canal cannot be wild – it is inherently not a part of its structure, whereas a river is wild by nature. To convert a canal into a river is the first step in allowing the wild to resume. However, wild design cannot do more than this. We cannot literally design the wild. We can only design so as to make room for the wild, or make an initial design for a restoration which brings a place back as much as possible to a state where it can flourish on its own, presumably ‘as it was.’ It is easy to see in the example of the Kissimmee River how wild design can allow for the wild to flourish once the river is restored, as it can then be given over to wild process. On the other hand, blatantly technological structures like power plants or houses are fairly permanent and

imposing, and thus the relation to the wild is far less apparent. I will thus further elucidate wild design in light of some of Heidegger's insights with respect to technology.

Wild Building

The term 'building' as used in wild building is meant in a broad sense, which includes not only our buildings proper, but our technology, artifact creation, and management generally. It is how we design, maintain, and run our world. Wild Building is not a precisely defined concept. It is only a beginning and in this thesis I will only hint at what it could be. What is certain is that it must do two things: allow the nonhuman wild to flourish, and leave a place for, and perhaps encourage, our own wildness. There is a difficulty here with using the term 'encourage.' It is problematic in the same way that Higgs' use of 'support' is, insofar as it is unclear what it would mean to encourage wildness beyond simply allowing for it. Regardless, like wild design, what distinguishes wild building is that thought is directed to the wild - the ever-changing life process. We have seen from Turner that some key criteria in defining the wild are autonomy and vitality. Wild building always has these in mind. Further, wild building is more than correlational coexistence building. It seizes upon Strong's vision of cultivating wildness, but Strong only describes this as making room for *things* in our lives. This is certainly important, but perhaps only an aspect of wild building. In the rest of this chapter I will consider more fully what wild building could be.

Heidegger

Heidegger hints towards wild building in two ways, by considering our place in the world and by considering the place of that which is not created by us. The last chapter

scratched the surface with its brief discussion of dwelling. Discussed were the fourfold, nearness, and gathering. These should be kept in mind as Heidegger's thinking is again considered. As was mentioned in the last chapter, a lack of dwelling results from a lack of nearness. What separates dwelling from mere building is that in dwelling human experience is central. Building is most commonly understood in terms of architecture and engineering, which are typically design according to the standards of mathematics or aesthetics. Contrary to the dominant building disciplines, Heidegger believes that we should begin at the level of phenomenological appreciation – the way we actually experience space and places. Heidegger distinguishes between abstract, mathematical, 'grid' space and the space in which mortals interact with the material world and the fourfold. Heidegger turns to the fourfold to capture this experiential reality. He claims that we are able to live in and be at home in our world due to the presence of gathering things and buildings. He considers a bridge to illustrate his point. "The bridge is a thing; it gathers the fourfold, but in such a way that it allows a site for the fourfold."¹¹⁸

Heidegger states that mortals dwell in spaces by virtue of things and locales. "Space is in essence that for which room has been made...by virtue of a locale, that is, by such a thing as the bridge. Accordingly, spaces receive their essential being from locales."¹¹⁹

Heidegger thinks of the bridge like a picture frame – "It presents what crosses it. It also presents the world around the bridge to people crossing it."¹²⁰ Heidegger seems to suggest that the bridge itself is necessary to gather the fourfold. This runs contrary to typical conceptions of wilderness, especially Wilderness Act wilderness, which is defined in part as being without structure. The American conception of wilderness captured by this act is pristine, untrammelled nature, whereas Heidegger shares in the European

tradition where buildings are often seen as disclosing nature. Anyone who has ever faced a river in the wilderness realizes that a bridge is not necessary to ‘disclose’ the place, and this was certainly the way indigenous peoples understood place. Heidegger is thus wrong that a structure is necessary for a locale and as a site for the fourfold, though he rightly wants to show how mortals fit into the fourfold. However, what is important is not the presence of human structure, but living close to, and having an intimate understanding of things and places. What indigenous people lacked in structures they more than made up for in stories and experiences of places and formations not shaped by them – “we have stories for every bump in the land, every butte, every mesa.”¹²¹

Heidegger’s look at dwelling and building is largely concerned with gathering. There is a connection between that which is wild and that which gathers, but they are not equivalent. Heidegger does, however, in his own way, address the wild. In the case of the bridge, it *does* lessen the wildness of a place, but it also allows for some degree of wildness while additionally providing for a certain kind of use and brand of living. Heidegger speaks of the bridge existing with the wild when he states that “the bridge lets the stream run its course and at the same time grants mortals their way,” and that the bridge “holds [the stream’s] flow up to the sky by taking it for a moment under the vaulted gateway and then setting it free once more.”¹²² He further states that the bridge is ‘ready’ for the fickle weather, which includes flooding. This differs from the highway bridge, which is calculated for maximum yield and reveals and allows for nothing. Similarly to the bridge, Heidegger considers an old Black forest farmhouse, which sits in a manner attuned with the world around, “It placed the farm on the wind-sheltered mountain slope, looking south, among the meadows close to the spring. It gave the wide

overhanging shingle roof whose proper slope bears up under the burden of snow, and that, reaching deep down, shields the chambers against the storms of the long winter nights.”¹²³

Heidegger’s insights are wonderful for bringing wildness into the peopled realm, and thus for wild building. Insofar as we are committed to a mode of life with bridges and other such structures, Heidegger offers a way of building, which allows for this while also still allowing for the wild. However, his flaw here is in failing to see that ‘untouched’ nature can be complete in itself. Though there must be continuity between wilderness and the developed world, there should also be places left unmodified as much as possible. Some places, like Southern Utah are entirely different worlds from the Black Forest. They are complete in themselves, good as they are, hence Abbey’s defiant response to bridges in The Monkey Wrench Gang.

