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Toward a Marxist Environmental Ethic: Restoration and Preservation in Focus

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TOWARD A MARXIST ENVIRONMENTAL ETHIC: RESTORATION AND
PRESERVATION IN FOCUS

by

KRISTEN INDERGAND

Under the Direction of Andrew Altman, PhD

ABSTRACT

Restoration seeks to heal the environment and make amends for damages done by human interference. Preservationists, however, claim that restoration is anthropocentric, hubristic, and ultimately misguided. I defend restoration against these criticisms, and examine narratives from Karl Marx and Lynn White, Jr. to explain human alienation from nature. I use a synthesis of lessons from Marx and White to favor a restoration paradigm over a preservationist model.

INDEX WORDS: Restoration, Preservation, Environmental Ethics, Capitalism, Karl Marx

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, especially my dad, who taught me to love the earth.

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1 INTRODUCTION

On June 8th, 2002, a match was lit in a campfire ring near Lake George, Colorado. That match started a wildfire that would be the largest the state had ever seen. The Hayman fire burned over 137,000 acres and spread ash and smoke for over 100 miles in every direction (Ingold). Today, the National Forest Foundation, Vail Resorts, the USDA Forest Service, and the Rocky Mountain Field Institute are collaborating to complete "on-the-ground restoration work" in the recovering areas. Project workers plant trees, uproot noxious weeds, and engage in efforts to reduce runoff into active streams. All of this works towards the goal of helping to heal the land, as well as improving the quality of the affected water sources, for Colorado residents and for wildlife ("South Platte Hayman Burn Area Restoration Project").

The efforts to restore the Hayman burn area are just one example of the ways in which people have been engaging in the restoration of ecosystems that have been harmed by human activity. Restoration aims to heal the environment, for both the sake of the ecosystem itself and for the people who are affected by it. It is also a distinctly nondestructive way for humans to create an impact and relate to the natural environment, which is a rarity in modern society. Much human activity is destructive of the natural world, and this impact is further magnified by the use of advanced technologies. Because of this, restorative efforts stand out as a beacon of hope that humans can, at least in some ways, participate in nature in a mutually beneficial way.

While restoration is applauded by many environmental ethicists (see Hettinger 2012 and Jordan 2000), there is also a worry that accepting restoration as the ideal paradigm with which to relate to nature is anthropocentric, hubristic, and overly-optimistic (see Katz 2002). Opponents of restoration prefer a preservation model, which insists that the best thing humans can do for nature is to leave it alone. The debate between preservation and restoration is important to

resolve, if possible, because whichever path is chosen will not just impact the attitudes of persons, but will shape the physical environment in which those persons live. Restorationists know that despite their efforts, much of nature, once lost, is lost for good.

In this thesis I examine the debate between preservation and restoration. I will look at two narratives that might explain the current strained relationship between humanity and nature: one from Karl Marx, and one from Lynn White, Jr. I will use a synthesis of lessons from these views to favor a restoration paradigm over a preservationist model. I conclude, however, that ultimately, society may need to move a step beyond restoration in order to develop a relationship with nature that is sustainable in the long-run.

2 PRESERVATION VS. RESTORATION

Eric Katz is one of the foremost critics of restoration. He calls restoration "the big lie" (Katz 1997). He believes that restoration promises to make amends to nature for past wrongs, all the while promoting only human interests and needs. Restoration "makes us feel good" and "relieves the guilt" of damaging nature, while doing little to actually return nature to what it was (Katz 1997, 390). Katz writes that "'restored' nature is an artifact created to meet human satisfactions and interests" (Katz 1997, 391). He believes that humans do not and *cannot* restore nature to what it was in itself and apart from human activity; this would be a contradiction, because "restoration" is itself human activity that shapes nature. Nature as it was in itself was originally destroyed *by* human intervention; continued human intervention seeks only continuing human interests. The pursuit of those interests may be well-intentioned, but they are still necessarily human.

Katz writes:

Artifacts, I claim, are essentially anthropocentric. They are created for human use, human purpose--they serve a function for human life. Their existence is centered on human life. It would be impossible to imagine an artifact not designed to meet a human purpose. Without a foreseen use the object would not be created (Katz 1997, 392).

When humans enter the environment with the intention of changing it--even when they aim to change it for the better or to restore it to what it was--they are creating an artifact, which is necessarily the antithesis of nature, the natural. In this way, Katz and other preservationists understand restoration as necessarily both anthropocentric and self-contradictory.

Restoration is hubristic and deluded in its suggestion that humans have the power to *create* a "restored" nature. Katz warns that "we may come to feel omnipotent in the manipulation and management of nature" (Katz 2002, 142). This hubris, combined with the optimism that humans can heal the earth back to what it was, creates a dangerous circle in which human activity continues to wreak havoc upon the environment under the assumption that the mess can be cleaned up later. While even Katz admits that restored nature is better than leaving a desolate wasteland in our wake (see Katz 1997, 396), we should not confuse the better option with the best option. The best option would be to avoid harming nature in the first place. Katz writes: "Here is my solution: as much as possible, we humans *leave nature alone*. To 'let it be' seems to me to be the highest form of respect we can muster. And while I leave it alone, I try to learn as much as possible about it, so that knowledge, respect, and love can all grow together" (Katz 2002, 143).

The preservationist viewpoint is illustrated in an example from Glenn Deliege. He describes what he calls "the cinquefoil controversy" which occurred while he was volunteering for a nature-preservation group in Belgium. A coworker was dismayed when she found two

cinquefoil plants planted in the preservation area, despite this plant being among the very species the project was hoping would resurface over time. She urged fellow staff members in an email to "let nature run its course as much as possible [...] the plants that belong will come back of their own accord" (Deliege, 21). These words emphasize a very preservation-centered viewpoint. The damage to the marshy heath was caused by harmful human actions in the first place. Under a preservationist view, the best thing humans can do after that point is leave well-enough alone, even if that means a heath without cinquefoil.

Preservationists, following after the deep ecologists, insist that we must value nature intrinsically. George Sessions writes that "the independent reality and integrity of the Earth's wild ecosystems, biodiversity and evolutionary process [...] must be protected for their own sakes" (Sessions, 15). Preservation and deep ecology focus on a reworking of fundamental values: "Deep ecology goes beyond a limited piecemeal shallow approach to environmental problems and attempts to articulate a comprehensive religious and philosophical worldview" (Devall and Sessions, 100). If we think we ought to protect the environment to ensure a future for our children, we are missing the point. The most important thing we can do under a preservationist model is learn to value and respect nature for the sake of nature itself.

Restorationists neither deny the intrinsic value of nature nor believe that restorative work undermines that value. Restoration seeks to make amends for the damages done to the environment by human action; it is "a tool for repairing wrongs with regard to the natural world" (Lee et al, 186). Human intervention is often needed in order to heal the wounds that have been made by previous human action throughout the ages. This may include re-introducing species that have been nearly wiped out of certain ecosystems by human action, or uprooting alien species that, once thoughtlessly introduced, began to take over the natural flora (or fauna).

Restoration is a way for humans to re-enter a relationship with nature that is not exploitative, but healing.

If we return to Glenn Deliege's story, we can see the tension between these two goals. The preservationist would insist we not plant the cinquefoil, because doing so would create an artificial nature. Having already disturbed the land once, a preservationist would argue that leaving it alone now is the most respectful thing to do. This will show that we value nature in itself, however it grows back. Restorationists, on the other hand, will argue that we have an obligation to restore nature as best we can. If human action caused the disappearance of the cinquefoil, it seems only right that humans be the ones to reintroduce the species. This allows humans to heal the land that has been harmed, and help realize the biodiversity of the ecosystem. The damage done to the heath has created an obligation of repair that must be rendered. A restorationist would not see planting the cinquefoil as any kind of disrespect to the intrinsic value of nature. They would see it as a debt owed to nature.

It is important to examine Katz's accusation that restored nature meets distinctly *human* purposes. According to Katz, restoration is done by humans, for humans. This human-centered approach is problematic, to be sure. But I do not think this is an accurate interpretation of much of the restoration work taking place around the globe. If we look at the Hayman burn project, it is true that much of the efforts focus on improving water quality for Colorado residents. However, those same efforts will improve the water just as much for the local wildlife. Additionally, it is hard to see how practices such as uprooting noxious weeds serves *distinctly* human purposes. The removal of these weeds is an act of assistance to the land in its healing, allowing less tenacious species of natural plants to take root. And while likely down the line, humans will be able to enjoy the restored area, it seems like a stretch to claim that all restoration

efforts are made solely for *distinctly human* purposes. An act can serve a purpose both for humans and for the environment *itself*. Humans and nature need not have conflicting purposes. We do not want to get stuck in the circle of believing that everything humans do for nature must be in the interest of humans somehow. This is like getting stuck in the circle of believing that there is no such thing as a selfless-good-deed, simply because there is at least a *kind* of pleasure in doing the right thing. Performing good deeds and being happy yourself are not mutually exclusive activities, and it would be strange and perverse to insist that they must be.