Heidegger does in places move away from thinking of human structure as a necessary frame and instead to the wild itself:

Earth is the serving bearer, blossoming and fruiting, spreading out in rock and water, rising up into plant and animal... The sky is the vaulting path of the sun, the course of the changing moon, the wandering glitter of the stars, the year’s seasons and their changes, the light and dusk of day, the gloom and glow of night, the clemency and inclemency of the weather, the drifting clouds and blue depth of the ether.¹²⁴

Adam Sharr says that “Heidegger insisted that seasons and inclement weather should be accepted with grace. To him, we always exist with the bite of the wind, the chill of the snow, the cold saturation of rain and the burning intensity of the sun; and our absence of control over these forces hints at power beyond our reach.”¹²⁵ The wild forces of nature are in themselves mysterious and humbling, allowing people to await the divinities, and are such that “our being is thrust central to our attention.”¹²⁶

Heidegger writes that mortals dwell in saving the earth, where to save is to “set something free into its own essence.”¹²⁷ He continues, “Mortals dwell in that they receive the sky as sky. They leave to the sun and the moon their journey, to the stars their courses, to the seasons their blessing and their inclemency; they do not turn night into day nor day into a harassed unrest.”¹²⁸ This is what it is to let being be, or to allow the wild will. Characteristics of dwelling are saving, receiving, awaiting, and initiating. These are all “less about human will than a will-not-to-will,”¹²⁹ or perhaps better stated as a will to allow the wild will. Heidegger’s insights into building continue in “The Question Concerning Technology” where he shows that the current paradigm of building stems from a challenging of nature, such that nature is revealed as resource.

The Question Concerning Technology

In the ‘Question’ Heidegger asks, what is the essence of technology? He affirms what has been stated before – that we are a part of the world and that technology is more than simply instrumental. The instrumental view is that technology is a mere means to an end that we have dictated. Heidegger says that instrumentalism is correct but not true. He claims that the essence of technology is nothing technological, meaning that we must go beyond technology in order to grasp it. Heidegger claims that the essence of modern technology is found in the ‘framework’: “We now name the challenging claim that gathers man with a view to ordering the self-revealing as standing-reserve: Ge-stell [enframing].”¹³⁰ In other words, technology places everything into a framework of resource (standing-reserve) by challenging beings to be stored and set aside as expendable, on-demand commodities. This is accomplished by what Heidegger calls

positioning and ordering. Technology is thus a form of revealing that contrasts with other ways of revealing. Heidegger appeals to the Greek sense of understanding Being, which is captured in the notion of truth as *alētheia* – revealing or unconcealment. The Greek sense of making something like a chalice is not one of wresting the shape from raw material but of occasioning or bringing-forth. This bringing-forth is *poiēsis*, related to poetry. Technology does not let ‘what is’ come forth into its poetic essence, but instead sets upon and commands everything to ‘speak’ as resource.

Heidegger’s criticisms largely point to the interruption of a poetic revealing of the world. Beyond this implication is the reciprocal relationship spoken of by Strong and Turner. Heidegger addresses this. He writes about what he calls “the supreme danger.” The danger is that all things, including ourselves, will become revealed as resource such that there is no other possibility of revealing.

This danger attests to us in two ways. As soon as what is unconcealed no longer concerns man as object, but exclusively as standing-reserve, and man in the midst of objectlessness is nothing but the orderer of the standing-reserve, then he comes to the very brink of a precipitous fall; that is, he comes to the point where he himself will have to be taken as standing-reserve. Meanwhile, man, precisely as the one so threatened, exalts himself and postures as lord of the earth. In this way the illusion comes to prevail that everything man encounters exists only insofar as it is his construct. This illusion gives rise in turn to one final delusion: it seems as though man everywhere and always encounters only himself. . . *In truth, however, precisely nowhere does man today any longer encounter himself, i.e. his essence.*¹³¹

We are alienated from our essence, cannot encounter ourselves, and are subservient to resource. The irony of referring to ourselves as ‘human resources’ is not lost on Heidegger. In this sense we are not free.

Heidegger claims that freedom is not connected to the will, but is rather tied to truth as revealing where revealing stems from freedom. Freedom ‘governs’ the free, cleared space where that-which-frees resides – ‘the mystery,’ or perhaps ‘the nothing.’ Freedom also comes from listening, and becoming aware of the essence of technology -

the current mode of revealing. Heidegger is right that an unfettered will to control is contrary to freedom, but returning to Heidegger's example of the bridge, letting the stream run its course and granting mortals their way is an issue of two wills meeting and leaving according to their own natures, by their own wills. Heidegger is thus wrong here - freedom *is* a matter of the will.

What is it to Stockpile?

Heidegger's insights become remarkable when he considers the way that this conversion of everything into resources comes about. He states that nature is put to the "unreasonable demand that it supply energy which can be extracted and stored."¹³² The paradigmatic example here is the dam. It disrupts the current of the river by storing it up in the reservoir. Heidegger compares the 'old wooden bridge' to the Rhine River Dam. The dam is not built 'into' the river like the bridge, but instead destroys the river by backing it up into the confines of the power plant. It is no longer the Rhine that is revealed in the poetry of Hölderlin but is instead "an object on call for inspection by a tour group ordered there by the vacation industry."¹³³ The energy of the river furthermore becomes unlocked, stored, transformed, distributed, and "switched about ever anew."¹³⁴ The Rhine, a particular something, is transformed into an interchangeable unit, while the river is everywhere totally regulated and secured.

Heidegger constantly uses the term 'stored' to describe the technological transformation. Nature "is stockpiled; that is on call."¹³⁵ The introduction defines resource (standing-reserve) as a "stockpile in service to, and on call for, technological purposes."¹³⁶ "Everywhere everything is ordered to stand by, to be immediately on hand,

indeed to stand there just so that it may be on call for a further ordering. Whatever is ordered about in this way has its own standing. We call it the standing-reserve [Bestand].”¹³⁷ Much of what makes Heidegger’s observations potent is the context of our pre-agricultural existence. “Hunter-gatherers have little or no stored food, and no concentrated food sources, like an orchard or a herd of cows.”¹³⁸ The rise of civilization resulted precisely from the move to agriculture, specifically to the cultivation of crops such as wheat, which allowed for storage in silos and as beer. This unhinged people from the flow of the natural world, and left them in their own little world. Civilization could in fact be defined by the surplus and storage resulting from agricultural existence. In tandem with storage and surplus in signifying civilization is a modification of the landscape, which results from the act of agricultural cultivation itself, but also from the creation of irrigation canals, aqueducts, cities, pyramids, temples, etc.