There is another worry of Katz's to address: how do we restore nature without becoming hubristic and allowing ourselves to think we have the power to (re)create nature at will? This problem is not a new one. With every new technological advancement, there is the constant worry that humans have acquired power they do not understand or have control over. Katz's more particular worry is that believing humans have the power to *create* nature will lead to a devaluation of nature itself. We have already seen the destruction that is wrought when leaders of industry see no value in nature. Katz is disturbed that environmentalists might also adopt these kinds of instrumentalist views (Katz 1997, 393). This, he claims, is the dangerous path down which restoration takes us.

Choosing between adopting a preservationist versus a restorationist paradigm is not merely a philosophical endeavor. These models shape policies we write and adopt, as well as the way we experience our relationship to nature. In terms of policies, we might be able to "have both," in the sense that certain specific situations clearly require adopting a preservationist approach, while others obviously call for a restorationist response. For example, even the most adamant restorationist would likely agree that there need to be at least *some* nature reserves, closed off from almost all human activity, save that of special opportunities for study or research.

Likewise, probably even the most adamant preservationist would agree that human intervention is necessary to clean-up environmental disasters such as the BP oil spill.

When it comes to the living relationship between humans and nature, however, there is really no way to "have both." Either we ought to be striving to actively re-enter nature in the ways that restorationists like Hettinger suggest, or we ought to be leaving nature alone as much as possible, as Katz suggests. One thing that both preservationists and restorationists emphasize in their writing is that humans are currently experiencing a deep alienation from nature. Humans are, of course, intricately a part of nature. Humans are natural beings, formed through the long process of evolution, that rely on nature for their very survival. Yet, humans today experience nature as something separate from them. In the next section, I will discuss two different narratives that attempt to explain the root of this alienation.

3 ALIENATION

It is interesting to note that both preservationists and restorationists accuse the other side of perpetuating the alienation of humans from nature. Preservationists argue:

Such "shallow" ecologies [as those held by restorationists] adhere wrongly to an "anthropocentric" view of nature by taking a view that separates humanity from nature, deadening the latter. By seeing nature as inanimate matter, humans gain the power to dominate the earth (Luke, 179).

The view here seems to be that identifying humans as having the power to make change in nature is in itself anthropocentric and domineering. To think in such a way must be to think of humans as above and therefore separate from nature. This preservationist interpretation of the restorationists, however, misconstrues the aims of restoration work. Restoration does not aim to dominate nature; it aims to make amends for damages done to nature. The attitudes that come

with restoration work are not meant to exert control and domination, but provide healing and show respect.

Restorationists are equally guilty of misrepresenting preservationist views. Steve Vogel writes that preservationism "seems to me to express a deep alienation from nature and a failure to understand the human role in it. We are not visitors on Earth, and indeed we are never absent from it" (Vogel, 165). It is true that preservationists ask humans to take a step back from nature, in the sense of radically reducing the human physical impact on nature. But that only tells half the story; the other half of the equation is a spiritual journey aimed at respecting nature as it is. The goal is for "humanity [...] to be understood in terms of its proper place *in* nature [...] the idea of a human integrity that allows us to see ourselves and our history without self-serving and self-centered delusions" (Lynch and Norris, 65-66). Preservationists find this mindset to express not alienation, but a deep understanding and unity with nature.

I will now look at two narratives that explain the alienation that humans experience from nature. Karl Marx believes that capitalism is the driving force behind this alienation. Lynn White Jr., on the other hand, identifies Christianity as the root of problem. I begin with a discussion of Marx.

Alienation is, as its most basic, "the separation of things which naturally belong together" (Wood, 3). Marx most famously writes that under capitalism, workers are alienated from the products of their labor and their fellow workers. But those are not the only kinds of alienation. Marx writes that within capitalist society, man is "torn" from nature. In "the expropriation of the agricultural producer, of the peasant, from the soil [...] great masses of men are suddenly and forcibly torn from their means of subsistence, and hurled as free and 'unattached' proletarians on the labour-market" (Marx, qtd. in Burkett, 60). When workers lived off the land, they had,

firstly, land to live on. Furthermore, this land provided them with food that could grow, or animals that could be raised on that stretch of earth. This is the natural relationship between humans and the earth, according to Marx. But when workers have no land of their own (and therefore no means of production), they must labor in exchange for wages. Those wages in turn will provide their subsistence. The workers no longer live directly off the earth. Their relationship to nature is no longer visible. In virtue of being human, workers still rely on the earth and its resources for their continued existence. But that connection becomes hidden behind the omnipresent marketplace.