Technology is in many respects simply a continuation of the agricultural paradigm, which has been given tremendous reach and power since the scientific revolution. Agriculture seems to demand certain ways of thinking which do not allow for a pure affinity with nature. This was the case with John Muir when he left Yosemite to take up cultivating an orchard. The farmer is often “placed in an adversarial, exploitative relationship, an unremitting hand-to-hand combat with the land.”¹³⁹ The medieval peasants could not so alter the Rhine as the dam does, but if they had been able to improve their quality of life by doing so, it is likely they would have.

Though Heidegger has a remarkable insight as to the relation of technology and stockpiling, ultimately he looks to medieval peasant life and the Greeks (specifically the Greek language) as his inspiration, both agricultural civilizations. (They did differ from

ours of course in that their worlds were far less developed - the Greeks for instance were surrounded by the wild seas.) Heidegger appeals to agricultural imagery numerous times. In the 'Question' he compares the technological setting-upon to peasants cultivating their fields, where the peasants "take care of and maintain."¹⁴⁰ In "Building Dwelling Thinking" he appeals to the German term *bauen* to show that building is really dwelling. He writes that this word also means "to cherish and protect, to preserve and to care for, specifically to till the soil, to cultivate the vine."¹⁴¹ He draws a distinction between cultivation and construction, where the former is like nurturing a seed into a plant.

Heidegger's agricultural imagery is not totally inappropriate, however. It *can* help to guide the built world. Seventeenth century aristocratic gardens epitomize a cultivation that quashes the wild, "within [these] garden walls was a 'dead and standing pool of air,' where nature is 'stupefied.'"¹⁴² However, Griffiths writes, "I would argue that gardens are not an opposite of wildness and that paradise is not in conflict with wilderness. The truest gardening weaves the way of the wild within it – the will of nature and the will of humans not in battle but in cooperation."¹⁴³ In terms of wildness, the peasant mode of agriculture sits between hunting/gathering and our current industrial system. Like our ancestors of the last 10,000 years, we are still ultimately an agricultural civilization, but the significant difference is that we have oil and other fossil fuels. Oil is a deposit of the sun's ancient energy and is thus a stockpile of energy, while older modes of agriculture existence relied largely on the direct input of the sun's energy, though fertile soil has ancient sunlight stored in it as well. It is due to this increased reliance on the stockpiled that our mode is less wild than our agricultural ancestors.

Nevertheless, “Hunter-gatherers practiced the most successful and longest lasting lifestyle in human history. In contrast, we're still struggling with the mess into which agriculture has tumbled us, and it's unclear whether we can solve it.”¹⁴⁴ The effects of the transition to agriculture, namely profuse disease, famine, class hierarchy, incessant population growth, and the like, have in many ways subsided in first-world, fossil-fuel dependent nations like our own. However, these are still major issues worldwide and do still threaten industrialized nations. Clearly we cannot return to a hunter-gatherer existence. Population size and development will not allow it. However, we can look to a wild hunter-gatherer existence as an important and perhaps necessary inspiration. It is helpful here to very briefly consider what divides an agricultural (and thus our current, existence) from one of hunting and gathering.

As noted, the primary differences are stockpiling and modifying the world. Agriculture inherently modifies the world. It often disrupts and destroys ecosystems, replacing diversity and complexity with irrigated monoculture. A terrific contemporary example is the leveling and burning of rain forest in the South Pacific which is replaced by vast crops of oil palm. Prior to agriculture, people used what was available as it was available. Bison and tree bark, for instance were taken straight from the land and used. This meant that possessions and supplies tended to be sustainable, and autonomously available and replaceable. In other words, as a group followed game, their shelter, food, and other necessities were available to them as they roamed. Coupled with the modifying and storing elements of civilization is the additional characteristic of tying people down to particular permanent settlements. This is one of the biggest effects on humans. The ability to move and wander according to the seasons or the movement of game allowed

for a tremendous flexibility and freedom. This roaming also necessitated relatively few, easily and autonomously replaced possessions.

This wandering component of pre-agricultural existence comes close to the heart of wild building. Contrary to storage and settlement is flow, which by definition includes unimpeded movement. Heidegger approaches a conception of the wild in relation to building when he considers the windmill. He points out that the windmill runs with the world, not storing it. In contrast to a coal mine, he asks, “But does this not hold for the old windmill as well? No. Its sails do indeed turn in the wind; they are left entirely to the wind’s blowing. But the windmill does not unlock energy from the air current in order to store it.”¹⁴⁵ The windmill is immersed in the flow of the world and in this sense is wild.

We are settled people, no longer nomads, while the landscape has been carved up and developed. The challenge I present with wild building is to integrate that drifting, free-flowing, contingent movement into the settled, technological world of human habitation. This is not the same as the unattached never-dwelling-anywhere that Heidegger attributes to the ‘they,’ for in their wandering wild people are grounded in the presence of the fourfold and in the mystery of being. Stockpiling might be understood as ‘halting’ the world, and in so doing it undermines the gathering and revealing aspects of things, the autonomy and vitality of the world, and it pulls us away from ‘being.’ Stockpiling stores the world up into reservoirs of all kinds, such as crop silos, literal reservoirs of water, oil wells, the ‘dead pools’ of aristocratic gardens, the isolated pools of air and climate in buildings, and disconnected rituals and language. Griffiths calls language wild, it is always shifting and flowing so that one must be *fluent* to know it

well, though it can also be halted up and captured, for instance, in the dictionary or a static religious text. Wild building seeks to reimmerse human artifacts into wild process. This will not come from isolated building designs but from an all-inclusive transformation. This transformation can begin by examining further how structures shape our world, but first I will consider wild building in the light of green building.

Green Building

In chapter 2 I discussed alternatives to wildness in terms of conservation. The alternatives considered were biodiversity and naturalness. I concluded that these are commendable aims, but that they would be hollow without also considering wildness. Similarly, environmentally conscious building and design usually has sustainability or ‘green’ as its standard. As in the case of conservation, though both of these are important and in fact related to wildness, they are incomplete in and of themselves. Before addressing this point, it is helpful to distinguish to some degree between green and sustainable. The term green is usually ill-defined. It seems to mean that the environment is considered or prioritized to some degree, but it is not as rigorous as sustainable. Sustainable means the ability to maintain human support systems indefinitely, without causing irreversible damage to ecosystem health. Both green and sustainable usually include such things as slowing climate change and global warming, reducing energy and resource consumption, using renewable energy and materials, reducing pollution, creating healthy environments, and the like, where the latter implies long term perpetuation.