This dissolution of the bond between humans and nature is a kind of alienation. Included in this alienation is the loss of a "worldly orientation" which "affirms both material nature and the relation of men and women to the natural world of which they are a part" (Wood, 27). Under capitalism, humans are not natural creatures that live off the earth; humans are laborers within the marketplace. Capitalism takes natural conditions and "tear[s] them away from the individual independent labourer [and] develop[s] them as powers dominating the individual labourer and extraneous to him" (Marx, qtd. in Burkett, 77). In this way, the natural conditions of labor become alien to the worker. The powers of nature appear instead as powers belonging to capital. The power of the earth to grow food, the power of the sun and the wind and the water to provide power--these powers are presented as the powers of the market. The human who lives off the land has direct access to these powers, and can wield them. But as a laborer, the worker must pay for access to these resources, which are presented to her as products of the market.

Paul Burkett is a contemporary Marxist who also identifies capitalism as the root cause of the environmental crisis we face. In *Marx and Nature*, Burkett applies Marx's concept of exploitation to the way environmental resources are harvested under capitalism. Of course,

Burkett is working with a broader use of the term. Marx's concept of exploitation applies only to workers. But Burkett extends the term to show how capitalism "threatens biospheric havoc with its ability to destroy particular local and regional ecosystems while continuing to function by utilizing others" (Burkett, 135). Capitalism does not worry about maintaining the integrity of natural ecosystems, in order to keep them sustainable. After draining one ecosystem of its resources, it moves on to the next, exploiting all the natural powers available. In this way, capitalism prioritizes "short-run gains at the expense of long-run sustainability" (Burkett, 138). The realization that an entire economic system functions in exactly this way makes it clear how such massive destruction to the environment has come about in a relatively short amount of time.

Marx himself had a vision for how alienation was to be overcome. He wrote about communism as a restructuring of society in order to overcome the alienation of people from nature, from each other, and from themselves. Marx called communism the "positive transcendence" of the current mode of production: "the *genuine* resolution of the conflict between man and nature and between man and man" (Marx and Engels, 84). He believed that nothing short of these revolutionary changes would provide a 'genuine resolution'. Marx, along with Friedrich Engels, developed a materialist history that understood material life as primary. They viewed the most important human activity not as thought, but as production of the material goods that were needed for survival. Material life and the development of a society's productive forces (technology), are what move history forward, according to Marx. Marx rejected philosophical thinking that was "isolated from practice" as "purely scholastic" (Marx and Engels, 144). He wrote: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world [...] the point, however, is to change it" (Marx and Engels, 145). Change, for Marx, is only measured in material gains.

Thus, a restructuring of society will be the only viable solution to the environmental calamities of capitalism.

A final note on Marx's historical materialism will be important for the discussion later. In his day, Marx utterly dismissed critics who encouraged the move back to feudalism or other prior modes of production. He wrote that those groups committed to "restoring the old means of production" were "both reactionary and Utopian" (Marx and Engels, 493). The word "utopian" for Marx always amounted to an insult. "Utopian" suggests mere philosophical visions and theoretical musings. Marx was concerned with the actual world, and the actual material conditions of life. Utopian ideas amounted to nothing but "all these castles in the air" (Marx and Engels, 499). For Marx, we cannot turn back the clock. History does not go in reverse.

I will now consider an alternative narrative to explain the alienation of humans from nature. A Marxist perspective identifies capitalism as the root of today's environmental problems. In "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," Lynn White Jr. identifies Christianity as the historically alienating force. He writes that "Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has ever seen" and has "not only established a dualism of man and nature but also insisted that it is God's will that man exploit nature for his proper ends" (White, 1205). White believes that the human relationship with nature under conditions of paganism was much more mutually beneficial, and involved a balancing of human needs and human respect for natural things. He writes, "Before one cut a tree, mined a mountain, or dammed a brook, it was important to placate the spirit in charge of that particular situation" (White, 1205). This care and sensitivity was once crucial to any human interaction with the environment. But, when it brought about the end of paganism, "Christianity made it possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects" (White, 1205).

Christianity insists that man was made in the image of God, and this gives man license to use nature as he will. It is this picture that White believes led to the alienation and exploitation we see today.

White believed that the necessary solution to the ecological crisis was a restructuring of values. If Christian ideology is to blame for the alienation between humans and nature, than a distinctly un-Christian shift in values is needed to overcome it. He writes: "What we do about ecology depends on our ideas of the man-nature relationship. More science and more technology are not going to get us out of the present ecological crisis until we find a new religion, or rethink our old one" (White, 1206). White suggests Saint Francis of Assisi as a model among Christian saints. Saint Francis prescribed "the virtue of humility--not merely for the individual but for man as a species" (Ibid). He believed in equality among all animals, from ants to humans, and sought to deconstruct the "monarchy" of man above all other creatures. For White, we cannot begin to fix the environment until we can learn to think like Saint Francis: "we shall continue to have a worsening ecological crisis until we reject the Christian axiom that nature has no reason for existence save to serve man" (White, 1207). White does not believe we can achieve our well-meant ends until our values match our goals.

White emphasizes the importance of ideological changes in explaining the environmental crisis, while a Marxist view insists on the priority of material conditions, the dynamics of capitalism in particular. I think we need both idealist and materialist accounts to adequately understand and address the worsening environmental conditions. White's account of Christianity as the root of the problem, however, might not fully capture just how global the environmental crisis is. As of February this year, "India's rapidly worsening air pollution is causing about 1.1 million people to die prematurely each year and is now surpassing China's as the deadliest in the

world" (Anand). India's primary religion is Hinduism, and the majority of China's religious population identifies as Buddhist. If Christianity were the main problem behind degrading environmental conditions, then we might expect that parts of the world that do not subscribe to Christian ideology would fare significantly better. Yet, that is not what we find. White's theory cannot fully account for all the degradation of nature taking place across the globe.

Nonetheless, whether or not specifically *Christian* ideology is the root of the problem, it seems clear that we desperately need a restructuring of values. In order to overcome the current alienation we experience towards nature, we need an ideological framework that will bring humanity and nature together. Yet, we also cannot deny the importance of science and technology in assisting us in achieving our goals. A restoration model seems best fitted to incorporate both ideological and material changes. Preservation aims mostly at a spiritual alignment, which I will later show is rooted in problematic beliefs. It also asks humanity to take a radical step back from consumption, one that I think most people would find hard to accept. Restoration also asks us to reorient ourselves psychologically towards the environment, in a way that acknowledges the harm that has been done to nature. But it does not ask us to repudiate our technological advances.

4 IDEOLOGY AND MATERIAL LIFE

A restoration model would have us harness technological advances as tools in our efforts to have a less destructive relationship with nature: the technology that was created through the exploitation of nature can now be used to assist in healing it. This is consistent with Marx's view that capitalism, for all the harm it inflicts on humans and nature, "has accomplished wonders far surpassing Egyptian pyramids, Roman aqueducts, and Gothic cathedrals" (Marx and Engels,

476). Contemporary technology, which is advancing daily, brings with it the possibility to curb unsustainable human destruction of the environment.

Carbon-scrubbers and solar panels are examples of advancements that can be used to *restore* nature, in the first case, and *prevent further damage to it*, in the second. Carbon-scrubbing technologies actually extract carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, removing pollution that has already been made (Kunzig). Solar panels harvest the energy of the sun as an alternative energy source to pollution-heavy methods, such as burning coal. Solar panels are a perfect example of sustainable energy that once seemed impossibly expensive to utilize, and are now becoming cheap enough for middle-class house-owners to employ (McKibben). This kind of technology allows humans to continue to live at roughly the same level of comfort, while greatly reducing the cost to the environment.

There is no shortage of technological developments aimed at reducing cost to the environment for everyday needs, such as transportation and food. One 2011 study on laboratory-grown meat found that the process "would cut down on the land required to produce steaks, sausages and bacon by 99 percent and reduce the associated need for water by 90 percent" (Zaraska). Of course, much of this technology is years away from being fully developed and marketable. But there is strong potential in it.

Importantly, the seeds of this technology have already taken root. Adopting a restoration paradigm allows us to continue to develop these technologies to their full potential. Then, we can take the technologies and use them as tools to heal the environment. A restoration model easily fits into the ideal of progress, for better or for worse. In other words, it's a much easier sell. It suggests physical and material solutions, which are theoretically easy to understand and even seem feasible within a capitalist framework.