However green often goes beyond sustainable in that it considers not just renewability, but something that approaches wild building. “The ideal ‘green’ project

preserves and restores habitat that is vital for sustaining life and...[represents] the most efficient and least disruptive use of land, water, energy and resources. The optimum design solution is one that effectively emulates all of the natural systems and conditions of the pre-developed site – after development is complete,”¹⁴⁶ and again “the least costly, least time consuming and most environmentally preferable design...is often the one in which the design of buildings...respect[s] the existing natural flows and features of the land.”¹⁴⁷

Here, a description of green building begins to sound like Heidegger’s example of the Black Forest farmhouse, which is built into and in response to the world. Some proposed characteristics of green building move further in this direction. These are using natural lighting and shade, using local materials, retaining predevelopment hydrological systems, harvesting rainwater, using graywater, using natural ventilation, and creating small scale, off the grid, local energy primarily in terms of wind and solar. Wildlife corridors are another example where wildness is integrated into our world while at the same time allowing for the perpetuation of sustainable life systems.

There is definitely a lot of overlap between wild, green, and sustainable building and the dividing line between them is often not very sharp. Often what will be sustainable will also be wild, while what is wild must be sustainable. Responding to particular place, climate, water, etc is both green and wild, and often sustainable. However, there are also instances where these terms are not in harmony or where it is difficult to tell. For instance, some have conceived of mimicking nature as a potential solution to creating a sustainable world. This is known as biomimetics. An example that illustrates what could be learned from nature is the creation of a spiderweb versus Kevlar production.¹⁴⁸ The

production of Kevlar requires enormous temperature, pressure, and volatile chemicals, while producing a fair amount of waste. The spiderweb on the other hand is created organically in water at room temperature. Clearly the spider is more efficient and sustainable and thus it would be to our advantage to mimic its methods. Another possibility is to design a building like a tree. Such a building would be designed to mimic the trees' qualities of being photosynthetic, cleaning water, creating oxygen, etc. Similar design is found in organic architecture which can take the form of literally growing buildings or, far more commonly, of using living walls, roofs, and façade.

However, it is difficult to tell whether this integration of the living and organic into building is in fact wild. On the contrary, all of this could lead to hijacking nature and thus destroying wildness by finalizing the totalization of artifice and control. For instance, some have proposed engineering plants and bacteria to clean up our synthetic chemicals and waste.¹⁴⁹ An example is using vast 'networks' of mushrooms to heal environments by tapping "into this powerful inherent resource."¹⁵⁰ What seems to be implied in this example and in biomimetics more generally is that nature is nothing but a storehouse of technological gadgetry to be tapped into and integrated into our devices.

Close attention does need to be given to natural, organic forms, and we should learn from and mimic nature's ways. However, it is questionable whether biomimetics does in fact bring us closer to wild nature in some substantive way. The question must be asked whether it will merely prop up our egoistic god-aspirations and power-hunger at the expense of any possible relationship with wild existence apart from ourselves, and furthermore will it lead to a wilder existence for us? Strong offers a challenge to sustainable and green building when he asks: though the planet may be saved, will it be

worth living on? Thus Strong is drawing attention to the content of what is being sustained. A very real possibility is to survey, monitor, and control, as much as possible, the entire cycle of energy transfers that takes place in the total ecological system on earth, which would include the economic, the social, and the individual. Such a system and other forms of despotic or meaningless existence, though sustainable, are simply not worth perpetuating.

Toward Bodily and Mental Autonomy

Langdon Winner argues that certain structures are inherently totalitarian.¹⁵¹ A nuclear reactor is a highly volatile structure that requires strict operating procedures and tight security. Its very existence has effects that trickle out well beyond the plant to adversely affect our whole mode of life. As our world becomes filled with such totalitarian structures, our mode of life becomes ever more despotic. In the same manner, certain structures are inherently contrary to wildness. Consider Edward Abbey's analysis of industrial tourism in the national parks. He proposes outlawing cars in the national parks and compares the experience of our normal mode of life, as defined by the car and cubicle, to that offered by wilderness:

They will complain of physical hardship, these sons of the pioneers. Not for long; once they rediscover the pleasures of actually operating their own limbs and senses in a *varied, spontaneous, voluntary style*, they will complain instead of crawling back into a car; they may even object to returning to desk and office and that dry-wall box on Mossy Brook Circle. The fires of revolt may be kindled – which means hope for us all.¹⁵²

Structures that are inherently inimical to wildness include such things as mentioned previously in this paper like the canal, laboratory, and museum. Griffiths likewise considers the golf course, “Golf epitomizes the tame world. On a golf course nature is neutered...a prefab mat of stultified grass, processed, pesticided, herbicided.”¹⁵³ There

are many such un-wild structures – this is in fact the reality of most of our structures. Airports, cruise ships, arcades, factories, skyscrapers, interstates, etc. The airport is an excellent instance. Airport security requires that the entire premises be totally surveyed, and the initial entrance requires everything about one, save one’s internal makeup (depending on the style of scanner) to become evident and evaluated. Everything within the airport is wholly planned with every function designed and secured. One is totally enclosed within a hi-tech, artificial environment designed to most efficiently and comfortably accommodate waiting and departing. The airport epitomizes the rationally planned, sterile, and secure, and hence the anti-wild.

Wild building must do more than simply be in sympathy with the surrounding environment. It must also consider our life in the world and take Heidegger’s suggestions along these lines seriously. An instance of such a reform would be to counteract the trend towards automation. Certainly automation has its place as no one should have to do endlessly repetitive tasks like attaching brush bristles to plastic handles. However, when automation becomes inescapable and involuntary, humans become passive - dragged along by their environment.