Preservation, on the other hand, seems to ask humans to change their lifestyles in drastic ways. Preservationists would suggest that we abandon much of our contemporary science and technology, in order to reign in our lifestyles harmful to nature and reduce our impact on nature as much as possible. This would happen through lifestyles of "voluntary simplicity": living "simple in means, rich in ends" (Devall and Sessions, 68). A paradigm shift in values will be necessary across the board: "human satisfaction must shift to appreciating the quality of life (dwelling in situations of inherent value) rather than adhering to higher material standards of living" (Luke, 181). For all the rhetorical beauty of this idea, going through with it would require scaling back consumption to presumably the bare minimum, as well as severely curbing population growth. Restorationists need not accuse preservationists of demanding a primitive lifestyle; preservationists will admit that freely. Preservationists "see themselves borrowing from the 'ancient truths' of preindustrial, nonurban, and precapitalist societies for their future primitivism" (Luke, 182). The ideological shift required for such a future world to exist is daunting to think about. Marx would claim that such an attempt to 'turn back the clock' would be impossible. If we look at history, it does seem like such a move would be wildly unprecedented. Apart from a few exceptions (calamities involving widespread disease or war), human history does not go in reverse. Humanity on a whole does not abandon technologies and advancements in order to move back to lower levels of productivity.

Furthermore, it is unclear whether preservationist ideology is even rooted in a really-existing value. Marx is skeptical of the idea of there being a "pure" kind of nature, that exists apart from human activity. He writes that this "pure" nature which is often alluded to, "the nature that preceded human history [...] is nature which today no longer exists anywhere" (Marx, 20). There is no nature that has not been touched by human activity in some way, however

indirect it might be. White makes a similar point in his paper, when he recalls a conversation with Aldous Huxley. Huxley was complaining about a valley in England near where he had grown up that had been "overgrown with unsightly brush because the rabbits that had formerly kept such grown under control" had died due to a disease introduced by local farmers to keep the rabbits from disrupting their crops (White, 1203). While the introduction of this disease is a very anthropocentric and domineering act in itself, White couldn't help but note that originally, "rabbits had been brought as a domestic animal to England in 1176, presumably to improve the protein diet of the peasantry" (Ibid). This story emphasizes Marx's point: that which we consider nature has already been formed by human activity.

If Marx and White are correct, then it seems misguided to point to the value of "pure" or "untrammled" nature as one of the foundational values of a project. If there is no *pure* nature, no nature that has not been affected by humans, then there is no real place to ground this value. The nature that surrounds us, as "wild" as it may look, is the result of human activity. The greatest depths of the ocean, where few if any humans have ever been, are changing because of human activity. The acidification of the world's oceans is being brought about because of the rapidly increasing presence of carbon dioxide in the world's atmosphere, which in turn has developed from the burning of fossil fuels. In this way, human activity affects parts of nature that no humans have ever seen.

The goal of preservation then might be an empty one. If the aim is to preserve and protect 'the independent reality and integrity of the Earth's wild ecosystems' as George Sessions calls it, then the goal cannot ever be achieved. There *is no* nature fully independent from humanity. All of nature is altered nature, in one way or another. White writes, "Ever since man became a numerous species he has affected his environment notably" (White, 1203).

Additionally, much of these effects are quite unintentional. He notes an example of such accidental effects, in which "the advent of the automobile eliminated huge flocks of sparrows that once fed on the horse manure littering every street" (Ibid). Here, the sparrow was neither introduced nor intentionally eliminated. Rather, sparrows were indirectly encouraged to flourish under one model of human transportation. When a new system took its place, this advantage disappeared; subsequently, the sparrow populations dissipated as well.

The unintentional nature of many of these alterations is no excuse to continue them. But the prevalence of such effects gives reason to be suspicious of appeals to "pure," "wild," or "independent" nature. Marx writes, "the history of nature and the history of men are dependent on each other so long as men exist" (Marx, 5). It would be futile to try and leave nature alone to maintain its "untrammled" quality. Nature on this planet is already necessarily altered. The 'best we can do' minimum that Katz resigns us to (leaving nature well-enough alone) may actually be the most impossible goal to achieve. The 'best we can do' may instead be realizing the diverse potential of the ecosystems we encounter, even if by artificial means. Nature cannot ever be 'left alone' in the way that preservationists desire.

Furthermore, it is unclear how preservationists intend on spreading their ideological revelations to the masses. Preservationists cite spiritual goals as the key to overcoming the alienation between humans and the environment. But spiritual goals can only be realized on the individual level; it is unclear how these aims are to be mobilized. As Luke puts it, "Without real opportunities to change collective activity--in the economy, ideology, technology, or polity--this individual moral regeneration might be, at best, a green quietism, suitable only for finding a personal path in an evil society" (Luke, 184). And while personal paths such as these are

commendable, they are not the catalysts for worldwide change, which is exactly what the environment needs from humanity.

Preservation offers high minded ideals with little practical application. Borrowing from Marx, we might label the goals of preservation as one of those 'castles in the sky,' or perhaps call it 'purely scholastic' for its being so 'isolated from practice'. As Luke puts it, "The goal may well be worthy, but it is basically impossible to operationalize" (Luke, 183). Preservation pursues lofty goals, with far too great of demands for the average person to meet. While asking people to think about their consumption and scale back unnecessary waste is not in-itself an unreasonable request, scaling back the human population would require asking people to limit their reproductive goals. This, I believe, is a limitation on freedom that will receive a great amount of pushback.

Fully embracing a restorationist paradigm will require work as well, though not nearly the same ideological shift. Restoration within a capitalist framework will require people to continue to pressure the market for more and better sustainable technologies. It will require local and wider communities to acknowledge the damage that has been done to nature, and to fix it. It requires putting our bodies into nature in a way that humans are not contemporarily accustomed to. It requires informed and thoughtful engagement on how to bring about what is best for both humans and the environment. This engagement itself is how the ideological changes that White prescribes can be achieved. Each individual need not take a spiritual journey of her own; through engagement with the community, individuals begin to shift their priorities from themselves to the wider group. Restorative efforts are not a "hands-off" process like preservation can be. Restoration requires group decisions to be made on how to best heal the local environment for the benefit of the community and the ecosystem itself. These decisions

cannot be made fully without considering the community at large, and the local flora and fauna as well. Through this process of engagement, humans can come to better understand the earth. Ideological engagement combined with the actual, physical restoration work that is done is the formula for how the alienation from nature that humans experience is to be overcome.

5 OBJECTIONS

First, I must address some of the charges I have made against preservation. I have claimed that preservation harbors empty goals, as there might not actually be any kind of "pure" or unadulterated nature to preserve. This kind of nature may simply not exist. But these accusations may just as easily be turned against restoration. If there is no pure nature to be preserved, then there is also no pure form to *restore* nature to. If there is no nature that is not already affected by the human presence on earth, then why bother restoring it at all? To what standard are we restoring nature if there is no ideal of how nature should be apart from human activity? This objection is known elsewhere in the literature as the "baseline" problem (Lee et al). If we recall the story about Aldous Huxley and the rabbits, there are at least two baselines to consider. There is the state of the valley before the intentional killing of the rabbits. And then there is a former, maybe even *more* natural state of the valley, before rabbits had ever been introduced to the land. If we were to engage in a restoration project within this valley, we would have to decide to which baseline we would want to return the land. It seems that whatever baseline we choose, the choice is arbitrary to at least some extent. There is no "original" condition of any part of nature. If we go back far enough, there was a time "when large mega-fauna, from mastodons to North American cheetahs, roamed the continent" (Lee et al, 172). Yet this is certainly not the baseline to which we want to restore any North American ecosystems.

Because the baseline objection is so powerful, it is important for restorationists not to fool themselves into thinking they are restoring nature to some "pure" or "original" state. The reason to restore is not to (re)create a more natural kind of nature. The reason to restore is because reparations are owed to nature. Because human activity has damaged nature, humans have an obligation to restore it. Lee et al write: "That we have altered the world from some state *B*, without [adequate] justification, is the *reason* that we must restore, but it is not the state *back to which* we must restore" (Lee et al, 183). The goals of restoration, then, are more about fulfilling duties owed to nature, rather than recreating some imaginary "original" nature.

Another significant worry that must be addressed is whether or not the goals of restoration can actually be achieved under capitalism. Restorationists themselves admit to the worry that restoration alone might not be enough to create a sustainable relationship with the environment. As Hettinger notes, "Focusing solely on the positive dimensions of restoration ignores its essentially regrettable character. [...] An ideal community would not need such institutions" (Hettinger, 39). Only damaged nature needs to be restored. The worry is that nature will always be exploited under capitalism. Can we really ever have a non-exploitative, non-dominating relationship with nature in a consumer-driven society like the one we live in today?