Another trend that wild being should counteract is the erosion of bodily and mental autonomy. It should be noted that a focus on the body is core in wild building. Part of heeding Heidegger’s suggestion of bringing the world near and Turner’s of immersion within the wild so that ecology becomes “not studied, but felt” is literally returning to feeling the world – opening up the world so that it can be directly encountered with the body and senses. As we have shaped our environment we have increasingly isolated and padded ourselves and thus pushed away feeling so that much of the world can not longer be felt. As feeling and sensation are subverted and dulled, the

qualitative is replaced with the quantitative, the experienced with the surveilled and monitored.

Bodily autonomy is found in the “varied, spontaneous, voluntary” use of the body and senses, while mental autonomy is thinking and imagining on one’s own – responding to the particularities of one’s time and place. This only results from a relative lack of information, which requires a degree of remoteness and isolation. Constant bombardment by news, advertising, and various other social and technological pressures are increasingly becoming unavoidable as information technology ‘progresses’ and invades into all aspects of life. No man is an island, and the emphasis on autonomy here is not meant to belittle the value of community, but the trend of technology is toward ever-greater integration and this should be resisted. Individuals and communities should be able to decide how they wish to engage or not engage markets, technology, and globalization.

Some initial characteristics of wild building are: flexibility, engagement, empty spaces in life and land; allowing or requiring danger, challenge, and skill; continuity and freedom; and bodily and mental autonomy. All of these can be found, for instance, in a free flowing river. These ideas will be developed in the next chapter on wild being. Ultimately wild building serves wild being, both our own being and being more generally. Thus understanding wild building entails understanding wild being.

Chapter 5: Wild Being

The term ‘being’ as used in ‘wild being’ refers to the way that we engage, think, and live in the world. Cronon states that “wilderness is more a state of mind than a fact of nature.”¹⁵⁴ Wild being would be akin to the state of mind he refers to here. However, the relationship between our being and the makeup of the world is more reciprocal than Cronon’s statement seems to imply. For Turner this is key:

The farther you are from a road, and the longer you are out, the wilder your experience. Two weeks is the minimum, a month is better. Until then the mind remains saturated with human concerns and blind to the natural world, the body bound to metronomic time and ignorant of natural biological rhythms.¹⁵⁵

Despite Cronon’s statements to the contrary, this attunement to the wild is found exponentially more powerfully in wilderness than in the garden or in the built world.

Wild being is a part of resolving the dichotomy between wilderness and our world. It entails the recognition of the reciprocity between our building and our being. This means coming to realize the way our environment shapes us and our thinking, especially technology, agriculture, and wilderness. Wilderness must become part of our way of life. This will come from allowing the sacred, the mysterious, and the uncontrolled to inform our lives and our culture. Our everyday being must become, as much as possible (though it is doubtful that it can ever be as powerfully as in wilderness) “residency in a wild biological realm, where the experience of wilderness is part of everyday life.”¹⁵⁶

I will begin this chapter by looking back at some of the authors previously considered, namely Thoreau, Turner, and Strong in terms of what they can offer to a

conception of wild being. I will then continue the metaphor of flow by looking at Csíkszentmihályi's psychological use of the term in Beyond Boredom and Anxiety. Lastly, this discussion of flow will be continued in a look at Alan Watts' Tao: The Watercourse Way, and in Dolores LaChapelle's Deep Powder Snow.

Practically every author considered in this work thus far has admonished that we should shatter the separation between us and the wild - to become wild ourselves, and to - "urge wilderness to grow back into civilization."¹⁵⁷ As noted in the first chapter, Cronon says that we should bring the wild home, while Birch writes that we must reinfuse the world with wildness and the sacred. It is really from Thoreau and Turner, though, that a robust sense of wild being begins to emerge. Thoreau considers wildness a quality that can apply both to nature and to people. At one point in Walden, he considers fishermen that come to the pond. Thoreau calls them "wild men" as they are experts in natural lore and spend their lives in skilled engagement with nature. Their lives pass "deeper in Nature than the studies of the naturalist penetrate" and are thus like natives in their ability to navigate in wild environs. They are the manifestation of Thoreau's desire to "live as the animals, in so far as Nature is carried out *in* them."¹⁵⁸ This is what Thoreau calls Indian wisdom. Being wild, however, is more than cultivating a connection with wild nature, but also involves "obedience to the laws of [one's] being."

Thoreau also considers our relationship to the radical wild. At one point he states, "Let the thunder rumble; what if it threaten ruin to farmers' crops?"¹⁵⁹ What is notable is that he calls on us to *let* be that which is dangerous to us and our crops. This echoes Heidegger's sentiment about the bridge's relationship to the 'fickle' weather. Lightning,

thunder, and violent weather more generally, is one of the last powerful, fearful expressions of nature, which by its character introduces danger and thus, in a sense, meaning, to our lives. This is poetically illustrated by Karsten Heuer. He was stalked by a bear in the subarctic and comes to a powerful realization:

That bear has freed me. It has pushed me to a place where fear empowers rather than enslaves. There is none of the paranoia that followed the last aggressive encounter at Cypress Creek. I am quiet inside now, washed in a calm awareness. For the first time, I understand the risks and dangers for what they offer life, not what they threaten to take away. I see more, hear more, feel more. The fear of bears, wild rivers, and untamed storms strengthens the connections between a person and a place. Fear engages.¹⁶⁰

Jack Turner echoes Thoreau in many respects. He states that wildness does not equal a total lack of humans or influence, and that in fact the quality can apply to humans. Turner considers what he calls the wildest man he has ever seen in Asia. He was a pilgrim in Lhasa who was chanting and bowing around a temple. Turner gives many suggestions for what wild being might look like. Part of cultivating a wilder self is recognizing and celebrating the wild elements of our personal lives like sex, dreams, and rage. He also echoes Thoreau in calling for Indian wisdom. This would entail ecology being felt as immutable cycles. It could only come about from residency in wild nature, from living in and studying the wild without taming or destroying it. Not only does he consider wild people, but also wild culture and our form of life. He calls for a new tradition of the wild, one that is uniquely our own, what might be called an ‘old-new’ way of being. It necessitates a literature and lore of wild nature, but this alone is not enough. More relics, tourism, and books will not do – what is ultimately needed is to live the life of the wild

Finally, David Strong considers how our being should come to be informed by the wild. We can cultivate wildness by allowing wilderness to inform everydayness. An

instance of this is making room for sacred times and places, which allow for renewal. Strong further suggests that homecoming will come from finding a place to dwell. He goes on to clarify that this dwelling is opposed to stagnation and that a necessary component of dwelling is wandering. We must become at home in a condition of wandering, patience, openness, and danger - “as wanderers we are ready for and receptive to the given and the surprising as they come to pass.”¹⁶¹ Becoming open to the given requires realizing that wild things are good as they are, that they “do not need to be rearranged, ‘developed’, or made use of before they reach the fullness of their being.”¹⁶² Strong relates this way of being to Kant’s interpretation of the sublime. That which is fearful, mighty, and terrible would normally be fled from, but one who is educated can stand firm and have their soul lifted. In other words, the adversarial wild becomes kind.

Flow in *Beyond Boredom and Anxiety*

As mentioned in chapter 3, Csíkszentmihályi claims that alienation and meaninglessness result from a life of empty drudgery that is meant to be compensated for by extrinsic rewards like money and status. Society typically relies on extrinsic motivation to persuade people to act according to social imperatives. Conditioning by punishment and reward forces people along predetermined paths. Intrinsic motivation differs from extrinsic in that the activity itself is inherently rewarding. This is what Csíkszentmihályi calls autotelic - that which is pursued for its own sake.

Csíkszentmihályi considers what other psychologists before him have hypothesized as to what makes an activity pleasurable in itself. These characteristics have been: 1) the participant is functioning according to sensory and physical potential, 2)

there is an 'optimal' level of novel stimulation, and 3) the activity is freely chosen or internally motivated, whereas compulsion is drudgery.¹⁶³ Csíkszentmihályi accepts that these are true, but believes that they are incomplete. He argues that the crucial quality of enjoyment that draws people to an activity, or what takes people beyond boredom and anxiety, is what he identifies as flow. Flow is a "holistic sensation that people feel when they act with total involvement."¹⁶⁴ In the flow state "action follows upon action according to an internal logic that seems to need no conscious intervention by the actor."¹⁶⁵ This is what is meant by 'total involvement.' In this state, decision-making is not rational - rather it is more like an animal. Further flow is an end in itself - "the purpose of flow is to keep on flowing."¹⁶⁶

Flow experiences are not limited to any particular type of activity; in other words flow can be found in both work and play, or even in religious activity, in what Csíkszentmihályi calls 'deep flow.' Activities that he considers in depth as producing flow are chess, rock climbing, dancing, and surgery. He defines a flow state by listing several requirements: 1) lack of awareness, 2) narrowing of concentration (reduction of stimulus, information), 3) self-forgetfulness, 4) feeling in control of actions and environment, 5) clear goals and ordered rules, and 6) autotelic. Later, Csíkszentmihályi lists other elements correlated with flow, namely freedom, skill, growth, and self-transcendence.¹⁶⁷

Csíkszentmihályi's notion of flow is relevant to wild being in several respects: one's 'self' expands as one becomes enmeshed in, and respondent to, the world; an activity which produces flow is freely chosen and thus stems autonomously from one's being; and flow entails being in the here and now. The most difficult characteristics of

flow to relate to wild being are feeling in control, and having ordered rules. For instance, Csíkszentmihályi writes that chess can produce flow in part because it is a “self contained universe which one can control.”¹⁶⁸ As we will see, his description of control here is misleading, and in fact Csíkszentmihályi writes of flow elsewhere in ways that seem to contradict this description. Clearly there is a departure here as playing chess would hardly be considered participating in the wild. Csíkszentmihályi’s more general observations are nevertheless applicable.

He writes that flow is produced when there is a proper relation of skills to conditions. Too much difficulty produces anxiety, while too little produces boredom. What is required is something ‘external’ to ‘struggle’ with, some resistance that produces a challenge, but not so much resistance as to be overwhelming. Thus, one must feel in ‘control’ in so far as one’s skills match one’s environment. In flow, one is exploring the limits of one’s abilities and expanding them. This validates one’s competence and existence.

Though Csíkszentmihályi’s description of chess seems to suggest otherwise, the necessity for control does not mean that one is actually in control of one’s world, but rather that one has the feeling of being in control of one’s self, while at the same time being a part of something larger. There is thus a coupling of personal autonomy with self-transcendence. A good example is rock climbing. Here one is in control in so far as one understands the rock and one’s abilities, but one is not in control of the rock itself. Gravity and the rock itself challenge one to ‘bend’ to the will of the rock, but in such a way that one is made better and broader, both physically and mentally. As one becomes more skilled, the challenge must become greater to produce flow. One is thus deeply

enmeshed and shaped by one's world, but in a way that expands one's being while at the same time increasing one's appreciation and relationship to the world. Power and control over oneself and willful action are all a part of flow and a part of wild being, but this differs from power and control over wild things and a will that does not allow for the wild will.

Confronting wildness is not always a flow experience. In fact, the deepest encounters with wildness are often when one is overwhelmed. Usually however, where and how one enters wilderness or a wild place is based on skill and ability, yet it is often when one loses control that the wild is most present. Strong writes that one cannot orchestrate an encounter with the wild, rather it must come up from behind. Though one may enter into a wild place in this way, with the intention of matching one's abilities to the world, the wildest (and greatest) moments are when the unplanned happens. At one point Csikszentmihályi considers the quality of adventurousness, which he describes as a tendency to see "socially expected life patterns [as] meaningless," in other words, "life is worth living only when it offers extraordinary challenge and adventure."¹⁶⁹ When one encounters the wild, adventure is a necessary part of the equation because the wild is to some degree unknown and unpredictable and will frequently surprise us. The wild is also to some degree dangerous. Csikszentmihályi considers the danger of rock climbing. This danger is usually clear and understandable for someone experienced and is thus compatible with the feeling of control. The danger is in fact a necessary component, for instance in forcing concentration on the immediacy of the situation.