Marx certainly didn't think so. Marx believed that the societal shift from capitalism to communism was a necessary step in order to overcome alienation and end exploitation. A transition to post-capitalist society might indeed be the very best solution to the current environmental crises across the globe. This solution, however, seems to be just as utopian a goal as the preservationists have proposed. As much as Marx really believed that the communist revolution was imminent and unpreventable, we find ourselves still mired within capitalism, well over a hundred years later. But if communism is nothing but a utopian dream, and the necessary

changes cannot be made while capitalism still rules, then it does seem as if the goals of restoration are impossible to achieve.

White, at least, seemed to believe that overcoming this alienation was possible within the current system, if we could just transcend our Christian ideology. While Christianity does seem to be dwindling in its numbers of adherents as the years go by, "no new set of basic values has been accepted in our society to displace those of Christianity" (White, 1207). Those who claim not to subscribe to Christianity still embody much of the ideology that White finds problematic. A non-Christian may not believe that man was given the right to dominate nature by God, but the fact that these people still exhibit dominative behaviors towards nature means that they have internalized some kind of destructive ideology nonetheless. But theoretically, should we be able to successfully instill a new set of values in greater society, we would then be able to establish a mutually beneficial relationship with nature, according to White.

White is fairly quiet about how exactly these values are to be instilled, but I think that adopting a restoration paradigm is a prime way to begin. Whether we ought to label these values as "anti-Christian" or perhaps "anti-capitalists" is besides the point. What is needed is an ideology that is able to transcend the alienation of humans from nature, and bring humans back to nature in a non-exploitative way. Restoration does not promise any particular ideology, but a process through which one might be adopted in the community at large. Restoration projects get people thinking about nature and humanity as inextricably linked, and wanting to help build a thriving and diverse nature. These sorts of engagements encourage people to think and act as a part of nature. Through this process, attitudes will begin to shift away from dangerous anthropocentric and domineering views.

The worry about the plausibility of a healthy relationship with nature within capitalism is a powerful one--one that cannot be resolved within the limitations of this thesis. It may indeed be the case that the relationship between humans and nature under capitalism will always be less than ideal. But as far as choosing between preservation and restoration, I still believe that restoration will be *better*. It will provide farther-reaching and more attainable results, without having to completely up-end the status quo. As it stands, preservation cannot make any significant ground within capitalism. Restoration, however, can still make substantial progress, even if capitalism ultimately sets certain limits.

We are already seeing the tangible results of restoration projects taking place across the globe, even within the existing capitalist framework. The restoration taking place in the Hayman burn area is just one such example. Restoration projects on the Galapagos Islands have been successful in rebuilding multiple rare tortoise populations, which have finally, in the last five years, been able to successfully reproduce healthy hatchlings on their own ("Giant Tortoise Restoration Initiative"). In 2009 the Coral Restoration Foundation "made history" when their project at the "Wellwood" site in the Florida Keys recorded "corals [that] were the first documented nursery-raised corals to spawn" ("Coral Spawning Success"). The point is this: when well-meaning, well-informed groups come together to work for a common cause, change can happen. The collective nature of restoration is what makes it so much more powerful than preservation. The individual, spiritual goals of preservation will not do the work they're supposed to. Actual persons going out into nature and doing the work is the only thing that will bring about change. A restoration paradigm is not the final solution to the story, but it's a strong start that is known to produce tangible results.

6 CONCLUSION

When it comes to the living relationship between humans and nature, the debate between preservation and restoration is key. Either we ought to be striving to mitigate the harmful effects human activity has on nature in the ways that restorationists suggest, or we ought to be leaving nature alone as much as possible, as preservationists suggest. In examining the two narratives of alienation that Karl Marx and Lynn White Jr. present, I believe that in order to overcome the alienation that humanity experiences from nature, we must adopt both ideological and material goals, which will then mean endorsing a restoration paradigm. Ideological goals must include a reorientation of values that bring humans and nature onto the same level. We must abandon all value-systems that identify humans as dominators of nature. Material goals are also essential to the project. We must continue to develop science and technology that will meet humanity's material needs without continuing to exploit nature in an unsustainable way. While a reorientation of values might well reduce the rate of increase in consumption, focusing on developing sustainable technologies as opposed to enacting restrictions on freedom keeps restoration within the realm of possibilities. This thesis remains uncertain on the long-term future of global capitalism, but provides hope that a mutually beneficial relationships between humans and the environment can be established here and now.

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