Csikszentmihályi writes that all flow stems from the challenge of the unknown. He writes that "discovery and exploration imply transcendence, a going beyond the

known, a stretching of one's self toward new dimensions of skill and competence.”¹⁷⁰

This unknown is necessary for transcendence and creation. His insights really become pertinent when he considers our building. He writes about what he calls action deprivation, where our world deprives us of “*room* for free imagination, room for free movement, room to explore and manipulate real objects.”¹⁷¹ Once again, this is allowing for empty spaces. He further writes that these empty spaces allow for deep-play - experiments in living; the destruction and creation of new forms of living. He laments that highly technological societies, even when they see the benefit of such free spaces, often build settings like replicas of jungles or slums, which are too artificial, like zoos or museums, to provide a true unknown and to allow for any genuine deep play or encounters with the unknown. This process of creation and destruction is not just related to empty spaces, but also to social interaction. Csíkszentmihályi finds that flow is found in events where “social roles are temporarily abolished and spontaneous interactions among people are encouraged.”¹⁷²

Csíkszentmihályi writes that the world should be built so as to allow for flow experiences. He claims that eliminating personal and social alienation will not come from having a greater number of isolated flow activities, but that rather the whole of life must be redesigned and restructured. This redesign would remake the total environment in which we live such that the split between work and play would disappear, and personal development and self-transcendence would be foremost. Csíkszentmihályi speculates that primitive life was often “one well-ordered flow experience.”¹⁷³ Strong affirms this notion when he writes that wilderness and things are complete in themselves and thus ask us to

linger. Cultivating wildness is bringing this completeness into the everyday. A life completely defined by wildness is likely one of flow.

Birch states that part of bringing wildness into our lives entails letting the sacred infuse into our world. Turner similarly calls for a spiritual transformation and claims that this is in fact necessary for the wild to be substantively preserved. Deep flow thus offers a good starting place. Csíkszentmihályi describes deep flow as a ‘grand expansion,’ which can be described in such terms as “transcendent, religious, visionary, or ecstatic.”¹⁷⁴ Csíkszentmihályi mainly considers this in the context of rock climbing. Deep flow goes beyond the usual level of flow where action and awareness are meshed. It is characterized by such things as a feeling of being in the eternal moment or an “oceanic feeling of the supreme sufficiency of the present,”¹⁷⁵ where one’s self, body and mind are fully integrated. Further, there is a feeling of oneness or spirituality where one feels a sense of place in the universe, a oneness with nature, and a confrontation with the ultimate. This deeper, spiritual sense of flow is continued in the next section in terms of the Tao.

Tao: The Watercourse Way

Wildness has definite parallels with the Tao in Taoism. Jack Turner refers to Lao-tzu on a couple of occasions, “Do you want to improve the world? I don’t think it can be done. The world is sacred. It can’t be improved. If you tamper with it, you’ll ruin it. If you treat it like an object, you’ll lose it.”¹⁷⁶ The original Taoist texts are often mystifying and poetic, thus not particularly appropriate for this paper. I have thus used Alan Watts’ Tao: The Watercourse Way to consider the flow of the Tao in a more linear, rational style.

As good a definition of wildness as exists is given by Lao-tzu himself, “the Tao principle is what happens of itself.”¹⁷⁷ This concerns the happenings of nature beyond us:

(As I) sit quietly doing nothing,

Spring comes and grass grows of itself.¹⁷⁸

It also concerns the wildness within us. We often take ourselves to be our egos or our self-consciousness, but in fact the innermost self is beyond the ego: “The configuration of my nervous system, like the configuration of the stars, happens of itself, and this ‘itself’ is the real ‘myself.’”¹⁷⁹ Watts draws clear parallels between the world beyond us and within us - our own inner workings function on their own, “spontaneously, like the rotation of the heavenly bodies and the drifting of the clouds.”¹⁸⁰ Wildness is also considered in a way that strongly echoes Thoreau. Chuang-tzu discusses horses in a way similar to Thoreau. He considers them to have a “natural disposition,” such that when bridled they become depraved in a sense.¹⁸¹

We often impose our order on that which happens of itself, and as society ‘progresses,’ less and less is of-itself. Food in the Paleolithic was once provided spontaneously and on its own, but this was replaced by agriculture and must now be procured through toil. Technology is enlisted in this destruction and conversion of the wild into conscious ordering. Consider where technology and conscious control are moving. Watts uses the self-functioning of the nervous system to illustrate the self-thusness of Tao, but precisely here lies the frontline of the war on wildness. Watts challenges us to consider how complex the functioning of the nervous system is. Its functioning is so tremendously complex and nonlinear as to be impossible for conscious thinking and planning.

The brain is in many ways the ultimate wild. Like a wild ecosystem, it functions on its own, but we will unlock its secrets enough to destroy and simplify its spontaneous functioning, to be replaced by our conscious toil, arbitrary human desires, bureaucratic confusion, and political power struggles. “The conscious control of life seems to involve us in ever more bewildering webs of complexity so that, despite their initial successes, technics create more problems than they solve.”¹⁸² We are not ‘free’ to change the functioning of something we cannot comprehend, but this is liberating. Once we have destroyed something’s independent ordering and hoisted ourselves into control, we become bound to the necessity of controlling and toiling to sustain these processes. By themselves, these processes simply are - given to us as gifts. Perhaps thankfulness, rather than frustration at apparent limitation, is the appropriate response

Our manic grasping for control stems from a lack of trust. This is a product of misguided philosophical beliefs. “Our human fear is that the Tao which cannot be put into books, is chaos.”¹⁸³ We tend to believe that that which is not named or grasped intellectually is chaotic, however there is an intelligent understanding beyond words, as found in the organism, for instance. Watts notes that endless paperwork and bureaucracy are a sign of this mistrust. He urges us to trust the organism, both in terms of our body and of nature. This is not to say that such trust is without risk, however.

The order of the Tao is harmony out of discordance, which stems from mutual resonance and interdependence. The Tao is incompatible with external compulsion. Its order differs from an imposition from above which forces things into “conformity with some arbitrary, artificial, and abstract notion of order.”¹⁸⁴ It is thus fundamentally

opposed to absolutizing the rule of law. The Tao's principle of order is 'li' - an organic order, as opposed to mechanical or legal - "an asymmetrical, nonrepetitive, and unregimented order which we find in the patterns of moving water, the forms of trees and clouds, of frost crystals on the window, or the scattering of pebbles on the beach sand."¹⁸⁵ This order is nonlinear, it will not be 'straightened out;' it is like the flow of water.

"The great Tao flows everywhere,"¹⁸⁶ it is "the course, the flow, the drift, or the process of nature,"¹⁸⁷ it is 'now-streaming.' To clutch it is to destroy it for what we control or remake necessarily ends up simplified and destroyed. It is better for us to flow with the flow of the world. Watts writes that we should see ourselves as part of the world process, not opposed to it. This leads to the principle of wu-wei – "not forcing." This is a kind of intelligence, both intellectually and organismically. "Wu-wei is to roll with experiences and feelings as they come and go, like a ball in a mountain stream...this is called 'flowing with the moment.'"¹⁸⁸ It applies to our relationship with the world in that we do not fight against nature, but move and work with it - go with its flow. Watts mirrors Heidegger when he states that this principle can guide our energy creation. We should use what nature has given us - the tides, sun, and wind, in a way that preserves and affirms these things. Not only is it rolling with the flow of what-happens-of-itself but it requires being in the present moment and taking a phenomenological approach. The only way to 'grasp' the Tao is to watch the processes and patterns of nature, to quietly and openly observe. Ultimately this is to allow the nonlinear and complex to run free.

Deep Powder Snow

The last work that I will briefly consider is Dolores LaChappelle's Deep Powder Snow. I draw on it as a concluding and summarizing work because it brings together many elements previously discussed like the Tao, psychological flow, wildness, and the fourfold. LaChappelle's book describes the transcendent experience that comes from deep powder skiing. She calls it a "continuous flowing interaction" where she loses her ego and all that is left is a blissful experience of mutual flow. She quotes Watts as stating that the distinction between the doer and environment is a false distinction, rather there is simply doing. Conscious thought ruins this bliss. The rational mind cannot see beyond human purpose and tries to control that which it cannot box in. This attempt at control however is disastrous, not only in ruining the flow of skiing but in technological and ecological terms as well. She further affirms Watts' rejection of the dichotomy between imposed law and 'chaotic' wildness. Rather wildness is closer to li – a self-organizing, dynamic, living order. Freedom, she claims, is found in adhering to something like wu-wei, moving with the will of the world, becoming one.

The flow of skiing takes on the larger implications of deep flow when LaChappelle considers Heidegger's fourfold. She notes that the fourfold is disclosed in the skier's world. The world of skiing necessitates responding to the mountains and the snow, paying attention to the weather, and being aware of death and danger that could come from an avalanche, for instance. LaChappelle writes that deep involvement with a place and the fourfold creates total, on-going flow. She further writes that primitive life is one of total attention to where one is and a complete immersion in reality and wildness,

which she calls the essence of being alive. She further affirms this when she quotes Gary Snyder, “wildness is the state of complete awareness.”¹⁸⁹

LaChapelle might be critiqued in that she tends too far toward total willessness. At one point she tries another form of skiing that requires input from her and she dismisses it. Her descriptions of engaging with the wild world nevertheless affirm and add to a conception of wild being.

Conclusion

Wilderness, though informative, cannot be a guiding ideal for the built world and for human beings. Meanwhile both wilderness and the built world are suffering, largely due to a conception of wilderness as entirely separate from the realm of daily life.

Wildness is neglected and assaulted in both wilderness and the built world. It should, however, come to guide both realms. Crucial to this reformation of our world is the realization that in powerful ways we *are* our world. Thus included in the reformation of wilderness and our building must be our being. I introduced flow as a metaphor in an attempt to guide this reformation, both in terms of building and being.

Wild being is participating in wild nature and cultivating the wildness within us. Not only is direct engagement with wild nature needed, but we must also find *how* to engage wildness – we must develop mentally, physically, and spiritually. Flow as considered by Csikszentmihályi and Watts offers a starting place. Some characteristics of flow are being in the moment, melding and moving with the world, and allowing our intuition to guide us to some degree. Wild building is shaping our world to allow for wild being, to integrate biological wildness into the built realm, and to build into the flow of

the world. Ultimately what must be realized is that the wild, the mysterious, the potential, the difficult, danger, vitality, autonomy, the self-ordered, adventure, and ultimately freedom are all of central importance to our existence and to the existence of all life.

A rallying cry that comes from this paper's analysis might be: "resist efficiency - cultivate wildness." This is somewhat misleading, though, as efficiency in and of itself is not problematic. A canal is presumed to be more efficient than a river that randomly wanders and floods. This is what motivates the Army Corp of Engineers to transform countless rivers and streams such as the Mississippi River into paved canals. However, in truth the river, like all things, is far more efficient in its wildness.

Efficiency cannot be given as a general rule of technology. In fact it is technology's very inefficiency that has produced so much of the environmental crisis. Our bodies and organic life in general are incredibly efficient, far more so than any machine. What is problematic is wresting and imposing efficiency based on our perceived standards of performance, especially at the level of life and experience. Nevertheless, given the common use of the term in economic and mechanical terms, I believe it to be a worthwhile slogan and a fitting end to this thesis. Further, 'cultivate wildness,' a phrase taken from Strong is also misleading. A better choice might be 'allow wildness.' Cultivating wildness, in this context, is allowing and appreciating the uncalculated, apparently inefficient meanderings of life – like the paths found in the Black Forest or in the ancient courses of the Mississippi River.

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- ¹⁴⁴ Diamond, "The Worst Mistake in Human History," 5.
- ¹⁴⁵ Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," 320.

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- ¹⁴⁷ Ibid 4.
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- ¹⁵⁵ Turner, The Abstract Wild, 85.
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- ¹⁵⁷ Oelschlaeger, The Idea of Wilderness, 275.
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- ¹⁶⁰ Heuer, Karsten, Walking the Big Wild, 206.
- ¹⁶¹ Strong, Crazy Mountains, 178.
- ¹⁶² Ibid, 129.
- ¹⁶³ Csikszentmihályi, Beyond Boredom and Anxiety, 25.
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- ¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 198.
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- ¹⁶⁹ Ibid, 152.
- ¹⁷⁰ Ibid, 33.
- ¹⁷¹ Ibid, 200 (emphasis added).
- ¹⁷² Ibid, 30.
- ¹⁷³ Ibid, 189.
- ¹⁷⁴ Ibid, 88.
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- ¹⁷⁶ Turner, The Abstract Wild, 121.
- ¹⁷⁷ Watts, Alan. Tao: The Watercourse Way, 38.
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